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**AJS Perspectives:** *The Magazine of the Association for Jewish Studies*

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**Front, Back, Inside Covers, and images throughout issue unless credited otherwise:** Jan Tichy. Installation no.10 (Spertus), 2010. Video installation, 18 minutes. Two channel HD projection, 36 MDF white painted objects, two books. Collection of Spertus Museum. Photo: Jan Tichy.

Jan Tichy has worked with various institutional collections including the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art in Hartford, Connecticut, the oldest public museum in America, and the Spertus Center for Jewish Learning and Culture in Chicago. The Spertus Institute built a striking new glass and steel building in 2007, designed by Kruek+Sexton, that originally housed a museum. By the time Tichy was invited to work with the building and its collection, in 2010, the institution was experiencing a financial crisis that ultimately led to the closing of its exhibition space and major reductions in staff. As the building slowly emptied out, Tichy considered the relationship between this vacancy and the Institute's collection, which is full of items relating to Judaism, ranging from arts and crafts and tourist trinkets to precious art objects.

In an effort to reflect what he felt to be a rather bleak institutional atmosphere, Tichy decided to fill the exhibition space—a glass-fronted transitional space between the street and the Institute's lobby—with “emptiness,” by installing a set of plain white forms that recalled plinths, display cases, and bookshelves. He animated them with light video projections that emphasized their vacancy, and also projected text excerpts from *War of the Jews* by Flavius Josephus (37–ca. 100 CE), in which Josephus describes King Herod's adventures in architecture, which may have resulted in the second Jewish revolt. Interestingly, the truthfulness of this text has been questioned as Josephus was working from Rome at the time. However, his writing was still embraced by Jews as a valid record of their history, and Tichy saw it as appropriate for the Spertus installation since it describes the decline of a kingdom. Tichy included the Spertus Institute's copies of the books displayed in vitrines. His installation was visually striking and an appropriately minimal complement to its glass and steel environment. It also provocatively commented on the institution and its tenuousness by offering images of vacancy as well as those of a memorial, or graveyard, poignantly reflecting the impending threat of the institution ceasing to function as an accessible resource to its community.

Karen Irvine  
*Curator and Associate Director of the Museum of Contemporary Photography in Chicago*

# From the Editors

## *Dear Colleagues,*

Of late, the inseparability of higher education and the economy has become glaringly clear. This was ever the case, but the very idea of an ivory tower set above financial transactions has been shattered. In its place, a new reality has set in. Professors are expected to fundraise and bring in revenue. Upper administrators often conduct their business like CEOs and receive commensurate salaries. Consultants who advise universities how to behave more like corporations march through and receive considerable portions of the budget. And, as the administration swells and the faculty shrinks, the dichotomy between management and labor becomes increasingly relevant to academe.

This juncture where academics find themselves on one side or the other of the management-labor divide warrants the exploration of academic labor. How is our work valued? In what ways is our labor exploited? How does our work participate in systems of exploitation? How can we represent what we do as valuable in a world increasingly defined by the market? Should we even make such arguments or should we try to safeguard the university from the pressures of consumerism?

Behind these questions rests the fact of a reduced number of academic positions. With universities increasingly relying on the labor of adjunct professors, graduates of doctoral programs can no longer expect a tenure-track position awaiting them. The salaries of

adjunct positions, which provide little job security, can bring a family beneath the poverty line and provide little time for the pursuit of a research program. It can also prove difficult to move from a contingent to a tenure-track position. The diminishing number of tenure-track positions also means that permanent faculty members bear an increased amount of administrative duties matched by new demands for accountability and standardization. Whatever side of the management-labor divide academics find themselves, much of their labor bears little resemblance to their training.

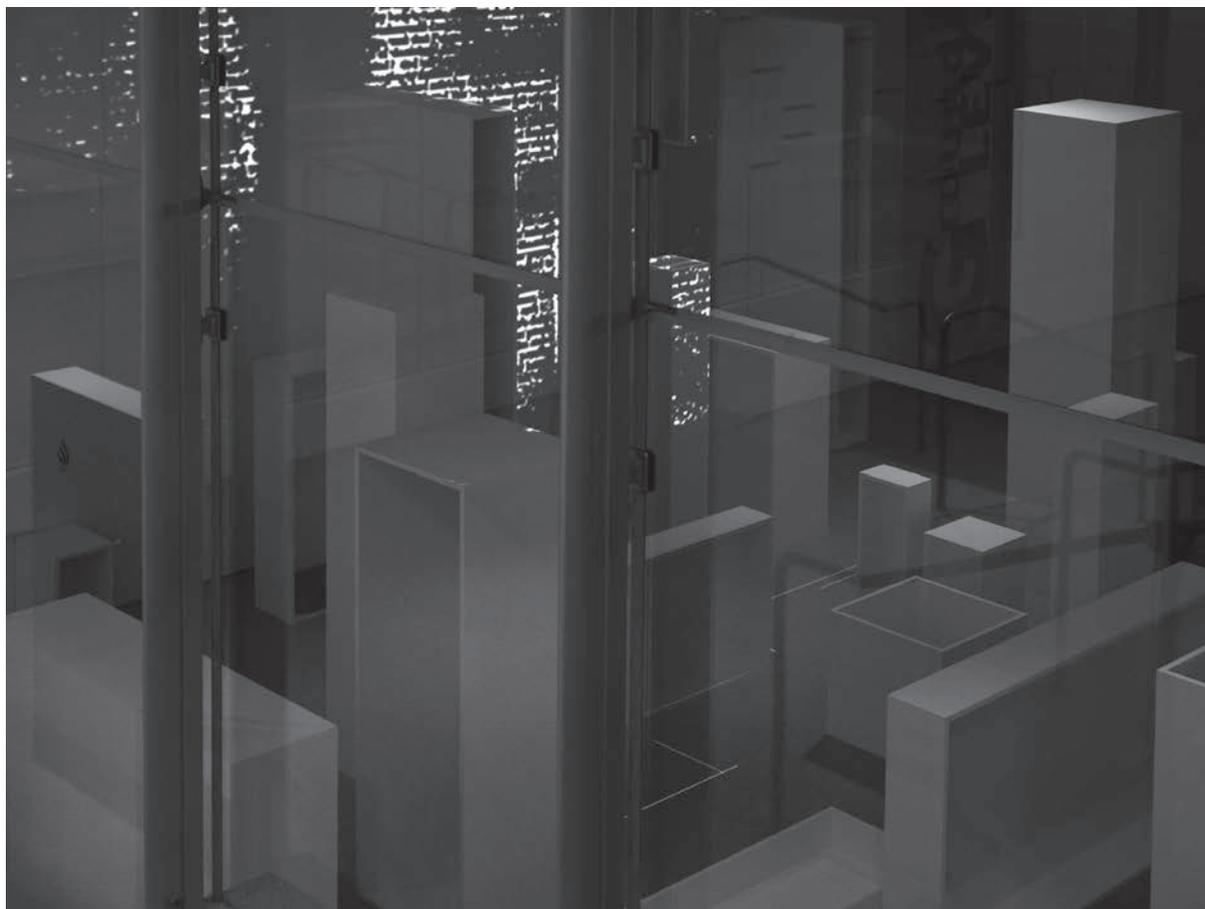
Although the articles in this issue do not directly address the contemporary state of academic labor, they do explore labor from multiple angles of Jewish Studies. As laborers in the field of Jewish Studies, the treatment of Jewish labor throughout the ages surely pertains to our present state. We bring such questions to the forefront through articles about individual and collective work in a wide range of places and times and hope that our work on this issue yields pleasure for our readers.

**Matti Bunzl**

*University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign*

**Rachel Havrelock**

*University of Illinois at Chicago*



## From the President

*Dear Colleagues,*

When I was in graduate school, the word on the street was that someone with a PhD had a one-in-four chance of getting a tenure-track job in the academy. I have no idea whether this was an accurate statistic. Professors never discussed the issue, and it was raised only seldom, and with trepidation, among graduate students; it was the proverbial elephant in the room. And apparently this is still the case, even though it seems that the odds of getting such a position may have gotten worse since the 1990s, when I finished my graduate studies. I find that this is a topic neither professors nor students are eager to talk about: when I raise it with graduate students, they generally look aghast—as if, in a remarkable bit of magical thinking, never mentioning the issue somehow wards off the possibility of not getting a tenure-track position. And when I've broached the issue with other professors, they are often dismissive. One assured me that “the best people get jobs.” Not only do I know this to be, at best, a partial truth—some of the finest scholars in areas of study with which I am familiar are not in tenure-track positions—but I find such thinking even more disconcerting than the graduate students' taboo.

Some institutions of higher education have begun to confront this challenge by providing workshops or other information for graduate students on alternative careers to the academy. The issue has been addressed on the pages of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, at annual conferences of major learned societies, and of course on Twitter at #altac. Jewish Studies needs to engage the question of graduate students' professional futures as well and should do so on multiple fronts. First, graduate students need to be engaged in this topic. One outcome of AJS's recent strategic plan is the commitment to forming a Graduate Studies Committee, involving both students and faculty members, to address a variety of students' concerns regarding the profession in general and AJS in particular. Career planning, broadly defined, should be at the top of this committee's agenda. Students need to be encouraged to think proactively and creatively about how their scholarship might relate to how they make a living, whether in the academy or elsewhere.

Moreover, academics who have become tenured faculty need to rethink assumptions that many of them make about those scholars who are situated otherwise professionally. It has been my experience that people with doctorates who do not get tenure-track jobs are often thought of by their former mentors as fallen angels, second-class citizens, or worse. To my astonishment, I once heard a professor remark, when someone mentioned a former student of his—a student who had gone on to pursue a nonacademic career (and a quite impressive

one at that)—that training this student had been “a waste of my time.” Such thinking is, frankly, destructive. Not only is the pursuit of an advanced degree a rewarding experience in its own right; the investment of time, energy, and money in training a doctoral student should not be considered a “waste” if that student has something to offer to the field, irrespective of his or her livelihood. Professors, and the profession at large, should encourage all their graduates to continue to be actively engaged in scholarship to the extent that they are able and wish to be. Postgraduate professional possibilities, widely defined, should be a subject of ongoing conversation between professors and their graduate students during the course of their education. And faculty need to address the issue among themselves as they think programmatically about the future of graduate training—for example, preparing students for the growing importance of conjoining humanities and technology, within and without the academy.

AJS can support independent scholars by encouraging them to remain active in the field though the Association's annual conference and publications. Conference sessions can be convened to address how scholars working in other venues, such as public cultural institutions or religious education, draw upon their academic training. Professional development workshops can help graduate students think proactively and expansively about career possibilities and about how their graduate training can relate to a variety of professional futures. This issue deserves urgent attention not only because of the tight academic job market, but also in light of the challenges that the humanities face on and off campus. At a time when a bachelor's degree has become commodified, increasingly regarded as nothing so much as an investment in a student's fiscal future, undergraduates are retreating en masse from courses in the humanities and social sciences, which this pecuniary view of higher education has deemed unprofitable. Scholars therefore need to develop new strategies for making the case for the relevance of their profession. This includes rethinking how the work scholars do as researchers and teachers relates to the lives of professionals beyond the academy. This rethinking of what it means to be in the academy is not merely a matter of addressing economic circumstances. Doing so can enhance what scholars offer to their students, both undergraduate and graduate; it can foster greater value of scholarly work in the public sphere, and it can enrich the work of scholars as a learned community.

**Jeffrey Shandler**  
*Rutgers University*

## From the Executive Director

*Dear Colleagues,*

How can AJS best serve the needs of its members in the shifting landscape of higher education and the humanities? What role should Jewish Studies and AJS play in the community outside the university's walls? How are digital and social media transforming the work of the

scholar and the learned society? And is the learned society model of supporting its activities through membership dues, conference fees, and publications still relevant and viable? These and other questions drove AJS's first formal strategic planning process, which began in the

fall of 2012 and ended recently with the AJS Board of Directors' overwhelming vote of support for its findings. Spearheaded by AJS President Jeffrey Shandler and directed by Marta Siberio of Marta Siberio Consulting, the strategic planning process yielded a set of priorities, listed below, which will guide AJS's activities and resources for the next three years. These priorities focus on expanding the services AJS provides its members, building AJS's capacity to collect and share data, and enhancing AJS's infrastructure to enable it to do even more for scholars and the field in years to come.

AJS could not have completed this project without the wisdom and work of an exceptional Strategic Planning Committee. I am grateful to have worked alongside: Beth Berkowitz (Barnard College), Mark Kligman (HUC-JIR), Rebecca Kobrin (Columbia University), Hartley Lachter (Muhlenberg College), Joshua Lambert (University of Massachusetts, Amherst and National Yiddish Book Center), Vanessa Ochs (University of Virginia), Adam Teller (Brown University), Shelly Tenenbaum (Clark University), and Jeffrey Shandler (chair, AJS President, Rutgers University). Likewise, many of you participated in focus groups at the AJS Conference in Chicago and our offices in New York; thank you for sharing your time and ideas. We also owe thanks to several learned society and foundation professionals, as well as experts in academic publishing and the state of the humanities, who agreed to be interviewed by Marta.

### **Strategic Priority #1: Enhance AJS's engagement with its membership**

**Goal 1: Devise and execute a meaningful digital media strategy to increase AJS's year-round relevance to members.**

**Goal 2: Utilize *Perspectives* as a platform for an enhanced digital presence, engagement with members, and interaction with people outside the academy.**

**Goal 3: Create more professional development opportunities to support members, especially early career scholars, in their efforts to secure positions, advance professionally, and assume new roles in the profession.**

AJS has a multigenerational membership with different approaches to communicating, getting information, conducting research, and teaching. Owing to their experiences with larger learned societies, and as participants in online culture in general, many members expect AJS to engage with them digitally, offering more robust online services—including an interactive website, discussion platforms, original online content, and research and teaching resources—in highly accessible ways. To address these member expectations, AJS will create a cohesive digital media strategy that: 1) makes AJS the foremost resource on all news related to Jewish Studies and 2) draws members and potential members to a more interactive website that invites greater engagement with the organization.

Many members also turn to AJS for guidance on professional matters, including: approaching the job market, developing a Jewish Studies program, undergoing a program review process, and negotiating controversial issues. AJS can significantly expand its engagement with members by expanding its professional development and advice resources, including: creating a Professional Development Committee, providing enhanced content on its website, and offering

workshops on select issues in the Jewish Studies profession. AJS should also tap the great interest of graduate students to participate more significantly in the organization by creating a Graduate Studies Committee and a graduate student seat on the Board of Directors. Taken together, these efforts will demonstrate AJS's value throughout the year and will allow AJS to communicate with members in an up-to-date fashion.

### **Strategic Priority #2: Become the authoritative source on the field of Jewish Studies and Jewish Studies professions**

**Goal 4: Systematically collect data about AJS membership and the field of Jewish Studies.**

There are major changes underway in academia that pose a threat to the humanities and a liberal arts education, to the working conditions of current faculty, and to the career trajectories of those entering the profession. These trends have had an impact on most AJS members, some more severely than others, and have created a growing demand for information on the state of the field. AJS can play a critical role by collecting and sharing data on the field of Jewish Studies (hiring trends, enrollments, funding sources, etc.); the professional conditions facing its members (salary ranges, teaching requirements, years on the job market, etc.); and PhDs working outside of academia, a group about whose activities and needs little is known.

AJS will invest resources to conduct periodic, comprehensive field and member surveys and to analyze and share those results with the membership and beyond. AJS will also conduct surveys to better understand its own membership patterns—for instance, surveying lapsed members to understand why they have not renewed their membership.

### **Strategic Priority #3: Strengthen AJS personnel and infrastructure to ensure successful implementation of the strategic plan**

**Goal 5: Expand AJS personnel and infrastructure.**

**Goal 6: Create a development and fundraising culture in AJS.**

**Goal 7: Expand revenue-generating activities.**

AJS needs to make targeted investments in its staffing and infrastructure in order to ensure the organization's continued relevance, responsiveness, and sustainability. These investments include: the judicious expansion of personnel to launch the other strategic initiatives detailed in this plan and to further cultivate the AJS membership base (outreach to lapsed members, research on potential international membership constituencies); initiation of formal fundraising and marketing activities, with a focus on the Distinguished Lecture Program; and the implementation of new governance mechanisms to increase Board engagement with the long-term sustainability and operations of the organization.

Please let us know what you think about these priorities; you will certainly be hearing more about these initiatives in the months to come.

**Rona Sheramy**  
*Association for Jewish Studies*

# The Labor Issue

## Jewish Work

Hasia Diner

In the old Yiddish joke, one Jew asks another, “*voss makht a yid?*” meaning both how are you doing and, more literally, what does a Jew make.

“*A yid makht arbet,*” a Jew makes work.

The answer may or may not be funny, but it points to the inextricable bond between life and labor, between existence and work. It assumes that work means making something—hence the verb *makht*—and takes for granted that the essence of work is producing tangible objects.

For much of Jewish history, Jewish work did not mean making something, but conducting the business which culminates the long process of making. Jews worked at buying the goods which someone made and then going out to sell them. Obviously millions of Jews did make things. Among other items, they made clothes. But the making of clothes could not have been accomplished without the commerce behind it. Most Jewish laborers who made products worked for Jewish employers, the capitalists who owned the factories, invested in the materials, stocked the machinery, paid the rent on the buildings, and yes, reaped the profits, whether modest or grand.

Jewish commerce has only recently become something that we study. It was a taboo topic in large measure because so many enemies of the Jews focused on their concentration in commerce. Critics of the Jews, whether intellectual, religious, or populist, accused them of not making anything, only engaging in the filthy business of business. Even where Jews produced things, they did not produce the things that the majority produced; that too set them apart, making them abnormal in the eyes of many among whom they lived. Many scholars have avoided labeling business as Jewish work, perhaps because so many of us are left of center on the political spectrum. We like workers, particularly those who joined unions, demanded humane working conditions, emphasized the dignity of labor and the



Street types of New York City: Peddler with cart, c. 1896. Photograph by Elizabeth Alice Austen. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

positive bonds of the working class, and went out on strike, confronting their (Jewish) employers. They have been our heroes.

This is changing. The Center for Jewish History now runs a scholars working group on Jews and business. Yuri Slezkine’s stimulating, although problematic, *The Jewish Century* endowed the Jews’ history in business with great and transformative power. Slezkine argued that because they operated in the commercial zone, Jews had the freedom to innovate, migrate, and change the world. They may not have made many things, but they made the modern world. Not making things enabled Jews to move freely and cross boundaries.

Jews had peddled for centuries, certainly going back to the early modern period, and they did so all over the world. In some

communities nearly all Jewish men peddled and some women did as well. My current project tackles this mundane yet historically rich form of Jewish work. First, a very quick definition as to whom I include as a peddler. “My” peddlers traversed the roads. They did not stand still on a street corner and wait for their customers to come to them, but put packs on their backs or got up on an animal-drawn wagon and went out to sell. They knocked on doors, crossing the thresholds of their customers’ homes. They went from house to house, building up a clientele who would, they hoped, keep buying new things. They returned to their homes once a week, maybe less often than that, depending upon the scope of their routes. Despite their obvious commercial activities, they made things, or better, they made things happen.

I am interested in the connection between Jewish peddling and Jewish migrations in the modern era, a time span that began at the end of the eighteenth century when the first contingent of Jews from Poland and Morocco went to England to sell goods door-to-door in small provincial towns.

Primarily, they brought domestic products to people who had previously not had access to these goods. The linkage between peddling and migration continued into the second and third decades of the twentieth century, as Jewish men tried their luck in places like Cuba, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and elsewhere in Central America. In between those two temporal book ends, Jewish migrations to the United States, Canada, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Sweden, all of South America, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, largely began with and flowed from the movements of peddlers. Peddlers as such founded all the new Jewish communities.

Everywhere they went, peddlers plied a weekly circuit. In Ireland they called them “weekly men,” and in parts of South America, *semananiks*, testifying to the ways they organized their time. They ideally slept in the home of their last customer of the day, and became fixtures of small towns, mining communities, plantation regions, and the like.

Because they had to engage with customers who spoke English, French, Spanish, Mayan, Swedish, Afrikaans, and so many other languages, peddlers became amateur cultural anthropologists. In order to make a sale they had to learn the tastes, prejudices, predilections, and sensibilities of their customers regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity. They likewise served as the interpreters of Judaism to their customers, women and men who likely had never encountered a Jew before. When the peddler demurred that he could not eat ham or other clearly forbidden foods, he had to explain

that his religion did not allow him to bite into what his hostess had put on the table. At times they carried some food with them, while at other times they picked and chose what they believed they could eat among the foods their hosts offered them. Some peddlers left pots in their customers’ homes and cooked for themselves, and yet others decided that whatever food the housewife served, they would eat. Through small encounters, the peddlers made the Jews part of many strange new worlds. The peddlers played a crucial role in making new kinds of Jewish life, based in large part on the positive reception that they encountered as they went about doing their Jewish work.

