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Rachel Havrelock
University of Illinois at Chicago

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Please direct correspondence to:
Association for Jewish Studies
Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street
New York, NY 10011

Voice: (917) 606-8249
Fax: (917) 606-8222
E-Mail: ajs@ajs.cjh.org
Web Site: www.ajsnet.org

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From the Editors

Dear Colleagues,

What is the issue with Muslims? Or, more precisely, what is the Jewish issue with Muslims? The Muslim issue with Jews? Is there an issue or is it simply a legacy of entrenched positions as Christianity's polar others? Do we in Jewish Studies neglect a textual interplay so deep that, in certain periods, it is hard to say what writing is Muslim and what Jewish. Do we tend to forget a long and productive relationship suddenly remembered when we evoke Andalus, read Maimonides, or find ourselves in a dialogue group? And, when we participate in the dialogue group, are we there in the name of Judaism and Islam or Israel and Palestine? Might the Muslim issue really be the Israel issue?

With a wide temporal and geographic reach, the Muslim Issue thinks through many of these questions. Norman Stillman speaks to the history and limitations of "Islamicate Jewish Studies." Carol Bakhos and Reuven Firestone offer glimpses into complicated textual representations. David Freidenreich openly brings Christianity back

into the equation. Paul Silverstein, Mustapha Kamal, and Aomar Boum take us to Morocco where imbricated political, cultural, and religious identifications do not produce expected positions. Dinah Stillman, Ethan Katz, and Julia Cohen provide fascinating evidence of parallel trends in contemporary Europe, and Marc Baer and Marcy Brink-Danan offer further nuance in the case of Turkey. Gil Anidjar complicates the whole matter, bringing us back to the very question of the Muslim Issue.

Matti Bunzl

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

Rachel Havrelock

University of Illinois at Chicago

From the President

Dear Colleagues,

Twenty-four years ago, when I first presented a paper at an AJS conference, I had no notion that this organization would come to play such an important role in my professional life, let alone that one day I would be asked to serve as its president. This was not simply because it was very early in my academic career, but also because the field of Jewish Studies looked quite different then. As a scholar interested in contemporary popular culture (my first paper examined American Jewish self-portraiture on television), my place within the field seemed to be at the margins.

Since then, AJS became vital to my development as a scholar, as I engaged in lively debate during conference sessions, wrote for AJS publications, and met people who have become cherished colleagues. Through AJS I have also watched with great interest how the field of Jewish Studies has developed: in the broader range of subjects, disciplines, and methodologies undertaken by scholars in the field, the forging of new connections between Jewish Studies and other areas of study, and discussions of the field's shifting concerns and expanding sense of the possible.

Increasingly, AJS fosters a scholarly environment in which work once thought peripheral to the field of Jewish Studies is flourishing alongside more established areas of scholarship. Moreover, this learned society's various undertakings bring scholars across a wide spectrum of interests into conversation with one another, as they embrace the notion that such an expansive understanding of Jewish Studies is in the best interests of the field. As president of AJS, I look forward to enhancing this engagement among the diverse array of scholars in Jewish Studies.

This spirit of thoughtful scholarly adventurousness is at the core of what attracted me to the field of Jewish Studies in the first place—something brought acutely to mind several days after the 2011 AJS conference by news of the passing of Adrienne Cooper, a treasured member of the Jewish Studies community. Adrienne is likely best remembered as one of the leading performers of Yiddish song of her generation, but music was only one of the spheres of activity in which she made vital contributions. As a committed builder of Jewish scholarly, cultural, and

communal institutions, she played a strategic role in the field of Yiddish Studies, especially during the 1970s and '80s. Like many other Jewish Studies scholars, I first met Adrienne when she was Assistant Dean of the Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. Thanks largely to her encouragement, my initial curiosity about Yiddish was transformed into an academic career.

I was far from alone in benefiting from Adrienne's intellectual and moral support. In the days following her death I spoke with or heard from some of the many other scholars for whom she provided the point of entry to studying Yiddish and to applying it to their work in fields ranging from history and literature to linguistics and ethnomusicology. Like these colleagues, much of what I found exciting about Yiddish Studies was the multidisciplinary community it attracted. In courses, seminars, conferences, and other undertakings, Adrienne helped bring together diverse scholars from around the world, junior as well as senior, working in disciplines across the humanities and social sciences. She also fostered close ties between scholars and artists—musicians, actors, filmmakers, visual artists, and others—and modeled how they might learn from one another and work together in her own undertakings as a performer, writer, translator, and teacher. For me, this lively, creative environment was as attractive and as formative as the subject matter at hand.

This milieu emerged at a crucial moment for both the creation and the study of Yiddish culture. At the time, many people saw this culture as having more or less ended, and the place of Yiddish Studies was much less established in the academy than it has since become. As a central figure in this scene, Adrienne brought both scholarly acumen (as a PhD candidate in History at the University of Chicago) and a musician's creative energy to the nurturing of academic and artistic communities. A generation of scholars, writers, translators, performers, media artists, public culture workers, and others involved with Yiddish culture is indebted to her efforts on its behalf and to the vision of new possibilities for engaging with Yiddish that she epitomized.

This vision continues to inform how I work as a Jewish Studies scholar. In addition to the enrichment that comes from working across

disciplines, I have found opportunities to engage with artists of all kinds to be especially gratifying—not only to learn about their careers but also to better understand how their work figures in contemporary Jewish life. These encounters have inspired me to integrate academic rigor with artistic creativity, striving to produce work that is deeply informed and at the same time takes innovative chances. Similarly, I've found exploring the nexus of the academy and the public sphere to be intellectually rewarding—and, at times, challenging—whether by contributing to public culture in the form of exhibitions, public programs, and other endeavors, or by studying these practices.

These are possibilities not only for someone working in Yiddish Studies or on contemporary Jewish culture but for scholars in any

area of Jewish Studies. Moreover, these possibilities can enhance how scholars think about Jewish Studies as a wide-ranging field with a complex relationship to the public sphere. These possibilities can inform how we continue to develop what AJS does at its annual conference, in its publications, and in other initiatives under way, such as the AJS Distinguished Lectureship Program. In my term as president of AJS, I look forward to working with all of you on enriching this lively intellectual environment and advancing what makes Jewish Studies such a rewarding, engaging field.

Jeffrey Shandler
Rutgers University

From the Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

Since the mid-1990s, the AJS has structured its conference submission and evaluation process around a set of roughly twenty division themes. These themes have informed how scholars have shaped their proposals, identified their work, and reached conference audiences. Largely organized around geographical, chronological, disciplinary, and linguistic rubrics, the division structure has worked well for many members whose work falls within clear disciplinary boundaries—Professor X is a modern Jewish historian, and thus submits her proposal to the Modern Jewish History division; Professor Y is an art historian and thus submits his work to Jews and the Arts.

At the same time this division structure has been in place, the AJS conference has grown in participation and scope, with more than 160 sessions and 1,000 attendees. Looking back at the conference program from 1974, one finds a total of seven sessions: “The Impact of the State of Israel on Jewish Thought,” “New Idioms in Israeli Literature,” “Archival Research in Judaica: Resources and Problems,” “The Shifting Roles of the Rabbi and the Jewish Scholar,” “Literary Criticism of the Bible: the Comparative Approach,” “Tensions and Adjustments in East European Jewish Identity during the Last Decades of the Tsarist Regime,” and “Achievements and Horizons in Qumran Studies.” In 1987, the number of sessions had grown to 47; in 1995, the number reached 78. Now double that in size, the AJS conference needs to accommodate an increasingly diverse group of scholars, representing the breadth of humanities and social science disciplines, in a manner that does not splinter the field into micro-units while at the same time recognizes the highly interdisciplinary nature of many scholars' work.

In response, over the past decade, the conference program committee has sought to make the divisions more flexible and accommodating to scholars' shifting interests and methodologies, adding the term “studies” to several areas which had once only embodied one disciplinary approach; thus Yiddish Literature became Yiddish Studies, Holocaust History became Holocaust Studies, etc. The committee also created the Special Topics/Interdisciplinary Division to provide a home for proposals that did not fall neatly within one division or another (and often reflected multiple divisions subject areas). Interestingly, the Interdisciplinary Division has witnessed some of the greatest growth in submissions over the past five years, as scholars across literatures, languages, time periods, and regional specialties have joined together in panels to ask new questions in new ways.

The program committee, made up of scholars across Jewish Studies and chaired by the vice president for program, Reuven Firestone, is

now undertaking a re-evaluation of the division structure as a whole. Recognizing that the field of Jewish Studies, and the humanities and social sciences more generally, have changed in significant ways since the time that the division structure was formulated, the program committee seeks to ensure that the conference framework is still reflecting—and pushing—the field in the most challenging and useful of ways. The committee will be asking questions such as: Do the divisions reflect the way Jewish Studies scholars think, write, and work? Is the structure responsive to the AJS's multigenerational membership and the different ways in which they have been trained? Do the divisions facilitate and allow for new forms of scholarly collaboration? Do they encourage scholars to approach a problem in a manner they want to or, better yet, in a manner they hadn't thought to before?

Fortunately, there are many models to turn to. Some learned societies provide one overarching theme for its annual meeting, seeking to encourage scholars to consider a particular issue from a range of perspectives. Other societies provide a roster of semipermanent topics, akin to the current AJS division structure and reflecting discrete subjects of study, but also offer special topics approved for a shorter period of time (i.e. three to five years) as a way to encourage exploration of new issues (these topics are proposed and overseen by members). A few societies do not provide any rubrics at all, and allow themes to arise from the submissions. We will be looking to other societies for creative and practical models, as well as turning to you, the membership, to find out what you think of the current division structure, and what would make the conference an even more useful intellectual and professional experience. Please be on the lookout for requests for your input in the coming months.

Along these lines, the AJS will also be improving its communication about conference processes and policies, ensuring that members understand who is charged with evaluating their proposals and devising the conference program. We are developing a clear set of guidelines regarding who can serve as division coordinator and program committee member, how these positions are selected, and what their terms of office are. These policies will be made public on the AJS website. Please e-mail me at ajs@ajs.cjh.org if you have any other thoughts on this topic. As always, thanks for making the AJS conference such a successful event year after year. I look forward to seeing you in Chicago.

Rona Sheramy
Association for Jewish Studies

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The Muslim Issue

The Islamic Component of Jewish Studies

Norman A. Stillman

Until the middle of the twentieth century, more than one million Jews lived in the Muslim world. Some of these Jewish communities were very ancient with roots in Antiquity, as in Iraq and Iran where there had been a Jewish presence since the destruction of the First Temple and Babylonian Exile. In most other Middle Eastern and North African countries, there had been Jews since Greco-Roman times, long before the Islamic conquests of the seventh century, before most of what are now the Arab countries had any Arabs, before what is now the Republic of Turkey had any Turks. Today, at the beginning of the second decade of the twenty-first century, less than fifty thousand Jews remain there. The overwhelming majority of these—more than 90 percent—are in Turkey and the Islamic Republic of Iran. The lion's share of the small, vestigial remnant in the Arab part of the Muslim world today resides in a single country: Morocco. The virtual disappearance of these large and venerable Jewish communities was not due to a Holocaust as in the case of European Jewry (although some communities in the Middle East and North Africa did actually brush up against it during World War II), but rather to a mass population movement, part of the great waves of migration that have been so important in Jewish history overall (and particularly in the past one hundred fifty years) and also part of the population displacements of the twentieth century that resulted from wars, nationalism, and ethnic conflict as well as the quest for greater economic and social opportunity.

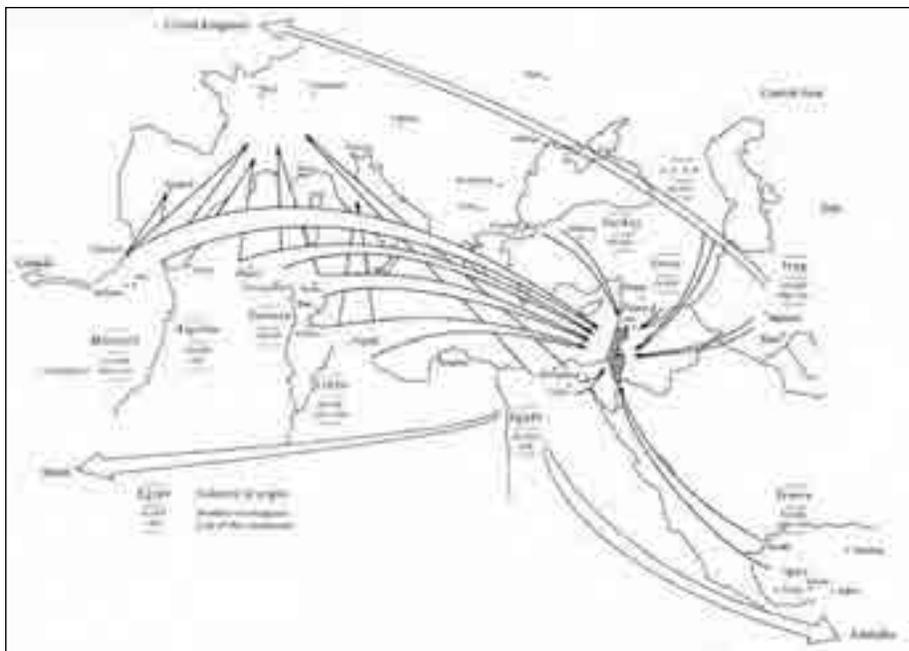
Most of the Jews who left the Islamic countries of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia remain in the same region—in Israel—where they and their descendants make up approximately half the population of the Jewish State. After Israel, the largest number settled in France, mostly from the former French colonial possessions in the Maghreb, but also in large numbers from Egypt and Lebanon, where French was the culture language of the Jewish bourgeoisie. They and their descendants make up over half of France's Jewish population. In both

Israel and France, Jews from Islamic countries and their immediate descendants have had a profound impact not merely upon Jewish life, but upon the general cultural and, particularly in the case of Israel, upon the political life. Other émigré communities from the Islamic world may be found in various Western European countries, in North and South America, and in Australia. In those countries where they have settled in sufficiently substantial numbers (e.g., Moroccan Jews in Canada, Syrian and Iranian Jews in the United States, Libyan Jews in Italy, and Iraqi Jews in Britain), they have maintained a distinct communal identity into the second, third, and in the case of Syrian Jews even the fourth generation.

This important branch of the Jewish world received relatively little academic attention until the last three decades of the twentieth century. If one were to attend the annual meetings of the Association for Jewish Studies in the 1970s and 1980s (and I attended them faithfully), one would be hard pressed to find more than a single

panel and perhaps an isolated paper or two imbedded within other broader thematic panels pertaining to Islam (to use Marshal Hodgson's useful neologism) Jewish Studies. (I am not taking into account papers on Maimonides which despite his own historical and cultural milieu, were most frequently presented within a purely general and/or Jewish philosophical context.) There would be no official Sephardi/Mizrahi Section within the AJS structure until 2002.

In the more rarified atmosphere of the American Academy for Jewish Research, the situation was slightly better. An important component of the research of a number of its small body of members was indeed devoted to the Jews of the Islamic world, but only following in the paths established by the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* scholars of the nineteenth century and dealing with the history, literature, and thought of the medieval period. These scholars, many of whom had come to the United States from Germany and Central Europe, would occasionally publish a postmedieval or



"Exodus of Jews from the Islamic world." Map by Daria Janssen. Reproduced by permission of the publisher from the *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), vol. 5.



Portrait of Shlomo Dov Goitein.
Courtesy of the author.

Not only did the Jews who emigrated from the Islamic world not assimilate to the point of disappearance but also they became subjects worthy of study in their new cultural milieu by a generation of young scholars in Israel, France, and North America. There was also a new recognition and institutional response within Israel that was partially a result of social pressures from within the society by the so-called *'edot ha-mizrah* (literally, “the communities of the East”), particularly from the large and vocal Maghrebi community. Misgav Yerushalayim (the Institute for Research on the Sephardi and Oriental Heritage) at the Hebrew University, the Centre de Recherche sur les Juifs d’Afrique du Nord within the Ben-Zvi Institute, the Babylonian Jewry Heritage Center, and the Institute for Research on Zionist and Pioneer Movements

in Eastern and Sephardi Communities at Yad Tabenkin were all established between 1972 and 1979. The establishment of the Office for the Integration of the Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage within the Ministry of Education and Culture in 1977 channeled government funds into teaching and research at a variety of levels and gave the historical and cultural experience of Sephardi/Mizrahi Jewry a new recognition and status within the construction of an Israeli national identity with a plurality of roots. The establishment of new research hubs was soon followed by the first large, international conferences in Israel and France and in the decades that followed in the United Kingdom, Spain, and the United States. Many of these conferences were followed by published proceedings that offered scholars a considerably expanded venue for bringing their research to light. But

even modern Judeo-Arabic or Judeo-Persian text, but they did so only as a philological curiosity. They took almost no interest in the early modern or contemporary history or the social scientific study of what was then called Oriental Jewry. The principal themes of postmedieval Jewish history—expulsions and migrations, Marranism, Haskala, Emancipation, anti-Semitism, religious Reform, Zionism, and the Holocaust—were all regarded as part of the Western Jewish experience. This general neglect was in keeping with the primary research interests of Judaic scholars in Europe and North America.

The 1970s witnessed the growth of social scientific interest in Jews generally, including those Jews who had left the Islamic world en masse during the twenty-five years that followed the establishment of the State of Israel and the end of European colonialism. Already in the preceding decade, there had developed a sense of urgency in Israel and France that it was necessary to launch a “salvage” operation in order to learn as much as possible about these traditional Jewish cultures before they disappeared forever in the Israeli melting pot, on the one hand, or assimilated under the allures of Gallic culture, on the other. The interest at first was primarily in ethnography and folklore and the processes of immigration, absorption, and integration. The history of these Jews in their former lands, their intellectual life, literature, and religious creativity were for the most part ignored since there was not thought to have been any noteworthy history or creative output among them since the Golden Age of the medieval period.



Business Letter from Mūsā b. Ishq Ibn Hīsdā in the central Egyptian countryside to Joseph Ibn ‘Awkal in Fustat (first third of the eleventh century). Cambridge University Library, T-S NS 308.119. Reproduced by permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library.

conference volumes reach a relatively limited audience and are occasional in nature. The appearance of the journal *Pe'amim* in 1979 provided a regular medium for the publication in a succinct form of the latest research aimed at a combined scholarly and educated reading public. (*Pe'amim* describes itself in its Hebrew subtitle as the "Quarterly for the Study of Jewish Communities of the East." "East" is taken to include everything outside of the Ashkenazi world. Originally aimed at the educated reading public as well as academics, it has evolved into a standard academic journal.) The format, scope of subject matter, and strongly interdisciplinary nature of the journal set it totally apart from every other periodical in Jewish Studies anywhere.

The expansion of institutional frameworks and the increasing scholarly encounters of the late 1970s and early 1980s, contributed to a new interdisciplinarity within the field as a whole. The number of researchers throughout the world at this time was still relatively small. There was a definite sense of enthusiasm and esprit de corps generated by its newness, and there was a strong impetus for anthropologists, historians,

linguists, and comparative literature scholars to become familiar with each other's work and methodologies, and within fields there was also the sustained direct encounter of specialists working on different time periods (medieval and modern) and cultural regions (Maghreb, Mashreq, Balkans). Although "interdisciplinary" was a trendy buzzword in the academic world at that time, it was Judaic scholars generally, and scholars of Sephardi/Mizrahi Jewry particularly, who actually practiced—and indeed still do practice—this much-preached virtue. The conscious interdisciplinarity that marked the development of the field was not merely the product of some intangible Zeitgeist, but owed a great deal to the impact of S. D. Goitein's magisterial work, *A Mediterranean Society* (University of California Press, 1967–1993, 6 vols.), the first volume of which appeared in 1967, and which was immediately recognized as a model of how social history as a totality might be studied. The book has influenced research on postmedieval Islamicate Jewry, and it would not be an exaggeration to say that the impact of Goitein's work on the study of Jews in the Islamic world is parallel to that of Braudel and

the *Annales* school upon modern historical scholarship in general.

Today, Israel is far and away the leading center for historical and contemporary studies of the Jews of the Islamic world, followed by the United States and France. And although the field is and will remain small relative to the overall field of Jewish Studies in the U.S., it is no longer marginalized as it once was. One can find a fair representation of individual lectures and entire panels on Sephardi/Mizrahi themes at the AJS annual meeting. Two of the past AJS presidents and the longest-serving editor of the *AJS Review* have been specialists in the Islamic component of Jewish Studies, and seven of the eight editors of the recently published *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (Brill, 2010, 5 vols.) teach at American universities. Thus a "Muslim issue" of *AJS Perspectives* is particularly timely.

