
This set of interrelated studies is full of closely reasoned analyses and bold but careful speculation. Several of these studies provide a model, almost unique within biblical studies, of how to integrate biblical and extra-biblical data within a framework deeply informed by theory. The book is intended for specialists with expertise in technical details the book addresses but rarely pauses to describe.

This work’s breadth is noteworthy. It contains lengthy studies of Israelite cult places uncovered by archaeologists (not only familiar ones such as Arad and Beer-sheva, but also smaller and less well-known enclosures and tumuli throughout the areas in which ancient Israelites lived), cult items (altars, figurines, cult stands), inscriptions, as well as historiographic and prophetic texts from the Hebrew Bible. Zevit emphasizes that there were many forms of religious practice in ancient Israel, that various gods were worshipped in motley settings, that worshipers of YHWH may often have worshipped other deities as well, and—most significantly—that one can appreciate the varieties of religious experience in ancient Israel only by coordinating the data that come from the full range of texts, artifacts, and perspectives this study utilizes.

New insights regarding specific issues abound. Space permits only a few examples. Zevit’s discussion of the origin of the Israelites (pp. 84–121) is one of the finest treatments of this controversial issue available. His mastery of archaeological and textual data is perhaps unmatched by other scholars who write on this subject, most of whom focus on one type of evidence and are embarrassingly unfamiliar with responsible use of the others. Zevit concludes that a significant discontinuity between the Late Bronze and Iron Age populations of the highlands of Canaan emerges from several different types of evidence. It follows that the Israelites did not originate in Canaan, though significant elements of the Canaanite populations were absorbed into Israel early in the period of the monarchy. The range of evidence used by Zevit and the methodological self-consciousness with which he analyzes it render this discussion one of the most convincing ever published.

The lengthy analysis of Hebrew inscriptions is full of new readings and interpretations, which cannot be treated here. The most significant suggestion Zevit makes is that phrases like $lyhwh \, wî\, šrth$ in the Kuntillet ‘Ajrud and related inscriptions refer not to YHWH and His partner, the goddess Asherah (which is, as he notes in his painstaking review of the literature, grammatically impossible), nor to YHWH and His cult-pole, but to YHWH and the goddess named Asheratah, whose relationship to YHWH is not spelled out in the phrase itself.

Zevit proposes a startling new view of the Elohistic Psalter (Psalms 42–83). Most scholars believe that the tetragrammaton has been replaced throughout this
collection by the appellation ′elohim, perhaps due to the tendency of post-exilic Judeans to avoid pronouncing the former. Zevit rejects this explanation because the tetragrammaton’s occasional presence in these psalms suggests that it has not been systematically removed. Because some texts found in the Book of Psalms seem to have existed outside Israel as prayers to other gods (for example, Psalm 20 occurs in an Aramaic version as a prayer to Baal/Horus), Zevit proposes that the divine names removed from the Elohist Psalter were names of gods other than YHWH who were worshipped in Israelite sanctuaries. As polytheistic worship became more problematic for some Israelites, the replacement of these names by the vague term ′elohim allowed these psalms to continue in use in a less controversial way, and ultimately allowed them to be read as monotheistic texts.

Unfortunately, several factors will limit the usability, and hence the impact, of this work. In spite of its subtitle, this anthology does not synthesize the conclusions of the many individual studies it contains. It remains, rather, a collection of highly detailed discussions, united by their insistence on utilizing a wide range of material but never achieving the unity a book has. (One might contrast, say, Yehezkel Kaufmann’s eight-volume history of Israelite religion or Rainer Albertz’s two-volume history. Both contain extraordinarily detailed treatments of specific issues, but they marshal all these details on behalf of a larger thesis, so that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.) Aggravating this lack of synthesis is the absence of a detailed table of contents. It will be difficult for readers to know where topics that interest them in this encyclopedic work are located. (How would a student of Psalms know that the chapter entitled “Israelite Religions: A Paralactic Synthesis” contains what amounts to a twenty-page article on the origin of the Elohist Psalter? How would a person researching social structure know that the same chapter begins with a forty-page article on tribalism?) Moreover, the absence of a detailed table of contents makes it difficult to discern whether there is any overall trajectory to the work, much less what it is. This difficulty is made more acute by Zevit’s fairly consistent refusal to include anything resembling a thesis statement at the beginning of most chapters, sections, and sub-sections. Each hits the ground running, but where we are running is rarely made clear. This work contains impressive amounts of data, but the point of the data is not often articulated. Sometimes it is not evident that there is a specific point at all: parts of this work belong to the genre of antiquarian research rather than historiography.

This work provides a fine example of how to pursue research in the history of ancient Israel and its religions. Alas, it does not provide a model of how to publish the results.

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In this wide-ranging overview of biblical literature, Israel Knohl argues that the Hebrew Bible does not present a consistent or monolithic viewpoint concerning ancient Israel’s or Judaism’s understanding of God, itself, and the world in which it lived. Rather, Knohl contends that the Bible presents a pluralism of viewpoints that to a great degree anticipates the pluralistic outlook of Rabbinic Judaism. This will hardly come as a surprising thesis to anyone familiar with modern biblical and theological scholarship. Indeed, it takes up the classic question of unity and diversity within the Hebrew Bible that might be illustrated by Gerhard von Rad’s well-known Old Testament Theology. Von Rad recognized the diversity of traditions that informed the various writings and viewpoints now gathered in the Bible while simultaneously trying to systematize them into a general concept of *Heilsgeschichte*, that is, “salvation history” or “sacred history.” Such *Heilsgeschichte* moved inexorably to what von Rad believed would be the ultimate culmination of human history. Knohl’s contribution comes not in relation to the model of pluralism in the Bible per se, but in relation to his argument that so much of the priestly literature that engages in pluralistic debate with other biblical works is rooted in the monarchic period of ancient Israel’s (or Judah’s) history. In this respect, Knohl’s own work—although original in its own right—owes much to an earlier model advocated by Yehezkel Kaufmann, one of the founding fathers of modern Israeli biblical scholarship.

Knohl’s work is rooted in Kaufmann’s fundamental challenge to Julius Wellhausen’s literary-critical model for the formation of the Pentateuch. Wellhausen argued that the priestly source represented both the final stage in the literary history of the Pentateuch and the rise of the Temple priesthood to full leadership over the Jewish people in the post-exilic period. In Wellhausen’s model, the priestly source represented a distant, all-powerful and holy God, who relied on law to enforce social and theological uniformity. Older models of a more approachable and flexible God in the J, E, and D sources were suppressed when the P source was employed to systematize the presentation of the Pentateuch and meld these other viewpoints into a single literary work.

Knohl argues instead that the so-called priestly literature of the Pentateuch displays a great deal of diversity within itself, and that this diversity points to the variety of viewpoints found within the P literature, the setting of significant portions of the priestly literature in the monarchic period, and its interaction with other monarchic period works. He begins his study by arguing that the editing of the Torah represents the first stage in the formation of the Bible. In his view, such an editorial process entailed the gathering of material concerning creation, the patriarchs, the Exodus, the wilderness wandering, festival observance, etc., that had been known by the Temple priesthood but not by the population at large. To support his view, he points to statements in Nehemiah 8 to indicate that the people were unaware of the observance of Sukkot or other observances and to inconsistencies within the Torah (e.g., the means by which the Passover offering is cooked) that point to the variety of viewpoints found within.

Knohl’s model for the chronology of editing the Pentateuch thus resembles Wellhausen’s to a certain degree, but it differs by pointing to democratization in the study of Torah rather than a legalistic suppression of Jewish thought and reli-
Knohl argues that the crucial problem faced by the P writers was the problem of evil, and he maintains that the P writers demythologized earlier notions of diverse gods associated with nature by positing a model of primordial evil that had been suppressed by the order of creation. Nevertheless, evil continued to reinfuse the world of creation, and it would be the task of the priestly writers to develop a system for moral conduct by which human beings might resist the continuing influence of evil in the world.

In order to support his contention that the priestly tradition engaged this debate in the monarchic period, Knohl first points to Isaiah’s (and other prophets’) critique of Temple ritual in which the prophet decries ritual observance without moral foundation. To a large degree, his viewpoint concerning Isaiah and the prophets overlooks the rhetorical dimensions of the text, that is, to what extent do the prophets’ caricaturize the objects of their criticism? Did Temple ritual truly eschew moral concerns (see, e.g., Psalms 15; 24), or was that Isaiah’s way of discrediting the priesthood to make way for his own understanding of God and human responsibility? Knohl contends that Isaiah’s critique prompted a reaction within the priesthood that came to expression in the Holiness Code now found in Leviticus 17–26, which articulates a combination of ritual and moral concerns. The Holiness School thus represents an early attempt within the priesthood to collect early tradition, to reflect upon it, and to develop a synthesis between the practices and beliefs of the priesthood and the people at large. According to Knohl, the Holiness School calls for all Israel to be holy, not just the priests, and thereby begins the process by which the study of Torah is democratized among the entire Jewish people.

Although the debate within the priestly tradition emerges within the monarchic period, it influences the development of Judaism throughout the Second Temple period as well. The demise of Israelite/Judean kingship opens the way for the priestly contention that only God is king and that the divine royal representative is no longer conceived as a human king but as a quasi-divine messianic figure. Older views of human sacrifice reemerged as calls for animal sacrifice and human service to God. Ezekiel reflects a debate among the prophets concerning divine determinism and human freedom and responsibility. Second Isaiah conceives of Israel as the high priest among the nations whose task is to expiate the idolatry of the nations. Job points to such freedom and responsibility among the nations as well.

A concluding chapter points to the origins of Second Temple sectarianism, insofar as the Pharisees were the heirs of the Holiness School and the Sadducees were the heirs of a distant and removed Priestly School. These divisions emerge in Rabbinic Judaism as the schools of Hillel and Shammai with their very different approaches to halakhah.

One may note the degree to which Knohl is actually dependent on the Wellhausenian model of a legalistic and detached priesthood. Yes, the priests may have been cloistered, but were the people so ignorant of priestly teachings and the priesthood so aloof as Knohl contends? Why then would the people ever have supported the Temple in the first place? Likewise, we may ask to what extent the early priesthood eschewed moral concerns and sought to suppress earlier traditions.
Does not the incorporation of earlier tradition point to an inherent adaptability within the priesthood? Nevertheless, Knohl reminds us to reconsider our own tendencies to systematize biblical literature and our own penchant for identifying consistent biblical, priestly, or even prophetic viewpoints.

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Ithamar Gruenwald’s recent book brings together various essays the author has published over the last few years, each seeking to rethink aspects of ritual theory, especially as applied to the rituals of ancient Israel. After introducing his themes and approach in the first chapter, Gruenwald addresses (in Chapter 2) what he calls the “economic ethos” of ancient Israel, speculating that “in the history of ancient Israel, the transition from ethos to religion is connected to the passage from nomadic lifestyle to an urban one” (p. 67). The third chapter reexamines the relationship between myth and ritual. The last three chapters are devoted to ritual theory as it pertains, respectively, to rabbinic halakhah (Chapter 4), biblical sacrifice (Chapter 5), and the “Lord’s Supper,” as related primarily in the writings of Paul. Throughout the book, Gruenwald emerges as an emphatic spokesperson for the non-symbolic nature of rituals in general, and of biblical sacrifice in particular. While this book is wide-ranging in scope, a significant portion of chapters 2 and 6 are devoted to the stated theme of chapter 5: biblical sacrifice. Because Gruenwald himself believes that “sacrifices constitute the core of religion” (p. 189), perhaps the best way to review his complicated book briefly is to examine his approach to this particular ritual structure.

With regard to ritual in general and sacrifice in particular, Gruenwald maintains

that rituals create, or establish, their own meaning in the very act of doing
and in the logic that constitutes the processual manner in which they are done

Let me repeat that, to say that there is meaning in rituals is not tantamount—as many scholars think—to saying they are symbolic expressions of ideas. The meaning is contained in the performed essence of the rituals (pp. 198–199).

Put more briefly, Gruenwald elsewhere states that rituals “should be understood by what they aim to accomplish, rather than by what they stand for” (p. 69). In its emphasis on what rituals achieve, Gruenwald’s approach can be called functionalist. But unlike Mary Douglas, Clifford Geertz, Victor Turner, and many others operating in the functionalist tradition (broadly conceived), Gruenwald resists recognizing that symbols play a key role in how rituals shape or reflect societies.

There are some important contributions in this work. Gruenwald is correct to be disappointed with the current level of involvement in ritual studies by Jewish Studies scholars (though to be fair to the field, it is also important to note that Gruenwald’s bibliography is hardly complete in this regard). The author is also correct to recognize that much work on ritual in general (and sacrifice in particular) is “theology in disguise” (p. 236; cf. pp. 3, 5, 160–161, etc.). Gruenwald correctly criticizes the late-nineteenth-century evolutionist theories (189–190). Moreover, he is correct to step away from Frits Staal’s extreme reductionist position on the non-symbolic nature of rituals (p. 198). Yet Gruenwald’s overall thesis does not convince. The shortcomings of his analyses illustrate well the difficulties involved in trying to escape from either symbolism or theology when discussing rituals.

Gruenwald seems to think that his turn away from symbolism supports his effort to liberate ritual studies from theology (pp. x, 5–6). But the assertion that ritual is non-symbolic is not theologically neutral. To the contrary, this move is suspiciously reminiscent of rationalist strains in Jewish philosophy (such as Maimonides and Mendelssohn) that continue to have influence particularly in modern Orthodox circles (cf., p. xi). These approaches, in turn, have their precedents in some rabbinic texts, including the famous tradition attributed to Yohanan ben Zakkai to the effect that the red heifer ritual has no known symbolic or even rational basis. The Jewish theologians who have maintained the non-symbolic approaches to ritual—from Yohanan ben Zakkai (or whoever composed the tradition attributed to him) through Mendelssohn and beyond—have by no means articulated non-theological approaches to ritual. Gruenwald’s approach, therefore, does not truly escape theology, but rather takes a side in long-standing theological debates concerning the role of ritual in religious systems.

In the study of rituals, symbolism may well prove just as inescapable as theology. Even while he steadfastly maintains that rituals are in essence non-symbolic, Gruenwald states repeatedly that rituals have meaning. For Gruenwald, rituals are “expressions” (p. 159): they “communicate” (p. 162), “speak” (p. 176), and “represent” (p. 205). Curiously, though Gruenwald spurns theology, he adopts René Girard’s neo-gnostic approach to the meaning of sacrifice, so that offerings “mimetically assume the victim status of a person or group” (pp. 217, 259–260). But the ritual process is still not a symbolic one: sacrifice is a “real event” (p. 217).

