

# Phase Shift Judaism

## Table of Contents

[Hegel's Social Ethics: Religion, Conflict, and Rituals of Reconciliation by Molly Farneth \[Princeton University Press, 9780691171906\]](#)

[After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840–1900 by Frederick C. Beiser \[Princeton University Press, 9780691163093\]](#)

[The World as Transmitting Medium: Theorie eines Meta-Mediums bei Alfred North Whitehead by Matthias Götzmann \[Film - Medium - Diskurs, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826064692\] text in German](#)

[Sefer Yesirah and Its Contexts: Other Jewish Voices by Tzahi Weiss \[Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion, University of Pennsylvania Press, 9780812249903\]](#)

[Habad in the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Politics, Outreach edited by Jonatan Meir and Gadi Sagiv \[The Zalman Shazar Center for the Study of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, 9789652273505\]](#)

[Classic Essays in Early Rabbinic Culture and History edited by Christine Hayes \[Classic Essays in Jewish History, Routledge, 9781409425052\]](#)

[Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity by Karen B. Stern \[Princeton University Press, 9780691161334\]](#)

[Hasidism: A New History edited by David Biale, David Assaf, Benjamin Brown, Uriel Gellman, Samuel Heilman, Moshe Rosman, Gadi Sagiv, Marcin Wodziński, Afterword by Arthur Green \[Princeton University Press, 978-0691175157\]](#)

[The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism: The Unique Perspective of the Bavli on Conversion and the Construction of Jewish Identity by Moshe Lavee \[Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, Brill, 9789004317338\]](#)

[On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism by L. Stephen Cook \[Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, Mohr Siebeck, 9783161509209\]](#)

[Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE edited by Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson \[Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum, Brill, 9789004349865\]](#)

[The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 7, The Early Modern World, 1500-1815 edited by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe](#)

[The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 8, The Modern World, 1815-2000 edited by Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels \[The Cambridge History of Judaism, Cambridge University Press, 9780521769532\]](#)

[The Jewish Museum: History and Memory, Identity and Art from Vienna to the Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem by Natalia Berger \[Brill, 9789004353879\]](#)

[Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages by Ortal-Paz Saar \[Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, Brill, 9789004347885\]](#)

[Essay: Beit El Kabbalah Kavvanah Prayer](#)

[The Reception of Ancient Virtues and Vices in Modern Popular Culture: Beauty, Bravery, Blood and Glory edited by Eran Almagor and Lisa Maurice \[Metaforms: Studies in the Reception of Classical Antiquity, Brill, 9789004347717\]](#)

[The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance: Language, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning by Christopher S. Celenza \[Cambridge University Press, 9781107003620\]](#)

[Florentine Patricians and Their Networks: Structures Behind the Cultural Success and the Political Representation of the Medici Court \(1600–1660\) by Elisa Goudriaan \[Brill, 9789004346529\]](#)

[Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking in the Renaissance by Suzanne Karr Schmidt \[Brill's Studies in Intellectual History / Brill's Studies on Art, Art History, and Intellectual History, Brill Academic, 9789004340138\]](#)

[Measured Words: Computation and Writing in Renaissance Italy by Arielle Saiber. \[Toronto Italian Studies, University of Toronto Press, 9780802039507\]](#)

### [Bibliography](#)

[Hegel's Social Ethics: Religion, Conflict, and Rituals of Reconciliation](#) by Molly Farneth [Princeton University Press, 9780691171906]

[Hegel's Social Ethics](#) offers a fresh and accessible interpretation of G. W. F. Hegel's most famous book, the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Drawing on important recent work on the social dimensions of Hegel's theory of knowledge, Molly Farneth shows how his account of how we know rests on his account of how we ought to live.

Farneth argues that Hegel views conflict as an unavoidable part of living together, and that his social ethics involves relationships and social practices that allow people to cope with conflict and sustain hope for reconciliation. Communities create, contest, and transform their norms through these relationships and practices, and Hegel's model for them are often the interactions and rituals of the members of religious communities.

The book's close readings reveal the ethical implications of Hegel's discussions of slavery, Greek tragedy, early modern culture wars, and confession and forgiveness. The book also illuminates how contemporary democratic thought and practice can benefit from Hegelian insights.

Through its sustained engagement with Hegel's ideas about conflict and reconciliation, [Hegel's Social Ethics](#) makes an important contribution to debates about how to live well with religious and ethical disagreement.

Adapted Excerpts:

This book is for people who care about Hegel and people who don't.

For those who care about Hegel, it draws on important recent work on his epistemology and shows how his account of how we know is linked to his account of how we ought to live. The latter is

what I call Hegel's social ethics. Social ethics, on this account, is not primarily about what we ought to do in the face of moral quandaries; rather, it is about the relationships, practices, and institutions that a community ought to cultivate. It is about *Sittlichkeit*. A modern *Sittlichkeit*, according to Hegel, involves contestation as well as rituals of reconciliation. Without both—practices of conflict and reconciliation—neither his epistemology nor his ethics can be realized. This book shows what those practices are and how they can be sustained in religiously diverse communities.

For those who don't care about Hegel, the book offers something else. It develops a distinct approach to social ethics that attends to conflict and reconciliation in contemporary life. It details how this approach emerged in one significant strand of modern Western philosophy, and it shows what this approach might teach the members of religiously diverse communities about how to talk and listen to one another across difference, build relationships of reciprocal recognition, and forge solidarity in the struggle for justice. While the book includes close readings of passages of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, my hope is that readers unfamiliar with the details of Hegel's philosophy will be able to see what is worth seeing in those passages.

...

These two aspects of Hegel's thought—his epistemology and his account of power, and thus social ethics—need not be held apart. In fact, they are inextricably linked. This book contends that an epistemology that attends to social practices opens to a social ethics that attends to norms, power, and conflict. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel shows the connection between communities' accounts of why the things that they believe and do ought to be believed and done—that is, why they have authority—and the practices through which the members of those communities instantiate norms and adjudicate conflicts over them. That connection is at the heart of this book. As I have suggested, the transition from "shapes of consciousness" to "shapes of spirit" in the middle of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is significant, and the second half of the text requires the careful analysis that the first half has

already received from the post-Kantian interpreters. This is particularly pressing because, as Jameson notes, the social, political, and religious themes that have made the *Phenomenology of Spirit* so compelling in continental philosophical circles for the past two centuries have been neglected in this new reading of Hegel. By highlighting the relationships and practices through which ethics and norms are instituted—and the dynamics of power, exclusion, and domination in them—this book bridges the gap between Hegel's post-Kantian interpreters and those animated by continental philosophy.

In Farneth's reading, Hegel anticipates many nineteenth- and twentieth-century objections to and mis-readings of his philosophy. Those who read Hegel as a philosopher of totality, of mediation that ends in absolute spirit, have objected to his supposed claim that mediation could come to an end under present historical circumstances (Marx, Kierkegaard, Kojève), while others have objected to his apparent presumption that mediation could come to an end under any circumstances (Adorn, Foucault, Derrida). If Hegel's metaphysics are of the sort that traditional interpretations suggest—that is, if Hegel thinks that absolute spirit involves the subject's a priori knowledge of the absolute—then absolute spirit would entail closure. But I read Hegel as a philosopher of "mediation without closure," Hegel is committed to the notion that social practices stand at the center of human life. Through social practices, human beings become subjects—and through social practices, these subjects create, maintain, and transform the norms of their shape of spirit. When people reflect on these processes, Hegel claims, the search for a self-sufficient standard of knowledge comes to an end, because they become self-conscious of their participation in the practices by which they institute norms and generate authority. Nothing about this, however, necessitates the end of difference, conflict, or contestation.

In what follows Farneth develops these arguments of social ethics with two broad goals in sight. The first explicates Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* as a work, not only of epistemology but also of social ethics, concerned with the evaluation of relationships, practices, and institutions. The book

follows Hegel's account of how ethical conflicts emerge, and how they might be confronted and overcome. The second goal is to show the continuing relevance of Hegel's social ethics for a religiously diverse democratic society like our own. Accordingly, this book proceeds in two parts.

The bulk of the study presents an interpretation of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that connects consciousness's search for the standard of knowledge to an account of the relationships and practices that communities ought to cultivate, of the juncture between social psychology as embedded in a social ethic. This interpretation entails a close reading of a series of linked parts of Hegel's *Phenomenology* alongside an analysis of the major concepts at play in them. In "Tragedy and the Social Construction of Norms" begins to make the case that, for Hegel, the authority of a community's norms is rooted in its social practices. It considers the lessons of Hegel's discussion of Sophocles' *Antigone*, in which he shows that a community that treats its norms as natural, fixed, and immediately given will be afflicted by tragedy. "Culture War and the Appeal to Authority" turns from immediacy and tragedy to self-legislation and alienation through a discussion of the conflict between Faith and Enlightenment. Faith and Enlightenment believe that individuals must be able to affirm their commitments for themselves, based on objective standards that are available to all. Because they disagree about what those standards are, however, they are locked in a culture war-style impasse. The apparent intractability of their conflict stems from the two sides' inability to recognize the social practices through which members of each group authorize and contest their norms. "Rituals of Reconciliation" describes Hegel's alternative to domination. It compares the relationship between the lord and bondsman in the famous struggle for recognition to the relationship between the wicked and judging consciousnesses near the end of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*. In the latter section, the two individuals' conflict is transformed into a relationship of reciprocal recognition through their practices of confession and forgiveness. Farneth describes the structure of the relationship of reciprocal recognition as one of reciprocal authority and accountability, and she shows how

this relationship emerges from the sacramental practices of confession and forgiveness. "Religion, Philosophy, and the Absolute" draws out the implications of these three conflicts for Hegel's account of absolute spirit. Absolute spirit, Farneth argues, is characterized by ongoing diversity, conflict, and disagreement, mediated by rituals of reconciliation that create and repair relationships of reciprocal recognition.

The final portion of the book moves from interpretation to application. There is no straightforward way to apply Hegel's thought to contemporary public life. Hegel's system of philosophy is marked by its own social and historical context. Hegel himself knew this. "Philosophy," as he famously wrote in the preface to the *Philosophy of Right*, "is its own time comprehended in thought." Nevertheless, many of the social, political, and philosophical challenges that confronted Hegel still demand attention. His work seems to provide philosophical resources for thinking about these challenges. Hegel's view of conflict and reconciliation—his social ethics—can help us think about the relationships and practices that sustain diverse communities. His work addresses the relationship between religion and philosophy. It responds to the worry that Hegel's claims about authority collapse into a naturalist view of norms and normativity that is incompatible with respect for religious difference. Farneth engages with the work of contemporary Christian theologians concerned with the nature of authority and argue for the relevance of the Hegelian account to these concerns. While the Hegelian standpoint is at odds with some religious views, it embraces a set of practices for engaging with one another across such differences and disagreements. Finally, "Democratic Authority through Conflict and Reconciliation" concludes this reading of *Phenomenology of Spirit* an account of democratic authority based in the relationships and practices of citizens. In a democratically organized community, citizens' relationships are relationships of reciprocal recognition. Insofar as we call ourselves democrats, we ought to be committed to cultivating practices in which we recognize one another's authority and hold one another accountable. These practices include some, but not

all, forms of contestation and conflict, as well as practices of reconciliation. Farneth offers examples of what such relationships and practices have looked like in democratic organizing and restorative justice.

Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* offers an account of the relationships, rituals, and other social practices through which norms are created and transformed, and through which they gain or lose their authority over people and communities. The task of this book is to understand Hegel's claims about what those relationships and practices are and how they work, and to suggest how his social ethics can contribute to how we think about, and do, democracy in our own diverse communities. <>

[After Hegel: German Philosophy, 1840–1900](#) by Frederick C. Beiser [Princeton University Press, 9780691163093] [paperback](#)

The received view, against which Beiser's book is directed, depicts the history of German philosophy in the nineteenth century as a brief period of intense philosophical production during the first three decades, followed by a long lacuna. Even though philosophy never ceased to be an academic discipline during the century, its representatives were, as Beiser summarizes this narrative, either 'idealist epigones, who were not original, or [...] materialists, who were not really philosophers at all.' The sheer volume of such forgotten biographies and neglected oeuvres itself would, I think, warrant scholarly attention, but Beiser makes a convincing case that the latter longer part of the century is just as interesting as the glorious decades of Classical German Idealism that suddenly collapsed within one decade of Hegel's premature death in 1831. As a matter of fact, Beiser points out, it was the second disrespected part of the century when philosophy was revolutionary, rather than resembling the normal working of sciences, insofar as philosophers after the demise of German Idealism 'asked themselves the most basic questions about their discipline: What is philosophy? How does it differ from empirical science? Why should we do philosophy?' Taking into consideration another novelty of the period, namely that these questions 'were reinterpreted in completely secular terms' at the first time, one wonders how the

achievements of this 'rich and revolutionary age' could have been overlooked at all?

The Manichaean view of nineteenth-century German philosophy is, of course, an artificial construct by its contemporaneous participants. Beiser emphasizes Hegel's deliberate exclusion of his contenders, which led to a subterranean 'lost tradition' of German idealism that actually lasted until the end of the century (cf. also his 'Two Traditions of Idealism.' In [From Hegel to Windelband: Historiography of Philosophy in the 19th Century](#), edited by Gerald Hartung and Valentin Pluder [De Gruyter, 9783110554540], as well as Karl Löwith's influential narrative that transformed the history of nineteenth-century post-Hegelian philosophy into the prehistory of twentieth-century Marxism and existentialism. In fact, the rise and fall of philosophy was a topos widely employed as early the 1870s: 'In the first decades of our century the lecture halls of German philosophers were packed, in recent times the flood is followed upon by a deep low tide,' Franz Brentano declared in his inaugural lecture at the University of Vienna in 1874 (Ueber die Gründe der Entmuthigung auf philosophischem Gebiete, Wilhelm Braumüller: 1874), echoing the complaints of Eduard Zeller in his inaugural lecture in the capital of Germany two years earlier (Vorträge und Abhandlungen. Zweite Sammlung, Fues: 1877). The contemporaneous Anglophone readers were not uninformed either: 'the decline of the speculative systems so long prevailing,' Wilhelm Wundt informed the readers of the *Mind*, was 'followed by the rise of no new theory of the universe obtaining a similar general acceptance. [...] Metaphysic is treated historically and critically in the succession of philosophical systems, as a science, so to speak, that has passed away' ('Philosophy in Germany.' *Mind* 2 (8), 1877)

Wundt's statements, together with the fact that he has meanwhile been reassigned to the history of psychology as an empirical science, already delineate many of the key themes— philosophy's pluralization and its contested relation to positive sciences, the rise of historicism, etc. —that a historian of post-Hegelian German philosophy should address, and Beiser fulfils this task with the aid of an original and rewarding historiographic

methodology. His book is not organized thematically or in a strictly chronological manner, but rather it is structured along contemporaneous controversies, i.e., such 'issues, which are still of interest today' but which were 'also important to contemporaries themselves.' This innovative historiographic principle helps him navigate the via media between the Scylla of anachronistic Problemgeschichte and the Charybdis of writing an anachronistic and boring Lives of Eminent Post-Hegelian Philosophers in the doxographic manner epitomized by Diogenes Laertius. Beiser's protagonists are not dealt with in separate sections, but repeatedly re-emerge during the investigations of the controversies they were engaged in. An additional benefit of the methodology adopted by Beiser is that his history is attentive to the so-called minor figures who had actually participated in those controversies but subsequently fallen into oblivion and were excluded from the classical grand narratives.

Beiser's introductory first chapter is both an exposition of the metaphilosophical landscape and a set of thematic demarcations in disguise. Philosophy's challenged role was to be restored either by conceiving it as a first-order science— anticipated by one aspect of Trendelenburg's ambiguous organic teleological idealism and explicated by Hartmann's deliberate conception of 'philosophy as the metaphysics of the natural sciences'—or a second-order enterprise that is not a direct contender to positive sciences: Sciences 'always deal with some aspect of the world, whereas the philosopher analyzes discourse about that world.' The latter role was first assumed by the left-wing Hegelians, declared by Trendelenburg and perfected by the neo-Kantians. The success of the latter option cannot be overestimated. It 'ensured philosophy against obsolescence at the hands of the sciences' up to the point of turning philosophy into a rigorous science. A different metaphilosophical option is manifest in the subliminal hermeneutical tradition of early post-Hegelian philosophy that, at the same time, avoids the too narrow focus on theoretical philosophy by (some) neo-Kantians. Beiser explores Schopenhauer's aim 'to decipher appearances' behind his practical metaphysics and puts an

emphasis on Dilthey's indebtedness to Schopenhauer. In this chapter, Beiser also introduces a number of clever thematic demarcations. His reason for not focusing on left-wing Hegelianism is its incapacity to become aligned with institutional forms of philosophizing, and, similarly, Beiser's exposition of the inherent tensions of the neo-Kantian definition of philosophy could be regarded as a rationale for not choosing it as the guiding line of his investigations.

The idea that the nineteenth-century post-Hegelian was underpinned by a series of major controversies was recently articulated by Kurt Bayert et al., who published a set of volumes consisting of primary sources and interpretative essays entitled 'Der Materialismus-Streit,' 'Der Darwinismus-Streit,' and 'Der Ignorabimus-Streit.' Beiser proposes a different classification of these controversies, insofar as he includes the first and the last, adds the 'Pessimism Controversy,' as well a chapter on the rise of historicism in which he draws on his previous research in this field ([The German Historicist Tradition](#) edited by Frederick C. Beiser [Oxford University Press, 9780199691555]).

Beiser's treatment of these controversies is simultaneously precise, comprehensive, and accessible, exemplifying the best tradition of Anglophone philosophical historiography. Unlike Klaus Christian Köhnke's seminal book (*Entstehung und Aufstieg des Neukantianismus: Die deutsche Universitätsphilosophie zwischen Idealismus und Positivismus*, Suhrkamp: 1986) that pioneered the study of post-Hegelian Universitätsphilosophie, Beiser also strikes a fortunate balance with regard to the explanatory role of external factors. He, for example, rejects Köhnke's thesis that political uproar caused by the assassination attempt on the Kaiser occasioned the radical transformation of the neo-Kantian conception of philosophy. On the other hand, Beiser seems to agree with Bayert et al. ('Einleitung der Herausgeber.' In *Der Ignorabimus-Streit*, edited by Kurt Bayert, Myriam Gerhard, and Walter Jaeschke) that du Bois-Reymond's privileged position in the contemporaneous networks of natural sciences explains why du Bois-Reymond's admittedly philosophically unoriginal apology of the intrinsic limits of scientific knowledge could have ignited the Ignorabimus

Debate: 'from the mouth of the devil, came a mea culpa.'

Despite his justified concern for the contemporary relevance of his historical subject-matter, Beiser rightly warns against the hasty identification of today's analytical philosopher with its closest post-Hegelian counterpart, the 'neo-Kantian of the 1860s' who 'was a very different animal' (51). There is, however, another current of contemporary philosophy, namely phenomenology, the roots of which lie precisely in the period investigated by Beiser. A considerable amount of historical and philosophical lessons are sacrificed by Beiser's exclusion of Early Phenomenology (i.e., the School of Brentano, the early Husserl, the Göttingen and Munich circles of phenomenology, and, maybe, the pre-1916 Heidegger). There are, I think, intrinsic reasons for Beiser to include them in his coverage. Unlike his simultaneously published monumental study of the origins of neo-Kantianism ([The Genesis of neo-Kantianism, 1796 – 1880](#) by Frederick C. Beiser [Oxford University Press, 9780198722205] [paperback](#)), the present book has no natural ending. The long nineteenth century, as a period of German cultural and intellectual history, obviously did not end until September 1914. In particular, there is no reason for the omission of the psychologism controversy, the origins of which definitely antedated the turn of the century (contra ix). It was not only the topos of the rise and fall of philosophy that was shared by Brentano and the subsequent early phenomenologists. Many of the protagonists of Beiser's 'lost tradition' of idealism and psychological Kantianism also figured in the intellectual formation of Husserl—first and foremost Herbart, the official philosopher of Husserl's native Austro-Hungary. On the city map of Berlin, 'Herbartstraße' is equally a side street to the old and new 'Kantstraße.' <>

[The World as Transmitting Medium: Theorie eines Meta-Mediums bei Alfred North Whitehead](#) by Matthias Götzelmann [Film - Medium - Diskurs, Königshausen & Neumann, 9783826064692] text in German

Inhaltsverzeichnis  
Einleitung



- Alfred North Whitehead — Eine einflussreiche Biographie
- I Lexikalische Begriffsgeschichte — thematische Grundlagen am Beispiel der Encyclopædia Britannica
- I.I Medium im englischsprachigem Raum
  - I.II Die Encyclopædia Britannica
    - I.II.I Logik
    - I.II.II Arithmetik und Geometrie — Zahl, Punkt, Sinnlichkeit
    - I.II.III Subtle or Æthereal Medium — Eine Hypothese gegen das Nichts
    - I.II.IV Philosophie
    - I.II.V Optik
    - I.II.VI Spiritismus
- II Medium und Äther
- II.I Das Diaphane und der Äther — Qualitäten des Unsichtbaren
  - II.II Der Äther in der Physik — Der leere Raum und das Nichts
  - II.III Whiteheads antimaterieller Äther
- III Kosmologie
- III.I Der Kosmos und die Raum - Materie Konstellation
    - III.I.I Hesiod — Das Chaos
    - III.I.II Anaximander — Das Apeiron
    - III.II Platon — Das fünfte Element
      - III.II.I Platon — Space-Time, (chōra) und (metaxý)
      - III.II.II Platon — Raum und Ort als Relation des Wahrnehmbaren
      - III.II.III Platon — Quantentheorie
      - III.II.IV Platon — Geometrie und Sinnlichkeit
      - III.II.V Platon — Whiteheads Definition des Atomistischen
    - III.III Zwei Grundzüge Whiteheads Kosmologie
      - III.III.I Weltwerden und objektive Unsterblichkeit
      - III.III.II Das extensive Kontinuum
- IV Whiteheads frühe Naturphilosophie
- IV.I Die Panphysik (1919 - 1922)
    - IV.I.I Ereignisse
    - IV.I.II Ereignisäther und Wahrnehmungseignis
    - IV.I.III Objekte
    - IV.II Der Begriff des Mediums in der Panphysik
  - IV.II.I the medium relating that mind to the whole of nature.
  - IV.II.II Cogredience — Die Ruhe der Wahrnehmung
  - IV.II.III the medium within which the daily life of Londoners is passed
  - IV.III Abstraktion, natürliche Induktion und symbolisches Denken
  - IV.III.I space behind the mirror — Die Wahrnehmung von perceptual-und delusive-object
- V Kulturelle Symbolisierungen — Whiteheads Symboltheorie
- V.I Symbolism Its Meaning and Effect (1927)
  - V.II Symbole als ontologische Dimension
  - V.III Symbolische Inklusion und die Bedeutung der presentational immediacy
  - V.IV Semantisches Kontinuum — Symbol und materielles Medium
- VI Process and Reality (1927 - 1929)
- VI.I Grundzüge zu Process and Reality
    - VI.I.I Die Ersetzung des Materiebegriffs durch die Kreativität
    - VI.II Das Kategorienschema
    - VI.III the world can be conceived as a medium for the transmission of influences
    - VI.IV Die Einheit der Person — Die Innenseite des Mediums
    - VI.V Synthese — Die Innen- und Aussenseite des Mediums
    - VI.VI presentational immediacy und die Aussenseite des Mediums - Die historische Route der actual world
- VII Kultur als Prozess — Science and the Modern World (1925)
- VII.I Theologie und moderne Wissenschaft
  - VII.II Perspektivische Vernunft
  - VII.III the recoil of Protestantism from aesthetic effects dependent upon a material medium.
  - VII.IV Ästhetische Medien, Kunst und Wahrheitsbeziehungen — waiting for the object to come alive
  - VII.V Natur und Technik

- VII.VI Anreiz für das Empfinden — Proposition, Technik, Kunst
- VII.VI.I Technik, Religion und Magie
- VIII Fazit — attack on the environment
- IX Ausblick
- X Zusammenfassung — Abstrakt
- XI English abstract
- XII Bibliographie
- Einleitung
  
- Table of Contents
- Introduction
- Alfred North Whitehead — an influential biography
- I lexical concept history — thematic bases on the example of the Encyclopædia Britannica
  - I. I medium in the English-speaking area
  - I. II the Encyclopædia Britannica
    - I. II. I logic
    - I. II. II Arithmetic and geometry — number, point, sensuality
    - I. II. III Subtle or Æthereal medium — a hypothesis against nothing
    - I. II. IV Philosophy
    - I. II. V Optics
    - I.II.VI Spiritualism
- II medium and Ether
  - II. I the Diaphane and the ether — qualities of the Invisible
  - II. II of the ether in D He physics — the empty space and nothing
  - II. III Whitehead's antimaterial Ether
- III Cosmology
  - III. I the cosmos and the space-matter Constellation
    - III. I. I Hesiod — the Chaos
    - III. I. II Anaximander — the Apeiron
  - III. II Plato — The Fifth Element
    - III. II. I Platon — space-time , (Chôra) and (Metaxý)
    - III. II. II Plato — Space and place as a relation of the Perceivable
    - III. II. III Platon — Quantum Theory
    - III. II. IV Plato — Geometry and Sensuality
    - III. II. V Plato — Whitehead's definition of Atomistic
- III. III Two basic principles of Whitehead Cosmology
  - III. III. I become world and objective Immortality
  - III. III. II The extensive Continuum
- IV Whitehead's early nature Philosophy
  - IV. I the Panphysik (1919-1922)
    - IV. I. I events
    - IV. I. II event ether and perceptual event
    - IV. I. III Objects
  - IV. II The concept of the medium in the Panphysik
    - IV. II. I the medium relating that mind to the whole of nature.
    - IV. II. II Cogredience — The calmness of Perception
    - IV. II. III the medium within which the daily life of Londoners is passed
  - IV. III Abstraction, natural induction and symbolic thinking
    - IV. III. I space behind the mirror — the perception of perceptual and delusive-Object
- V Cultural symbolizations — Whitehead's symbol theory
  - V. I Symbolism its meaning and Effect (1927)
  - V. II Symbols as Ontological dimension
  - V. III Symbolic inclusion and the meaning of the presentational immediacy
  - V. IV Semantic continuum — symbol and material medium
- VI Process and Reality (1927-1929)
  - VI. I basic principles for process and Reality
    - VI. I. I the substitution of the concept of matter by the Creativity
  - VI.II the Kategorienschema
  - VI. III The world can be conceived as a medium for the transmission of influences
  - VI. IV The unit of the person — the Inn Side of the medium
  - VI. V synthesis — the inside and outside of the medium
  - VI.VI presentational immediacy and the outside of the medium-the



historical route of the actual World

VII culture as process — science and the Modern World (1925)

VII. I Theology and modern science

VII. II Perspective reason

VII. III The recoil of Protestantism from aesthetic effects dependent upon a material medium.

VII. IV Aesthetic Media, art and truth relations — waiting for the object to come alive

VII. V Nature and Technology

VII. VI incentive for feeling — proposition, technique, art

VII. VI. I technique, religion and Magic

VIII conclusion — attack on the Environment

IX Outlook

X merge constitutes — Abstract

XI English abstract

XII bibliography

Excerpt with translation:

Die Geschichte der Lehren von der Materie ist noch nicht geschrieben; sie wäre zugleich die Geschichte des Einflusses griechischer Philosophie auf die Naturwissenschaften [...]

The history of the teachings of matter is not yet written; It would also be the history of the influence of Greek philosophy on the natural sciences [...]

In order to understand our epoche, we can neglect all the details of change, such as railways, telegraphs, radios, spinning machines, synthetic dyes. We must concentrate on the method in itself; that is the real novelty, which has broken up the foundations of the old civilisation.

*Der Medienbegriff scheint in den medienwissenschaftlichen Diskussionen nicht abschließend und klar definierbar, sondern fungiert vielfach als ein Oberbegriff für eine Vielzahl von Konzepten, die ein weites Spektrum umspannen, was aber nicht den Verzicht auf begriffliche Klarheit impliziert.<sup>1</sup> Diesem Anspruch soll die vorliegende Arbeit gerecht werden. Diese Klarheit kann nur durch einen systematischen Durchgang durch die jeweilige Theorie gelingen, in denen der Begriff Medium seine Anwendung findet. In und mit der Dissertation wird der Begriff im Werk von Alfred North Whitehead*

*behandelt sowie dessen begriffsgeschichtliche Konzeption und dessen Anwendungsdimensionen innerhalb der von ihm formulierten Kosmologie. Ziel dieser Arbeit ist es, den Begriff des Mediums als Grundbegriff innerhalb Whiteheads Theorien freizustellen und die Relationalität des Begriffes in seinen unterschiedlichen Anwendungsdimensionen zu analysieren. Der Begriff des Mediums ist kein von Whitehead herangezogener Hauptbegriff und dennoch wird dieser an sehr zentralen Stellen in Whiteheads Schriften herangezogen. Man könnte jedoch von einem latenten Hauptbegriff sprechen, denn er berührt und dies gerade in seiner begriffsgeschichtlichen Artikulation von Grundproblemen, die grundlegendste Theorie in Whiteheads Werk. Zu Beginn bezieht sich Whiteheads Analyse auf die starke physikalische Konnotation des Begriffs Medium, den Whitehead stringent reflektierte. Von diesem Ausgangspunkt aus kann der Verlauf eines solchen Begriffes als werkimmanente Entwicklung, von einer physikalischen hin zu einer metaphysischen Konnotation, verfolgt werden. Der Begriff des Mediums wird bei Whitehead vor allem im philosophischem Frühwerk an sehr zentralen Stellen herangezogen, entwickelt jedoch erst im philosophischem Hauptwerk seinen vollen Gehalt. Es zeigt sich in Whiteheads Werk, dass der Begriff auf philosophische Grundfragen, wie die von Raum, Materie, Sinneswahrnehmung und vor allem deren Relationalität rekurriert. Es finden sich darin philosophische Grundprobleme der Antike und der frühen Naturwissenschaften vereint. Diese Arbeit widmet aktuellen Debatten der Medienwissenschaft keine gesonderte Aufmerksamkeit. Vielmehr wird eine Analyse aufbereitet, die sich weit vor den institutionellen Diskursen der Medienwissenschaft des späten 20. Jahrhunderts über den Begriff des Mediums ansiedelt und die im Werk Whiteheads Verbindlichkeit erlangt. Anfangs wird der Begriff deshalb zuallererst in zwei Schwerpunkten analysiert: Zum einen den frühen griechischen Wurzeln und dessen thematischen Bezügen, zum anderen den naturwissenschaftlichen Perspektiven von Descartes über Newton bis hin zu Einstein. Dieses Vorgehen wird durch die Frage strukturiert, was ein Denker wie Whitehead meint, wenn er den Begriff des Mediums nutzt bzw. worauf er sich hierbei beruft.*

The media term does not seem conclusive and clearly definable in the media-scientific discussions, but often acts as a generic term for a multitude of concepts that span a wide spectrum, but which does not eliminate the need for conceptual Clarity implies. <sup>1</sup> The present work is to meet this requirement. This clarity can only be achieved through a systematic passage through the respective theory in which the term medium finds its application. In and with the dissertation, the term is treated in the work of Alfred North Whitehead as well as its conceptual conception and its application dimensions within the cosmology formulated by it. The aim of this work is to release the concept of the medium as a basic concept within Whitehead's theories and to analyse the relationality of the term in its different application dimensions. The concept of the medium is not a main term used by Whitehead and yet it is used in very central places in Whitehead's writings. One could, however, speak of a latent main term, because it touches the most basic theory in Whitehead's work, especially in its conceptual articulation of basic problems. At the beginning, Whitehead's analysis refers to the strong physical connotation of the term medium, which Whitehead has rigorously reflected. From this point of departure, the course of such a term can be traced as a work-immanent development, from a physical to a metaphysical connotation. The concept of the medium is used by Whitehead mainly in the philosophical early work at very central places, but is only developed in the philosophical main work *Process and Reality*. It is evident in Whitehead's work that the term refers to philosophical fundamental questions such as space, matter, sensory perception and above all their relationality element. There are philosophical fundamental problems of antiquity and early natural sciences united. This work does not devote special attention to current media science debates. Rather, an analysis is being prepared that settles well before the institutional discourses of media Science of the late twentieth century about the concept of the medium and which is acquired in the work of Whitehead. First of all, the term is first analyzed in two main areas: firstly, the early Greek roots and their thematic references, and on the other, the scientific perspectives of Descartes,

Newton and Einstein. This approach is structured by the question of what a thinker like Whitehead means when he uses the concept of the medium or what he calls himself.

*Offensichtlich kann dies noch kein medienwissenschaftlicher Ansatz sein, reden wir doch vom Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts und damit über eine Zeit, in der eine Forschungsperspektive, die ich, zusammenziehend, als Medienwissenschaft(en) bezeichnen möchte, noch nicht ausformuliert ist. Es wird sich im ersten Teil zeigen, dass gerade die Betrachtungsweise, der aus der Antike formulierten Probleme, Begriffs Medium zu den frühen Anfängen der Naturwissenschaften. Im Verlauf der Etablierung der aktuellen Medienwissenschaft(en) ist der Begriff des Mediums zumeist als dingliche, für sich seiende Entität aufgefasst worden. Oft wird die Materialität der Kommunikation betont und dementsprechend ein Medium materialistisch auskristallisiert. Zwar kam die Einsicht der materialistischen Unbestimmbarkeit von Medien zunehmend in den Fokus wissenschaftlicher Analysen, dennoch scheint der Status eines solitären und systematisierbaren Objekts — wenn auch nicht bei allen Medienwissenschaftlern — dabei aufrecht erhalten zu werden. Die in der lateinischen Übersetzung des griechischen Begriffes (metaxý) als Medium ausschlaggebend werden, bis heute größtenteils als Forschungsdesiderat weiter existieren. Dies gilt auch für die Beziehungen des*

Obviously, this cannot yet be a media-scientific approach, but we are talking about the beginning of the 20th century, and therefore about a time when a research perspective, which I would like to refer to as media Science (en), has not yet been formulated. It will be shown in the first part that precisely the approach, the problems formulated from antiquity, which are decisive in the Latin translation of the Greek term (metaxý) as a medium, to this day largely as a research desideratum further exist. This also applies to the relations of the term medium to the early beginnings of the natural sciences. In the course of the establishment of the current media science (s), the concept of the medium has mostly been regarded as a real-world entity. Often the materiality of communication is emphasized and thus a medium is materialized. While the insight of the materialistic indeterminacy of media

increasingly came into the focus of scientific analysis, the status of a solitary and systematizable object, albeit not in all media scientists, seems to be maintained To be.

*Medien lassen sich also nicht auf bestimmte Repräsentationsformen, materielle Träger oder Distributionsformen wie Film, Fernsehen oder Internet reduzieren. Der gemeinsame Nenner älterer und neuerer Positionen der Medientheorie lässt sich vielmehr darin sehen, dass Medien ihren Status als systematisierbares Objekt dadurch gewinnen, dass sie das, was sie speichern, verarbeiten und vermitteln, jeweils unter Bedingungen stellen, die sie selbst schaffen und sind.*

Thus, media cannot be reduced to certain forms of representation, material carriers or distribution forms such as film, television or the Internet. Rather, the common denominator of older and more recent positions in media theory can be seen in the fact that media are gaining their status as a Systematizable object by making what they store, process and convey, each under conditions that You create and are yourself.

*In einer solchen Perspektive werden Medien in Tradition einer aristotelischen Ding-Ontologie gelesen, die dem Objekt einen Status der Systematisierbarkeit zugestehen und es somit gleichwohl als solitär existierende Ursache situieren. Ein solcher Ansatz wird hier bestritten. Richtiger scheint der Ansatz, ein Medium als eine potentielle Beziehung zu sehen, die ihre einzige Beständigkeit darin hat, eine solche Beziehung überhaupt formulieren zu können. Ein Medium ist demnach immer nur dann systematisierbar, wenn eine aktuelle Beziehung von Potentialität und dessen Abstraktion vorliegt. Ein Medium muss so stetig neu, in dieser Beziehung und nur für diese Beziehung, analysiert werden. Erst wenn ein Medium durch Erfahrungsakte vollzogen wird, entstehen also Medien.*

In such a perspective, media are read in the tradition of a Aristotelian-ding ontology that concedes to the object a status of systematization and thus it is nevertheless a solitary Cause. Such an approach is disputed here. The approach to seeing a medium as a potential relationship seems more correct, which has its only permanence in having such a relationship at all To be able to formulate

them. Thus, a medium is only systematizable if an actual relationship of potentiality and its Abstraction. A medium must be analyzed so constantly anew, in this relationship and only for this relationship. It is only when a medium is completed by experience that media is created.

*Medien liegen in diesem Sinne der Erfahrung nicht zugrunde, sondern repräsentieren diese. In dieser Funktion verweisen sie — wie jede andere Entität auch — auf die Potentialität der erfahrbaren Welt. In der Unterscheidung von Medium und Medien könnte man demnach formulieren, dass die Zukunft im Medium die Vergangenheit in Medien liegt.*

In this sense, the media are not based on experience, but represent it. In this function, you, like any other entity, refer to the potentiality of the world that can be experienced. In the distinction between medium and media, it could be formulated that the future in the medium is the past in media.

*Ein Medium ist bei Whitehead als grundlegende Potenz eines Erfahrungsaktes zu sehen. Wobei Erfahrungsakt hier bedeutet, ein privates, subjektives Ziel, dass jeder Entität unterstellt wird, mit seiner öffentlichen, objektiven Möglichkeit, also seiner ihm eigenen Umwelt zu transzendieren. Nietzsches ironische Einsicht, dass das Schreibwerkzeug an den Gedanken mitarbeitet, deutet jene Richtung an, die mit Whitehead herauspräpariert werden kann. Allerdings verläuft die Deutung konträr zu einer medienmaterialistischen Wende.' Der Fokus einer solchen Analyse liegt auf der Analyse einer realen, nicht materiell konnotierten, Beziehung, in der ein Medium die Potentialität ist, die einer Erfahrungsperspektive zugrunde liegt und gleichwohl nur durch diese Erfahrungsperspektive überhaupt Bedeutung erlangt: ein Medium also als eine Relation aufscheint, bzw. als eine konkrete empirische Beziehung. Es wird die Frage erörtert werden, inwiefern der Begriff des Mediums, wie er bei Whitehead aufscheint, der Vorzug gegenüber seinen dinglichen Versionen zu geben ist und welche Konsequenzen sich aus einer solchen Perspektive ergeben. Für eine solche theoretische Konzeption liegt ein klares Forschungsdesiderat vor.*

A medium is seen in Whitehead as the basic power of an act of experience. Where Erfahrungsakt here

means a private, subjective goal that is subcontracted to each entity, with its public, objective way of transcending its own environment. Nietzsche's ironic sense that the writing tool Coworks with the thought suggests that direction that can be prepared with Whitehead. However, the interpretation is contrary to a media materialistic turn. ' The focus of such an analysis is on the analysis of a real, non-material connotations, relationship in which a medium is the potentiality underlying an experiential perspective and, however, only by this experience perspective even meaning means a medium as a relation, or as a concrete empirical relationship. The question will be discussed, to what extent the concept of the medium, as it appears at Whitehead, is to be given preference over its real versions and what consequences arise from such a perspective. A clear research desideratum is present for such a theoretical conception.

*Whiteheads Werk, das dieser Untersuchung zugrunde liegt, lässt sich grob in zwei Perspektiven einteilen: Zum einen handelt es sich um die Analyse wirkungsgeschichtlicher Zusammenhänge — wobei Wirkung als eine Verschmelzung verschiedener zeitlicher und räumlicher Vorgänge aufgefasst wird<sup>8</sup> — zum anderen geht es um die grundlegende Ordnung der Natur, die einem solchen Verschmelzungsprozess zugrunde liegt. Hierfür bemüht sich Whitehead um eine wissenschaftliche Grundlage, die den Einzelwissenschaften eine Basis verleihen soll und vor allem diejenigen Faktoren miteinbezieht, die in den Einzelwissenschaften nicht hinreichend behandelt werden. Bei Whitehead kulminieren ein empirischer und ein rationaler Theorie-Teil, die er in seinem philosophischem Hauptwerk *Process and Reality* (1929) hin zu seiner organistischen Philosophie verbindet. In der organistischen Philosophie werden die Probleme, die in der komplizierten Textur des zivilisierten Denkens aufscheinen, herausgestellt und es wird darauf aufbauend der Versuch unternommen, die vielfältigen Aspekte unserer Erfahrungen in eine widerspruchsfreie Relation zueinander zu bringen. Die in diesen Relationen aufscheinenden Probleme werden nicht als Einzelthemen, sondern gerade in dessen Verbundenheit zu einem kosmologischem Schema zusammengeführt." Im Fortschreiten dieses*

*kosmologischen Schemas wird immer wieder auf die Lehren von Raum, Zeit und Wahrnehmung sowie dessen Kausalität Bezug genommen, denn nur so kann Licht in die Verbundenheit aller Erfahrungsakte gebracht werden. In dieser Arbeit wird der Begriff des Mediums als eine Verbundenheit von Einzelthemen aufgezeigt. Nahezu immer werden dabei die Probleme von Raum, Materie und Sinneswahrnehmung adressiert.*

Whitehead's work, which is based on this investigation, can be roughly divided into two perspectives: on the one is the analysis of effects-historical correlations — whereby effect is a fusion of different temporal and spatial processes SNS<sup>8</sup> — on the other, it is about the basic order of nature that underlies such a process of merging. For this purpose, Whitehead strives for a scientific basis, which should give a basis to the individual sciences and, above all, involves those factors which are not adequately treated in the individual sciences. at Whitehead culminate a Empirical and a rational theory part, which he combines in his philosophical work *process and Reality* (1929) towards his organical philosophy. In the organist philosophy, the problems that appear in the complicated texture of civilized thinking are exposed and the attempt is made to build on the manifold aspects of our experience in an object-free Relationship. The problems that appear in these relations are not brought together as individual themes, but precisely in their attachment to a cosmological scheme. " In the progression of this cosmological scheme, the teachings of space, time and perception as well as its causality are referred to again and again, because this is the only way to bring light into the connection of all the acts of experience. In this work, the concept of the medium is shown as a bond of individual topics. Almost always the problems of space, matter and sensory perception are addressed.

