

BOOK REVIEWS

David Aaron. *Biblical Ambiguities: Metaphor, Semantics and Divine Imagery*. The Brill Reference Library of Ancient Judaism. Leiden: Brill, 2001. ix, 221 pp.

This is an interesting, well-written and important study, relevant to anyone interested in better understanding metaphor in the Bible, figurative language, or idolatry. David Aaron, Professor of Bible at Hebrew Union College—Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, was trained in rabbinics and linguistics at Brandeis University; this training offers him a certain sensitivity to how language, especially what many would consider figurative language, functions. Thus, the book really deals with the importance of understanding semantics for interpretation.

The core claim of the book is that most statements that biblical scholars consider to be metaphorical are not metaphorical. Aaron depicts this first by critiquing a common “binary” view of language, which views all utterances as either literal or metaphorical, and assumes that words’ meanings are determined by “ontological identity,” that is, necessary and sufficient features that adhere to the word itself. Instead, following the Brandeis University linguist Ray Jackendorff, Aaron speaks of “typicality conditions” (p. 77), noting that indeterminacy and fuzziness are part of human language (p. 76). Though certain words may be clearly defined, e.g. scientific words by the scientific community, most words from the general perspective are like “dog”—“We know a ‘dog’ when we see one” (p. 74).

Not all linguists agree with this notion of semantics. However, as Aaron correctly notes, this notion has an important implication: it suggests that there is not a binary opposition between literal and metaphorical language, but, rather, a gradient. Thus, most scholars incorrectly overextend the concept of metaphor, ignoring natural semantic fields of words (p. 110). Biblical images like “God is king” belong in this gradient, and should not be considered metaphorical, because they do not require what James Fernandez suggests metaphors require: “a stretch of the imagination” (p. 61). According to Aaron, “‘metaphor’ should be saved for a more distinctive rhetorical strategy, one that involves a process or decoding and mapping” (p. 111). He also develops a criterion for suggesting when we have a true metaphor (pp. 101–123), and makes it quite clear that scholars have exaggerated the extent of metaphorical God-talk in the Bible for several reasons, including misunderstanding the nature of metaphor, having anachronistic biases about the biblical text; and treating the Bible too much as a unity. The latter points are certainly correct; the former will depend on whether the linguistic perspective of Jackendorff is compelling.

The concluding chapters deal predominantly with idolatry, aniconism, and the ark as an icon. He correctly observes that too many scholars accept Deutero-Isaiah’s depiction of idolatry as normative for the entire Bible. He suggests that the ark originally had an iconic status in early Israel, and that groups in Israel treated (an)iconism in particular ways not for theological reasons, as most scholars suggest, but for a combination of social and political reasons, mostly related to the as-

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sumption of Aaronide priests to power and their control of which icons were permitted (pp. 185–192). This suggestion has some merit, but may be criticized as one of a group of suggestions heard now in biblical studies that views religious developments as purely political. (For example, centralization of worship as depicted in Deuteronomy 12 is seen by some as only an attempt by the royal powers to consolidate power in Jerusalem.) The importance of politics in religion should not be minimized, but it seems foolish to understand all significant religious developments such that “It probably all comes down to politics and control” (p. 192). It is odd that Aaron is so attracted to this position, since elsewhere he eschews widely held modern notions such as the indeterminacy of textual meaning (pp. 4–7).

The major contribution of the book is the suggestion that scholars have overstated significantly the extent of metaphorical God-talk in the Bible. How correct Aaron is depends on whether his/Jackendorff’s theory of language is correct. His notion of a “gradient” is attractive; and his observation that “. . . gods differed from humans . . . not in absolute terms, but in degrees” (p. 193) is well argued. It would have been helpful, however, to see whether this general theory resulted in a different or better understanding of certain utterances such as “God is king” or “God is father,” which others have analyzed as metaphorical.

Given the highly technical linguistic issues that are presented, the book is quite clear. It is unfortunate, however, that it took over five years to bring to press, so it is not up to date bibliographically. It also ignores some earlier, basic works (e.g., pp. 160–162, wherein a discussion of *lyla* meaning “gods” does not refer to the same conclusions in the Koehler-Baumgartner *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*). There are a fair number of typographical errors in the Hebrew (e.g., p. 58, which has יהיה for the Tetragrammaton), and in other foreign languages (e.g., 173 n. 48, where the “d,” the determinative for deities in Akkadian, should appear as a superscript). In some cases the bibliography and the notes do not match (e.g., p. 62 refers to Levenson 1993a, but in the bibliography, there is only a Levenson 1993). These are relatively minor concerns, however, and do not interfere with the clear and often witty prose used to outline this important problem.

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Shelly Matthews. *First Converts: Rich Pagan Women and the Rhetoric of Mission in Early Judaism and Christianity*. Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. x, 164 pp.

In this very balanced and thought-provoking book, Shelly Matthews studies a series of Greek and Roman texts concerning Gentile women of high standing who were attracted to Judaism and Christianity. These texts, in particular Josephus’ novelistic conversion and expulsion story in *Antiquities* 18.65–84, are well known and often discussed, but they have rarely been set into a wider framework. Matthews ar-

gues that Josephus, Luke, “and other religious apologists,” in recounting episodes of upper-class women’s associations with their communities, followed a rhetorical strategy. These authors were anxious to depict their respective communities as compatible with Greco-Roman culture. The existence of pagan upper-class women supporting the Jewish cause could demonstrate such a compatibility. Matthews is well aware of the numerous derogatory statements by such authors as Tacitus and Plutarch, who criticize women’s involvement in politics and religion. Jewish and Christian use of the sympathetic Gentile woman as an apologetic figure, one might think, could have a boomerang effect. Matthews tries to solve this problem by pointing out that women in Greco-Roman antiquity often played an active role in religious performances and that this role was often accepted. The narratives of Josephus and Luke thus reflect a historical phenomenon.

The book begins with a somewhat oddly placed passage from Juvenal (*Sat.* 6.542–47). In his famously misogynous sixth satire, Juvenal depicts an old Jewish woman, whom he describes as an interpreter of the laws of Jerusalem, who “tells you dreams of any kind you please for the smallest of coins.” For Matthews this old woman is not a mendicant, but a professional missionary and thus a good example of ancient Jewish proselytism. Although the sketchy literary evidence regarding Jewish proselytism often allows for controversial interpretations, Juvenal’s Jewish woman hardly provides a good argument in favor of a Jewish mission.

In the first chapter, “Crimes of Passion: Religion, Sex and State Subversion in *Antiquities* 18:65–84,” Matthews provides a thorough reading of Josephus’s account of the expulsion of Isis worshippers and Jews from Rome in 19 CE. In both cases of expulsion it is a highborn woman who is the source of the trouble for both the Jews and the Isis community. Comparing this text with accounts of the same events in Tacitus and Suetonius, Matthews convincingly shows how Josephus deflects accusations of sexual misconduct concerning the Jews by specifically referencing the sexual misconduct among the Isis practitioners. Josephus reacts to a pattern in Roman literature that tends to fuse subversive religious and sexual activity. Moreover, Matthews argues, these texts suggest elite Roman anxiety about the missionary influence of foreign religions in Rome. One may very well disagree on the last point. Erich Gruen in *Diaspora* (Berkeley 2002, published after Matthews’ book) questions such an anxiety on the Roman side. Neither Tacitus nor Suetonius call the Jews who were expelled proselytes, let alone mention proselytism as the cause of this action.

In Chapter 2, “Ladies’ Aid: Gentile Noblewomen as Saviors and Benefactors in the *Antiquities*,” Matthews describes how Josephus portrays a large number of Gentile upper-class women as advocating Jewish causes (e.g., Nero’s wife Poppaea Sabina; Augustus’ wife Livia; Helena, the Queen of Adiabene; and Agrippina the Younger). Matthews correctly notes that Josephus’ presentation of politically active and influential Gentile women clashes with his reading of biblical matriarchs and the women of the Hasmonean and Herodian dynasties in the *Antiquities* and the *Jewish War*. There women’s political freedom is as little endorsed as, say, in Tacitus. This raises the above-mentioned question of whether Josephus’s portrayal of Gentile women who acted on behalf of the Jews might not be at variance with the goals of Jewish apologetics. Matthews is well aware of this tension.

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She solves it—hesitantly, though—by pointing to evidence of the existence of such influential noblewomen, for example, an inscription from Aphrodisias that recounts the influence of Livia’s advocacy on behalf of the Samians. In the end, Josephus’s apologetic strategy may be more than wishful thinking. Even more typical and for Matthews’ purpose more important is the case of Plotina, Trajan’s wife, who—at least according to the *Acts of the Pagan Martyrs*—supported the Jews (Plotina is discussed in Chapter 3).

Chapter 3, “‘More than a few Greek Women of High Standing’: ‘God-Fearing’ Noblewomen in Acts,” discusses the role of prominent Gentile women, whom Paul encounters at several instances in his missionary journeys (Acts 13:50; 17:4; 17:12). Matthews includes here an unnecessarily lengthy discussion of the term “God-fearer,” only to conclude (rightly so) that the term is not a fiction of Luke (as Kraabel had argued), but actually existed in history. Matthews shows that Luke’s presentation of prominent women follows the same pattern as in Josephus. Luke underscores the role of upper-class Gentile women, while limiting the sphere of action of women in other contexts. As in the case of Josephus, Matthews wonders about the efficacy of such apologetics. Given the resentment of the Greco-Roman *literati* toward politically active women, why would an apologetic author depict Gentile women who patronize, and sometimes affiliate with his community? As in the preceding chapter, Matthews suggests that a partial explanation might lie in the fact that the phenomenon of elite women’s benefaction was not just a fancy.

Who then would endorse religiously active women as they are presented in Josephus and Luke? The fourth and last chapter of this short book, “First Converts: Acts 16 and the Legitimizing Function of High-Standing Women in Missionary Propaganda,” provides an answer to this question. Screening a wide range of texts (from Euripides’ *Bacchae* to Philo’s *Therapeutae*), Matthews identifies a line of argument in Greco-Roman texts concerning the special function of women in missionary religions. In fact, women’s religious function in the Greco-Roman world was often viewed as proper and virtuous. The potential audience of Josephus and Luke, one might add, was therefore as divided with regard to the religious role of women as these two authors were themselves. This relates to a further question, often raised in recent years in Josephus studies: is “apologetics” really the right term for Josephus and Luke?

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Shemaryahu Talmon, Jonathan Ben-Dov, and Uwe Glessmer, editors. *Qumran Cave 4. XVI: Calendrical Texts. Discoveries in the Judaean Desert, XXI*. Oxford: Clarendon Press. xii, 263 pp., 13 plates.

Sacha Stern, *Calendar and Community: A History of the Jewish Calendar, 2nd Century BCE–10th Century CE*. Oxford University Press, 2001. xvi, 306 pp.

Since the publication of the first Qumran scrolls more than half a century ago, the schematic 364 day solar year of Jubilees has been posited as a major issue in the schism of the Qumran community from mainstream Judaism. She-maryahu Talmon was among the pioneers in assessing the impact of this calendar upon the life of the Qumran community, as best illustrated by the Yom Kippur confrontation with the Wicked Priest who came to suppress the sect's observance of the fast on a date in conflict with the prevalent lunar calendar. Talmon's thesis is that the sect, like the author of Jubilees, viewed the observation of the moon as leading to corruption of the ideal 364 day calendar in which the holidays and all dates were perpetually fixed to particular days of the week. Whether and how the sect made correction for the annual deficit of one and one quarter days is not known, but presumably they had only disdain for the arbitrary methods of lunar intercalation.

With the publication of Qumran calendrical texts now nearing completion, it is natural to ask how this thesis holds up in the light of new Cave 4 fragments. Fortunately, we have two recent Oxford volumes which are relevant to this question. One is the official publication of calendrical texts from Cave 4 as volume XXI in the *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert* (DJD) series. The other is a broad history of the Jewish calendar from the second century BCE to medieval times by Sacha Stern.

As to the first volume, it is gratifying to note that Talmon, assisted by J. Ben-Dov, is its primary editor, thus testifying to his continued active contribution to Scroll scholarship. Here he publishes seventeen fragmentary calendar documents, almost all of the *mishmarot* type, that is, using the rotations of the twenty-four priestly courses listed in Chronicles for dating festivals and other events in a six-year cycle of the Qumran calendar. Uwe Glessmer edits fragments of a schedule of daily prayers to be recited sequentially during a month. This schedule, as noted by Glessmer, may have important bearing on the rabbinic liturgy. Ben-Dov is the editor of a fragment of a longer cycle of 294 years—6 jubilees of 49 years—in which every period of three years is identified by its sign, the name of the priestly course serving during the first week of the period.

In his general introduction to the volume, Talmon restates his premise that the Qumran calendar shared the antilunar position of the book of Jubilees. The Damascus Document, one of the foundational works of the community, does indeed make reference to the chronological system of the Book of Jubilees, and as Talmon demonstrated long ago, the *mishmarot* lists of annual festivals on fixed days of the week presuppose the schematic 364-day solar calendar. However, as illustrated by the early astronomical Book of Enoch, not all proponents of the 364-day year were oblivious to the need for synchronization with the lunar calendar. In fact, in this volume, Talmon, himself, publishes 4Q320, which "is intended to achieve a concordance of the divergent 354-day lunar year with this 'ideal' ephemeris" (p. 33). 4Q321 designates two days in each solar month, one around the middle of the lunar month with the obscure designation *duqah*, and the other not named (Talmon designates it X), around the end of the month. The nature of these two days is still the subject of much conjecture among scholars. Michael Wise deduces from another Qumran text that *duqah* refers to the full moon, while

the X day was probably the day of its last visibility. Talmon and Israel Knohl have suggested that *duqah* was the night after the full moon when it begins to wane, and that X was the last day of the lunar month. In his opinion the purpose of recording these days inclining toward lunar darkness was to warn the members of the sect about the sinister influence of the moon.

This baleful lunar hypothesis contrasts sharply with 4Q503, a Qumran liturgical text which sets forth prayers to be recited daily in accordance with the varying portions of light and darkness in the moon, a method of measuring lunation also described in Enoch. As I had occasion to point out in 1986, 4Q503 shows that lunar observation or calculation was used for liturgical purposes at Qumran, despite the antilunar polemics of Jubilees. In his learned but noncommittal evaluation of the evidence (*The Dead Sea Scrolls after Fifty Years*, pp. 213–278), Uwe Glessmer maintained that the moon and “lots of darkness” occur only in passages reconstructed by the editor. This is not quite accurate, as one can verify by looking at the phrase גורלות חושך visible on plate XLI frg. 39 of M. Baillet’s edition.

Thus, with regard to 4Q321, it seems more plausible to suppose that the two days designated each month were intended for synchronization with the lunar calendar rather than as a warning against it. This option appears to be recognized by Talmon (p. 36) as at least a possibility once a comprehensive study of the entire Qumran calendrical corpus is completed.

The theme of Stern’s challenging history of the Jewish calendar is that Jewish calendar reckoning in antiquity was characterized by its diversity. Using modern astronomical tables for the visibility of the new moon in different parts of the ancient world, Stern analyzes specific Jewish dates recorded in various sources from the late Roman period. From a *ketubah* from Egypt in 417 CE, dated to the 20th of Kislev, it is inferable that Passover, 14 Nisan started on March 17. The vernal equinox that year was on March 19, but Stern notes that contemporary reckonings of the equinox were all later than March 19 or 20. So it appears that this Passover was not in accord with the rabbinic rule that the 15th of Nisan cannot precede the *tequfah* (b. Rosh ha-Shanah 21a). Stern suggests that the Jews in Egypt made their own calendrical determinations, as did other Diaspora communities. But even in southern Palestine, the fifth-century tombstone inscriptions from Zoar seem to indicate that the rabbinic rule of the equinox was not followed. Moreover, Stern is of the opinion that whereas various Amoraic calendrical rules were gradually formulated, the present-day form of the fixed rabbinic calendar emerged only in the Geonic period. The medieval tradition that Hillel the Patriarch instituted it in the 4th century is not supported by any talmudic evidence.

Based on his thesis that festivals could be observed even in late antiquity on totally different dates from one Jewish community to the next, it is interesting to see how this affects Stern’s evaluation of the efforts by communal authorities to institute uniformity in earlier periods. With regard to the Qumran solar calendar, he tends to cast doubt on its significance as a cause of sectarian schism. He speculates that it might have been intended only as an idealistic model and not really put into practice. The polemics in communal texts against those who go astray with regard to the festivals, he argues, may refer not to their dates, but to the manner of celebrating them. He admits that the Yom Kippur confrontation described in the

Habakuk pesher and highlighted by Talmon (see above) gets close to evidence for solar sectarianism, but even here he points to other interpretations, more congenial to his theme of coexistent diversity: “If the Teacher of Righteousness and the Wicked Priest were both observing, for instance, a calendar based on sightings of the new moon, then on this occasion they may simply have sighted the new moon on different days” (p. 17).

This speculative suggestion sounds very much like a retrojection of the famous confrontation between R. Gamliel, the Nasi, and R. Joshua over the new moon and the proper date for Yom Kippur, recorded in Mishnah Rosh ha-Shanah. Although I have argued previously that the schematic solar calendar, so laboriously tabulated at Qumran, does not preclude lunar synchronization, Stern’s interpretation strikes me as a dubious effort to turn the plate upside down.

General readers, who often shy away from the technicalities of calendar reckoning, should be assured that Stern’s volume is not only very clearly written; it is a challenging and exciting foray into the links between the measurement of time and a millennium of Jewish social history.

