

## BOOK REVIEWS

Herbert Chanan Brichto. *The Names of God: Poetic Readings in Biblical Beginnings*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. xvii, 462 pp.

This book, by the late professor of biblical studies at Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, is a companion volume to his *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics* (Oxford, 1992), in which, by utilizing rhetorical or poetic techniques, he first made the case for the aesthetic wholeness of the Hebrew Bible. Whereas the first volume analyzed narrative texts relating to the prophets, in this volume Herbert Brichto devotes his literary analysis to the early Genesis narratives, including the Creation, Flood, and Abraham stories.

Brichto's philosophy is clear: There is a common community of discourse between ancient writers and ourselves. Hence, ancient writers were fully aware of such modes of discourse as metaphor, figurative language, and irony. To understand the world of the Bible, one has to understand this discourse, and thus one has to be aware of the various rhetorical or poetic techniques employed by the ancient writers or else be mired in the bog of literalism. And it is literalists, both religious fundamentalists and representatives of modern biblical scholarship (the so-called source-critics), against whom Brichto inveighs throughout this book. If only scholars of this bent understood the biblical idiom and modes of expression, he argues, they would not be led astray into the methodological errors to which they are so prone.

Take genre, for example. Correct methodology requires that a text be analyzed and then assigned a genre. But what modern critical scholars do is assume that a text belongs to a certain genre and then interpret it in the light of the assumed genre. They maintain, for example, that the narrative after Gen 2:4b is another Creation story by a different author than that of first Creation story in Gen 1:1–2:4a. But Brichto demonstrates through his analysis of the text that this narrative is not a Creation text at all; rather it is a Paradise story. Thus, there are not two Creation stories, and not two authors.

The assertion of unity of authorship is dominant in Brichto's book. Indeed its very title, *The Names of God*, is a visible assertion of this unity. Brichto revives the old (and now long discarded) theory of Umberto Cassuto as to the different usages of the divine names Yahweh and Elohim. Yahweh is used when there is mention of Israel or the ancestors of Israel (the patriarchs), Elohim is used for outsiders or for generic descriptions of God. There was one author of the Pentateuch, and the unity of the text can be demonstrated by a proper understanding of its grammar and rhetoric.

The rhetorical device that Brichto most frequently uses to demonstrate the text's unity is what he terms the synoptic-resumptive technique. That is, when the writer first briefly describes an action (hence, synoptic; gives a synopsis) and then, in a second account, gives much more detail (hence resumptive; the author resumes the subject left off in the first account). This technique seems to the reviewer to be

analogous to the rabbinic exegetical technique called *kelal uferat* (“from general to particular”), but Brichto has expanded it considerably and employs it to explain difficulties in texts usually thought to contain duplications or contradictions. Consider how he argues for the unity of the Flood story, for example. The two accounts of the instructions to bring different animals, thought to signal two authors, are explained by regarding the first account as synoptic (a pair of each species), and the second account as resumptive (there are two orders of pairing: single pairs for the unclean, seven pairs for the clean). Hence, the so-called contradiction no longer exists, the second account is simply a more detailed account of the first.

This is a book that one cannot read casually, and readers are strongly advised to have a Hebrew Bible near at hand to follow Brichto’s close reading of the text. He will demonstrate when a Hebrew phrase is being used paratactically (connecting parallel sentences by “and”) or hypotactically (using statements parenthetically or by subordinate clauses necessitating conjunctions such as “when,” “because,” or “although”). Sometimes he employs these techniques very successfully, as when he deftly demonstrates how Lot, who had mistakenly closed the door behind him (Gen 19:6), is taken back safely into his house by the angels without the mob of riotous townsfolk pouring through the door. In other instances, Brichto’s solutions are a little fanciful and require readers to suspend their rational judgment in favor of interpretations that require acknowledgment of hidden riddles, codes, and metaphors within metaphors. However, if one stays the course and follows Brichto’s often quite involved arguments, one can only admire his ingenuity and brilliance, and more often than not one will find oneself rewarded by a new appreciation of familiar texts.

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Benjamin D. Sommer. *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66. Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. xiii, 355 pp.

Benjamin D. Sommer elevates the analysis of inner-biblical interpretation to the next level of sophistication and rigor in this volume, a substantially revised version of his University of Chicago doctoral dissertation written under the direction of Michael Fishbane. He focuses on the reuse of older biblical material in a specific biblical text, Isaiah 40–66. These chapters of the book of Isaiah, seen as an addition made a century and a half later to Isaiah 1–39, are assigned to an anonymous sixth-century prophet called, for the sake of convenience, Deutero-Isaiah. By treating the reuse of older biblical material in Deutero-Isaiah, Sommer is able to delineate what might be distinctive in Deutero-Isaiah’s methods of inner-biblical interpretation, a desirable next step in the analysis of inner-biblical interpretation. What is impressive in Sommer’s book is his ability to move to larger issues in bib-

lical studies and to parallel issues in other academic and intellectual pursuits often ignored in biblical studies. The book also exhibits a clarity of writing and argument in what in many ways is a highly technical subject.

Sommer commences with a discussion of the distinction between allusion and intertextuality, defining his project as an analysis of allusion because allusion reflects the intent of an author, whereas intertextuality is a construct in the mind of the reader. This allows him to sidestep the difficulty of determining whether a reader would even recognize the reuse of material and, more importantly, to connect the text to the guiding hand of a particular prophet and to connect that prophet to his time and place in the historical development of Israelite religion.

Sommer isolates the stylistic traits of Deutero-Isaiah's reuse of older material and argues that Deutero-Isaiah, while often making recourse to methods of inner-biblical exegesis used elsewhere, utilizes a number of methods whose combination is rarely found elsewhere. He often splits up a phrase from older material into a unit in which the constituent parts of the phrase may be separated by several words or even several verses. This is employed in combination with word play, where a borrowed word is used in a different sense from its source, and sound play, where words from Deutero-Isaiah's source are linked to similar-sounding words in his oracles. Sommer links Deutero-Isaiah's allusions to his theological program. For example, material that refers to the Davidic monarch is typically transformed by Deutero-Isaiah to refer to the Israelite nation as a whole. Deutero-Isaiah deliberately excludes mention of the Davidic monarchy because his theology excludes the restoration of the David monarchy.

Sommer shows that Deutero-Isaiah makes extensive use of material from other prophets. One of Sommer's most interesting conclusions is that, while Deutero-Isaiah does allude to material from First Isaiah, he makes more extensive use of Jeremiah. This refutes the claim made by some biblicists that Deutero-Isaiah possesses an organic connection to First Isaiah and was intentionally written as an appendix to First Isaiah. The ramification of this is that the placement of Deutero-Isaiah on an Isaianic scroll is mere coincidence. Deutero-Isaiah could have, by chance, been placed on a scroll at the conclusion of Jeremiah.

Sommer's chapter on Deutero-Isaiah's use of psalms carefully grapples with the quandary of identifying allusions to material that is so stereotypical. When the psalms sound so much alike, how can it be determined that Deutero-Isaiah is referring to a particular psalm rather than utilizing psalmic language in general? Throughout his study, Sommer struggles with the tentativeness of identifying allusions, but it is here that his argumentation is most rigorous.

Sommer concludes his volume by placing Deutero-Isaiah's activity into a general scheme of development. Deutero-Isaiah bases his prophecy on older prophecies rather than on direct experience of the divine word; his prophetic office is textualized in allusion and recasting of older words. In this way, Deutero-Isaiah prefigured the tendency of the Second Temple period to rely on the interpretation of texts so as to become a hermeneutically based religion. Furthermore, Deutero-Isaiah's confirmation of older prophecies of doom is employed to prove that earlier prophets spoke accurately, thus legitimizing the entire enterprise of prophecy. At the same time, the use of allusions strengthens Deutero-Isaiah's own

authority. Deutero-Isaiah's repetition of messages of comfort, called by the term "reprediction," and his reversal of earlier negative prophecies to positive ones, which conforms to Deutero-Isaiah's message of restoration, are legitimated because they are based themselves on authoritative material.

Of course, one could always quibble that some of the allusions Sommer identifies are not certain but merely possible, but such objections are basically immaterial. Mildly troubling, however, are the boundaries Sommer sets around certain texts that have been identified as later than Deutero-Isaiah and his refusal to treat possible allusions to them in Deutero-Isaiah. A future study could focus on the use of allusion to date texts, especially pentateuchal texts.

In sum, Sommer's outstanding volume sparkles with originality and is a stimulating advance in the study of inner-biblical interpretation.

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Gabriele Boccaccini. *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998. xx, 230 pp.

Boccaccini makes two important contributions in this work: he employs the methods of intellectual history to give a novel account of the origins of the Qumran community and he seeks to overcome the supersessionism characteristic of Christian studies of ancient Judaism.

Boccaccini tells a story of three schisms. First came "an ancient schism within the Jewish priesthood between Enochians and Zadokites" (p. 78), groups with "directly opposed" (p. 72) ideologies. Second, after a post-Maccabean Revolt appropriation of Zadokite traditions by some Enochians (reflected in Jubilees and the Temple Scroll), came "the birth of a schismatic group" (p. 114) of Enochians dissatisfied with the Zadokite establishment (reflected in the Halakhic Letter). Third came the formation of a sect with Enochic roots, "the schism between Qumran and Enochic Judaism" (p. 119).<sup>1</sup>

Other discussions of the Enochian/Zadokite division are cited, but Boccaccini's formulation seems more extreme: "The Enochians completely ignore the Mosaic torah and the Jerusalem temple" (p. 74). This seems incompatible with Kugler's characterization of early dispute as "still quite tame . . . [with] room for differences of opinion," and with Himmelfarb's characterization of Enoch as "deeply devoted to the ideal of the temple understood in a quite concrete way," both cited for support (p. 78). Indeed, the claim that Enochians "ignored" the torah of

1. For helpful discussion of Boccaccini on the origins of the Qumran community, see J.C. VanderKam, "A Response to G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism*." *Henoch* (forthcoming, 2000).

Enoch's "rival Moses" (p. 74) is supported only by an argument from silence: 1 Enoch's omission of the Mosaic covenant and the gift of torah. It is unclear what such omissions prove, especially since Boccaccini does not explain which traditions and laws were then thought to comprise "Mosaic torah." He acknowledges "a common mythological heritage shared by both Enochians and Zadokites" (p. 77), but regards pentateuchal traditions as "Zadokite torah" (p. 71). When these traditions were redacted, and how much pentateuchal law Enochians shared, are left unclear.

Boccaccini's assertion of ideological opposition seems driven by the desire to emulate "the study of the history of competing philosophical positions in antiquity" (p. xiv). But the distinctive character of text production, redaction, and transmission in ancient Judaism renders the application of such a model problematic. The complex interrelations between shared traditions implies that any division into two "directly opposed" schools must go beyond the evidence.

Boccaccini has an explanation for texts in which Enochic and Zadokite elements mingle: Jubilees and the Temple Scroll testify to an innovative attempt by Enochians to appropriate Zadokite torah. But there is no evidence that the mingling is innovative unless the earlier thesis of an ideological schism is accepted. "Rewritten bibles" may be viewed not as attempts to replace established pentateuchal texts, but, rather, as late products of the redactional and interpretive process that also produced biblical texts.<sup>2</sup>

Boccaccini claims that the Temple Scroll "does not recognize the Mosaic torah as its source. It claims to be an independent revelation from God that drew its authority from the same archetype, the heavenly tablets" (p. 100). In fact, the Scroll explicitly acknowledges neither Mosaic torah nor the heavenly tablets invoked in Jubilees as the source of its authority. But Boccaccini's dualistic history requires that it acknowledge one or the other. He thinks that it acknowledges the tablets because of its intellectual affinities with Enochic Judaism and Jubilees in particular (pp. 100–101). However, he ignores the possibility that to interpretively recast pentateuchal traditions *was* to acknowledge Mosaic torah as one's source. To privilege intellectual affinities over exegetical and redactional relations is to impose the methods of the history of ancient schools on the culture of ancient Judaism.

Boccaccini's preface eloquently attests to his interest in Jewish-Christian friendship and his desire to undo the effect upon Second Temple research of "a cultural pattern that for confessional reasons aimed to present Christianity and Judaism as separate and independent monoliths" (p. xiii). However, he avoids portraying Second Temple Judaism as either proto-Christian or proto-Rabbinic by portraying it as *both*. This avoids being narrowly confessional, but still appears anachronistic. We must await a forthcoming book for his views on the origins of Rabbinic Judaism. But it is clear from this book that, although he rejects the interpretation of the Qumran community as proto-Christian, he views the Christians as "the most direct heirs of Enochic Judaism," while "the rabbis . . . fiercely op-

2. I have discussed the problematic term "rewritten bible" in "Interpretation as Primordial Writing: Jubilees and Its Authority Conferring Strategies." *JSL* 30 (1999) 407–409.

posed it” (p. 159). This view overstates both the continuity between Enochic Judaism and Christianity and the discontinuity with Rabbinic Judaism. Enochic aspects of rabbinic *merkavah* traditions are unmentioned, while the gradual deemphasis of Enochic traditions within the Church is explained as follows: “If most Churches gradually rejected those [ancient Essene] documents from their canons, it was because the Church’s confrontation with Rabbinic Judaism did not encourage a relation with a movement that the Church’s direct competitors considered only a nest of heretics” (p. 190). No evidence is given either for the ascription of this attitude to the rabbis or for the influence of rabbinic views about heresy upon the Church.

Boccaccini attempts to avoid confessional history of Second Temple Judaism, in which “the literature of the period was forced into confessionally divided corpora only to serve as weapons for theological disputes” (p. xiii). However, the effect of his division between Enochian and Zadokite schools of thought is to make his own study oddly reminiscent of the kind of history he rejects. The difference is that, where others have divided Second Temple literature into confessionally divided corpora for the sake of contemporary theological disputes, Boccaccini sees the Second Temple period itself as the scene of theological disputes between two confessional groups with their own textual corpora. His provocative account, situated within a complex overview of the origins of both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism, will stimulate discussion for years to come.

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Erich Gruen. *Heritage and Hellenism: The Reinvention of Jewish Tradition*. Hellenistic Culture and Society. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. xx, 335 pp.

Erich S. Gruen, a leading Greco-Roman historian, here presents the results of several years of research in the field of Jewish history. Positioning himself as the gadfly in his adopted field, he describes certain consensus positions of scholars in Jewish studies and proceeds *seriatim* to question or deconstruct them. This makes for interesting reading, and in some cases a significant challenge to the standard views of textbooks on the subject. Only some of his challenges can be mentioned here.

The first consensus he engages is the one that sees the Maccabean war as a revolt of the saints against the corrosive inroads of Greek culture and politics, followed, ironically, by the thorough Hellenization of the resultant Hasmonean regime (pp. 1–40). The embrace of Hellenistic kingship after the Maccabean Revolt is accepted by scholars as a surprising but understandable assimilation to the ineluctable force of Hellenism. Gruen denies this common interpretation of the Maccabean Revolt, arguing that the Maccabees were not opposed to Hellenism as such,

but to the oppressive policies of Antiochus IV Epiphanes *in particular*. He points out that the enemies named in 1 and 2 Maccabees are not Greeks but the surrounding nations, likened to the enemies of Israel of old, the Ammonites, Moabites, and so on. The ongoing diplomatic relations between the Maccabees and the Seleucids would tend to confirm this. Some corroboration of his thesis can be found in the roughly contemporary but fictionalized work *Judith*, where the enemy is also, first, the Assyrian and Babylonian empires, but in addition the surrounding nations described as Ammonites, Moabites, Canaanites, and Edomites (Jdt 5:2–3, 7:8).

However, the consensus view of the Maccabean Revolt as an inevitable conflict between Judaism and Hellenism cannot so easily be replaced with the different but equally simple dichotomy of Israel versus the nations. 1 Maccabees does seem to identify the enemy as the peoples roundabout, but 2 Maccabees becomes an important test case for Gruen's thesis. While it is true that Seleucid figures can indeed be portrayed positively (3:3, 4:36, 8:20), they are often seen in direct opposition to Jewish piety (4:9–15, 11:24), and while the surrounding peoples are sometimes depicted negatively (8:9, 16), they can also be viewed in a positive way (4:35, 49; 12:29–31). To cloud the distinction further, *ta ethnê*, "the nations," sometimes seems to refer to the Greeks (6:4, 13:11); sometimes to non-Greeks (12:13, 14:14, 15:8–10); and sometimes to both (8:5, 9, 16), although it is in some cases unclear. A more workable conclusion can perhaps be derived from Robert Doran's study of 2 Maccabees as Temple propaganda (*Temple Propaganda: The Purpose and Character of 2 Maccabees*): how groups or individuals are viewed, and what *ta ethnê* means, is determined simply by their relation to the Temple and to Judaism. In other words, the valuations of Greeks and surrounding nations are not absolute, but always stand in relation to the Temple and Jewish interests. The cultural opposition of Judaism to Hellenism, or of Israel to the surrounding nations, may perhaps be better subsumed in 2 Maccabees under one umbrella.

As another challenge, Gruen argues that in reading the more imaginative and fictitious Hellenistic Jewish texts, scholars often look for political references in all the wrong places, and have as a result missed the irony and humor in the texts (chaps. 5–7). With that, they also miss an affirmation of Jewish identity confident enough to include barbed satire of both pagan and Jewish figures. Third Maccabees, Apocryphal Esther, *Tales of the Tobiads*, and *Letter of Aristeas* all, in his view, reveal a subtle but unmistakable tweaking of pagan and/or Jewish sensibilities.