*Im ersten Teil dieser Arbeit wird anfangs ein genereller Überblick über die Konnotation des Begriffes Medium im englischsprachigen Raum geboten. Anhand der *Encyclopædia Britannica* wird eine kurze Einordnung skizziert, die sich von der ersten Ausgabe aus dem Jahre 1768 bis hin zur 14. Auflage Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts zieht. Hierbei liegt der Schwerpunkt auf den Zeiten Whiteheads,*

also um das Ende des 19., Anfang des 20. Jahrhunderts. In einem zweiten Teil wird die griechische Philosophie der Antike mit den Problemstellungen des Begriffes reflektiert. Dies geschieht zum einem, um herauszustellen, welchen Bezug Whitehead, der ein absoluter Kenner der antiken Philosophie ist, zum Begriff des Mediums hat und zum anderen darum, den Begriff des Mediums möglichst voraussetzungsfrei zu analysieren. In einem dritten Teil wird der Begriff des Mediums in Whiteheads Werk verfolgt und analysiert. Im diesem dritten Teil wird zudem die ästhetisch-technische Dimension des Begriffes aufgegriffen, die gleichfalls über Whiteheads Werk Struktur erlangt. Abschließend wird eine Forschungsperspektive für die Gestaltung des Begriffes Medium entwickelt, die sowohl als Basis des Begriffes, als auch als alternative Problemstellung zu den gängigen Begriffsverständnissen gelesen werden kann.

In the first part of this work, a general overview of the connotation of the term medium in English-speaking countries is offered at first. The Encyclopædia Britannica outlines a short classification that draws from the first edition of the year 1768 to the 14th edition in the middle of the 20th century. The focus here is on the times of Whitehead, i.e. at the end of the 19th century, at the beginning of the 20th. In a second part, the Greek philosophy of antiquity is reflected in the problems of the term. This is done on one, to highlight the reference that Whitehead, who is an absolute connoisseur of ancient philosophy, has to the concept of the medium and, on the other, to analyse the concept of the medium as preconditionally as possible. In a third part, the concept of the medium is tracked and analyzed in Whitehead's work. In this third part, the aesthetic-technical dimension of the term is also taken up, which is also obtained through Whitehead's work structure. Finally, a research perspective is developed for the design of the term medium, which can be read both as the basis of the term and as an alternative problem to the common concepts of understanding.

*Es liegen derzeit keine, zumindest keine tieferschürfenden und aufhellenden wissenschaftlichen Publikationen über den Begriff des Mediums bei Alfred North Whitehead vor. Andrew Murphy,*

*Associate Professor at the School of the Arts and Media, der University of New South Wales formuliert ein Forschungsinteresse an „Whitehead's Media Theory“. Diesem sind bis dato keine Publikationen gefolgt. Lediglich Christoph Kann bezieht sich in seiner Analyse über das Verhältnis von Platon und Whitehead auch auf den Begriff des Mediums. Kann hebt hervor, dass ein Medium als Leben und Geist zu verstehen sei, dass sich innerhalb des platonischen Prozesses von Aktion und Reaktion als Aktivität des Seienden situiert.“ In selbigem Zusammenhang verweist Kann auch auf die Funktion des Raumes als ein Medium der Kommunikation.“ In Bezug auf Newton kommt das Äther-Medium als raumerfüllende Materie zur Sprache. Kann hebt damit die wesentlichen Themen hervor, ohne jedoch auf diese näher einzugehen.*

There are currently no, at least no profound and enlightening scientific publications on the concept of the medium at Alfred North Whitehead. Andrew Murphy, Associate Professor at the School of the Arts and Media, der University of New South Wales formuliert ein Forschungsinteresse an „Whitehead's Media Theory“. No publications have been followed to date. Only Christoph can refer to the concept of the medium in his analysis of the relationship between Plato and Whitehead. May emphasize that a medium as a life and a spirit is to be understood that within the platonic process of action and reaction is situated as activity of the being. " In unlawfully context can also refer to the function of space as a medium of communication. " In relation to Newton, the ether medium is spoken as a space-fulfilling matter. Can thus highlight the main issues, but without going into the details.

*Eine erste Methode, um sich dem Begriff des Mediums anzunähern, ist die lexikalische Begriffsgeschichte. Durch den Wortgebrauch des Begriffes werden Konzepte und Themen artikuliert, die den epochenspezifischen Bedeutungsinhalt zu Whiteheads Zeiten vorab analysieren. Einem solchen ersten Überblick folgt im Sinne von Leo Spitzer die Methode der historischen Semantik, mittels der die Wechselwirkungen des Begriffes mit und in seiner Geschichte herausgestellt werden. Der Begriff des Mediums wird so als Grundbegriff freigestellt und von seinen antiken Wurzeln aus rekonstruiert. Die sich daraus ergebenden Themen, Begriffe und Topoi*

werden durch eine textnahe — teils hermeneutische — Analyse mit Whiteheads Werk korreliert. Abschließend wird Whiteheads Methode der spekulativen Philosophie herangezogen. Das Ziel dieser spekulativen Philosophie fasse ich, im Sinne Whiteheads, folgendermaßen auf: die Entwicklung eines Schemas, in diesem Fall eines offenen Begriffssystems, welches den Begriff des Mediums in alternativer Lesart zur Verfügung stellt.

A first method of approaching the concept of the medium is the lexical term history. By the word use of the term concepts and themes are articulated, which analyze the epoch-specific meaning content at Whitehead's times in advance. In the sense of Leo Spitzer, this first overview follows the method The historical semantics by means of which the interactions of the term with and in its history are exposed. The concept of the medium is thus liberated as a basic concept and reconstructed from its ancient roots. The resulting themes, concepts and topoi are correlated with Whitehead's work by a hermeneutic analysis, which is very close to the body. Finally, Whitehead's method of speculative philosophy is used. The aim of this speculative philosophy, in the sense of Whitehead, is as follows: the development of a scheme, in this case of an open concept system, which provides the concept of the medium in alternative reading.

*Alfred North Whitehead — Eine einflussreiche Biographie* Alfred North Whitehead — an influential biography Alfred North Whitehead, geboren am 15.02.1861 in der englischen Hafenstadt Ramsgate, absolvierte seine universitäre Ausbildung in Cambridge (UK) und starb am 30.12.1947 nach einer äußerst erfolgreichen Karriere als Mathematiker, Physiker und Philosoph, in Cambridge Massachusetts (USA). Von Cambridge zu Cambridge spiegelt hierbei eine weltumspannende Karriere wieder, die sich von Forschungen innerhalb der angewandten Mathematik bis hin zum Ausformulieren eines philosophischen Werkes aufspannt, welches seit 1929 mit der philosophischen Schrift *Process and Reality* assoziiert wird. Bevor Whitehead jedoch anfang, zunehmend philosophische Schriften zu veröffentlichen, war er als Mathematiker und nicht als Philosoph bekannt geworden. 1898 verfasste Whitehead die Schrift *A*

*Treatise on Universal Algebra*. Schon in dieser frühen Schrift verfolgte Whitehead eine neue Philosophie der Mathematik, bei der die Mathematik als „die Entwicklung aller möglichen Arten des formalen, notwendigen und schlussfolgernden Denkens“ aufgefasset wird. Whitehead versuchte das Denken innerhalb eines logischen Symbolismus zu formalisieren und dadurch ökonomisch zu machen. Schon hier können zwei sich gegenüberstehende Begriffe hervorgehoben werden: Form und Inhalt. Die Form ist dementsprechend mathematisch zu klären, wobei der Inhalt nur aus der Erfahrung, bzw. der Bedeutung für diese erklärbar ist. Mathematik ist demnach deduktiv, sie ist aus der Erfahrung abgeleitet und beschreibt den formalen Rahmen des Denkens ohne selbst an Inhalte des Denkens gebunden zu sein, bzw. wird das mathematische System selbst zum Inhalt des Denkens.

Alfred North Whitehead, born on 15.02.1861 in the English port city of Ramsgate, completed his university education in Cambridge (UK) and died at 30.12.1947 after a highly successful career as a mathematician, physicist and philosopher, in Cambridge Massachusetts (USA). From Cambridge to Cambridge, this reflects a world-spanning career that spans from research within applied mathematics to the formulation of a philosophical work that has been working since 1929 with the philosophical writing process and Reality. However, before Whitehead began publishing philosophical writings, he had become known as a mathematician and not as a philosopher. In 1898, Whitehead wrote a *Treatise on universal algebra*. Even in this early writing, Whitehead pursued a new philosophy of mathematics, in which mathematics is perceived as "the development of all possible forms of formal, necessary and final concluding thinking". Whitehead tried to formalise the thinking within a logical symbolism and thereby make it economic. Here, two opposing concepts can be highlighted: form and content. The form is accordingly mathematically Klären, wherein the content can only be explained by the experience or the meaning for it. Mathematics is thus deductive, it is derived from experience and describes the formal framework of thought without being bound to the contents of thought itself, or the mathematical system itself becomes the content of thought.

Whitehead publizierte in der Folge viele weitere Artikel auf dem Gebiet der Mathematik. 1906 folgt die Publikation *The Axioms of Projective Geometry*, 1907 *The Axioms of Descriptive Geometry* und 1911, die sehr erfolgreiche Einführung, *An introduction to Mathematics*. 1917 wird die Essay Sammlung *Organization of Thought* publiziert, die im Jahre 1929 in leichter Veränderung zur Neuauflage kommt. Die Essays behandeln auch Whiteheads Ansichten über Erziehung und Bildung, die 1922 durch das kleine Pamphlet *The Rhythm of Education* ergänzt werden. In *Rhythm of Education* legt Whitehead eine periodische Analyse des Lebens, resp. der Erfahrung vor. *Leben ist ein Diktat der Natur und „essentially periodic“*. Das Rhythmische beschreibt darin die Übermittlung von Unterschieden in einem Rahmen der Wiederholungen. Darüber hinaus gibt es eine Vielzahl weiterer Publikationen, unter anderem das richtungsweisende Werk *Principia Mathematica* (3 Bände, 1911-1913), welches Whitehead zusammen mit Bertrand Russel publizierte. Das Werk warf nicht nur grundlegende mathematische, sondern auch philosophische Fragen auf, die für die späteren Arbeiten von Whitehead von größter Bedeutung waren. In den Bänden der *Principia Mathematica* bündelt sich der Versuch „der gesamten Mathematik, einschließlich der Geometrie ein logisches Fundament zu geben und sie so allein logisch zu begründen“. Whitehead war zu Zeiten der *Principia Mathematica* der Überzeugung, dass die darin formulierte Prädikatenlogik zur Universalsprache der Wissenschaft werden würde, unter anderem auch für Kunstgeschichte und Theologie." Kurt Gödel wies Anfang der 30er Jahre jedoch nach, dass sich in der *Principia Mathematica*, das formale System transzendierende, Metaebenen finden. Den Erfolg der *Principia Mathematica* stand dies, ca. 20 Jahre zuvor, jedoch nicht im Wege. So ist, neben den späteren philosophischen Schriften, gerade die *Principia Mathematica* eine der einflussreichsten Publikationen Whiteheads.

Whitehead subsequently published many other articles in the field of mathematics. 1906 follows the publication the axioms of projected geometry, 1907 the axioms of descriptive geometry and 1911, the very successful introduction, an *Introduction to mathematics*. 1917 is published the organization of Thought essay collection, which is

reissued in the year 1929 in light change. The essays also deal with Whitehead's views on education and education, which are supplemented 1922 by the small pamphlet *the Rhythm of Education*. In *rhythm of Education*, Whitehead presents a periodic analysis of life and experience. Life is a dictate of nature and "essentially periodic". The rhythmic describes the transmission of differences in a context of repetition. In addition, there are a number of other publications, including the pioneering work *Principia Mathematica* (3 volumes, 1911-1913), which Whitehead published together with Bertrand Russel. The work not only raised basic mathematical but also philosophical questions, which were of paramount importance for the later work of Whitehead. In the volumes of the *Principia Mathematica*, the attempt "to give the whole of mathematics, including geometry, a logical foundation and to logically justify it", is concentrated. In the time of the *Principia Mathematica*, Whitehead believed that the predicates formulated therein would become the universal language of science, including art history and Theology. " Kurt Gödel, however, pointed out at the beginning of the 1930s that metalevels were found in the *Principia Mathematica*, the formal system transcendent. The success of the *Principia Mathematica*, however, was not in the way about 20 years earlier. In addition to the later philosophical writings, the *Principia Mathematica* is one of Whitehead's most influential publications.

„A.N. Whitehead und Bertrand Russell versuchen mit den *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) eine logische Fundierung der Wissenschaften aufgrund einer abgesicherten mathematisch-formalisierten Theoriesprache; der Wiener Kreis um Rudolf Carnap als auch die Warschauer Logikschule um Alfred Tarski befassen sich ausführlich mit „Objekt-“ und „Metasprachen“. Insbesondere [Rudolf] Carnap sieht die Konstruktion entsprechender Sprachen als die vorrangige Aufgabe der Philosophie an.“

Ausgehend vom Wiener Kreis kann Whiteheads Werk weiter auf Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap und Hans Hahn bezogen werden. In der — 1929 von Ernst Mach herausgegebenen — Schrift *Wissenschaftliche Weltauffassung. Der Wiener Kreis wird Whiteheads Werk als eine der primären Quellen erwähnt. Dies bezieht sich auf die mit Russel*



publizierte *Principia Mathematica* als auch die Schriften *An Enquiry Concerning The Principles Of Natural Knowledge* (1919) und *The Concept of Nature* (1920). Rudolf Carnap bezieht sich 1928 in der Schrift *Der logische Aufbau der Welt* direkt auf diese beiden Werke Whiteheads. Etwas dem Wiener Kreis Analoges existierte in den USA nicht und sollte unter dem Vorstand von Whitehead, Clarence Irving Lewis und Edward Vermilye Huntington demnächst in Harvard eingerichtet werden, notiert Herbert Feigl in einem Brief an Moritz Schlick im Dezember 1930.29 Ausgehend vom Wiener Kreis kann auch über einen Einfluss auf das Dessauer Bauhaus gesprochen werden. 1929 halten Otto Neurath, Herbert Feigl und Rudolf Carnap dort Vorträge. Und auch bei Wassily Kandinsky und dessen Schrift *Punkt und Linie zu Fläche* (1926) findet sich eine thematische Nähe zu Whitehead, die Maxe Bense 1960 folgend illustriert:

*Nie Befanden sich Erkenntnistheorie und Malerei, Wahrnehmungslehre und Ästhetik in größerer Übereinstimmung (was ihre Zielsetzung anbetrifft) als bei Kandinsky und Whitehead."*

"A.N. Whitehead and Bertrand Russell try with the *Principia Mathematica* (1910-13) A logical foundation of the sciences due to a secure mathematical-formalized theory language; The Viennese circle around Rudolf Carnap as well as the Warsaw Logic school around Alfred Tarski deal with "object" and "metalanguage" in detail. In particular [Rudolf] Carnap sees the construction of the corresponding languages as the overriding task of philosophy. "

Starting from the Viennese circle, Whitehead's work can be further related to Otto Neurath, Rudolf Carnap and Hans Hahn. In the *World View*, published by Ernst Mach — 1929. The Viennese circle is referred to as Whitehead's work as one of the primary sources. This refers to the *Principia Mathematica*, published with Russell, as well as the writings to *An Enquiry concerning the principles of Natural Knowledge* (1919) and *The Concept of Nature* (1920). Rudolf Carnap refers to 1928 in *Scripture* the logical construction of the world directly on these two works of Whitehead. Something analogous to the Viennese circle did not exist in the United States and should soon be

established at Harvard under the board of Whitehead, Clarence Irving Lewis and Edward Vermilye Huntington, Herbert Craven wrote in a letter to Moritz Schlick in December 1930.29 Starting from the Vienna Circle can also be talked about an influence on the Dessau Bauhaus. In 1929 Otto Neurath, Herbert Cowardl and Rudolf Carnap will hold lectures there. and also at Wassily Kandinsky and its writing point and line to *Surface* (1926) There is a thematic proximity to Whitehead, which illustrates Maxe Bense 1960 following:

*Never was epistemology and painting, perception and aesthetics in greater conformity (as far as their objectives are concerned) than in Kandinsky and Whitehead. "*

*Whitehead, so könnte man sagen, hat letztlich den Formalismus der Principia Mathematica nie aufgegeben, sah aber schon früh, dass dieser nicht ohne die Verbindung zu einer Realität der Natur bestand haben kann. Konnte in der Principia Mathematica, der Formalismus noch klar auf eine logische Sprache bezogen werden, wird alsbald ein Formalismus der metaphysischen Grundbedingungen herangezogen, eine Synthese aus Logik und Gefühl, die ihre Rechtfertigung in einem stringent fundierten ersten Kalkül findet. Gerade dieses Kalkül eröffnet sich an dem Begriff des Mediums eindrücklich.*

Whitehead, it could be said, has never given up the formalism of the *Principia Mathematica*, but saw early on that it cannot exist without the connection to a reality of nature. In the *Principia Mathematica*, which formalism is still clearly related to a logical language, a formalism of the metaphysical basic conditions is immediately used, a synthesis of logic and emotion that justifies its justification in a rigorously founded First calculus. It is precisely this calculus that opens up to the concept of the medium.

*Begann Platon, einer der Gründungspfeiler der Whitehead'schen Philosophie, seine Karriere mit ethischen Fragestellungen und endet bei Fragen der Physik, Astronomie und Kosmologie, beschritt Whitehead den umgekehrten Weg; ' vom äußerst erfolgreichen Mathematikprofessor zum philosophischen Denker. So formulierte er sein philosophisches Werk, nach 40-jähriger Tätigkeit als Mathematiker, in den als Trilogie zu sehenden*

*Publikationen: Science and the Modern World (1925), Process and Reality (1929) und Adventure of Ideas (1933). Die 1925 publizierte Schrift Science and the Modern World — Whitehead war zu diesem Zeitpunkt 64 Jahre alt — wurde als Meilenstein der Philosophiegeschichte gefeiert. Whitehead geht hier darin über, die Natur nicht nur in mathematischer Terminologie zu beschreiben, sondern beruft sich auf ein kosmologisches Naturkonzept, welches Methoden und Forschungsergebnisse der modernen Wissenschaft reflektiert. Whitehead stellt damit explizit das Theorem einer schöpferischen Natur an den Ausgangspunkt seiner Metaphysik. Zudem wird erstmals der Wert der Kunst für eine zivilisierte Gesellschaft hervorgehoben. 1933 kehrt Whitehead zu seinem „leichteren“ Schreibstil von Science and the Modern World zurück und diskutiert — 72-jährig — in der Publikation Adventure of Ideas großen Themen wie, Soziologie (Part I.), Kosmologie (Part II.) Philosophie (Part III.) und Zivilisation (Part IV.). Im letzten Teil führt Whitehead die Begriffe von Schönheit, Wahrheit, Abenteuer und Frieden ein um einen Motor menschlicher Entwicklungen aufzuzeigen.*

Plato, one of the founding pillars of Whitehead's philosophy, began his career with ethical questions and ends with questions of physics, astronomy and cosmology, Whitehead went the opposite way; ' From the highly successful mathematics professor Philosophical thinker. Thus he formulated his philosophical work, after 40 years of work as a mathematician, in the publications to be seen as a trilogy: Science and the Modern World (1925), Process and Reality (1929) and Adventure of Ideas (1933). The 1925 published science and the Modern world — Whitehead was at that time 64 years old — was celebrated as a milestone in philosophy history. Whitehead is talking about not only describing nature in mathematical terminology, but refers to a cosmological nature concept that reflects the methods and research results of modern science. Whitehead thus explicitly presents the theorem of a creative nature to the starting point of his metaphysics. In addition, the value of art for a civilized society is highlighted for the first time. In 1933, Whitehead returns to his "lighter" writing style of science and the Modern World and discusses — 72 years — in the publication

adventure of ideas major topics such as, sociology (Part I.), cosmology (Part II.) Philosophy (Part III.) and Civilization (Part IV.). In the last part, Whitehead introduces the concepts of Beauty, truth, adventure and peace in order to show an engine of human development.

*Whiteheads philosophisches Werk ist keiner Strömung genau zuzuordnen und die Geschichte dessen Einflusses noch nicht zur Gänze geschrieben. Sein philosophisches Werk kann als alternative Position zwischen Monismus, Materialismus und Idealismus gelesen werden. Dabei steht eine wirkungsgeschichtlich orientierte Philosophie im Zentrum der Analysen.*

Whitehead's philosophical work cannot be accurately assigned to any current and the history of its influence is not yet fully written. His philosophical work can be read as an alternative position between monism, materialism and idealism. The focus of the analysis is on an effect-historical-oriented philosophy.

### English abstract

This dissertation deals with the concept of the "medium" in the work of Alfred North Whitehead (1861 - 1947) and its areas of application within the theory formulated by Whitehead. The concept of the medium is given a central place by Whitehead both in his early philosophical works (approximately 1919 - 1922) and in his best-known works (approximately 1927 - 1933). Over the course of his oeuvre, it develops its final significance, which situates the world (or environment) as a medium of transmission that co-determines every occasion of experience — in other words, the world as a transmitting medium. In Whitehead's work, the concept of the medium is applied to fundamental questions, such as those of space, time, material and sensory perception. This dissertation consists of an investigation that does not consider the concept of the medium in the light of institutional discourses. But rather uses A. N. Whitehead's work in order to exemplify a structure based on his philosophical scheme. Prior to this approach, it starts by drawing on Leo Spitzer's historical semantics methodology and provides a history of the concept of the medium up to the early 20th century. This reveals that the problems

formulated in the ancient world and in early scientific works still reflect basic issues of contemporary importance. Thus, the concept of the medium is initially analyzed from two perspectives: firstly, that of its early Greek roots and their thematic relations to Whitehead's theories, and secondly, from the scientific perspective of the "aether" medium as discussed by Descartes, Newton and later Einstein. In this context, Whitehead takes an opposing position, philosophically speaking, to Descartes and Kant, as he does, from a scientific point of view to Einstein. In rejecting Descartes' ontology of substance, Whitehead formulates a theory that he derives from interdependent processes, thereby laying the ground for the process philosophy that he goes on to develop. Such a process becomes the basis for analyzing the medium and feeds into an interpretation that emphasizes the idea that a medium creates unity. Further, the term of an aesthetic material medium is exemplified in the work, published 1925, *Science and the Modern World*. In contrast to this, the concept of the aesthetic material medium is correlated with Whitehead's symbol theory (*Symbolism Its Meaning and Effect*, 1927) and gives a brief outline of the technical concept in Whitehead's oeuvre. Subsequently, it supplies a research perspective for an analysis of the concept of the medium that reflects both the basis of that concept and the alternative problematization of it initiated by Whitehead: for Whitehead, a medium can never be conceived as a static entity but must instead be re-analysed anew in each perspective on the experience. The analysis of A. N. Whitehead's concept of the medium is clearly a desirable research outcome. Furthermore, mention is often made of the fact that both Marshall McLuhan and especially Gilles Deleuze frequently refer to Whitehead. In consequence, Whitehead's concept of the medium can be said not only to have an influence on current positions but also to offer a clear, under researched alternative to standard media studies perspectives. <>

[Sefer Yesirah and Its Contexts: Other Jewish Voices](#)  
by Tzahi Weiss [Divinations: Rereading Late  
Ancient Religion, University of Pennsylvania Press,  
9780812249903]

Sefer Yeşirah, or "Book of Formation," is one of the most influential Jewish compositions of late antiquity. First attested to in the tenth century C.E. and attributed by some to the patriarch Abraham himself, Sefer Yeşirah claims that the world was created by the powers of the decimal number system and the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This short, enigmatic treatise was considered canonical by Jewish philosophers and Kabbalists and has fascinated Western thinkers and writers as diverse as Leibnitz and Borges. Nonetheless, Sefer Yesirah is nearly impossible to contextualize, mainly owing to its unique style and the fact that it does not refer to, nor is it referenced by, any other source in late antiquity. After a century and a half of modern scholarship, the most fundamental questions regarding its origins remain contested: Who wrote Sefer Yeşirah? Where and when was it written? What was its "original" version? What is the meaning of this treatise?

In "[Sefer Yesirah" and Its Contexts](#), Tzahi Weiss explores anew the history of this enigmatic work. Through careful scrutiny of the text's evolution, he traces its origins to the seventh century C.E., to Jews who lived far from rabbinic circles and were familiar with the teachings of Syriac Christianity. In addition, he examines the reception of Sefer Yeşirah by anonymous commentators and laypeople who, as early as the twelfth century C.E., regarded Sefer Yeşirah as a mystical, mythical, or magical treatise, thus significantly differing from the common rabbinic view in that period of the text as a philosophical and scientific work. Examined against the backdrop of this newly sketched historical context, Sefer Yeşirah provides a unique and surprising aperture to little-known Jewish intellectual traditions of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages which, despite their distance from the rabbinic canon, played a vital role in the development of medieval Jewish learning and culture.

Contents  
A Note on Transliteration of the Hebrew  
Alphabet  
Introduction

Chapter 1. Discussions About Alphabetical Letters in Non-Jewish Sources of Late Antiquity

Chapter 2. The Creation of the World from the Letters of the Ineffable Name

Chapter 3. The Creation of the World from Twenty-Two Letters and the Syriac Context of Sefer Yesirah

Chapter 4. Sounds of Silence: Sefer Yesirah Before the Tenth Century

Chapter 5. Reevaluating the Scientific Phase of Sefer Yesirah

Epilogue

Appendix i. Sefer Yesirah and the Early Islamic Science of Letters

Appendix z. Sefer Yesirah's Long Version, According to Ms. Vatican z99/4, 66a-71b, with the English Translations of Peter A. Hayman

Appendix 3. The Midrash About Sefer Yesirah and Ben Sira, According to Ms. Vatican 2.99/4, 65a-66a

Notes

Bibliography

Index

Acknowledgments

Excerpt:

Sefer Yesirah is one of the most enigmatic, yet influential, texts in the history of Jewish thought. The text is striking for its rhythmic phrasing and evocative language; it connects the essence of language with the foundations of the world. This short treatise has fascinated Jewish thinkers and kabbalists, as well as 'Western thinkers and writers, from Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz to Umberto Eco and Jorge Luis Borges.

Because of its unique style as well as the fact that it does not explicitly refer to other Jewish sources and was not quoted by other Jewish sources in late antiquity, it is difficult, if not impossible, to contextualize. When I present Sefer Yeirah for the first time to my students, I joke that after about 50 years of scholarship on Sefer Yesirah, we know almost everything about this book except for four minor issues: Who wrote it? Where and when was it written? What does it mean? And what was its "original" version? Scholars disagree about the time and context of the book, proposing first-century CE Hellenism,<sup>1</sup> the rabbinic sphere of the second to sixth centuries CE, Neoplatonism of the fourth or

fifth centuries CE, fifth to the sixth century CE Palestine, the Syriac-Christian milieu of the sixth to seventh century, or the ninth-century Islamic world.<sup>1</sup> This diversity reflects what seems to be an inherent and radical inability to contextualize Sefer Yesirah.

Sefer Yesirah appeared in the Jewish world at the beginning of the tenth century. In this period, it was already interpreted as a canonical treatise by leading rabbinic figures living on three continents, and it had many different versions. The surprising appearance of Sefer Yesirah, as if out of the blue, is the result of its absence from the Jewish world before the tenth century, along with its immediate acceptance. Furthermore, Sefer Yesirah had a remarkable reception in Jewish milieus from the tenth century on. Joseph Dan describes the two main stages of its impact on the Jewish world—stages with little in common: in the first, between the tenth and the twelfth centuries, it was read by at least five commentators as a sort of philosophical or scientific text. In the second, from the end of the twelfth century on, it was interpreted by mystics and kabbalists as a mystical, mythical, and magical treatise. These facts about Sefer Yesirah's reception raise essential questions: Where was Sefer Yesirah before its canonization in the tenth-century rabbinic world? Why was Sefer Yesirah initially understood as a philosophical and scientific treatise, and later viewed as the canonical composition of Jewish mysticism?

My main goal in this book is to demonstrate that the evolution of Sefer Yesirah and its reception have something in common: they point us to an alternative picture of the history of Jewish thought in late antiquity and the early Middle Ages. I claim that Sefer Yesirah is a rare surviving Jewish treatise written and edited around the seventh century by Jews who were familiar with Syriac Christianity and were far from the main circles of rabbinic learning.<sup>9</sup> Sefer Yesirah does not show strong awareness of the articulations, insights, or even the existence of the rabbinic world. Sefer Yesirah, to put it slightly differently, conveys much information about its intellectual world in terms of language, physiology, astrology, and cosmology. We have no reason to assume that the text tries to conceal its context; it is more reasonable to assume that our information about its world is limited. Sefer

Yesirah is a unique, fascinating, and information-packed trace of another and unknown Jewish environment. Similarly, in the second part of the book, when we follow the mystical, magical, or mythical ways in which Sefer Yesirah was understood before the end of the twelfth century, a trace of another Jewish milieu beyond the scope of the medieval canon of familiar rabbinic figures comes into view. An investigative integration of the above hypotheses can help us outline the "margins of Jewish mysticism," a Jewish mystical thought that was not included in the classical canon of Jewish thought, for various historical reasons, but that was very important for the development of a Jewish horizon of thought.

My conclusions, as with any scholarly work, are based on the work of other scholars, and references to their works are to be found throughout the book. I want to mention the works of four authors who particularly helped me reach my conclusions. Shlomo Pines's paper on the similarities between the first chapter of Sefer Yesirah and the Pseudo-Clementine homilies brings important evidence to bear in support of the possibility of a Christian-Syriac context for Sefer Yesirah." Guy Stroumsa, in his article about a possible Zoroastrian origin to the perception of the sefirot in Sefer Yesirah, referred to the importance of the sixth-century treatise *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters*, which, as I will demonstrate, can be of much help in contextualizing Sefer Yesirah. Haggai Ben-Shammai's article on the reception of Sefer Yesirah claims convincingly that Saadya's aims in interpreting Sefer Yesirah were apologetic and probably a reaction to other Sefer Yesirah commentaries concerned with myth, mysticism, and magic. And in two articles, Klaus Herrmann discusses fragments of commentaries to Sefer Yesirah preserved in the Cairo Geniza, written between the end of the tenth century or the beginning of the eleventh, in the spirit of Hekhalot literature. These fragments clearly demonstrate that there were other Jewish approaches to Sefer Yesirah before the end of the twelfth century, of which we know very little today. My work begins where these important studies leave off.

### Sefer Yesirah: A Short Introduction

Sefer Yesirah opens with the following depiction of the creation of the world, from what it calls "thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom":

[With] thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom, YH, the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, the Living God, God Almighty, high and exalted, dwelling forever, and holy is his name (Isa. 57:10, created his universe with three books (sefarim): with a book (s.p/f.r) and a book (s.p/f.r) and a book (s.p/f.r).

Ten sefirot belimah and twenty-two foundation letters.

Ten sefirot belimah, the number of ten fingers, five opposite five, and the covenant of unity is exactly in the middle, by the word of tongue and mouth and the circumcision of the flesh.

Ten sefirot belimah, ten and not nine, ten and not eleven. Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding. Test them and investigate them. Know and ponder and form. Get the thing clearly worked out and restore the Creator to his place. And their measure is ten, for they have no limit. Ten sefirot belimah, restrain your heart from thinking and restrain your mouth from speaking, and if your heart races, return to where you began, and remember that thus it is written: And the living creatures ran to and fro (Ezek. 1:14) and concerning this matter the covenant was made.

Accordingly, the number thirty-two, constituting the paths of wisdom, comprises the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet—the foundation letters—and the "ten sefirot belimah." The meaning of belimah is unclear," and I think that the most reasonable meaning of the word sefirot is, as Yehuda Liebes suggests, "counting"; therefore, the phrase refers to the decimal counting system. In the paragraphs that we have just quoted, the ten sefirot are joined to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet to constitute a new numerical formula of thirty-two, which it calls the "thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom."

Scrutinizing these passages, which discuss the role of the ten sefirot, it seems at first glance that Sefer Yesirah demands precision. The numbers are not to be read differently: "Ten sefirot belimah, ten and

not nine, ten and not eleven." It would seem that the numbers, in their precision, specify some kind of scientific or magical quality. Because of the numbers' ontological and epistemological qualities, a reader of *Sefer Yesirah* is obliged to understand their role in the creation of the world and in the created world: "Understand with wisdom, and be wise with understanding. Test them and investigate them. Know and ponder and form. Get the thing clearly worked out."

Along with its enthusiastic pathos about the obligation to investigate the world with numbers and letters, *Sefer Yesirah* warns readers about the very thing it counsels—thinking!: "Ten sefirot belimah, restrain your heart from thinking and restrain your mouth from speaking, and if your heart races, return to where you began."

Regarding this gap between the obligation to investigate and the restriction on inquiry, Liebes has noted that it should be understood not only as a contradiction but also as an essential part of the dialectical path charted by *Sefer Yesirah*. According to Liebes, *Sefer Yesirah* is not merely a cosmogonic treatise; it would be more accurate to read it as a treatise about heavenly creativity and the human creativity inspired by the creation of the world. He says that *Sefer Yesirah* is actually a treatise of *ars poetica* that argues creativity's need of both terms: one should understand the world and articulate one's insights, while also making room for astonishment, for prediscursive and unarticulated phenomena—without investigating them.

Poetic and surprising ideas, like the dual obligation/restriction of investigating the world, occur throughout *Sefer Yesirah*. Another example from the same chapter concerning the sefirot describes two unexpected dimensions alongside the familiar three spatial dimensions of the world: the moral dimension and the dimension of time: "Ten sefirot belimah, and their measure is ten, for they have no limit: dimension of beginning and dimension of end, dimension of good and dimension of evil, dimension of above and dimension of below, dimension of east and dimension of west, dimension of north and dimension of south. And the unique lord, a trustworthy divine king, rules over them all from his holy abode forever and ever."

Thus the treatise asserts that, as with the ten sefirot, there are ten, not six, directions in the world. In addition to the familiar six directions—north, south, west, east, above, and below—there are four other directions: the moral dimension, which comprises the directions of good and evil; and a dimension formed by the directions of the beginning and the end. Such an approach demonstrates why so many people were inspired by *Sefer Yesirah*.

### The Letters

Following the first chapter, which is dedicated to discussions about the role of the ten sefirot, *Sefer Yesirah* discusses the role of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the creation of the world and in the created world. It divides the letters into three groups: the first group, comprising the letters alef, mem, and shin, is named *immot*, *ummot*, or *ammot*, a designation with no clear meaning in Hebrew. The second group, called the "double letters," contains the six letters that can be pronounced doubly: bet, gimel, dalet, kaf, pe, and tav, as well as the letter resh. The third group, called the "simple letters," comprises the remaining twelve letters of the Hebrew alphabet: "The twenty-two letters are the foundations: three *immot* letters, seven double (letters), and twelve simple (letters) ... three *immot* A, M, S ... seven double letters B, G, D, K, P, R, T ... twelve simple letters H, W, Z, H, T, Y, L, N, S, S, Q."

Notably, the criteria for this division are not clear-cut; we are left wondering about the basis for the division of the letters into these three groups. According to *Sefer Yesirah*, the triad of alef, mem, and shin represents initials of three of the four foundations: alef stands for air, mem for water, and shin for fire.

The next set of letters, the double letters, comprises the six Hebrew letters that can grammatically be pronounced in two ways—plosive and fricative, B, G, D; and K, P, T, as well as the letter resh. For example, the letter bet can be pronounced both as b and v; and the letter pe can be pronounced as p or as f. But to these six, rightfully identified as double letters, *Sefer Yesirah* adds the resh, which does not have a double pronunciation in regular Hebrew grammar. A few scholars have presented

important accounts of the role of the resh, indicating contexts in which it could have had a double pronunciation.<sup>23</sup> These observations explain why resh, and not other letters of the alphabet, had this attribute; I agree with Joseph Dan that grammatical determinants are not the only reason for this anomaly. As we saw at the beginning of this introduction, Sefer Yesirah argues that the world has ten dimensions and not six, in order to demonstrate that the number ten can be found in the foundation of the universe. Similarly, in the paragraphs dealing with the triad A-M-S, Sefer Yesirah states that there are only three, not four, elements: air, water, and fire; it does not mention earth. As several scholars have stressed, Sefer Yesirah subjects the facts to its ends where necessary and, in the case before us, alters received wisdom so that the given will correlate with the preordained numbers in the three groups of letters, not the other way around. It seems that here, too, Sefer Yesirah wants to demonstrate that a classical typological number such as seven stands at the heart of the created world; therefore, the resh was added to the group.

The third group of letters, "simple letters," appear, in all probability, to be designated as such, insofar as they are devoid of any specific shared characteristics. Along with the grouping of the letters, the discussions in Sefer Yesirah devoted to the letters reveal a singular, if not innovative, attitude. The letters are described as units that can be combined with one another and thus create the world in its ontological and epistemological pathways. Combinations of letters demarcate, according to the book, the limits of human knowledge and allow for the creation of everything: "Twenty-two letters: he carved them out, he hewed them, he weighed them and exchanged them, he combined them and formed with them the life of all creation and the life of all that will form. How did he weigh and exchange them? Alef with them all, and them all with alef; bet with them all, and them all with bet. And they all rotate in turn. The result is that [they go out] by 221 (231) gates. The result is that all creation and all speech go out by one name."

In this description, we find that, despite a limited number of letters in the alphabet, amounting to one

name, everything can be created: "the result is that all creation and all speech go out by one name." A similar approach to the letters, their infinite combinations, and creation that derives from them can be found later on in Sefer Yesirah: "How did he combine them? Two stones build two houses: three build six houses: four build twenty-four houses: five build 120 houses; six build 720 houses; seven build 5,040 houses. From here on, go out and ponder what the mouth cannot speak and what the eye cannot see and what the ear cannot hear."

This articulation that a limited number of basic signifiers, the letters or the stones, enable unlimited creativity within language, the houses, is interesting from a modern linguistic perspective. Since the basic components of the language expounded by Sefer Yesirah are not the phonemes but rather the written letters, the linguistic approach of Sefer Yesirah presents a clear preference for written language over speech. And consider the linguistic structure advanced by Sefer Yesirah: the limited number of signifiers and unlimited creativity within language looks like a raw model of the Saussurian differentiation between parole and langue: "From here on, go out and ponder what the mouth cannot speak and what the eye cannot see and what the ear cannot hear."

### The Structure of Discussion About the Letters

Sefer Yesirah's discussions about the ten sefirot and the twenty-two letters contain interesting insights as well as an exposition of the enduring structures involved in sustaining the created world. An example of such a structure is the three parallel levels of the created world. According to Sefer Yesirah, each letter functions and signifies on three levels: the celestial world or the universe, mankind or the human body, and the year or time: "Seven double letters: B, G, D, K, P, R, T. He carved and hewed them, he combined them, weighed them and he formed with them the planets in the universe, the days in the year and the apertures in mankind.... He made bet rule, and bound to it a crown, and combined one with another, and formed with it Saturn in the universe, the Sabbath in the year, and the mouth in mankind." Every letter is responsible for a certain aspect of each level. It seems that a



letter governs its aspect, perhaps even creating it. Thus in the last example, the letter bet rules: "Saturn in the universe, the Sabbath in the year, and the mouth in mankind." Another structural issue, which is of much interest yet remains abstruse, is the description of the last triple structure, A-M-S., as divided into male and female. Although assumptions as to the meaning of this division may abound, the laconic language of Sefer Yesirah, on this issue as well as others, tends to hide more than it reveals. For example, one finds this division described: "He made alef rule over wind, and bound to it a crown, and combined them with each other, and formed with them air in the universe, and humidity in the year, and corpse in mankind, male and female—male with alef mem, shin, and female with alef, shin, mem."

**Abraham the Patriarch and Sefer Yesirah**  
Abruptly, at the end of Sefer Yesirah, the book's laconic discussions are replaced by a new and totally different discourse, which appears in a sole paragraph describing Abraham the patriarch as having investigated and understood the secrets of Sefer Yesirah: "When Abraham our father came, and looked, and saw, and investigated, and understood, and carved, and combined, and hewed, and pondered, and succeeded, the Lord of all was revealed to him. And he made him sit in his lap, and kissed him upon his head. He called him his friend and named him his son, and made a covenant with him and his seed forever."

The last paragraph is thought to be from a late layer in the evolution of Sefer Yesirah because of its pronounced developed literary form. Further support for the view that this paragraph is alien to the spirit of Sefer Yesirah can be seen in the fact that biblical heroes or later Jewish figures had otherwise received no mention in the body of Sefer Yesirah, as well as in the fact that in this paragraph, Abraham is said to be contemplating an already-extant Sefer Yesirah. Furthermore, although there are versions of this paragraph in all the recensions of Sefer Yesirah, its second part, which gives a detailed description of the meeting of God and Abraham—"And he made him sit in his lap, and kissed him upon his head. He called him his friend and named him his son, and made a

covenant with him and his seed forever"—is absent from the earliest recension of Sefer Yesirah, from the tenth-century manuscript found in the Cairo Geniza.

Gershom Scholem and Moshe Idel give divergent readings of Abraham's contemplative relationship to Sefer Yesirah. Scholem argued that when Abraham studied Sefer Yesirah, he achieved a mystical revelation. In this mystical vision, God "made him sit in his lap, and kissed him upon his head. He called him his friend and named him his son." Idel argues that the key word in this paragraph is "succeeded," demonstrating that after Abraham "came, and looked and saw and investigated, and understood, and carved and combined, and hewed, and pondered," he was equal to God: he could create the world and had the highest magical abilities.

It is difficult to decide whether this paragraph belongs to the early version of Sefer Yesirah. Nevertheless, throughout the centuries, in the eyes of most readers of Sefer Yesirah, this paragraph was not just taken to be integral to Sefer Yesirah but was considered its most important paragraph. From a very early stage, because of this paragraph, Sefer Yesirah was attributed to Abraham.

### How to Place Sefer Yesirah in Context

Most of Sefer Yesirah concerns the role, status, and function of the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet in the creation of the world and in the created world. Although Sefer Yesirah begins by declaring that the world was created by "thirty-two wondrous paths of wisdom," Ithamar Gruenwald has shown that its main interest is in the twenty-two letters of the alphabet and therefore does not mention the ten sefirot after the first chapter. The common assumption in Sefer Yesirah scholarship has nevertheless been that Sefer Yesirah's approach to the alphabet and its role in the creation of the world is similar to the normative Jewish perception of the Hebrew letters—in other words, the approach of the rabbinic and Hekhalot literatures. Most scholars who have tried to find a context for Sefer Yesirah have consequently not given much attention to the issue of the letters and have

preferred to focus on two other matters: the origins of the notion of the ten sefirot; and the equivalents between more specific notions or terms in Sefer Yesirah and those found in other Jewish and non-Jewish texts of late antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

This book takes a step back to examine the context of Sefer Yesirah by considering its approach to the letters, which are, after all, its main interest. I argue that the attitude taken by Sefer Yesirah to the role of the Hebrew alphabet is substantially different from that of other Jewish sources. Paying close attention to how Sefer Yesirah talks about the letters can open new horizons and can assist in suggesting a context for the book.