Norman A. Stillman is the Schusterman/Josey Chair in Judaic History at the University of Oklahoma. He is executive editor of Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World (Brill, 2010).

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Jewish Life in America, c1654-1954

Based on a rich variety of original manuscript collections from the unique holdings of the American Jewish Historical Society in New York, ranging from a peddler's certificate signed by Benjamin Franklin, to records of organisations such as the Baron de Hirsch Fund, this project is an indispensable resource for all those interested in understanding and exploring the history of Jewish communities in America from first arrival in New York in 1654 to the integral part played today.

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Adam Matthew

Call Me Ishmael, Then Again, Maybe Not

Carol Bakhos



Hagar und Ismael by Emanuel K. Liska. Reprinted from *Illustrierter Katalog der internationalen Kunstausstellung im Königl. Glaspalaste zu München 1883* (München, 1883), 4.

It is no exaggeration to say that the figure of Ishmael evokes a variety of associations from nomads to *Moby Dick*, from Arab to Islam. When discussed in terms of his younger biblical brother, Isaac, it is taken for granted that their relationship is marked by sibling rivalry. One need not search far and wide to come across metonymic uses of Ishmael and Isaac. Either they represent Arabs and Jews, Muslims and Jews, or Islam and Judaism. Since the Medieval period, Ishmael is employed to represent Islam, and even today, in media parlance, the Palestinians. More often than not, underlying the rhetoric is a genuine desire to foster the notion of confraternity of religious and political communities, yet at the same time a relationship marked by strife is brought to the surface. The irenic intention behind the biblical evocation ironically subverts the desire to bridge differences. Allusion to the biblical narrative in which Abraham's firstborn son, Ishmael, is banished

from his father's household, to say nothing of later Jewish and Christian depictions of him, is problematic and does little to further mutual understanding and appreciation. If anything, it maintains deeply entrenched misconceptions of Islam and on some level aggravates the very antagonism it hopes to traduce.

Rivalry between Ishmael and Isaac in the Bible exists inasmuch as the brothers participate in the larger narrative structure of Genesis that sets one line of Abraham's descendants apart from others. The promise made to both Hagar and Abraham as to Ishmael's fate, that he will be a father of twelve nations, however, does not put him in direct conflict with Isaac, nor is there anything in the story that would lead one to believe that the brothers engaged in interpersonal conflict. To be sure, the prophecy in Gen. 16:12, "His hand will be against everyone and everyone's hand against him," portends a fate for Ishmael riddled with struggle, but not an exclusive

struggle with Isaac. In fact, there is no mention of competition or warfare between them.

Furthermore, rivalry between Ishmael and Isaac is neither divinely ordained nor explicit in the narrative. On the contrary, they appear together only when they bury their father: "And Isaac and Ishmael his sons buried him in the cave of Machpelah . . ." (Gen. 25:9). The text reverses the birth order by mentioning Isaac before Ishmael. This reversal figures prominently when comparing this narrative to that of Esau and Jacob. Unlike the burial notice of Isaac (Gen. 35:29) where Esau and Jacob bury their father, in this notice the younger son is mentioned first. The reversal, "Isaac and Ishmael," portrays the brothers acting not only in unison but also in accordance with God's preordained plan whereby the younger sibling supplants the older. Although there is no active rivalry between the biblical brothers, one cannot escape the

fact that the biblical narrative privileges one brother over the other. Furthermore, Jewish and Christian teachings and interpretations pit them against one another.

Throughout the centuries, Jewish and Christian exegetes have legitimized Sarah's demand that Abraham cast out "that Egyptian maidservant and her son (Ishmael)." The request so grieved Abraham that God had to intervene and assure him that if he acquiesced to Sarah, Ishmael would nonetheless be saved, that he would also become a nation, for he is also Abraham's seed. But if he is also Abraham's son, not only his seed but his firstborn, why did Sarah demand his expulsion? Jewish and Christian interpreters turn to Gen. 21: 9, "And Sarah saw the son of the maidservant playing [mezaheq]," for an explanation. Speculation as to what is meant by "playing" range from idol worship to fornicating, from shedding blood to abusing Isaac. Whatever the case may be, the Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions justify his biblical exclusion from the immediate Abrahamic family, the family of the covenant. For Jews, God makes a covenant with Abraham's seed through Isaac, Jacob, and their descendants. Ishmael is part of, and apart from, the family of Abraham. While it is true that he is also Abraham's son, and while it is also true that the biblical story does not portray him negatively, for most Jews and Christians he is cast in a less than favorable light.

As a means to confront the swiftly emerging political forces in the Near East and to protest against Islamic hegemony, the rabbis take swipes at Ishmael in post-seventh-century midrashim. In other words, there is a greater tendency in later rabbinic compilations to malign Ishmael. One can surely understand the linkage between Islam and Ishmael in light of its initial emergence in the Hejaz, and in light of Ishmael's important role in Islam.

One of the working assumptions when using Ishmael to represent Islam is that Ishmael, not Isaac, plays a major role in Islam. To be sure, although the Qur'an does not explicitly identify Ishmael as the intended son for sacrifice, and despite the fact that some early mufassirun (Qur'an interpreters) considered Isaac the intended son, Muslims today believe that God asked Abraham to sacrifice Ishmael. Moreover, Abraham, along with Ishmael, builds the Ka'ba, the central shrine in Mecca and focus of the obligatory pilgrimage (Hajj). In the Islamic tradition Ishmael is identified as the progenitor of Arabs, and in turn with Islam.

Yet, because Ishmael is also identified with Arabs, it is misleading to employ him as an emblem of Islam, for while most Arabs are Muslims, most Muslims are not Arabs. Moreover, in the Islamic tradition both Isaac and Ishmael are considered prophets in a long line culminating with Muhammad, the seal of prophecy. In sura 2:133, Ishmael, along with Abraham and Isaac, are referred to as the "Fathers" of Jacob. Unlike in Judaism and Christianity, which marginalize Ishmael and exclude him from the convenantal family of Abraham, in Islam both are considered full members of Abraham's family.

While the sons of Abraham are understood as antipodes in Judaism and Christianity, generally speaking this is not the case in Islam. Ishmael's role within Islam is as *rusul Allah*, messenger of God and *as nabi*, prophet, as well as the progenitor of the Arab people. The Qur'an, however, envisages Ishmael's role first and foremost as Abraham's son, not progenitor of the Arabs. The emphasis on genealogy in Islam developed over time as Islam expanded beyond the reaches of the Arabian peninsula, and the biblical genealogy of Arabs became widely accepted. This is adduced in the charged exchange between Arabs and non-Arabs ('Ajami) or

Persians in *shu'ubiyah* literature, the popularity of which is questionable, that emerged in the second to eighth century as a reaction to the exclusive Arab hegemonic right in Islam. In fact, it was taken for granted by non-Arab Muslims who, in response, disparage Ishmael's birth from a slave girl, and pronounce their own descent from Isaac, born of a free woman. This tension must, however, be understood within the context of the ongoing inner-Muslim polemics that took place in the ninth century; over time these debates abated and made little impact on the prominent role of Ishmael in Islam.

And yet, utilizing Ishmael metonymically for Islam, Arabs more broadly, and Palestinians specifically, fosters a rather unsettling dichotomy between Ishmael and Isaac—the unchosen and chosen—that the Islamic tradition by and large does not support, but one upon which Jews and Christians establish their theological identity. As such, despite conciliatory efforts and good intentions, reference to the Other as Ishmael exacts a price. In many religious and academic circles the resuscitation of the figure of Ishmael has gained traction, but the accretion of negative associations and images is inordinately difficult to escape. Perhaps it is therefore best to abandon altogether the problematic paradigm that inherently sets these siblings apart, or alternatively, we can accept with forthright recognition what is at stake in calling our so-called ethnic and religious sibling Ishmael.

Carol Bakhos is associate professor of Late Antique Judaism and acting chair of the Program in the Study of Religion at UCLA. She is the author of Ishmael on the Border: Rabbinic Portrayals of the First Arab (SUNY Press, 2006), and co-editor of The Talmud in Its Iranian Context (Brill, 2010).

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are found also in Jewish and Christian (and Samaritan) literature that contest this very strategy of authentication. The Jewish and Christian versions argue that Muhammad is not a prophet nor is his revelation authentic and take two forms. One is the tale of a Christian holy man who discovers through his esoteric wisdom that a very young Muhammad will grow up to become the most perfect prophet of God. The other, which I will consider here, is the story of Jewish sages who leave their own community and religion in order to follow the last of God's prophets, Muhammad ibn Abdullah.

The Muslim Story

The Muslim version of the story was most likely the earliest and derives from what were certainly real encounters between Muhammad and the Jews living in Arabia during his lifetime. The Qur'an refers repeatedly to Jews and the references suggest that most Jews refused to accept Muhammad's prophetic claims. The scriptural references are difficult to contextualize historically, but Islamic interpretive literature in the form of Qur'an commentary and oral tradition fill in the gaps. While most are polemical, the basic narrative—even if not the details—seems historically plausible. The Jews are interested in the new prophet, and the overall interest suggests that at least some Jews were expecting some kind of messianic or prophetic figure to come from Arabia (See Deut. 33:2 and especially Hab. 3:3, which has been read by some rabbinic and medieval Jews as a hint at a redemptive figure coming from Arabia). Some Jewish leaders seek him out to test his wisdom and authenticity, and one theme repeated in the sources has a good number of Jews, and even some of their rabbis (who are called *chaver* rather than *rabbi* in most sources), join up with Muhammad but eventually determine that he is not a true prophet. This is considered the ultimate hypocrisy in the Muslim sources, and many names of Jewish turncoats are listed in them. Some of the rabbis tested him with questions about esoteric matters, but they refused to follow him sincerely even after they admitted that he answered their questions correctly. They continued pestering Muhammad and tried to stump him publicly to embarrass him and disprove his claims. In the Muslim sources, however, every such attempt is defeated, often through Qur'anic revelation. According to a highly respected eighth-century biography of Muhammad, most of the first hundred verses of the second chapter of the Qur'an were revealed in order

to confound the Jews who tried to stump Muhammad. In a very few cases, however, one or more rabbis realized or admitted the truth, and their conversion proved the truth of Muhammad's message. One such rabbi was Abdullah b. Salam, whose Jewish name may have been Ovadia ben Shalom. In the Muslim version of the story, Abdullah understood from descriptions of Muhammad that "he was the one we were waiting for."

The Christian Story

A Christian angle on the story of Muhammad and the rabbis emerged early on. One of the first articulations is found in Theophanes' *Chronicle*, written in the late eighth/early ninth century. "When [Muhammad] first appeared, the Hebrews were misled and thought he was the Anointed One they expected, so that some of their leaders came to him, accepted his religion, and gave up of that of Moses, who had looked on God. Those who did this were ten in number, and they stayed with Muhammad until his death. But when they saw him eating of a camel they knew he was not the man they had thought. They were at a loss as to what to do; as they were afraid to give up his religion, they stayed at his side and taught him lawless behavior toward us Christians."

According to Theophanes, since the Jews had already erred by not accepting the *true* Anointed One, Jesus Christ, it is not surprising that they should run after a bogus diviner. They eventually figured out their mistake, but it was not their acumen in discerning truth from falsehood or any sense of spirituality that inspired them. What convinced them, rather, was their dry and spiritless Jewish dietary restrictions (Lev. 11:4/Deut. 14:7). Only after noticing Muhammad gobbling up camel meat did they realize they were wrong about him. Yet they didn't give up his religion because they were afraid of being killed. This would support the Christian view that Jews were anxious about death, unlike Christians, who as true believers, had confidence in death only of the body but not the spirit, and who trusted in a heavenly reward for being loyal to the true faith. And finally, it was the Jews who taught Muhammad all the negative attitudes toward Christians and Christianity that are found in the Qur'an and the subsequent religious literatures of Islam.

The Jewish Story

Two short and damaged early manuscripts containing the story, one in Hebrew and the other in Judeo-Arabic, were found in the Cairo Geniza. Just as in the Muslim and Christian

versions, learned Jews come to Muhammad and befriend him but don't fully believe him. And as in the Muslim version their names are given. But the names provided in the Jewish versions are meant to show that some of the closest companions of Muhammad were not loyal followers, but rather Jews who only pretended to accept him. So, for example, the same Abdallah ibn Salam who accepted Islam in the Muslim sources was only pretending. And one of the Jewish sages who didn't *really* accept Muhammad's prophethood turns out to be the great caliph Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb, whose beloved Islamic nickname was Al-Farūq, meaning "he who distinguishes truth from falsehood." Another was the very first caliph and Muhammad's closest ally, Abū Bakr. Even Muhammad's son-in-law and cousin Ali ibn Abi Ṭālib (who inspired the emergence of Shiite Islam) was one of those Jewish infiltrators.

In the Jewish versions, the learned sages join Muhammad in order to protect their people from the overwhelming power of the Muslim empires and the coming degradation of the Jewish people. Exactly how these sages knew the future is not fully explained. In the Hebrew version, ten elders (*asara hazeqenim*) came to him and wrote for him the Qur'an. Each one of them then inserted their names within it and also wrote a special code into chapter 2, called "The Cow." This is the same chapter that in the Muslim version refers so negatively to the Jews who refused to accept the prophethood of Muhammad. The code that the rabbis inserted into the Qur'an is constructed around a very interesting and enigmatic Qur'anic phenomenon: the so-called "mysterious letters" that preface a full twenty-nine of its chapters. Neither traditional Muslim scholars nor modern academic scholars of the Qur'an have been able to figure out why so many chapters are preceded by one, two, or three Arabic letters. The mystery is solved—or at least it is claimed to be solved by these medieval Jewish polemical texts—by the following story found in Judeo-Arabic from the Cairo Geniza.

This writing is the narrative of Muhammad . . . and those among the [Jewish] sages who inclined toward him and came and told him his affairs, and [who wrote] for him a book. They compiled and wrote their names in the beginning of a chapter of his Qur'an, and they compiled and wrote "Thus did the sages of Israel advise the dumb wicked man" hidden and confused

so that he would not understand and become cursed . . . as those sages said to whomever would understand [the code] so as not to join up with the Gentiles [i.e. those who followed Muhammad] . . . These are the sages that came to him: Abraham, called Kāb al-Aḥbār; Avshalom, called `Abdallah al-Silm; Jacob, called `Umar the Witness (or martyr) . . . These are the ten who came to him and Islamized through him so that nothing would harm Israel. They made for him a Qur'an and wrote and compiled their names, each one in a chapter without cause for suspicion. They wrote in the middle [of the] chapter "Thus did the sages of Israel advise the dumb wicked man." In the name of Allah, the Exalted, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Great, the Victorious, the Forgiving, the Master, the Creator, to whom everything belongs.

According to this story, Jewish sages feigned joining Muhammad and then counseled him in the writing of the Qur'an. Their purpose was to imbed proof within the Qur'an that it was a human document rather than the word of God in order to prevent fellow Jews from mistakenly joining the new faith. Exactly

how this was done is not obvious, but it seems that the device is associated with the so-called "mysterious letters" of the Qur'an as well as hidden codes within the chapters through which the names of the ten sages can be deciphered. According to this narrative, then, the "mysterious letters" were actually codes imbedded within the Qur'an by Muhammad's Jewish companions, which when decoded, reveal that the Qur'an is not divine but the writing of a false prophet. It therefore cannot possibly supersede the sanctity of the Torah.

For example, the Arabic letters that preface the second chapter of the actual Qur'an are *aleflam mim*. According to Islamic tradition their meaning remains a mystery, though if they were joined together they would speak a word meaning "ache" or "pain" in Arabic. In Hebrew the three letters spell "dumb" as in "unable to speak." That word, then, was understood to have been planted in order to refer the knowledgeable Jewish reader to a verse from the Hebrew Bible containing the same word, which would prove that the prophet and his revealed scripture are not authentic. So the *aleflam mim* might refer to the word as it appears in Isa. 56:10: "The watchmen are blind, all of them, they perceive nothing; they are all dumb (בְּלִבֵּים אֵלֵמִים) dogs

that cannot bark; they lie sprawling, they love to drowse." By association, therefore, the mysterious letters refer to Isaiah 56:10 and mean "dumb," thus serving as proof (to a medieval Jew at any rate) that Muhammad is a false prophet. Very recently, after giving a talk about the relationship between the Qur'an and the Bible, an extremely well-educated Iranian Jew approached me and told me confidentially that, if I was not yet aware, the Jews of Muhammad's generation actually wrote the Qur'an for him.

The Jewish, Christian, and Islamic versions of the story share motifs and attack their religious competitors, though they are of course directed against different targets. What they all share is a palpable tension and anxiety over the problematic determination of the end of prophecy and the authenticity of scripture.

Reuven Firestone is professor of Medieval Judaism and Islam at Hebrew Union College and founder and co-director of the Center for Muslim-Jewish Engagement at the University of Southern California. He is author of An Introduction to Islam for Jews (Jewish Publication Society, 2008) and Holy War in Judaism: The Fall and Rise of a Controversial Idea (forthcoming).

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Why Jewish Studies Scholars Should Care about Christian-Muslim Relations

David M. Freidenreich

Huguccio had a problem. As a leading late-twelfth-century expert on Church law, he knew well the traditional distinction Christians made between Jews and pagans, as well as its various legal implications. Jews, after all, held an inferior status to pagans within medieval canon law. As several of Huguccio's colleagues explained, "through the abuse of scripture [Jews] subvert faith in Christ . . .

Gentiles, however, are not like this." For this reason, Christians may eat with pagans but not with Jews. Similarly, it is legal under certain circumstances for a Christian to be the slave of a pagan, but a Christian may never be enslaved to a Jew according to the laws in force during the high Middle Ages.

Huguccio's problem was how to account for the status of Muslims, known as Saracens in Latin. Muslims, of course, are neither Christians nor Jews. By the logic of

medieval canon law, this means that Muslims must be gentiles, which is to say pagans. Yet Huguccio also knew that "nearly all Saracens at the present Judaize: they are circumcised, they distinguish among foods, and they imitate other Jewish rituals. There ought not be any legal difference between them."

Huguccio resolved his dilemma by collapsing the centuries-old legal distinction between Jews and pagans. While not without its detractors—various jurists and theologians continued to regard Jews as posing a uniquely grave threat to Christian souls—Huguccio's definition of Muslims as legally equivalent to Jews became normative. Muslims living in Latin Christendom became subject to the same laws as Jews over the course of the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

Meanwhile, in the Muslim world, scholars of Islamic law were debating the

legal status of Christians and, in particular, Christian acts of animal slaughter. Sunnis asserted that Christianity, like Judaism, is similar to Islam. After all, the Quran elevates the status of People of the Book over that of other non-Muslims by, for example, permitting Muslims to consume meat prepared by Jews and Christians. Shi'is countered that

prepared by Christian butchers is permissible. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya (d. 1350), for example, declared that Christian butchers who invoke Christ are in fact heretical Christians whose meat is therefore forbidden to Muslims; orthodox Christians, however, invoke God alone, in accordance with the Quran.

Why should scholars of Jewish Studies care about the attitudes of Christians and Mus-

lims toward one another?

Let me offer three reasons, which, I believe, apply not only to the debates summarized above but more broadly as well.

Ideas about Jews and Judaism play an important role in the ways Christian and Muslim authorities viewed one another during the Middle Ages and, arguably, during modern times as well. Christian attitudes regarding Islam are intertwined with Christian conceptions of Judaism: the question Huguccio poses is, in effect, "How Jewish are Muslims?"



Chief Rabbi Israel Meir Lau, Pope John Paul II, and Sheikh Tatzir Tamimi during an interreligious meeting at the Pontifical Institute, Notre Dame, Jerusalem, March 23, 2000. Photo by Amos Ben Gershom. Courtesy of the Israel Government Press Office.

Christians and Jews know nothing of God's will and thus are not like Muslims at all. As a case in point, Shi'is claimed that Christian butchers invoke Christ, not God, when slaughtering their animals. Surely the Quran would not permit treating Christ as God!

Sunni jurists bent over backwards to preserve the permissibility of Christian acts of animal slaughter and, by extension, the definition of Christianity as similar to Islam in important respects. "God, praised be He, permitted their food even though He knew that they invoke a name other than God's over their slaughter," argued the early twelfth-century jurist Ibn al-'Arabi. "Greater respect is accorded to them than to idolaters because they adhere to God's Book and cling to the coattails of prophets." Other Sunni authorities did not believe that God was quite so generous, but all assert that at least some meat

Islamic authorities ask a different question—"How Muslim are Christians?"—but they, too, have Jews in mind. Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyya, for example, discusses Christian butchers who invoke Christ alongside Jewish butchers who slaughter non-kosher animals. More broadly, Islamic authorities place Jews and Christians within the same legal category, "People of the Book."