He may be correct, but to read the ancient audience's sense of subtle irony is not easy, especially in such texts as Apocryphal Esther or *Tales of the Tobiads*. In the former I would see more romanticizing than satirizing (unlike the Masoretic version of Esther), and in the *Tales of the Tobiads* the supposed skewering of the Ptolemaic king may reflect instead a common ancient topos of how a clever person can ingratiate him or herself with a powerful king through aplomb (compare 2 Sam 12, 14; Herodotus 1.27, 3.34; Plutarch, *Alexander* 14.2; *The Eloquent Peasant*). In reading these chapters, I could not help but notice that Gruen consistently referred to sections of my own works where he perceived a disagreement, but not to places where I had investigated similar themes (note *The Jewish Novel in the Ancient*

*World*, pp. 44, 61–62, 68–69, 80–86, 130 n. 60, 132–157, 169, 190–191, and especially 245–256 on the Jewish satirical novel). To be sure, Gruen sometimes presses for a satirical reading where I do not find it, but both of us seek out irony, satire, humor, and related issues in very similar ways in our works, though sometimes in relation to different texts. One wonders, for example, why Gruen barely mentions the humor and irony found in *Judith*, *Tobit*, and *Testament of Abraham*, irony that in the latter two cases pokes fun at cherished Jewish values.

A third scholarly consensus that Gruen critiques concerns Book 3 of the *Sibylline Oracles* (pp. 268–291). Many have identified a Jewish core composed in Egypt in the second century B.C.E., based on, among other things, references to the “seventh king.” Gruen does not so much dispute this *particular* judgment as the notion that a historical context, or even a geographical location, can be discerned. He raises interesting objections to various theories, but does not, to my mind, close the subject. True, Ptolemaic kings were not numbered sequentially to distinguish them as we do (pp. 276–277), but that would not preclude an intentionally obscure text from referring to the kings by number. True, identifying the “widow who rules the world” as Cleopatra runs into the problem that she was not known principally as a widow nor did she rule the world (pp. 279–280). However, she did rule *because* she was the widow of a Ptolemaic king, and she may very well have been symbolized in Egypt hyperbolically as ruling the world.

Arising from Gruen’s challenges is the consistent thesis that Judaism in the Greco-Roman period can be characterized as an exuberant *engagement* with Hellenistic culture and not as a *conflict* of worldviews. Gruen thus wants to avoid the usual stereotype of the pious struggle of Jews to maintain their identity under the onslaught of the dual threat of annihilation and assimilation. Despite the reservations noted, the book will be a very welcome addition to the field of ancient Jewish studies. Simply by retracing the evidentiary basis for many of the accepted conclusions of Jewish studies, Gruen forces a very salutary reconsideration of them. His challenges may not induce scholars to change their minds, but they will be forced to consider each and every one of them, and in several cases may find that their conclusions will have to be altered. Future treatments of these issues will likely have to run through Gruen’s work and engage in what will be a very interesting dialogue.

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Michael Berger. *Rabbinic Authority*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998. xii, 226 pp.

Understanding the authority of “the rabbis,” the sages of the Mishnah and Talmud who lived during the first five centuries of the common era, has always been a tricky business. The sages grounded their authority on the concept of the

dual Torah—the belief that God revealed to Moses, in addition to the written Torah, an oral Torah, which was passed down in an unbroken chain from generation to generation. However, the emergence of Jewish historical consciousness during the Enlightenment rendered this view difficult to maintain. The rise of critical biblical studies revealed a gap between the religion of the Bible and Rabbinic Judaism. On what basis, then, are the pronouncements of the talmudic sages authoritative for subsequent generations of Jews?

In *Rabbinic Authority*, Michael Berger offers a sophisticated exploration of this topic. His method is that of philosophy of religion, the enterprise of employing the tools of analytic philosophy “to treat issues of religious thought seriously.” The book is not intended as a historical survey of the different ways Jewish thinkers have explained rabbinic authority in the past. Rather, Berger presents various models that help justify, explain, and legitimate the privileged place of “the rabbis” in traditional Judaism. He hopes “to unpack the notion of the authority possessed by the talmudic Sages in Judaism and . . . to lay bare the assumptions that undergird it and the implications that follow from it” (p. viii).

The book is therefore a type of apologetics—in the non-pejorative sense of the term. It provides a well-reasoned defense, or various possible defenses, of traditional Jewish notions of authority in light of the problems raised by modern historical-critical study. While Berger disavows any attempt to “justify the normative claim that a Jew must obey talmudic law or even to prove that Rabbinic authority is an internally coherent concept,” these motivations seem to lurk in the background. And while Berger’s probing discussions certainly do not offer simplistic answers, he provides valuable resources that a traditional Jew who wishes to participate intellectually in modern Western culture could use in constructing a coherent theology. A major virtue of the book is its honest and comprehensive analysis of both the utility and the problems of different justifications of authority.

Berger adopts the philosopher R. S. Peters’ distinction between “in authority” and “an authority” to organize the models he discusses in the book’s first two parts. Someone “in authority” possesses authority by virtue of holding a certain office or rank, and not necessarily because of any personal quality or character trait. This applies, for example, to army officers, government officials, and most types of institutional authorities. One who is “an authority,” on the other hand, holds authority because of individual qualities, such as expertise or competence. My assessment of another person’s knowledge in an area such as medicine renders that person’s medical judgments authoritative for me. Chapters Two through Four begin with models of the talmudic sages “in authority.” Chapter Two explores the possibility that the sages serve as “the judge in charge at the time,” whom Deut. 17:9 instructs the Israelites to obey. Here rabbinic authority stems from a divine command authorizing future rabbis to determine the law. Chapter Three considers the more conventional notion that the talmudic sages constituted the Sanhedrin (or heirs to the Sanhedrin), the highest Jewish judicial institution. Chapter Four locates rabbinic authority in the practice of ordination, an official licensing by which a sage received a type of certification of his position. The sages essentially stand in the place of Moses, the divinely appointed leader, insofar as they function as his substitute in each succeeding generation.

The next two chapters shift to the sage functioning as “an authority.” Chapter Five attributes rabbinic authority to general expertise in biblical interpretation and Jewish law. One could rationally accept rabbinic authority on the grounds that the talmudic sages possessed the greatest knowledge of Torah and understanding of the divine will. Chapter Six investigates the conception of the sages as divinely guided, either through an oral tradition passed down since the time of Moses, through contemporary divine inspiration, or through an “indeterminate” divine policy authorizing any interpretations that future sages might propound.

Berger’s analysis of these models is extremely thorough. So thorough, in fact, that in each case he finds significant problems with the use of the model to satisfactorily ground rabbinic authority. Two problems, in particular, crop up repeatedly. First, it is difficult to see why many justifications of rabbinic authority should be limited to the talmudic sages, as opposed to the geonim or the medieval rabbis. Yet traditional Judaism considers the talmudic sages as possessing an authority far beyond that of their spiritual heirs. For example, if the talmudic sages function as “the judge in charge at that time,” why is a rabbi of the tenth century (or a contemporary rabbi for that matter) any less authoritative? He, too, is the “judge in charge at that time,” and should possess commensurate authority. Similarly, if the sages hold authority by virtue of their expertise in interpreting Torah or understanding the divine will, could not later rabbis make similar claims? Second, the conclusions of modern historical study raise certain difficulties.

Little historical evidence suggests that the Sanhedrin continued after the destruction of the Temple, and even less that the talmudic sages actually occupied positions in the Sanhedrin. Moreover, the Sanhedrin never functioned in the diaspora, so to see the Babylonian sages as a Sanhedrin or as heirs to the Sanhedrin is problematic. The history of the practice of rabbinic ordination is also murky, and it, too, was not practiced in Babylonia. Berger discusses the counter-arguments to each of these objections, and the issues are more complex than can be summarized here. But in these chapters the difficulties tend to outweigh the possibilities for coherent models of authority.

Part Three, “Rabbinic Authority as Authority Transformed,” is the richest and most creative section of the book. Here Berger locates authority not in a conventional hierarchical model but in a “bottom-up” paradigm by which the people accept authority upon themselves. Chapter Seven considers whether the authority of the talmudic sages can be located as the “collective will” of the Jewish people accepting the *halakhah* laid out by the rabbis as normative practice. Rabbinic authority derives not from the institutional or personal authority of the sages but from a communal decision to recognize that authority, much as a community recognizes a certain judicial system to resolve its disputes and interpret its laws. Chapter Eight offers an interesting analysis of the textual authority of the Babylonian Talmud. The dictates of individual talmudic sages were transformed into the authority of a text that became the center of Jewish tradition, the object of study and basis for law of subsequent generations. Here, Berger makes use of the philosopher Ronald Dworkin’s famous metaphor for understanding the way laws are interpreted in a legal tradition. Dworkin compares a legal tradition to the writing of a book, such

that one author writes the first chapter and then passes the book to a different author to write the second, and to yet another to write the third. Each author is free to take the plot in a different direction, but must remain somewhat faithful to the earlier chapters if the book is to be coherent. In this view, rabbinic authority embodies “what those within the community living by talmudic norms feel: that their legal deliberations, their normative lifestyle, their way of ordering the world are all based on the words of the talmudic sages” (p. 124).

Chapter Nine, “Rethinking Authority: Interpretive Communities and Forms of Life,” invokes Wittgenstein’s notion of language-games and the literary critic Stanley Fish’s conception of an “interpretive community.” Fish argues that while texts do not have stable meanings in any absolute sense, and hence that interpretation, in theory, is completely subjective, in practice we all live within “interpretive communities” that provide shared assumptions, rules, and conventions. For Berger, this means that rabbinic authority need not be understood separately from the traditional Jewish “form of life,” which is built on such “shared assumptions” as the importance of Talmud study, the thousand-year commentarial tradition, and the centrality of normative practice. Rabbinic authority is not an external force imposed on an individual, but is “embedded in the interpretive community’s unique form of life and its actual practices” (p. 146). From some disembodied external perspective, it may be difficult to ground rabbinic authority on a sound philosophical basis, but from the internal worldview of the traditional community, rabbinic authority is inexorably connected to its web of beliefs, values, practices, goals, and convictions. Berger suggests that it may be more productive to describe rabbinic authority within traditional Jewish life than to justify it according to rigorous philosophical standards.

Berger’s last three chapters, which offer the most helpful models for justifying, or at least understanding, rabbinic authority, accept the postmodern notion of the role of the interpreter in the production of meaning. We have, then, another interesting intersection of postmodern theories with traditional Jewish notions. As contemporary literary scholars have used post-structuralist literary theories to shed light on rabbinic midrash, so Berger employs Wittgenstein, Dworkin, and Fish to offer new perspectives on the traditional doctrine of rabbinic authority.

Ultimately, one wonders whether this reframing of the issue successfully responds to the Enlightenment critique which “demands that some justification be provided for forgoing one’s own independent judgments and decisions in order to defer to another’s view” (p. 155). Berger argues passionately that it does, that reducing the question to “what grounds rabbinic authority” distorts a much more complex issue. Some readers may feel that Berger has finessed rather than solved the problem. Be that as it may, *Rabbinic Authority* is a carefully argued, profound, and meticulous analysis of this crucial tenet of traditional Judaism.

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Aryeh Cohen. *Rereading Talmud: Gender, Law and the Poetics of Sugyot*. Brown Judaic Studies 318. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998. 242 pp.

In this book, which is a slightly revised version of his dissertation, Aryeh Cohen tackles the challenge of reading the Babylonian Talmud as “literature.” This is a complex task, because the basis for a literary reading is not readily apparent. Large portions of the Bavli consist of logically dense legal argumentation. Cohen is to be commended for making these dense passages that comprise the overwhelmingly larger part of the Bavli the central topic of his analysis, for they give the Bavli its most distinctive literary qualities. Other approaches focus on subunits of rabbinic literature that are overtly literary, like parables or sage stories (*ma’asim*). While these approaches stress the literary qualities of rabbinic literature, as Cohen notes, they treat the subunits in isolation and consequently ignore the meaning conferred upon them by their broader contexts.

Cohen takes the sugya to be the relevant unit of literary analysis in the Bavli. Within the sugya, his reading is generated by several kinds of literary phenomena. First, he notices places where the sugya “doesn’t make sense”—either a conclusion does not flow smoothly from an argument or a term may appear opaque. These problematic textual moments, or “ungrammaticalities” as Cohen calls them, often generate post-talmudic discussions, and so contention among the post-talmudic interpreters is usually a good indicator of such points. Second, Cohen observes repeated syntactical patterns, tropes, images, and themes within the sugya. Finally, Cohen highlights “concepts introduced under erasure.” This term is borrowed from Derrida and applied to passages where the Bavli dismisses a legal principle as irrelevant. Cohen astutely notes that, by virtue of having been introduced at all, the concept can be *literarily* significant even when it is legally insignificant. These literary features—ungrammaticalities, repeated tropes, and concepts introduced under erasure—expose a progression in the sugya in addition to the linear flow of question, answer, proof-text, rebuttal, and so on, compelled by the sugya’s explicit rhetoric. Cohen provides real service to the field by isolating features within the texture of the text from which a literary reading of the Bavli can ensue. He skillfully balances the sensibilities of a text critic with those of a literary reader. While he takes the final redacted text as the primary subject of his reading, he also pays attention to the seams that indicate the presence of earlier sources. For Cohen, however, these seams provide stimulus for a literary rather than a text-critical reading. One of Cohen’s finest achievements consists in the fact that he points to a literary character of the Bavli that is independent of halakhic or aggadic genre. Indeed he treats halakhic, aggadic, and mixed sugyot.

The second major move in this book is to consider the relationship between the world of the text and historical “reality.” According to Cohen, the narrative that can be reconstructed from the above-noted literary features provides the link. Cohen asserts that the *textual* narrative draws its meaning from the larger *cultural* narratives of the rabbis. In an exemplary reading of several sugyot from b. Gittin, Cohen suggests that cultural anxiety about the exilic condition expresses itself in the perception of institutional vulnerability on the part of the rabbis. According to Cohen, the cultural narrative of exilic chaos is in dialogue with the textual narrative

of the exemplary sugyot, which try to assert stability through the construction of gender roles and by naturalizing the institution of slavery. This approach of connecting literary phenomena with historical reality is innovative in talmudic research and thought-provoking, but is not as fully developed in its execution as one might wish. Cohen draws most of his evidence of the larger cultural narratives from biblical sources and Ben Sira. This reader would have preferred a more thorough argument to establish his claim that exilic consciousness was a dominant cultural narrative of sixth- and seventh-century Babylonian Jewry.

When Cohen places his astute literary observations in the service of an extra-literary project, certain questions about the goals of a literary reading of the Bavli are raised. Are literary observations best exploited when they form the foundation of cultural critique, as in Cohen's work, or when they illuminate discourse *within* the textual universe of the Bavli? In this regard, Cohen's book provides an interesting counterpoint to David Kraemer's *Reading the Talmud: The Talmud as Literature*, which pursues the same goal of a literary reading of talmudic sugyot; Kraemer's focus remains, however, the textual universe of the Bavli. By implicitly engaging these important questions, Cohen's work furthers the scholarly project of reading the Bavli as literature.

The book still bears many of the marks of a dissertation. While the ideas are very interesting and original, the arguments are not always expressed as clearly or developed as fully as one might wish. A substantial portion of the book consists of a review of the secondary literature, which, while relevant, might have been condensed for the transition to book format in order to highlight the author's original thesis.

These criticisms notwithstanding, this book makes important contributions to the field. The methodologies that it employs and the ideas that it pursues have potentially far-reaching implications. By marking out important tasks and proceeding with a high level of methodological sophistication, this book welcomes a serious new voice into the arena of literary studies of rabbinic literature.

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Josef Stern. *Problems and Parables of the Law: Maimonides and Nahmanides on Reasons for the Commandments (Ta'amei Ha-Mitzvot)*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. xi, 201 pp.

Josef Stern's book "focuses on two elements in the Maimonidean revolution in the study of *ta'amei ha-miṣvot* and their impact on Nahmanides. The first is Maimonides' idea of the problematic commandment. The second is his idea that explanations of commandments—both individual laws and the . . . totality of commandments as a whole . . . should be modelled after the multileveled interpretation of parables" (p. 3). In Chapters Two, Three, and Six, Stern discusses Maimonides'

well-known “historically sensitive, context-dependent . . . explanations for the legislation of the *ḥuqqim*” (p. 4). While Stern briefly touches upon a number of problems that Maimonides grapples with in light of these explanations, he focuses on “specific arguments the *Guide* contains to counter the antinomianism implicit in its explanation of the *ḥuqqim*” (p. 5). Stern’s arguments and readings in these chapters are thoughtful and suggestive, if at times open to question, but space constraints prevent an analysis.<sup>1</sup> Rather, I will concentrate on the second focus of Stern’s work, contained in Chapters One, Two, and Five; namely, his understanding of “Maimonides’ theory of multileveled parabolic interpretation” (p. 68) and his claim that Maimonides extends this “parabolic model to the explanation of the commandments” (p. 11).

Stern notes that in the Introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides apparently contradicts himself regarding the relationship between the external (*zahir*) and internal (*batin*) meanings of a parable. First, Maimonides states that “the external meaning of a parable is worth nothing,” while the internal meaning is “like a pearl,” but he immediately reverses and states that the external as compared to the internal meaning is like silver as compared to gold. Stern suggests that Maimonides here “demarcates three levels of meaning . . . [that] characterize a parable: . . . 1) the vulgar external meaning [worth nothing], 2) the parabolic external meaning [like silver], and 3) the parabolic internal meaning [like a pearl or gold]” (p. 7).

There a number of problems with Stern’s suggestion. First, many scholars reconcile these different evaluations by assuming that Maimonides is referring to two types of parables, one where the external meaning is worth nothing, the other where it is “beautiful as silver.” This seems to be supported by Maimonides’ own observation that the silver/gold relationship “describes a well constructed parable.” Presumably, in the not so well constructed parable, the worthless/pearl relationship obtains. Stern, perplexingly, does not even mention this popular mode of reconciliation.

