This work is an updated revision of Kalimi’s *Zur Geschichtsschreibung des Chronisten*, published in 1995 in the BZAW series, which in turn is based on his Hebrew University dissertation. Kalimi begins by outlining his (mainstream) positions on central questions concerning Chronicles, such as its date, unity, and genre: issues that are crucial before developing his thesis. The bulk of the book comprises nineteen chapters, each dealing with a particular literary or historical principle, such as harmonization, measure for measure, chiasm, *inclusio*, and use of literary patterning. A final chapter deals with inconsistencies of various sorts, and an “Afterward” discusses how the book has advanced scholarship on Chronicles.

The material presented in the core nineteen chapters is often quite technical, but it is presented clearly and is easy to follow. It is not obvious why there should be nineteen rather than eighteen or twenty-one literary principles, but the categories used as chapter headings by Kalimi are quite functional. Most of the examples he offers are convincing, and after finishing this section, any reader would have a good sense of the range of techniques used by the Chronicler in revising earlier material.

As might be expected, not all of the several hundred examples adduced are equally compelling. For example, I do not agree with Kalimi’s claim (p. 96) that the Chronicler left out 2 Sam 7:14b, because it reflected poorly on Solomon; Solomon is not punished either by staff or afflictions, and some other reason must be sought for why the Chronicler omits this half-verse from Samuel. Perhaps the Chronicler was more sympathetic to, or was influenced by, the type of Davidic promise narrated in Psalm 132, which likewise lacks this punishment. (For additional possibilities, see Sara Japhet, *I & II Chronicles [OTL; Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1993], p. 334."

Although the collection of examples is rich and valuable, I wish Kalimi had been broader in his perspective. This is true on several levels. He often notes cases where a device in Chronicles is found in later rabbinic literature or in Josephus (e.g., pp. 39, 77, 141). There is no systematic overview of this issue; it would have been valuable to note how Chronicles’ rhetoric fits chronologically and typologically between the earlier historical writing and that found in the early post-biblical period and rabbinic writings. Such a discussion would have enriched the book greatly, and would have been an important contribution to the history of early Jewish historiography.

Similarly, insufficient attention is paid to continuity between the Chronicler and earlier biblical works. For example, the first chapter, which touches on chronological rearrangement, would have benefited from David A. Glatt, *Chronological Displacement in Biblical and Related Literatures* (SBL Dissertation Series 139;
Kalimi’s final chapter, on contradictions and inconsistencies either retained by the Chronicler from his sources, or created by him, is typical of the gold mine of information collected in the volume. Yet here, too, I wish he had gone further, examining the implications of this material for imagining what the Chronicler’s notions of consistency might have been, or even the extent to which we might expect consistency in any ancient text such as the Bible.

Similarly, Kalimi does not fit the specific categories he develops into a larger conceptual framework. What do they imply for our understanding of the Chronicler as a historian? How do the literary and the historical urges fit together? In what sense are these changes literary, or are they best seen as rhetorical? Less detailed studies, such as Elias Bickerman’s quick survey of the Chronicler in *From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees*, address such crucial issues in a much broader and more engaging fashion.

Additionally, although the book claims to be updated, relatively few works cited were written after the mid-1980s, when Kalimi’s doctoral dissertation was completed. It is very surprising, for example, that Rodney K. Duke’s *The Persuasive Appeal of the Chronicler: A Rhetorical Analysis* (JSOTS 88; Sheffield, MA: Almond Press, 1990), which explicitly addresses the literary status of the Chronicler, is never cited or discussed. Similarly, almost all of the essays in the important collection *The Chronicler as Historian*, ed. M. Patrick Graham et al. (JSOTS 238; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997) are ignored, as is the two-volume Chronicles commentary by William Johnstone, published in the same year as Sara Japhet’s magisterial Chronicles commentary of 1993. These works would have added depth to Kalimi’s observations, and may have forced him to re-categorize some of the texts he did explore.

Despite these structural and bibliographical deficiencies, *The Book of Chronicles: Historical Writing and Literary Devices* is a very important book, one which enriches our understanding of the Chronicler and begins to systematize the methods that he used. It is indispensable for anyone engaged in studying Chronicles, particularly for anyone interested in understanding in detail how the Chronicler worked with his sources.

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Did the God of Israel have a wife? Posed in the context of monotheistic Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity this is, of course, a nonsensical question. However, even in the heavily edited Masoretic text of the Hebrew Bible there remain traces of an earlier stage of belief in which Yahweh was accompanied by other beings. Among these para-human figures is Asherah, the form of whose name clearly indicates her feminine gender. In recent years numerous scholars have addressed the ticklish question of the original relationship between this lady and the Lord of Hosts, a problem that involves probing into the prehistory of the Hebrew scriptures.

The volume here under review, a reworked 1989 Cambridge dissertation, thoroughly considers the textual and archaeological evidence bearing on the matter of Asherah. The author commences with an exhaustive review of earlier work on the topic, presenting the arguments of contributors to the discussion in such specificity that she even reports the number of footnotes that appear in a certain work! While this excessive detail constantly reminds the reader of the book’s origins as a doctoral thesis, it nonetheless gives one an excellent basis on which to decide whether to consult a particular secondary source.

There can be little doubt that Asherah of the Hebrew Bible was originally the goddess known at Ugarit as Athirat and in cuneiform sources of the second millennium as Ashratum, and that she once stood in a close relationship to the God of Israel. Later editors of the scriptures, however, so thoroughly depersonalized her that she appears in the received text as an inanimate wooden pole, part of the furnishings of a shrine.

Asherah’s earlier identity could be recovered only after the documents of Israel’s ancient neighbors—both contemporaries and predecessors—had become accessible to scholars in the twentieth century. Several archaeological discoveries, capably discussed by Hadley, have added support to the work of the philologists. The most sensational of these was the unearthing at Kuntillet ‘Ajrud in the northeastern Sinai of the ruins of a caravanserai from the ninth-eighth centuries B.C.E. (see Chapter Five).

Among the graffiti incised into storage jars at this site are blessings by “Yahweh of Samaria and his Asherah” (on pithos A) and by “Yahweh of Teman and his Asherah” (on pithos B). Also present on the first vessel are crudely drawn figures that some authorities have sensationally interpreted as images of the divine couple. Hadley carefully sifts the iconographic evidence and demonstrates convincingly that the drawings in fact represent the Egyptian fertility/jester god Bes and a musician, and have no necessary connection to the benedictions.

However, the problem remains: was the Asherah evoked here a deity or merely a cultic object? While this matter may be of great moment theologically, from the viewpoint of the historian of religion it is a distinction without a difference. If a symbol—in this case a shaft of wood representing the ancient Near East’s sacred tree of vitality and fertility—may be invoked to provide boons, then it is imbued with both a personality and para-human powers. Functionally, therefore, it
stands for a divinity, if perhaps a minor one, whether or not labeled with the term “god(dess).” One is reminded of the optional use of the divine determinative with various pieces of temple equipment in Mesopotamian and Hittite rituals. As for the pairing of Yahweh with a goddess, Tikva Frymer-Kensky (In the Wake of the Goddesses [New York: Free Press, 1992] has emphasized the difficulties that arise when a monotheistic religion assigns humanlike character and gender to its sole god. Aspects of life more naturally attributed to beings of the excluded gender (e.g., motherhood in the case of the God of Israel) can be accommodated only awkwardly in conceptions of the universal deity. The evidence from ancient Israel strongly suggests that this problem had not yet arisen in the pre-exilic period.

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The field of Aramaic studies has witnessed a steady stream of major developments in recent years. Important new volumes include M. Sokoloff, A Dictionary of Palestinian Jewish Aramaic (Ramat-Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 1990); J. Hoftijzer and K. Jongeling, Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1995); and T. Muraoka and B. Porten, A Grammar of Egyptian Aramaic (Leiden: Brill, 1998).1 Two classics have been reprinted by Eisenbrauns: J. Payne Smith, A Compendious Syriac Dictionary (Oxford, 1903; repr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1998); and T. Nöldeke, Compendious Syriac Grammar (London, 1904; repr. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2001). In addition, the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon web site has been launched (http://cal1.cn.huc.edu/index.html), with various databases currently available and with the promise for more online resources.

To this bounty of material, especially in the area of Aramaic lexicography, we now may add the work under review, Abraham Tal’s A Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic. Professor Tal has been the most active researcher in the field of Samaritan studies for several decades, having inherited that position from his venerable teacher, the doyen of all Samaritan studies, Ze’ev Ben-ayyim. Tal’s dictionary is the crowning achievement of a lifetime of study into the language and literature of this tiny yet important religious community.

The body of this dictionary is written in Hebrew. Thus, for example, each Aramaic word is glossed with its modern Hebrew equivalent; each text cited is followed by a Hebrew rendering; additional discussion of specific points is in Hebrew; sources and bibliographic information are presented in Hebrew; and so on.

1. For my reviews of the first two of these works, see, respectively, AJS Review 17 (1992), pp. 296–99; and Journal of the American Oriental Society 118 (1998), pp. 96–97.
To aid the English reader, each entry includes an English gloss as well; furthermore, many (though not all) of the cited texts include English renderings alongside the Hebrew renderings. The detailed Introduction is presented in both English and Hebrew, though, quite oddly, slightly different information is conveyed in the two versions.

Tal describes in clear terms the major problem facing the compiler of a dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic. As with the Jews, so with the Samaritans: the contact between Aramaic and Hebrew throughout the centuries creates a very thorny problem for the lexicographer. Are Hebrew words in Aramaic to be considered true loanwords, and therefore fodder for a dictionary of Aramaic; or are they to be treated as pure Hebrew words invoked by the author of a particular composition, sometimes even subconsciously? Tal notes two different periods of contact between the two languages. The first is the Second Temple period, when both Hebrew and Aramaic were “living languages, coexisting as vernaculars” among the Samaritans (p. xii). The second is the medieval period, when both languages no longer were spoken—the Samaritans adopted Arabic as the vernacular by the eleventh century C.E. Tal argues convincingly that Hebrew words borrowed into Aramaic during the first period should be included in the dictionary, just as loanwords into any living language should be included in a dictionary of said language. For the medieval period, however, generally Tal opts not to include Hebrew words that appear within Aramaic compositions, especially lexical items which appear randomly. He presents such examples as an occasional attestation of שְׁמִשׁ, תּוֹרָה for Aramaic שְׁמִישׁ, תּוֹרָה, and מַקְמָן for Aramaic שְׁמִישׁ, תּוֹרָה. In these cases, the Hebrew term does not displace the Aramaic term, nor is it used for a special nuance, but rather it simply occurs in a poem or hymn written by an author or copied by a copyist at a time when “no solid distinction between Hebrew and Aramaic was made” (p. xiv).

To a lesser extent, the same problem arises with the occasional Arabic word that appears within an Aramaic composition. Again, Tal is conservative in his judgment, choosing typically not to include such words. Tal notes another complicating factor: that our oldest Samaritan manuscript dates to 1204 C.E. That is to say, even for our oldest Samaritan texts, such as the Targum to the Torah, clearly authored in late antiquity, we possess very late copies in which occasional Arabisms appear. Obviously, these lexemes cannot be considered truly representative of Samaritan Aramaic. This is not to say, however, that Tal excludes all Arabic words. When in his judgment an Arabism within Samaritan Aramaic is determined to be a loanword, Tal includes the word, with reference to the dictionaries of either Lane or Dozy for further information on the lexeme.

In the fourteenth and especially the fifteenth century, a great renaissance of Samaritan literature occurred, with the resultant new literary language, “a kind of artificially constructed conglomerate of Aramaic and Hebrew with heavy traces of Arabic” (p. xiii). Given the even greater problems inherent in sifting Aramaic material from texts of this period, Tal utilizes sources from only the thirteenth century and earlier.

2. Tal informs the reader (p. xxv, p. רכ) that Steven Fassberg of the Hebrew University checked the English material for greater accuracy.
The main sources for this dictionary, accordingly, are a) the Targum, b) the great midrashic composition known as the Tibat Marqe (or Memar Marqa), c) the liturgy (prayers, etc.), and d) chronicles such as the book of Asatir and the Tulida. In all cases, Tal utilizes the best manuscripts available, especially those published during the past sixty years by Ben-ayyim, Tal, and Moshe Florentin (representing three generations of Samaritanists in Israeli academe). In addition, as would be expected, Tal cites the great late medieval Samaritan multilingual dictionary Ha-Melis wherever relevant.

Note, however, that Tal has not included Samaritan inscriptions in his database; it is not clear to me why this is so. I was able to identify at least one lexical item attested in an inscription that is not included in Tal’s work, namely, the loanword מְשֶׁה (Moses). I was able to identify at least one lexical item attested in an inscription that is not included in Tal’s work, namely, the loanword מְשֶׁה (Moses). I was able to identify at least one lexical item attested in an inscription that is not included in Tal’s work, namely, the loanword מְשֶׁה (Moses).

The dictionary also includes proper names, for which Tal has provided the traditional Samaritan pronunciation in transliterated form, e.g., מֶשֶׁה mēṣē.

The appearance of a major reference work such as this dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic is by itself a significant contribution to the world of scholarship. Samaritanists and Aramaicists obviously will use this dictionary for decades to come. But one should not think that scholars in other fields cannot benefit from it as well. Thus, before concluding, I want to present one small example of how I as primarily a biblical scholar already have put Tal’s work to good use. I recently was pondering the difficult verse of Ps 32:9, in particular the obscure phrase adidas בַלָם which has the hapax legomenon בַלָם. The first word normally means “his ornament” (cf. Ezek 7:20), and probably it can mean that here, too, with reference to the preceding phrase “יתְנַה לִפְרָט ‘bit and bridle.” The second word is known from various Aramaic dialects and means “stop, block.” Presumably the phrase refers to the manner in which the rider utilizes the mouthpiece to halt the horse’s progress. But I would go further and propose that a complex wordplay is present here. The first word also can be taken from the homonymous root adad “pass, move” (and not adad II “beedeck”); thus adad = “his movement,” and the phrase also means “to block his movement.” Furthermore, in Samaritan Aramaic—and only in this dialect of Aramaic, as far as I can determine—the root בלָם has a second nuance, namely “be foolish,” as noted by Tal on p. 100. The evidence comes from the Samaritan Targum to Deut 32:5 where בלָם is used to render Hebrew עָקֵשׁ “be perverse,” and from Ha-Melis which glosses the root with Hebrew שָׁבָע “be stupid.” When one recalls that the main thought expressed in Ps 32:9 לא תְהִי בַּלָם כִּפּרֵד אֲזֵן בְּבִין (“do not be like the horse and the mule without understanding”), one appreciates the delightful wordplay inherent in this verse. I am employing here the comparative philological method, with the assumption that both senses of the root בלָם existed in ancient Hebrew as well. Clearly the poet selected this rare verb intentionally, in order to evoke both meanings, “stop, block” and “be foolish.” Note, moreover, that while polysemy is a characteristic of all Hebrew poetry (and much prose as well), there

is an even greater propensity for multiplicity of meaning specifically where the reader is charged to be intelligent. My treatment of these few words in the book of Psalms is hardly a major issue in biblical scholarship, but it demonstrates the point nonetheless. Without Tal’s Dictionary of Samaritan Aramaic at my disposal, I would not have encountered בָּלָה meaning “be foolish,” whose application to Ps 32:9 allows the reader to marvel at the ability of the ancient Israelite wordsmith.

I must register one criticism of this dictionary, namely, the unpleasing nature of the visual layout of the entries. There is insufficient distinction in the various fonts, sizes, and styles of the Hebrew characters, especially between the Samaritan Aramaic text citations and the Modern Hebrew renderings. This lack of variation prevents the reader from easily scanning an entry to locate the desired information.

We congratulate Professor Tal on this major accomplishment, two decades in the making.

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Fox’s objective is “to refine current definitions of titles of royal functionaries and their roles in the monarchical state-organization and to create a tentative reconstruction of the government structure” (p. 269). Secondarily, she questions whether “Israelite officialdom and administrative practices were modeled after foreign prototypes” (p. 276f).

Fox considers the Bible “the most substantial and comprehensive account” (p. ix) for the evaluation of Israelite social history, consisting of authentic documents and ideology-oriented interpretations. Construing Israel’s social history means, according to Fox, to supplement the Biblical texts with extra-biblical epigraphic evidence. Her approach is Bible-centered, Israel-centered, and traditions-oriented. This approach is not universally shared any longer (Edelman, 1991; Grabbe, 1997; Niemann, 2001; Knauf, 2001).

Book Reviews

The main part of the book is devoted to the study of the titles borne by civil servants in the Bible. These are arranged according to a new classification: four “Status-Related-Titles” (bn hmlk, ʿbd hmlk, qznym, yldym); eleven “Function-Related-Titles” (ʿsr ʾl hbyt, spr, mzkyr, rʾh hmlk, mšnh, ywʾs lmlk, ʿsr ʾl hms, nsb/nsbym, ʿsr hʿyr, šr, špt, šʾr); and four “Miscellaneous Designations” (skn/sknt, nʾr/nʾ rh, štr, sry). Some recent studies on the titles of state employees discussing these officials within the context of social history and governmental structural control are not discussed, nor is the question of when Israel and Judah became full-blown states, which by definition required administrative staff (Jamieson-Drake 1991; Niemann 1993; 1997; recently Knauf 2000). The results of Fox’s enquiry are somewhat predetermined by the use of such traditional terms as “beginnings of a bureaucracy,” “a more sophisticated administrative apparatus” and “centralized complex governmental system” for the reigns of Saul, David and Solomon (p. 5). On the other hand, Fox’s analysis of seals, bullae, and other administrative artifacts as ostraca and inscribed weights reveals a respectable acquaintance with current epigraphical research.

Fox takes as historical the ideological presentation of, for example, David and Solomon’s “United Kingdom” with its “provinces” and “districts” read by some modern scholars into the Biblical narrative. Fox does not apply or conceive empirical tests for categories such as “general taxation,” “district prefects” (p. 273), and “empire-building phase of Solomon’s reign” (p. 278), or for “twelve-district division . . . an Israelite innovation established for efficient governing of a complex system” (p. 279). Nor does she reflect the compass of these notions. “Highly centralized government organization” is used to describe Hezekiah’s rule (p. 234, 275). Such a traditional approach leads to an understanding of the royal administration in Israel and Judah that has been bypassed by new insights put forward in the past ten years (Jamieson-Drake 1991; Niemann 1993; 1997; 2000).

The most important resource for the reconstruction of social and political hierarchies presently at our disposal has not been considered at all: settlement archaeology. The sociopolitical impact of spatial organization has been made accessible to the non-specialist by works like Kempinski and Reich 1992; Herzog 1997. Fox relies on Deuteronomistic textual support to claim that “the archaeological picture of the Iron Age IIA . . . indicates the existence of a state exhibiting the characteris-
tics of economic and political centralization” (p. 16). The gradual development of power and administration in Israel and Judah (Niemann 1993) is thus leveled out.

The last chapter is the most innovative one: “Aspects of Administration Revealed in Inscriptions: Land Grants, Supply Networks and Regional Administration” (pp. 204–68). Fox favors A. F. Rainey’s interpretation of the Samaria Ostraca. The reviewer has tried to integrate the Samaria Ostraca in a more comprehensive social and political context (Niemann 1993: 75–86, 274–5; 2000: 71, n. 11). Fox does not enter into this discussion, but she offers a new hypothesis to understand the lmlk stamp seal impressions: the jars with lmlk stamps plus private seals impressions belong to royal estates, handed over to members of the ruling elite whose name appears on the handle. Fox interprets the lmlk stamps plus private seals not only in the context of war preparations, but also as an indicator of the economic development under Hezekiah. However, when the seal impressions are interpreted as signs of a “highly centralized government organization” (p. 234, 275), I think that Fox stretches the possible implications of this single type of archaeological evidence too far; the integration of more archaeological data is badly needed. The impressive corpus of 1716 seal impressions recorded up to now does, in any case, reveal an increasing interest of the eighth century’s Jerusalemite dynasty in economic organization. Fox understands the “Rosette stamp seals” as symbols of an increasingly centralized state-economy. At the same time these seals might underline national independence in Josiah’s time.

Finally, Fox deals with “Systems of Accounting: Hieratic Numerals and other Symbols” (pp. 250–268) with particular care. The large majority of stratified finds come from the seventh and sixth centuries B.C.E.; few come from the eighth. These dates match the development of state organization in Israel and Judah, which I presented in 1993 on the basis of archaeological, epigraphic, and textual evidence. Differences of forms, uses, and individual scribal traditions between Israel and Egypt lead Fox to conclude that “conscious borrowing of a foreign phenomenon never actually took place” (p. 268; see p. 279). According to her, since the early monarchy or even earlier (sic!), the Israelite bureaucracy made use of local and regional counting-systems. The differences between Israel and Egypt show an early Israelitizing process and the independence of the Israelite administration from earlier foreign administrative systems (p. 279). Few “foreign terms and features” in state organization and in bureaucratic terminology, according to Fox, point to the same direction. Vis-à-vis the world-systems approach presently gaining ground in Ancient Near Eastern studies, these results recall a period of research that was dominated by ethnocentric parochialisms.

These critical remarks do not intend to detract from a welcome addition to the scholar’s library. One would have wished, though, that central European scholarship had been considered beyond the late 1980s.

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*The Ancient Synagogue: The First Thousand Years* serves as a kind of handbook for the study of the synagogue in antiquity. It discusses every major site, every major text and most major issues and secondary sources. It is indeed a worthy successor to Samuel Krauss’ *Synagogale Altertümer* (Berlin and Vienna), published in 1922. Comparison of this volume with that of Krauss shows the intention of each author to be inclusive of all that was known about the synagogue in an encyclopedic fashion. This comparison also shows how much more we know of the ancient synagogue than Krauss did. This is crudely expressed by sheer number of pages in each volume. While Krauss produced a book of 470 pages in length, Levine’s magnum opus is a whopping 748 pages. Archaeological discoveries in Israel and the Mediterranean basin, as well as texts discovered or published (most significantly from the Cairo Genizah) have greatly increased our sources for the history of the synagogue. In addition, new methods for the study of ancient Judaism, its literature, and its material culture have facilitated a complete rethinking of the history of the synagogue.

Unlike Krauss’ important volume, however, Levine’s work has a very specific thesis. Levine, who for purposes of due disclosure it should be noted served as my dissertation advisor, argues that the synagogue’s “primary importance throughout antiquity was as a communal center” that was “fundamentally controlled and operated by the local community” (p. 3). While there was great diversity amongst ancient synagogues, “the institution exhibited a remarkable unity as well” (p. 3). Levine sees continuity in “the range of activities and types of religious functions conducted therein, as well as orientation, ornamentation, symbolism, and sanctity, were in varying degrees common to synagogues throughout antiquity,” and is expressed in both literary and archaeological sources” (p. 4). With the destruction of the Temple, Levine argues, the synagogue “evolved” greatly, particularly in its religious aspect. “The synagogue had become—according to Rabbi Isaac, borrowing a phrase from the prophet Ezekiel (11:16)—a *miqdash me’at*, a ‘lesser’ or ‘diminished’ holiness” (p. 4). Levine attributes this transformation “first and foremost” to internal Jewish developments, but “no less important” to the “evolving” Empire-wide social contexts in which the synagogue functioned, and particularly to growing Christian influences.

The remainder of the volume is dedicated to fleshing out this thesis, which in general terms reflects the current consensus of scholars that Levine has done so much to form and inform. The book is divided into two parts and nineteen chapters. Part I, “The Historical Development of the Synagogue,” includes: “Origins,” “Pre-70 Judaea,” “The Pre-70 Diaspora,” “The Second Temple Synagogue—Its Role and Functions,” “Late Roman Palestine,” “Byzantine Palestine,” and “Diaspora Synagogues.”