Christians and Muslims pose different questions about one another. Unlike his Muslim counterparts, who compare Christianity to their own religion, Huguccio compares Islamic practices with those of the Jews. These comparisons reflect fundamentally different approaches to conceptualizing the relationship between Us and Them. Islamic law employs a sliding spectrum in which non-Muslims are like Muslims to varying degrees. In the context

of discussing laws governing the blood-money due to the relatives of a murder victim, Muslim jurists even assign numerical values to these degrees: Jews and Christians, according to many Sunni authorities, are worth either one-third or one-half the value of Muslims, while Zoroastrians and other non-Muslims are worth only one-fifteenth. Shi'i sources, tellingly, declare that Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians alike are worth only one-fifteenth the value of a Muslim. Canon law, in contrast, envisions a world polarized between Christians and Jews and imagines Judaism as antithetical to Christianity. Jews are not fractional Christians but rather anti-Christians (-1, to stick with our numerical values). Other non-Christians, the "gentiles," are neutral (0), so long as they aren't reclassified as being quasi-Jewish and thus thrust toward the negative pole.

Recognition of this dynamic does more than improve our understanding of Christian and Islamic ideas about Jews. It also enables scholars of Jewish Studies to query Jewish

notions about gentiles more effectively. Pre-Rabbinic and Rabbinic literature alike attest to a binary distinction between Jews and gentiles analogous to the Hellenistic distinction between Greeks and barbarians. Jewish sources thus represent gentiles simply and literally as non-Jews: in numerical terms, 0. This paradigm differs both from the sliding spectrum used by Muslims to represent People of the Book as like Muslims and also from the antithetical framework employed by Christians to present Jews as anti-Christians. How and why do Jewish thinkers employ this distinctive worldview? In what contexts, for what reasons, and to what ends do Jewish thinkers supplement their binary paradigm with elements of likeness or antithesis? To what extent, if any, might intellectual exchange within Christian or Muslim cultures account for these adaptations to the classic Jewish approach to conceptualizing non-Jews? Familiarity with ideas regarding Christian-Muslim relations enables us to ask better questions about the ideas espoused by Jews.

The study of Christian-Muslim relations constitutes an important cognate field to Jewish Studies. Our discipline fosters scholarship about majority-minority relations and the distinctive attributes of minority life. Awareness of the dynamics that animate other instances of majority-minority relations furthers our ability to interpret our own data and to communicate our findings to colleagues who study other civilizations. Only if we understand Christian-Muslim relations can we answer, in a scholarly idiom quite different from that of Ibn al-'Arabi or Huguccio, such questions as "How Christian are Jews?" and "How Jewish are Muslims?"

*David M. Freidenreich is the Pulver Family Assistant Professor of Jewish Studies at Colby College. He is the author of *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (University of California Press, 2011).*

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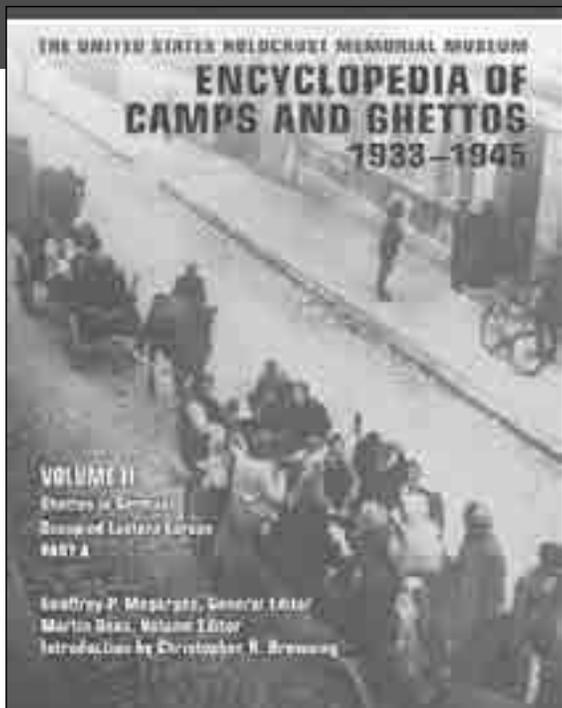
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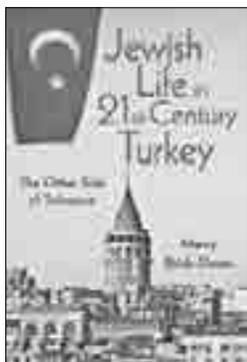
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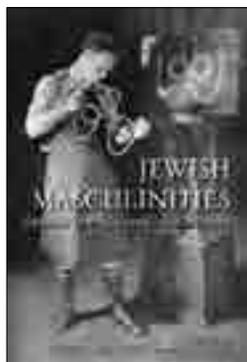
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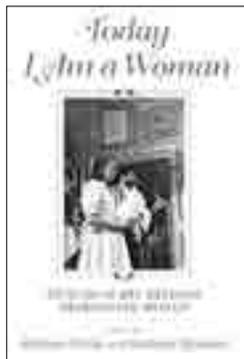
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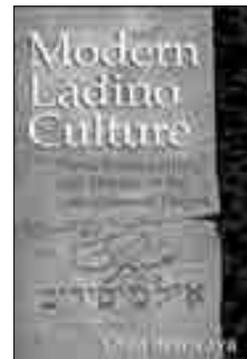
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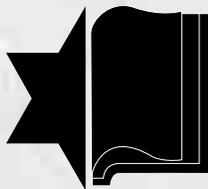
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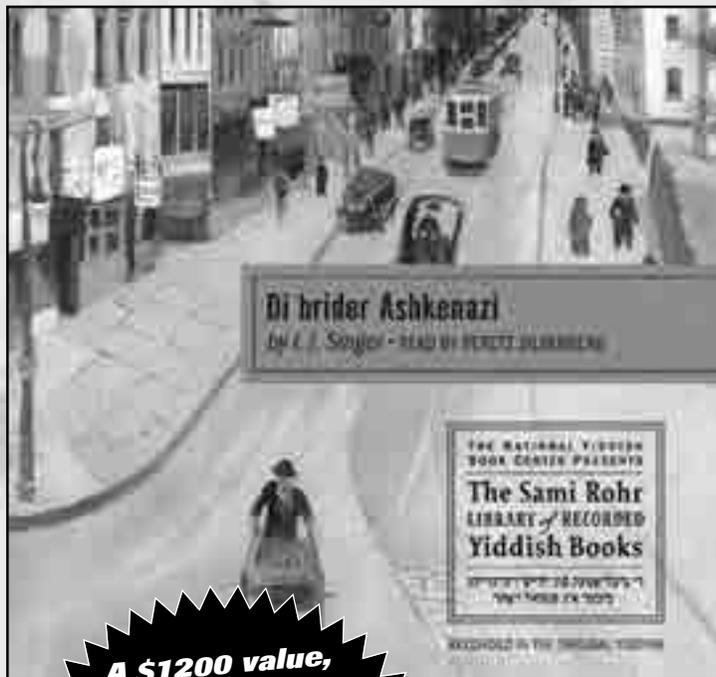
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The Moroccan Spring, the Berbers, and the Jews

Paul A. Silverstein

Common wisdom has it that the recent uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa are bad for Europe, bad for the United States, and, as the saying goes, bad for the Jews. European observers fear an uncontrollable tide of refugees and migrants streaming across the Mediterranean. Western security officials bemoan the power vacuums created by the fall of authoritarian regimes in Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, and Yemen as a boon for Islamist “extremists,” a strategic blow to the U.S.-led “global war on terror,” and a threat to Israeli security. From this lens, the storming of the Israeli embassy in Cairo and the burning of a synagogue in Tunisia manifest as signs that the unrest in the region is anything but good for the Jews.

But to approach the uprisings through the lens of crisis and threat risks adopting a cynical realpolitik logic that makes authoritarianism the prerequisite for stability, security, and peace—and treats democracy as good for but a select few. It does a great disservice to the thousands who have risked and lost their lives in the struggle for political transparency, social justice, and economic opportunity. These protesters have fought against a sclerotic political and economic elite whom they accuse of having sold out to Western interests. They broadly conjoin the language of democracy with the rhetoric of Islam, opposing an ethic of equality under God to the humiliating inequities experienced in everyday life. The appeal to Islam thus amounts to a claim to membership in humanity as deserving of the same rights and rewards as citizens of Western democracies, as being part of the proverbial 99 percent.

As egregiously, treating the Middle East and North Africa as not yet ready for democracy ignores the political openings created by the uprisings as spaces of hope. The emergence of new political actors might very well spur forward a stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Leaders of the newly elected Islamist al-Nahda party in Tunisia, while opposing normalization with Israel, have reached out to local Jewish populations. Youth movements have created vectors of solidarity across national, religious, and ideological borders. And the movements have forced leaders across the region to scramble to introduce preemptive social, economic, and political reforms that, among other things,

have expanded the rights and protections for women and ethno-religious minorities.

Moroccan Activism and Reform

A case in point is Morocco. The international media has upheld Morocco as a cardinal example of a revolution averted, and its king, Mohammed VI, as a paragon of political foresight and savvy. Not having the deep pockets to purchase quietude like his oil-rich counterparts in the Gulf, the Moroccan king has had to rely on his status as Commander of the Faithful and his burnished public image as a modern reformist. Since taking the throne in 1999, he has released a number of political prisoners and initiated a truth and reconciliation process to indemnify victims of his father’s iron-fist rule. He oversaw a reform of the family code (*al-mudawana*) to promote greater equality between men and women in matters of marriage and divorce. And he created a royal institute to promote Berber/Amazigh culture and introduce the three dialects of Tamazight—the maternal language of an estimated 40 percent of Moroccans—into state education and the media.

For many critics these were but half steps that guaranteed neither full equality nor real

political freedom, with press censorship still prominent, opposition activists still subject to arrest, and avenues for social mobility for those without Palace connections still largely blocked. Unemployment for youth in the 25–34 year-old range has been as high as 26 percent, and close to double that in urban areas. In the wake of Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, these demands took on new fervor. Militants from labor unions, Islamist associations, and the Amazigh movement—groups that for years had done (sometimes bloody) battle in the press, the streets, and university campuses—united in an unlikely coalition for political change, calling for a more fair and inclusive parliamentary monarchy based on dignity, respect, and social justice. On February 20, 2011, and in subsequent months thereafter, they mobilized hundreds of thousands of demonstrators across the country. Their vision was nonsectarian and inclusive. A promotional YouTube video featured men and women, young and old, veiled and unveiled, Arabic- and Berber-speaking, all under the rubric of “I am Moroccan . . . and I want change.” Demonstrators brandished placards with Arabic quotes from the Qur’an, human



Udayen Tashurt (Jewish Ashoura) masquerade festival, with an Amazigh activist dressed up as a “Jew” and displaying an Amazigh flag; Goulmima, Morocco, mid-2000s. Photo by author.

rights banners written in French, and Amazigh flags and standards. Their uniting slogan was “*mamfakinch*”: “We will not be disunited.”

King Mohammed VI quickly responded to this mass movement with promises of sweeping reforms and a new constitution. If the new constitution does not in any substantial way alter the king’s absolute authority, it does invoke wide civil rights and emphasizes cultural, linguistic, and religious pluralism. Whereas previous constitutions had specified the nation as an “Islamic and fully sovereign state whose official language is Arabic,” the new preamble adds that “Amazigh constitutes an official language of the State, as the common heritage of all Moroccans without exception” and invokes a “convergence” of Arab-Islamic, Amazigh, and Saharan (Hassaniyya) “components,” “nourished and enriched by its African, Andalusian, Hebrew, and Mediterranean influences.”

The Figure of the Jew

The preamble’s invocation of Morocco’s “Hebrew influences” is particularly striking. Certainly Morocco has cultivated expansive economic and cultural relations with Israel since the late-1970s, relations mediated by the nearly one million Israelis of Moroccan descent, as well as the hundreds of thousands of Moroccan Jews now living in France and the Americas. At various points the Moroccan state has variously embraced the small, remaining Jewish community, its religious practices, and heritage sites as signs of national authenticity and political liberalism. Nonetheless, such official performances of inclusion were generally limited to particular ritual contexts of pilgrimage, tourism, and cultural festivals—moments of intercommunal contact especially visible to the international press. The new preamble inscribes such an acknowledgment of the Hebrew elements of Moroccan culture in the supreme law of a land whose population is 99 percent Muslim.

Such a move is hardly self-evident. Anti-Zionist and occasional anti-Semitic discourse is common fare in the café political discussions of underemployed Moroccan men. While there is broad nostalgia for the former Jewish presence in the southern and eastern parts of the country, Jewish heritage sites and community centers are also the targets of occasional vandalism, as Aomar Boum details in this issue. The Palestinian cause continues to rally mass support, and pro-Palestinian slogans tend to accompany all



Painted door to an Amazigh activist artist’s house in the old Jewish quarter; Goulmima, Morocco, mid-2000s. Photo by author.

marches and demonstrations. The February 20th Movement’s website, Mamfakinch.com, for instance, includes several articles denouncing the Moroccan government’s tacit normalization with Israel being in clear conflict with the fact that “the Palestinian cause is dear to the hearts of the Moroccan people.”

Yet such dominant public opinion is increasingly fractured. Amazigh activists in particular have criticized the Moroccan opposition’s political orientation towards Palestine as a distraction from domestic problems of inequality and marginalization. Indeed, the disagreement over the Palestinian question has often split the Amazigh movement from other militant organizations and led to occasional violent tensions. While by no means the agents of the Israeli state that Islamists occasionally accuse them of being, Amazigh activists see in the Zionist movement as a model for their own struggle. In the southeastern town of Goulmima where I lived in the mid-2000s, young militants have invoked their solidarity with Jews through artwork, graffiti tags of heart-filled variants of six-pointed stars, and revitalized masquerade festivals where they dress as “Jews” (*udayen*) as a sign of protest. Through such performances of anti-anti-Semitism, they present themselves to the watching world as liberal, tolerant modern subjects.

A New Morocco?

To a great extent, Morocco as a whole confronts the same political predicament internalized by Amazigh activists. The new constitution’s ultimate audience may actually be an international community prone to question the future of officially Islamic states in a putatively secular world. Avowing the “Hebrew elements” of Moroccan culture certainly makes for good publicity in a geopolitical climate where Islam is too often amalgamated to anti-Semitism and terrorism. But such a declaration of anti-anti-Semitism is arguably more than merely a strategic resource; it calls forth a new Morocco of inclusion, pluralism, and transparency, a regime of governance premised on rights-bearing citizens rather than submissive religious subjects. It builds into law protections for minority ethnic and religious communities that could very well serve as a model for regional neighbors similarly making a transition from authoritarian rule. And that can only be good for the Jews.

*Paul A. Silverstein is associate professor of Anthropology at Reed College and 2008 Carnegie Scholar. He is the author of *Algeria in France: Transpolitics, Race, and Nation* (Indiana University Press, 2004).*

The Civilized Alternative

Mustapha Kamal

Secular scholars are used to viewing modern Islamists as staunch opponents of the separation of religion and state and as unfaltering foes of liberal democracy. No matter how much Islamists support pluralism and free elections, as they did in Iran and Algeria, many consider their attitude a ploy to fool secular opposition, or a tactical move to further the same agenda: full control of the state apparatus. Within this vision, if there are any differences among Islamists, they are superficial and constitute different ways of achieving the same goal: the Islamist bid for political power. According to Nasr Hamid Abu-Zayd, the Egyptian professor whose life and marriage were jeopardized by fanatical proponents of the “Islamic Way,” the dichotomy between moderate and extremist Islamists is spurious. In his eyes, it is no more than a labor division among them. For him, intellectuals speak the language of moderation in order to appeal to the educated segments of the populace, while activists are out to organize the masses and issue *fatwas* legitimizing the murder of their secular opponents (Abu Zayd, *Naqd al-Khitaab al-dini*). For other scholars, these differences boil down to two currents: they call the first one exclusionary, and the second one integrationist (Muhammad Dariif, *al-Islam al-siyyaasi fi al-Maghrib*). The former current considers that either the government or society (or both) has lapsed into pre-Islamic evil-doing and needs to be brought back to the fold of Islam, by coercion if need be; while the second current considers that ruler and subjects can be convinced to mend their ways through patient and sustained proselytizing.

There seems to be a consensus among scholars that all Islamist movements are opposed to modern political ideals such as democracy, human rights, and pluralism. It seems to me, however, that this conclusion is inaccurate because in Morocco the Islamist Civilized Alternative promotes these very ideals. Already, its members accept collaboration with liberals and leftists. They denounce human rights abuses, promote pluralism, and claim to believe in dialogue with secular political organizations. In short, they have a democratic agenda.

The situation becomes more bewildering when certain Islamist groups not only express their belief in democracy and its corollary implications such as equality between man and woman and the right of a woman to choose her garment, but also give it, through an alternative reading of the Qur’an and the Sayings of the Prophet, a theoretical grounding. In Morocco, the Civilized Alternative, a group of such new Islamists, in a series of answers to questions I submitted to them in May 2004, expressed views that can easily be considered heretical by our experts and their foes—the literal Islamists.

The Civilized Alternative says, “For democracy to strike roots within our social fabric, we need to implement democratic mechanisms; and by that, we mean all the practical steps that enable our nation to choose its leaders.” To be implemented, these mechanisms require three conditions: First, political pluralism; second, the possibility for any candidate to run for office; and third, the peaceful transfer of power. Concerning the first condition, i.e., political pluralism, the Civilized Alternative considers that equality before the law, freedom of speech, and freedom of organization are sine qua non. To remove any suspicion that by pluralism the leaders of the Alternative authors mean only like-minded political currents, as is the case in Iran, they expressly mention secular and leftist parties. To drive the message home, they cite a series of long-standing relationships they have already established with some leftists. Thus in January 2001, they signed “The Call for Democracy” and they helped found “The Democratic Pole” with both leftist and Amazigh groups in March 2002.

But where they achieve a real theoretical contribution is when they give their ground-breaking interpretation of the Muslim caliphate. Unlike other Islamist trends, which see in the pious ruler the embodiment of Muslim ethos, the Alternative leaders consider that the locus of Muslim legislation is the Ummah, i.e., the Muslim community. For them, the successor of the Prophet Muhammad is not an individual but the whole Muslim community. As a corollary, they say: “The elected leader and his deputy wield political power and run

the nation’s affairs—but only vicariously.” Thus, the ruler is the representative of the Ummah, not of the Prophet.

From these premises, the Civilized Alternative draws the following conclusions: the ruler’s legitimacy is not a religious one; the seal of sacredness must be lifted from political decisions; politics is based on the centrality of citizenship, not on religion. With these conclusions, the last theoretical obstacles to democracy and the separation of state and religion are removed. In the recent past, when secular thinkers in Muslim countries presented these same demands, literal Islamists accused them of importing ideas from Orientalists bent on destroying Islam. But with their new reading of the Islamic tradition, the Alternative leaders are treading a safer ground. Of course, as any political group, the Civilized Alternative leaders hope to translate these ideas into action and open a space for public debate.

But this same space may be fraught with danger. For example, how do these ideas relate to an absolute monarchy that claims to hold both a political and a religious legitimacy in Morocco? The answer proposed by the Civilized Alternative is a modern constitutional democratic monarchy, in which “the king is the symbol of a unified and independent country; and the people the holder of power.” When the writers of this platform are asked, “What will hold the monarchy and the people together if we implement your program?” The answer will be: “A renewable social contract.” This contract “will be open-ended and multidimensional, and as a result it will be legitimate.” When these ideas are explored within the precincts of the university, the powers that be may feel nervous; but they tend to turn a blind eye, hoping that university professors will timorously retreat and forget these bold undertakings. But when an Islamist movement, which aspires to acquire a legal status within the current political system, presents these same ideas, their tolerance may evaporate. In fact, in 2008 the leaders of the Civilized Alternative were rounded up and accused of plotting terrorist attacks in Morocco. The following year, they were sentenced to twenty-five

years. Many believe they were framed because of their positions on the monarchy.

It is wrong to lump all Islamist political movements together and assume that they read the Holy writ and the Tradition of the Prophet in the same way. Neither do all Islamist movements oppose the implementation of Western-style democracy. We might ask what the word democracy means exactly? One can argue that there are as many democracies as there are democratic societies. Nor do all Islamists favor market economy. Guided by a sincere

desire to see the Muslim impoverished rise out of their squalor, some Islamists strive to incorporate a social agenda into their political program. It is no wonder that the founders of the Egyptian Muslim Brethren, the first Islamist organization in the Arab world in the twentieth century, justified their actions by the need to defend Islam against foreign encroachments—religious, moral, political, economic, and military. That the early Islamists, in their confrontation with European colonialism, emphasized the religious aspect of their agenda does not

mean that all subsequent Islamists will blindly follow the same path. Time will show what direction Islamists will take in the future.