In Chapter 1, I will present a panoramic picture of relevant approaches from non-Jewish sources to alphabetic letters in texts from late antiquity to the early Middle Ages. Those sources will later help us contextualize Sefer Yesirah.

Chapters 2 and 3 focus on the main role of the alphabet in Sefer Yesirah: the creation of the world based on letters. These chapters identify two traditions known to late antiquity that give this sort of account of the creation of the world. One describes the creation of the world from the ineffable name or its letters; the other holds that the world was created by all twenty-two letters of the alphabet. Close scrutiny of these two traditions shows that in rabbinic sources, the dominant notion was that the world was created with the letters of the ineffable name, while in non-Jewish and, especially, in Christian sources, we can find the account of the creation of the world from the twenty-two letters of the alphabet. As the final step of the inquiry in these chapters, I will strengthen the case for Sefer Yesirah's connection to the Christian-Syriac world. There are many good reasons to assume that Sefer Yesirah's writers or editors lived sometime around the seventh century and were deeply familiar with Syriac notions. This conclusion, which relies on concrete and contextual resemblances, should be seen in light of the apparent near-absence of engagement between Syriac Christianity and the rabbinic culture in Babylonia: we have very few examples showing a possible influence of Syriac texts on rabbinic ones.

## How Was Sefer Yesirah Understood by Its Early Readers?

Sefer Yesirah was accepted into the rabbinic canon in the tenth century. Before the second half of the twelfth century, it had spawned at least four commentaries that can be roughly defined as scientific-philosophical in nature. Nevertheless, in the last three decades, a number of studies dealing with different issues in the history of the reception of Sefer Yesirah have all taken the view that even before the last part of the twelfth century, Sefer Yesirah was understood as a mystical, mythical, or magical treatise.

In Chapter 4, I will look at an early and enigmatic time in the history of Sefer Yesirah, the unknown period beginning when it was conceived up until the tenth century. I will examine two traces of how Sefer Yesirah was understood in the Jewish world. The first is a short gloss inserted into some recensions of Sefer Yesirah before the tenth century. A careful reading of this gloss reveals that its author was influenced by the Hekhalot literature and other Jewish myths and read Sefer Yesirah in that context. The second trace of a Jewish reception of Sefer Yesirah is the well-known ninth-century epistle of Agobard of Lyon, which describes the insolence of the Jews. I suggest that the ninth-century French Jews whom Agobard describes were probably acquainted with the cosmogony of Sefer Yesirah, though not necessarily with Sefer Yesirah itself, and saw that cosmogony as part of a wider mythical and mystical realm.

Chapter 5 examines sources testifying to how Sefer Yesirah was understood between the tenth century and the end of the twelfth century. Central to this chapter is a discussion of a medieval midrash about Sefer Yesirah and Ben Sira, preserved in an eleventh-century manuscript and composed between the ninth and the eleventh centuries. This midrash has been discussed in the scholarly literature, but inaccurate dating and insufficient analysis of its contents have prevented scholars from fully understanding its importance in the history of the reception of Sefer Yesirah. Sefer Yesirah is here described in an unambiguously mythical and magical manner that reflects a common understanding of this treatise at the time.

In addition to investigating this lengthy midrash, I will reexamine Rashi's treatment of Sefer Yesirah and argue that he was influenced by this midrash about Sefer Yesirah and Ben Sira. Last, I will discuss a short, very popular, and boldly mystical statement that was included in most recensions of Sefer Yesirah before the eleventh century.

### Should Sefer Yesirah Be Considered a Book?

In the first comprehensive commentary on Sefer Yesirah, R. Saadya Gaon states that there are several versions of the text and consequently that one of the purposes of his commentary is to determine the correct one. Saadya was not alone in noting the textual problems of Sefer Yesirah, which were, in fact, discussed by most of its early commentators. Indeed, the first three commentaries that were written on Sefer Yesirah—by Saadya, Dunash Ibn Tamim, and Shabbetai Donnolo—were written on the basis of different versions of Sefer Yesirah. The fact that there are three (or possibly more) main recensions of Sefer Yesirah raises fundamental issues: What is it exactly that we intend to date when discussing Sefer Yesirah? Is it viable to assume that there is one urtext written by a single author whose date needs to be determined? How can we establish the date of a treatise when we cannot reconstruct its earliest version and when there is not even scholarly agreement about the very existence of such an original?

Daniel Abrams, in his extensive and comprehensive study about kab-balistic manuscripts and textual theory, suggests an original path to investigate Sefer Yesirah. According to Abrams, since it is essentially impossible to reconstruct Sefer Yesirah's urtext and since there are great differences between the manuscripts of this composition, Sefer Yesirah scholarship should focus on more valid evidence: the manuscripts themselves. He says, in other words, that there is no Sefer Yesirah (Book of Formation) but rather Sifrei Yesirah (Books of Formation) and therefore instead of trying in vain to establish the "original" Sefer Yesirah, one should trace the history of Sefer Yesirah's acceptance and the ways that this fluid text had been modified over the years by its medieval commentators. Each

recension reflects, according to Abrams, a certain moment in Sefer Yesirah's history of acceptance, and that moment should be committed to scrutiny.

Abrams did not offer textual evidence to support his argument, and although his theoretical suggestion appeals to me, I did not find much support for it in the manuscripts of Sefer Yesirah. In my opinion, the textual history of Sefer Yesirah should be divided into two stages: in the first stage, before the tenth century, there are indeed differences between the recensions of Sefer Yesirah. During that period, the book was edited and reedited by various redactors, and a few glosses were inserted. That was the reason for the discomfiture of its early commentators with regard to its correct version. Therefore, in analyzing the history of Sefer Yesirah before the tenth century, I used a similar method to the one that Abrams suggested.

Nevertheless, in the second stage, after the tenth century, the three recensions of Sefer Yesirah remained the main ones, and it would be rare to find new glosses within Sefer Yesirah. Therefore, the assumption that the book continues to change during the High Middle Ages has no textual support. From a careful reading of tens of manuscripts of Sefer Yesirah, I have not found evidence of conspicuous interventions of late medieval commentators in the versions of Sefer Yesirah but rather, the contrary. New versions that combine the short and the long recensions of Sefer Yesirah constitute the main modification that can be encountered.

The differences between the versions of Sefer Yesirah, hence, occurred before the book was interpreted by its early commentators, and it seems that these commentaries framed its versions. Moreover, even if one scrutinizes the three main recensions of Sefer Yesirah, the differences between them are less crucial than might be assumed. At first glance, they are mainly differences in length and manner of editing that did not influence the structure of the book and its basic arguments. Ithamar Gruenwald, who published the first critical edition of Sefer Yesirah, has articulated it: "The three recensions differ from one another mainly in the length of the text and in

inner organization of the material. The differences of reading between the three recensions are not as many as is generally assumed.

There are, as Gruenwald states, great differences between the image of Sefer Yesirah in scholarship and the reality of this book according to its manuscripts. We would not be wrong in saying that the textual problem of the version(s) is less complicated than assumed and that those problems were sometimes over-theorized in scholarship. From all the recensions of Sefer Yesirah known to me, the basic issues of the book remain stable: in all the recensions, twenty-two letters are divided into the same three groups: immot, "doubles," and "simples." Each of these groups contains the same letters without variations, and the discussions about the letters use identical terminology and symbolism. Similarly, in all the recensions, the first paragraphs of Sefer Yesirah deal with the ten sefirot, and only minor differences can be found between the recensions. For example, the differences between the long and the short recensions are related to the length of the discussion but are not reflected nor do they have any influence on the meaning or the symbolism of each letter. In the same vein, the great differences between Saadya's recension and other recensions of Sefer Yesirah are related to the way in which the text is edited, but there are merely a few differences in terms of content and terminology.

A different methodology to analyze the textual labyrinth of Sefer Yesirah has been suggested by Gruenwald and Ronit Meroz. Forty years ago, Gruenwald suggested that there are thematic and terminological reasons for making a distinction between Sefer Yesirah's first chapter and subsequent chapters of the book and that it seems that the first chapter reflects a different treatise, which was integrated into Sefer Yesirah. Such an approach can help explain, for example, the opening paragraph of the book by determining the odd number: thirty-two, as an editorial addition. This number thirty-two is not discussed throughout Sefer Yesirah; it was added by an editor of the book who combined together the main chapters of the book discussing the twenty-two alphabetical letters, with the new chapter about the ten sefirot. In an alternative suggestion put forth a few years

ago, Meroz argues that Sefer Yesirah comprised three distinct compositions that are described in the opening paragraph as: a book, a book, and a book. If Gruenwald's or Meroz's hypothesis is correct, we must suppose, as Meroz noted, that the three main recensions of Sefer Yesirah all evolved from one branch—after the book was redacted, and that the sections of Sefer Yesirah known to us had already been edited at that juncture. It would be a mistake to assume that the early forms of Sefer Yesirah are merely a result of a redaction of various preexisting compositions. It would be more suitable to perceive it as a combination between original and eclectic materials. In comparison with other late antiquity and medieval compositions, such as the Hekhalot literature, Sefer haBahir, and the Zoharic literature, Sefer Yesirah, despite all the differences between its recensions, seems to have a coherent structure with unique and distinct terminology. Of course, Sefer Yesirah is a layered text, and preceding the tenth century, its readers edited it, reedited it, and added material. Nevertheless, we have to listen to the manuscripts themselves and observe the great similarities between the three recensions. We should conclude that there was an early composition from which the three main recensions of Sefer Yesirah developed, a composition that Peter Hayman tried to reconstruct as "the earliest recoverable text of Sefer Yesirah."

My main goal in this study is not to publish a new edition of the "early" Sefer Yesirah, so I will not discuss every word in the book with the purpose of determining whether it is part of that early version. My purpose is to date and locate the early version of Sefer Yesirah; in order to do so, I will determine the terminus a quo and the terminus ad quem of central themes and basic issues that relate to the core of Sefer Yesirah and that can be found in all its recensions.

[Habad in the Twentieth Century: Spirituality, Politics, Outreach](#) edited by Jonatan Meir and Gadi Sagiv [The Zalman Shazar Center for the Study of the History of the Jewish People, Jerusalem, 9789652273505]

Habad (Lubavitch) is among the best known Hasidic communities in the world. One is indeed likely to

encounter a “Lubavitcher” at a wide range of occasions, from Hanukkah menorah lightings on the main squares of countless towns and cities to official Jewish ceremonies hosted by non-Jewish public figures and, naturally, at one of the thousands of Habad Houses, where “emissaries” cater to the religious needs of Jews. However, readers wishing to expand their knowledge of Habad’s special nature would be hard-pressed to find an accessible, up-to-date, and balanced scholarly exposition on this topic.

The present anthology, which consists of four articles on Lubavitch from the turn of and through the end of the twentieth century, endeavors to address this lacuna. The authors of the articles are leading scholars of Habad who study the movement from the perspectives of history, theology, sociology, and politics. Habad perpetuated its theological, organizational, and political characteristics during its entire history. This collection offers informed perspectives on Habad as a whole.

Jonatan Meir is a professor of modern Jewish thought at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. He has published monographs and many articles on the Jewish Enlightenment, Hasidism and modern kabbalah. He is the author of *Imagined Hasidism: The Anti-Hasidic Writings of Joseph Perl* (2013), *Kabbalistic Circles in Jerusalem* (2016); *Literary Hasidism: The Life and Works of Michael Levi Rodkinson* (2016).

Gadi Sagiv is senior lecturer at the Open University of Israel. He is the author of *Dynasty: The Chernobyl Hasidic Dynasty and Its Place in the History of Hasidism* (2014) and a co-author of *Hasidism: A New History* (2017).

#### Contents

Efraim Halevy: Preface

Gadi Sagiv and Jonatan Meir: Foreword  
Naftali Loewenthal: “The Thickening of the Light”: The Kabbalistic-Hasidic Teachings of Rabbi Shalom Dovber Schneersohn in Their Social Context

Elliot R. Wolfson: Achronic Time, Messianic Expectation, and the Secret of the Leap in Habad

Alon Dahan: Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson’s Outlook on the Land of Israel, Zionism, and the State of Israel  
Samuel Heilman: Lubavitch and How and Why It Is Taking Over the Jewish World

Excerpt: Habad (Lubavitch) is among the best known Hasidic movements in the world. In the eyes of many, Jews and non-Jews alike, it has become the most conspicuous representative of Orthodox Jewry. One is indeed likely to come across a “Lubavitcher” (a member of the group) at a wide range of occasions: Hanukkah menorah lightings on the main squares of countless towns and cities; official Jewish ceremonies hosted by non-Jewish public figures; and at one of the thousands of Habad Houses (the Hasidism’s far-flung outreach centers around the world), where “emissaries” cater to the religious needs of Jews. The ecumenical Jewish image that Lubavitch has acquired camouflages the fact that the movement possesses unique attributes not only compared with other Orthodox Jewish groups, but other Hasidic factions as well. However, readers wishing to expand their knowledge of Habad’s special nature would be hard-pressed to find an accessible, comprehensive, up-to-date, and balanced scholarly exposition on this topic. For the most part, we are currently forced to make do with research on the group’s luminaries or biased works by its members and admirers. The present anthology, which consists of four articles on Lubavitch in the twentieth century (as well as the end of the nineteenth century), endeavors to chip away at this scarcity of information. In this foreword, we will lay the groundwork for the topic at hand with a brief history of Habad before the twentieth century.

The emergence of Habad should be understood against the backdrop of the Partitions of Poland – the division of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth among the three surrounding empires of Russia, Prussia, and Austria. In 1772, during the first of the three partitions, a swath of land, which is today part of Belarus (“White Russia”), was transferred to Tsarist Russia. This area was indeed home to many Hasidim (followers of the Hasidic movement), who were led by Menachem Mendel of Vitebsk and Avraham of Kalisk. Both were influential disciples

of the Maggid of Mezertich (a prominent disciple of the Baal Shem Tov, who is perceived to be the founder of Hasidism) and each became a Hasidic leader (tsaddik in Hebrew or rebbe in Yiddish, among other titles) in his own right. Five years later, Menachem Mendel and Avraham relocated to the Land of Israel for reasons that are not entirely clear (these motives are indeed the object of scholarly debate). The two Hasidic leaders planned to continue their leadership from afar by guiding their flock via epistles. However, their followers wanted a living, approachable leader in somewhat close proximity. To this end, the Hasidim in that area began traveling beyond the borders of White Russia to tsaddikim in Volhynia (a region in what is now northwestern Ukraine) and central Poland. In an effort to preserve their crumbling assembly, Menachem Mendel and Avraham turned to Shneur Zalman of Liady (1745–1812), a fellow disciple of the Maggid, entreating him to preside over their followers in White Russia. Shneur Zalman's acceptance of this offer in 1786 can be seen as the beginning of Habad. The community would be headed by the Schneerson dynasty for more than two centuries. Since the passing of Menachem Mendel Schneerson in 1994, Lubavitch has forged ahead in the absence of a leader as before and like other dynasties.

Habad historiography presents its upper echelons as an unbroken dynasty of seven nesi'im (presidents) who seamlessly passed the scepter down the line of succession. In reality, there were inheritance battles, schisms, and even power vacuums along the way. What is more, this tableau of seven leaders only pertains to the main branch of Habad that was named after Lubavitch, their town of residence during the nineteenth century. However, there were also long stretches in which multiple courts vied for primacy or independence.

The passing of Shneur Zalman in 1812 triggered a succession struggle between his son Dov Ber (1773–1827), and the late rebbe's close disciple Aharon HaLevi of Staroselye (1776–1829), in which the former ultimately prevailed. As in other Hasidic groups, Dov Ber essentially molded Habad into a familial dynasty. Furthermore, he established the "capital" in Lubavitch, a town that the movement – or, more precisely, its main faction – is strongly

identified with to this day. Following his death, the second rebbe was replaced by his son-in-law, Menachem Mendel Schneerson (1789–1866), who is also known as Tsemach Tsedek – after a collection of halakhic works under this authorship. Another feud erupted after Menachem Mendel's demise. His youngest son, Shmuel (1834–1882) took over the court in Lubavitch, whereas his older brothers founded independent courts in other towns. These alternative centers indeed functioned for several decades, but the dynasty later reunited under the court in Lubavitch. Once again, the passing of the movement's head, Shmuel, was met by a pause in succession. Though the circumstances are vague, his eldest son, Zalman Aharon, eschewed the helm. After having already moved to Vitebsk, Shmuel's second son, Shalom Dovber (1860–1920), returned to Lubavitch and became the heir. Until the end of the Tsarist era, he was the most prominent Hasidic figure throughout the empire. The next in line was his son, Yosef Yitshak Schneerson (1880–1950), who was succeeded by his son-in-law Menachem Mendel (1902–1994) – the seventh and last leader of Habad.

Whereas the majority of Hasidic rebbes sufficed with tending to their own community, Lubavitch's eminences viewed themselves and acted as though they were the heads of the entire Jewish people. For instance, in the early nineteenth century, it appeared as though the Tsarist government was going to curtail the residency rights of village-dwelling Jews. Consequently, Shneur Zalman embarked on a fund-raising trip that took him well beyond Habad's area of distribution. Most notably, Shalom Dovber filled a key role in the Orthodox Jewish establishment from the end of the nineteenth century to the initial stages of Bolshevik rule. Within this framework, he cooperated and competed with prominent non-Hasidic rabbis. Likewise, Yosef Yitshak deemed himself to be the savior of Russian Jewry under the communist regime. This ecumenical ideology and the aforementioned developments shaped the worldview and enterprise of the last rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

These pretensions of leading the Jewish world were tied to another defining attribute of Habad – the complex mutual relations between the leadership and the non-Jewish authorities. These connections

began inadvertently. Informants, perhaps *mitnagdim* (opponents of Hasidism), reported to the authorities on Shneur Zalman, who was detained in 1798 and 1800 on charges of subversion. After a series of investigations, Shneur Zalman was cleared of all suspicion. His release, though, was followed by instances of Lubavitch collaboration with the regime. For instance, Shneur Zalman supported Russia during the Napoleonic Wars (as a spy!), thereby earning accolades from the Romanovs. His son and successor, Dov Ber, backed government initiatives for Jewish agricultural settlements. Moreover, the third rebbe (the Tsemah Tsedek) sat on a committee established by the authorities with the aim to standardize Jewish education. That said, it was this very prominence that impelled the regime to surveil and investigate the movement's senior ranks. At any rate, Lubavitch is considered a "Russian" Hasidic court to this day, not only because it was the first to be taken under the wing of the Tsarist government, but also because of its relationship with the Russian authorities. In these relationships it stood out from all the other Hasidic groups in the empire.

Habad also excelled from an organizational and administrative standpoint. From as early as Shneur Zalman's reign, a system was implemented to help the leadership keep tabs on its far-flung devotees. Emissaries were appointed to visit affiliated communities where they conveyed the rebbe's messages and assembled information for the court about the lives of the Hasidim. Moreover, the court ran various institutions such as a philanthropic arm, which financially supported members in the Land of Israel. And from 1897, the court cultivated a network of yeshivot called *Tomkhei Tmimim* (lit. Benefactors of the Pure).

Habad is perhaps the Hasidic group with the most extensive literary tradition, manifested in printing and circulating books. In all likelihood, this characteristic is tied to the movement's organizational prowess. The most famous Habad work is the *Tanya*. Penned by Shneur Zalman, the core of this book explicates how an "average" (*beinoni*) Hasid can attain spiritual heights. In fact, all of Habad's seven leaders are attributed with numerous teachings, which were later collected in books. This output consists primarily of various

Hasidic theological-ethical teachings. On rare occasions, the rebbes also produced halakhic literature. Furthermore, the *Igrot Kodesh* (lit. "Holy Epistles") – a collection of letters that the leaders wrote to various correspondents – were meticulously assembled by devotees.

Over the course of its existence, Habad has also put out a wide range of historiographic works, foremost among them are Haim Meir Heilman's *Beit Rabbi* (1902), as well as Yosef Yitshak Schneersohn's literary enterprise during the first half of the twentieth century. Targeting an internal audience, this corpus advances a variety of myths that revamped the movement's chronicles. Furthermore, this body of work was intended to serve as a quasi-alternative to both maskilic and research literature. In the words of the scholar Ada Rapoport-Albert, this is "hagiography with footnotes" – a fictional literature under the guise of history. These works evolved into an airbrushed version of reality that was accepted by many Lubavitchers. Similarly, Habad adopted the "Kherson repository" – a collection of fabricated epistles that are "dated" to the movement's inception. The tension and discrepancies between this hagiography and the research literature still pervade quite a few contemporary works on Lubavitch.

Against this backdrop, what did the movement's leaders wish to convey to their followers? Given the voluminous amount of Habad writing, a comprehensive description is beyond the confines of this volume. However, we can have a glimpse of the ethos of Habad by comparing the image of "the Habad way" to the approaches of other Hasidic groups. In fact, Habad members have long understood themselves by contrasting their own movement's ideology to that of other Hasidic courts.

According to this binary image of Habad vis-à-vis other groups, Habad champions an exoteric ethos that strives to reveal secrets of divinity to the entire flock. In addition, every member of Habad, regardless of his lot in life, is encouraged to contemplate the Godhead. Therefore, it is the job of the Hasidic leader to provide spiritual guidance that will allow his followers to pursue these goals on their own. This outlook indeed explains why the



leaders of Habad were inclined to deliver Hasidic teachings at great length. Conversely, in other Hasidic groups, which Lubavitch dubbed “Hasidisms of Poland” (apparently in contrast to its own “Russian” nature), spiritual responsibility was transferred from the member to the leader. On the premise that the “simple Jew” lacks the independent means for spiritual endeavor, the “Polish” courts gradually reached the conclusion that the rank and file should be instructed to distance themselves from such pursuits. Instead, they should focus on cultivating their pure faith in the Almighty and his worldly representative – the tsaddik. As such, a weighty burden is thrust on the Polish tsaddik’s shoulders; besides offering guidance to the flock, he must see to their spiritual and material needs. For this reason, his most influential public undertakings are to conduct mystical prayers and perform miracles. Moreover, the Polish rebbe usually did not deliver lengthy theoretical Hasidic teachings; they were more attenuated to the practical implications of the ethical message and sometimes also wanted to conceal esoteric kabbalistic knowledge. To borrow a Hasidic metaphor that was formulated in this particular context, the Habad leader who guides his followers “shepherds the flock,” whereas his counterparts in “the Hasidisms of Poland,” who remove the responsibility from their followers’ shoulders, also “carry the sheep.”

A common way of formulating this difference is to categorize the Lubavitcher ethos as intellectual worship. This ideology is manifest in the three kabbalistic imperatives that form the acronym HaBaD: Hokhma (wisdom), Binah (understanding), and Da’at (knowledge). In contrast, the ethos of “Poland” is presented as the Hasid working on his or her middot (attributes), namely the emotional and instinctual dimensions of one’s character. For the most part, these divergent outlooks are brought up in the Habad discourse, where they express and reinforce the flock’s self-awareness as a group that has intellectually outshone the rest of the Hasidic world. Put differently, in the Habad sources one can sometimes discern a belief in the Habad Hasidim’s superiority to occupy themselves with spiritual enterprise compared to followers of other Hasidic groups.

The intellectualist nature of Lubavitch is manifest, to a large extent, in the seven leaders’ concerted efforts to impart to their followers a Lurianic strain of kabbalistic knowledge. Likewise, the rank and file are taught to predicate their religious belief on the contemplation of the Godhead. This exoteric approach ran counter to other Hasidic groups in the Russian expanse, which objected to the average Hasid’s study of kabbalah and preached for “simple faith” instead.

All these eighteenth- and nineteenth-century lineaments of Habad – its leaders’ belief that they were the heads of the entire Jewish people; the leadership’s close relations with government authorities; the movement’s administrative prowess; prolific literary output; and intellectualist ethos – basically endured into the 1900s, the temporal focus of this anthology. Elliot Wolfson’s article showcases the intellectual range and depth of Lubavitch philosophy. In the second chapter, Naftali Loewenthal demonstrates how this thought has been passed down to the faithful. Moreover, he opens a window onto the movement’s literary vigor. Samuel Heilman delves into organizational aspects of Habad. From Alon Dahan’s article, one gets a sense of Habad’s pan-Jewish aspirations and its attendant political involvement.

From philosophical, organizational, and political standpoints, Habad has essentially perpetuated the doctrines the group embraced during the first two centuries of its existence. In consequence, even though this collection focuses on the twentieth century, in certain respects, the authors explore issues that have long defined the Habad movement. <>

[Classic Essays in Early Rabbinic Culture and History](#)  
edited by Christine Hayes [Classic Essays in Jewish History, Routledge, 9781409425052]

This volume brings together a set of classic essays on early rabbinic history and culture, seven of which have been translated into English especially for this publication. The studies are presented in three sections according to theme: (1) sources, methods and meaning; (2) tradition and self-invention; and (3) rabbinic contexts. The first section contains essays that made a pioneering contribution to the identification of sources for the historical and

cultural study of the rabbinic period, articulated methodologies for the study of rabbinic history and culture, or addressed historical topics that continue to engage scholars to the present day. The second section contains pioneering contributions to our understanding of the culture of the sages whose sources we deploy for the purposes of historical reconstruction, contributions which grappled with the riddle and rhythm of the rabbis' emergence to authority, or pierced the veil of their self-presentation. The essays in the third section made contributions of fundamental importance to our understanding of the broader cultural contexts of rabbinic sources, identified patterns of rabbinic participation in prevailing cultural systems, or sought to define with greater precision the social location of the rabbinic class within Jewish society of late antiquity. The volume is introduced by a new essay from the editor, summarizing the field and contextualizing the reprinted papers.

#### CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Part I. Rabbinic History — Sources, Methods and Meaning

Leopold Zunz, "Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur" in 1818 (republished in *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1875-76), pp. 1-31. Translated by James Redfield

Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891), "Hagadische Elemente bei den Kirchenvatern" in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Vol. 3, No. 8 (1854), pp. 311-19. Translated by James Redfield

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Adolf Bitchier, "The Levitical Impurity of the Gentile in Palestine before the Year 70" in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series, Vol. 17 (1926), pp. 1-81

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Part II. Rabbinic Culture — Tradition and Self-Invention

Israel Levy, "L'Origine Davidique de Hillel" in *REJ*, Vol. 31 (1895), pp. 202-211.

Translated by Erin Brust

Wilhelm Bacher, "Das altjüdische Schulwesen" in *Jahrbuch für Jüdische Geschichte und Literatur*, Vol. 6 (1903), pp. 48-81. Translated by Eva Kiesele

E.E. Urbach, "The Derashah as the Basis for the Halakhah and the Problem of the Soferim" in *Tarbiz*, Vol. 27 (1958), pp. 168-82 (Hebrew). Translated by Christine Hayes

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 Index

Excerpt:

When I undertook to edit a volume entitled *Classic Essays in Early Rabbinic Culture and History*, I did not anticipate the challenge I would face. A classic essay is one that has a recognizable value or high quality over time, but the scholarly study of the rabbinic period has undergone more than one sea change since the early days of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. The discovery of new textual sources, the increased availability of critical editions, the stunning contributions of archaeology, the development and refinement of historical-critical methodologies, the rejection of both historical positivism and historical idealism, the embrace of comparative approaches, and the integration of methods and theories from across the humanities have utterly transformed the scholarly study of the rabbinic period. In light of these seismic shifts one may be forgiven for wondering whether it is even possible for works of a certain age to be perceived by modern scholars as possessing high quality or recognizable value. Fortunately, in the course of preparing this volume, I have come to the conclusion that even a somewhat outdated work can possess both high quality and recognizable value.

In selecting these essays I adopted five criteria. First, I confined myself to scholars who are no longer living and to essays and articles published for the first time before 1970. I considered this to be a completely non-negotiable criterion. Second, I gave preference to items that are less readily available either because they are out-of-print and have not been widely reproduced or digitized or because they have not been translated into English until now. This was, however, a somewhat negotiable criterion; on occasion, an essay readily available online or in other anthologies cried out to be included. Third, I did not include essays devoted

entirely to the philological and textual study of rabbinic literature, though it is clear that reliable scholarly research in rabbinic history and culture depends upon those who labor in the fields of lower criticism, higher criticism and in the publication of critical editions. Fourth, I favored stand-alone studies rather than book chapters or excerpts from monographs. Fifth, I chose essays that I consider to be pioneering — either because they inspired scholars to do something they hadn't done before or because they enabled scholars to do things in a different way. In the Introduction, I detail the specific reasons for my choices and highlight the enduring legacy of each essay. Where possible, I point to subsequent scholarship that has followed the trail blazed by the essay.

This is, inevitably, a subjective and perhaps even idiosyncratic list. While some of the essays included here would likely appear in any scholar's list of "Classic Essays in Early Rabbinic Culture and History," others would not. These essays are here because they have generated an intellectual energy and ongoing scholarly conversation that I have found to be stimulating and of enduring significance. It is entirely possible, and indeed likely, that another editor's intellectual passions would dictate a substantially different list.

The essays in this volume are divided into three parts. Part I contains essays that made a pioneering contribution to the identification of sources for the historical and cultural study of the rabbinic period, articulated methodologies for the study of rabbinic history and culture, or addressed historical topics that continue to engage scholars to the present day. Part II contains essays that made a pioneering contribution to our understanding of the culture of the sages whose sources we deploy for the purposes of historical reconstruction, grappled with the riddle and rhythm of the rabbis' emergence to authority, or pierced the veil of their self-presentation. Part III contains essays that made pioneering contributions to our understanding of the broader cultural contexts of rabbinic sources, identified patterns of rabbinic participation in prevailing cultural systems, or sought to define with greater precision the social location of the rabbinic class within Jewish society of late antiquity.

## Rabbinic History — Sources and Methods

In 1818, Leopold Zunz (1794-1886) launched a new era in the history of Jewish scholarship with an essay entitled "Etwas über die rabbinische Litteratur." As Ismar Schorsch notes: "The unmistakable thrust of the essay was toward transferring the study of Hebrew literature from the synagogue to the university, the only proper forum for pursuing the history of mankind.<sup>1</sup> The essay established Zunz as the founder of the modern "Science of Judaism" or *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, whose practitioners advocated the application of historical-critical methods to the study of Judaism and the integration of Jewish studies into the humanities. To make the case for the recognition of Judaism and its literature in university research and teaching, Zunz argued that Jews had made important contributions to all areas of Western civilization, contributions that should be included in its history. To achieve a full integration of the study of ancient Judaism into the study of ancient history in general and Roman history in particular, Zunz and the other members of the *Wissenschaft* movement believed they "had to show classicists that their own source material had historical value and justified historical consideration."<sup>2</sup> In his pioneering essay, Zunz surveyed the great expanse of post-biblical Hebrew literature, some of it previously unknown, in order to demonstrate that Jewish literary activity was rich and deep, that it was not confined to law but embraced all areas of human endeavor. The essay was the first attempt to document all branches of Hebrew literature and to outline the vision of the *Wissenschaft* movement.

In 1819, Zunz joined with Edward Gans and Moses Moser to found the "Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden" (Society for Jewish Culture and Science) which promoted the scientific study of Jewish history, literature and science as a means to securing an equal place for Jews in European society. Zunz edited the sole issue of the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* published by the society (1922), and when the society disbanded a few years later, Zunz continued its work alone as the unofficial leader of a generation of scholars dedicated to *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In 1832, he published what is considered one of the most

important Jewish books of the 19th century, his *Gottesdienstliche Vorträge der Juden* ("The Worship Sermons of the Jews, Historically Developed"). A methodological model for the study of Jewish literature, the work analyzed the development of Jewish homiletical literature from classical rabbinic midrash, the Haggadah and the prayer-book up to the modern-day sermon. Zunz's explorations and expositions of Jewish literature and history continued in *Zur Geschichte und Literatur* ("On History and Literature," 1845), which repeated many of the themes of his 1818 essay: the scope of Jewish literature was expansive and included all post-biblical Hebrew writing; Jewish literature and general literature have mutually influenced one another; the study of the former should be an integral part of the latter; and the exclusion of Jewish studies from the university is an outrage that must end.

Although originally sympathetic with the goals of the Reformers, Zunz became increasingly frustrated with their selective approach to the Jewish past. Denigrating the religious orientation of Jewish literature as parochial, the Reformers saw no value in the scientific study of rabbinic writings and exegesis. Such parochial works could not constitute a national literature. In the 1940s, Zunz broke openly with this view and articulated an alternative program of *Wissenschaft* that was comprehensive in its vision of Jewish history and literature. Although a distaste for Talmud is evident in some of his writings, his major works<sup>3</sup> drew upon hundreds of manuscripts and thousands of liturgical works to present the historical development of liturgical poetry and synagogue customs, in an effort to counter the vision of *Wissenschaft* promoted by Geiger and other Reform figures.

One of the goals of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement was to demonstrate the Jewish contribution to the development of European civilization, a goal well served by identifying Jewish materials in non-Jewish literature. The 19th century saw an increased interest in the effort to uncover evidence of Jewish traditions in the writings of the church fathers. Scholars of patristics were not in general well suited to this task; it took scholars with both yeshiva training and a Western classical university education to undertake the comparative

study of these two bodies of literature.<sup>1</sup> One of the pioneers in the effort was Heinrich Graetz (1817-1891).

Graetz is best known for his comprehensive eleven-volume *History of the Jews* (1853 to 1876). While the historian Salo Baron criticized the work for its "lachrymose conception of Jewish history," it was hailed more than a century later as "the best single introduction to the totality of Jewish history."<sup>6</sup> In contrast to the attention paid to this magisterial work, many of Graetz's other works (he translated and wrote commentaries on biblical books as well as analyses of rabbinic texts) have been overlooked and are no longer available. And yet, his articles investigating aggadic elements in the writings of the church fathers — a topic of continuing scholarly interest — inspired a flurry of research.

In 1854 Graetz published "Hagadische Elemente bei den Kirchenvatern," the first of two articles (the second was published in 1855) investigating midrashic elements and parallels in the writings of Justin Martyr, Origen, Ephrem, Cyrus and Jerome, in order to show the influence of rabbinic thought on patristic literature. Judith Baskin notes the many dissertations, articles and books between 1863 and 1900 that followed Graetz's lead, including: D. Gerson on Ephrem (1868), A.H. Goldfahn on Justin Martyr (1873), C. Siegfried on Jerome (1883-84), M. Rahmer on Jerome and Pseudo-Jerome (various studies from 1861 to 1903), S. Funk on Aphrahates (1891) and two important articles by S. Krauss in 1893-94.<sup>7</sup>

Krauss's articles, which focused on Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, Aphrahates, Ephrem and Jerome, emphasized the importance of patristic writings not only for a better understanding of the rabbinic sources and the polemical context in which the latter were produced, but also for evidence of early Christian representations of Jews and Judaism. The 19th century search for rabbinic parallels in patristic texts culminated in the studies of Louis Ginzberg between 1899 and 1935.<sup>8</sup> His findings were included in his classic multi-volume work *The Legends of the Jews* (1909) which contains many references to the church fathers. In the mid-20th

century, E.E. Urbach insisted on the importance of patristic literature and its polemical practices for a full understanding and explanation of certain rabbinic interpretations and sayings.<sup>9</sup> More recently, Oded Irshai, Paula Fredriksen, and Hillel Newman have continued to make important advances in the study of the treatment of the Jews in patristic literature; Marc Hirshman has inquired into the literary polemics and borrowing between these two literatures<sup>10</sup> Judith Baskin has compared Jewish and Christian exegetical methodologies and interpretive traditions; and Daniel Boyarin has explored the relation of Judaism and Christianity, arguing that the separation of the two was the work of rabbis and church fathers of the 4th century C.E.<sup>11</sup> Connections between the literature of Eastern Christianity and the Babylonian Talmud have been identified by Isaiah Gafni, Naomi Koltun-Fromm, Shlomo Naeh, Adam Becker, Michal Bar-Asher Siegal and others. Nevertheless, debate continues over the contacts between rabbinic and patristic figures (and Christians generally), their mutual influence or interaction, and proper methods for the identification of both parallels and polemics.

A leading scholar of the early 20th century Wissenschaft, Avigdor (Victor) Aptowitz (1871-1942) investigated a wide array of subjects in Jewish history and literature. While his most famous scholarly work is his 1913-35 annotated edition of the *Sefer Ravyah* (R. Eliezer b. Joel ha-Levi, a scholar of medieval Ashkenaz), he also produced a four-volume work on biblical citations in Talmudic-midrashic literature that deviate from the Masoretic text (*Das Schriftwort in Der Rabbinischen Literatur*, 1906-1915), and dealt extensively with aggadah (in *Kain and Abel in der Agada* [1922] and *Parteipolitik der Hasmonäerzeit im rabbinischen and pseudoepigraphischen Schrifttum* [1927]). In his work on aggadah, he developed criteria for distinguishing folk legends from legends produced by rabbinic academies, and compared the content and literary form of aggadah with non-rabbinic works such as the Apocrypha and patristic literature.

Aptowitz was one of the first scholars to recognize the close and mutually illuminating relationship between halakhah and aggadah. His

1924 article "Observations on the Criminal law of the Jews" drew on both halakhic and aggadic texts in an attempt to produce an intellectual history of rabbinic criminal law. His attention to the relationship of halakhah and aggadah and to the larger intellectual universe of the rabbis foreshadowed the rise of law and narrative studies in rabbinic scholarship beginning in the latter part of the 20th century with the work of American and Israeli scholars, including Jeffrey Rubenstein, Steven Fraade, Suzanne Last Stone, Yair Lorberbaum, Moshe Simon-Shoshan, Yonatan Feintuch, Beth Berkowitz, Chaya Halberstam, and Barry Wimpfheimer.

These scholars, influenced directly or indirectly by jurisprudential approaches informed by literary theory (in particular Ronald Dworkin's theory of law as interpretation and Robert Cover's emphasis on the role of narrative in transforming law from a system of social control to a system of meaning), highlight the many ways in which law and narrative interact and overlap in the larger complex of rabbinic thought. In resisting the isolation of halakhah and aggadah as distinct discourses they return to a path pioneered by Victor Aptowitzer nearly a century ago." At the same time, they forged new pathways in the study of rabbinic legal culture in the light of legal theory.

Adolf Büchler (1867-1939) was a historian of the social, economic and religious life of Jews in Palestine in the centuries immediately preceding and following the rise of Christianity. Büchler is noted for his insistence on the basic credibility and reliability of rabbinic texts as historical sources, despite a widespread scholarly bias in favor of contemporaneous Greek and Roman sources. The debate over the suitability of rabbinic sources for the task of historical reconstruction continues to occupy scholars to the present day.

In his wide-ranging researches, Büchler mined Second Temple and Talmudic materials, arriving at conclusions that significantly altered the presentation of Judaism in the first few centuries of the Common Era. Some of his most innovative studies concern ethical and religious concepts, particularly around matters of purity, sin, and atonement. Büchler was one of two early scholars

to take seriously the notion of sin as a defiling force. Despite certain flaws (such as the failure to consider New Testament evidence and an assumption of continuity between the biblical and rabbinic periods) Büchler's basic distinction, refined and supplemented, has been revived to great advantage in recent studies of impurity in ancient Jewish culture'

Buehler also addressed the social consequences of ritual impurity in two major works. The first, a monograph length study entitled *Der Galiläische 'am-Ha'ares Des Zweiten Jahrhunderts* (1906), demonstrated that purity concerns did not prevent social interaction among Jewish groups. In recent years, younger scholars such as Yair Furstenberg and Mira Balberg have applied new methodological tools and theoretical frameworks to the study of purity and impurity and their social and ideological consequences in rabbinic texts. The second, an essay entitled "The Levitical Impurity of the Gentile in Palestine before the Year 70" appeared in 1926 and was an important corrective to the views advanced by many 19th-century scholars of ancient Judaism such as Emil Schürer. Schürer claimed that Gentiles were considered by biblical Israelites and Pharisaic rabbis in late antiquity to communicate a ritual impurity because they did not observe the biblical laws of ritual purity. This impurity was believed to be the basis for a strict and burdensome policy of separation. In his essay, Buehler argued that the ritual impurity of Gentiles was the de novo creation of first-century rabbis prior to the Roman—Jewish war of 66 C.E. and that this statutory and non-intrinsic ritual impurity was a response to specific historical circumstances. While the essay contains errors and methodological flaws, the basic thesis, that the ritual impurity of Gentiles was not an ancient legal tradition traceable to biblical times, was a major contribution. In the 1950s, Gedalyahu Alon would criticize Buehler's thesis and posit an ancient tradition of inherent ritual impurity arising from the Gentile qua Gentile. The evidence for such a view is slim, however, as noted in the recent studies of Klawans and Hayes. Nevertheless, some recent Israeli scholarship has returned to Alon's notion of an ancient Gentile impurity in ancient Judaism.

## The legacy of Adolf Buehler lives on in this continuing debate

The early Wissenschaft scholars led by Zunz fought to demonstrate the historical value of Jewish source materials. Scholars such as Aptowitzer and Buehler heeded the call and utilized aggadic and midrashic materials as well as the history of halakhah to reconstruct the social, economic, political and ideational history of ancient Judaism. Little changed in the next generation: Saul Lieberman, Gedalyahu Alon and E.E. Urbach all sought to reconstruct ancient Jewish history from "historical kernels" extracted from a wide range of Talmudic sources.

Gedalyahu Alon (1901-1950) was one of 20th century's foremost historians of the Talmudic period who also utilized rabbinic sources in his reconstruction of the social, political, and economic world of Jewish Palestine. He regarded the Jews as a single nation, united and resistant to external cultural influences. Alon's nationalist orientation is also evident in his assertion that Jewish political life and official institutions did not end with the destruction in 70 C.E., but continued under the leadership of sages and Patriarchs until the Muslim conquest in the 7th century. The assumption of a post-destruction Jewish nation united under the rule of sages and Patriarchs and impervious to outside influence may be seen in Alon's 1947 essay "Those Appointed for Money."