Clearly, Gruenwald’s understanding of symbolism is rather narrow: most scholars who view rituals as representing things would not be so reluctant to speak of symbols. His evaluation of symbolism is also rather negative: rituals achieve things while “mere symbolism” is powerless (pp. 259–260).

The trick to understanding what Gruenwald is getting at is to keep in mind that the author has a tendency to redefine the terms of debate. Rituals become “behaviourally autonomous . . . expressions of the mind” (p. 2). Myths constitute “the reality configured to establish a functional relation to ritual” (p. 68). Gruenwald similarly redefines “existence” (p. 24), “ethos” (p. 41), “cosmos” (p. 69), and even “reality” (pp. 69, 195), among a number of other terms. Curiously, the term “symbolism,” is left undefined, at least as far as I can tell (unfortunately, the book lacks a general index). Then, toward the end of the book the reader discovers the author’s positive evaluation of the anthropologist Stanley J. Tambiah’s definition of ritual as a “culturally coded system of symbolic communication” (pp. 242-243). One can surely ask at this point whether Gruenwald has really demonstrated that ritual is not symbolic or whether he has just redefined all the terms in such a fashion that “symbolism” no longer means for him what it does for Tambiah or most other scholars of ritual.

Scholars surely should reserve the right to redefine terms—I could hardly advise otherwise. However, scholarly redefinitions of common terms ought to be restricted to cases where previous definitions have led to serious misunderstandings. Gruenwald has not made this case. His approach is to work in the other direction: he redefines the terms, and then complains that other scholars have failed to put things in precisely the way he would prefer. There are some serious issues discussed here, and that is what to admire in a broadly conceived, theoretically informed, bold rethinking of ritual in ancient Judaism. But when a work redefines nearly all the terms of the debate, it becomes unnecessarily difficult to evaluate or appreciate its particular contribution.

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The central thesis of Lorberbaum’s book is that according to the rabbis, the meaning of *imago dei* is that there is tangible divine presence within every human being. This concept impacted primarily upon two areas of *halakhah*: the death penalty and procreation. Since humans are physical representations of God, execution is equivalent in some ways to deicide. Conversely, procreation is strongly mandated because it increases God’s physical manifestation in the world by creating more vehicles in which to embody God’s presence. Importantly, as “images” of the divine, human beings function as icons in a manner similar to the way idols
function in the pagan world; they draw God’s presence into themselves, blurring the borders between representation and form. Finally, the drawing of God’s presence into the human body dictates that human beings are embodied with significant theurgic powers.

This thesis rests upon two components: anthropomorphism and anthropology. The Tannaim had an anthropomorphic conception of God. Their deity was a God with a concrete physical form and a complex personality, similar to the biblical conception of God. The tannaic conception of humans as created in God’s image is also an expression of their anthropology, which takes into account both the human intellectual/spiritual capacities and the body’s concrete dimensions.

In the first two of three introductory methodological chapters, the author surveys previous scholarly work on *imago dei* and anthropomorphism in rabbinic thought. Lorberbaum demonstrates how deeply scholars have been influenced by both the Maimonidean transcendent and incorporeal deity and by their own rational biases. Rabbis of the mishnaic and talmudic periods, according to Lorberbaum, rarely conceived of God as being incorporeal but rather ineffable. God’s body may be hidden from human beings, but God does have a form. The third methodological chapter deals with the intimate connection between *halakhah* and *aggadah*. For Lorberbaum not only does *aggadah* impact *halakhah*, but halakhic rulings and biblical exegeses are the source through which rabbinic theosophy can be deciphered, for the rabbis shaped and expressed their theosophy through *halakhah* as much as *aggadah*.

A large portion of the book is dedicated to demonstrating how the concept of *imago dei* affected the death penalty and modes of execution. The Tannaim shaped three out of the four modes of execution—strangling, burning, and stoning—so as to cause as little damage to the body as possible, for the body is an icon of God. They limited post-mortem hanging to a bare minimum of time and its applicability to only a few crimes. Decapitation is the exception that proves the rule, for it is the punishment for the murderer, the very crime which diminishes the image of God. The Tannaim imposed radically strict requirements for judicial procedure and criminal conviction, which made execution virtually impossible to carry out. Their concept of *imago dei* led to an outright opposition of execution as punishment, despite its prevalence in the Bible.

Lorberbaum’s work on the death penalty is familiar terrain. This is the third book to be published in less than a decade that deals with the rabbinic prescriptions for carrying out execution. Whereas Moshe Halbertal in *Interpretive Revolutions in the Making* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 1997) claimed that the rabbis shaped the death penalty to express the dignity of the human body (a moral value), Lorberbaum attributes these exegeses and halakhot to tannaic theosophy and theurgy. Another difference is that Lorberbaum analyzes the outright opposition to the death penalty whereas this topic is not covered in Halbertal’s work. In contrast to both, Aharon Shemesh in *Punishments and Sins: From Scripture to the Rabbis* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2003) emphasizes the rabbinic midrashic impulse as being a much greater contributor to the shaping of *halakhah*. The close appearance of these three books makes for fertile comparison between their different approaches. The debate over
the proper setting for rabbinic *halakhah*, exegesis (Shemesh), encryption of values/morality (Halbertal) or theosophy/theurgy (Lorberbaum) is a debate over the very identity of the rabbis themselves, a debate that is at the heart of modern rabbinic scholarship.

There are two issues barely touched on in the book that deserve mention. At the end of his conclusion, Lorberbaum mentions only briefly the concept of Israel as God’s chosen people, an exclusive conception of Israel which conflicts with the universalistic concept of *imago dei*. Most of Lorberbaum’s book deals with Rabbi Akiva’s first statement in M. Avoth 3:14, “Precious is *adam* for he was created in the image [of God]” Rabbi Akiva’s next statement, “Precious is Israel in that they are called children to the Omnipresent,” seems to propose a genealogical relationship with God, one exclusive of other human beings. The reconciliation of this second statement with the first deserves deeper exploration, and indeed the author is currently working on a book on this very topic. Similarly, the book does not deal with issues of gender. When conceiving of an embodied God, did the Tannaim conceive of God as engendered, gender-neutral, or perhaps dual-gendered?

Lorberbaum’s book is in the process of being translated into English and will hopefully be published by 2005–06. In translation, it should have impact not only on scholars of rabbinics, but also on scholars of early Christianity and Gnosticism, as well as on a wide range of scholars of religion and religious history. Lorberbaum discusses the shift in concepts of holiness from the Second Temple period to the post-destruction era. He also very briefly surveys other post-70 CE Jewish groups for whom the idea of *imago dei* was also central. However, since the book is about the Tannaim and not ancient Judaism, he does not develop these ideas. The ideas that the presence of God is represented in every human being and that the human being is the seat of holiness are rich concepts in the study of the various forms of ancient Judaism, including early Christianity in its various forms. When translated and available to a broader range of scholars, Lorberbaum’s book should serve as a new and critical starting point for inquiry into the relationship between early Christianity, Gnosticism, Neoplatonism, and rabbinic Judaism.

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Three texts are scrutinized in this monograph: *Hayy ibn Yaqzan* (Alive son of Awake), the Epistle or philosophic “Recital” composed in Arabic prose by the Muslim sage ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980–1037); *Hayy ben Meqitz*, the closely related Hebrew poem composed by the Andalusian Jewish sage Abraham ibn Ezra (1089–1164); and *Hayy ibn Yaqzan*, the more loosely related Arabic treatise composed by the Andalusian Muslim sage Abu Bakr ibn Tufayl (1116–1185). Each of
the texts is well known to specialists in medieval intellectual history. Editions and critical discussions abound, almost all of them listed in the bibliography (pp. 245-65). The Arabic texts have long been accessible in reliable English translations. Thanks to Aaron W. Hughes, the same can now be said for ibn Ezra’s less familiar narrative poem. In the appendix (pp. 189–207), the poem is rendered into English based on the original Hebrew text published in 1983 by Israel Levin. The translation is enhanced by references to the biblical idioms employed by ibn Ezra who ingeniously transformed ibn Sina’s profoundly Islamic original into an equally stunning Hebrew gem.

The value of Hughes’s monograph far exceeds the welcome offering of an annotated English translation of ibn Ezra’s poem. Levin’s editorial agenda did not include the investigation of ibn Tufayl’s classic. Levin also preferred to stress major differences between ibn Sina’s “Epistle” and ibn Ezra’s poem. On both counts, to our benefit, Hughes departs from Levin. Having noticed numerous stylistic and doctrinal affinities among these three diverse texts, Hughes argues that they constellate. First, he contends that the three medieval texts share a common origin in ancient prophetic revelations and apocalyptic ascents to heaven. Second, he proposes that the medieval texts belong to the same literary cycle or genre. This genre is distinguished by an elaborate fusion of technical philosophy with imaginative literature. Third, he maintains that the genre serves as literary surrogate to living psychopomps who lead their disciples to philosophically informed human perfection. Hughes names the genre Neoplatonic “initiatory tales” (p. 19).

The monograph’s title is therefore more alluring than informative. Readers ought not expect to find a discussion of imagination in all of medieval Jewish and Islamic thought, especially its treatment among Sufis and Kabbalists. By “medieval thought,” Hughes strictly means the eleventh- and twelfth-century Neoplatonic philosophers, among whom he problematically includes Maimonides (p. 227 n. 61). Hughes apparently miscalculated Maimonides’s critique of positive attributes and Neoplatonic aesthetics (pp. 103, 150).

Readers will also not find a discussion of imagination in medieval Islamic theories of prophecy and political philosophy (p. 129). By imagination, Hughes strictly means the “inner eye,” the human capacity that produces cataphatic images of the apophatic divine. Neoplatonic imagination, according to Hughes, forges stirring symbols of spiritual being out of the raw material of corporeal multiplicity and evanescent becoming. These symbols simultaneously affirm the physical order and enable human transcendence of that order as the prerequisite to soteriological “permanence” (p. 150). Neoplatonism, at least in its medieval Jewish and Islamic guises, therefore emerges in Hughes’s exposition as less ascetic than scholarly convention traditionally assumes.

More so than the title, chapter headings indicate the true scope of authorial intention and accomplishment: “Reading the Divine: A User’s Guide to the Initiatory Tale” (pp. 13–47), “Reading Between the Lines: Text as Encounter with the Divine” (pp. 49–81), “Polishing a Dirty Mirror: The Philosphic Imagination” (pp. 82–114), “The Initiation of the Philosopher: Ritual Poetics and the Quest for Meaning” (pp. 115–145), and “‘God is Beautiful and Loves Beauty’: The Role of Aesthetics in Medieval Islamic and Jewish Philosophy” (pp. 146–184). The clus-
tered reiteration of “reading,” “tale,” “lines,” “text,” and “poetics” indicates that Hughes is less interested in exploring the tactile implications of the term “texture” than in mapping “the attempt to textualize the ineffable” (p. 1). Hughes contends that the three texts record visionary journeys across the Great Chain of Being. These journeys culminate in a trans-rational, religious encounter with divinity, the Neoplatonic “flight of the alone to the Alone,” and that subsequent readers empathetically undergo similar journeys, attaining similar transformative encounters. “This visionary experience of God,” according to Hughes, champion of philosop-
  
phizing with literature, “can only occur within a rich narrative setting such as that which the reader encounters in” these tales (p. 40, emphasis added). The exclusivity of his claim is open to challenge.

Scrupulous as he is in Chapters 1 and 3 to describe the historical circumstances of the authors and to locate the three texts within their complex literary traditions, Hughes is less conscientious in specifying the gender and predisposition of the “reader . . . [who] is invited to experience the same journey as the [text’s] protagonist” (p. 187). This is presumably the same “reader [who] is transformed and emerges as a different person when he or she finishes the tale” (p. 145). Visionary experiences and literary texts are not synonymous. Texts are not machines infallibly producing uniform results; readers are not automatons. Not every medieval Jew or Muslim can be expected to have fancied Neoplatonic fictions. Confronting the texts, numerous medieval Jews or Muslims might have been left cold or provoked to object. Like Odysseus before them, and many moderns after them, including Friedrich Nietzsche and Martha Nussbaum (p. 212, nn.13–17), they might have resisted the bookish invitation to “transcend humanity.” That Hughes seems unaware of these possibilities may be due to his exhilarating and learned immersion in the realm of embodied Neoplatonic aesthetics. His exposition of this relatively ignored, world-affirming realm will provide great pleasure to medievalists who love Neoplatonism and find aesthetics compelling.

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Marc Shapiro puts an explicit contemporary context on this remarkable collection of sources that disagreed with one part or other of Maimonides’ Thirteen Principles—the beliefs Maimonides asserted were absolutely necessary to be considered a believing Jew and to attain the World to Come. By showing the extent to which past authors disagreed with those Principles, Shapiro seeks to debunk assertions by contemporary writers that place those Principles at the core of Orthodox belief.
As a potpourri of ideas, the work is astonishing in its range. Shapiro uses his daunting bibliographical abilities and his considerable skill as a writer to present his material—well-known and obscure—cogently and entertainingly. To the reader interested in the limits of the theological imagination of Jews, it is not likely to be soon rivaled. What he has not done is offer intellectual history or made a relevant theological argument. For history, Shapiro would have at least had to place each idea cited in the context of the time and place in which it developed. What we have instead is a large amount of undigested data, which would need much fleshing out to become history.

Space considerations prevent critiquing that aspect of the work any further, since listing the problems in Shapiro's main endeavor—using his sources to support a claim about Orthodox theology today—will take more than the rest of this review. First and most problematically, Shapiro explicitly assumes that consensus among Orthodox thinkers cannot render heretical a position once taken as legitimate by a traditional scholar (pp. 141–146). He cites three authors on this issue, two of whom agree with him—David Weiss Halivni and Chaim Rapoport. Problematically, those two are not clearly adopting Orthodox positions. The Orthodox world does not generally recognize Weiss Halivni as one of theirs; regardless of his personal practice and beliefs, he provides little evidence of Orthodox theology. Rapoport, a practicing Orthodox rabbi, ratified Shapiro's view in a work written to support a belief that had but one or two sources to support it, so that his claim is already suspect. More, he assumed that view to defend those who believed that the late Lubavitcher Rebbe could still be the Messiah, which David Berger more convincingly showed is not an Orthodox view. Whatever one thinks of Rapoport in general, his views on the status of a lone source as a lasting part of Orthodox theology are suspect because of the context in which he offered them.