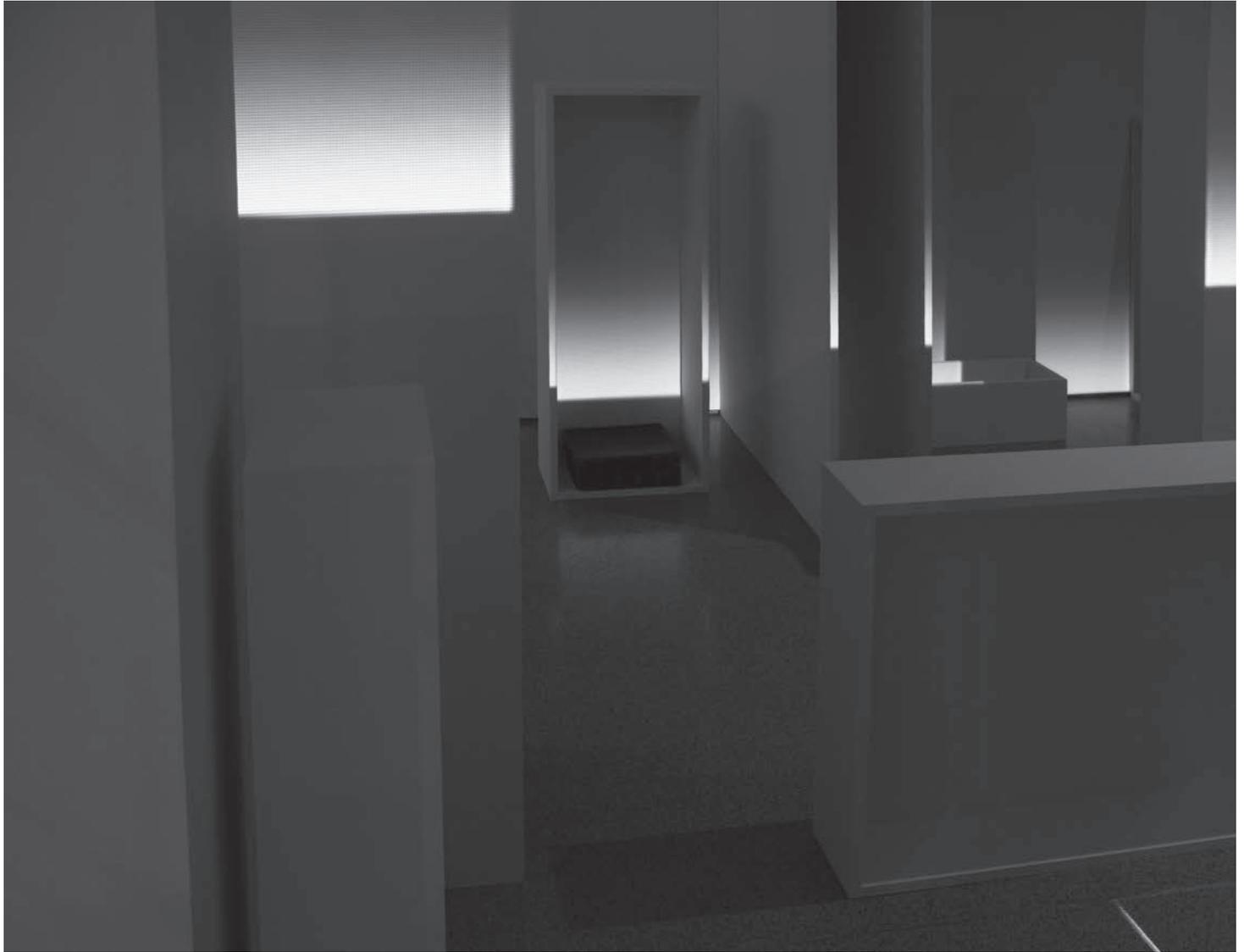
*Hasia Diner is professor of Hebrew and Judaic Studies and History and Paul S. and Sylvia Steinberg Professor of American Jewish History at New York University. Her publications include The Jews of the United States, 1654 to 2000 (University of California Press, 2004).*

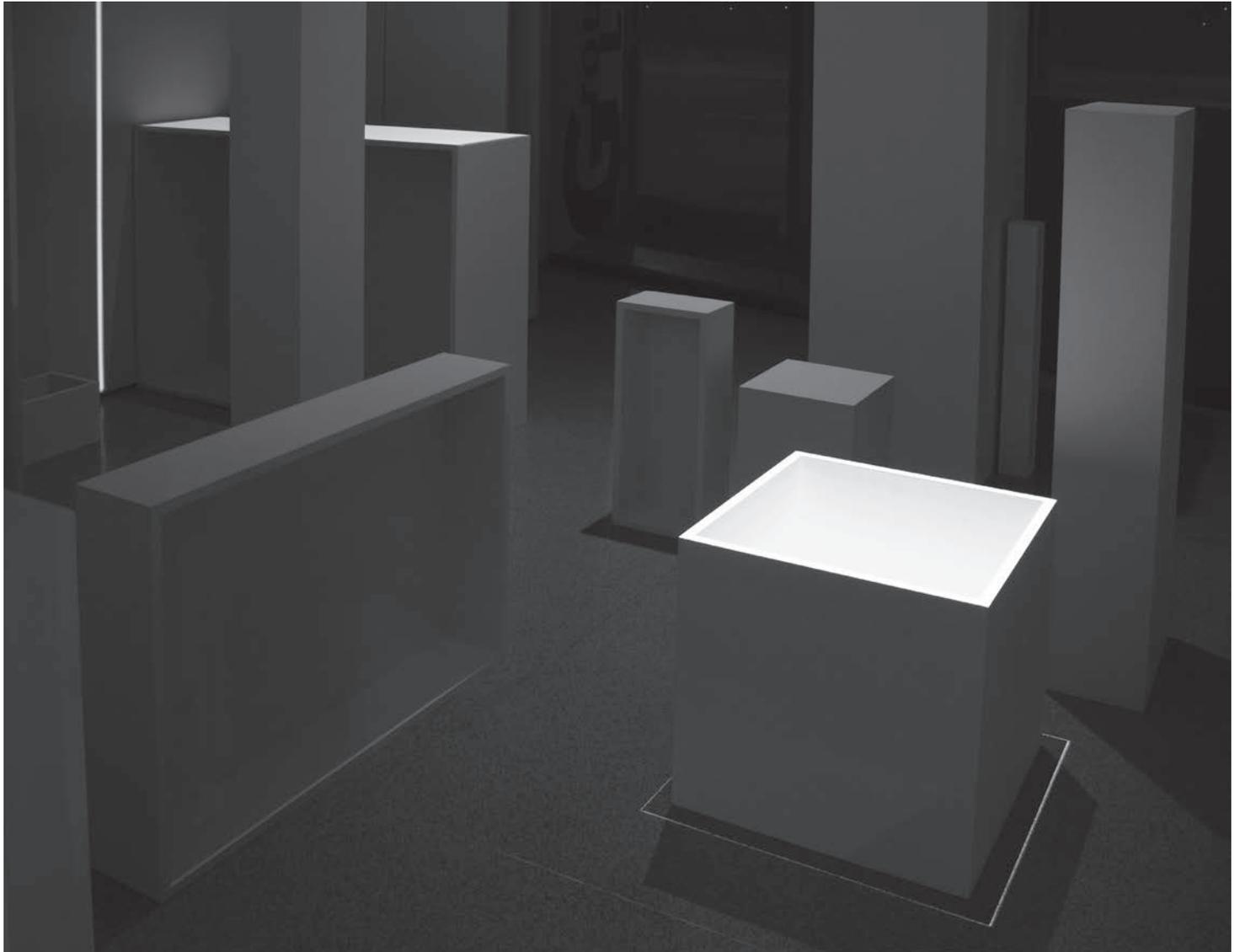
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## THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THAT IT **AWARDED** MORE THAN **50 TRAVEL GRANTS** TO SUPPORT **SCHOLARS PRESENTING RESEARCH** AT THE AJS 45TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE.

The AJS thanks its members and the following  
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- Hadassah-Brandeis Institute
- Jewish Music Forum: A Project of the American Society for Jewish Music
- Lucius N. Littauer Foundation
- Maurice Amado Foundation





# Kohelet's Theory of Labor

David Tabb Stewart

One of *Kohelet's* “findings” in his thought-experiment about labor appears in a little poem intercalated with his work notes:

The fool folds his hands  
eating his flesh.  
Better is a spoonful of calm  
Than two cupped hands of anxiety—  
feeding wind (Kohelet 4:5–6).

One imagines Kohelet (the speaker in Ecclesiastes—already figured as a Solomon in disguise by the writer) collecting proverbs and making glosses in the margins of his memory. Later, he polishes the peoples’ sayings into poems. As he composes the scroll, he takes apart the mnemonic armature in order to recall his own observations: “Then I saw that all toil and all skill in work come from one person’s envy of another. This also is vanity and a chasing after wind!” (Kohelet 4:4). Here the Hebrew grammar doubly marks the first person: Kohelet stresses his own exasperation at the “Aha!” moment. Does the raw emotion come from the discarded notes of Kohelet’s proverb collection? Does embedding a song lyric (“Better a spoonful”) popularize what’s learned, the singer finding a bald conclusion insufficient? Kohelet, the teacher, follows the path of Solomon, composing and collecting songs and proverbs as part of his scholarly, pedagogical project. After all, didn’t such songs—Moses’s and Miriam’s victory song, Deborah’s mocking song, David’s lament for Saul and Jonathan—teach well?

I suppose one *could* reduce the writer’s sentiments to *nihil nimus*, “nothing in excess,” noting something about the “middle way”

or “golden mean.” But then one loses all the “pleasures of the text” including wordplay about hands, hollow-of-hand, and handfuls (*yadayim*, *kaf*, (*hofnayim*), the tension between the contrasted realms of *basar* (flesh/meat/food) and *ruah* (wind/spirit), the wordplay on ‘*amal* (toil; anxiety) and its contrast to *nahat* (calm; patience). The words of the sage cannot quite be nailed down (Kohelet 12:11).

The self-described “son of David, king in Jerusalem” hates toil. His thought-experiment—following two others concerning pleasure and wisdom—diagnoses work’s futility. He may leave the fruit of work to someone foolish, or leave it to someone who didn’t work at all. What are his wages? Vexation, pain, and sleepless nights, because his mind takes no rest. If he were wicked, his gathered fruits and heaped-up grain could go to the righteous! His prescription? “There is nothing better for mortals than to eat and drink, and find enjoyment in their toil.”

Kohelet extends his scope to observe work’s sorrows in finer detail. Besides the toil of envy, he imagines the wretched toil of the oppressed and the burdensome labors of oppressors. The dead are happier than the living because they don’t have to further endure misery.

A solitary worker amasses wealth while denying himself. For whom does he work?

A lover of money is never satiated. In Kohelet’s imagined autobiography, “I multiplied my possessions . . . built myself houses . . . planted vineyards . . . laid out gardens and groves . . . [and] constructed pools of water.” Having launched all sorts of projects, his wealth piles up—but so do the “eaters” who consume it. For the wealth manager, what

good is the result if it only delights her eyes but does not satisfy her cravings? “The eyes are not satisfied by seeing.” All human toil is for the mouth—he argues—“yet the gullet is not sated.” Satisfaction is a moving target.

To treat the work-related illnesses diagnosed above (let’s call them the “pain-of-the-whip” and the “burden-of-oppressing,” workaholism, “achievement-disaffection,” and “survival-struggle fatigue”), Kohelet prescribes companionship. “Two are better off than one,” not only because they have more earnings, but also “should they fall, one can raise the other.” In contrast, “Woe to the one who is alone and falls.” If companionship is a consolation that adds to the enjoyment of food and makes work more of a joy, then, Kohelet adds, sleep can operate similarly for the workaday laborer.

I ask my companion, “What is *your* theory of labor?” He answers, “Get it over as quick as possible.”

In an interview with Paul Rabinow Foucault discussed his notion of an “archaeology of thought.” In historical linguistics the words and grammar of existing languages enable the envisioning of a “proto-language”: known rules of language change make a linguistic archaeology possible. One can conduct a similar archaeology of ideas. For example, one can take the “data” of Kohelet as an ancient “solution” to a felt “problem” and compare it with other material from narratives or law that enfold multiple, even conflicting, “solutions.” From these one can triangulate a hypothetical problem that various biblical writers confront. The “archaeology of thought,” as I understand it, suggests that felt discomfort pushes a problem into consciousness; the problem mulled

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*for providing the AJS with office space at the Center for Jewish History.*

over engenders a question; and the question leads to attempted (textual) solutions. As a method, it offers a way of discovering what is under the surface of ancient texts.

The writer of *Kohelet* may be reacting to a folk tradition that centers on the bad and good habits of workers. The so-called Pious Digest or “Proverbs of Solomon” (Proverbs 10:1–22:16) gives us a proverb-a-day for consideration. Among the 182 for the second half of the year one finds: “The appetite of a laborer labors for him/ Because his hunger forces him on” and “In winter the lazy man does not plow/ At harvesttime he seeks and finds nothing.” On the other hand, “The Words of the Wise” (Proverbs 22:17–24:22), which reworks the thirty proverbs of the Egyptian Instruction of Amen-em-ope, commends the skilled worker but recommends that he not toil for wealth because it is prone to disappear. “The Words of King Lemuel” (Proverbs 31), a non-Israelite collection attributed to a woman, praises the extraordinary patriarchy-serving labors of the righteous woman, *’eshet hayil*. But, in contrast with such proverbs, *Kohelet* uses the proverb form to argue that the accumulation of wealth—the surplus value of labor (if I can borrow from Marx)—causes anxiety, problems with heirs, trouble with workers. For the workers, work causes the loss of their labor product. The question, implicit in these wisdom texts, shifts from “What’s right with work?” to “What’s wrong with it?” How can this be fixed? *Kohelet* advises readers to take the small everyday rewards and not become overinvested. This is not the Protestant work ethic that Weber and others claimed to identify in the Hebrew Bible.

Biblical narratives offer different answers and a larger context for *Kohelet*: Divine work counts as both “good” and “very good” and concludes with rest. Human work, however, is cursed, hindered by pain, thorns, and thistles. “By the sweat of your brow shall you get bread to eat.” Jacob worked seven years for Rachel “and they seemed to him but a few days,” while Pharaoh “ruthlessly imposed upon the Israelites . . . harsh labor at mortar and bricks.” Questions—“Why must I work?” and “Is work good?”—are implied by the narratives’ competing answers:

God ordains and curses work; work to eat; punctuate work with rest; love a companion to distract from work’s pains; if those pains are life-threateningly bitter, resist. If we follow Foucault that something must have made a behavior—work—“uncertain” and provoked difficulties, then the questions betray the fact that work is difficult, causes discomfort, and that its absence endangers life itself. Thought, then, “develops a given into a question” and transforms “difficulties into problems” resulting in diverse cultural solutions.



Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld. Woodcut. Reprinted from *Die Bibel in Bildern* (Leipzig: Wigand, 1860).

Ancient legal texts in the cultural world of the Hebrew Bible form a third solution set. Though the Sumerian Laws of Ur-Namma (ca. 2100 BCE, Ur) and the Code of Hammurabi (ca. 1750 BCE, Babylon) make personal injuries torts, what about work-related injuries? Hittite laws (ca. 1650–1500 BCE, Anatolia) view all injuries as compensable both in the case of slaves and free people (Laws 8–12). The biblical Covenant Code (ca. early first millennium BCE) requires damages from the slave owner or “employer” who injures the slaveworker: “When a man strikes the eye of his slave . . . he shall let him go free on account of his eye” (Exodus 21:26). Generously construed, this is a forerunner of the late-nineteenth century move in Prussia to enact employer liability laws that eventually gave way to workers’ compensation.

Otto von Bismarck, in his struggle with Prussian Marxists and socialists, pushed for the Employer Liability Law in 1871, which

initiated limited worker protections in select industries. But in 1884 Bismarck’s Workers’ Accident Insurance extended coverage to create the first modern workers’ compensation no-fault system. The older act required that workers prove employer negligence; the newer did not. In 1911 Wisconsin passed the first comprehensive law in the United States. By the time Mississippi passed its Workers’ Compensation Law in 1948, employers in the US also had legislative incentives to rehabilitate the injured worker.

Returning to the work legislation of ancient legal texts, Hammurabi set wage scales for certain work, a move that may or may not have protected workers. But both the biblical Holiness Code (Leviticus 9:13) and Deuteronomic Code (Deuteronomy 24:15) call for immediate payment of wages. The Hebrew slave is to be given wages upon release (Deuteronomy 15:13–14). The straitened kinsman who sells himself into slavery must be treated as a hired laborer, not subject to ruthless treatment (Leviticus 25:39–40, 43). Even the ox is not to be muzzled while threshing. If laboring animals are allowed to feed, then workers must be able to eat. If slaves gain rights to fair treatment, compensation for injury, and wages then, *kal va-homer*, so do the free. Thus when the Decalogue commands weekly rest from work for animals, resident aliens, male and female slaves, and kin, they shall “rest as you do.”

These legal gestures toward reducing work’s bitterness prepare one to triangulate the cultural problem. What question might stand behind the solutions negotiated in various textual layers of biblical wisdom literature, narrative, and law that trace a history of ideas? Laboring is neither idealized in *Kohelet*, nor rejected as without benefit. In light of the tensions between divine declarations, actual work-life experience, and work’s inexorable necessity, “How should we then work?”

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# “The Faithful Service”: Enslaved Domestic Labor in the Homes of West Indian Sephardim

Stanley Mirvis

Solomon Franco, who died in 1721 at age 31, was among a minority of Jamaican Jewish men during the eighteenth century who resided on the island without a wife and children. He lived out his short days as a merchant in the then recently rebuilt town of Port Royal where the remnants of a Jewish community still existed after the devastating earthquake and tidal wave of 1692. Although without a nuclear family, he was not alone on the island. Solomon had five sisters scattered throughout the western Sephardic Diaspora, including one who lived nearby in Spanish Town. In his home he lived with his enslaved domestic servant, known only as Anne, who was there to care for him during the last days of his life. Along with his five sisters, Anne was the only other beneficiary of Solomon's modest estate.

Anne and Solomon developed a close bond that bordered on familial. When he knew his death to be imminent, he freed her from slavery with a deed of manumission. But as much as Solomon appears to have been dependent on Anne, she seems to have been equally dependent on him. After her manumission, she indentured herself to Solomon for a period of three years (he later released her from this indenture in his will). As a reward for her “faithful service,” Solomon also bequeathed to her fifty pounds, all of his household goods, and further stipulated that she be allowed to “take away . . . my said house hold stuff and also . . . Anne's chests and trunks without being searched by any person whatsoever.” His concern over Anne being searched by his executors implies the expectation of mistrust that he intended to prevent.

It is clear that, despite the underlining inequality between Solomon and Anne and the exploitive reality of slave ownership, Solomon and Anne had cultivated a close and mutually beneficial relationship. Unlike several other West Indian Jewish male testators during this period, Solomon never identified Anne a sexual partner nor recognized any natural children from her. It can therefore not be assumed that Anne was his concubine—though domestic labor was often synonymous with this type of sexual exploitation. Their



Marie-Guilhelmine Benoist, *Portrait of a Black Woman*, 1800. Oil on Canvas. Paris, Louvre Department of Paintings, inv. 2508.

relationship, while unequal, seems to have been built on a sense of shared necessity.

Though cases like Solomon and Anne reveal an almost sentimental relationship between a Jewish owner and an enslaved domestic servant it should not be taken as evidence that colonial West Indian Jews naturally treated their enslaved labor better than non-Jews. A prevailing historiographic narrative has it that Jews, informed by a sense of religious humanitarianism, both treated the enslaved with benevolence and manumitted them with greater frequency than non-Jews. On the contrary, it is not

difficult to demonstrate that an ethos of accumulation prevailed among Jews, who mirrored their non-Jewish neighbors in their patterns of slave ownership throughout the colonial Atlantic world.

A sample of three hundred last will and testaments of eighteenth-century Jewish testators from Jamaica and Barbados reveals that, in fact, slaves were only manumitted by 41 testators while they were bequeathed to beneficiaries by 172. In other words, the enslaved were thirteen times more likely to be inherited by Jews than they were to be freed by them. The most likely cause

of manumission of enslaved children was biological paternity. Manumission records reveal that Jewish men freed children of color four times more frequently than they manumitted black children. However, sexual liaisons did not always produce affectivity or even a sense of responsibility toward “reputed” offspring. In one case, Jacob Bravo, a married man with two Jewish children, stipulated in his will that his enslaved mistress Betty and their two children—with whom he lived on his plantation “Lucy Lawn”—be sold after his death for the “highest and best price.”

Jamaica, unlike Barbados, experienced a major slave revolt at least once a decade throughout the colonial period, fueling an environment of intense hostility between owners and the enslaved. In some cases, traces of hostility, and even brutality, appeared between the enslaved and their Jewish owners as well. In one case from 1765, the married Kingston shopkeeper Moses Levy Alvares—one of the spiritual leaders of the Jamaican Jewish community—bequeathed an enslaved “negro” woman with his initials, “MA,” branded on her shoulder, to his “quadroon” daughter. In another case, an enslaved woman named Jenny was tried and convicted in a slave court for poisoning the wife of her Jewish owner, Abraham Nunes Henriques. Unfortunately, her fate along with the fate of Mrs. Henriques, is unknown. Jewish men and women placed advertisements for runaway slaves in late eighteenth-century West Indian newspapers with as much frequency as non-Jews.

Despite these inevitable hostilities, enslaved domestic laborers were a quotidian presence in Jewish homes and an integral part of the household rhythm and routine, touching the lives of nearly every Jew residing in the colonial British West Indies. Household laborers prepared their food—undoubtedly cultivating a familiarity with Jewish dietary restrictions—and in some cases even nursed their children. Domestic laborers, whether enslaved or free, were therefore often absorbed into the family as unrelated extended kin.

The West Indies were infamously renowned in the eighteenth century for the sexual libertinism of the creole population. Concubinage between white men and women of color was a pervasive social reality. Though not often acknowledged, Jewish men, in at least fourteen out of three hundred wills—some of the testators even married with children—incorporated their natural children of color into their families through bequests of both monetary and

material legacies. The Kingston merchant Moses Gomes Fonseca, as he manumitted his three daughters from his long-time concubine Eleanor Minol Thomas in 1795, incorporated the highly uncommon phrase, “the natural love and affection which I have and bear for my three mulatto children.” In other cases, such as with Solomon and Anne, Jews acknowledged their freed domestic servants with inheritance alongside and in equal measures to related Jewish kin, raising new questions about the singular role of ethnicity as a marker of Spanish-Portuguese identity and familial belonging.

Some Jewish testators even adopted parental postures toward the unrelated enslaved children who grew up in their homes. The Jewish testator Rachel Nunes ensured the fate of three enslaved black children who grew up in her home by bequeathing them to the wardens of the Jewish community in 1796. She referred to them as her “children as I regard them.” The testator Grace Lopes

Torres cared for the “reputed” son of her married cousin as her “adopted son.”

The inequality of West Indian slave society engendered conditions where the enslaved could be brutalized, commodified, and sexually exploited by white men and women with near immunity. Jews were no exception to the rule. But, it is unfaithful to the social realities of the time to characterize West Indian slave society as dominated by an either/or ethos of accumulation versus an ethos of sentiment. Both prevailed and both could exist simultaneously within a single individual. Solomon Franco leveraged his position of power for the mutual benefit of both himself and Anne. They were reliant on each other, and Solomon seems to have viewed Anne as nothing less than a member of his family.

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# The Labor of Schnorring

Natan Meir

Recently, Haredim and secular Israelis have traded accusations of being “parasites” and “schnorrers” in the Israeli public arena. The battle over “sharing the burden” (*shivyon ba-netel*) concerns the questions of drafting Haredi Jews and state funding for ultra-Orthodox yeshiva students. The most frequent allegation is that Haredim do not contribute their fair share to Israeli society since a high percentage of their men do not participate in the labor market and do not serve in the military. But there have also been counterallegations—that secular Israeli Jews are the true parasites since they benefit from the merit of those who labor under the burden of the Torah.

The debate about Jewish productivity and labor predates the Zionist movement, which imagined the new Jew redeeming himself through the labor of his hands. When it came to discussions of how to integrate the Jews into European society, maskilim across late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Europe advised that Jews become models of productivity. They counseled Jews to abandon their narrow range of economic pursuits and instead to enter fields beneficial to society; this occupational turn would also benefit Jews as a group and reflect well on Jewish participation in the commonweal.

In making these recommendations, Jewish reformers were reacting to widespread Christian perceptions of Jewish economic parasitism and criminality (in western Europe) and exploitation (in eastern Europe). But by the mid-nineteenth century, the *Betteljuden*, highway robbers, horse thieves, and other scoundrels and undesirables who tended to predominate in the Christian imagination had, for a variety of reasons, disappeared from much of Europe. Much to the dismay of Jewish reformers, however, the Russian Empire still had its fair share of Jewish loafers, vagrants, and professional beggars. Yiddish terms attest to the many names for various kinds of beggars: *schnorrer*, *betler*, *shleper*, *kabtsn*.