Moreover, the triadic model forces Stern to conclude that “Maimonides uses the expression ‘external meaning’ equivocally or amphibolously” (p. 7). But Stern has no textual basis for this assertion. Furthermore, he assumes that Maimonides identifies this vulgar external meaning with the *peshat* of the text (p. 83) and consequently concludes that Maimonides is simply uninterested in *peshat*. But many statements in both the *Guide* and the *Book of Commandments* point to precisely such an interest.<sup>2</sup>

Stern also minimizes Maimonides’ distinction between the silver and gold levels of the “well constructed parable” (pp. 8–9). First, he claims that these levels are not addressed to different audiences. But Maimonides explicitly states that,

1. They also prevent my paying more than the barest attention to Stern’s remarks about Nahmanides.

2. Stern contrasts Maimonides’ supposed neglect of *peshat* with Nahmanides’ “deep . . . interest . . . in . . . *peshat*” (p. 83). In support of this contrast, he cites (p. 84) a passage from Nahmanides’ notes on the *Book of Commandments*, where Nahmanides emphasizes that “even in purely legal contexts the biblical text never loses its literal meaning.” One would never guess from Stern’s presentation that Nahmanides is making this point in the midst of a critique of Maimonides for an *overemphasis* on *peshat*! In general, Stern’s neglect of the *Book of Commandments* must count as a serious lacuna.

while everyone can perceive the exterior silver filigree-work, only “the keen-sighted observer” can perceive the interior apple of gold. Second, Stern emphasizes that Maimonides describes the silver and gold levels of meaning as kinds of wisdom, the silver level containing wisdom “useful [for] the welfare of human societies,” the gold level containing wisdom “useful for belief concerned with the truth as it is,” and concludes that both levels are “kinds of philosophy.” Here, it seems that Stern blurs the distinction between different types of wisdom despite explicit textual evidence (*Guide* 3:54) that, to paraphrase Stern, “Maimonides uses the expression ‘wisdom’ equivocally or amphibolously.”<sup>3</sup>

It is difficult to determine how far Stern wishes to push his claim that Maimonides extends his “parabolic model to the explanation of the commandments.” In the book’s title and throughout the work, he refers to the commandments as parables. However, parables work by way of symbolization, and, as Stern correctly points out, Maimonides displays a “genuine antipathy” for symbolic interpretations of the commandments (p. 100, referring to the *Guide* 3:43).<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, Stern’s weaker claim that there are important parallels between Maimonides’ understanding of parables and his understanding of *ta’amei ha-mišvot* is on firmer ground. Thus, he convincingly suggests that there are two levels of *ta’amei ha-mišvot* for Maimonides, corresponding to the silver and gold levels of parables. In *Guide* 3:26–49, the commandments serve the twin goals of welfare of the body and welfare of the soul, that is, the communal good. This corresponds to the silver level of the parable. In *Guide* 3:51–52, by contrast, the commandments serve the goal of training “one who has apprehended the true realities” to occupy himself with God alone. This corresponds to the gold level of the parable.<sup>5</sup>

Stern’s attempt to carry this analogy one step further by arguing that these two levels of *ta’amei ha-mišvot* are sometimes present in the multiple reasons that Maimonides offers for individual commandments in *Guide* 3:26–49 is less convincing. Thus, Maimonides offers two reasons for the commandment of circumcision (*Guide* 3:49): one, “to weaken the faculty of sexual excitement;” and two, “as a bodily sign uniting all people who profess the unity of God.” Stern maintains that the first reason is the internal, “gold” reason for the commandment, since the weakening of bodily desires makes possible the intellectual apprehension of intelligible truths, that is, perfection of the soul, while the second reason is its external, “silver” reason, since this bodily sign facilitates teaching true opinions to the multitude, that is, welfare of the soul (pp. 102–107). But in the context of *Guide* 3:26–49, the acquisition of moral qualities, including the weakening of sexual desire,

3. Nahmanides’ understanding of the parable, on the other hand, does, as Stern claims (pp. 81–82), accord with the triadic model. But in light of my remarks in the text I can not agree with Stern that Nahmanides adopted this model from Maimonides.

4. The two places where Maimonides offers such symbolic explanations and actually refers to actions prescribed by the commandments as parables, namely, the sin offering and scapegoat sent into the wilderness (3:46), are the exceptions that prove the rule. Stern’s discussion of this important issue strikes me as inconsistent (contrast p. 115 with p. 142).

5. This analogy, one should note, argues against Stern’s claim that the gold and silver levels of the parable are addressed to the same audience.

belongs not to the perfection of the soul but to the welfare of the body. Thus both reasons are external, or “silver.”

There is one suggestive analogy between Maimonides’ understanding of parables and his understanding of *ta’amei ha-miṣvot* that Stern does not mention. In the Introduction to the *Guide*, Maimonides distinguishes between “two kinds of parables.” In the first kind, “each word has a meaning”; in the second kind, “the parable as a whole indicates the whole of the intended meaning.” Maimonides goes on to say that to confuse the two kinds and seek parabolic meanings for “all the details” of parables of the second kind “would result in extravagant fantasies.” This calls to mind Maimonides’ claim that not all the particulars of the commandments have causes, and that those who attempt “to find causes for something of these particulars are stricken with a prolonged madness” (*Guide* 3:26). This possible analogy, one should note, appears to contradict Stern’s powerfully argued claim that Maimonides’ distinction between the generalities and details of the commandments should not be taken at face value, and that his statement that the particulars of the commandments have no causes simply means that “they have no causes known to us” (pp. 22–33).

Whether, in Maimonides’ view, one should distinguish between the generalities and particulars of commandments, one certainly should distinguish between the generalities and particulars of Stern’s book. Even if, as I have argued, many of Stern’s general contentions are questionable, many of his more particular claims can stand on their own and are both thought-provoking and convincing. Since this review has focused on the generalities and not the particulars of Stern’s book, it may give an overly negative impression of a rich and stimulating work. All readers interested in Maimonides should read Stern’s book, with the *Guide* in hand, slowly, carefully, and, above all, critically. They will find his original and forcefully presented arguments enlightening, even—perhaps especially—when they disagree with him.

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Ruth Glasner. *A Fourteenth-Century Scientific Philosophical Controversy: Jedaiiah Ha-Penini’s “Treatise on Opposite Motions” and “Book of Confutation.”* Sources for the Study of Jewish Culture 5. Jerusalem: World Union of Jewish Studies, 1998. 255 pp. (Hebrew).

Recent years have witnessed a proliferation of studies devoted to medieval Hebrew science, but few editions and explications of texts. In this book, Ruth Glasner provides a critical edition and exhaustive analysis of two polemical letters pertaining to physics by the fourteenth-century Provençal poet and philosopher Jedaiiah ha-Penini (Bedersi) (born ca. 1285). These letters were largely forgotten until S. Pines drew attention to their significance and called for their publication over

thirty years ago. That call has been answered in exemplary fashion in the present volume.

The two works are especially significant because the editor is able to identify Ha-Penini's anonymous opponent with Levi Gersonides (1288–1344), medieval Jewry's most illustrious scientist/philosopher. She reconstructs the stages of their controversy from an initial face-to-face encounter, followed by a letter from Gersonides to Ha-Penini (no longer extant), then to the latter's response in the *Treatise on Opposite Motions*, and culminating in a final round consisting of Gersonides' criticisms (also no longer extant) and Ha-Penini's last word in the *Book of Confutation*. This reconstruction seems plausible, although the evidence for an initial letter by Gersonides is weak. The *Treatise on Opposite Motions* may have been prompted by Ha-Penini's desire to expand on the positions he had taken during his discussion with Gersonides. In any event, the letters provide an important record, albeit one-sided, of an actual scientific controversy by two distinguished philosophers in fourteenth-century Jewish Provence. They are, therefore, of great importance for understanding the high level of philosophical culture in that period.

The starting-point for the controversy is Aristotle's view that celestial bodies rotate in a uniform circular motion in one direction, unlike sublunar elements, which move naturally up, in the case of fire and air, or down, in the case of earth and water. Underlying this view is the claim that circular motion possesses no contraries. An ambiguous comment by Averroes in his commentary to *De Coelo* I:4 leads the protagonists into a discussion of the notion of contrariety with respect to motion, and, since locomotion involves change of location, to the question of whether there is contrariety with respect to locale. Because these notions invoke fundamental principles in Aristotle's logic, physics, and mathematics, the controversy ranges over such concepts as the natural places of the elements; natural and violent motion; the four primary qualities of hot, cold, dry, and moist; gravity and levity; qualitative change; the essential forms of the elements; and the relationship between mathematics and physics.

For all of Ha-Penini's originality, he is generally closer to Averroes on these matters than is Gersonides. He accepts and defends Aristotle's claim that contrariety exists in the category of locale, whereas Gersonides simply rejects it. He accepts Aristotle's position that qualitative differences are brought about by the combination of contraries, whereas Gersonides views them as caused by the dominance of one contrary over the other. He develops Aristotle's view that there are natural places for the sublunar elements, whereas Gersonides rejects the notion of natural place and therefore does not use it to explain natural motion. He accepts the limitations on geometry required by Aristotle's cosmology, whereas Gersonides accords greater autonomy to the geometer. Yet, paradoxically, the very arguments that Ha-Penini uses to defend some Aristotelian positions often lead him to oppose others. He is particularly enamored of using the category of quality to explain many of the physical phenomena under discussion—what the editor calls his “qualitative reduction.” As for Gersonides, the picture of a bold and iconoclastic philosopher that emerges from these treatises is consistent with what we know to have been his intellectual persona, as well as his reputation among his contemporaries.

His deviations from Averroes aroused as much controversy in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries as his deviations from traditional theology.

Since many of the solutions proposed by Ha-Penini and Gersonides are not found in the writings of the Arab peripatetics, and since they occasionally resemble scholastic solutions to similar problems, the question of scholastic influence naturally arises. Glasner divides this into three questions: Were our protagonists personally familiar with scholastic intellectual life? Was their method of philosophical controversy somehow influenced by scholastic academic practices, such as formal disputations? and, Were their positions influenced by contemporary scholastic discussions? With regard to the first question, she claims that it is impossible to give a clear answer, although she does cite evidence of contacts between both disputants and Christian sages, and notes that much communication during this period was oral. As for disputation and other academic practices considered distinctly scholastic, she argues that they could have developed concurrently among Jews and Christians as a result of the intensive study of Averroes' commentaries.

With respect to the question of doctrinal influence, the editor generally is content to point out similarities and parallels. The one exception is the discussion of the increase and decrease of qualitative forms, where the two protagonists adopt positions that do not appear in Averroes but resemble positions in the scholastic debate over the *intentio et remissio formarum*; their very interest in the subject appears to indicate awareness of scholastic positions, according to the editor. Yet, such arguments do not convince this reviewer, because both scholastic and Jewish discussions of the topic arise naturally from a consideration of the issues found in Averroes, even not explicitly. Perhaps instead of looking for direct or indirect influence of scholastic doctrines on fourteenth-century Provençal Jewish philosophy, scholars should concentrate on examining the parallel traditions of Averroes' commentary, traditions in which Jewish and Christian scholars, independently of each other, developed similar solutions to textual and doctrinal problems. Of course, further investigation in both traditions, especially in the primary sources of the scholastic tradition, will doubtless shed light on this matter.

The highly speculative question of scholastic influence occupies only a small fraction of the discussion, which focuses on the issues and implications of the controversy. Readers unfamiliar with medieval physics need not be deterred from reading this book. The editor provides lucid and illuminating discussions, synopses and explications, and substantive annotations to Ha-Penini's text, which is edited on the basis of the sole surviving manuscript. The result is that the text occupies only 66 of the book's 250 pages, with history, exegesis, and indices providing the rest. Although there is indeed a certain amount of editorial repetition, it can be justified by the difficulty and unfamiliarity of the subject. The same cannot be said for the editor's practice of providing modern Hebrew equivalents for medieval idioms; for example, *naskim lekha* for *nodeh lekha*, and *af<sup>c</sup>al pi* for *lamrot*. These glosses, arguably appropriate for popular versions of classical texts, are unnecessary in a scholarly edition.

In sum, apart from their intrinsic interest for historians of science, these two treatises by Jedaiah ha-Penini provide a rare opportunity to view a scientific con-

troversy among prominent intellectuals during the golden age of Jewish science and philosophy. Thanks to Glasner, the view is crystal-clear.

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W. J. van Bekkum, ed. *Hebrew Poetry from Late Antiquity: Liturgical Poems of Yehudah; Critical Edition with Introduction and Commentary*. Arbeiten zur Geschichte des Antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1998. xxx, 183 pp.

Late-antique Israel enjoyed astonishing literary creativity and output in the form of the piyyut, which offered a poetic alternative to the standard liturgical language. The treasures from the Genizah have enriched our knowledge of the paytanim of this period, and important collections of the works of Yosi ben Yosi, Yannai, Shimon bar Megas, and Kallir have been compiled in recent years. But alongside these well-known paytanim were others, often anonymous but sometimes not, thanks to the use of name acrostics, a characteristic style of the piyyut. Numerous compositions identify a paytan whose name was Yehudah, and now his oeuvre has been ably compiled by van Bekkum.

Yehudah's compositions are of the *kedushta* genre, a series of piyyutim intricately related through the use of interconnecting alphabetical acrostics and interconnecting references to the Torah-reading selection for which the *kedushta* was composed. The first two piyyutim in each *kedushta* serve respectively as the first and second berakhot of the Amidah, and the following ones lead to the climax of the third berakhah, the *Kedushah*, which extols God's holy nature. Although scholars have been aware of Yehudah's works since Menahem Zulay's *Zur Liturgie des babylonischen Juden* (1933), little about the paytan himself could be said with certainty, largely due to the fragmentary nature of what remains from his works. Now that van Bekkum has diligently gathered and organized all of the Genizah fragments that preserve Yehudah's compositions, he has made it possible, at the very least, for the reader to observe first-hand that Yehudah wrote with reference to a triennial Torah-reading cycle, confirming recent speculation about his provenance and context. His relationship to Yannai and Shimon bar Megas also becomes readily apparent, and this volume can only facilitate further pursuit of questions of influence. Best of all, one can now read Yehudah on his own terms, appreciating not only his allegiance to classical techniques and forms, but also his individual stylistic characteristics. Van Bekkum reviews both of these in his introduction, a series of short chapters marked by clarity and brevity. This reader was especially pleased to find in the introduction an excellent explanation of the linguistic peculiarities of piyyutic language, again brief but remarkably clear. Students of piyyut will benefit greatly from this introductory material, which, both despite and because of its brevity, offers the clearest introduction to piyyut available in English.

The piyyutim themselves are accompanied by explanatory notes that this

reader found too sparse. Often the full midrashic allusion of a passage is left unexplained, and particularly difficult phrases are occasionally unannotated. But quibbles aside, the door to Yehudah's work has been opened, and the eager student of piyyut can now work with ease among Yehudah's compositions.

We still do not know much about Yehudah, but we now have his beautiful, moralizing compositions published alongside those of his coevals. Such a publication contributes immeasurably to our understanding and appreciation of classical piyyut. Van Bekkum is to be commended for such fine work.

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Ruth Langer. *To Worship God Properly: Tensions Between Liturgical Custom and Halakhah in Judaism*. Monographs of the Hebrew Union College. Cincinnati: HUC Press, 1998. xiii, 287 pp.

Ruth Langer's meticulously researched volume fills a gap in the study of Jewish liturgy. While many histories of the liturgy focus on the origins, use of language, and literary aspects of the texts, Langer's study provides an analysis of some of the dynamics that shaped the halakhot dealing with prayer, thus impacting directly upon the spiritual life of Jews. How did the legal system that discussed issues regarding the liturgy develop? What questions were asked, and around which factors did disputes come about? What concepts and practices contributed to the resolution of differences? As Langer notes in her preface, a significant force in the formation of rabbinic prayer and the legal system undergirding it was the principle of worship as an evolving phenomenon. Once prayer is understood as both a communal and an individual response to God's covenant with Israel, the intricacies of the liturgical system must be developed and justified. They must express the history of the community as well as the existential needs of the person of faith.

The struggle to define proper worship is shown to take place primarily in the shifting authority of minhag, the customs of the people, and *halakhah*, legal theory. Indeed, while Langer's volume is primarily a study of various cases in the development of an established corpus of *tefilah*, its underlying methodological principle is that the borders of minhag and *halakhah* constantly impinge upon one another, calling for frequent readjustment of both legal pronouncement and actual practice. The demonstration of the porous quality of these boundaries leads to an understanding of the tradition as responsive to social change and historical circumstances.

In the first chapter, Langer sets out the parameters of her study. This chapter analyzes the development of what she calls the "liturgical law," which replaced the sacrificial system in the periods of the tannaim and amoraim. The principles thus formulated establish an authoritative guide for later generations; all subsequent adaptations, interpretations, and alterations are viewed in the context of clearly articulated talmudic concepts. While most derive from the Babylonian Tal-

mud, the Palestinian traditions are shown to have an important influence in regard to some issues. The authors of the Talmud collect and promulgate laws that establish and order the nature of communal prayer, laws that provide a framework and structure necessary for the composition of prayers, and laws that define the practical application of these various rules. A central concern in their formulations is the efficacy of prayer, both for the person and for the prayer-community. Having laid the groundwork in terms of *halakhah* and talmudic principles, Langer's subsequent chapters focus upon specific halakhic issues regarding prayer and explore their interaction with surrounding non-Jewish cultures and their influence, evolving Jewish customs, and adaptations of the understanding of efficacy. The medieval world inherited structures of prayer defined by the sages and protected by the fences of *halakhah*. The continuing development of the tradition, however, depended upon its inner flexibility and its capacity to maintain scholarly dialogue about the interactions necessitated by historical circumstance.

Thus the analysis in Chapter Two, "The Halakhic Status of Non-Talmudic Benedictions," specifically deals with *birkat bitulim* and the priest's blessing at the redemption of the firstborn son, while Chapter Three focuses upon "The Language of Prayer: The Challenge of *Piyyut*." The emphasis changes in Chapter Four, "Individual Recitation of the *Kedushah*: The Impact of Mysticism on Minhag and *Halakhah*." Each discussion begins with a survey of the relevant geonic texts, moving on to *Masekhet Soferim*, debate among Jews in Muslim and Christian Spain, *rishonim* and *aḥaronim*.