Shapiro's other source, J. David Bleich—an unquestionably Orthodox thinker—assumes that consensus can in fact convert once-acceptable views to heresy. In a footnote, Shapiro notes several post-medieval rabbinic authorities who determined matters of faith in a proto-halakhic fashion, where consensus becomes normative.

Whether Weiss Halivni and Rapoport's views on this matter can be considered Orthodox is crucial because Shapiro is making an assertion about Orthodox theology. If Bleich's position correctly defines Orthodoxy, views from the past are only relevant if they remain plausible elements of the consensus today. Shapiro's claim that any view that was at one time non-heretical remains an option within Orthodoxy, for which he has no Orthodox support, explains why he cares about these sources when contemporary Orthodox thinkers need not.

The specific sources Shapiro cites sometimes weaken his argument, also. Since he reads Maimonides as demanding agreement with all details of his Principles, he can use citations that accept the fundamental idea of the Principles but argue with a detail as proof that later Jews did not accept Maimonides' Principles as completely binding. Aside from the logical implausibility of this reading of Maimonides—it leads to absurd positions such as Shapiro's assumption that Maimonides would have labeled a heretic anyone who thought the Messiah could come from a different Davidic line than Solomon's—Shapiro himself offers plentiful ev-
idence that Maimonides held a more complicated view than he recorded in the Commentary on the Mishnah.

As he notes, the content of the Principles appears in Maimonides’ later works, but without the same emphasis or prominence. In addition, Shapiro shows us that Maimonides could not have accepted at least some of the Principles as he stated them (pp. 71-77 and pp. 115-117).

Just as Maimonides simplified his true position for the audience of the Commentary, the Orthodox thinkers who aroused Shapiro’s pique were simplifying a more complex reality as well. To pick an easy example, many of the disagreements that Shapiro finds stem from Kabbalah, a stream of thought well known to Orthodox thinkers. It is literally unbelievable that the writers Shapiro quotes meant to require adherence to the Principles to the exclusion of well-known Kabbalistic beliefs. What those writers meant was that the Principles conveniently encompass broad categories of belief. Within each category, sophisticated thinkers may adopt differing positions, differences not vital for the general populace to understand. Shapiro could have performed a real service had he clarified the kinds of differences that Orthodox thinkers today can tolerate as “within” the Principles, but he chose a less useful approach.

Shapiro’s reliance on otherwise unknown authors further limits the utility of the book. He includes any writer who self-identified with the traditional community and was “regarded as such by significant, if not overwhelming, segments of this community” (p. 28). That only shows that the writer thought of himself as Orthodox and managed to convince his contemporaries of the same. Maimonides’ whole point, though, was that sincerity or ritual fidelity does not create doctrinal acceptability. Before a source is useful in defining Orthodox belief, we would need to know not only that its author was traditional in his actions, but that his ideas were known and accepted as plausible by those qualified to judge.

Even with these caveats, the book lays the groundwork for a really useful work defining the limits of Orthodox theology. Although Shapiro only proves what reasonably educated Jews already knew—that Orthodox theology has grown in size and complexity since Maimonides’ time—he gives a wonderful head start to anyone choosing to write the more useful book buried within that would combine intellectual history with analysis of the state of belief today to define when, where, and on what issues current Orthodoxy allowed and allows disputing Maimonides. That book awaits writing.

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Pinchas Giller is one of the finest contemporary scholars of the zoharic corpus. His current study, Reading the Zohar, constitutes an excellent sequel to his
earlier book, *The Enlightened Will Shine*. The Zohar certainly warrants the kind of thoughtful and serious reflection that Giller devotes to it, insofar as the Zohar is a massive, complex corpus consisting of some two dozen distinct strata. In *Enlightened*, Giller examined major themes in *Tikkunei Zohar* and *Ra’aya Mehenna*. Although these are rich and interesting compositions, chronologically they are among the latest and were undoubtedly written by someone other than whoever was responsible for the foundational writings of the Zohar. In *Reading the Zohar*, Giller is primarily concerned with three seminal aspects of the zoharic corpus: *Saba’ de-mishpatim*, cosmogonic descriptions that are preserved in various strata, and the four interconnected *Idrot* texts. On its own, an analysis of such disparate and challenging sources would be an admirable undertaking. What makes Giller’s study even more ambitious is that he also examines how these particular works were studied and interpreted. In particular, Giller is interested in how the kabbalists of Safed, most notably R. Moses Cordovero and R. Isaac Luria, incorporated these zoharic texts into their distinctive theosophical systems.

Giller divides his study into seven chapters, consisting of 157 pages of relatively small font text and 50 pages of erudite endnotes. Additionally, there is a 15-page appendix of translations from two of the *Idrot* followed by an extensive bibliography and index. In Chapter 1, he sets the stage by discussing the Zohar and its commentators. One of the important issues that he grapples with is how the Zohar achieved its status as a sacred text, thereby becoming the fulcrum of the medieval Jewish mystical tradition. Although he pays special attention to the centrality of the Zohar among the kabbalists of Safed, it is surprising that he neglects to underscore nearby Meron and the pilgrimages made by these mystics to the grave of R. Shimon bar Yohai, the central figure in the Zohar.

Whereas the latter half of the first chapter proceeds chronologically in its overview of zoharic commentators, towards its beginning there is a brief, one-page section that is enigmatically titled, “Doctrinal Development.” Therein Giller summarizes the twentieth-century scholarly debate on the authorship of the Zohar. He notes that Gershom Scholem’s theory of Rabbi Moses de Leon as the Zohar’s author has been challenged in recent years by Yehuda Liebes. Liebes has persuasively argued that the various strata, with their heterogeneous doctrines, suggest multiple authors. Liebes also suggested that the central figure of R. Shimon bar Yohai might have been modeled after R. Todros Abulafia, and that Abulafia and his kabbalistic circle might have been responsible for some of the zoharic material. Giller endorses Liebes’ theory without developing it any further.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the *Saba’ de-mishpatim* section (Zohar 2:94b—114a). This cohesive text offers the most comprehensive discussion of reincarnation in the Zohar. Giller exposes it as being suffused with erotic pain and love. He provides an excellent analysis of multiple facets of the soul and its erotically charged involvement in marriage, divorce, and procreation. Chapter 3 is entitled *Hormanuta*, that is, Royal Will, and deals with zoharic cosmogony. Giller assembles a number of related passages found in different strata. In so doing, he analyzes key terms, such as *buzina’ de-kardinuta*, “most widely understood as the instrument through which God begins the emanation of the ten sefirot” (p. 70). Howev-
er, the differing ways that he renders the passage from the Sifra’ de-Zeniuta’s allusion to the death of the Edomite kings is disconcerting. In the body of the book, Giller cites it as: “the primordial kings died and their unions were not found” (p. 96). In his appended translation, this sentence reads: “The primordial kings died and their weapons vanished” (p. 159).

Chapters 4–7 constitute the second half of the book and focus on the four interrelated texts of the ‘Idrot. They comprise the most complex theosophical speculations within the Zohar and were highly esteemed by the Safedian kabbalists. Giller offers an overview of the central issues of the ‘Idrot, such as the symbolic death of the kings, and he also raises, but does not resolve, the problematic relationship between the ‘Idrot and the Sifra’ de-Zeniuta’. Although he presents a solid analysis of how R. Moses Cordovero interpreted these key texts, the real value is his nuanced treatment of R. Isaac Luria’s appropriation of zoharic texts in his radical formulations of Divine anthropos and the dynamic relationship between intradivine processes and the created universe. In so doing, Giller effectively counters Scholem’s thesis that Lurianic theosophy, especially the doctrine of shevirat ha-kelim (breaking of the vessels), was a response to the historical trauma of the banishment of Iberian Jewry. Instead, Giller demonstrates that Luria was primarily concerned with resolving textual tensions within the Zohar itself. In sum, Pinchas Giller has successfully tackled two of the most recondite aspects of the Jewish mystical tradition and presented them in a lucid, edifying, and highly readable manner.

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... ... ...


German Jewish communities underwent momentous changes in status, composition, and character during the fifteenth century, yet apart from its intellectual legacy, this period has merited scant attention from historians. Even contemporaries viewed the post-plague German communities as a diminished and spent shadow of their vital medieval Ashkenazic predecessors, and historiography has maintained this perception. Scholars characterized the period as one of intellectual decline, population shrinkage and expulsion from the remaining cities that had not destroyed or expelled their Jewish communities during the bubonic plague depredations. Despite the real devastation caused by the fourteenth-century chaos, much vibrant life remained within German Jewish communities.1 Little has been

1. For the best portraits of Jewish intellectual life and rabbinic leadership in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries, see Yedidya Alter Dinari, Ḥakhme Ashkenaz be-shilte Yeme ha-benayim:
written, particularly in English, concerning the reasons for subsequent Christian resistance to the presence of Jews and the effects of new Christian conceptions of their own communities on Jewish self-perception. Bell’s book intends to fill this gap. Neither a social history, nor an intellectual history of fifteenth-century Germans and Jews, it is a pioneering attempt to track the changing definitions of Jewish and Christian identity in the fifteenth century. It is an ambitious enterprise.

Bell begins by examining the changes that led to the exclusion of Jews from German cities in the course of the fifteenth century. A rich trove of chronicles, records, sermons, and other primary sources written by Christian contemporaries of the events forms the foundation for Bell’s analysis. Bell puts these sources to excellent use. His first chapter focuses on changes in the governance of German cities in a critical period of their growth, c. 1300–1500. It is followed by a discussion of the changes taking place in urban morality with a late medieval theological shift of emphasis to moral behavior rather than sacrament as the agent of spiritual transformation.

The influence of penitential sermons on the urban population and the laicization of sacred spaces led to the blurring of boundaries within the cities between profane and sacred spheres. Bell’s strength lies in his direct analysis of primary sources. His discussion of the role of language is rather derivative and banal when it rounds up secondary theoretical material. But as soon as Bell gets to an actual chronicle and its specific locutions, such as that of Burkhard Zink and his use of various terms that denote inclusion or exclusion, particularly the term *gemain*, Bell’s work shines.

Bell’s study of the changing Jewish community and its self-definitions in this period combines similar balances of strengths and weakness. He marks the transition from the period in which the *kehilla* was the primary repository of communal authority before the Black Death, to the reconfiguration of Jewish settlement patterns after the plague, which resulted in the formation of regional associations (but no reference to the monumental work of Daniel Cohen on *Landjudenschaften*), as an essential turning point. He has made excellent use of the newest volumes of Germania Judaica which cover the years until 1519, even devoting a special appendix to it (Appendix A-E, 255–260), but other important works, such as the monographs of Hava Fraenkel-Goldschmidt, are underutilized.

Bell’s strengths as a close reader highlight one of the primary puzzles of this work: his persistent, even perverse, resort to filtering primary texts through secondary sources whenever possible, including primary sources available in editions listed in his bibliography and used elsewhere in the book. Why cite Terumat ha-Deshen of Isserlein (p. 172) from the Ben-Sasson textbook when it is listed among the primary sources and available in modern editions? Or R. Meir of Rothenberg,
Maharam, through a citation in Freehof’s *Treasury of Responsa* (p. 174); Kenneth Stow as a source for the Jerusalem Talmud (p. 197)? In a book about fifteenth-century German Jewish identity, the readers deserve references to the primary sources.

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Jehiel Jacob Weinberg was, and remains, one of the outstanding figures of Modern Orthodoxy, along with David Zvi Hoffmann, Isaac Herzog, and Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Shapiro’s exemplary biography marks the onset of a new stage in biographical scholarship about leading Orthodox personalities, moving beyond the hagiographies (which brought the figures to attention while affirming the Orthodox community) and the pioneer studies of Aharon Sorasky and Aharon Rak-effet-Rothkoff, and is a mandate for Judaic scholars to study the other greats (including the Hofets Hayim, Hayim Hirschensohn, Meir Shapiro of Lublin, Nathan Birnbaum, Hayim Ozer Grodzensky and Jakob Rosenheim). This book tells us what it takes to be a pathfinder in the world of twentieth-century Orthodox Judaism: the courage to carry a Hegelian-like dialectic about religious options to conclusion in a world of societal turmoil and historical trauma. As Weinberg moved from Slobodka to Pilwishki (Lithuania), to Giessen, Berlin, and then through the Warsaw ghetto, detention camp in Wülzburg, and finally to Montreux, he existentialized the struggle between the isolated talmudic culture of Eastern Europe and the Talmud *cum* secular culture of the West and its synthetic conclusion.

Weinberg was a man of the sacred. He recalled how the Musar great, Yitshak Blazer, spoke on the Yom Kippur before he went to Palestine, dressed in his white *Kittel* and wrapped in his *Tallit*: “Here was a man, a giant who had not stopped studying all his life, sobbing his fear that he had not fulfilled his duty to the Almighty. . . . Whenever Yom Kippur night arrives, I relive that sacred hour, the holy face, the awesome scene, the timeless faith” (p. 9). He found a vessel for the sacred in the Knesset Yisrael Yeshivah of Slobodka, where Nathan Zvi Finkel grafted introspection to improve one’s human character onto study of the Talmud, and then in the *yeshivah* world of Pilwishki. For Weinberg of Pilwishki, the intellectual and moral identity of Judaism was to be found only in the traditional Jewish communities of Eastern Europe, where it was severed from general culture. Jewish ethics were to be drawn from the divine will, not extracted from universal categories; secular studies were of themselves useless in terms of the sacred center: “Those who say that we should grab the coat corners of our young ones who are led astray and attract them with the beauty of Japhet so that we bring them into
the tents of Shem are making a great mistake. For when the spark of self-sacrifice has vanished from the heart, hope for Judaism is lost” (p. 27).

However, Weinberg left his Eastern European world for medical treatment in Germany, war broke out between Germany and Russia preventing return, and he began to see things differently. He recognized the need to go beyond the Talmud to cope with changing times. Before, he was willing to sacrifice the outer core of Jewry, which looked to secular culture because it was detached from the center. Now he was willing to turn from the center for the moment to face surrounding historical realities. He advocated scientific study—as a student of Paul Kahle and as an instructor of Bible and Rabbinics at the University of Giessen—and he assumed the leadership of the Berlin Rabbinical (Hildesheimer) Seminary, known for its prerequisite of secular education and advocacy of Wissenschaft des Judentums’s study of Jewish texts. Before, he discounted the role of religious laymen in the survival of Judaism, which he believed depended upon Torah study. Now he saw the need to combine Torah study with professional training. He embraced Samson Raphael Hirsch’s Torah im derekh erez (Torah and culture) doctrine, which he had earlier rejected. Before, he idealized the ghetto’s isolation; now he “came to agree with Hirsch that it was the ghetto which had caused a major distortion in Jewish values. It was the ghetto and other persecutions which had turned Judaism into a religion of ritual and the synagogue” (pp. 154–155). Before, he shared company with Israel Meir Hacohen and Eliyahu Dessler; now he belonged alongside Hanokh Ehrentreu and Yeshayahu Wolfsberg. Still, none of this meant a dilution of his sacred commitment to Blazer’s God. He grounded the Seminary students in the Lithuanian yeshivah method of Talmud study—it was a precondition for using the critical approach. In 1934, Grodzensky encouraged Weinberg to transform the Berlin Seminary into a yeshivah, “because one must ascend in holiness, not descend.” But Weinberg’s ascent was in place—he just no longer needed to turn his back to the secular universe, or separate piety from science, art, politics and professional life, to keep it so.