Archival documents reveal that, under the draft system instituted by Nicholas I in 1827, Jewish communities presented those who did not contribute to society for conscription. One document speaks of “idlers [the writers surely had the Yiddish term *batlonim* in mind, though the language used was Russian], those not paying

taxes, and similar undesirables.” The first ethnographic studies of the Jews of the Russian Empire (one written by a Christian, the other by a Jew) agreed that the members of the Jewish underclass preferred begging to honest hard labor, and that Jewish charitable giving encouraged this trend. These vagrants were described as rude and audacious, roaming the Pale of Settlement in large groups and lodging in the *hekdesh*, the combination poorhouse, sickhouse, and wayfarers’ hostel found in most shtetl.

The didactic goals of Yiddish writers such as Ayzik Meyer Dik and Mendele Moykher Sforim (S. Y. Abramovitsh) led them to write expansively about the Jewish underclass and to expand the definition of the *schnorrer* to include anyone who made a living off of Torah study or the commandment to give charity. The insinuation that students of Torah exploit honest folk is nothing new, but its roots may lie as much in fiction as in fact.

In the early 1860s, a group of Jewish progressives in Odessa, which included the city’s state-appointed rabbi Shimon Aryeh Schwabacher, submitted a proposal to the authorities for a set of western-style, “scientific” philanthropic institutions, comprising a hospital, an old age home, an orphanage, and a vocational school. The proposal called for the hospital to have a hospice of sorts (*bogadel’nia*) to house people

with incurable illnesses, those unable to work, and people whose physical defects or deformities aroused disgust in others and were thus presumably unable to lead normal productive lives. Notably, the proposed institution was to accept only local residents (i.e., no vagrants) who were also “truly [or absolutely] poor” (*sovershenno bednye*). Its inmates were to be made available to other institutions for miscellaneous chores. This is a fascinating amalgam of the traditional *hekdesh*—home to all those on the margins of society: the sick, the destitute, even the ugly—and the kind of rational philanthropy that had been accepted for some time in western and central Europe that dictated that the deserving poor had to be truly destitute, local, and willing to work.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Jewish social scientists began to argue that the putative “army of beggars” roaming the Pale of Settlement was a gross exaggeration, if not an illusion altogether. Against this newly gathered statistical evidence, they maintained the typology of “deserving poor” versus *schnorrer*. An early twentieth-century survey of Jewish poverty in Odessa registered seventy-nine beggars, including elderly, sick, and disabled people, all of whom desperately wanted to work. The authors took pains to differentiate these individuals from what was ordinarily understood by the term “professional beggar,” an “ill-willed,



A man accepting alms from a barefoot boy. “He is a beggar,” one of the “Jewish livelihoods in Vilna” (translation of Yiddish caption). Published in the *Jewish Daily Forward*, March 18, 1923. Courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

lazy parasite not willing to work by his own labor and preferring to live off of society.” Similarly, the editors of the survey of Jewish economic circumstances in the Pale conducted by the Jewish Colonization Association in 1898 and 1899 insisted that “it is not the love of idleness or ill will that pushes the poor Jew into a life of begging.” As in the Odessa survey, the social scientists almost pleaded with their readers to understand that Jewish beggars were those who could not work because of age or ill health. The Russian authorities believed that some Jews were guilty of parasitism and did not hesitate to arrest and prosecute those whom they considered to be vagrants (though there is no evidence that Jews were disproportionately targeted). In 1897, for example, one Movsha Mordukhov Frenkel (a.k.a. Grinberg), 27, was arrested in Kiev for vagrancy and sentenced to four years in prison, followed by exile to eastern Siberia.

Memoirs and anecdotal accounts of life in ordinary shtetls attest to the continuing presence of town beggars and vagrant mendicants. They do not always fall into the more “sympathetic” description provided by the JCA and Odessa researchers. One memoirist recalled that a poor man could not sleep longer than three nights in the *hekdesh*, so that poor people passing through town would have a place to sleep. The *takanot* (regulations) listed in the *pinkas* (record book) of the Hakhnasat 'Orḥim brotherhood of Bar, held by the Vernadsky National Library of Ukraine in Kyiv, refer

specifically to poor people passing through the town. Who exactly is referred to by the phrase “the unfortunate poorfolk” (*ha-'aniyim ha-'umlalim*)—described in the *pinkas* of the Bikur Ḥolim brotherhood of the southern Ukrainian town of Balta as living in the town *hekdesh*—is unclear, but the *pinkas* gives no suggestion that they were divided into “worthy” and “unworthy.”

No matter how it was characterized, begging was and still is labor. As Fishke explains in *Fishke der krumer*,

My wife . . . showed me how to come into a house, how to moan and cough and look pitiful. I learned how to beg or even demand, how to stick like a leech and bargain for more, how to bless the giver, or to swear and curse with deadly oaths. Did you think that you can just start begging from house to house? Oh, no! There's a whole science! (*Fishke the Lame*, trans. Gerald Stillman, in *Selected Works of Mendele Moykher-Sforim* [Pangloss, 1991], 236)

As Derek Penslar has shown in *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (2001), through emigration, the Jewish poor of eastern Europe eventually became a problem in central Europe as well, where Jewish philanthropy directed much of its resources towards them. Immigrant aid workers employed by German and Austrian Jewish philanthropic organizations were told to be on the lookout for shysters,

freeloaders, and criminals who sought only to leech off of communal finances.

After the First Zionist Congress in 1897 Theodor Herzl wrote in his diary that, despite appearances, he had “only an army of schnorrers.” The statement is revealing in its honest admission of how an assimilated, bourgeois Jew of *Mitteleuropa* viewed his eastern brethren. It is also more than a little ironic, for it was in part to solve the problem of Jewish schnorring in Europe—to bring about a new Jewish economic dispensation—that Zionism proposed to revolutionize Jewish life in the new society that it sought to create.

The charge of parasitism thus carries an extra sting in contemporary Israel, at least for some. Lest we think we have come full circle, however, the situation in Israel is quite different from that in Russia a century ago. An entire subgroup of society living off the state so that its menfolk can study Torah fulltime would have been impossible and indeed unthinkable in the czarist empire. In that place and time no Jewish faction or denomination could attempt to carve a separate space for itself in society. Whether Haredim will yet succeed in doing so still remains to be seen.

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*Hekdesh* [poorhouse]. P166 dalet 16 Annopol bogadelnia, The Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People.

# Jewish Labor in Interwar Poland

Jack Jacobs

Workers in interwar Poland led hard lives. Before 1914, the Polish-speaking lands had been parts of one or another of three great empires—the Russian, the German, or the Austro-Hungarian. The inhabitants of Poland, including the very large number of Jewish inhabitants, had had relatively easy access to important and prosperous markets. The First World War diminished this access. This led to considerable destruction of productive capacity and had a negative impact on workers in the Polish-speaking territories, both those who were ethnically Polish and those who were not. But the hard times which began with the Great War did not end with the conclusion of that conflict. The Polish-Soviet War of 1919–1921 also depressed economic activity in parts of the new Polish state. In a later period, all of Poland was very deeply affected by the Great Depression.

However bad economic conditions were for Poles in the two decades between the world wars, economic conditions for the Jews of Poland were even worse. The first census taken in independent Poland in 1921 revealed that there were slightly less than 2,800,000 Jews in the country. As a result of widespread anti-Semitism, Jews were generally not hired to work in factories, businesses, or offices owned by Poles, nor by Polish municipalities. In addition, a number of large Jewish-owned firms and factories also declined to hire Jews—either to avoid potential tension between non-Jewish and Jewish employees, or to avoid conspicuously different holidays and Sabbaths for two groups of workers. Because it was so hard for Jews to find work in interwar Poland, it was difficult to organize Jewish workers.

From the beginning, the deep political differences among Polish Jewish political parties exacerbated the problems involved in creating or sustaining Jewish trade unions. After the establishment of independent Poland, several different Jewish political parties vied for influence among Jewish workers, and each created or fostered trade unions affiliated with their party. In the period immediately after the end of the First World War, a little more than six thousand Jewish workers in all of Poland were enrolled in unions that were led by the Po'alei Ziyon. A little fewer than six thousand were members

of unions led by the Fareynikte (the United Jewish Socialist Workers' Party). Bundist-led unions had more than twenty thousand members at that time in Warsaw alone.

Bundist unions remained the largest and most important Jewish unions in Poland throughout the interwar era. The unions associated with the Bundist-dominated National Council of Professional Class Unions



Leaflet urging people to vote for the electoral list of the Bund and of the unions affiliated with it. Courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.

in Poland (Land-rat fun di profesionele klasn-fareynen in poyln), or its successors, showed impressive growth. However, the course of the Land-rat was neither smooth nor steady. The membership of its affiliates dipped significantly at various points in the 1920s and 1930s, as a result of disputes fanned by Jewish communists, as well as other factors. Nevertheless, in the years immediately preceding the Second World War, the Land-rat dramatically increased its strength. The Land-rat represented just fewer than 72,000 members in 1937. It had more than 99,000 members in its constituent unions in 1939. The Land-rat was, therefore, many multiples larger than the Bund itself on the eve of the Second

World War, and served, at that moment in time, as a major reservoir of Bundist strength in local elections and in other matters.

Information has long been available on the Land-rat's leading figures, including well-known Bundists such as Victor Alter, Sara Shveber, and Shmuel (Artur) Zygielbaum. Until recently, it has been difficult to get a sense of the nature of the rank-and-file members of Polish Jewish trade unions. Documents unearthed in Lithuania now make it possible to provide a snapshot of the members of one such union—the Union of Trade Employees (Profesionele fareyn fun handels-ongeshtelte)—in an exceptionally important location, the city of Vilna. Under the leadership of Yankl Zhelezchnikov, a prominent and active Bundist, the union in the interwar period was comprised of individuals who were employees in stores and businesses (as distinguished from factory workers or artisans employed in workshops). Although there is no reason to think that this union was necessarily representative of unions in which Jews dominated, a closer look at this union is nevertheless revealing.

On November 1, 1922, Vilna's Union of Trade Employees had 1,127 members. A detailed description of the union's membership dated January 20, 1924 reveals that its membership had fallen sharply and rapidly in the period of a year. In 1924, the union had only 775 members. Of the regular members, 597 were Jews. Forty-five of the regular members were not. In addition to these 642 individuals, the union had 133 members in its "youth section," which was made up of workers who were under 18 years of age (some of whom were as young as 12) and about whom neither ethnic nor religious affiliations are provided. The union was divided into twenty branches, each of which consisted of employees working in businesses in a specific trade. The single largest branch, which had, in 1924, 106 members (including "youth" members) was the "manufaktur" (textiles) branch. The second largest, which had 86 members, was the "kolonial" branch, made up of those who worked in entities which sold items like coffee, tea, and spices, items imported from "colonies." The branches which were made up of those who worked for the community—the *kehile*—and by

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those employed by haberdasheries also had significant numbers of members. The smallest branches were made up of those consisting of employees in businesses devoted to wood (4 members), wine (11), shipping (14), hats and furs (18), and furniture and glass (18). Several branches—including those in the haberdashery trade and those in the shoe trade—had more female members than males. Most of the men in this union were married. On the other hand: most of the women were not (because, I suspect, women who married tended to work at home rather than continuing to hold paying jobs outside the home). There were more workers in the union aged 21 to 30 than in any other age group. Twenty-two of the workers—twenty-one males and one female—were between 51 and 60. Only fourteen—all male—were above 61.

Why was it that Vilna's Union of Trade Employees saw such a precipitous drop in its membership between the end of 1922 and the beginning of 1924? 1923 was a year

characterized by hyperinflation, which sharply reduced the value of the typical wage. The drop in living standards led to a general strike, which was followed by severe economic need, widespread hunger, and hundreds of arrests. The large increase in the number of unemployed workers might account for the many instances in which workers, unable to support themselves or their families, committed suicide. In all likelihood, there were fewer Jews employed in stores and businesses in Vilna at the end of 1923 than there had been at the beginning of that year. This, in itself, would explain the drop in the union's membership. It is possible that other factors could also explain this phenomenon. Some Jewish trade employees, either deeply disappointed by the results of the strike tactics or no longer able to afford membership dues, may have voted with their feet by dropping out of the union.

Power, Foucault has taught us, is often best understood not by looking from the top down, not by, for example, focusing

(merely) on the bourgeoisie's domination of capitalist society, but rather by looking from the bottom up. Jewish labor in eastern Europe—the “pariah among pariahs” as Kautsky once described it—was very much at the bottom. The history of Jewish labor should not be presented, as some early studies may suggest, as a history primarily of leaders or institutions or parties, but a history of the lives, actions and reactions of rank and filers. By using a microhistorical approach, a Foucauldian analysis of power from the bottom up, and newly available sources, we might well learn a great deal about Jewish labor in interwar Poland—and may be able to shed additional light, more generally, on the power dynamics of Jewish life in that critically important albeit very troubled land.

*Jack Jacobs is professor of Political Science at John Jay College and the Graduate Center, CUNY. He is the author of Bundist Counterculture in Interwar Poland (Syracuse University Press 2009).*

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# The Exploitation of Jewish Labor in Radom (1939–1944)

*Idit Gil*

In the Nuremberg trial of Oswald Pohl, head of the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office (Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt [WVHA]), an insightful document was presented. The document showed queries he was asked by a subordinate about the treatment of Jewish forced labor: “Must this mandate be regarded primarily from a political-police or from an economic point of view? If it is primarily of a political-police nature, political considerations [concentration of the Jews] have to rank foremost, economic considerations have to remain in the background. If it is to be primarily of an economic nature, economic

considerations must, however, predominate in the matter of the concentration of the Jews, as ordered.” Pohl answered: “both.” The question reflects the Nazi dilemma regarding the contradictory approaches towards Jewish labor: whether to take into account the economic and practical needs of the war or to promote the regime’s racial ideology and the realization of extermination. Pohl’s answer sheds light on the particular dynamic of Nazi policy towards Jewish labor: exploitation intended to both persecute the Jews and to gain economic benefits. The characteristics of this exploitation were modified during the war, influenced by a combination of pragmatic

considerations and personalities. From the Jews’ perspective, work for the Nazis was a means of survival, even though this did not always prove true. Nazi labor policy towards the Jews in the city of Radom during the years 1939 to 1944 is an interesting example of the complexity of these issues.

The city of Radom in central Poland was the headquarters of the Radom district, which was one of the four districts established in October 1939 to create the Generalgouvernement. The district was one of the three most important industrial areas in prewar Poland. About thirty thousand Jews lived in the city on the eve of the War,



Jews in Radom. Copyright © by Landeshauptstadt München. Reproduced by permission of Stadtarchiv München.

comprising 30% of its population. They were the economic backbone of the city, since they owned most of the small industries for which the city was known: tanneries; iron foundries; lumber mills; and furniture, shoe, enamel, and brick factories. They handled the majority of the city's commerce. Yet, most Jews worked as artisans. Jews were not allowed to work at the state-owned armament factory, Vitornia Broni, which produced guns, the unique Radom pistols, the VIS, and bicycles.

From the first day of occupation, the Nazis exploited Jewish labor for various ends. Until the implementation of the Final Solution, Jews viewed this work as one of multiple forms of Nazi persecution. The "decree regarding the establishment of forced labor for Jews" was issued by the Generalgouvernement's governor, Hans Frank, on his first day in office on October 26, 1939. Even before the official edict, young Jewish men were press-ganged to comply with exigent labor needs for the war and the organization of the new authorities' headquarters. Nazis took Radom Jews from the streets to repair bridges; clear rubble; clean offices, stables and streets; and carry furniture. These violent kidnappings created an atmosphere of terror among the Jews, many of whom avoided the streets. One of the first requests made to the German authorities by the Radom Jewish council (the Judenrät), established in early December, was to provide a regular quota of laborers (labor commandos) in order to stop the kidnappings. Afterwards, it became one of its official tasks.

The Judenrät administered the enlistment of workers, and organized their payments. All Jews fit to work had to appear for duty twice a week. The workers were often young people whose studies or apprenticeships were disrupted because of the war. They worked as a replacement for older family members, who were the family bread winners, or in place of affluent Jews, who paid them as substitutes. They toiled in manual labor, some of which was temporary and some of which regular. The authorities were keen to employ both unskilled and skilled workers because they were paid less than the Poles.

The most severe forced labor for Jews at the beginning of the war was in labor camps established to build infrastructure. Jews toiled to pave roads, drain swamps, and divert rivers. Working and living conditions were poor. Many became sick or died. The Nazis also used the labor camps to alleviate the demographic problem in Radom. In early

1940, Radom became overcrowded. Local Jews who escaped to the Soviet Union at the beginning of the war returned. Deportees, Jews from the Warthegau, annexed to the Reich, and Jews from the surrounding communities found refuge in the city. The Germans responded swiftly. They expelled 1,840 "unproductive" Jews to other counties and sent 2,500 young men in two transports to various labor camps in the Lublin district.

Nevertheless, the crowdedness increased in the spring of 1941 when thousands of Germans came to the city in preparation for "Operation Barbarossa" (the invasion of the Soviet Union). This time the authorities reacted to the demographic crisis by crowding the Jews in two ghettos. In April 1941, 27,000 Jews were squeezed in a ghetto in the old city, and 5,000 Jews were packed in a ghetto in the Glinice suburb.

Despite the miserable circumstances in the ghettos, relatively, the economic conditions were not as bad as in other ghettos. Radom's strategic location and the large number of Germans in town provided work patterns and "opportunities" for the Radom Jews. Most of them worked outside

their confined living area, for the official authorities or for private industries. Among the occupying forces: the civil administration, the SS, and the military, the latter became the largest employer. It staffed Jews in transit bases, supply depots, a garage, a sewing workshop, and a military hospital established when the war expanded to the East.

Nevertheless, most Jews worked in small private industries held by Polish or German trustees outside the ghettos, since the lack of space within the Radom ghettos prevented the Germans from opening workshops inside. Jews also started to work in the local armament factory, which was owned by the Austrian firm Steyr-Daimler-Puch. Officially, Jews could only work for the war effort or for other Jews within the boundaries of the ghetto. But several dozen tradesmen and merchants, who served the personal needs of the German population, were able to keep their businesses and work in the private market both outside and inside the ghetto. Within the ghetto, the Judenrät was the biggest employer. Its police department, comprised of 128 policemen, was the largest, and its primary job was to

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accompany the workers from the ghettos to their work places and back every day.

In the spring of 1942 when rumors about the deportations from Lublin reached Radom, many started to look for work as a means to survive. Before being restricted in the ghetto, Jews tried to avoid compulsory work for the Germans, but suddenly work for the Germans became desirable. Indeed, during the August 1942 selections, the main criterion for staying in Radom was a work card authorizing work for the Germans. Although many workers met their death, those without cards were sent to Treblinka.

A new phase began for the five thousand Jews who remained in the town. Before the liquidations, the civil administration was responsible for the employment of all Jews and could assure wages for those who worked for any official authority. Now, the SS became the dominant power and provided no monetary compensation for Jewish labor. A limited number of Jews could work in military

camps and in private factories, producing equipment for the military. Gradually, those Jews were killed, sent to work directly for the SS, or transferred to armament factories.

Jews worked for the SS in four main capacities: dealing with the byproducts of the Final Solution (collecting, sorting, and repairing merchandise left by deported Jews); auxiliary and maintenance of SS facilities (demolishing old houses, digging peat, and loading and unloading provisions); fulfilling the individual needs of the SS (cleaning, providing and maintaining household goods); or producing goods for the German population in town.

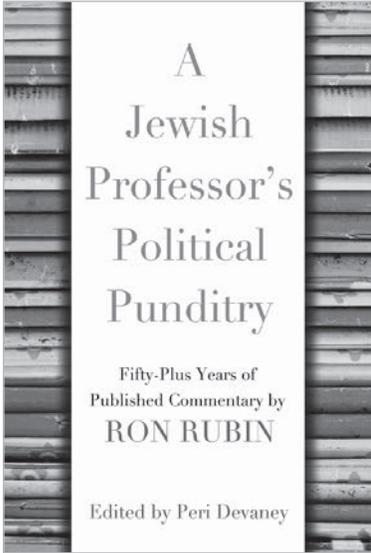
Following the campaign for increased armament production in 1942, Radom proved itself yet again as a valuable place for working Jews, since five of the eight most important military factories in the Generalgouvernement were operating in the district. In the summer and fall of 1943, while most Jews working in the Generalgouvernement were massacred,

Radom Jews were sent to work in the district's armament factories. They lived in camps established near the factories.

The final stage of Jewish labor in Radom took place in January 1944, as Szkolna, the factory camp in the city, became the only concentration camp in the district. With the advancement of the Red Army in the summer of 1944, the camp was closed. Its 3,367 Jewish workers, considered experienced, were not killed, but rather were taken to Auschwitz, to be deported for work in other locations inside the Reich. They had to adjust to a new type of slave labor and harsher living conditions, while trying to continue to survive through labor and not be destroyed by it.

The notion of "work as a savior" held only for some of the Radom Jews, but was more the case in Radom than in other places. Radom Jews experienced various types of work during the war. Until the liquidation of the ghettos, Jews perceived work for the Nazis as persecution; after it, they viewed work as a means of survival. During the first years, Radom Jews were forced to work for the various authorities: the civil administration, the military, and the SS. They mainly worked in hard labor, often for little pay. Some could work in the free market. In August 1942 the SS received the jurisdiction of Radom Jews. Only Jews who contributed to the war effort could remain in Radom, and would not be deported. The Nazi labor policy towards the Jews became the Nazi policy towards the Jews. The SS enabled only Jews who toiled for the armament industry or for the SS to remain in town. The economic importance of Radom and the personal interests of its SS residents gave Radom work Jews some chance to survive through work.

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# Jews, Labor, and Local Politics in New York City

Daniel Soyer



Meyer London and car strikers speaking to crowd from a balcony, July 15, 1916. Photograph published by Bain News Service. Courtesy of the Library of Congress, [www.loc.gov](http://www.loc.gov).

Since the late nineteenth century, when millions of Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe began to stream into New York City and slowly became naturalized as citizens, Jews have been central to the politics of the city. Throughout much of the twentieth century, they formed the main base of support for a left wing labor politics that linked the trade union movement to a broader conception of social justice. Of course, there were others in New York with different approaches to local politics, the labor movement, and labor politics, as well as others on the labor left. And not all Jews shared in the labor politics described here. But the “social democracy in one city” that historian Josh Freeman and others have argued characterized New York in the middle of the century can scarcely be understood without reference to how the Jewish Socialist movement inserted itself into the political mainstream.

A specifically Jewish Socialist movement arose in the 1880s at the start of the mass migration. But the early movement was divided between Socialists and Anarchists,

and aside from a few fleeting victories in strikes, and a heady moment of relevance during Henry George’s radical 1886 campaign for mayor, the Jewish Left had little to show for its efforts before the turn of the century.