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Menahem Kahana. *Sifre Zuta Deuteronomy: Citations from a New Tannaitic Midrash*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2002. 476 pp. (Hebrew)

In 1989, after the fall of the Iron Curtain in the former Soviet Union, Menahem Kahana of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem was the first Israeli scholar to search the St. Petersburg and Moscow libraries for manuscripts of rabbinic texts, and especially for lost halakhic midrashim. During his second visit, Kahana noticed that in a commentary on Deuteronomy written by a tenth-century Karaite sage named Yeshua ben Yehuda from Jerusalem, there were *derashot* to Deuteronomy that are unknown from any other rabbinic source. At first, he tentatively assumed that these quotations were from lost sections of the *Mekhilta on Deuteronomy*. However, the more Kahana culled quotations from the 30 (!) manuscripts of Yeshua’s commentary, the more he realized that the terminological differences between these *derashot* and *Mekhilta on Deuteronomy*, coupled with the absence of these sources from *Midrash Hagadol*, which was familiar with *Mekhilta on Deuteronomy*, precluded such identification. In 1993, Kahana lectured on these *derashot* and identified them as belonging to a third tannaitic midrash on Deuteronomy (*Sifre on Deuteronomy* being the first), which he entitled *Sifre Zuta Deuteronomy (SZD)* based on its similarities to the already known *Sifre Zuta Numbers (SZN)*.

Kahana completely rejects the possibility that these *derashot* are fakes or paraphrases. This denial is based on several proofs. First, Yeshua’s quotations of numerous other known rabbinic sources are accurate. Second, the quotations from

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SZD contain midrashic terminology unknown from any other source except *SZN*, with which Yeshua was not familiar. These, along with other rare phrases, unusual usage of rabbinic Hebrew, and uncommon Greek words, make it impossible that Yeshua invented these sources. Finally, some of these *derashot* are found in two other medieval sources: *Sefer Pitron Torah* published by E. E. Urbach and *Midrash Hadash on the Torah*, published by Jacob Mann. These independent corroborations of Yeshua's quotations proves that they were not his invention.

Kahana's edition of *SZD* is divided into two sections: (1) an introduction and (2) a critical edition and commentary. The first section of the introduction deals with the three sources in which Kahana has identified *derashot* taken from *SZD*. In the chapter on the aforementioned Yeshua ben Yehudah, Kahana concentrates on a technical description of Yeshua's commentary on Deuteronomy and his method in quoting from *SZD*. *Sefer Pitron Torah*, the second source in which Kahana found quotations from *SZD*, was published by E. E. Urbach in 1978. According to Urbach, this collection of midrashim and biblical commentary was composed in Babylonia in the late ninth or early tenth century. *Midrash Hadash on the Torah*, the third source for *SZD*, was partially published by Jacob Mann in 1940 in his book, *The Bible as Read and Preached in the Old Synagogue*. The remainder of the work was published in 1966 by Hebrew Union College. Whereas the work's compiler and exact place of origin remain unknown, based on the compiler's familiarity with the Palestinian triennial cycle of Torah readings Mann proposed that its origins were in Jewish centers in the east.

The second section of the introduction examines the connection between *SZD* and *SZN*. The close connection between these two works is based on three factors: (1) the shared terminology, (2) the individual *derashot* common to both works and not common to other tannaitic sources, and (3) the named sages in these two works, compared with the named sages in other tannaitic sources. In this section and the following it becomes clear that Kahana's research into the halakhic midrashim is based on their classification into two corpora, "of the School of R. Ishmael" (*Mekhilta of Rabbi Ishmael*; portions of the *Sifra*; *Sifre on Numbers*; and *Mekhilta on Deuteronomy*) and "of the School of R. Akiva" (*Mekhilta of Rabbi Shimon ben-Yochai*; most of the *Sifra*; *SZN*; *Sifre on Deuteronomy*; and *SZD*). This classification was originally proposed by David Zvi Hoffman and further developed by subsequent scholars, first and foremost J. N. Epstein. Although some have recently criticized this classification, Kahana's arguments for its general correctness are so convincing as to make them practically unassailable. Kahana's arguments in favor of such classification are based on philological grounds and not on proposed theological/philosophical differences or on differences in methods of biblical interpretation. It is only once the philological differences have been well documented that these other differences between the two schools may be documented. Kahana has argued for this classification for decades and we can hope that his summary discussion of the halakhic midrashim, due to appear in the second volume of *Literature of the Sages* (Fortress Press), will appear in print soon.

Having established the connection between *SZD* and *SZN*, Kahana next describes *SZD* itself. He discusses such issues as: the language of *SZD*, the relationship of *SZD* to the Mishnah, the place of the editing of *SZD*, and reflections of *SZD*

in later talmudic literature. At the end of this section he includes a brief summary on the different schools of the halakhic midrashim.

Kahana's introduction to *SZD* is rich in technical discussions of the material. The examples that Kahana provides are valuable not only for their detailed description of *SZD*, but also for the insights they provide into the other halakhic midrashim in particular and into tannaitic literature in general. For example, Kahana provides a long list of passages that Horowitz included in his edition of *SZN* that, according to Kahana, are not part of *SZN* and come from other works. Until a new critical edition of *SZN* is produced, this list is an invaluable tool in its study. As a further example, Kahana describes the unique use of the term "*bet hashekhinah*" in *SZD* and *SZN* as referring to the Temple. Other rabbinic works use such terms as "*bet hamikdash*" and "*bet habehirah*." Kahana proposes that "*bet hashekhinah*" is an earlier term and that the later terms are meant to temper the description of the Temple as a place of God's presence.

The remainder of the book is a critical commentary on the 138 *derashot* that were part of the original, much larger midrash. In each section Kahana has included the introductory Arabic words which Yeshua used, followed by the *derashah* itself. In cases where there were more than one textual witness for the *derashah*, Kahana creates an eclectic text. Below the *derashah* appears a clear apparatus listing manuscript differences, and full, well-organized lists of parallels in rabbinic sources.

Kahana comments on each *derashah* separately, explaining both the *derashah* itself, and, when applicable, the content of the *derashah* and its relationship to the parallels in other rabbinic sources. In these discussions one can find comments that will affect research into all of the different branches of the study of rabbinic literature, as well as important notes on other fields such as language and history. I will offer just two examples:

SZD's midrash on Deut 24:1 (pp. 346–359) deals at length with two inter-related issues: (1) can a woman force her husband to divorce her by claiming that she is somehow forbidden to him; and (2) do certain types of immodest behavior obligate a husband to divorce his wife. The fact that this *derashah* is parallel to other sources from the Mishnah and the Tosefta and yet differs in wording, context, and *halakhah* makes for rich comparisons that can yield interesting results in the study of the redaction of tannaitic *halakhah*. Kahana's discussion of the *derashah* is in essence a detailed article on the differing tannaitic views on divorce and the nature of marriage, as well as a brief comparison of these views to those ascribed to Jesus. (Kahana returns to this subject later in the book when discussing a *derashah* concerning relatives who are disqualified from testimony). Future discussions of early rabbinic attitudes towards divorce cannot afford to ignore this source.

The second example is a *derashah* on Deut 16:18 which contains information on the function and appointment of courts of three and twenty-three. According to Kahana, this *derashah* is the only talmudic source to assume that courts of three are appointed and not chosen by the litigants, as is stated in mSan 3:1. Furthermore, the *derashah* claims that one of the jobs of the judges is "to expound upon the Torah and the Writings (*ketuvim*)."⁷ Kahana raises the possibility that this is the earliest known reference to the later custom of public exposition of the Torah

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on the Sabbath. If he is correct, this *derashah* may prove an invaluable source in the discussion of the early rabbinic legal system, its appointment of judges, and their function.

The larger impact of the discovery of *SZD* on talmudic research must not be underestimated. The other recently rediscovered halakhic midrashim (*Mekhilta of Rabbi Shimon b. Yohai*, *SZN*, and *Mekhilta on Deuteronomy*) were known, to a lesser or greater degree, by some medieval rabbis. In contrast, *SZD* seems to have been relatively unknown already to the amoraim, both in Palestine and Babylonia, and was almost completely unknown to medieval rabbis. Its discovery increases the possibility that other ancient rabbinic texts may be discovered in the future. Until now, an assumption could be made that for each book of the Pentateuch there existed two halakhic midrashim, one from the Ishmaelian school and one from the Akivan school; the appearance of a third midrash on Deuteronomy proves that this assumption is wrong. Kahana is himself optimistic about the future discovery of other lost texts. The greater the possibility of future discoveries exists, the greater caution the talmudic researcher must exhibit in evaluating existing literature and especially in evaluating parallel sources. Is a *derashah* found in the Babylonian Talmud an editorial revision of one found in the *Sifre on Deuteronomy*, or might it be from a section of *SZD* that has not yet been located? Is a *baraita* which appears in one of the Talmudim a revision of a parallel source in the Tosefta, or is it from a collection of *baraitot* or midrashim that did not survive? These questions are frequently asked by scholars; Kahana's work should have an impact on the answers.

Kahana's book sets a high standard for critical editions of midrashim. In comparison, all other critical editions of halakhic midrashim pale, both in their critical apparatus and in the depth of their commentary. The publication of *SZD* has created the strange situation whereby the midrash that was least known throughout history now exists in the best edition, whereas most of the *Sifra*, the longest of the halakhic midrashim, has not merited any critical edition. After several centuries of searching for lost midrashim, a search which has yielded impressive results, one hopes that we have not "lost" the main midrashim, and that scholars will increasingly turn their attention towards publishing and commenting on these monumentally important works.

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Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert. *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender*. Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences. Stanford: Stanford University Press. ix, 326 pp.

This book is presented as "first a study of the classic rabbinic discourse on menstruation and of the range of meanings that talmudic literature accords to

women's bodies in its discourse on Niddah" (p. 1). As the presence of the word "Christian" in the subtitle would suggest, however, the actual contents of the book are somewhat broader. The range of materials covered are all worthy of scholarly examination and analysis, which Fonrobert ably and engagingly provides. Yet, the wide reach of this book contributes to both its strengths and its weaknesses.

In Chapters 1–4, Fonrobert reads texts from the tractate Niddah in the Mishnah and the Babylonian Talmud (and to a lesser extent the Tosefta and the Palestinian Talmud). She seeks both to elucidate the "dominant discourse" in these texts as they construct women and women's bodies, and also to locate the "moment[s] of disturbance in the dominant discourse" (p. 104). Broadly, Fonrobert's thesis is that rabbinic texts construct the female body, particularly sexual organs and the reproductive tract, through architectural metaphors, by which women and women's bodies may become the objects of androcentric discourse. A similar effect occurs in rabbinic discourse about the examination of blood stains; male rabbis are positioned as authorities over female blood, which is further removed from the (bodies of) women who actually experience menstruation or other genital flows. But Fonrobert also cogently reads for the moments when this dominant discourse is undermined, when the texts themselves admit/confront "the conceptualization of the female body as a sentient being, as already 'inhabited' by the feeling subject" (p. 69), as, for example, in her analysis of a story in bNid 20b, in which Yalta engineers a rabbinic ruling about her blood sample that is to her liking.

The latter two chapters move outward from either menstruation (Chapter 5) or rabbinic sources (Chapter 6). Chapter 5 is an attempt to "think more . . . about the possibility of women's space within the discursive universe of the rabbis, particularly with reference to women's bodies," that is, to seek "cultural spaces in which women relate directly to women and can establish relationships that are not under the immediate control of male authority . . ." (p. 129). Tractate Niddah is a fruitful site for this work in that it "considers various other situations in which women's bodies are examined" (p. 130), including examinations performed by other women. Similarly, Fonrobert's turn in these chapters to early Christian works—notably the *Didascalia Apostolorum* of the third century CE—and to Greco-Roman medical writing contextualizes rabbinic menstrual discourse in a way not often seen in scholarship on the subject. On the other hand, these moves also become opportunities for digressions that make the book as a whole feel somewhat disjointed. Chapter 5 concludes by asking "whether it is possible to trace the existence of women healers" (p. 151). This is a worthy question, but Fonrobert does not make clear its connection to her subjects of menstruation and the construction of the female body; indeed, she seeks an answer in an extended corpus, outside of tractate Niddah (bShab. 133b–134a), of medical information—attributed by the amora Abaye to his mother—particularly regarding the care of infants. The chapter on the *Didascalia* and other Christian sources includes a discussion of the uses of rabbinic menstrual laws in a particular kind of anti-Jewish feminist New Testament scholarship; ten pages are then dedicated to analyzing a New Testament story and its relationship, or lack thereof, to rabbinic menstrual laws and discourse.

This book engages several important and ongoing methodological debates in the field(s) of rabbinic and feminist studies, and evaluations of its effectiveness

may well be influenced by the reader's personal positioning regarding these questions. First, Fonrobert does not discuss very much the extensive literature as to whether rabbinic midrash is best understood as a response to internal, hermeneutical considerations of the biblical text or external, sociocultural and historical issues (or some mix of the two). Yet, despite her historicizing moves in the latter chapters, Fonrobert's self-positioning on the hermeneutical side of the debate in this instance is evident. A major premise of her analysis of the rabbinic discourse on women's bodies begins with a pair of verses, Leviticus 15:2 and 19, in which a man's genital discharge is described as being "*mibisaro*," "*from his flesh*," whereas a woman's is "*bivsara*," "*in her flesh*." Fonrobert suggests that the rabbis' hermeneutical attention to this difference in prepositions led them to "construct the interior of the woman's body, while not admitting the possibility of thinking the interior of the male body" (p. 49), resulting in the architectural metaphors already discussed. She writes, "The rabbinic understanding of corporeal practices and the body's role in the constitution of the Jewish community are products of the rabbis' biblical hermeneutics as much as the other way around" (p. 40). I find the rabbinic attention to the biblical prepositions intriguing, but insufficiently explanatory of the turn to architectural metaphors in particular.

Fonrobert seems to share a common desire of feminist scholars to recover women's lost or marginalized voices. She demonstrates quite well the various ways, rhetorical and otherwise, that statements attributed to women in rabbinic and early Christian literature are indeed marginalized both by the texts she examines and in later exegetical traditions (including modern scholarship). Thus, for example, in her analysis of Abaye's mother's medical advice, Fonrobert suggests that the distinctive form of citation used for these statements can be read as reducing the authoritative weight of the female voice; she further demonstrates how later scholars often disregarded these materials or further diminished their significance. Her work becomes more problematic, though, when she takes up the question of whether it is indeed possible to retrieve a "uniquely authoritative woman's voice" even if one is able "to reverse the continuous process of . . . marginalization" (p. 153). Fonrobert is aware of the likelihood that in other ancient works feminine figures (for example, Diotima in Plato's *Symposium*) exist as "literary construction[s]" and creations of a male author, rather than as "representation" (p.158). However, she argues against reading the sayings of Abaye's mother in this way, based on the nature of the Talmud as "collective" and "citational literature"; "Even though the overwhelming majority of speaking participants are men, we should not single out the one woman's voice as the only one not 'quoted' but the mere product of male speech" (p. 159). The obvious difficulty here is that the current trend in rabbinic scholarship has been against naively assuming that materials (quotes or biographical stories) attributed to *male* figures in rabbinic literature may be read as unproblematically representational, rather than as constructions developed in the process of textual transmission and redaction.

Moreover, this recourse to the supposedly distinctive nature of rabbinic literature would seem not to be available when Fonrobert turns to the *Didascalia*. She does begin by recognizing that "we do not have the voices of the women themselves in the form of independent texts," yet here too the desire to assert the presence of

women's voices creeps back in over the course of the chapter. The *Didascalia* text is structured as direct discourse to women in the author's community who are practicing some form of menstrual separation, and presents several rationales that the women might give for their actions (each followed by a rebuttal). Fonrobert suggests that "It seems likely that this reasoning is not merely thought up by the author, but is indeed one that the women put forward" (p. 175). This conjecture becomes, rhetorically, all the more certain as the chapter progresses, so that as Fonrobert moves through the *Didascalia*, she can write, "Now the author . . . turns to the other argument that the women advance" (p. 179) and "The third and final argument . . . is not a response to a specific claim made by the women themselves" (p. 186).

Fonrobert advises her fellow scholars that "It is our task as readers of talmudic literature not to succumb to constructing uniformity where there is doubt, contradiction, ambiguity, and difference" (p. 67). Despite the concerns I have expressed above, I believe Fonrobert has provided a worthy model of how to achieve the goal she advocates. Her work is nuanced, erudite, and never simplistic. Her readers, whether in rabbinics, gender studies, or both, would do well to follow her example.

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Christine Hayes. *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002. 309 pp.

Jonathan Klawans recently argued that there are two distinct types of purity in the Bible: ritual and moral. In biblical texts, the impurity of Gentiles is not ritual, but moral (the exception being corpse impurity, to which Gentiles are susceptible). Moral impurity is not contagious and is not subject to rites of purification. In the first section of her recently published work on Gentile impurities, Christine Hayes further categorizes impurity by introducing two types of purity considered to be intrinsic to Gentiles by some second temple groups: genealogical and carnal.

Genealogical impurity is an impurity intrinsic to a nationality/race and cannot be cleansed through conversion or assimilation. The idea that Gentiles are intrinsically profane is introduced into Israelite ideology by Ezra, who conceives of *all of Israel* as a holy seed, a concept ascribed only to priests in the Torah and Ezekiel. The idea is further developed in Jubilees and 4QMMT which, in Hayes's reading, prohibit and polemicize against intermarriage and are intolerant of any form of conversion.

Paul theorizes a new form of impurity, which Hayes dubs "carnal impurity." This type of impurity *is* contagious, and is passed from the flesh of a nonbeliever to a believer through sexual union. While Paul obviously believes in conversion,

he does not envision the possibility of intermarriage between the holy flesh of the believer, and the defiled flesh of the nonbeliever. In such a manner, Paul adopts the Ezran idea of holy seed, and transforms it to meet his concept of the holy flesh (flesh which is imbued with the holy spirit).