In the essay, Alon responded to Hirsch Zvi Chajes's 1899 article "Les juges juifs en Palestine de l'an 70 à l'an 500" (REJ) which argued that there were no formal rabbinic courts after the destruction. According to Chajes, individual rabbis authorized by the Roman government made judgments but, with the exception of some of the Patriarchs, rabbis in Palestine in the Talmudic period lacked civil authority. Against this view, Alon read rabbinic sources as providing evidence for a tripartite judicial system consisting of (a) communal judiciaries independent of the Patriarch and Sanhedrin and ruling according to local custom and equity, (b) rabbinic courts run by ordained sages and authorized by the Patriarch and Sanhedrin to rule according to rabbinic law, and (c) a system of arbitration. According to Alon, the rabbis were antagonistic towards the communal courts and in

time were able to limit the scope of their authority. Alon's thesis exerted a strong influence on some subsequent scholarship, but has recently been challenged by the work of Martin Goodman and Seth Schwartz.

The debate between Chajes and Alon is symptomatic of a larger debate over the place of the rabbis in Palestinian Jewish society in the first four centuries of the Common Era. A significant contribution to that debate, in addition to the works mentioned above, is Catherine Herser's 1997 book, *The Social Structure of the Rabbinic Movement in Roman Palestine*, which shows that for most of this period the Palestinian rabbis were not an institutionalized class but a loosely agglomerated group. The assertion of a more central role for the rabbis in Palestinian Jewish society in the early centuries C.E. may be seen in the papers delivered at a recent symposium entitled "In the Wake of the Destruction: Was Rabbinic Judaism Normative while other recent scholarship brings archaeological and other evidence to bear on the question of the place of the rabbis in post-destruction Jewish society.

The pioneers of the historical and cultural study of the rabbinic period concerned themselves primarily with the rabbinic estate, or that of ancient Jews writ large, with little interest in the experience or representation of women or the application of theories of gender. In the last forty years, the task of historical and cultural reconstruction of the rabbinic period initiated by these scholars has embraced a broader vision as demonstrated by investigations of women's history by such scholars as Tal Ilan, Cynthia Baker and Miriam Peskowitz; analyses of rabbinic discourses of gender, gender roles, and sexuality by such scholars as Daniel Boyarin, Charlotte Fonrobert; and studies of women and the halakhah by Judith Hauptman, Gail Labovitz and Elizabeth Alexander.

## Rabbinic Culture — Tradition and Self-Invention

The scientific study of Judaism was predicated on the adoption of a critical approach to traditional Jewish sources. One of the most remarkable early instances of a "hermeneutic of suspicion" in rabbinic scholarship may be seen in Israel Levy's 1895 essay "L'Origine Davidique de Hillel." Levy (1856-



1939) was a French scholar of Jewish history and literature who made important contributions to the fields of aggadah, midrash, Talmud, Jewish folklore, Jewish-Christian controversies and the history of French Jewry. In his essay on the claim

of Davidic descent for the house of Hillel, Levy approached the relevant sources with a healthy dose of skepticism. Noting that the claim of Davidic origin is not attributed to any Gamalielian Patriarch or his colleagues prior to Judah ha-Nasi at the end of the 2nd century, Levy concluded that the idea is a fabrication datable to the time of that Patriarch. Levy speculated on the reasons for the invention of this genealogy and suggested R. Judah's need to counter the claim to authority of his contemporary, R. Hiyya, whose relation to the Exilarch conferred upon him a connection with the house of David. In a continuation of the article published in REJ 33 (1896), Levy rejected the argument that Hillel and his descendants hid their Davidic ancestry from the Roman authorities.

Levy's essay may be seen as an important precedent for subsequent work on the patriarchate, the exilarchate, and models of leadership in rabbinic culture, including a monograph by David Goodblatt and studies by Shaye J.D. Cohen, Martin Goodman, Lee Levine, and Seth Schwartz among others.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, his hermeneutic of suspicion in debunking one aspect of the rabbinic "myth of origins," presaged more contemporary scholarly approaches that focus on the invention of rabbinic identity and authority.

Increasingly scholars turned their attention to the rabbinic class itself — who were these individuals? What do their texts reveal about the rabbis themselves and about the culture of learning with which they were so closely identified? How were they connected with groups known to have existed in the pre-rabbinic period and how did they gain authority?

The astonishingly prolific Wilhelm Bacher (Ludwig Blau's bibliography lists 48 books and nearly 700 articles), helped to shed light on some of these questions. A master of Hebrew, Aramaic, Arabic and Persian, Bacher is best known as a pioneer in

the scientific study of the aggadah and midrash, and his major works include *Die Agada der Babylonischen Amoräer* (1878); *Die Agada der Tannaiten* (2 vols., 1884-90); *Die Agada der Palaestinischen Amoräer* (3 vols., 1892-99; repr. 1965); *Die Prooemien der Alten juedischen Homilie* (1913); *Rabbanan, Beitrag zur Geschichte der anonymen Agada* (1914); and *Tradition and Tradenten in den Schulen Palaestinas and Babyloniens* (1914).

*Tradition and Tradenten* examined the vocabulary and the transmission processes of the attributed traditions in the Talmud, and reflected Bacher's scholarly interest in rabbinic learning and Jewish education more broadly. These interests were already apparent in Bacher's 1903 essay "Das altjuedische Schulwesen." This essay surveyed late biblical and rabbinic sources in order to reconstruct the origins, institutions and methods of Jewish education in the Second Temple and Talmudic periods. Bacher located the origins of Jewish primary education in the Hasmonean period, rather than the 1st century C.E. and argued for the wide dissemination of scriptural knowledge among the Jews of antiquity. Sections of the essay dealt with techniques of teaching and learning, discipline, the organization of schools and the school day, the use of private tutors, and teachers' salaries.

While some of its conclusions and methodological assumptions are flawed, Bacher's essay drew scholarly attention to basic and enduring aspects of rabbinic and ancient Jewish culture: the cultivation and transmission of learning. In her 1931 book on Jewish education in the Talmudic period, Tova Perlow cited Bacher's work approvingly before developing her own detailed account of the historical growth of elementary Jewish education based on rabbinic and non-rabbinic materials. Catherine Herser has traced the conjunction of Greco-Roman educational practices and specifically Jewish alternatives. Most recently, Marc Hirshman has explored the ideals and practices of Jewish learning that developed under rabbinic leadership in the first centuries C.E. In an Appendix, Hirshman reviews the major contributions to the study of Jewish education in the rabbinic period, including work by Shmuel Safrai, David Goodblatt, Isaiah Gafni, and Haim Shapira, and volumes of

collected essays. In recent years, scholarship on rabbinic learning has benefited from the insights of orality studies, a focus on questions of literacy, and a fuller integration of recent work on Greco-Roman paideia, as seen in the important studies of Martin Jaffee, Yaakov Elman, Yaakov Sussman, and especially Catherine Herser.

In their quest to uncover the origins of rabbinic Judaism and halakhah, scholars have turned their attention to the two primary modalities of rabbinic learning and what those modalities might tell us about the status of Torah and tradition in Second Temple Judaism and about the emergence of a rabbinic class. Those two modalities are midrash halakhah (learning arising from the interpretation of Scripture) and the form adopted in the Mishnah and Tosefta (free-standing legal teachings not explicitly derived from interpretation of Scripture). In 1958, Ephraim Elimelech Urbach (1912-1991) published "The Derashah as the Basis for the Halakhah and the Problem of the Soferim," which surveyed and critiqued prevailing theories of the interpretation of Scripture by Second Temple period scribes and the relationship of the scribes' legal interpretation to that of the rabbinic sages.

Urbach is best known for his monumental work *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs* (Hebrew edition, 1969)<sup>42</sup> and *The Halakhah: Its Sources and Development* (1986) which employ a philological-historical method to examine rabbinic thought and halakhah with attention to their institutional and cultural context. In his 1958 article included here, Urbach concurred with those who traced midrashic activity to the early Second Temple period. However, he took issue with those who assumed that later rabbinic midrash was a relatively untroubled continuation of Second Temple legal interpretation and that this basic continuity paved the way for the post-destruction emergence to authority of the rabbis. Urbach drew a distinction between early halakhah emerging from the institutions of government and the judiciary of the time (the free-standing decrees and enactments of the High Priest, the elders and sages, the courts and Sanhedrin) and the work of scribes who were engaged in preserving, transcribing and expounding the biblical text. He likened the scribes to the Greek grammarians who expounded the

works of Homer in 3rd century B.C.E. Alexandria. According to Urbach, the idea of textual exegesis as a source of law developed only gradually and was still a point of debate in the first century C.E. as may be seen by Hillel's appeal to both textual legal midrash and the authority of tradition in his discussion with the sons of Bathrya. After the destruction, midrashic techniques for determining the law became increasingly important and eventually the entire Oral Torah was subordinated to the scriptural text by exegetical processes. Urbach argued that the controversy between the Pharisees and the Sadducees lay not in their rival exegeses, as widely supposed, but in their different approaches to the oral tradition and its relation to Scripture. Several of the issues addressed in this essay — the origins of midrash, the relation of midrash and mishnah, the rival approaches of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and Second Temple biblical interpretation and its relation to rabbinic interpretative practices — continue to exercise scholars to this day.

Interest in the origins of halakhah drew scholars to study the primary texts of midrash halakhah, which contain rabbinic interpretations of the (primarily) legal portions of the Pentateuch. Late 19th- and early 20th-century scholars, such as Israel Levy, Solomon Schechter, H. S. Horowitz, and David Hoffman, labored to produce critical editions of the major Halakhic Midrashim and to reconstruct lost works from medieval citations and manuscript fragments. In the opening pages of *Zur Einleitung in die halachischen Midraschim* (only a portion of which is translated for the present volume) published in 1888, David Hoffman proposed a division of the works of Halakhic Midrashim into two groups, or schools, based on differences in exegetical terminology, the names of the sages, exegetical method, and correspondences between anonymous teachings in the midrashim and attributed teachings in parallel texts. According to Hoffmann, a complete midrash on the books of Exodus through Deuteronomy was produced by the school of R. Akiva (the *Mekhilta deRabbi Shimon bar Yohai*, the *Sifra*, *Sifre Zuta* and *Sifre Deuteronomy*) and another by the school of R. Yishmael (the *Mekhilta deRabbi Yishmael*, fragments of a commentary on Leviticus

incorporated in the Sifra, Sifre Numbers and a Mekhilta to Deuteronomy, or Midrash Tannaim). Hoffman was instrumental in reconstructing some of these lost midrashim on the basis of citations in later works. The labor of reconstruction has occupied many scholars to the present day. Most recently, a project spearheaded by Michal Bar-Asher Siegal, Moshe Koppel and Avi Shmidman offers a reconstruction of the early Mekhilta to Deuteronomy from the later Midrash HaGadol using both philological and computational tools.

No serious scholar of the Halakhic Midrashim can avoid reckoning with Hoffmann's two schools thesis. Y.N. Epstein accepted and sharpened Hoffmann's basic distinction by defining the unique character of each school;<sup>44</sup> Hanoch Albeck objected that differences existed not in substance or method but in terminology only and were therefore a product of late-stage redaction rather than two distinct schools in tannaitic times; and Finkelstein argued for an original core common to the schools of R. Akiva and R. Yishmael. Yet, despite qualifications and criticisms, Hoffman's basic division has had remarkable staying power. Menahem Kahana concludes from his extensive research on these texts that the difference between the schools in substance, exegetical terms, and names, is expressed in the halakhic sections but is hardly visible in the aggadic sections. Recently, Azzan Yadin has argued that the R. Akiva/R. Yishmael distinction should not be understood as a claim of historical authorship but as shorthand for a set of distinct and recognizable interpretive practices, assumptions and terms that appear in the halakhic sections of these works. Yadin's research has illuminated two distinct interpretive ideologies in tannaitic literature regarding the relationship of midrash to extra-scriptural halakhah.

As continuing research uncovered the rich complexity of Jewish society in late antique Palestine, the origins of various Jewish groups and their evolving inter-relationships increasingly occupied scholarly attention. Of particular interest was the question of the origin and character of the Second Temple Pharisees and their relation to the rabbinic sages. In 1936, Solomon Zeitlin (d. 1976) published *Ha-Tsadoqim v'ha-Perushim: Perek behitpathut ha-Halakhah* (Horeb, 111:5-6, 56-89)

describing the halakhic, social and religious differences between the Pharisees and the Sadducees as expressed in Talmudic literature. He returned to the question of the Pharisees in 1961 with an essay entitled "The Pharisees: A Historical Study" (JQR 52:2, pp. 97-129).

The Pharisees received unsympathetic treatment at the hands of Christian scholars due to their negative portrayal in the gospels and in patristic literature. Indeed, the very term Pharisee was synonymous with "hypocrite" and the idea that Pharisees might have been religiously sincere or devout was inconceivable. In his essay tracing the origins, beliefs and practices of the Pharisees, Zeitlin considered the various hypotheses for the rise of the name "Pharisee." He argued that in the absence of rabbinic evidence for hostility between Pharisees and persons lax in the observance of tithing laws and purity practices (the *am ha 'aretz*, or ordinary Jew) or between Pharisees and Essenes, the name "Pharisee" must not have been adopted in order to signal a desire to be separate (*perush*) from other groups. According to Zeitlin, the term "Pharisee" was a derisive nickname bestowed upon the Pharisees by their opponents, the Sadducees, because in the view of the latter the Pharisees had separated themselves from God and Torah. This explains why the sages, though the successors of the Pharisees, did not apply the name to themselves in their voluminous literature. Zeitlin dated the emergence of the Pharisees to the period of the Restoration and described the controversy between Pharisees and Sadducees as centering on such issues as the divine origin and authority of the Oral Torah, the modification of the law, and attitudes to proselytes.

The questions addressed in Zeitlin's study, have been the subject of ongoing debate. Specifically, scholars have continued to investigate the reasons for the formation of sects in the Second Temple period; to attempt to account for the divergent evidence of Josephus and rabbinic sources regarding the issues dividing the sects; to ascertain the fate of the sects after the destruction; and to determine the relationship of the rabbinic sages not only to the Pharisees but to other Second Temple period groups.

## Rabbinic Contexts

The Judaism of the rabbinic period developed within the context of Greco-Roman and Byzantine civilization in the West and the Parthian and Sassanian Persian empires in the East. Few would deny that these host cultures influenced the course of Jewish history and the development of Jewish culture in the rabbinic period, but there has been little consensus on the nature and extent of this influence.

The question of Hellenization and the Jews in the Greco-Roman West has been debated for more than a century. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, many studies highlighted the evidence for Hellenistic contacts with and influences on Jews and Judaism. The Talmudic scholar Saul Lieberman (1898-1983), was known for his path-breaking textual studies of the Palestinian Talmud (*Al Ha-Yerushalmi*, 1929; *Ha-Yerushalmi ki-Feshuto*, 1934; *Talmudah shel Qesarin*, 1931) and the Tosefta (*Tosefet Rishonim*, 1937-39; *Tashlum Tosefta*, 1937; and *Tosefta Ki-Feshuta*, 1955 to 1967). Nevertheless, his extensive knowledge of Classical Greek language and literature, patristic literature and Roman history combined with his deep knowledge of rabbinic texts to shed light on the life, institutions, literary output, textual practices and ideas of Jewish Palestine in the period of the Talmuds. The collection of articles published in *Greek in Jewish Palestine* (1942) and *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (1950), illustrate the influence of Greco-Roman culture on the rabbis. In the words of Seth Schwartz, "[h]is main legacy was in contributing to a form of scholarship on ancient Judaism according to which the Jews did not react to the destruction with resistance and self enclosure but with creative engagement with the majority culture.

In the early 1940s, Lieberman published an important essay entitled "The Martyrs of Caesarea." He used the essay to argue that Talmudic literature is a valuable source for historical information about the events of its own time, and to urge rabbinic scholars to draw upon a broader knowledge of the languages and cultures of late antiquity in order to derive maximum advantage from their sources. In demonstration of

these desiderata, Lieberman painted a portrait of the relations among Jews, Christians, Samaritans and pagans in Roman Galilee on the basis of a close reading of both Talmudic texts and Eusebius' *De Martyribus Palaestinae*, as well as linguistic analysis of Greek, Latin, and Aramaic terms. Lieberman responded to criticisms of the article in 1946 and published a greatly reworked version as "Redifat Dat Yisrael" (Hebrew) in the Salo Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume.<sup>54</sup> Despite some well-deserved criticisms, the original 1944 essay, reproduced here, challenged historians of the Talmudic period to utilize the riches of classical culture and a wide range of comparative tools in their study of rabbinic texts.

In his 1949, article "Rabbinic Methods of Interpretation and Hellenistic Rhetoric" David Daube argued for the indebtedness of Talmudic jurisprudence to Hellenistic rhetoric. Daube (1909-1999) was a legal scholar who made highly original and inter-disciplinary contributions to the fields of biblical law and literature, Greek and Latin literature, Roman law, New Testament and Talmudic law. In this essay, Daube focused on the figure of Hillel, his theory of the relation between statute, tradition, and interpretation, and his seven norms of legal interpretation. According to Daube, in both theory and practice, Hillel's norms of interpretation betray the influence of the rhetorical teachings of the age and find parallels in non-Jewish argumentation (especially Stoic writers and Cicero). This essay was followed four years later by "Alexandrian Methods of Interpretation and the Rabbis" (in *Festschrift Hans Lewald* [Basel, 1953]) in which Daube argued that the rabbinic mode of interpretation known as *seres* originated in both substance and name in Alexandria, and the rabbinic term *hekhre'a* derived from a particular Hellenistic treatment of Greek syntax.

The article drew a response from Saul Lieberman. In 1950, Lieberman published *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine: Studies in the Literary Transmission, Beliefs, and Manners of Palestine in the 1st Century BCE-IV Century CE* and included a chapter entitled "Rabbinic Interpretation of Scripture" in which he acknowledged some of the parallels highlighted by Daube, but argued against Daube's claim of overt borrowing. According to Lieberman, it is only the

terminology that is on occasion borrowed by the rabbis. The methods of interpretation employed by the rabbis show no definitive sign of Greek influence and are likely rooted in longstanding interpretative practices. The Hebrew terminology for these methods is often a translation of equivalent Greek terms; Greek influence may be broad, but it is not deep.

Daniel Patte outlines the positions of Daube and Lieberman in *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine* (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 113-15, and the debate over these two positions continues to the present day. In the 1980s and 1990s, Daube's position was endorsed by William Horbury and Philip Alexander' while Stephen J. Lieberman sided with Saul Lieberman and asserted the Ancient Near Eastern roots of rabbinic interpretive techniques. More recently, Richard Hidary has argued for a deep rabbinic familiarity with, and adaptation of, Hellenistic interpretative, rhetorical and forensic practices, and Maren Niehoff has examined Alexandrian Jewish Bible exegesis in the light of the textual and interpretative practices of Homeric scholarship.

The issue of Hellenization featured prominently in the work of another scholar active in the middle of the 20th century. Elias Bickerman (1897-1981) was a historian of the Second Temple period whose research provided new insights on the Maccabees, the Pharisees and Jewish attitudes towards Gentiles. One of Bickerman's major contributions was to highlight the extent to which Palestinian Judaism was Hellenized. As Shaye J.D. Cohen has noted in regard to both [The God of the Maccabees](#) (Berlin, 1937) and [From Ezra to the Last of the Maccabees](#) (New York, 1962), Bickerman was "the first to show that the Maccabees were not 'anti-Hellenistic,' but were prepared to draw upon the riches of Hellenistic culture so long as Judaism would be enriched, not threatened, by the process." Not only did Bickerman demonstrate "the Maccabean willingness to incorporate the ways of the Greeks," he "advanced the same thesis for the rabbis of the Talmud. His 1952 essay "La chaîne de la tradition pharisienne," on the chain of tradition found in Mishnah Avot 1, exemplified this claim. Bickerman began with the observation that the chain of rabbinic tradition set forth in Mishnah

Avot 1 (stretching from Moses through the prophets, the men of the Great Assembly, the 'pairs' and finally the rabbis and the Hillelidae Patriarchs) is highly unusual and in need of explanation. He argued that the "chain of tradition" form was adapted from succession lists composed in Greek philosophical academies. The purpose of this form was to bolster the authority of the rabbis as the sole interpreters of Torah at the expense of the priests: the chain replaced the priestly model of inherited authority with a paideic model of master—disciple transmission characteristic of the rabbinic class. Employing a hermeneutic of suspicion to pierce the rhetoric of insularity and even hostility to Greek culture, Bickerman showed "that ancient Judaism was part of the ancient world and had to be interpreted in the light of the host culture.

The 1950s and 1960s saw further contributions to the question of Hellenization and the Jews. In 1956, Morton Smith published "Palestinian Judaism in the First Century,"<sup>62</sup> a brief but compelling exposition of the Hellenization of Palestinian Judaism. Smith was a scholar of ancient history whose interests spanned biblical Israel, ancient Judaism, Greco-Roman religion, New Testament and early Christianity. In this essay, Smith declared that first-century Palestine was "profoundly Hellenized and that the Hellenization extended even to the basic structure of much Rabbinic thought". How then, he asked, are the rabbis who appear in rabbinic writings to be situated within the wider context of Palestinian Judaism? What part did they play in the history of the period? Smith went on to argue that the rabbis (whom he identifies with the Pharisees) were neither unopposed nor united, as Jewish society contained a number of sects. Moreover, "[t]he average Palestinian Jew of the first century was probably the 'am ha 'ares, any member of the class which made up the "people of the land," a biblical phrase probably used to mean hoi polloi." These "ordinary Jews" were not without religion but they did not follow Pharisaic rules. The apparent dominance of the Pharisees is the result of their representation in rabbinic sources and in the writings of Josephus. Applying a hermeneutic of suspicion to these texts, Smith argued that the role of the Pharisees prior to the destruction had been exaggerated. Smith concluded the essay by

reiterating his basic thesis: Palestinian Judaism in the first century emerged from a long period of thoroughgoing Hellenization. If there was an "orthodox" Judaism then it was not Pharisaism but the religion of the average "people of the land" (although, in truth, Smith has little use for such terms as "orthodox" or "normative"). A significant study advancing claims similar to Smith's was Martin Hengel's [Judaism and Hellenism](#) (German edition, 1969; English edition, 1974). Like Smith, Hengel argued that Jews and Judaism encountered significant Hellenistic influence in the third century B.C.E., an influence that permeated all strata of Jewish society. In recent times, Hayim Lapin has argued that the small rabbinic movement is best understood as a product of the provincial context of Roman Palestine rather than a natural development of Jewish national practices. He describes the rabbinic movement as "an association of religious experts claiming ancestral knowledge, employing a rhetoric of self-representation with affinities to Greco-Roman associations and especially to philosophical schools, and capable of using wider cultural motifs to their own ends."

Morton Smith's claim that Palestinian Judaism was thoroughly Hellenized went hand-in-hand with his skepticism about the scope of Pharisaic-rabbinic influence. These ideas were also held by Erwin R. Goodenough, though the latter scholar approached the issue from an entirely different direction.

In the 1920s, Goodenough became convinced that the Hellenistic elements of early Christianity derived from an already Hellenized Judaism. He located this Hellenized Judaism in the artistic record uncovered by archaeology. Since rabbinic Judaism objected to figural art, it stood to reason that such figural art as existed held the key to understanding a non-rabbinic (or Hellenized) Judaism. Goodenough's portrait of Hellenized Judaism, a counterpoint to George Foot Moore's portrait of rabbinic Judaism, was thus based on an impressive assemblage of previously neglected and often misunderstood archaeological material. In his monumental and multi-volume *Jewish Symbols in the Greco-Roman Period* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953-64), Goodenough explained the symbols in ancient Jewish art in light of both universal psychology (drawing on Jungian psychology) and

the symbolism common to Hellenistic religions of antiquity. Properly understood, he argued, these symbols point to the existence of a mystical Judaism like that evident in the writings of Philo. The first three volumes of *Jewish Symbols* (1953) provoked a storm of protest from those who objected both to Goodenough's interpretation of the artwork and his claim that since the rabbis would have been violently opposed to figural art, its existence means they must have lacked the authority to control or prevent its production and use. According to Urbach, the rabbis would have had no objection to purely decorative uses of figurative art and its existence does not signal their marginality.

In 1961, Goodenough responded to his detractors in an article entitled "The Rabbis and Jewish Art in the Greco-Roman Period." In this article, he forcefully reasserted his notion of a mystical Hellenized Judaism attested in the writings of Philo, before defending his interpretation of Jewish art in the Greco-Roman period. The symbols in this artwork, he argued, cannot be dismissed as purely decorative. Their presence attests to a mystical religiosity that rejected rabbinic Judaism, and forces a reconsideration of the authority of the rabbis in this period.

Morton Smith was sympathetic to certain aspects of Goodenough's work, which he considered important and revolutionary, but he was critical of other aspects. In his 1967 essay, "Goodenough's Jewish Symbols in Retrospect," Smith took issue with Goodenough's portrait of a mystical Hellenistic Judaism that stood in dichotomous opposition to rabbinic Judaism. Certainly, the material assembled by Goodenough pointed to a Jewish religiosity different from that of the rabbis — a topic taken up by scholars of Jewish mysticism, such as Peter Schäfer and some of his students, and Jewish magic, such as Gideon Bohak — but it was not at all clear to Smith that hostility existed between the rabbis and the Jewish producers and consumers of figural art.

Despite its errors and binary assumptions, the work of Goodenough has had a profound and lasting influence, particularly as mediated by Morton Smith, many of whose students — Jacob Neusner,

Lee Levine, Shaye J.D. Cohen and Seth Schwartz — have accepted Goodenough's skepticism about the scope of rabbinic Judaism in late antique Palestine. As Steven Fine writes "Goodenough's unique contribution to scholarship is found in the paradigm shift that his counter history generated. Jewish Symbols sparked two generations of scholars to actively seek out alternate voices in the extant sources, both archaeological and literary. This in itself is a major contribution."

Two years after Morton Smith's review of Goodenough's *Jewish Symbols*, Henry Fischel (1913—2008), following in the footsteps of David Daube, published an article that posited connections between rabbinic midrash and the larger Greco-Roman world. In "Story and History: Observations on Greco-Roman rhetoric and Pharisaism" (1969), Fischel noted similarities between rabbinic stories about sages (particularly the stories about Hillel the Elder) and Greco-Roman stories about sophoi (sages). This type of story, known as a *chreia* (in Greek) or *chria* (in Latin), depicts an encounter in which the sage's wit and/or wisdom are revealed. The stories have the same function in both literatures — to elevate the founder-sage about whom the story is told. According to Fischel, this parallel constituted evidence of the Hellenization of the Pharisees, who resembled Hellenistic sages as a class and functioned as an elite scholarly bureaucracy. At the same time, the Pharisees adapted the *chreia* to their own purposes — to celebrate their own heroes and spread Torah. While some scholars denied the similarity highlighted by Fischel, Catherine Herser has supported Fischel's basic conclusions and pointed to additional literary forms that appear in both rabbinic and philosophical texts.

Scholars arguing for the Hellenization of Jews and other provincials in the Greco-Roman period have continually encountered resistance to the idea of "influence": Alon was critical of Lieberman; Urbach, Baumgarten, and Blidstein dismissed Goodenough's work; Louis Feldman, Moshe David Herr, and Saul Tcherikover objected to Hengel's claims. Some of these scholars doubted Hellenization altogether while others argued over its extent and reach, leading proponents of the Hellenization thesis to

avoid the term "influence" when describing the collocations and interactions of Jews, Greeks and others in late antiquity.

The scientific study of Judaism called for the investigation of rabbinic literature as the product of a historical time and place. Palestinian rabbinic literature benefited from the classical training of the early practitioners of *Wissenschaft* and a concentrated focus on the Greco-Roman environment of Roman provincial Palestine. The Babylonian Talmud fared less well. Few scholars were equipped to explore the cultural, religious and linguistic milieu of Sasanian Iran. Nevertheless, some took up the study of Persian, Sassanian history and Iranian religion. A pioneer in this area was Alexander Kohut, whose *Arukh ha-Shalem* (1878–1892) updated the *Arukh* of Nathan b. Yehiel of Rome and provided numerous Persian loanwords and etymologies. In 1871, Kohut published "Die talmudischmidraschische Adamsage in ihrer Ruckbeziehung auf die persische Yima and Meshiasage," one in a series of articles exploring the relationship between Judaism and Zoroastrianism and broaching the (then sensitive) question of Zoroastrian influence.

Shai Secunda provides a brief survey of the subsequent generations of scholars who continued to research the content, nature and extent of Iranian and rabbinic intersections, including the historical work, *Die Juden in Babylonien, 200-500* of Salomen Funk. A new era in the study of the Babylonian Talmud in its Sasanian context was ushered in by Yaakov Elman whose many articles explore the impact of Persian culture on every level of Babylonian Jewish culture. Today, Elman's students and others, equipped with the requisite linguistic and textual skills, are shedding new light on the world of the Babylonian Talmud. The school of Irano-Talmudica has not been without its critics. While some criticism has been dismissive, other criticism has been constructive, encouraging a fuller investigation of the Sasanian context so as to include not merely Zoroastrian sources (which present a host of methodological problems) but Syriac Christian, Manichaean, and other sources (including Hellenistic materials imported from the West) that are known to have circulated in the Sasanid East. In this category, we may point to the

scholarship of Yishai Kiel, Richard Kalmin, Yakir Paz, Sara Ronis, Aaron Butts and Simcha Gross.  
<>

[Writing on the Wall: Graffiti and the Forgotten Jews of Antiquity](#) by Karen B. Stern [Princeton University Press, 9780691161334]

Few direct clues exist to the everyday lives and beliefs of ordinary Jews in antiquity. Prevailing perspectives on ancient Jewish life have been shaped largely by the voices of intellectual and social elites, preserved in the writings of Philo and Josephus and the rabbinic texts of the Mishnah and Talmud. Commissioned art, architecture, and formal inscriptions displayed on tombs and synagogues equally reflect the sensibilities of their influential patrons. The perspectives and sentiments of nonelite Jews, by contrast, have mostly disappeared from the historical record. Focusing on these forgotten Jews of antiquity, [Writing on the Wall](#) takes an unprecedented look at the vernacular inscriptions and drawings they left behind and sheds new light on the richness of their quotidian lives.

Just like their neighbors throughout the eastern and southern Mediterranean, Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt, ancient Jews scribbled and drew graffiti everywhere—in and around markets, hippodromes, theaters, pagan temples, open cliffs, sanctuaries, and even inside burial caves and synagogues. Karen Stern reveals what these markings tell us about the men and women who made them, people whose lives, beliefs, and behaviors eluded commemoration in grand literary and architectural works. Making compelling analogies with modern graffiti practices, she documents the overlooked connections between Jews and their neighbors, showing how popular Jewish practices of prayer, mortuary commemoration, commerce, and civic engagement regularly crossed ethnic and religious boundaries.

Illustrated throughout with examples of ancient graffiti, [Writing on the Wall](#) provides a tantalizingly intimate glimpse into the cultural worlds of forgotten populations living at the crossroads of Judaism, Christianity, paganism, and earliest Islam.

## CONTENTS

Illustrations

Preface

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

INTRODUCTION Graffiti, Ancient and Modern

CHAPTER 1 Carving Graffiti as Devotion

CHAPTER 2 Mortuary Graffiti in the Roman East

CHAPTER 3 Making One's Mark in a Pagan and Christian World

CHAPTER 4 Rethinking Modern Graffiti through Ancient

Notes

References

Index

### Excerpt:

Hidden within sprawling catacombs of the Middle East, Italy, Malta, and North Africa, enfolded by cliffs throughout Egyptian and Arabian deserts, and degrading along walls of a synagogue secreted in Damascus, are vestiges of markings—graffiti—once written by ancient Jews and their neighbors. Contents and locations of these graffiti are as erratic as they are disparate. Some consist only of texts, which record writers' names and solicit the attentions and remembrances of passersby; others depict images, including those of obelisks, enshrouded skeletons, horses, birds, menorahs, ships, and concentric circles. Dismissed by the archaeologists and explorers who discovered them as random and incidental scribbles, these graffiti are only briefly noted in excavation records and compendia. Given their general obscurity, it is no wonder that so few people know that they exist at all.

But these graffiti do exist and they number in the hundreds to thousands. And it is for the very same reasons that they have been neglected for so long that they are of consummate importance in the historical record. Unlike other forms of commissioned and monumental writing or decoration, or the well-edited literary treatises that shape the histories of their eras, these graffiti document otherwise unknown activities of religious devotion and commemoration, expressions of identity, belonging, and belief, of the long-forgotten people who produced them. The artists



who created them were ancient Jews and their neighbors, who inhabited diverse regions of the Mediterranean, southern Europe, Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Arabia from earlier through later antiquity. They carved their drawings and personal dedications during visits to places of worship, family graves, pilgrimages, work trips, sports competitions, theatrical displays, and dealings in local marketplaces. These faint traces of daily life are largely overshadowed by the ocean of words produced by intellectual elites of the day: the feverish sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the treatises of privileged authors such as Josephus and Philo, and the elaborate legal discussions of the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmuds. My purpose in writing this book was to heed these written messages and drawings, to consider how their examination might reveal information about ancient Jews, whose stories have otherwise disappeared from the literary and historical records.

The sheer ubiquity of graffiti associated with ancient Jews singlehandedly begs for their collective evaluation. Archaeologists have identified graffiti of Jewish cultural provenance in significant archaeological sites: around the interiors of the famed synagogue of Roman Dura-Europos, throughout the extensive necropolis of Beit Shearim and in burial caves elsewhere in Roman Palestine, and inside the storied catacombs of Rome, Naples, and Malta. These graffiti also pervade public spaces dedicated to pagan worship, including Egyptian sanctuaries for local gods, points along Arabian desert-highways, and the once-bustling theatres, streets, and markets of Tyre, Miletos, Sardis, and Aphrodisias. Scholars have exhaustively investigated the literatures, laws, monumental architecture, inscriptions, and art discovered in and around many of the same places in order to learn more about regional Jews. Shifting the focus of study to neglected examples of vernacular texts and pictures encourages more nuanced analyses of how Jewish individuals and communities, as agents, used their acts of writing and drawing to manipulate the built and natural (those not originally created by human hands) environments that surrounded them. This heretofore under-considered body of material therefore sheds

new light on some of the most elusive features of ancient history—the daily lives and activities of individuals—documented in raw and unedited form.

When approached from a locally comparative perspective, contextual readings of these graffiti, from such diverse places, periods, and contexts, can fundamentally transform what we think we know about Jews and Judaism throughout the ancient world. Only graffiti, for example, reveal that some Jews invoked deity in spaces designed for pagan worship and that their acts of carving graffiti constituted devotional experiences for some Jews, inside pagan sanctuaries, along open cliffs, and in synagogues alike.<sup>1</sup> Only recurring appearances of graffiti in burial caves throughout the Mediterranean suggest that many Jews engaged in the same types of mortuary activities as their peers, even if those behaviors defied rabbinic record or subsequent prohibition. Graffiti alone can illuminate the functional coexistence of Jews and Christians in late ancient towns where contemporaneous writers consistently report Jewish and Christian antipathy. And finally, the study of graffiti can offer more nuanced insights into local and regional diversities in Jews' relationships with their pagan, Christian, and early Muslim neighbors. Analyses of graffiti cannot fill in all the gaps of our historical knowledge, but they can add to it significantly; they challenge current understandings of ancient Jewish life, by offering new information about how Jews and their neighbors prayed, mourned, celebrated, loved, worked, and played.

The need for such a study responds to a sober reality confronting most historians interested in all numerical minority populations, including Jews, from antiquity: a dearth of evidence for their everyday lives and experiences. Roughly two millennia, countless geographic divides, and unfathomable cultural shifts separate modernity from the world Jews inhabited in earlier through later antiquity in disparate corners of the Mediterranean and the deserts beyond. And however rosy (or positivistic) one's perspective, the ancient sources on which most historians rely for the extrapolation of Jewish history are considerably more opaque than they initially appear. Ornate tractates of religious jurisprudence redacted by Palestinian and

Babylonian rabbis, alongside fiery treatises composed by Christian writers throughout the Mediterranean, and revelations from the Qur'ān, constitute the majority of relevant literary discussions on the subject; as has long been acknowledged, the diverse polemical agendas of related editors and authors sometimes remain impenetrable for the purposes of historiography. Evidence from the monumental archaeological record, likewise, skews toward the documentation of exceptional events and behaviors, conducted by wealthier members of society. In light of these realities, pursuit of the ordinary and the quotidian sometimes seems futile, at best.

Systematic readings of ancient graffiti, this book argues, circumvent challenges such as these, by offering new insights into the activities Jews once performed on a daily or periodic basis, which otherwise evade literary documentation. The chapters that follow draw attention to these graffiti, as well as to the social, political, economic, and religious dynamics and activities associated with their production. Close regard for patterns in the contents and locations of graffiti and their comparisons with local analogues (often produced by non-Jews), informed by theories of anthropology, landscape, and visual studies, ultimately illuminate the fundamental connections between Jews' activities of writing and drawing and the architectural spaces in which they performed them, whether along the Mediterranean coastline or throughout the open deserts of Egypt and Arabia.

Underlying this study is a reality that resonates strangely in modernity—the fact that many ancient people viewed built and natural spaces as appropriately mutable, interactive, and open to modification. Ancient writers of graffiti, for instance, did not necessarily regard buildings (whether pagan temples, synagogues, burial caves, or civic structures) as finished products when their construction and formal decoration ceased. As graffiti writing indicates, rather, many people viewed their built environments as plastic and processual, even years after the setting of mortar and plaster upon building stones and the final applications of mosaic, paint, or fresco to their

surfaces. Similar perspectives governed interactions with natural spaces, which visitors equally viewed as appropriately violable. Graffiti thus represent the mutual and continuous inextricability of humans from the built and natural environments they created and traversed.

Related vantages advance well-documented observations that ancient Jews, just like their neighbors, engaged in ongoing acts of writing and drawing just about everywhere—whether in urban or rural landscapes along the Mediterranean coasts, farther inland in Italy, Malta, North Africa, Macedonia, Greece, Asia Minor, or the Levant, or throughout the desert expanses of Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Arabia. They painted, engraved, and even buried examples of their words and pictures wherever they lived, visited, and traveled. Assessments, such as those that follow, thus offer a rare and comparative means to vivify the activities ancient Jews performed on a daily basis, alongside their peers, outside of literary frameworks and within their variable built and natural environments. And while vast cultural chasms separate the world of antiquity from that of modernity, more careful attention to relationships between image and space, artist and viewer, permits the reclassification of these ancient activities of writing and decoration for their meaningful and collective assessment.

The imperative to address these graffiti, however, responds as much to practical as to intellectual concerns. Total numbers of graffiti, which I have collected in databases and analyze below, represent only a fraction of those which once existed. Patterns of passive and active destruction explain their rapid and recently accelerated disappearance. Most graffiti remain unprotected in situ and thus as vulnerable today to environmental damage (from moisture, erosion, and exposure), as they are to vandalism. Recent political and religious upheavals throughout the Levant, Mesopotamia, and Arabia, in places like modern Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq, as well as Tunisia, Egypt, and parts of Arabia, have exacerbated the ongoing processes of their destruction and effacement. Graffiti (like so many other types of archaeological evidence) are important, if rapidly diminishing resources, whose

stories ought to be told before they vanish entirely, and it is too late.

In recent years, graffiti have assumed more prominent roles in the scholarship of ancient Egypt and classical antiquity. Considerations of graffiti have not been integrated into narratives about ancient Jewish history in the same way, but they deserve to be. Only analyses of media, such as graffiti, can ultimately apprise us of the diversities of Jewish life throughout the Mediterranean, which should appear fuller and stranger to us than is commonly acknowledged.' This study thus opens up to scrutiny new ways of looking at old materials, as scholars continue to reconsider the dynamics, political and cultural shifts, regionalisms, eccentricities, particularities, and conventionalities of Jewish life in centers and peripheries of the Hellenistic, Roman, and Byzantine empires. <>

[Hasidism: A New History](#) edited by David Biale, David Assaf, Benjamin Brown, Uriel Gellman, Samuel Heilman, Moshe Rosman, Gadi Sagiv, Marcin Wodziński, Afterword by Arthur Green [Princeton University Press, 978-0691175157]

The first comprehensive history of the pietistic movement that shaped modern Judaism. Written by an international team of scholars, Hasidism is a must-read for anyone seeking to understand this vibrant and influential modern Jewish movement.

This is the first comprehensive history of the pietistic movement that shaped modern Judaism. The book's unique blend of intellectual, religious, and social history offers perspectives on the movement's leaders as well as its followers, and demonstrates that, far from being a throwback to the Middle Ages, Hasidism is a product of modernity that forged its identity as a radical alternative to the secular world.

Hasidism originated in southeastern Poland, in mystical circles centered on the figure of Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, but it was only after his death in 1760 that a movement began to spread. Challenging the notion that Hasidism ceased to be a creative movement after the eighteenth century, this book argues that its first golden age was in the nineteenth century, when it conquered new territory, won a mass following, and became a mainstay of

Jewish Orthodoxy. World War I, the Russian Revolution, and the Holocaust decimated eastern European Hasidism. But following World War II, the movement enjoyed a second golden age, growing exponentially. Today, it is witnessing a remarkable renaissance in Israel, the United States, and other countries around the world.

This volume is a watershed English language history and introduction to Hasidism for any who want to know about this living mystical tendency within Judaism. It is likely to be a ready resource and primer for the next generation of pious and doubtful inquirers into the history of Hasidism, especially for outsiders. As such, it is written with masterful inclusivity and invites to secular sceptics, Jews and non-Jews alike to understand with sympathy. The pious insider may find it too broad and historical in scope, finding variant details as blemishes to authenticity. The volume does not call the doubter into the intensity of prayer and practice of Hasidism life, study and devotion. However, recognizing that the purpose of the volume is to provide a thorough and even-handed history of the movement, it serves and will serve many purposes and — over and above — it provides a vigorous account of the movement that will inform the reader well. Each chapter and section include short bibliographic essays that points to deeper study.