Then came Kristallnacht, the Warsaw ghetto, and detention camp in Wülzburg—and after that, twenty years in Montreux. Weinberg would not go to the Land of Israel: “There are different worlds there, which reject and hate one another. I am part of two worlds; and which one should I choose when I go there?” (p. 176 n. 16). In true dialectical fashion, the “thesis” of sacred life in Pilwishki included the seed of “antithesis”: namely, Finkel’s approach to Musar, which stressed the dignity of humanity, the condition for the possibility of openness to the humanistic dimension of secular and scientific study, and the notion that besides studying the laws of kashrut, students should strive to enable Judaism to become a spiritual force for humans. The antithesis in Germany contained the Lithuanian method of Talmud study, so that when the talmudic vessel of sacred ascent moved west it was not diluted but potentially strengthened by critical and historical analysis. There were two spheres, each containing something of the other, potentially or actually. After the chaos of the Holocaust, Weinberg settled into his own isolated world in Montreux, as a renowned halakhist distilling the cultures of East and West into rulings of historical impact for Judaism. Writing Samuel Atlas about his geographic loneliness, he expressed the holiness that imbued his synthesis as
he contemplated the end: “Only the pure righteous ones are at peace with death, because they believe that it is a gateway from life to life, from degraded life to exalted life, and even then they do not want to die” (p. 174). In her comprehensive essay, “Between East and West: Modernity and Traditionalism in the Writings of Rabbi Yehiel Weinberg,” Judith Bleich characterizes Weinberg as an intermediary who interpreted Zionist aspirations to the non-Zionist Orthodox, fears among the religious secular nationalists, women’s rights to the devout, text-critical study to rabbinic scholars, and pilpul to academicians. Beyond this mediating function, Weinberg’s whole life was a progressive internal reconciliation of the two sides. Why, or more importantly, how, was he supposed to split himself asunder and choose academic scholarship/torah ‘im derekh erez in the Holy Land?

Shapiro’s mastery of rabbinic and historical sources, the fact that no relevant archival or published source is untouched, the superb contextual studies (Eastern European views of German Orthodoxy, Jewish educational changes in the interwar period, shehitah legislation, Grossgemeinde vs. Austrittsgemeinde), the 1,037 enriching and critical footnotes, make this a classic. With the story of Weinberg’s life and work now complete, it is time for the intellectual historian’s questions. Was the relationship between the Lithuanian yeshivah and the Berlin Seminary as dualistic as scholars take for granted—or did the respective proponents rather reside on opposite sides of a continuum, such that all involved belonged to a larger synthesis? How did the biographical reality of Weinberg’s circumstantial move to Germany relate to his ideological transformation; would he have changed ideas without his geographical change in perspective? Was his early identification with Musar (as I suggest) a prelude to his later openness to historical developments of scholarship? How may his initial gratitude for Hitler’s fight against Communism and atheism be understood in the context of his German Orthodoxy? Why did he have so much to say about the Jewish state, but so little about the Holocaust?

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This book searchingly reexamines and sheds much new light on subjects that might already seem to have received more than enough scholarly attention. Ronald Schechter succeeds in offering an intriguing new account of the attitude of the thinkers of the French Enlightenment, some of their heirs, and some of their enemies toward the Jews. He also presents a challenging, if less than fully convinc-

ing, interpretation of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century French Jews’
response to what was being said about them and what was happening to them.

Unlike Arthur Hertzberg, with whom he almost never bothers to take issue,
Schechter draws no sharp line of demarcation between friendly thinkers like Mon-
tesquieu and enemies of the Jews like Voltaire. Instead, he highlights the similari-
ties between these two men and others who condemned past mistreatment of the
Jews and deplored various aspects of their tradition and current condition but still
believed in the possibility of their successful rehabilitation in the future. If many
of these men’s narratives and hopes “resemble one another, it is because they all
took as their model (no doubt unconsciously) the three-act biblical drama of Par-
adise, Paradise Lost, and Paradise Regained” (p. 107). Not the heritage of classi-
cal antiquity but notions unwittingly derived from Christianity constitute the pri-
mary roots of many early modern thinkers’ aspirations to bring about “what they
revealingly called the regeneration of the Jews” (p. 108). This does not mean that
they continued to ascribe any special theological or metaphysical significance to
the Jewish people. But they did come to think of it as a sort of test case for mea-
suring the limits of human perfectibility. If the Jews, “the most recalcitrant, obsti-
nate people could improve, then all peoples could improve” (p. 105).

Those who denied that the Jews were corrige ble were in Schechter’s opinion
by no means heirs of the Enlightenment. In his sole explicit disagreement with
Arthur Hertzberg, he flatly rejects his characterization of François Hell, the insti-
gator of the “false receipts” affair in Alsace, as a pupil of Voltaire. “Even the most
cursory reading” of his anti-Semitic writings, he observes, “reveals a set of con-
victions and a narrative style that are entirely at odds with those of the philosophe”
(p. 68). Following his own careful and insightful analysis of Hell’s essentially un-
enlightened outlook, Schechter similarly shows how incorrect it is to regard a harsh
critic of the Jews named Latour-Foissac, another key figure in Hertzberg’s famous
genealogy of modern anti-Semitism, as an heir of Voltaire.

In the part of his book devoted to the Jews’ post-revolutionary response to
the new estimations of their history and their potential for improvement, Schechter
seeks to demonstrate that they were anything but putty in the hands of those who
wished to refashion them. On the basis of extensive analysis of apologetic writ-
ings, patriotic prayers, poems, early Jewish journalism, the record of the Paris San-
hedrin, and other sources, he concludes that the “Jews were not assimilated by the
dominant culture, despite the proclaimed intentions of most Gentile regenera-
tionists. They assimilated that culture into their own. That is to say, they recognized
its values as their own without undergoing a fundamental transformation of iden-
tity” (p. 179).

Unfortunately, Schechter arrives at this broad conclusion without giving due
consideration to the worldviews of men like the Jewish leader of the revolutionary
era, Berr Isaac Berr, whose eagerness to see the Jews immerse themselves in Gen-
tile culture seems to have greatly exceeded their attachment to their own heritage.
Nor does he weigh the full implications of something that he himself notes: many
Jews seem to have recognized as their own whatever happened to be the dominant
culture’s values at any given moment. In the early 1790s, for instance, Möise En-
sheim, a Hebrew poet living in Metz, affirmed that “the revolutionary values of
equality and justice were Jewish values revealed by God and enshrined in the highest of all laws: the Torah” (p. 188). A mere decade later, other French Jewish poets celebrated Napoleon as their father, likening him to the messiah and even to God. Such a shift makes it difficult to affirm, along with Schechter, that the evidence “suggests that the Jews were assimilating la grande nation far more than they were being assimilated to it” (p. 233). But even if he is not entirely convincing on this score, Schechter succeeds in elucidating self-affirming aspects of the French Jewish response to the Enlightenment and Emancipation that many previous historians have tended to overlook. This is not the least of his book’s very considerable merits.

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In his epilogue to The Politics of Canonicity, Michael Gluzman has aptly delineated the parameters of this book, by writing that it “originates from the American debate on canon formation and cultural wars that predominated academic discourse during my years at University of California, Berkeley” (p. 181). This statement firmly sets its author within a critical context that auspiciously brings a wider literary discourse, such as that sustained by Chana Kronfeld and Hannan Hever,1 into the realm of modern Hebrew poetry. In particular, The Politics of Canonicity is identified by its publication in the series entitled Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences, which has a primary interest in the ongoing redefinition of Jewish identity and culture, specifically involving issues of gender, modernity, and politics.2 The Politics of Canonicity is effectively divided into two parts. In the first, comprising Chapters 1 and 2, Gluzman provides the intellectual and historical context for the interwoven formation of national identity and the literary canon in modern Hebrew literature. In particular, in Chapter 1 he relates the story of the 1896–1897 debate between Ahad Ha’am and Mikha Yosef Berdichevsky,
arguing that it produced a dominant and regulative paradigm of Hebrew literature that integrates the private and public, the aesthetic and the national. In the second chapter, Gluzman discusses the way in which Hebrew modernism created a counterpoint to international modernism’s glorification of exile. He discusses a full range of premodernist and modernist Hebrew poets—Shaul Tchernichovsky, Avigdor Hameiri, Avraham Shlonsky, Noach Stern, and Leah Goldberg—in order to underline their resistance to “the idea of exile as a literary privilege or as an inherently Jewish vocation” (p. 37), a resistance which Gluzman determines as calling into question “the critical tendency to read modernist practices as essentially antinationalist” (p. 37).

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 move from the more general discussion of Hebrew modernism to a focus on the individual poets who, Gluzman asserts, were marginalized because of their respective undermining of this paradigm. The third chapter discusses the career of David Fogel (1891–1944), which Gluzman perceives as “marked by his refusal (or inability) to participate in any collective enterprise, be it national or literary” (p. 69). Gluzman employs David Lloyd’s definition of minor literature both to classify Fogel’s poetry and to explain its marginal status in the modernist Hebrew canon. He also integrates sensitive readings of poems by Fogel with those by Avraham Shlonsky and Uri Zvi Greenberg (central figures of Hebrew modernism), as well as with poetic manifestos and public debates, to recreate the cultural context in which they wrote.

Chapters 4 and 5 present innovative discussions of, respectively, Hebrew literature’s reception of its first women poets and of Avot Yeshurun’s 1952 poem “Passover on Caves.” In the fourth chapter, Gluzman focuses on Rahel Bluwstein (1890–1931), Esther Raab (1894–1981), and Anda Pinkerfeld-Amir (1902–1981) in an effort to recover their participation in Israeli cultural memory. He investigates the cultural history of Judaism and Zionism through the lens of theoreticians such as Irigaray and Foucault, to refocus the poetics and lines of influence in Hebrew modernism. Bluwstein’s “interest in simplicity,” Raab’s “fascination with open forms,” and Pinkerfeld-Amir’s “rejection of excessive literariness,” as well as their “shared effort to develop a language of the self” (p. 140) are justly given a central place in the reconstruction of the narrative of Hebrew modernism. Chapter 5 examines a single poetic text by Avot Yeshurun (1903–1991), with both the immediate goal of reversing the poet’s marginal status within the canon of Hebrew poetry and the more general goal of understanding the process and proscriptions that determined this status. Gluzman locates Yeshurun’s marginalization in his radical disclosure of all that Zionism had repressed and excluded (Jewish history and tradition, the Yiddish language, and the Arab presence in ‘erez yisra’el). To support this claim, Gluzman does well to present a fascinating reading of “Passover on Caves” as a Bildung poem, underlining Yeshurun’s “iconoclastic rereading of the Bible—a reading that promotes a radical political end” (p. 167).

Interestingly, this volume has received a very ambivalent review in Seforim, the literary supplement to the Israeli newspaper, Ha-‘arez. While admitting that Gluzman has done a fine job in discussing Hebrew women poets, the reviewer Ari Ofenganden takes umbrage at what he terms Gluzman’s “insensitive application of
Anglo-American political thought.” Yet it is particularly in his intelligent utilization of such theory that Gluzman contributes to a rethinking of the canon of modern Hebrew poetry, as he searches for a wider conceptual framework that can indeed “show how the apparently divergent evaluations of poets as different as Rachel and Avot Yeshurun stem from the same ideological formation” (p. 182). What we have here is, sadly, an unwarranted tension between those who view Hebrew literature as participating in an international experience of culture and language, and those who do not. In this context, Gluzman’s book should certainly be widely and closely read both inside and outside of Israel. For it is a propitious contribution, anchoring as it does the concern and discourse about Hebrew literature within a wider context, demonstrating that its “Republic of Letters” must certainly partake of contemporary intellectual life if it is to remain vibrant.

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The subtitle tells it all: the book is not about bioethics, business ethics or communal ethics, but about the kind of ethics one should establish for one’s personal life. Starting with issues of privacy, the book moves us through sexual ethics, relationships within families, forgiveness, and finally, hope. Although traditional Jewish sources are mined for their insights, in the end, this is one person’s notion about what Jewish ethics can (and should) say about issues of personal ethics. Dorff acknowledges this right in his preface, “throughout the book, I present what I take to be an authentic reading and application of the Jewish tradition but surely not the only one. I therefore take care to use judgment [emphasis in the original] in assessing how the tradition should be best applied to modern circumstance, by providing arguments from the tradition and from modern sources and circumstance to justify [emphasis in the original] my reading of the tradition and arguing against alternative readings” (p. xii). In short, the book is not descriptive of the Jewish tradition but prescriptive, laying out how one should think about these issues as a modern American Jew who wants to think “Jewishly.”

The preface also serves to place the book in its intellectual context. Elliot Dorff is both an ordained Conservative Rabbi and the holder of a Ph.D. in philosophy. With these “Wissenschaftliche” credentials, he has spent his career bringing traditional Jewish sources and modern philosophical questions and methods into conversation. This book is part of that ongoing project, positioning itself between

two powerful alternatives. On the one hand stand the Orthodox, who insist that Jewish law is prescriptive and timeless. From this perspective there is no such thing as a “modern” Jewish ethic; there is only timeless *halakhah*. On the other side stand Reform thinkers, who claim that there is no stable “Jewish ethics” at all, but merely a tradition built by Jews living in certain times and places. Dorff places himself firmly between these positions. After a brief summary of a variety of approaches to moral philosophy, Dorff takes up the issue of what makes his version of modern Jewish ethics both modern and Jewish. Against the Orthodox, he insists that Jewish law is not fixed but is the product of historical development and interpretation. Against the Reform, he insists that such development and interpretation emerge from the community and are not simply what this, that, or the other person happens to conclude. This positioning of the “Conservative” position is hardly new. Here, however, it receives an eloquent and refined articulation. It should be noted that the content of the book is also not entirely new. Much of the material in the following chapters is drawn from an array of earlier publications.