The chapter on synagogue origins reflects well the structure of the book. Levine is cautious to represent all major primary evidence and scholarly positions on this and indeed on every issue in the book, positing also his own interpretation.
On this question of synagogue origins, Levine believes that the Biblical city-gate was the forerunner of the synagogue. The synagogue at Gamla is a bridge for Levine between the Biblical city gate and the later synagogue, as Gamla was constructed near the gate (p. 34). Levine considers this to be a “fortuitous indication of a synagogue setting continuing the earlier city-gate tradition.” While this is by no means the last word on a very opaque subject, Levine’s theory certainly provides food for thought.

A book of this breadth is bound to include interpretations that scholars in the field might not find to their liking. I am not satisfied, for example, by Levine’s interpretation of Tosefta Sukkah 4:6, the description of the great “double stoa” of Alexandria. Levine considers this text to reflect closely a synagogue building and community that existed in late-first-century Alexandria. To my mind, this text is reflective of a Second Temple period synagogue, and in at best a very general way. There was surely at least one large synagogue in Alexandria, and this text may reflect real knowledge of a large synagogue there. The text that stands before us, however, has been molded by Tannaitic conceptions, reflecting aggadic and halakhic motifs that are well documented in Tannaitic literature. The Tannaim used Temple motifs in “constructing” this fantastic description of the Alexandrian synagogue. The immediate purpose of this text is to exemplify the “glory” of Alexandrian Jewry and its synagogue. The use of Temple forms in this text was undoubtedly stimulated by the developing use of Temple imagery within their own synagogues. While I am not in any way committed to the notion that Rabbinic sources cannot be used to illustrate the first century (an approach that is often taken to extreme), it has long been my contention that this text is best seen as a projection of Tannaitic values upon a distant, apparently destroyed, synagogue.

The second part of the volume, “The Synagogue as Institution” includes chapters on “The Building,” “The Communal Dimension,” “Leadership,” “The Patriarch (Nasi) and the Synagogue,” “The Sages and the Synagogue,” “Women in the Synagogue,” “Priests,” “Liturgy,” “Iconography: The Limits of Interpretation,” and, finally, “Diachronic and Synchronic Dimensions—the Synagogue in Context.” Many of the themes that Levine discusses here have been the subject of his own preliminary specialized studies, though in the current volume one may sense continued reflection. Levine’s discussions here supersede his earlier articles. The chapter on iconography, a subject that Levine has not previously discussed in a sustained manner, is mainly descriptive of current research.

Lee Levine’s *The Synagogue* is a truly monumental undertaking. It is destined to be the standard handbook on the ancient synagogue and its history.

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*The Battles of Armageddon* is a meticulous chronicle of the dozens of military clashes over the centuries that have given an aura of apocalyptic expectation to a small patch of valley in northern Israel. Television-evangelists and Bible-thumpers all over the world continue to whip up their followers with nightmarish visions of nuclear disaster and divine judgment linked to the ominous word “Armageddon.” But for those who care to dig a little deeper, Eric H. Cline of The George Washington University masterfully shows us that a long, violent, and tangled history lies behind that name. Cline systematically reveals the millennium-long steps by which certain arbitrary topographic realities, unchanging military technologies, and the relative geographical positions of the great Near Eastern empires made the site of Megiddo—and indeed all of the Jezreel Valley—a tragically tiresome cockpit of war.

Beginning with a solid introduction about the world’s fascination with the mystique of Megiddo—Armageddon and about the historical background behind it, Cline presents a series of chronologically arranged chapters, each highlighting a particular battle of Megiddo, the political background, the clashing cultures—and of course the eerie replay of the same movements, the same mistakes, and the same outcomes again and again. It is not simply that the military leaders through the ages have failed to learn from the past; Pharaohs, Canaanite princes, Israelite warriors, biblical kings, invading Roman armies, rival Muslim dynasties, modern Palestinians and Israelis, and global strategists looking into the cloudy future have learned all too perfectly that Megiddo could not be avoided if one was to gain military control of whatever you wish to call it: Canaan, Israel, Palestine, Southern Syria, the Levant.

In this book, Cline’s research on all periods in which there is any shred of recorded or archaeologically-inferred combat at Megiddo is painstaking and impressive. While many historians of the military history of Israel/Palestine tend to concentrate on either the ancient or modern periods, Cline offers a historical narrative with no bumpy transitions or selective omissions. In the vast span of time covered by the book, he naturally analyzes the most famous of the Biblical and classical battles, the campaigns of the Crusaders, and the modern wars of the State of Israel. Yet because he also includes some encounters that all but the most specialized scholars would never have heard of, his descriptions of the medieval battles for Megiddo between rival dynasties are especially enlightening.

The book’s style and attitude is thoroughly positivist. Except for the overarching intention to de-mystify Armageddon, readers will find little evidence of deconstructionism here. Nor will they find evidence of recent critical biblical scholarship. In his chapter on the wars of Deborah and Barak described in the Book of Judges, for example, Cline takes the narrative quite literally as a fairly reliable military report. Whether it was, or for that matter whether the boasting triumphal inscriptions of the various expansionist pharaohs can similarly be taken as reliable without a large grain of Dead Sea salt, is also a question. But at the same time,
Cline does not completely ignore these thorny historiographical problems in constructing his larger narrative. Cline provides a concluding look at the term “Armageddon” and its relationship to the long, bloody history he recounts. Where other historians might have been content in simply bringing the story up to the present, Cline offers the reader some thought-provoking reflections on the development of “Armageddon” as a concept and what its continual use suggests about the social and religious preoccupations of the West. Yet Cline wisely does not seek to make a sweeping, simplistic judgment on how and why the battles of Armageddon happened. Such a reductionist conclusion would probably immediately arouse dissenters and would probably not be fully satisfying in any case. That’s why Cline’s concluding summary offers a well-advised ending to a wide-ranging, yet ominously repetitive book: to quote the words of Santayana about the tragic futility of not remembering history.

The Battles of Armageddon is a significant and welcome contribution to the military history of Israel. It seeks to resolve a number of specific, long-debated issues relating to Megiddo’s military history. Its historical coverage is impressively wide and its text is accompanied by clear and effective maps of the most important battles from the Bronze Age to the 1973 Yom Kippur War. This book will undoubtedly make an important addition to the libraries of those scholars, institutions, and interested lay-people involved in the study of both the ancient and modern Near East.

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The religious poetry of Judaism turned a corner with a prolific hymnist from seventh-century Palestine called Eleazar birabbî Kallir (or Killir). Modern studies of medieval Jewish liturgical poetry, or *Piyyut*, have increased considerably and many manuscripts and fragments have been discovered in several Genizah collections, offering new material on the tradition of classical hymnists from the period of late antiquity and early Islam. Yosse ben Yosse, Yannai, Shim’on bar Megas, Yehudah, Kallir, and Yohanan ha-Kohen are the outstanding names of synagogue poets who composed their hymns for the weekly sabbath and the festivals, predominantly in Palestinian-Jewish communities.

Kallir was the greatest poet for having reshaped the tradition of *Piyyut* itself. His influence on the classical and post-classical school of Hebrew religious verse was far-reaching. In his numerous compositions (intended exclusively for holidays) he shows that religious awareness needs a new language to be adequately expressed. His linguistic creativity led to innovations that came not only from
complicated allusions, but also from the use of rare biblical words and the introduction of Aramaic or new expressions with little regard for what is normative in classical and rabbinic Hebrew. Kallir as well as other hymnists created numerous forms of the verb through analogous conjugation and formation, often forms of expression taken over from midrashic literature or the spoken language, strengthening the tendency in contemporary literary Hebrew to mix grammatically acceptable forms with novel kinds of derivation.

Kallir succeeded in presenting his poetry as a mediation of religious sense in his time through his personal understanding of piyyutic language and themes; for this he was the object of public admiration and criticism. Saadia Gaon and Abraham ibn Ezra represent traditional objections to Piyyut that survived until quite recently. Today, Kallir’s significance must not be judged from what the ancient grammarians said of him, because the modern critical establishment of new texts gives a different idea of his art. Moreover, later Piyyut traditions in Italy and Ashkenaz echo many features of Kallir’s poetry, demanding a reassessment of Kallir’s lasting contribution to the qualities of piyyutic language and style.

Among the new hymns that emerged from the Genizah were his qedushtot for Shavuot, the nine-part hymns which end with a recitation of Is. 6:3 and are designed to adorn the benedictions of the ḍamidah during the morning service on the festival. On Shavuot, the anniversary of the giving of the Torah, the composers of liturgical poetry were specifically attracted to a versification of the numerous aggadot about the Sinai event and the Ten Commandments. Kallir is credited particularly with having made extraordinary embellishments for the required Torah reading for Shavuot. Some of the hymns have remained part of the Shavuot liturgy to this day, but Shulamith Elizur has re-edited these texts on the basis of Genizah manuscripts together with a number of unknown fragments. Elizur is at her best when she traces the qedusha parts through Genizah materials and reconstructs the best textual witnesses. Her detailed commentaries are impressive and her analysis of poetic structures is most accurate. However, her discussion of the ideas and concepts prevailing in Kallir’s hymns is often too narrow.

Kallir’s qedushtot are essentially poetic commentaries, introducing a wealth of talmudic-midrashic traditions in connection with the holiday theme. He did not, however, draw his inspiration only from the subjects of the Bible or Midrash; he also used popular legends and developed their themes, thus breaking new ground. Kallir enlarged the biblical and aggadic images, for instance, by presenting a description of world history up to the Sinai event including a personified Torah who refused to be offered to Adam, Noah, or the Patriarchs. The earliest association of the Torah with a (female) personality occurs in Proverbs, but Kallir elaborates this motif and designates the Torah to be a daughter of God who was proposed to many grooms until she chose to be married to Moses. Such an embellishment, giving the Sinai story its epic character, is preserved in Piyyut but not in rabbinic sources.

Elizur discusses this specific aspect of Kallir’s narrative range extensively, but related features of his religious temper and lyrical power are underappreciated. Kellir’s hymns communicate with strong involvement a sense of intensity in a language and through metaphors that extend beyond the standard rhetoric of the synagogue poets. He created for himself a highly particular and yet not eccentric
idiom for rendering the spiritual-ecstatic meaning of Shavuot while accepting the practical significance of the commandments of the Torah for Jewish existence. It is necessary to stress the value of Kallir’s liturgical poetry in order to place his *oeuvre* in its proper temporal and spatial setting in seventh-century Palestine. Elizur’s book will prove to be an indispensable aid for reaching more definite conclusions about Kallir’s hymnography.

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In *The Sinner and the Amnesiac*, Alan Goshen-Gottstein returns to the question of rabbinic biography with a comprehensive study of all traditions about Elisha ben Abuya, also known as *Aher*, “the Other.” (One chapter is devoted to the few traditions of R. Eleazar b. Arakh, a sage who reportedly forgot all his knowledge of Torah.) Goshen-Gottstein also provides a thorough summary of the secondary literature on Elisha, whom scholars variously have portrayed as a mystic, gnostic, apostate, philosophical atheist, and heretic. He appends a complete Hebrew version of the main Bavli story of Elisha including all manuscript variants. This book is both frustrating and brilliant. It is frustrating because Goshen-Gottstein’s ultimate goal is to probe behind the rabbinic traditions in order to recover the historical Elisha b. Abuya. Goshen-Gottstein is well aware of the contributions of Jacob Neusner, William Scott Green, Yonah Fraenkel, and others who have convincingly shown that rabbinic narratives are didactic tales better approached as fictional literature than history—he begins with a superb methodological introduction summarizing this scholarship and the current state of the question. Nevertheless, Goshen-Gottstein examines each source in order to determine to what extent the historical kernel can be separated from literary, ideological and hermeneutical factors. Over and again, Goshen-Gottstein finds that very little history can be recovered (pp. 47, 75, 132, 139, 177, 191, 198 etc.). He identifies but one or two authentic testimonies (pp. 38–39), which do not tell us much, and con-

cludes that the later traditions are completely unreliable: the Amoraic traditions “are devoid of historical worth” (p. 199). While this conclusion is surely correct, it is exactly what we would expect, and hardly warrants almost three hundred pages of analysis. Goshen-Gottstein tries to justify his project by arguing that Elisha b. Abuya was “outside the collective,” hence “his teachings and tradition may therefore not be shaped in accordance with collective concerns” (p. 13). But this explanation is insufficient. Why should traditions of outsiders be preserved more reliably? If anything, we should assume the opposite—that storytellers could take more liberties in embellishing the stories of “outsiders” as their audience would be less likely to know the “truth,” much as we find with Romans, Christians, and other non-rabbis. In any case, the current thinking is that to excavate rabbinic stories for historical information in this way is to mistake the genre, and that the genre is the same regardless of whether the characters are leading sages or outsiders. In sum, Goshen-Gottstein’s conclusion should have been his point of departure, and the literary analysis should have been pursued for its own sake, not to isolate the historical core.

However, if Goshen-Gottstein beats a dead horse, it must be said that he beats it well. This book has value for anyone not absolutely convinced that the pursuit of the historical or biographical kernel of rabbinic stories is futile. Goshen-Gottstein systematically treats each passage, cogently demonstrating how every twist and turn in the plot is motivated by other factors. He does not reject the historicity of stories on the grounds of general skepticism, or using simplistic arguments that the lack of possible verification renders historical conclusions inherently suspect. Here is a scholar aware of every methodological consideration, one who has mastered the secondary literature, who even attempts to develop new criteria by which the historicity of traditions can be evaluated (pp. 34–36)—and who nevertheless comes up empty-handed. For those already convinced of the futility of isolating a historical core, the repeated assessment after treating each passage that this source, too, yields no historical information is distracting.

The book is brilliant because Goshen-Gottstein is an extremely sensitive reader. His careful analysis of the sources constitutes a major breakthrough in the scholarship on the Elisha traditions that all future scholars must take into account. Goshen-Gottstein shows, for example, that many of the Bavli and Yerushalmi stories of Elisha (yHag 2:1, 77b-c; bHag 15a-b) are generated through exegesis of the “Pardes passage” of Tosefta Hagiga 2:3. Thus the Tosefta’s cryptic statement that Elisha “cut the shoots” is interpreted by the Yerushalmi in terms of Elisha killing young students of Torah and by the Bavli as Elisha plucking the radish which he presents to the harlot (pp. 81–88, 93); the “mistake” and the “angel” mentioned in the verse applied to Elisha in the Tosefta (Eccles 5:5) generate Elisha’s mistaken utterance before the angel Metatron in the Bavli (pp. 90–91); and so forth. Goshen-Gottstein has identified the motivation for the strange scenarios described in both Talmuds. It turns out that the Amorite storytellers were as perplexed by the Toseftan passage as modern readers and spun out their stories, in part, to interpret that tradition. Exegesis, not history, produces biography.

Yet Goshen-Gottstein is not satisfied with an explanation of the origin of the stories’ elements. He continues with extremely compelling literary analyses of the
stories as coherent wholes, always sensitive to the use of motifs, stock phrases, and common rabbinic themes. Goshen-Gottstein suggests that both stories address fundamental problems of rabbinic ideology. The Bavli story wrestles with the question of sonship: can a Jew cease being considered one of God’s children (bnei yisra’el) due to sin? The heavenly voice, “Return O backsliding children, except for Aher,” excludes Elisha from this status. In the continuation of the story, however, his merits accrued through Torah study and the efforts of his disciples save him from perdition. The main Yerushalmi story focuses on the identity of Elisha as a master of Torah by exploring his relationship with his disciple R. Meir. Despite his sins and rejection by the voice heard from the Holy of Holies, Elisha retains this identity and R. Meir retains his obligations toward his master. Both stories testify to the power and indestructible merit of Torah in the storytellers’ ideology. These analyses are a delight, and replete with penetrating insights. They are essential reading for anyone interested in the workings of Talmudic narratives.

The one weakness of the literary dimension of Goshen-Gottstein’s work is the lack of perspective on the general narrative techniques of the Bavli and Yerushalmi (though there is copious and excellent use of parallels and thorough awareness of rabbinic forms). This leads to several errors, in my opinion, in Chapter Seven, which compares the versions of the two Talmuds and attempts to reconstruct the history of the tradition. Goshen-Gottstein argues, for example, that the main Yerushalmi story postdates the Bavli’s version. His evidence includes the observation that the heavenly voice appears twice in the Bavli story but only once in the Yerushalmi, which suggests that the Yerushalmi has conflated two voices into one, and therefore comes later (p. 208). A broader view of Bavli stories reveals that the Bavli frequently doubles an element of its source. This observation suggests rather that the Bavli is the later version and has duplicated an element of its source. Goshen-Gottstein also attributes the Bavli story to the students of R. Yohanan on the grounds that R. Yohanan appears in a favorable light in the Bavli, though not in the Yerushalmi (p. 215). However, R. Yohanan is a general hero of Bavli narratives and the protagonist of numerous (fictional) stories, and there is no evidence that these stories should be attributed to his students, at least not in their current forms. These conclusions are not persuasive without a broader view of narrative in both Talmuds.

Goshen-Gottstein’s concluding chapter, “Collective Torah culture and individual rabbinic biography,” offers interesting and significant reflections on the nature of rabbinic biography (pp. 267–276). He points out that in collective works such as the Talmuds, the individuality of any sage tends to lose significance in relation to the ideological concerns of the group. Torah, the primary concern of the rabbis, is the true hero of rabbinic biographical tales. As with the midrashic recasting of biblical figures, rabbinic storytellers freely used rabbinic figures to express their own attitudes and ideological interests. And like midrash, rabbinic biographical traditions are shaped by the continued exegesis of earlier stories in the face of changing ideological needs. In The Sinner and the Amnesiac, Goshen-


Avi Sagi and Zvi Zohar have, in recent years, made great contributions to Jewish studies, in particular the study of *halakhah*. In their many individual publications they have mined the often ignored halakhic literature in order to offer perspectives in a variety of areas. They have also jointly published a number of works, including a very learned study on conversion (*Giyur ve–Zehut Yehudit*). In their latest work, *Circles of Jewish Identity: A Study in Halakhic Literature*, they follow the path set out in their previous work by asking what the assumptions and conclusions of halakhic literature tell us about issues of Jewish identity, such as how to define it; whether it is immutable; and, if not immutable, whether one’s Jewish identity can be removed against one’s will. Their discussion proceeds from the relevant talmudic texts, through the medieval period, up until the most recent responsa. This chronological approach is helpful in charting the development of concepts.

Just as modern man struggles with the issue of identity, with some putting the focus on ethnicity and others on religion, the authors show how the halakhists also had to confront this issue. Although the halakhists obviously never formulated the problem in the way moderns do, many of their concerns were similar, and, from their halakhic arguments, the criteria they used, and their conclusions, it is possible to understand their perspectives.

Sagi and Zohar focus on one halakhic issue that has had many repercussions throughout Jewish history: the Sabbath violator. As is well known, according to the Talmud a Sabbath violator is placed on an equal footing with an idolator. But is this to be taken literally? In other words, does this mean that a Sabbath violator cannot marry a Jewish woman or that he can be charged interest on a loan? If the answer is yes, then Jewish identity is clearly a function of religion only. If no, then despite what the Talmud writes, there is also an ethnic component, which is not so easily severed.

To provide especially clear illustrations of this issue, the authors discuss in great detail the status of wine handled by a Sabbath violator. If a Sabbath violator is really no different from an idolator, then his wine is undrinkable. As the authors show, there are many halakhists, even in modern times, who believe this. There are some who go even further, and very shocking is the view of Rabbi Hayyim Shloush, the current chief rabbi of Netanya. According to Shloush, one is not permitted to save the life of a Sabbath violator on the Sabbath, adding that "perhaps
today we don’t have to kill them” (my emphasis). The authors quote a number of other halakhists who, while not as extreme as this, are also explicit that even a contemporary Sabbath violator is, in certain respects, no different from an idolator. This position is the basis for the special hashgahōt on wine stating that it is produced by Sabbath-observant Jews.

The authors quote authorities that come down on the other side of the question and put the focus on the ethnic element of Judaism. Without downplaying the importance of the Sabbath or the seriousness of its violation, some halakhists argue that the negative consequences recorded in earlier literature concerning one who violates the Sabbath refer only to the brazen violator. However, one who does not know any better and who shows in various ways that despite his Sabbath violation he still wishes to be connected to the Jewish people is not removed from his ethnic connection.

In focusing on the issue of identity the authors are also able to illuminate the concept of deviance in the eyes of the halakhists. In some Jewish societies, communal identity formation required an almost complete removal of the Sabbath violator from the Jewish collective. In others, such as nineteenth-century Germany, where Sabbath violation was widespread, such a tactic was thought to be counterproductive. Therefore, halakhists such as Jacob Ettlinger, Esriel Hildesheimer, and David Zvi Hoffmann found ways to justify keeping the Sabbath violator in the Jewish collective.

The authors are careful to stress that their study should not be compared with sociological studies, since theirs is an inner-halakhic study. They are not speaking of how society judged the Sabbath violator. They are speaking of the rabbis’ judgments, which might be very different from the judgements of their congregants. It is only in the last chapter that the authors attempt to connect the rabbinic opinions with various theoretical models of Jewish society. According to the authors, how the halakhist relates to these models will determine in large measure whether Sabbath violation is thought to remove someone from the Jewish religious or ethnic collective. It is only in this chapter that the authors focus on issues discussed in modern sociology. Those who appreciate this type of analysis will find the discussion helpful, but it is not essential to the major themes of the book.

By way of criticism, one must express surprise that the authors, in discussing medieval views, include a passage from Z. B. Auerbach’s edition of the Eshkol, supposedly authored by R. Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne. There is a scholarly consensus that this edition is a forgery. I can do no better than cite the words of a reviewer from these very pages: “Auerbach’s Eshkol appears as a clear forgery, incorporating arguments found in sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and even eighteenth-century writings . . . [The work] should not be used for historical purposes.”

1. Haym Soloveitchik, review of Eric Zimmer, Olam ke-Minhago Noheg, AJR Review 23 (1998), pp. 227–228. Israel Moshe Ta-Shema, perhaps not knowing about other accusations of forgery leveled against Auerbach, believes that the Eshkol is a fourteenth-century forgery that Auerbach innocently published. See Rabbi Zerahyah ha-Levi Ba’al ha-Maar u-Venei Hugo (Jerusalem, 1992), pp. 40–41, and my Between the Yeshiva World and Modern Orthodoxy (London, 1999), p. 77 n. 8. The manuscript that Auerbach claimed to have used has never been found. For a rare example of a halakhist who refuses to grant Auerbach’s edition of the Eshkol any validity, see Isaac Ratsaby, Olat Yitzhak (Bnei Brak, 1989), p. 410.
A more serious criticism of their work is that Sagi and Zohar do not always distinguish between the categories of codes, where “pure” halakhah is recorded, and responsa, where in the rough and tumble of the real world the pure halakhah cannot always be applied. Thus, it is well known that codifiers, including Maimonides, wrote responsa that contradict what appears in their codes. The kelalim literature deals with this issue in great detail.

This is relevant for an example discussed on pp. 70–72, dealing with the opinions of Joseph Karo and Moses Isserles regarding the status of wine touched by a Sabbath violator. In the Shulhan Ārukh both Karo and Isserles agree that one may not drink such wine. The authors raise an apparent contradiction between this strict opinion and Isserles’ well-known justification for the widespread practice of consuming Gentile wine. The authors claim that Isserles’ lenient opinion in this case is a recognition of the changes in the religious world of Christians compared to the idolators of years past. The authors then ask why Isserles did not also adopt a lenient approach to wine handled by Sabbath violators, and they suggest a sociological explanation.