The Jewish Socialist movement really came into its own on the electoral front only in the second decade of the twentieth century. By that time it had built powerful institutions—the *Jewish Daily Forward*, the world’s leading Yiddish newspaper; the Workmen’s Circle, a fraternal order with tens of thousands of members; and the needle-trades unions, which had gained strength after a series of momentous strikes beginning in 1909–10. In 1914, the Lower East Side sent immigrant labor lawyer Meyer London to Congress as a Socialist. In the next several years, Jewish immigrant districts in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx elected Socialists to the state assembly and the city board of aldermen. Another Socialist immigrant lawyer, Morris Hillquit, conducted a spectacular “peace and milk” campaign for mayor in 1917 in opposition

to American intervention in World War I and calling for measures to ensure adequate nutrition to the city’s poor. Hillquit (a successful corporate lawyer in his day job) finished a strong third in a four-man race, well ahead of the Republican candidate.

At the same time, Jewish labor activists began to influence “mainstream” politicians. The disastrous 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Company fire, which killed 146 workers, most of them young Jewish women, gave a push to the Socialist movement. But it also impelled non-Jewish Tammany Hall Democrats such as State Assemblyman Al Smith and State Senator Robert F. Wagner to take the lead in investigating factory conditions in New York State. The legislators received instruction from Jewish labor activists Rose Schneiderman, Pauline Newman, and Clara Lemlich, who served as their guides through the state’s industrial system. (Later, when he served as governor, another Jewish woman would become Smith’s top aide and progressive conscience. Though Belle Moskowitz did not emerge from the labor

movement, she had served as impartial arbitrator for the dress and waist industry.)

During the 1920s, New York's Socialist movement sojourned in the political wilderness, weakened by a combination of state repression, splits with the Communists, gerrymandering, coalition campaigns by Democrats and Republicans, and the gradual dispersal and upward social mobility of its prime constituency—Jewish immigrants. But in the 1930s, the movement entered the mainstream by devising a new electoral strategy—making use of an unusual feature of New York election law that allowed parties to “cross-endorse” each other's candidates. (To this day, a candidate can appear on the ballot lines of more than one party in New York.) In 1936, most of the Jewish labor movement—including the garment unions, the *Forward*, the Workmen's Circle—joined with the former right wing of the Socialist Party and some other independent liberals to form the American Labor Party. Over the next several years, the ALP became a powerful factor in New York politics—backing the candidacies of progressive Democrats like President Franklin Roosevelt and Governor Herbert Lehman, and New Deal Republicans like Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, who soon enrolled as an ALP member and made the new party his chief electoral vehicle. The ALP also sometimes ran its own candidates. In Jewish districts, the ALP was often the second, and sometimes even the first, party.

However, internal conflicts concerning issues of particular relevance to Jews soon tore the party apart. The party had been founded by anti-Communist social democrats, but the Communist Party infiltrated local ALP clubs in keeping with the Moscow-dictated Popular Front line of alliance with liberals and Socialists against fascism. The party leadership largely ignored the Communist presence until the Hitler-Stalin Pact put an end to the Popular Front in the late summer of 1939. Then, the Communists and their friends within the ALP suddenly reversed their line, vituperatively attacking their erstwhile allies in the anti-fascist movement. The ALP “left” now derided Roosevelt as an “imperialist warmonger” and tried unsuccessfully to block his renomination in 1940 at a tumultuous convention in which police had to intercede. For the next four years, right and left battled for control of the party, even when the Popular Front was ostensibly restored after Germany invaded the Soviet Union. The pro-Soviet faction finally won control of the party

in a series of primary contests in 1943 and 1944, in which the Soviet arrest and apparent execution of Polish Bundists Henryk Erlich and Victor Alter became an issue (Erlich actually committed suicide while in prison.)

The right split and formed its own party—the Liberal Party, led by David Dubinsky, president of the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, and Alex Rose, of the hatters' union. The Liberal Party played an important role in New York politics for several decades, replacing the ALP, which faded during the early Cold War. The Liberals even reelected Mayor John Lindsay solely on their line after he lost the Republican primary in 1969. Like the ALP, the Liberal Party depended on Jewish districts for its votes and the Jewish labor movement for its material support. While the party chair was always a gentile intellectual—a professor or minister—Yiddish-accented trade unionists Dubinsky and Rose called the shots. By the 1960s, however, the old “Jewish” unions, though led by Jews, had fewer and fewer Jewish members. The social base for Jewish labor politics was thus eroding. The ILGWU quit the party after Dubinsky retired in 1966. Rose died in 1976. With its roots in the Jewish labor movement all but

severed, the Liberal Party went into moral and electoral decline. By the end, it was a cynical patronage machine—not so much a party, as one observer put it, but a “law firm with a ballot line.” Its last hurrah came in 1993, when it helped elect Rudy Giuliani mayor.

New York's Jewish labor politics arose out of a specific historical experience in eastern Europe and America. Echoes of it still exist today—in New York's Working Families Party, for example, which seeks to occupy the left-of-center space opened up by the demise of the ALP and Liberal Party. But New York's Jewish population is changing—with a growing Orthodox sector and a sizable number of immigrants from the former Soviet Union—and likely to become more conservative politically. For the better part of a century, though, Jewish labor infused local New York politics with a social democratic ethos rare in large American cities.

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# A Tale of Two Buildings: Sender Jarmulowsky's Bank, the Forward Building, and the Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism

Rebecca Kobrin

**O**n March 18, 1986, New York City's Landmark Commission granted landmark status to the Jewish Daily Forward Building on East Broadway. Resisting the city's gentrification trend, the commission argued for the Forward building's preservation in light of the deep imprint left by the newspaper it published, *The Jewish Daily Forward*, on its neighborhood and the larger city. The Yiddish newspaper published in the Forward building, claimed over two hundred thousand readers in the 1920s, and was the most widely read foreign-language newspaper in New York and throughout United States. As it shared the news, this newspaper also sought to persuade Jewish immigrants to embrace socialism and to fight to reform America's capitalist ethos. The Forward Building stood as a testament to the impact of Jewish immigrants and their leftist political agendas on the very landscape of American capitalism.

As the Landmark Commission noted, built to a towering height of twelve stories in 1912, the Forward Building was



The Jarmulowsky Bank, corner of Orchard and Canal Streets, New York City, 1912. Reprinted from "Building for S. Jarmulowsky," *Architects & Builders Magazine* XLIV (November 1912): 447.

intentionally designed to overshadow the first "skyscraper" of the Jewish Lower East Side, Sender Jarmulowsky's bank. Several blocks away, the rusticated limestone, twelve-story Jarmulowsky Bank—called the Temple of Capitalism for the easy credit it offered to immigrants seeking to buy businesses, real estate, or ship tickets—stood as a symbol of the great promise of American capitalism and the gifts it bestowed on those who embraced its risky ways. The editorial board of *The Jewish Daily Forward* did not believe that American capitalism in its present form could be harnessed for the greater good. Nor did it want its readers to see the Jarmulowsky Bank as the brightest beacon on the Lower East Side. Thus, as the commission report emphasized, the *Forward* took great care to ensure that "the heights of its new office building . . . [cast a long shadow over] Sender Jarmulowsky's bank, capitalism's major monument on the Lower East Side."

The two buildings represented the debate concerning how Jews should engage American capitalism. The debate remains inscribed on the landscape of the Lower East Side. Many scholars have examined Jewish immigrants' critical participation in socialist politics in America, but far fewer have considered the role Jews played in the practical development of American capitalism through their numerous banks, business ventures, and other financial enterprises. Sender Jarmulowsky's bank was one of many businesses developed by Jewish immigrants as they inserted themselves into America's economy. His bank not only inspired many Jews to believe in the promise of American capitalism, but it also formatively shaped how banking regulators thought about commercial banking and immigrant entrepreneurs in early-twentieth century America. Far from operating on the margins, Sender Jarmulowsky's bank and its failure in 1914 would reshape the practice of commercial banking in New York City, the financial capital of the United States. .

Werner Sombart (1863–1941) would be surprised by the scant attention paid to

Jewish entrepreneurs like Jarmulowsky, who embraced capitalism, in the annals of American Jewish history. Over a century ago, the German sociologist and economist marveled at two remarkable "exceptionalisms" in the world: America's exceptional development into an industrial juggernaut and Jews' exceptional talent for capitalist endeavors. Sombart wondered why, despite the rapid growth and economic inequality, the United States and its capitalist system did not nurture a mass socialist movement among its working class like its counterparts in Europe. He asked: What exceptional forces made workers in the United States seem more content and less inclined to protest their condition? Equally exceptional in Sombart's eyes was the unique role of the Jews in the development and expansion of capitalism in Europe. Revising Max Weber's vision of capitalism as linked to Protestant ethics, Sombart contended that Jews' intrinsic proclivities made them central pioneers in the creation of modern capitalism



Jewish Daily Forward building, Lower East Side, New York City, 2011. Photograph by Flickr user Hettie.

Perhaps it was the anti-Semitic overtones of Sombart's writings that discouraged the study of the specific patterns and strategies utilized by Jews in their encounter with America's dynamic economy. No one looked closely specifically at how Jews made money or how they pursued earning a living in America. Where scholars shied away from exploring the ways in which Jews shaped American capitalism in the early twentieth century, journalists appear to have been fascinated by the topic as exemplified by *Fortune* Magazine's 1936 survey of Jewish economic activity in America. Responding in veiled ways to Sombart's claims, the article concluded that "there is no basis whatever for the suggestion that Jews monopolize U.S. business and industry." Jewish participation in the American economy took place in a few limited industries such as clothing manufacturing, retail, entertainment, and scrap metal collection. *Fortune* acknowledged that in their marginal niches Jews "were highly visible." For example, Jews constituted just under 4% of the population of the United States in 1936, but they constituted 90% of participants in the scrap iron industry; 95% of

the entrepreneurs in waste management of nonferrous scrap metal, paper, cotton rag, and rubber; 85% of owners of factories specializing in the manufacture of men's clothing and 95% in women's clothing. Through these niches, immigrant Jews left their imprint on the contours of American capital.

Since *Fortune* conducted this survey over seventy years ago, few others have ventured to analyze or ponder the specific niches or ways in which Jews molded America's distinctive type of capitalism. Did Jews alter the course of American capitalist development, as Sombart argued Jews had done in Europe? Perhaps they did not alter it as much as Sombart claimed, but Jews played a critical role in molding certain sectors of the economy, enabling some to ascend into America's middle and upper class with astonishing speed. How and with what methods and strategies did the masses seek to achieve mobility? How did men like Sender Jarmulowsky amass enough capital to build the first "skyscraper" for the Jewish Lower East Side?

One can start looking at the streets and concrete constructions of the Lower

East Side. There, Sender Jarmulowsky's bank and the Forward Building—both landmarks completed in 1912—bear testament to the divergent approach of Jewish immigrants to American capital. In the years following the erection of these buildings, many Jews took to the streets to strike and form unions; but equally as many invested in real estate, founded sweatshops, or formed new businesses ventures. By the mid-twentieth century, American capitalism would be reconfigured by war and emergence of the United States as a superpower. But we cannot forget, as these buildings demonstrate, that the immigrant Jewish experience offers fresh perspectives on the contested trajectory of American capitalism in the early twentieth century.

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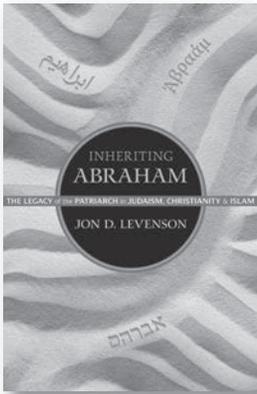
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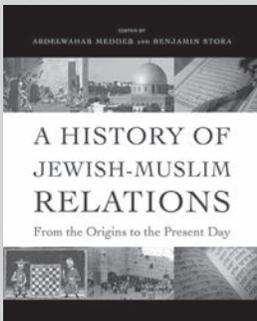
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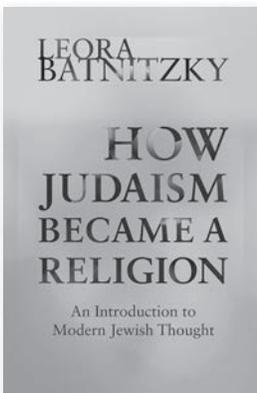
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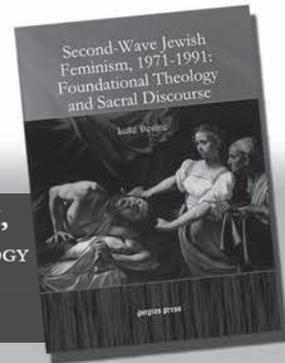
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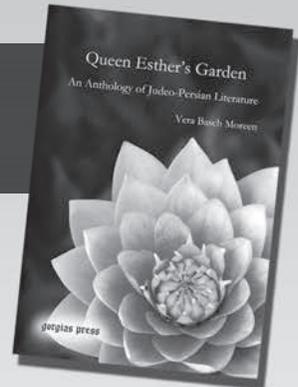
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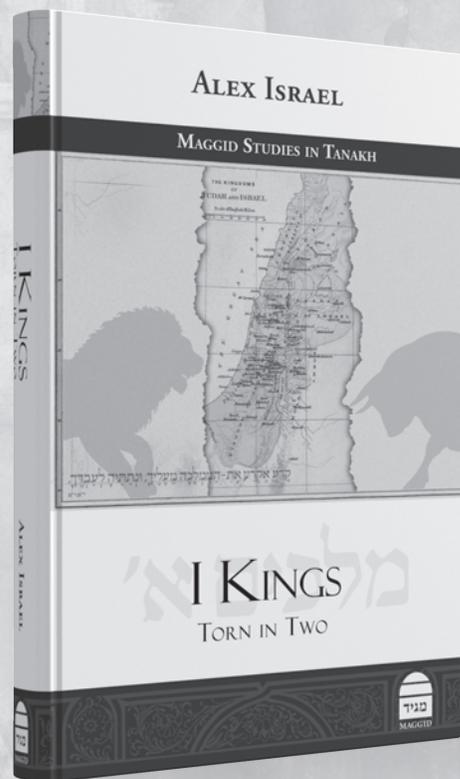
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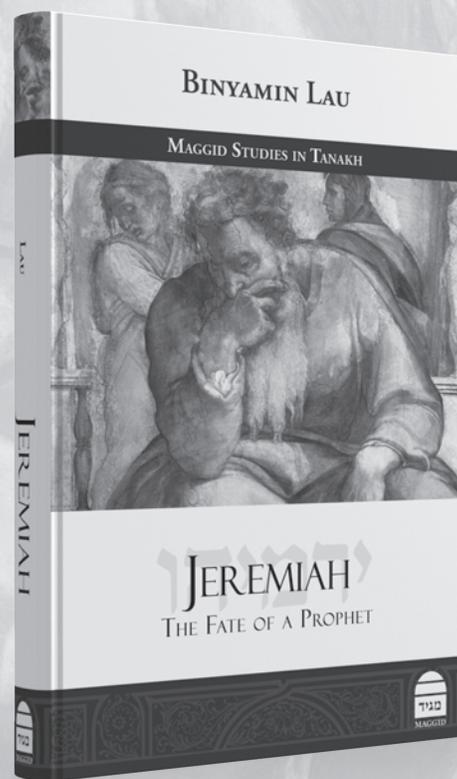
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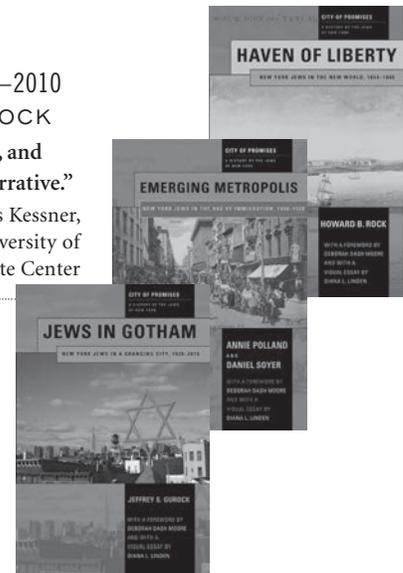
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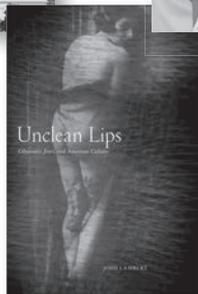
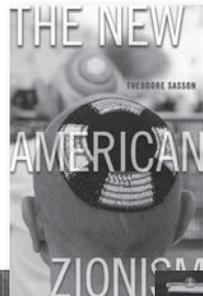
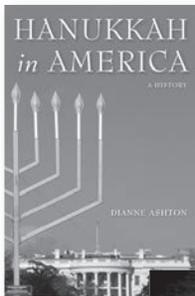
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# Will Herberg on God and Socialism

Tony Michels

The Second World War precipitated an ideological-political crisis among Marxists in the United States. Prior to the war, Marxian intellectuals struggled to explain the rise of Hitler and Stalin within an established ideological framework.

But Germany's invasion of Poland, the systematic killing of Jews that followed, and the Soviet invasion of Finland forced a reconsideration and, in most instances, abandonment of Marxism, particularly by those independent of and, indeed, hostile to the Communist Party. Could anything be salvaged from the socialist tradition?

For intellectuals of Jewish background, the flight from Marxism entailed a new engagement with things Jewish. Subjects previously considered parochial or irrelevant—anti-Semitism, Judaism, Yiddish literature, Zionism—now commanded attention. This Jewish turn continued a historical pattern among left-wing intellectuals. Since the nineteenth century, repeated crises, such as, the pogrom wave of 1881–82, the Dreyfus Affair, and the Kishinev pogrom, produced dramatic reconsiderations of “the Jewish Question.” And so it happened with American-born (or—raised) Jewish intellectuals in the 1940s. They reached no shared conclusions, but their forays produced a rich outpouring of writing on Jews, socialism, and the relationship between the two.

Enter Will Herberg. Although best remembered for his influential study of religion in postwar America, *Protestant-Catholic-Jew* (1955), Herberg occupied an important place in the history of American socialism. Between the two world wars, he earned respect as a bold, wide-ranging thinker, who tackled areas of knowledge (Freudian psychoanalysis, Einstein's theory of relativity) most other Marxists either avoided or dismissed. He belonged to a group of Marxist-Leninists referred to informally as the Lovestonites, after its leader Jay Lovestone. The Lovestonites were expelled from the Communist Party in 1929 for adhering to the idea that capitalism evolved differently within different countries, which meant, in practical terms, that Communists should enact policies appropriate to American conditions, rather than automatically imitate



Will Herberg speaking at a University of Illinois YMCA board-cabinet retreat in 1958. Photograph by University YMCA, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

those of Russian Communists. For that heresy, Josef Stalin labeled Lovestone and his followers “American exceptionalists” and ordered their expulsion from the Communist Party. The Lovestonites established a rival communist organization, which published an interesting newspaper, edited by Herberg, and exerted considerable influence within the (predominantly Jewish) International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU). Herberg himself served as educational director of one of the union's largest locals. By the end of the 1930s, however, Herberg and most of his colleagues lost faith in Marxism. They voted to disband their organization in 1941 and went separate ways.

Herberg discovered religion. He started reading the Protestant theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, and the Russian Orthodox philosopher, Nikolai Berdyaev. For a time, he considered conversion to Christianity, until Niebuhr dissuaded him.

Herberg enrolled in the Jewish Theological Seminary and found his way to the writings of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig. All the while, Herberg associated with Niebuhr's Fellowship of Christian Socialists and contributed to its journal, *Christianity and Society*. Drawing from these various sources, Herberg formulated a theologically grounded socialism that was anti-utopian yet committed to the pursuit of social equality, protective of individual autonomy yet true to “authentic Jewish tradition.”

The central problem Herberg set out to address was totalitarianism, which he defined as an all-encompassing political and cultural regime that denies “the autonomous reality of society as against the state and therefore denies all the more the autonomy of the individual as against either society or the state.” Totalitarianism reached monstrous forms in Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia, but its seeds, Herberg contended, could be

found in nearly all modern institutions: corporations, government agencies, trade unions, anywhere potentially. All collective endeavors contained an inherent tendency toward totalitarianism. This caused an acute dilemma—a crisis, really—for democratic socialists. Socialists needed to mobilize large numbers of people to create effective organizations capable of attaining economic and political power. Yet, in doing so, socialists risked betraying their original, emancipatory purpose. “Organization,” Herberg observed in 1944, “makes for bureaucracy; discipline for authoritarianism; solidarity for the submergence of the individual in the mass—in every case the tendency runs counter to the goals that socialism sets out to achieve.”

Trade unions exemplified the problem. To be sure, Herberg, still in the employ of the ILGWU, remained committed to organized labor. As late as 1949, Herberg called for the creation of a national labor party, despite a growing conservative shift in American politics. And, during the Korean War, with McCarthyism in full swing, he defended labor’s right to strike, even against the federal government. Herberg regarded labor a crucial mechanism “in the struggle for democracy and social justice.” All the same, Herberg found much wanting in the labor movement. Bureaucratization, “lust for power,” and apathy among rank and file members plagued trade unions. As they grew in size and strength, their original idealistic and democratic energies gave way to ossification and corruption. Herberg posited this moral decline as a veritable law of labor history.

Herberg called for a new “powerful social idealism” and “moral dynamic” that could check “the crudities of personal ambition and power politics.” But what source could sustain such new idealism? In the past, Marxism functioned as the “conscience” of the labor movement, but it proved a failure. The tragedy of Marxism was that it worked against its own humanistic, libertarian impulses and emancipatory goals. On the one hand, Marx criticized the degradation of the individual under capitalism, the transformation of humans into mere instruments of industrial production and market exchange. On the other, Marx’s materialist conception of history denied transcendent morality, and thus opened the door to terrible oppression. Marxism actually upheld an unacknowledged morality, a morality of power that considered anything that advanced the class struggle to be just, as determined

and verified by the dialectical movement of history. As Herberg wrote in 1947:

Whatever served the “interest of the proletariat” was good; whatever ran counter was evil. Everything, literally everything, was permitted if only it permitted the “proletarian class struggle.” But the proletariat could attain self-consciousness only in its “vanguard party,” so that in the end the interest of the proletariat really amounted to the interest of the party. Party interest—power for the party and its leaders—thus became the ultimate, indeed the only criterion of right and wrong.

Thus Marxists came to reify the collective—the working class, the workers’ party, the workers’ state—at the expense of the individual, and thereby contributed to the rise of totalitarianism. What, then, could replace Marxism? Where was the moral force, capable of improving organized labor and society generally? Herberg found the answer in Judaism.

Judaism, according to Herberg, made possible “a mature and effective social radicalism.” The key word was “mature.” Judaism contained a “passion for social justice” forcefully displayed by the Prophets. “No modern attack upon economic exploitation,” Herberg marveled, “can equal in earnestness and power the denunciations of the Prophets against those who ‘grind down the faces of the poor.’” At the same time, Herberg believed the prophets’ passion for justice was restrained by God’s ultimate authority. Worship of an all-powerful God curbs “arrogance and exorbitant pretensions of men and institutions.” Furthermore, the scriptural relationship of “man” to God lays the basis for mutual respect between individuals, necessary for social solidarity and democracy. To believe that God created man in his image is to respect the dignity and value of human life. Judaism, by its very nature, was antitotalitarian. It doesn’t disavow the need for power, Herberg added. Judaism understands the need for a worldly authority to keep in check man’s evil inclinations that would otherwise threaten individuals and

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society. Judaism thus recognizes power as both a necessity and a “corrupting influence.” This ambivalent conception of power combined with passion for social justice and recognition of human dignity as derived from an all-powerful God, makes possible a restrained socialist politics, a socialism of limits.