#### Excerpt: Hasidism as a Modern Movement

It was the century of the Enlightenment and of the American and French Revolutions: the dawn of the modern world. But it was also the century of the Great Religious Awakening in North America, of Pietism in Germany, and of the split in the Russian Orthodox Church between Reformers and Old Believers. We are accustomed to think of the Enlightenment and its critique of religion as representing modernity, while seeing movements of religious revival as reactionary, throwbacks to an earlier age. Yet the story of modernity is more complex. As we now know, the trajectory of history did not lead in a straight line from religion to secularism, "darkness" to "light": religion is as much a part of the modern world as it was of the medieval. As much as religion typically claims to stand for tradition, even the most seemingly

"orthodox" or "fundamentalist" forms of religion in the modern world are themselves products of their age. Just as secularism was incubated in the womb of religion, so religion since the eighteenth century is a product of its interaction with secularism.

The southeastern corner of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth was certainly an improbable place for a "modern" religious movement to be born. Yet it was there, starting sometime in the middle of the eighteenth century, that small circles of Jewish pietists coalesced around rabbis who would come to be called, in Hebrew, *tsaddikim* ("righteous men") or, in Yiddish, *rebbe*s. From these modest beginnings emerged a movement that eventually named itself Hasidism ("piety"). The name referred not only to the traditional virtues of piety that the movement espoused but also to a new ethos of ecstatic joy and a new social structure, the court of the *rebbe* and his followers, his *Hasidim*, a word formerly meaning "pious men" but now also "disciples." Drawing upon earlier texts of Kabbalah—or Jewish mysticism—as well as popular magical traditions, the *tsaddikim* (singular: *tsaddik*) served as intercessors between their *Hasidim* and God, providing the channels through which their followers could commune with the divine. They signified this relationship to God with such terms as *devekut* ("ecstatic union"), *ha'alat nitzotzot* ("raising of sparks"), and *avodah be-gashmiyut* ("worship through the material"). Focusing primarily on prayer rather than study, they developed new techniques for mastering *mahshavot zarot* ("alien thoughts," or distractions, typically of a sexual nature). Rather than ascetic withdrawal, they emphasized *simha* ("joy"), seizing such thoughts and elevating them to pure spirituality.

Above all, Hasidic theology emphasized divine immanence—that is, that God is present throughout the material world.

From its beginnings, Hasidism was far more than an intellectual movement. It was also a set of bodily practices, including praying, storytelling, singing, dancing, and eating, all performed within the frame of the reciprocal relationship between *rebbe* and *Hasid*. The very physicality of Hasidism played an enormous role in transforming it from an elite to a popular movement. Despite all of the traditional

elements one finds in Hasidism, this concatenation of ideas and practices was something entirely new in Jewish history, a movement of mass religiosity that would take its place side by side with more secular movements as part of the complex phenomenon of Jewish modernity.

This book presents a new history of Hasidism from its origins to the present. We intend to focus not only on the charismatic *rebbe*s who have served as the movement's leaders but also on its followers. What did it mean in different periods to live as a *Hasid*, whether in close proximity to the *rebbe*'s court or at a distance? Was Hasidism in a given time and place a majority phenomenon or a minority? What were the relations on the ground between *Hasidim* and non-*Hasidim*? What were the relations between *Hasidim* and non-Jews, both governments and ordinary people? We propose, therefore, to offer a cultural history of Hasidism, combining its social structures with its religious ideas.

Nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century attempts to write histories of Hasidism were often products of the polemics for and against the movement among East European rabbis and intellectuals. These polemics also reverberated among the German Jewish historians, the school called the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* ("science of Judaism"). The most important of these historians, Heinrich Graetz, was scathing about Hasidism in his highly influential *History of the Jews*, where he contrasted Moses Mendelssohn, whom he termed the founder of the German Jewish Enlightenment, with the benighted "founder" of Hasidism, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov of Mezhibizh (Miedzyboz). For Graetz, Hasidism was *unjüdisch* (un-Jewish), a pack of ignorant superstitions, and thus not a fitting subject for a history of the Jews.

It became possible to write a more balanced or objective account only at the turn of the twentieth century, once these battles had died down. The first to do so was Solomon Schechter (1847-1915), who published a small booklet on the subject in English in 1896 and in German in 1904. Schechter, who came from a Chabad Hasidic family, made his name as a scholar of the Cairo Geniza and did not pursue Hasidism as his main subject. More

influential was Shmuel Abba Horodezky (1871-1957), whose four-volume history appeared in 1922. However, Horodezky tended to romanticize Hasidism, from whose bosom he also sprang, even though he had embraced the worldview of the Jewish Enlightenment.

Most important for subsequent scholarship was Simon Dubnow (1860-1941), the doyen of Eastern European Jewish historians. Already in the late 1880s, Dubnow undertook to collect sources for such a history, publishing a series of articles in Russian between 1888 and 1893. It was a period in Russian Jewish letters when intellectuals began to intuit the disintegration of the traditional Jewish world and sought to preserve its memory by ethnographic and archival research. Although the world of the shtetl (plural: shtetlekh; the market towns in which many Jews lived) would persist for a number of decades, urbanization and emigration were already taking their toll. Dubnow, in exile from this world in Berlin, published the first scholarly study of the movement in 1931. At the request of Ahad Ha'am, the founder of cultural Zionism who had died four years earlier, Dubnow wrote his influential book *Toldot ha-Hasidut* (The History of Hasidism) in Hebrew. (It was also published simultaneously in German. Only a small portion is available in English.) In luminescent and riveting prose, Dubnow's book sketched the history of Hasidism from the time of its putative founder, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov, to 1815. Since Dubnow's views were so dominant, it is worth spelling them out in some detail.

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Dubnow asserted that Hasidism emerged in the context of a political, economic, social, and spiritual crisis that overwhelmed the Jews of Ukraine, and eventually the whole of Polish Jewry. This crisis began with the 1648 uprising of Cossacks and Ukrainian (Ruthenian) peasants led by the man Ukrainians revere as their George Washington and whom Jews vilify as among their worst persecutors: Bogdan Khmelnytsky. A key component of this revolt against Polish rule in the Ukrainian territories of Poland was persecutions and massacres, especially of Jews, earning these events the Jewish sobriquet *Gezeirot Tah-ve-Tat* (the persecutions of

1648-1649). In Dubnow's telling, these persecutions set off a chain of anti-Jewish harassment, repression, and depredations lasting well into the eighteenth century, and climaxing in what he termed a "frenzy of blood libels." External persecution therefore provided the crisis to which Hasidism was an answer. Other early scholars of Hasidism emphasized different crises: Ben-Zion Dinur (1884-1973) focused on the corruption and political disintegration of the Polish Jewish communities, while Raphael Mahler (1899-1977) drew attention to economic factors.

All early historians of Hasidism also agreed with Dubnow about the centrality of the man generally considered to be the founder of Hasidism, Israel ben Eli'ezer, Ba'al Shem Tov—often known by the acronymic form of this Hebrew title, Israel Besht (or just "the Besht"). The Ba'al Shem Toy (ca. 1700-1760) was a ba'al shem (plural: ba'alei shem)—that is, "master of the [divine] name," a kind of shaman who could use magic to invoke divine forces. According to Dubnow, who drew on Hasidic stories as well as archival material, the Besht was at once a socially marginal magician and a sophisticated religious innovator who proposed a new form of Judaism. He, like his audience, was relatively uneducated, and he promulgated his teachings through stories and pithy folk sayings.

According to this view, the rabbis of the Polish Jewish communities, oblivious to the real problems people were facing, imposed upon them an onerous halakhic (legal) regime. Communal lay leaders knew only how to demand obedience and raise taxes. By contrast, the Besht's doctrines, leadership style, and righteous acts offered psychological-spiritual healing (*tikkun*) to the Jewish soul and relief from communal oppression. By the time of his death on the holiday of Shavuot in 1760, he had galvanized an original—yet authentically Jewish—revivalist movement. In Dubnow's account—which in many ways mirrored that of the Hasidim themselves—this movement had a coherent set of doctrines and institutions that attracted the semilearned majority, but not the learned elite.

For Dubnow, Hasidism from the outset was a dynastic movement, where a leader passed his

authority to a son or favorite student, so the mantle of the Besht's leadership was inherited by one of his main disciples, Dov Ber, the Maggid (preacher) of Mezritsh (Miedzyrzecz) (d. 1772). The Maggid (as he is usually called) further articulated Hasidism's doctrines, established its headquarters in his court north of Mezhibizh in the more centrally located Mezritsh, and dispatched emissaries to attract new followers for the movement. After the Maggid's death, a group of his disciples brought the movement to organizational and doctrinal maturity, founding their own autonomous courts in far-flung areas of Poland and the Russian Jewish Pale of Settlement (areas of western Russia where the Jews were permitted to live). This third generation was composed of men such as Elimelekh of Lizhensk (Lezajsk), Levi Yitshak of Barditshev (Berdichev), Avraham of Kalisk, Menahem Mendel of Vitebsk, and Shneur Zalman of Liady. Each cultivated a signature organizational style and set of doctrinal nuances while maintaining authentic spiritual connections and loyalty to the Maggid's legacy. This decentralized structure and flexible faith enhanced Hasidism's physical and doctrinal accessibility to a broad public, boosting the movement's popularity and enabling it to dominate the Jewish street, at least in the southerly reaches of the Russian Pale of Settlement.

These first three generations of the movement's leadership—the Besht, the Maggid, Ya'akov Yosef of Polnoye (a disciple of the Besht who did not found a court or dynasty), and the Maggid's disciples—constituted for Dubnow the creative and pristine period of Hasidism. Lasting from the Besht's "revelation" circa 1736 (preceding his move to Mezhibizh) and extending until 1815 (by which time all of the Maggid's students had passed from the scene), this period came to be known as "early" Hasidism. For Dubnow, the history of this period of Hasidism was essentially the history of these leaders.

Ending his history in 1815, Dubnow believed that this date marked a turning point from the "classical" or "creative" age of the movement to its later degeneration into "late" Hasidism when the movement splintered into myriad dynasties and subdynasties with little ideological originality or coherence. He thought nineteenth-century Hasidism

was perverted by "tsaddikism" (excessive veneration of its leaders, whom he described as corrupt or as charlatans) and wastefully preoccupied with its struggle with Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment). This degeneration culminated after 1870 in what Dubnow dubbed "the period of absolute decline."

While Dubnow, Dinur, and others created the framework for Hasidic history, Martin Buber (1878-1965) and Gershom Scholem (1897-1982) sought to elucidate its spiritual and intellectual content. Buber famously termed Hasidism "Kabbalah become ethos," by which he meant that Hasidism concretized mystical insights into pious behavior and transformed the leaders' charisma into the basis for a just society. He made central one phrase in Hasidic texts, *avodah be-gashmiyut* ("worshipping God through the material world"), which he understood in line with his own religious existentialism. Instead of an escape into otherworldly mysticism, Buber saw Hasidism as consciously grounded in this world. Buber's primary source for learning the nature of Hasidism was Hasidic stories, typically recounting exploits of the tsaddikim. Not merely tales conveying folk wisdom and laudable charitable acts, these stories for Buber held the key to Hasidism's revolutionary spirituality. In order to penetrate the deep spiritual-ethical message of each story, he rewrote them, which for Buber was a method of revealing their true meaning. Buber's earliest work on Hasidism, from the first decade of the twentieth century, was part of the rediscovery of Hasidism—often called "neo-Hasidism"—by a cohort of modern, often nationalist, thinkers who found in it a model of romantic religiosity with which to counter assimilationist rationalism and rabbinism.

Gershom Scholem, although part of this movement of romantic recovery, insisted on rigorous standards of historical scholarship. Scholem reconstructed the history of Kabbalah—Jewish mysticism—from its origins in antiquity through Hasidism. He agreed with Dubnow and other earlier historians that Hasidism was a response to a crisis, but he located the crisis elsewhere. For Scholem, Hasidism was "the latest phase" of Jewish mysticism arising out of the failure of Shabbetai Tsvi and his seventeenth-century messianic movement. He argued that Israel

Ba'al Shem Tov possessed certain Sabbatian manuscripts and that his movement needed to be understood as a response to Sabbatianism. Like the Sabbatians, Hasidism gave priority to charismatic spiritualists over Talmudic scholars. But where Sabbatianism veered into violation of the law as a result of its acute messianism, Hasidism "neutralized" messianism, fully embraced Jewish law, and redirected Sabbatianism's mystical energies from the national plane to the individual.

Scholem originally echoed Buber's idea that the charismatic Hasidic tsaddik translated Kabbalah into ethical values applied through Jewish law (halakhah) to the common people's everyday life. But later, as part of a withering attack on Buber, Scholem insisted that Hasidism's real contribution was the appropriation and new articulation of earlier Kabbalistic notions, especially ecstatic union with God (devekut) and "annihilation of reality" (bittul ha-yesh). This theology was the opposite of this-worldly: it sought to transcend the material world. Yet Scholem agreed with Buber that Hasidism was not theosophically innovative, but instead focused on the inner life of the tsaddik and his Hasid. At the very onset of the movement, in Scholem's view, personality took the place of doctrine.

Like all previous scholars of Hasidism, Scholem considered the movement's first half-century to be a heroic period, a rebellion of religious energy against petrified religious values. Even though it brought forth no original ideas, its dynamic social structure revolutionized Eastern European Jewish life. But by the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Hasidism had lost its original élan. Scholem quoted a famous story by the nineteenth-century rebbe Israel Friedman of Ruzhin (1776-1850), who claimed that he no longer possessed any of the actual magical powers of his eighteenth-century predecessors—all he had left were the stories of their deeds. Storytelling, to be sure, took on its own magical power in later Hasidism, but the intellectual creativity of the early movement had atrophied. For Scholem, the long history of Jewish mysticism came to an end with eighteenth-century Hasidism.

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The powerful narrative represented by these scholars, who were born in the latter part of the nineteenth century and flourished mainly in the first half of the twentieth, provides the crucial backdrop for this book, crucial because the counter-narrative that we will present challenges many of its assumptions and conclusions. As we shall see and as the latest research demonstrates, a "hasidism before Hasidism" arose before the eighteenth century, largely independent of Sabbatianism. Hasidism's sources lay not only in Lurianic Kabbalah, as Scholem thought, but in a diverse library of Kabbalistic texts going back to the thirteenth-century Zohar and other late medieval and early modern mystical-moralistic tracts. Ascetic in nature, this mystical movement differed from later Hasidism, but it still furnished the later movement with texts, ideas, and potential followers.

As a movement that borrowed eclectically from many sources, Hasidism cannot be reduced to one, homogeneous doctrine. It incorporated both ascetic negation of the material world and antiascetic affirmation of the material, as well as messianic and antimessianic tendencies. For some Hasidic teachers, devekut meant the union of the worshipper with God, while for others, it meant less self-effacing communion. Some Hasidic teachings are almost explicitly pantheistic, while others emphasize God's transcendence. Some rank prayer higher than study, while others see them as equally holy. Some doctrines are imbued with halakhah, while a few flirt with antinomianism. Each tsaddik offered his own interpretation of the "philosophy" of Hasidism. Not one, but the full range of these ideas must count as constituting Hasidism.

There have been repeated attempts, most recently by Moshe Idel, to find sources of influence for Hasidic ideas in non-Jewish sources, such as in ecstatic religion in the Carpathian Mountains. It is possible that the emphasis on certain kinds of prayer, cults of holy saints, and pilgrimages to their graves all have their parallels, if not roots, in similar phenomena in the protean world from which Hasidism sprang. Although the proof remains elusive, we wholly endorse the idea that Hasidism must be understood not as hermetically sealed but as a part of its environment. Certainly, the

attraction of Eastern European noblemen and peasants alike to the tsaddikim and their courts that we find in the nineteenth century testifies to how embedded Hasidism was in its world. So, too, does the way Hasidic tales reflect motifs from folklore generally and Eastern European folklore in specific. That some Christians regarded tombs of tsaddikim as sites of veneration and that there were Jews who assigned theurgic power to some contemporary Christian figures speaks volumes about the complex relations between the two religions. Although the Hasidic masters at times disparaged the Christian world in terms of Kabbalistic dualism, the day-to-day interactions between Hasidim—as well as other Jews of the time and place—and Christians were marked not only by antagonism but also by symbiosis.

Returning to the movement's origins, we claim, against the prevailing arguments of the earlier scholarship, that it was not crisis that gave birth to Hasidism but instead developments within the religious and social life of Polish Jews. By the early eighteenth century, the Jewish communities of Eastern Poland (present-day Ukraine) were deeply engaged in the process of reconstruction following the pogroms of 1648-1649. The communal structure was still quite strong; the crisis of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth lay in the future. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, Israel Ba'al Shem Tov was not an unschooled radical who sought to overturn either the values or social structure of his time. A functionary of his community, he did indeed gather a small circle around him, but this circle was drawn from the learned elite. And the sources do not demonstrate that he intended to found a movement: the "founder" of Hasidism acquired that role only retrospectively two or three generations later. Rather, it is apparent that he and his followers saw themselves as operating within the bounds of conventional mystical pietism.

It was Dov Ber, the Maggid of Mezritsh, a member of this group, often portrayed as the Besht's anointed successor, who formed the first court—that is, a place where Hasidim and other admirers of a rebbe made pilgrimage to receive his blessing and imbibe his teachings (others of the Besht's circle also established something like courts around the same

time). When Dov Ber died in 1772, his disciples created a multiplicity of courts in multiple locations.

The year 1772 is also crucial because it marks the first herem, or ban, against the Hasidim. Hasidism's opponents (Mitnagdim) mocked its claim to be a form of pietism by calling the followers of what they took to be a movement as mit'hasdim—those who pretend to be pious. In this way, the opponents tried to distinguish the new "Hasidim" from the older "hasidim", even if the former at least initially saw themselves as only a variant of the latter. It is therefore possible that these opponents, led by Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, played a key, if unwitting, role in forcing the Hasidim to see themselves as a movement. Just as Hasidism provoked a movement of opposition, so the opposition helped to catalyze Hasidism into a movement. Hasidism as a movement was therefore the product of the last quarter of the eighteenth century. Yet its followers remained few in number. The courts of the tsaddikim probably numbered dozens or, at most, hundreds of Hasidim each. And not every Hasidic leader necessarily formed a court. But something new was unquestionably happening. The tsaddikim constituted new types of leaders. While some also served as communal rabbis, they generally extended their geographical influence beyond specific towns. A new pattern of religious life developed where Hasidim who lived at a distance from their rebbes made pilgrimage to the Hasidic courts one or more times a year. This geographic development would have a profound effect on how Hasidic Jews saw their relationship to place. It also created a social and leadership structure that would serve the traditional community well in the face of the dislocations of modernity.

By the second decade of the nineteenth century, Hasidic leadership developed increasingly in the direction of dynasties and institutionalized courts—something, we argue, that was not true of the Besht and his followers. As we noted earlier, Dubnow

saw in nineteenth-century Hasidism a movement in decline, but, even so, he clearly believed that more needed to be said about the later movement. (In the preface to his canonical history, he laid out the parameters and sources for a second volume, while



he admitted that old age prevented him from undertaking the task.) We have heeded Dubnow's call for work on the later movement even as we depart from his narrative of decline. We argue instead that Hasidism of this later period was entering its first golden age (the second began in the last decades of the twentieth century). Spreading rapidly into Congress Poland, Galicia, Hungary, and Romania, as well as in its eighteenth-century strongholds in Ukraine and Belarus (White Russia), the movement became increasingly numerous and influential. If it did not win over a majority of East European Jews, Hasidism nevertheless claimed a mass following. It fought for and often gained control over local communities. One of the key stories that we will tell involves the life of the Hasidim in the shtetl—that is, far from the courts of the tsaddikim.

It was in the early nineteenth century that many important Hasidic texts from the eighteenth century were edited and published, a process that actually started in the 1780s. The editors of these texts thus put their stamp on their progenitors in the eighteenth century, turning the Ba'al Shem Tov retrospectively into the "founder of Hasidism" and projecting their conception of a dynastic movement backward by a half-century and more. Because of the paucity of historical sources about the Ba'al Shem Tov, the relationship of later Hasidism to its putative founder resembles that of the early Christian Church to Jesus, whose teachings also remain shrouded in mystery. The way in which later generations of Hasidim shaped the image of the Besht is therefore of critical importance in understanding their own definitions of the movement.

Far from lacking in intellectual creativity, nineteenth-century Hasidism spawned a variety of schools and new ideas that unfortunately have attracted less scholarly attention than their eighteenth-century predecessors. The theological creativity of eighteenth-century Hasidism underwent important changes as the movement became both more popular and more institutionalized. While some tsaddikim, such as those of Zhidachov and Komarno (Komárno) emphasized Kabbalah, other nineteenth-century Hasidic leaders, notably Israel of Ruzhin, explicitly scorned the Kabbalistic

theology of the early movement in favor of a more practical, nonintellectual form of Hasidism. A new kind of leadership emerged, especially in Galicia and Hungary, of rebbes who functioned simultaneously as tsaddikim and as traditional rabbinical legal authorities. Other creative innovations were not lacking, from the antinomian speculations of Izhbits Hasidism to the extreme and idiosyncratic asceticism of Menahem Mendel of Kotzk. At the same time, archival evidence suggests that nineteenth-century Hasidism may not have been primarily a movement of the poor and unlettered any more than it was in the eighteenth century. It also attracted merchants who found the widespread social networks of Hasidic groups useful for commercial as well as religious purposes.

As Hasidism won an ever-wider circle of adherents, its earlier Orthodox opponents gradually came to accept the movement as a legitimate part of the traditional world, especially when that world came under assault by Jewish Enlightenment activists known as Maskilim (singular: Maskil). These intellectuals, who were at first a tiny minority in the Jewish world, established alliances with the Russian and Habsburg states

as well as with other forces of modernization. In their satirical writings, the Maskilim found a ready target in the tsaddikim as corrupt charlatans and their Hasidim as gullible obscurantists. In the pages that follow, we will focus more than previous historians on the ways in which Hasidism itself evolved precisely as the result of its conflict with the forces of Enlightenment. The Hasidim embraced modern strategies of political organizing and lobbying, often winning important concessions by the Russian, Polish, and Habsburg authorities against attacks by their Jewish and non-Jewish enemies. Like other modern religious movements of tradition, Hasidism drew much of its sustenance from the struggle with the Enlighteners. Just as it is impossible to think about the Jewish Enlightenment without its attacks against Hasidism, we argue that it is impossible to think of Hasidism without its use of new weapons against secular modernity.

The mass emigration of Jews from the Russian Empire that began in 1881 and lasted until the 1920s siphoned off millions of potential adherents,

many of whom abandoned religion when they left the Old Country. Urbanization shifted the centers of population from the small market towns in which Jews were often the majority, to cities, especially Warsaw. Although Hasidism remained rooted in small towns, with the onset of World War I, a number of important courts migrated to the cities. At the same time, the railroad made it easier for Hasidim to travel to the court of the rebbe. Always a geographically dispersed movement, with its groups drawing their adherents from beyond the local community of the rebbe, Hasidism was ideally positioned to benefit from new forms of transportation. In the late twentieth century, the Hasidim made similar use of the airplane—and in the twenty-first century, we see a parallel process, among some Hasidic groups, with the use of the Internet.

In the early twentieth century, Hasidism faced a new and less hospitable landscape. World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution shattered Jewish society and radically destabilized the movement's social infrastructure. So, too, did the rapid secularization and acculturation of the Polish Jews between the World Wars. Ideologies like Zionism and Communism competed for the loyalty of young Jews. On the eve of the Holocaust, Hasidism was very much besieged. And what these other forces had started, the Nazis finished by murdering an incalculable number of Hasidic leaders and their followers. By the end of the war, the idea that the movement was finished was not unreasonable. Hasidism was but a pale ghost of its former self—many rebbes and their Hasidim dead or scattered to the winds.

When Simon Dubnow wrote his history in 1931, he reported having just heard that the Soviet authorities had destroyed the tombs of the Ba'al Shem Tov and Nahman of Bratslav, two of the main sites of Hasidic pilgrimage. Himself in exile from Russia, Dubnow clearly despaired about the future of the Jews in that part of the world that was their historic heartland. From his vantage point, the history of Hasidism appeared to be coming to an end. Yet after the devastation of the Holocaust, which claimed Dubnow as one of its early victims, the phoenix has risen from the ashes in ways and in places that would have astonished its first historian.

While earlier Hasidism was almost exclusively an Eastern European phenomenon, the postwar movement had to reroot itself in new and radically changed circumstances in relatively small areas of settlement, primarily in North America and in what would become the modern State of Israel. A new concept of Hasidic place took hold. Hasidism came to see itself in exile from its original home in Eastern Europe, preserving the place names where it originated as the names of its rebbes' courts. Eastern Europe became an imagined space, the site of hallowed memory. With the fall of Communism and the end of travel restrictions in the former East Bloc, holy sites, especially the graves of rebbes, have resurfaced and today have become destinations of Hasidic pilgrimage.

Place is but one dimension of Hasidic identity as it emerged in the postwar era. Hasidim turned Yiddish into a holy language, a way of preserving the vanished world of Eastern Europe. Clothing and a variety of other customs specific to each Hasidic group also assumed sacred meaning. Because they signified the Old Home, they could not be changed. In this fashion, a movement of tradition became traditionalist—that is, a movement whose *raison d'être* was to conserve the past. Yet, of course, traditionalism of this sort is itself modern—an artifact of the postwar world.

With the creation of the State of Israel and growth of large Hasidic communities in the United States in the last half-century, important distinctions have developed between those living in a sovereign Jewish state and those in Diaspora. In Israel, Hasidic groups, most of which were virulently opposed to Zionism, had to negotiate their relationships with a secular Jewish state. They needed to interact with other religious communities, such as the pious Jewries of Middle Eastern and North African origins. In the United States, where other remnants of East European Hasidism found refuge, they needed to learn for the first time how to thrive in a pluralistic democracy. In both postwar America and Israel, Hasidic groups that had developed at a distance from each other in Eastern Europe now found themselves living cheek-by-jowl with one another in neighborhoods like Borough Park and Me'ah She'arim. Competition for followers, always a part of the Hasidic story,

became much more intense in Hasidism's new homes.

While most Hasidim of the postwar period ignore the less religious and secular Jews among whom they live, two groups, Chabad-Lubavitch and Bratslav have developed missionizing ideologies directed to the wider Jewish world. The seventh Lubavitch Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, is of particular importance, since many of his followers regard him as a messianic figure. Even after his death in 1994, some believe that he continues to play an eschatological role in this world. The career of Schneerson and the ongoing vitality of his movement as well as the other surviving groups of Hasidim demonstrate that this religious phenomenon is not a mere relic of an earlier world, but continues its creative career today.

The story of Hasidism at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not, as the Hasidim themselves often insist, a story only of uncompromising conservatism, the preservation of age-old traditions in the face of punishing assaults by the secular world. In reestablishing themselves in Israel, North America, and elsewhere, the Hasidim created—wittingly or not—new forms of religious and social life. Their very conservatism, while unquestionably grounded in the nineteenth-century "invention" of ultra-Orthodoxy, took on new colorations, the inevitable result of the new settings in which they found themselves. Far from a mere fossil of the eighteenth century marooned on the streets of Jerusalem and Brooklyn, they are a dynamic part of the modern world. Indeed, starting in the nineteenth century and continuing to today, Hasidism's very identity is wrapped up in its struggle against modern, secular culture and derives much of its identity from that struggle. It is this dialectical entanglement with its secular opponent that defines Hasidism as a modern movement. We might say that Hasidism throughout its two-and-a-half-century history represents a case of "modernization without secularization." It is the goal of this book to tell that story as part of the process by which the Jews became modern, a process in which the Jewish religion itself has changed profoundly but scarcely disappeared.

In the foreword to his history of Hasidism, Simon Dubnow spoke of the challenge of distilling the "essence" of Hasidism from the *tohu-va-vohu* ("chaos") of its teachings and from the "obscurantism" of its preachers. For our part, the challenge is not to distill an essence of what is, by its nature, a diverse and, at times, contradictory movement. But we share Dubnow's desire to rescue for the modern reader a sense of the vitality and endless originality of a religious phenomenon that continues to enthrall those who engage with it, even if they do not count themselves among its adherents.

### Toward the Nineteenth Century

The proliferation of hasidism in the years shortly before and mainly after the death of the Maggid of Mezritsh in 1772 demonstrates how a movement that had no central authority and no formal mechanisms of organization could nevertheless develop with enormous vitality. The very lack of a rigid ideology allowed for a great variety in the forms of leadership, governing ethos, and types of practice. This flexibility gave the movement greater strength, as it attracted different types of leaders and followers. Some of the leaders cultivated elitism, while others were more populist. Some focused on the material needs of their Hasidim, while others stressed the spiritual. But whether in Ukraine, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Galicia, or Central Poland, by the beginning of the nineteenth century one central characteristic was shared in common: the structure of the court with a *tsaddik* at its center surrounded by his Hasidim. In the space of a few short decades, a movement thus took shape and was poised to expand itself still further in the next century.

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Jews of Poland no longer lived in the commonwealth that had been their home since the Middle Ages—and in which Hasidism first arose. The three partitions of the commonwealth left the Jews in four political units: Prussia, the Habsburg Empire, Russia, and the area of Central Poland under Russian rule, but with a certain degree of autonomy. After the first partition in 1772, there still was a sizable Jewish community in the part of Poland not swallowed by its neighbors. Prussia absorbed approximately

twenty thousand Jews in the first partition. Starting with Frederick the Great in 1750, the Prussian state departed from medieval tradition by intervening actively in the internal affairs of the Jewish community in order to try to integrate Jews into society. As a consequence of this integrationist policy, Polish Prussia was not fertile soil for Hasidism, whose western penetration stopped more or less at the border with Prussia.

The first partition most affected the Jews of what became known as Galicia—that is, roughly the southern tier of today's Poland together with the westernmost quarter of today's Ukraine. This area contained approximately a quarter of a million Jews. They joined the Habsburg Empire, which already had a small Jewish community and a Jewish policy that still largely followed traditional lines: limited Jewish autonomy within the framework of various occupational and social restrictions. However, as we shall see in greater detail in chapter 19, starting in the 1780s, the Habsburg government began a policy of tolerance that both improved the legal status of Jews and encouraged adoption of German culture. As Hasidism entrenched itself in this region, it had to contend with forces of modernization that took much longer to develop to the east.

Russia, which at first annexed territories with only thirty to forty thousand Jews, had been officially closed to Jewish settlement and had no organized Jewish community prior to the first partition. By the third partition, however, Russia had gained a total of approximately 600,000 Jews, the largest Jewish community in the world at that time. Jewish policy there oscillated between continuing to treat the Jews as an autonomous ethno-religious community and trying to force them to integrate and lose their Jewish identity.

Indeed, the Jewish policy of all the regimes that absorbed the Jews from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth vacillated between favoring Jewish modernizers, on the one hand, and preference for traditional, conservative Jews, on the other. At times, this latter policy could prove instrumental in supporting Hasidim in their battles with Maskilim and other modernizers.

By 1815, when the Congress of Vienna stabilized the borders of Eastern Europe, the stage was set for the development of Hasidism in the different countries, each with its own political constellation. Although the borders remained relatively easy to cross and Hasidism developed along roughly common lines throughout the region, the new political order left its stamp on the proliferation of courts and their character in the long nineteenth century.

Between 1815 and World War I, Hasidism enjoyed a Golden Age. It was in this period that the small, elitist, and mystical circles of the eighteenth century coalesced into a genuine mass movement. To be sure, the development from circle to court and from court to movement that we have traced in the eighteenth century was already on a trajectory to win a major following for Hasidism. But as vigorous as the movement was by the end of the eighteenth century, it was qualitatively and quantitatively transformed in the nineteenth. Almost everything one associates with classic forms of Hasidism came to maturity in that century: courts with all their rituals and cultural expressions, the tsaddikim and their various forms of leadership, different types of dynastic inheritance, the diversification of Hasidic ethos and teaching, extension of geographical boundaries, new genres of Hasidic literature, and new modes of political engagement.

Despite relatively recent scholarship on the nineteenth century, Simon Dubnow's judgment that Hasidism went into decline from its eighteenth-century age of creativity still shapes perceptions of the history of the movement. While the relatively small number of sources for the eighteenth century has been extensively mined, historians have only begun to explore the much richer materials available for the nineteenth century: internal Hasidic literature, the polemical and journalistic writings of Maskilim, and governmental archives from Russia, Poland, and the Habsburg Empire. Many subjects, such as the migration of Hasidim to the cities at the end of the century, their responses to modern political upheavals, and the history of specific courts remain terra incognita. Indeed, this paucity of research continues into the crucial interwar period as well.

One defining characteristic of nineteenth-century Hasidism was demographic. Never before had it achieved such rapid increase in followers, most won over by conversion rather than natural growth. While rapid growth also characterized Hasidism after World War II, in our period, Hasidic courts won the loyalty of a larger proportion of the overall Jewish population of Eastern Europe. This Golden Age was therefore, in part, a story of numbers. In addition, the geography of Hasidism expanded dramatically, moving from its birthplace in Podolia and other eastern provinces of what was originally the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in a westward direction toward Galicia and Central Poland, as well as Hungary and Romania. Indeed, we will show in chapter 10 that these new territories became even more numerous with *tsaddikim* and their followers than were the original heartlands of Hasidism.

As a result of Hasidism's centrifugal explosion into most regions of Jewish Eastern Europe, it developed varieties of religious and social expressions. It will prove convenient to divide these varieties geographically (Russia, Poland, Galicia, and Hungary), but, even though these different political settings surely influenced the development of Hasidism in each, we want to be careful not to stamp these different regions with rigid and unchanging definitions. While there is some truth to generalizations about the Hasidism of different regions, they conceal counter-examples that belie the "essential" character of Hasidism in this or that place.

With the geographic and demographic expansion of Hasidism, the average Hasid often lived far from the court of his *tsaddik*. As a consequence, the courts developed into highly significant institutions as the vehicles for keeping a dispersed group of followers unified. The so-called regal courts in particular boasted expansive physical structures and retinues of functionaries and servants. A pilgrimage to the court took on a strongly ritual flavor. At the same time, most of a Hasid's life took place in the *shtetl*, the small market towns in which most Hasidim—and most Jews—lived and, within the *shtetl*, in the *shtibl*, the local prayer room of the Hasidic branch. This section of our book therefore contains a detailed description of how Hasidim

lived when they did not attend the court, how they struggled for power and influence within their local communities, what was the role of women, and, finally how the Hasidim related to non-Hasidic Jews and non-Jews as well.

If the focus here is primarily on social history, the history of Hasidic ideas is no less important. As opposed to section 1 of this book, here we do not have a separate chapter on Hasidic ethos or rituals, in part because the movement now developed so much variety that it is hard to make generalizations. In the chapters on varieties of Hasidism in Russia, Poland, Galicia, and Hungary, we examine a range of religious themes as they found expression in the different dynasties. A particular avenue for disseminating these ideas was in the book culture that developed in the course of the nineteenth century, including a wave of new books of tales of *tsaddikim* starting in the 1860s. However, the development of Hasidic ideas did not take place in a vacuum. The growth of the *Haskalah* (Jewish Enlightenment) in Eastern Europe paralleled the growth of nineteenth-century Hasidism. Some of the *Maskilim* made Hasidism the target of their parodies and polemics, but the story we will tell of relations between these two opposing groups will be more complicated, including *Maskilim* who were sympathetic to Hasidism and local relations of Hasidim and *Maskilim* that confound ideological enmity.

Finally, our story includes relations between Hasidism and the state. While the *Maskilim* sought to mobilize the state against the Hasidim, these efforts generally proved futile since the states in which the Hasidim lived refused to outlaw Hasidism as a "sect." At the same time, Russia, Congress Poland, and the Habsburg Empire all had an interest in modernizing and acculturating the Jews that led to conflicts with Hasidim and the emergence of a Hasidic politics directed toward these states.

These momentous events of the nineteenth century had a profound effect on Hasidism. From an element of radical ferment in the eighteenth century, Hasidism evolved into a bulwark against modernity, a force of conservatism. By the end of the century, the rise of Zionism and other forms of

secular Jewish politics mobilized the Hasidim further to combat what they saw as threats to their way of life. Indeed, Hasidism as we know it today owes much to its transformation into perhaps the representative of tradition in the rapidly modernizing world of the nineteenth century. And yet—as we argued in the introduction to this book—Hasidism was itself a product and a form of modernity, both as a movement of opposition to the secular world and as a religious and social phenomenon never seen before in Jewish history. The tradition that Hasidism fought so hard to defend against the assaults of the modern world was itself ironically an innovation.

### The Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

In the early twentieth century, one might have been tempted to write the epitaph for Hasidism. The crisis of Hasidism described in chapter 20 of the previous section escalated and took on new dimensions. During World War I, rebbes and their followers endured death and dislocations, with many fleeing the front for the safety of cities like Vienna. Following the war, the movement faced persecution and defections in the newly established Soviet Union after a very brief cultural spring, and lost many adherents in interwar Poland to secularism and new political movements. The impoverishment of the late nineteenth century had sparked mass emigration out of Eastern Europe to America and Western Europe, with smaller numbers reaching Palestine. After World War I, new political and economic pressures provoked additional migrations out of Eastern Europe, although quotas that the United States imposed in 1924 made it much more difficult to find refuge in that country, which had absorbed millions of Jews over the previous half century. Meanwhile, the Balfour Declaration in 1917 energized Jews to move to Palestine in the hopes that Zionism might provide a refuge. While the vast majority of Hasidim remained in their heartland and homeland, the conditions that had made possible Hasidism's nineteenth-century Golden Age had largely collapsed.

What this section of our story reveals, however, is that the final chapters of Hasidic life had yet to be written. The twentieth and now the twenty-first

century would turn into a tale of death and resurrection. After the Holocaust had decimated their ranks, the Hasidim discovered that the very places their rebbes had warned them against—the Zionist state and the democratic countries of the West, primarily North America—became the havens where they flourished as never before. These were places that provided them with economic and political stability, relatively little persecution, and conditions where they could gain confidence and numbers in ways they could never have dreamed of during the early 1900s.

A movement many believed had passed its Golden Age would have a second Golden—even Platinum—Age. This would be a time of both rebuilding and reinvention, especially after the extraordinary losses of the Holocaust. The Hasidim of this century were not radicals; they were increasingly conservative and Orthodox. They were no longer rebelling against the yeshivah world as they once had done; they often emulated it, with rebbes acting like yeshivah heads, recruiting their followers via their educational institutions. With the exception of Chabad and Bratslav, which made outreach to the less religious the hallmark of their movements, Hasidism no longer acquired followers from the non-Hasidic world, as it had done in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For most Hasidic groups in the latter part of the twentieth century, growth would come from fertility and through their educational institutions.

In their new places of residence, Hasidim would find themselves concentrated together in ways that were unprecedented in their history, and with modern travel and other forms of communication, even distances once thought obstacles to overcome seemed to shrink away to near nothing. Never had there been such a concentration of Hasidic courts in urban locations such as in Brooklyn, Jerusalem, and Bnei Brak, and never had Hasidim found themselves living in a sovereign Jewish state with a powerful government and army to defend them and offer them welfare. Living in such proximity and refraining out of conservatism from forming new dynasties with new names, new conflicts arose among and within courts, as they competed for influence and authority.

The result was a Hasidism that claimed to be faithful to the past, even as it fashioned itself anew. Although the modern, interconnected world, which this post-Holocaust Hasidism tried to keep out, seeped into their cloistered communities, as the twenty-first century dawned, there were signs of cultural and social change. Some tried to ignore it, or to characterize the change as continuity. Others fought it tooth and nail. This was a period of great nostalgia for their lost communities of Eastern Europe, but, having thrived in the State of Israel and democratic countries of the West, the Hasidim were now firmly anchored in the postwar world.

This was also a century in which women, once marginal to Hasidism, became more fully engaged as Hasidim (more correctly: Hasidot). Certainly, this was true in Chabad, but no Hasidic court could ignore its women, and they played a growing role in every court, in some cases, like Satmar, even acting like a rebbe. This development paradoxically occurred as Hasidic leaders insisted more stridently than ever before on gender segregation.

This section of our book is divided into two parts. In the first part, we will examine how Hasidism tried to meet the challenges of World War I and then the interwar period in the Soviet Union and the new states—Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Romania—that arose out of the dismantling of the Russian and Habsburg Empires. The movement fought a rear-guard action to survive in these new conditions. Yet, even in the face of new forms of antisemitism and accelerating abandonment of religion, the movement did not lack for pockets of vitality and innovation. Side-by-side with increasing rigidity, we will find attempts to respond to the new challenges. And then came the Holocaust that almost totally destroyed what remained. Hasidism responded to this unprecedented catastrophe both by mobilizing traditional strategies and by examples of remarkable adaptation. In the second part of this section, we turn to the dramatic story of resurrection after World War II, focusing particularly on the State of Israel and the United States, the two places where the preponderance of Hasidim can be found to this day. We will consider their political, social, and cultural manifestations,

bringing our account as close as possible to the present time. <>

[On the Question of the "Cessation of Prophecy" in Ancient Judaism](#) by L. Stephen Cook [Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, Mohr Siebeck, 9783161509209]

Recent decades have witnessed a virtual explosion of studies examining various aspects of Second Temple Judaism, and no slowdown appears on the horizon. These studies seek to elucidate, among other things, the religious and historical situation from which Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism emerged. As part of this ongoing effort, the present work seeks to identify and examine attitudes about the status of prophets and prophecy in this complex phase of Jewish history.

A variety of Jewish texts from the Second Temple and rabbinic periods seem to reflect the view that Israelite prophecy ceased during the Persian period, around the beginning of the Second Temple era. Up until the twentieth century, scholars generally regarded these ancient texts as presenting a relatively uniform, consistent picture of the historical process of the cessation of prophecy. Some authors still hold to this assessment; in recent decades, however, others have pointed to numerous ancient texts which refer to prophetic activity occurring well beyond the point of its supposed cessation. These scholars therefore hold that the claim that prophecy ceased was simply one view in antiquity, and not necessarily representative of a larger consensus. According to these authors, the evidence of prophetic activity in the Second Temple period either contradicts ancient claims of prophecy's demise, or else exposes these claims as polemical attempts to counter belief in the legitimacy of prophecy during this period. Contemporary scholarship is therefore divided on whether to regard the sources which allege the absence of prophets/prophecy as reliable characterizations of the religious atmosphere of the Second Temple period.

What, then, is the best way to describe ancient Jewish thought on the status of prophets and prophecy in the Second Temple period? Some difficulties confront those who seek to address this question. The first is merely a practical one, in that

research on this topic is not always easy. Discussions of the subject often occur in bits and pieces rather than in comprehensive treatments, though fortunately some articles and book chapters have appeared recently which are devoted largely to this topic. In another regard, work on the present topic also involves contending with semantic and terminological difficulties, not the least of which is the problem of defining the terms "prophet" and "prophecy." One must take care to discern not only how these terms are used in modern discussions, but also how their Greek and Hebrew counterparts are used in ancient discussions.