After documenting pre-rabbinic concepts of Gentile impurities, Hayes turns her attention to a contextual description of rabbinic attitudes toward these impurities. In these chapters, Hayes disputes Gedalyahu Alon's theory that as Gentile ritual impurity was actually biblical (with its basis in the ritually-defiling power of idols), when the rabbis declare that Gentile ritual impurity is of rabbinic origin it is an attempt to soften the impact of the ancient law.

In contrast to Alon, Hayes demonstrates that the rabbis understood well that Gentiles were excluded from the ritual purity laws of Leviticus 12-15, and that although there was some debate on corpse impurity, the rabbis did not include Gentiles in their torahitic purity laws. Whereas Alon posited three different types of Gentile impurity in rabbinic texts (*sherets*, *zav*, and corpse) corresponding to three types of idol impurity, Hayes shows that only *zav* impurity is rabbinically attributed to Gentiles. For Hayes, the impurity of Gentiles in rabbinic texts is clearly of rabbinic origin. In all of these points, Hayes's arguments are persuasive. In my opinion, her argument that the rabbis considered *idols* to be only rabbinically ritually impure demands further consideration. Unlike Gentile impurity, which is explicitly attributed to rabbinic decree, the impurity of idols is learned exegetically, from verses such as "You shall cast them away [idols] as a menstruous thing" (Isa 30:22) or "You must utterly abominate them [*shaqqets teshaqquetsu*] it [i.e. an idol]" (Dt 7:26). Modern scholars may not understand these verses as comparing the ritual impurity of idols with the ritual impurity of the *niddah* or *sheqqets*, but at least some rabbis may have interpreted them so. While the ritual impurity of idols may be of rabbinic origin historically, it remains to be proved that the rabbis themselves conceived of it as such.

The final two chapters of Hayes's book turn to two issues related to the impurity of Gentiles: intermarriage and conversion. The rabbis reject the "holy seed" concept of Israel, and erect permeable barriers between Jews and Gentiles, barriers open to conversion. Sexual relations with Gentiles, while forbidden, do not carnally defile (as they do for Paul). In general, Palestinian rabbis preach against intermarriage in subtle tones. Hayes puts to rest the idea that Gentile ritual impurity impeded intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles. She suggests the opposite: by constructing the principle of Gentile impurity the rabbis "signaled their disagreement with alternative characterizations of Gentiles and the consequences of interethnic sexual relations." In her conclusion she goes even further and claims, "the decree of Gentile ritual impurity was less a strategy for eliminating the evil of miscegenation than a volley in the internal cultural wars of first-century Judaism." However, there is little evidence to back these speculative statements. In the end, having portrayed the rabbis as lenient on the different forms of Gentile impurity, it is difficult for Hayes to explain why they did, after all, declare them to bear some form of impurity.

In the final chapter, Hayes traces a progressive leniency in allowing descendants of converts to marry into the priesthood and forbidding them from marrying

mamzers. The reason for such progression lies in a further distancing from the Ezran/Jubilees/4QMMT application of holy seed ideology to all of Israel. Palestinian rabbis curtailed the application of this ideology even with regard to the priesthood, almost against Leviticus itself, which does prohibit the profanation of priestly seed. Hayes locates a potential cause for this shift in the supreme value of Torah learning in rabbinic circles; as position in the bet midrash rose as a determining factor in status, genealogical descent correspondingly dropped. It is interesting to note that while Hayes detects a decline in the import of *yivus* in the rabbinic period, Michael Satlow recently came to an opposite conclusion: the rabbis actually created marital castes. Such differing conclusions might be attributed to the highlighting of different strands of the rabbinic tradition, a tradition which cannot easily be typified. They also remind us that interpretation is often a function of the choice of a starting point.

Whatever the case, Hayes's exhaustively researched and articulately argued work on Gentile impurity will surely be the starting point for all future inquiries into the subject. Hayes has deeply enriched our knowledge of how the impurity of Gentiles functioned in the formation of identity by Jewish sects in antiquity. The fact that one may question some of her conclusions and supplement others does not in any way detract from the brilliance of her work.

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Martin S. Jaffee. *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001. xi, 239 pp.

In recent decades, an array of scholars has investigated the oral and written (re)creation and transmission of early Jewish and Rabbinic tradition. Martin S. Jaffee stands at the forefront of this field of research, devoting much of his recent scholarly effort to the topic. In a series of journal articles and chapters in edited volumes over the past ten years, Jaffee has offered diverse insights from a variety of research forays into the literary traits of early Judaism. *Torah in the Mouth* is Jaffee's initial monograph on the subject, in which he builds extensively and impressively on his prior work, augmenting it in breadth, depth, and theoretical sophistication.

The work is divided into two parts. The first consists of three chapters, each devoted to a distinctive Palestinian Jewish social group of the Second Temple period (in order: scribes; the *Yahad*; and the Pharisees). Through his selection and analysis of the appropriate literary evidence for each group, Jaffee discerns a range of intriguing facets of the oral-literary, oral-performative and text-interpretive elements of Second Temple Jewish literary circles. For example, Jaffee argues that a primary characteristic of Second Temple scribal literacy was its exclusive privileging of only the oral, "original" dictation of a textual tradition to a scribe. Sub-

sequent, oral presentations of the same text were accorded no ideological significance. Concerning the *Yahad*, Jaffee proposes that the community endowed its mutually oral and written text-interpretive process with prophetic authority. Particularly meritorious is Jaffee's precise refutation of scholarly attempts to discern clear lines of continuity between the text-interpretive tradition of Pharisaism (about which we know virtually nothing), and the text-interpretive tradition preserved in early Rabbinic literature.

Taken as a whole, the first part of the book serves to introduce Jaffee's overarching theoretical claim in the monograph, namely, that Second Temple Judaism lacked "any articulate ideological formations of oral-literary tradition as a distinctive Judaic cultural possession" (p. 11). Or, stated differently, Second Temple Judaism did not possess an ideologically distinct conceptualization or privileged construction of an "oral tradition" that was perceived to be intrinsically distinct from its written textual tradition. Again, in Jaffee's words, "Second Temple Judaism . . . was virtually innocent of self-consciousness regarding the orality of tradition. Oral tradition existed, but it wasn't much thought about" (p. 7).

The second part of the book consists of four chapters and an epilogue. Jaffee follows the same pattern as in the first, advancing his overarching theoretical proposal introduced in Part One through the simultaneous exploration of various, discrete aspects of early Rabbinic textuality in each chapter. Jaffee proposes that, in contrast to Second Temple Judaism, it was the *Amoraim* who developed for the first time an ideological conception of a distinct corpus of "oral" tradition. They did so by shifting the *consciousness* of orality from the text (as described in the first three chapters) to the rabbinic tradition of interpreting and performing the text (as described in the final four chapters).

Thus, Rabbinism did not create *ex nihilo* the notion or content of Jewish oral tradition. Rather, the early rabbis inherited an indeterminate mass of tradition from the spectrum of Second Temple Judaism, adapted it to suit their needs, and ultimately buttressed these adaptations by bestowing upon them an oral provenance ". . . that as a matter of ideological principle, came to deny that the written sources of its oral-performative tradition exist" (p. 12). By the time of the early *Amoraim*, rabbis are not only *thinking* about their oral tradition, but also *privileging* it through the construction of the elaborate myth of its purported pristine, oral transmission from Sinai to the present—"Torah in the Mouth."

In the final chapter of the work, Jaffee offers an explanation about not only why early Rabbinism created such an ideological understanding of its oral-literary, performative, and interpretive tradition, but also how it was applied to its daily religious endeavors. Jaffee inquires why the *Amoraim* based their pedagogical system upon this ideology to the extent that Rabbinic tradition was regarded as validly engaged and transmitted only by means of oral processes, detached from written sources—even when faced with an entirely different reality. It is clear that written sources were utilized for all aspects of Rabbinic learning; nonetheless, the *Amoraim* consistently privileged and promoted only the oral, spontaneous, engagement of tradition.

Drawing from models of Greco-Roman and early Christian rhetorical education, Jaffee argues that the impetus for the development and application of the

ideology of “Torah in the Mouth” comes from the master–disciple relationship that served as the foundation of *Amoraic* pedagogy. Rabbinic sages formed close, personal, and intimate relationships with their disciples, believing that revelation could only be accessed in this way. For these sages, “Torah in the Mouth” was an ongoing *process*, linked not to words on the parchment page, but, rather, to the embodiment of the sages’ lives, actions, and words. *Talmud torah*—the engagement and activation of the revelatory power of “Torah in the Mouth”—was not an option to the disciple who encountered tradition from the written text in isolation. Rather, it was realized in the encounter between sage and student involving the spontaneous, declaimed performance of tradition. In Jaffee’s own words: “[The *Amoraim*] link[ed] the idea of Torah in the Mouth firmly to the pedagogical reality of discipleship training. They elevated to a new level the primacy of the Sage as mediator of a transforming body of knowledge in which his own presence was the principal mode of mediation” (p. 152).

It should be noted that, at times, the dense mass of ideas in the final four chapters sometimes obfuscates the linear development of Jaffee’s overarching argument, making it somewhat difficult to discern. Jaffee’s diverse ideas, valuable as they may be, do distract somewhat from the overall continuity of his argument. Incorporating and augmenting over a decade of thought into a single effort clearly is not an easy endeavor. Nonetheless, cohesion exists for the industrious reader, and Jaffee’s overarching argument is both forwarded and supported throughout the monograph.

Moreover, the price is worth paying. Jaffee’s insights are unique, daring and challenging, and are certain to engender much rigorous scholarly debate. Particularly noteworthy in this respect is Chapter Four, wherein Jaffee advocates an innovative understanding of the term *halakhah*, routinely conveyed as “law.” Jaffee proposes that the term be understood more precisely as “. . . an orally transmitted report concerned with normative behavior in a particular sphere of activity” (p. 75). *Halakhah* refers not simply to legal tradition, but to “. . . tradition subject to change and fluctuation in its specific implementation . . . because it is grounded in the personal authority of human beings” (p. 82). The academy awaits eagerly the rigorous deliberation that ideas such as this are certain to promote.

As mentioned above, *Torah in the Mouth* is the culmination of Jaffee’s gradual, persistent consideration of the oral and written literary processes of early Judaism. As such, it is presently one of the most articulate, disciplined, and precise monographs on this subject to appear in quite some time. It is also a testimony to the value of a measured agenda of scholarly inquiry, built upon the steady accretion of ideas over time. One can only hope that this work does not represent Jaffee’s *magnum opus* on the topic, and that he will continue to contribute actively to the dialogue in the years to come.

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Book Reviews

Avinoam Cohen. *Ravina and Contemporary Sages: Studies in the Chronology of Late Babylonian Amoraim*. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2001. 323 pp. (Hebrew, English précis)

Talmudic chronology is an uncertain science. Aside from stray data here or there in the Talmud, there are only two sources: *Seder Tanna'im ve-Amoraim* and *Igeret Rav Sherira Gaon*. Both are Geonic, separated by centuries from the Amoraic period. Moreover, they deal mainly with heads of yeshivot (or perhaps master–disciple circles), not with individual Amoraim. Avinoam Cohen's revision of the dating of the sages named Ravina and of a few other Babylonian Amoraim who functioned during Rav Ashi's time (d. 427) and afterwards is a closely reasoned study and, as such, a paradigmatic work of talmudic historiography. Through painstaking readings of Talmudic passages and medieval commentators, Cohen takes issue with the regnant dating of those Amoraim and, in arguing for his revisions, explains how to identify historically relevant information in talmudic *sugyot* and how to utilize it.

The traditional view is that one Ravina was extremely long lived. He studied under Rava (d. 352) and again under Rav Ashi, as an older *talmid-ḥaver* (disciple–colleague). This Ravina would have had to live another seventy years beyond his age at Rava's death (352–before 427). It would stand to reason that he predeceased Rav Ashi, and a line in the version of *Seder Tanna'im ve-Amoraim* in *Maḥzor Vitry* as well as a passage in Rabbenu Hananel's commentary on Mo'ed Katan 25a-b support that notion. Cohen claims that Rava's disciple and that of Rav Ashi are two, and he demonstrates the errors of the aforementioned sources. Cohen thus adds a second Ravina, a young student of Rav Ashi who died after the latter.

This revision contributes to the solution of another conundrum, namely, the identification of Ravina, the Amora who, along with Rav Ashi, concluded the central Amoraic Talmudic process: *hora'ah* (TB Bava Metsia 86a). Previous theories had held that the final Ravina (bar Rav Huna), a sage who lived after Rav Ashi and died between 475 and 501, was the one who brought *hora'ah* to a close. This led to confusion and made problematic the identity of Rav Ashi. Cohen's second Ravina as a young *talmid-ḥaver* to Rav Ashi makes good chronological sense as Rav Ashi's partner in closing *hora'ah*, and still leaves room for the final Ravina.

Cohen's demonstration is cumulative, carefully built up over several painstaking analyses. Thus, he shows that *sugyot* in which Ravina apparently contradicts himself make sense if two Ravinas are understood. He calls attention to the achronological presentation of sages in *sugyot*, a phenomenon he had noted elsewhere.¹ This allows him to establish consistency in the representation of the two Ravinas, taking into account the exigencies of logical presentation on the ideational level. Social data demonstrate the unlikelihood of the latter being Rava's Ravina, for example, the fact that Rav Ashi accords respect to Amoraim older than himself, including those younger than the Ravina who studied with Rava, whereas he

1. “*Al ha-mikum ha-bilti khronologi shel divre Mar bar Rav Ashi be-sugyot ha-Bavli ve-hash-lakhotav*,” *Sidra* 2 (1985/1986), 49–66.

did not relate thusly to his own student Ravina. Moreover, Cohen shows that Ravina Rava's student lived in a town near Mehoza (where Rava taught), and engaged exclusively in agricultural pursuits, whereas Ravina Rav Ashi's disciple lived near the latter's home (Mata Mehasya), and trafficked in wine, money, and loans, as well as agriculture. They were two different people.

Previous hypotheses regarding Ravina affected the dating of other Amoraim. He is also associated with Rav Aḥa. When it was thought that the final Ravina was the only one alive after Rav Ashi, Rav Aḥa was dated late. Now Rav Aḥa can be seen as relating to the second Ravina. Furthermore, it was unclear whether a Rav Aḥa (without a patronymic) can be identified with Rav Aḥa bar Rav or Rav Aḥa bereh de-Rava, and whether the two with such similar patronymics are identical. Cohen noticed that one is always mentioned before Ravina, whereas the other always comes after him in sequences of names. Viewing this consistency of representation in terms of the rule that the elder Amora (or the one who died first) is always enumerated before the younger one (cited simply as *yadu'a*—"well-known"—on p. 173) allowed Cohen, having taken into account textual variants and parallels, to differentiate between the latter two Amoraim (Chapter 6).

There are some areas in which one may disagree with Cohen's assumptions or reasoning. For example, his appeal to achronological presentation of Amoraim in discussion as support for his identification and differentiation of the two Ravinas might strike a reader as circular reasoning. His acceptance of Talmudic data, for example, descriptions of dialogue as a *maga' hai* (living interaction) may seem naïve. However, the arguments are cogent even if the text as formulated does not reproduce unmediated the *ipsissima verba* of the interaction. Moreover, intensive examinations of textual evidence such as this counter the contemporary notion that most attributions in the Talmud are suspect, whether as pseudepigraphs or due to the vagaries of tradental and scribal error. On the other hand, Cohen's acceptance of a citation formulation like *'amar leh* (he said to him), as opposed to *'amar* (he said), at face value as clear evidence of a *maga' hai* (living interaction), is problematic because of confusion in the manuscripts.

This work could be a first stage, a methodological prolegomenon that serves as foundation for an intellectual history of the late Amoraic period. Differentiating further between the various Ravinas and the three Rav Ahas, Cohen could produce intellectual-halakhic biographies that enrich our understanding of the attitudes, ideas, and methodologies current among the late Amoraim in all their diversity. Moreover, through his interest in the relations between teachers, students, and colleagues Cohen may be in a position to make a contribution to the current debate about the nature of the academic setting in the later generations of the Babylonian Amoraic period, despite the fact that of the 900 citations of Ravina in the Talmud, only those that contextualized Ravina in dialogue with another Amora aided in dating and differentiating the collocutors. But perhaps Cohen can build on his present findings to develop methods to further distinguish between the authors of more of those other statements.

Clearly thought through and formulated, this book merits (and requires) careful reading and consideration: chapters end with appendices, and footnotes are

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full of information and judicious analysis. In addition to passage, topical, and name indexes, Cohen supplies a useful index of Talmudic terms and phrases.

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Ephraim Kanarfogel. *Peering Through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical and Pietist Dimensions in the Tosafist Period*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000. 274 pp.

Medieval Ashkenazic culture often appears monochromatic, especially when contrasted with the dizzying array of cultural and intellectual disciplines that were cultivated by the Jews in Spain and Provence. The typical perception of Franco-German Jewry is that of a self-contained minority devoting itself to traditional intellectual pursuits (Bible, Talmud, *Halakhah* etc.), while addressing the externally imposed need to respond to the increasingly aggressive missionary activities of the Catholic Church. Its spiritual life (with the prominent exception of the German pietists) is typically portrayed as profound but uncomplicated.

With the present volume, Ephraim Kanarfogel has made an important contribution to our appreciation of Jewish spirituality and intellectual life in Ashkenaz in the Central and High Middle Ages (c. 1100–1300 CE). Based upon an impressive survey and analysis of the relevant literature, primary and secondary, including a large number of hitherto unknown manuscripts, the author demonstrates that the spiritual and intellectual life of broad sections of the rabbinic elite of Ashkenaz in the Central and High Middle Ages was broader and more varied than hitherto suspected. It was especially marked by the cultivation of pietist and ascetic behavior (*perishut*), as well as the study of mystical texts and the practice of sacred magic.