Mustapha Kamal is assistant clinical professor in Arabic at the University of Illinois at Chicago. His translations include works by Jacques Lacan, Roland Barthes, Umberto Eco, Noam Chomsky, Fernand Braudel, Jean Piaget, Edward Said, Tzvetan Todorov, Pierre Burgelin, Fatna Elbouih, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Michel Foucault.

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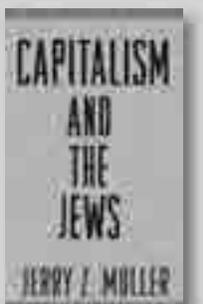
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Moroccan Judaism for Sale: Jewish Culture in the Context of the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict

Aomar Boum

Jews have lived in the Amazigh (Berber) regions of southern Morocco, known as the *bled*, for centuries. They were part of rural communities—some of the oldest Jewish settlements in North Africa, even preceding, according to some historical narratives, the Arab conquest. They were part of independent states that were established across southern Morocco, playing a key role in trans-Saharan commerce, and maintaining relative independence from the central government until the twentieth century. Jews were present in almost all the rural hamlets along the valleys of Sous, Draa, and Tafilalt, as well as in such communities as Tarudant, Igh, Akka, Agadir, Mhamid Ghozlan, and Errachidia. Jewish merchants were also based in large urban settlements such as Agadir, Essaouira, and Tarudant, while Jewish peddlers were key to trading networks linking Berber and Arab villages throughout the region. In the 1950s, the Jewish population was estimated at ten thousand. By the early

1960s, these thriving Jewish communities ended when Zionist organizations managed to persuade them to resettle in Israel. Today, only a handful of families continue to reside there, mainly in the urban centers.

In the last decade, a longing for local Jews in the valleys of Sous, Draa, and Tafilalt has begun to be publicly expressed by a number of Berber activists. In Sous, for instance, a group of teachers and university graduates launched a Berber-Jewish friendship association. Its founders contend that their main objectives were to promote the cultural diversity of the region, disseminate social tolerance, and create economic bridges with Moroccan Jews living abroad.

As it happens, this Berber initiative coincided with Israel's launch of its large-scale military operation inside Gaza targeting Hamas political and military leadership. As Al-Jazeera, al-Manar, al-Arabiya, and other Arab satellite news agencies broadcast the

Israeli military operation, popular protests broke out in the Middle East and the Islamic world calling on Arab and Islamic leaderships to rise against “the Jewish enemy” and its Western allies. Anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli rhetoric filled Arab news outlets as popular anger rose dubbing the military intervention as a “Gaza Holocaust.”

Against the backdrop of this popular movement, a delegation of Moroccan Amazigh teachers visited Yad Vashem to participate in a week-long educational seminar about the teaching of the Shoah. Their objective was to incorporate the neglected subject of the Holocaust in the national school curriculum. In Morocco, Khalid Soufyani, the President of the Moroccan Association for the Support of Palestine and Iraq, led a fierce attack against these Berber activists who called for establishing relations with Moroccan Jews living in Israel. Berber associations were critiqued for their refusal to



Shrine of Rabbi Yissachar Ba'al Ha-Ma'al Ha-Ma'ayan; Irahalan, Akka, Province of Tata, Morocco. Photo by author.

participate in pro-Palestinian demonstrations against Israel's military operation in Gaza and the West Bank. These accusations were rejected by Ahmed Asid, a leading Amazigh intellectual, who denounced the anti-Jewish discourse of Soufyani and other Islamists.

It is in this fractured national context that Morocco's Jews—who number about five thousand today, mostly live in Casablanca, and include some high-profile figures like royal advisor André Azoulay—were targeted as Zionist and Israeli spies. Soufyani organized demonstrations in Rabat and other cities where people chanted “Khaybar, Khaybar, O Jews! Muhammad's army will return,” in a clear reference to the Qur'anic story of the destruction of the Jewish community of Khaybar. Despite all these anti-Jewish tirades, however, the government continued to highlight the long history of Jewish-Muslim co-existence and the cordial relationship between Moroccan kings and their Jewish subjects, even those living in Israel. To many Amazigh activists I interviewed, however, this discourse of tolerance did not go far enough. They were advocating for an even more overt distinction between the Jews of Morocco (and their local role) and the state of Israel.

Let me exemplify this position with the following story. In 2010, I ran into a student in the halls of the University of Cadi Ayyad in Marrakesh. When he realized that I studied Moroccan Jews, he told me:

Moroccan Jews are like a valuable mortgage that cannot be afforded. Moroccans talk a lot about their Jewish subculture to outsiders and boast about their history of tolerance; yet, they refuse to accept that Jews can be Moroccan citizens with full rights and obligations. Our full support and sympathy toward the Palestinian cause have blinded us hindering our acceptance of Moroccan Jews. If we believe that Moroccan Jewish history can be an economic asset worth mortgaging then we should accept their full rights. Otherwise we have to put it for sale and stop using it for our economic advantages.

For this informant and many Berber students from different parts of Sous, Moroccan society is required to rethink its attitude toward local Jews, to accept them as part of its wider multicultural, ethnic, and religious fabric without looking at them through the lens of the Palestinian issue.

All this becomes particularly pressing when it comes to cultural heritage. A dead Jew, a southern Moroccan proverb goes, does not fight a war. The proverb is evidence of Muslims' long-standing respect of Jewish tombs and graveyards. Cemeteries have always been sacred sites. I was told by an elderly man that even in times of conflict, when Jewish shops and sometimes neighborhoods were targeted, Jewish tombs were never violated. The dead are sacred because they are in God's land.

Yet despite this long-held tradition, instances of desecration of Jewish shrines and vandalism in Jewish cemeteries throughout Morocco have been on the rise in the last decades. As Palestinians and Israelis battle over the Holy Land, Moroccan children and youth target Jewish sites and property to express their hatred of the Jewish state, its leaders, and Morocco's Jews as its accomplices. As I traveled throughout southern Morocco in the last ten years, I noticed that many tombs and shrines are vandalized with anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli graffiti. The dead are no longer sacred; they are the only legitimate targets as the majority of the living left for France, Canada, and Israel.

Let me illustrate with another story. In 2010, I took a group of teachers through southern Morocco as part of a Fulbright-Hays federal grant to introduce K-12 teachers to pre-Saharan communities. In Errachidia, we visited two adjacent Jewish cemeteries. In the first, few of the tombs from the early 1900s were in good shape; many were either destroyed by the elements or completely desecrated by local children. Broken plates, black kettles, human hair, and animal bones were laid on some graves. A large green door, decorated with *hamukiot*, led to the second cemetery. It mainly housed the tombs of three tzaddikim: Rabbi Yahia Lahlou, Rabbi Moul Tria, and Rabbi Moul Sedra, arrivals to Morocco, according to local lore, dating as far back as the destruction of the First Temple.

We were given a tour of the cemetery by the local Muslim Berber guard who was paid the equivalent of 40 U.S. dollars per month by Jews from Casablanca to keep an eye on the property. The old man had been guarding the cemetery since the local Jews left for Israel. He seemed to care about the preservation of the cemetery. But while we chatted about local Jewish history, I noticed graffiti on the outside walls which read: “Sharon go to hell,” “Live Palestine,” “Jews are pigs,” “God's curse on the Jews,” “Hitler!” and “Americans are

Jews!” As I took a couple of pictures, one the teachers tried to ask me about the meaning of the graffiti. Before I began to translate some of the words, the man interrupted me in a very faint voice: “Do not tell her the exact meanings of what is written in the walls. Children play on these walls and write this nonsense. We respect local Jews.” As much as I wanted to conceal the truth from the teacher, I couldn't, and I leaked the secret.

With tourism revenues becoming a pivotal part of the Moroccan economy, Jewish cultural heritage is increasingly seen as an integral part of national history. This movement started first as the private endeavor of a few Moroccan Jews. Later, the state got involved through its ministries of culture and tourism, recognizing that the country can capitalize on Moroccan Jewish culture by marketing its discourse of tolerance to Jews from the Moroccan Diaspora. Even King Mohammed VI recently joined the initiative by supporting Morocco's Jewish community in the restoration and maintenance of its historical Jewish cemeteries. By preserving Jewish graveyards through the country, the state acknowledges the importance of pilgrimage events (*hillulot*) as central to its tourism and national revenues.

Against this opportunistic and potentially exploitative policy, Morocco's Jews are trying to reclaim heritage through the creation of a virtual Jewish milieu, centered around the world of the dead. As cemeteries and synagogues are being restored throughout the country, local Jews have launched a large online project, posting images and videos of Jewish graveyards and tombs for a global Jewish audience.

But the crux of the matter remains. The conservation of Jewish cemeteries will never fully succeed unless Moroccan Jewish history and culture is taught at the country's schools and universities. Otherwise, Jewish cemeteries, shrines, and neighborhoods will remain nothing but international tourist attractions, overlaid locally by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Aomar Boum is assistant professor in the School of Middle Eastern and North African Studies and Religious Studies Program and holds a courtesy appointment with the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona. He is finishing a manuscript titled, Memories of Absence: How Muslims Remember Jews in Morocco.

Muslims as Jews, Jews as Muslims, and Both as the Other in Recent French Cinema

Dinah Assouline Stillman



Mauvaise Foi movie poster (Pan Européenne, 2006). Salut Cousin movie poster (JBA Productions, 1996). Chouchou movie poster (Films Christian Fechner, 2003).

When Roschdy Zem, a well-known French actor of Moroccan Muslim origin, appeared on screen in Radu Mihaileanu's film *Va, vis et deviens* (*Live and Become*, 2004), I could not suppress a gasp. He was playing Yoram Harari, an Egyptian-born Israeli Jew who volunteered to welcome a young Ethiopian boy just rescued from an African refugee camp into his family. I had already seen a few movies in which Jewish actors played Arab characters, but not Arabs playing Jews, much less Israelis, and sympathetic ones at that.

In France, in fact, there has been a plethora of movies in the last few years evoking either strong ties of friendship or love between Jews and Muslims or emphasizing their similarities. And while actors from one group rarely play characters from the other, the theme of consciously or accidentally passing for the other, or of being mistaken for the other, does come up in a number of films.

One example is *Mauvaise foi* (*Bad Faith*, 2006), a comedy about a mixed couple and how they are perceived by relatives, friends,

and society. The film is written, directed, and stars Zem as Ismael, the Muslim lover of Clara, an Ashkenazi Jewish girl played by Cécile de France. Like Zem himself, Ismael is the French-born son of Moroccan parents. Thoroughly secular and non-observant, Ismael and Clara have never let their respective religions intrude on their four-year-long relationship. However, the day they find out that Clara is pregnant launches a series of both funny and tragic vignettes, as they introduce their significant other to their respective parents and tell them they want the baby. Suddenly, bridging the cultural and religious prejudices that seemed nonexistent or invisible to them before seems insurmountable. Each tries to feel what it is to become a practicing Jew or Muslim before seeking a compromise. In one funny scene, Ismael tries on a *kippa* out of curiosity, but forgets to remove it while going to buy *halal* meat for his mother at his devout Muslim uncle's butcher shop. The uncle and his employees stare at him in total bewilderment, while the crowds in the streets of the working-class

Bellemeville neighborhood do not even seem to notice him, with so many local North African Jews and Muslims looking alike.

The physical similarities between Jews and Muslims appear to be exactly the point in the film *Salut Cousin!* (*Hey Cousin!*, 1995) by Merzak Allouache, who took refuge in France after his life was threatened when he made a feature film about the violent ascension of Islamists in his native Algeria (*Bab El Oued City*, 1993). Allouache casts a young Moroccan Jew, Gad Elmaleh, then an up-and-coming comedian, to play the part of Alilo, the naïve, strongly Arabic-accented Algerian youth visiting his *beur* (Maghebi-French) cousin Mok in Paris, who in marked contrast, speaks impeccable French. Alilo is to bring back to Algeria high-end dresses for black market sale, but he temporarily misplaces his contact's address and meanwhile has to stay with his cousin. Mok lives in a derelict inner city neighborhood, La Goutte d'Or, along with many fellow immigrants. As the title and other allusions in the film to La Fontaine's stories suggest, Mok is much

like the mouse of the fable hunted by French police instead of the City Cat. Alilo's experiences of North African immigrant life offer eye-opening instances of the status of migrants in France. His uncle lives in one of the projects in the *banlieue* (impoverished suburb) and all the stereotypes of immigrants living in France are addressed more or less benignly through Alilo's naïve eyes.

Three scenes are of particular interest on the subject of Jews as the Muslim Other. One of the first Algerians Alilo meets in Paris is an ex-policeman who, full of remorse that he had contributed to the government massacre of hundreds of young civilians there, fled

Algiers after the riots in 1988. Having become an illegal petty street peddler, he says he found an excellent way of tricking the French cops: he just dons a *kippa*, and "they never arrest" him because they think he is Jewish. This indicates that, on one hand, the North African Jewish immigrants are treated better than Arabs, while, on the other hand, being physically indistinguishable. And indeed two more scenes attest to their physical and psychological similarities. Mok's friend and neighbor Simon, a would-be actor, comes to borrow a jacket and chooses one from Mok's over-the-top garments to audition at the venerable Comédie Française. Looking North

African in every way, he rehearses a famous seventeenth-century soliloquy with a distinct Jewish Algerian accent, and proves by this and his gauche jacket how utterly unrealistic it is that he would be accepted. The last scene showing interchangeability between Jews and Muslims occurs when Alilo finally finds the address and goes to the couture workshop to retrieve the dresses. The owner, Monsieur Maurice, who happens to be a Jewish Algerian, left the country at the same time as the French Pieds Noirs when Algeria became independent in 1962. He invites Alilo for a glass of tea, and while pouring it, reveals his nostalgia for his native country. He knows he will never go back to Algeria, but every day, while drinking mint tea and listening to Oum Khulthum, he imagines himself retracing his steps home through Algiers' streets, breathing in the various scents of herbs and spices. He tells Alilo that he prays every Saturday at the synagogue for the Algerian Muslim victims of the raging civil war. He even says a few words in Arabic to convey his dismay of the Islamic fundamentalists and what they are doing to Algeria.

But the most striking achievement of the film is Gad Elmaleh's uncanny ability to incarnate a North African Muslim in all of his physical mannerisms, his Arabic-accented French, and his speech patterns. He managed to fool even native Algerian audiences into thinking he was an authentic Algerian. His success as a comedian with his first show *Décalages* was, until then, only carried through the grapevine by both Jewish and Muslim North Africans living in Paris. Elmaleh became famous in Algeria too, and Chouchou, a character in one of the sketches included in his second one-man show, *La vie normale (Normal Life)* in 2000, appealed so much to the Algerians at home, that Elmaleh and Allouache collaborated in a new eponymous movie, *Chouchou* in 2003.

Chouchou is an Algerian homosexual fleeing the Islamists in his country. Recently arrived in Paris, he becomes a transvestite wooed by a native French of aristocratic origin. His heavy Arabic accent in French combined with the butchering of French idioms made both native North Africans and Français *de souche* (indigenous French) roar with laughter. Gad Elmaleh became an icon of free Arab and Berber humor against religious oppression. Moroccan audiences embraced him with pride, as he never failed to mention his native country and nationality. Although the plot in the film adaptation is rather flimsy, it resulted in an enormous



Coco movie poster (Coco Legende Film, 2009).

box-office success, garnering Elmaleh immediate fame and recognition in France.

Curiously, most native French audiences, very fond of Elmaleh, consistently perceived him as a Muslim because of the Moroccan nationality he touted so much as well as his exotic name. For many years, they even mistook his elderly character Baba Ihya, who speaks in a definite Judeo-Arabic accent, as “the Arab grandfather.” Elmaleh went on to write, perform, and tour in France and all around the world with two other shows, *L'autre c'est moi (I am the Other)* and *Papa est en haut (Daddy is Upstairs)*. Although not as much focused on the immigrant language as before but rather on hilarious cultural differences, they both include moments in which he talks with a strong Muslim Arabic accent—to the joy of his numerous fans, which include Muslims, Jews, and native Frenchmen.

It seems that it was not until Elmaleh went on to make his own movie, *Coca*, in

2009, that he was finally identified clearly as a Jew. It was based on the eponymous sketch in the same show as Chouchou, and this time portrayed a highly caricatured parvenu Sephardi Jew planning a phenomenal Bar Mitzvah celebration at the Stade de France. His numerous appearances on TV shows and press articles for the promotion of the film finally ended for good any remaining ambiguities among his native French audience as to his origin, even though all the crew of actors and actresses playing in this film looked and acted like bona fide North Africans in their eyes.

One of the results abroad was that Elmaleh became the subject of a hate campaign in Lebanon by Hezbollah's Al Manar radio and television station. He was accused of having served in the Israeli army and was forced to cancel his scheduled Lebanese tour in July 2009, to the bitter disappointment of many of his francophone fans. Another outcome of his popularity abroad was his

appearance in three American movies in 2011, as a “real” Frenchman in *Midnight in Paris* (Woody Allen) and *Jack and Jill* (Adam Sandler), as well as the Arab character in Steven Spielberg's *The Adventures of Tintin* (2011).

While in French films, Gad Elmaleh can play a convincing Muslim and Roschdy Zem an equally believable Sephardi Jew, they remain mostly indistinguishable, both to indigenous Frenchmen and Hollywood's global public.

Dinah Assouline Stillman is instructor of French Culture, Literature, and Linguistics at the University of Oklahoma. Her articles include “Encounters with Aharon Appelfeld,” World Literature Today 84:6, November–December 2010, pp. 20–23.



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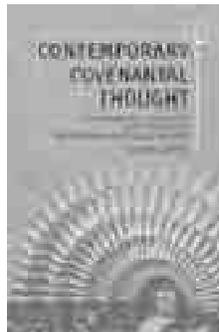
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**Constructing Borders and Crossing Boundaries:
Social, Cultural and Religious Change in Early Modern Jewish History**

Scholars working in a wide variety of disciplines have long identified the late fifteenth through the late eighteenth century as a discrete historical period called “Early Modern.” Among scholars interested in the place of Jews and Jewish culture within this period, however, there has been little attempt to think broadly about early modernity as a whole or to connect the insights of discrete studies in any coherent and meaningful way. This research group will create a conversation that connects these smaller units and so examines those changes in the Jewish world which characterized the Early Modern. We will focus on the issue of borders and boundaries, understood as not only geographical, but also social, cultural, legal, political, and economic. Some divided and connected the Jewish and the non-Jewish, while others functioned within Jewish society, creating internal divisions and conjunctures. Considering, among other things, the breakdown of old social and cultural boundaries and the construction of new ones, the boundary as both a dividing line and a place of meeting and mixing between different groups (Jewish and non-Jewish), and the ambiguities inherent in situations where elites envisioned strong boundaries while others ignored them (and vice versa), will encourage a wide ranging discussion on the very nature of both Jewish Early Modernity and the early modern period in general.

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- What were the nature and characteristics of Jewish transregional networks in the Early Modern age?
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- How did the spread of printing affect cultural and intellectual boundaries both inside Jewish society and between Jews and non-Jews?
- To what extent did early modern Jewish society witness shifts in its cultural borders, such as those between men and women, the educated and the uneducated, and the rabbinic and lay elites?
- How did early modern European religious and intellectual life affect the social, cultural and political boundaries between Jew and non-Jew?
- What are the implications of changes in the social, cultural, religious, and political borders of the early modern Jewish world for our understanding of the early modern period in general? and of the modern Jewish experience as well?

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Common Culture, Survival Strategy, or Useful Foil? Jews and Muslimness in Modern France

Ethan Katz

Since the start of the twenty-first century, France has struggled mightily with the challenge of integrating its Muslim population; in a related development, the country's Jewish-Muslim relations have entered a period of crisis. Most Jews and Muslims in France are of North African extraction. In such an environment, certain French Jews see Muslims as the new victims of discrimination historically faced by Jews; they express solidarity with Muslims' quest for greater inclusion and their cultural particularity. Other French Jews seek to dissociate themselves entirely from Muslims. They draw sharp rhetorical distinctions between their own history, religion, culture, and politics on the one hand, and those of Muslims on the other hand.