A full complement of sources is brought in each case to demonstrate not only how Jewish communities struggled with specific issues regarding prayer, but also—and perhaps especially—how culture, minhag, and talmudic dictum were distinct but interwoven variables in determining interpretations of *halakhah* in regard to the liturgy. What is of particular interest in the detailed analyses of various sources is their application to contemporary *pesaq*. Thus, toward the end of the chapter on the halakhic status of non-talmudic benedictions, Langer refers to the *pesaq* of R. Ovadiah Yosef, who maintains that women may not use a full liturgical blessing when reciting *she-'asani kirsono*, as does also Barukh Halevi Epstein. The latter opines that even though it appears in some siddurim, the current custom is not to recite it at all and it should be deleted from the text. However, the blessing does appear in full in almost every Orthodox Ashkenazi siddur, and there has been no further discussion of its omission in contemporary commentaries on the traditional siddur. Only the most recent Sefardi siddurim, printed in Israel, make use of R. Ovadiah's ruling. Langer's conclusion in this chapter, that in the case of non-talmudic blessings, "minhag rarely overruled *halakhah*," yet "only rarely were strong stances taken against active customs based on the theoretical authority of the Talmud" (p. 107), still holds. Rabbis devise new interpretations of either the minhag or the *halakhah*, stretching the boundaries of the theoretical legal basis or giving new meaning to the minhag. In this way conflict is avoided. Langer convincingly demonstrates that, as customs weakened because of migrations and upheavals, the Talmud came to be regarded as the "timeless, absolute, operative authority by which to judge the efficacy of liturgical customs" (p. 109). Hence, the issue of the legitimacy of non-talmudic blessings remained potent.

The concluding chapter, which examines the *halakhic* debate over the appropriate setting for the recitation of the various *kedushah* prayers, continues the analysis of the forces which shaped—and are still shaping—liturgical law. The discussion focuses on *kedushah deyozer* and *kedushah desidra*, tracing the issues from *Mishnah Megillah* 4:3 through *Masekhet Soferim* to Joseph Karo and others. Langer quotes a gloss on the text of the late ninth-century sage Rav Naḥshon Gaon, found in a Vatican manuscript of *Halakhot Gedolot*. This detail demonstrates the precise and attentive scholarship, expressed in a smoothly written narrative, that characterizes this volume. For those interested in the development of *halakhah* and analyses of specific liturgical texts, this is a book worth reading.

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Chava Weissler. *Voices of the Matriarch: Listening to Prayers of Early Modern Jewish Women*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1988. xxvi, 267 pp.

For more than a decade, Chava Weissler has called on readers to listen to the voices of matriarchs. Her numerous articles on *tkhines*—Yiddish prayers for private devotion typically recited by women of early modernity—have appeared in a wide variety of academic and, to a much lesser extent, popular publications. At once folklorist, ethnographer, literary critic, and student of classical Jewish texts and mysticism, Weissler has time and again applied her training in elite fields of learning to non-elite sources. While initially interested in merely “recover[ing] women’s religious experience and contrast[ing] it to men’s,” her objectives have broadened over the years to include “understanding the *tkhines* within the matrix of Ashkenazic Judaism” (pp. xii–xiii). Most recently, Weissler has turned to interpreting how *tkhines* influenced twentieth-century Jewish religious life in communities as diverse as Conservative Jewry and feminist ritual groups.

In essence, *Voices of the Matriarchs* is an anthology consisting of Weissler’s previously published articles on *tkhines*. Of the ten chapters, only the seventh (an exhaustive study of the *tkhine* author Leah Horowitz and her works) was composed expressly for this volume. As a result, most of the chapters, while interesting and important in and of themselves, are self-contained and bear little relation to the others. Additionally, background information is repeated in various spots, and even the author’s style is not consistent throughout the book. So, for instance, Weissler addresses the general reader in a fascinating essay tracing portrayals of women in paradise from the Zohar to the *tkhine* literature, but she addresses the academic reader in a sophisticated discussion of how gender is constructed in Ashkenazic sources.<sup>1</sup> In many ways, *Voices of the Matriarchs* resembles the Essential Papers

1. The first appeared originally as “Women in Paradise,” *Tikkun* 2 (April-May, 1987): 43–46, 117–120; the second as “For Women and For Men: The Construction of Gender in Yiddish Devotional Literature,” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 5 (Fall, 1989): 3–24.

series published by New York University Press, which features a collection of articles devoted to a single subject from disparate approaches and authors. In fact, Chapter Six of *Voices of the Matriarchs* appears in *Essential Papers in Kabbalah*.<sup>2</sup>

Notwithstanding its structure, *Voices of the Matriarchs* makes a significant contribution to the study of religion. Indeed, Weissler's trenchant analysis of the rich array of *tkhines* prompts a rewriting of the religious history of the Ashkenazic world of the Netherlands, the Germanic lands, Poland, and Russia from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century. She demonstrates that, though exempt from communal worship and generally ignorant of the classics of Jewish tradition, women were far more likely to be engaged in religious life than previously acknowledged. The hypothesis argued throughout is that the female segment of the Ashkenazic population was influenced by the scholarly and male formulation of Judaism but was also in part free of them. Thus Sarah bas Tovim—whose *Shloyshe sheorim* (“The Three Gates”) became “perhaps the most beloved of all *tkhines*”—drew on popularizations of kabbalistic material in Yiddish but turned to women's folk rituals like *kneytlakh legn* (“laying wicks”) to develop a paradigm of religious power (p. 126). Weissler leaves little doubt that women, too, participated in the overarching rhythm of Jewish life.

In a powerful and refreshing concluding essay, Weissler offers an honest meditation on the personal implications of her scholarship and ultimately breaks with her hypothesis that Jewish women created any sort of religious culture independent of the male mainstream. In her words: “My efforts to define and valorize an Ashkenazic women's culture . . . began to seem naive, as I recognized that the gender representations that controlled women's lives were enmeshed in the very fiber of Ashkenazic Judaism” (p. 175). Ultimately, she concluded, “The religious world we can infer from the *tkhine* literature is, essentially, a set of female variants of male Jewish culture” (pp. 185–188). In the end Weissler must admit that her earlier, perhaps idealistic, aim of unearthing women who created, shaped, or even influenced traditional Judaism has been thwarted by the evidence. Jewish women were essentially conforming to and accepting the basic values of the male-created and -dominated system into which they had been born. This discomfiting fact causes Weissler—as a scholar, as a woman, and as a Jew—to question her loyalty to Judaism and to the academy.

No need. As one of a growing number of matriarchs who combine scholarly erudition and sensitivity to gender issues, hers is a voice that is transforming the very nature of Jewish studies and the power relations therein.

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2. “Woman as High Priest: A Kabbalistic *Tkhine* for Lighting Sabbath Candles,” *Jewish History* 5 (Spring, 1991): 9–26, and republished in *Essential Papers in Kabbalah*, ed. L. Fine (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 525–46.

Ora Wiskind-Elper. *Tradition and Fantasy in the Tales of Reb Nahman of Bratslav*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. viii, 310 pp.

Few critical terms in use over the past two decades have been so abused and hence rendered almost meaningless as “postmodern.” And yet the term can be used to advantage to describe a period, its critical suppositions, and its inherent dispositions. It does signify the blurring of categories and styles, the shifting of identities, the often self-conscious invasion of the objective by the subjective. When the author of a serious scholarly study of a complex, seminal religious figure—a major influence and icon in modern Jewish narrative art like Reb Nahman of Bratslav (1772–1810)—designates herself a postmodern and conducts her investigation as a postmodernist scholar, we cannot ignore this hermeneutic stance.

Happily, Ora Wiskind-Elper takes her study of the texts seriously, is acutely self-conscious about her critical moves, and presents intelligent and sensitive readings of the thirteen canonical Bratslav tales plus the often dazzling homiletic passages of *Likkutei Mohoran* and the more biographical, though often jumbled, pericopes of *Hayyei Moharan*. She has profited from an intense study of Joseph Dan’s work on the Hasidic tale seen as a discrete literary genre (1975) and Arthur Green’s fundamental psychological study, *Tormented Master* (1981), both of which had themselves benefited from the work of Joseph Weiss (1972) and Mendel Piekarz (1974), products of the Jerusalem scholars Gershom Scholem and Isaiah Tishby. Her own study builds on these and others, such as Liebes, Elstein, Haidenberg, Oron, and Roskies, and thus culminates the achievements of a generation of solid research into the nature of these enigmatic tales.

On this foundation of scholarly research, Wiskind-Elper erects a hermeneutic structure that exploits both her reading in German Romantic literature, much of which was contemporary with the composition and early dissemination of the Bratslav tales during the first two decades of the nineteenth century (chap. 3), and, more important perhaps, her exploration of literary theory, particularly that which deals with the realm of the fantastic and uncanny, where Todorov and Freud figure significantly.

Despite her obvious erudition, Wiskind-Elper is motivated by a keen curiosity about the enigmatic nature of these tales and by her own patent empathy with the creative personality of Reb Nahman, as he dramatizes in narrative form his vacillation between spiritual despair and ecstatic fantasy. She describes the growth of her interest in these tales, from her “first unpremeditated encounter” to a perceptive wonderment about their bizarre tone:

As a postmodern reader and willing accomplice to all flights of an author’s imagination, the anomalies and paradoxes the tales presented were compelling though abstruse. The complete lack in the tales of any indication their landscape was a Jewish world was, on second thought, somewhat striking as the “hero” of traditional Hasidic tales is usually the rebbe himself, and its “message” the teaching embodied in the way he lived his life. . . . Here, in contrast, the zaddik and storyteller, never mentioned by name, seemed to exert an uncanny presence—not as subject but as creator (p. 1).

It is the figure of the creator of tales that intrigues her; it evokes her interest in artistic creativity in the Romantic period and, more important, in the literary products of the world of fantasy. Her description of the specific nature of Reb Nahman's literary creativity is emblematic.

The utter unconservative self-referentiality of Reb Nahman's tales becomes increasingly apparent with further reading, rereading, and the exploration of his wider oeuvre and commentary on it. The "self" referred to, of course, in the tales Reb Nahman told takes diverse forms. It is metahistorical, identifying with traditional heroes cloaked in legend; it is reflected in alter egos, characters that people the tales; it is even a surreal empathy with the very symbols, metaphors, and allegories of Jewish tradition transformed in the narrative (p. 2).

This focus explains her avoidance of historical inquiry in the first and third chapters of the book. In the first chapter, which deals with Reb Nahman's concept of himself as *zaddik*, his role within the burgeoning world of Hasidism in its formative early generations, she makes less use than one would expect of Arthur Green's psychological portrait of Reb Nahman, his actual life and many personal disappointments regarding, for instance, his messiahship. Clearly, what interests Wiskind-Elper is not the actual Reb Nahman as reconstructed by Green, but the figure of the creator of these wondrous stories as it emerges from the texts or from ancillary texts like *Likkutei Moharan* dealing with the same motifs. One feels that a confrontation with the figure that Green portrays would distract her from her goal: an understanding of the tales and of their creator, whose voice is so central to the tales and their import.

In Chapter Three, "The Romantic Drama," for instance, Wiskind-Elper treats Romanticism at some length and several times cites the fascinating contemporaneity of the Bratslav tales and such writers as E. T. A. Hoffmann, but she refrains from any speculation regarding the provenance of the Bratslav tales or the often striking similarity between their themes and those of the Romantics. The historical setting and the folkloristic motifs that interest Yoav Elstein do not impress her. These lacunae in her treatment of the tales are cited merely to situate her focus within a variety of possible areas of investigation.

In her final, fourth chapter, Wiskind-Elper fuses two pairs of possibly opposing tendencies. First is the rich intertextual allusiveness of the tales and the intense, often fantastic figurative language conveyed in a very personal voice. This narrative approach implies that "this revolutionary notion, that the process of spiritual enlightenment is necessarily effected, not by philosophical arguments, but by fiction born of the imagination—this notion is the foundation stone of Reb Nahman's entire oeuvre" (p. 220).

Second is the challenge "to strike a balance between solid scholarly work, with the documentation and implicit dialogue with contemporary research it requires, and personal, honest engagement with the tales, their author, and the spiritual and religious matrix that gave birth to them" (p. 7). Note some of her sub-headings: "Perception and Deception: Transmutation of Reality Within the Tale," "Blurring of Boundaries, Shifting Identities."

Ora Wiskind-Elper has accomplished this double fusion admirably, and yet, one can imagine objections on the part of readers who resist the blurring of boundaries and the shifting of identities.

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Heidi Thomann Tewarson. *Rahel Levin Varnhagen: The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual*. Texts and Contexts. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998. 262 pp.

Fields such as Jewish cultural history and women's studies, where interest in nineteenth-century Berlin Jewish literary salon society continues to grow, converge at the emblematic example of Rahel Levin Varnhagen. Heidi Thomann Tewarson's new biography, *Rahel Levin Varnhagen: The Life and Work of a German Jewish Intellectual*, is the first to address the English reader since Hannah Arendt's recently reissued *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, originally published in 1957. As such, Tewarson has incorporated the most up-to-date research on this figure and period, otherwise available almost solely in German. Arendt's work has traditionally been read as part biography and part autobiography—as much about identification and coming to terms with Jewish identity as a German Jewish woman intellectual in 1930s Berlin as it is about the salon period. Tewarson has taken a different tack. Rather than focusing on the life of a Jewess per se, Tewarson is interested in the work of an intellectual. What constitutes the legitimate, creative work of an intellectual? And can the term itself be gender-free? These questions, though necessarily tied to Rahel's place outside the literary and cultural mainstream, serve as the main thrust of the book.

Born in 1771, Rahel Varnhagen was a Jewish salon hostess in Berlin at the turn of the nineteenth century, a specialist in what she called the art of sociability. Founder of the cult of Goethe, she also befriended early Romantics like the Schlegel brothers and "Young Germans" like Heine. The first three volumes of her letters appeared posthumously in 1834 and were read by many of her contemporaries, both in Germany and abroad. Her correspondence, published selectively throughout the nineteenth century, ultimately reached ten volumes<sup>1</sup> when the 1980 discovery of her unpublished letters and diaries, thought to be lost in World War II,<sup>2</sup> stimulated even more interest and new publications.

Tewarson makes a strong case for the expansion of the literary canon to in-

1. This collection, which reprints the initial three volumes and the nineteenth-century publications together, is called *Rahel-Bibliothek. Rahel Varnhagen, Gesammelte Werke*. Edited by Konrad Feilchenfeldt, Uwe Schweikert and Rahel E. Steiner. 10 vols. München: Matthes & Seitz, 1983.

2. See Deborah Hertz, "The Varnhagen Collection is in Krakow!," *American Archivist*, 44 (1981) 223–28.

clude the products of Rahel's creative project. The crux of the matter rests on whether Rahel ever intended to publish her collected letters (she only published letters infrequently and anonymously during her lifetime). Rahel's collected works comprise her volumes of dialogic correspondences, diaries, and aphorisms. These are the recorded places where she attempted to capture the ephemeral moment of social conversation, which she viewed as her chief artistic endeavor. Though generic categories cannot contain her writings—epistolary exchanges, autobiographical essays, current arts and letters reviews, and philosophical observations—one nevertheless wonders at the latitude accorded other generic innovators (such as Schlegel) and denied her. If authority and legitimacy could simply not be claimed by a Jewish woman at that time, this would intriguingly suggest that a revision of Rahel's literary contribution and canonical status is at long last possible. Tewarson aims to show explicitly that "Rahel thought of herself as an author, that she was intent on having her writings published, and that she held very specific views with regard to the form these publications should take" (p. 9). By raising the issue of a self-aware, self-reflective author, concerned for the character she creates in her self-presentations and conscious that these moments of writing and dialogue will and are intended to go beyond the sphere of private communication, Tewarson rallies to the defense of Rahel's *oeuvre* as literary. In addition to confirming Rahel's authorship, this helps dispel the myth that her husband, K. A. Varnhagen, was the primary force behind *Rahel: Ein Buch des Andenkens für ihre Freunde*, which appeared a scant four months after her death.

Tewarson's organization of material is largely chronological. She begins by describing the Berlin Jewish community of the 1770s through the 1790s and situating Rahel's personal commitment to *Bildung* within the context of the general education of Jewish women of the period. She then proceeds through the first salon, presenting Rahel's youthful correspondence with Davit Veit, Gustav von Brinkmann, and Friedrich Gentz, along with more general discussions of love letters and correspondence with women friends; moves on to the Napoleonic period of rupture; follows with the dreary, reactionary period of 1814–19, which culminates in the "Hep! Hep!" riots; and concludes with Rahel's second salon.

Along the way, Tewarson provides both extensive citation and thoughtful analysis. The section on the Napoleonic era offers an interpretive tour-de-force, featuring quotations appearing for the first time in translation from Rahel's previously unpublished dream diary of 1812.<sup>3</sup> Tewarson shows that "Rahel's ideal consisted of a vision oriented toward life, joy, and harmonious human interaction rather than an objectified, autonomous work of art" (p. 136). Interpreting Rahel's second dream, Tewarson argues that "life and art appear inextricably linked: the artists are the works of art, and the ideal is symbolized by the dancing couple rather than the motionless and somewhat reluctant model on a pedestal. . . . The art of sociability, represented in the dream by the dancing couple, appears not as the subterfuge of a talented woman restricted by virtue of being female but as open and equal in significance to any artist's *oeuvre*" (p. 136).

3. German transcriptions of the dream diary appear in Barbara Hahn, ed. "Im Schlaf bin ich wacher": *Die Träume der Rahel Levin Varnhagen*. Frankfurt am Main: Luchterhand, 1990.

The summa of the book, however, is its last section. There, in view of her completed sketch of Rahel's career and life, Tewarson rewardingly synthesizes Rahel's views on a range of subjects that preoccupied her throughout her lifetime, which Tewarson groups under such suggestive subheadings as "Gender and Writing," "The Life of the Mind," "The Woman Question," "Jewish Matters," and "The Perfectibility of the World."

Heidi Thomann Tewarson's new biography of Rahel Levin Varnhagen will appeal to scholars of European, Jewish, and women's history as well as to those closest to Rahel in spirit: literary connoisseurs, history buffs, and enlightened readers. It is a well-written, well-rounded, compelling, and ultimately essential place to begin a study of this exemplary personage and period.

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Zachary Braiterman. *(God) After Auschwitz: Tradition and Change in Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998. 208 pp.