Here, however, the authors are comparing apples and oranges. Isserles’ lenient opinion with regard to Gentile wine is found in a responsum. He makes it very clear that his role in the responsum is not to record the law for posterity, as he does in the Shulhan Ārukh, but rather to find some justification, however tenuous, for a widespread apparent violation of halakhah. Not surprisingly, in the Shulhan Arukh, Isserles does not offer this leniency, a point not noted by the authors. Had Sabbath violators been prevalent, and had the general population been accustomed to make use of wine handled by them, there is no reason to assume that in a responsum on this issue Isserles would not also have attempted to justify the practice.

These caveats aside, Sagi and Zohar have given us an important and readable book which provides conceptual order to the vast halakhic literature. Its significance is not simply in collecting and explaining all of the major texts concerning an important issue of Jewish religious history, but in showing how the debates between the rabbis reflect different views of the nature of Jewish identity.

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The title Medieval English Jews and Royal Officials whets the appetite for a rich exploration of the general policies of the English crown towards the Jews. What were the contradictions in royal policies from the Conquest to the expulsion, the relation between policy and implementation, and the capacity of the Jews to
parry injurious policies or to encourage more generous ones? Unfortunately, the book that addresses these issues in a sophisticated contemporary way still remains to be written. The subtitle of the book under review here, *Entries of Jewish Interest in the English Memoranda Rolls, 1266–1293*, more accurately defines its content.

Zefira Entin Rokéah calendars—that is, she provides summaries, paraphrases, and, very rarely, full translations of—the official notes of English government clerks on matters related to royal finance. The number of surviving memoranda is immense. Those of Jewish interest constitute a miniscule proportion, but still come to 1329 entries in the years covered. “Of Jewish interest” is defined broadly. A debt left unpaid by a converted Jew and unrelated to his former Jewishness is of Jewish interest; a long list of outstanding obligations pertaining to a monastery or noble is of Jewish interest if one of those obligations ever had anything to do with a Jew. This broad definition helps to situate the Jews in the wider fiscal concerns of the English crown.

The introduction to the volume is brief but serviceable. Scholars have written so much and so well on medieval English law and government that it is perfectly reasonable for Rokéah to summarize what is known and refer the reader to specialized works. A notable feature of Rokéah’s annotation is her description of the (bored?) government clerks’ pictorial graffiti on the memoranda rolls—little pen drawings of scowling monks, disgruntled bishops and caricatured Jews that clutter the margins of the manuscripts. Unfortunately, but understandably since she has published elsewhere on these images, no representations are reproduced except for two on the cover of the book. The modern cover artist has taken the liberty of touching up these two with yellow in order to highlight in the one case the caricature of a Jew, the badge or tablets of the Law, and in the other, a drawing of the king, the gold of the crown. In fact, the drawings do not face each other in the original or even appear on the same roll. No artist, that is, actually expressed some sense of balance or counterpoint by means of color-coding Torah and *Corona*.

The memoranda themselves are mostly routine: X, a Jew, owes such-and-such; Y brought a packet of Jewish bonds to the treasury for examination and needs reimbursement for his trip; Z purchased a house in the former Jewry of this-or-that town. As one reads through these monotonous records, one comes to recognize why the clerks doodled so much. Then, suddenly, a surprising entry will appear. A touch of compassion (no. 181, year 1269): “Because impoverished Jews can be burdened beyond their resources concerning this fine unless it be assessed properly, the king [Henry III] orders that the richer Jews not be exempted from paying their fair share and thereby over-burdening the poorer Jews.” A hint of fear about the possible breakdown of civil order on the death of the king (no. 430, year 1272): The Christian debtor “should have paid the 36 marks to the Jew . . . [and] had the money ready to pay, but the Jew was in hiding at the tower of London because of the king’s death.” Even a surprising name (no. 528, year 1273): “Toni [in another manuscript memorandum of the same matter, Tony] son of Aaron, Jew.”

Finally, uncertainty whether the Jews were gone for good with the expulsion of 1290 (no. 1321, year 1293): “Should the aforesaid Jews return to England hereafter (*Et si continget predictos Judeos in Angliam in posterum redire*) . . .”
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With nuggets of information like these and with the routine but useful information in most of the other memoranda, one can only lament the absence of a first-rate up-to-date book on the Jews of medieval England and their relations with the state. Rokéah’s calendar will provide an invaluable resource for anyone who undertakes to write that book. Do it for Tony.

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As crusaders swept through the Rhineland in 1096 en route to the Holy Land, they brought destruction to Ashkenazic Jewry, through death or forced conversion. Record of this violence has survived in Latin and Hebrew chronicles as well as in Hebrew dirges. These chronicles have been the subject of intense scrutiny since their publication in 1892. Attention has focused on accounts that in Worms, Mainz, and elsewhere Jews killed their family members and then themselves when the enemy was at the door. The Hebrew sources glorify these acts of self-destruction as the embodiment of the religious ideal of martyrdom, Kiddush Hashem.

Two decades have witnessed a shift in methodological focus, from what the chronicles say to the way they say it. In 1982 Ivan Marcus questioned the assumption that the narratives provide a reasonably accurate report of the events. He argued that the texts attest to the concerns of their authors, rather than those of the protagonists, and that they represent “fictions of a particular religious imagination.” Similarly, Jeremy Cohen has devoted several studies to the cultural context of images and symbols employed by the narrators. Symptomatic of the decline in the credibility of the chronicles is the assertion, which has entered the mainstream of scholarship, that many, if not most, Jews chose apostasy over death, despite the fact that the chronicles depict martyrdom as the predominant response.

Robert Chazan has been one of the leading figures in this field of scholarship. His European Jewry and the First Crusade (Berkeley, 1987) is a thorough scholarly treatment; In the Year 1096 (Philadelphia, 1996) is a more popular survey of the subject, with an innovative discussion of its place in modern historiography. In these works, and in a dozen articles, Chazan has consistently defended the “facticity” of the chronicles, though he, too, has been attentive to issues concerning the needs of the narrators and their literary techniques. God, Humanity, and History (GHH), Chazan’s latest contribution, addresses the fundamental ques-

tion of why the Hebrew narrative sources were written, an issue Chazan links to basic historical questions regarding the Hebrew texts.

The thrust of GHH is Chazan’s characterization of the messages of the narratives as “time-bound” and “timeless.” The former motif is intended “to provide guidance for that time when the next threat of anti-Jewish hostility would develop” (p. 112). Chazan terms this approach “time-bound,” because he claims that the Mainz Anonymous, in his view the earliest and most important Hebrew narrative, was written on the eve of the Second Crusade, when “guidance” would have been particularly handy.

The idea of studying the past behavior of the enemy in order to prepare for an approaching confrontation seems anachronistic; a mode of thought characteristic of modern (American?) culture, rather than of medieval Europe. A more fundamental problem is that the narrators do not explicitly mention any immediate practical purpose. Nor is it clear what the readers could have learned, even in theory, from the behavior of the assailants and victims of 1096. Chazan is aware of this last problem. We read, concerning the behavior of bishop Engilbert of Trier: “Clearly there was not a lot to learn from all this for the future” (p. 116). He also makes the general remark: “no clear-cut messages can readily be distilled” from the narratives (p. 117).

The terms time-bound and timeless are also problematic. The narratives scarcely seem time-bound if, centuries later, Jews could have continued to draw upon them for strategic guidance. Moreover, subsequent generations, too, would have been profoundly moved by the memorialization of the victims, a second time-bound motif identified by Chazan. Conversely, concerns that Chazan deems timeless were obviously as important to the Jews of 1096 as they were to those of other eras. If time-bound messages are also timeless, and vice versa, the classification scheme appears unhelpful.

Theodicy is the quintessential timeless issue. Chazan explains that one approach to this problem in the narratives is that the persecutions were, simply, a divine decree (i.e. no explanation). Another view, located in the chronicle of Solomon bar Simson, sees the horrors of 1096 as retribution for the Golden Calf episode. The latter explanation is derived from the narrative’s statement that there existed a decree from “the day of my accounting,” a phrase found in the Golden Calf story. This explanation is questionable, for the medieval narrator may have used the phrase rhetorically, to indicate generally that the violence was retribution for past sins—not necessarily for the Golden Calf.

The primary timeless motif is that God will—and must—reward the supreme heroism and devotion of the martyrs and exact retribution from the assailants. This, says Chazan, is a novel view of God’s role in history, the innovative contribution of these writings. I would emphasize the delicate relationship between “will” and “must”: The expressions of certainty may represent positive thinking, rather than absolute conviction, for the petitionary element betrays lingering, pervasive anxiety.

Chazan is at his best when he tackles the thorny problems of the chronology and authorship of the different chronicles, and the relationship of the narratives to one another. His analysis of their structure and literary characteristics is sensi-
tive and path-breaking. For example, he portrays the Mainz Anonymous as tightly organized, and therefore the work of a single author, contrasting this with the chronicle of Solomon bar Simson, which he characterizes as a clumsy compilation of earlier sources. Novel and intriguing, too, is Chazan’s suggestion that the reports in the latter chronicle of the Cologne persecutions and of the events at Trier are independent narratives.

The final chapters are an ambitious and enlightening comparison of the Hebrew narratives with medieval Hebrew storytelling and with the Gesta Francorum, a contemporary Latin chronicle. Chazan maintains that the Hebrew narratives are unprecedented in Hebrew literature, but strongly resemble the Gesta Francorum. In particular, the Hebrew and Latin texts emphasize the centrality of human action, rather than the divine manipulation of history, an idea that Chazan reasonably sets in the context of the twelfth-century Renaissance.

GHH greatly advances the study of the 1096 catastrophe and its immortalization through the author’s thorough and trenchant analysis and his thoughtful and creative insights. It provides a much-needed springboard for further research into an endlessly relevant chapter in Jewish history, one that is both painful and fascinating.

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If there is a contemporary “dean” of Indo-Judaic studies, it is Nathan Katz, professor and chair of religious studies at Florida International University. He is helping revive the field of study inaugurated by Walter Fischel, who died in 1973. Katz first made his mark with several articles and a book about one of the three Indian Jewish communities, The Last Jews of Cochin (1993); he edited Studies of Indian Jewish Identity (1995) with chapters about the Jews of Cochin, the Bene Israel of Bombay and Maharashtra, and the Baghdadis of Bombay and Calcutta. He subsequently founded and currently co-edits the Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies. Katz contributes to comparative Jewish studies by synthesizing in this book a new wave of publications from the period of 1985 to 1995, which he calls “a groundbreaking era for the study of Indian Jewish communities” (p. 6). His purpose here is to explain generally how these Jews, who never suffered discrimination at the hands of the Indian majority, maintained their identities and their commitment to Halakhah while acculturating to Indian and English ways.

Because Katz did his field work in Cochin, located in Kerala, on the South-west or Malabar Coast of India, he devotes more than half the book to the Malayalam-speaking Cochinites or Cochinites. They numbered about 2,500 at the time of Indian independence in 1947 but are now unable to provide a Sabbath minyan be-
cause most have migrated to Israel and elsewhere. The largest sub-group among them are the black and brown Malabari. Although they claim they arrived after the destruction of the Second Temple, empirical evidence goes back only to the eleventh century when charters and honors from the Indian maharajas assured them a high status.

The less numerous white Cochinis, who came from Spain in the sixteenth century and from Yemen and other Arabic speaking countries, are called Parade-sis, or foreigners. They were never more than about 300, but they are famous because of their beautiful synagogue built in 1568 and because some, such as the Rahabis, were the middlemen between the Dutch East India Company and Indian pepper producers during the eighteenth century. Their contacts with Dutch Jews ensured their access to mainstream Sephardic Judaism. They also adapted to the Indian context. Their exaggerated concerns about purity during Passover reflected brahmin customs. It is not clear from this book whether all Jews of Kerala celebrated this holiday in the same way, however. Parade-sis emulated “the Indian caste system by developing subcastes” (p. 59), relegating the darker-skinned older settlers, Malabaris, and their own manumitted slaves, who were practicing Jews, to inferior status. In addition to his own research, Katz depends on Barbara Johnson, Orpa Slapak, J. B. Segal, and Parade-sis such as the Koders and Hall-eguas.

The Marathi-speaking Bene Israel numbered about 20,000 at the time of Indian independence and have reached 50,000 in the world. About 5,000 still live in India. Bene Israel say their ancestors, fleeing Assyrian persecution after the destruction of the First Temple, survived a ship wreck off the Konkan coast. By the eighteenth century their Jewish identity was tenuous. After making contact with other Jews they became more observant and most moved to Israel after 1948. Distinctive to their practices is a particular reverence for the Prophet Elijah. During the “Malida” ritual the Bene Israel make a food offering to Elijah in connection with a vow (p. 103). Katz’s discussion depends here on Shirley Berry Isenberg, Joan Roland, Shalva Weil, as well as Haem Samuel Kehimkar, a Bene Israel himself. Baghdadis, the Arabic-speakers from Baghdad, Basra, Aleppo and even from Persia and Afghanistan, arrived in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. A few, such as the Sassoons, came with considerable capital, which they invested in trade, real estate, and the new industries of Bombay and Calcutta. Bagh-dadis in Bombay rejected the Bene Israel. Katz asserts that the cause of the break between the communities was the 1857 Indian uprising against the British, after which Baghdadis strived to become Englishmen and Englishwomen. This does not explain why, twenty-one years before the revolt, the Baghdadis requested that a wall be built in the Jewish cemetery between their graves and those of Bene Israel, or why they would not intermarry with Bene Israel. Sometimes it seems that the Jews got along better with Indians, who were never anti-semitic, than they did with other Jews. In this section Katz depends on Joan Roland, Tom Timberg, and the Calcutta Baghdadis such as Rabbi Ezekiel Musleah, Jael Silliman, Sally Solomon, Mavis Hyman, and Esmond Ezra.

For years, Walter Fischel worked almost alone on Jews of South Asia. This impressive book shows that a new generation of scholars and memorialists, in-
spired by the relatively happy history of the Jews of India and led by Nathan Katz, is writing excellent works about them today.

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Our knowledge of the French school of biblical interpretation has benefited in the last two decades from much original scholarship, including newly published texts and groundbreaking studies. Sara Japhet has already contributed in both areas, with her edition of Rashbam on Qohelet (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1985, with a translation by R. Salters) and studies of this school’s hermeneutics. Her new book, likewise, represents a two-fold advance in scholarship. It features the (unattributed) Job commentary in MS Lutzki 778, which she identifies as Rashbam’s, preceded by an analytic introduction, divided into seven chapters, two appendices and a bibliography that itself is a most valuable, up-to-date study of Rashbam’s exegesis. After demonstrating that this commentary was, indeed, written by Rashbam (Chapter One), Japhet outlines his concept of peshat (Chapter Two), system of beliefs (Chapter Three), literary insights (Chapter Four), and linguistics (Chapter Five). M. Banitt contributed a study of Rashbam’s Old French glosses (Chapter Six), which is followed by Japhet’s description of her edition (Chapter Seven).

Apart from offering an important new commentary by Rashbam, critically edited and annotated, Japhet has produced the most comprehensive published study on this exegete since the pioneering work of Rosin over a century ago. Building on the substantial advances in our understanding of the interpretive tradition since that time, Japhet has created a lucid, nuanced picture of Rashbam’s hermeneutical thought and practice.

Japhet’s greatest contribution is her thorough, insightful definition of Rashbam’s concept of peshat as embodied in the Job commentary and its relation to his other writings. In his Torah commentary, Rashbam makes a point of interpreting Scripture without resorting to Midrash. Though his anti-midrashic stance is not stated openly in the Job commentary, Japhet identifies the same endeavor by showing how the label “peshuto” implies a rejection of the midrashic reading (pp. 55–75). She suggests that his muted tone on Job indicates this commentary was written late in his career, when Rashbam was confident in his peshat method and no longer needed to defend it polemically. (Alternatively, we might suggest that the midrashim on Job were simply not as well known as those on the Torah, and that Rashbam did not need to address them directly.) The idea that Rashbam avoided
Midrash, of course, is hardly new; M. Greenberg, for example, defined this as the key feature that distinguishes Rashbam’s notion of peshat from Rashi’s. But Japhet refines this distinction by showing that Rashbam’s debate was with midrashic methods, not midrashic readings themselves, which he accepts when they meet his criteria of peshat (pp. 55n, 63, 75–78). As Japhet shows, a peshat reading, according to Rashbam, is one that takes into account (a) the literary context (pp. 55–65); (b) derekh leshon ha-miqra (“the manner of biblical language”), i.e., biblical stylistic conventions (pp. 65–69); and (c) noheg she-ba-˜olam (“the manner of the world”), i.e., typical human behavior, societal norms, and the natural order (derekh eretz [“the way of the world”] in Rashbam’s Torah commentary; pp. 148–149). Rashbam applies these principles in conjunction with the ein le-daqdeq (“one must not scrutinize”) rule to undercut elaborate, fanciful and supernatural midrashic readings and offer a more reasonable peshat interpretation.

Japhet’s new book is related in important ways to her earlier studies of the so-called compilatory genre, which have changed our perception of northern French exegesis. As earlier scholars have noted, many French commentaries originated as marginal glosses on the biblical text or Rashi’s quntres, which made them susceptible to being compiled into larger works that represent a school of thought rather than individual authorship. (One need only compare the varied collections of Tosaftot on the Talmud with Maimonides’ Mishneh Torah or Mishnah commentary, both of which bear his unmistakable signature.) A prime example of the compilatory genre, according to Japhet, is the Job commentary attributed to Joseph Qara, recently published by M. Ahrend. That work includes much material identical to the Job commentary in MS Lutzki 778, which forces scholars dealing with either one to define the relationship between them. Ahrend himself noted that his text often incorporates Rashi’s glosses and midrashic citations, the latter being especially surprising in light of Qara’s otherwise staunchly anti-midrashic tone. Japhet’s solution: Ahrend’s alleged “Qara commentary” is a compilatory work that draws upon Qara’s original glosses on Job among other sources, including Rashbam’s commentary as attested in MS Lutzki 778. Ironically, Japhet’s insight has come back to haunt her, as some scholars continue to maintain the integrity of the Qara commentary by arguing that MS Lutzki 778 is the compilation. Japhet devotes her first chapter and an appendix to refuting this view, presented most fully by M. Rosen in his Ph.D. dissertation (University of London, 1995). The dialogue continues in M. Lockshin’s review of Japhet’s book, in which he defends Rosen’s position (JSQ 8 [2001]: 80–104). In the end, Lockshin (p. 103) admits that this commentary reflects the imprint of Rashbam and may have been written by his


students, much as Japhet (pp. 305–306) admits that interpolations may have crept
into the MS. Despite its importance, the issue of authorship should not deflect at-
tention from the more central questions of hermeneutical method that Japhet ad-
dresses in her comprehensive analysis.

Having described what I consider to be the most important features of Ja-
phet’s work, I would like to select a few points where an alternative perspective
might be helpful. Japhet appropriately describes Rashbam against the backdrop of
his own intellectual milieu, in which Rashi and midrashic works were prevalent.
Yet when we place Rashbam in a larger cultural picture that includes the Spanish
exegetical tradition (of which he was largely unaware), a different result emerges.
For example, in light of the modern literary reading of Scripture, Japhet empha-
sizes Rashbam’s sense of biblical poetics. She points to his well-known insights
about biblical parallelism, a convention he notes in the Job commentary (pp. 170–
87) and regards as a means of enhancing Scripture’s elegance (tiqqun milat ha-
miqra; p. 173). Rashbam also discerned Scripture’s proclivity for metaphor (pp. 68,
76, 87, 148–51), an exegetical concept he invoked in conjunction with the ein le-
daqdeq principle to avoid elaborate midrashic readings. While it is evident that
Rashbam manifests literary sensitivity, it must be distinguished from the literary
awareness of exegetes in Muslim Spain who were exposed to Arabic poetics. Lack-
ing such training, Rashbam’s literary intuition is remarkable but his isolated styl-
stic observations do not match the aesthetic sense manifested, for example, by the
great Hebrew poet, Moses ibn Ezra, who analyzed biblical parallelism and met-
aphor (which he distinguished from simile and allegory) as part of an overall en-
deavor to identify biblical precedents for twenty Arabic poetic techniques.4 A sim-
ilar observation perhaps applies to Rashbam’s linguistics, which lacked the benefit
of the numerous important works in this field written in Arabic. Japhet, however,
does argue that Rashbam was aware of Hayyuj’s work and promises to address this
question elsewhere (pp. 51n, 228).

A comparison with the Andalusian school also sheds light on the rationalist
tendencies Japhet detects in Rashbam. As she notes, he at times reinterprets an-
thropomorphic depictions of God (pp. 127–135), an endeavor typical of the philo-
sophical exegetical tradition pioneered by Saʿadia.5 But Rashbam did not have a
philosophical outlook that would militate against anthropomorphism, which might
explain why he does not reinterpret it consistently. A similar issue arises with re-
spect to Satan in Job 1–2. The existence of a heavenly being capable of influen-
cing God was theologically untenable for Saʿadia and Maimonides, who both adopt-

vol. 1/2, pp. 282–301.

5. Japhet (p. 127n) points to the Targumim as a precedent for this endeavor. While Saʿadia and
Maimonides both made this claim, it has been challenged by M. Klein, Anthropomorphisms and
Anthropopathisms in the Targumim of the Pentateuch [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Makor, 1982). Citing nu-
merous Targumic passages that depict God anthropomorphically, Klein argues that even those passages
that avoid anthropomorphism do not reflect a philosophical stance. Saʿadia and Maimonides may have
been compelled to project their anti-anthropomorphic theology onto the Targumim; but Rashbam would
have had less reason to do so.
ed decisive exegetical strategies to nullify this inference. Rashbam does not address this problem explicitly; but Japhet infers from his comments that he takes Satan to be an imaginary character, employed by Scripture to hypostatize God’s infliction of pain on human beings (pp. 136–137), an interpretation articulated by M. Weiss (The Story of Job’s Beginning [Jerusalem: Ha-Sokhnut Ha-Ychudit Le-Erets Yisrael [Hebrew], 1983], pp. 38–39). While Japhet’s reading of Rashbam’s language is itself not unreasonable, it seems questionable to me whether he really had this sophisticated explanation in mind. After all, Rashbam accepted the existence of demons and other supernatural entities (pp. 142–46) and might have expressed himself more clearly if he really intended to claim that Satan is an imaginary character, something Maimonides does with great fanfare in Guide III:22. As Japhet herself notes (p. 56), a mythological text should prompt a peshat reader to suspend his rationalism and convey the plain sense of the text, a directive that would have led Rashbam to avoid the heavy-handed, philosophically driven reading and accept Satan’s heavenly existence.