Kanarfogel begins by providing the reader with a background survey of evidence for pietism, mystical study, and prayer among eleventh-century scholars, especially in the Rhineland. This discussion is valuable both *per se* and as an accessible presentation of the spiritual world of pre-Crusade Ashkenazic Jewry. Following this, he proceeds to examine and evaluate the spiritual world of the Tosafists in both France and Germany. By carefully examining the writings and traditions associating various scholars with pietism and judiciously testing their reliability, Kanarfogel shows that amidst the rationalist, dialectical revolution wrought by R. Tam, many of the latter's students and followers in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries adopted pietist and/or mystical spiritual postures. He then consistently makes an effort to correlate these reports with parallel behavior among the German pietists. One highlight of these discussions is his nuanced treatment of the points of similarity and contrast between the worlds of the Tosafists and the pietists.

This is an important work that will spur much further research and serve as a point of first reference for students of the period. It could hardly be otherwise, considering the fact that the text, and especially the extensive footnotes, addresses a wide range of issues relating to Jewish intellectual history in medieval Franco-Germany. Kanarfogel adopts clear positions on hundreds of bibliographical, philological, and historiographical questions, many of which are still considered moot.

In the book's introduction and afterword, the author lightly touches upon two lines of inquiry, which, in my opinion, deserve further attention:

First, Kanarfogel's findings apply to both the French and the German components of this community. As noted above, the widespread tendency among historians is to attribute any and all pietist and/or mystical activity in Ashkenaz almost solely to the direct or indirect influence of German Pietism, a position to which the author faithfully adheres. Kanarfogel's findings, however, reinforce the likelihood that many of the practices hitherto identified exclusively with German Pietism and its influence were in fact independently derived from the religious and cultural substratum shared by Jews on both banks of the Rhine. Thus, the cultivation of *perishut* among many Ashkenazic (and especially French) Jews may well have developed independently of German Pietism or, at most, been adumbrated thereby. Recognizing this would have freed the author from the need to seek at all times literary or personal connections with *Haside Ashkenaz* to explain the behavior and the spiritual pursuits of the many figures that he discusses.

The second point regards the significance of Ashkenazic pietistic and mystical practices within the broader European Christian context. The author, at the start of the book, rejects the possibility of Christian influence upon the phenomena that he describes. This may very well be the case. However, scholars have long known that many Ashkenazic rabbis were keenly aware of intellectual and spiritual developments in their Christian surroundings. One might then ask what function (if any) pietism and mystical prayer and magic played in Jewish self-definition, as a *contra* to the ferment that typified Europe (and especially France) during the so-called Twelfth-Century Renaissance. This was an era marked by Cistercian piety and reform, by the rise of medieval individualism, and by extensive mystical tension and creativity. So, although I agree with the author that the things he describes were essentially indigenous in origin, nevertheless, the encounter with the outside world certainly added dimensions and context to the developments described in the book that go far beyond the narrow question of "influence."

Be that as it may, the author is to be congratulated for a significant addition to a frequently recalcitrant field. One looks forward with anticipation to his future contributions.

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Book Reviews

Anna Foa. *The Jews of Europe after the Black Death*. Translated by Andrea Grover. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, 288 pp.

Writing a survey history is not easy. Every basic decision—periodization, geographic limits, thematic focus—is fraught with the linked dangers of overgeneralization and oversimplification. There are always experts looking over the author's shoulder, ready to cry foul if their areas or contributions are not accorded sufficient attention. And if the author is a good historian, she will realize how much she has had to omit, how tendentious she has had to be. Anna Foa is a good historian, and she is therefore especially to be congratulated for having taken on the arduous task of producing this highly readable survey, now in its third, updated Italian edition and at last available in an unfortunately flawed English translation.

The book was clearly prepared with Italian university students and lay readers in mind; despite its pan-European title, the book is primarily structured around the Italian Jewish experience. Foa begins her account with the Black Death even though it meant omitting the main features of Ashkenazic and Sephardic medieval growth and cultural accomplishment. The brief "Afterword on Modern Times" notwithstanding, Foa ends her book with the complex story of European Jewries' emancipation in the nineteenth century, omitting any serious treatment of the Shoah or Zionism. But such idiosyncratic periodization makes perfect sense when we realize that Foa has focused her book on those centuries in which the role of Italian Jews is especially significant and well known. She has, furthermore, structured her book along the usual lines of Italian history which begins the Renaissance in the fourteenth century and ends *l'età moderna* in the nineteenth.

Foa's book is of a sort more common in Europe than in America: a survey of the state of the field that tries to maintain a narrative line while acknowledging the positions and contributions of various historians. The end result is, in a sense, closer to a team effort than a scholarly monograph. The role of the author is subtle and complex: she is coach, editor, and commentator as she molds the historiographical approaches into a readable story without overwhelming the individual contributions of her sources. The best of these books make wonderful teaching tools: the details of history are given meaningful context and students come away with a sense of how scholars collaborate to construct a picture of an era. (Incidentally, this may explain why most textbooks for Jewish history don't work in the classroom: they lack that sense of historiographical debate and process.)

To appreciate how Foa has approached her task, let me try to outline one of her chapters. In Chapter 6, Foa organizes her discussion of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries under the title "The Age of the Ghettos." She gives useful terminological, legal, and historical overviews of the ghetto especially in Italy, evaluates its demographic impact, and assesses the factors that led to Jewish population growth and oppressive overcrowding. She also opens up many of the thematic issues involved in the study of the period by structuring her presentation around what she calls the "paradoxicality" of the ghetto—a form of simultaneous confinement and protection for the Jews. Though it is, in her view, an expression of Christian conversionary ideology, the ghetto is also the home of a Jewish society with its own long-standing norms and values. Although ghettoization helped

to strengthen certain inward-turning tendencies in Jewish culture, it also led to increased borrowings from the outside society. Indeed, even the rise of kabbalistically inspired confraternities and nighttime religious ceremonies are shown to be linked to behavioral and cultural patterns found in the outside world.

In other words, Foa has produced a social-cultural history of the sort that is widely read and taught today, and has exposed her readers to a strong sampling of current approaches to the field. She has made the subject accessible even to readers and students without detailed knowledge of terms, genres, ideologies, geographies, or other specifics. But she has also challenged the reader to delve deeper, by pointing out broader issues and providing bibliographical references to the work of each scholar whose views she has summarized. (Although I find the APA style of in-text citation—author and date in parentheses—unappealing on aesthetic grounds, it has become the norm in European publications and it does work well here.)

What could have been a useful work, however, is sadly marred by uneven translation and sloppy editing. Andrea Grover mistakenly assumes that Italian words that sound like English also mean the same thing as their English parallels. She is repeatedly trapped into imitating the convoluted structures of Italian academic prose, producing English that simply doesn't mean anything. And on more than one occasion, she misses Foa's point and therefore misrepresents the original even though she is being faithful to the literal meaning of each individual word.

Equally distressing is the sloppy editing of the bibliographical references. In the brief chapter summarized above, this reviewer found eight mistakes: references to the wrong, or to nonexistent, items in the bibliography, incorrect page numbers, and so forth. (There were similar mistakes in the Italian original; some of these have been corrected, but others seem newly invented for English readers.) The effect of poor quality-control is compounded by the unfortunate decision to omit one of the most useful parts of the original work: a 40-page discussion of the state of the field and guide to further reading.

Many scholars and no fewer than ten charitable foundations and donors worked with the University of California Press to make this English translation possible. It would be wonderful if this collaboration between philanthropists and an academic press could serve as a model for future publication of an entire series of textbooks aimed more specifically at the American reader.

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Haim Beinart. *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2002. xvii, 591 pp.

Since the 1965 publication of his Hebrew book, *Conversos on Trial*, Haim Beinart justifiably has been hailed as the foremost historian of medieval Sepharad.

Over the next three decades, in numerous articles and books, Beinart continued to examine the last years of Jewish life in the Iberian peninsula. It was therefore with great anticipation that Haim Beinart's magisterial overview of the expulsion of the Jews from Castile and Aragon was received when it was published in 1994 in Jerusalem. Now, eight years later, the Littman Library has presented an English translation of this imposing work.

Beinart likens his effort in assembling more than one thousand documents as the "construction of a mosaic, stone by stone, to display the picture of the last days of the Jews on Spanish soil." He sees his work as "the story of those heroic Jews who withstood extreme trials and retained their faith, when they took up the vessels of exile and followed Him who put them to that test" (p. xi). Readers who have followed Haim Beinart's writings over the years will find these and other familiar tropes. As we have come to expect, he exults with the Jews who chose exile and is embarrassed and defensive about those who remained with their family and property on Spanish soil.

But such ideological assertions, which reflect intense engagement with the material, are few and far between. Instead, we encounter an author encumbered by the documents and unable to provide a convincing framework within which to understand his data. The ten loosely-connected chapters which comprise this work are based overwhelmingly on documents from the Registro General del Sello, mined previously by Luis Suárez Fernández and judiciously presented in his *Documentos acerca de la expulsión de los judíos*, published in 1964. As a result of this documentary bias, Castilian Jewry is narrowly the focus of this work. The sections on Jewish communities within the Crown of Aragon are presented as an afterthought and are based on secondary materials.

After initial chapters on Ferdinand and Isabella's attitude toward the Jews and an analysis of the edict of expulsion, Beinart devotes many pages to the fate of communally and privately-owned property and credit. Information is arranged by towns (maps would have been welcome) and his descriptions reflect the legal entanglements involved in the resolution of debts and property. Beinart follows the disposition of communal abattoirs and baking ovens many years after the expulsion, even when the property ceased to have any connection to the expulsion or to the Jews and their descendants.

Beinart seems to be propelled by the desire to uncover anything which might have belonged to the Jews and to trace its ultimate fate. In an introduction to the fate of Jewish cemeteries and their stones, Beinart writes that with the disposition of this property, "every remnant and memory of Spanish Jewry was to be eradicated" (p. 111). Perhaps when he recounts the details of the lawsuits regarding this property, Beinart imagines that medieval Sephardic life can thereby be retrieved and life can be returned to these forgotten stones.

In wading through case after case of Jewish loans, also assorted by town, the reader is left overwhelmed by the atomized data and emerges with neither an appreciation of the Jewish role within the general economy nor a recognition of a pattern of behavior exhibited by Ferdinand and Isabella and their officials. As Beinart writes in a desultory summarizing mode, "This is the picture of Jewish life . . . we

learn of arbitrary actions taken by Christian creditors on the one hand, and on the other of mutual efforts to avoid paying debts. This is no innovation with respect to human behavior. As noted, these documents represent only a tiny fraction of the extant credit. Hence it would be a distortion of the truth were one simply to add up the sums mentioned in these documents” (p. 206). So what indeed have we learned?

Beinart’s prose throughout the work is comprised essentially of translations of archival material. The original wording of the texts is preserved in his notes. If we view this effort then as a documentary compilation, we can praise our author for having successfully provided the raw data that his successors can use in their own research. Benefits will accrue to historians who fine-comb his chapters on the implementation of the edict, on smuggling, and on the return and conversion of some exiled Jews, even though the writing is weighed down with all the names and officials mentioned in the sources. One of the casualties of this plethora of detail is the translator who, seemingly exhausted, resorts to clumsy and overly literal translations. The translator, Jeffrey Greene, appears to emulate the historian who, in turn, reproduces the documents.

Unfortunately, Beinart is not as punctilious when it comes to recognizing how some of his peers have contributed to his narrative. For example, while Beinart footnotes much of the work of Miguel Ángel Motis Dolader, he does not cite Motis’ important two-volume *La expulsión de los judíos de la Corona de Aragón* published in 1990, a work which would rival what he is attempting to do in this 1994 volume. Beinart furnishes fascinating material on Abraham Senior—chief collector of taxes of the kingdom of Castile, rab de la corte, and supreme magistrate of the Jews—who, together with some members of his family, converted to Christianity in the wake of the edict. But he avoids acknowledging how Eleazar Gutwirth advanced our understanding of Abraham Senior in an article he published over a decade ago.

Beinart’s chapter on Don Yitzhak Abravanel contains new material on his financial activities. Happily, we note citations to Benzion Netanyahu’s biography of Abravanel, after having read through hundreds of pages without any reference to Netanyahu’s other works. Netanyahu, who sparred with Beinart over the years about the Jewish nature of the converted Jews, had made sure to cite just one article of Beinart—a 1961 essay on judaizing within the Hieronymite Order, in his 1300 plus pages on *The Origins of the Inquisition*. Succeeding generations of scholars in medieval Sephardic Jewry would do well to avoid the kind of behavior displayed by their teachers. In Beinart’s brief concluding chapter entitled “Contemporaries Describe the Expulsion,” he assembles some interesting information from Jewish and Christian chroniclers, but there is no attempt to integrate this material with the findings of Yosef Hacker, among others.

Admittedly, it is difficult for an archival historian who is literally swamped by hundreds of texts to decide what data are worthy of retelling and thereby lose much of the data he or she has painstakingly uncovered. It is indeed a further challenge, as it is for all historians, to situate the results within a synthetic framework, let alone an overarching view of the historical past. Even in the absence of such at-

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tempts, the data uncovered by Haim Beinart will remain a source for many future generations of historians of the Jews of medieval Iberia. For that alone, we are indebted to this monumental contribution.

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Eric Lawee. *Isaac Abarbanel's Stance Toward Tradition: Defence, Dissent, and Dialogue*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000. xiii, 320 pp.

Responsible students of Isaac Abarbanel face a complicated task. This towering figure was more than a “statesman and philosopher.” He was one of the most prolific writers in the Middle Ages and Early Modern periods, both in terms of quantity and variety of genres. As a Jewish leader, his writings reflect the turbulent age of Spanish Jewry after the expulsion from Spain and the spiritual needs of the refugees. Living in a milieu exposed to renaissance culture, one must be attentive to its influence on Abarbanel’s world.

But the most important fact one must keep in mind is that he was saturated with the long classical medieval intellectual legacy, not only the philosophical tradition, but no less the exegetical one. Moreover, the bulk of Abarbanel’s literary efforts belonged to the genre of biblical exegesis. The fact that scholars, by and large, did not pay enough attention to these writings, save for their specific limited studies of his thought, can be attributed to their voluminous nature and to the difficult task of analyzing them in the broad context of medieval biblical exegesis from Rashi onward. Lawee’s study, though using as a starting point the two treatises *Ateret Zeqenim* and *Yeshu’ot Meshiho* for detailed analysis, incorporates the entire corpus of Abarbanel’s writings. Anything less than that would be a serious flaw in attempting to synthesize Abarbanel’s “stance toward tradition,” and many previous studies of Abarbanel testify to that.

The multi-layered platform of “contexts” for the study is dealt with by the author primarily in two introductory chapters (“Life and Contexts” and “Works and Traditions”), in which an updated survey of Abarbanel’s life and intellectual biography is given. This includes his formative Portuguese period (about 40 years), his ten years in Spain, and his Italian career, as well as the major figures and trends that played a role in his world. A clear survey of the order of his works completes this long but essential introduction.

A study of Abarbanel’s attitude to tradition, be it in biblical exegesis, theology, or messianism, all of which are discussed in this volume, must reflect his references to the Midrash, Medieval philosophy, kaballah—indeed to everyone who claimed to be the true heir of Jewish religious truth. Lawee begins his investigation with Abarbanel’s first work: *Ateret Zeqenim* (Lisbon, late 1460s). This exegetical work, concentrating on the enigmatic story of the “nobles of the children of Israel” (Ex. 24:9–11) is also a starting point for Abarbanel, who reveals his at-

titude to the “time-honored rabbinic interpretations and the main medieval claimants to the mantle of Jewish tradition, the philosophers and kabbalists” (pp. 59–60), and uses it as a springboard to deal with major topic which will central to his thought in his works throughout his literary activity.

How does one do justice in a short review to a study whose most conspicuous contributions lie in “nuancing” of views and endless qualifications of well-established and long standing generalizations and clichés? Abarbanel’s “conservatism” is well known, especially in his dialogue with the rationalistic–Maimonidean tradition. But Lawee succeeds in painting in detail this general picture, only after dissecting each relevant reference in the most patient, meticulous, rigorous, cautious, and sensitive manner. The closing sentence of this chapter characterizes the conclusions on other scores throughout this volume: “conservatism on the one hand; occasionally bold independence from traditionally received opinion on the other” (p. 82). Nothing about Abarbanel is ever simple.

This is evident especially in Abarbanel’s stance to the Midrash. First, facing the biblical text as a exegete committed to *peshat* (and Abarbanel saw himself as such) demands a critical attitude to midrashic interpretations. As a rationalist thinker, Abarbanel had to deal with theologically problematic dicta of *Ḥazal* and with medieval tensions, both internal (rival spiritual trends) and external (polemics with Christianity). On the one hand, we may find him rejecting what Lawee terms the “renunciationist” position of Nahmanides and the Andalucian school, which rejected any binding authority of the Midrash in nonlegal matters. On the other, when hard-pressed by Christian polemics, Abarbanel holds just such a view (p. 164), while still claiming in general that *Ḥazal*’s messianic traditions are not to be taken lightly. Often the reader is left with the impression that the only consistency by Abarbanel is his lack of it. Or better, the only consistency is that Abarbanel’s attitude is adjusted in accordance with his needs as a theologian or as a Jewish leader.

In the end of the long process of dealing with the details, Lawee is able to do away with some accepted “truths” concerning Abarbanel and his works. Looking at them from this study’s prism of midrashic exegesis, his messianic trilogy cannot be seen as a mere attempt at defusing christological interpretations, or reduce it to concise reference manuals for Jewish preachers in their efforts to fend off Christian attacks (p. 167).