This debate is not new. Jewish engagement with Muslimness in France has a long and complicated history. With this phrase, I mean Jewish depictions of what it meant to be Muslim and, more precisely, Jews' own relationship, or lack thereof, with Islam or Muslim identity. The Jewish engagement with Muslimness in France has historically oscillated largely between two poles. The first pole treats Muslimness as an element of shared culture with Jews, particularly those from North Africa or the Middle East. The second regards Muslimness as a useful foil that helps to legitimize Jewishness as more fully Western, European, assimilable, and French. Yet a third component of engagement, overlapping with the first two, has repeatedly emerged at times of crisis: one that uses the close affinities between North African Jews and Muslims as a survival strategy.

It was during World War I when, for the first time, Jews and Muslims began to interact in large numbers in metropolitan France. In April 1917, the popular weekly of traditional French Judaism, *L'Univers Israélite*, printed an article that recounted a conversation between two French soldiers in the trenches, one of them Jewish, the other Muslim. With Passover approaching, the Jewish soldier, named Habib, spoke to his Muslim comrade, Rahmoun, of the importance of human action in the Exodus story. He said that while he found Islam to be in "perfect harmony" with Judaism in most respects, he

disagreed with the way the former "exalts the feeling of . . . submission to divine will, to the detriment of the human energy that is called upon to react constantly against evil."

In response, Rahmoun deemed his own faith the "daughter" of Judaism, and asserted that while Habib might question some Muslims' temperament, he should not misjudge the teachings of Islam. Rahmoun



Cover reprinted from *Univers Israélite*, April 6, 1917.

recounted a story from Muslim scripture in which Moses becomes ill while the Israelites are in the desert. For too long, Moses refuses to call a doctor, claiming his fate lies in God's hands. Finally, God calls out to Moses and explains that science is a divinely created art, and that Moses should accept a doctor's care. Having concluded his story, Rahmoun turned to his comrade and exclaimed, "You see, our religions profess the same doctrine. Faith should not prevent action; rather it should inspire and support it."

It is difficult to know if this exchange actually took place as reported. Yet both as a possible daily interaction and as a representation, the account illuminates crucial aspects of early Jewish-Muslim relations in France. Here we already see the push and pull of Jewish engagements with Muslimness on French soil. With

pride and respect, Habib and Rahmoun noted each other's common membership in Abrahamic, monotheistic faiths that had overlapping beliefs and textual traditions.

Like most Jews and Muslims who fought together in the French lines, both soldiers appear to have hailed from North Africa. Thus their mutual knowledge was part of a shared Mediterranean cultural and even religious heritage that they brought with them to the *métropole*. At the same time, the soldiers' shared loyalty to France was implicitly overriding. The Jewish soldier appeared as a conduit within the army's role as the "school of the fatherland." The Jew from Algeria, a French citizen since the Crémieux Decree of 1870, could help France to complete the dissemination of republican values to its Algerian Muslim natives, who remain colonial subjects. Such a position at once affirmed the Jew's own status and elevated the Muslim's.

Twenty-five years later, Jews in France found themselves on the opposite side of a far sharper divide in status. By autumn 1940, in Occupied France, under Nazi and Vichy racial laws, France's Jews became "non-Aryans" and faced growing restrictions on their status and freedom. Stripped of their French citizenship, Algerian Jews were, for the first time since the period of the *dhimmi*, of inferior legal status to Muslims. While most of the Muslims in mainland France remained French subjects rather than citizens, they had the same legal status as "Aryans."

Under these circumstances, a significant number of the 35,000 Jews from the Levant or North Africa living in France sought to utilize their intimate cultural, linguistic, and religious knowledge of the Maghreb to disguise themselves as Muslims. During a roundup of Jews in 1943, Lucette Bouchoucha was coming out of the Saint-Paul Métro in the heart of the Marais in Paris. Warned by her mother, Bouchoucha had hidden her yellow star in her bag. When approached by an officer and asked her name, she followed her mother's instructions, offering the Arab "Benichou" instead of her real family name, Cohen. When asked if she was Jewish, she said, "Monsieur, I don't know what that is." With that, the officer turned his attention elsewhere and she escaped. Rather than chance an

encounter with a Vichy or Nazi agent, many Jews claimed to be Muslim in writing as well. The Algerian Jew René Baccouche claimed that his paternal grandparents were Muslims of Turkish origin who, at the time of the Crémieux Decree, simply registered as Jews in order to gain French citizenship (ultimately this ruse appears to have failed).

The disguise of North African and Levantine Jews as Muslims paralleled the attempts of many Ashkenazic Jews to pass themselves or their children off as Christian. Both practices constituted survival strategies. Yet these Mediterranean Jews' choice of camouflage also reflected how deeply Islam had marked their background. It displayed intimate familiarity with Muslim linguistic and religious conventions, food, clothing, and surnames. Such knowledge attested to these Jews' multifaceted identities. As French citizens who retained vital links to the culture of the Islamic world, most had long operated in both the colonial and the native spheres. Their choice of disguise, however, acknowledged that Muslims and Jews now stood on opposite sides of the new racial barriers erected in Occupied France.

A final snapshot of Jews and Muslimness in France comes from the period of the Franco-Algerian War (1954–1962). In the March 1956 issue of the *Revue du FSJU* (the precursor to *L'Arche*), Algerian Jewish leader Émile Touati advocated for the need to welcome Algerian Jewish immigrants. He did so in large part by painting a picture of Algerian Muslim difference. While acknowledging that Algerian Muslims sometimes migrated for the same reasons as Jews, Touati drew several contrasts between the two groups. The Jewish immigration, he claimed, was “Francophone,” but most Muslims spoke little or no French. Unlike Muslims, Algerian Jews did not differ so markedly in their daily habits from French citizens of the *métropole*. French Jewish organizations stood ready to welcome Jewish immigrants, whereas “nothing comparable” existed among Muslims. Most Algerian Jews lived in cities; the majority of Muslims were rural, mainly from the mountainous region of Kabylia. Further, he noted, Jews generally brought large families, wanted to stay in France, were middle class, and had at least small sums of money to build their own enterprises. Muslims, by contrast, usually arrived as single men, for transient reasons, from agricultural settings, and could only do unskilled labor.

To be sure, Touati's assessment reflected certain realities. Yet treatments like his also

expressed a clear message, intended for the French Jewish community and the larger metropolitan public: Jews from the Maghreb, especially Algeria, were already Frenchified to a great degree; they could adapt quickly and bring vital cultural, economic, and demographic resources. Muslims lacked these attributes. One should not confuse the two. Whereas massive Muslim migration could provoke legitimate concerns, one had nothing to fear from Jews. Such a depiction implied a static view of Jews, Muslims, and their places in the republic.

These brief historical examples have shown the complexity of periodic attempts by Jews in modern France to create greater closeness or distance between themselves and Muslimness. We have seen that Muslimness served three primary functions for Jews: as an element of cultural commonality; a convenient foil for claims to true Frenchness; or a survival strategy. For Jews

in France, then, Muslimness played a more important, multifaceted role at an earlier date than scholars have previously estimated. Moreover, such historical precedents extend farther back in time, and across the Mediterranean. From the 1500s to the twentieth century, numerous Mediterranean Jews acted like veritable shape-shifters. They disguised themselves as *conversos*, acted as intermediaries between Europe and the Islamic world, or wore Muslim garb in shared Jewish-Muslim ritual events. Thus, as French Jews today navigate their relationship to Muslimness, they are undertaking only the latest in a series of negotiations over identity and status, in France and far beyond.

Ethan Katz is assistant professor of History at the University of Cincinnati. His articles include “Did the Paris Mosque Save Jews? A Mystery and Its Memory,” Jewish Quarterly Review 102:2 (2012).

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Halal and Kosher: Jews and Muslims as Political and Economic Allies

Julia Phillips Cohen

A few months after blood libel accusations led to widespread attacks against Jews on the Greek island of Corfu in 1891, a Ladino newspaper of the Ottoman capital published a short notice with the cryptic title “A Curious Report.” Drawn from the Warsaw-based Hebrew newspaper *Hatzfira*, it described a public announcement recently directed to the Jews of Warsaw by Muslim bakers in that city. According to the article, Warsaw’s Muslim bakers were concerned that their Jewish neighbors had decided to boycott local Greek businesses in retaliation for the violence that Greek Orthodox rioters in Corfu had inflicted upon the Jews of that island. The Muslim bakers did not object to the boycott as a matter of principle, however, but rather to the fact that they had been mistaken for Greeks at a particularly inopportune moment. To clarify matters, they announced their readiness to demonstrate with official documentation that they were in fact “Turkish bakers.” Calling on the Jews of Warsaw to patronize their businesses, they offered further incentives by noting that all of their products were prepared according to the laws of kashrut and were certified by none other than the chief rabbi of the city. What followed was more striking still: the announcement declared that the bakers in question were “circumcised Mohammedan Turks” and that they ate “nothing but kosher meat.”

As surprising as such assertions and alliances may appear to us from the vantage point of the early twenty-first century, in the context of nineteenth-century political, economic, and social configurations, they were far from inscrutable. If we presume the claims of the piece to be true, Warsaw’s Muslims likely ate kosher meat because it was the closest thing they could get to *halal* meat in a city with a negligible Muslim community. Similar arrangements were recorded in other contexts in the nineteenth century, from Ottoman Syria to Peabody, Massachusetts, where a sizeable Ottoman émigré community settled. An advertisement placed in a Ladino publication of Salonica in the early twentieth century even advertised a “Kosher Halal” restaurant, suggesting that



“Kasher Helal” restaurant ad, Salonica, 1912. Reprinted from Itzhak Rafael Molho, *Las diversas tentativas de reformar la nacionalidad djudia* (Salonica, 1912), 17.

such arrangements could be formalized and turned into a profitable economic venture.

Seen in this light, it is not entirely surprising that the Muslim “Turks” of late-nineteenth-century Warsaw would have seen fit to acquire a kosher certificate: by doing so they opened their business to the city’s substantial Jewish population. Moreover, throughout the nineteenth-century Middle East, it was not uncommon for Jews and Muslims to emphasize their shared practice of male circumcision in order to mark themselves off from Christians who were often referred to as “the uncircumcised” in such discussions. What is intriguing about the announcement of Warsaw’s Muslim bakers is that its authors turned what was no doubt a makeshift arrangement into a virtue. Realizing that—besides Jews—only Muslims would make a point to eat kosher meat exclusively (at least where *halal* meat was unavailable), Warsaw’s Muslim bakers employed Jews’ and Muslims’ similar dietary habits to help prove what they were not—namely Christian. By drawing attention to customs Muslims and Jews shared, their appeal also aimed to reinforce Jewish-Muslim economic ties in a local context.

Yet the same announcement made broader political declarations as well. Expressing their sympathy for the Jewish victims of Greek accusations and violence on the island of Corfu, the Muslim bakers of Warsaw took their message of Jewish-Muslim allegiance one step further. Not only did they propose that Muslims never supported blood libel accusations against the Jews, they also

suggested that the Ottoman sultan—their august sovereign—received the Jewish refugees fleeing Corfu, offering them land on which to settle. Having entered the tangle of a local Jewish boycott, spurred in turn by a foreign event, the announcement of a small group of Muslim bakers of Ottoman origin in Warsaw thus made claims about the worldwide alliance of Muslims and Jews.

Although the notice first appeared in the Hebrew press of Warsaw itself, it did not take long for it to find its way to Istanbul, where Sephardi audiences of the Ottoman capital and beyond no doubt read the story of a faraway Jewish boycott of Greek Christians and of the Warsaw Jews’ allies, the Muslim Turks, subjects of a sultan who was also a friend to the Jews. Indeed, a more telling story could not have been invented for late Ottoman Sephardi elites interested in forging close ties with their state and with their Muslim neighbors in the empire, whom they (rightly) understood to be the hegemonic group in imperial politics. Though it had been introduced merely as a “curious report,” the piece must have resonated on multiple levels with the Ladino readers who encountered it in their own imperial context. After all, the Muslim bakers it described were their compatriots, and the sultan they invoked was also their sultan.

By 1891, when the report appeared in the pages of Istanbul’s Ladino press, Jewish communal leaders had been engaged for decades in the project of turning their coreligionists in the empire into imperial citizens, teaching them to consider their neighbors as “brothers” and their empire as a sacred homeland. They had originally done so in response to nineteenth-century state reforms in the empire, which granted equality to non-Muslims and introduced new, universal definitions of Ottoman belonging. By the late nineteenth century, however, such universal definitions competed with new approaches to imperial politics that focused increasingly on the Islamic nature of the Ottoman state. Many Ottoman Jews responded to the politicization of Islam in the empire with claims about the inherent compatibility of Islamic and Jewish customs in a way not dissimilar to the language that appeared in

the announcement of the Muslim bakers of Warsaw. Ottoman Jews also participated in public discussions that drew upon Islamic concepts like jihad, or holy war, such as when the Ladino press of the empire praised the empire's Muslim martyrs who fell for the cause of "their state and religion" in wars fought against different Christian countries.

Ottoman Jews' public pronouncements about their relationship with their state in the late nineteenth century also offered an image of their empire as a refuge for persecuted Jews, just as the announcement of the Turkish bakers of Warsaw had done. In fact, just a month after the bakers' note appeared in the Ladino press of Istanbul, a Sephardi journalist of Izmir proposed that Ottoman Jews create a new holiday commemorating the 400th anniversary of their arrival in the empire as a means of demonstrating Jews' gratitude to their state and sultan. The holiday they invented the following year harked back to the distant past when the Jews' "brother Ishmael" took them in, just as Christian Europe expelled them, suggesting in the process that Muslim-Jewish alliances were based on a centuries-long arrangement. In this case, as with the Warsaw bakers' announcement, the ties Jews forged with Muslims were almost always developed against the foil of a shared opponent, usually a Christian one.

Muslim-Jewish cooperation was invariably part of a triangular relationship, in other words, and thus regularly entailed not only positive relations but also carefully nurtured exclusions. This pattern emerged clearly when Jews and Muslims together boycotted Greek Orthodox businesses in the empire after Crete declared its union with Greece in 1909. As they did so, they combined assertions about their social and political affinities with an expression of their shared economic interests, just as the Muslims of Warsaw had called upon Jews to do two decades earlier.

Late Ottoman Muslim-Jewish alliances were hardly uncomplicated. They were not guaranteed to work, nor were they the only options available to Ottoman Jewish or Muslim subjects, who sometimes pursued alternative strategies of allegiance. To be clear, I do not mean to issue a call to return to an idealized past: the solidarities Muslims and Jews expressed in various contexts and moments throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century were often based on their perception of shared interests, even when they spoke about the inherent kinship of their communities. What is more, such alliances almost always involved the exclusion of other groups. Yet the prevalence of Jewish-Muslim collaboration in a not-so-distant past should nonetheless serve as a reminder

of the historically contingent—and thus potentially fleeting—nature of political partnerships and social arrangements.

Indeed, it may be difficult for most people today to picture Jews and Muslims participating collectively in a boycott against Christians, to imagine Muslims declaring publicly that they eat nothing but kosher meat, or to understand a world in which Jews would participate in discussions of a jihad against a Christian power. Although the myriad individuals who spoke of Muslim-Jewish bonds of brotherhood gave the impression that such relationships were both timeless and self-evident, they now reach us as little more than a "curious report" from a distant past. Ultimately, even those political alliances and social coalitions that appear at particular historical junctures to be obvious and immutable are prone to the amnesia of later generations and new political alignments.

Julia Phillips Cohen is assistant professor in the Program in Jewish Studies and the Department of History at Vanderbilt University. She is the author of "Between Civic and Islamic Ottomanism: Jewish Imperial Citizenship in the Hamidian Era" International Journal of Middle East Studies 44: 2 (May 2012).

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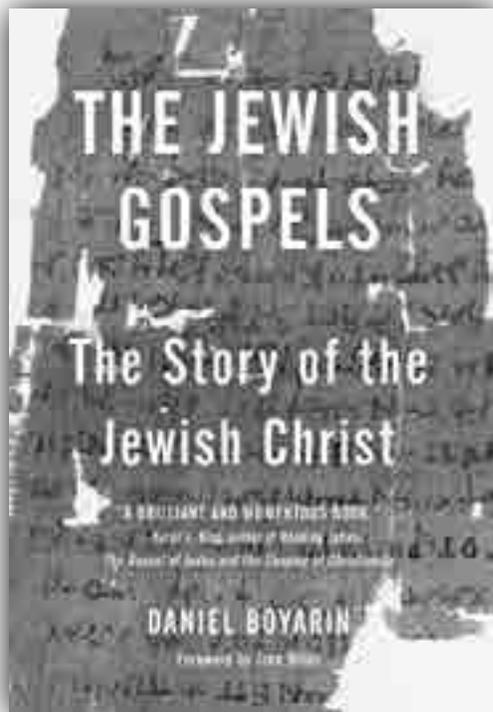
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The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks

Marc David Baer

On October 16, 1666, Shabbatai Tzevi, who was believed to be the messiah by numerous Jews from northern Europe to southern Yemen, converted to Islam in the presence of Ottoman Sultan Mehmet IV in Edirne. Faced with the choice of converting to Islam or martyrdom, Shabbatai Tzevi chose to change his religion. The act split his followers into three groups. Most lost faith in him and returned, alienated, to normative Judaism. A second group, the Shabbateans, remained Jews, but furtively maintained their faith in Shabbatai Tzevi's messiahship.

For a third group, however, the radical failure of their messiah ironically led, not to disappointment and despair, but confirmation, renewed confidence, and the ecstasy of knowing that one cannot know the mysteries of God's chosen. After all, if his followers could believe him when he moved the Sabbath from Friday to Monday, abolished holidays, and emancipated women and let them be called to read from the Torah, then why not believe him when he said "There is no God, but God" and "Muhammad is God's messenger"?

The followers of Shabbatai Tzevi who became Muslims called themselves Ma'aminim (Hebrew: believers) but came to be more widely known as Dönme (Turkish: convert). They consisted of two to three hundred families (i.e., 1,000 to 1,500 people). Continuing to believe in his messianic calling, they adhered to his religious precepts and practices, which had emerged at the intersection of Kabbalah and Sufism. They coalesced first in Edirne and then, by 1683, in Ottoman Salonika, a Jewish-majority city renowned for a large *converso* community as well as its Sufis.

The nucleus of the Dönme community was established by Shabbatai Tzevi's Salonikan survivors: his last wife Jochebed, who had converted with him and had been renamed Aisha, and brother-in-law Yakub Çelebi (Jacob Querido), to whom the soul of Shabbatai Tzevi was believed to have transmigrated. It was Çelebi who converted Shabbatai Tzevi's antinomianism into ritualized charisma, thereby establishing the structures according to which Dönme belief and practice were organized. The result was a distinct and self-sustaining community that,

within a century, grew to around six hundred families (perhaps 3,000 people).

A crucial factor in the consolidation and perpetuation of the Dönme community was its adherence to the "eighteen commandments" laid down by Shabbatai Tzevi during his lifetime. The commandments, which asserted that God is one and that Shabbatai Tzevi is the redeemer and messiah, ordered the



Tombstone portrait of Vahide (d. 1928), Istanbul. Photo by author.

Dönme to "be scrupulous in their observance of some of the precepts of the Muslims" and to heed "those things which are exposed to the Muslims' view." The commandments also admonished the Dönme not to have any relations with other Muslims and to marry only among themselves.

Dönme belief and practice were a departure from Judaism *and* Islam. The community had a distinct theological system, manifested in its religious calendar including feast and fast days based on the life of Shabbatai Tzevi: its beginning, the first receiving of revelations, the coronation as messiah, as well as the eventual conversion. The yearly cycle was also rooted in the holidays he instituted, such as making the ninth of Av a day of celebration

of the messiah's birthday rather than one of mourning the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem. Whereas Jews marked the day by rending their garments and fasting, the Dönme dressed in their finest clothes, ate sweets, and danced and sang.

Dönme liturgy, prayers, and beliefs were accepted neither by practitioners of Judaism, the religion the Dönme left, nor Islam, the religion they outwardly confessed. They also possessed their own lay and religious hierarchy and leadership, institutions of orthodoxy including communal courts presided over by judges and served by policing agents and jails, and places of worship, pilgrimage, and burial. Their dietary customs further illustrate their divergence from Judaism and Islam. The Dönme purposely violated the laws of kashrut, cooking meat in butter and eating offal forbidden to Muslims.

Being Dönme was not limited to maintaining unique rituals and a distinct creed. Attached to their religious core was also an ethnic identity. The Dönme chose to distinguish themselves from Jews and Muslims by keeping detailed genealogies to ensure endogamous marriage and burying their dead in distinct cemeteries, walled off from others. Their burial rituals were distinct as well. Unlike the gravestones in Jewish Ottoman cemeteries, Dönme tombstones comprised both head- and footstones and were inscribed in Ottoman script. And like Muslim cemeteries, theirs were thickly planted with cypresses. Mostly absent, however, were the turbans that topped Muslim tombstones.