The three parts of this dissertation will seek to address these and other problems relating to the question of whether prophecy ceased in ancient Judaism. As an aid to future researchers, Part One will first present the key texts from antiquity, and then systematically summarize the seminal discussions of the question from the last 150+ years. Larger aims of this section will be to clarify the status of modern scholarship on this issue, particularly regarding the two general views delineated above, and to introduce the body of material with which I will interact throughout the rest of the dissertation. Part Two will then attempt a thorough analysis of the ancient texts in question, in order to present my own view of how each of these texts should be understood. This section will examine a range of relevant texts from antiquity, including passages from the Old and New Testaments, Qumran, rabbinic literature, and numerous other Jewish sources from the Second Temple period. A mostly chronological analysis will seek to identify streams of thought within ancient Judaism which help address the question of whether prophecy was thought to have ceased. Part Three, finally, will offer an assessment of modern scholarship on the subject, with a view toward clarifying where the various schools of thought diverge. I will evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches, and also offer my own suggestions on how the discussion should proceed from here. While I have attempted to keep repetition of material to a minimum, the reader may notice occasional overlap between material introduced in Part One, and the interaction with this material in Parts Two and Three.

Citations from the Bible (including apocryphal/deuterocanonical works) are taken from the New Revised Standard Version. Regarding citations of other ancient sources, see the bibliography for a complete list of translations and critical editions used.

Second Temple Jews did, on the whole, tend to believe that prophecy had ceased in the Persian period. This is the conclusion for which I argued in Part Two of this work, in an effort to answer some key questions about Jewish thought in the Hellenistic and Roman eras. Of course, this conclusion, in and of itself, is not a new assertion in biblical scholarship. Yet it has faced an ongoing assault in the last few decades, from those who question whether the usually cited texts from antiquity have been understood properly, and who also point to evidence of prophecy's continuation into the Second Temple period. Accordingly, it has been worthwhile to ask whether recent critiques of this view are justified, and to what extent they have succeeded.

The literature review in Part One revealed various streams of thought on the overall question of whether Jewish prophecy ceased in the Persian period. Advocates of the traditional view, which affirms prophecy's cessation, have taken several approaches to describing religious developments in Second Temple Judaism. Some have emphasized "First Temple prophecy" to the neglect or denigration of developments in prophecy after this period; others have evaluated Second Temple prophetic claims more positively. Some have limited themselves to a description of Second Temple thought, while others have also affirmed and adopted the conclusions of Second Temple authors.

Advocates of the more recent or "non-traditionalist" view, though claiming to refute the traditional view entirely, have, I believe, succeeded only in correcting some imbalances in the latter. First of all, by amassing considerable evidence of revelatory claims in the Second Temple era, these authors have exposed the flaw in the stream of traditional thought which ignores, denigrates, or otherwise minimizes the importance of such phenomena in this period. In a similar vein, they have also rightly pointed out the bias whereby some traditionalist authors have adopted and perpetuated the notion



of a cessation of prophecy in Judaism. In view of these corrections, it is important that traditionalist scholars take more seriously the evidence of pneumatic and revelatory claims in the Second Temple period, and see these claims as constitutive elements of the religious milieu from which Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism emerged. It is also important that in answering the question of whether Jewish prophecy ceased, that such scholars seek only to discern and describe the views of the ancients themselves. It is legitimate under the traditional approach to raise such questions as, How did ancient Jews define prophecy? How did allegedly inspired individuals in the Second Temple period understand their claims? How directly did these individuals claim to have had contact with God? Did they see their inspiration as infallible? In what way did they see their claims as true over against the claims of others they viewed as false? These are valid historical/theological questions, but to go beyond them and to decide whether scholars today should view ancient prophecy as having ceased, is to raise a question about the intrinsic validity of prophetic claims — a question that critical scholarship cannot answer.

I argued in Part Three that the more recent approach, which operates with a broad definition of prophecy, is most helpful in general sociological and comparative studies. But in both approaches, it is also important to raise the question of the relationship between the revelatory phenomena of the Second Temple period and their earlier counterparts. Should one characterize this relationship fundamentally as one of continuity or discontinuity? The non-traditionalist approach tends more toward emphasizing the continuities, and on the basis of this approach, I think it is legitimate for sociological studies on the history of prophecy to claim that prophecy continued from the Persian period into the Second Temple period. Authors who take this approach, however, should also make clear that this observation is based on a definition of prophecy which is broader than that which is generally stated or assumed by the ancient Jewish authors. It is the case, in my opinion, that the traditional approach remains the best vehicle through which to understand the ancient Jewish mind-set itself regarding prophecy, including the

relevant discontinuities which Second Temple Jews perceived with those of earlier eras. I should acknowledge in all fairness, though, that Henze is right in saying that scholars in the past have tended to overemphasize these discontinuities. The more recent approach helps to correct this situation.

Thus, I argue that two legitimate approaches exist for addressing the basic question, Did Jewish prophecy cease in the Persian period? It is apparent that how one chooses to define prophecy is a central question in this regard, and is also usually an outgrowth of scholars' purposes for discussing the subject in the first place. The broadness or narrowness of one's definition often correlates with the relative broadness of one's discussion, and it is hard to declare either approach invalid. As I see it, these two approaches are not mutually contradictory, as has usually been claimed. While the clash has often been presented as one of conclusions, the basic difference has instead been more a matter of approach. A lack of clarity in this respect has often led to a muddled

discussion. Thus, it is of paramount importance for future discussions of this topic that scholars be clear about what their assumptions are. From which viewpoint (ancient or modern) are they arguing? What definition of prophecy are they using? What is the overall purpose/methodology of their study? Accordingly, authors who respond to others' discussions should also consider the methodological approach in the sources to which they are responding, and seek to ensure that any alleged "disagreement" is taking place within the parameters of the same methodology. If a point concerns, for example, whether Josephus or Philo was a prophet, one author may say yes and the other no. But if one author is asking whether either of these figures was a "prophet" from a modern, historical/sociological standpoint, and the other is raising the question of whether either thought of himself as a prophet, from a historical/theological standpoint, then it cannot fairly be said that they really disagree.

Regardless of which approach we take, our own presuppositions will of course, to some extent, emerge in the terminology we choose to use in our descriptions of ancient Jewish prophecy.

Admittedly, to term pneumatic activity in the Persian era and prior as "prophecy" but to use other terms for the related activity which followed it, as I have done, is to run the risk of implying that the spiritual health and fervor of the later age was somehow inferior to that of the earlier age. However, while I have occasionally used the term "inferior" to describe the view Second Temple Jews took toward prophetic phenomena of their day vs. that of the ancients before them, I here stress again that such a description of the Jewish beliefs about prophecy need imply nothing necessarily about the spiritual fervor of the later period. Indeed, from the modern standpoint, the religious enthusiasm of the latter era may even be characterized as greater, since the Jewish people of the later Second Temple period continued to seek the face of God even when they doubted that God's infallible voice found an outlet in their day. In ironic contrast to earlier periods in which prophets had abounded but the people did not listen, Jews of the Second Temple period, thinking as they did that only attenuated channels of revelation existed in their day, sought more zealously to hear the divine voice in those channels.

### Views on Why Prophecy Ceased

The literature review in Part One mentioned several authors who hold that prophecy ceased in ancient Israel because of an increased focus on law in Second Temple Judaism. As a supplement to Part One, the following is a brief sampling of various alternate explanations that have been put forth in modern times, as to why prophecy ceased in ancient Israel.

—The nation of Israel felt distant from God in the aftermath of the destruction of the First Temple, and prophecy could not survive in a spiritual crisis of this sort. Kaufmann, *History*, 4. 460-61; cf. Milikowsky, "End of Prophecy," 90 n. 34. Discussion of Kaufmann's view: Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," 38-39.

—Prophecy succeeded in its mission to stamp out idolatry, and was therefore not needed any more. Gevaryahu, "End of Prophecy," 92 n. 3; Podhoretz, *The Prophets*, 302-5.

—Prophecy ended because of the loss of the monarchy in Israel.

Sommer, "When Did Prophecy Cease?" 45-46 (who also offers other reasons); Cross, *Canaanite Myth*, 343; Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy*, 6; Crone, *Early Christian Prophecy*, 64.

Discussion of this view: Sheppard, "True and False Prophecy," 274-75; Mason, "Prophets of the Restoration," 139-40.

—Prophecy ended because prophets lost their base of support within society.

Overholt, "End of Prophecy," 103-15; Wilson, *Prophecy*, 28-32; cf. Meyers, "Second Zechariah," 720-23.

Discussion of Overholt's view: Greenspahn, "Why Prophecy Ceased," 39.

—The conquests of Alexander the Great left Palestine untouched by events of a world-wide scale, and prophecy had always operated in times when such events were taking place.

Von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2. 297.

—The writings of the great prophets were widely available, and so society no longer needed active prophecy.

Blenkinsopp, *A History of Prophecy*, 227; Podhoretz, *The Prophets*, 308; cf. von Harnack, *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, 332-33 n. 5.

—Prophecy ended because of the intractable problem of distinguishing true from false prophets.

Guy, *New Testament Prophecy*, 25 (who also mentions other factors);

Johnson, *Cultic Prophet in Ancient Israel*, 66-75; Wilson, *Prophecy*, 307; Crone, *Early Christian Prophecy*, 64.

For additional sources and discussion, see Jassen, *Mediating the Divine*, 12 n. 26; Schniedewind, *Word of God in Transition*, 14-22. <>

[The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism: The Unique Perspective of the Bavli on Conversion and the Construction of Jewish Identity](#) by Moshe Lavee [Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity, Brill, 9789004317338]

### Contents

Introduction: Methods and Models  
PART 1: "Like an Israelite in Every Respect": The Conversion Procedure

1	The Babylonian “Mini-Tractate” of Conversion
2	The Invention of the Conversion Court
3	Immersion and Circumcision
4	Sinai as Conversion: Acceptance of the Commandments
PART 2: “Like a Scab”: Negative Attitudes toward Converts and Conversion	
5	“Like a Scab”: A Babylonian Expression
6	Converting Missionary Images
7	Hillel and Shammai Revisited
Appendix 7.1 Hillel and Shammai: Comparison Charts	
PART 3: “Like a Newborn”: The Erasure of the Convert’s Past	
8	Newborn: Conversion and the Severing of Kinship Appendix 8.1 The Severing of Maternal Relations in Palestinian Sources
Appendix 8.2 A Palestinian Concept in a Geonic Text?	
9	Newborn: From Forgiveness of Sins to a New Personality
PART 4: Contextualizing the Talmud “Against its Will”	
10	Dominantization: The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism
11	Legalization, Rabbinization and the Shift of Authority
12	Genealogical Anxiety and the Body: The Iranian Context
Conclusion—A Newborn, an Israelite, a Scab: The Babylonian Convert	
Appendix—The Conversion Mini-Tractate: Annotated Texts 231	
1	The Preceding Narrative
2	The First Baraita: The Requirement for Both Immersion and Circumcision
3	The Second Baraita: The Case of Circumcision without Immersion
4	The Third Baraita: Witnessed Conversion
5	The Fourth Baraita: The Conversion Court
6	The Fifth Baraita: The Procedure of Conversion
7	The Sixth Baraita: A Theological Reflection on the Suffering of Converts

8	The Meimrot of Rabbi Hiyya bar Abba in the Name of Rabbi Yohanan
9	Conversion at Night and the Conversion Court
Bibliography	
Index of Sources	
Index of Names	
Index of Subjects	

The Bavli tells the story of a non-Jew who travels to the Temple and partakes of the Passover sacrifice in Jerusalem. Upon return home, the pilgrim brags that while in the Holy Land he ate the best parts of the Paschal lamb, despite the biblical prohibitions against its consumption by foreigners and the uncircumcised. Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra hears the non-Jew boasting, inquires whether he had received a portion from the tail fat of the lamb, and advises the pilgrim to request this portion the next time he visits Jerusalem. The following year sees the non-Jew back at the Temple, requesting, per Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra’s instructions, a portion of the tail fat. The request arouses suspicion among the people of Jerusalem, who know quite well that this portion is forbidden. Discovering the true identity of the non-Jew, they kill him. The story ends with the expression of gratitude the Jerusalemites send to Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra: “Peace unto thee, who are in Nisibis; your net is spread in Jerusalem” (ST Pesahim 3B).

This book is about the road not taken in the Talmudic story: the path of conversion. Rabbi Yehudah ben Bathyra’s tale dramatizes the biblical prohibitions concerning the Paschal lamb in Ex 12:43–48: “No foreigner may eat it ..., no uncircumcised male may eat it”, but makes no mention of the alternative presented in the very same biblical passage: “circumcise him, then shall he eat”. The latter became one of the primary sources for the rabbinic institution of conversion to Judaism.

The omission is startling as the Paschal sacrifice was tightly tied to conversion in earlier rabbinic texts. For instance, a rabbinic source from the Land of Israel describes Roman soldiers who immersed themselves and then ate the Paschal sacrifice (Tosefta Pesahim 7:14). The Paschal sacrifice is also

the subject of the earliest rabbinic legislation on immersion of converts, since a debate on this topic is attributed to the houses of Hillel and Shammai (Mishnah Pesahim 8:8; Mishnah Eduyyot 5:2). Similarly, a rabbinic anecdote in the Yerushalmi recounts that the prohibition of eating the Paschal sacrifice led to the conversion to Judaism of Antoninus (PT Megillah 1:10, 72b; PT Megillah 3:1, 74a).

Our Bavli tale ignores such traditions. In striking contrast with sources from the Land of Israel, here conversion is not even on the agenda. Rather, the non-Jew is portrayed as an intruder who wishes to turn a Jewish ritual into a culinary adventure. Defending the boundaries of the Jewish group, the sage from Nisibis alerts the Jews of Jerusalem. Thanks to his advice, the imposter is unmasked.

It may seem odd to begin a book about conversion with an account that appears to consciously sidestep that very topic. Yet this is precisely the right way to begin, as I consider the neglect to be emblematic of the dramatic shift in the Bavli. A close reading of the sources reveals a growing resentment toward converts and conversion, in comparison to attitudes that held sway in earlier rabbinic sources from the Land of Israel. The tale not only exemplifies this resentment, but also discloses an awareness of its Babylonian provenance: Yehudah ben Bathyra is from Nisibis, in Babylon. Particularly striking is that the Bavli seems to affirm the role of Babylonian attitudes in the construction of Jewish separatism in the rabbinic period.

This volume foregrounds the ways in which the Bavli shaped rabbinic conceptualizations of conversion to Judaism, but it also treats the crucial impact made by the Bavli on the rabbinic “conversion” of Judaism, namely, the gradual process by which the rabbinic model of Judaism became dominant. I take as a central text sT Yevamot 46a–48b, which is a lengthy and complex passage that I dub the Babylonian “mini-tractate” on conversion. This unit includes a sequence of sugiot (Talmudic discussions) arranged around a series of baraitot (non-Mishnaic tannaitic sources). Each part in this book examines one of the three famous rabbinic aphorisms on conversion, all of which appear in this unit: “a

convert is like an Israelite in every respect”, “a convert is as hard for Israel as a scab”, and “a convert is like a newborn infant”.

Part One, titled “Like an Israelite in Every Respect”, deals with the conversion procedure itself. After presenting the literary framework of the minittractate and its main features, it discusses the Bavli’s innovations concerning conversion. These include the invention of the institution of the conversion court, the shift from the personal journey of the newcomer to the constitutive power of the accepting society (Chapter 2), the incorporation of immersion and circumcision as compulsory elements of a single supervised procedure (Chapter 3), and the implied inclusion of acceptance of the commandments as part of the procedure of conversion (Chapter 4).

Part Two, “Like a Scab”, presents Babylonian attitudes toward conversion such as the use of the scab imagery as an example of the growing negativity toward marriage to, and acceptance of, converts (Chapter 5), the eradication of rabbinic missionary traditions (Chapter 6), and a new reading of the Hillel and Shammai tales about converts that argues that despite the explicit lessons in these stories in favor of conversion, they also contribute to the Babylonian construction of stringent standards and rabbinic authority over the procedure (Chapter 7).

Part Three, “Like a Newborn”, shows the use of this imagery and its application in the context of the legal status of converts’ kinship, and the theological question of punishment for sins committed before conversion. The Babylonian sources offer a radical reading of conversion that entails the “creation” of a new person and the annulment of the convert’s past (Chapters 8–9).

These chapters explore how the Bavli delimits the boundaries of Jewish identity through its institutionalization and rabbinization of the conversion procedure. Modification of the ritual is accompanied by a new lexicon that further positions conversion as a constitutive and irreversible event. Conversion is understood to abrogate totally converts’ former identity, personality and even existence, and transform them into newborn Israelites. This rhetoric of birth and

renewal, which at first sight might be considered an agent of inclusivity, is revealed to drive legal implications, discursive patterns, and exegetical conventions that underscore the differences between converts and natal Jews. This Babylonian separatism is also expressed in negative attitudes toward converts and conversion, as seen in the repudiation of missionary traditions and the use of the negative metaphor of converts as scabs, its exclusionary functions in the contexts of marriage, acceptance of converts, and even in eschatological depictions that exclude converts from the future promise of the resting of the Shekhinah (Divine Presence) upon the families of Israel. This trend of Babylonian separatism exists in other areas which are beyond the scope of this volume, such as the use of the Noahide laws to delineate the differences between Jews and non-Jews, and the rejection of liminal identities, such as the Samaritans (the Bavli considers their imagined faulty conversion as the reason for their rejection), the disappearance of the notion of “God-fearers”, and so forth.

The tension between the Babylonian tendency towards separatism and exclusivity and its rhetoric of renewal and inclusivity constitutes what I call “the paradox of renewal and rejection”. The last part of this book is devoted to clarifying this paradox. It offers some conclusions concerning the textual and conceptual developments described in the first three parts, in seeking the coherence and consistency that bridge the seemingly contradictory trends. Chapter 10 points to the evolutionary nature of the developments herein set out, and introduces the idea of a “rabbinic conversion of Judaism”. By distinguishing between geo-cultural and chronological factors, Chapter 11 shows how the rabbinization and institutionalization of conversion were products of the late redaction of the Bavli. Chapter 12 presents the role of genealogical anxiety and the body as the locus of the self in the formation of the Bavli’s notion of conversion, and suggests that the Iranian context was pivotal in this regard. Finally, the paradox of renewal and rejection in conversion is suggested as a model for resolving the tension between the seemingly inclusive language of renewal of the convert, on the one hand, and the exclusionary

approach manifested in the rise of negativity toward converts, on the other.

Though *The Rabbinic Conversion of Judaism* aspires to depict the evolution of rabbinic conversion in Late Antiquity, I cannot deny that my interest at the topic arose in the context of contemporary debates about conversion to Judaism. The praxis of conversion has been in the last two centuries a source of continuous tension among various Jewish denominations. The book reflects an effort to speak about the past in order to understand the present, and at the same time, to understand the past without imposing contemporary ideologies. The agenda of this book lies not in supporting any particular contemporary mode of conversion to Judaism. Rather, I engage with the Bavli because of its canonical status and its immense and ongoing influence on contemporary modes of Judaism. I aim to increase awareness of the constitutive power of the Bavli by way of a thorough investigation of the relevant texts. The conversion court and the scab simile are excellent examples of the continuing impact of Babylonian attitudes on contemporary Jewish life. Ironically, the conversion court, shown in this book to be the last procedural invention of the Bavli, has been left completely intact, even by rabbinic authorities who no longer consider the Bavli normative. The Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Liberal and Reconstructionist movements disagree vigorously on various aspects of the conversion procedure, including immersion, circumcision, the acceptance of commandments and the model for pre-conversion instructions, yet across confessional streams conversion is carried out under the supervision of a rabbinic court. As such, the Babylonian “invention” makes its presence felt strongly even today. The scab imagery is another important example of the influence of Babylonian perceptions on modern Jewish perceptions of identity:

[...] Holding this worldview, we rejected the convert. “Converts are as hard for Israel as a scab”. This was the way of the Hebrew nation from ancient times to this very day. Thanks to this approach, and only thanks to it, we still exist!

These words were uttered by Menachem Begin. The late Israeli prime minister uses the pluralis

majestatis when referring to an imagined eternal national entity, the Jewish People: an entity with a unified and temporal nature, including all Jews, always and everywhere. We shall see that the scab metaphor is most definitely a Babylonian innovation. Yet, it continues to operate powerfully today. I myself can offer a poignant anecdote in this regard. After lecturing on the metaphor at hand to a Jewish community in London, I was approached by a member of the audience. A convert, the man confided that while he now enjoys excellent relations with his in-laws, he well remembered their reaction when his wife-to-be first brought him home. Encountering the scab metaphor in the Bavli, he said, helped him to understand his in-laws' initial response. If scholarly efforts such as this book can contribute in even a small way to such interpersonal harmony, it would be ample reward.

### Rabbinic Conversion: The Fusion of Biblical, Greco-Roman and Persian Models

This book engages with important internal developments in the rabbinic corpus, and shows how the Bavli dramatically extended the rabbinic model of conversion to Judaism. The developments I set out are constituent components of a broader picture. Rabbinic conversion fused the biblical heritage with models of identity derived from the host Greco-Roman culture. The product, in turn, was further forged in the Bavli within the context of the Iranian culture and Zoroastrianism during the Sassanian dynasty in Babylonia.

The biblical heritage furnished an awareness of “Israel” as distinct from other groups, its self-perception rooted in genealogical affiliation, and the possibility of “partial belonging” or at least the ability to take part in certain rituals through circumcision. Greco-Roman culture contributed two complementary and interrelated social models, informing Jewish self-perception and conceptions of membership. The first of these was a civic model that evolved from the Greek polis to its later forms of citizenship in imperial Roman settings. Such Greco-Roman perceptions seem to supply a framework for considering Jewishness as a membership in an imagined political entity (“Israel”), and understanding belonging to a group

as being subject to its legal system. The second model was cultic in nature. Mystery cults supplied an example of select group that adhered to a secret code of practice. As such, the group was distinguished from society as a whole. They also provided the archetype for conversion in the form of religious rituals of initiation, including elements of purification and scrutiny of the newcomer. In various channels, the examination of which is beyond the scope of this book, these two Greco-Roman models comprise the background for rabbinic concepts of conversion. They contributed to the developing perceptions of belonging—probably already during the Second Temple period—which later played a role in the crafting of the rabbinic model of conversion.

Over the first centuries of the Common Era, as the rabbinic form of Judaism rose to dominance, these civic and cultic models of conversion were fused. The product was a configuration of group membership that was similar to a civil status and which incorporated the latter's legal implications, but was enacted through a channel of acceptance into the group that absorbed cultic elements. This rabbinic model of conversion reached its maturity in the Bavli, where it merged with a new perspective, likely inspired by Iranian models that were characterized by a resentment of the “other” and an accentuation of genealogy and the body as the locus of identity.

### Uncovering Babylonian Perspectives

Scholars have taken a perennial interest in the history of conversion to Judaism. The subject, which has preoccupied Jews across the ideological spectrum at least since the emancipation of Jews in Europe, sheds light on a broader discourse regarding the nature and boundaries of Jewish identity. Braude, Bamberger, and much later Porton, offered detailed surveys of classical rabbinic sources on the topic; Schiffman, Feldman, Goodman, Stern, Cohen, and Hayes discussed classical rabbinic sources; and Sagi, Zohar, and Finkelstein touched on conversion to Judaism in classical rabbinic sources as a background for their examination of later halakhic developments. This abbreviated list—which only partially covers scholars who discuss the topic in monographs—is

complemented by other scholars who approach the topic in wider surveys on rabbinic Judaism or the history of Judaism, such as Emil Schürer, Joachim Jeremias, Gedalyahu Alon, Ephraim E. Urbach among many others. The current volume contributes to this discourse by implementing methods developed by the latest generation of Talmudic scholarship. It draws on the growing recognition of the distinctive nature of the rabbinic culture represented in the Bavli, and affirms the complex character of classical rabbinic literature as a corpus that evolved in two distinct geo-cultural centers. The cradle of rabbinic literature is the Land of Israel, the provenance of tannaitic literature of the first and second centuries, as well as the later amoraic works of the third to the fifth centuries. However, it was by the rivers of Babylon that rabbinic literature ripened into the rich, sophisticated and elaborate text of the Bavli.

During the long period of the formation of the Bavli, the two rabbinic cultures, namely, the Palestinian and the Babylonian were in close contact. These two centers were situated within markedly different political and cultural contexts, however: the formative centuries of the Bavli overlap with the Sassanian dynastic periods in Babylonia, whereas the Palestinian rabbis worked within a Roman framework. Thanks to these distinct political and cultural milieux, the common rabbinic heritage unfolded differently in the two centers. The imprint of this disparity is evident in the extant rabbinic corpora. As products of gradual and complicated processes of transmission and redaction, the texts absorbed the perspectives peculiar to each of these centers.

Beyond this geo-cultural aspect, a chronological factor contributed to the crafting of rabbinic texts. While the textual evolution of the Yerushalmi ceased in the fifth century, the Bavli continued to develop well into the sixth century and perhaps even later. The Bavli thus combines the cultural traditions of tannaim and amora'im from the Land of Israel with those of the Babylonian amora'im, as shaped and presented by later anonymous literary tradents.

Talmudic scholars are well aware of the tortuous trajectories of their core texts, but scholars in other

fields have been less so. In the main, textual analysis of rabbinic literature has not prompted a change in the way historians and scholars of related fields construe the corpus. As such, the identification of Babylonian developments and perspectives has not informed otherwise systematic studies of the history of conversion. Although sources from the Land of Israel are commonly believed to provide a relatively authentic picture of early rabbinic developments in that region, the immense weight of the Bavli in molding scholarly perceptions about conversion has received scant attention. This has led to the standard portrayal of the rabbinic model as the end-product of a single process of transformation, in which the concept of conversion shifted from the Biblical conception of the ger as a sojourner to the later rabbinic model of conversion to Judaism. Such a model stresses the shift from the biblical model to the rabbinic one, thus presuming that the rabbinic model of conversion to Judaism was largely accomplished by the early tannaitic period. In this scenario, the later Babylonian stages of development were overlooked.

This neglect of later Babylonian development actually attests a victory: the success of the Bavli in creating a fictitious chronology, a feature which is revealed and analyzed closely in this book. Moreover, we ourselves are party to this narrative, as the Babylonian tendency to reconstruct the chronology and history of rabbinic law by consistently attributing later developments to earlier authorities from the Land of Israel distorts our historical perspective to this very day. A number of scholars have pointed to the presence of various approaches toward converts and conversion within rabbinic sources, but these findings have not been mapped onto the chronological and geographical matrices of rabbinic Judaism. Aside from the occasional comment on distinctions between rabbinic sources from the Land of Israel and the Bavli, the differences between the two rabbinic corpora have remained largely unexamined. One important exception is the work done by Isaiah Gafni, which notes the rarity of references to converts in the Bavli. In this respect I shall mention as well Gary Porton's survey of the classical sources, which treats

each rabbinic “document”, including the Bavli, as an autonomous entity. Porton followed Neusner’s documentary approach to rabbinic literature, which helped to stimulate recognition of the unique nature of the Bavli. The current volume endorses the singularity of the Bavli, but aims to show that a synoptic study of specific themes, laws, and terms can be more productive in identifying approaches peculiar to each center than isolated investigations of each “document”. Though I am critical here of Porton’s treatment of rabbinic sources, I nonetheless acknowledge his pioneering efforts to apply the social sciences to the topic of conversion in rabbinic literature. My work suggests a Babylonian context for the affinity between negativity toward converts and conversion, and genealogical perceptions of Jewish identity, themes which Porton identified.

This book thus represents an effort to bridge the gap between Talmudic scholarship, which is dedicated to making sense of rabbinic textual dynamics, and historical and conceptual studies of the rabbinic period. I attempt to accomplish this goal in several ways, first and foremost by bringing to light heretofore foundational observations, such as the one below, found nestled in a footnote of a particular Talmudist, and applying them to the specific theme of conversion:

The intensive development [of the text of the Bavli—M. L.] is not only an issue of a more voluminous text or the growing dialectical complexity of the Talmudic discourse. Rather, above all, it is the issue of the development and consolidation of abstract legal concepts typical of the Bavli. In the case of certain concepts and legal conceptions entirely new features and perspectives were introduced [in the Bavli—M. L.], which were completely unknown (at least in terms of their formation and phrasing) in earlier amoraic sources. SUSSMANN, “Yerushalmi Neziqin, Once Again,” 107, N. 201

These intensive developments lie at the heart of this work. In order to lay them bare, I make use of a method employed by Shamma Friedman:

Spelling out the relationship between the component works of the Talmudic corpus, and modes of literary evolution discernible in synoptic parallels will lead to the

identification of institutional and conceptual evolution and developments. FRIEDMAN, *Uncovering Literary Dependencies*.

Hence, I take an eclectic and integrative approach, applying a variety of methods, including the synoptic comparison of sources proposed by Friedman. This synoptic review reveals the Babylonian rephrasing of meimrot (amoraic statements) and views attributed to rabbinic authorities from the Land of Israel. I demonstrate a pattern in which the wording preserved in the Bavli is actually a product of later transmission, reflecting specific Babylonian tendencies. In such cases the Talmud presents not only “Babylonian baraitot”; that is, tannaitic texts that differ from parallel versions found in rabbinic works from the Land of Israel, but also “Babylonian meimrot”, namely, statements attributed to amoraim from the Land of Israel, which appear in a reworked form in the Bavli. In other cases, while the genetic relations between sources cannot be determined precisely, the comparison discloses distinct exegetical and ideological traditions that capture purely Babylonian trends.

I juxtapose the Bavli to a variety of rabbinic compilations from the Land of Israel, including the Mishnah, the Tosefta and tannaitic midrashim, the Yerushalmi and classical amoraic aggadic midrashim, such as Genesis Rabbah, Leviticus Rabbah, and Pesikta de-Rav Kahana. One composition, however, merits particular mention: tractate Gerim. Gerim is one of three extra-canonical tractates that collate seemingly tannaitic legislation on marginal groups: converts (Gerim), slaves (Avadim) and Samaritans (Kutim). Typically, these three tractates were transmitted along with four tractates that deal with ritual objects (Mezuzah, Sefer Torah, Tefillin and Tzitzit). The dating of these minor tractates is not definitive. Analysis of Gerim shows that it is fairly representative of the Palestinian rabbinic milieu. Indeed, the tractate is frequently in line with Palestinian, rather than Babylonian, sources. As well, it preserves materials that are otherwise known only in their Babylonian parallel. However, in these cases too, Gerim differs significantly from the Bavli. In terms of the arrangement of materials



in Gerim, some editorial features may be a reflection of an agenda identified here as Babylonian.

Furthermore, I scrutinize the Bavli itself for the identification of later Babylonian tendencies. By applying methods developed by David Weiss-Halivni and Friedman, I pinpoint cases in which anonymous late-Babylonian additions (as well as certain amoraic comments) introduce concepts and points of view that were not intended in earlier meimrot attributed to sages from the Land of Israel. Following Alex Samely, the anonymous layer of the Talmud is referred to here as “the governing voice” of the Talmud. More helpful than the commonly used term “stam”, Samely’s apt phrase, suggested in the context of the Aramaic Targum, makes direct reference to the literary function of these additions and avoids speculation about imagined redactors, editors, or anonymous contributors.

Additionally, I do literary analyses of large-scale units. This work uncovers the conceptual framework underpinning the structure of larger units, which can also be seen as a literary product of the governing voice of the Talmud. The structure of the material reflects key perceptions, and I will suggest how such a structure specifically serves to constitute the authority of specific texts and views. While the search for implicit agendas in the arrangement of material can be speculative, synoptic comparison of large-scale parallels (long and complex textual units in the Bavli and Yerushalmi that share a chain of materials arranged roughly in the same order) is used here to demonstrate the way distinct Babylonian arrangements of materials serve the unique Babylonian agenda. In the case of these parallels, a well-formulated sugiah, an entire Talmudic discourse, might well already have been transmitted as a sequence in early amoraic stages in the Land of Israel, and later evolved differently in Babylonia and the Land of Israel. Borrowing from Darwinian imagery, I call such cases “the hippo and the whale,” since they can be seen as huge creatures that share significant pieces of DNA, implying common ancestry. The relation between the large-scale parallels in the Bavli and in amoraic texts from the Land of Israel mirrors the relations between the Babylonian baraitot and meimrot and their Palestinian counterparts.

Moreover, identifying large-scale parallels serves to shed light on the common origin of smaller units placed within the larger structure.

Thus, I use a combination of form- and source-criticism to reconstruct the history of rabbinic practices and ideas. This work makes plain the flux inherent to rabbinic conceptual frameworks and the semantic fluidity of terms, phrases, and categories used in the sub-corpora of rabbinic literature. My analysis of the genealogies of terms and metaphors applies methods from the history of concepts to the study of rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity. In this sense this book is inspired by the “linguistic turn” and the “historical turn” as applied to the study of the rabbinic corpus. These approaches have had an immense impact on other areas within Jewish Studies. Moshe Idel’s reflection on the nature of conceptual and textual developments in the study of Jewish mysticism speaks for itself:

Let me dwell on my use of the term *move*. I can scarcely believe in the possibility of pointing out the precise meaning of many passages in ancient and medieval texts, especially those dealing with such complex topics [...] Given the relative indeterminacy of so many crucial passages that inspired later discussions, it is difficult to assess the exact nature of the semantic and conceptual moves. [...] This is why, in my opinion, it is necessary to take into account the broad semantic field of a given word, notion, or conceptual structure both in the earlier literatures and in the more recent ones, which will be able to map all its usages. [...] the *move*—in fact our understanding of the different forms and directions of developments of a particular term—consists of semantic oscillations and fluctuations. Such semantic mutations, as well as continuities, are necessary for a better understanding of each of the stages of a term’s evolution. The cumulative mutations of individual terms provide a clue to a much larger conceptual change.... A later semantic meaning of a given term may mark a development caused by a dramatic change, a rupture with the past [...] but also a gradual development of

possibilities that are inherent in the earlier texts [...]. IDEL, *Absorbing Perfections*, 8–9

The impact of the linguistic turn can be discerned in other works dealing with conversion to Judaism in Late Antiquity, such as those of Shaye Cohen and Martin Goodman. Both demonstrate awareness of the semantic instability of related terms and concepts, and attempt to locate different social categories within historical processes. However, Goodman and Cohen are mostly interested in identifying the shift from the Second Temple to the rabbinic period, whereas I aim to examine the continuous development documented in the rabbinic corpus.

This interest in the rabbinic corpus informed my treatment of Second Temple sources, which I only sporadically address. Nevertheless, the rabbinic perception of converts and conversion is influenced by elements that are the heritage of the Second Temple period. The “history” of rabbinic Judaism began with a move to organize orally transmitted texts; in that sense, written texts of Second Temple period can be considered as fossilized forms of rabbinic “pre-history”. To borrow Idel’s Darwinian-derived terminology, I consider these features to be “wandering molecules” in the “primordial soup” of the Second Temple period from which the later “organism” of rabbinic Judaism evolved. Thus, the lack of key elements of the rabbinic conversion model in Second Temple sources is not seen here as an evidence of a rejection of the concept of conversion, but rather of a phase that preceded the construction in Judaism of the very concept of conversion. Rabbinic depictions of conversion in the Second Temple period are thus regarded with suspicion, following studies that read rabbinic deliberations on Second Temple rituals as imagined reconstructions of the past.

Since my work supports research that challenges assumptions concerning a strong continuity between Second Temple literature and the rabbinic corpus, I shall note a seemingly contradictory phenomenon. In some cases the separatist tendencies I identify here as Babylonian may be traced to sources from the Second Temple period; in such cases the comparison of the Bavli to Palestinian rabbinic sources may suggest that these Babylonian tendencies were a revival of, or a return to,

approaches that were known in the Second Temple period but were silenced or suppressed in the tannaitic period and in amoraic sources from the Land of Israel. However, when such tendencies reappear in the Bavli, they have already taken on a new form, and have been shaped as part of the rabbinic conceptual grid of categories.

### Combining Analysis of Various Talmudic Genres

My inquiry considers both legal and aggadic material, and takes into account laws, legal sugiot, biblical exegesis (midrashim) of laws and lore, exegetical narratives,<sup>34</sup> and rabbinic narratives. The approach exposes a common discourse that cuts across the genres and chronological layers of the Bavli. One such feature is body imagery. The hand as a signifier of the power of the sages over the conversion procedure appears in both the Babylonian version of the story about Hillel and Shammai, where the latter is described as pushing the convert with his measuring rod, and in legal deliberations using figurative language to convey the idea that conversion “is not in the hand” of the convert. The Talmud’s preoccupation with the skin as a symbolic carrier of the liminal boundary of identity emerges in the stipulation to excise all shreds from the foreskin of a convert, and in the use of the scab metaphor. These examples point to commonalities in the Babylonian discourse found across genres and apparently distinct chronological layers of the text. The Babylonian worldview, with its unique imagery and language, penetrates these variegated texts and unites them.

This common discursive thread is also evident in the way in which the Bavli deals with the Bible. I am referring here to anachronistic representations of biblical figures in later Babylonian models of conversion, and to the use of biblical verses to support Babylonian innovations. Yet the thread does not end there. Indeed, in a much deeper move, the Bavli identifies biblical discursive patterns that are actually a reflection of its own discourse: The Bavli emphasizes the use of different biblical vocabulary for converts and Israelites, a feature I identify as typical of the Bavli’s own language and denote as the “semantic isolation” of converts.

## The Textuality of the Bavli

Alongside the theme of conversion, this book tackles the textuality of the Bavli, and applies the fruits of textual Talmudic studies. First and foremost the textual process reveals itself to be markedly evolutionary. Babylonian inventions, in which the Talmud introduces entirely new terms, images, concepts, institutions or legislation, are rare. By and large, the innovations at hand were the product of delicate and complicated processes of transmission, reworking, reshaping and rearrangement of earlier material, images and laws. They reflect minute modifications, subtle conceptual shifts, and sophisticated reframing of elements that were already present in the tannaitic or Palestinian amoraic literature. Babylonian scholars transformed legal conceptualizations and restructured entire discourses on particular themes. They reshuffled and reconceived laws, ideas and metaphors, and in the process created a novel perspective. These processes involved both semantic and textual mutations, in which phrases and images took on new meanings and halakhic legislation as well as exegetical speculation were reworked to conform to emerging perceptions.

The Bavli brought together elements that were already known in the Land of Israel and integrated them into one textual or conceptual framework. Moreover, ideas that were marginal among earlier rabbis were transformed by the Bavli into normative approaches, and thus gained prominence in later rabbinic literature. “Dominantization”, a term borrowed from musicology, describes the process by which the Talmud transformed such subaltern ideas into prevailing ones. Thus, terms and concepts on the margins of rabbinic literature from the Land of Israel were reconfigured and shifted to the center of the Babylonian conceptualization of conversion.

The Babylonian chronological perspective is an important by-product of the evolutionary nature of these textual developments and a key aspect of such Babylonian dominantization. The Bavli sets forth its innovations as transmissions or interpretations of ancient traditions. It consistently attributes—explicitly or implicitly—emerging stances to the founding figures of rabbinic Judaism

who lived in the Land of Israel in the first three centuries of the Common Era, tannaim or early amoraim alike. Yet transformative legal and theological positions are not state outright. Instead, earlier materials are redesigned to craft a new historical record in which the teaching of earlier sages conforms to that of the later Babylonian rabbis. Systematically attributing views, institutions and even terms to earlier authorities, the Bavli creates the impression of intergenerational continuity, obscuring the extent of its innovation and thereby enhancing its authority. By this mechanism, the Bavli constructs (or enabled the later construction of) a historical narrative about the development of the laws of conversion which influenced not only common beliefs about the history of conversion, but also informed later scholarly assumptions about the constancy of both the theory and practice of conversion during the rabbinic period.

The invention of the conversion court showcases the creation of the Babylonian chronological perspective. We would look in vain for a single reference to a conversion court in the rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity, apart from sources documented in the Bavli. However, this fact would easily escape the notice of the casual reader. The Bavli presents the institution of a conversion court in all chronological layers. It attributes the institution to the second-century tanna Rabbi Yehudah and reads it into a meimra ascribed to the third-century Palestinian amora Rabbi Yohanan. It cites Rav Huna and Rav Sheshet, Babylonian amoraim of the third to the fourth centuries, as explicitly suggesting this court. In formulating this anachronistic account of the development of the law, the Bavli roots the conversion court in the authority of earlier generations. Yet this move was not some sort of devious manipulation. In a hermeneutic culture, new interpretations and even rephrasing of old material are perceived as faithful representations and transmissions of the heritage. And, while the Bavli does not make a deliberate effort to grant authority to later innovations, the above-described process does serve this goal. This relates to the wider issue of intentionality behind the textual developments surveyed in this book.

The Bavli speaks in a composite voice of centuries of textual evolution. It is not the voice of a late redactor, purposefully reworking the structure of the text and its contents to fit his agenda. As products of an evolutionary process the Babylonian inventions and innovations mirror a variety of minor and independent changes. Even the creation of a false sense of chronology ought to be seen as the outcome of a naïve perception of the history of conversion, because the later reality was assumed to stem from earlier traditions, and thus was gradually retrojected onto earlier unstable texts through a prolonged process of transmission and reorganization of sources. Unlike the text of the Mishnah, the baraitot and meimrot were not fixed and canonized. These texts were open to minor emendations reflecting the agenda of the later Babylonian amoraim, Talmudic redactors, and even later transmission agents. Babylonian scholars presented themselves, and I believe also perceived themselves, as accepting the authority of earlier generations and preserving their words and views. Through continuous creative and fluid transmission of sources and traditions they interpolated the later Babylonian agenda into the words of earlier strata.