Northern French biblical commentaries, including Rashbam’s, have been characterized in earlier scholarship as collections of glosses on words and phrases, rather than analyses of larger literary units. Japhet, however, argues that this generalization does not apply to Rashbam’s Job commentary, which includes a structural analysis of this biblical book (pp. 98–99, 101–9, 162–70). Rashbam shows, for example, that chapters 12–14 form an integrated speech that concludes the first round of dialogues; he addresses the incomplete structure of the third round, in which Zophar’s part is missing; and he identifies the internal structure of the Elihu speeches. Yet Rashbam does not address meta-textual issues; i.e., he explains what the narrator and characters say and mean, but he does not evaluate their views philosophically, as the medieval Spanish exegetes, like modern readers, tend to do. Abraham ibn Ezra, for example, whose textual glosses otherwise resemble Rashbam’s, composed a lengthy epilogue in which he abstracts a theoretical stance from the speeches of each interlocutor, culminating in the ultimate philosophical response to evil uttered by God Himself. The lack of such explicit analysis in Rashbam raises a question, in my opinion, about Japhet’s view (pp. 125–27) that Rashbam identified the correct philosophical solution to Job’s suffering in Elihu’s words. Ibn Ezra (comm. on Job, introduction and epilogue), Maimonides (Guide III:23), and Nahmanides (comm. on Job 33:17, 36:14) all make this claim explicitly; but Rashbam never evaluates the analytic merit of Elihu’s arguments. Japhet draws her inference from Rashbam’s reading of Job 42:7, in which Elihu is spared from the divine wrath directed at the other three friends for “not speaking that which is right (nekhonah), as my servant Job [had done].” This verse, no doubt, is an important key for unlocking the book of Job and was, indeed, taken by the Spanish exegetes as evidence that Elihu offered the correct view and therefore was not scolded by God. But why is Job not scolded for his blasphemy? In fact, God’s words imply that “my servant Job” spoke “that which is right”! Ibn Ezra, Maimonides and Nahmanides all answer that Job merits this status because he retracted his blasphemy and accepted the philosophical truth he received from God. When we turn to Rashbam against this backdrop, it becomes evident that he reads 42:7 quite differently. He explains that Job was spared from God’s wrath because his blasphe-
my was mitigated by suffering (as suggested in the Talmud [p. 125]), and that Elihu was spared because he spoke to Job in a consoling manner (as Rashi on 36:9 argues), unlike the three friends who criticized Job. According to Rashbam, then, God’s wrath indicated the interlocutors’ moral and religious flaws, not philosophical errors. Just as Job’s blasphemous words were excusable (but, presumably, not correct) in light of his despair, Elihu was exceptional among Job’s friends because of his moral virtue, not his philosophical insight. This reading of 42:7 comes closer to the modern view that the book of Job teaches that there is no philosophical solution to the problem of evil, and that true friends must respond to a sufferer with compassion and sensitivity.6

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In this exciting book, Professor Moshe Halbertal of the Hebrew University and the Shalom Hartman Institute uncovers with brilliant conceptual clarity the religious world of the philosophically inclined rabbinic scholars of southern France. With impressive erudition, Halbertal surveys most of the relevant thirteenth- and fourteenth-century primary source material, both in print and in manuscript, with an emphasis on the writing and thought of Menahem ha-Meiri of Perpignan (d. 1315). Meiri was the leading talmudist of a proud and self-consciously independent southern French Jewish community at the turn of the thirteenth century and the author of an encyclopedic commentary on the Talmud, *Bet ha-Behirah*. Halbertal argues that the history of medieval Jewish thought has been impoverished significantly on account of an inadequate appreciation of the impressive degree to which southern French talmudists, like Meiri, integrated philosophy and *halakhah* in their writing and thought. In this Halbertal is undoubtedly correct, and his book is therefore an unusually important contribution to Jewish intellectual history. (A conceptual core of Halbertal’s work appeared as “R. Menahem ha-Me’iri: bein Torah le-Ḥokhmah,” *Tarbiz* 63 (1995): 63–118, but issues and themes treated there are examined here with much greater scope and depth.)

In brief introductory and concluding essays, Halbertal clearly frames his topic both conceptually and historically, and powerfully states the case for its im-

7. This review was written while I was a Fellow at the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, to which I am grateful for providing a congenial atmosphere for my research and writing. I wish to thank Prof. Adele Berlin for her insightful comments on an earlier draft of this review.
portance. His book contains six chapters that investigate the intersection of philosophy and law in rabbinic culture in southern France from a variety of angles. The first chapter establishes Meiri’s commitments as a Maimonidean scholar, demonstrating that Meiri’s views on a wide range of issues—including the role of intellectual comprehension, the nature of God, immortality, and prophecy, as well as Meiri’s biblical exegesis and understanding of magic—are all thoroughly Maimonidean. The second chapter explores Meiri’s relationship to the legacy of Samuel ibn Tibbon of Marseilles, the great philosophic translator and bible commentator who flourished in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, and whose work had become, in Meiri’s day, emblematic of the southern French synthesis of philosophy and Jewish tradition. The third chapter is a major contribution to the understanding of Meiri’s celebrated innovation that Christians being “bound by religion” are not to be considered idolaters but brothers. With penetrating learning and insight, Halbertal eliminates the hypothesis that Meiri’s categorization of Christians is apologetic in nature, clarifies the conceptual basis of Meiri’s notion of “religion,” and persuasively identifies the exegetical sources out of which Meiri fashioned this striking innovation. The fourth chapter gives the reader a sense of the character of the rationalistic commitments of southern French rabbinic scholars in the generations proceeding and following Meiri, and contains path-breaking work on the talmudist and polemicist Meir ben Simeon ha-Me’ili of Narbonne, and Meiri’s teacher, Reuven ben Hayyim. The fifth chapter presents the controversy over philosophic study that gripped Languedoc (1304–6) as an abrupt intensification of a decades-long conflict over the nature of the Maimonidean legacy that bifurcated the moderate rabbinic elite, with some moderates, like Meiri, moving to defend the radical philosopher translators, and others, like Abba Mari ben Moses of Montpellier, taking an active critical stand against them. The sixth chapter breaks new ground with a study of the work of David ben Samuel ha-Kokhavi, the author of Sefer ha-Batim and one of greatest Jewish legal scholars to follow Meiri in the southern French tradition. With impressive learning and sensitive reading, Halbertal shows how ha-Kokhavi dared to go further than any of his southern French predecessors in the philosophic spiritualization of halakhah.

Driving much of Halbertal’s analysis is a vision of the moderate and radical interpretative streams of southern French Jewry as historical expressions of a profound duality immanent within Maimonidean thought. The validity of Halbertal’s work therefore depends to a great extent on the validity of this vision. Halbertal argues, for example, that the southern French rabbinic elite adopted a moderate interpretation of the Maimonidean legacy, while the region’s philosopher translators tended to read Maimonides along radical lines. However, a significant number of southern French philosopher translators, like Kalonymous ben Kalonymous, among others, were quite conservative in orientation, while several southern French talmudists like David ben Samuel ha-Kokhavi stood just a hair’s breadth from the most radical philosophic positions. Further, Halbertal describes Meiri as a moderate Maimonidean “critic” engaged in a passionate “internal” conflict with a radical philosophic wing. However, Meiri held the works of philosophers like Samuel ibn Tibbon and Jacob Anatoli as the very fonts of southern French Jewish culture and appears to have given them a rather moder-
ate interpretation. In a similar vein, Halbertal argues that were it not for the “pro-
tection” bestowed upon the philosophically radical translators by a fundamentally
opposed and potentially hostile moderate rabbinic elite, philosophic culture in
southern France “would have collapsed” in the face of the “systematic” attacks
against it. However, the closeness and mutual dependence that characterized the
relationship between the philosophic translators and their rabbinic supporters
from the earliest days of southern French Jewish philosophic culture render this
presentation rather difficult. Finally, Halbertal presents the southern French con-
flict over philosophic study as a virtual “hypostasis” of immanent Maimonidean
dualities. However, it is unlikely that any living community ought be described in
such reified terms, as if its culture were abstractly determined according to a par-
ticular interpretation of Maimonides’ challenging and multivalent literary corpus.
Despite his extraordinary grasp of the relevant material, Halbertal draws the knot-
ty complexities of thirteenth- and early-fourteenth-century southern French Jew-
ish thought into a conceptually brilliant but historically inaccurate and untenable
picture.

Similarly, on the issue of the religious valuation of Talmud study, Halbertal
casts the difference between Meiri and his southern French philosopher colleagues
a bit too harshly. In Halbertal’s intriguing presentation, Meiri’s decision to write
Bet ha-Beḥirah on the Talmud constituted a conscious and unequivocal repudia-
tion of the southern French philosophers’ desire to eliminate the Talmud, with its
impractical dialectic, as a source for Jewish legal study. However, Meiri was as dis-
dainfully adverse to impractical talmudic discourse as the exclusive philosopher,
as his practically oriented encyclopedia of talmudic interpretation consistently ex-
ecuted over such a vast terrain clearly shows. The philosopher translators, on the
other hand, maintained a keen interest in the deeper meaning of rabbinic literature.
They surely would have been fascinated, for example, by the allegorization of spe-
cific halakhot by Meiri’s younger contemporary ha-Kokhavi. Furthermore, scrip-
tural exegesis was the philosophers’ principal medium. They did not simply wish
to move on to Averroes’ commentaries on the works of Aristotle, as Halbertal im-
plies. Conversely, powerful, creative talmudists took—and, today, still take—very
little interest in Meiri’s light and breezy discussions of the talmudic sugyah. The
great Jewish legal minds of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Ramban, Rash-
ba, and Ritva, dealt extensively with the writing of the twelfth-century southern
French talmudists Rabad and Zeraḥyah ha-Levi. They did not, however, cite the
work of the succeeding generations of southern French talmudists, many of them
rationalists, at all. Halbertal acknowledges that much of this southern French le-
gal writing was simply not of the caliber necessary to engage the attention of the
great Catalanian talmudists. Nevertheless, Halbertal suggests that these important
Spanish talmudists consciously abandoned southern French halakhic writing on
account of the rationalistic orientation of its authors: a fascinating but complete-
ly unsubstantiated hypothesis. The utter lack of interest of the important Spanish
talmudists in the vast halakhic literature of contemporary southern France, never-
theless, remains intriguing.

A notable gap in Halbertal’s study is his cursory treatment of the Mezoqaq
Shiv'atayyim, a massive talmudic work, comparable in scope to Bet ha-Beḥirah, by a late-fourteenth-century southern French scholar Joseph ben Saul. (Professor Israel Ta-Shma of the Hebrew University identified the unique manuscript of Mezoaq Shiv'atayyim a few years ago.) In his fourth chapter, Halbertal briefly establishes the Maimonidean commitments of Joseph ben Saul, but concludes with the description of Mezoaq Shiv'atayyim as “a work that has yet to be studied.” Written in 1380, the existence of this major work renders problematic Halbertal’s claim that the expulsion of the Jews of Languedoc in 1306 fundamentally undermined their distinctive culture. The terminus ad quem of the southern French religious and cultural life that Halbertal so marvelously brings to light therefore requires further clarification.

Curiously, Halbertal suggests that Meiri and his teacher Reuven ben Ḥayyim, held “esoteric” views on a number of major issues, including the creation of the world. Indeed, a number of Meiri’s formulations regarding such sensitive issues are extremely cautious and compressed, and Meiri can be caught contradicting himself on these same delicate topics. It seems most unlikely, however, that either Meiri or his teacher turned to modes of esotericism—deliberately contradicting themselves or elaborately concealing their true views, for example—as a strategies for scholarly communication. Perhaps Halbertal uses the term “esoteric” more loosely. In any case, this issue requires clarification.

Finally, two relatively minor observations deserve mention: Halbertal puzzlingly perpetuates the legend that Meiri’s Bet ha-Beḥirah was “discovered entirely by accident in the nineteenth century in one complete manuscript after all traces of the work had vanished over the course of around five hundred years” (p. 17). The manuscript in question—which lacks Meiri’s introduction and commentary to Avot and, hence, is not complete—was written in Avignon in the 1450s and identified independently by the Hebrew bibliographers H. J. Azulai and G. B. De-Rossi not much later than 1750. Both scholars immediately recognized this manuscript’s importance because of their acquaintance with Bet ha-Beḥirah from sources already known to them. Lastly, Halbertal consistently uses the term “Provence” for the South of France. This designation for the region, while justifiable in a Hebrew-language work, probably should have been introduced with some qualification, as almost none of the places where the scholars treated in this book lived—Montpellier, Lunel, Béziers, Perpignan, and Narbonne, for example—are in Provence. Most are in Languedoc, while Perpignan, where Meiri himself lived, is in Roussillon. The absence of this clarification may confuse the general medievalist, who probably would experience uncertainty and perhaps even a sense of historical dislocation in attempting to place the Jewish community under discussion in its social, political, and economic context.

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In *Kabbalah in Liturgy, Halakhah, and Custom*, Moshe Hallamish asks the seminal question: From where does the kabbalist, whose sources are heavenly, or at best heard from a teacher, gain the ability to speak into the halakhic tradition (p. 118)? Presumably, the principle of “*lo ba-shamayim hi*” should prevail, excluding any kind of kabbalistic privilege. He asks further, Is there a historical point where there is a sudden penetration or was it through progressive process? Does the Kabbalah create new forms to exert its influence or does it use the halakhic forms in existence? This collection of thirty-one articles is the most comprehensive attempt to assess the relationship between kabbalah and halakhah, prayer, and custom, and as such marks a significant milestone in this important area of research.

The book is divided into three sections: “Foundational Issues,” “Personalities and Approaches,” and “Halakhah and Minhag under the Influence of Kabbalah.” The first chapter of the book, “Problems in Researching Kabbalah’s Influence on Prayer,” is a consideration of the parameters of the question, and the methods and methodologies required. Hallamish frames the questions of influence as follows: Given that all religions are conservative by nature, and that prayer is an emphatic carrier of that value, how can change occur? Are the changes due to internal or external developments?

Hallamish shows how the Kabbalah jumps over the traditionalistic hurdles of *minhag avot* and *minhag ha-makom* through the proliferation of printed *tikkunim* and migrations of populations. Mysticism’s appeal to a higher authority led to the famous principle attributed to David ibn Abi Zimra (1479–1573) that one should follow the kabbalistic practice if it is a stringency and does not conflict with the rulings of the Talmud. In this manner, the normal channels of due halakhic process were not contravened. Hallamish suggests that the key to success of the Kabbalah-practice relationship is *humrah* and *hiddur*, stringency and beautification. In other words, by appealing to spiritually-minded people, the Kabbalah could exercise leverage on the tradition without necessarily making demands on the populace as a whole.

The call for proper *kavvanah*, before and during prayer, and before the performance of commandments remains a primary popular legacy of the Kabbalah. We witness the advent of “prayer before prayer,” to use Hallamish’s phrase, in the form of verbal or mental *kavvanot*. An interesting ramification of attempts to inspire spiritual directedness through the utterance of a verbal formula such as the *le-shem yihud* formula was that they raised further anxieties about the lack of proper fulfillment. Objections arose from Yehezkel Landau (1713–1793) and others, who declared it arrogance to imagine that his contemporaries might be in possession of an essential formula that previous generations lacked.

The middle section of the volume treats texts and personalities considering, for example, “The Halakhic Authority of the Zohar,” “The Status of the Ari as a Jurist,” and “North African Songs in Honor of R. Shimon bar Yohai.” One of the strengths of this section and, indeed, of the book as a whole, is Hallamish’s expertise in the Halakhah and customs of the North African Jewish communities.
Among the valuable contributions that Hallamish makes is to correct the prevailing assumption, purveyed by R. J. Zvi Werblowski and Jacob Katz, regarding Yosef Karo’s (1488–1575) guarded reliance on kabbalistic teaching and experience. He demonstrates in “The Kabbalah in the Jurisprudence of Rav Yosef Karo” that there are more than a few instances in which Karo’s experiences with his maggid also left impressions on Karo’s halakhic rulings.

The third section contains studies dealing with a variety of focussed topics: times to give charity in the prayer service, the liturgical custom regarding love for one’s neighbor, familiar and perennial battles over mundane conversations in the synagogue, and a series of blessings that fell in and out of practice as a result of the influence of kabbalah. In “The Place of Kabbalah in Minhag,” Hallamish points out that kabbalistic minhagim have a prestige that rises above time and place inasmuch as they are more portable than other minhagim, appealing as they do to a sense of authority.

In reading the entirety of the collection, one gleans an historical narrative of the Halakhah-Kabbalah relationship: the Zohar as early innovator of kabbalistic praxis and mindset, Karo integrating Kabbalah into normative halakhic practice, the turning point coming with the plethora of practices introduced by Isaac Luria and his disciples that soon became widespread. This popularization was facilitated through popular kabbalistic-ethical manuals such as Reishit Hokhmah of Elijah de Vidas (d. ca. 1593), the Shnet Luhot ha-Brit of Yeshayah Halevi Horowitz (c. 1570–1630), Seder ha-Yom of Moshe Makhr, the Magen Avraham of Avraham Gumbiner (c. 1637–1685) which conferred legitimacy on Lurianic kabbalah, and the influential works of the Hida, Hayyim Yosef David Azulai (1724–1806).

Hallamish’s collection will be an invaluable resource for all those interested in the nexus of Kabbalah with Jewish practice of the last 500 years. His vast research entailed investigation of kabbalistic ta’amei ha-mitzvot literature, halakhah, minhag, siddurim, and the tikkunim literature. As a collection of discrete articles the book inevitably lacks some unity, but Hallamish asserts that, in any event, many more detailed studies are first required before a comprehensive history of kabbalah’s effects in these areas can be written (p.16). The bibliographical plenitude of a number of the articles makes them a valuable resource for further research; moreover, this voluminous compendium of detailed studies will provide those who study the evolution of liturgy, Kabbalah, or Halakhah much with which to be sated.

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The academic study of medieval Jewish philosophy began in the nineteenth century with a comparisons of classical Jewish texts (e.g., Saadia Gaon’s Beliefs
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and Opinion; Judah Halevi’s Kuzari; Maimonides’ Guide of the Perplexed; Gersonides’ Wars of the Lord) with classical Islamic texts (especially those of the Aristotelians al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes; and the anti-Aristotelian al-Ghazali). The possibility that Jewish thinkers took their inspiration from, or should be seen in the context of, Islamic thinkers (such as Shi’ites or sufis) and Christian philosophers (especially scholastics vis-à-vis late medieval Jewish thought) was rarely entertained, partially because of lack of availability of texts and partially because of preconceived notions. The last few decades have seen a reversal of this trend: as the chances fade of finding more parallels in the well researched Aristotelian texts, more attention has been paid to alternate contexts of Jewish philosophy. This excellent book, a much revised and updated Harvard University dissertation (1995), is a very welcome addition to this growing tendency.

Diana Lobel is not interested solely in the search for parallels between Judah Halevi’s Kuzari and Sufi (and other) texts. Rather, her study is intended to show the ongoing dialogue in the Kuzari between Halevi’s Jewish spirituality and that of his Islamic contemporaries, both the philosopher (who is mentioned explicitly in the text) and the mystic (whose presence is solely implicit). Lobel accomplishes this by concentrating on key Arabic terms, many of them used both by the Aristotelians and the Sufis, which were undoubtedly well known to Halevi’s Arabic speaking Jewish audience. Assuming that the poet Halevi’s choice of language was not arbitrary, Lobel demonstrates how Halevi repeated central terms in differing contexts in order to employ them in an ongoing, but subtle, debate with Sufism, which parallels his unambiguous criticism of philosophy, Islam and Christianity (parts of which are also analyzed here). Lobel’s study, which is not solely philological but also literary, placing the terminological parallels inside a larger context (cf. p. 10), is particularly welcome since it shows the indispensability of using the original text of the Kuzari. No current Hebrew (or English) translations of the Kuzari consistently render the underlying Arabic terms, and, since terminological exactitude is so important for understanding Halevi’s thought, these translations are quite misleading to readers who rely solely upon them.

The terms at the center of Lobel’s study are those concerning relationship (connection or union); human striving; perception; prophecy; and intimacy, longing, and love. Lobel ably demonstrates that all of these topics were of concern to Halevi’s Islamic sources, especially the Sufi ones, and that a full understanding of Halevi’s philosophy requires comparison with Islamic precedents. Also of interest is Lobel’s demonstration that Halevi often gives the familiar terms new nuances as part of his ongoing dialogue with competing Islamic models.

One example of Lobel’s exposition of Halevi’s methodology will have to suffice: Although one does not need the original Arabic to know that the experiential truth of prophecy is a central theme of the Kuzari, by analyzing the Arabic terminology, Lobel explicates both the experiential and prophetic aspects of Halevi’s thought. Halevi’s term for the collective experienced of Israel at Sinai is mushāhada, or witnessing, a common Sufi term for religious experience. For the Sufi, however, witnessing is a result of much psychic preparation and is an individual, not a group, phenomenon. By constantly using the term mushāhada and many of its cognates, Halevi emphasized that the collective Sinaitic experience,
for which Israel did not need special preparation, is a much more reliable source of truth than Sufi mysticism (or philosophy, which assumed that prophecy needs intellectual preparation). Furthermore, Halevi’s contrast of Israel’s mushāhada with the philosopher’s use of logical deduction (qiyaṣ) is intended to emphasize that unmediated witnessing can be trusted more than logic. In terms of prophecy itself, Lobel demonstrates how Halevi is careful to distinguish between different levels of prophetic experience by his use of distinct Arabic terms. Thus, the theophany at Mt. Sinai was perceived by all Israelites as an act of wahy (real prophecy), and not ilhām (inspiration) or taʾyid (divine assistance). By focusing on the repeated use of various Arabic terms in the Kuzari, Lobel convincingly argues that Halevi was responding to specific Islamic views that were current in twelfth-century Spain.

If one has any methodological bone to pick with the author it will concern the question of Halevi’s consistency. Previous readers have pointed out possible contradictions between different passages in the Kuzari and have offered varied explanations of this phenomenon, such as developments in Halevi’s thought through the years of the Kuzari’s composition; the dialectical nature of the work, or a general lack of consistency. By dealing with the Kuzari as a seamless whole, even when a war of possible contradictions (“Ha-Levi is thus far from systemically consistent” [p.47]), Lobel risks reading more into the terminology than there actually is. If Halevi was not always concerned with reconciling different passages in the Kuzari for whatever reason, how can one be sure that he used his Arabic terminology consistently? Thus, while the term qiyaṣ (logical analogy) generally has negative connotations, this is not always the case. Similarly, sometimes the author uses qiyaṣ to mean rational proof; in other passages the term seems to be istidlāl (logical demonstration; see, e.g., pp. 73–74, 81–82). Is this terminological change purposeful, or does it perhaps have another reason, such as the different stages of composition of the Kuzari? As noted, while Lobel’s terminological exegeses are generally convincing, at least the possibility of inconsistency should be taken into account.

One can also quibble concerning some of Lobel’s interpretations. She is understandably uncomfortable with what is anachronistically referred to as Halevi’s racism (notice her paraphrase: “Every Israelite of pure heart” [p. 20], when the original refers to native-born [or pure, ṣarḥ] Israelites, to the exclusion of converts; but cf. p. 194, n. 61). Further, Lobel’s distinction between nature and nurture is a valuable one, and her non-racist explanation of Kuzari 1:27 (pp. 35–37, and notes) is convincing. Nevertheless, her understanding of ṣafwa (chosen, elect) as non-genetic because of the Shiʿite use of the term, and her statement that “Ha-Levi appears to deliberately leave the precise nature of Israel’s status as ṣafwa ambiguous” (p. 38), ignore the many statements in the Kuzari about the relatively inferior status of the proselyte and the intrinsic nature of native-born Jewish superiority. Even if Halevi’s sources did not use ṣafwa in a biological/genetic manner, this is no proof that Halevi’s understanding was similar. After all, the central focus of Lobel’s book is Halevi’s appropriation of pre-existing Arabic “vocabulary of religious experience” by “creatively adapting [it] to the Jewish experience” (p. 159)!
Despite these caveats, there is no doubt that Lobel’s study is the most important book on Judah Halevi’s philosophy currently available and deserves both a wide audience and close attention. It is indispensable for all future discussions of the Islamic context of medieval Jewish philosophy in general and of Judah Halevi’s thought in particular.

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That the Jewish people has a distinct political tradition should not at all be surprising. Yet, it has been only about thirty years since the process of its recovery has begun. Major political thinkers, including Leo Strauss, Aaron Wildavsky, and especially Daniel Elazar, have made significant contributions to understanding the major impact that Jewish political thought has had on the Western political tradition. With the increasing secularization of political thought since the seventeenth century, there had been a marked reluctance to understand the Bible as a resource for political discussion. However, it has been demonstrated that the consent/contract basis of authority is derived directly from federalist theology of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries in Western Europe. “Federal,” after all, is derived from the Latin, *foedus*, which means covenant.¹ Protestant churches searching for a basis of polity that was not based on Catholic hierarchical sacramental authority returned to the Hebrew Bible. Their clergy studied Hebrew with rabbinic tutors who most probably emphasized the Jewish mutual concept of covenant over the Christian unilateral covenant theory.