The Dönme also managed their cultural difference through social segregation, residing in distinct neighborhoods in Salonika, complete with houses of worship and schools attended primarily by members of the community. At the same time, living publicly as Muslims, they assimilated into Ottoman society. They did so while remaining a devout community, forming both a closed caste protecting a unique religion and a fully acculturated group fitting in with their surrounding culture. In the Ottoman Empire, they were able to be fully Dönme among other Dönme and fully Ottoman Muslim in public, at ease inhabiting two worlds and insiders in both. They did not have to abandon



Tombstone portrait of Şemsi Efendi (d. 1917), Istanbul. Photo by author.

their religion to be full members of society, to choose between them in order to play their political, cultural, and economic role.

By the turn of the twentieth century that role was significant. With around 15,000 members, the Dönme had risen to the top of Salonika—a city with a population around 150,000, where they constituted one third of the Muslim population, a minority within a minority since most inhabitants of Salonika continued to be Jewish. The Dönme nonetheless transformed Ottoman Salonika, promoting the newest innovations in literature, architecture, and local politics, urban reform, trade and finance, as well as education.

The Dönme also inhabited an increasingly cosmopolitan network. By the early 1900s, they were found not only across southeastern Europe (in addition to Ottoman Salonika, there were communities in Macedonia, Greece, and Bulgaria), but also throughout the major cities of the Ottoman Empire, including Istanbul and Izmir, western and central Europe, with notable groups in London, Brussels, Paris, and Berlin, as well as in Vienna and other cities of the Habsburg Empire. Located on the religious margins of society and rigorously endogamous, the Dönme were able to network among their own diaspora, and—given their official status as Muslims—could still rise in the Ottoman administration and military. They also helped hasten its end. Leading revolutionary ideologue Doctor Nâzım (d.

1926) and government minister Mehmet Cavid Bey (d. 1926) were the driving force behind the Committee of Union and Progress (hereafter CUP), the secret society of Young Turks that dethroned the last powerful sultan, Abdülhamid II (d. 1918), following the 1908 revolution. Soon after the revolution, however, the Dönme began to face a double-pronged attack. They were castigated for their membership in what many Muslims perceived to be the atheist and immoral CUP and the decision to remove the sultan from power. For the first time also, their Islamic faith and practice were doubted and the Jewish label was first applied to them by political opponents. At this point in history, the Dönme became similar to *conversos*. Like the early modern crypto-Jews, the Dönme came to be considered “a ship with two rudders,” a group willing to trim its sails to the prevailing religious and political winds.

Soon, the Dönme were not only targeted for what they believed, but for what they did, namely, engage in foreign economic networks and local politics. After Salonika fell to Greece in 1912, there was no room in the city for cosmopolitanism. Some Dönme managed to hold on to their political and financial capital. But after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey just over a decade later, they were expelled from Greece which could not tolerate cosmopolitan elements with substantial financial connections beyond the nation-state.

Banished from Greece because they were Muslim, the Dönme were greeted in

Turkey as if they were Jews. As soon as they arrived, they faced threatening articles in the Turkish press declaring that because Jewish blood ran in their veins, they had no right to live in Turkey. They were depicted as disloyal, sponging parasites who hoarded their wealth and did not sacrifice any part of their fortune for the sake of the nation. As a result, the Dönme were denied a secure place in the secular Turkish nation-state.

Unlike the *conversos*, the Dönme were never accepted as Jews by Jews, nor accused of having close relations with Jews. They were not charged with Judaizing—believing in Judaism or secretly following its commandments, rituals, and customs. Their crime lay less in their actions than in their inherited genes. In the Turkish Republic, they were attacked, not for acting like Jews, but for being Jews, for their racial identity, and for their cosmopolitanism, all of which allegedly caused them to spread immorality.

Facing intense external pressure to abandon their cosmopolitanism and “Jewishness,” the Dönme eventually integrated themselves into the Turkish majority. Their final conversion—to secularism—also brought their end. Abandoning endogamy, the Dönme ceased to be a distinct group by the 1940s.

Marc David Baer is associate professor of History at University of California at Irvine. He is the author of The Dönme: Jewish Converts, Muslim Revolutionaries, and Secular Turks (Stanford University Press, 2010).

If It Smells Muslim: Lemon Cologne, Hebrew Lessons and Turkish Identity

Marcy Brink-Danan

Turkey smells like lemons; to be precise, it smells like what Turks call “limon kolonyası,” lemon cologne: an antibacterial concoction of fragrance, water, and alcohol. While rose, lavender, and even hazelnut colognes exist, it is the lemon version that Turks sprinkle abundantly to clean diners’ hands before or after a meal, to welcome a guest arriving after a voyage, and to revive someone after fainting. I have yet to enter a Turkish home that doesn’t have a little glass bottle of cologne or a Turkish institution without an industrial sized bucket of the stuff hidden in a utility closet.

If, given the widespread use of cologne, observers of Turkey would find the statement, “Turks smell like lemons,” uncontroversial, what of the following: “Muslims smell like lemons?” Surely “Turk” and “Muslim” are not interchangeable terms, even in a state where the majority of Turks are Muslim. Yet pundits, politicians, tourists, and theologians regularly call Turkey a “Muslim” or “Islamic country,” an affront to the secularist designs of the republic’s founders and the fact that separation of mosque and state is enshrined in Turkish law. Adopting the French political model of *laïcité*, the founders of the Republic of Turkey imagined a public sphere dramatically emptied of religious symbolism.

I was reminded of the slippery equivalence between Muslimness and Turkishness while sitting in the basement of a Jewish community center in Istanbul in 2002. Turkish Jewish adults used the center’s café as a makeshift classroom for Hebrew lessons offered by an Israeli living in Istanbul. Over home-cooked food, students struggled with the Hebrew for “allowed” and “forbidden,” constructing practice phrases such as “It is forbidden to eat on Yom Kippur” or “We are allowed to eat on Ramadan.” The teacher, who knew little Turkish, taught class in English (for some of the students this meant that they got two language classes for the price of one). Toward the end of the meal, the cook offered everyone a splash of lemon cologne. Watching the Israeli teacher’s quizzical expression, one of the students smiled broadly, explaining this cultural practice to him in English: “Muslims do this.” Then, just as quickly, she turned to me to say, in Turkish:

“Turks do this.” Here I was, eating kosher food, speaking Ladino, Turkish, and Hebrew with Jews whose deep integration into Turkish cultural life included the commonplace use of lemon cologne at the end of a meal. Why, then, would my friend say, “Muslims do this” in light of evidence to the contrary?

This slippage is what anthropologists call “indirect indexicality.” That’s a fancy way to say that relationships between things and what they stand for often skip a mediating step, creating a seamless relationship between signs that might otherwise not be linked, such as: lemon cologne–user = Turk = Muslim; ergo: lemon cologne–user = Muslim. One might expect Turkish Jews, the very folks whose citizenship belies the fact that Turkishness equals Muslimness, to have a heightened consciousness about what counts as Turkish or Muslim. Yet, despite their deep historical roots in the region, full Turkish citizenship, and fluency in Turkish, Turkish Jews are regularly reclassified as *yabancı* (Turkish for stranger or foreigner) in everyday interactions with Muslim Turks. If Jews (specifically Romaniote and Karaite communities) lived in the region now called Turkey before there even were Turks, why are they considered foreign today? Through what linguistic and social practices is one made—or makes oneself—a stranger? What does a turn of phrase about lemon cologne tell us about hegemony in Turkey?

Turkish Jews stand in a paradoxical relationship to Turkish hegemony for their pronounced role as authors and advocates of proto-republican reforms in the late Ottoman era. Despite the Jews’ loyalist attitude, the early years of the Republic of Turkey saw an increase in xenophobia in which minority languages were banned and devastating riots occurred. During the early years of the republic, becoming Turkish, and the fear of not being perceived as Turkish enough, engendered a profusion of effacing social practices among Jews and other minorities in Istanbul, such as adopting Modern Turkish instead of ethnic minority languages, “Turkifying” personal names, and removing other markers of difference from the public sphere. An excessive tax, the *Varlık Vergisi* instituted during World War II, pilfered small

Jewish (and other non-Muslim) businesses to the point of bankruptcy and was a major impetus for Jewish emigration from Turkey. *Varlık Vergisi* is commonly translated as “Capital Tax” or “Wealth Tax;” we might, however, consider an alternate translation of *varlık* as “presence,” which focuses attention on the devaluation—both financial and symbolic—of non-Muslim presence. While a muted version of Sunni Muslim identification was nonetheless incorporated into the vision of a secular Turkish Republic—and has reemerged with a vengeance since the 1990s—the languages, practices, and beliefs of Turkey’s religious and ethnic minorities took on a marked and taboo character.

Despite these hardships, some non-Muslims, albeit a tiny fraction at less than 1 percent of the population today, remained in Turkey. Currently sixty to sixty-five thousand Armenians, twenty to twenty-five thousand Jews, and three thousand Greeks live in Turkey. These traces of difference were overwhelmingly erased from the hegemonic narrative when the Republic of Turkey redefined the status of its minorities as full citizens. Fifty years ago, scholars of Turkey considered Turkish identity to be a zero-sum game, arguing “a non-Muslim in Turkey may be called a Turkish citizen, but never a Turk.” During ethnographic research in Turkey in 2002–03, I found this to be sometimes true and sometimes not. Jews today work and play in the same venues as Muslim Turks, go to the same bars and movie theaters, wear the same clothes, speak Turkish like their compatriots and, increasingly, marry Muslims. If prior to the 1960s intermarriage was quite rare, by 1992 marriages between Jews and Muslims in Turkey was recorded at 42 percent, with the rate of intermarriage nearly doubling between 1990 and 2001.

Turkish Jews have some habits that are unlike those of their Muslim neighbors and others that reveal their integration into the national Turkish fabric. In addition to the requisite bottle of lemon cologne, Jewish homes in Istanbul have collections of items from Israel: Dead Sea soaps and creams fill bathroom vanities, Israeli good luck charms hang on bedroom walls, and Israeli foodstuffs, such as Elite-brand coffee, Wissotsky tea,

or Max Brenner chocolates, are regularly served at Jewish social gatherings. These artifacts of contact between Turkish Jews and Israelis (usually duty free offerings) should not be surprising given the history of such a huge out-migration of the former after the establishment of the State of Israel, during which family networks became separated; an estimated one hundred thousand Jews of Turkish origin now live in Israel. Turkish Jews' knowledge of Israel, however, is generally concealed in public, as anti-Semitism and the complicated relationship Turkish Jews have with Israel (and, perhaps more importantly, the relationship that Islamists and leftists *perceive* them as having with Israel) generate incentives to maintain "*kayadez*," the Ladino term for "low-profile."

In a radio interview following a 2010 Israeli raid on a Turkish flotilla attempting to break the blockade of Gaza, the Turkish Prime Minister condemned Israel's actions yet warned that anti-Israel sentiments, evident in the massive street protests at the time, should not be allowed to spill over into anti-Semitism against Turkish Jews: "Our Jewish citizens have, as members of the Turkish people, defended, and continue to defend, the right position of Turkey to the utmost." He went on to insist that "looking with hatred upon

our Jewish citizens . . . is not acceptable." But why should Turkish Jews be punished for the actions of a foreign government? By saying that Turkish Jews should not be punished for Israel's actions, the Prime Minister reinforced the seemingly natural and logical connection between Turkish Jews and Israel in the first place. Reading these comments recalled an image that circulated in the Turkish press just a year earlier of proprietors of a Turkish social club posing proudly for photos, pooches in arms, next to a sign reading "No Jews or Armenians allowed; Dogs Welcome!" as a protest to Israel's invasion of Gaza in late 2009. The perception that Jews are "naturally" less Turkish than their Muslim neighbors by virtue of their possible affiliation with Israel are apt examples of indirect indexicality gone awry.

These semiotic slippages exemplify how identity performances are expressed by way of casual indexical assumptions. These sloppy associations, in which citizenship is symbolically reassigned or entire religious traditions are conflated (why, otherwise, should Armenians and Diaspora Jews be banned from a Turkish club as a reprisal for Israel's military actions?) reveal how social meaning—especially stereotype—is produced less through

denotation (direct indexicality) than through connotation (indirect indexicality).

Reluctance to challenge the implicit Muslim-ness of Turkey in public makes sense in the current political climate, but doesn't explain why my friend, who has since moved to Israel, described the use of cologne as a "Muslim" practice in private. While I doubt she would credit a slip of the tongue to her decision to emigrate, I have no doubt that a lifetime of moments of non-identification with the majority contributed to her alienation from Turkish life. In light of the regularity with which opinion-makers assert that Turkey is a "Muslim" country, the onus remains upon those of us who study Jews from "Islamic" lands (a phrase that is still common in Jewish Studies) to provide evidence that undoes ideological assumptions about what is Muslim and what is not, such as lemon cologne and other iconic Turkish things.

Marcy Brink-Danan is assistant professor of Judaic Studies and Anthropology at Brown University and author of Jewish Life in Twenty-First-Century Turkey: The Other Side of Tolerance (Indiana University Press, 2012). Starting in 2012, she will co-chair the AJS Sephardi/Mizrahi Caucus.

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The Issue Between Judaism and Islam

Gil Anidjar

“Jewish thinkers,” writes Jacob Taubes in the “The Issue Between Judaism and Christianity” (from whom I borrow my title), “have become so spellbound by Christianity’s historical success that they try to give it a ‘theological’ justification.” Although Taubes was writing in the early 1950s, one could easily argue that what we are witnessing, indeed, what we are doing in this issue on the other “issue” appeals still to the same kind of enchantment, albeit with significant variations.

There is no doubt that one could point to a long and diverse tradition of poets, grammarians, and philosophers, going back to Dunash ibn Labrat, Sa’adiah Gaon, and, of course, Moses Maimonides, whereby Jews would have been transfixed, indeed, spellbound, by some aspect of Islam. My favorite illustration at the moment—and, conveniently, a fascinating summary of its own—is www.jews-for-allah.org. But one could also turn to the essays collected by Martin Kramer on *The Jewish Discovery of Islam*, which, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin has pointed out, implicitly concedes the main point made by Edward W. Said. For if it has in fact been the case that Jewish thinkers and scholars have had a more positive, and less instrumental, attitude toward Islam than their Christian counterparts, the conclusion with regard to the Orientalism of the latter at least is clear enough. The issue between Christianity and Islam is, one can safely say, fraught and perduring.

Were Jews good for Islam then? Sorry. Was Islam good for the Jews? It may be important to recall that, as with the stereotype of “the virgin and the whore” admiring pedestals are not always more “positive” than their better recognized, degrading doubles (philo-Semitism is, after all, anti-Semitism under a different guise). Still, there are those who desperately try to conjure ancient truths, that Muslims were not quite as intent as Christians were on persecuting Jews, or that Haj Amin el-Husseini was not as damagingly evil as Himmler. And indeed, the fact may remain that, whether or not there was a German-Jewish dialogue, those involved—respectable individuals like Abraham Geiger, Moritz Steinschneider, or Hermann Cohen—seem to have thought that there was such a

thing as a Jewish-Muslim dialogue, and quite a productive one too. And they have followers, eager and laudable proponents of interfaith dialogues or even Abrahamic trialogues.

There are, however, terminological oscillations that may or may not contribute to the clarity of the issue at hand. Consider the not so linear evolution from culture or ethnicity to religion in the discursive spheres. Shlomo Dov Goitein told us about *Jews and Arabs*, which emphasized ethnicity and culture, whereas Bernard Lewis refreshingly suggested that Jews may have been of that world, but not in it in *The Jews of Islam*. Steven Wasserstrom, who traces some of that very history in his own *Between Muslim and Jew*, argued that the turn to religion and away from culture was probably for the best, while Ammiel Alcalay compellingly asked whether there was something, anything, *After Jews and Arabs*, after the alleged divide. At a remote distance from the alleyways of state administrations and the powers that be, other debates have taken place over Arab Jews, the possibility (Shimon Ballas, Ella Shohat, Sami Shalom Chetrit) and impossibility (Albert Memmi, of course, and pretty much the entirety of the Jewish establishment) of their existence. The importance and accuracy of historical testimony on the matter can be read, among other places, in the work of Emily Gottreich, Ivan Kalmar, Gil Hochberg, and others. In the current public sphere, however, a different kind of fascination appears to be holding sway and growing still. Many are rather spellbound by that lachrymose conception of Jewish history—the heading is “dhimmitude”—as well as by the prospect of extending yet again financial claims and demands for compensations. Call it remittance or call it the “Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative.” Or call it indeed, the Muslim issue.

It may be pertinent here to recall that Michael-André Bernstein obliquely contributed to the discussion when he contrasted foreshadowing and side-shadowing. The former is the tendency to see in the past the inevitable kernel of the dreaded future (all anti-Semitic roads lead to the Holocaust). The latter is the acknowledgment that historical events are knots of potentiality rather than markers of inevitability, mere confirmations of “foregone conclusions,” as Bernstein’s title

has it. I submit that what we are witnessing—the Muslim issue—is an intriguing moment of back-shadowing: the renewed casting of historical Islam in the image and terms of modern, Christian, and “secular” anti-Semitism. Invoking another pertinent set of terminological resources, I have elsewhere referred to “the Semitic hypothesis.” In the Christian imagination, the association and dissociation of Jew and Muslim (those other “Christ-killers”) is as ancient as “the new anti-Semitism” (roughly: the eleventh century). Here I would point to the profound connections, denegations, and omissions that link the war on terror to the war on anti-Semitism. Or, in Stephen Greenblatt’s recent hawk-eyed observation: “Shylock refuses to be a suicide bomber.” Back-shadowing indeed.

Now, what Taubes was objecting to was not the fact that Jews became white (as Karen Brodtkin has it). Not quite. He objected to the fact that they became Christian. Taubes was quite precisely opposing the attempt to make sense of the Jewish-Christian dispute, of Jewish history, and of history at large in Christian theological and historical terms (Othello, Greenblatt doth protest further, was “evidently” not a Muslim, rather “conspicuously, insistently, decisively a Christian”). Taubes’s argument was that the dispute could not be resolved by appealing to the Christian “economy of salvation.” Taubes hoped (mistakenly, as it turns out) that this would be readily understood: “the Christian religion in general and the body of the Christian church in particular, is of no religious relevance to the Jewish faith . . . Christian history can have no religious significance of any kind for the Jewish creed . . . It cannot even be recognized as something which, though meaningless for the Jewish people, represents truth for the rest of the world.”

What I am objecting to, in my (immodest) turn, is the enduring and derivative attempt to make sense of the Jewish-Muslim connection in Christian terms (just like Franz Rosenzweig did, as Taubes first pointed out), within the frame that has been set by the Christian West and that continues to determine and shape the ongoing war on terror (the economy of salvation also functions, of course, as the salvation of the economy, what Tim Mitchell

is calling *Carbon Democracy*). The affirmation of the “Judeo-Christian,” a post-genocidal concession of Faustian proportions, which functions in each and every single case as a negation of both Jews and Muslims, must be recognized as meaningless. As a frame of understanding that fosters a no less Faustian Jewish-Christian alliance, the war on terror (“the Muslim issue”) is the present culmination of a Christian understanding of history as the history of progress, freedom, and secularism. It can hold no truth value for the rest of the world. Much less for us.

We must begin again, then, if it is not too late. And we must do so by interrogating the very frame within which we operate as we consider “the Muslim issue” in its relation to our Jewish, all-too-Jewish questions, God forgive us. These are older questions, to be sure, but still worth asking. Were there Muslims in Auschwitz? Are we a religion? Are we a people or a nation? Are we a race? Exile or sovereignty, *torah or medina*? As

Mitchell Hart asked, are we even one anyway? And depending on the way we answer, one can only dream of the kind of political imagination that might become available to us toward ourselves, first of all, in our secure and insecure borders, and toward those who might be called Muslims, but many of whom were or are Arab Christians, Sunni Persians, or Pashtuns of a Shi’i persuasion—and even, lest we forget what was done to their blood as well, Iraqi and Ethiopian Jews.

What Muslim issue then? I do not think it is my task to assuage “security” concerns—as if I could—nor to recall a Jewish-Muslim symbiosis (although there were many, in case you’re wondering). There is no Muslim issue, not for the Jews, and not for the rest of the world, or what’s left of it. That is the inconvenient truth, which is not to deny that untruth has had, of course, staggeringly devastating consequences. Still, the notion that Islam is an issue (commensurable, say, with the weapon industry or the banking

industry) holds no truth value today, and particularly not when considering the role of that name, “Islam,” as a place holder in a long list of names—and targets indeed of the military and financial, and prison-industrial, complex—from “the dark hordes” to the “third world,” from terra nullius to “America’s vital interests,” from the “Saracen infidel” to the “illegal immigrant.” We must try to look at history, as Taubes demanded, with different, less Christian eyes.