Herberg named this politics “personalist socialism.” Similar to the early, libertarian strains in Marxism, personalist socialism, as put forward by Herberg, opposed capitalism, not because it was excessively individualistic, but because it paid lip service to individualism while, in fact, degrading the individual. Herberg imagined that personalist socialism would “lead to a higher and more complete individualism.” He failed to describe in any detail the necessary economic arrangements, but he spoke of a pluralistic economy consisting of publicly and quasi-publicly owned enterprises existing alongside privately owned businesses—a mixed economy presumably along the lines of postwar European social democracy.

Herberg failed to convince other erstwhile Marxists, who mostly continued to reject God, even as they grappled with what it meant to be a Jew. Why wasn’t a liberal constitutional government sufficient to prevent totalitarianism and abuses of power? Hadn’t religion caused tremendous suffering and persecutions throughout history? Herberg brushed over such questions all too lightly. For his part, Herberg eventually lost conviction in socialism altogether. In a 1954 essay on the Socialist Party leader, Norman Thomas, he declared socialism dead, irrelevant to a society of ever-growing prosperity and political consensus. He proposed in its place “social idealism,” an admittedly vague notion, but one characterized by “burning indignation against social injustice; impatience with compromise and expediency. . . ; a high sense of the human worth of productive labor and of the dignity of the producing classes in society; a conviction that the welfare of the masses is a prime social responsibility; above all, the vision of the ‘cooperative society,’ of a ‘truly just social

order,’ in which men will live by their own work in freedom, peace, and brotherhood.” In this rhetorical flourish, Herberg’s social idealism did not sound much different from socialism. But by the end of the decade Herberg settled into political conservatism in the spirit of Edmund Burke. He now stressed the need to preserve “historical stabilities and continuities” and, in a particularly low moment, faulted Martin Luther King for disrupting both. Nonetheless, the dozen or so years Herberg spent formulating a Judaic basis for socialism may be viewed as a distinct and creative period in Herberg’s intellectual biography, and an important part of the larger history of American Jewish intellectuals as they confronted the horrors of the twentieth century.

*Tony Michels is the George L. Mosse Associate Professor of American Jewish History at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the editor of Jewish Radicals: A Documentary History (New York University Press, 2012).*

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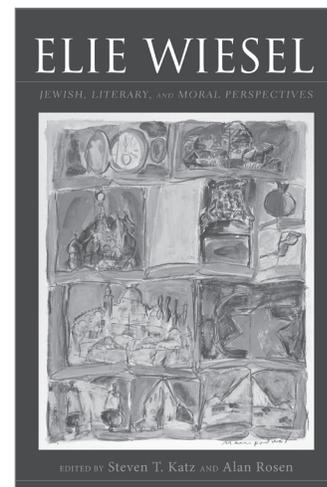
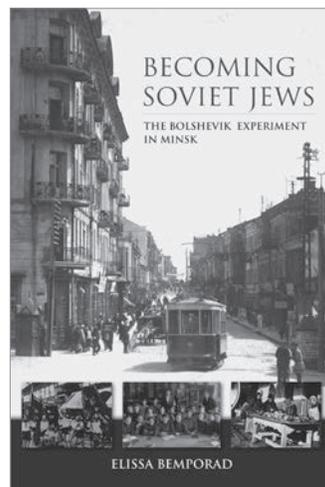
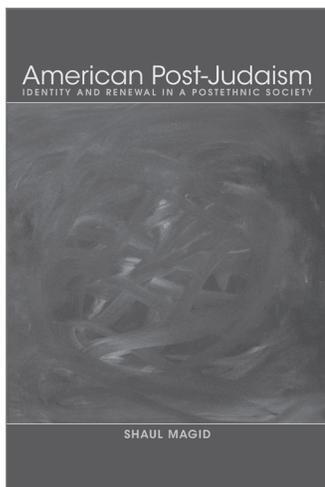
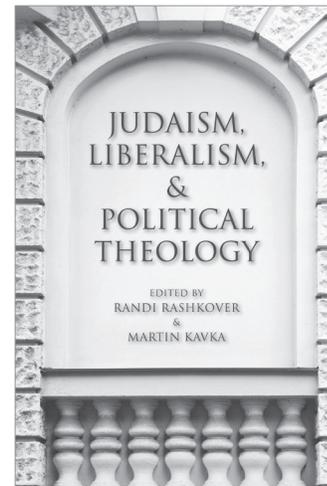
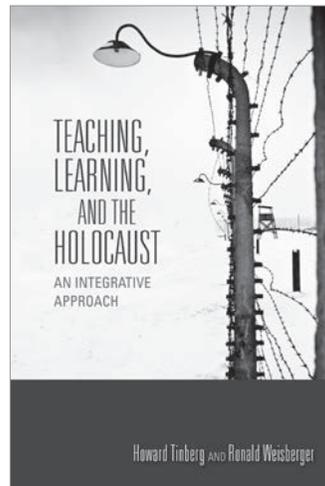
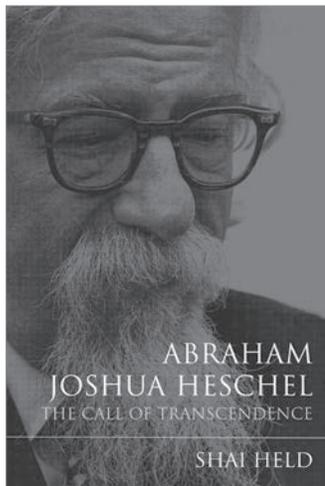
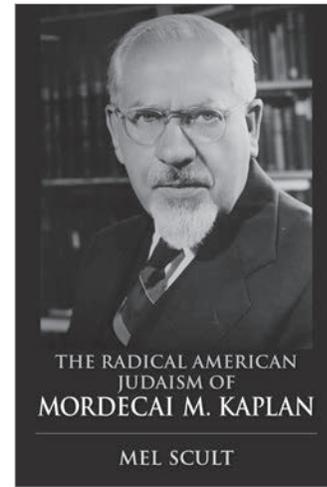
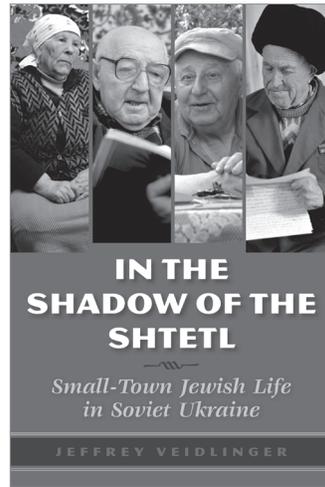
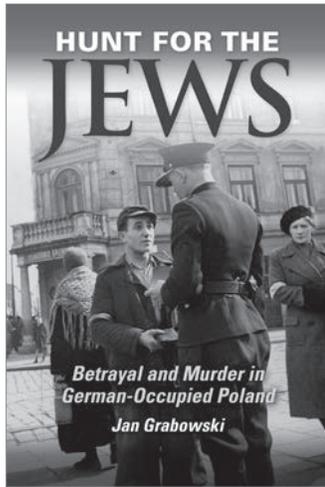
The notion of secularization is a freighted and a contested one, particularly so in Jewish contexts. The theme of the Frankel Institute will focus on the complexity and dynamism of processes of making objects, acts, and relationships holy and marking off others as worldly and apart from spiritual life. What processes are actually at play in the apparent disaggregation of faith from everyday life, or, conversely, in the processes of imbuing or reimbuing material life with spiritual content? “Secularization/Sacralization” may best be conceived as a problem cluster that signals moments of self-consciousness of shifting relations of interior faith and faith communities to civic life, inter-group relations, and the everyday. This implicitly comparative project invites participants who explore contacts among Jewish, Christian, and Islamic secular and sacral processes within an array of disciplinary discussions.

The processes of secularization and sacralization are key to inquiries into the changes within Judaism and in the ways in which Jews interacted with non-Jews. These shifts and relations are not limited to the modern period. Asking questions about the sacred and the secular in Judaism needs to involve the places where and ways in which personal faith, communal relations, and daily life practices coincided, and the ways in which spiritual and worldly have been interwoven. The Frankel Institute deliberately focuses on the processes of secularization and sacralization rather than the static dichotomy of the sacred and secular, or presumed states of holiness and secularity, and rejects assumptions that these processes are identical in different times and places, or lead to a common and determined endpoint. The Frankel Institute invites applications from diverse scholars for a theme year that will help prepare the ground for thinking differently about these processes as well as our study of them.

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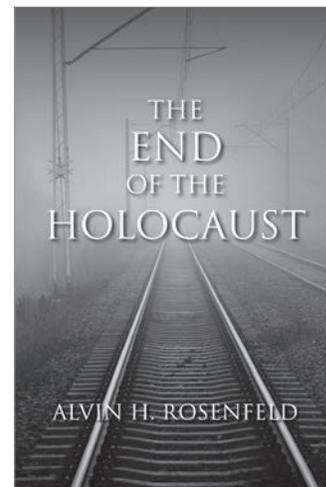
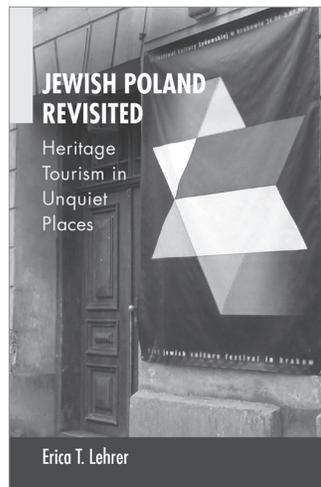
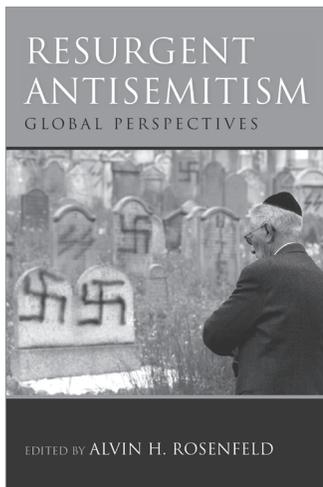
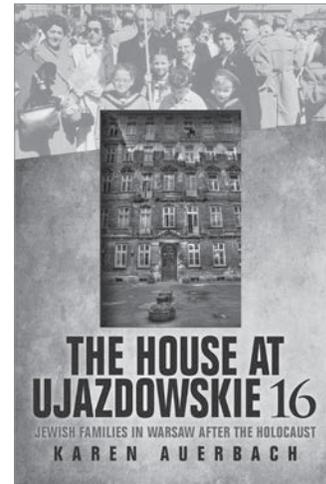
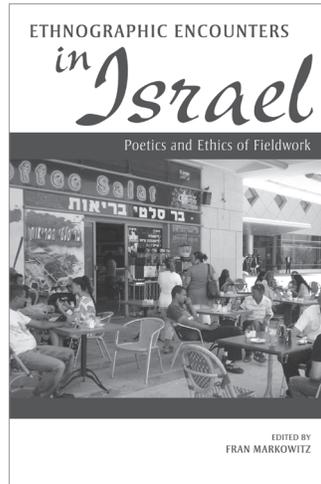
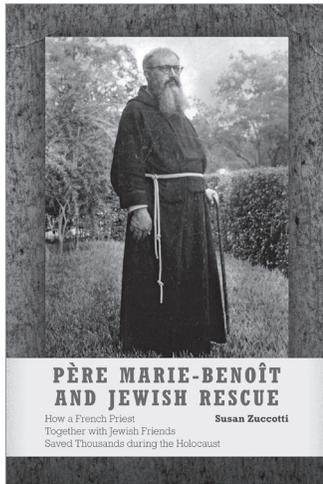
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# A Party of Naysayers: The Jewish Labor Bund after the Holocaust

David Slucki

The Jewish Labor Bund stands as one of the most important political and social movements in shaping twentieth-century Jewry. The Bund's contribution to the modernization of Jewish life, according to Zvi Gitelman, included providing greater opportunities for the participation of women, as well as the implementation of more democratic decision-making processes. In addition, the Bund developed a conception of Jewish nationhood based on the principle of *doikayt*, literally "here-ness," which stated that Jewish life should be fostered anywhere that Jews lived. *Doikayt* was a decentralized, extraterritorial idea of nationhood, one that insisted that Jews were not bound by territory or the state, but by history, language, and culture.

While the Bund's pre-Holocaust history is well documented, particularly its early years in czarist Russia and its transformation in independent Poland, we know less about the fate of the Bund after the demise of Polish Jewry during the Holocaust. Historians have generally assumed that the Bund perished in the ruins of the Warsaw Ghetto. The reality is more complex.

Although it would never again reach the popularity and influence it had enjoyed among Jews in interwar Poland, Bundist life continued late into the twentieth century and beyond. In postwar Poland, where the ruling communist Polish United Workers' Party forced the Bund to liquidate at the beginning of 1949, it never stood a chance. However, Bundists established branches in dozens of cities around the world and tried to rebuild some semblance of what had been destroyed. Bundists also came together in Brussels in 1947 to form the International Jewish Labor Bund, an organizing body based in New York that incorporated Bund groups and organizations from dozens of locations. Like all Holocaust survivors, the process of rebuilding their lives was disorienting for Bundists, but the structures they created gave them a sense of comfort and familiarity that helped them navigate the process of displacement. Yet how could a movement so rooted in the conditions and circumstances

of prewar eastern Europe adapt to new circumstances in which surviving Polish Jews were now only a tiny proportion of world Jewry, scattered in pockets throughout Western Europe, the Americas, Israel, and Australia?

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The trajectory of the Bund after the Holocaust—its successes and contradictions—can be seen in the lives of two men who would come to lead their respective chapters of the Bund. These two men lived contrasting lives. They experienced both the Holocaust and the process of resettlement differently, yet in their attempts to rebuild the Bund in different settings, Emanuel Scherer and Bono Wiener highlight two different aspects of the postwar Bund's fortunes: the local and the global.

Emanuel Scherer was the Bund's leading intellectual in the postwar years. A lawyer by trade, his presence looms large in the visual and documentary record of the movement's American branch and the World Coordinating Committee. His lanky frame, bushy eyebrows, bow tie, and stern expression exemplified the earnestness with which the Bundists approached the task of carrying the Bund's legacy into the post-Holocaust world. One Bundist who worked alongside Scherer in the early 1970s told me that Scherer didn't dance. "Dancing is for the bourgeoisie," Scherer would say. "I'll dance when the revolution comes."

Scherer and many other Bundists like him were not ready to give up the dream of revolution, of socialism in their lifetime, and of Jews fostering Yiddish cultural life in democratic and multiethnic societies. He was preoccupied with the Bund's relevance on the global Jewish stage in the wake of the Polish Jewry's decimation and of the Polish Bund's liquidation. How could it continue to maintain its prewar significance in the new world order of a Jewish state and the rapid decline of Jewish socialism?

Like Scherer, Melbourne Bund leader Bono Wiener is ever present in the records of his local Bund chapter, both physically and spiritually. Standing over six-feet tall, with a knowing smile (which later was often beaming through his greying moustache), Wiener was an energetic activist, a *tuer* in Yiddish, in the

truest sense of the word. Reared in the Bundist children's movement and Yiddish schools in Lodz, he led the Bundist youth in the Lodz ghetto underground, survived Auschwitz, and tried to rebuild the Bund in Lodz immediately after the war. When he eventually settled in Melbourne in 1951, he very quickly became a prominent figure within the Melbourne Bund, the local Jewish community, and among the migrant chapter of the Australian Labor Party. In contrast to Scherer, Wiener's work was mainly focused on issues of local significance. Rather than ruminating on what role the party might play globally, Wiener focused on the Bund's role in its local context and how it could help to shape a changing Jewish community in Melbourne.

The two men are studies in contrast: Scherer was born and raised in Austro-Hungarian Krakow; Wiener, in interwar Lodz. Scherer escaped Europe at the beginning of the war and spent those years in New York and London trying to bring the Jews' plight to the attention of the world. Wiener led the Bundist youth underground in the Lodz ghetto and was sent to Auschwitz after the ghetto's liquidation. Scherer spent the remainder of his life employed by the Bund; Wiener was a laborer-turned-businessman, whose political activities supplemented his working life. Scherer was known for his intensity; Wiener, for his good humor, malleability, and fondness for a bottle of whisky. Scherer maintained his fervent anti-Zionism throughout his life. Wiener, on the other hand, held strong affection for the State of Israel, visiting regularly and making financial contributions.

While Scherer clung to ideas about the future prospects for socialism and operated primarily in the political and theoretical sphere, Wiener was more concerned with the day-to-day concerns of how to best improve the lot of the Australian working class, and how to secure the place of Yiddish culture among Australian Jewry. Certainly, he dreamed of the triumph of democratic socialism, but he was very much consumed by how this would play out locally. This contrast is at the heart of the postwar Bund, which was torn between its desire to recreate a glorious, imagined

past, and the realities on the ground in which it no longer carried widespread appeal. With the decline of the organized Jewish labor movement everywhere except Israel and the marginalization of Yiddish in Jewish life, Bundists stood little chance of reinventing their shattered movement.

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The Bund in the postwar world operated on two interconnected levels: the global and the local. It is the latter in which the postwar Bundist story is most important. Bundists set up a transnational network that sought to ensure the movement's continuing relevance in global Jewish discourse. Within that network, Bundists debated how to approach the challenges facing both Jews and socialists on the world stage. The Cold War formed a difficult backdrop. Scherer usually had the first and last word in those debates. He represented the Bund at every meeting of the Socialist International until his death in 1977, and maintained relationships with leading socialists around the world. The transnational network supported the local activities of larger and smaller Bundist communities.

The true significance of the postwar Bund can be seen in how it helped shape local Jewish life in Melbourne, Paris, Buenos Aires, Mexico City, Montreal, and other similar locales. It was in these small- and medium-sized communities with sizeable Polish-Jewish populations that the Bundists were able to exert influence and rebuild some modicum of the Bundist life that had been crushed in by Nazism and Stalinism. Bundists set up cultural institutions: youth movements, Yiddish supplementary schools, and libraries. They participated, sometimes in a meaningful way, in their local labor movements and socialist parties. In Melbourne, Bono Wiener initiated the short-lived New Australians Council, a branch of the Australian Labor Party that supported and represented migrants, and recruited them into the Labor Party. Such organizations served an important purpose for the several thousand Bundist migrants who sought a sense of familiarity and community.

But the story of the postwar Bund is ultimately one of decline. The deterioration of Yiddish and socialism and the rise of the

State of Israel perhaps made this inevitable. After the Holocaust, the Bund could at best hope to be a kind of "third way" in Jewish life, an alternative to the major ideological and cultural forces. As Scherer would proclaim, on the major questions facing Jews during the Cold War, the Bund could be no more than a party of "naysayers" in a world where Zionism and communism were the dominant political ideologies among Jews.

When looking deeper at Bundists such as Bono Wiener, it becomes clear that the Bund still played a substantial role in local Jewish communities. The movement was particularly important in the lives of its few thousand followers, still dedicated to the Yiddish socialism in which they were reared, that was all but destroyed in the fire that engulfed European Jewry.

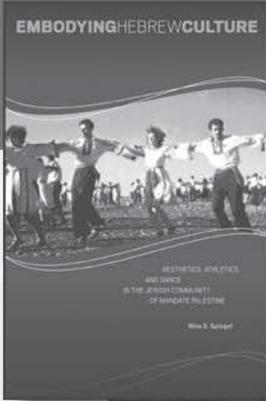
*David Slucki is visiting assistant professor in the Yaschik/Arnold Jewish Studies Program at the College of Charleston. He is the author of The International Jewish Labor Bund after 1945: Toward a Global History (Rutgers University Press, 2012).*



Committee of the Bund Organization in New York, 1950s. Emanuel Scherer is seated fourth from the left. Courtesy of YIVO Institute for Jewish Research.



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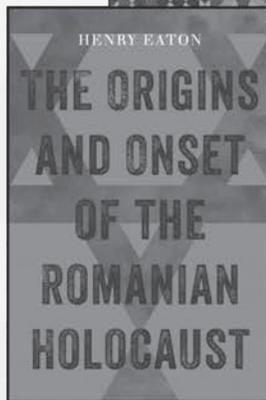
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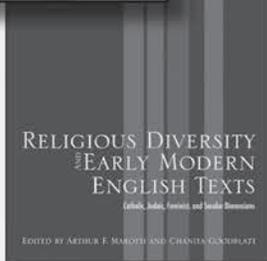


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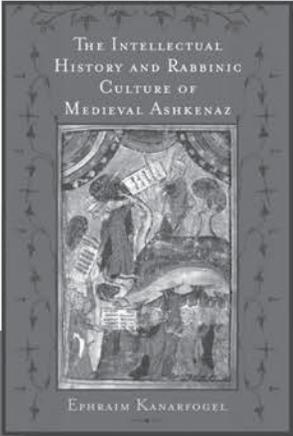
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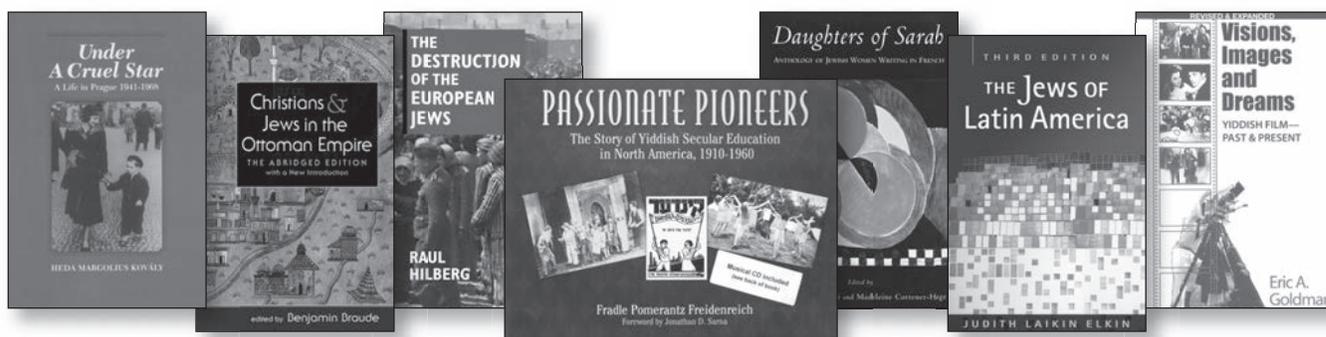
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# Intellectuals, Socialists, Capitalists, and Binationalism in Mandate Palestine

Joel Beinin

The likelihood of a “two-state” solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is on an asymptotic trajectory precipitously approaching zero. The present reality is a highly unequal de facto binational state. Between the two world wars, Zionist advocates of binationalism believed that guaranteeing the civic and national equality of Jews and Arabs would make it easier to establish a Jewish national home in Palestine. But for those actively engaged in the Zionist settlement project, binationalism was always fraught with contradictions.