Though many of the aforementioned changes reflect a common agenda, they were not redacted into one stable and fully consistent text. The Bavli was not produced by redactors who methodically pursued an agenda. As such, it contains multiple ruptures and tensions. We find evidence of this within the Babylonian innovations themselves as well as in the Babylonian tendency to attribute these points of variation to earlier generations. Within the diffusive process of textual evolution, the degree of penetration of novel perspectives into earlier texts changes constantly. I identify two distinct yet complementary methods of presenting novel Babylonian tendencies, both of which seem to result in discrepancies within the Babylonian chronological perspective. First, the Bavli presents its own version of the words of tannaim or early Palestinian amoraim; second, with regard to the same texts, the governing voice of the Talmud adds explanations to show that the revised texts are part of a new conceptualization. The first method pertains to the power of later authorities to

intervene in earlier texts, while the second method creates a façade of early and authentic traditions which can only be interpreted by the later governing voice of the Talmud. Such use of two apparently contradictory methods might give pause for thought. The nature of the Bavli itself, however, clarifies this methodological move. As a text, the Bavli took on a canonical status without being subjected to formal canonization and redaction. Novel Babylonian perspectives penetrated the text through multiple voices, with no discernable harmonization among them.

Evolving as the Bavli did, that is to say, haphazardly, the “Babylonian picture” is somewhat patchy. Within the eclectic Talmudic corpus, certain sources mitigate the prevailing tendencies. Hence, the Bavli occasionally preserved views that run counter to its dominant trends, and created discrepancies in the chronological perspective. In fact, this very inconsistency was instrumental in the process of dominantization. It contributes to the presentation of the Talmud as a multilayered text, one that reflects the preservation and application of authentic and well-established traditions. The multilayered presentation of the Bavli contains an implied chronology suggested by the language, style and form of various materials. The Talmud makes use of different terminology to mark distinctive chronological layers and assumes an authorial hierarchy between later and earlier sources. This textual situation invites modern “archeological” textual excavation, yet has important rhetorical functions as well. The presentation of distinct layers of tannaitic, amoraic, and the later governing voice of the Talmud grants authenticity and authority to specific ideas (attributed to early sages), and conveys the sense that the entire rabbinic project is one of continuity. As such, we ought to read the Talmud not as a source that accidentally preserved different chronological layers, but rather as one that constituted a set of assumptions and perceptions of authority through the specific sense of chronology implied in the text.

The creation of a chronological perspective is part of a wider project through which the Bavli conveys its later views. Specifically, it uses a “rhetoric of the obvious” to introduce new perceptions into the

wording of earlier sources. We see this, for instance, when a Babylonian amora presumes that an earlier text refers to the notion of a conversion court. This presumption colors the Babylonian view as accepted and authoritative, and bestows upon it a sense of authenticity. The attribution of the later innovations to earlier periods elides their evolutionary nature by implying that rabbinic laws and institutions emerged fully fashioned, rather than unfolding over time. It further contributes to the (inaccurate) perception of a rapid fire rabbinic renovation of Judaism after the destruction of the Second Temple. Just as the procedure of conversion is a social drama that reduces a long social process to a single event, the Bavli, through continuous attribution of later views and concepts to earlier generations, crafted a (distorted) chronology that turns the prolonged rabbinic conversion of Judaism into a revolution carried out by early authorities.

### From Textual Analysis to Historical Observations

My gaze in this book is primarily on literary developments. In discussing missionary traditions, for instance, I do not join the historical debate on whether or not Judaism was a missionary religion in the rabbinic period. Taking a different tack, I inquire as to whether or not rabbinic sources present missionary efforts among the nations as an ideal. I am cognizant of the futility of constructing a history of actual practices on the basis of speculative rabbinic reflections about the acts of Biblical heroes. Yet, while the specific textuality of rabbinic sources does not yield an accurate chronology of social and institutional developments, they nonetheless bear historical significance; they convey the story of conceptual and institutional changes of the *longue durée*.

One argument against the historicity of rabbinic textual developments ought to be addressed here. The past two decades have seen scholarship alternate between two interpretative models in accounting for the “Babylonian perspective”. The first of these recognizes the historical significance of textual developments, and hence locates the source of distinction in the “external” host culture, namely, the context of Iranian and Zoroastrian trends typical of the Sassanian dynasty. The second model

stresses the “internal” textual context, arguing that the dynamics of the Babylonian Talmudic “language-game” dictated legal, conceptual, and textual developments. An extreme version of the latter view holds that the unique Babylonian perspective is nothing more than the outcome of the Talmudic tendency toward generalization, abstraction, and clear-cut definitions. Only a shift in modes of presentation, it should not be seen as pointing to any actual change. Following this line of thinking, no specific ideology or cultural context was responsible for the laws related to converts and conversion. One might find support for such a view below, in that many Babylonian textual developments I identify have common discursive modes, typical of the style and language of the Bavli. They reflect regular textual and conceptual frameworks and processes, such as the application of techniques of legal formalism, the frequent use of abstractions, the sharpening of distinctions, and an intensification of the use of a dialectic tone. Tending strongly toward definitional precision, the Bavli always classifies a law as either biblical or rabbinic.

My approach combines these two models. In my view, textual developments ought not to be assessed exclusively as expressions of mere “internal” legal and textual formalisms, on the one hand, or as reflections of “external” historical cultural contexts, on the other. Scholastic deliberations are not a kind of hermetic discourse, but rather a means through which social, cultural, and ideological perspectives are played out. Babylonian legal and textual developments follow certain rules and formal patterns, but they do not hew to a line leading to an inevitable legal conclusion. Formalism is not a neutral exercise that solely reflects the application of hermeneutic and judicial conventions, legal and textual; it is also a creative act. Let us take, for example, a Babylonian decision to label a specific law as biblical. One could argue that such a decision merely reflects a general Babylonian tendency to classify each and every detail in the halakhic system as biblical or rabbinic. However, such a decision is best understood in light of the conceptual developments that delimit its ambit. The decision, in fact, simultaneously mirrors and

constitutes the validity and importance of the law, and is part of a much wider textual, conceptual and even historical development.

Moreover, the interplay between scholastic formalism and social and cultural development may be bi-directional. Let us consider the “scab” metaphor discussed in Chapter 5. The textual developments identified in this case were correctly defined as “anachronistic”. The late governing voice of the Talmud “cloned” the phrase and systematically associated it with early authorities. However, earlier scholars were wrong in referring to this move as “merely anachronistic”, implying that as it is not an authentic documentation of early rabbinic ideas, it lacks import. The textual work of later generations creates a new textual setting, which both reckons with new conceptual and social agents, and itself functions from then on as a historical agent, influencing later Talmudic audiences. This was precisely the case for the conversion court, where a textual construct became historical reality. Crucially, this transformation from construct to reality took place over time, continuing after the formation of the Bavli. Some tendencies were further intensified by the geonim of Babylonia or by medieval rabbis, and others ascended so gradually that their validity was not yet accepted at the close of the first millennium. Thus a term coined in the Bavli became a concrete historical reality for medieval and modern Jews. Indeed, in some cases we may trace the process by which the assumptions conveyed in Babylonian rhetorical strategies, such as “the rhetoric of the obvious”, became actual legal and social differentiations only in post-Talmudic legislation.

I have signalled two seemingly contradictory phenomena in geonic literature, namely, intensification of tendencies found in the Bavli on one hand, and examples of their gradual and not-yet-fully-accomplished acceptance, on the other. The presence of both may be related to the puzzling nature of the Bavli as a canonical text, which, however, never went through a process of institutionalized redaction or sealing. Under such conditions a complicated situation may have arisen: the Bavli, indeed, provides a “vector” of change, a tendency that is not fully realized within the scope of the Bavli itself. Rather, later agents and

commentators of the Bavli such as the geonim and medieval authorities brought it to fruition, stabilizing and formalizing it. Yet, since the tendency did not come to completion in the Bavli, these later cultural agents may also preserve it in its unripened model. A glance at the history of the reception of the Bavli will help to clarify the point. The Bavli, which became the most canonical work of the rabbinic corpora, never underwent an official stage of canonization. It was never sealed and stabilized—wholly atypical for canonical texts. The situation in which later authorities bring tendencies of the Bavli into realization and at the same time preserve hints of their earlier stages stems from the nature of the Bavli as a canon that was never officially canonized.

Geonic, that is, post-Talmudic developments, may be seen as legal and social realizations of Talmudic rhetoric, scholastic deliberations, and conceptual thinking. This kind of dynamic between the Geonim and the Bavli may also explain the relation between the Talmud and the Mishnah. In this vein, we might think of the developments in the Bavli as a flowering of conceptual changes that began in the mishnaic period. A good example of such change is the use of the term “goy” to mark the identity of an individual, which Rosen-Zvi and Ophir have argued is a mishnaic innovation.

When thinking of rabbinic textual and conceptual developments as active agents of later historical developments, our gaze is best directed broadly, beyond particular terms and concepts. The Babylonian discursive models, including the tendency toward clear-cut legal definitions and abstraction, and the dialectical negation of ideas may be in themselves a historical factor. The binary nature of halakhic thinking as developed and intensified in the Bavli became an agent in subsequent historical developments, shaping social structures and hierarchies, and crafting ideas and institutions that have bearing on converts and conversion. Babylonian discursive models have thus contoured Jewish perceptions of a clear-cut demarcation of Jewish identity.

### The Bavli’s Conceptual Network

The phenomena presented in this book can be accounted for in multiple ways, and this fact calls

for some comment. Oftentimes, novel Babylonian perspectives on the theme of conversion go hand-in-hand with new Babylonian representations of related issues. Consider, for instance, the intense application of the biblical/rabbinic dichotomy for the classification of laws. In Chapter 8 I show how the Bavli marks its legal understanding of the newborn metaphor with the authority of a biblical dictum rather than a rabbinic one. This is a fascinating moment in which two distinct Babylonian textual developments merge. The tendency to intensify the use of the biblical/rabbinic dichotomy fuses with Babylonian views concerning conversion. The consequence is the rise of a new network of concepts, in which different novel Babylonian perspectives cohere: each is novel unto itself, and each supports the others. The Bavli not only promotes its agenda concerning conversion by claiming the latter's biblical authority, it also constitutes the authority of the rabbis by making the biblical/rabbinic dichotomy a core classificatory feature of Jewish law. A further example of this coupling is the "conversion" of missionary scenes into episodes of intra-Jewish preaching of rabbinic teachings or rabbinic authority. In Chapter 6, I present this phenomenon as a product of the innovative Babylonian perception of conversion, but at the same time it bespeaks a new emphasis on the role of the sages. The two explanations, that is, deterrence from conversion, on the one hand, and the increasing authority of the sages, on the other, are not mutually exclusive. Each textual phenomenon is an encounter of various tendencies, and may express multiple developments. When Babylonian scholars replaced the image of Abraham preaching to the nations with the image of a scholar educating a Jew, they revealed both their view of the role of rabbis in Jewish society and their disapproval of preaching to non-Jews. The Babylonian eschatology in which converts are not considered part of the multitude of Israel upon which the Shekhinah will rest is a further illustration of this phenomenon. As I demonstrate in Chapter 5, this view reflects a melding of Babylonian tendencies concerning conversion and procreation. Babylonian sources on abortion use language recalling that of discussions on conversion—language which is absent in the Palestinian sources. Showing a web-like structure,

the meaning of one Babylonian innovation is anchored in the development of other Babylonian innovations in other realms. Hence, the "novel Babylonian perspective" is a product of the emergence of a new Babylonian network of concepts. <>

[Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70–132 CE](#) edited by Joshua Schwartz and Peter J. Tomson [Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum Ad Novum Testamentum, Brill, 9789004349865]

Excerpt:

### A Conference on 'Yavne'

In January 2015, scholars from Israel, Europe, and the United States met at Bar Ilan University, Ramat-Gan, Israel for a conference entitled 'Yavne Revisited: The Historical Rabbis and the Rabbis of History'. It was a continuation of a conference held in Brussels in 2011 whose papers were published two years later in Tomson and Schwartz, *Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: How to Write Their History*. That conference was based on the premise that the study of Judaism and Christianity as two fundamentally different entities is inadequate and incorrect. Instead, we postulated a 'shared history' which implies that the separation between the two religions was not the result of 'essential' theological differences, but caused by external factors such as wars and in particular the three Jewish revolts against the Romans, their merciless repression and the need to react and respond to the Roman occupation. This first volume was also part of the larger project, 'Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries', which aims to offer an account of the shared history of Judaism and Christianity in the first two centuries CE.

The 2015 conference, as also the resultant volume, was to zoom in on one delimited period during those centuries. While it is generally understood that the third revolt, the Bar Kokhba War, marks a decisive step towards the definitive rupture of Christianity from Judaism, symptoms of this development begin to be seen in the early second century. Reliable sources pertaining to the period are very scarce, but nevertheless, our literary

sources report some consequential events in this respect. Indeed, ever since Heinrich Graetz's majestic conception, many scholars of Judaism have been viewing the 'Yavne generation' as the formative period of classic rabbinic Judaism – Yavne or Jamnia being the center of the rabbinic movement reported to have emerged in that period.

As indicated by the title of the conference, the focus was to be on the rabbinic perspective in describing the period. But what does rabbinic literature describe? Does it describe a historical Yavne period at all – or for that matter, one related to a physical settlement entity of Yavne – or does it cherish a literary concept of 'Yavne' and of a related period? Is this to do with history or with rhetoric? Here, scholarship is deeply divided and runs the gamut from 'Yavne believers' to 'Yavne skeptics' or, using other terms, from 'maximalists' to 'minimalists'. To tell the truth, the debate also occupied our minds as editors considering how we are to write the history of Jews and Christians in the first two centuries. Thus we became aware that it would be both an inevitable task and an attractive challenge to invite learned colleagues and stage an exchange of expert views on the period.

### Debate and Polemics

It is an accepted axiom that debate is a basic condition for the advance of science and scholarship. Whether one formulates it with Popper as the necessary confrontation between theoretical hypotheses and empirical observations, or with Kuhn as the inevitable accumulation of observations anomalous to the reigning paradigm until the latter has to be replaced by a more adequate one' – scholarship advances through the clash of observations and interpretations.

This necessary condition, however, must be distinguished from the polemics between schools and scholars that are also a fact of life. Here, we have to take a sociological view on ourselves as scholars, or rather a socio-psychological and even an ethological view. Often, disputes between scholars and schools are not just over discoveries, interpretations, or, worse, methods, but in addition, to a larger or a smaller extent, over power. Given

that available research funds must be distributed on the basis of peer review and autonomous budgeting, an amount of power struggle is inevitable as well. Also, it certainly is a lesser evil compared with state-governed, top-down funding systems, where scholarly power struggles are equally endemic but much more difficult to identify. As it is, scholarship of Judaism has recently gone through a period of intense polemics during which it has often been difficult to distinguish at all between the actual scholarly debate at hand and the underlying struggle over power and influence.

Therefore, let us step aside for a moment, taking an ethological view on us scholars with the leading Dutch-American primatologist Frans de Waal and his *The Bonobo and the Atheist: In Search of Humanism Among the Primates*. Having studied apes and monkeys all his professional life, De Waal writes that these, like us humans, 'strive for power, enjoy sex, want security and affection, kill over territory, and value trust and cooperation'. Yes, we do have computers and airplanes, but our psychological makeup remains that of social primates. De Waal's book is about the zoological basis of morality in primates and other mammals and about morality's relationship with religion. Rejecting what he calls the 'religion bashing' of 'neo-atheism', de Waal maintains that although religion is not the basis of morality, it is nevertheless basic to the existence of us human primates. Quoting the sociologist Emile Durkheim, he emphasizes the bonding power of religious practice consisting in collective rituals, music, and singing. In contrast, science is not congenial to human nature:

Science is an artificial, contrived achievement, whereas religion comes as easily to us as walking or breathing. ... By all accounts, science is only a few thousand years old, hence it appeared extremely late in human history. ... Religion has always been with us and is unlikely to ever go away, since it is part of our social skin. Science is rather like a coat that we have recently bought. We always risk losing it or throwing it away. [This also goes for us scientists:] ... Science is also often, like religion, based on what we want to believe. Scientists are human, and humans



are driven by ... 'confirmation biases' (we love evidence that supports our view) and 'disconfirmation biases' (we disparage evidence that undermines our view).

Obviously, scholars of early Judaism and Christianity are not an exception in any way. Such social dynamics and territorial rivalries as we may be going through in our fields of study are easier to see through in the mirror of our closest zoological relatives, primates. Then we may also be encouraged to draw inspiration from the central message of de Waal's book: empathy appears to be a basic quality of our species. And empathy, we believe, is basic to the higher scholarly quality of knowing ourselves and our limitations. Equipped with this dual insight let us carry on with the debate.

### A Volume on 'the Interbellum'

During the period under study, the shared yet distinct histories of 'Jews' and 'Christians' – the terminology is far from unequivocal as regards this period – functioned within various overarching frameworks. One is the concrete material reality of the time. Jews and Christians lived in villages and cities and had everyday lives formed by the material realities in which they live. Some of this revolved around local events and conditions and was particular to Jews, Christians, or both. Another general framework is external, revolving around developments in government and/or policies of rulers. Emperors, legates, governors, imperial policy and authority, high and low had their influence on the history of Palestine during the Yavne era. The lives of Jews, Christians and pagans in village, town and city were much effected by this outside world and its policies. Within these general frameworks, Jewish and Christian communities lived their own lives and created their literary sources, incorporating their particular views on the period.

Thus in line with the methodology set forth in our previous conference volume, we invited experts familiar with the various bodies of sources relevant to our two centuries of history: Roman, Jewish, and Christian literary sources, supplemented and calibrated by archaeology and epigraphy. The widening of the horizon implied in this methodology caused questions to arise. How do interpretations

based on these various sources reflect on the 'Yavne period'? Do they justify speaking of such a period at all? And if they do not, does this mean that there were no decisive events bearing on the shared history of Jew's and Christians? In preparing the volume, we became aware that the premise from which we had departed could not do justice to the evidence. In order for the above queries to be phrased as open questions, we decided to opt for a less rabbinic-centric title to the volume: 'Jews and Christians in the First and Second Centuries: The Interbellum 70-132 CE.

Further reasons for adopting this title are our basic intuitions, voiced in our previous volume, that the impact of the three revolts was a major cause in shaping the history of these decades, and that, seen from the perspective of Roman Judaea, the roughly 60 years between the first and the last revolt were actually an interbellum, an 'intermission between wars'. Not only the ancient rabbis saw continuity between the first and the last revolt (see below), but also modern historiographers. We tend to agree with Martin Goodman in viewing direct strategic continuities in Roman policy towards the Jews over the course of the period, as also with William Horbury in positing that Trajan's war with the Jews must be studied together with Hadrian's to start with.'

Writing in the thick of history runs the risk of being overtaken by ongoing events. Nevertheless, at this point in time, the analogy between the Judean Interbellum (70-132 CE) and the one between the two World Wars (1918–1939) still strikes us as particularly apposite. In multiple ways, World War I and its aftermath related to the birth of Fascism and Nazism and to the outbreak of the Russian revolution. The forces unleashed by these movements piled up fuel for World War ii. And in combination, the two wars resulted, among many other things, in a worldwide repartition of power both at the level of international relations and of civil society.

Obviously, the studies presented at the conference and included in the volume did and do not have to agree with or reflect the paradigm or methodologies of the 'shared history' and the parting of the ways due to external factors such as

wars. There are even those who explicitly disagree and seek to prove just the opposite. The project described above is still very much research in progress and the present studies interact and interface with that project but some studies go their own different ways and perhaps they too will result in a finer resolution of our paradigm. They certainly require re-thinking of certain conclusions.

### Presenting the Volume

The present volume basically reproduces the format of the conference, with minor changes. Thus, the articles are divided into five sections reflecting various complementary lines of approach in studying Yavne and the Interbellum: i. Archaeology; ii. The Roman Perspective; iii. Historiography; iv. Developments during the Interbellum; v. The Import of Literary Sources.

An important detail, though tangential to the volume's theme, concerns the dates of the Bar Kokhba Revolt. Werner Eck has established that the Revolt must have lasted until the early months of 136 CE. We accept this dating and use it in the volume, though leaving some latitude to use the 'old' dating where appropriate.

Archaeology represents the 'hard evidence'. Archaeology puts the words into an historical and social context. Unfortunately, archaeology is often just as inscrutable and fragmentary as literary evidence. What does it mean? There is never any one single answer. However, studying the literary traditions in the absence of archaeology and material culture is a sure-fire prescription for a distorted view.

Thus, the volume opens with the general archaeological overview of Boaz Zissu who addresses several aspects of Interbellum rural Judaea and provides an archaeological context of Yavne and its environs. Zissu examines the scope of physical damage to Judaea as a result of the Great Revolt, the changes introduced by the Roman administration which would have impacted on the area, and the sources relative to recovery after that war, showing that there was a good deal of continuity. The core of the overview is a depiction of the archaeological record of the Jewish population of Judaea at the time and a description of their settlements and settlement history. Zissu

lays out the framework for the understanding of the 'life story' of Yavne.

Next, Eyal Baruch examines the interface between the archaeological record during the Yavne period and afterwards and rabbinic literature on one aspect of material culture, i.e. the rabbinic *traklin* and the Roman *triclinium*. Baruch shows the rather unusual phenomenon of the Roman period archaeology of the *triclinium* being discarded by the rabbis and apparently in Jewish society in general, while the *triclinium* ceremonies were passed through a rabbinic filter and then adopted. The message of the external was not in keeping with the mores of Jewish society while the internal message of *triclinium-traklin* was.

Joshua Schwartz then examines the very concept of the title of the period, the 'Yavne generation'. Was Yavne the real center of Jewish life or perhaps were there more worthy candidates for the appellation, such as Lod? Should it have been the 'Lod generation'? Or perhaps both place names reflect the nature of the times, but if so why did the Yavne generation survive into posterity? The author, as a counterpoint somewhat to Zissu's rural perspective, also examines the urban fabric of both sites in terms of what they could have offered as leadership centers.

As mentioned above, Judaea during the Interbellum does not function in a vacuum, but rather within the framework of the Roman Empire and Roman policy towards its provinces in the East and especially towards those who revolted and fought against the Empire. This brings us to the second division of the book, 'The Roman Perspective'. As was the case regarding the archaeology of Judaea, things are not always simple to understand regarding the Land of Israel and the Roman Empire and especially the status of Judaea as part of the Empire and the rank and commission of its administrators. This was apparently also the case in the ancient sources in which the status of Judaea was hard to discern. The new post-War of Destruction administrative reality, however, put an end to the situation that had resulted from a long development until then.

Werner Eck, in the first study in this section, shows that a *conventus* system was instituted in Judaea

which attests to the high degree to which the organization and internal structure of Judaea approached those of a normal Roman province. Below the top level of administration, Rome did not implement a uniform structure in all its provinces, neither in the first and second centuries, nor during late Antiquity. What it did do consistently, however, was to ensure that its hegemony was not undermined by any other factors. Former enemies were by no means exterminated, but Rome certainly never gave the opportunity to rebuild a new power base from which it would be possible to threaten Roman supremacy. This consideration applies equally to Yavne and whatever it was that was allowed to develop there.

Benjamin Isaac also examines the essential elements of Roman rule in Judaea after 70 and throughout the Interbellum. Judaea – Syria Palaestina, as a province, was governed, according to Isaac, like other provinces with similar status, a framework that had very little hierarchy below the level of the governor and the procurator. The organization that existed was a territorial one, not a vertical hierarchy. Originally this was based on a few cities and a number of districts that were not subject to the jurisdiction of a city, but commonly named after a larger settlement that served as an administrative centre. In addition there were royal, later imperial estates that continued to exist as such for many centuries. Also, Isaac cautiously suggests that a conceptual framework for a specific status of the Jewish leadership may be found in some of the elements of the provincial councils, attested to in this period. This would then not have been part of the provincial government, but a separate body that could speak and act on behalf of the Jewish population in Judaea – Syria Palaestina.

Marco Rizzi continues within a Roman framework but adds Jews and Christians to the discussion. Rizzi attempts to shed some light on the ‘parting of the ways’ between Jews and Christians before the last Jewish revolt against Rome in 132-136 CE. He proposes that the arrest, the imprisonment and finally the death of Ignatius of Antioch can be explained by placing these events against the backdrop of the Jewish Diaspora revolt of the years 115-117 CE and, in particular, the period of

Trajan’s stay in Antioch based on information in the Chronography of John Malalas.

Francesco Ziosi moves from Trajan to Hadrian and argues that Hadrian had a political and cultural agenda for the eastern part of his Empire which of course impacted on Judaea. Politically, he sought to stabilize the East, and culturally, to foster Hellenization. Hadrian’s policies towards Jerusalem were part of this agenda. Thus, while Hadrian’s activities in the East might have been perceived positively at first by the Jewish community, his Jerusalem policy, aiming to rebuild Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina, must have caused great disappointment. All of these developments help us to understand the shift in Jewish sources which at first portray Hadrian in a neutral or even positive form and then switch course to negative portrayals.

Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, in the last study in this division, examines the liminal situation of Jewish society in the land of Israel from the destruction of the second Temple until the establishment of the Yavne center circa 70-85/90 CE. These years were critical for the Jewish population in the Land of Israel due both to the devastating shock of their losing the war and the Temple, and their lack of national leadership. He emphasizes the uniqueness of Roman policy in Palestine, which in his estimation differed from that in other provinces. Having examined Roman policy towards the Jewish population from the onset of the Great Revolt to the period after the revolt, Rosenfeld concludes on a continuation and enhancement of the policy that had been in effect during the war.

Earlier we mentioned that the original thrust of the conference was to evaluate the relevance of rabbinic literature to the period. Before it is possible to determine what this literature can contribute it is necessary to determine if it can be trusted. Does rabbinic literature, that of the Interbellum as well as that from afterwards, contain history? Can it be accessed? Thus, questions of historiography serve as the topic of the third section of the book.

David Levine suggests that evaluations of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 found in rabbinic literature differed not only by religious ideology, social position, and political persuasion, but from a

chronological vantage point as well. The impact and consequences of 70 were viewed more moderately by the responses – in action or writing – between the wars, but gained a different, harsher perspective after the failure of Bar Kokhba. 70 is perceived as epoch-making after 135. In the decades immediately after 70, continuities were stressed and the destruction of Jerusalem was regarded as temporary. After 135, two complementary developments can be identified. The destruction of the Temple had come to be seen as defining a new, more permanent reality, and the failures and fallout of the Jewish revolts during these decades (70, 117, 135 CE) are taken as a sequence inaugurating this post-Temple consciousness.

While Yavne of the Interbellum is a Tannaic-period phenomenon, it is mentioned also in later rabbinic literature. How did the Talmud Yerushalmi see Yavne? It was edited several centuries after the first three generations of Tannaim associated with Yavne in rabbinic sources. The talmudic editors – and the Amoraim before them – looked at Yavne from retrospect. Catherine Hezser traces the reception history of Yavne in the Yerushalmi: what kind of Yavne-related traditions did its editors preserve and how did they integrate them into their sugyot? How was Yavne remembered in post-Yavnean times, when the Palestinian rabbinic movement expanded to other regions and became more established? The author shows how the majority of references to Yavne in the Yerushalmi are based on Tannaic traditions which are integrated into and made subservient to the thematic discussions of the respective sugyot. Yerushalmi editors – and probably Amoraic tradents before them – were interested in halakhic traditions of Yavnean rabbis rather than in the settings and circumstances of Yavnean teaching. For the late antique rabbis of the Yerushalmi, ‘Yavne’ stood for the first three generations of Tannaim and the second generation of R. Gamliel II and his colleague-friends in particular. Thus, the Yerushalmi does not relate to what might have taken place but rather to a view of what Yavne should have been in a legal sense and in view of the interests of the Amoraim.

Rabbinic literature is literature before it can even be considered as history, if at all. Moshe Simon-Shoshan presents a study of the tradition of the Deposition of Rabban Gamliel, one of the key texts of what has of late become known as the ‘Yavne Cycle’. Firstly he lays out a framework for understanding the range of possible modes of transmission of stories, contrasting between ‘performative’ and ‘textual’ modes of transmission. He then explores more deeply the performative process through which the Deposition tradition was developed and transmitted. He attempts to reconstruct the process through which the tradition of the deposition of Rabban Gamliel developed, from its earliest sources to the final texts we find in the Talmuds.

What actually ‘happened’ during the Yavne period? We probably will never really know, but the study of some of the sources gives us an indication regarding possible developments then, the subject of our fourth division. Christine Hayes seeks to determine whether the unique Tannaic perspective on the Noahide commandments came into being at the time of the redaction of the Tosefta, third century, or whether it might date to an earlier Tannaic period – the Yavne era of the late first to early second century CE. After examining the development of these laws and traditions in their literary, legal and philosophic contexts, the author postulates that while the classic literary formulation of Noahide Commandments as positivistic laws that distinguish Israelites and Gentiles may date to the third century, the central ideas that inform its composition were in all likelihood implicated in the very formation of the late first century E of the rabbinic movement, i.e. the Yavne period.

Jews and Gentiles were just one aspect of life then. What about internal Jewish life? The role of Yavne in the development of rabbinic prayer, specifically the Amida or Shemone Esrei (‘Eighteen Benedictions’), is universally recognized, although the nature and extent of this role have long been disputed. Differences of opinion range far and wide, from minimalists to maximalists. Was Yavne merely the final stage of the editing process that began at some time in the Second Temple period, or was this era the specific time and place in which

the Amida was actually conceived and composed? Lee I. Levine tries to show that it seems most likely that the first attempts to formulate fixed prayer took place in Yavne. The impressive number of sources connecting Yavnean sages to the creation of the Amida (as well as other liturgical innovations) makes a compelling case for assuming a modicum of historicity, certainly in general terms if not in all particulars, concerning the sages' role in the development of this prayer, even in the absence of external corroborating evidence.

Next, James Carleton-Paget addresses the question of the effect of the revolts upon Jewish-Christian separation, one of the issues that lay at the very center of interest of the conference and the larger project described above. He argues that deriving any clear conclusions from the revolts about Jewish-Christian separation is difficult but that the balance of evidence supports a view that sees them as playing a much less significant part in what is a complex tale. Carleton-Paget takes issue with the 'separatism through revolt' school which undercut the view that Christians and Jews moved apart because of their ideological differences and claims that without the revolts, Jews and Christians might not have separated to the degree that they did, or that separation would have been a slower process.

Shaye J.D. Cohen, in an essay not read at the conference which he graciously agreed to reprint in the volume, also deals with the 'the separation of Christianity from Judaism' or 'parting of the ways', concentrating on the first half of the second century CE. The evidence surveyed here supports the view that by that time Jews and Christians constituted separate communities, each with its own identity, rituals, institutions, authority figures, and literature. There were no mixed communities of Jews and Christians, except for Christian communities which numbered among their members Jews who had converted to Christianity, and except for Jewish communities which included Christians who had converted to Judaism. 'But absent conversion, the boundaries between the Jewish and the Christian communities were clear enough and stable enough. As the second century proceeded, the boundary would become ever clearer and ever more stable.'

Christoph Marksches concludes this section, examining possible links between Christian Gnosticism in the early second century CE and teachings or developments in Judaism at the same period, i.e., more or less during the Yavne period. Regarding Christian Gnosticism, the article relates only to the individuals and their supposed teachings that, according to everything we know, clearly belong to the first decades of the second century and who are usually labelled 'Gnostics', i.e., Cerinthus, Simon, Menander, and Saturninus. The study asks to what influence from teachings or developments in Judaism they might testify and concludes that there is very little evidence to that effect, as also, more generally, that there is not enough ground for concluding that a particular religious or political crisis in Judaism was responsible for the origins of Gnosticism as such.

It would be a mistake to think that the Yavne period is defined only by rabbinic or archaeological sources. There are other types of sources which help us in understanding the world of Yavne; some are surprising. This is the topic of the last section of the volume.

The first example comes from Josephus who for the most part relates the history of the Second Temple period, but has much that might help us understand the Interbellum. Josephus devotes much attention to the Temple and its destruction as well as to the fall of Jerusalem. The Christians picked up on this material and interpreted it as a watershed between the histories of the Jews and the Christians, which marked the transition of God's election from the Jews to the Christians. In light of this, Jan Willem van Henten rereads some of Josephus' passages on the Temple through the lens of a post-70 perspective in their literary context and then interprets them by contextualizing them in Josephus' setting in Flavian Rome.

Eric Ottenheim deals with the Gospel of Matthew within the framework of the developing religious center at Yavne. What sort of 'Yavne' is reflected in the Gospel of Matthew? Ottenheim focuses on issues mentioned in the notorious polemics against 'Scribes and Pharisees' in Matthew 23:1-12, assessing the way in which these reflect the dynamics of social interaction with a

neighbourhood elite. This is done within a framework of social theory to argue how polemics tell history. The author analyzes the editorial rhetoric of the pericope of Matthew under discussion and concludes with a discussion of four practices mentioned there: phylacteries and tassels, the seat of Moses, and the title 'rabbi'.

One of the fundamental issues in studying the Yavne period is the problematic nature of rabbinic or Jewish sources. Are there any other Jewish sources which reflect the period? Are there non-rabbinic Jewish sources which might offer evidence regarding the realities described in rabbinic literature of the Yavne period? Ze'ev Safrai answers affirmatively and argues that *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* was written and edited in the period before or immediately after the Bar Kokhba Revolt and by consequence is such a source. On the basis of extensive analysis, he also comes to the important conclusion that the work throughout reflects views analogous to those of the rabbis of the Yavne period.

Finally, Peter J. Tomson focuses on such author-related information as is given away by the author of Luke-Acts and by Josephus, authors whose floruit can be presumed roughly to coincide with the early Yavne period. Tomson proposes to view the apologetic histories of both authors against the background of circumstances in Rome and Judaea around 100 CE, paying special attention to the way prominent leaders are portrayed. He shows how both Luke-Acts and Josephus independently show deference towards the Pharisees and their former leaders Gamliel and Shimon, suggesting that towards 100 CE, the Pharisaic movement, headed now by Gamliel ii, enjoyed the sympathy of circles in Rome that our two authors thought influential. By that time, the movement was definitely on the rise in Judaea and adjacent parts of Syria. Contemporaneous Christian documents from these areas express protest against the Pharisees' rules about prayer and fasting and against their novel way of designating law teachers as 'rabbis'.

### Features of the Interbellum

In addition to the above summaries of individual articles, we think it is helpful to offer what might be

called a longitudinal cross-section of the volume, highlighting converging views on the Interbellum as well as points where authors disagree. In doing so, we are deliberately choosing a vantage point from where we can view the entire period as a whole. We could either look at it prospectively, from its beginning, or retrospectively, looking back from its end. Or again, we could look at it as an integral whole and ask for its characteristic features.

As to the retrospective approach, two of our authors register the amalgamation of the defeat of Bar Kokhba with the destruction of the Temple in both patristic and rabbinic sources. James Carleton Paget notes that only from Justin Martyr onwards do Christian writers start to exploit the destruction of the Temple in 70 to bolster up their supersessionist views. From then on, the defeat of 136 E 'is seen to confirm the punitive meaning' of that of 70. The same observation is made by David Levine, adducing it as a parallel to a similar amalgamation of the two defeats by the rabbis: in rabbinic tradition, '70 is perceived as epoch-making after 135'. In the experience of both Jews and Christians, we gather, the catastrophic outcome of the Interbellum galvanised the incisiveness of its beginning in 70.

Conversely, several of our authors, looking at the Interbellum from its beginning in 70 CE, register continuity with the previous period. Thus both Boaz Zissu in his archaeological survey of Jewish settlements in Interbellum Judaea, Joshua Schwartz in an evaluation of the vitality of 'household Judaism' in post-70 Lod rather than Yavne, and Ben-Zion Rosenfeld with his assessment of Vespasian's approach of Jewish civilians before and after 70 all emphasize the preservation and revitalization of pre-70 conditions in Judaea. In the diaspora as well, as Francesco Ziosi shows, Jews assumed that life would go on and cherished high hopes that Hadrian would grant the rebuilding of the Temple. Something similar may be read from Jan Willem van Henten's observations on Josephus and his persistent view of the centrality of the Temple. Thus, if in retrospect the suppression of the revolt and the destruction of the Temple marked off a new era, the Interbellum may prospectively be seen as starting out in a mode of continuity, both on the material and the ideological level.

Axiomatically, naming a period ‘interbellum’ implies defining it by the wars that mark its beginning and end, more so if in addition it is punctuated by a related war at different locations. One of the questions then to be asked – crucial to the present project – is how this constellation bore upon the relation of Jews and Christians during the period. Shaye Cohen’s essay does not go into this question but establishes, using Roman, Christian, and Jewish sources, that by the middle of the second century CE, Jews and Christians effectively lived in separate communities. Did the revolts and their aftermath in fact largely contribute to this situation, as posited by Peter Tomson and Joshua Schwartz? We noted that James Carleton Paget discusses all possible arguments in favor of their thesis and concludes that it is untenable. Similarly, he maintains that it is impossible to prove that Gnosticism arose in reaction to the outcome of the Bar Kokhba War. A similar judgement on the rise of Gnosticism (and Marcion-ism) is given by Christoph Marksches. While these movements appear in the sources by the mid-second century, he finds no definite proof that they were triggered by the third revolt.

As for the characteristics of the Interbellum, a number of authors describe developments and phenomena that set the period off from the later Second Temple period. Eyal Baruch shows on the basis of archaeological and literary sources how Roman household ceremonial was adapted to function in Jewish homes. Similarly, Lee Levine explores the contribution of the Interbellum generation of rabbis in creating a new communal framework for Jewish liturgy, and Christine Hayes concludes that the same generation must also be held responsible for a prominent formulation of the rabbinic concept of the Noahide commandments. Following the method of analysing one literary document as a whole, Ze’ev Safrai reveals numerous para-rabbinic ideas reflected in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, a work he dates to the later part of the Interbellum. An increasing prominence of the ‘Pharisees’ or rabbis is assigned to the earlier part of the Interbellum by Peter Tomson on the basis of Josephus and Luke-Acts, and by Eric Ottenheijm on the basis of Matthew. Furthermore Ottenheijm notes that Matthew also

reflects the separation of his Christian community from the Pharisees or rabbis, a phenomenon that Shaye Cohen found to be pervasive during the period. Finally, in a development as yet difficult to fit in the overall picture, Marco Rizzi describes Ignatius’ execution under Trajan against the backdrop of the Diaspora Revolt.

Thus it seems that much can be said in favor of the traditional view that the Interbellum saw the rise of the rabbinic movement. It is more difficult to assess its scope and influence. A theory proposed by Solomon Schechter and Wilhelm Bacher, developed by Alon, and further refined by David Goodblatt, holds that Rabban Gamliel’s rule would have gained recognition from the Roman administration. The idea is still entertained among our authors. However, as Werner Eck explains in the volume, such a recognition would have been unthinkable and was alien to the workings of the Roman administration. Taking his departure from a similar assessment, Benjamin Isaac goes on to explore the possibility that a Jewish leadership could have functioned in the regional framework of provincial councils. On that basis, Peter Tomson concludes that what external literary evidence there is for the rise of the rabbis by 100 CE must reflect an internal development on a regional scale.

It remains to refer to the successful subsequent ‘literary career’ of ‘Yavne’, contrasting, as Joshua Schwartz showed, with the initially much more impressive ‘material career’ of rabbinic Lod. Catherine Hezser and Moshe Simon-Shoshan analyse the ways in which the Yerushalmi and the Bavli laid the foundations for the classic image of the Yavne rabbis and their spiritual heritage.

In conclusion, if identifying the years 70-132 CE as ‘the Judaeen Interbellum’ involves a deliberate act of interpretation, it also opens up a new perspective on the period. We were not aware of it at the outset, but this is what in our view the volume comes down to. If we are correct in drawing out the consensual views voiced in the book, the Interbellum is best seen as a transition period during which basic Judaeen infrastructures remained in place while receiving partly new functions, just as new elements came to fill some of the empty spaces left by the war. By all

appearances, the Bar Kokhba Revolt and its repression galvanised such developments and created a wholly new situation, both for Jews and Christians. Interestingly, the concept of a 'transition period' was used by Alon in his history, *The Jews in Their Land*, while referring to the years 70-630 CE and incorrectly positing decisive rabbinic power from the start. Thus we think there is reason for renewed reflection on Alon and his historiographic points of departure.

#### Contents

##### PART 1: Archaeology

- 1 Interbellum Judea 70-132 CE: An Archaeological Perspective by Boaz Zissu
- 2 Adapted Roman Rituals in Second Century CE Jewish Houses by Eyal Baruch
- 3 Lod of the Yavne Period: How a City was Cheated out of Its Period by Joshua Schwartz

##### PART 2: The Roman Perspective

- 4 Position and Authority of the Provincial Legate and the Financial Procurator in Judaea, 70-136 AD 93 by Werner Eck
- 5 Judaea after 70: Delegation of Authority by Rome? by Benjamin Isaac
- 6 Jews and Christians under Trajan and the Date of Ignatius' Martyrdom by Marco Rizzi
- 7 'He Will Bear the Name of a Sea': Jewish Expectations of Hadrian and His Imperial Strategy before 130 CE by Francesco Ziosi
- 8 The Liminal Time from the Temple's Destruction until Yavne, 70-85/90 CE by Ben-Zion Rosenfeld

##### PART 3: Historiography

- 9 70 CE or 135 CE – Where was the Watershed? Ancient and Modern Perspectives by David Levine
- 10 Uncertain Symbol: The Representation of Yavne in the Talmud Yerushalmi by Catherine Hezser
- 11 Transmission and Evolution of the Story of R.

Gamliel's Deposition by Moshe Simon-Shoshan

##### PART 4: Developments during the Interbellum

- 12 Were the Noahide Commandments Formulated at Yavne? Tosefta Avoda Zara 8:4-9 in Cultural and Historical Context by Christine Hayes
- 13 The Historicity of Yavnean Traditions: The Case of Jewish Liturgy by Lee I. Levine
- 14 Jewish Revolts and Jewish-Christian Relations by James Carleton Paget
- 15 The Ways That Parted: Jews, Christians, and Jewish-Christians, ca. 100-150 CE by Shaye J.D. Cohen
- 16 Christian Gnosticism and Judaism in the First Decades of the Second Century by Christoph Marksches

##### PART 5: The Import of Literary Sources

- 17 Josephus on the Temple from a Post-70 Perspective by Jan Willem van Henten
- 18 Matthew and Yavne: Religious Authority in the Making? by Eric Ottenheijm
- 19 Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum: A Para-Rabbinic Jewish Source Close to the Yavne Period by Ze'ev Safrai
- 20 Josephus, Luke-Acts, and Politics in Rome and Judaea by 100 CE by Peter J. Tomson

Abbreviations

Bibliography

Index of Ancient Sources

Index of Names

[The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 7, The Early Modern World, 1500-1815](#) by Jonathan Karp and Adam Sutcliffe [The Cambridge History of Judaism, Cambridge University Press, 9780521889049]

This seventh volume of *The Cambridge History of Judaism* provides an authoritative and detailed overview of early modern Jewish history, from 1500 to 1815. The essays, written by an



international team of scholars, situate the Jewish experience in relation to the multiple political, intellectual and cultural currents of the period. They also explore and problematize the 'modernization' of world Jewry over this period from a global perspective, covering Jews in the Islamic world and in the Americas, as well as in Europe, with many chapters straddling the conventional lines of division between Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and Mizrahi history. The most up-to-date, comprehensive, and authoritative work in this field currently available, this volume will serve as an essential reference tool and ideal point of entry for advanced students and scholars of early modern Jewish history.