We can read late medieval city managers, such as Althusius in Germany, who described the “perfect Jewish polity” as a model for city government.² Frequent references to biblical sources in Western political thought were not unusual. Indeed, Michael Walzer, one of the editors of the volume under review, has demonstrated in his *Exodus and Revolution* the political significance of the book of Exodus on political revolutionary movements.³

*The Jewish Political Tradition: Authority* is the first of four volumes on the subject, the others being: *Membership, Community, and Politics in History*. If the first volume is any indication of the future, we can expect works of great quality. This work lets the tradition speak for itself by presenting primary texts, beginning

with the Bible and ranging throughout the Jewish experience to modern times. The texts are presented with sagacious introductions. The book includes several commentaries written by contemporary scholars that engage in a dialogue with the text in a most stimulating manner. The commentaries critically address the texts, demonstrating their significance. They are well written and invite the reader to participate in the dialogue.

Yale University Press has done a magnificent job in publishing the book. Its design is sumptuous, the layout welcoming. The volume’s look reflects the serious nature of its content.

Michael Walzer points out in his introduction that the integrity and unified nature of the Jewish political tradition is based on its “intertextuality” (p. xxii), that is, biblical literature has been regarded as the foundation text. The task of this four-volume series, Walzer writes, is to retrieve appropriate texts from the tradition, integrate them—that is, provide a context for them in the world of political thought in general—and provide criticism in order to be fully engaged in the messages of the tradition. The editors and contributors have succeeded in this ambitious task.

The work on covenant is excellent in regard to its relation to consent issues. Covenant is probably the unique contribution of the Jewish political tradition to political thought. It would have been helpful, especially since this concept has had such an enduring influence on Western political theory, to include a descriptive analysis of how biblical covenants functioned, the different types of covenants, and the mechanisms therein.

This reader would have appreciated a commentary on the Spinoza extract. Spinoza is such a pivotal thinker in so many ways—between the holy and the secular, between the ancient and the modern, between theocentric and anthrocentric concepts of authority and between communal and individual identity. He also lived during a time and in a place where biblical concepts of covenant were widely discussed as a basis of authority for Protestant churches. It would have been interesting to read an analysis of Spinoza’s thought in the context of the federal theologizing that was the rage in the Netherlands. It was the secularization of federal theology that led to the consent theories of Locke and Hobbes. Unfortunately, the limited space allotted to this review does not allow for any extension of these comments.

The selection of texts is marvelous. Especially remarkable and generally unavailable to the general reader are the medieval texts such as Gerondi and the texts reflecting real issues about the scope and source of authority raging in various Jewish communities. Especially telling was the piece by Jacob Sasportas, a communal rabbi competing for authority with lay leadership.

In this context it would have been useful to include early on the concept of the three differing, sometimes competing, traditional jurisdictions of authority analyzed by Stuart Cohen: liturgical (keter kehunah), administrative (keter malkhut) and divine (keter Torah). In this vein, another text that should have been included in Chapter Four, on priests, is that of Numbers 8: 9–12, which demonstrates that

the Levites were not only authorized by God but also by the people. This reflects the biblical concept of authorization: divine authorization is never sufficient. The king, too, is not only designated by God but also must be accepted by the people.

It would have been important to note a paradox in biblical authority: The tribe of Levi was not allowed to own land. This precept would seem to be a source of a proto-system of checks and balances, that is, the role of this tribe was powerful because of its liturgical authority acting as the gatekeepers between the people and God. At the same time it was totally dependent on the people for sustenance and the sacrifices that the priest performed. This interdependency would act as a check against aggrandizing power.

The prophets, who claimed to represent God, had no institutional support. This seems to be yet another example of checks and balances. God’s representative stands alone and must depend on persuasion and the power of his word. The prophet cannot back up his claims with physical force.

Finally, one important primary source for understanding authority has not been included in this otherwise comprehensive volume. That source is Jewish liturgy, which contains not only a model for authority-constituent relationships but an active consent exercise that illustrates the engagement of people in governance. Jewish liturgy continues to be utilized. Liturgy provides a political vision of governance. The constituency is actually engaged in proclaiming its consent. Hence, its placement in the context of Jewish political tradition needs to be examined.

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Originally published in Hebrew under the title Shafrir Mitzrayim (Tel Aviv, 1995), this thoroughly researched monograph, based on some 800 documents from the Cairo Genizah, illuminates an obscure and overlooked chapter in the history of the Jewish communities that flourished in the medieval Islamic world. As the author notes in her foreword, previous studies of Jewish leadership in Muslim lands have discounted the importance of local political activity, emphasizing instead the dominant role of the central authorities, that is, the Exilarchate and the yeshivot of Babylonia and Palestine. Bareket takes up the question of local leadership by focusing on the careers of nine individuals who headed the Palestinian and Babylonian congregations in Fustat’s Jewish community during the first half of the eleventh century. While these leaders formally recognized the sovereignty of the central authorities, they nevertheless exercised considerable autonomy, establishing in Fustat a local school (midrash) for Torah study, issuing their own responsa, imposing bans, and corresponding with Jewish leaders outside of Egypt.

Bareket’s decision to concentrate on the first half of the eleventh century is
significant. The later decline of the Palestinian yeshiva as a result of internal struggles, followed by its relocation to Tyre after the Seljuk conquest of Jerusalem (summer of 1073), has been viewed as a critical antecedent to the emergence of a fully mature local leadership in Egypt. Barek’s findings, however, indicate that a strong tradition of local rule was found in Fustat even before the Palestinian yeshiva’s grip on Egypt was loosened. Furthermore, beginning at a time when the Palestinian yeshiva’s authority was still strong allows her to challenge the view that the Palestinian geonim were uniformly opposed to such manifestations of autonomy by local leaders.

The first two chapters examine the Jewish community of Fustat following the Fatimid conquest of Egypt in 969. In the first, Bareket demonstrates sensitivity to the vibrance of local political life with her description of Fustat’s complex Jewish population, which comprised numerous smaller groups and factions (Palestinians, Babylonians, Maghrebis, Karaites, etc.). These overlapping loyalties form the crucial demographic backdrop against which the occasionally erratic behavior of Fustat’s congregational leaders must be evaluated. Bareket’s subsequent discussion of the community institutions illustrates the broad range of responsibilities that fell to Fustat’s leaders, as well as the various opportunities for independent action open to them. Perhaps the most important of these institutions was the local court, through which the heads of Fustat’s Jewish community exercised considerable independence in religious and political matters.

Chapter Three introduces the biographical sketches that close out the book. Bareket demonstrates that Fustat’s local leaders were exceptional individuals who brought to their posts experience, wealth, and a network of family connections. They were also learned: all of her subjects composed piyyut, and many wrote commentaries on sections of the Bible and the Talmud. Bareket contends that their control over the local Jewish population, and over Egyptian Jewry generally, was far more centralized than has been recognized. Thus she convincingly argues, contra the earlier view, that Fustat’s Palestinian and Babylonian congregations constituted a single, unified rabbanite Jewish community. A number of the congregational leaders—Babylonians Shemarya ben Elhanan and Elhanan ben Shemarya and the Palestinian Ephraim ben Shemarya—appear also to have headed up this united rabbanite community. Moreover, at the height of Ephraim ben Shemarya’s career (1040s) even important Egyptian cities like Alexandria acknowledged the pre-eminence of Fustat and its leader. Bareket shows that a few of these leaders were also in close touch with Jewish communities outside of Egypt. Elhanan ben Shemarya, for example, visited numerous towns in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq, renewing contacts with supporters and cultivating his image as a regional figure. Bareket insists, however, that despite their extensive authority, none of these individuals intended to undermine the Palestinian yeshiva; they remained loyal to the institution and its geonim.

The English translation is at times clumsy, and, unfortunately, also lacks the judicious selection of skillfully edited primary documents that accompanies the Hebrew text. Nevertheless, the book’s appearance in English is an auspicious sign that scholarship on the documentary materials from the Cairo Genizah has found
a wider audience among historians. It is to be hoped that the burst of interest in the Genizah witnessed in recent years will carry this trend further.

The emergence in Muslim lands of local Jewish leadership has long been associated with the decline of the Exilarchate and the yeshivot of Babylonia and Palestine. *Fustat on the Nile* compellingly argues that a precedent for local political leadership existed even as these institutions experienced renewed vigor during the first decades of the eleventh century. It is a point both well-taken and sure to stimulate further research.

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This book is, without a doubt, a major contribution in the field of Judeo-Persian Studies. Judeo-Persian literature, which extends for about eight centuries, has been severely neglected except for the work of a small number of scholars. There are only four scholars in the United States who have dealt with any aspect of this field, and not many more elsewhere. The existing Judeo-Persian texts are a vast collection of all sorts of material and deserve much more attention. Vera Basch Moreen has made a great step forward by providing translation of a wide variety of literary texts. Especially valuable are her commentaries, explanations, and bibliography.

Jews who have lived in Iran, Afghanistan, and Central Asia and for whom Persian is their spoken language have, until fairly recently, been able to read and write the language only in the Hebrew alphabet and not in Arabic script. It is clear, however, from the varied Judeo-Persian texts in this book and in others that Jews must have heard Persian poetry recited in public and have had many texts read to them. The texts represented in this book are a clear indication of their generally detailed familiarity with non-Jewish texts. Moreen’s commentary and footnotes make this abundantly clear.


Moreen’s translations are masterful and accurate. Her notes and commentary are especially useful and provide enormously interesting information on Islamic, historical, and all sorts of textual background and information. Just reading through the footnotes and other explanations gives the reader fascinating information on the cultural context of the Persian world in various periods.
In going through the pages of this remarkable book, I am reminded that in 1973, Amnon Netzer published in Tehran an anthology of Judeo-Persian poetry transcribed into Arabic script. Soon after the book appeared, a review written by a very prominent Tehran University professor of Persian literature was published in a literary journal in Tehran. “Here is an anthology of Judeo-Persian poetry of almost 1000 years, of which we have known nothing,” he began. He then praised the book and marveled at the nature of the texts provided in the anthology.

Vera Moreen’s book, too, is truly to be welcomed as a most useful source for this marvelous but relatively unknown Jewish literature. Perhaps it will spark an upsurge of interest and research in this field.

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During the past two decades, many important works have been published—mostly by Israeli scholars—on virtually every aspect of Hasidism. The writings of David Assaf, Rachel Elior, Zeev Gries, Moshe Idel, Gedalia Nigal, Ada Rapaport-Albert, and Moshe Rosman, to name only the most prominent contemporary scholars of Hasidism, range from sweeping critical re-evaluations of earlier Hasidic historiography and theology to close studies of major sects within the Hasidic movement. In the course of this outpouring of Hasidic scholarship, the pioneering work of Scholem and his disciples has been demolished and rehabilitated several times over. Beyond even more detailed studies of later and minor Hasidic sects, it would have seemed, at this late date, that there was little left to add to the discussion of the origins and theology of classical, or “Beshtian,” Hasidism. Thus the appearance, in the year 2000, of a new book by Immanuel Etkes dedicated to the “Founder of Hasidism,” R. Israel Baal Shem Tov, could hardly be greeted without the question with which the author himself begins his introduction: “Why another book on the Besht? What can this book hope to add to all that has already been written and published on this topic?” (p. 9).

The answers that Etkes’ new study of the Besht provides to these self-imposed questions are, as it turns out, both substantial and rewarding. While *Baal Ha-Shem: Ha-Besht—Magiah, Mistikah, Hanhagah* does include much material with which Etkes has already dealt in previously published articles and reviews, the book presents a clear, comprehensive and delicately balanced overview of the earlier scholarship—in itself not an easy task—as well as the author’s own compelling view of the “historical” Baal Shem Tov. Among the key questions that Etkes addresses are: (1) What can we know about the Besht based on the limited primary source material available, and (2) how are we to evaluate the Besht’s disputed role in the emergence of the Hasidic movement in the decades immediately fol-
following his death? Etkes notes that he had already begun his research on the Besht before the appearance of Moshe Rosman’s groundbreaking book, *Founder of Hasidism: A Quest for the Historical Baal Shem Tov*¹, and indicates that it was his sharp disagreement with many of Rosman’s methodological assumptions about the unreliability of Hasidic sources (mainly the Shivhei Ha-Besht), as well as his conclusions about the Besht’s place in history, that stirred him to complete his work (p. 13; see also Etkes’ detailed critique of Rosman’s book on pp. 245–249).

One of Etkes’ strengths as an intellectual historian is his ability to use his erudition to clarify rather than obfuscate complex matters that have long been mired in scholarly dispute. In reviewing the mass of previous scholarship on the Besht and early Hasidism, he paves a clear path through the thicket of books and articles that have sprouted in recent years. His conclusions are not only well argued and meticulously rooted in a sober analysis of the sources; they are, for the most part, very compelling.

The first chapter (“*Magiah U-Vaalei Shem Be-Yamav Shel Ha-Besht*”), in many ways the most original part of the book, examines in rich detail the development in seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century East European Jewish society of an elaborate culture of folk-superstition rooted in the fear of the tangible evil and demonic forces at work in the world. The most significant aspect of the widespread superstitious beliefs of the Jewish masses in the forces of evil, for our understanding of the life of the Besht and the subsequent emergence of Hasidic leadership, was the important place it allowed for the emergence of a new class of religious professionals in Polish Jewish society, the *Baal Shem*. Etkes analyzes a rich selection of primary texts that document the activities of these Jewish magicians and healers, focusing in particular on the career of R. Joel Baal Shem who, in many ways, typified the pre-Beshtian model (pp. 41–51). He shows that by the middle of the eighteenth century, Baal Shemism had become a surprisingly well-defined profession, characterized by magical practices consisting mainly of a variety of exorcisms directed at combating an array of evil forces that had taken root in individuals, properties, and sometimes entire communities. What is most striking about the work of the *Baal Shem*—and what differentiates it from the path later taken by the Besht—was its self-imposed limitations. These men were, essentially, contractors who responded to calls for their services to heal individuals of demonic possession or to cleanse homes that had become haunted by hitsonim, or the forces of evil. They had a limited repertoire of tricks, the most common of which were the writing of *kamei’ot* (amulets); prescription of *lehashim* (magical incantations); and performance of *segulot* (voodoo-like ceremonies) directed at combating the various agents of the *Sitra Ahra*, or .

In Chapter Two (“*Yisrael Baal Shem*”), Etkes describes the ways in which the Besht conformed to the earlier model of the Baal Shem and, more significantly, how he expanded that role and broke with its self-imposed limitations. While he, like R. Joel, responded to individual calls for exorcism, the Besht had a far grander perception of his role and powers. Thus, the Besht addressed issues of much broader communal concern than his predecessors, reflecting his own self-

¹ Berkeley, 1996.
assessment as the spiritual leader—though never chosen or formally appointed by any Jewish community—of the entire Jewish people. One of the striking features of the Besht’s personality that emerges here is his astonishing grandiosity, boastfulness regarding his supernatural powers, and arrogant sense of superiority vis-à-vis other rabbis and Baalei Shem. The Besht harbored absolutely no self-doubt when it came to his divine calling to minister to East European Jewry as a whole or his powers to fulfill that formidable mission.

Among the major problems facing the Jewish communities of the Ukraine during the Besht’s lifetime were violent anti-Semitic persecutions by the Haidameks, the economic crisis that faced many Jewish leaseholders of Polish estates, and the declining standards of shehitah. Skillfully using the Hasidic sources that he deems reliable, most notably Sefer Shivhei Ha-Besht, Etkes demonstrates in Chapter Three (“Manhig Shel Klal Yisrael”) how the Besht uniquely addressed these major communal concerns. In addition to extending his mandate beyond responding to calls from individuals desiring the benefits of his magical services, the Besht also used mystical prayer and ecstatic experiences (most notably heavenly ascents) to solve problems tackled by earlier Baalei Shem through a more limited repertoire of magical techniques.

Having established the Besht’s boldness and self-confidence as a Baal Shem and his expansive vision of both his mystical powers and communal mission, Etkes goes on in Chapter Four (“He-Besht Ke-Mistikan U-Vaal Besorah Be-Avodat Ha-Shem) to re-visit in impressive detail his innovations as a mystic. While, as Etkes points out, there have been many fine studies of early Hasidic mysticism—mostly by Scholem’s disciples, such as Rivka Shatz and Joseph Weiss—none have focused exclusively on the teachings of the Besht himself. What we know of “Beshtian” Hasidism is mostly gleaned through the writings of key disciples such as the Maggid of Mezeritch and R. Jacob Joseph of Polnoe, thus, the Besht’s own originality as a mystic is lost in the forest of their writings (p. 128). Etkes points to several key elements of the Besht’s mystical theology that later became salient features of Hasidism. Most important among them is his deep faith in the absolute immanence of God in the material universe, out of which flowed the Besht’s denial of tangible reality to evil and his rejection of ascetic religious practice. And, Etkes insists, unlike many earlier Kabbalists, the Besht’s mysticism grew out of his life experience:

It seems to me that it was the Besht who cleared the path for the revolutionary conception of Divine immanence in Hasidism. Moreover, it would seem that this new conception did not emerge from the perplexities of a theoretician bound by the four cubits of theosophical speculation, but that it reflects the actual mystical experience enjoyed by the Besht (p. 146).

The final chapter of this fine book (“Sefer Shivhei Ha-Besht Ke-Makor Histori”) deals with methodological questions about Etkes’ sources for reconstructing the life of the Besht, most importantly, the degree to which the historian can rely on the tales in Shivhei Ha-Besht. Etkes here expands on his devastating review of Rosman’s aforementioned book (“Ha-Besht Ha-Histori: Beyn Rekonstruktsia Le-Dekonstruktsia” Tarbiz, 66 [1997]: pp. 425–42), in which he compellingly argued
that one need not believe in the truth of the details of these tales in order to accept their authenticity and value as sources for understanding the life and times of the Besht and his impact on the subsequent development of Hasidism. Etkes demonstrates how these tales can be parsed and used analytically to great advantage by the historian who is sensitive to their linguistic and theological nuances.

There are times when Etkes’ study slips into a somewhat pedantic reading of seminal Beshtian texts that have already been overanalyzed by scholars of Hasidism. One conspicuous example of such excess is his exhaustive treatment of the famous letter of the Besht to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov. At the end of his thirteen-page discussion (pp. 88–100) of this already overworked text, Etkes has not added much to its understanding, beyond elaborating upon Scholem’s denial that it bears an urgent messianic message. Then again, Etkes certainly succeeds in presenting a convincing case—Scholem’s many subsequent interlocutors notwithstanding—that the Besht did not see himself as a messianic figure at all. Quite the contrary, his entire calling was based on the struggle with an unredeemed world, and the conversation with the Messiah during his ascent of soul showed clearly that messianic redemption was not expected by the Besht in his own lifetime.

However thorough and clear the picture of the Besht that emerges from this book, he remains one of Jewish history’s most clouded figures. Even for those who accept all of his methodological assumptions and historical conclusions, Etkes’ book raises new ambiguities and paradoxes. I shall deal with two of the most conspicuous examples.

First, central to Etkes’ argument about the Besht’s originality as a mystic was his denial of any reality to evil forces that had hitherto been confronted with utmost seriousness by Kabbalists and by Baalei Shem. Yet, in his discussion of the Besht’s practice of Baalshemism, Etkes recounts several tales in which the Besht seems indeed to take demonic forces with utter seriousness, including one case in which he deals with a rather cute couple of hitsonim who had been conceived and born in a synagogue as the result of an arrogant baritone Hazzan’s vanity during prayer. At the end of the day, sensing the need to get them out of the shul, the Besht finds them alternate housing near a deserted well (pp. 59–60). It is unclear how to reconcile such accounts of the Besht’s engagement with hitsonim with his denial of the reality to netherworldly and evil forces at work in the world.

Second, throughout the book, particularly in the long chapter on the Besht’s “circle,” Etkes presses the point that the Besht consciously and deliberately cultivated a group of followers who were meant to continue his work, thus spawning the Hasidic movement. At the same time, Etkes demonstrates clearly that the Besht was possessed of a belief in his uniqueness, suggesting the impossibility of any competent spiritual heirs. In fact, Etkes devotes a long discussion to what he terms the Besht’s bił’adiyut, or total singularity, as a mystic and Baal Shem (pp. 78–87), but he never quite resolves the inherent tension between that self-perception and the Besht’s allegedly self-conscious role as the harbinger, if not the direct founder, of the Hasidic movement.

These problems notwithstanding, Immanuel Etkes has produced a major, highly erudite re-evaluation of the Besht that both clarifies and clearly contextu-
alizes the work of many earlier scholars, and as well presents a well-documented and deeply learned portrait of the still-mysterious Israel Baal Shem Tov. This book is essential reading for those working in the field of East European Judaism, as well as for anyone interested in the origins and early history of Hasidism.

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When Daniel Swetschinski’s dissertation appeared in 1980, it immediately became an indispensable work. It was a wide-ranging, clearly-ordered synthesis of scholarship on the Portuguese—Jewish community of Amsterdam in the seventeenth-century, incorporating some important original research. It surveyed the community’s legal, demographic, economic, and institutional history, with a brief chapter on certain aspects of its cultural life. Its most original contribution was a detailed study of demographic data gleaned from the Amsterdam puyboecken, the municipal registers of intended marriages. On the basis of these records, Swetschinski charted in detail the immigration to Amsterdam of ex-conversos with origins in the Iberian Peninsula. His examination of the community’s institutional life relied to a considerable extent on existing studies in Dutch, but also incorporated his own archival work, and it raised important questions about the structure of the community. Moreover, at a time when this was the exception rather than the rule, it dealt with the Portuguese Jews in an unsentimental, unromanticized fashion. The dissertation was far from exhaustive—a task beyond the reach of any young scholar—but it was a valuable contribution to Jewish communal history.

Reluctant Cosmopolitans draws heavily in structure and contents from this dissertation. To be sure, the book reflects an effort to rethink and update, but it is not a new work, and does not seriously take into account the scholarship of the last two decades. This is not entirely apparent from the bibliography, which lists important recent works, however, in the text itself, Swetschinski tends to draw on these works (if at all) only vaguely, and without attribution.

The core of Chapter Two, an examination of immigration to Amsterdam, is
Swetschinski’s study of the *puyboeken*—a painstaking and valuable piece of research. But here, as elsewhere, in the book, the failure to use a wider range of sources leads to problems of interpretation. For example, Swetschinski infers—though he has no data on unmarried men and women—that there was a shortage of marriageable women in the early community, and concludes that the *Dotar* dowry society was established “for the specific purpose” of furthering the migration of single women to remedy the imbalance (pp. 85–88, 100, 180). However, a look at the *Dotar* records—not to mention existing research—would have shown that the society was not designed to do this, nor did it further such an aim. Of the 68 young women who received dowries in the first twenty-five years of the society’s existence, 38 were already living in the Amsterdam/Hamburg area. Only a very few of the other 30 migrated to Amsterdam, if they migrated at all. (At least one recipient migrated *out* of Amsterdam, to Izmir). When data is so abundant, it is risky to draw conclusions based on inferences.

Chapters Three through Six deal with topics that have been studied extensively by a handful of competent scholars in the last two decades: Portuguese-Jewish commerce, the institutional history of the community, conflict within the community, and Portuguese-Jewish cultural formation, respectively. The author makes some use of notarial and communal records, and wide use of indispensable older secondary works, but without a persuasive new perspective or an attempt to integrate new research and/or secondary literature, these chapters are of limited value.

Especially problematic is the somewhat bewildering Conclusion, which deals with issues of identity, ethnicity, and memory. Here, Swetschinski chooses to locate his own thinking in relation to that of other scholars—or rather, of an unlikely few. I hope it does not detract from the respect due to Carl Gebhardt (*Die Schriften des Uriel da Costa*, 1922) and Yitzhak Baer (*Galut*, 1936) to point out that their work has long been superseded on such matters. In any case, Swetschinski’s conclusion, rather than providing a satisfying ending to the book, seems a half-hearted attempt to move into a new arena in which he is not very comfortable.