This is a superb study of post-Holocaust theology, perhaps the best study of its kind since Steven Katz's *Post-Holocaust Dialogues*. Zachary Braiterman focuses on three of the most important post-Holocaust theologians—Richard Rubenstein, Eliezer Berkovits, and Emil Fackenheim—in an attempt to demonstrate that all three thinkers share a common discourse rooted in a theological sensibility which Braiterman identifies as "antitheodicy," a term he has coined. Antitheodicy refers to a position which rejects theodicy—that is, any attempt to justify God in the face of catastrophic suffering or to see redeeming value in it, even if one continues to believe in God. Braiterman also makes use of postmodern insights to explore the dynamic of how the three post-Holocaust theologians reread or misread the traditional sources in order to catapult antitheodic discourse from the margins of Jewish thought into its center.

The first three chapters introduce the study by providing definitions of theodicy and antitheodicy, surveying theodicy and antitheodic motifs in biblical and rabbinic literature and demonstrating how such major Jewish theologians as Buber, Heschel, Soloveitchik, and Kaplan are captive to theodicy approaches toward suffering. The next three chapters focus on the three post-Holocaust theologians and are, therefore, the heart of the study. In Chapter Four, Braiterman shows how Rubenstein initiates antitheodic Jewish discourse in post-Holocaust theology. He presents a far more nuanced portrait of Richard Rubenstein than one finds in previous assessments, showing that, far from being the radical and destructive revisionist his critics make him out to be, Rubenstein is, in fact, a complex thinker who attempts to reinvent the Jewish tradition. The great surprise in this study is Braiterman's analysis of Eliezer Berkovits in Chapter Five. Ostensibly at the opposite pole from Rubenstein, Berkovits is read by Braiterman as sharing the same antitheod-

ic tendencies that inform Rubenstein's thinking. Braiterman argues that in *Faith After the Holocaust* Berkovits swings between theodic and antitheodic thinking, and that in his later work, *With God in Hell*, the antitheodic strain becomes more pronounced. Braiterman's analysis of Fackenheim in Chapter Six follows along the same lines as his analysis of the other two theologians in examining how Fackenheim adopts antitheodic thinking in his emphasis on the imperative of Jewish survival as the 614<sup>th</sup> commandment.

In his concluding chapter, Braiterman argues that the three post-Holocaust theologians constitute a "discursive formation" of the kind postulated by Foucault, with its own rules, thematic objects, and class of experts designed to restrict and control the way in which discourse is constructed. In this case, antitheodic discourse is the privileged mode of thinking, a form of discourse which, Braiterman emphasizes, was made possible only by a new language for the Holocaust created by a wide array of figures in the 1950s and 1960s in fields as diverse as literature, politics, and popular culture. Braiterman also draws on Umberto Eco to argue that the three theologians come up with their new antitheodic discourse by a *formal* rearrangement of elements, or "signs," within the tradition rather than by alteration of its *content*. Braiterman concludes with some reflections on the implications of his study for the future of Jewish theology.

This volume has many virtues. Most salient from my perspective is that Braiterman has gone well beyond his predecessors in his insightful understanding of the nature of the relationship of post-Holocaust theology with the classical tradition. In addition, he has broken new ground in attempting to understand that relationship in light of the tools provided by postmodernism. But perhaps the greatest strength of Braiterman's study is the multitude of penetrating insights he provides in his running commentary on each thinker, insights too numerous to summarize here. Moreover, versatile erudition underlies Braiterman's analysis as he brings to bear on his subject an impressive range of fields that include Jewish theology, literary theory, sociology, and art.

Still, I have difficulties with some of Braiterman's ideas. I wonder if, in his eagerness to demonstrate a discursive linkage between the three thinkers, he has overstated his case somewhat. Braiterman's insights about Berkovits are provocative, but not entirely convincing. He places too much emphasis on the citation of Yossel Rakover at the end of *With God in Hell* as evidence that Berkovits' thinking leans toward antitheodicy in his final ruminations on the Holocaust. One could argue that Berkovits would not have seen Rakover's view—or any other in the same volume—as a guide for his own theology. As Braiterman himself notes, Berkovits draws a sharp distinction between armchair theologians like ourselves and those who actually experienced the suffering of the death camps; thus, we dare not criticize even those who lost their faith *entirely* in the death camps (p. 126).

I believe that Braiterman is also too harsh in emphasizing the negativity of Fackenheim's thinking. I disagree with the assessment that at the end of *God's Presence in History* "all that remains are antitheodic fragments and the dumb will to endure" (p. 143). Fackenheim's third fragment implores Jews to continue their identification with the poor and persecuted of humanity, a point which Braiterman

glosses over.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, Braiterman fails to mention that for Fackenheim, Jews continue, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, in their traditional role as witnesses to humanity, which in the present era means being witnesses of both endurance and hope in an age of nuclear threat (*ibid.*, p. 95).

It would seem that these ideas invest the suffering of the Holocaust with at least *some* redemptive value.

Braiterman's use of Foucault's notion of discursive formation, while illuminating, strikes me as somewhat awkward. First, while it is true that the three theologians may have formed a new theological discourse with the help of a language created by their literary and cultural predecessors, Braiterman, to my mind, does not provide enough information regarding this dynamic. We are never given an account of what language was actually created, nor is sufficient explanation provided for its effect on the three theologians. Only Fackenheim's overly romantic views of the State of Israel (pp. 151–154) and Berkovits' curious dependence on the fictional Yossel Rakover are discussed in any detail (pp. 123–125, 133). Second, Braiterman does not account for the fact that in many respects post-Holocaust theology, especially that of Rubenstein, who initiated this way of thinking, was a stark *departure* from the language of the Holocaust that came before it in *directly* confronting religious questions in a way that literature and other media had not; that is why Rubenstein was attacked and Elie Wiesel was not. Finally, for someone like Rubenstein, that departure may have had as much to do with the *immediate* environment of the 1960s in America, where all sacred dogmas were being questioned, as it did with the images provided by such figures as Wiesel, a factor which might move one in a direction different from that provided by Foucault.

Despite these observations, I conclude by emphasizing my enthusiasm for Braiterman's accomplishment. This is a profound and sophisticated study, and even in those places where I disagree with Braiterman I am enlightened by his provocative thinking.

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Richard I. Cohen. *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. xviii, 358 pp.

Richard I. Cohen has contributed greatly over the last decade and a half to the study of the relationship between Jewish art and society.<sup>1</sup> His most recent book,

1. *God's Presence in History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 87–8.

1. See, for example, two books that he edited or co-edited: *Art and Its Uses: The Visual Image and Modern Jewish Society* (Studies in Contemporary Jewry: An Annual, Vol. VI) (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990) and *From Court Jews to the Rothschilds: Art, Patronage, and Power 1600–1800* (Munich: Prestel, 1996).

*Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe*, is a thoughtful, well-written, and original account of how Jews interacted with the non-Jewish world through art. This text is not a seamless narrative. Rather, Cohen rightly has organized it as separate essays, fragments of a history of the relationship of Jews to modern art. The book's greatest strengths lie in its interdisciplinary approach, its exploration of little-known objects, and its examination of a broad range of Jewish art patrons. Organized chronologically, the book begins with a chapter on early modern Christian images of Jewish rituals. The second chapter explores Jewish ceremonial objects, and subsequent chapters examine portraits of rabbis, nostalgic images of the ghetto, the history of Jewish art collections, and representations of Jewish homelessness and hopelessness. The word "icon" in the title appears in two contexts. On the one hand, it refers to portraits of rabbis, which had a hagiographical function.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, it refers to David Roskies' description of Samuel Hirszenberg's *Exile* (1904) as "the first icon of Jewish suffering" (p. 234).

The last four chapters are especially persuasive. Chapter Three examines a long-neglected but important subject: portraits of rabbis dating from the seventeenth through the nineteenth century. At first rabbis were shown alone, in half-length, and gazing intently at the viewer while holding a book or seated in a library. Cohen convincingly demonstrates that such renderings were designed to exalt the rabbi, to construct him as spiritual and learned, and to foster a close emotional bond between viewer and subject. Breaking with the centuries-old injunction against portraiture, traditional Jews adopted modern techniques to bolster Orthodoxy. Later mass-produced prints displayed rows of portrait heads of prominent Jews, including rabbis, to satisfy a growing "interest in history and national consciousness" (pp. 149–150).

The fourth chapter examines how assimilated Jews of the second half of the nineteenth century produced idealized images of traditional Jewish life, untouched by modernity. Cohen persuasively argues that "feelings of disorientation and emptiness" among urban Jews produced nostalgic feelings for the life they had left behind (p. 156); they eagerly embraced images that visualized ghetto life as filled with warmth and contentment.

In the fifth chapter, Cohen explores the range of motivations that sparked the development of Jewish art collections in the second half of the nineteenth century. Private and public collections served to satisfy nostalgic longing; to preserve local history; to prove that Jews were cultured and refined; to demonstrate their contributions to their countries; and to promote a sense of Jewish nationalism and historical consciousness. The last chapter focuses on images created by Jews in response to the pogroms of 1881 and 1903. Cohen shows that, in contrast to the positive images of the mid-century, later ones portray Jewish life as filled with poverty, despair, and endless wandering.

The greatest weakness of the book is the first chapter, which is based on a series of false assumptions. First, Cohen claims that images of Jewish rituals by Christian artists are "drawn from direct observation." "It is hard to imagine," he writes, "that such drawings could have been executed without the artist's presence

2. Cohen's third chapter is entitled "Rabbi as Icon."

and direct observation” (p. 57). Yet knowledge of Jewish ritual could have been transmitted in other ways: orally, through texts, or through images in books on Jewish customs. Cohen’s conclusion contradicts what we know about the practices of early modern artists. Final works (as opposed to preparatory sketches) did not reproduce what artists saw; rather, artists created images that looked realistic but were in fact constructed.<sup>3</sup>

Second, Cohen repeatedly argues that these images are objective. His thesis—that “images can reflect social reality”—is first stated in the introduction (p. 8), and then developed insistently throughout the first chapter. Art has a point of view; it is not a mirror of reality. But for Cohen, images by Christians are “essentially objective” (p. 18); show an “objective interest in Jews” (p. 22); “offer an objective treatment of Jewish ceremony” (p. 44); are “realistic” (p. 54); and “document the rite faithfully” (p. 60). Because Cohen views these images as objective, he fails to recognize those elements that denigrate Jews. For example, figure four shows Jewish women talking in synagogue during a religious ceremony. In contrast, images in Jewish books omit such negative behavior.<sup>4</sup> Instead, they idealize Jewish ritual, and everyone, including women and children, pays attention. Since Christians repeatedly condemned women who gossiped during religious services,<sup>5</sup> the motif of the talkative Jewesses would have been interpreted negatively by Christian viewers. Similarly, a Christian image of a Jewish circumcision shows blood on the infant’s cushion (fig. 18). Again this motif does not appear in contemporary Jewish images and is probably meant as a criticism. Cohen points to the presence of dogs as proof of another print’s realism (p. 54), but dogs were considered especially odious and often used to denigrate figures portrayed nearby.<sup>6</sup> Concerning Böner’s print of Jewish women, Cohen concludes that “two of them appear with their backs turned to the viewer, intimating their consent to show him the backside of these clothes, while a third stands with her coat removed to demonstrate the garments underneath” (p. 55). But there is no evidence that the women posed. The artist may well be denigrating the figures by showing them from the rear and with their undergarments displayed.<sup>7</sup>

Because some Christian images of Jewish ritual include Christian specta-

3. For an excellent summary of views on how to interpret the realistic style of Early Modern art, see Wayne Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 1–17; *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. by Wayne Franits (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

4. See, for example, versions of the *Sefer Minhagim* published in Venice in 1593 and 1600 as well as an earlier manuscript version today in Paris. I am currently writing a book on early modern illustrated Yiddish books.

5. See Diane Wolfthal, “Women’s Voice and Women’s Community in Erhard Schön’s How Seven Women Complain about their Worthless Husbands” in *Attending to Women in the Early Modern Period*, ed. by Adele Seeff and Susan Amussen. (University of Delaware Press/Associated University Presses, 1998), 117–54.

6. See, for example, James Marrow, “*Circumdede runt me canes multi*: Christ’s Tormentors in Northern European Art in the Late Middle Ages and Renaissance,” *Art Bulletin*, June 1977, 167–81.

7. For a discussion of images of the dorsal position, see Ruth Mellinkoff, *Outcasts: Signs of Otherness in Northern European Art of the Late Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) Vol. 1, 212–217, 221, 222, 227, 230–233.

tors, Cohen concludes that Jews welcomed gentiles who wished to observe their rituals. He writes, “The Jew harbors no objections to having a Christian view his service” (p. 63). But when both artist and patron are Christian, we can conclude nothing about how actual Jews felt, only about how Christians constructed that response. In fact, images of Jewish rituals made for a Jewish audience include no Christians.<sup>8</sup>

Can we understand the motivations and practices of real Jews from a study of Christian art? Art made by and for Christians can only reveal something about Christian attitudes toward Jews. Furthermore, a realistic style is not equivalent to an objective one. When artists adopt a realistic style, they convince viewers all the more that their images—even those that denigrate—are fact, not fantasy. But is determining the accuracy of these images the most important question? It might be better to ask who was the intended audience for these images and what ideological function they perform.

Although there are weaknesses in the first chapter, Cohen’s book greatly expands our knowledge of Jewish art in the modern period. Cohen embraces the study of both “high and low” art (p. 8); laments the traditional privileging of Jewish texts over Jewish visual culture (p. 3); and rightly observes that the earliest historians of Jewish art were largely devoted to “documenting and describing” (p. 7), whereas later scholars, like Cohen himself, can address other issues. We have much to learn from his work.

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Edith Wyschogrod. *An Ethics of Remembering: History, Heterology, and the Nameless Others*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. xxi, 280 pp.

“What is it that must precede the conveying of history? Must there not be the declaration of a double passion, an eros for the past and an ardor for the others in whose name there is a felt urgency to speak?” asks Edith Wyschogrod. She continues: “to be a historian . . . is to accept the destiny of the spurned lover—to write, photograph, film, televise, archive, and simulate the past not merely as its memory bank but as binding oneself by a promise to the dead to tell the truth about the past” (p. xi). By positing the responsibility of the historian peremptorily as a “promise,” thus implying a binding obligation to others, Wyschogrod tilts her discussion of the writing of history away from the cognitive realm and toward “post-modern” ethics. Her intricate reflections are marked by an overwhelming consciousness of the uniqueness of our age, in which the historian must breast the cumulative moral impact of the experiences of organized “scientific” murder and genocide and the staggering and disconcerting manipulation of information made

8. See note 3.

possible by hyperreality; as well as the radical philosophical questioning of the communicative possibilities of language and skepticism about the nature of historical truth.

To execute her ambitious analytical design, Wyschogrod resorts to the pivotal figure of the “heterological historian,” a dialogical gravitational center through whom the relational complexity of writing history is unmasked: she—and the feminine gender becomes a heuristic imperative—is “a multiplicity of conceptual personae . . . a thinker through whom a particular thought-perspective is exhibited, someone frenzied who is in search of what precedes history; the passionate advocate of another; the Socratic gadfly who challenges received assumptions” (p. xiii). Here is just a mellow intimation of Wyschogrod’s discursive style, and the exemplification is meant as a warning. For, on the one hand, the themes in the book are enunciated with fascinating passion and intriguing urgency, deploying the kind of sweeping, declamatory advocacy that makes them resonate with the categorical force of relevancy and necessity. On the other, the conception is executed all too often as a rambling tour de force, a tracery of overwrought sentences plodding forward breathlessly in the obscurantist, damning virtuosism of cryptic postmodernist argot. The procedure culminates in some memorable utterances: for example, we read, “Death as the ultimate negation is a non-product, a workless work whose value cannot be determined by labor” (p. 247); “the heterological historian can reply to Nietzsche that the diseased body is the destitution of alterity written upon the face of nature, that de-signs its aesthetic surface” (p. 96); “images of the past must first be seen as released from the individual cogito and later from the regimenting conditions of transcendental subjectivity to be replayed before a transpersonal subject” (p. 113); “Can the cataclysm be understood as such an unsurpassable exteriority, an outside that cannot be poetized and that fissures communities of immanence?” (p. 218). Comparable overcharged miniatures appear with implacable regularity, linguistic matter so dense that the light of my understanding struggled to pierce and defuse, finally resigning to bend around it.

For the undeterred, this work exposes insightful comparisons and contrasts, engaging, for example, Kant and Hegel to discuss their conceptions of history in one breath with Derrida and Althusser; or Husserl and Heidegger to confront contemporary naturalized theories of time and consciousness. But in places I found Wyschogrod’s emphases incomplete or misguided. Thus, for example, for all its dramatic appeal, I am puzzled by her insistence on the historian’s vocation and responsibility to the dead, those helpless and mute “nameless others” who are supposedly given a “countenance,” a voice and hope by the empathetic, almost lachrymose, “heterological historian.” For the duty and responsibility of the historian is first and foremost to the living, to whom s/he is bound by social rules of “conversation” that demand a commitment to truth in what we say: the historian is, in this respect, a trustee of memory, shaping, nurturing, and safeguarding the ballast of the social self and identity of the present and future generations. Despite all the ambiguous virtues of empathetic understanding, the space that separates us from those whose lives were truncated remains an incommensurable, gaping abyss staring at us with its opaque, question-fraught darkness, and no hermeneutic somersault can animate it to luminous transparency. Elsewhere, I found her interlude on

mnemotechnics both thin in expressive depth and redundant to her argument, as if the avid pen could not let go of a succulent sideline in a Lucullan feast of information.