One of the most important contributions of this study lies in the last chapter, which deals with Abarbanel’s historical thinking. Abarbanel stood in an important historical junction between the Middle Ages and Renaissance (already in Iberia), between Jewish traditional non-historical thinking and revolutionary critical thinking of figures such as Azariah de’ Rossi in the second half of the sixteenth century. Was there a significant Renaissance mentality to be found in his historical thinking? Did Abarbanel’s critical stance toward classical text play any role in the transition to the “modern” bold independence expressed in de’ Rossi’s rejection of Jewish nonlegal traditions that conflict with reliable non-Jewish sources?

Lawee detects traces of Renaissance historical thinking in Abarbanel’s biblical exegesis, as in his critical view concerning the authorship of biblical books, relying on non-Jewish sources, and interest in chronological problems. As always,

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his conservatism is the barrier between his innovative impulses and extreme conclusions that follow from his attitude. Abarbanel would not dare apply to the Pentateuch the critical tools used in analyzing the Prophets. (Lawee points out that facing “modernity’s onslaught” on Scriptures, traditionalists like Malbim criticized Abarbanel for his bold critical statements. Taking his conservative sensibility into account one might guess that, facing the world of Haskalah and biblical criticism, Abarbanel himself would have recoiled from his conclusions.) For as systematic a person as Abarbanel was, this approach suggests that he found himself in the difficult position of knowing the truth and yet feeling the need to deny its consequences. In comparison, Azariah had no problem rejecting Jewish traditional chronology. In the polemical context of his historical analysis/criticism of the development of Christianity, Abarbanel represents the missing link between Profayt Duran (end of fourteenth century) and Leone de Modena (seventeenth century). This chapter is a refutation of B. Z. Netanyahu’s failure to see Abarbanel’s historically critical attitude in evaluating the veracity of ancient holy texts.

Lawee’s study is a rich and valuable one in all respects. It is sound methodologically, and will, I hope, set a new standard of scholarship in Abarbanel studies.

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Kenneth Stow. *Theater of Acculturation: The Roman Ghetto in the Sixteenth Century*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001. x, 246 pp.

“Roman Jewry in the mid-sixteenth century,” notes Kenneth Stow in the introduction to this stimulating volume, “offers an excellent venue for seeking to answer the theoretical question of how a distinct and distinctive minority created the cultural tools to cope with a difficult, ambivalent, and sometimes hostile environment” (p. 5). Stow’s reference to “cultural tools” reflects the implicit “Cultural Studies” orientation of his book, an orientation already indicated in the book’s title as well as in its opening sentence, which declares that “this study is about strategies of cultural survival.” Yet unlike many other works of a similar orientation, Stow’s is based on years of archival research, primarily among the notarial records of the Roman Jewish community. Some two thousand documents from these records have been ably registered and summarized by Stow in the two volumes of his *The Jews in Rome* (Leiden, 1995–1997) to which the current volume (based on the Kennedy lectures delivered at Smith College in 1996), serves as an attractive companion.

Stow’s reference to the Roman Ghetto as a “theater” in his title may remind some readers of Clifford Geertz’s now classic *Negara: The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali* (Princeton, 1980), a work which does indeed appear in his (quite extensive) bibliography. But Stow’s theater is one of “social drama”

(p. 32ff), especially in cases of litigation (of which his notarial sources contain 860 cases), whereas Geertz sought to present Bali's state ceremonies as "metaphysical theater—theater, designed to express a view of the ultimate nature of reality and, at the same time, to shape the existing conditions of life to be consonant with that reality" (p. 104). This sort of theatricality was more characteristic of the papal court than the Roman Ghetto, and Stow, in fact, takes a special interest in the "subculture created by Roman Jews," which, he claims, challenged the dominant culture of Rome "as much as it was imitating it" (p. 96).

It must be admitted, however, that he presents considerably more evidence of imitation than of challenge. Thus, we are told (somewhat breezily) that Rome's three to four thousand Jews "looked and *for the most part* talked, dressed, and lived like any other Romans" (p. 45), and (on the very same page) that Jews and Christians often met in taverns "where they drank, gambled, and *sometimes* ate together" (emphases added). Stow's ostensibly cautious hedging in the latter part of both statements only underlines the bold implications of their opening words—that Roman Jews always looked like other Romans, and that they always (or, at least usually) drank and gambled with Christians in the city's taverns. Indeed, already in his introduction Stow stresses "how Jews and Christians were always much alike but never truly the same" (p. 8). On this point he seems, in contrast to such scholars as Ariel Toaff (who has stressed sameness) and Robert Bonfil (who has stressed difference), to want to have his pizza and eat it too.

Although Stow is greatly interested in the "subculture" created by Roman Jews, he does not describe it great detail. We are told that they had "their own special concept of space," focussing on the spatial sanctity of the ghetto (a subject Stow has treated before), but when it comes to such matters of everyday life as time and sound he hedges again. Although Jews and Christians had their respective holidays and days of rest, Stow insists that Roman Jews "were not tied exclusively to the Jewish calendar" and that they lived "comfortably within the two systems of time" (p. 51). He also sees them as having been no less "comfortable" with Christian music, "especially Catholic sacred chant, which consciously or unconsciously they adopted" (p. 51). How then did Jewish sounds constitute part of a separate Jewish subculture? For Stow, the main difference seems to have been the sounding of the *shofar* on the New Year!

"Subcultures," according to J. F. Short in his eponymous entry in *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (1996), "denote shared systems of norms, values, interests, or behaviors" that distinguish individuals or groups from the larger societies in which they also participate. Furthermore, he notes that research has found "social separation" to be a major contributor to the formation of subcultures, tending to produce "cultural differentiation." In the context of sixteenth-century Italian history, this would suggest that the social separation imposed by the ghettos (Rome's was established in 1555) would tend to promote a greater degree of cultural differentiation. Yet Stow repeatedly insists that "no matter how much the Ghetto physically separated the Jews from Christians, psychologically the Jews never perceived it as hermetically sealing off the outside" (p. 93). Rather, with their enclosure of Roman Jews in their ghetto, "the stage was set," in his view, "for a drama in which Jews could blur, or sometimes even ignore, the differences between them and their

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non-Jewish neighbors, yet recognize that as Jews . . . they must punctiliously foster their own, Jewish ways” (pp. 93–94).

Although Roman (and other Italian) Jews certainly fostered their own ways, they did not always do so punctiliously. Stow himself stresses the degree to which they were notoriously lax about the prohibition of imbibing non-Jewish wine (pp. 45–46). In this matter and related ones they may, in fact, perhaps be seen as constituting a subculture within the Jewish world—neither Askenazic nor Sephardic. Stow’s stimulating and well-written book, together with the two previously published volumes of documents, will provide scholars with useful tools for examining both the relationship of Roman Jewry to its Catholic environment and the degree to which the Roman experience was different from that of communities to the north in Tuscany, Lombardy, and the Veneto.

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Abraham Miguel Cardozo. *Selected Writings*. Translated and Introduced by David J. Halperin. Classics of Western Spirituality. New York: Paulist Press, 2001. xxi, 411 pp.

Abraham Miguel Cardozo is one of the most unusual and complex figures in the history of Jewish thought, but his identification with the Sabbateans caused him to be largely excluded from the study of that history, in his time and in ours. He had no impact to speak of on the larger development of Jewish ideas; yet, his biography and thought shed much light on the peculiarities of late-seventeenth-century Jewish identity. Cardozo was born to a New Christian (*converso*) family in Spain in 1626, and, after fleeing the Iberian Peninsula with his older brother, Isaac (who was the subject of a well-known biography by Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi), reverted to Judaism in Italy in 1648. He had already completed university studies by this time, and his fine Iberian training in philosophy and theology left its mark on all his writings.

Cardozo became deeply caught up in messianic fervor surrounding the advent of Shabbatai Zvi in 1665–1666, and for the rest of his life his thought centered on the struggle to understand the significance of Shabbatai’s appearance. After Shabbatai converted to Islam, Cardozo became one of the most important theologians of the movement, opposing the views of Nathan of Gaza. Later he would contend with the relationship between Shabbatai’s mission and his own very strong messianic identity. In Cardozo we find the coexistence of the skeptic, mystic, prophet, and philosopher.

David Halperin’s translation of works by Cardozo, with a preface by Elliot R. Wolfson and an extensive introduction and notes, appears in the excellent “Classics of Western Spirituality” series from the Paulist Press, which has given the English reader exposure to an impressive array of medieval, early modern, and

modern Jewish mystical texts. Cardozo may seem an odd character for this series—he is hardly a leading light of seventeenth-century Jewish spirituality—but Halperin’s undertaking is highly useful for both scholar and student. Specialists will continue to consult the voluminous texts of Cardozo in manuscript and the few in print, but for those with a more general interest in *converso* ideas, Sabbatean thought, and the late-seventeenth-century Sephardi context, this English volume supplies a great deal of material.

The volume opens with Elliot Wolfson’s learned discussion about Cardozo’s complex identity, formed in the nexus of Christian and Jewish lives. Wolfson points out how this background affected Cardozo’s Kaballah and Sabbatean thought in particular.

The rest of the book is divided roughly thus: one-half texts from Cardozo in translation, one-fourth Halperin’s introduction, and one-fourth notes. The extensive introduction and notes are absolutely critical for the non-specialist first encountering this difficult thinker; but even experts will find novel approaches here. The introduction, called “The Man and His Universe,” considers Cardozo’s identity as a “marrano,” kaballist, messiah-bearer, theologian, magus, and wanderer. In the last section Halperin attempts to put together all this analysis, to answer the question, “Who was this man?” He concludes that Cardozo was a figure out of step with his time, the eternal outsider whose unusual perspective was valuable in ways his contemporaries could not yet fathom.

Halperin’s translation is fun to read because it is as much literary as literal. He is faithful to the text insofar as it is comprehensible through a straightforward rendering, but he brings across the complexities when they arise. His prose is colorful and engrossing. The overall effect of the introduction and texts together is to create an image of Cardozo in the reader’s mind that is appropriately vivid and intricate. Most of the selections are from printed texts, though Halperin has checked some of them against the manuscripts to enhance accuracy. They include autobiographical fragments, Sabbatean theology, polemics, and prophecies. Among the other features, background texts help the reader follow Cardozo’s intent.

I would highly recommend this volume for anyone studying early modern Jewish life and ideas. It is lively and useful, and both a primary and a secondary source.

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Ken Koltun-Fromm. *Moses Hess and Modern Jewish Identity*. Jewish Literature and Culture Series. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2001. x, 180 pp.

The complex and intriguing figure of Moses Hess (1812-1875) has received attention as a socialist and a Zionist. His *Rome and Jerusalem* (1862) has been seen

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as a brilliant, if stylistically flawed, document that gives remarkably early evidence of the racial basis of antisemitism and striking testimony of a socialist intellectual's return to his Jewish roots. Despite the relatively large literature on Hess, no one had heretofore read Hess with a predominant interest in his fractured religious identity. This is the task that Ken Koltun-Fromm has set for himself in this highly novel, closely argued, and challenging work.

Not only does the author look at aspects of Hess that have remained largely unexplored, but he does so with tools not hitherto applied to the subject. Koltun-Fromm draws (critically) upon conceptions developed by contemporary theoreticians, especially the moral philosopher Charles Taylor, that enable him to dig beneath the surface of Hess's writing to reveal unresolved tensions which earlier writers on Hess had not discovered. Koltun-Fromm's Hess emerges from this reading as paradigmatic for the modern Jew, who likewise seems unable to integrate fully the divergent strands of Jewish identity. Hess deserves renewed attention because his confusions and conflicts, Koltun-Fromm argues, are characteristic for the Jewish condition in modernity.

A passage from *Rome and Jerusalem*, cited three times, provides Koltun-Fromm with the key for his strong reading of the text. In reference to sacrificial worship in Judaism, Hess writes: "The scar on the face of my beloved not only does not detract from my love, it is just as precious to me—who knows, perhaps even more precious?—than her beautiful eyes, which one can also find in other beautiful women, whereas just this scar is characteristic of the individuality of my beloved." In Koltun-Fromm's interpretation, this passage reveals more clearly than any other Hess's "ambivalence" toward his Jewish heritage in which sacrificial worship has not only to be acknowledged but also affirmed, while at the same time he could neither fully justify it morally nor envisage it in the messianic future of a restored Zion.

Koltun-Fromm examines Hess's relationship to his Jewishness in his earlier works, but the three central chapters of this revised dissertation focus on the pivotal *Rome and Jerusalem*. Drawing upon Taylor, he sees Hess embarked upon a "narrative quest," which seeks to integrate experience, but it is a quest at which Hess ultimately fails, leaving his identity fragmented and torn. Yet Hess does create a "necessary framework" for continuity, which lies in his understanding of Jewish identity as essentially racial, or national, in character. Given the contradiction between Hess's relationship to Judaism in real life (non-practicing, married to a French Catholic woman) and his call for Jewish observance—which contemporaries termed hypocrisy—it is not surprising that the Jewish race, to which all Jews belong regardless of belief or practice, should serve as the basis for Jewish continuity and unity. Once again with the aid of a Taylor concept, Hess is also portrayed as a "strong evaluator": his assessment of Judaism places it objectively above competing cultures and religions. He is also willing to polemicize strongly against both Reform Judaism and Jewish Neo-Orthodoxy, as represented by two unrelated rabbis named Hirsch: the radical Samuel Hirsch, whom Hess accuses of extinguishing Judaism through "fusion" and the traditionalist Samson Raphael Hirsch, who is guilty of rigidity.

Koltun-Fromm's analysis forced me to reread *Rome and Jerusalem* with his framework of understanding in mind. Would my own newly informed rereading support his interpretation? My conclusion: yes and no. To be sure, there are cracks here: Hess's misreading of his idol Spinoza, his seeming inability to deal absolutely with the issue of animal sacrifice, the tensions within his narrative quest. But I must admit that the overall impression was less that of inner fragmentation—despite the fragmentation of the book itself—than of polemics and apologetics. Hess has discovered—or rediscovered—that antisemitism, rooted in race, strikes the cultured Jew no less than the uncultured, that the Jewish *Kultus* (a difficult term that Koltun-Fromm renders as “tradition,” but which embraces contemporary Jewish life as well as legacy) is superior to any other, and that the answer to anti-semitism is a Jewish state. There is no ambivalence or ambiguity with regard to these central ideas. They are advocated with a whole heart. To be sure, *Rome and Jerusalem*, cast in the form of letters to Josephine Hirsch, is also a highly personal work, with references to self and family, but identity is not the principal issue, at least not explicitly. Koltun-Fromm's argument rests on what he digs out from beneath the surface.

As I read Koltun-Fromm and then Hess, my conviction grew that Koltun-Fromm's paradigm of the ambivalent modern Jew better fits Hess's friend Heinrich Heine than it does himself. Heine (whom Koltun-Fromm discusses briefly) had amazingly much in common with Hess: both were married to gentiles, both lived in French exile from Germany, both suffered extended illness during the last years of their lives, both were drawn to Utopian socialism, both were influenced by the Damascus Affair, and both “returned” to Judaism. But unlike Heine, who remained deeply ambivalent about Judaism even in the late poems of his *Romanzero*, Hess of *Rome and Jerusalem* is a proud defender of the Jewish race and its *Nationalkultus*, with none of the ironic, even mildly self-hating passages that mark Heine's work. I find Hess's ambivalence much more directed toward European culture than toward Judaism. On the one hand it has, especially in Germany (Hess is remarkably uncritical of France), produced racial hatred. On the other, he notes that tolerance has become a widespread article of faith and marks his own age as nothing less than messianic.

It is of the nature of a sharply focused lens that it enables us to see what a broadly focused one will miss. But it is also true that it leaves out of clear view what lies outside the focus. Hess's writing has lent itself to multiple foci, each of which is legitimate and helpful in creating a fuller understanding of the man and his work. Koltun-Fromm's new and highly interesting focus has revealed neglected aspects that make Hess freshly relevant for contemporary Jews. His work, therefore, deserves our attention.

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Book Reviews

Kimmy Caplan. *Orthodoxy in the New World: Immigrant Rabbis and Preaching in America (1881-1924)*. Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 2002. 395 pp. (Hebrew)

In the concluding pages of Kimmy Caplan's book, the author asks his ultimate question: "Did the Immigrant rabbis and preachers succeed?" (p. 312) To achieve success, in the eyes of Caplan, is to stimulate an emotionally charged response or to generate a change in perspective or action.

Historians, as modern historiography has made clear, are nary different from preachers. Caplan's exceptionally well-researched book might not meet the standards he sets for his preachers, but it is definitely an outstanding work of American Jewish scholarship and the most comprehensive treatment of the American immigrant Orthodox rabbinate to date.

The present work is a revision of Caplan's doctoral dissertation, completed at the Hebrew University under the tutelage of Joseph Dan. Caplan's book begins with a full discussion of the history and historiography of American Orthodoxy, relying heavily on social historian Jeffrey Gurock. Intellectual integrity demands that the author raise some of the serious methodological concerns related to writing a history of the American Orthodox *derashah* (sermon), and he does this deftly. His use of Saperstein's and Blondheim's writings gradually delineates the locus of his discussion: the meeting point of the classical Eastern European Orthodox *derashah* and the modern Jewish American experience.

Admittedly, Caplan cannot provide parallels to the American immigrant *derashah*, primarily because the historical events of 1904-1905 and the outbreak of the first world war uprooted Orthodox life in Eastern Europe. Instead, Caplan attempts to analyze, at least briefly in the last chapter, the connection between the Protestant and non-Orthodox sermons in America and the Orthodox ones.

The first chapter sketches the transformation of rabbis from the old world to the new. Caplan admirably traces the conflict and challenges of the immigrant rabbi and even attempts to compare the experience of the immigrant rabbi to that of other immigrants. Unfortunately, there is no summary that analyzes the extent to which immigrant rabbis were *sui generis* in the context of the mass immigration to America. Further, although Caplan has a relatively long discussion of the return of immigrant rabbis to Eastern Europe, he does not cite Jonathan Sarna's classic essay "The Myth of No Return," which suggested that between five and eight percent of all immigrants retraced their steps.