Hayim Kalvarisky, an early and persistent advocate of binationalism, also purchased lands in the Galilee for the Jewish Colonization Association and supervised the expulsion of peasant tenant farmers. Kalvarisky regretted the dispossession of Arab peasants but recognized that establishing a Jewish national home required it. Yet, in 1919 Kalvarisky presented a proposal for a Zionist-Arab agreement to the General Syrian Congress, where the forces that had launched the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire were ensconced. The congress accepted Kalvarisky’s text in principle, declaring that “Palestine is the homeland of all its citizens: Muslims, Christians and Jews are all citizens with equal rights.”

Arthur Ruppin, another early proponent of binationalism, established the first Zionist office in Jaffa in 1908. He was also instrumental in securing the loan to establish Tel Aviv and involved in purchasing Arab lands on Mount Carmel, the Jezreel Valley, and Jerusalem. In 1913 he wrote, “Land is the most necessary thing for establishing roots in Palestine. Since there are hardly any more arable unsettled lands . . . we are bound in each case . . . to remove the peasants who cultivate the land.”

Binationalism has most prominently been associated with a group of mainly German-Jewish professors at the Hebrew University who did not live its contradictions—Hugo Bergmann, Martin Buber, Hans Kohn, Judah Magnes, Gershom Scholem, and Ernst Simon. In 1926 they, along with Kalvarisky, Ruppin, and others established Brit Shalom, the first binational

political association. Brit Shalom barely survived the Arab riots of 1929; it ceased activity in 1933. In response to the violence Ruppin abandoned binationalism while Kohn broke with Zionism altogether. Despite the intellectual brilliance of its leaders, Brit Shalom never had more than a few hundred adherents. It had no social or political base.

Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah, supported Brit Shalom and its successor, Iḥud. But she did not represent Hadassah’s views on this issue. For many Zionists who believed they were more “pragmatic,” the identification of binationalism with intellectuals was evidence of its infeasibility, whatever its ethical merits.

There was, however, a version of binationalism rooted in the political economy of the *Yishuv*—paradoxically embraced by the most radical currents of the Jewish labor movement as well as representatives of large agricultural and industrial capital. The platform of the 1927 founding congress of the federation of Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir kibbutzim (Ha-Kibbutz Ha-’Arzi Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir) advocated “a bi-nationalist socialist society in Palestine and its environs.” As Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir moved from communitarian anarchism to orthodox Marxism in the 1930s, it became increasingly engaged at the national political level, including more urgent advocacy of binationalism.

The May 1942 Biltmore Conference called for a Jewish commonwealth in Palestine after World War II—the first time a representative body of the World Zionist Organization specified that the goal was a Jewish state. Proponents of binationalism were compelled to respond. Immediately after the Biltmore conference, Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir and its urban ally, the Socialist League, officially joined the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement on the basis of a binational program. Po’alei Ṷiyon, a small urban workers’ party, affiliated with the league when it was established in 1939, left the league, the first expression of the changing social character of binationalism.

Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir and the Socialist League won 20% of the vote in the 1942 Histadrut elections. Thus, in the 1940s radical socialist binationalists comprised the largest

minority bloc in the *Yishuv*. To broaden the binationalist coalition, in 1942 the League for Arab-Jewish Rapprochement joined Iḥud, an association established by intellectuals around Judah Magnes. Iḥud there by became a much more substantial organization than Brit Shalom.

In 1946 Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir and the Socialist League fused to form the Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir Workers’ Party. Two-thirds of its ten thousand members were kibbutzniks. The party delegated Mordechai Ben-Tov to draft a book-length memorandum entitled *The Case for a Bi-National Palestine*. It was released in March 1946 when the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry, which was tasked with formulating recommendations for resolving both the European Jewish refugee crisis and the future of Palestine, was conducting public hearings in Jerusalem. The Jewish Agency obliged all its constituent parties to endorse the Biltmore Conference’s demand for a Jewish state when addressing the AACI. So Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir did not publicly advocate a binational state before the AACI.

Binationalism is primarily a political-constitutional issue. Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir envisioned that the legislature of the proposed binational state would be based on parity between the two peoples regardless of their numbers. This would allow either community to block legislation it regarded as vital to its interests. However, Ben-Tov’s presentation of binationalism depended heavily on economic reasoning to explain why this would not result in legislative gridlock. Ha-Shomer Ha-Ṷa’ir believed that “cooperation between Jewish and Arab labour constitutes the cornerstone of the whole future of both races in Palestine.”

Like all labor Zionists, Ben-Tov argued that Zionist settlement had raised the standard of living of Palestinian Arabs. But he criticized the Histadrut’s policy of excluding Arab workers and Arab products from the Jewish economy—core elements of labor Zionist practice—as unnecessarily exacerbating national tensions. He imagined that the class interests of Jews and Arabs, especially workers, would override their national affinities, and form the basis of a

binational majority for the future government on “every practical . . . piece of legislation on taxes, tariffs, budget, social insurance, labour conditions, protection of industries . . . the bulk of the business of any legislature.”

Ben-Tov proposed that a special development authority administer Palestine for the next twenty or twenty-five years. Its task would be to promote the settlement of “at least two to three million Jews,” “raise the standard of living and education of the Palestinian Arabs to approximately the Jewish level,” and “actively encourage Jewish-Arab cooperation.” As a Marxist, Ben-Tov supported planned economic development. But, this program was incommensurable with the prescriptions of post-World War II development economics.

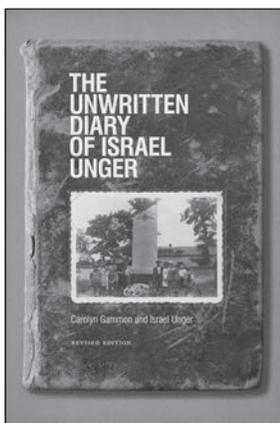
Bourgeois Zionists, who rejected labor Zionism’s “conquest of labor” agenda, formed another group of binationalists. They wanted to hire Arab workers who generally accepted lower wages than Jews; and some were engaged in profitable activities with Arab partners. Eyal Sivan’s film, “Jaffa, The Orange’s Clockwork” (2010), documents Arab-Jewish collaboration in the production and export of citrus fruits through the 1940s.

Moshe Smilansky, the founder of the Farmers’ Association and a prominent citrus grower, was a Brit Shalom member and later a Palmah commander in the Rehovot area, an expression of the contradiction in seeking Arab-Jewish rapprochement while settling on what was once the rural frontier. Other bourgeois supporters of Brit Shalom included Moshe Novomeysky, founder of the Palestine Potash Company, Pinhas Rutenberg, founder of the Palestine Electric Company, and Gad Frumkin, the only Jew to sit on the Palestine Supreme Court.

During the summer of 1936, after the Arab Revolt of 1936–39 erupted, Judah Magnes and these four bourgeois Zionists met secretly with Musa al-Alami and other Palestinian Arabs in a back channel effort to achieve an Arab-Jewish agreement. A major point of contention, according to Aharon Cohen’s account in *Israel and the Arab World*, was the willingness of the Arab parties to accept the immigration of 30,000 Jews annually for the next ten years while the Jewish Agency insisted on 62,000 a year—the difference between achieving a Jewish population of 40% by 1946 and a Jewish majority.

The dispossession of Palestinian peasants, the demand for extensive Jewish immigration, which would turn the Arab majority into a minority, and the postponement of political independence by a lengthy United Nations trusteeship (advocated by Ben-Tov) were substantial obstacles to Arab acceptance of binationalism. Moreover, the contours of global politics have changed dramatically since the late 1940s. Consequently, the history of Mandate-era binationalism does not offer us any unambiguous “lessons” for the present and future. Believing that it can be a facile misuse of history. What we can learn is that the partition solution embodied in UN General Assembly Resolution 181 of November 29, 1947 was not inevitable. Alternatives were seriously considered and preferred by thoughtful, conscientious individuals and substantial social groups.

*Joel Beinin is professor of Middle East History and Donald J. McLachlan Professor of History at Stanford University. His most recent publication is Social Movements, Mobilization, and Contestation in the Middle East and North Africa, 2nd ed. (Stanford University Press, 2013); co-edited with Frédéric Vairel.*



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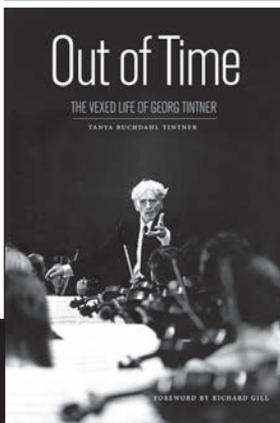
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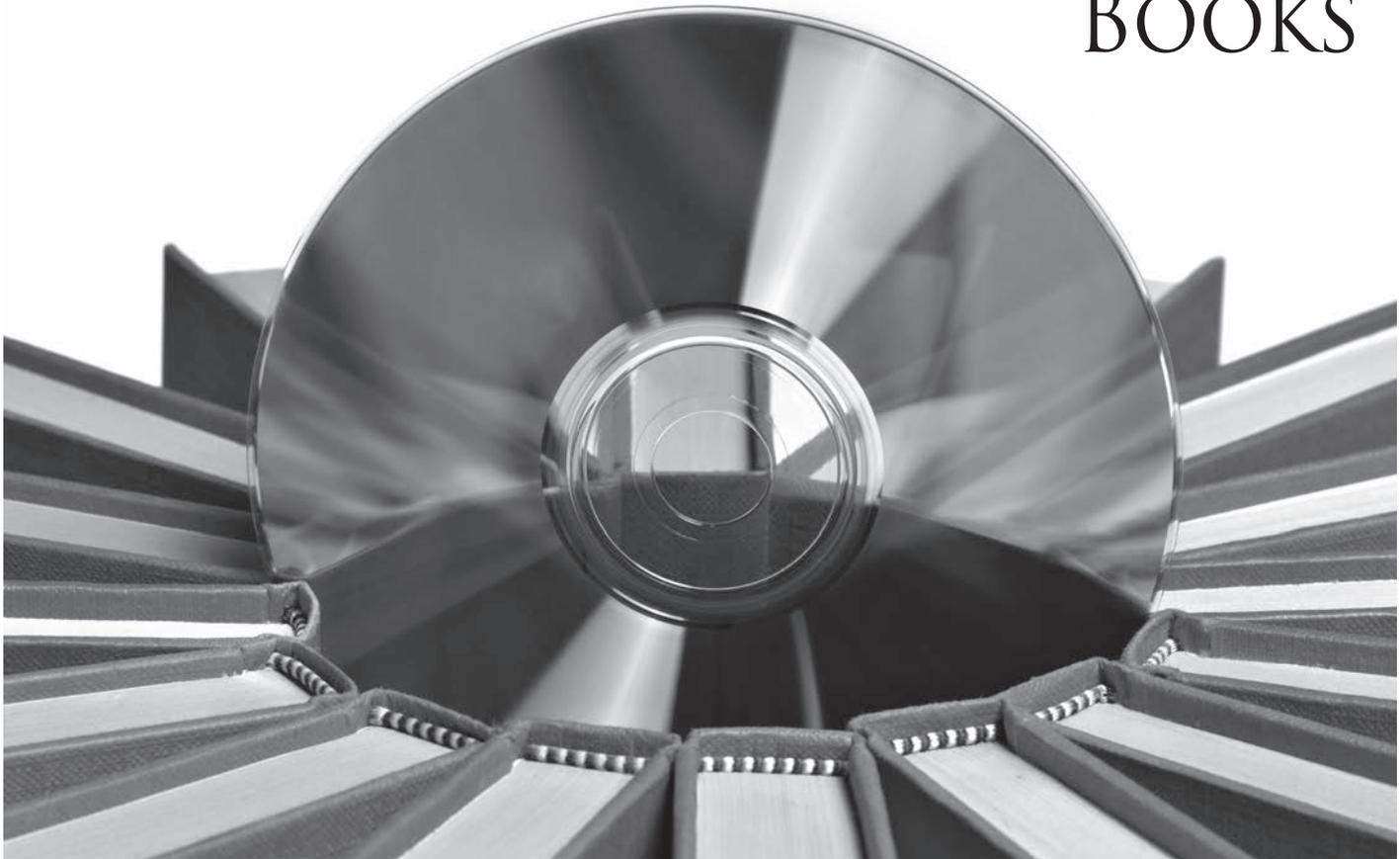
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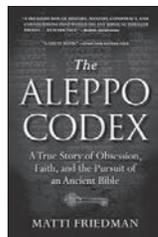
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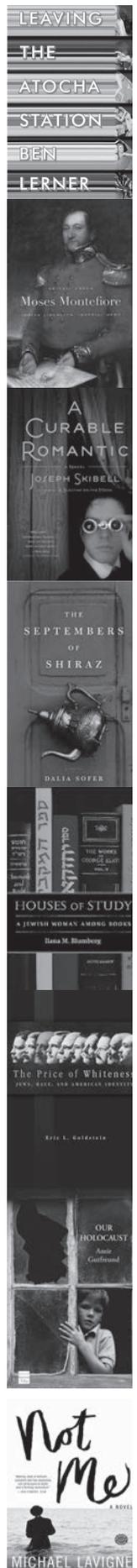
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# Between Markets and Morals of Care: Migrant Care Workers in Israel

Adriana Kemp

“Who at all was taking care of the elderly and disabled before the foreigners arrived?” wondered member of Knesset Ran Cohen, head of the Knesset Committee on Foreign Workers, in 2005. At the time, widespread consensus over the “essential necessity” of migrant worker caretakers seemed to have become axiomatic for all parties involved. And his was a well-put question.

Since the mid-1990s, a new market of live-in care workers was created in Israel. In no time, it became associated with migrant women, under the implicit assumption and policy framework that only foreigners could perform underpaid, physically and emotionally demanding work with the disabled and elderly. High demand for global care workers in Israel is the result of changing demographic, family, and welfare configurations taking place within an increasingly unequal and gendered international division of labor. The catalyst for the “insourcing” of live-in migrant care workers was the implementation of the Long-Term Care (LTC) insurance program in 1988, which expanded the social security net provided by the state to disabled, chronically ill, and elderly people living in the community. However, this progressive social program was underfunded and failed to cover the cost of round-the-clock home care. The budget solution was found in the 1995 “Filipino Plan” (*Ha-tokhnit ha-Filipinit*), which aimed to save up to 50% of the costs of home care by bringing in foreign workers. Hiring a foreign care worker means that one can have live-in help, twenty-four hours per day, six days a week for the equivalent of a monthly salary of about \$800.

Ever since, LTC has been the only sector for which there are no permit caps, and its continuous growth has not been affected by restrictive recruitment policies. The number of care workers who can enter is linked to the number of Israeli citizens found eligible to employ a care worker. Yet, while the number of people entitled to nursing care benefits grew by only 60% between 1996 and 2002, permits allocated to foreign care workers grew by 350% over the same period. The growth is related less to demographic trends than to the



Meeting in Ramat Gan park. Photograph by Anna Lim.

advantages it entails for private employers, their families, and brokerage agencies specializing in supplying services. The LTC benefit is paid to the worker through agencies, but the employer is expected to pay the worker directly for additional hours, a fact that opens a door for abuse. All foreign care workers must be registered with a licensed care-giving agency, which places foreign workers with the employer. These have become a major force in pushing for further recruitment of migrant worker women and profiting from high—if illegal—mediation fees that range from \$5,000 (Philippines) up to \$20,000 (China).

The social welfare laws, coupled with virtually unlimited permit policies and high profits derived from the system by vested parties, contribute to the commodification of care and the feminization of migration flows. Women make up to 52% of all officially recruited migrants. Women arrive primarily from the Philippines but also from India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bulgaria. They work with the elderly or disabled if they hold permits and in domestic labor if they don't. Undocumented migrants arrive from Eastern Europe, South Asia, Africa, and South America. While most of them enter through the “tourist loophole,” there is a margin of overlap between countries of origin of documented and undocumented migrants because of two main reasons: first, women who enter with a work permit and overstay once it expires; second, women who enter with work permits and lose it once they leave

or are made to leave the original employer to whom they are bound by contract.

Until 2005, a “binding policy” prohibited visa portability and rendered the work and residence permit of foreign workers valid only for a single employer. Binding the worker means that any change in work relations, such as dismissal, resignation, or employer bankruptcy, can lead to the loss of the worker's residence permit, with the worker automatically becoming subject to arrest and deportation. Any foreign workers who demanded that their employers respect labor legislation on working conditions or sought remedies for such violations faced the risk of being immediately fired and losing their legal status. Losing the work permit as a result of the binding policy has detrimental effects on the workers' ability to repay the loans they had taken out back home to pay the high recruitment fees demanded by recruiting agencies. Withholding the workers' passport to prevent them from leaving their jobs became a widespread norm among employers and a major means of creating forced labor. Following a petition, in 2006 the High Court of Justice declared binding as a violation of “the inherent right of liberty” and a form of “modern slavery” (HCJ 4542/02); yet, binding is still very much alive.

The increasing reliance on global care workers has been met with their depiction as a threat to the political body of the nation. Official discourse in Israel has presented an ambiguous image of migrant women as an “essential” pillar for

the well-being of Israeli families and, at the same time, as a danger to the integrity of the ethnic boundaries of the nation. Policies, regulations, and deeply seated social norms provide ample evidence for this duality of seeing care work as a “dangerous necessity.” Tensions between the economic and moral dimensions of a migrant labor force resurface when migrant women marry local residents, give birth, or seek to reunite with their own families in the host society.

The issue of migrant workers’ families brings to the forefront competing interests between the universal recognition of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society enshrined in international human rights instruments, and national interests and prerogatives regarding immigration. These tensions are further complicated if we bear in mind that the “supply” of foreign care workers is conceived in Israel as part of a “contract” between the state and its own citizens to safeguard the well-being and social rights of the elderly and handicapped and of their families. Last, but not least, the physical and social presence of migrants’ families and children, who are in a legal limbo, at once

within society but not an integral part of it, mobilizes a variety of societal responses, emotional and moral, calling for their social integration and for political solutions that go beyond humanitarian and piecemeal governmental decisions. Or as put by one NGO official, “As long as there are migrant workers in Israel, there will be also migrant workers’ children” (O. F. interview 29.2.12).

Ongoing social negotiations around migrant women’s own families and their place in relation to Israeli families and the Israeli public have been reflected in court litigations and public campaigns throughout the last decade. A decision of the Tribunal for Review of the Detention of Unlawful Residents on the matter of a migrant worker from the Philippines upholds the “pregnant foreign workers directive” (PFWD) from 2004, which revokes work permits from migrant women who become pregnant. PFWD is part of a “no-family” policy that aims to ensure that migrant labor will not turn into a venue for immigration. Accordingly, work visas are issued only if migrant workers do not have a first-degree family member working in Israel. If two migrant workers

get married in Israel, one of them is required to leave the country, and if a woman gives birth, she must either send the baby away or leave the country with the newborn and return alone in order to regain her visa.

The decision reads:

The detainee is staying and working in Israel for three and half years. The detainee is in the 30th week + 5 days of her pregnancy. Her partner, the baby’s father, is a Philippine citizen lawfully working in Israel.

The detainee requests that she will be released so that she can give birth in Israel and then continue to work in Israel.

The detainee is staying and working in Israel together with a partner, the father of her baby who is supposed to be born, *besha’a tovah* (congratulations in Hebrew), in two months. According to the Interior Ministry’s procedures, partners cannot work together in Israel. The detainee has a family unit to which a baby is about to join.

Under these circumstances, in which the Interior Ministry will not

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give a work permit to the detainee, I don't see that there is cause to release her, even if the detainee states that she intends to send the baby to her country of origin. I am authorizing the detention order without changes. (Quoted in Hanny Ben Israel, 7.3.2010, [http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/media-view\\_eng.asp?id=2854](http://www.kavlaoved.org.il/media-view_eng.asp?id=2854), retrieved on 15.1.2012)

Like in other countries in the Middle East and South East Asia that are engaged in temporary labor migration schemes for low skilled jobs, the no-family policy is part of the contractual relations between invited foreign workers and host societies, as explained by a government official: "The foreign worker who comes here knows that this is the condition; she knows, and she signs her name to it" (Knesset Committee for the Examination of the Foreign Workers Problem, November 3, 2004). The no-family policy is also understood, even expected, given that Israel is a country designed for the immigration of Jews. However, labor migrants constitute the largest group of migrants that has arrived in Israel in the last decade.

Neither the "contract" nor the "regime" has prevented the creation of families and households. The precise number is subject to speculation. Two government decisions

reached in 2005 (#3807) and 2010 (#2183) granted status to over a thousand migrant children whose parents entered with valid visas but overstayed them. The decision, which normalized their families, shows the possible contradictions between the economic benefits and the social costs of importing laborers, as they are manifested in the phenomenon of migrant workers' families. No less significantly, both the PFDW and the naturalization decisions on children point to the undefined zone between what is officially sanctioned as (il) legal and what is socially sanctioned as (il) licit, a messy zone where Israeli civil society, individuals, migrants themselves, and the authorities have been negotiating the political and moral economies of labor migration.

The PFW procedure was eventually banned by the High Court of Justice in April 2011, asserting that it violates the foreign worker's constitutional right to family life and is incongruent with Israeli labor laws that safeguard the rights of women both during and after childbirth. At the same time, the ruling made the protection of the migrant worker's right to parenthood in Israel contingent on her legal persona as a female worker, and therefore, as subject to constitutional principles on gender equality in labor law that sanction the release of

women from work on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth. Second, the court instructed the state to design a new procedure that will ensure that the care worker would leave the country with her baby upon the termination of her work permit. Finally, the renewal of the work permit will be contingent upon the foreign workers' proven ability to combine care of her child and care of the elderly employer (<http://elyon1.court.gov.il/files/05/370/114/r27/05114370.r27.htm>).

The "children's campaigns" took place outside the courtroom. A wide and heterogeneous network of activists, sympathizers, and public figures rallied high profile campaigns under the banner of "Israeli children," which encapsulates the idiom in which the campaigns were conducted. The protestors called the government's planned deportation of children who grew up in Israel and whose only language was Hebrew an act of "cultural exile." The campaign proved successful, to a certain extent. Following a visit to a school in south Tel Aviv attended mainly by migrant workers' children, President Shimon Peres penned an emotional letter to the minister of Interior, Eli Yishai, asking him to cancel the expulsion. "I heard Hebrew ring naturally from their mouths. I felt their connection and their love for Israel and their desire to live in it, to serve in its army, and to help to strengthen it . . . Who if not a people who suffered embitterment in the lands of exile, should be sensitive to their fellow man living amongst them?"

As the ongoing negotiations over the reproducing bodies of migrant workers seem to show, the presence of migrant workers' families exposes and challenges the multiple ethics that animate Israel's identity politics. These negotiations elicit claims of Jewish exclusivity and anxieties over Israel's changing ethnic demography; carry the weight of Jewish history and the heritage of "not oppressing the stranger"; express a yearning for "normalcy" centered on cosmopolitan human rights and liberal values; and, perhaps most powerfully, emphasize participation and assimilation over rights. While labor migration has changed the ethnic composition of the Israeli labor market and society, it has not challenged the national meaning and quandaries of "being Israeli" in any significant way.