Wyschgrod is at her best in her perceptive treatment of the impact of the contemporary information-technology revolution and the hypertrophy of visual stimulations on the writing of history, diagnosing with keen intelligence and a wealth of examples issues of technology's "active interference in the world," and the added burdens and sometimes arduous demands it makes on the historian (chap. 3). The manipulative pyrotechnics that virtual reality affords are of special concern at a time when history is being unscrupulously rewritten and "denied" by warlike coalitions spurred by sheer power, reckless ideology, and demagoguery. Even the plainest images—lingering in the interstices between perception and judgment and enjoying a privileged status in the popular imagination, as expressed in the misguided truism that "images don't lie"—require "narrative orchestration if [their] meaning is to emerge and narratives differ in the claims they make about their referents" (p. 111). Take the recent conflict in Kosovo, for example. One striking image of a corpse lying in a crater with, in the background, a truck loaded with other bodies, charred and shredded, became the leading photograph in a number of magazines. The Serbian officials who took journalists to the site claimed the victim was an Albanian refugee killed, like all the others in the picture, in a botched NATO bombing attack. And yet, news editors familiar with the conflict could legitimately ask, Who made the crater? Was the body dragged by Serbian forces anxious to score a point with international public opinion? Whose bodies are really in the background? And who is the photojournalist who took the picture, does he have an agenda? The photo may have been staged, the bodies may have been repositioned to create an effect. Far from constituting genuine "evidence," then, the picture may contribute to muddle the facts instead of clarifying them.<sup>1</sup>

The forging of collective memory escapes more and more the cudgel of the historian. Dominant power has at its disposal massive means for the control of its self-representation. Indeed, the kind of intense and non-conformist documentary photo essays that the British photographer Larry Burrows produced during the Vietnam War—a body of work that played an important role in undermining the support of American public opinion for this armed conflict—would today be unthinkable because the reporting profession has undergone a radical transformation since his heroic times. In a climate of increasing assault, the lonely voice of the heterological historian struggles to emerge from moral cacophony and indeterminacy to serve as a sure bridge between yesterday and tomorrow.

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1. Cf. Felicity Barringer, "Pictures Can Lie, After All," *New York Times*, April 25, 1999, p. E12.

David Novak. *Natural Law in Judaism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998. xii, 210 pp.

In this book, based upon his Lancaster-Yarnton Lectures in 1996, David Novak argues that natural law has always played a central role in Jewish thought and discourse. He also argues that natural law *ought* to be seen in a positive light; in other words, this is a work of constructive theology as much as it is a survey of the influence of natural law in Jewish intellectual history. Its “historical” side shows itself in Novak’s interpretations of various biblical narratives; the stories of Cain and Abel, Abraham and Sodom, and Abraham and Abimelech are coherent only if we recognize that the characters share a conception of a universally valid moral law based upon reason rather than revelation. In addition, the long record of investigation by Jewish thinkers into the reasons for the particular commandments (*ta’amei ha-miṣvot*) suggests both that Jews have sought to explain the substantive content of revelation in rational terms and that, in Novak’s words, “more often than not the rules cannot be cogently applied unless we have some understanding of what these rules intend” (p. 64).

The efforts by such luminaries as Saadiah Gaon and Maimonides to develop teleologies of Jewish law—“an essential component of natural law thinking” (p. 120)—are offered as evidence that these mainstream rabbis regard knowledge of the revealed law as insufficient in the absence of a rationale that itself is not dependent upon revelation. And Novak sides with those Judaic thinkers who hold that the concept of Noahide law represents “an authentically Jewish way to engage in thinking natural law” (p. 191). Although he acknowledges that not all will agree with this assessment, “it is enough for any Jewish thinker to be able to connect himself or herself with a sustained subtradition within the overall tradition itself, even if that subtradition has a counter subtradition” (p. 192).

The “theological” side of Novak’s argument lies in his claim that natural law makes it possible to conduct Jewish moral discourse in a world composed of many cultures, to make claims of moral meaning in the name of Judaism that are simultaneously understandable to non-Jews. Within a particularly Jewish context as well, natural law serves as an indispensable critique and refinement of our understanding of the positive law of the covenant of Sinai. These claims allow Novak to respond to those traditionalists who reject natural law as unnecessary on the grounds that the revealed *miṣvot* by themselves are the exclusive authority in Judaism. To Novak, the *miṣvot* do not function, and never have functioned, in isolation from rationale; “theology cannot simply avoid philosophy without appearing absurd in the process” (p. 177). At the same time, Novak rejects the stronger claims made by some natural law advocates that reason alone is a sufficient ground for all law. All law emerges from particular cultures; natural law can critique this cultural grounding but cannot replace it. In Jewish terms, natural law cannot function *without* revelation, which establishes the basic Gestalt of Judaism as “a full and abiding relationship between God and a people on earth” (p. 61).

Novak’s argument is compelling, assuming that one does not assume an “extreme” position of either the theological or the rational-philosophical variety. It may be weakened, though, by its tendency to conflate the concepts of natural law

and reason. Reason or rationality is surely an inescapable precondition for theological thought. Just as human beings cannot hope to express themselves in conversation in the absence of a common linguistic structure that makes meaningful communication possible, we might say that religious meaning, too, depends upon the existence of a shared intellectual framework (including accepted understandings of such notions as justice, right, good, and evil) that precedes any specific revelatory act. Yet, the inevitable existence of reason as an aspect of Jewish religious discourse may not prove that Judaism recognizes a doctrine that we would customarily identify as natural law. As the late Professor Marvin Fox noted, the very term “natural law” is conspicuous in its absence from the writings of leading Jewish religious thinkers, including those of the rationalists Saadiah and Maimonides. Those who respond that Judaism nonetheless recognizes natural law, albeit not by that name, may have a point. Then again, it is possible that they are “defining natural law down,” broadening and generalizing the concept so as to identify it with the sort of reason that virtually all would agree most certainly functions in Jewish religious discourse. In this way, the existence of natural law within Judaism becomes less controversial. It also becomes less interesting.

Still, Novak’s essay is a cogent presentation of the issues, an important statement by a leading contemporary Jewish theologian.

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Judith Laikin Elkin. *The Jews of Latin America*. New York: Holmes & Meier, 1998. xv, 339 pp.

Until the late 1920s, the subject of Latin American Jewry was not of great interest to Jewish scholars. It only burst forth with the beginning of the persecution of the Jews in Nazi Germany, especially in the years when they were forced to seek a refuge in any country willing to give them a life-saving visa. During this period, guides, leaflets, and books about all the Latin American countries were published, providing information about their histories and the presence of Jews. There was also some discussion, naturally, of the expectations for immigrants to remake their lives.

In the first years of the postwar period, specialized books and encyclopedias began to appear, including the voluminous *Enciclopedia Judaica*, published in Mexico in 1948, which for the first time dedicated appropriate space to each of the Latin American countries and entrusted the writing of these articles to Jewish specialists residing in the various countries.

Later, between 1966 and 1975, the Buenos Aires branch of the American Jewish Committee published several volumes under the title *Jewish Communities in Latin America*, which expanded the treatment of the history, presence, and organization of Jews in these countries of the New World, providing recent infor-

mation and essays by leading figures of Latin American Jewry. Around the same time, in 1976, Judith Laikin Elkin presented the results of her investigations of the history of the Jews of Latin America in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in her unpublished Ph.D. dissertation at the University of Michigan. Since then this well-known scholar has specialized in the study of Latin American Jewry. Her first book, *Jews of the Latin American Republics*, appeared in 1980, and her subsequent book, whose revised edition we are reviewing here, was published in 1998.

Although it is true, as Elkin says in the preface to her new book, that since 1979 “more research has been published on Latin American Jewry than in the previous one hundred years,” the material she uses is not always trustworthy, and at times her sources must be subjected to strict rectification and evaluation.

To mention but one instance, in her discussion of the Jews in Mexico, she uses estimated data stating that “the Jewish population of Mexico in 1905–10 varied from seventy-five [families] to fifteen thousand” (p. 61), a figure that shows how imprecise Jewish demographic studies were at the beginning of the twentieth century. Further on, the author of the source of this information, Corinne Azen Krause (*The Jews in Mexico* [Mexico City, 1987], p. 68, n. 9) mentions “a Jewish banker, Jean Baptiste Jecker,” information which she took from another author without checking it properly. Could a Jewish boy, in the middle of the last century, have been named John the Baptist? Unfortunately, this information also appears in Judith Laikin Elkin’s book (p. 39).

During the first decades of the nineteenth century, only a few thousand Jews were to be found anywhere in Latin America (p. 47). It must be recalled, however, that until the end of the century, the stream of European immigrants (excluding, naturally, those from Spain and Portugal), while not large, was very important for the development of agriculture, technology, and science. That is why several Latin American countries sought to increase the immigration from Europe, facilitating the arrival, mainly in the Argentine, of numerous Jews fleeing the pogroms in tsarist Russia from 1889 onwards. The available statistics show that only a small percentage of the Jews leaving Russia found a new home in Latin America in the years before World War I. Thus, between 1901 and 1914, the total number of Jews arriving in the main centers of immigration in Latin America, Argentina, and Brazil, amounted to 96,000, hardly more than arrived in Canada, while the United States absorbed, in the same period, more than 1,346,000.

Possibly as a reaction to the increase in immigration and to the special treatment European immigrants were given as compared to the native population, nationalist ideologies came into being in several Latin American countries. On the one hand, this trend showed a preference for the old creole traditions, and on the other, it fomented a negative image of the Jews, turning to the well-known antisemitic allegations popularized in France, Germany, and tsarist Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century. After World War I, the suspicion that Jews from Russia might be secret Bolsheviks was added. Thus, during a strike at an ironworks in Buenos Aires, when an effort was made to determine who had been stirring up the workers, rumors spread that those responsible for the agitation were immigrants, especially Catalans and Jews. A pogrom resulted from the violent repression of the

striking workers during the so-called Tragic Week in January 1919. Private homes and stores were looted, libraries destroyed, and 800 persons arrested, of whom 80% were Russians. Among the hundreds of dead and thousands of wounded, many were Jews.

This exaggerated nationalism was echoed by a substantial number of Argentines and paved the way for Nazi and fascist propaganda, which found so many adepts in influential circles of the Argentine Republic. It was they who later drew up the regulations for the country's immigration legislation.

An extensive part of *The Jews of Latin America* is devoted to Argentina, for it was the Latin American country that accepted the greatest number of Jewish immigrants. At the outset, in the agricultural colonies financed by Baron Maurice de Hirsch and founded by the Jewish Colonization Association (JCA), thousands of Jews attempted to remake their lives in new settlements located in different provinces of the Argentine. However, by the first decades of the twentieth century, Buenos Aires and other cities were receiving the greater part of the immigrant stream. Statistics published in recent years show that in 1909, approximately 19,000 Jews were living in the agricultural colonies, 16,500 or so in Buenos Aires, and around 13,000 in other cities of the province. By 1917, Argentina was home to an estimated 110,000 to 113,000 of the 150,000 Jews then living in Central and South America and in the Caribbean (p. 68). If we consider, as well, that even at present more than half of Latin American Jewry is concentrated in Argentina, it is clear why so many studies of Jews in this part of the New World focus on that country.

Elkin's book thoroughly analyzes the difficult process of initiation into Argentina's economic life, as well as the Jewish communal organization that developed there. She begins by examining the formation and failure of the Jewish agricultural colonies and the long and difficult process of social and economic integration of the first generation of immigrants. "Sephardim and Ashkenazim began their life as pedlers" (p. 134), she explains, selling small and portable items of mass consumption, and cloth. In many cases, those who did not have the capital to purchase merchandise obtained initial loans without interest from mutual aid societies established by immigrants. However, the second and third generations of Argentinean Jews had to traverse a slow and difficult road before they were able to join the country's middle class. Still, in 1960, about a third of Argentinean Jews were in business, almost 20% made their living as industrial workers, and only 10% were in the free professions (p. 151). Although a small percentage of the Jewish populace ascended to the wealthy upper class, a considerable number lived below the poverty level. Thus, in 1990, some 5,000 Argentinean Jewish families received subsistence from their communities, as did 12% of the Jews remaining in Peru in 1988 (pp. 155–156). Equally alarming, in the same year, 35% of the children attending the Jewish school in Lima needed scholarships.

The profound political and socioeconomic changes in Latin America over the last few decades led Elkin to rewrite her chapter "The Jewish Street," which had been published under the same title in *Jews of the Latin American Republics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). In it, she discusses the or-

ganization of Jewish communal life in Argentina and in other Latin American countries such as Uruguay, Brazil, and Mexico. Her account of the beginnings and the evolution of the main Jewish institution in Latin America, the *kehillah*, is excellent. This institution, from its origins until the present day, has maintained a monopoly on burial; credit organizations (which began as an aid to destitute immigrants); charitable agencies for the poor, sick, and aged; and the network of Jewish schools, communal press, libraries, youth groups, and also, sometimes, sports clubs. In Argentina, this umbrella organization is known as AMIA, but similar organizations are found in other Latin American countries. Although “characterized by a highly centralized and rigid bureaucracy” in some sectors, AMIA was in the past and still is the country’s main Jewish institution. Nevertheless, the fact that even in 1970, 70% of its members were over fifty years old, and 17% were over seventy (p. 187), suggests that it has lost its appeal for the new generations of native-born Jews, who are more interested in participating in the secular world of the universities and in the cultural and political worlds of their respective countries.

Is there a connection between the lack of interest in Jewish institutions among younger people and the alarming decrease in the Jewish population of Latin America over the past few decades? The chapter entitled “Latin American-Jewish Demography” allows us to draw some conclusions. In her earlier book, Elkin said that “some 550,000 people who were identifiable Jews were living in the Latin American republics in 1960, 310,000 of them in Argentina” (p. 191). Now, with 1990 as the reference year, these figures are dramatically reduced to 430,000 persons in Latin America, with 30% of them, which is 208,000, in Argentina. Similar reductions are mentioned for the other Latin American countries.

The reasons for this decrease include emigration, for economic and political reasons, to Israel, the United States, and Europe. Other studies indicate that the death rate is at times greater than the birth rate, and point out an increase in intermarriage.

It is necessary to discuss the reliability of the figures for the Jewish population of the Americas given in Table Four. Let us take as an example the permanent change in the figures for the Jewish population of Chile. Up to the 1950s, the total is said to have been 35,000 people (*Jewish Communities in Latin America*, 1966, p. 52), a figure provided by the country’s Jewish leaders. The figure was reduced to 28,000 in the first edition of the earlier *Jews of the Latin American Republics* (p. 193). In 1994 the figure is again reduced: only 15,000 Jews are mentioned in Chile in the *American Jewish Year Book* (1996). A socio-demographic study by the Representative Committee of the Jewish Institutions, an organization which links all the Jewish institutions in Chile, mentions a total of 19,000 persons.

Now, thanks to a study by the German historian Irmtrud Wojak in 1994, it is known that around 13,000 German-speaking refugees arrived in Chile between 1933 and 1941. Of these, only 1,500 families joined the B’ne Isroel community, founded by German Jews. The others did not join any Jewish institution at the time. We must assume that most of them did not appear in any internal census of the community. Nor do later censuses include Jewish residents of Chile who, for whatever reason, are not active in Jewish communal life and do not belong to any Jewish institution.

In light of this, is there really so alarming a decrease in the Jewish population of Latin America, or could it be that the published studies only consider persons who have a connection with Jewish institutions? Whether the reduction in reported Jewish population reflects a decrease in population, or a decrease in Jewish activity that facilitates identification in population surveys, if the trend continues, it may endanger the survival of organized Jewish life in Latin America.

Anyone who wishes to learn about the problems of Latin American Jewry will find it essential to read Elkin, whose numerous publications on Latin American Jewry make her one of the most distinguished scholars in the field. This volume's numerous notes and lengthy bibliography will facilitate further research by readers seeking a deeper understanding of the question of the future of the Latin American Jewry and the strategy for Jewish survival in Latin America.

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Seth Forman. *Blacks in the Jewish Mind: A Crisis of Liberalism*. New York: New York University Press, 1998. x, 274 pp.

This is a welcome corrective to the many recent polemical and scholarly—but tendentious—studies of black-Jewish relations that portray Jews as differing little from other whites. As Seth Forman indicates, many of these studies bear the imprint of the Black Power movement, whose influence mounted in the late 1960s. Seeking to undermine the integrationist civil rights coalition in which Jews occupied a leading role, the writers of these works severely minimized or denied any special Jewish empathy for the African-American cause. David L. Lewis claims that Jewish involvement in the civil rights movement was motivated by self-interest rather than by heightened sensitivity rooted in a memory of antisemitic persecution. Jews allegedly “us[ed] Blacks as surrogates” (p. 12) to eliminate discrimination against Jews, blacks deriving little benefit from the alliance. Harold Cruse similarly portrayed Jews in the civil rights movement as opportunistic, as a privileged group that had not suffered in the United States and therefore had nothing in common with African Americans. According to Forman, Taylor Branch even cites Israel's refusal to grant citizenship to members of Ben-Ami Carter's “Black Hebrew” sect as evidence that Jews have been “perpetrators of racial hate” (p. 14). But Branch ignores the invalidity of the sect's claim to be Jewish as well as its virulently antisemitic and anti-white theology.

Rejecting a genuine multicultural model for a narrowly constructed racial one, many black nationalists have even labeled Jews the most racist whites. Thus, the Nation of Islam (NOI) depicted the Jews as the most malicious of the white devil race created by the mad scientist Yacub. Black academics like Tony Martin supported the NOI's ridiculous charge that Jews controlled the slave trade. The his-

torians August Meier and John Bracey helped legitimize this antisemitic fabrication by suggesting that Jewish involvement in the slave trade, and in the plantation system of the American South, constituted one of the most important subjects for future research.

Fearing that any acknowledgment of significant Jewish suffering threatened the concept of a monolithic white racism, many black nationalists grossly inflated the death toll of the Atlantic slave trade, and even the numbers imported, in an effort to trivialize Jewish suffering during the Holocaust. Forman quotes Malcolm X, a militant antisemite for most of his career, as complaining that “everybody’s wet-eyed over a handful of Jews who brought it on themselves”—in effect, *justifying* the Holocaust—while ignoring “our one hundred million” captured and brought to “this country” (p. 71)—a monstrous exaggeration.