Caplan continues with a discussion of the historical context of these preachers and their sermons. It is within this context that the reader feels that "more is less." Caplan has chosen to focus on seven preachers (who are given partial biographies in an appendix to the book), but the twenty-plus different rabbis discussed throughout the book are difficult to track, primarily because so much information is provided about each one and because incidental anecdotes permeate almost every discussion. In one paragraph, for example, we learn that Rabbi Zalman Yakov Friederman is buried next to Rabbi Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook on Mount Scopus in Jerusalem; that Rabbi Israel Levinthal was almost killed in a terrorist action in 1936; and that Rabbi Gedalia Silvestron was on a boat with Rab-

bi Levinthal when they traveled to Israel (p. 82). None of these facts is critical to the central narrative. In addition, rules of organization are sometimes not followed. For example, though the author generally lists the years of each individual rabbi when that rabbi is introduced, the years of Aaron Gorowitz (1870-1958) only appear the fourth time he is mentioned in the book (p. 203).

A further complication is provided by the illustrations provided in one of the appendices. Ten photographs of rabbis appear, but it is wholly unclear why some of the less-discussed rabbis (such as Rabbi Hayyim Hirschenson) are included while others are neglected. Still, these are minor points, and they do not detract from the wide-ranging and superb portrayals that this book has to offer.

Chapters Three and Four move from the contextual to the textual as Caplan describes the formulas and sources used by immigrant Orthodox preachers. Whereas most of this section is very descriptive, a few portions are merely suggestive. The author makes clear that the sources that were accessible to American Orthodox immigrants were limited, but it is left for the reader to surmise why at least two rabbis quoted extensively from the Kuzari of Yehuda Halevi, one surreptitiously! (p. 166).

Orthodoxy in the New World concludes with a discussion of the transformation of the American *derashah* from the old world to the new. For Caplan, this sheds significant light on the history of American Orthodoxy, but as Caplan himself notes, this is only one piece of the puzzle of the development of American Orthodoxy. Caplan's discussion neglects the evolution of an American *halakha*, so critical to the self-definition of Orthodoxy. This lacuna cannot go unmentioned, yet it is hardly noticeable in this excellent portrayal of the popular religious culture of American immigrant Orthodox rabbis.

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Michael Alexander. *Jazz Age Jews*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001. viii, 239 pp.

The 1920s witnessed great changes in the American Jewish community. Jews moved out of their areas of first settlement and became increasingly assimilated into mainstream American life, and many became prominent figures in the world of popular music, film, the law, and organized crime. Paradoxically, as they strove to be fully integrated into American society, they also desired to maintain their separate Jewish identity. The tension this created has remained a central theme of the American Jewish experience. Michael Alexander has constructed an elegantly written and compelling interpretation of how that second generation of American Jews sought to resolve this conflict. In so doing, he offers fresh insights into the sources of American Jewish liberalism.

Briefly stated, his thesis is as follows: Even as the children of Eastern European immigrants moved up in the social and economic spheres, they identified

“down” with the outsiders, with marginalized Americans, and with less fortunate individuals and groups. Alexander argues that the experience of Eastern European Jews as members of an exiled and oppressed group made their status as outsiders a central characteristic of their Jewish identity. The religious toleration, freedom, and democracy in the United States threatened this feature of their Jewish identity. In order to keep alive their self-identity, many Jews intentionally impaired their economic, political, and cultural relations with gentiles. They did so by marking themselves off from American society by imitating, defending, and even participating in the group life of marginalized Americans. This activity served as a means by which second generation Jews could maintain some sense of their Jewish identity in free and open America.

To validate his thesis, Alexander focuses on the lives of three prominent Jewish personalities of that era: Arnold Rothstein, gambler and underworld kingpin; Felix Frankfurter, Harvard professor and legal scholar; and Al Jolson, the greatest entertainer of that time. All three men were born in the 1880s, grew up in Jewish ghettos, married gentile women, rose to national fame and, according to Alexander, became heroes to the Jewish community because of their association with certain key events of that decade. To wit, Rothstein allegedly fixed the 1919 World Series; Frankfurter championed the anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti; and Al Jolson regularly impersonated African Americans in blackface and appeared in the first talking film, *The Jazz Singer*. Alexander tells the story of these men and illustrates how other Jews perceived them and their role as outsiders and, in the process, defined themselves as Jews.

The book is divided into three sections. The first deals with Arnold Rothstein and explains how he achieved success in the criminal economy. The second section recounts how Frankfurter challenged the Massachusetts political and legal establishments by creating a groundswell of public opinion in support of Sacco and Vanzetti. The final section surveys Jolson’s career and describes how the application of burnt cork to his face allowed him to identify with black culture. Alexander argues that although all three men entered mainstream America, they fostered a sense of marginality. This, in turn, gave them approval and status within the Jewish community. Alexander buttresses his insights and conclusions by utilizing archival sources, government publications, the Yiddish press, and relevant secondary sources.

Despite the author’s thorough research and convincingly argued case, the book contains a few misconceptions. The gangster Legs Diamond was not Jewish; he was Irish. And despite what the American Jewish press supposed, Charlie Chaplin was also not Jewish. I also question a number of the author’s assertions. While admitting that only about nine percent of the Yiddish press readership was born in America, Alexander avers that the reaction of the second generation of American Jews “is found predominantly in Yiddish newspaper coverage of the described events” (p.185, n. 3). I find his reasoning for this unconvincing. The children of the Eastern European immigrants attended public schools, where the language of instruction was English. English became their primary language. Alexander offers no firm evidence to show that the second generation learned to read, could read, or wanted to read Yiddish. The author also declares that Arnold Rothstein “never

shied from his ethnic identity and never lost group feeling” (p. 39). But he offers no evidence to support this. To the contrary, Rothstein’s “group feeling” did not prevent him from sending gangsters to beat up Jewish strikers. Rothstein’s career showed that making money superseded any group or ethnic loyalty he may have had.

These points nonetheless do not detract from the importance of this imaginative and splendidly written study of American Jewry during the Jazz Age. All future studies investigating the origins of American Jewish liberalism or exploring American Jewish identity will have to take Alexander’s study into account.

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Mikhail Krutikov. *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity, 1905-1914*. Stanford Studies in Jewish History and Culture. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001. viii, 248 pp.

A feast for the imagination, Krutikov’s *Yiddish Fiction and the Crisis of Modernity* is best begun with dessert; the last chapter of this richly observed, original study of the modernist turn in Yiddish prose fiction repays with interest the reader’s diligent investment in the first three-quarters of the book. Here, Krutikov not only offers the most concise and compelling version of his argument but also resolves some of the questions that bedevil his attempt to determine the role of literature in history. The problem is, of course, not his alone but of paramount importance for every student of Eastern European Jewish culture. Krutikov’s diachronic reading of a single historical moment through the prism of fiction thus offers an immediate point of entry into the gap between the reality of Jewish lives in history and the construction of Jewish life in literature.

Krutikov argues that the floodtide of cataclysmic changes—violence, economic dislocation, immigration, radical politics—that overwhelmed Jewish society in the wake of the 1905 revolution altered the course of Yiddish writing. While the so-called classics of modern Yiddish letters—the works of Sholem-aleichem, Sh. J. Abramovich (known by the name of his fictional persona, Mendele the Bookpeddler) and I. L. Peretz—achieved almost canonical status, a younger cohort of writers both in both Russia and America strove toward the creation of a new narrative paradigm. All three, according to Krutikov, based their Jewish fictions on the principled use of repetition in the name of desire to return to a mythical point of origins; overwhelmed by events, they constructed (in the words of David Roskies, invoked by Krutikov) an enduring Jewish “mythology of the mundane” as a way of mitigating catastrophic history. By contrast, Weissenberg, Opatoshu and, most characteristically, Bergelson adopted a more linear, historicist approach to plot and characterization, as well as a style that privileged transformation over stasis, psychology over type, universality over Jewish particularity, and nature over

culture. Instead of Yiddish novels, which rendered Jewish language as the expressive means of Jewish content—ethical, ritual or textual—they experimented with generically indeterminate forms to describe the Yiddish-speaking Jews who occupied the same unbounded historical space as their gentile neighbors. Their own commitment to Yiddish derived not from a vision of ecstatic union with their audience but from a subtle appreciation of the linguistic—phonetic and semantic—potentialities of the colloquial idiom. Unmoored from Jewish scripture and Jewish community, the language of Yiddish modernism became more closely linked with the revolutionary course of the European avant-garde, a movement equally obsessed by its own anxieties of influence.

In order to demonstrate the all-important link between modernity and modernism, Krutikov constructs a taxonomy of motifs—the shift from an agrarian to an industrial and commercial economy, the spread of revolutionary politics, immigration, and the rise of the “new woman”—that appear as a series of “crises” within Jewish society, refracted through the lens of contemporary Yiddish fiction. While Krutikov explicitly acknowledges his debt to his Soviet predecessors in his emphasis on literature as a faithful register of social reality, he is at his best precisely when he strays from the well-trodden path of Marxist historicism. The first three chapters focus on the aesthetic representation of social mobility; this is a tale simply told and expertly put together. The final chapter, “Love and Destiny: The Crisis of Youth” is, in its own modest way, a gem of historical insight into the way literature makes a difference. Linking the expression “crisis” of early-twentieth-century Yiddish literature with an increasing interest in psychological realism that seemed beyond the capacity of its conventions, Krutikov relates the literary quest for subjectivity to the radical transvaluation of gender categories. Krutikov contrasts the tentative embrace of subversive female interiority in the work of Opatoshu, Asch, and Bergelson with the defense of male authorship in the autobiographies of Sholem-aleichem and Peretz. The latter recuperates Jewishness for the modern Jew by promoting the reconciliation between personal desire and collective responsibility; the former forecloses any possibility of a qualified return to Jewish society and Jewish tradition. The national mythology of the prodigal son gives way to the incurably diasporic reality of the errant daughter.

Krutikov is among a distinguished minority of contemporary Yiddishists fully at home not only in the Jewish vernacular but in the imperial lingua franca. His cosmopolitanism is impressively evident in his command of Russian theoretical literature but not sufficiently so in his reluctance to depart the imaginary confines of Yiddishland for the actual places where Yiddish literature developed alongside its Russian, Polish, and American counterparts. Strained comparisons with British modernism serve only to heighten the absence of local texts and contexts. Was the sense of crisis that Krutikov attributes to Yiddish literature generally symptomatic? After all, the events which occasioned it affected gentiles no less than Jews, not to mention Jews who wrote in languages other than Yiddish. More attention to the comparative cultural manifestations of the forces that engaged the attention of Yiddish authors might have led Krutikov to the proposition that the creation of the “Yiddish literary system” (p. 6) depended—then as now—on the constant re-assertion of crisis as a paradigmatic Jewish condition. In their move toward the sin-

gular and the idiosyncratic, Krutikov's Yiddish modernists implicitly defied the limits of such historical parochialism. Writing in Yiddish served their efforts to leave Yiddishland behind; Krutikov's fine work leaves one wishing that more Yiddishists would follow suit.

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Jeffrey Veidlinger. *The Moscow State Yiddish Theater: Jewish Culture on the Soviet Stage*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. ix, 356 pp.

The October Revolution fostered the rise to prominence of two of the greatest Jewish art theatres of the twentieth century: the Hebrew-language Habima and the Yiddish-language Moscow State Yiddish Theater, the latter commonly referred to by its Russian acronym, Goset. The impetus for their creation predated the Revolution, with roots, respectively, in Bialystok and Petrograd; but it was only after they established themselves in Moscow that they spread their wings and attained artistic heights that would ensure a place in the annals of world theatre. Both were important participants in the great flowering of the Russian stage during the 1920s, a period that seethed with revolutionary fervor, as Moscow took the vanguard as the incubator for theatrical experimentation. It was here that the theories and artistic silhouette of the modern stage were examined, reshaped, and reinvented with an unwavering conviction that theatre matters, that it has the power to transform society.

Goset and Habima immersed themselves in the vibrant theatrical culture created by such theatrical greats as Konstantin Stanislavsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Aleksandr Tairov, and Yevgeny Vakhtangov, directors whose teachings still nurture the world's theater. Eventually, the two companies, benefiting from the state's official recognition and support (as problematic as it may have been), refashioned the Jewish stage with such avant-garde productions as Habima's *The Dybbuk* (1922) and Goset's *The Sorceress* (1922), *200,000* (1923), and *A Night in the Old Market* (1925).

Though Habima and Goset represented two antagonistic political camps—Zionism and Communism—both were children of the revolutionary quest for modernistic Jewish artistic expression. Their stories, however, unfolded along disparate paths. Habima left Moscow in 1926, settled permanently in Palestine, and became Israel's national theatre. Goset remained, maneuvering its way through the gauntlet of Soviet political and artistic policies, only to be brutally liquidated by Stalin's henchmen. Solomon Mikhoels, the company's director and star actor, was murdered in an "accident" in Minsk on January 12, 1948, and the company was disbanded the next year; Benjamin Zuskin, his longtime acting partner, was tried on trumped-up charges and executed on August 12, 1952, together with other leading Russian Jewish artists and intellectuals.

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Since the 1920s, Goset has captured the attention of Yiddishists, historians, and theatre scholars, who have over time generated a rich literature in Russian, Yiddish, French, German, and Hebrew, with books that vary in tone and purpose. Jeffrey Veidlinger has made an important contribution to this predominantly non-English body of literature. His carefully researched volume is the first English-language monograph on Goset and the first comprehensive account of the theatre's history from its early beginnings to its liquidation. Exploring his topic in the aftermath of the collapse of the USSR, the author profited from newly released original materials. Though not sensational in their revelations, these documents, ably used by the author, contribute to a deeper and more detailed understanding of the relationship between the state and Goset in their exposition of the minutiae of backstage politics and intrigues.

Veidlinger's historical narrative consists of seven chronologically arranged chapters, strung together along the central theme of the Goset's shifting relationship with the regime. The first chapter is devoted to the early days, with an emphasis on its ur-history as the Jewish Theatrical Society established in Petrograd in 1916. This prerevolutionary phase is a near-forgotten period that the author highlights in order to correct what he considers to be two self-serving accounts of the company's formation, one by Alexander Granovsky, its artistic director in the 1920s, and the other by Soviet historians bent on glorifying the role of the Soviet government. The following two chapters are devoted to the 1920s and the theatre's renowned stylized adaptations of Jewish classics. They are informed by newly released materials that document nasty shenanigans, some of them not altogether shocking to one familiar with the backstage politics of theatres dependent on state funding. This section of the book concludes with Goset's 1928 European tour and the defection of Granovsky, who had shaped its artistic language and persona.

Veidlinger's most important contribution lies in the ensuing chapters, which are devoted to the lackluster and tightly controlled 1930s, an unsung decade in theatre history, but a time of great interest to students of Soviet Jewry. In the aftermath of Granovsky's departure, it was left to Goset's actor Solomon Mikhoels, its new director, to navigate the company through the increasingly difficult path of Soviet cultural and ethnic politics and to remold Jewish nationalism in conformity with the ideological twists and turns of newly proclaimed dogmas, including socialist realism and cultural nationalism. Veidlinger traces Goset's efforts to reorient its style and message so as to adjust to the hardening political realities of the 1930s by presenting plays in the social–realist vein. The last part of the book is devoted to the war years and Mikhoels' involvement in the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. It concludes with the terminal postwar history of the company, hurled into institutional and personal destruction by intensified official anti-Jewish policies.

The book's self-declared purpose is to demonstrate how Goset championed Jewish national culture. The author clarifies its central theme in the introduction: "while sharing many aspects of the state's educational ideals and class-based worldview, the Yiddish theater successfully resisted all attempts to turn its stage into just another platform of Soviet propaganda" (p. 3). The tenacious nature of this thesis is manifest in the portrayal of the theatrical enterprise, and particularly its leader, Solomon Mikhoels, as a steadfast force carefully navigating turbulent

Soviet waters. The result of this heroic interpretation is that the theatre's shifting repertoire and production styles are seen as largely reactive, the result of the impact of external forces and hardly the product of creative maturation. Veidlinger posits that many of the theatre's productions included a nationalist Jewish subtext that eluded the censor but was calculated to evoke deep national sentiments in Jewish audiences, who were able to read between the lines. Although this subversive interpretation may be valid in some cases, the author does not factually substantiate the thesis and occasionally stretches his argument beyond logical and historical credibility. For example, he suggests that the collective suicide of the besieged Vilna Soviet delegates at the end of M. Daniel's civil war play *Four Days* would remind the audience of the heroism of the Zionist Masada myth. However, there is no evidence that the Masada story was a part of the cultural consciousness of Russian Jewish spectators by 1931. Similarly, the author attaches much importance to Mikhoels' thoughtful attention to hand gestures, particularly as related to playing the lead in Bergelson's *The Deaf*, and interprets this interest as related to the Zionist commitment expressed in Psalm 137: "If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning . . ." Such undocumented speculations detract from the strength of the overall argument.

Although Goset's journey is chronicled in great detail by the author, who is well grounded in the vicissitudes of Soviet Jewish political and cultural life, the intense focus on the politics of Jewish national culture, for which the author uses the theatre as an example, leads to a certain flattening of the artistic landscape. By the book's end, the reader is left hesitant regarding the significance of Goset as a theatrical institution. How noteworthy were its artistic achievements? Where would one position it within the overall theatrical map of the period? Was it in the same league as Tairov's or Vakhtangov's theatres, or was its role more ethnic than artistic?