Let me repeat this, then: There were Muslims in Auschwitz, but there is no Muslim issue. No “issue” between Judaism and Islam, no shared perspective either.

Not yet.

Gil Anidjar is associate professor in the Department of Religion and the Department of Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies at Columbia University. He translated The Historiographic Perversion by Marc Nichanian (Columbia University Press, 2009).

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The Latest

Hadag Nahash 6

Azzan Yadin-Israelael

In September, 2010, *Time* magazine ran a cover story about Israel's disengagement from the peace process. Arrayed with striking photos of Israelis sunning on the beach and the frenetic Tel Aviv skyline, Karl Vick set forth the thesis that, as the tagline stated, "Israelis feel prosperous, secure—and disengaged from the peace process." Looking back at that article now that hundreds of thousands of Israelis have taken to the streets to protest the growing economic inequality, it is safe to say that in hindsight, *Time's* pronouncements appear premature. It is also safe to say that Karl Vick should have spent more time listening to Hadag Nahash.

Earlier that year, the Israeli hip-hop band released 6, its fifth studio album, bearing a relentless message of social, economic, and political protest. Some of the themes are familiar, among them war ("War"), the increasing violence within Israeli society ("od 'ah ehad"), religious fanaticism ("Little Man"), and the plight of foreign workers ("ma'arbolet shel hol"). Others, like *zeh lo' maspik's* lament against the vacuity of success, less so. Perhaps the most dramatic protest is Hadag Nahash's decision to begin recording in English. To be sure, Anglophone success is much more lucrative than one limited to a Hebrew speaking audience—just ask Isaac Bashevis Singer and S. Y. Agnon—so the band has solid financial reasons for writing in English. Still, given the dark tone and relentless criticism of much of the album, it is hard not to hear the English songs as a sign of growing despair, artistic and perhaps more, of seeing—to say nothing of effecting—meaningful change in Israel.

Unfortunately, the English songs are the album's weakest, as Sha'an'an Street is not able to replicate the same virtuoso combination of lofty themes and ribald humor, of poetry and slang that animates his Hebrew lyrics, the songs' political messages are flat ("War! I don't want no more

war!") and sometimes Ali G hilarious ("Yo! I come from the holiest place on earth").

Fortunately, Hadag Nahash remain a formidable force in their native tongue, and 6 contains some of their finest songs. Musically, the band hews close to its established mix of laid-back rap, dance floor rousers, and hip-hop laced with big, infectious brass sections. An exception is the acoustic "od 'ah ehad" ("Another Brother"), whose simple (some

classics to write our verses." Food, alcohol, dirty jokes, and crashing laptops fuse in a lovingly wrought portrait of friends and musical partners savoring their time together.

To my mind, the album contains two of Hadag Nahash's strongest songs. "*Ani ma'amin*" ("I Believe") offers a series of unapologetically leftist credos about Israel's failures as a negotiating partner, the dire need to invest in public education and cultural activities, rampant racism and economic inequality. The singer, Sha'an'an Street, then shifts gears and, adopting an ironic pose, describes the well-intentioned actions of a political activist organizing demonstrations, working with nonprofits, raising awareness—in short, the very activities that have characterized Hadag Nahash since their early days. But, at least in the song, it is all for naught. Nobody cares and so "I wither away, drop off, drawing away from everyone, not eating and not drinking . . ." This tale of irreparable social decay and individual impotence is set to some of the band's funkier music, opening with a blaring trumpet—part Earth, Wind, and Fire tribute, part biblical declaration of war—that shifts into a richly textured, syncopated rap. As though the band were saying: the situation is indeed hopeless—all that's left is to dance.

The crowning achievement of 6 is, to my mind, "*shir nehama*" ("A Song of Consolation"). Thematically, the song is of a piece with the album's motifs of protest and despair. "My taxes go toward the purchase of weapons, and I see (the world) through them; my children pull the trigger, and I'm so very proud . . ." Street shouts with biting sarcasm, even as he lays some of blame at his own feet since even though he is lied to and deceived "like an innocent lamb, still I believe (or: still I have faith)." The confluence of criticism and helplessness leads—as with "*ani ma'amin*" and "*zeh lo' maspik*"—to a self-directed critique, here in the derogatory characterization of the band's musical enterprise. Like other protest songs that thematize the powerlessness



Album cover of 6 by Hadag Nahash. Photo by Amit Israeli.

would say: simplistic) lyrics are paired with a simple melody to produce a poignant protest against the senseless death of young Israeli men and the rhetorical and at times physical violence that follows. Anyone familiar with the vapid landscape of American top forty (e.g., parents to teens) will be struck by the fact that the song hit number one on both the Reshet Gimmel and Galgalatz countdowns.

The remarkable "*ba-salon shel salomon*" ("In Solomon's Living Room") provides the listener a glimpse of the raunchy, hip-hop boys-will-be-boys camaraderie that fuels the band's creative process as they sit in Solomon's (Shlomi Alon, the band's saxophonist and flautist) living room, "going back to the

of the song to effect the desired change (e.g., Shlomo Gronich's "*shirim peshutim*"), Hadag Nahash pull back from the implicit claim that their message can make a difference, seeking solace in home cooking, backyard barbecues, and a bottle of arak.

And their music? They "sing in order not to see that there's nothing to sing for; sing another song of consolation." At the same time, the song epitomizes the best traits of popular Israeli culture. The lyrics layer elevated and colloquial Hebrew, and the irrepressible melody is a tapestry of sources and influences. Opening with an oud riff, "*shir nehama*" is based on an Arab musical scale though it is performed on typically western instruments (electric guitars, a drum battery, electric bass). The musical synthesis is personified in the guest guitar soloist, Yehuda

Keisar, a seminal figure in the Mizrahi music scene. Keisar is considered the father of the Mizrahi electric guitar, a style he developed while playing with many of the luminaries of Mizrahi (sometimes called "Mediterranean") music, most famously Zohar Argov, whose first album he produced (*Elinor*, the best-selling Hebrew album of all time). His inclusion in Hadag Nahash's hip-hop, is a testament to the band's desire to break down the barriers that have long defined Israeli music.

6 is a grim album that reflects Hadag Nahash's growing despair with *ha-matzav*, the hypostasized Israeli "situation," and their ability to change it. Guy Mar's "*zeh lo' maspik*" ("It's Not Enough"), offers a long list of "achievements" (from HD DVR's to Facebook friends) all of which predictably turn out to be "not enough," a list that culminates in

another bout of musical self-critique: "I've got a band—it's not enough; we conquered the charts—it's not enough . . . this song is nice—but it's not enough." Faced with the band's increasing tendency to question the ultimate meaning of their music, at least one fan would like to temper the pessimism. Yes, politically, socially, and economically 6 may not be enough, but it shows that Hadag Nahash continues to be a fresh and thoughtful voice in Israeli music, with a groove second to none. And that's no small thing.

Azzan Yadin-Israel is associate professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. He is the author of Scripture as Logos: Rabbi Ishmael and the Origins of Midrash (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).



Hadag Nahash (from left: Sha'anán Streett, Moshe Asraf, Shlomi Alon, Guy Margalit, Yaya Cohen Aharonov, Dudush Klemes). Photo by Amit Israeli.

Notes on the Relaunch of *Studies in American Jewish Literature*

Benjamin Schreier

More than thirty-six years ago, in the editorial note that opened the inaugural issue of *Studies in American Jewish Literature*, Dan Walden described the problem the journal was founded to address. Speaking for the editorial board—which in those early years included scholars like Sarah Blacher Cohen, Leslie Fiedler, Allen Guttman, Irving Howe, Sanford Pinsker, and Moses Rischin—Walden wrote, “This is the first issue of a new journal devoted to the American Jewish writer and the American Jewish experience. In view of the way that some sectors of academia have ignored American Jewish materials . . . it seemed necessary to a number of people in the field to provide a medium of communication.” Responding to this historiographic lapse, the journal would aim to publish “the best available” work “bearing on the American Jewish experience, particularly in literature and related areas.”

One year earlier, in 1974, Walden had edited *On Being Jewish*, an important, field-defining anthology of Jewish American literature, and in it he previewed this argument for the historiographic significance of Jewish American literary study. Walden highlighted the immense cultural work performed by Jewish America—he sketched a historical typology from the *Jews who immigrated to America*, to the *American Jews of their children’s generation*, to the *Americans who were Jews of their grandchildren’s generation*—as it struggled at once to define and to hold on to an identity that was always in flux and never self-evident. As he laid it out in the anthology’s introduction, the literature written by these Jews is so important because it constitutes the record of this cultural work: “That set of experiences, these problems, this people, are the source and reason for the American Jewish writers included here.” More specifically, and more significantly, if Jews in America were and remain “uncertain . . . of their precise Jewish identity,” Walden insisted on focusing on those “writers who have asked the questions about other Jews, because that is whom they know, and love, and hate, and because they care deeply and want to find out what it means to be a Jew or an American Jew or an American

who is a Jew.” Thus, as Walden defined the field, Jewish American literary study is important in the first instance because of the literature’s sociological-historical reference, because it attests to a Jewish American experience that had rarely been made the focus of academic study, and in the second instance because it asks important questions about Jewish identity and identification.

The key to Walden’s Jewish American literary criticism, as to his institutional advocacy, is simple and elegant: as he wrote in the anthology, “the American Jewish writers wrote of what they knew. American Jewish literature was invented by them.” What’s changed since the late 1960s and early 1970s, and since the founding of *SAJL*, of course, is that we no longer have to make the case for specifically American Jewish literary study; thanks in large part to Walden, we can now point to a growing canon of Jewish American literary criticism. But at the same time, this does not mean that we can take for granted the meaning—or really even the existence—of that canon. If we’re going to say that we can derive a picture of American Jewry from this literature, then beyond asking questions about how Jews are represented in the literature that they have invented, we need to ask questions about how the literature deploys the Jewish identity that it has invented, and even more radically about how our criticism articulates this identity and this literature. And these latter questions are not so easy to answer, at least once we start facing the implications of asking them.

As a professor at Penn State University Walden was instrumental in the late-1960s movement to introduce the study of minority and ethnic literature into the American academy as a way of addressing and administering the institutional crisis that was wracking universities across the country; he taught some of the first courses in ethnic and urban literature offered on U.S. campuses. The logic that energized this movement, that political representation and artistic representation are bound up with each other and mutually reinforcing, and that literary analysis should be understood as a species of historiography, has become so normalized,

is so pervasive now, so much a part of our academic and cultural commonsense, that it sometimes can be hard to criticize what we’re doing, or hard to envision alternative approaches. At the same time, explicitly Jewish literary study seems almost to suffer from the opposite problem, and is sometimes a bit hard to notice. Questions about specifically Jewish identity are often neglected in English departments’ larger fascination with identity and ethnicity, few English departments seem all that interested in hiring specialists in Jewish literature, and Jewish Studies has only relatively recently concerned itself with asking properly literary critical or theoretical questions about Jewish literature. A few years ago I took part in a roundtable at the Modern Language Association conference which polemically asked “Does the English Department Have a Jewish Problem?” And while I don’t think that blame for the uncertain status of Jewish literary studies lies completely with English departments, I think the panel usefully showcased the open question of Jewish literary studies—the fact is that it’s not at all clear where the critical study of Jewish literature belongs. The future of Jewish literary study needs to situate itself precisely in this troubled space between often overly normalized questions about the representation of identity and often unauthorized questions about the Jewishness of literature.

At the risk of sounding petty for using this space to settle old scores, I’d like to seize the opportunity to quote from a rather haughty and dismissive reader’s report I received a couple of years ago when a leading journal of academic literary criticism rejected an article that I had submitted: “Jewish American literature won’t survive because of its Judaic sources, its Jewishness so-to-speak, but solely through its literature.” Though as a modern, post-Enlightenment kind of guy I want, of course, to agree with such a sentiment, I’m not at all convinced that this distinction—that is, between the “Jewish” part and the “literature” part of a critical or scholarly entity called Jewish literature—is a legitimate one, at least if we’ve decided that we want to hold on to a specifically Jewish (or

Jewish American) field of literary study. It's obvious (as I think this reviewer was trying to suggest) that we don't need to read a Jewish author for his or her texts' "Jewishness." But this means that if we *are* interested in a literary critical concept of Jewish identity, as I would imagine scholars who take a professional interest in Jewish literature likely are (here's where my score-settling comes into play, incidentally, as I think it's where this reviewer was being reductive—or actually reactionary), then we need to admit that the field of Jewish American literary study inheres at least partly, but undeniably, in the practice of treating literature as "Jewish"—I'm not sure why or how else we'd maintain the field. The Jewish unity or identity of a text is not a datum or textual attribute; it is a project, produced in the activity of reading, and deferred through a series of metonymic recognitions. It seems to me that a truly critical Jewish American literary study needs to approach texts obliquely, with its own interpretive desire to read texts as Jewish, with this overdetermination, in mind.

Studies in American Jewish Literature relaunches in 2012 with a new editor (me),

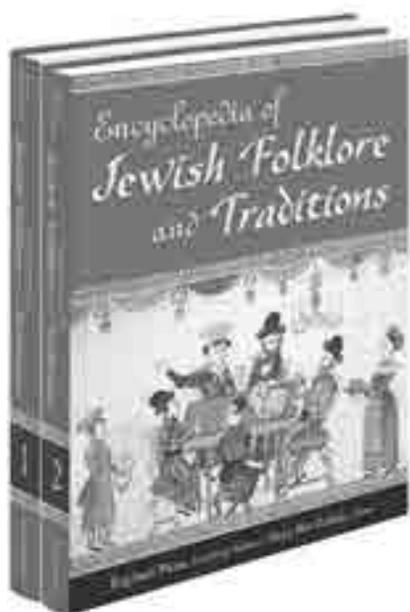
a new editorial board, and a new press, but without, sadly, Dan Walden, who is stepping down after having done so much to establish the academic study of Jewish American literature. Thanks to Dan, we no longer have to prove the field's worth. Thanks also to him, we can dedicate our efforts to publishing the very best and most important scholarship in Jewish American literary and cultural criticism. What we mean by this is methodologically serious work that rejects the compensations of consigning Jewish literature and its criticism in a celebratory ghetto, but instead opens the literature, and itself, to their many constitutive outsides and others.

SAJL does not seek to be an all-purpose Jewish Studies journal (of which there are already several excellent examples); instead, we're trying to theorize how "Jewish" exists literarily and culturally—how it exists, above all, *textually*. Accordingly, *SAJL* refuses to reduce Jewish literary historical and literary critical work to a single methodological approach, and seeks to explore a wide variety of critical paths. *SAJL* seeks to enliven and enrich the universe of Jewish Studies work by paying serious critical attention to the

aesthetics of identity. We're dedicated to publishing work analyzing the place, representation, and circulation of Jews and Jewishness in American literatures, and to serving as a venue for theorizing—as broadly and intensely as possible—the ways in which it makes sense to talk about identity in literature. We understand this commitment to aesthetic inquiry as uncontained by any particular methodological, ideological, categorical, or national project, and we remain open to new work that seeks to interrogate the relationships between writing, reading, genres, histories, technologies, and thinking. In other words: try us.

Benjamin Schreier is the Malvin and Lea Bank Assistant Professor of English and Jewish Studies at The Pennsylvania State University. He is the author of The Power of Negative Thinking: Cynicism and the History of Modern American Literature (University of Virginia Press, 2009).

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The Questionnaire:

Why did you go into Jewish Studies?

Benjamin M. Baader

Associate Professor of History and Coordinator of Judaic Studies, University of Manitoba

In the 1960s and 1970s, when I grew up in Munich and later West Berlin, Jewish life in Germany was ossified. Paralyzed. Bound and gagged by a past that was not over yet. As has been described by scholars such as Michal Bodemann, postwar German-Jewish communities were fortresses, where survivors locked themselves in to find protection from a mostly self-absorbed or even hostile German society and a not very sympathetic Jewish international public.

Whatever comfort was to be found within these small and often suffocating communities, I did not have much access to it, as I grew up at their margins. My Viennese father, though Jewish and marked by his experience as a camp survivor, was a socialist, not affiliated Jewishly, and he passed to me only faint echoes of a Jewish practice. My non-Jewish mother communicated to me that my father's heritage was an obligation to me, but she was not able to provide much content beyond the story of persecution and extermination of those who came before me. So I grew up with a strong sense of difference and purpose. I was bound to something that I knew reached deep into the past, far beyond the abyss of death and destruction, but that I did not have much concrete information about.

Thus not surprisingly, in my twenties I began searching for what Judaism was beyond concentration camps. I began learning Hebrew and enrolled in a Judaic Studies university program. I also formally joined the Jewish community of Berlin and underwent a conversion to regularize my status. At that time, I started falling in love with the richness of Jewish texts and with the complexities of Jewish history; the shiny fabric of Jewish learning has not ceased to delight and enchant me since. And while my Jewish Studies career unfolded in North America, Jewish life in Europe began to resurge. Due to the influx of post-Soviet Jews, the German-Jewish population is more than three times larger now than it was in the

1980s, and today new generations of European Jews assert themselves and establish novel, diverse, inventive, and often provocative forms of Jewish life. The shadows of the Shoah are still long, but they have become less overwhelming and impenetrable. I have gone into Jewish Studies in post-genocidal Germany in the search for what is alive in the Jewish experience, and the Jewish capacity for sustaining and recovering aliveness lets European and German Jews today shape new and distinct local Jewish cultures.

Cynthia Baker

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, Bates College

Three decades ago, as a young college student, I studied in Jerusalem. Ripe for the encounter, I fell intensely and fearfully in love with that place, *ha-makom, ha-aretz*. With the loss of political innocence and the heartbreak that followed, I have often felt myself caught in a seemingly hopeless attempt to make sense of it all, caught like a fly in the sticky interconnections of the web into which I've flown. Jewish Studies at times illumines for me diverse strands in this web of love and grief.

As I grow older, I find I am increasingly bemused by the human world, its confounding disparities, and perplexing preoccupations. As a child of Western education and culture, I have come to know Jew as a name by which to take hold of and wrestle with bemusement, alienation, and ambivalence; to own the strange as familiar and the familiar as strange; to recognize self in/as Other. Jewish Studies provides me many ways to face and embrace that ambivalent Jew.

Throughout my life, I have been intrigued by complex questions; by ideas that open out to other ideas, other questions, multiple possibilities. And I yearn to live within a sense of the sacred that reaches beyond common parochialisms. These impulses surely ground my choices of an academic profession and, within that, the field of religious studies. I come to Jewish Studies through religious studies, seduced—and sustained—by delight in the play of ideas

and words, the resonant multivocality of practices like midrash, and by deep pleasure in a tradition that, at its best, honors questioning, challenging, and learning as sacred acts.

Deborah Green

Associate Professor of Religious Studies, University of Oregon

In 1995, I was working for a human resources consulting firm as a marketer. I was living in Madison, Wisconsin, and flying out to the Los Angeles office for two weeks each month. I spent a lot of time in airports and on the phone. I did my job quite well and could probably do it in my sleep. The pay was very good, and my staff was really terrific, but I felt unfulfilled. I wanted to work at something in which I would need to learn constantly and where I could interact with bright, highly curious people every day. One day the rabbi of my synagogue in Madison asked me to speak to some church groups on the weekends because he had more invitations than he could handle. I agreed and spent the next year or so researching and speaking on topics such as, "The Jewish View of Jesus," "Jews at the Time of Jesus," and "What Kind of Jew was Jesus?" Needless to say, I became very interested in Bible and Hellenistic and early rabbinic Judaism. When my now ex-husband landed a job that moved us to Chicago, I thought, "Here's my chance. I'll take off for a year or two and see what grad school feels like." I enrolled in a terminal MA program at the Divinity School at the University of Chicago. The dean of students kept asking me, "Don't you want to enroll in the regular MA program? What if you decide to go on for a PhD?" I didn't consider his questions seriously. But on the first day of orientation, I sat in this magnificent room on campus, listened to presentations about the upcoming intellectual rigors, and gazed up at the wood-carved angels on the beam ceiling who were singing hymns. At the break, I went downstairs and changed my track from "terminal MA" to "MA toward PhD." I was home; I've never looked back.