There are occasional misstatements that suggest an uncertain grasp, or that may simply be careless generalizations. Let me mention a few. It was not “to interrogate [the] converts” that the Inquisition was established (p. 4). Amsterdam’s Portuguese Jews were surely not “the first Jews to create a significant body of religious and secular literature” (p. 5). The knowledge of “matters religious” among *conversos* in the Peninsula cannot be characterized as “probably perfunctory across the board,” nor does it make sense to cite Jean-Pierre Dedieu in support of such a generalization (p. 174 n. 26). Moses Mendelssohn was far too sophisticated to have regarded the Portuguese Jews collectively as “in some sense exemplary” (p. 318, and cf. p. 316; no sources cited).

Swetschinski does not explicitly refer to his book as a social history, though he strongly suggests it belongs in that category (pp. 5, 271). It would better be described as communal history, a venerable genre in Jewish historiography. To do him justice, Swetschinski offers occasional glimpses of his ability to use archival data imaginatively to illuminate social life. He uses the *puyboecken*, for example, to obtain figures on female illiteracy (p. 89); he tells a story of *richesse oblige* with
his data on refusal to serve on the Mahamad, and its penalties (pp. 192–94); he extracts from the puyboecken and notarial records indirect evidence about Sabbath observance (pp. 215–16). But we have still seen only the tip of the iceberg, and the archives await.

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This is a fine book, one which constructs its tasks with seriousness and depth. Grossman’s book is all about the place of Yiddish in German cultural and intellectual contexts. The shortcomings are more a product of the limitations of the discipline than of the author.

The introductory chapter “The Return of Yiddish and Other Considerations” sets the parameters for the book. Grossman begins by noting the “current vogue” interest in Yiddish and seeks to put this into cultural context. This is followed by a statement of his general theoretical approach to “discourse,” and his specific task:

to relate the presentation of Yiddish . . . to various fields of knowledge (such as language, philosophy, linguistics, and Jewish history, literary forms . . . ) and to ideologies of German and Jewish culture, conceptions of peoples, nations, and national language and to various strategies resorted to . . . for controlling the image of Yiddish” (p. 5).

Chapter One, “Herder, Humboldt, and the Language of Diaspora Jews,” is a well-organized discussion of German Enlightenment views concerning language, Jews, and Jews’ language. Chapter Two, “Yiddish and the Invention of the German Jew,” discusses Jewish discourse on language and culture within the new paradigms. This chapter includes detailed discussion of Moses Mendelssohn and of the individuals and writings associated with the Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden (founded 1819). Grossman provides valuable discussion of the scholarly agenda set by Zunz and others, for example, of Zunz’ efforts to set the terms for “Re-defining the Canon of Jewish literature” (pp. 101–108). Chapter Three, “Language and Control: The Pedagogy and Performance of Yiddish in Linguistic and Theatrical Literature,” deals with the rise of German studies of Yid-

dish language and the portrayal of Yiddish in German theater. Grossman’s discussion of German interest in the study of Yiddish, while helpful, is not new; much derives from known Yiddish scholarship. However, Grossman’s lengthy discussion on the portrayal of Yiddish in German theatrical literature is valuable in two significant ways. First, he presents data and analysis. Second, he goes beyond much German-centered scholarship by systematically distinguishing between Yiddish and Yiddish-influenced German, and between the (German) portrayal of Yiddish and Yiddish itself.

Chapter Four, “The Threat to German Culture: The Function of Yiddish in German Realism after 1848,” discusses historical, cultural, and economic developments in the nineteenth century and provides detailed case-study and analysis of Freytag’s Soll und Haben (1855), Raabe’s Hungerpastor (1864), and Franzos’ works. Grossman’s comparative analysis of these works, authors, and times is nuanced and solid. A concluding chapter, “Beyond the Nineteenth-Century View of Yiddish,” brings discussion up to the present, including the rise of a German-Jewish “Re-discovery of Yiddish”; a run-through of current approaches to nation, nationalism, and culture; and an appeal for mutual respect among diverse groups in the modern world.

Grossman’s book presents a full, multi-faceted treatment of precisely what he sets out to examine: the “role” of Yiddish in German contexts. Grossman appropriately subjects issues, ideological positions, and data to critical scrutiny. What is missing, however, is a sense of a Jewish internal dynamic, outside the German context. In this Jewish dynamic, Jews may contextualize, react to, or modify their views about, or use of, Yiddish, Hebrew, and indeed even German, on Jewish terms. To be sure, the Jewish internal dynamic interacts with external forces; however, a recognition of (Jewish) agency all too often receives short shrift in German-centered scholarship dealing with Yiddish. To his credit, Grossman uses significantly more primary Yiddish scholarship than is the norm in Germanistic scholarship. Scholarship in one discipline typically reduces and simplifies when incorporating the scholarship of another. Still, it is problematic to this reviewer (writing from the perspective of Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies) that Germanistic scholarship dealing with the rise of modern European Jewry typically focuses on the same limited cast of Jewish figures (Mendelssohn, Friedländer, Lewald, Heine). Clearly, Enlightenment (both Aufklärung and Haskala/Haskole) and post-Enlightenment debates about the nature of language, culture, and nation are part of a European elite discourse of the times; thus, the same cast of Jewish figures will repeatedly surface in academic discussion. However, it would be useful to provide a basic mapping of the Jewish-internal intellectual


landscape of the times as well, where, for example, Mendelssohn’s views are put into (Jewish-internal) context vis-à-vis those of the Khasam-Soyfer (1762–1839), a contemporaneous advocate for Yiddish. Grossman uses Sorkin’s term “invisible, Jewish subculture in Germany.” It must be asked: invisible on whose radar screen? Finally, Grossman rightly holds many issues up to critical light, yet he leaves unproblematized his use of Haskala, mitzvot, etc. (vs. Ashkenazic pronunciation Haskole, mitsves, etc.). The issue is not that Grossman uses forms reflecting modern Ivrit. Rather, what is lacking is some overt contextualization concerning the use of one Hebrew model over the other. Grossman could, for example, merely declare that the canonized forms in English are borrowed from Ivrit. In a book that deals so finely with issues of nuance and perspective, some statement is necessary.

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With America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism, Gulie Ne’eman Arad has placed the American Jewish response to the rise of Nazism within its political and social context, thereby making an important contribution to the growing literature that seeks to historicize America’s relationship to the Holocaust.

At first glance, the book seems to exonerate American Jews from the charge that they did not do enough to save European Jewry. In her tightly argued introduction, Arad offers a corrective to some of the commonplace assumptions about the American Jewish reaction to Hitler. She challenges, for example, assumptions that “exceptional circumstances will elicit exceptional responses” (p. 3), and that responses should be measured by the extent of the victims’ needs rather than by the bystanders’ means to intervene effectively. She argues that critics of American Jewry have ignored the political context that severely limited its ability to act.

In the end, however, American Jewry does not come across particularly well in Arad’s rendering. For the most part she agrees that Jewish leaders failed to react appropriately to the growing crisis, but that the untenable condition of modern Diaspora Jewry made it impossible for them to do so. American Jewry is thus guilty as charged of inaction, but must be excused because of its inherent disability.


In order to understand American Jews’ actions in the 1930s, Arad argues, it is necessary to understand their political history going back to the 1840s. Beginning with the Damascus Affair, she concentrates on instances in which American Jews attempted to influence U.S. foreign policy, rightly pointing out the limits of ethnic group power. Most importantly, while the United States always willingly accepted members of white minority groups into the polity as individuals, it was generally hostile to group claims.

Arad sometimes overstates her case. She portrays the Jewish experience in America as an ordeal of persistent anti-Semitism. She argues that Jew-hatred first cropped up in the mid-nineteenth century and grew steadily stronger from then on. By the interwar period American Jews were in no shape to react effectively to events in Germany. Not only was the community in a “profound mood of disarray” (p. 72) at the end of World War I, but the condition of “statelessness” had had a “profound effect” on the “collective Jewish psyche” (p. 58), inducing an attitude of deference toward the state and a fetish for citizenship. Because American Jews recognized their own precarious position as citizens, they were seldom willing to rock the boat. Because they had internalized many anti-Semitic stereotypes, they were afraid to engage in activities that seemed to bear out those stereotypes. But if “for many American Jews, the first thirty years of the century were the painful unraveling of a dream” (p. 69), things only got worse in the 1930s.

Not surprisingly, the American Jewish response to the rise of Nazism was insufficient. For a variety of reasons, communal leaders at first downplayed the threat posed by Hitler. When events in Germany finally made American Jews face up to their own illusions, some turned to Zionism, and others to despair, but most chose to emphasize the principle of universalism. Arad argues that, ironically, the presence of unprecedented numbers of Jews in influential positions within the Roosevelt administration contributed not to Jewish power, but to the cooptation of the Jewish leadership. By the late 1930s, after a series of unsuccessful struggles over immigration policy, Jews were in a “state of existential turmoil” and their leaders were “paralyzed” with fear over the “terrifying” mood in the country (pp. 203, 205). In any case, Arad argues, there was little that American Jews could really do to help their European counterparts. The unfortunate truth was that they were right to see the unhelpful Roosevelt as their only political hope.

America, Its Jews, and the Rise of Nazism focuses primarily on a relatively small cohort of important communal leaders in the American Jewish Committee and the American Jewish Congress (mainly Stephen Wise), as well as on Jewish advisors to the president like Felix Frankfurter and Louis D. Brandeis. She seldom discusses Jewish mass politics, except as it occasionally served to pressure Rabbi Wise to take more vigorous action. Indeed, there is little discussion of the public actions that American Jews did take. Frequent mass rallies in Madison Square Garden, for example, are mentioned mainly for the anxiety that they elicited in some sectors of the Jewish community.

Gulie Ne’eman Arad has made an important contribution by opening the discussion of how the prewar political and social context influenced the American Jewish response to the rise of Nazism. Arad is right that the vastly changed ethnic political climate of recent decades provides a faulty lens through which to view
the actions of the prewar generation. Clearly, as Arad argues, there is room for still more studies on the American relationship to the Holocaust.

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Marc Gopin believes that religion can play an important role in forming a global society committed to peace and moral principles. He bases his belief on the fact that in most religions there is a “commitment to peace and elimination of violence” (p. 30) expressed in a broad range of values. Through the “internal hermeneutic dynamics of the tradition” (p. 60)—that is, through a textual investigation of how traditions have changed—he believes that Muslims, Christians, Jews, and others can contribute to promoting peace.

Although Gopin deals with other religious traditions, I will concentrate on the relationship between Judaism and Islam. Gopin argues that there is a common denominator in the literature of Islam and Judaism that could result in a resolution of the Middle East conflict. He shows that in the course of centuries of legal and religious reflection, in both traditions, there are trends that emphasize alternatives to conflict and promotion of ethical values related to “coexistence, peacemaking, and even pacifism” (pp. 66–67).

As Gopin points out, in classical Jewish literature there is a tension between the pursuit of peace and of war. In the books of Deuteronomy and Kings, the Mishnah, the Talmud, and Rabbinic literature, there is permission and even the requirement to go to war, although the first preference is “when coming close to a city to fight you have to call for peace” (Dt. 20:10). Commandments to the Hebrew people not to make alliances with the nations in their midst nor to allow a soul among them to live (Dt. 7:1–5, 20, 15–18) were in reality not fulfilled and indeed were negated in the Talmudic literature.

In a similar vein, Gopin suggests, later sources in Islam modify the original conceptions of war and peace. “The Quranic uses of the term Jihad are only the first level of analysis of the Islamic approach to war. There are later distinctions between state Jihad and religious Jihad,” he writes (p. 66).

However, Gopin’s discussion of traditional and contemporary Muslim thought is not supported by other modern scholars. Several examples that are particularly relevant to the Arab-Israel conflict contradict Gopin’s ideal of a symmetry between Judaism and Islam.

In eight of its chapters, the Koran enjoins the faithful to follow the path of Jihad, the aim of which is to bring the world under Islamic control. Ibn Taymiyyah, a jurist and philosopher of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, described a world divided into two parts, *Dar al–Harb*, the territory of war, and *Dar al–Islam*,
the already conquered territory of Islam. In November 1914, the Ottoman Empire used Ibn Taymiyah’s views on Jihad in a religious ruling in order to justify the war.

Similarly, the Mufti and leader of Palestine during the 1930–1940s used Jihad not just as an expression of religious intolerance, but also to justify political terrorism. Likewise, Sheikh Al-Rukabi of twentieth-century Damascus connects Jihad to national liberation movements. Both al-Husseini and al-Rukabi used the term Jihad to describe war against the “Zionist entity” in Palestine, making resistance against Israel therefore obligatory for Muslims everywhere. Their Syrian contemporary, Muhammad al-Bayuti, follows the four legal schools, emphasizing that the purpose of Islamic sovereignty is to turn the land to Dar al-Islam, whether its inhabitants are Muslims or not. Palestine under the control of Jews is Dar al-Kufr, the land of the infidel; therefore Muslims have an obligation to release it from the hands of its “occupiers.”

Sheikh Ekrima Sabri, the present Mufti of Jerusalem, said three years ago in an interview that Muslims embrace death while Israel is a selfish society that loves life, and they are not people who are eager to die for their country and their God. He added that Jews will leave this land rather than die, but the Muslim is happy to die.

So it would seem that in Islam, unlike in Judaism, the issue of war and peace is almost monolithic, directed toward making the whole world Dar al-Islam. Mainstream Islam does not support coexistence with non-Muslim countries, although Islamic governments have historically tolerated foreign communities in their midst so long as their members behaved as subordinates, paying taxes in exchange for the opportunity to follow their religious laws, maintain communal autonomy, and enjoy property rights.

Gopin’s analysis of Israeli internal unity and search for ways to solve conflicts is comprehensive. Certainly it is true that “creating a climate and a future vision which is not violent . . . can be done only by creating a nonviolent vision on both sides” (p. 209). This is difficult to accomplish, however, when Islamic religious parties base their legitimacy on religious concepts such as Jihad, Dar al-Islam, and Dar al-Harb.

Using religion as a main means of solving conflicts also poses the risk that leaders will interpret their sacred literature in ways that leave little room for compromise. After Camp David, Hani al-Hasan, a major figure in the Fatah group ob-

2. Fregosi, 409.
served: “Barak’s mistake was to focus on Jerusalem as a religious issue. The roots of the Fatah are in the Muslim Brethren. From the beginning they were debating whether to fight a religious war or to fight as a national liberation movement. We have chosen to act as a national liberation movement because it allows us to accomplish compromise, but as soon as the issue of Jerusalem became religious we cannot leave al-Akza.”

Despite the reservations expressed here, Gopin’s book and its suggestions and challenges illuminate significant initiatives and thoughts to be pursued in the near future.

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The post-Zionist perspective is a commonplace in political and social discourse these days, and with this book it seeks to ensconce itself in the literary domain. Sidra Ezrahi, who teaches at the Hebrew University, situates herself here in an existential stance antipodal to Yehuda Halevy’s: her heart is in the West even as she sits at the edge of the East. Manifestly Ezrahi, in readings of nine writers and poets, has constructed a literary triptych that seeks to rationalize the post-Zionist moment and narrative. What it boils down to is a book that is essentially a detailed gloss, in literary terms, on one of the seminal articulations of Diasporism as the anodyne to the moral ambiguities of political Zionism: George Steiner’s 1985 essay “Our Homeland, the Text.”

The basic question out of which the book proceeds is “how the reacquisition of the spatial dimension has affected the Jewish literary imagination in the twentieth century . . . “ (p. 19) What Ezrahi means is: What happens when secular Zionism precipitates an apparent Jewish eschalon by re-establishing Jewish sovereignty in the ancestral homeland, and a place that over the millennia was idealized and romanticized becomes an accessible, conflict-ridden reality? Ezrahi studies this question in literary terms, examining it under the twin rubrics of “Jewish journeys” and “Jewish geographies.”

Jewish journeys, i.e., fictional travel narratives, are treated longitudinally. Four are discussed. Though poetry and not prose, Halevy’s “Songs of Zion” constitute for Ezrahi “the earliest and most enduring model” of “the tensions between desire and fulfillment as they begin to play themselves out in a poetics of exile and return” (p. 38). Mendele’s *Travels of Benjamin the Third*, a latter day Jewish *Don Quixote*, parodies, in Ezrahi’s reading, the Zionist project of repatriation. Ben-

jamin’s “ultimate return to his point of origin thus is as much a return to the logo-centric culture of the European Diaspora as it is an eschewal of political activism or religious messianism” (p. 66). Agnon’s In The Heart of the Seas becomes, by default, the ur-text of which Benjamin the Third is the parody, or the epic that the earlier work mocks” (p. 89). “It does more than explicitly perform the master narrative of the Zionist century, for it proceeds by incorporating and superseding its own subversive subtexts” (p. 102). Sholem Aleichem’s Motl the Cantor’s Son exemplifies a permutation of the Jewish travel narrative into a “third, non-epic model” where the journey arrives not in Zion or Galut but, quite simply, in Diaspora (p. 103). Ezrahi insightfully connects this narrative to such seemingly disparate works as Kafka’s Amerika and Kazin’s A Walker in the City.

In “Jewish geographies” Ezrahi reprises her long-standing engagement with the Holocaust by studying modalities of literary responses to the destruction of the East European Jewish cultural homeland. Here she proceeds latitudinally, noting that “over the last fifty years, what was destroyed has become an authentic original that can be represented but not recovered” (p. 138). And so we see in the late-twentieth-century writers she studies—Celan, Pagis, Appelfeld, I.B. Singer, and Philip Roth—the same process of disengagement and separation from the holy sites, and then of substitution, reinvention, and mimesis, that evolved in the centuries following the destruction of ancient Jerusalem. Although the streets of Lodz are not sanctified in collective memory as were the hills of Zion, they became accessible to pilgrimages real and imagined, ritual and literary, as an unredeemable and indestructible ruin (p. 139).

Space prevents me from outlining the details of the readings. Suffice it to say that in doing them, Ezrahi makes good on the warning she issues in the very first sentence of her introduction: “This book . . . has a tendency . . . to wander off.” The discussions pick up and incorporate a diffuse surplus of issues, narratological and cultural, and everywhere show that Ezrahi is not only at home in the various western Jewish literary traditions, but that she has read enormously on each of the figures and subjects she treats. If anything, she has read too much, or she has used too much of what she has read. At times supporting material from other critics and sources tends to overwhelm and drown out her own voice.

Stylistically the writing is often given to turgid abstractions, as in:

What Philip Roth’s late fiction suggests is less a cultural revolution than a reconfiguration, from within the American purview, of the dichotomy between ‘original’ and ‘imitative’ space—between place designated as real, and therefore nonnegotiable, and places designated as spots on blueprints that are infinitely negotiable. It is Diaspora as polemic option and aesthetic process rather than as a cultural canon or a ‘way of life’ that I want to consider here (p. 222–223).

Come again?
There are, however, more fundamental problems. To really appreciate what
Ezrahi is trying to do with a given writer the reader would have to have read all the works she discusses, and in the original, even though the texts are cited in her English renderings. Further, I question her method of showcasing one work from an author’s corpus that is congenial to her larger thesis rather than seeing that work in the context of the whole corpus, especially when the corpus in its totality serves to qualify and even subvert what she is holding up from the one work.1 The effect is to place the works and writers she discusses into a Procrustean bed. The selection of writers discussed fosters the impression that it is arbitrary, in the service of what is essentially a private canon. Celan is fine exemplar of literary Diasporism, but why not Jabes? Roth fits too, but what about Malamud? And what about writers and works that would call her notions of Diaspora into question, like Kafka and The Castle? And, most tellingly, why not treat some Israeli writers who contend fictively with the quotidian reality of the unrealized promises of the Promised Land from out of their lived Israeli experience?

These and other conceptual and theoretical problems abound, and they have been pointed out elsewhere (see Prooftexts 20:3 [Autumn 2000]). They combine to make this a book of prodigious research and limited utility.

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Rarely is there such synergy between literary texts and a critic’s personal convictions as there is in Yael Feldman’s latest book. Strong positions and emotional ties often prove a double-edged sword, especially when ideology dictates the interpretation. In the present case, the deep bond between the fictional narratives and the scholar is mostly beneficial, lending Feldman’s writing exceptional verve and drama.

Feldman skillfully synthesizes modern feminist theories and critical tools with her deep knowledge and understanding of psychological, cultural, and so-

1. This is particularly true of Ezrahi’s treatment of Agnon and Philip Roth. In the case of Agnon she is aware that works like Temol Shilshom subvert the implications of Bilvav Yamim but she veers away from the implications of this fact, probably for fear of damaging her claim for the latter. And though she has read much, she seems not to have taken into account Baruh Kurzweil’s seminal treatment of shivah me’uheret (late return) and how he reads Bilvav Yamim. Kurzweil notes that there are many kinds of “return” in Agnon, certainly more than Ezrahi observes, and the conclusion to his study of the journey in Agnon bears citing here: “Any attempt to reduce [or confine, JSD] the topos of ‘departure/arrival’ and ‘home’ in Agnon’s fiction to the sphere of religious tradition is testimony to a total misunderstanding of Agnon’s epic enterprise” (Masot ‘al sippurei shai ’agnon, Tel Aviv, 4th enlarged edition, 1975, 228.)
ciopolitical currents in modern Israel. The detailed discussions of two feminist precursors, Virginia Woolf and Simone de Beauvoir, may be needed more in the Hebrew edition of the book than in the English. To feminist critics in this country, the works of these two writers are well-trodden fields, underlying much of feminist scholarship of the 1970s and early 1980s. The undeniable necessity of this discussion in the Hebrew edition is in itself a cultural comment, proving that Israeli feminist criticism, as well as feminist fiction, has lagged behind European and American trends.

Feldman has set out to correct this obvious gap with a study focusing on the fiction of five Israeli women writers: Shulamit Lapid, Amalia Kahana-Carmon, Shulamith Hareven, Netiva Ben Yehuda, and Ruth Almog. Her research agenda is ambitious: she scrutinizes the Hebrew works in the light of recent European and American theories of gender and literary creativity, attempting to find out whether and how the Israeli fiction conforms to paradigms set forth in other social and cultural climates. She examines the extent to which the Hebrew examples, bred in an environment plagued by a geopolitical and psychological state of siege, add a new wrinkle to these theories. She also uncovers the feminist intertexts in some of these writings, which Israeli criticism has failed to recognize.

Women’s liberation as a political movement has had its roots in the modern ideas of enlightenment and progress. On the face of it, modern feminist writings should be enhanced by both modern egalitarian ideas and the postmodern spirit, which is committed to re-reading Western history and literary canon from an off-center vantage point, giving voice to the rejected and the marginal. But things did not work out as neatly as these formulas would suggest. First, as Feldman explains, postmodernism also postulates the fictiveness of the autonomous subject and as such the feminist claim for autonomy within the postmodern context is problematic in itself.

Secondly, in the particular context of Zionist and Israeli mentality, the plot thickens: the suppression of the individual voice in preference of the collective “we,” part of labor Zionist ideology and the pressing needs of a nation-building process, has been a problem encountered by both male and female Hebrew writers. But it has especially complicated the dilemma of women writers struggling to emerge from both a long tradition that silenced the woman’s voice and a new ideological and political reality, which demands the surrender of individual creativity to the national effort and the shared collective destiny. Feldman asks why women writers such as Shulamit Lapid or Amalia Kahana-Carmon were unable to create a female Künstlerroman, “a portrait of the artist as a young woman.” The answer, she says, lies in a combination of the marginal role of women in Jewish history and literary tradition, which has produced an insecure female artistic ego, and the overwhelming national narrative which has been the driving force of both male and female writings. The writer Ruth Almog, who published thinly veiled autobiographical stories in 1969 and 1979, felt guilty that she allowed herself to become immersed in her own internal life when “larger” issues of national importance dominated public life and discourse.