The argument of the book rests on certain basic assumptions about human beings. These assumptions include the notion that humans are created in the divine image and so are innately due respect, that humans are an integrated whole of body and soul, that human beings have a built-in potential for good, and that people are best developed as part of a family and a community. There is of course no question that all these assumptions can find ample documentation in traditional Jewish sources. Yet it must also be said that one can easily hold these views without being Jewish. In short, it seems to me that Dorff is not so much giving us an ethic that is quintessentially Jewish as he is giving us one that can be more or less easily situated within Judaism.

The content, too, often comes across as not so much “Jewish” in some narrow sense as just good common advice. Consider his advice to young Jews regarding marriage, contraception, and reproduction. Dorff asserts that while the use of contraception by Jews is permissible, it should be used strategically because reproduction is important for the Jewish people and so having children should be an ultimate Jewish goal. As part of this argument, he makes the following points: 1) parents should make sure that their teenagers choose a college attended by many Jews, 2) college students should understand that the college years are not too early to look for a spouse, 3) young people who find a mate in college should marry in graduate school and begin having their children, then 4) even if young couples choose to use contraceptives for a time, they are well-advised, both medically and Jewishly, not to wait too long (p. 101, and again in a slight variation on p. 153). Now there is nothing wrong or objectionable with any of these points. In fact, quite the opposite, they are almost commonplaces. Any good parent could (and probably has) come up with these exact principles without the benefit of Conservative ordination or a Ph.D. in philosophy. This one example can stand for a good deal of the content of the book. It is such a good reflection of modern middle-of-the-road Jewish thinking that it faces the danger of coming across as almost self-evident to the educated Jewish reader.

In the end, the book is an articulate, even compelling presentation of what a modern, secularized but Jewishly concerned, well-informed writer sees to be the
ingredients of a strong and healthy personal ethic. It draws on Jewish sources, tradition, and history, not in a profound or technical way, but in a way that is accessible to a broad readership. It offers insight, advice, and guidance that are Jewishly informed, but not halakhic in the traditional Orthodox sense. If nothing else, it shows us that in struggling with the difficulties of being Jewish, and raising Jewish families, in modern America, the Jewish tradition is not, and need not, be silent.

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On July 27, 1656, the Jewish community of Amsterdam expelled Baruch de Espinoza. As Josef Kaplan’s work has shown, the community used *herem* as a standard disciplinary instrument, usually on a temporary basis. In Spinoza’s case, however, the Amsterdammers issued a fierce and permanent denunciation on grounds of “abominable heresies” and “monstrous deeds.” Speaking for the community, the rabbis “excommunicate, expel, curse and damn” him with formidable intensity. In addition to forbidding contact with Spinoza himself, the *herem* concludes with a prohibition against reading “any treatise composed or written by him.” What were these heresies and deeds, and why was the *herem* so harsh? Only twenty-three years of age, Spinoza had not yet, so far as we know, begun to write the philosophical works—the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* (1670) and the *Ethica* (1677), the former published anonymously, the latter only posthumously—that would make him notorious well beyond the domain of the Portuguese Jews. Looking at the later texts, it is not difficult to imagine the cause of the outrage: Spinoza denies creation and divine providence, individual or personal immortality (together with the doctrine of eternal reward and punishment), and the truth of the Torah. But what exactly was Spinoza doing in the mid-1650s, and why were his ideas and actions so offensive to the community?

“It is,” Nadler writes, “a splendid mystery” (p. 1). For Nadler, the mystery is not so much what Spinoza’s views were; contemporaneous reports indicate that the young Spinoza’s views were of a piece with the obvious heterodoxy of his mature works. Rather, the mystery is why the Amsterdam community responded as it did. Nadler pursues this question primarily in terms of the community’s internal dynamics and leading figures, and secondarily in terms of its sensitivity to the Dutch political scene, which, while broadly tolerant, was not without its powerful conservative Calvinist figures. Nadler’s thesis is that Spinoza’s denial of personal immortality was the decisive factor in his expulsion. While this denial was undoubtedly repugnant to Christians and so in violation of the Jews’ compact with the city, Nadler’s real argument is that the specific history and sensibilities of the Amsterdam Sephardim and their rabbis are the more important factors. The immortality
of the soul was “simply the wrong issue to pick on in Jewish Amsterdam in the 1650s” (p. 156). As a community of Iberian exiles, the Amsterdam community had many ex-conversos and descendants of conversos, as well as many members with family and associates still living as Catholics in Spain. The Amsterdam Sephardim thus had very personal and direct reasons to be concerned about apostasy and its ramifications for their place in the World to Come. Although the community was divided about the exact nature of the postmortem fate of such individuals—its leading rabbis, Saul Levi Mortera and Isaac Aboab da Fonseca disagreed about the meaning of the statement “All Israel has a place in the world to come”—it was unanimous in affirming personal, individual immortality. Nadler makes the additional, valuable point that former Catholics, having recently abandoned a highly eschatological creed, would easily have imported an eschatological orientation or agenda into their new or renewed Jewish lives. On this issue, it is essential to emphasize that Jews as well as Christians were affected by the condemnations and controversies inspired by Averroes’ account of Aristotle, whose philosophical principles he took to preclude personal immortality. From Bishop Tempier’s condemnations in the 1270s through such Renaissance controversies as the Pompanozzi affair and into the seventeenth century, the question of the immortality of the soul is urgent both philosophically and politically.

Nadler helpfully surveys the history of Jewish understandings of hish’arut hanefesh in order to underline the question of why personal immortality occasioned the expulsion of Spinoza but not, for example, Moshe Narboni or Joseph Albo. Nadler quite rightly links Spinoza to Maimonides and Gersonides, and he joins the company of scholars who argue that Spinoza represents a culmination and/or radicalization of trends in medieval Jewish Aristotelian philosophy. While specialists will disagree on how to interpret these giants of medieval philosophy—not to mention how to interpret Spinoza’s own very difficult texts!—a great virtue of Spinoza’s Heresy is its accessibility. In it, Nadler fulfills his promise to separate the “technical trees” from the “programmatic forest” (p. 148). He brings the Jewish sources to the attention of students of early modern philosophy, who have tended, lamentably, to read Spinoza against an exclusively Christian backdrop, and he brings the major themes and import of Spinoza’s philosophy, particularly the Ethica, to the attention of the Jewish studies community, which has tended to focus on the Tractatus Theologico-Politicus. As for the distinctive thesis that Spinoza’s denial of personal immortality accounts for the vehemence of the herem, Nadler’s case is provocative and subtle. He is surely correct to build on work by Altmann, Kasher and Biderman, and others in order to emphasize the centrality of questions of the postmortem fate of the soul. How it came to be, if we follow the view of another Amsterdam rabbi central to the Spinoza affair, Menasseh ben Israel, that belief in the immortality of the soul is the basis for belief in the existence of God and the divine origin of the Torah, deserves further study. One hopes that others follow Nadler’s example of interdisciplinary inquiry in deciphering this history.

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What seemed just barely possible when Léon Poliakov undertook to write a complete history of anti-Semitism in the mid-1970s would strike most serious historians as the height of folly today. The torrent of specialized studies of the subject in the past quarter-century, covering every period, culture, and continent, may have rendered such a project all but impossible. Even before Poliakov completed his fourth volume, Jacob Katz had wisely decided to confine his classic, *From Prejudice to Destruction* (1980), to Europe, 1700–1933. Yet there is a need for general treatments of the topic, if only to keep it from disappearing into the forest of ever-narrowing monographs and to help non-specialists make sense of a problem that shows no sign of going away.

Frederick Schweitzer and Marvin Perry make no claims to universalism, although their survey of anti-Semitism extends from antiquity to the very recent past. General treatments aimed at the general audience cannot hope to do justice to the intricacies of the history of anti-Semitism; they rise or fall on the strength of their conceptualization, integrating themes, presentation of useful detail, and accessible writing. Measured against these criteria, Schweitzer and Perry are impressively successful.

The authors have chosen as their organizing principle to concentrate on the powerful anti-Jewish myths that have governed the relations of Jews and non-Jews. The capacity of myth to unleash mayhem they take as axiomatic, resulting in some unusual emphases. Werner Sombart, Louis Farrakhan, and the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* get as much attention as Heinrich Himmler and a good deal more than Adolf Eichmann, the actual murderers of Jews, not just fashioners of fantasies about them. This is a legitimate interpretive decision, given that the violence unleashed upon Jews, as opposed to many other ethnic groups, is almost always heavily justified on the basis of ideological constructs.

Limiting themselves to six chapters and two appendices, the authors have obviously had to make some difficult choices. Jews as deicides, ritual murderers, agents of evil (whether it be Satan, racial defilement, or international conspiracy), and greedy exploiters of gentiles—these historic charges each get their own chapter, packed with accurate information, well-chosen and wide-ranging illustrative examples, all based on extensive, up-to-date readings. The remainder of the book deals with post-World War II mythologizing: Holocaust denial, Jews as the force behind black slavery, and Muslim anti-Semitism, which the authors treat as often interrelated, cross-fertilizing phenomena.

The subject of Jews and the slave trade is part of a larger discussion of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and its sponsorship of the scurrilous pseudo-history, *The Secret Relationship Between Blacks and Jews* (1991), written by anonymous members of the NOI’s Historical Research Department. Schweitzer and Perry do a good job marshalling the evidence against the book’s specious claims and shabby methodology. They move on to provide a wealth of information concerning move-
ments of black separatism, information that is often diplomatically excluded from the mainstream media (at least the media that I read). With damning thoroughness they detail the lunatic theology of the NOI, buttressed by extensive quotations from Khalid, Jefferies, and Farrakhan; the documentary evidence makes a compelling case for the destructive intentions of these spokesmen, defaming and threatening not just Jews, but homosexuals, the Pope, women, and the totality of South African whites. Leaving no doubt about their personal feelings regarding this and the other sources of anti-Semitic myths they analyze, the authors also try to achieve some balance, in this case, by recognizing the more hopeful developments in the NOI since the death of Elijah Muhammad, especially in its attempts to improve their relationship with Jews.

Readers will find the appendices useful. The first deals with Muslim Jew-hatred, providing a compact collection of relevant primary and secondary source quotations and a brief guide to the relevant literature on the subject; it ought to enable the beginner to place current Muslim anti-Semitism in a larger historical perspective. The second appendix is particularly valuable on a number of grounds. It recounts Schweitzer’s role in attempting to bring a halt to the Holocaust denial and neo-Nazi activities of Ernst Zündel, reproducing extensive excerpts from the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal findings. Schweitzer was asked to testify before the Tribunal on the dangers inherent in anti-Semitic hate propaganda; he is thus able to report firsthand on the difficulties involved in making reason prevail in such cases. The affair ended with a moral victory of sorts. Just as in the Irving-Lipstadt case, it was heartening to see that intelligent laymen—not trained historians or experts on the Holocaust—were well able to sift through the lies, obfuscations, and sophomoric debating tricks of Zündel’s friends to arrive at the truth and to condemn publicly and emphatically their malevolent agenda. On the other hand, Zündel left Canada before the Tribunal banned his Internet dissemination of hate propaganda, crossing the border into the U.S. where, married to an American, he and his Zündelsite continue to prosper.

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The religious thought of Rabbi Tsevi Hirsch Kalischer seems a promising starting point for a study of messianism in the Jewish encounter with modernity. Kalischer himself stood at the vortex of dramatic changes that were transforming Jewish life in the mid-nineteenth century. He lived on the seam line between Eastern and Western European Jewries, at a crucial historical juncture that witnessed political upheaval, the rise of nationalism, the crisis of enlightenment thought. His
lifetime spanned the period of great hopes for Jewish emancipation and early disenchantment with it. Religiously and philosophically, Kalischer was in some sense both a remnant of an increasingly challenged traditional society and a harbinger of modern Jewish politics. In his thought, Kalischer embodied the pivotal role which messianic impulses played in the transformations of Jewish life in the nineteenth-century encounter with modernity.

“The battle over modernization” itself, Jody Myers argues intriguingly in her opening chapter, “was fought in the language of messianism” (p. 2). The greatest strengths of her book lie in her suggestions of the ways in which religious reformers and conservatives alike mobilized and transformed notions of redemption as a key to recasting Jewish life itself. Or did they? There was, Myers also suggests, “very little debate” among Europe’s Jews “on the messianic idea in general or the sacrificial prayers in particular” (p. 75). The book consequently hints at an inherent tension in its own argument: Was Kalischer’s radical halakhic departure—his proposal that sacrificial worship be resumed in Palestine—part of a broader social and intellectual context, or did it stem instead from a certain naïveté which severed him in some sense from the contemporary context of religious tumult, allowing him, as Myers also argues, simply to assume “reasonably, that pious Jews . . . accepted in their hearts the prayers they were uttering for the renewal of sacrificial worship [and] the return to the Holy Land” (p. 82)? One is left to wonder, however, whether pious Jews of earlier ages—or the majority of Kalischer’s pious contemporaries, who rejected his scheme—did not also accept these prayers “in their hearts.” And supposing they did, how then did clearly differing understandings of these prayers and their invocation of an ancient past engender sharply divergent visions of a Jewish future?

This tension impresses itself upon one’s understanding of Kalischer’s own texts and exegetical work as well. The ancient sacrificial cult, as Myers shows, emerged as a crucial polemical motif in the nineteenth century—“a code” (p. 103) demarcating the line between reformers, who sought to remove all traces of the sacrifices from a reformed liturgy, and conservatives, for whom it became a symbolic measure of continued Jewish distinctiveness. It remains somewhat unclear, however, whether for Kalischer the centrality of a restored sacrificial cult was arrived at within the context of these contemporary debates, or independently of them. On the one hand, Myers argues that Kalischer avoided the polemics, devoting himself to an ostensibly pure exegesis. And yet the very exegetical models he constructs—of the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh, for example—seem to resonate with a strident polemical force, as Kalischer puts Pharaoh to use as representative of a religiosity which holds external ritual to be unnecessary, while Moses embodies “the indispensability of the performance of acts” to signify one’s love for God (p. 122). Rather than placing Kalischer at a distance from the polemical battles, this kind of exegesis seems in fact to situate him at their very heart.

Not surprisingly, however, it was from within the conservative camp, rather than among reformers, that Kalischer met with his most formidable opposition. Myers suggests enticingly that the dispute with his former teacher Akiva Eger, for example, was “at its core, about the structure and authority of post-Temple Ju-
daism” (p. 102), intimating at what might be a rich opportunity to explore the ways in which differing responses to modernity not only divided reformers from conservatives, but led to variations and fissures within the religious conservative camp as well.