Atina Grossmann

Professor of History, Cooper Union

I am trained as a modern European and German historian and did not “go” or “get” into Jewish Studies via any conventional academic route; Jewish Studies captured and captivated me because that’s where my research led me. My work on Jewish survivors and displaced persons in postwar occupied Germany, which initially emerged from questions about the German experience of defeat and occupation, pushed me not only to a more particular focus on Jewish history but, quite literally, into new territory, beyond the borders of Germany and German history, into Poland, the Soviet Union, Palestine/Israel, and now even toward Iran and India as I explore the experiences of European Jewish refugees during and immediately after World War II. Jewish Studies quite simply offered the transnational, border-crossing, and interdisciplinary perspectives and methodologies I needed to investigate and make sense of topics that fascinated me. Not so simply, I have found myself launched, at first slowly, almost without noticing, and now in a way that feels familiar and (almost) legitimate into a new academic universe, with different (and sometimes overlapping) conferences, seminars, colleagues, for which I am not in fact formally qualified—but which has become integral to my scholarship and, indeed, to which my own scholarship contributes. If I had only known in the 1960s that this was the path my research would take I might have paid more attention in Hebrew School and picked oranges on a Kibbutz where everyone didn’t speak German, but my path into Jewish Studies speaks, I think, to a more general opening of a once tightly patrolled field that in so many ways seems peculiarly suited to address current wide-ranging scholarly and political preoccupations with cosmopolitanism, migration, displacement, multiple identities, and memory. Last but not least—and this warrants a longer complicated conversation having to do with the life cycle of the “second generation”—Jewish Studies offers a space within which I can experiment with linking family stories to collective histories.

Melanie Landau

Lecturer of Jewish Studies, Monash University

Eight years ago I was employed as a Lecturer in Jewish Studies when I returned to Melbourne, Australia, after four years in Jerusalem. My colleagues and I developed a community education program for the

university and then we raised money from local family foundations for our salaries. Our university positions involved half-time community education with university branding and half-time regular academic teaching and research. This model was a great success for the university. We changed the nature of discourse in the community, attracted our target audiences, and we succeeded in bringing in several new chairs because of the exposure that our program gave the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation.

My first monograph (converted from my PhD) is currently in press. *Tradition and Equality in Jewish Marriage: Beyond the Sanctification of Subordination* (Continuum) is both an analytical and a constructive project. It looks at alternatives to traditional Jewish marriage from within the traditional sources (such as conditional marriage and *derekh kiddushin*) as well as showing how traditional marriage is nonreciprocal and detrimental to women (and the marriage relationship) as well as exploring the role of values in halakic determinations. This project represents both my embrace and my wrestling with the tradition.

All the courses I have been involved in developing and/or teaching have had a transformational goal in mind: “Jewish Law”; “Reading Gender in Judaism”; “Rethinking Australian Jewish Community”; “Post conflict: Memory, Justice and Reconciliation”; and an overseas trip to Israel and the Palestinian Territories called “Israelis and Palestinians: Between War and Peace.”

I currently live in Jerusalem with my family on sabbatical and also work half-time as Director of Facilitation for Encounter, which is an educational organization dedicated to providing global diaspora leaders from across the religious and political spectrum with exposure to Palestinian life. I am thriving in this environment where relationship is at the center and I have the privilege (and burden) to be a “boundary-crosser” and move between Israel and Palestinian Territories, carrying both my grounded-ness in the tradition as well as the consideration of our Jewish participants and our Palestinian partners.

Olga Litvak

Associate Professor of History and Michael and Lisa Leffell Chair in Modern Jewish History, Clark University

As a matter of fact, I didn’t go into Jewish Studies. What I did was go to Columbia in

order to study with Michael Stanislawski for a few years before settling down to a real job, the only one I’ve wanted since the age of four: teaching. I had no particular interest in Jewish Studies, but Stanislawski proved such a gifted, inspiring mentor that I would have been prepared to go into his field no matter what it was (except, possibly, organic chemistry). I had no stake in the academic profession for the first three years of graduate school and no sense of my contribution to “Jewish Studies” until I finished my first book. Actually, I resisted studying anything that was even remotely connected to Russian-Jewish history because I worried about people assuming that I couldn’t do anything else. With Stanislawski, that was not a handicap. Quite simply, he took my intellect more seriously than my background and made me see my early Jewish education and native knowledge of Russian as assets rather than liabilities. In the course of things, I met several other people whose friendship and respect I now treasure. It so happens that most of them were also working in Jewish Studies. I’ve come to share their interests and I think they now share some of mine. I love the fact that we read many of the same books and obsess about the same questions. And I love that they want to read my work. However, I remain firmly convinced that my professional choices were largely (and happily) contingent; I often wonder about the possibility of going back to my real roots—a lifelong obsession with narrative—and writing something about Chekhov or Dickens. But as long as I can write about Sholem Aleichem, I probably won’t.

Alan Mintz

Chana Kekst Professor of Hebrew Literature, Jewish Theological Seminary

My entry into Jewish Studies was the solution to a problem.

I began my freshman year at Columbia University with the intention of becoming a rabbi or a Jewish educator, but I became enthralled by the explosion of literary theory (J. Hillis Miller, Barthes, Foucault, and others) and soon forgot about my earlier vocational plans. Instead of rabbinical school, I continued on at Columbia in the doctoral program in English with a focus on Victorian fiction. Outside my graduate studies I was deeply involved with the New York Havurah and the spiritual and cultural ferment of the Jewish youth culture. As I met students from Zionist and radical

movements and learned more about the Holocaust and Soviet Jewry, I realized how parochial had been my upbringing within the youth movement of Conservative Judaism. I began to feel connected to the national historical experience of the Jewish people and not only to its religious practices.

After my oral examinations, I took some time off to consider what had become a pressing dilemma. Although my enthusiasm for English studies had not abated, I began to question whether I had a sufficient depth of personal commitment to make it my life's work and to go to a remote location to practice it. My deepest commitments were now to the Jewish people, and I wanted to find a way to insure that whatever intellectual gifts I had would leave their mark on its culture. But I felt I was starting too late and could never make the switch into another field of study. A fateful conversation with the late theologian and man of letters Arthur A. Cohen forced me to confront my defenses and re-imagine my future. The decision was made, and I experienced an enormous release of intellectual energies. I would complete my degree by writing a dissertation on George Eliot and the novel of vocation. Only in retrospect did I realize that I had chosen a topic that described the ordeal I had been undergoing. At the same time and during several postdoctoral years, I would "retool" in Jewish Studies. I first pursued midrash and then medieval Hebrew poetry and finally found my home in modern Hebrew literature. Only in retrospect, as well, did I realize that my chosen field was a solution to yet another problem: how to remain deeply connected to Israel and to Hebrew while making a life in America.

Anita Norich

*Professor of English and Judaic Studies,
University of Michigan*

Why not? Why wouldn't I "go into" Jewish Studies? That seems to me a good Jewish (Studies) answer, partly because it underscores the insistence on questions that is central to study of any kind, partly because it made me pause over where I was coming from and what I was going to when I began my study of Yiddish, Jewish culture, thought and history, partly because it assumes that people choose to go into a field called Jewish Studies. A generation ago literature students could not have chosen such a field, though the training we received in English,

German, Slavic Studies, and other disciplinary homes has, I think, stood us in good stead.

The question suggests to me a coming of age because it assumes that Jewish Studies, while not a discipline or a methodology, is nonetheless a field people choose. I entered it initially, I am now a bit sorry to confess, partly out of pique. When I was getting my PhD in English and Comparative Literature (with a focus on Victorian Literature), I took language exams in French and German and then asked to take them in Yiddish as well. It seemed wrong for someone who was as educated as I was about to become to be functionally illiterate in her native tongue. My spoken Yiddish was excellent, but my reading was . . . let's just say neglected. Columbia refused my request (hence, the pique) until, following my advisor's suggestion, I said that I wanted to do a comparative field in the Yiddish novel. I don't think I could have named half a dozen Yiddish novels at that point but once I started reading I did not want to stop. I "discovered" a wealth of modernist poetry and satirical novels, funny characters, and those caught between what academics have been taught not to call tradition and modernity, stylistic experimentation and realism: in short, everything I knew about English literature. But in Yiddish and, for the most part, concerning Jews. Since both mattered a great to me personally, I wondered if they might matter professionally as well. And they have.

Vanessa L. Ochs

*Associate Professor of Religious Studies and
Jewish Studies, University of Virginia*

I didn't go into Jewish Studies. I landed there.

A dozen years ago, the Dean of the College of Arts and Science at the University of Virginia decided the time was ripe to create a Jewish Studies Program and a major in Jewish Studies. My partner, Peter Ochs, who has a great imagination, was asked to bring it into being and initially, I was invited to join the faculty. I was just finishing my PhD in Anthropology of Religion at Drew University at the time and was a senior fellow at CLAL, the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership in New York. But mostly, until that point, I was a writer who taught classes in Writing and Women in Religion.

After a year of teaching at UVA and being responsible for the fledgling undergraduates studying Judaism at UVA, my department chair told me that the dean

wanted me to be the director of the Jewish Studies Program. I said I was flattered and would think about it, and the chair said, no, this was the dean's decision, not mine.

Was this plausible? I had picked up skills in fundraising and dealing with donors from my work at CLAL, so I figured I could do that part, and as one of the directors of the International Committee for Women of the Wall, I had learned to speak persuasively in public. But I had no experience in any other aspects of academic administration: creating a faculty, negotiating, programming, grant writing, hiring, and so forth. Beyond that, I didn't picture myself as a Jewish Studies scholar (I had in mind people who seemed to fit the bill: Judith Baskin, Deborah Dash Moore, David Ruderman, and the late Judah Goldin, a friend of mine at the time). True, my work as a writer and anthropologist focused on Jews, but still . . . the turn to "cultural studies" for Jewish Studies scholarship had yet to have the status it does now.

I didn't yet know that for most academics who take on administrative responsibilities, it is "Amateur Hour," at least initially. And I didn't yet know that most people who find themselves in Jewish Studies, even those directing programs, consider themselves, compared to others who are "legit," to be imposters. It turned out that the dean had good instincts: I learned on the job and embraced my new identity as the first Ida and Nathan Kolodiz Director of Jewish Studies, a role that my colleague Gabriel Finder is now interpreting in his own way.

Todd Presner

*Professor of Germanic Languages and
Comparative Literature and Director of the
Center for Jewish Studies, UCLA*

In the mid-1990s, I went to Germany to study the language and deepen my knowledge of German philosophy. Among other places, I spent time in Weimar, a city famous not only for being the birthplace of Goethe and Schiller but also the first location of the Bauhaus and home to the Nietzsche archive. A short bus ride up a hill outside the city leads to Buchenwald, a massive, sprawling concentration camp, marked—at the time—by giant anti-fascism monuments erected by the Soviets. The horrible proximity of Weimar and Buchenwald was, to me, the distillation of Adorno's culture/barbarism dialectic, a complex history of civilization and violence that simultaneously entangled and estranged German and Jewish.

Inspired by Walter Benjamin's writings on urbanism, I lived in Berlin for a large part of 1995 and 1996, trying to piece together the history of the city as the city tried to piece itself back together. Monuments and museums for the Holocaust were debated almost every day in the press, while on the ground, traces of the Jewish past were often very hard to find. I spent several days looking for Berlin's Judenhof, only to find apartment courtyards and parking lots. I first found the Judenhof on a 1772 map of the city, and I used that, like a palimpsest, to guide my search in the present. Not unlike Benjamin, I found the streets conducted me downward in time, into a thickly layered past. I walked to the Anhalter train station, which was now just a ruin, knowing that Kafka, Celan, and Benjamin had entered and left Berlin from this station. Birch trees grew through its derelict tracks.

I went into Jewish Studies initially to untangle the German-Jewish dialectic but found that I could only tarry with it. German-Jewish Studies was and still is a spatial practice for me, marked not only by spaces of memory and oblivion but storytelling and way-finding, marking and annotating places of encounter, productivity, and destruction. I felt an obligation to map these histories as places, to struggle with their otherness, and to develop a kind of relational ethics between the then and there and the here and now. Jewish Studies became a way of listening, an attentiveness to the many pasts, which called out, however faintly, to a different future. I am a cultural historian of these pasts.

Na'ama Rokem

Assistant Professor of Modern Hebrew Literature, University of Chicago

Let me begin by laying my cards bare: I work on Jewish literature because it is what I know and where I come from. Navel-gazing, pure and simple. Moreover, I never quite decided to get into Jewish Studies. I studied Comparative Literature at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and then at Stanford University, and as I evolved as a student and a scholar, Jewish authors more often than not wrote the texts that attracted and compelled me. This determined the languages I learnt (I originally took up German because I was completely fascinated by Freud's figurative language) and the fields I specialized in (the cultural history of Zionism, Modern Hebrew literature). In retrospect, I've come up with several types of rationalization for what I do,

for both personal and professional purposes. One of them emerges from my experience of teaching Israeli literature and culture, which has become one of the parts of my job that I value most. For me, teaching the history of Zionism and Israeli literature and culture at an American university is a fascinating opportunity to explore the power of literary texts and other cultural phenomena to expand and challenge our world-views, or, in other words, it is an opportunity to reflect on the very value of the humanities and of literary studies. Students often come to these classes with firmly entrenched perceptions about the politics of the Middle East. I see it as my role neither to confirm these views nor to change them, but rather to expose my students to complex, multivalent objects that defy the either-or logic of politics and open up spaces for reflection. Studying the contact-zone between German and Hebrew has been for me an entryway into precisely such a challenging space of reflection, forcing me to reconsider some of my basic perceptions about Hebrew culture before and after the Holocaust. So, to return to where I started, I work on Jewish literature because this allows me to question what I think I know about where I came from and because this opens a conversation with peers—colleagues and students—that I value.

Seth Schwartz

Professor of History and Classics and Lucius N. Littauer Professor of Classical Jewish Civilization, Columbia University

American stories are supposed to feature moments of redemption and new beginnings, but my story does not. I cannot remember ever having wanted to do anything other than what I actually do. From very early childhood, I was obsessed with the accumulation of information about a Jewish past I was convinced was utterly different from my own and my parents' American Jewish experiences. I was and am an inveterate reader and re-reader of encyclopedias (what a blessing to live in the era of Wikipedia) and really got something to sink my teeth into when the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* came out, around the time of my bar mitzvah. Though I was a dutiful rather than enthusiastic Bible and Talmud student as a kid, long before my bar mitzvah I had devoured Graetz's *History of the Jews*, a variety of other old fashioned works of scholarship, Maimonides's *Guide*, a volume called *Otzar Havikuhim*, which includes the disputation of Nahmanides and

Pablo Christiani, and a Hebrew translation of Josephus, *Against Apion*. A bemused but sympathetic summer camp librarian gave me as a gift the library's neglected copy of Jacques Heurgon, *Daily Life of the Etruscans*, around the same time. The last fact points to some ambivalence, which set in during adolescence and has never disappeared. My self-image as a Jewish historian has vacillated asynchronously with my job description. I studied classics in college (admittedly at Yeshiva University), ancient history in grad school, and have subsequently experienced periods of having proprietary feelings neither about Jewish Studies (which in the U.S. has a modernist orientation) nor about ancient history (a field not really interested in the Jews, in the final analysis). So I am now in the perfect—maybe perfectly untenable—position of being 37.5 percent a Jewish historian, 37.5 percent an ancient historian, and 25 percent a classicist.

Lara Trubowitz

Assistant Professor of English, University of Iowa

I came to Jewish Studies not because I was in the right environment for studying Jewish culture and history—for instance, my native New York and the Yiddishkeit of my extended family—but rather because I found myself in the wrong one—Iowa, where “Jewish” is still a somewhat exotic adjective, and where seemingly banal encounters can bespeak, not anti-Semitism exactly, but a kind of benign obliviousness to the history of anti-Jewish rhetoric. In this agreeably uncondusive environment, I have become a Jewish Studies scholar who studies non-Jews, or who studies the ways in which Jewishness can be misinterpreted or misspoken.

A brief example: at Passover a few years ago, I went to the local Co-op (an enclave of liberalism and cosmopolitanism) to buy matzos, only to find they had discontinued their line of Passover products. I wrote a letter of complaint, emphasizing the Co-op's importance to its Jewish shoppers. In response, I was told politely that the store could not cater to “individual communities” and that they could only purchase “clean product lines.” Incidents like this one make me suspicious of politeness; in my work I seek a vocabulary for describing sociable behaviors that disguise or belie more insidious forms of prejudice. I am especially intrigued by smart and self-reflective people who

still don't know what to do with Jews (this includes many of my favorite writers, for instance, Djuna Barnes and Virginia Woolf). I theorize what I call "civil anti-Semitism," a form of anti-Jewish rhetoric that can easily coincide with a disdain for outright bigotry. I treat such "civil" hate speech as a form of rhetorical argumentation, one that may be "useful" or "productive" despite, or because of, its complexity and subterfuge.

James E. Young

Distinguished University Professor of English and Judaic Studies and Director of the Institute for Holocaust, Genocide, and Memory Studies, University of Massachusetts at Amherst

Without knowing it, I "went into" Jewish Studies the moment I veered into an interdisciplinary PhD dissertation on Holocaust literature. This would have been around 1979 or so, when I realized that the twin, interdependent aims of my research and writing on the Holocaust would always have to be both what happened and how this history has been passed down to me. That is, I needed to know both the hard history of this period and the ways this history has been shaped and remembered in narrative, poetry, music, film, art, and architecture, among other media. My study would necessarily cut across all kinds of disciplinary boundaries, to the consternation of some but not all my mentors at the time.

Among my dissertation readers, Murray Baumgarten, Sidra Ezrahi, Yehuda Bauer, and Hayden White all understood my approach and by 1981, they were encouraging me to present parts of my dissertation at the MLA, CAA, and AHA—and I did. But there was only one annual conference that had room for all of my research preoccupations (obsessions), and of course, this was the AJS—a professional organization composed of every possible discipline under the sun.

Indeed, as an area study, Jewish Studies has always been interdisciplinary, an amalgam of historians, linguists, Biblical scholars, literary comparatists, political scientists, and sociologists. More lately, the tent has expanded to include researchers and teachers working on Jewish themes in Art History, Musicology, Communications, Anthropology, Folklore, and Women's Studies, among others. Some of these fields are themselves area studies, while others hew more closely to traditional departmental disciplines. In fact, over the years, Jewish Studies has even served as a model for further interdisciplinary area studies programs, such as Gender Studies, Islamic Studies, and even Memory Studies.

As it turns out, enlarging the tent of Jewish Studies to include the research and teaching of scholars from such a disparate pool of disciplines has done wonders for the field overall. And as becomes clearer with every passing year, Jewish Studies continues to create a space where work in other, more traditional disciplines can find innovative and entirely unexpected expression. Rather than asking scholars in Jewish Studies to define their work as constitutively "Jewish," we ask each other to do the best work possible in our respective disciplines, allowing it both to inform a traditional discipline's offerings and to enrich that which we call Jewish Studies. As it turns out, choosing to do my work within the reciprocal, invigorating exchange between disciplines is when I "chose" to go into Jewish Studies.

Froma I. Zeitlin

Emerita Professor of Comparative Literature and Classics and Ewing Professor of Greek Language and Literature, Princeton University

I came to Jewish Studies, by the back door, as it were. The granddaughter of two rabbis and (a Litvak to boot) raised in a deeply committed family to all things Jewish, my

own Jewish education was quite remarkable for its time. Yet despite my very strong background from an early age on, including Hebrew and much more, my major academic field turned out to be Classics. Luckily, I was given an opportunity at Princeton both to found and build a program in Jewish Studies (which I directed for nine years) as well as an appointment in Comparative Literature that gave me more flexibility in teaching. The courses of Jewish interest I have taught take two paths: the first was "Gender, the Body, and Sexuality in Judaism from the Bible to Contemporary America." I had already taught gender courses in antiquity and it was an exciting moment to transfer (and expand) my expertise into a broader cultural context. But what held much greater urgency for me was the Holocaust and the desire to bring relevant courses to the curriculum. I was a child of the time. Growing up in the years of World War II, I was haunted by what might have been in my own life, and my absorption in the topic only increased as the years went on. My richest experiences at Princeton have been the two courses I teach under the aegis of Comparative Literature. The first is entitled "Texts and Images of the Holocaust" and the second, which branched off from the first, is called "Stolen Years: Youth and Adolescence under the Nazis in World War II." Oddly enough, these courses increasingly attract non-Jewish students, many of whom return again and again to seek my advice (and write recommendations for them), since more than one has declared to me, even many years later, that this was a course that changed their lives. While I have published several articles on the subject of Holocaust literature (and film) and have given presentations and participated in conferences, ranging from Dreyfus to Berlin Holocaust memorials, my primary engagement has been in my teaching, although I hope that further writing is on the horizon.

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