*Adriana Kemp is senior lecturer in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Tel Aviv University. She is the author of Migrants and Workers: The Political Economy of Labor Migration in Israel (Kibbutz Hameuchad and Van Leer Publications, 2007 [in Hebrew, with Rebeca Raijman]).*

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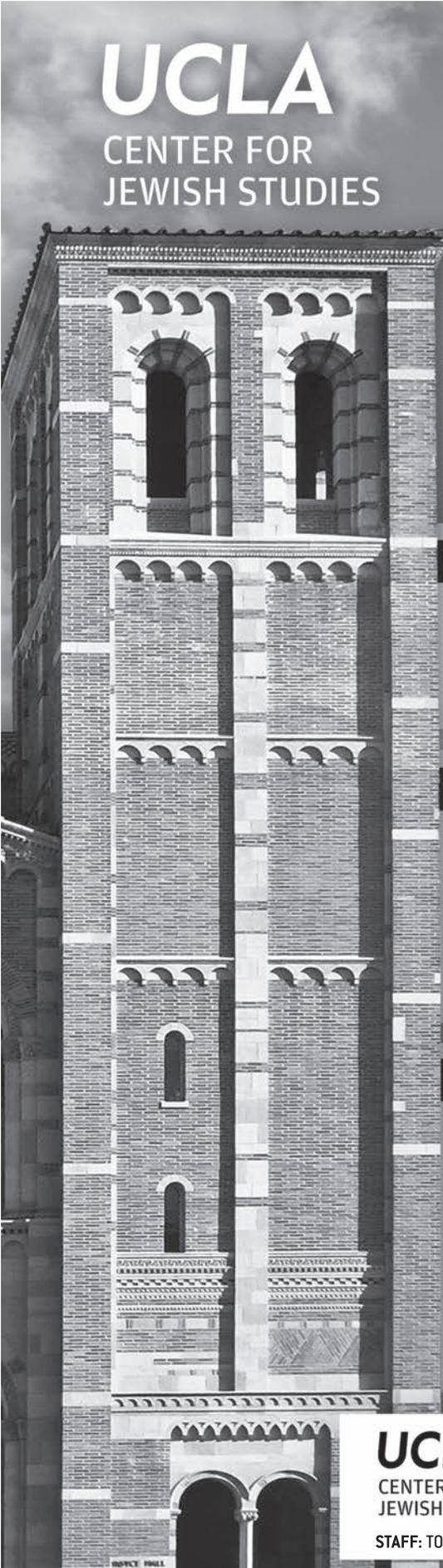
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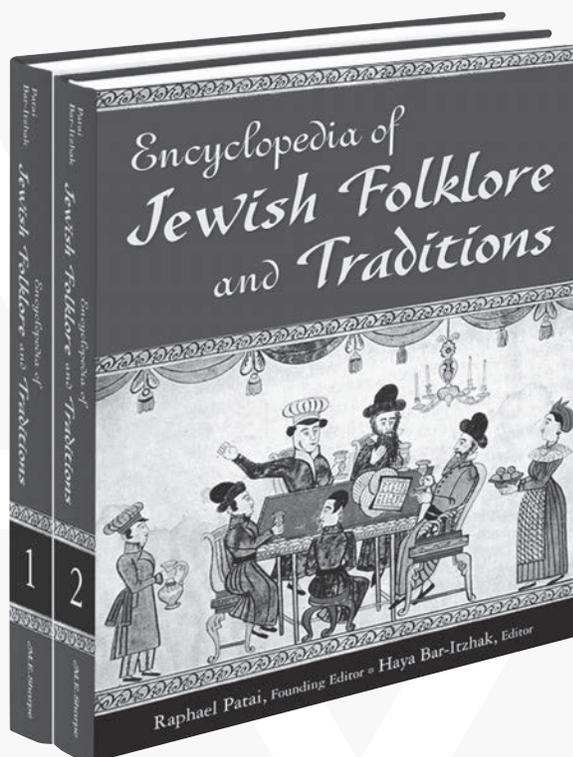
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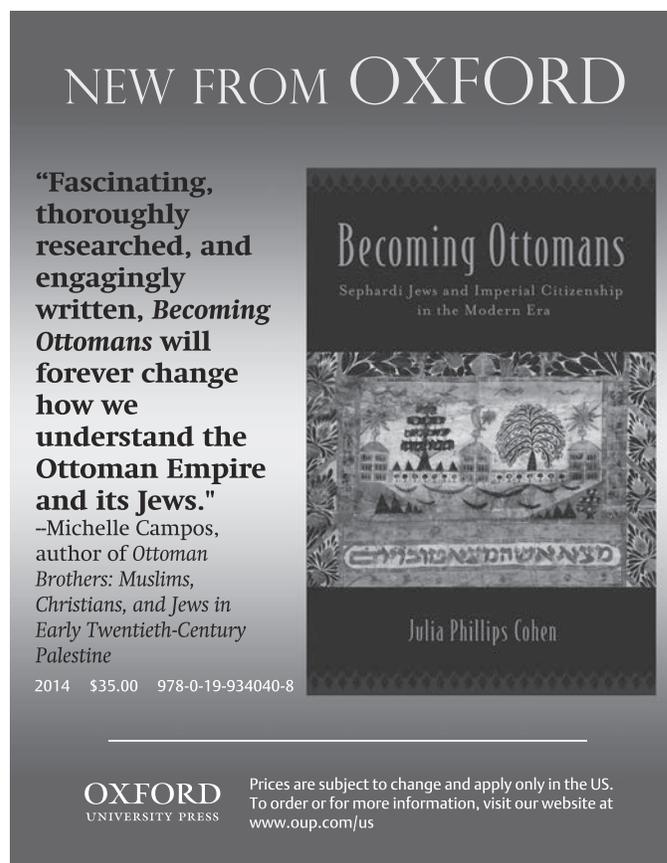
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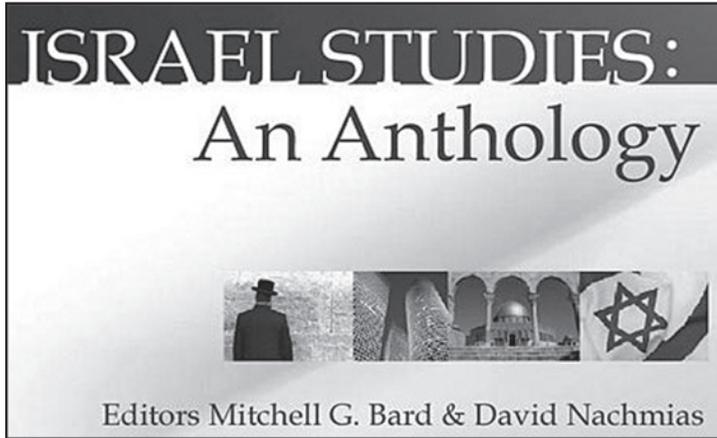
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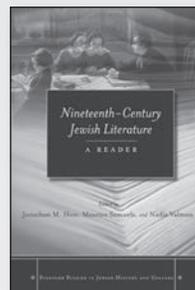
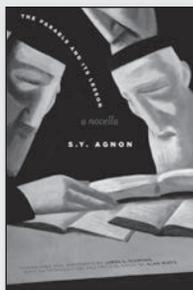
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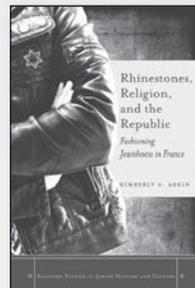


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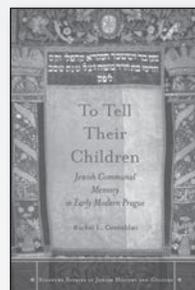
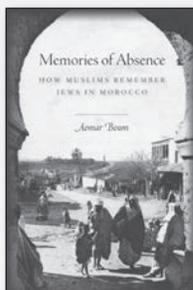


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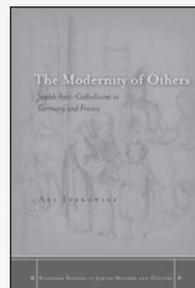
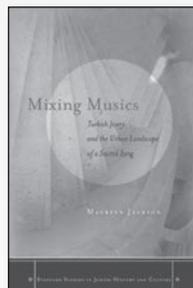


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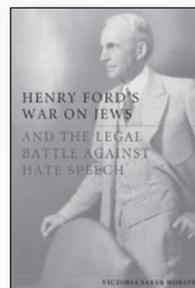
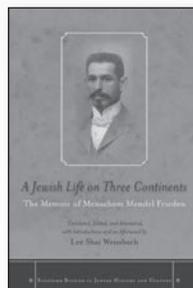


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# The Latest

## Reviewing the Eruv

Maya Balakirsky Katz

“Shaping Community: Poetics and Politics of the Eruv,” ISM Gallery of Sacred Arts, Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale, Yale School of Art, October 2012–January 2013, curated by Margaret Olin.

“It’s a Thin Line: The Eruv and the Jewish Community in New York and Beyond,” Yeshiva University Museum, October 2012–June 2013, curated by Zachary Paul Levine.

**T**hese two exhibitions focus on the *eruv*, a barely visible enclosure that according to Halakhah transforms an outdoor space into a shared courtyard and enables Jews to carry objects on the Sabbath. The exhibitions at the Yeshiva University Museum and at the Yale School of Art demonstrate how this aspect of Talmudic law is a living spatial practice. Once defined in the language of anthropology, the *eruv* becomes

interesting for its capacity to chart the radically different ways people experience the same space (and the radically different ways exhibitions treat the same subject).

The Yeshiva University Museum exhibition takes a more straightforward, historic approach. Curated by Zachary Paul Levine with the rabbinic guidance of Rabbi Adam Mintz, the exhibition begins with three early printings of Tractate Eruvin, the Talmud volume concerning the laws of *eruv*, which include occasional hand-copied schematic drawings to illustrate the opinions of rabbinical commentators. This directional framework—text to practice—defines the curatorial approach of the Yeshiva University Museum exhibition.

The exhibition meticulously reconstructs the passionate rabbinic debates surrounding the *eruv* and demonstrates how modern Jewish communities applied these opinions

in practice. It focuses almost entirely on New York City and its surrounding Jewish communities. At least half of the exhibition explores the history of the Manhattan *eruv*, the only American community *eruv* from the end of World War II until the early 1970s. The exhibition presents the bureaucratic hurdles of securing local government approval for construction and rabbinic controversies surrounding proposals for new *eruv* boundaries. The engagement between religious and secular leadership in the local project reveals a little-known story of postwar Jewish life in New York, a history that is typically told from the perspective of the Jewish commitment to Israel and Russian Jewry. The displays reference local landmarks like the Second Avenue elevated train track and local Jewish celebrities such as Rabbi Yehoshua Seigel, which serves to reconstruct vivid experiences of the city



Photograph courtesy of the author.



Photograph courtesy of the author.

during the period of its largest absorption of Jewish immigrants. This anchoring of Jewish geography to the New York City map celebrates that icon of American life—a close-knit hamlet community—right in the middle of the congestion of modern urban life. R. Justin Stewart’s installation *Extruded* offers a visual echoing of the various iterations of the Manhattan eruv, as described by the rabbinic responsa on the surrounding walls, by hanging blue and white rayon threads at different levels from the ceiling. While Stewart’s three-dimensional map created by the individual strings is difficult to read in space, the shadow they create on the raised white platform below is immediately recognizable as the iconic map of Manhattan. Stewart’s nearly invisible lines invite critical analysis of how boundaries only exist in relation to the space outside (a category with aesthetic implications); yet, the placement of the installation in the center of a room that otherwise displays the chronicles of controversial rabbinic treatises casts the artistic installation into the context of halakhic commentary.

As reflected in the show, the thin line of the eruv strongly impacts those communities living within its borders. The exhibition even pays attention to the culture that grows around the absence of an eruv, from a display of accessories worn to enable pedestrians to carry home keys (such as key tie-clips, belts, and bracelets) to Yona Verwer’s installation *Tightrope*, which looks at how the absence of an eruv on Manhattan’s Lower East Side affects the lives of the infirm and Orthodox women

with young children. *Tightrope*’s sixteen panels create an impenetrable enclosure of their own, with images of synagogue interiors that mothers and the disabled can rarely visit on the Sabbath because of the lack of an eruv. While the exhibition considers how Rabbi Moshe Feinstein’s strict opinion against the construction of an eruv in his Lower East Side neighborhood still affects women decades later, the exhibition ignores the culture wars embedded in suburban eruv politics. Outside the *Daily Show* segment on the proposed Westhampton Beach eruv, no



Photograph courtesy of the author.

reference is made to the overlapping contexts of the non-Orthodox Jewish and Orthodox Jewish experiences in the suburbs. Friction over eruv construction permits, with its First Amendment overtones, is typically a more prosaic suburban battle over public monies, as Orthodox communities, with their private yeshivas, large families and kosher-only establishments, compete with incumbent non-Orthodox communities over zoning, public school budgets, and local culture.

In contrast to the Yeshiva University exhibition, the triumvirate of exhibitions on the eruv mounted at Yale University does not rely on rabbinical advisors or religious perspectives. Conceived and curated by art historian and artist Margaret Olin, these shows look at the eruv as a minimalist architecture with rich metaphoric implications of place and boundary. When Olin does harken back to Jewish texts that discuss the social practices of eruv, these are excerpted quotes from such varied authorities as Maimonides, Franz Kafka, and Michael Chabon. These texts are framed in simple black wooden frames and hung on a white wall, as befits the display practices of modern art.

Olin describes the eruv as “urban bricolage” for its creative use of preexisting infrastructure; rather than use Talmudic text as a blueprint for the living spatial practice of the eruv, her curatorial focus is on how the eruv itself, with its metaphoric potential and its appropriation of borders, is a source of inspiration for contemporary art projects.

The number of works on display at Yale is only a fraction of the circa two hundred items on display at Yeshiva University Museum, but Olin has mounted the larger exhibition by far. The exhibition turns its visitors into pedestrians within the Yale eruv, activated by the boundaries of the three different exhibition sites as delineated on a map on the inside back cover of the exhibition catalog. The experience evokes that of Orthodox students walking the campus on the Sabbath; however, in this case, displays of modern art, rather than Jewish liturgical spaces, are the destination sites. In Suzanne Silver's text-sculpture, *Kafka in Space (Parsing the Eruv)*, neither the Talmud nor related rabbinical rulings inform the work; instead, the artist explores Franz Kafka's fictional treatment of the eruv, and how the leitmotif of the eruv throws the idea of legislating private life into high relief. Some of the artists touching on the subject of the eruv appear in both the Yeshiva and Yale exhibitions, such as Ben Schachter's embroidered eruv maps and Elliot Malkin's "Modern Orthodoxy," which uses

a laser to check the eruv. Their appearance at Yale is for the artistic questions that they raise, and their appearance at Yeshiva University is for their visual mediation of ever-evolving halakhic questions.

The Yale exhibition includes six photographers (Sophie Calle, Aklan Cohen, Daniel Bauer, Avner Bar-Hama, Margaret Olin, Ellen Rothenberg), four of whom feature disruptive divisions in Israel, one of whom focuses on the nearly invisible eruv that surrounds the Yale campus, and one who draws the Talmudic measurements of the eruv across her own body. Although the extroverted Israeli eruv, the introverted New Haven eruv, and the female flesh eruv make for fascinating social commentary, the insistent appearance of the thin line of the eruv across all the photographs turns the thin line into a formal element, like the clotheslines that cut across buildings in Paul Strand's photographs of New York in the 1920s. With the broad focus on the nature of boundaries, the third part of the exhibition includes Shirin Neshat's video, *Turbulent*

(1998), which does not refer to eruv in any form but makes use of the subject of boundaries to evoke divisions between men and women in contemporary Iran.

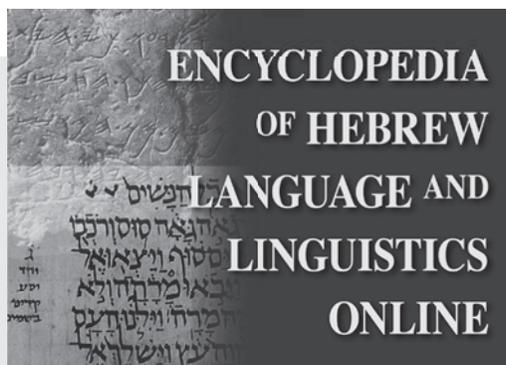
The eruv provides an elegant tool for mapping modern Orthodoxy as a habitat and as a subject. The viewer of these two exhibitions might wonder how to chart the terra incognita of the Jewish experience outside the eruv or whether new edges could be inscribed through the eruv's boundaries. How would one map the way Orthodox Jews, unable to afford living within the eruv, organize themselves outside the boundaries of its steep real estate prices? How would one represent Jewish communities that drive to synagogue on the Sabbath and do not subscribe to the concept of eruv?

*Maya Balakirsky Katz is associate professor of Art History at Touro College and on the faculty of Touro's Graduate School of Jewish Studies. She is the author of The Visual Culture of Chabad (Cambridge University Press, 2010).*

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BRILL

# Do You Just Love Philip Roth?

Brett Ashley Kaplan

“So, do you just love Philip Roth?” I didn’t quite know what to say, a little surprised by the question, coming as it did out of the near darkness from a New-Yorkese-speaking stranger at a movie theater. Granted, the film was *Philip Roth: Unmasked* and the venue was Film Forum (the venerable and wonderful theatre on Houston in NYC that has been around almost as long as me), so I perhaps should not have been all that surprised. I answered something like “Well, it’s complicated, love isn’t quite the right word.” I was feeling shy and didn’t want to reveal that I was a “Roth scholar,” or that I was on my way to a Roth conference in honor of the great writer’s eightieth birthday, or that I was about two-thirds of the way through writing a book on Roth. My interlocutor replied: “He’s a bit of a misogynist.” “So, you don’t love him?” I queried. She nudged her mate (a man) with her elbow, cocked her head to the left, and said, “He does.” The lights dimmed even further and just before the film began one of the cute queer boys behind me said, “I’ve read like seven Philip Roth novels and after a while they all start to blur together.”

So, do I love Roth, and do you? Well, as I told my neighbor at the Film Forum, it’s complicated. I have been reading and working on Roth for many, many years (first book? *Portnoy’s Complaint*, read in Murray Baumgarten’s Jewish American Literature course at UC Santa Cruz around 1987). I have been very, very frustrated at times not only with his problematic (this overused word is an understatement) representations of women but also with his attacks on feminists, his queasy-making depictions of queer women, not to mention the totemic manner through which black characters are consistently plunked throughout his texts (more on all of this in my book, *Jewish Anxiety: Philip Roth*). Not to mention the fact that, were I to review his entire oeuvre (ok, at time of writing I am a few shy of having read all thirty-one novels) I would say his prose is full of brilliant sentences, turns of phrase, and released neuroses, but he should have redacted and condensed more, and written less. As Roth himself told us at the conference, “I’m far from liking all the pages I’ve written.” So, do I love Roth? Yes, most of his prose I love.

Roth’s announcement in *Les inrocks* that he was retiring from writing (“Némésis

sera mon dernier livre.”) predated the spectacular Roth@80 conference. Of course, the planning of the conference predated his surprise retirement (and just as a side note many people at the conference fully expect Roth to write another novel). So there was much reference made to this new turn in his long career. The first day of the conference, on March 18, 2013 at the Robert Treat Hotel in Roth’s hometown of Newark, followed a traditional academic format with simultaneous sessions of panels consisting



Philip Roth’s childhood home. Photograph by Michael Kimmage.

of two or three papers. I heard some excellent essays on queering Roth (David Brauner), Roth’s Newark (Michael Kimmage), Roth and Joyce (David Stone), Death and Roth (Debra Shostak), and many other wonderful essays by established and emerging scholars, as well as looser roundtable discussions by Aimee Pozorski, Pia Masiero, Dean Franco, Bernard Rogers, Benjamin Schreier, Ezra Cappell, and others. It was marvelous to be in the same room with so many other people who inhabit the same imaginative headspace and who can understand any reference to (or any joke about) any moment in any of Roth’s novels.

The second day of the conference, on the day of Roth’s eightieth birthday, had an entirely different flavor. It began at the glorious Newark Public Library, designed

by Rankin and Kellogg and considered one of the crown jewels of Newark civic architecture in 1901. The day ended with a reception, a series of talks by writers and friends of Roth and then Roth himself, followed by a birthday toast and cake. All of these took place at another crown jewel of Newark’s former glory, the Newark Museum, which opened in 1909, and is enhanced by a capacious and elegant courtyard. At the library a carefully curated exhibit about Roth ringed the second floor. Photographs of Roth in his military garb, Roth as a young boy, Roth with Ben-Gurion, Obama, and Clinton, Roth’s parents and grandparents, and so on were paired with apt quotations from Roth’s works. Then, we gathered into three big busses and set off on a tour of Roth’s Newark. Our tour guide was Liz Del Tufo, the president of the Newark Preservation and Landmarks Committee, who is dedicated to resurrecting or at least delaying the destruction of some of the great dinosaurs of the Newark of Roth’s era. And they deserve all the attention they can garner. On the tour, in addition to stopping at Roth’s former home, Roth’s high school, and other points of Rothian interest, we passed many marvelous old mansions with boarded up windows, surrounded by barbed wire, and looking very sorry indeed. The day ended with a reception, a series of talks by writers and friends of Roth, and then Roth himself, followed by a birthday toast and cake. All of these took place at another crown jewel of Newark’s former glory, the Newark Museum, which opened in 1909, and is enhanced by a capacious and elegant courtyard.

Before the conference I was deeply worried that the question “so, do you love Roth,” would be answered with an unqualified yes by everyone there, that there would be general unruffled sycophantic attachment, and that my complicated, ambivalent, relationship with Roth would have to be quashed. Despite the fact that we were all scholars, one possibility floated when we were wondering what we might say if we were granted the opportunity to shake Roth’s hand was “I’m a fan of your work.”

For the record, I blew my chance to shake his hand because of my sneakers. When I arrived at the museum, Roth was

standing there, chatting with someone and that was my chance. But I was wearing jeans and sneakers, so felt wrongly attired for the moment. What would I have said anyway? “I have been frustrated by your work for decades.” “Your prose is glorious and brilliant but I wish you’d written less.” “Reading *Sabbath’s Theater* made me want to sequester my two little girls to keep them safe from the likes of Mickey Sabbath with all his admiration for his ancient Italian teacher with the twelve-year-old girlfriend!” “What do you think of the current title of my book, *Jewish Anxiety: Philip Roth*?” “What is *Jewish Anxiety*?” I mean, really what could I possibly have said in one sentence that would encapsulate all that ambivalence and confusion? By the time I had donned my conference dress, Roth had been whisked away for the VIP dinner and then, later, he was preceded by a fragment of the band from Weequahic High School and surrounded by well-wishers, TV cameras, etc. The reception before Roth’s speech included such literati as Nathan Englander, Jonathan Safran Foer, Nicole Krauss, Don DeLillo, Paul Auster and doubtless others I would have recognized by name but not by sight. It was quite a spectacular gathering of birthday celebrants.