Myers is justifiably wary of “historians intent on showing that Kalischer was a proto-Zionist” (p. 63 n.). Her discussion, however, does raise the prospect of new directions which might shed a more nuanced light on intricate ways in which interpretive molds might nevertheless have been transmitted. What links might there be between Kalischer’s brand of radical exegesis and his reinterpretation of halakhah and scripture (within an apparently changing environment of discourse in the nineteenth-century Jewish world generally) and the Zionist call for a rereading of Jewish culture some decades later? Myers takes some interesting steps in this regard, examining Kalischer’s recasting of a concept such as ge’ulat ha-arez from one pertaining to the laws of shemitah to one denoting the “land’s life-giving power,” implying that the Jews “would be redeeming the land, and . . . would be redeemed through it” (p. 170). Zionists would later embrace similar readings of this and other traditional concepts. Might Kalischer’s dramatic exegetical departure point to the kind of conceptual paradigm shift which would set some of the groundwork for Zionist discourse?

Adopting such a perspective, Kalischer’s thought might allow for new insight into the intricate weave connecting modern Jewish nationalism to traditional Jewish religiosity. Indeed, the issues raised by Myers’ examination of Kalischer’s life and thought clearly have the potential to shed new light on the Jewish modernity project itself, and certainly on the changes in internal Jewish discourse which gave rise to Jewish nationalism and to the Jewish rediscovery of Palestine. Kalischer’s life spanned a number of crossroads at which European Jews were trying on new ways of re-shaping their understandings of both divine and human spheres, to the ultimate effect of revolutionary transformations in Jewish life. Seeking Zion hints at some tantalizing new directions in exploring this modern Jewish odyssey.

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This book compares two uneasily related exile communities in early twentieth-century Shanghai: the Russians and the Jews. Although traders, including some Jews, had drifted down from Siberia from the mid-nineteenth century, the Russians in Shanghai, for a time the city’s largest foreign community, were mainly remnants of Admiral Kolchak’s “White” army who fled Vladivostok in 1922–23, with a rag-tag group of camp followers, aboard what remained of the former
imperial fleet. Most settled in the French Concession district and worked as small shopkeepers. The Jewish refugees from Germany and Central Europe who followed in the period 1938–41 had little in common with the Russians, some of whom regarded the Jews as commercial rivals, and many of whom were deeply infected by the traditional anti-Semitism of the Russian extreme right.

The yoking together in this study of these two very different and mutually suspicious communities is justified by the author on the ground that they shared the character of “victim diasporas” (p. 5). The two groups did share a legal status—or non-status—of statelessness. Both exhibited many of the common collective traits of exile groups: tendencies to paranoia, conspiracy theorizing, political fragmentation and in-fighting, nostalgic sentimentalism about the homeland, and unrealistic expectations about a return to their previous condition. Hence the decision by some four thousand Russians to accept an invitation to move to Stalin’s Russia in 1947–48; and the repatriation at the same time of about two thousand Jews to Germany—the only organized group of German Jewish refugees to return after the war. But in spite of these common characteristics, the proposed typology is flawed since the nature of victimhood was very different in the two cases. The Russians were, for the most part, ex-combatants and their families who had fled their country after defeat in a civil war. The Jews were civilians driven out of their homeland by racial persecution.

Although the author has exploited an impressive range of printed and manuscript materials in several languages (including Russian, Japanese, and Chinese, but not Hebrew or Yiddish), the most heavily used source is the collection of records of the Special Branch, that is, political section, of the Shanghai Municipal Police. This was the security service that operated in the International Settlement of Shanghai until 1941 under British control and from then until 1945 under Japanese control. Russians were among the senior officers of the force under both dispensations and among subordinate employees there were also a few Jews. This treasure trove of documentation, now held by the United States National Archives, includes detailed reports on social and political developments in both the Russian and the Jewish communities.

Ristaino’s approach is more descriptive than analytical. On the Jewish community, the account given here is the best documented and generally most reliable yet published—certainly an improvement on David Kranzler’s Japanese, Nazis and Jews (Hoboken, New Jersey: Ktav, 1988), which gave too much credit to the Japanese for supposedly pro-Jewish policies and accepted too readily Orthodox Jewish gripes against the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and against non-Orthodox elements in the Jewish community.

Ristaino shows greater sympathy and closer knowledge of the Russian than of the Jewish context. But she handles the tangled internecine conflicts within both communities effectively and, in general, her judgment is sound on both fronts. Dismissing the oft-repeated notion that Japanese restriction of Jewish refugees to a so-called ghetto in 1943 was a response to purported German pressure, a myth propagated by, among others, Kranzler, she notes that this explanation probably derived from the desire of many refugees after the war to qualify for German restitution claims by showing that they had been victims of Nazi or Nazi-influenced
persecution. And she briskly deflates the exaggerated legend of Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese vice-consul in Kaunas, whose alleged defiance of his government in granting visas to Jewish refugees is credited by some with saving large numbers of lives. On the other hand, her speculation that Sugihara was a Soviet spy is merely unsubstantiated surmise.

Overall this is a valuable, intelligent, and elegantly written account of the contrasting collective experiences of these two communities in their exotic-sounding but in reality squalid and unwelcoming Nachtasyl.

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For a half-millennium until the 1940s, the history of Poles and Jews was inextricably intertwined. In particular, from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, Poles and Jews alike were faced with sweeping economic and social changes that challenged—even threatened—livelihood, traditions, and identity. One way in which both Jews and Poles attempted to make sense of “modernity” (to use the word as shorthand for industrialization, secularization, and the communications revolution of this period) was to subscribe to one or another form of socialism. In the Polish lands, socialism and nationalism were never mutually exclusive, indeed on the whole, the two movements overlapped considerably. Again, this was just as true for Jews (Bund, Poalei Tsiyon) as for Poles (PPS). Josh Zimmerman’s important book examines relations between the two most important pre-1914 Polish and Jewish socialist parties, the Bund and the PPS. Both parties aimed simultaneously to pave the way for international socialism and to develop their respective nations (Jews and Poles). Both parties rejected national chauvinism or prejudice, arguing in a Herderian vein that only when each nation developed its full potential could true internationalism reign. Despite their theoretical agreement, however, the parties frequently clashed on practical issues. Examining these practical differences, Zimmerman has much to tell us about the nature of being Jewish, Polish, and/or socialist in late imperial Russia.

The two central heroes of this story are, as said, the Bund and the Polish Socialist Party (PPS). Both aimed to spread socialism throughout the Polish lands and both rejected any kind of exclusivist nationalism. But herein lay the rub: the PPS wanted to consider all denizens of the region as potential Poles on a political level at least. It would be wrong—very wrong indeed—to accuse the PPS of exclusionist nationalism. Indeed, the problem was exactly the opposite: the Polish socialists wanted to include Jews (and, at least potentially, Lithuanians, Belarusians, Ukrainians) within their political nation. The PPS also clearly stated on numerous
occasions its commitment to cultural rights (e.g., use of native languages, including in schools). While one may view the PPS’s relations toward non-Poles as based on questionable assumptions and overly optimistic, chauvinist, or overtly “polonizing,” it was not.

Neither did the Bund see the nation as an unchanging entity and a value above all other sociological categories. Indeed, Zionists (and others, including Simon Dubnow) accused the Bundists of fomenting class hatred within the Jewish community. But for the Bundists, Jewish culture (not necessarily religion) did represent a cherished value and one they were dedicated to protecting and furthering. Thus for both practical and ideological (one could almost say “spiritual”) reasons, Bundists rejected the appeals from the PPS (and the Russian social democrats) for closer organizational relations. The Bund’s rocky relationship with the Russian social democrats (and Lenin) is rather well known, but actually less interesting than the Bund-PPS relations that Zimmerman examines here. Although Lenin and the Russian social democrats were in organizational terms arch-centralists and intolerant of even the concept of a Jewish nation, the PPS’s views on the subject were considerably more nuanced and friendly. It is this complicated and, in a sense, tragic relationship that forms the center of Zimmerman’s study.

This book makes important contributions to our knowledge in several respects. First, it provides an excellent overview of the parallel development of Bund and PPS conceptions of nationality, in particular as this concept was applied to Jews. Secondly, based on careful readings of party platforms, press, and correspondence combined with a judicious use of archives, Zimmerman establishes that the PPS position on the “Jewish question” could not fairly be described before 1914 as “assimilationist.” Finally, Zimmerman’s work illuminates an oft-neglected aspect of Polish-Jewish relations. For all the squabbling and disagreement between the Bund and the PPS, they agreed on fundamental issues of toleration, the need for cooperation between national groups (not subordination, as the Russian socialists implicitly demanded), and respect for Jews as a cultural group. If more Polish political movements (and thinkers) had expended as much energy in attempting to find a modus vivendi between Poles and Jews in a future Polish state, the history of the interwar republic would likely have been considerably happier.

To be sure, one can always quibble with certain conclusions. For example, Zimmerman’s reliance on party platform statements may make him underestimate the level of “creeping assimilationism” among Polish socialists. And there are, as always, some errors, for example, Vilna University was not closed in 1869 (p. 26), polu-inteligenty would probably be better translated as “quasi-intellectual” than “worker intellectuals,” and it was not a “PPS-Bund alliance” (but wealthy and on the whole conservative electors) that helped elect a socialist to Warsaw seat in the fourth Duma (p. 272). Still, these are small matters. This book is an important work that deserves to be read by anyone interested in the history of Jews, Poles, or nationality in Europe.

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Perhaps no subject is more actual than the relationship of Zionism and the State of Israel to the exercise of military power. Ehud Luz’s passionate *cri de coeur* appears, at first glance, to cover much the same ground as Anita Shapira’s earlier *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948*: both books analyze comprehensively the way Zionist thinkers, writers, and activists struggled with the moral limitations on the use of force and violence in the acquisition of Jewish sovereignty. But Shapira’s focus is more on political history, while Luz treats primarily writers and rabbis, ranging from the ultra-Orthodox pacifist Aharon Shmuel Tamares, the Labor Zionist poet Natan Alterman, the messianic Zionist Zvi Yehuda Kook, and the secular apocalyptic Uri Zvi Greenberg. Where Shapira ends her story with what she describes as the emergence of a new Israeli mentality in the wake of the 1948 war, Luz brings the debates up to virtually the present day. Shapira leaves readers—perhaps unwittingly—with the impression that the values of *havlagah* (self-restraint) which characterized Labor Zionism in the 1930s were largely replaced by a more ruthless ethos of retaliation: after 1948, Labor Zionism came to adopt the position of its Revisionist archrival. Yet, as Luz demonstrates, the debates of the prewar period continued, if in a new key, in the half-century after Israeli sovereignty.

It is not, however, only in chronological terms that these two works differ. Luz’s agenda goes beyond the historical since he also wishes to engage philosophically the very questions raised and contested by his sources. He holds that Zionism has been—and continues to be—driven by countervailing views on the role of power. As a revolt against the ostensible passivity of the diaspora Jews, Zionism sought to ground the relations of Jews and non-Jews in the vocabulary of modern nationalism. But this revolution could not escape the Jewish past because the tradition continued to echo in the very terminology with which the Zionists cast their arguments. For example, the idea of a Zionist “wager”—daring to accomplish something seemingly fantastical—drew directly from the traditional idea of a “saved remnant.” Similarly, the Zionist slogan of *hagshamah* (self-realization) recasts the medieval philosophical term for materiality; thus, Zionist realization meant in Jewish terms to make the spiritual material.

For Luz, the Zionist indebtedness to Jewish sources is not only descriptively true, but is also as it *should* be. Rejecting the universalist ethics of Kant, he turns instead to Hegel’s idea of *Sittlichkeit*, arguing that ethics are always refracted through the prism of particular cultural traditions. It is therefore only right that an ethical debate about the limits of Jewish power should take place in the framework of the historical tradition. In Luz’s reconstruction of that tradition, the Bible emerges as an ambivalent text that celebrates military victory, but only in the context of an ethical theology. As opposed to militaristic cultures for whom honor and shame are central, the Bible—and later Jewish tradition—foregrounds guilt and repentance. It is this difference that explains the denigration of military virtues in
rabbinic and medieval Jewish culture. Here, I believe that Luz somewhat overstates his case. As I argued nearly two decades ago, Jews did not entirely abandon arms and warfare during the Middle Ages, just as they were not wholly an apolitical people. Nevertheless, as Jews entered modernity, their self-perception, as well as others’ perceptions of them, was as physically passive and pacifistic. The Zionist revolution targeted a real self-perception and not only one that the Zionists manufactured.

Luz believes passionately in bringing to bear the manifold texts of the Jewish tradition on contemporary debates about the future of Israel. He is clearly exercised by the fundamentalist interpretation of traditional sources by the religious right, who claim that halakhah and morality have nothing in common. He sees the new concept of da’at torah (which he implicitly understands as something like the Islamic fatwa) as a dangerous departure from argument based on sources. He argues instead, following the general lines of the liberal orthodoxy associated with the Hartman Institute, that the halakhah does not foreclose autonomous morality. On the contrary, it enshrines the idea of “righteousness beyond the law.” There should be no contradiction between universally accepted political norms and the dictates of the Jewish tradition.

Luz’s book occupies a difficult, but in this reviewer’s eyes, essential position between, on the one hand, anti-Zionists and post-Zionists who believe that Jews can only be moral without power, and, on the other, messianists who believe that any exercise of power by Jews is inherently just. There is, he insists, a moral price to be paid for sovereignty, but there is an equal, perhaps greater, moral price for the lack of sovereignty. Forced to self-defense, Zionism, in his account, has never succumbed to militarism and the very intensity of the debates within Israel is proof that the moral price of sovereignty remains very much on the public agenda.

I have some reservations about this position. At one time, moralistic soldiers were said to be those who “shoot and then cry” (yorim ve-bokhim). Crying after the fact made the shooting more palatable, as if recognition of the quandary of being forced to kill was itself the answer to the quandary. At what point do debates about the ethics of power cease being real debates and become instead unwitting forms of legitimation of the very practices the debaters condemn? What I am missing in Luz’s book, then, is an examination of the role of Israel’s internal discourse over power and morality in the functioning of its power.

But even if that discourse should turn out to be more insidious than many of its practitioners imagine, Luz has made a powerful and compelling contribution to its understanding. Without concealing his own deeply held convictions, he judiciously gives a wide variety of opinions their due, and, in the process, reconnects Zionism with its profoundest roots in the Jewish tradition.

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Book Reviews


Perhaps the best way to evaluate a book is from the perspective of its stated objectives. Are they clearly stated, and worth pursuing? Has the author met the objectives he set for him/herself?