Extant Jewish and Russian materials would have helped to clarify some of these questions. Eyewitness histories of the Russian stage offer rather objective answers by virtue of the attention they grant Goset. Konstantin Rudnitsky's *Russian and Soviet Theater 1905–1932*, for example, discusses the extraordinary acting skills of Mikhoels and Zuskin and emphasizes their creative interaction. This collaboration reached its artistic zenith in Goset's renowned production of *King Lear*, when they captivated Moscow in the roles of King and Fool. The origins of *Lear*'s bold directorial concept are shrouded in mystery. Veidlinger credits Sergei Radlov as the director, yet Rudnitsky's history rejects this official credit. He argues that Radlov was a tame director, by then not capable of the creative spirit manifest in the production. He suggests that the directorial concept was developed by Les Kurbas, an innovative Ukrainian director who, like Granovsky, had been a student of Max Reinhardt. Kurbas, whose unique directorial style was characterized by a sharp graphic quality and a dynamic rhythm that earned him the nickname "the Ukrainian Meyerhold," was imprisoned before the completion of *Lear*. So it was left to Radlov, the lesser director, to finish and "sign" the production. True, Rudnitsky offers no proof for his version of events, but his narrative is presented with much confidence that demands either confirmation or denial.

Another issue that requires discussion is Granovsky's artistic impact. Was he

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a great director? A merely competent one? By all accounts he was intellectual and pedantic, the sort of director who used a metronome in his work with actors. Again, it may be instructive to look at Russian theatre sources that precede his defection. Huntly Carter, a British scholar who saw many of the Soviet productions of the 1920s and discussed them in detail in his ground-breaking book *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre 1917–1928*, paid considerable attention to Granovsky's work. In a subchapter devoted to the persons he identifies as the "Practical Builders" of the new Russian theatre, Carter offers a list of "the big five," consisting of Granovsky, Lunacharski, and the path-breaking directors Meyerhold, Tairov, and Stanislavsky. Was Carter correct in this assessment? Did he reflect the professional theatrical views of the time?

A discussion of such theatrical issues would have enriched the largely political tapestry woven by Veidlinger. In addition, given the large number of productions covered, it is unfortunate that the book does not include an appendix with a chronological list, offering such basic information as playwright, translator, director, designer, choreographer, and composer. These names are included in the body of the text, but a list of productions—a standard feature in theatre history books—would have provided a clear road map and serve readers interested in specific aspects of the theatre's artistic history.

These comments should not detract from Veidlinger's immense contribution. His meticulous research presents a richly detailed and cohesive picture. It is instrumental in introducing English-language readers to a storied chapter in the history of modern Jewish creativity and will undoubtedly trigger future study into the various aspects of the Moscow State Yiddish Theatre.

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Daniel J. Elazar and Rela Mintz Geffen. *The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities*. SUNY Series in American Jewish Society in the 1990s. Albany: SUNY Press, 2000. xiv, 238 pp.

Michael B. Greenbaum. *Louis Finkelstein and the Conservative Movement: Conflict and Growth*. Academic Studies in the History of Judaism. Binghamton, NY: Global Studies, 2001. xv, 308 pp.

Mordecai M. Kaplan. *Communings of the Spirit: The Journals of Mordecai M. Kaplan. Volume 1, 1913–1934*. Edited by Mel Scult. American Jewish Civilization Series. Detroit: Wayne State University Press and the Reconstructionist Press, 2001. 558 pp.

Much has been, and continues to be, written about the Conservative movement and its impact upon both American Judaism and world Jewry. Such works

differ widely in scope and emphasis. The three recently published volumes under review serve to exemplify such diversity. One examines the movement in its entirety, concentrating on the present, primarily from a sociological perspective; the others focus more on history, illuminating in different ways the roles of two of the most influential figures in Conservative Judaism in the past.

With the publication of *The Conservative Movement in Judaism: Dilemmas and Opportunities*, Rela Geffen and the late Daniel Elazar have produced a concise yet comprehensive analysis of the Conservative movement's relative strengths and weaknesses. The authors summarize the movement's origins and history, and examine its constituent institutions and organizations. They describe the growth and impact of *Havurot*, the Ramah Camps and Solomon Schechter Day Schools, and also point out the often articulated shortcomings of Conservatism—problems relating to “turf,” ideology, defections (on both the left and the right), and the like.

In gathering their data, Elazar and Geffen have surveyed Conservative rabbis, interviewed a large number of movement leaders, and made use of existing studies on religious observance and affiliation. They identify eight “dimensions” of the movement, for example, demographics, and examine each using the following model:

1. A statement of the problem, its dimensions and background;
2. A review of existing data and literature bearing on the problem;
3. The generation of new data as necessary to understand the problem;
4. An outline of plausible policy alternatives to address that problem;
5. A discussion of the merits and potential dangers associated with each policy option;
6. Ideas for additional information gathering, which would further assist the policy-making process (p. 8).

But Elazar and Geffen are not content, however, merely to describe the “state of the movement.” In Part II of their work, entitled “Next Steps,” they offer suggestions as to how the Conservative movement should address its problems. Much of their advice, such as broadening the institutional base of the movement to include constituencies beyond congregations, and adopting the name “Masorti” worldwide, is sound; the leaders of Conservatism would be well advised to reflect seriously on this thoughtful volume and to implement many of the authors’ recommendations.

Louis Finkelstein, who served as president and chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America from 1940–1972, was a major figure in shaping Conservative Judaism. Although a good deal has been written about him, *Louis Finkelstein and the Conservative Movement: Conflict and Growth* is the first book-length treatment. An expanded version of Michael Greenbaum’s doctoral dissertation, the work is an in-depth study of Finkelstein’s first fifteen years in office. Greenbaum is uniquely positioned to author such a volume, having spent his entire career at the Seminary, where he currently serves as vice-chancellor and chief administrative officer. Whereas one might assume that his Seminary connection

might blur Greenbaum's objectivity, happily, such is not the case. He offers a balanced, critical analysis of Finkelstein's formative years.

Framing his study around the "Mission/Identity Conflict" inherent in all religiously affiliated academic institutions, Greenbaum's initial chapters deal with Finkelstein's predecessors at the Seminary, Solomon Schechter (1902–1915) and Cyrus Adler (1915–1940), for it was their vision that Finkelstein adopted and expanded. Each president was firmly committed to the idea that the school's impact be broad and far-reaching, and each was reluctant to define the Seminary narrowly as a Conservative institution. This fact was a major source of ongoing tension between Finkelstein and the leaders of the other two arms of the movement, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue. Both organizations felt that Finkelstein, in particular, and the Seminary, in general, should primarily serve the movement, whereas Finkelstein was firmly committed to a broader agenda. He believed that the Seminary should serve the entire Jewish, as well as non-Jewish, world; accordingly, he devoted much of his time and energy to creating and expanding programs and institutions such as the weekly radio "The Eternal Light," the Jewish Museum, and the Institute for Religious and Social Studies.

To his credit, Greenbaum uses many primary sources to document comprehensively and accurately the positions of both Finkelstein and his critics, and demonstrates the strengths and weaknesses in each.

A concluding observation: For this reader, too many financial details vis-à-vis Seminary campaigns and budgets are included. However, this is understandable, given the fact that Greenbaum's portfolio includes oversight of the Seminary's finances.

Anyone interested in Mordecai Kaplan is familiar with the works of Mel Scult, who has authored and edited a number of books and articles dealing with Kaplan's life and thought. Most recently, Scult has focused on Kaplan's journal and has edited Volume 1, which covers the years 1913–1934. Kaplan, it turns out, was not only an original thinker, prolific author, and pragmatic innovator, but also one of the world's premier diarists. His journal, which begins in 1913 and extends well into the '70s and consists of approximately 10,000 pages occupying 27 volumes, is one of the most extensive personal diaries extant.

Scult had unprecedented access to the journal and has judiciously chosen and titled each entry. The selections reflect Kaplan's broad range of interests and activities, and also include candid opinions of the many prominent individuals with whom he interacted. The reader catches glimpses of Kaplan grappling with his evolving theology, struggling with his unappreciative laity and bickering with his intolerant colleagues.

The journal does not include much detail about Kaplan's family, but it does offer fascinating insights into his sense of self, apprehensions, self-doubts, and solitude. Sadly, Kaplan had many, many admirers, but few close friends. He considered his journal one, as his poignant entry on July 3, 1929 tells us: "As on previous occasions, I shall resort again to this diary as though it were an intelligent friend . . ." (p. 341).

Scult is to be commended for undertaking the task of making Kaplan's jour-

nal available to the public. It is riveting and offers unique insights into the mind and thoughts of one of the “giants” of American Judaism. The publication of Volume 2 is anxiously anticipated.

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Walter P. Zenner. *A Global Community: The Jews from Aleppo, Syria*. Detroit, Michigan: Wayne State University Press, 2000. 233 pp.

The author of this review was once invited to give a historical lecture at a venerable New York City Jewish institution. The subject of antisemitism figured prominently in the talk. “Why do they hate us so?” wailed one member of the audience among the crowd that gathered afterward. “Can you tell me?” As she walked with me to my subway stop, pouring out her despair, I patiently tried to explain to her why perceptions of Jews might have developed as they had.

Suddenly a Duane-Reade drugstore appeared in our path. Instantly the woman’s manner changed. She whispered in a conspiratorial voice, “Do you see that store? It’s owned by *Syrian Jews*. They’re *rich*. They exploit their employees. They are sharp businessmen. And they’re incredibly clannish—they won’t marry among anyone but themselves!” “Oh, really?” I replied. “Isn’t that terrible.” On she went, spouting the alleged qualities of the Syrian Jewish community in terms almost identical to the general anti-Jewish stereotypes I had been speaking about only a half hour before. “By the way,” I interrupted her as the appearance of my subway stop forced an end to the conversation, “I’m half Syrian.” Her eyes widened with shock. I did not wait to hear her subsequent sputters of apology as I took my leave and descended the steps into the subway.

Encounters such as these are all the more reason to cherish the work of the late Walter P. Zenner, a distinguished professor of anthropology and Jewish studies at the University at Albany, who made the study of Syrian Jews his life’s calling. *A Global Community: The Jews from Aleppo, Syria* includes a peerless bibliography and eleven chapters covering history, culture, rabbinical traditions, geography, cuisine, music, photographs, and comparative scientific anthropological insights. Musicologist Mark Kligman of Hebrew Union College, an authority on the distinctive Syrian Jewish liturgy and *pizmoneem*, makes a valuable contribution in one co-authored chapter.

The ancient city of Aleppo in northern Syria was at the peak of its importance as a commercial center from the Ottoman Conquest in 1517 to the beginning of the nineteenth century. One of the oldest Jewish communities in the world, it had been enriched by an influx of Spanish exiles and other European Jews in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and Spanish family names and loanwords are part of the community down to the present day. Silk, cotton, and other goods were exported from the Middle East and Aleppo was a main trading center between Iran and Iraq and Europe. Syrian Jews, though handicapped by their status as *dhimmis*,

nevertheless played an extensive role in this trade, and developed techniques for setting up family members in foreign lands as a way of advancing the business.

Aleppo's prominence came to an end, however, with the Industrial Revolution, which reversed the flow of trade from the Middle East. Now, cheap factory-manufactured textiles and other products from Europe were flooding the market. The opening of the Suez Canal brought caravan trading to an end. The disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, the "Young Turk" revolution, wars, the prospect of enforced military service for *dhimmi*s, and the economic depression in general built up pressures to emigrate.

From their start on the Lower East Side along with other immigrants, the Syrian Jewish and allied communities in America have grown to the point that they may number as many as 50,000 or more. Syrian Jewish insiders refer to themselves as "SY"; Ashkenazim are "Iddshy" and "Iddshiyeh," or "Jay-Dubs" (as in JW for "Jewish"). Thoroughly Americanized (with the possible exception of thousands of newcomers who arrived in the early 1990s) they are flourishing in their United States home bases of Ocean Parkway, Brooklyn; Deal, New Jersey; and Hallandale and Turnberry, Florida. Although of late more men and women have been entering the professions, mercantile pursuits are still encouraged.

The Community (often pronounced by SY's as if it were written with a capitalized "C") is characterized on the whole by early and opulent weddings, a higher-than-average number of children, and a unique combination of American acculturation coupled with intense piety and conservatism. For example, in an instance that Zenner describes, at one point tennis lessons were becoming increasingly popular at Syrian Jewish country clubs. Rumors began to surface that some community women were having affairs with their coaches. The rabbis thereupon issued an edict banning the women from taking lessons from male tennis coaches, and that ban has been obeyed.

The community is also marked by distinctive family names, which are often based on occupations, physical descriptions, or towns of origin. Zenner initiates readers into some of these. They include a dealer in fragrances (Attar); a dealer in cotton (Kattan); slaughterer (Dabbah); soldier (Jindi or Gindi); blacksmith (Haddad); greengrocer (Hadary); butcher (Kassab); soapmaker (Sabban); water carrier (Sakkah); candlemaker (Shamah); and olive dealer (Zetun). Also common are Beyda (white), Tawil (tall), Safdieh (from Safed), Dweck, Esses, Kassin, Labaton, Matalon, Schwecky, Sutton or Setton, and, oddly enough, Ashkenazi.

Some of Zenner's most interesting encounters are with alienated intellectuals who "left" the community to pursue alternate paths. These include the poet and author Jack Marshall, professor of English and literary critic Stanley Sultan, and the actor Dan Hedaya, who spurned his family's import-export business in order to follow his chosen career. In general, however, the community places strong emphasis on keeping the children close to home. If higher education is pursued, it is preferably done at Brooklyn College, New York University, or other schools nearby. Community rabbis do their best to see to it that course subjects are chosen with care and that those who live in dormitories return to the parental abodes for Sabbaths and holidays.

Central to understanding the Syrian Jews is their communal ban on intermarriage. Meticulously worded, signed by thirty-five rabbis and communal leaders, and elaborately lettered in calligraphy, the ban is displayed in the lobbies of Syrian Jewish synagogues and community centers. Any member of the community, male or female, who marries a non-Jew, as well as any children that might result from such a marriage, are excommunicated from the group. Conversions to Judaism for the purpose of marriage are simply not recognized. Paper copies of the ban are easily available and, as Zenner notes, are known to have been sent in the mail to Syrian Jewish men reported to be dating non-Jewish women.

Such arrogance and protective insularity is felt to be justified by an ancient and holy community whose ancestors, as members take for granted, have walked in the shadow of King David himself. As every child in the Aleppan-sponsored Magen David Yeshiva in Brooklyn knows, in Biblical times King David and his general Joab ben Zeruiah conquered the land north of Israel all the way up to city of Aram Zoba, as “Halab” was known in the Hebrew Bible (2 Samuel 8, 1 Chronicles 18, and Psalm 60). The name “Halab,” meaning “milk” in both Arabic and Hebrew, stems from the tradition that Abraham stopped to milk his flocks there before continuing to the Holy Land. Residents and descendants from the area were and are known as “Halabi” and “Halabiyyeh.” (Damascenes were known as “Shami.”) Italian traders on the caravan and sea routes from Europe rendered the name Halab as “Aleppo.”

Significantly, the Hebrew initials of Aram Zoba happen to be *aleph-resh-tzaddi*, or “Eretz”; and it is this Hebrew abbreviation that identifies most of the community’s prayer books and rabbinic documents. There was no international border between the two areas until after World War I, when Syria and Lebanon became French Mandates and Palestine went to the British. In Ottoman days they had been part of the same province. Indeed, Syria as a whole was considered to be an extension of the Holy Land itself, with portions of the *halakhah* applicable to *Eretz Yisrael* also applying there. “What do you mean, return?” sniffed one community mother, upon hearing her graduate student daughter wax enthusiastic on the glories of modern Jewish history and the Return to Zion. “As far as Grandma was concerned, *she* never left.”

Zenner admits at the end of his book that the example of the Syrian Jews is of limited practical use to the rest of the American Jewish community. As he points out, “a heavy price must be paid for insulation.” Nevertheless, this community represents at the very least a magnificent opportunity for research. Their unbroken line permits the observer to see what all Jewish communities must have been like at the dawn of their existence. There is much work that can yet be done, and Walter P. Zenner has blazed the trail.

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Book Reviews

Jeffrey A. Summit. *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land: Music and Identity in Contemporary Jewish Worship*. American Musicspheres. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. xiii, 203 pp.

With few exceptions, classical study of Jewish liturgy has focused on the words of the prayers, largely ignoring the less tangible elements of setting, gesture, halakhic guidance, and music. When scholars like Eric Werner and A. Z. Idelsohn wrote about liturgical music, they, too, considered it a text. In recent years, and influenced by trends in the larger academy, the field has become more interdisciplinary, open to the insights of other scholarly methodologies, resulting in important studies on the archaeological history of the synagogue itself, prayer gestures, liturgical *halakhah*, and mystical approaches to prayer. Into this context, we can welcome warmly Jeffrey Summit's *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land* and its ethnographic study of the musical dimension of contemporary American Jewish liturgy.

Scholars generally have been slow to study Jewish religious practice through anthropological lenses, applying the interpretative methods offered by ritual studies sporadically at best and rarely addressing the nonverbal aspects of liturgy. Summit thus enters new territory, and his study necessarily focuses on generating the "thick descriptions," that is, the primary data necessary for more complex analysis. This book, a revision of his dissertation, is a narrow ethnomusicological examination of five different Ashkenazi congregations in the Boston area, focusing on their *kabbalat Shabbat* services. These include a New Age *havurah*, a large Reform congregation still in the process of abandoning its classical Reform practice, the Conservative minyan at the Hillel where Summit is rabbi, a modern orthodox congregation, and the Hasidic congregation of the Bostoner Rebbe. Summit is aware of the pitfalls of applying participant-observer methodologies to communities in which he is an insider (pp. 8-9); he successfully balances sympathetic description and scholarly analysis in his portrayal of each community.