Forman notes that American Jews maintained a “truly admirable” (p. 15) record on civil rights, and that most African Americans perceived Jews as more friendly to their cause than other whites. The Jewish press was strongly sympathetic to African-American civil rights, and the major Jewish-led trade unions were historically more committed than other unions to organizing and admitting blacks. Jews were virtually unique in retaining a liberal outlook after achieving significant economic mobility after World War II. Forman also argues that Jews continued to support racial integration even when the destabilization of Jewish neighborhoods and their institutions, on which Jewish identity depended, was often a consequence. Northern Jews strongly endorsed racial integration in the South, even when it threatened the physical and economic security of the region’s small Jewish population, and Southern Jews themselves were more supportive of desegregation than other Southern whites.

Forman traces the growing divergence between African-American and Jewish interests as blacks pressed for racial preferences and “community control,” threatening a system of merit-based entry and advancement in education, government, and the professions that after 1945 had benefited Jews. Affirmative action programs confirmed the Black Power view of Jews as “privileged” whites, a status made official in 1973 when the federal government established five racial categories and classified Jews as “non-Hispanic whites.” This implied that Jews, as part of a monolithic white majority, had oppressed those in the other four categories.

Forman argues that the communal needs of blacks have been taken more seriously in the United States than those of Jews. This is in part illustrated by what until recently was widespread government backing for racial preferences benefiting African Americans. Forman notes that African-American moviemakers today often receive financing to make films celebrating African-American culture that disparage racial intermarriage, while Jews in film have traditionally avoided Jewish themes and celebrated Jewish-gentile intermarriage. In music, African Americans remained committed to jazz and other identifiably black forms, while Jews who succeeded in that field invariably wrote and performed music that had no connection whatsoever to Jewishness—a prime example being Irving Berlin, composer of “White Christmas” and “Easter Parade.” The predominantly Jewish “New York Intellectuals,” largely excluded from university careers, could gain

prominence only by writing on non-Jewish topics. By contrast, the African-American “public intellectuals” of the 1990s, like Henry Gates and Cornel West, occupy high-salaried positions at prestigious universities, and write almost exclusively about race.

The author is to be commended for his stimulating, forthright, and often insightful discussion of a critical subject.

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Joel Beinin. *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. xii, 329 pp.

During the past three decades, several major scholarly studies and personal accounts of Egyptian Jewry have been published in Europe, Israel, and the United States.<sup>1</sup> Joel Beinin’s book is the product of several years of research in Israel, Egypt, France, and the United States, in which he consulted not only books but also newspaper articles in English, French, Arabic, and Hebrew, as well as archives, among them the YIVO Institute records; the Haganah, Ha-Shomer ha-Tsa’ir, and the Central Zionist archives (Israel); the Jamie Lehmann Memorial Collection of Yeshiva University (containing the records of the Cairo community); and the U.S. National Archives. He also interviewed Egyptian Jews and non-Jews.

Beinin examines issues pertaining to the history of the Egyptian Jewish communities since the 1948 war, attempting to flesh out three areas: the life of the community that chose to remain in Egypt from 1948 until the Sinai/Suez campaign of October 1956; the dispersion and resettlement of Egyptian Jews in North America, Europe, and Israel; and contested memories of Jewish life since the beginning of the Egyptian-Israeli mutual peace overtures leading to the Camp David Accords

1. The most noted scholarly publications include Jacob M. Landau, *Jews in Nineteenth Century Egypt* (New York: New York University Press, 1969); Gudrun Kramer, *The Jews in Modern Egypt, 1914–1952* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989); Michael M. Laskier, *The Jews of Egypt, 1920–1970: In the Midst of Zionism, Anti-Semitism and the Middle East Conflict* (New York: New York University Press, 1992); Yoram Meital, *‘Atarim yehudiyim be-Miṣrayim* (Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute, 1995); Zvi Zohar, *Tradition and Change: Halachic Response of Middle Eastern Rabbis to Legal and Technological Changes [Egypt and Syria, 1880–1920]*. [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Ben-Zvi Institute, 1993); and Yosef Algamil, *Pirḳei Tuvia ben Simḥa Levi Babovitch: ‘Aḥaron ḥakhmei ha-kara ‘im be-Miṣrayim*, 2 vols. (Ramlah: Center for Karaite Jewry, 1998). Some of the best personal accounts are Maurice Mizrahi, *L’Egypte et ses Juifs: Le Temps revolu, xixe–xxe siècles* (Geneva: Imprimerie Avenir, 1977); Yitzhaq Gormezano-Goren, *Blanche* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1987); Jacqueline Kahanoff *Mi-mizrah shemesh* (Tel-Aviv: Yariv Hadar, 1978); Ronit Matalon, *Zeh ‘im ha-panim ‘eleynu* (Tel-Aviv: Am Oved, 1995); Rachel Maccabi, *Mitzrayim sheli* (Tel-Aviv: Sifriyat ha-Poalim, 1968); and André Aciman, *Out of Egypt* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1994).

of 1978. One of his main arguments is that neither Egyptian nationalist nor Zionist narratives can properly tell the experience of Egypt's Jews. He therefore sets out to provide an alternative approach: an interdisciplinary analysis—including history, ethnography, literary criticism, and autobiography—to assess changing patterns of Jewish identity.

Concerning the first area, Beinín has little to add. Kramer's *The Jews of Modern Egypt*, Zohar's *Tradition and Change*, and my own *Jews of Egypt* more than cover the Jews' religious, social, and political evolution in the twentieth century to the end of the Nasser era. André Aciman's *Out of Egypt* covers Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations in Egypt as an eyewitness account for the 1950s and 1960s. *Operation Susannah* by Aviezer Golan, a veteran Israeli journalist, published in 1978 by Harper & Row, concentrates on the status of Egyptian-Jewish Zionists who faced trial for sabotage activity on Israel's behalf. Though Beinín is highly critical of this book, Golan adds much to our understanding of the political mood of young Jews at the beginning of the Nasser era.

The main contribution of Beinín's book here is in providing some data on Zionism and on Jewish communists and a useful analysis of the small but dynamic community of Karaites. Yet, to offer a well-documented interdisciplinary analysis of Jewish life in Egypt after 1948, Beinín should have exploited more extensively the Jamie Lehmann Memorial Collection, dug deep into the archives of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (AJDC) located in New York and Jerusalem, and consulted the Israel State Archives (ISA), whose records up to December 1967 are now accessible.

Grappling with this area of investigation, or when surveying scholarly literature on the Jews of Muslim lands, Beinín tends to criticize rigorously those who do not share his views. They include Martin Gilbert, whose outlook on Arabs, Muslims, and Judeo-Muslim relations is regarded as "crude." Somewhat "less crude" is Norman A. Stillman, who nevertheless embraces a perspective similar to Gilbert's because he portrays the Jews as belonging to a discriminated minority that faced continual danger.

In challenging other scholars, Beinín remarks on several occasions that Zionism was almost marginal in Egyptian Jewish life. Nothing could be further from the truth. True, Zionism in Egypt and other Muslim countries was indeed an elitist force or confined to groups belonging to the middle bourgeoisie and poorer Ashkenazim. But this was also the case for most communities in the Diaspora—a phenomenon that did not deter activists from fund-raising, organizing *aliyah*, and sometimes extending their authority to challenge the established communal leadership. Zionism in Tunisia, after 1930, emerged as a vital contender in the struggle for communal leadership and influence in the Jewish milieu. During the various legal, illegal (underground), and semi-legal phases of *aliyah*, Zionist activists in Morocco—with or without Israeli sponsorship—formed a leadership core that pressured anti-Zionist or non-Zionist Jewish leaders to hasten communal self-liquidation.

In Egypt, as in Iraq, the Zionist *aliyah* underground forces, until the early 1950s, were instrumental in initiating large-scale emigration to Israel. Of the 20,000 Jews who left Egypt in 1948–50, more than 14,000 immigrated to Israel

via Europe. They were prodded and organized for departure by the Israeli-sponsored underground. In Iraq, a similar situation evolved with the local underground that conducted the *aliyah* of many thousands of Jews via the Syrian desert and Iran. During the years 1950–52, this underground, in conjunction with Israeli emissaries, evacuated more than 120,000 Jews in a major operation with the consent of the Iraqi government. The degree of Zionist membership or increasing ideological conformity to Zionism in a given community is less crucial than the influence and initiative of those who succeeded in bringing about partial or large-scale departure. Though much of the *aliyah* from Egypt occurred only in 1948–49 and 1956–57, between 1948 and 1970 at least 35,971 of the 75,000-member community, or some 45–48%, chose Israel as their destination. The majority of the rest emigrated to Europe, Australia, and the Americas.

In treating the second area of dispersion and resettlement, Beinín's main groups are the Karaites who settled in Israel and North America, particularly in the San Francisco Bay area, and communist and other leftist intellectuals living in France. His sections on the Karaite and communist emigrés are quite good. Notwithstanding, the limited scope of his target groups prevented Beinín from reaching the less accessible "silent majority" of Egyptian Jews, many of whom are still alive, dispersed throughout Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Canada, Switzerland, France, Israel, England, and Australia. This is one of the major weaknesses of the book. The really hard work of finding Jews who represented the majority of Egyptian Jews has not been done. Their testimony is not heard here.

It is virtually impossible to write about communal dispersion since 1948 without resorting to extensive questionnaires and interviewing large segments of the populations. I, myself, am conducting a major survey, using questionnaires and interviews, of North African Jews of different backgrounds and strata who settled in Israel, France, and the Americas since the late 1940s. Having thus far reached only 1,000 persons, I nevertheless am already getting a highly complex, nuanced, and diverse picture of conflicting identities and outlooks. By interviewing intellectuals with certain political orientations, among them Eric Rouleau and Jacques Hassoun, Beinín chose persons who reflect some of his own worldview. Consequently, the limited application and scope of his interdisciplinary approach hindered his efforts to offer a more in-depth narrative about the wider Egyptian Jewish experience.

The third area of Beinín's book highlights contested memories of Egyptian-Jewish life since the Israeli-Egyptian peace overtures. Although some of the themes he raises here are pertinent and important, others do not actually relate to the book. The same is true for his enthusiastic endorsement of post-Zionist historiography (pp. 238–240). Whereas post-Zionist thinking and narrative of the past decade has its merits and is a refreshing approach to Israeli history, it is on the whole irrelevant to the issue of the dispersion of Egypt's Jews. The reader may also wonder why Beinín chose to insert his autobiography and relate it to the topic.

All in all, this book is another pioneering step in the area of research on the decline of Jewish minorities in Muslim lands and the crises they underwent in new

geographies. However, a comprehensive work on the dispersion of Egyptian Jewry awaits another scholar. The sooner this task is accomplished, the better.

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Paula Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France. Jewish Communities of the Modern World*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998. xii, 283 pp.

Paula Hyman's *The Jews of Modern France* is the first volume in a new series on Jewish communities edited by David Sorkin. Hyman has written a superb interpretative history. Incorporating classical texts as well as recent monographs in French, English, and Hebrew, she calls attention to the major issues, tensions, and socioeconomic developments in French Jewish history from 1789 to 1989 without either sacrificing their complexity or losing the reader in an overabundance of detail.

The themes of emancipation, acculturation, assimilation, antisemitism, and Zionism are woven throughout the text in a manner that facilitates an appreciation of how they have continued to shape the identities of French Jews. Demographic and occupational shifts are emphasized, as are the international connections between the Jews of France and their coreligionists in other countries—especially in the Maghreb. The population transfusions at the end of the nineteenth and the early part of the twentieth century are graphically illustrated, highlighting both the struggles faced by the East European immigrants and their transformative impact on the native Jews. Lastly, comparisons are intelligently made between French Jewish and German Jewish history as well as between Jews and non-Jews living in France.

Hyman's approach is measured and nuanced. She does not, however, refrain from adding her own interpretations on some frequently debated issues, such as Voltaire's contribution to modern antisemitism; the accomplishments and intentions of Napoleon; the impact of the Dreyfus Affair; the responses of French Jewry to immigration, especially in the 1930s, and to Zionism; and finally, the French Jewish establishment's less than exemplary behavior during the Second World War. Whether one agrees with Hyman's analyses or not (and this reviewer generally does), there is no question but that they are based on the recent and in some instances path-breaking research of both American and French historians.

Before and after her comprehensive discussion of the Dreyfus Affair, Hyman carefully distinguishes between the virulent antisemitism present in France and the high degree of integration of French Jewry. Neither Germany nor Austria could have had a Dreyfus Affair, she reminds us, since no Jew had achieved a parallel position in the army of either country. And, although she carefully enumerates the criticisms of the Jewish establishment at the time of the Affair (e.g., their passivity), she also suggests that the French Jewish reaction was "more varied and complex than earlier assessments have conveyed" (p. 109). Significantly, and not for the only time, Hyman warns against reading past events through the lens of more recent ones.

The Dreyfus Affair may have played a catalytic role in Herzl's thinking, but it did not lead the native French Jewish establishment, lay or rabbinic, to support Zionism. On the contrary, the French establishment generously supported Palestinian Jewry but remained opposed to Zionism. Hyman suggests that its non-Zionist pro-Palestinianism was merely a strategy to weaken the institutions of the Zionist movement (pp. 140–141). Only in the 1930s, when Zionism seemed to offer a practical resolution to the growing refugee problem, did this strategy change.

French Jewish involvement in the refugee question has been the subject of much debate and no less polemic. Hyman succinctly summarizes Vicki Caron's recent study, suggesting that it provides a more complete picture than previously available of the divisions among French Jewry on policies toward the refugees and the consensus ultimately reached, as well as the French Jewish establishment's decision to challenge politically the government's decrees of 1938 (pp. 153–154).

No controversy has been as heated as the one concerning the reactions of the Jews of France to the Nazi occupation. Arguing that it is morally and methodologically untenable for a historian to specify correct responses from the vantage point of hindsight, Hyman presents a lengthy and careful overview of the events; the decisions made; and the actions and motivations of the major protagonists, in particular the official organization of the Jews of France, the UGIF. Was it collaborationist, she asks, because it cooperated with the Germans and Vichy in order to address the needs of their victims, or do its intentions excuse it from charges of collaboration, regardless of their effect on Jews? Her answer attributes the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust primarily to those who were actually in a position of power and authority. Decisions made by the UGIF, however, whether intentional or not, facilitated the Nazis' task.

Needless to say, no history that covers more than two hundred years can escape minor mistakes and omissions. The Jewish population of Paris at the time of the Revolution was at least 1,000 and not 500 (p. 7); the Metz Society's question was actually "Are there means of making the Jews more useful and happier in France?" (p. 20); and the *more judaico* was eliminated in 1846 but never officially abolished (p. 55). One would have liked even more attention paid to individual voices, especially those of women. Finally, although there are excellent illustrations at the beginning of each chapter, there is neither a chronology nor a set of maps, both of which would have been useful.

France now boasts the largest Jewish population in Western Europe. Its communities are diverse and vibrant, and, as the battle over the post of Grand Rabbi recently demonstrated, its future is contested. But if an "identity virus" is besieging both the Jews and the country, it is hardly an unfamiliar one to those who explore the two-hundred-year odyssey presented in Paula Hyman's book.

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Steven Cassedy. *To the Other Shore: The Russian Jewish Intellectuals Who Came to America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997. xxiii, 188 pp.

One of the lesser-studied aspects of modern Jewish history is the margin that thinly separates the origin from the destination of the great migrations of Eastern European Jews to America. The experience of Jews in the New World has been well documented, and increasing numbers of studies of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Russian Jewish history have appeared. Most of these works, however, treated the mass movement of Jews as either a concluding chapter of Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement or as a completely new beginning: the Jewish experience in the United States and Canada. Steven Cassedy's *To the Other Shore* examines the generations on the seam of the great migrations—the people who formed the bridge between the shtetl and the sweatshops, translating, with varying levels of success, Russian Jewish culture into American English.

A theme that runs through *To the Other Shore* is the culturally fluid nature of these immigrants, which Cassedy illustrates with a wide variety of vignettes from autobiographical materials. A strong element of Russification had already been impressed on their worldviews, and many had adopted nontraditional attitudes long before leaving the shtetl. Many had an exceptionally antagonistic attitude toward Judaism, and in this Morris Winchevsky's memoirs are typical: "For me," he writes, "and not for me alone in those days, unbelief and hatred for any kind of faith had reached the highest degree of fanaticism. It became hard for me to pass a *bes medresh* . . . without gnashing my teeth in anger, and I could hardly stand to hear the voice of men praying or studying a page of Talmud" (p. 13).

Students of the American Jewish experience will find Cassedy's work particularly useful for its description of the bizarre intellectual currents popular in the late tsarist period. Special attention is devoted to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's classic, almost unreadable, *What Is to Be Done?*, a rambling work of fiction in which uni-dimensional characters devote their lives to the cause of transforming society at its most fundamental level. *What Is to Be Done?* was mandatory reading for all budding socialists; Lenin later consciously adopted the title for one of his most significant political treatises, and as the Jewish ideologue Chaim Zhitlovsky described Chernyshevsky's impact on Jews: "He became in the literal sense of the word our *rebbe*, our leader, our *er zol lebn* . . . and we, his ardent *Hasidim*. . . . [*What Is to Be Done?*] could almost be added to the ranks of the sacred scriptures of mankind: the Bible, the Gospels, the Koran . . . people approached *What Is to Be Done?* as they would the Zohar . . . because they expected to discover in it the *sisre-toyre* [mysteries of the Torah]" (p. 29).

Cassedy also provides fascinating glimpses into Russian counter-cultural movements, such as nihilism and populism, and traces their influence on the budding secular Jewish intelligentsia as it emerged from traditional rabbinic culture in the late nineteenth century. One of the more significant observations that Cassedy makes in this valuable work is that these Jewish intellectuals "did not for a minute cease thinking of themselves as Russians," and were forced to "recognize and affirm their Jewishness, if only for the pragmatic purpose of gaining a political audience among their fellow Jews" (p. 62). While discussing their considerable con-

tributions to the development of American intellectual life, particularly in New York, Cassedy argues that the mind-set of these immigrants was, Jewishly speaking, a failure: “Over and over again they had asserted their status as Russians and had been so successful that native-born Americans thought of them primarily as Russians. Over and over again they had shied away from acknowledging the Jewishness of their readers, even when those readers were reading them in a language that almost no one except Jews could understand [i.e., Yiddish]. When they had moved into the world of English-language publishing, many of them abandoned all traces of their Jewish identity” (pp. 158–159).