What then are the objectives of *An Orthodox Dreamer: Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Boston’s Maimonides School*? Correctly observing that very little has been written about R. Soloveitchik as “community architect and educator” in Boston, especially during the early years of his career, between 1932 and 1945, the author explains that the book is designed to help fill exactly this void, as the book’s very title suggests.

What complicates, matters, however, is that just a few lines later the author himself states, “in its more limited focus this book is about a well-known school and its leader” (p. 1), an objective reflected in the title as well. But these two objectives, valuable as each separately is, are hardly identical, and this leads to a certain ambiguity in the book’s conception. If the book’s aims are broader in focus, and primarily about an under-studied period in R. Soloveitchik’s life, then we have no need to learn the lyrics of Maimonides’ School Song, nor do we need considerable space devoted to the post-Soloveitchik era of the school, among other topics more appropriate to a straightforward history of the school.

What we would need, however, is a more extensive discussion of R. Soloveitchik’s virtual ostracism from the local Orthodox rabbinate and alienation from the Jewish community, during parts of the period under discussion, mostly relating to his views on inter-religious cooperation and the position he took on *kashrut* supervision. Although these matters are indeed raised in the book, they do not receive the full treatment they deserve, and of which the author is capable, because of the book’s “limited focus” on the Maimonides school. On the other hand, a book exclusively about the history of the Maimonides School would not have done justice to the importance of its founder, and would lack greater significance for the history of American Judaism, which a book about R. Soloveitchik undoubtedly possesses.

Despite this ambiguity in purpose, however, all told this is a very valuable book. The author is scrupulous about placing the history he examines in the broader context of the history of the Jewish community and trends in American and Jewish education. There is considerable use of archival material, including the minutes of the school, and issues of the local Jewish newspaper, and the use of extensive interviews with alumni, faculty, and parents of students in the school. We gain fascinating insight into the role of R. Soloveitchik’s wife in the life of the school, including the founding of the high school, and the personal largesse of the Soloveitchiks in supporting the school. We discover how R. Soloveitchik insisted on rigorous quality in both Jewish and general education, and how he himself sought to convince Maimonides graduates to attend college. Moreover, we learn that a surprisingly modest percentage of Maimonides’ graduates attended Yeshiva University—whose central figure was R. Solovetichik himself!—which the school
seems to have believed offered an inferior education, more directed to the rabbinate than to successful careers beyond.

Perhaps the most contentious features of R. Soloveitchik’s Maimonides School were its coeducation and its insistence on providing equal exposure to Talmud for female as for male students. Unfortunately, we possess very little in the way of documentary evidence about R. Soloveitchik’s actual position on these matters. Were they concessions to the needs of a fragile mid-century Bostonian Orthodoxy, or did they represent ideal modes of Jewish education in modernity? Farber’s own discussion—he tries to be fair to all sides—cites a plethora of secondary sources, and is therefore obviously limited. Farber himself comes down on the side of the “modernists,” but the argument of the “modernists” is largely ex silentio, while the argument of the “traditionalists” is based on at least anecdotal evidence, as problematic as that might be.

This leads me to a larger point. The author profoundly identifies with the ideology of the school as he understands it. “During the five years that I taught at Maimonides . . . its philosophy became the preoccupation of my life. I believe that all my colleagues would agree that when I left Boston in 1995 I should have received a high school diploma” (p. xv).

This is a noble sentiment, but it interferes to some extent with the sobriety necessary for an honest assessment of the school and its founder. The book sometimes sounds, to this reader at least, like a cheerleader for the Modern Orthodoxy the author takes it to represent. But the language of a school, its public relations materials and curricular goals, built to satisfy the needs of 1950s and 1960s Boston Orthodoxy does not necessarily speak directly to the ideological battles that have come to shape the Orthodoxy of the 1970s and beyond. This is a point that must not be obscured.

The author contends that the book’s “central argument” is “that though R. Soloveitchik founded the Maimonides School capitalizing on existing trends in the era, his leadership and vision revolutionized the American Orthodox community as a whole, in Boston and beyond” (p. 2). This reader was unconvinced that the case for this conclusion had been fully made, for reasons too involved to enter into here. But it is an argument that should be heard, and this volume makes an important, well-documented contribution to the historiography surrounding this period of American Orthodoxy and one of its most influential leaders.

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“The Jews are our misfortune.” This was the final conclusion of the eminent historian Heinrich von Treitschke—should it prove impossible to slow down the
“flock of ambitious young men hawking trousers” who were penetrating into Germany “year and year . . . over the eastern border.” “Experience taught,” von Treitschke averred that these Polish Jews were alien to the “Germanic soul.” He had nothing against Jews, “baptized and otherwise,” such as Felix Mendelssohn, Gabriel Riesser, and others, all of them “fine specimens of the German man in the best sense of the term.” But then there were all the others, etc. These are sentences taken from Treitschke’s November 1879 essay “Unsere Aussichten,” subsequently triggering the debate that has been known since Walter Boehlich’s first edition of source materials1 as the “Berlin Anti-Semitism Dispute.”

There were numerous prominent counter-replies, by Heinrich Graetz, Manuel Joel, Ludwig Philippson, Hermann Cohen, Moritz Lazarus, and others, as well as the “Declaration of 75,” and the contrary views put forward by Treitschke’s colleague Theodor Mommsen. Nonetheless, research has scarcely looked at many positions expressed at the time, including opinions voiced by Jacob Burckhardt, Johann Gustav Droysen, Seligmann Meyer, Leopold von Ranke, Isaac Rülf, and others. The present volumes present a far more extensive portion of these materials than has previously been available. This includes 121 documents from November 1879 to May 1881, with more than a third drawn from mid-November through mid-December 1880, when the dispute between Treitschke and Mommsen reached its high point.

The picture of events we now have points to a new range of diverse intellectual motives and strategies involved. We were, of course, familiar with the view of Theodor Mommsen, who left no doubts about his recognition of the legal integration of the Jews into society, while at the same time calling for their voluntary conversion to Christianity. Mommsen considered this being similar to the assimilatory gesture in which the North Germans or Hanoverians had been constrained to renounce their special separate existence when they became a part of the German Reich. Ludwig Philippson, editor of the Allgemeine Zeitung des Judentums, was emphatically opposed to drawing this parallel between political and religious integration: “does Mommsen actually think that a person’s conversion to Christianity is analogous to an official being transferred from his native Schleswig-Holstein to Berlin?” In Philippson’s view, the difference could be found in the concept of “conscience” (Gewissen, p. 793); in decisions regarding religion, Gewissen was central, but not when it came to questions of political adaptation.

Somewhat better known was the position of Hermann Cohen, developed in opposition to Moritz Lazarus’ essay “Über den Begriff der Nation.” For Cohen, “Kant’s nation” was interwoven as a constitutive element with (Protestant) Christianity. In decisive points, the German Jews too were the heirs of Protestantism. But in the Protestant quest for a “more pure form of Christianity” (p. 346, cited from Treitschke), the Jewish knowledge of the One and Only God has to play a key role. To mention one final example, there were also the views of the demographer and statistician Salomon Neumann. He demonstrated that there had been no substantial Jewish immigration from the East. However, in Neumann’s eyes, figures were not just ciphers. Statistical quantification was here still a very particular style

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of thought in dealing with the most sensitive questions of one’s own identity, rooted in a high degree of moral motivation.

Several comments on the technical quality of this present edition are in order. For most purposes, the bibliographical data on first and subsequent publication of the texts included are adequate. But the accuracy of the reproduction of the texts themselves, as several sample probes have indicated, is not always satisfactory. The tables and index in the appendix are quite useful. Explanatory notes to the texts have helped to clarify many points and call attention to the contemporary historical circumstances and context. However, one drawback here is that in cross-references within the edition, for example, in quotes from one author by another, the editor lists only the relevant document without giving the exact page, leaving the search for the passage to the reader. The historical introduction has an almost amusing aspect: the editor has not taken the quotations he cites, such as those by Treitschke, from his own edition here, but rather refers to the edition by Walter Boehlich, which this new work in fact supplants. In this respect as well, the author would have been well advised to do a final more painstaking editorial review of this otherwise excellent edition.

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This valuable book is more than a long overdue corrective to the extant one-volume histories of American Jewry whose narratives pivot upon a familiar list of male names. Diner and Benderly offer us all the events and themes of American Jewish social history that we expect to find, but we see them through the actions, motivations, and experiences of women. And because women’s experiences often have been entirely different from those of men, we learn more about the topic than can be available in the previous one-volume accounts. Although this book was written for a general audience, it reminds this reader of the more scholarly *U.S. History as Women’s History* (1995) for the new understandings it brings to familiar material.

The authors assert that “women have had a distinctive history apart from that of Jewish men” (p. xv) and that the activities they recount are, in their view, “largely the work of women fulfilling women’s sacred role” (p. xvii), as described in Proverbs 31:10–31, which appears in its entirety in the opening of the book. In fact, the title of this volume is taken from the Proverbs text.

The great strengths of this book are its wealth of data and the engaging man-

ner in which it is written. New chapters usually open with a dramatic episode in the life of a Jewish woman of the period to be explored, a device that both involves the reader and introduces previously little-known actors. So Jewish colonial New Amsterdam begins with an account of a lawsuit brought by Rycke Nunes against Asser Leveen over boat fare. A thorough discussion of the complexities of colonial and early nineteenth-century Jewish life in North America begins with Rebecca Samuels’ comment that although her family in Petersberg, Virginia enjoyed a degree of freedom and success unimaginable to her kinfolk in Germany, “the way we live here is no life at all” (p. 19). The Samuels family soon relocated to Charleston and its 300-strong Jewish community.

Discussions of the subtle interaction of social forces, historical events, and basic Jewish religious experiences in this and other chapters make the volume much more than a “telephone book” style introduction to American Jewish women. For example, we learn quite a lot about the degree to which nineteenth-century families were scattered around the country, the miles women traveled to find suitable husbands, and that in these circumstances, many immigrant women, particularly after 1820, “quickly adopted the American custom of choosing their own mates” (p. 90). In some of these cases, intermarriages brought new young people into the Jewish fold; in other cases, they left. Throughout the nineteenth century, Jewish women were enterprising. Around the country, from New Jersey to California, women ran boarding-houses, general and clothing stores, and stationery, millinery, butcher, and dressmaking shops. Many of these concerns were family-owned businesses in which husbands traveled to customers, either peddling or visiting other businesses, while women shared in the toil of creating the product, running the shop, and tending the ledger.

Twentieth-century women’s lives were more varied. Francis Y. Sanger, for example, was an army nurse who landed with American soldiers at Normandy and wrote about the event for Stars and Stripes before losing her life there. An army hospital ship was named for her. While this book introduces us to many American Jewish women, it provides important general data in which to frame that knowledge. Jewish men and women had begun to reach white-collar occupations by the 1920s, working as clerks, bookkeepers, teachers, and business owners, and a decade later “a high school diploma was the minimum expected of youngsters from respectable Jewish families” (p. 281). By 1968, Jewish communities outside the northeast grew, in some cases tripling. Through all these twentieth-century travels and changes, Jewish women’s service organizations provided communal and intergenerational bonds that united women in communities large and small around the country. Late in the century, feminism transformed many of those organizations, as it did Jewish women’s religious opportunities.

The title may lead a reader to expect that this is a volume primarily addressing Jewish women’s religious lives. Yet, the book is primarily a social history of American Jewish women. This volume attempts to tell a complex story in a succinct and compelling manner and achieves much of its goal.

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Lloyd Gartner has written an excellent survey for the serious student and a fine tour d’horizon for the professional historian, delineating long-range historical developments concisely and lucidly, providing apt, fresh illustrations throughout the narrative, and efficiently unpacking terminology and nomenclature that would be obscure to the general reader. His book supersedes previous overviews of modern Jewish history.

Opening with a chapter on “the heritage of medieval Judaism,” Gartner then devotes considerable attention to the early modern period where he describes Mediterranean Jewry and the edot ha-mizrah with much greater attention than the older surveys. The treatment of Jewish life in the nineteenth century is inevitably more Eurocentric, revolving around the crisis years of 1815, 1848, and 1881–1882. The structure of the twentieth century is determined by the Holocaust and the establishment of the State of Israel, along with the move to center stage of the American diaspora. Thus, the social devastation and political chaos inflicted by World War I led to a relentless spread and amplification of anti-Semitism. Gartner lays out the main features of the Holocaust and events leading to the creation of the State of Israel in a dignified, understated tone that drives home all the more their momentous consequences. The concluding part describes the postwar reconstruction of Jewish life from the late forties to 1980, when the narrative ends.

As befitting Gartner’s earlier work in social and local history, special attention is placed on migration (symbolized by the famous photograph on the cover by Robert Capa of displaced persons finally on their way to the land of Israel). Social and economic trends are necessarily treated by region of the world; changing political fortunes are often covered country by country. Gartner’s approach is heavily influenced by his teacher, Salo Baron, whose importance to him is acknowledged in the introduction. Like Baron, Gartner places special emphasis on Jewish demographic patterns and the varied structure of the Jewish communities. Religious movements and denominations are handled judiciously. Almost always there is that balanced judgment associated with Baron: a rather acidulous statement is qualified by an “on the other hand.” Attention is paid to influential Orthodox figures that have not been given their due in general Jewish histories as well as to Reform Judaism, even though Gartner’s sympathies lie with the Conservative middle ground. As with Baron, one will not find any startling conceptual breakthroughs in Jewish intellectual history or the history of Jewish literature. From time to time, Gartner remarks on Jewish philosophy and high culture, but the deeper theological (or secularist) dilemmas of choosing to be Jewish in the modern world are not his primary concern.

Gartner’s strength is his impeccable mastery of significant detail drawing on wide-ranging, up-to-date reading. The reader is provided an account which does effectively convey the continual series of transformations usually called “modernization” without Gartner’s discerning—or imposing—an overarching or underly-
ing theory. Hence, at the end Gartner remarks: “Schemes, even as learned as Krochmal’s was for its time, may not hold up against simple observation, not to mention detailed historical investigation.” Although early on he sets himself apart from the “Jerusalem School” of recent Israeli historiography, in the hesitant sentences of his concluding paragraph he seems to see the achievements of the state of Israel as the main hope of the Jewish future. Perhaps it is this reluctance to extrapolate trends that caused him to end the book in 1980, avoiding the more problematic Jewish concerns of the recent two decades.

The book has no separate bibliography, but there are plenteous references to recent historical studies in the footnotes. A drawback for some is the small type used in the paperback edition.