Following a methodological introduction and a brief overview of Jewish liturgy, Summit's book consists of three studies. In these, he explores the practice of each community, combining observations of the actual services with the results of extensive and often fascinating interviews of members and leaders of the congregations. Many musical illustrations appear in notation in the text and on the accompanying CD. His findings are individually often not astounding, but the very exercise of placing them side by side is enlightening. In many cases, the comparisons highlight the complexity of the American Jewish cultural matrix. As Summit points out, the musical choices of these communities do not generate a continuum consistent with the standard spectrum of New Age/Reform to Orthodox. The New Age congregation, halakhically very liberal, and the Hasidic congregation, halakhically very strict, were most similar in their understandings of the role of liturgical music and in their types of musical choices (103-104).

Summit's primary theoretical goal here is to discern how music functions to help construct identity for communities of American Jews. He suggests that individual congregations place themselves in relation to each other and in relation to their own (perceived if not actual) history by the choices that they make regarding

such issues as congregational participation versus formal professional performance of the liturgy; reliance on known tunes versus introduction of new ones; freedom of innovation and musical style versus (sometimes perceived) traditionalism; and/or using music as a vehicle of transcendence versus a reliance on the verbal dimension of the prayers. The first study investigates the meaning of melodic choice in each setting, with a primary but not exclusive focus on *Lekhah dodi*. The second explores the communities' perceptions of *nusah*, the traditional chants for performance of the liturgy.¹ The third study broadens the perspective beyond *kabbalat Shabbat* to examine the codes embedded in melody choice in Jewish worship more generally.

In the first two studies, Summit travels from community to community, following an arc from the less to the more traditional settings, describing their practices. The third study, however, breaks from the ethnographic model to explore more theoretically how liturgical music functions as a communicative code in Judaism. Here, where application of the theory to the familiar communities would most strongly demonstrate his point, Summit discusses directly only the Hillel and New Age communities, bringing additional examples from common knowledge and a sixth congregation. His proofs also operate on different planes. The use of Lamentations *trop* in Esther is quite a different sort of code-switching than the New Age employment of a Buddhist melody or the Hillel negotiation between *nusah* and song. The latter two speak to communal identity; the first does not.

Summit's conclusion attempts briefly to place the Boston Jewish communities within the larger setting of American religion. While important, this exercise would be more convincing had he already more deeply situated his five communities within the larger spectrum of American Judaism. Summit studied familiar and welcoming local congregations; this only increases his obligation to contextualize them and establish how they represent their larger movements. In addition, whereas including a Conservative Hillel *minyán* added a young adult community, omitting the voice of the traditionally trained cantor found in a large Conservative congregation created a lacuna, one exacerbated by the presence of only one (Reform) cantor in the study. Indeed, a wider study, as Summit himself acknowledges (p. 14), is necessary to demonstrate the validity of his own theoretical claims. Nevertheless, Summit's book provides an important foundation for further research into the role of Jewish liturgical music.

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1. Summit's only egregious error concludes this chapter, wherein he dates the *Mazor Vitry* to two centuries before Rashi instead of to the generation after, and where his bibliographic reference, strangely, lists its author by his patronymic.

Book Reviews

Jerold S. Auerbach. *Are We One? Jewish Identity in the United States and Israel*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001. vii, 248 pp.

Steven T. Rosenthal. *Irreconcilable Differences? The Waning of the American Jewish Love Affair with Israel*. Hanover, New Hampshire: University Press of New England for Brandeis University Press, 2001. xxii, 231 pp.

Perhaps it should be thought good luck if you've written a deeply flawed book that is overtaken and rendered very nearly useless by events. Saved by the bell, as it were, your bad book may not be noticed. (Or is it better to be embarrassed than ignored?)

Now come two books that deal with Israel–Diaspora relations, that are both ill-timed: written before, but published after, the current intifada, and able to deal with these latest events with only polite acknowledgement rather than as a serious challenge to their arguments.

But although both are ill-timed, and must be held blameless for that, only one is also ill-tempered. Professor Jerold Auerbach, who early on “dreamed of a white Christmas” and “hunted for Easter eggs,” came upon Israel and Zionism some three decades ago, near his fortieth birthday. With all the zeal of a convert, he now wields his faith like a hammer, and his is more screed than book, largely indifferent to facts that stand in the way of his pre-Zionist analysis. Yes, “pre-Zionist,” perhaps even more simply anti-Zionist. Auerbach is furious with Zionism in general, with secular Zionism in particular. He thinks himself a defender of Israel, but the Israel he defends never was and never will be. On one hand, he criticizes all those liberal Zionists who have from time to time expressed disappointment with Israel's departure from liberal norms; on the other, he castigates Zionism for its departure from Auerbach's own norms. He comes not to praise Zionism, but to bury it. (His praise is reserved for the settlers and their settlements.) For in his view, the choice that Israel—and Jews more generally—must make is the fateful choice between Zionism and Judaism, and Auerbach is relentlessly on the side of Judaism. “[T]here is,” he tells us, “a fundamental, perhaps irreconcilable tension between Zionism, a revolutionary political movement in pursuit of normalization, and Judaism, the distinctive faith tradition of the Jewish people—a people, according to the biblical text . . . destined to dwell alone, set apart from the other nations of the world” (pp. 113–114). “The journey of the modern Jews,” as he sees it, “is from emancipation through Zionism to assimilation” (p. 220). Period, end of story.

Now, although Auerbach invariably misses the nail despite his relentless hammering—and one has the sense that he gets carried away into a kind of manic hammering because he is desperate for contact—he does have one solid underlying point. It is the same point that has been made by virtually every thoughtful analyst of Jewish life since the Emancipation, for the Emancipation is still the great challenge to Jewish life. What, in fact, can and should it mean to be a Jew in a free society, a society in which the individual is encouraged to make his or her own choices? And what are the prospects of the Jews in such an environment?

To that standard question, Auerbach's answer is fealty to Torah—which “is hardly the founding text for freedom of choice and liberal politics.” Whether feal-

ty to Torah means more to him than hostility to liberalism is hard to say; he apparently does not see much difference between the two. Others among us may think the *haredi* (ultra-Orthodox) community an offense not only against Zionism, which they explicitly choose to be, but also against Judaism, which they preserve in its purest cultic aspects, but for Auerbach they are “in the end a living reminder of everything Jewish that Zionists assumed they had defeated in their struggle with the rabbis for Jewish cultural supremacy in the modern era” (p. 204). Not for Auerbach pastels, much less shades of gray; his truths are loud and bitter, even garish. As if to add insult to injury, he breathlessly fills his argument with unattributed, unfootnoted quotations. Thus, for example, he faults American Jews who move to Israel for bringing vestiges of their Americanness with them, whether in the form of a penchant for softball or a commitment to civil liberties, “characteristically American in its Jewish shallowness” (p. 70).

Indeed, he goes on for some pages in an effort to portray (the erstwhile) American fascination with the kibbutz as deriving from the consonance of the kibbutz with the American historical experience. “When *halutz* (pioneering) values were taught to American youngsters, their sources in European socialist theory were conveniently overlooked. Instead, the kibbutz became the embryonic expression of (American) democracy, justice, and equality” (pp. 66–67). Perhaps that is so. The relevant passages are dotted with quotation marks, and it is hard to imagine that Auerbach has manufactured the quotes. But alas, the book lacks any notes, so we are left in the dark as to the source of the quoted material. His notion that American youngsters were taught about the kibbutz by reference to the Green Mountain Boys is a “fact” entirely unfamiliar to me, and at sharp odds with my own experience in precisely the socialist Zionist youth movement Auerbach chooses to discuss and lambaste. We of Habonim were never as rigorous in our socialist studies (or practice) as our colleagues in Hashomer Hatzair, but we were sharp critics of American society, and smart enough to know the difference between softball and Joe McCarthy. The kibbutz, as we encountered it, came to us from Isaiah, A.D. Gordon, and Yosef Baratz, not from Thoreau and much less from the several American utopian experiments.

The product of all this mishmash is a collection of factoids and errors in service of a pristine theory that has about as much relevance to the life of the Jews as does the politics of Micronesia. So, Auerbach depicts the American Jewish community as cravenly seeking to be taken as full-fledged Americans, hence caving in whenever an American administration chooses to oppose, pressure, or in any other way be critical of Israel. This is essential to his critique of American Jewry as fundamentally assimilationist. He tells us, for example, that President George Bush (the elder) and Secretary of State James Baker successfully “all but battered” the American Jewish community “into silent submission” (p. 109). He thereby ignores—one must assume willfully, since even the casual observer could not have been deaf to it—the chorus of protests the Bush-Baker team consistently elicited from that “battered into submission” community. Again and again, the behavior of the American Jewish community is thus either misreported or caricatured, for nothing must stand in the way of the theory.

What Auerbach just doesn’t get is that those with whom he disagrees are not

necessarily self-hating Jews blinded by their liberalism, and that his own “logic” can easily, perhaps even must easily, lead to places even he himself finds noxious. So, for example, he faults the historian Benny Morris for suggesting that Israel was born in the original sin of the “willful dispossession of Palestinian Arabs from their land” (p. 178). Nonsense, says Auerbach; only tiny groups on the right-wing fringe of Israeli politics have ever, then or now, supported the “transfer” of Israel’s Arabs. In truth, he contends, it is only the Zionists of the left who endorse “transfer,” in this case the transfer of the Jews from West Bank settlements. Auerbach is inventive, so perhaps if he were writing today, he would find a creative way to explain away that the transfer of Arabs is the explicit policy of Effie Eitam, head of the National Religious Party and a member of the current Israeli cabinet. It may well have passed Auerbach’s notice, but endorsement of transfer is no longer regarded as a proposal of the fringe; it is, in fact, a perfectly logical implication of the Judaism *über alles* logic that Auerbach himself advances—a logic based on a most tendentious reading of Judaism’s sacred texts.

Oh yes, and peace. Peace? Forget it. A “delusion,” since the “tribal animosity” between Moslems and Jews is “ineradicable” (p. 214).

Steven Rosenthal is a Zionist of a very different color, most especially one who does not feel compelled, as does Auerbach, to caricature those with whom he disagrees. Unfortunately, he shares with Auerbach one irritating lapse; though his book is duly footnoted, very many of his quotations are not. They are left dangling, without source. His errors—and there are very, very many of them—are not for the most part major errors of interpretation, but the kinds of small factual mistakes that inevitably raise questions regarding the author’s credibility. It is not the “Council of Presidents” but the Conference of Presidents, and it is either the American Zionist Movement or the Zionist Organization of America, but not the “American Zionist Organization” and there is none. It is not the “American Friends Committee,” but the American Friends Service Committee; Norman Podhoretz’s office at Commentary was not on Park Avenue, it was on 56th Street; Peace Now was founded not “shortly after the conclusion of the 1973 war” but five years later; the Jewish Council on Public Affairs (then the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council) was determinedly not “a pro-Pollard group;” there is no newspaper called the Boston Star; Al Vorspan is not now and never was “Rabbi” Albert Vorspan; Moment magazine’s first consideration of the desirability of a Palestinian state was published in 1975, not in 1988; Seymour Reich was (and is) a prominent Jewish lay leader, but never was “the chief executive of the American Jewish Committee;” the “arrival” of American Jews is marked not by “six United States senators and 15 congressmen,” but by ten senators (sometimes nine) and 35 or so (depending on which Congress) congressmen. And so forth.

As to interpretation, Rosenthal’s is a bit too sunny. He writes as Oslo seems ripe for full implementation, and so positions the American Jewish community as much more coherently opposed to the Begin/Shamir policies than was in fact the case. He cites, for example, the Levin-Metzenbaum letter to Yitzhak Shamir (1988) on the eve of a Shamir meeting with President Reagan as evidence of the awareness of American politicians that American Jewish support for Shamir’s policies

had fallen, and ignores the furious backlash the letter provoked, a backlash that has echoed through the years as an inhibition against Congressional criticism of Israel. From the standpoint of Israel–Diaspora relations, that particular Shamir trip was in fact a triumph.

More generally, one wonders what Rosenthal can have had in mind in referring to the “liberal policies of Ben Gurion and Eban” (pp. 180–181), since whatever the reasons to honor Abba Eban—and there are many—affecting the policies of Israel’s government is assuredly not among them.

What we have here is a well-intentioned book, a book that also and inevitably takes up the question of the Jewishness of the Jewish state—though it comes to rest in a very different place from Auerbach’s book—but that cannot, for all its good intentions, be taken as definitive. The real question is whether it can even be taken seriously, since the road it travels is so rutted, so filled with potholes, large and small. It is hard to see the forest when so many of the trees are missing.

Fear not, however: Next season, there will be two or four or eight or perhaps sixteen more books on the subject. They, too, will, whether explicitly or implicitly, take the Emancipation as their starting point; they, too, will try to characterize the fractious American Jewish community with a few sweeping generalizations; they, too, will be outdated by the time they appear; they, too, will stumble over the difficulties of deciding whether they are writing about the Jewish organizations of the Diaspora and their leaders or about *amcha*, the Jewish people. The sometimes stormy, sometimes happy, always complicated relationship between Israel and the Diaspora will doubtless survive them all.

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Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen. *The Jew Within: Self, Family and Community in America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000. x, 242 pp.

Demographic studies and their findings have dominated research in to the American Jewish community since the first National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) of 1970. When it comes to Jewish identity, both national and community-based demographic studies have been criticized for providing only superficial portraits of the character of American Jewish institutional life and being even less revelatory of the inner life of American Jews. Yet, few fiscal resources and little public notice have been given to those who sought to describe American Jews and their Judaism in depth through the use of qualitative research methods. It took Steven M. Cohen and Arnold M. Eisen, professors of sociology and religion respectively to risk the development of a theory of Jewish identity for more than 50 percent of America’s adult Jewish population based on 45 in-depth interviews and two focus groups. To be sure, the authors, both highly respected and prolific scholars, set their findings against a backdrop provided by surveys mailed back by 1005 Jews. Nevertheless, it is the insights derived from the three hour interviews that

are critical to the analysis. Paralleling the work of students of American Protestantism such as Robert Bellah, Wade Clark Roof, and Robert Wuthnow, Cohen and Eisen seek to decipher the inner workings of the life journeys of moderately affiliated Jews.

Anthropologists and ethnographers have written case studies of synagogues, *havurot* and Talmud study circles, but this volume chronicles a pioneering attempt to delineate the “Jew in the street.” Moderately affiliated Jews were defined as the more than 50 percent who belong to a Jewish institution but are not as involved, learned or pious as the most highly engaged 20-25 percent of American Jews. The authors write that “Our aim was to get to know the average members of Reform and Conservative congregations, Hadassah chapters and the like” (p. 5). The target generation was married Jews between the ages of 35 and 50. In their own words, “the single most important finding of our study is decidedly double-edged The ‘first language’ that our subjects speak is by and large one of profound individualism. Their language is universalist, liberal and personalist. Community—though a buzzword in our interviews, a felt need, even a real hunger for some—is a ‘second language,’ subordinate to the first. Our subjects, like Americans more generally today, do not speak it as often or as well.”

Cohen and Eisen buttress these findings in chapters on the sovereign self (an explanation of the individualist imperative); the family (the most important source of Jewish identity for interviewees); and ritual (the most significant way in which they express their Jewish commitments). Although three-quarters of the Jews who participated in the national survey agreed that “I have the right to reject those Jewish observances that I don’t find meaningful,” some Sabbath and festival observance is prevalent. They then describe the retreat of public Judaism, contending that three pillars of mid- to late-twentieth-century Judaism have eroded. These include interest in or knowledge of the organized community; particular rather than universal lessons gleaned from the Holocaust; and connections to Israel. The authors see the decline in passion for Israel as one of several factors underlying a related decline in Jewish organizational life (p. 189).

In contrast to the demonstrated erosion of public Judaism, the authors learned that for the Jews studied, God and the synagogue are central attachments though, somewhat ironically, the authors note that they are usually not connected to each other. Attachment to synagogues is real and persistent but based on what might be seen as a Kaplanian or Durkheimian view—the communal, social, and study functions of synagogue life are paramount. Although the interviewees overwhelmingly believe in God, this belief is linked to a non-institutionalized pursuit of spirituality rather than to formal prayer or synagogue life.

Periodically, the authors return to the “unprecedented exercise of autonomy among the current generation of Jews” (p. 75). Thus they note that “moderately affiliated Jews *choose what to observe and what not to observe*; they also decide, and take it for granted that they have the right to decide, with no one able to tell them any decision is wrong, *when to observe, how to observe, and how much to observe Our subjects are clear . . . authority rests with each individual or family*” (p. 91, italics in original). More than 83 percent of the participants in the mail survey agreed that “it bothers me when people try to tell me that there’s a right way

to be Jewish.” Moderately affiliated Jews are open to increased performance of rituals but they invent new and diverse meanings for them. The authors express doubts about the possibility of lasting or transmittable commitments based on such subjective reasons for observance attenuated from a sense of being commanded.

Along with a high level of subjectivity, Cohen and Eisen describe a Jewish identity which is so fluid that it is more about “search, exploration, growth, and change” (p. 119) than it is about commitment to any particular belief or practice. There is a sense of tribal connection which runs very deep for many interviewees, a connection which leads them to prefer friendships and marriage with other Jews. Nevertheless, “more Jews today than previously count non-Jews among their friends, and more count non-Jews among their closest friends” (p. 124). There is a withering opposition to intermarriage with just 60 percent agreeing with the statement that “Jews should marry Jews” (p. 132). And, in the event that their children were to marry non-Jews, almost all said that they would be warm and welcoming.

It is impossible in a brief review to capture the complex analysis of American Jewish identity so richly delineated in *The Jew Within*. It is a book which should be read carefully by American Jewish leaders, in the community, the academy, and the synagogue. It should also be utilized as a required or recommended text in university and adult learning courses on American Judaism on the cusp of the twenty-first century.

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