We assembled in the auditorium of the museum and the first speaker, Jonathan Lethem, spun a gorgeous narrative about *The Breast*, his first Roth novel, which he’d read while vacationing in the Hamptons with a rich girl into whose pants he couldn’t get. His remarks, which he cleverly titled, “CounterRoth,” noted that all American writers have to contend with Roth and that the latter had “closed the gap between Bellow and *Mad* magazine” and elicited a “strongly opinionated, half-aggrieved love.” So, do you love Roth, Mr. Lethem? The answer would be a qualified yes and Lethem seemed to support the argument of the queering Roth essay I’d heard the day before when he closed with, “The only breast I fondled in Southhampton was Roth’s.”

After Lethem, Hermione Lee delivered an eloquent speech about Shakespeare in Roth, Claudia Roth Pierpont spoke about three undertheorized aspects of Roth’s writing: music, silverware, and women. I would agree with her about the first two but not about the third, although I don’t

agree with myself about the third . . . or rather, I can’t decide, or rather I have been so aggrieved for so long, so pissed off so often, that I can’t believe I am even struggling to articulate what is problematic about gender in Roth. Claudia Roth Pierpont’s suggested that many of Roth’s female characters are more complex than is often noted. Pierpont thickly described George Ziad’s wife, Anna, from *Operation Shylock*, then noted that when she asked Roth about her he said he wanted to “reverse the stereotype.” Yet Roth describes Anna as a “tiny, almost weightless woman” whose “intense and globular” eyes were “set like a lemur’s in a triangular face not very much larger than a man’s fist” (140). This description seems to defy the thick one Pierpont wanted to cull from it; not only is she literally “anorexic” (140) but the scalar comparison of her face with a man’s fist seems to make her ripe for a punch. Pierpont went on to tell us that, in a “snippy” mood, she phoned Roth to complain about Jamie in *Exit Ghost* because with her expensive cashmere sweaters casually slung over lingerie “she’s kind of perfect.” Roth replied: “You should hear what she says about you.”

Then, after Alain Finkelkraut performed a reading of *Nemesis* (supposedly Roth’s last novel), Edna O’Brien introduced Roth by recounting a series of recollections of her time with him. He pounded on her door in a rage one day because during rehearsals for his then-wife Claire Bloom’s play *The Cherry Orchard* (which appears in *Sabbath’s Theater*, 389–90) in London, Roth was not sufficiently consulted. Thinking that fresh air might calm the angry author, O’Brien took him to the park whereupon he flung himself down on the wet grass. When she had first met Roth, at a dinner party at her house, he had attempted (unsuccessfully) to address her in an Irish accent. “It has been assumed we were lovers, I have to confess to you that we were not,” O’Brien continued, and then, “there is a misconception that Roth does not like women; well he may not like women, but he certainly loves them.” When O’Brien had asked Roth about his relationship with his mother, whether she loved him—yes, she did—Roth had emphatically replied, and “I was too adorable for words.”

Then Roth took the stage. He began his remarks by asking O’Brien to confirm

that she had told the story of him flinging himself down on the grass and noting that the author of *Portnoy’s Complaint* doesn’t need to be thought of as any more childish. Roth then began by speaking about all he would not speak about, using the rhetorical trope of proslipsis. (Just as I was making a note to myself to email someone from my former rhetoric department to find out what this trope was called Roth announced that his friend Alain Finkelkraut had told him it was either paralipsis or proslipsis.) Each of the moments of proslipsis was amplified and made visceral by the memories of the tour. As Roth told us he wouldn’t tell us about riding his bike to the Weequahic branch of the library and returning home with a basket full of books, I could see in my mind’s eye the route he would have taken through the “tidy” (this was our tour guide’s word) single family homes of his childhood haunts. Then, after describing all the things he would not describe from the Newark of the 1940s, he closed by reading sections from a long passage from *Sabbath’s Theater* (694–711), among Roth’s most marvelous novels. “I’ve described my last breast, you’ll be glad to know,” he told us, riffing on Lethem’s story. The passage begins at the cemetery where Sabbath looks for his family and includes a series of ruminations on the gravestones: “Our beloved mother Minne. Our beloved husband and father Sidney . . .” (705); it ends with, “Here I am,” as though Roth were throwing a gauntlet down to death and defying us to make an epitaph for him. Later in *Sabbath’s Theater*, Sabbath bitterly imagines his own gravestone: “Beloved Whoremonger, Seducer, Sodomist, Abuser of Women, Destroyer of Morals, Ensnarer of Youth, Uxoricide, Suicide 1929–1994” (716).

At one point in *Philip Roth: Unmasked* Roth is asked where he plans to be buried. Roth replies that if he revealed this information the day after his death, his grave would be flooded with teeny boppers. Beloved writer?

*Brett Ashley Kaplan is associate professor and Conrad Humanities Scholar in the Department of Comparative Literature at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She is the author of Jewish Anxiety: Philip Roth (Continuum/Bloomsbury, forthcoming).*

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מרכז למדעי היהדות

# Questionnaire

## What's your ideal AJS conference?

### Zachary Braiterman

*Associate Professor of Religion,  
Syracuse University*

I've been going to the AJS conference just about every year for the past twenty years. I keep coming back for the small venue and intimate scale. If you go for long enough, you get to know everyone. Year in and out, you run into her, him, or them in the lobby, on a panel, at the hotel bar, or wandering around the book exhibit. The proximity makes for a sense of community-citizenship and close bonds of scholarly-human fellowship, which I think is special to a forum like the AJS conference with its parochial character, and which makes the conference precious. What would be an ideal conference? One where I get to see my friends, meet colleagues, make new friends, and hear something new. Not the same old lines of analysis that I've heard over and over, but something, anything, that I've never heard before, at least not at the AJS conference, some kind of intellectual connection that might force me to rethink the study of the Jews and Judaism, the human condition, in some new light, from a skewed perspective and larger frame.

### Galeet Dardashti

*Postdoctoral Fellow, Taub Center for Israel  
Studies & Skirball Department for Hebrew and  
Judaic Studies, New York University*

As an anthropologist, I find it very exciting to share my ethnographic and theoretical work with scholars from a range of disciplines who might not normally come across it. This is, in part, why I have enjoyed attending AJS conferences. Over the past several years I have delivered papers at AJS's annual meeting on organized panels spanning a diverse range of topics: Jewish music; the economics of Jewish education; mysticism and spirituality; Israeli culture and nationalism; and Mizrahi pop culture. This has meant gaining perspectives and feedback from scholars who view issues from diverse vantage points and methodologies, and I know that this has enriched my research. I believe AJS

could do more to facilitate such important interactions. Perhaps AJS could encourage a formalized "speed-dating" type of academic networking during a reception, where attendees might meet a range of scholars over hors d'oeuvres; these brief interactions would likely lead to new collaborations.

At the same time, it is very important for the more specialized caucuses to have a space to meet. My ideal AJS conference would also offer a forum/meeting for scholars who examine contemporary cultural studies (such as anthropologists, sociologists, ethnomusicologists, folklorists, and scholars of film, dance, and literature). We—who study the very recent past and present—are a small minority at AJS, and it would be wonderful to have an opportunity to discuss our work and shared theoretical interests and concerns.

In short, the ideal AJS conference would provide attendees with more opportunities for interaction and exchange beyond our disciplinary boundaries while also allowing further communication and connection with scholars in our own specialized fields.

Finally, I feel a responsibility to voice what so many of us feel: if we continue to meet at the beginning of winter vacation, why not occasionally hold the meetings in sunny Florida? Laura Levitt and David Shneer's annual AJS party could only be improved if folks were sipping margaritas with an ocean-side view.

### Jonathan Decter

*Associate Professor & Edmond J. Safra  
Professor of Sephardic Studies,  
Brandeis University*

I try to strike a balance among the following: attending several sessions in my most immediate fields of interest, sitting in on at least one session in a field I know little about (heard a great one last year on Irano-Judaica), scheduled professional and social meetings (which should involve sushi and white wine), and at least one unplanned adventure (which should also involve sushi and white wine). And of course, books, books, books.

### Daniella Doron

*Lecturer in Holocaust and Genocide  
Studies, Monash University*

The heart of the AJS conference lies in the hallways, conference rooms, and cafés of the hotel. My ideal AJS conference would involve finding myself listening to a panel that may not be directly associated with my area of work, but piques my interest methodologically or because of the eclectic and unexpected composition of the panel. I too am guilty of organizing panels around a specific topic. And yet I find the most thought-provoking panels are those that are bound together around a methodological question or debate. Having said that, some of the most rewarding intellectual exchanges and moments of professional development flow through the conversations that take place away from the panels, in the hallways and coffee shops of the hotel. The majority of AJS conference participants use the conference as an opportunity to catch up with old friends and informally meet senior scholars who can help guide their professional paths. An ideal conference could find a way to formalize those types of conversations—through mentoring sessions and programs; informal interest group meetings based on subfields (French Jewish history, for instance) where scholars can exchange ideas, archival knowledge, and learn about developing research projects; sponsored social functions for faculty with shared social and professional experiences such as untenured faculty, faculty at large state institutions, or those working at universities with large Jewish populations; and, finally, more working groups based on research fields that are scheduled during prime conference time. Having recently moved from the rich Jewish Studies community of New York to the significantly smaller (yet vibrant) one of Melbourne, ultimately the most rewarding AJS conferences allow me to reconnect with a supportive and energetic academic community.

## Shai Ginsburg

Andrew W. Mellon Assistant Professor for  
Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Duke University

An ideal AJS conference is no different from other annual disciplinary conferences (in contradistinction to small conferences that focus on one theme or issue). The main questions for me are not only what conference format (or formats) allows participants to attend talks by their friends, socialize with colleagues from other universities, and spread around the latest gossip, though all are worthy ends in and of themselves. An ideal conference also provides a space for divergent activities, not all reconcilable. For one, it should allow for an easy survey of the state of the field at the present. Given the fact that Jewish Studies is anything but a coherent discipline, and that it is much more a loose network of scholars from divergent disciplines who espouse divergent scholarly agendas brought together only by their subject matter, such a survey is anything but simple. An ideal conference would thus highlight works that have the potential to have a wide impact beyond the particular pale of the discipline and research agenda of their authors. Simultaneously a conference should also generate intensive scholarly exchanges both within the particular disciplines that make up Jewish Studies and within the field (however it is defined) at large. Such exchanges, inasmuch as they require time and engagement and perhaps even particular disciplinary knowledge, do not always go hand in hand with a survey of the field as a whole. Still, most important to me are unexpected intellectual encounters, ones that lead me to think anew and from a new perspective about the questions on which my own research focuses. Often such exchanges take place with people outside my own discipline. Indeed, a successful conference leads people to engage productively with

presentations in areas they would not normally follow. This is the biggest challenge to conference organizers, the most difficult to achieve, yet one that turns the conference experience into a most satisfying one.

An afterthought: much of this depends not so much on the conference organizers, on the format (or formats) of the conference, and on the selection of papers presented, as on the institutional culture of participants. Are they interested in crossing over their disciplinary boundaries or do they rather stick to their familiar setting? Do they look to reinforce what they believe in or, rather, are they willing to challenge and question it?

## Amy Horowitz

Lecturer in International Studies,  
The Ohio State University

I remember my first AJS conferences well. As a new mother and recent PhD, I was impressed by the intentional creation of a community of communities. There, in the not-so-*heimish* context of Chicago and Boston corporate hotels, parents like me dropped off their very young children at on-site childcare and hurried off to sessions that we had efficiently mapped out in the program booklet text. I can remember excitedly noting that a session on queer theory had managed to make its way into what I had expected to be a more narrowly imagined Jewish Studies rubric. I also remember attending the oh-so early morning women's caucus where a Mizrahi feminist scholar spoke with passion and poise.

Over the years, my initial concern over the privileging of "mainstream" Jewish Studies gave way to a sense that AJS celebrates the multiple streams that coexist within the porous boundaries of "the field." I watched music and art colleagues reimagine the

AJS conference by creating new panels and sections that reflected our research interests—and I was reminded of something African American culture historian Bernice Johnson Reagon had said to me years earlier—"If you feel something is missing, it is probably the sound of your own voice."

In other words, AJS seems to have succeeded in fostering a structure that allows for new voices to enter the conversation. My ideal AJS conference then, would be one that continues to nurture this inclusive sense of tradition and transformation beyond what we can now imagine.

If I were to suggest two areas for further development, they would be:

Global reach: find resources for increased numbers of Jewish Studies scholars and students from countries outside of North America to add their voices to the mix.

Multimedia teaching: For seven years I have been teaching a course that is based on blog-bridging, videoconference sessions, and conflict transformation. I coteach the course and study tour "Living Jerusalem: Ethnography and Blogbridging in Disputed Territory" with a Muslim American colleague. I would enjoy a forum devoted to multimedia teaching. If I take Dr. Reagon's words to heart—I guess it's time for me to add my voice to the conversation and get this idea off the ground!

## Shaul Kelner

Associate Professor of Sociology and  
Jewish Studies & Director, Program in  
Jewish Studies, Vanderbilt University

AJS conferences consistently provide all the elements that make for an ideal conference: an array of high quality presentations by a diverse group of scholars, excellent exhibits, and a first-rate hallway experience. The

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question is, do I make the most of these opportunities? In any given year, the answer to that question determines whether I leave feeling that the conference has been ideal.

Over the years, I have approached the conference in different ways. In some years, I have immersed myself in the sessions of my particular division. In others, I have spent my time in conversations and meetings outside the sessions. Both approaches, however, have generally left me feeling that I was missing too much, surrounded by treasures of which I was hardly partaking.

Lately, I have been trying to spend much more time in sessions that are far afield from my actual area of study. The AJS conference provides one of the few opportunities to encounter Jewish Studies in its full breadth. I try to experience the field writ large, beyond my four cubits. Are there leading minds who have trained my friends and colleagues in other subfields but whom I have never read nor heard in person? I try to see them. Are there smart young scholars whom I meet in the halls and who might feel supported by an interested person at their sessions? I go to hear them, too. Are there people working on similar questions as me but from a radically different disciplinary vantage point? Circle those on my program guide.

We are, by dint of our profession, specialists. And while the AJS conference provides an opportunity for us to delve deeper into our respective specializations, it affords a wonderful opportunity to listen in on others' conversations, to expand horizons, and to experience the much larger scholarly enterprise of which we are all a part.

### **Laura S. Levitt**

*Professor of Religion, Jewish Studies, and Gender, Temple University*

Admittedly I have an unusual perspective on this question. For the past fifteen years or so I have hosted a party on the Monday night of the conference and have increasingly spent much of my time at the AJS conference—when not in sessions—handing out invitations and simply encouraging any and all to come to the party. For my ideal conference we are in a beautiful hotel where we have access to a lush penthouse suite for the party. This is not a dream—we have done this in L.A. with the generous support of AJS and my amazing cosponsors! Of course, to make this vision sing requires large and diverse participation in the conference,

many scholars of Jewish Studies and related fields and subfields all gathered together in such a hotel. In this ideal hotel there are lots of communal spaces, lobbies, and lounges where people at the conference can bump into each other and just hang out. These are crucial aspects of my ideal conference, but I also want to be able to go to sessions.

I want to attend sessions where I learn new things, where I hear new voices as well as great papers by people I know and by scholars whose work I have admired for a long time and want to hear and finally meet in person. I also want to attend sessions where there is lots of time for questions and discussion and where those in the audience contribute and enhance the session. And I want to be able to continue the conversation after the session is over as we spill into the hall and find some of those communal spaces to continue to talk in passionate and engaged ways. These visions of enriching sessions also come from my experiences at recent AJS gatherings. I had an amazing two-plus hour conversation just this past year with two presenters I had never met before, two early career scholars on a panel about Argentinian Jewish life. And, at my ideal conference, I also want to be able to see the works of those I have heard and met on display in the book exhibit. I want to be able to buy their books at the conference.

I have to say, as I write these reflections, it is less about ideals and more about what I now experience at this conference each and every year. I love the size, the scale of this gathering as opposed to the AAR, the religion conference I also regularly attend. I like that we are in a single hotel (more or less) in any given city, and I am grateful to the energetic and inspired leadership of AJS, who for the past number of years has made these ideals a reality.

### **Andrea B. Lieber**

*Associate Professor of Religion & Sophia Ava Asbell Chair in Judaic Studies, Dickinson College*

Working at a small liberal arts college, AJS keeps me connected to the broader field of Jewish Studies—its people, its trends, and its politics. The conference comes once a year as that rare opportunity to network, compare notes, and get my scholarly wheels turning. I learn what my colleagues are doing and how they are doing it; and if I'm presenting my own work, I get valuable feedback from knowledgeable peers. And yet, as much as I look forward to the AJS conference, I have noticed that lately, I tend to spend less time

in formal conference sessions and more time in the lobby and the hallways. And considering the spotty attendance in the sessions I do attend, it seems I'm not alone.

My ideal AJS conference is a meeting where we eliminate our guilt over the inclination to skip out on formal sessions by making informal, spontaneous conversation a legitimate and driving force of the conference program itself. This vision of the AJS conference conceptually flips the hotel lobby and the meeting room, thus shifting the “buzz” of the hallway—the informal networking that is so important to our professional development—from the margins to the center of the AJS conference experience.

Imagine a block of time in our conference program that is driven by ideas and questions generated spontaneously, without any formal presentation to shape the discussion. A scholar working on a particular project might “host” a session in which she raises some questions she's thinking about in her work. Those who share her questions might join in and stay for a while before moving over to a nearby discussion about pedagogy, or another about gender. Meeting facilitation styles like Open Source Technology or World Café, popular in the business and nonprofit sector, are useful tools that foster “structured spontaneity”—sessions where the issues that matter to the scholars in the room drive the conversation.

Now, there are lots of reasons to maintain the traditional presentation model. Let's face it, many of our institutions fund our travel only when we present our research publicly, and many of us need that momentary spotlight. But, if new technologies are forcing higher education to rethink the nature of the academic classroom, maybe it's time for us to rethink the way we share our work at the AJS conference?

### **Shai Secunda**

*The Martin Buber Society of Fellows, Hebrew University*

Communication has improved so dramatically over the past few years to the point that most of us are in constant electronic contact with fellow scholars throughout the year. As such, the ideal AJS conference is one where *human* contact with colleagues, mentors, and friends is at the center. A great conference is one where the papers are more than transcripts read aloud but constitute real-time dialogues. There are more roundtable discussions, more seminar-like presentations, etc. More than

that, the places and times available for professional meetings outside of the session rooms are ample. Most of all, an ideal AJS conference is one where the conversations about the texts and theories that brought us to academia in the first place spill into coffee shops, bars, and those “epic” AJS parties.

### Rona Sheramy

*Executive Director, AJS*

My ideal conference is one in which people leave with connections, insights, information, and possibilities that they didn't have when they arrived. I am acutely aware of the cost—in time, family arrangements, and money—that members pay in order to come to the conference. AJS has to earn people's participation each year, and make it worth their while. The availability of video conferencing and online forums for sharing research means making the case for in-person conferences is even more urgent. So the question is, why not just move the AJS conference online? Why not arrange for a massive exchange of papers over the internet? It would certainly save everyone (including AJS) a lot of money and travel time. But scholarly communication happens differently in person than online or over the phone or by reading a journal article. The conference is a unique form of scholarly communication because of its very social and spontaneous nature. You can't replace the opportunity presented by putting five scholars on a podium for an unscripted roundtable discussion, or of presenting a new

theory to an audience of experts, and having them bounce ideas and responses off each other. Nor can you replace the opportunity created by bumping into someone in line for coffee. Corporate leaders like Google are structuring their cafeterias to create the same chances for informal interactions (a lunch line that lingers a bit) that happen naturally at the AJS conference, whether in the lobby or book exhibit or hotel cafe. Yahoo's recent decision to bring telecommuters back to the office highlighted a slew of research about how innovation happens when people interact face to face. Scholarship is often, by necessity, a solitary endeavor, but the conference offers a respite from that, and an opportunity to put ideas to the test, get feedback, speak informally, and connect with someone who you have been meaning to connect with, but couldn't find the time or right approach. So, an ideal conference to me is one in which people leave thinking “I could never have done that by email.”

### Carol Zemel

*Professor of Art History, York University*

Thinking about my ideal AJS conference, I face a pleasant challenge: there isn't much I would change or add. I came to Jewish Studies after Avi Chai Foundation, a midcareer reorientation from the history of modern art to Jewish visual culture, modern and contemporary. From my first AJS conference in December 2000, I knew I had found my way home. But what makes the annual conference better or more effective than

other scholarly meetings? Well, the AJS conference is relatively small and *heimish* (I hope not clannish), and that suits me fine. Even though our annual breakfast is at 7:00 a.m., I really value the wonderful work of the Women's Caucus. I do a lot of schmoozing with what I think of as “the-only-Jewish-community-where-I-feel-at-home”; as a secular Jewish woman, it's my ideal *beit midrash*.

Still, with schmoozing and committee meetings, I get to fewer sessions than I'd like. I'm not sure how to resolve this embarrassment of riches. I'm looking forward to this year's new program formats—the seminars, in particular. I love the idea of precirculated or posted papers from a group of scholars, more discussion, and lengthened or multiple timeslots. I'm concerned, though, that this might be an elite conversation; I'd really enjoy a more open seminar discussion with a fixed number of participants—maybe twenty to thirty—who sign on in advance, study the work, and bring prepared voices to the discussion. Digital projects are important teaching and research tools for me. I'd like to learn about them in the more intimate setting of a scheduled display booth encounter, much like the book display, rather than using up dedicated session slots. Finally, I'd love to attend an annual session devoted to “second thoughts,” in which senior scholars think aloud about the changes, revisions, and vagaries of their earlier scholarship. It would be part methodology, part experience, and a view of how our intellectual practice works.

The AJS conference is a great intellectual and community gathering. Can't wait till December!

# ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

## 45TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE

**DECEMBER 15–17, 2013**

Sheraton Boston, Boston, MA

### SPECIAL EVENTS

- **THATCamp Jewish Studies** (December 15, 9:00 am–12:30 pm): an open forum for exploring issues related to Jewish Studies, technology, and digital media.
- **Plenary Lecture** (December 15, 8:15 pm–9:30 pm): “From *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to Jewish Scholarship Today: The Issues We Have Faced and Those That Lie Before Us,” delivered by Michael A. Meyer (HUC-JIR). “The Place of Jewish Studies: Discipline, Interdiscipline, and Identity Studies,” formal response delivered by Rachel Havrelock (University of Illinois at Chicago).
- **Digital Media Workshop** (December 16, 10:30 am–12:00 pm): with the latest online and digital resources for Jewish Studies scholars.
- **AJS Honors Its Authors Coffee Break** (December 16, 4:00 pm–4:30 pm): celebrating AJS members who have published books in 2013. Sponsored by the Jewish Book Council Sami Rohr Prize.
- **Graduate Student Lighting Sessions** (multiple events, see conference schedule): an interdisciplinary forum for graduate student presentations.

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