We must be very grateful for a book written with such care, accuracy, sensitivity, and reasonableness. One would hope that the publisher would make more of an effort to bring this magisterial volume to the attention of non-Jewish readers as well, who, unfortunately, have much to learn from it.

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The central dimension of Azariah de’ Rossi’s complex and diverse treatise, *Me’or e’inyayim*, is undoubtedly what Joanna Weinberg describes as “his real contribution to critical scholarship” (p. xxix), and this is especially evident in his innovative chapters on Philo, rabbinic aggadah and Jewish chronology. De’ Rossi’s studies are compounded by ponderous Hebrew prose replete with citations, proof-texts, references, and allusions. Nevertheless, Weinberg skillfully makes this classic manageable in English. Her abundant notes clarify the classical Jewish texts he addressed and the innumerable Jewish and non-Jewish sources from antiquity to the sixteenth century integral to his scholarly endeavor. The translation is also complemented by a comprehensive index of sources.

*Me’or e’inyayim* occupies a unique place in the sixteenth-century age of Jewish historiographical creativity, not least by virtue of the negative reaction it generated. That the Maharal of Prague was unrestrained in his castigation of de’ Rossi’s critical, historically driven scrutiny of *aggadah*, would have been expected, but reception to his work by some prominent Italian Jewish dignitaries was also vehement. These included signatories to the 1574 ban of *Me’or e’inyayim* which required the would-be reader or owner of the book to first obtain rabbinic permission. Even Weinberg, who subscribes to the view that the initial participants to the ban “were minor authorities,” acknowledges, albeit in a footnote, that Yehiel Nissim da Pisa “one of the signatories for Ferrara, was an important communal leader and erudite
“scholar” (p. xliii n.158). Given da Pisa’s objection to earlier rationalistic exposition of *aggadah* and his emphasis on its secret meaning, his participation in the ban against “discourses which our pious ancestors could not have imagined” as the text stated, is hardly surprising. Another signatory was Yehiel Trabot of Pesaro, a leading *halakhic* decisor, who years later while overseeing Hebrew books prior to their printing, referred to certain published works that should have been hidden or thrown into the fire along with their authors. He very likely had de’ Rossi in mind. The highly cultured Judah Moscato raised theological considerations in his cautionary response to de’ Rossi’s unconventional views regarding creation era chronology and the Jewish calendrical system, while Moscato’s distinguished rabbinic contemporary in Mantua, Moses Provencal, vigorously addressed this in a lengthy *hasagah*. It is true as Weinberg points out, that “Provenzali did not articulate his dissent in a polemical vein” (p. xliii), but given de’ Rossi’s forthright denial of the ostensibly Mosaic or even pre-Mosaic age of that system and its divine authority, Provencal’s *hasagah*, despite the niceties of his relationship with de’ Rossi, significantly transcended what Weinberg calls simply “the form of a scholarly exchange” (p. xliii). Moreover, the late-eighteenth-century Italian rabbi Hnanel Neppi, who had occasion to consult an entire manuscript of Provencal’s *hasagot to Me’or ‘einayim*, described how Provencal fulminated against many principal aspects of the work, notably the characterization of various talmudic pronouncements as hyperbole, denouncing de’Rossi as “seeking to permit forbidden things.” Very reverential in referring to Provencal, Neppi nonetheless defended de’ Rossi, noting at length the positive intent of his studies. In this confrontation between theological affirmation and critical historical analysis, the censure of de’Rossi’s work in Italy was definitely not limited to what has sometimes been characterized as marginal, intellectually unaccomplished, superannuated rabbinic spokesmen and mystics.

Weinberg rightly calls attention to de’ Rossi’s “consistently apologetic stance,” even periodic dismissal of his own scholarly endeavor, and his assurance of judicious use of non-Jewish sources, all in anticipation of disapproval of his novel approach. Nevertheless, she observes that de’ Rossi persisted in the pursuit of truth, even combining Neoplatonic with talmudic notions: “Truth is like a seal of the true God, the characteristic of the beautiful soul and the good to which all aspire” (Intro., xxv f.; Trans. 406). She seems to conclude that “this discloses his true attitude . . . which would appear to undermine all his token gestures toward rabbinic authority” (p. xxvi, n. 88), although she qualifies this by asserting that his search for truth precluded Sinaitically mandated tradition, and “the main body of Oral Torah.” Perhaps it must be made clearer to the reader that even while stimulating doubt regarding some central areas of non-Sinaitic tradition, his objective embraced genuine concern for the intellectual integrity of the ancient sages, and he insisted that customary religious usage sanctioned by them, even in such areas, remained obligatory. If, as Weinberg stresses, the combination of the Neoplatonic and the rabbinic was intended to enhance “the significance of his work despite all his protestations that Torah study is of paramount importance” (p. 406 n. 4), he certainly was committed to the perpetuity of that study, even as he sought to bring new perspectives to it.
Although it is not possible to do justice to a translation of more than 700 pages in a brief review, one must conclude that the combination of requisite scholarship and creative skill required for a translation of *Me'or`einayim* is impressively obvious throughout Weinberg's work. Indeed, the challenge which this task presents can even be gauged from passages where one may take issue with Weinberg's rendition of the text. De' Rossi for example, anticipating criticism of his use of non-Jewish authors, invoked Judah Messer Leon's disparaging reference to those "self-appointed" (p. 98) co-religionists who rejected truths from gentile sources, and Maimonides' insistence that the truth should be accepted irrespective of its source. As for his own treatise, de' Rossi referred to, as Weinberg translates, "the simpleton or hypocrite whose sole aim is to libel me for his own self-aggrandizement or to exploit my work, he should keep his hands off my book for it is not intended for him" (p. 99). De' Rossi's original reads "peti ve-savu'ah 'asher ein lo mikgo'ah rak tanuvi bi-nezikin le-hitgadel 'o le-kurdom, 'al na' tiga yado behibi zeh ki l'o 'elav pi kar'ati" (*Me'or`einayim*, ed. Cassel, p. 89), meaning "the simpleton or hypocrite whose only area [of wisdom] is the exclusive study of [the Mishnaic Order of ] Damages in order that he may achieve fame or material gain." In contrast with "the person who has a brain in his head," whom de' Rossi had referred to some lines earlier, it was precisely the parochial minded talmudist who might indeed seek to defame him, that type whom he described in another context as "from among the common herd of talmudists" (ibid., p. 303: "'eizeh she-yiheyeh me-hamon ha-lamdanim"). Weinberg, who constantly cites de' Rossi's sources or allusions, surprisingly chooses here not to identify the rabbinic frame of reference (B. Berakhot, 20a, B. Ta'anit, 24a–b, & B. Sanhedrin, 106b; M. Bava Batra, 10:8; M. Avot, 4:5). She resorts to a figurative translation, thus losing the contrast which de' Rossi constructed from a very literal and purposeful adaptation of rabbinic dicta. For all of de' Rossi's great gift for turning a phrase, given the hostile response to his work among contemporary rabbinic spokesmen, his derisive reference to narrow preoccupation with "tanuviim bi-nezikim" should be taken at face value. De' Rossi's contrast moreover echoes Maimonides' assertion that his Guide's purpose was not "to make its totality understandable to the vulgar ("le-hamon" Ibn Tibbon trans., Petihah, 4) ... nor to teach those who have not engaged in any study other than ... the legalistic study of the Law" (Guide, Intro., Pines trans., p. 5), but rather the individual drawn by the human intellect.

There is also such a plethora of citations in *Me'or`einayim* that an occasional oversight in precisely specifying a source is not inconceivable. Concerning the talmudic account of Rabbi Eleazar bar Yose's presence in Rome where he was able to see the Temple vessels, de' Rossi referred to Rashi's description of this in his commentary to tractate *Me'ilah* (p. 609). De' Rossi's gloss here cites the lines from Rashi but incorrectly specifies their source as *Me'ilah* (p. 610, and n.10: B. Me'i-lah, 17b), when in fact they are in Rashi’s commentary to Tractate *Yoma*, 57a where

R. Eleazar’s experience in Rome is also mentioned. Weinberg’s translation of the gloss overlooks this error.

De’Rossi obviously echoed Proverbs 15:30 (“me’or ‘einayim yesamah leivav”) when he asserted in his introduction that the work, being “me’or ‘einai vesimhat levavi”—“the light of my eyes and the joy of my heart” (p. 6)—he named it, “Me’or ‘einyim.” But what is not clearly articulated in the translator’s title, “Light of the Eyes” was de’Rossi’s intent to provide “Light for the Eyes” as the title has occasionally been rendered. More specifically it was the “Enlightenment of the Eyes” which de’ Rossii hoped to impart to the reader “drawn by the human intellect” (p. 299) whom he regularly addressed in his work. In formulating his title, de’ Rossi would of course have recalled Gersonides’ comment on the verse in Proverbs to the effect that “the enlightenment of the eyes of the heart (i.e., the mind) gladdens the intellect for its joy is in the apprehension of speculative matters” (“me’or ‘einei ha-lev yesamah ha-sekhel ki simhato be-hasagot ha-iyuni-yot”). The significance which de’ Rossi attached to this choice of title may also be gauged from his determination to perpetuate his work by giving it a “shem ‘olam,” an everlasting name. Weinberg’s translation will certainly contribute to the realization of that aspiration and the objective which it embodied.

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This is a uniquely informed and informative work on the vicissitudes of the radical Jewish left in America, post-1945, and the losing battle it has waged against more conservative impulses within American Jewry. It is also notably uninformative about the liberalism of American Jews that ostensibly forms the focal point of its discussion. It ably documents a variety of topics: the persistent intra-Jewish strife over political dissent, the overfree use by both sides of Holocaust rhetoric, the penchant for Jewish political discourse to indulge in citing so-called “prophetic” and “Talmudic” models to legitimize or delegitimize controversial contemporary positions, and the recent demise of an organized, active Jewish left wing. In contrast, the author displays little interest, if any, in survey data on Jewish opinion, and he is similarly unconcerned with comparing Jews and other ethnic or religious groups or otherwise contextualizing the phenomena he discusses in general American political terms. The result is a book that possesses many merits save one: it is not a well-rounded or convincing treatment of postwar American Jewish liberalism.

At the heart of Staub’s book lie conceptual and definitional issues that are never resolved. Before taking up his narrative about the decade of the fifties, Staub
opens with a “flash-forward” to the 1968 dismissal of Rabbi A. Bruce Goldman, the Jewish campus chaplain at Columbia University, against the background of the rabbi’s support for student strike activity on the campus that year—a notably virulent and, indeed, violent season of strife at Columbia that left many scars. Staub closes his book with a description of the witch hunt conducted against Breira, a dissident, left-wing Jewish group of the early 1970s (which my own membership in once lost me a job opportunity in Jewish education). Neither the Goldman case nor Breira fits neatly within most accepted schemes of what constitutes “liberalism.” It is far more accurate to describe both as episodes belonging to the margins of the Jewish left experience in America. In framing his discussion between these points of reference, Staub underlines the ambiguous—even idiosyncratic—nature of his political definitions and the resulting lack of clarity about the purposes of his book.

In between these two orienting episodes, Staub guides the reader through a broad-ranging discussion on the engagement of organizations and public personages in the Jewish community with African-American affairs since the fifties, with the politics of the Cold War (especially with regard to the Rosenbergs and the Paul Robeson controversy), with the Vietnam War, the Israeli-Arab wars of 1967 and 1973, the sexual revolution, the New Left, feminism, the debates over abortion rights, and gay rights. He demonstrates that the Jewish community never formed a consensus on any of these, but his treatment of these issues and the sources he uses to support his argument invariably pit the community’s most radical elements against what he calls “antiliberal” critics. Where, one wonders, are all the liberals, and why are some of his “antiliberal” examples not very convincing in that role (Arthur Hertzberg, of all people, figures prominently in this regard).1

One reads with interest Staub’s account of the involvements of the American Jewish Congress and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations in the politics of racial integration in the sixties—this, at least, really is a case of liberal Jews addressing liberal issues. But what is one to make of a book on Jewish liberalism that omits mention of Alex Rose and the Liberal Party; David Dubinsky and the Jewish unions; Senator Jacob Javits; the longstanding political alliances between Jews and such leading American liberals as Hubert Humphrey; figures like Bella Abzug; the quest by Jewish organizations to shore up the so-called “wall of separation” between church and state; the always shifting (but, compared to other groups, remarkably stable) Jewish voting records over the past fifty years; the Jewish role in the American Civil Liberties Union (which merits only two very oblique, one-line references)? How is one to understand a perception of disarray in the Jewish liberal-left camp that does not entail even a sideways glance at the ideological disarray in the Democratic Party, its splintered leadership and its studied avoidance of the nasty “L” word since the Clinton administration?

1. Hertzberg’s famous book, The Zionist Idea, is misidentified by Staub as the Zionist Ideal (p. 93), which may simply be a technical error. In a somewhat related and more substantive reference that is worth correcting, however, Staub identifies the late Abraham Joshua Heschel, along with Arthur Hertzberg, as a Conservative rabbi (p. 12). Heschel was not a Conservative rabbi, though he was a very prominent theologian at the Jewish Theological Seminary.
What one must make of such a book, clearly, is that it takes all of the above for granted—though many readers might well have profited from some basic orientation in the field—and proceeds instead to examine the cultural politics of Jewish communal infighting. This is a legitimate subject in its own right, of course. Though it sets out to be a study of postwar American Jewish liberalism, Staub has, in fact, written a finely detailed account of the politicization of Jewish ethnicity and religion in the post-Holocaust period. What interests Staub most of all are the political constructions that Jews over the past decades have placed upon their Jewishness and upon Judaism. This is what leads him, as well, in a last-minute gambit (on the book’s final page) to lament the recent inward-turning tendency of Jews of different political hues, which he contends not only robs the debate between left and right of the fire and passion of yore, but also portends a loss of social cohesion among Jews. No longer quite so avid for a good old-fashioned fight over the “Jewish” roots and Judaic rightness of their politics, the author warns “that collectivity known as a Jewish people” is coming “closer to an end” (p. 308). The real crux of the book, then, appears not to be the “crisis of Jewish liberalism,” but the crisis of Jewish ethnicity.

It is disconcerting, in the first place, that Staub has not discussed, apart from a telegraphic sentence or two, what transpired between the mid-seventies and the end of the twentieth century to bring about the situation as he sees it. It also seems, from my vantage point here in Israel, where we have had a prime minister assassinated for political reasons, disturbingly insular for Staub to suggest that the sort of political polarization that he has so amply described could be, of all things, the surest sign of a healthy collective life.

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