In her study of Shulamit Lapid’s widely popular novel Gei Oni (the story of the Galilean settlement Rosh Pinah) Feldman identifies the strategy employed by
the novelist to correct the gender imbalance in Israeli historical narrative. The welding of two genres, she says, has enabled the writer to reconstruct nostalgically an era imprinted in the national memory with heroic masculinity and at the same time insert the female voice and presence and thus speak to a more “feminist” age.

Feldman places Ruth Almog’s *Roots of Air (Shorshei Avir)* within the modern critical and literary corpus, which has reread and rewritten Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* with a feminist twist. She sees Jean Rhys’ novel, *Wide Sargasso Sea* (in which the heroine is Mr. Rochester’s insane first wife, a marginal character in *Jane Eyre*) as a direct influence on Almog’s novel, especially in its treatment of female madness.

Feldman raises many important issues, too numerous to discuss in this review. She meticulously maps out the diverse theories and sub-theories of gender and creativity that have sprung up in the past several decades. Her extensive discussions of literary paradigms and critical theories are nicely balanced by direct interpretive encounters with the fiction itself.

Finally, one cannot but reflect on the leap that modern Israeli criticism has made from Baruch Kurzweil to Yael Feldman. Kurzweil’s critical essays, brilliant, often groundbreaking and polemical, showed disregard for any system of scholarly documentation, referencing, and attribution. Yael Feldman’s study is a model of painstaking canvassing and classifying of a large body of theories pertaining to questions of gender and the creative process; charting their philosophical, socio-historical, and psychological roots; and uncovering their universality as well as limitations when applied to women’s fiction in Hebrew. *No Room of Their Own* is a major contribution to both the study of Hebrew fiction and critical theory. It deals masterfully with fascinating stories within their local environment while also placing them within an international cultural framework and critical discourse.

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We live in the age of the scholarly monograph and the multi-authored history. The shifting and contentious nature of literary studies provides little encouragement to senior scholars to devote decades of their work to taking the long view and accepting responsibility for rendering a comprehensive account of the development of a whole field over a substantial period of time. Our epistemological uncertainty is such that we suspect that fairness and truth can be approximated only if we break up the whole among divers hands and listen to different viewpoints.

There is, then, something bracingly old fashioned about Gershon Shaked’s imposing five-volume Hebrew work, *Hasipporet ha’ivrit 1880–1980* [Hebrew
Fiction 1880–1980], which appeared between 1977 and 1999. (The work under review, which I will discuss below, is the one-volume English abridgement of this larger endeavor.) Shaked’s project is genuinely ambitious. Within this great hundred-year arc, Shaked seeks to establish the place of each of the scores of writers who wrote serious fiction in Hebrew; to map out the networks of traditions and counter-traditions; to connect aesthetic developments to larger social and ideological transformations; to render a critical description as well as an evaluation of all the key individual works; and, finally, to gauge the degree and quality of influence that strong authors have had upon later writers. The aspiration to mount such an undertaking—which Shaked pulls off with astonishing success—is founded on the refreshing assumption that the fruits of generations of literary criticism form a body of knowledge and that this research can be culled, utilized, summarized, and advanced rather than remaining merely a mass of ideologically driven misreadings.

Although the beneficent ghost of positivism may be looking over Shaked’s shoulder, there is nothing musty about his literary history. His critical practice is founded on some of the key developments of literary criticism in our time. Shaked’s background in New Criticism makes him supremely attentive to varieties of narrators, strategies of narration, and techniques of characterization. His training in genre theory accounts for his passion for locating writers and their work within—and at odds with—the generic conventions of romanticism, realism, naturalism, modernity, the comic-grotesque, and other movements, trends, and modes of writing. An interest in stylistics prompts Shaked to track the changes in the way Hebrew is used to construct narrative discourse. A Lukacsian commitment to the organic nexus between history and literature leads him to see fictional characters as complex representations of social forces and class consciousness. Finally, reception theory explains his acute interest in how works of literature were understood by contemporary audiences and by readers at later removes of time.

It bears keeping in mind that although the five volumes of Hebrew Fiction cover a hundred-year period, they themselves appeared over a period of more than twenty years. This means that just as the subject under scrutiny was in motion, forming and reforming itself, Shaked’s appetitive mind was at the same time also in motion, ranging widely and bringing different critical emphases to the fore. An attentive reading of the whole Hebrew work would notice, for example, how issues of reception become more central in later volumes and how Shaked’s manner of engaging his material moves from a monographic account of a single author’s work to a series of thematic essays that return to the same works in different contexts.

There is a similar dynamic relationship between Shaked’s subject and his own life. His situation is decidedly not like that of Leopold Zunz, the great nineteenth-century Wissenschaft scholar, who is supposed to have said when a young Hebrew poet appeared at his door, “What century did you live in?” Shaked’s scholarly career, and especially the years he worked on Hebrew Fiction, coincided with an unparalleled boom in Israeli prose writing that gives little sign of abating. And he has been an actor in the enterprise whose history he is writing. As a student in Jerusalem in the fifties, Shaked was part of a circle centered around the journal
Likr’a—together with Yehuda Amichai, Natan Zach, Amos Oz, A. B. Yehoshua, Benjamin Harshovski-Harshav, and Dan Miron—which challenged the social realism and pathos of the Palmah Generation writers. Even though Shaked is not himself a novelist, he has been inextricably and intimately involved in the critical reception of the fiction of his contemporaries, the writers of the New Wave, including Aharon Appelfeld, and Amalia Kahane-Carmon, as well as Oz and Yehoshua. Yet unlike Oz and Yehoshua, Shaked is not a sabra. He was born Gerhardt Mandel in Vienna and was brought to Eretz Yisrael by his parents, who came more as refugees than as settlers. The ordeal of immigration gave Shaked an unusual empathy for the experiences of uprootedness, dislocation, and exile at the center of the great works of Hebrew literature created at an earlier period in Europe.

There is a great deal to admire in the objectivity of Shaked’s scholarship. He has read everything and attempts to locate everything in a complex and multi-strand narrative of the development of Hebrew fiction. Each writer, even those who played a role in their time but whose reputations and influence have faded out of sight and even those whose literary achievements obviously do not stir Shaked’s sympathies, receives his considered attention. He puts them in context, reminds us of the substance of the books they wrote, offers a critical description of the poetics of their fiction, and assesses the imprint they made upon later Hebrew writers. Yet despite the project’s analytic comprehensiveness, it is impossible to write serious and ambitious literary history without at the same time engaging in the creation of an implied canon of modern Hebrew literature. (Despite all the drivel written about the hegemony and the evils of canon formation, let it be stated clearly that making arguments for the importance of strong works of art—the main business of literary critics of which canons are a byproduct—is a chief responsibility that intellectuals discharge toward their culture.) At the center of Shaked’s canon, their place marked by the ample attention given them and by the vigor of his arguments, stand the works of Mendele (Abromovitch), Berdichevsky, Brenner, Gnessin, Agnon, Hazaz, Shamir, Oz, Appelfeld and Yehoshua. Their centrality is purchased, in Shaked’s eyes, by the nexus effected in their work between the embroiled investigation of the fate of the Jewish collective and the artful practice of literary modernism in its many forms. Like all great historical scholars, Shaked judges and analyzes with his feet planted firmly in his time and place. The writing of Hebrew Fiction was begun when this nexus, the Zionist “metaplot,” still held together and had achieved greatness in the works of Shaked’s contemporaries, the members of the Dor hamedinah, the State Generation. Shaked’s project was brought to a close, on a note that is both elegiac and anxious, at a time when that nexus had been attenuated by the assertions of post-Zionism and post-modernism.

Like all abridgements of great multi-volume foreign-language works of scholarship, the English volume under review is more useful than it is successful. It is as if some grand Balzacian character was forced to submit to the ravages of a Draconian diet. The face remains recognizable and all the limbs are still there, but the flesh hangs on the bone and the sheen of vitality is gone. Gone, too, is the vast apparatus of endnotes and references to the history of Hebrew literary criticism that makes the Hebrew volumes an indispensable compendium as well as a work of
original critical thought. This is entirely comprehensible in a work intended to be an introduction to Hebrew fiction for the English reader. Yet if that is indeed the aim, it is entirely incomprehensible why there should be no mention of any critical literature written in English. There is no reference to the works of Arnold Band, Robert Alter, Anne Golomb Hoffman, Naomi Sokoloff, Gilead Morahg, and other American critics of Hebrew literature, not to mention the hundreds of articles in *Prooftexts* and *Hebrew Studies* over the years. What remains is Shaked’s chronicle of the development of Hebrew fiction and the bibliography of primary works (translations duly noted). While this is certainly valuable enough, the utility of the volume would have been greatly augmented if readers—and students—could have been directed to secondary readings taken from the serious enterprise of commenting on Hebrew literature that has grown up on these shores.

The sterling accomplishment that remains undiminished in the English volume is the contours of the map Shaked draws of Hebrew fiction. Making a map is, in a sense, at odds with making a canon. The great authors in Shaked’s pantheon are mostly known to us and well represented in translation. Less familiar are the dozens of contemporaneous Hebrew writers in each generation whose serious works provides a context and counter-context for the achievements of the canonical writers. So, for example, we know the writings of Oz, Yehoshua, and Appelfeld, and our conception of contemporary Israeli fiction is fashioned around their work. Yet, as Shaked points out, there a number of strong authors from this period, including Benjamin Tammuz, Pinhas Sadeh, Yitzhak Orpaz, and Yehoshua Kenaz, whose work cannot be easily assimilated to the paradigms created by the dominant figures of the time. Rather than simply describing the work of these others writers, Shaked takes responsibility for drawing a complex map which can make sense of these achievements in relation to one another. It is in the attempt to see things whole that Shaked’s intellectual imagination shines.

On this score I was particularly grateful for Shaked’s chapter on Hebrew fiction between the two world wars. This period is a kind of interregnum between the earlier breakthroughs of Brenner and his generation and the new literature that arose after the creation of the state of Israel. For most of us, Agnon is the great eminence that presides over these years; to a lesser degree, Hazaz. Yet Agnon is precisely the example of the great canonical writer who flies above his contemporaries and, sharing very little with them, blots them out, so that by knowing Agnon we may know a great deal but not about the intensive fictional activity during the twenties, thirties, and forties. In addition to the center in Palestine, there was David Vogel writing in Vienna and Paris and Shimon Halkin and Reuven Wallenrod writing in New York. (Shaked’s chapter on Hebrew literature in America is the only such account I know.) In Eretz Yisrael itself there was rivalry among the journals *Ketuvim*, *Moznayim*, and *Gilyonot* and the writers allied with them. Fiction grounded in the realities of the Yishuv was being written by Israel Zarchi, Avigdor Hameiri, Yehudah Yaari, and Yitzhak Shenhar, while the standard of the European narrative was being upheld in the novels of Eliezer Steinman and Yaacov Horowitz. Taking in the lay of fictional landscape for the first time, with Shaked’s help, I have resolved to revisit these writers, some of whom I have known only glancingly.
Taken as a whole, the map Shaked has drawn of development of Hebrew fiction, together with the rich insights about individual writers found in the Hebrew volumes, make this work an enduring achievement. For many years to come, it will be instinctive for students to check what Shaked has to say before embarking on any task of criticism. Like the great synthesizing and summarizing work of other eminences of his generation, his magnum opus is just as likely over time to have its paradigms poked, challenged, and revised. Who would wish it any other way?

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This is a fantastic book, certain to stimulate many debates, and not just about its subject, Franz Rosenzweig. At the heart of Batnitzky’s text is an argument about religious truth and the form it takes in the modern world, about “idolatry” and “representation.” As understood by the author, the law against idolatry did not mean for Rosenzweig what it meant for Maimonides and Hermann Cohen; it does not reflect the epistemological conundra that go into the presentation of a God who outstrips all sensual image and mental representation. Instead, Batnitzky takes idolatry to mean the act of fixing upon one single image, thereby limiting God’s freedom to appear in different forms. In this light, the term representation gets pulled away from the German Vorstellung (i.e. with the presentation of an abstract truth) and aligned with the verb vertreten (suggesting how one represents that truth through one’s very being, one’s own physical existence and image).

Batnitzky situates Rosenzweig—but perhaps more importantly, the larger German-Jewish tradition of ethical monotheism—within an expanded field that includes art and politics. Some readers may want to quibble with this or that detail, with the author’s portrait of Rosenzweig, or with her understanding of politics and modern art. However, Batnitzky has gotten Rosenzweig so right in so many ways that it hardly matters that the problem of idolatry did not directly exercise him nearly as much as it does her. Idolatry and Representation persuasively highlights the importance of carnality, community, and the harsh and dissonant judgments that these entail in Rosenzweig’s work. Great bracing tonic, this image of Rosenzweig will advance not just Rosenzweig scholarship but also the very types of argument upon which the larger project of contemporary Jewish thought depends. It does so, in large part, by combining the insight of two recent voices in contemporary religious thought: the post-liberal Protestant theologian George Lindbeck and the modern orthodox Michael Wyschogrod.

The emphasis on community demonstrates Batnitzky’s affinity with Lindbeck, the author of Nature of Doctrine—who has sought to move Protestant theology away from individual experience and its expression and towards the cultur-
al and linguistic types of thought made possible by community. Lindbeck is the unnamed presence supporting an argument regarding the logical and axiological priority of community that dominates Chapters Three and Five of Batnitzky’s text. She insists that, in Rosenzweig’s thought, individual experience “can only be understood” from the perspective of community (p. 64); that structures of community are “epistemologically privileged” over experience (p. 67). Reading *The Star of Redemption* backwards, Batnitzky argues that the intense expression of revelation and redemption in part two of Rosenzweig’s text is “only possible” and “only because” of the Jewish and Christian communities described in part three (p. 71). It is a bold claim with a lot of merit, but it is one-sided. After all, the argument that one cannot think or value “I” without already presupposing “you/he/she/it/we/they” works both ways simultaneously. For my part, I think it makes more sense to argue that, logically and axiologically, the community and the individual are always already co-present, neither one before the other, but all at once. This yields a more tensed dynamic that I think comes much closer to the one that Rosenzweig shared with Buber—who has been turned into the romantic and individualistic antipode of a Rosenzweig made to look too much like . . . George Lindbeck.

In my view, the book’s far greater contribution lies in the way it supports the claim that truth is embedded. This idea resonates with those expressed by Michael Wyschogrod in *Body of Faith*—a book dedicated to the carnality of Jewish life and thought, to a deeply embodied Jewish people, its land and cult, and a personal God who comes quite close to assuming corporeal dimension. In Batnitzky’s view, Rosenzweig’s thought assumes the same fleshy presence. As she reads him, an expansive carnal field mediates truth. This field takes shape qua Jewish being, calendar-life, blood community (sexual procreation?), scriptural word-forms, the act of translation, and the image of God. The revelation of truth runs the gamut from ethics, art, and politics—parts one, two, and three of Batnitzky’s text. The very structure of *Idolatry and Representation* should clearly generate great conversation. Should ethics assume that privileged center point around which pivot art and politics? Or does she want to have ethics depend upon art—which turns in turn around politics? Or does she intend to hold all three points together at the same time, without privileging one or the others? Those at least are some of the questions that I would ask.

Delighting in the author’s lead, one reads Batnitzky’s book back in reverse-order to get a sense of how it all moves:

**Politics:** In the conclusion and in Chapter Eight respectively, Batnitzky considers “the future of monotheism” and Rosenzweig’s thought in light of American pluralism, the memory of the Holocaust, and the creation of the State of Israel. Chapter Seven looks to the challenge and risks involved in maintaining a separate Jewish identity in the Diaspora. Chapter 6 goes against the easy ecumenism that often attends the Rosenzweig scholarship. The dialogue between Jews and Christians requires asymmetry and judgment, not mutuality and tolerance, in order to preserve the difference.

**Art:** Chapter Five shows how Rosenzweig sought to maintain that Jewish difference in his Bible-translation work, retaining the particular nuance of Hebrew language in order to sustain the shock and abiding strangeness of God’s word.
Chapter Four lays out the idea of the Jewish uncanny, one suggested by Susan Shapiro. In this view, the Jewish people as understood by Rosenzweig resembles a modern work of art: uncanny, self-contained, and other; itself an embodied sign.

Ethics: Chapter Three picks up Daniel Boyarin’s phrase “carnal Israel” in order to advance a strong image of Jewish and Christian community, one that insists upon the logical and axiological priority of its structure over against the individual subject. In Chapter Two, this carnal sign reorients the modern person vis-à-vis the past, opening humanity to those communal and historical structures which alone provide “meaning” in the modern world. In Chapter One, the author persuasively defends the philosophical coherence of biblical anthropomorphism, the image of God meeting with a carnal person imbedded within community.

Full of verve, broad in reach and consequence, analytically sharp, and clearly written, this fresh and important reading of Rosenzweig is a must-read text for those who want to work modern and contemporary Jewish thought and philosophy of religion around community, the uncanny, and other embodied signs.

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In *Witness from the Pulpit,* Marc Saperstein, a leading expert on the art of Jewish preaching in medieval and modern times, took on the personally rewarding and professionally challenging task of assembling, editing, and commenting upon the sermons of a twentieth-century American Reform rabbi, of “mid-level” national leadership stature, who had “a rather extraordinary personal involvement . . . in twentieth-century Jewish history.” The reward was to make available for scholarly consideration the homiletic messages that Harold Saperstein delivered during his forty-seven years (1933–1980) as spiritual leader of Lynbrook, New York’s Temple Emanu-El as a source for understanding how a rabbi communicated with, and educated, his community about the great crises that the Jewish people faced in that tumultuous time-span. The challenge was to present and analyze objectively what his own father had done, without an almost understandable degree of filiopietism. Happily, Saperstein fils chose well in documenting how one rabbi attempted to raise worshipper consciousness about the destruction of European Jewry, the rise and perils of the State of Israel and the struggles for Soviet Jewry, as well as central post-war American issues like the battle for Civil Rights, McCarthyism, civil unrest and the tragedy of Vietnam, and more. Harold Saperstein’s views are introduced with calm, dispassion, and clarity.

Of course, a compendium of sermons, by its very nature, allows us only to “listen in” on a preacher and not really to determine how his/her message was
heard. Still, Marc Saperstein makes a valiant effort in his notes to begin to evoke the general American and specifically the Lynbrook moods that “triggered [his father’s] messages.” For example, in introducing “The American Dream, in Color,” he did an outstanding job in noting the tenor of local town attitudes in 1963 toward the busing designed to ensure school desegregation in Malverne, where Saperstein lived, even if he could not tell us how Temple Emanu-El people reacted to his father’s strong advocacy of equality for all Americans. All told, Marc Saperstein has produced a highly accessible volume that, if analyzed with comparable sources from similar times and locales, will afford us important vistas into how Jews in pre-war and post-war suburbia viewed the external Jewish and American worlds around them.

There is, however, a remarkable lacuna in the range of themes documented and discussed in this compendium, which will frustrate students of American Judaism. Arguably, Harold Saperstein, part of that first generation of Neo-Reform rabbis produced at Rabbi Stephen S. Wise’s Jewish Institute of Religion, had to have presided over and participated in the reorientation of that denomination towards Jewish tradition and ancient ritual. And, as a rabbi in suburbia, for more than two generations, he had to have faced up to such weighty “internal” Jewish issues like the challenge of assimilation in social environs where Jews were accepted and the ongoing battle to find ways and means of attracting the disaffected back to Jewish identification. Yet, this compendium says little about what Emanu-El’s rabbi—a self-described “pioneer in what is now called the ‘creative service’”—said to his flock about his feelings concerning “the deep-seated problems” Judaism faced “in a non-religious age.” Only two sermons—including the one from which I have just quoted briefly—even begin to address these questions. The one sermon presented here where Saperstein spoke extensively about the challenges and frustrations of the rabbi’s mission to reach disinterested American Jews took place “off campus,” when this senior rabbi was invited to speak at the 1972 HUC-JIR Ordination Ceremony at New York’s Temple Emanu-El. There, in front of that class of new rabbis—including his son and future editor, Marc—he implicitly addressed the findings of that year’s famous Lenn study (*Rabbi and Synagogue in Reform Judaism*) and asserted candidly that “our generation has in large measure lost the sense of necessity and value of prayer” (p. 297). One wonders whether and how often Harold Saperstein spoke so openly “at home” about the meaningfulness of prayer in Lynbrook’s Temple or of the efficacy of new forms of worship as a means of reaching out to the unaffiliated within his own midst. Such comments—if they were offered—would have helped us better gauge how Judaism was then doing on the frontiers of suburbia. And it would have made *Witness from the Pulpit* an even more valuable source for studying American Jewish life in the mid-decades of the twentieth century.

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In recent years, there has been an abundance of feminist scholarship in the field of Israel studies. Notably, much of this scholarship has been in the form of articles. Dafna N. Izraeli, et al, in *Sex, Gender, Politics: Women in Israel* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1999) (Hebrew), provide a comprehensive bibliography in this regard, both for Hebrew and English publications. Sered and Kahn’s book-length studies are welcome and necessary contributions to the field. Both anthropologists demonstrate, in overlapping yet different ways, the daily and material ways in which Zionist practice and ideology manifest in and through women’s bodies.

Susan Sered’s work, as her evocative and declarative title suggests, posits an ostensibly broad thesis. Initially, I anticipated reading a theoretical examination of maternity, modesty and militarism, interpreting Sered’s use of “sick” metaphorically. Sered’s introduction, however, clarifies her intent: “Israeli women are sicker and die younger then their counterparts in other western countries. Over the past decade the life expectancy of Israeli women has ranked in the vicinity of thirteenth to seventeenth in the world—trailing after Greece and Ireland, whereas the life expectancy of Israeli men has remained among the highest in the world—ranked second or third, following only Japan and Sweden” (p. 1). Sered then demonstrates how the issues of maternity, modesty, and militarism—issues that feminist scholars of Israeli culture have long identified as lynch pins in the construction of Israeli gender identity—shape “the cultural politics of somatization” (p.1).

Sered’s scholarship builds on the earlier work of feminist scholars such as Nira Yuval-Davis, who is credited with the terms “womenandchildren” and “women as bearers of the collective,” enlisted in a demographic war. Sered takes Yuval-Davis’ terms and the theoretical analysis underpinning them further by interfacing the examination of public policy and Knesset debates, for example, with an ethnographic study of birthing mothers and women soldiers. In Chapter One, “Collective Representations of Motherhood,” Sered maps out the trajectory by which Israeli female citizenship came to be conferred through motherhood. Citing Nitza Berkovitch’s illuminating examination of the passage of the Equal Rights Law (1951), Sered delves further into Knesset debates on the issue of “Government Means for Encouraging Natality in the State” (p. 23). One means of encouragement was the institution of grants given to birthing mothers. The discussion of birth grants in and of itself is not new among feminist scholars. Sered’s discussion, however, demonstrates the complex and variegated political motivations expressed in the Knesset debates surrounding this issue. There was considerable political pressure to condition the grant on a hospital birth, thus giving the state-sponsored medical authorities control over the birthing process. Underlying the in-
sistence on hospital births and medical superiority, presumably for the sake of the health of the mother and child, is a fundamental mistrust in the ability of women and their bodies to “do it right.” The state must take over, in essence, because what is at stake are the state’s children.

The following four chapters flesh out, quite literally, the corporeal components of Sered’s argument: “The Reproductive Body,” “The Militarized Body,” “The Ritualized Body,” and “The Scrutinized Body.” The titles foreground the theme that runs through the book: Israeli women’s bodies as the nation. In other words, women are objects of the nation, never subjects, and as such, women, by definition, are never ideal citizens. As bearers of the nation, women have the responsibility of producing the next generation but have neither political nor personal power to determine how this could or should be done. As soldiers in the IDF, largely relegated to auxiliary roles with little ability or opportunity to prove themselves in a military capacity, women soldiers are evaluated predominantly as symbols of control and orderliness, called upon to beautify and soften the harsh military environment. Women have responsibility with little or no authority.