*To the Other Shore* is essential reading for students of American Jewish history and culture, and very important for specialists on Eastern Europe. Cassedy’s fluid style will make this well-illustrated work useful in undergraduate classes.

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Abraham J. Karp, *Jewish Continuity in America: Creative Survival in a Free Society*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1998. 302 pp.

*Jewish Continuity in America* is a collection of articles written by Abraham Karp over the course of his scholarly career. The earliest essay in the collection was published in 1955 on Jacob Joseph, who was appointed chief rabbi of New York in the late nineteenth century. The most recent previously published essays are an account of Isaac Leeser, traditionalist religious leader and Jewish journalist, and an overview of the synagogue in America, both published in 1987. In addition, there are two new essays, one on Congregation Beth Israel of Rochester, New York, and a second on what Karp calls the “tripartite” division of the American Jewish community. Because the book is a collection of articles, it could have perhaps been more accurately entitled “Studies in Nineteenth-Century American Jewish History” or “Essays on Rabbis and Synagogues in Nineteenth-Century American Judaism.”

And yet, a serious effort has been made to place these previously published essays in a broader conceptual framework. Karp has adapted a selection from his book *Haven and Home: A History of the Jews in America* as an introduction, which is subtitled “Quest for a Viable Identity.” The book briefly outlines the European precedents that serve as an important background to the religious changes that occurred in nineteenth-century America. Karp discusses how identity as a religious community established a corporate status for the Jewish community in the United States, and suggests that the Jews needed to justify that corporate identity by building a religious ideology, which they found in the Mission Idea. What developed involved presenting “a new corporate posture” that was “a dual-image identity.” Karp argues that this dual-image identity was “fashioned by the folk wisdom of the people” rather than by rabbis or intellectuals or Jewish communal leaders. This

identity involved retaining a religious communal self-definition vis-à-vis the larger society while maintaining an internal understanding of themselves as a people with their own civilization.

Karp divides his studies into three sections. The first deals with the synagogue, the second with the rabbinate, and the third with the religious community. The essays are fascinating. The opening chapter deals with the development of different types of synagogues in nineteenth- and twentieth-century America. He then describes the development of Congregation Beth Israel of Rochester, New York. Karp lived in Rochester for many years, serving as a Conservative rabbi and as a professor of Jewish studies at the University of Rochester. This essay will be of great value for future researchers writing on the history of the synagogue in America.

The second section is the most interesting. Chapters are devoted to Isaac Leeser and Solomon Schechter, as well as to Jacob Joseph and Simon Tuska. Leeser, the most important nineteenth-century traditionalist minister, served for many years at Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia and published the *Occident*, one of the most widely read Jewish newspapers of its time. The essay on Solomon Schechter, the most important leader of the Conservative Movement in early twentieth-century America, deals primarily with the Genizah scholar's decision to assume leadership of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

But while Schechter was able to build a successful career in the United States, Jacob Joseph of Vilna was destroyed by disunity, infighting, and obtuse lay decisions. When the leaders of Beth Hamidrash Hagadol in New York began to search for a chief rabbi, they faced the daunting task of convincing a major talmudic scholar to leave Lithuania to come to the United States. But Jacob Joseph was heavily in debt and saw the monetary inducements offered as the only way he could emerge from his financial crisis. Karp describes the constitutional setup of the association, the arrival of Chief Rabbi Joseph, and even his first sermon. The ensuing conflict and controversies and the eventual failure of the attempt to establish an American chief rabbinate are explained in context. One puzzling aspect of the essay is Karp's insistence on ending this tragic story of the destruction of a scholarly and gentle talmudist on a positive note. He states that the attempt to establish a chief rabbinate "had its lasting effect for the good," arguing that the attempt to create a chief rabbinate encouraged H. Pereira Mendes and others to organize the Union of Orthodox Jewish congregations of America in 1898. This reader was not convinced.

One of the most interesting essays describes the short rabbinic career of Simon Tuska of Rochester and later Memphis. Tuska was the son of the Reverend Mordecai Tuska of the Rochester Jewish community, and he studied at the University of Rochester, becoming the first American-born student to travel to Breslau to study for the rabbinate. During his years in Europe, he wrote twenty-three letters to Isaac Mayer Wise that were published in the *Israelite* between 1858 and 1860. Tuska's career was cut short in 1871 when he died of a heart attack at age thirty-six on a Friday night shortly after returning home from services in the Memphis temple where he served. Because he died so young, Tuska's story is of interest mostly in its description of the life of a young American rabbi. It would be unfair to compare his accomplishments with those of Leeser or certainly Schechter.

The final section of the book discusses how the tripartite division of the American Jewish religious community developed. Tracing the ideological and institutional differences back to Europe, Karp explains how the conferences of the antebellum period determined the religious structure of American Jewry. He focuses in on the Cleveland Conference of 1855. But this general chapter is followed by a long essay on the Conservative Movement. While the essay is very good, why are there no parallel chapters on Orthodoxy and Reform? The postscript deals with Solomon Schindler, the radical Reform rabbi of Temple Israel in Boston, who left Judaism only to return and apologize for the “mistakes I have made” in a guest sermon delivered to his former congregation in March 1911. This, too, is provocative, but does not provide the tying together of the various topics that would have been satisfying.

*Jewish Continuity in America* contains a great deal of thought-provoking material. Karp writes well and has done extensive research on specific topics, many of which deal in one way or another with Rochester, New York, where he lived and worked for much of his life. He and his publisher have made a serious attempt to take essays that have no organic connection to one another and blend them into a coherent, cohesive volume. Despite the fact that this book cannot be regarded as comprehensive, it nevertheless provides a detailed look at selected aspects of the history of Judaism in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American Judaism. The volume is engaging and will serve as a valuable source of information for researchers and as an entertaining read for a general audience.

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Harvey Warren Meirovich. *A Vindication of Judaism: The Polemics of the Hertz Pentateuch*. Foreword by Ismar Schorsch. New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1998, xvi, 304 pp.

Anyone who was personally privileged to meet the late J. H. Hertz, as was this reviewer from time to time in his student days, could not fail to be conscious of being in the presence of greatness. Short in natural height, he was a man of impressive stature. A commanding personality, he was easily the most outstanding individual ever to occupy the exalted position of chief rabbi of the British Empire (1913–46). He was courageous, energetic, eloquent, and determined, and he left an indelible impression on English-speaking Jewry. He bequeathed enduring, living monuments in the form of his *Book of Jewish Thought* (1917), his *Commentary on the Torah and Haftorahs* (1929–36), and his *Commentary on the Prayer Book* (1942–45), apart from numerous essays and addresses. As the Torah writes of Moses, “his hands were steady until the setting of the sun” (Exod. 17:12).

Dr. Meirovich’s study concentrates on the *Commentary to the Pentateuch*, or, more specifically, on its general style, arrangement, organization, and constituent elements, and on the factors that weighed upon Hertz in editing it.

The first chapter, entitled “Intellectual Roots, Theological Objectives,” details the influences that swayed the young Hertz as a student at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York, particularly those of Sabato Morais and Alexander Kohut. Although Hertz graduated in 1894, whereas Solomon Schechter did not take over JTS until 1904, it is clear that the writings of Schechter, too, exerted an influence upon him. On becoming British chief rabbi, Hertz found himself confronted with contemporary Christian anti-Jewish biblical scholarship, which was strongly swayed by Julius Wellhausen’s reconstruction of Israelite history and religion. Schechter had called it the “Higher anti-Semitism,” and had urged the production of a distinctly Jewish commentary on the Bible. Hertz also faced the activities of Claude Goldsmith Montefiore, the outspoken and prolific scholarly leader of so-called Liberal Judaism in England. The second chapter of this book, entitled “Inspiration and Perspiration,” evaluates the impact that all the foregoing had on Hertz’s plan and formulation of his commentary on the Pentateuch, and on his trials and tribulations in the initial effort to execute it.

The third chapter, “Biblical Criticism,” discusses in greater detail the Christian scholarly onslaught on the Mosaic authorship of the Torah, and the comparative study of the religion of Israel with that of the pagan ancient Semites.

Following is a chapter on “Hebraism and Hellenism” in which Meirovich shows how Hertz harshly denigrated the latter’s morality and emphasized the consequent baneful influence of Hellenism upon Christianity and the Christian world of the West.

Chapter Five, “Aspects of a Jewish Theology,” constitutes a reconstruction of Hertz’s main points and a critical review of his tendencies to explain away the shortcomings and character-blemishes of biblical heroes and to smooth over the clear instances of cruelty and barbarism occasionally found in the biblical narratives.

In the final chapter, “Achievement and Impact,” Meirovich reports on Hertz’s lamenting the initial poor response to his volume on Genesis, the sluggish sales, and the lack of support from Conservative and Orthodox rabbis. This pathetic reception evaporated with the appearance of the one-volume edition of the entire Pentateuch. A drastic lowering of its price boosted sales in the postwar years, but Hertz was then no longer alive. A summary of critical reviews follows.

Censorious comments took note of Hertz’s use of the King James English translation of the Bible instead of the 1917 Jewish Publication Society version. This, however, was an unfair criticism, because Hertz had made strenuous efforts, unsuccessfully, to utilize the latter. More to the point was the condemnation of the chief rabbi’s affinity for glossing over problematic verses, his simplistic rationalizations, his selective use of non-Jewish sources, and particularly his tendency to cite the supportive testimony of non-Jews. His obvious bias against Christianity and Hellenism also drew the attention of some critical reviewers.

Meirovich may be congratulated for producing a painstaking, thoroughly researched, and impressive study, exceptionally well written. The notes to each chapter are invaluable and reveal a wealth of learning and scholarly erudition meticu-

lously documented. Anyone who is interested in the course of modern Jewish intellectual history, and especially in the state of pre–World War I Anglo-Jewry, will find this book indispensable.

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Pamela Nadell. *Women Who Would Be Rabbis: A History of Women's Ordination, 1889–1985*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1998. xiii, 300 pp.

Pamela Nadell begins her history of “women who would have, if they could have, become rabbis” (p. x) with an acknowledgment “that uncovering women’s history remains a political enterprise” (p. 13). Surprised to discover so many predecessors to today’s female rabbis, Nadell enthusiastically traces the repetitive and discouraging history of arguments and efforts by diverse women to enter the rabbinate.

Reclaiming these forgotten efforts now that women in the United States receive ordination in the Reform, Reconstructionist, and Conservative movements contextualizes a struggle for social change. Nadell shows how the desire, energy, and commitment to open Jewish religious leadership to women did not emerge suddenly with the radicalism of the 1960s and the second wave of feminism in America. Rather, it began a century ago as modernity upset established gender roles and reconfigured the place of religion in Jewish life. As the rabbinate lost some of its authority with the widespread adoption of congregationalism by American Jews, rabbis’ tasks shifted from interpreting law toward pastoral duties. The ability to speak effectively in public, to preach, and to lead congregations in prayer acquired greater salience, encouraging a few women to imagine themselves acting as rabbis.

A host of reforms in synagogue services that equalized the positions of men and women accompanied these clerical innovations. Reformers eliminated the *meḥiṣah* and introduced mixed seating in family pews, they added choirs of men and women to beautify worship, and they created the confirmation ceremony to acknowledge equally the educational accomplishments of girls and boys. Women’s responses hastened the transformations in Jewish religious activity. Women eagerly accepted positions as teachers in Sunday schools, rapidly feminizing Jewish education. With men working on Saturdays, women often filled seats in synagogues left vacant by absent husbands. The struggle for women’s suffrage kept issues of equality and justice in the consciousness of liberal Jews. Given this milieu, the question of women’s ordination arose as a natural and logical next step.

Despite its logic, women’s efforts to become rabbis repeatedly encountered stiff resistance and a fearful reluctance to overturn the status quo. Nadell chronicles the attempts by aspiring women to acquire the education necessary for the rab-

binate. Most came from distinguished backgrounds and sought to emulate fathers who were rabbis and scholars. In each decade, a few succeeded in studying at Hebrew Union College or the Jewish Theological Seminary or the Jewish Institute of Religion with the support of individual rabbis and a few fellow students. Some, like Martha Neumark, Henrietta Szold, and Irma Lindheim, are relatively well known because they crafted impressive careers for themselves. Others, like Dora Askowith, Helen Levinthal, and Avis Shulman, struggled without recognition. But when it came time for liberals like Stephen Wise or Kaufmann Kohler to act decisively in support of women's aspirations, these leaders deferred to their conservative colleagues. No woman's accomplishment or erudition led to acceptance as a rabbi in the United States prior to World War II, although Regina Jonas received a rabbinic diploma in Germany in 1935.

Nadell devotes attention to the ideological debates—the same arguments for and against women rabbis reappear in almost every decade—but she situates her discussion within a thorough sociopolitical analysis. The almost numbing repetition of the arguments suggests that the explanation for the rabbinical opposition to women rabbis lies elsewhere. Nadell finds her answer in a version of “the time was not ripe.” Individual women alone, no matter how extraordinary, could not force radical change. A larger cohort was required. Higher education for women had to become widespread. Married women's presence in the professions had to be accepted. Women's religious leadership among Protestants had to increase, setting a precedent for Reform Jews and making the idea of women clergy more commonplace. Finally, the second wave of feminism sweeping through the United States in the 1960s dramatically changed the atmosphere. The doors opened first for women in the Reform movement, then for Reconstructionists, and, after much struggle, for Conservative Jews. Nadell expects Orthodox women to follow their Jewish sisters.

A paradox stands at the heart of this history: the women seeking to enter the rabbinate desired to uphold Judaism, yet they were attacked for attempting to overthrow it. In response, women turned to Jewish tradition for evidence to support their efforts to extend women's leadership. Their eventual success shows how “they used the past to create a revolution” (p. 220).

Nadell's sympathies lie with her heroines. In writing their history, she seeks solid ground that will let future women understand the scope of the struggle required “to create their own revolutions” (p. 220). Yet her tale has its cautionary elements. Although a reader cannot help but finish the book with admiration for its protagonists and their efforts to become rabbis, Nadell's history suggests that, ultimately, Jewish women's accomplishments depended more on the sociopolitical configuration of the historical moment than on their own agency. It is a sobering conclusion.

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Bonnie J. Morris. *Lubavitcher Women in America: Identity and Activism in the Postwar Era*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998. x, 186 pp.

Four years ago, when I first read Bonnie Morris' *Lubavitcher Women in America*, the book was in manuscript form and I was directing a women's studies program at a regional university in Kentucky. As a Jewish feminist educator, I was asked by SUNY Press to review the book and make a recommendation about publication. The ultra-Orthodox represent a closed community: difficult to observe from the outside and rarely reported on from the inside, and I was fascinated by Morris' study of Lubavitcher women's postwar contributions to the spiritual life and growth of their Hasidic community. Along with another reviewer, I recommended publication, and the book came out in late 1998. Just under two years later, I again read *Lubavitcher Women in America* for the purpose of writing this review. What has changed is not my high regard for this skilled examination of the impact of American feminism on the lives and roles of women within this particular Hasidic community. Rather, it is my proximity to ultra-Orthodoxy.

I now find myself living in Brooklyn, New York. On my daily commute to the university at which I teach, I pass through the Brooklyn neighborhood of Crown Heights, ground zero for Morris' research. While living in Kentucky, it was easy for me to regard the ultra-Orthodox as an abstraction: they were simply the keepers of *their* form of the faith. While I had always been simultaneously intrigued and nonplussed by their way of life, I never had to give them any space—literally or figuratively—in my daily life. Now things are very different. As I watch a young married woman cross Eastern Parkway pushing a double baby stroller fully loaded with twins and groceries, and holding onto the hand of an older child who leads two littler ones, I question who is best served by ultra-Orthodox Judaism's understanding of women's roles.

As an American feminist, I cannot quite accept that Lubavitcher women benefit within what I will always perceive as a matrix of male privilege and hegemony. However, while Morris' book once merely informed me of the details of postwar life and activism for Hasidic women, it now serves to remind me that these women I see on a daily basis are seeking fulfillment, as *they* understand it, through an ultra-Orthodox design for living, and that this is a form of liberation. Morris is careful to place her account of these women's experiences in a post-Holocaust context. In the aftermath of annihilation, it makes more sense that the Jewish women most touched by the destruction would see rebuilding the Jewish people (through motherhood and support of traditional Judaism) as a sacred and honored opportunity.

Specifically, Morris' research documents the unexpected interplay of feminism and what she calls "counter-feminism" on the lives of these ultra-Orthodox women. While sex roles, ritual, and religious thinking among Lubavitchers remained unaltered, the issues raised by the women's movement were paralleled in the Lubavitcher community by the increased role women began to play as activists and educators. In terms of both Jewish and feminist study and scholarship, this is an interesting, ironic, and unexpected outcome of American feminism. In a sense, feminism raised the question of female fulfillment, thus providing Lubavitcher

women with an opportunity to answer it by saying that what women are “supposed” to do Jewishly is what will make them happy.

While feminism, by Morris’ account, has made no dent in what I consider to be the wholesale privileging of male spirituality, needs, and desires in ultra-Orthodox Judaism, it may have made a welcome improvement in the lives of *ba’alot teshuvah* (new adherents to Hasidism). These women, once on the margins of Hasidic life until sufficiently enculturated to marry, are now encouraged, as Morris documents it, to use the “emptiness” of their secular accomplishments as a recruiting tool for reaching the hearts and minds of still-secular Jewish women who have doubts about the meaningfulness of their lives. This is not anti-feminist backlash, this is counter-feminist whiplash. *Ba’alot teshuvah* now serve as smart, articulate, informed, and *effective* recruiters for the late Rebbe’s vision and version of Jewish life. What feminist irony!

That Morris’ study examines, from a feminist perspective, a population of women who feel they have no commerce with feminism may strike some as inappropriate. Certainly researcher Susan Faludi has been criticized for studying men through a similar lens (*Stiffed: The Betrayal of American Men*, 1999). To my way of thinking, however, Morris’ work invites further use of contemporary feminist theory as an interpretive tool. I appreciate the respect with which she treated this complicated community, and the respect her work inspires.

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