Sered’s attention to the Israeli women’s level of responsibility vis-à-vis their lack of political, social (i.e., membership in decision-making bodies), and personal authority is noteworthy. As Sered notes, psychological research has demonstrated that physical and psychological well-being correlates with social status. “Women soldiers,” writes Sered, “neither mothers nor true warriors, are in a problematic liminal state. It seems to me that the intense concern with the neatness and sexuality of women soldiers is an expression of that liminality. The ‘proper’ sexuality of the neat and attractive ‘CHEN’ [the recently disbanded Women’s Corps] soldier signifies that she is on the appropriate path to suitable motherhood within the collective” (p. 86).

I assigned Sered’s book in two recent Jewish/women’s studies classes. While most students found the book illuminating, several Jewish studies students argued that Sered’s prose suffered from hyperbole, a fact that made it difficult for those students to evaluate her claims on their merit. While the charge of hyperbole may, unfortunately, ring true in some instances, I sense that the students’ resistance to Sered’s book lies more in the fact that her indictment of the enlistment of women’s bodies in the Zionist cause is not easily heard by the mainstream Jewish studies student. The difficulty my students had is demonstrative of the failure of Jewish studies both to incorporate gender as a category of analysis in Jewish and Israel studies and to expose students to feminist analysis. Sered’s examination of maternity, militarism, and modesty exposes these failures, calling into question assumptions generally held by the average Jewish studies student on American university campuses.

Susan Kahn’s study on assisted conception is in many ways a continuation of Sered’s examination of the meaning of maternity in Israel. Kahn, however, delves deeper into the meaning of Jewish identity vis-à-vis assisted conception. Ever-developing reproductive technologies make it possible, and for some necessary, to consider the Jewishness of sperm, womb, and ova. Such determinations and distinctions are important in different ways, as Kahn demonstrates, to Ortho-
dox and non-Orthodox Israelis. Yet all share an adulterated and enthusiastic embrace of reproductive technologies. “A word about Israeli pronatalism is crucial here,” writes Kahn, “for the overwhelming desire to create Jewish babies deeply informs the Israeli embrace of reproductive technology” (p. 3). If Jewish women, then, are “bearers of the [Jewish] collective,” Kahn’s book explicates the ways in which assisted conception and its widespread and growing use is an outgrowth of this attitude.

The “objective” field of Kahn’s research is compelling. Kahn writes that in the mid 1990s, “there were more fertility clinics per capita in Israel than in any other country in the world (twenty-four units for a population of 5.5 million, four times the number per capita in the United States). Moreover, Israeli fertility specialists have emerged as global leaders in the research and development of these technologies. . . . [A]ll the new reproductive technologies, including artificial insemination, ovum donation, and in-vitro fertilization, are subsidized by Israeli national health insurance” (p. 2).

In Chapter One, entitled “The Time Arrived and the Father Didn’t: A New Continuum of Israeli Conception,” Kahn enumerates eight stages of assisted conception, from choosing to use assisted conception, through entering a relationship with a fertility clinic and choosing sperm, to post-natal concerns of “narrating” the absence of a father. This chapter addresses the use of artificial insemination among non-married women, heterosexual and lesbian, in Israel. Through her description of the process, well chosen selections from her narrators, and insightful analysis of both, Kahn demonstrates the primacy of childbearing among Israelis in general and how Israeli women have internalized the belief that motherhood is an Israeli woman’s duty and mission. “If you’re not a mother, you don’t exist in Israeli society,” Kahn quotes a social worker in a Jerusalem fertility clinic (p. 9).

What is striking in Kahn’s description of the insemination process is the degree of control exercised by the fertility clinics in this case. For example, Israeli Ministry of Health regulations have held that single women must first be screened before being “approved” for artificial insemination. According to Kahn most women are “approved” and yet the very process of screening positions the clinics, and hence the state, in a paternalistic role vis-à-vis the women seeking insemination. (This exercise of control by various medical or mental health authorities recurs throughout Kahn’s research as well as in Sered’s work and is demonstrative of the state’s policing of women’s bodies).

The way in which women “choose” a sperm donor is at once outrageous and profoundly telling of Israeli state paternalism, attitudes toward race and class, lack of respect for individual choice, and the supremacy of the collective interest in reproducing Jews. From the personal accounts provided by Kahn, it becomes clear that ultimately the women have very little choice, and it often comes down to the nurse sitting across the table from the client saying in a maternal voice something to the effect of, ‘Don’t worry, I’ll find someone just right for you.’ Kahn notes that women were encouraged to choose someone who resembled them, “which in most cases meant ‘light’ or of Ashkenazi origin” (p. 37). “Certainly,” writes Kahn, “there is no official policy that mandates the matching of Ashkenazi donor sperm with Ashkenazi unmarried women, but the informal practice of sperm selection
seems to suggest that it is desirable to observe and maintain ethnic difference in this process. That the long simmering tensions between Jews of different ethnic origins in Israel should be played out in the realm of assisted conception is not surprising, for this is the realm in which cultural dramas become most vivid” (p. 37).

Kahn’s prose is mellifluous and her adaptation of alternative models of kinship to the particular dynamics of Israeli culture is scintillating. Departing, for example, from Kath Weston’s model of kinship in *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinships*, Kahn argues that unmarried Israeli women bearing children through artificial insemination have no intention of challenging either so-called traditional family structures or the biological relationship between parents and their offspring. “The social consequences of their reproductive choices,” explains Kahn, “are much less ambitious in their origin and more profound in their result: for what they have done is reveal inadvertently that heterosexuality and marriage have never had a monopoly over reproduction in the Jewish imagination; in the Jewish imagination it is Jewish children born to Jewish mothers who have conceptual monopoly over reproduction, regardless of how they are conceived” (pp. 44–45).

Over the course of the next three chapters, Kahn discusses the legal and religious elements in these cultural dramas. In Chapter Two, Kahn discusses the Nachmani case, wherein an Israeli couple, Ruti and Dani Nachmani, underwent fertility treatment, resulting in eleven frozen embryos. As Ruti Nachmani had previously undergone a hysterectomy, the couple hoped to use the frozen embryos with a surrogate mother. Before brokering such an agreement, however, the couple divorced. Ruti Nachmani wished to proceed with a surrogate agreement, but the fertility clinic housing the embryos refused to release them because Dani Nachmani denied his consent to Ruti’s use of the embryos, arguing that this would force him into fatherhood. Ruti Nachmani turned to the Israeli Supreme Court. In its initial decision, the court held in favor of Dani Nachmani’s right not to become a parent. Subsequently the court agreed to hear the case again with wider panel of judges, at which time it ruled in Ruti Nachmani’s favor. “In a surprising reversal of its earlier decision,” writes Kahn, “the court ruled that Ruti’s right to be a parent is more important than the right not to father children and ruled that she should be given custody of the embryos. In the words of Judge [sic] Tsvi Tal: ‘the interest in parenthood is a basic and existential value, both for the individual and for society as a whole. In contrast, there is no value to the absence of parenthood’” (p. 67).

The Court’s language is somewhat disturbing when considered in the context of the abortion debate, both here and in Israel, and women’s right and ability (in terms of social acceptance) to choose not to bear children. Moreover, it suggests that women have an inalienable right, as it were, to mother, while women in Israel lack equal civil rights in general. As Kahn, notes, however, the religious authorities (rabbinic writings on the issue), the civil courts, and public opinion are each heavily informed by an image so deeply imbedded it is unquestioned: that motherhood is the deepest desire of all women and should be pursued at all costs. . . . Consent for the new reproductive technologies is all but universal in Israel, a pronatalist state
where the despair of the barren women has deep cultural roots. Indeed one could argue that Ruti Nachmani’s battle for motherhood echoes that of the biblical matriarch Rachel, who lamented: ‘Give me sons or else I am dead’ (Genesis 30:1)” (p. 70).

Kahn’s discussion in Chapters 3–5 of rabbinic approaches to reproductive technology is revealing. She demonstrates that rabbis, like anthropologists, ask questions about kinship, and hence the analytical tools of anthropology are useful for the examination of rabbinic deliberations on kinship. Interestingly, the development of reproductive technologies in concert with the deepest concern for the “reproduction” of Jews has all but vacated the relationship between Jewish kinship and Jewish biology in the rabbinic imagination. What is most illuminating in Kahn’s book for those concerned with the relation between Israel as a Jewish state and Israel as a democratic state is the connection and confluence Kahn finds between rabbinic understandings of kinship and reproductive technologies, and the approach to these by the largely secular, or non-orthodox, Israeli public. The state, for example, could not support, either theoretically or financially, reproductive technologies that produced babies not deemed halakhically legitimate by the rabbinic authorities. The rabbis would prefer that single women not use artificial insemination at all, but their choice to do so does not raise significant halakhic difficulties for the rabbis. However, rabbinic authorities concur that married women resorting to artificial insemination (in cases of male-factor infertility) should use sperm donations from non-Jewish donors, thus avoiding the problem of mamzerut, among other halakhic problems. (A child born from a sexual union between a married Jewish woman and a Jew not her husband is illegitimate, “mamzer,” and is not permitted to marry another Jew. A union between a married Jewish woman and a Gentile does not make the resulting child illegitimate).

In conclusion, both Kahn and Sered’s books provide a captivating read, but more importantly, they are required reading for any scholar of Israeli culture, and eminently useful for courses on Israeli culture as well as those addressing Judaism and gender.

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This is a book about the junction of European modernity, Jewish life, and new forms of social knowledge. Illuminating the intellectual history of Jewish social science primarily in Central Europe from 1880, but especially after the turn of the century, to the threshold of catastrophe in the waning moments of Weimar, So-
Social Sciences and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity offers a keenly researched, thoughtful study both of the social consequences of Emancipation and the manner in which these consequences were assessed by Jewish social scientists trained in modern tools of statistics, anthropology, public health, and sociology. Astute in its selection of institutions (including the Verein für jüdische Statistik); key scholars (including Arthur Ruppin, Hugo Hoppe, and Leo Motzkin); and subjects (population, health, physical anthropology, and economic issues), the study invites attention to vexing issues for students of Jewish life and history and, more broadly, the development of the social sciences.

The uneven process by which Jews gained entry after the French Revolution into political, social, and economic Europe without having to undergo Christian conversion posed unprecedented questions about assimilation and identity; population trends and health; normalcy and exceptionalism; race and nation. As it turned out, in this period, unparalleled Jewish heterogeneity in the West, as well as trauma and emigration in the East and the extension of world Jewry in space and imagination to the United States and Palestine, coincided with the growth and development of new forms of academic social inquiry. Putatively objective, neutral, and scientific, discipline-based tools in anthropology, sociology, demography, and public health offered a cohort of urbane and well-trained Jewish scholars the means to know and represent more accurately the Jewish condition in the heart of modern Europe and to deploy systematic evidence to ask whether Jewish life in the Diaspora could thrive in the long-term under conditions of emancipation.

Breaking with insular and elite-focused historiographical traditions, these social scientists, Hart shows, did more than record key features and patterns in post-Emancipation Jewish life. Their studies of physiology, marriage patterns, crime, morbidity and mortality, schooling, and work, among other subjects, also recast Jewish identity by answering such questions as: Who are the Jews? What marks their coherence and cohesion as a people? Which traits and abilities mark their distinct orientations and capacities? What defines the boundary between normal and pathological? How can a plethora of trends in Jewish life be arrayed to shape coherent analytical narratives of social change?

Social Science and the Politics of Jewish Identity thoroughly surveys a wide range of empirical studies and conceptual debates conducted by the first generation of secular Jewish scholars to take possession of methodical social studies of their people. Two themes dominate the book. The first highlights the split between the regenerative and nationalist impulses of Zionists, who utilized the new social science to demonstrate that integration of Jews into the West threatened Jewish degeneration as much as did oppression and poverty in the East, and a diverse group of scholars Hart calls “diasporists,” who believed in the possibility of a decent and normal future for Jews outside Palestine. Focusing mainly on Zionist social science, Hart persuasively demonstrates affinities linking their purposes, research, findings, and advocacy. This portrait of Zionist hegemony may be disproportionate. What was the actual balance between the two tendencies within the Jewish social science community? This weighing-up is a bit elusive in the text. Where, moreover, shall we place the many scholars who sought to transcend these options via “scientific neutrality”?
The second central theme concerns the mutual constitution of Jewish and general social science. In a perceptive sociology of knowledge, Hart focuses on the deeply contradictory position of the Jewish social scientists. Their disciplines, concepts, research language, and broad orientation to social inquiry were drawn from general European social science. They utilized sources of data and key ideas that originated outside their Jewish milieu. Though modern and cosmopolitan, they were embedded, nonetheless, within the Jewish world by choice and necessity. In charting patterns of conversion and intermarriage; writing counter-narratives to combat dominant visions of Jewishness and disease; measuring the anthropological distinctiveness of Jews; and assaying their affinity for capitalism, Jewish social scientists produced questions, designs, and strategies for the dissemination of knowledge geared to affect Jewish choices and possibilities.

In pursuing these goals, general social science proved liberating. It facilitated fresh, even unprecedented, modes of inquiry. Even today, data and analyses generated by Jewish social scientists in the early-twentieth century are still used (often credibly, Hart reminds us). But the utilization of the period’s general social science by Jewish scholars also imprisoned them within unfortunate debates, categories, and conceptions, especially dealing with key issues in biology and physical anthropology. Often, Jewish scholars found themselves uncomfortably reinforcing widespread prejudices about Jewish distinctiveness, even pathology, differing only in the spin they put on this information.

Hart is to be applauded for not writing a history of his actors and their period that imposes on them what we know about their eventual fate. His stance is prospective, seeing choices and possibilities from the perspective of the actors on the basis of the information they possessed. His decision to frame the book in terms of quite recent discussions in the United States concerning intermarriage as measured by Jewish Federation-sponsored sample surveys introduces a slightly jarring quest for relevance. These extraneous pages do not detract, however, from this compelling treatise.

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This is a book about “political culture,” a concept which, according to Hadassa Kosak “encapsulates the cultural and social characteristics of a group and the way these traits are demonstrated through political action” (p. 5). Kosak’s book describes the political culture developed by Jews who left the small towns (*shtetls*) of eastern Europe for the United States between 1880 and the Russian Revolution of 1905. Unaccustomed to large-scale wage labor in an urban, industrial economy,
these often poorly educated newcomers had to develop new ways of dealing with the difficulties and injustices they encountered in a highly stratified, urban, capitalistic America. Kosak demonstrates how they did this. Her work is especially valuable because it focuses on late-nineteenth-century immigration, while most historians of East European Jewish immigration focus on the larger, more politically sophisticated post-1905 immigration. Her work is also valuable because of the breadth of its definition of what is “political.” It deals with the political life of women as well as men and with political activity in private as well as public spaces, including food riots and parades as well as strikes and unions.

As Kosak acknowledges, *Cultures of Opposition* builds on the culturally oriented perspectives of pioneer labor historians E. P. Thompson and Herbert Gutman. Looking beyond social class, Kosak untangles the web of religious and cultural traditions on which the immigrants drew in constructing the new political culture. Like many recent historians of immigration, Kosak finds the roots of immigrant behavior in America in “old country” traditions. Eschewing romanticization of Jewish life in the *shtetl*, she describes the privileged position of the wealthier Jews and their dominance in both the religious and secular spheres. Always present in Jewish communities, social stratification and class conflict within these communities grew in the mid-nineteenth-century as the economic policies of the Czarist government reduced increasing numbers to poverty. The sense of economic and social grievance against “unfair” use of economic privilege in East European Jewish communities was part of the baggage immigrants carried with them to America and one source of the political culture they developed there.

Kosak documents other sources. Religious or not, immigrants drew on the biblical traditions embedded in their culture; they identified oppressive working conditions in America with the slavery the Jewish people had endured in Egypt. They also drew on the Marxist ideologies of nineteenth-century Europe. Finally, they drew on traditions and ideas associated with the United States. They had come to the United States because they believed that it was a place of freedom where they could earn a living and be treated with fairness and respect, and they intended to stay. Therefore, they were willing to invest time and energy in making America, at least the part of it they encountered, live up to their expectations.

In urban America, as in Russia, social and economic stratification in the Jewish community produced “unfairness.” Kosak identifies the American Jewish behavior that the newcomers saw as unfair—economic exploitation by the more established and acculturated German Jews (and later by Eastern European Jews also) as landlords, employers, shopkeepers, and dispensers of charity. More importantly, she documents the immigrants’ resistance.

The immigrants’ protest against sweatshop conditions and low pay involved not the disciplined bargaining advocated by the American Federation of Labor, but rather “anarchical,” often spontaneous strikes; boycotts of offending manufacturers; and harassment and even mob violence against employers and scabs. Labor protest, and indeed the entire culture of opposition, was a family affair, with housewives and children as well as working men and women participating. Consumer as well as workplace issues aroused protest. Housewives organized rent strikes against “unfair” landlords and led boycotts against “exploitive” merchants.

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ing the “kosher meat riots,” women paraded through the streets destroying meat to break what they called the Rockefeller kosher meat monopoly. Kosak provides vivid descriptions of these and other sites and forms of protest. She emphasizes the communal dimension of the new political culture, the fact that popular protest against perceived injustice was supported by a wide range of community institutions, including synagogues, lodges, and the Yiddish press.

Kosak’s book is clearly within the ranks of the newer historical and sociological works about minorities that, while acknowledging oppression, emphasize coping mechanisms, strengths, and “agency” among the oppressed. She moves beyond documenting isolated incidents of resistance to developing the idea of a working class culture of resistance. She argues—convincingly—that this culture was more democratic and participatory than the labor movement represented by the American Federation of Labor, and that its motivation was a desire for “fairness” and not for immediate economic gain. Despite the strong, sometimes repetitious, theoretical framework that runs through Cultures of Opposition, the book is a “good read.” Using well selected quotations from immigrant letters and diaries and from the American and Yiddish press, Kosak brings dramatic incidents and fascinating people to life. Cultures of Opposition is a welcome addition to immigrant history, labor history, and the history of the American Jewish community and should be of interest to the political scientist as well.

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Images are popular these days, and even scholars of the Jewish experience are turning to them seeking to find another avenue to gain further insight into the historical past. A spate of recent studies has given more credence to this direction. One hopes that soon, authors will not have to begin their work, as has traditionally been the case, by rejecting the perceived implications of the adherence to the Second Commandment for Jewish creativity. Michael Berkowitz has contributed to this development in his various studies on Zionism, in which he has argued for the centrality of iconography to the movement, in particular the images of Theodor Herzl, for the emerging sense of a national consciousness. In the present study, Berkowitz places visual material of sixty years (from 1880) at center stage and widens his scope and trajectory to show how Jews “perceived representations of themselves” and “appropriated modern media to exert a greater control over their lives as well as to realize their humanity more fully” (p. 11). This is certainly a tall order to achieve in an introduction and two additional chapters (“The Gallery of Zionists” and “Greater Deviations”).

This, then, is not an easy book to review. I admit from the outset that the book
suffers from the author's inflated promises of its contribution to our understanding of the modern Jewish experience. Much more is expected than is offered. Its contours are revealing: There are 105 illustrations, 16 pages of references, and 19 pages of bibliography, leaving very little room for interpretive text. Even if pictures are worth a thousand words, the minimal text can hardly attempt to answer seriously the wealth of questions posed in the introduction (pp. 11–52). Though we are told that the book is also meant to be “an interpretation of applications of art, graphics and photography, over time, which accompanied and fostered the ethnic mobilization of Western Jews in the realm of popular culture” (p. 11), Berkowitz leaves much to be desired in creating the links between the visual material and the social and political framework.

How does Berkowitz show the contribution of the visual sphere to the political and “ethnic mobilization” and what form does the “interpretation” of the visual imagery take? I will begin with the latter question, as it relates to many of the author's methodological comments in the introduction and elsewhere on the significance of visual material and its use for historical research. Berkowitz has brought together a wide array of photographs, paintings, drawings and other media from archives, journals, postcards and other ephemera. They focus on Zionist personalities, Jewish athletes, and political figures of an anarchist and Yiddishist bent, and on various paintings and drawings. His purpose was not, I presume, to reveal unfamiliar images, as most have been published, and many are well known to scholars of Zionist history and iconography and to students of American Jewish history. Berkowitz could have easily expanded the corpus by consulting a fine catalogue dealing with Zionism, where he would have found some less common images that provide unique insights into Zionist iconography, the place of Herzl in the imagination of Jews from different countries, and the role of symbols in modern Jewish discourse.1

Berkowitz rejects a “formalist analysis of Jewish iconography,” preferring “to illuminate the historical processes that are accessible through Jews’ public self-representation” (p. 19). What this means is not perfectly clear and one is hard-pressed to find a definite method to his use of the visual imagery. The images, though central to the raison d’être of book, are treated in an unsystematic and careless manner. Many are brought without reference to their date or context, others are left without any comment or discussion, and hardly ever are we offered an insight into the resonance (or reception) of the work mentioned. The failure to deal with reception is all the more surprising when one of the goals of the book is to give substance to the claim that “the visualization of Jewish politics” (p. 51) made ethnic politics possible. Berkowitz may prefer a non-formalist analysis but one still expects some basic information on the sources that constitute the heart of the book. Thus, for example, we are shown an interesting portrayal of Herzl by Max Kurtzweil (p. 59), but told nothing about the artist, or whether it was done before the Zionist leader’s death, or what the work was meant to convey. In other cases, we are left wanting either because we are provided with erroneous information, as in

the caption to illustration 42 where both the year and Hebrew translation rendered are incorrect, or because his remarks on the illustrations (as in the case of nos. 52–54 and in many others as well) provide only minimal or partial information. Moreover, except in the cases of Herzl (where Berkowitz is at his best) and Albert Einstein, the author rarely provides us with a sustained interpretation of a visual image while taking into consideration imagery that challenges that interpretation. Just as it requires a detailed argument to prove that Herzl’s visibility and representation enabled Jews to feel a sense of belonging to an emerging nation, so it seems important to address the way images of socialist figures facilitated ethnic politics. I am thus regretfully unclear why certain visuals were chosen, how they communicate the social and political messages attached to them, and what underlies the method of interpretation.

Has the author succeeded in showing the contribution of the visual sphere to the political and “ethnic mobilization”? In “Greater Deviations,” he treats a wide spectrum of Jewish political movements in the United States, Britain and Western Europe (pp. 94–129)—anarchism, Jewish communism and radicalism, trade unionism and workers’ associations—and a wide gallery of individuals, some of whom are visually represented in the book. Berkowitz finds that these movements and individuals showed a clear desire to integrate into the surrounding society while asserting a uniquely Jewish sense of pride that manifested itself in the images appended to the chapter, but how these connections are made escaped me, like the caption to the image of Meyer London of New York, stating: “Unquestionably a favourite son of New York’s Lower East Side, he did not need a beard to be identified as Jewish” (p. 116). The other figures and movements brought together here, almost at random, help Berkowitz make the claim that they were all engaged in a new form of ethnic politics. Hardly, I daresay, a radical thesis for anyone who has read the work of Chimen Abramsky, Jonathan Frankel and Ezra Mendelsohn, to name but a few scholars of the Jews and of the political left.

Visual imagery has much to offer historians of the Jewish past, however, its usefulness depends upon the way it is processed and interpreted. In this work we are treated to many images but left wondering what guided the author in this book—the illustrations or the themes he wished to explore. Incorporating images in historical writing is not an end in itself but a means to widen our historical understanding and through historical interpretation to further the meaning of the visual material.

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