Excerpt: The term "early modern" is notoriously ambiguous, if not oxymoronic. It also remains, even a half-century after its introduction into historical studies, controversial. As one recent critic has complained, the world between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries "was not in any way 'modern,' and certainly not in any way an 'early' form of modernity." "Early modern" is indeed a cumbersome and loaded term, but nevertheless not one likely to be soon displaced or replaced. This is because the period covered under this rubric, from the age of Renaissance and Reformation at the beginning to the era of the Atlantic Revolutions at the end, is too distinctive and integral to be subsumed under such labels as "medieval" or "modern." It is an age in its own right as far as such matters as international trade, state building, religious transformation, communications, global exploration, and the development of political thought are concerned. In this sense, however legitimate the terminological criticisms leveled against it, "early modern" really only serves as a convenient shorthand designation for a necessary and essential periodization.

Does this periodization make sense, though, in the specific context of Jewish history? It is not obvious that the landmark moments in Christian religious or European cultural history that open the period should coincide with those of Judaism, or that the revolutions of the late eighteenth century, at its close, were of great transformative consequence for Jews, most of whom lived far from the places where those events resonated most strongly. The

implicit teleology in the very term "early modern" also raises particular questions in relation to Jews, whose relationship to modernity has been, both during this period and since, notably complex and contested. While "the early modern period" started to become a fashionable designation among historians in the 1940s and 1950s, it has only quite recently become widely employed by Jewish historians. Prior to the 1985 publication of Jonathan Israel's *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism*, the first work to put forth a coherent and self-conscious claim for an early modern period in Jewish history, a number of Jewish historians had focused on this period (roughly 1500-1800) and discussed its outstanding features. What is interesting is that to one degree or another all characterized this age as both essentially medieval and, despite moments of creative efflorescence, one primarily defined by crisis. That which was incipiently modern in the period, these historians suggested in various ways, was more the internal crumbling of the older forms of Jewish society than the construction of anything genuinely new, while that which was truly new and progressive was by and large only what managed to seep into an insular Jewish society from general European culture and ideas.

For the pioneering nineteenth-century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz, these centuries were marked above all by intellectual decline and the rise of superstition, what he labeled "a general demoralization of Judaism," while for the great Russian-Jewish historian Simon Dubnow the contrast between general European cultural dynamism and Jewish persecution and stagnation could not be sharper. "At the time," Dubnow observes, "when the medieval period had formally come to a close for occidental Christendom ... the middle ages continued in unmitigated brutality for the Jews." True, the twentieth-century sociologist and historian Jacob Katz did present a somewhat more balanced view. Appearing in Hebrew in 1958, Katz's *Tradition and Crisis* has sometimes been taken as the first work attempting to come to terms with a Jewish early modern period, but such an assessment is exaggerated. As its title indicates, Katz's volume, in so far as it deals with the roots of modern Jewish life, focuses overwhelmingly (in its

second half) on the erosion of traditional structures, such as rabbinic authority. When it does report on new trends, particularly in the form of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) in western and central Europe and Hasidism in the east, it offers no clear analysis of how these key developments emerged, but instead only a treatment of how they further contributed to tradition's displacement.

In understanding the dynamics of late medieval "crisis," Katz relied heavily on the revolutionary scholarly insights of Kabbalah scholar Gershom Scholem. Like Katz, Scholem did not employ the term "early modern," but he did likewise view the centuries following 1492 as ones of crisis and creativity. In Scholem's imaginative rendering, an unfolding and dynamic response to the theological problem of Jewish exile led, in a pattern of "dialectical" twists and turns, to the widespread dissemination of new, redemptive forms of Kabbalah (especially that created by the sixteenth-century mystic Isaac Luria) that crystallized in the failed messianic mass movement of Sabbatai Zevi (1666) and thence splintered into a host of movements as disparate as Hasidism and Reform Judaism. Even more so than Katz, Scholem's historical outlook was shaped by Zionism, by its characterization of Jewish diaspora existence as rooted in exilic crisis and its understanding of the period immediately preceding the modern as one in which exilic tensions finally became unbearable.

Desiccation, decay, atrophy, and above all crisis — these are the terms and concepts which long tended to dominate depictions of the early modern era *avant la lettre*. One of the important developments in historical scholarship of the last several decades — broadly reflected in the present volume — has been to offer a more variegated and frequently more positive, or at least more balanced, picture. This re-evaluation was first crystallized in the aforementioned study by Jonathan Israel, a specialist in the history of the early modern Dutch Republic. Unlike his predecessors, Israel did not see this epoch as a mere extension of the Middle Ages (or an extended crisis marking medieval decline) but rather as "an essentially new phase." From the mid sixteenth to mid eighteenth centuries, he argued, the standoff between the Reformation and Counter-Reformation opened up space for the

more religiously neutral policies of *raison d'état*, including, in the economic sphere, mercantilism, which proved transformatory and over-whelmingly beneficial for the Jews. In this context, Jews' commercial utility enabled them to win new freedoms and opportunities, not least of all the opportunity to resettle in parts of western Europe from which they had been excluded for centuries. Indeed, Israel went as far as to describe the age as marking a kind of first Jewish emancipation, one applied to Jews as a collective, that preceded the later and better-known emancipation of the French Revolution era that granted rights to Jews, but as individuals alone.

As noted, Israel's positive assessment marked a clear break with earlier, more "lachrymose" depictions. It highlighted the Jews' experience between 1650 and 1713 as reflecting "the most profound and pervasive impact on the west which they were ever to exert." Although the aftermath of this high water mark entailed a century of rapid decline — characterized by widespread economic dislocation and "creeping intellectual paralysis" — Israel's sweeping integrative depiction of early modern demographic transformation, autonomous Jewish self-rule, and above all interlocking semiglobal commercial networks, cast this formerly rather bleak period of Jewish history in a strikingly triumphant glow.

Though vastly influential, Israel's formulation did not meet with universal approval. As critics noted, its weak point lay in its characterization of Jewish internal cultural and intellectual developments, which Israel viewed largely as subordinate to broader European trends. In fact, disagreements over Israel's approach on this count reflected long-standing divisions among historians between focusing on the Jewish past from the vantage point of external shaping conditions, on the one hand, and immanent internal ones, on the other. Most crucially, the scholar David Ruderman, while appreciating Israel's pioneering effort to map the period's broad contours, endeavored to complicate his portrait by identifying the cultural dynamics or "formations" of the Jewish early modern: "the interconnections among intellectual creativity and the political, social, and technological conditions shaping Jewish life in this era." Ruderman's specific

insights can be found in the concluding chapter of this volume, among other places. Suffice it to mention here that his overarching project can broadly stand for (and builds upon) the work of a generation of scholars who came of age starting in the 1970s and 1980s, and who have collectively helped to transform our understanding of almost every aspect of Jewish history over the centuries from the Iberian expulsions to the development of Hasidism and Jewish Enlightenment. This scholarship includes, but is hardly confined to, the study of: the Sephardic diaspora after 1492 and its implications for the growth of a more expansive Jewish role in global trade; the imposition of ghettos, particularly in Italy, which, despite the hardships they imposed, also opened up a tolerated Jewish space within Catholic civilization where Jews at times culturally flourished; a host of intellectual developments that were hardly medieval in character, such as Jewish engagement with Renaissance humanism and the associated proliferation of both Hebrew publishing and "Christian Hebraism"; the appearance of new religious mass movements connected with the dissemination of Kabbalah; and the first signs of the rise of more secular attitudes among rulers and states toward Jewish subjects, and even of a fledgling Jewish secularization itself.

This explosion of new scholarship on early modern Judaism is reflected in the college classroom as well. As late as the 1970s, an undergraduate course devoted to early modern Jewish history (however designated) would have been hard pressed to find relevant quality textbooks, certainly in English; today the instructor will find a great wealth of accessible materials, from primary source readers to contemporary memoir literature to specialized monographs and a handful of solid period surveys (as noted above). The synthetic works of Israel, Ruderman, and Dean Phillip Bell offer stimulating, coherent, and accessible guides to the period as a whole.

What is lacking, however, is a text that brings together both the depth and breadth of understanding that all of this recent scholarship has now made possible. It is our hope that this volume will satisfy precisely that need.

The shape of this volume reflects the broad consensus among current scholars that the early modern period is a meaningful unit of analysis in Jewish history. In some respects, it is fully appropriate to consider the period as one of transition, during which a range of phenomena broadly associated with "modernity" began, in varied ways, to impact upon Jewish lives: the rise of print culture; more complex commercial, financial, and production practices; increased migration flows; the growth of state power; and new forms of contestation of traditional orthodoxies and power structures. However, as almost all early modernists would also agree, change in this period was highly uneven and far from unidirectional, and the varied particularities of Jewish worlds from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth centuries should be understood in their own diverse and locally contingent terms.

The chronological boundaries of the volume are therefore loose and flexible. 1500 is very much a soft opening date, inviting forays back into the late medieval period, but nonetheless signalling the rough start of various narratives that were important in Jewish as well as in "general" history (the rise of print; the European encounter with the New World; the denominational fracturing of Western Christendom), and also the key watershed of Sephardic history in 1492. Our terminus ad quem of 1815 is less conventional. In Jewish history (as in European history), the modern period is often taken to begin with the French Revolution, if not slightly earlier.

This inaugural "era of emancipation" is thus yoked to the further advancement of the political inclusion of Jews later in the nineteenth century and the reactions against it, usually placed at the heart of the modern Jewish historical narrative. Yet this periodization entails certain distortions. It is not just the fact that, as a diaspora people, Jews were so dispersed geographically that no single watershed event reverberated in its effects to encompass all or most of them. It is also that modernity itself took different forms and developed at different times depending on the nature of the surrounding political culture and social structure. The major Jewish population centers, particularly in eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire, were at best only

indirectly affected by the French Revolution of 1789. Polish Jewry — the most populous segment of the Jewish world — was impacted far more profoundly by the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, and 1795), though to the degree that these brought about disjuncture it was not necessarily or invariably in the direction of modernization. On the contrary, more recent depictions of eighteenth-century Jewry emphasize as much continuity as disjuncture. For Ottoman Jews, certainly, the modern era can in no sense be said to coincide with the European Enlightenment or the French Revolution, and properly only begins with the inauguration of the Tanzimat Reforms in 1839, which gradually eroded the traditional category of the tolerated alien, the *dhimmi*.

Jewish modernity has been variously measured by intellectual and spiritual developments — Italian Haskalah and Polish Hasidism in the eighteenth century, Russian Haskalah in the nineteenth — or by loose, unselfconsciously assimilative processes such as occurred for Anglo-Jewry starting in the early eighteenth century. In either case, broad efforts at periodization prove challenging. As Michael Meyer dishearteningly concluded in his survey of different approaches to periodizing the modern age in Jewish life, "any endeavour to mark a borderline which will be meaningful for all Jewries and embrace the origin or rise to normative status of all — or even most — of the characteristics of Jewish life as it presently exists seems ... bound to fail.

And yet, Meyer goes on to say, if for organizational purposes alone, one must begin (and in our case also conclude) somewhere. We feel that the best solution is to close our volume with the end of the Napoleonic wars. By including the years up to the Congress of Vienna in our "long" early modern period, an alternative vista is enabled, in which the upheavals of the revolutionary era can be more readily understood in relation to the centuries and decades that preceded it. Continuing the story up to 1815 disrupts any easy demarcation with the modern period of Jewish history. It also brings into somewhat greater synchronicity the very different trajectories occurring in western, central and eastern Europe, as a result above all of the Napoleonic conquests, which helped extend modern

trends regarding Jews (or at least debates about such trends) not just throughout Europe but also as far as the Ottoman world, where two decades after Napoleon's fall a period of fundamental internal reform would begin.

The volume aims to offer an up-to-date and commanding survey of the field of early modern Jewish history, which has grown immensely since the late 1990s. The history of Judaism is necessarily also the history of the Jews: although religion will figure prominently, many chapters will approach the Jewish past from perspectives that emphasize social and political over religious developments. And the history of the Jews is necessarily also the history of the interactions of Jews with others, and so these interactions will be central to much of the volume. Some contributors are primarily affiliated with Jewish studies, while others are thematic specialists for whom Jews are not necessarily their primary expertise. Most contributors are historians, but this is an interdisciplinary volume, including contributions from scholars of religious studies, literary studies, art history, and material culture. We have consciously solicited contributions from North America, Israel, and Europe, in order to ensure that the volume captures current scholarly thinking from these three different regions, each of which tends to generate a somewhat different perspective on the Jewish past. We present, we hope, an authoritative history, but also one that reflects the diversity and internal debate that characterizes this vibrant field.

How should the history of early modern Jewry be organized? Much of the historiography of the field takes the national or linguistic boundaries of the modern period as its primary demarcating logic. This is in part due to the nation-state-oriented structures that have governed and dominated the study of the Jewish past since the late nineteenth century, promoting the narration of French, German, Italian, American, and other state-shaped Jewish histories. While for certain purposes these divisions make adequate sense, the key differences across the Jewish world — most notably the distinctions among Sephardic, Ashkenazic, and other cultural realms — do not align with the political map of the early modern

world, and indeed, Jewish communities in this period cannot be neatly geographically separated from one another. A more refined periodization also poses difficulties, as rhythms of continuity and change of course varied between areas of Jewish settlement. For some topics, it is useful to mark a separation between the earlier half of the period, up to approximately 1650, and the "long Enlightenment" period in Europe from roughly 1650 onwards. The former period is characterized by the impact of the Renaissance, the emergence of Christian inter-confessional competition and conflict, and the policies of so-called mercantile philosemitism, through which small numbers of Jews were encouraged to resettle some territories in western and central Europe (from which they had long been excluded), in order to fructify commercial life. The latter, in contrast, covers a period when new ideas increasingly fed into scientific and political thought, global interconnections grew more prominent in economic life, Jewish settlement spread farther into important new areas (notably Britain and North America), and, in the wake of the Peace of Westphalia (1648), the modern state system, so impactful on the future life of Jews, began to take shape. However, it is important also to highlight cultural continuities and connections across the 315 years covered by this volume, and across the breadth of the expanding Jewish world.

We have therefore divided the volume into three broad sections, while allowing for a blurring of the boundaries between them. In the first section, six ambitious chapters together offer a survey of the key features of European and Mediterranean Jewry in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The first three chapters cover the attitudes and policies toward Jews and Judaism in each of three main religious spheres in which they lived: Catholicism, in the late Renaissance and Catholic Reform eras; Protestantism, in its formative period through to the end of the Thirty Years' War; and Islam, during the dramatic rise of Ottoman Jewry from 1492 through to the late sixteenth century. The next three chapters each cover a key aspect of the framework of Jewish existence in this period: the varied and changing legal and political status of Jewish settlements; the place of Jews in

the European and intercontinental economy; and the institutional structures and practices of Jewish communities in the transition from the medieval to the early modern period. Taken together, the chapters in this section provide a broad but thorough overview of Jewish life across Europe and the Mediterranean basin in the first half of the early modern period.

The chapters in the second and longest section of the volume are thematically more tightly focused, but are often more chronologically ambitious, in many cases covering the full period covered by the volume, from the end of the fifteenth to the outset of the nineteenth century. The aim of this section is to cover as wide a range as possible of the historical processes shaping early modern Jewish life. Chapters are comparative across time and space when appropriate, but offer focused attention on key episodes in the period (such as the Sabbatean irruption) and on major centers of population (such as eastern Europe). Religious, cultural, intellectual, economic, and political topics are given equal priority, and often overlap with one another, with some chapters approaching related topics from different disciplinary or interpretive perspectives.

The first two chapters of this section both stretch back into the pre-1500 period in order to analyze and explain key particularities of the two European Jewish cultural domains: first, the impact of the Iberian inquisitions on Sephardic Jewry and on the development of "New Christian" identities; and second, the cultural and institutional flourishing of Jewish life in the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth from the early sixteenth century onward. Two contributions then trace the linguistic transformations, across the early modern period, of the distinctive tongues of these two domains: Ladino and Yiddish. The next two chapters both focus on the transformations wrought by the advent of printing: in the development of Jewish book culture through to the early nineteenth century, and in the study of Jewish texts by early modern Christians. Three chapters then look at a range of aspects of the structures of religious authority in early modern Jewry: rabbinic culture and the development of religious law, or Halakhah; the particular challenges to communal authority across the

Western Sephardic Diaspora, from Hamburg to the Caribbean; and the development of Jewish institutions and practices of education and of rabbinical homiletics. The next cluster of chapters explores various dimensions of Jewish mysticism in this period: the development of the Kabbalah across the early modern Jewish world; the place of magic and mysticism in Jewish popular beliefs and practices; and the particular case of the Sabbatean movement of the 1660s, and its afterlife. This is followed by a chapter on early modern Jewish scientific, medical, and philosophical thought. A pair of essays then focus on Jewish economic history, the first surveying the relatively recent historiographical concept of the early modern "port Jew," and the second analyzing the particular role of Jews in the economy of the Polish—Lithuanian Commonwealth. The next four chapters approach early modern Jewish religious life from a range of perspectives. Staying in eastern Europe, the first of these looks at Jewish practices of piety and devotion in this region across the early modern period, while the next offers an interpretive account of the eighteenth-century rise of Hasidism. The emergence, at roughly the same time, of the Haskalah, or "Jewish Enlightenment," is the subject of the next chapter, which is followed by a more social-historical exploration of the popular religious world of early modern Jewry, with an emphasis on Italy but ranging comparatively across the continent. The final two essays of the section look at the visual arts and at music, broadening out the range of Jewish cultural experience and expression addressed in this volume.

The final section of the volume covers the period from the middle of the seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century. It is in this section alone that chapters are primarily organized geographically, and are often focused on particular states — in recognition of the fact that in the latter part of the early modern period state policies toward Jews became an increasingly significant focus of debate, while national affiliations became an ever more significant component of Jewish identities. The section starts with German Jewry, and then moves on to the cognate, if still more heterogeneous, Jewries under

Habsburg rule, including the small but growing community of Jews in the Kingdom of Hungary. We next turn to the Ashkenazic demographic heartland of Poland—Lithuania. Ottoman Jewry in the later early modern period was also demographically substantial (although by this time declining) and certainly of enormous cultural vitality, as the subsequent chapter covering Ottoman Jewry at this time makes clear. Like Germany, Italy — the subject of the next chapter — was also a region of multiple polities and numerous scattered Jewish communities, many with a continuous history through the early modern and modern periods, despite not infrequent local expulsions. In contrast, the Jewries of the Netherlands, France, and Great Britain — to each of which a chapter is dedicated — were effectively reconstituted in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, developing in parallel despite the important differences in the status, economic activity, and cultural characteristics of these Jewish communities.

The volume then moves beyond Europe, with two chapters on the Jewries of the New World, the first on the Caribbean in the context of the wider Atlantic world, and the second on the early Jewish settlement of North America. A synoptic chapter then covers the various Jewries of Ethiopia and elsewhere in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in Yemen and India; a separate short chapter is devoted to the Jews of Iran. Two comparative chapters round out the section and bring the volume to its close. The first explores the intellectual, political, social, and economic origins in this period of what came to be known retrospectively as "Jewish Emancipation"; the second looks back at the entire early modern period from the vantage point of the early nineteenth century and offers a reflective reconsideration of the periodization of "modernity" in Jewish history.

As with any text of this scale, individual readers will use this volume in different ways, and we hope that most will find it serves a variety of purposes. The volume is designed equally as a work of reference, a high-level gateway into multiple fields of specialism, an overview of the interconnections between different topics, and a tool and stimulus for further research. It is also a polyphonic interpretive summary of the current state of

knowledge in the interdisciplinary field of early modern Jewish studies. Our mapping of the field is no doubt too vast to be readily taken in as a whole. A very different but equally valid map could also certainly have been produced. As editors we cannot claim to present anything like a comprehensive survey, but we hope that our forty-odd contributions reflect the current breadth, diversity, and dynamism of this exciting area of study. Some of the volume's lacunae perhaps also reflect the current areas of weakness in the field — though different readers will of course identify and diagnose these differently. Despite undoubted imperfections, we hope we have succeeded in our aim of producing an unprecedentedly rich and detailed exploration of the textual, economic, political, cultural, and social history of the Jews from the start of the sixteenth century to the end of the Napoleonic era, and of the interweaving of these histories in the wider transformations of the early modern world.

Looking Backward and Forward:  
Rethinking Jewish Modernity in the Light  
of Early Modernity by David B.  
Ruderman

### The Challenges of Writing a History of Early Modern Jewry

Given its composite nature, *The Cambridge History of Early Modern Judaism* cannot easily stake out a single authoritative position on what early modern Jewish culture and society means in its totality. Taking as a whole the variegated perspectives presented elsewhere in this volume, and despite the strong hands of the editors in organizing a coherent exposition of the period, it is virtually impossible to expect one unified viewpoint to emerge. Without some notion of what the whole represents, however, one is hard pressed to suggest in what ways this epoch is continuous or discontinuous with the period that follows it — that is, the modern period itself.

As a mere contributor to this large collection of essays and having published a book that purports to offer a broad interpretation of the entire period,<sup>1</sup> I would like to venture beyond the particular portraits offered by my distinguished colleagues and suggest how I would map this entire period. With this blueprint in mind, I might then be

in a better position to offer some additional reflections on the meaning of modernity in the light of early modernity. But first, it might be useful to suggest why there have been so few attempts in the past to offer an overarching synthetic interpretation of the early modern period that transcends the particular narratives of specific regions, personalities, or themes.

The reluctance to offer a comprehensive, transregional portrait of Jewish culture and society in early modern Europe is attributable, I have argued, to at least three major challenges which have inhibited others from attempting to do seriously what only one historian has previously attempted. I refer to Jonathan Israel who first offered a comprehensive portrait of the entire period, arguing for the first time that early modern Jewish history needed to be understood as a distinct epoch, distinguishable from both the medieval and modern periods.

Prior to the appearance of Israel's book, historians of the Jewish experience, such as Heinrich Graetz, Simon Dubnov, Jacob Katz, Shmuel Ettinger, and Ben-Zion Dinur, had focused almost exclusively on the periodization of the modern period. Graetz even considered the so-called dark ages for Jews to be not the European Middle Ages — which he viewed more positively, along with other nineteenth-century historians — but the period immediately preceding the emancipatory era — that is, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. This position was first challenged by Salo W. Baron in a classic essay as early as 1928. While Jacob Katz focused primarily on the period now conventionally called "the early modern," he never utilized the term, nor did he display any awareness of an early modern era genuinely distinct from the Middle Ages.

For Baron, and later Gershom Scholem and Yosef H. Yerushalmi, certain "modern" developments could actually be located in European Jewish societies long before the Enlightenment and Emancipation. Baron located modernist tendencies among the Italian and Dutch Jewish communities adumbrating — but long preceding — those of German Jewry in the era of Mendelssohn and the Berlin Haskalah. Scholem saw an incipient

modernity in the challenge to normative Judaism posed by the Sabbatean movement, while Yerushalmi labeled conversos returning to the Jewish fold in the seventeenth century as the first modern Jews.<sup>4</sup> But Jonathan Israel was clearly uninterested in merely locating the origins of modernity in an earlier era or in tracing the process of modernization back to its earliest beginnings. He attempted instead to describe an autonomous early modern era whose distinguishing marks were not identical with those of the modern.

Proceeding beyond the partial and limited reflections of his predecessors to offer the first comprehensive portrait of social and intellectual developments in the early modern era across the European continent, Israel's accomplishments were obviously formidable. He produced a fascinating and wide-ranging narrative, offering an impressive mastery of detail while situating the Jewish experience within the contours of western civilization as a whole. The challenge Jewish historians have faced since the appearance of this book is how to question some of its conclusions without necessarily dislodging its well-deserved and influential position in scholarly literature. While Israel had made an important case for a distinct early modern period for Jewish history and ably described its economic and political foundations, his understanding of Jewish culture was deficient in many respects when he first published his book in 1985. Subsequently, the new explosion of scholarship over the last three decades has made his reconstruction appear even more outdated and incomplete. Israel's characterization of Jewish social and cultural history as primarily reflective and derivative of general trends located in non-Jewish society also requires revision and re-evaluation. The history of Jewish society and culture in early modern Europe is more than a mirror of the Christian world and needs to be described more accurately and more comprehensively than Israel has done. It also needs to be viewed simultaneously from both an external and an internal perspective.

The second challenge is that offered by historians who prefer to speak about the early modern period exclusively from the vantage point of a particular region or locality they study. I refer to such works as the history of Italian Jewry in the

Renaissance by Robert Bonfil; Gershon Hundert's overview of Polish—Lithuanian Jewry in the eighteenth century; the comprehensive portraits of western Sephardim in Amsterdam offered by Yosef Kaplan, Miriam Bodian, and Daniel Swetschinski; or the synthetic essays of Yosef Hacker on the Jews of the Ottoman Empire — to mention only a few examples. The overarching assumption of their work and that of others is that Jewish history in this period can best be reconstructed on a regional or micro-level. Its variegated histories, according to this perspective, are radically singular, diverse, heterogeneous, lacking common features that might link them together. The general thrust of these recent narratives of early modern Jewish history is to ignore, or even to deny, the possibility that a distinct early modern pan-European Jewish cultural experience can ever be meaningfully described. Without invalidating the important work of writing local and regional histories I wish to assert that such a broader description is possible and necessary.

The third challenge is the one posed by both European and world historians who have grappled with the slippery term "early modernity." There is, for many historians, some discomfort in relying on this fashionable and convenient label for designating the period from the end of the Middle Ages to the modern age, which is commonly evoked but never clearly defined. Thus, in the oft-quoted words of Randolph Starn: "Early, partly, sometimes, maybe modern, early modern is a period for our period's discomfort with periodization." There is also the more formidable challenge in overcoming the teleological progression from pre-modern to modern which the term "early modern" surely implies. The notion of early modernity has been easily linked to the paradigm of modernization that so long dominated historical writing, where "modern" is deemed capitalistic, industrial, urban, individualistic, bureaucratized, secular, disenchanted, and scientific, while the pre-modern has been deemed feudal, preindustrial, agrarian, religious, and magical. Early modernity is, then, that in-between period that displays some, albeit not all, nascent characteristics of modernity, such as secularization, rationalization, individualization, the rise of the middle class, as well as new scientific discoveries. Such an understanding of early



modernity as a critical stage of the triumphant march of civilization from one stage of development to an allegedly higher one is obviously inadequate.

'When the label "early modernity" is employed by world historians confronting the radical diversity of the regions they study, their comparative search for elements common to all societies often appears superficial and reductive, and even a distortion when viewing the entire globe, either explicitly or implicitly, from a Europeanist perspective. I wish to find a way to overcome the so-called early modern muddle in writing specifically about the Jewish experience.

Beyond these three challenges, one might even question on a more basic level the need for the historian to offer elaborate schemes of periodization in the first place. Any attempt at periodization invites the detailed criticisms of specialists eager to discredit any facile generalizations about the past. We undoubtedly live in an age where periodization schemes have gone out of fashion since they suggest an effort to essentialize, and it is much easier and more certain to focus on the particular than the sweeping explanations of larger historical units.

### Viewing the Modern Era in the Light of the Early Modern

Up until this point I have focused on the continuities and discontinuities between early modern Jewish culture and the Haskalah in its various phases. But modernity, as I have already indicated, is a larger and more complex phenomenon than the Haskalah movement alone. For many historians, modernization is neither primarily about the flood of new ideas nor about educational and cultural agendas, but about political, legal, and socio-economic processes. Roughly at the same time as the appearance of Wessely's educational pamphlet, the French and American revolutions in the West and the partitions of Poland in the East took place. And generally within the same time frame, European states experienced, to varying degrees, intense urbanization and industrialization, the aggressive consolidation of national economies, and the break-up of an older estate system of privileged and powerful -groups upon which

mercantile governments had relied. The emergence of the public sphere, of partial or sometimes full political and legal emancipation, of the development of democratic electorates and modern citizenship, of political parties, nationalist ideologies, and more suggests a rapidly changing social and political universe where new pressures were being placed on Jewish individuals, their families, and their collective institutions and leaders. This is not the place to describe these processes in detail but only to point to a radically different political and social reality for Jews that sharply contrasted with the processes we have carefully traced in early modern Europe.

Underscoring the difference between our period and its successor, however, should not blind us from observing the obvious continuities between the two. We have already mentioned the intellectual linkages between early modern Jewish intellectuals and the early maskilim. Accelerated mobility, the dissemination of printed books, pamphlets, and newspapers, the diminution of rabbinic authority, and the blurring of religious identities are primary factors for Jewish culture both in the early modern and modern periods. Even the condition of communal cohesion we have pointed to in describing early modernity was never fully eroded in the modern era. No doubt, political emancipation and the civic pressures of the new modern states precipitated the fragmentation of Jewish collective life to a greater degree than in the past. Nevertheless, as Birnbaum and Katznelson emphasize, modernization created new forms of communal cohesion as it destroyed old forms. The rabbis still remained a force to contend with in the nineteenth century and beyond as they discovered new ways of influencing their constituencies; the organized Jewish community was hardly a spent institution; and even assimilated Jews continued to identify themselves as Jews ethnically and religiously.

Thus, the transition that Jacob Katz once called "out of the ghetto" was never about a clean break between one era and the next, and no historian who attempts to distinguish one period from another should expect any neat and uncomplicated partitions between them. When we add to this mix the complex regional variations, the variegated

political, economic, and social structures of each locality in which Jews lived, and the cultural, linguistic, and religious differences originating in the specific environments to which they were exposed, then the presumption that one can delineate the general contours of any epoch or differentiate it decisively from another might indeed be called into question.

I still remain convinced, however, as I have argued from the start, that the exercise in which I have been engaged serves worthwhile ends. One such result is to undermine once and for all a view long entrenched in modern Jewish historiography of an inevitable one-dimensional and one-directional path from servitude to emancipation, from communal solidarity to disintegration, from ghettoization to citizenship, and from a normative tradition to radical assimilation. This trajectory, labeled by Jonathan Frankel as the bipolar focus of nationalist historiography, originating in the writing of Simon Dubnov, has long dominated the way the process of modernization has been described. It is no doubt a specifically Jewish instance of the flawed paradigm of modernization, one which posits the triumphant march of civilization from the inferior condition of a traditional pre-modern society to a more superior modern one.

The term "early modernity," if taken literally, as I have mentioned earlier, preserves the false dichotomy between tradition and modernity and the implied teleology of a supposed progression from one to the other by simply introducing an intermediate stage between the two. Thus "early modernity" might be taken to denote a kind of inevitable transition from the allegedly backward condition of medievalism to the more advanced one of modernity. When shorn of its literal meaning in designating an early stage of modernity and utilized solely as a neutral label for demarcating a specific epoch in history, neither medieval nor modern, the construction of an early modern period of Jewish history might still allow us to overcome the polarizing tendencies of the "nationalist" approach. Early modernity contains elements conventionally labeled both medieval and modern; its overlapping characteristics defy reduction to either one pole or the other. By locating prominent trends usually deemed modern in the early modern

period, such as mobility, knowledge explosion, or heresy and orthodoxy, while recognizing the novelty of later developments such as the politics of the modern state, the sharp juxtaposition between traditional/pre-modern and modern is blunted. A more nuanced and more profound understanding of constancy and change ultimately emerges. Those who would see the modern world as a sweeping transformation or the Haskalah as a radical break from the past, a kind of revolution shattering the old while ushering in the new, might indeed reconsider such extreme dichotomies when examining the three centuries preceding the late eighteenth century. In aligning the early modern with the modern, carefully tracing the evolution of one to the other, while discerningly noting their convergences and divergences, the myth of a radical modernity itself is called into question.

[The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume 8, The Modern World, 1815-2000](#) edited by Mitchell B. Hart and Tony Michels [The Cambridge History of Judaism, Cambridge University Press, 9780521769532]

The eighth and final volume of The Cambridge History of Judaism covers the period from roughly 1815-2000. Exploring the breadth and depth of Jewish societies and their manifold engagements with aspects of the modern world, it offers overviews of modern Jewish history, as well as more focused essays on political, social, economic, intellectual and cultural developments. The first part presents a series of interlocking surveys that address the history of diverse areas of Jewish settlement. The second part is organized around the emancipation. Here, chapter themes are grouped around the challenges posed by and to this elemental feature of Jewish life in the modern period. The third part adopts a thematic approach organized around the category 'culture', with the goal of casting a wide net in terms of perspectives, concepts and topics. The final part then focuses on the twentieth century, offering readers a sense of the dynamic nature of Judaism and Jewish identities and affiliations.

Excerpt: Most scholars work on the assumption that they can recognize modernity in the broadest sense when they see it: modernization often functions as a

catch-all phrase, implicitly conveying a series of large-scale forces that worked to transform society, with Northern and Western Europe functioning as their origin and cradle. A standard list would include the Enlightenment, mercantilism/early capitalism, absolutism and the strengthening of centralized authority, along with a whole host of related developments that came into play as indirect outgrowths of these major forces — industrialization, urbanization, secularization, increasing religious tolerance (or at least moves towards this), social and economic mobility, and the gradual, often painful, inclusion of previously marginalized or excluded groups into the political and cultural commonwealth.

The debate surrounding the onset of "Jewish modernity" reaches back into the nineteenth century, and the many and various ways in which Jews became modern, or didn't, now form a staple of scholarly research. The beginnings of Jewish modernity on a substantial scale have often been situated in the last decades of the eighteenth century in Europe, associated with the rise of the Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah) in Germany, the granting of civic emancipation to the Jews in France at the outset of the Revolution, and the subsequent emancipation of Jews in other parts of Europe in the wake of Napoleon's conquests. By way of contrast, 1815 marks the beginning of a period of reaction: for most Jews, part of the downfall of the Napoleonic system was a return to subordinate status. But this once-regnant notion of the Haskalah as the "big bang" of Jewish modernization has been questioned as different strands of modernization are scrutinized — religious, intellectual, secular, political, cultural, economic — in different regions.

No matter when we might date its beginnings, it has become clear that we are dealing not with the smooth rise of Jewish modernity, of integration and acculturation, but rather an endlessly complex process of back and forth, success and failure, mutual accommodation and rejection. Rather than re-engage directly with the by-now venerable debate about the beginnings of Jewish modernity, we see this volume as an opportunity, following Lord Acton's dictum, to make problems rather than periods the focus of attention.<sup>1</sup> Since modernity

does not "begin," the search for its origins can easily degenerate into a specious undertaking. A degree of self-reflexivity is called for, as it is not sufficient merely to invoke the categories "modern" and "modernity" without further ado. As an historian of the American Revolution has written: "Making modernity their grail gives historians [among others] a strong incentive to discover telltale signs of its emergence." Two points are important here: First, scholars in Jewish Studies have for some time now been aware of the varying ways in which Jews became modern, and this awareness is reflected in this volume. Second, while each Jewry established its own particular relationship to the processes and demands of modernity, it is nonetheless possible to identify similarities and continuities that span time and space, connecting the experience of Jews across political and cultural borders; this too will find expression in the essays found here.

This volume on "modern Judaism," then, poses questions not so much about when the Jews became modern (although this is inevitably addressed), but how and why they did or did not do so. While aware of the perils of being overly prescriptive, we have asked contributors to deal with both the material and ideal spheres. In other words, these essays take account of the ideas and ideologies that shaped Jewish life in the two centuries under consideration, while also conveying a sense of the political, social, economic, and institutional infrastructures that both acted on these ideas and were acted upon by them. In the end, though, we remain keenly aware of the difficulties posed by a project that appears to assume something called 'modernity' — and by extension, Jewish modernity — and then sets out to find innumerable examples of it. We might argue that this very epistemological and methodological discomfort, a heightened self-reflexivity, is a constitutive aspect of modernity itself. As the sociologist Anthony Giddens has put it, "Modernity turns out to be enigmatic at its core, and there seems no way in which this enigma can be 'overcome'. We are left with questions where once there appeared to be answers, and ... it is not only philosophers who realize this. A general awareness of the phenomenon filters into anxieties which press in on everyone."

One of the key themes that reappears in these essays is that of the question of Jewish identity: what did it, and what does it mean to be a Jew within states and societies in which internal, communal, and external mechanisms of control and compulsion are vanishing? Without drawing too rigid of a line between pre-modern and modern along these lines, we can say that this question of identity — the very notion of Jewishness as a potential problem or question to be addressed by Jews themselves — is a fundamentally modern question insofar as it comes to affect immediately not just isolated individuals such as Uriel de Costa or Baruch Spinoza, but potentially every Jew.

Modernity is, in part then, the breakdown of the almost total control of the Jewish community — rabbinic and communal authorities — over the individual, the disappearance of the ability or power of the community to enforce belonging, to impose identity, through a set of compulsive measures. This was itself a product of the emergence of the modern nation-state, with its appropriation and centralization of power and coercion together with the shift from collective to individual rights and duties as the hallmark of the subject or citizen.

Modernity for the Jews will mean a reorientation of the relationship between Jews — at the individual and collective levels — and the government, between Jews and the State. The rise of the modern state, built on the ideals of individual rights, and the civic equality of all citizens, demanded a revolutionary shift in thinking about the relationship between the Jews and the State. This, in turn, would produce dramatic shifts in the relationship between the Jews and other groups within society. And, just as important, it demanded and produced revolutionary changes in the internal structure of the Jewish community.

The emergence over time of individual autonomy vis-à-vis the organized Jewish community and Judaism as a set of commandments and obligations meant that the individual Jew was increasingly free to choose what it meant to be a Jew. Jewish identity, then, becomes a question, a challenge or problem, a matter of individual decision over the course of a lifetime. This does not mean that there

are no "objective" factors involved here. One is either born into a Jewish family or one is not; one is either raised as a self-conscious Jew or one is not. Thus, with the exception of those who converted to Judaism and joined a Jewish community, Jewish identity continued to be a matter in part of descent or biology, as well as familial and communal ties. And these are, indisputably, very powerful forces. But these are the elements that are continuous with the traditional past. What is different, what helps us begin to distinguish the modern from what came before, is the matter of choice: the choice of what sort of Jew to be within an increasingly wide and varied range of religious, cultural, and social possibilities, or even to sever all or most ties to one's own Jewish past and present.

III

A volume on the history of Jews in the modern world, in this case one composed of essays by forty authors, must raise the question of narrative unity and coherence. Can there be such a thing as "a history" of the Jews? Can we legitimately speak of something such as "modern Jewish history" in anything but nominalist terms? Do 'the Jews' exist as a coherent thing in any sense other than when they are brought together in a volume such as this? While the series in which this volume appears bears the title *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, we recognize, as have others before us of course, the enormous gap between the complex and multifaceted reality of the past and the work that historians do to bring this reality into a more or less coherent and understandable story. Moreover, the essays in this volume range well beyond the strictly religious, and so "the history of Judaism" can be perhaps misleading. Indeed, some of the essays here barely touch on Judaism, qua religion, at all. So we are speaking of Jews or Jewishness as much as Judaism, of the complex and complicated mix of forces and developments over the past two hundred and more years that went into producing a 'modern Jewish identity' — or more accurately, modern Jewish identities.

Thus, we conceive of the "Judaism" of this volume's title in the broadest possible terms: the book aims to offer a portrait of Jewish civilization and its relationships with the surrounding world over

roughly the past two centuries. Given that diversity is at the heart of the modern Jewish experience, such a portrayal will of necessity be constructed from numerous themes, approaches, narratives and episodes. Indeed, it would be futile to attempt to encompass the entirety of "modern Judaism" in a strictly systematic fashion in a single volume. We're confident, however, that the result is not a mere eclecticism without a discernible connecting thread. Rather, our approach is grounded in the conviction that the essays in this volume present a composite picture of a complex and variegated Jewish society or societies. Our goal was not to put together an encyclopedia on a grand scale; we did not strive for comprehensiveness. A volume such as this by its nature conveys large amounts of information, but contributors accomplish this by means of argument and informed narrative, in the context of ideas and perspectives, not as a form of vulgar factology.

The field of Jewish Studies has experienced exponential growth in recent decades, and given the plethora and sheer variety of modern source materials, it is well beyond the powers of any given individual to master the field(s). Developments both within the Jewish world and in numerous academic disciplines make this a propitious time for a new modern Cambridge History of Judaism. As noted above, it was one of our working assumptions that a volume such as this neither can be, nor should strive to be, comprehensive. Inevitably, even with some forty chapters, it will give short shrift or ignore certain aspects of modern Jewish life. In devising the structure and contents, we have made particular choices regarding what deserves extended analysis and what might be addressed only in passing, if at all. It is also necessary to note that there were a number of thematic essays that we wanted, and even solicited, but for one reason or another were unable in the end to secure. Thus, there are notable gaps.

Many of the individual chapter themes will be self-evident to readers with a modicum of familiarity with modern Jewish history: emancipation, national identity, religious reform, social, cultural, and economic integration and/or assimilation, mass migration and mobility, antisemitism, Zionism and

the State of Israel. All these, along with other now normative themes, constitute a significant part of the volume. But we have also made choices that reflect important shifts in recent scholarship, both within Jewish Studies and within the larger academy. Many previously unheard, or indeed unimagined, movements have gained traction and now enjoy institutional and intellectual support, demanding integration into any new account of modern Jewry. We imposed no methodological or theoretical demands on individual contributors, and readers will note a wide range of approaches. Some may be dissatisfied that recent particular innovations or trends in critical scholarship did not receive adequate attention. Nonetheless, we hope that part of what this volume can contribute to a wider intellectual audience is, at the least, a demonstration of the potential utility of approaches for the study of the Jews and Judaism(s) in the modern context.

Recently, for example, Jewish scholars have turned towards post-colonial studies, and particularly scholarship focused on Southeast Asia, to shed light on European Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The essays in *Orientalism and the Jews* and more recently, *Colonialism and the Jews*, demonstrate how the insights of post-colonial scholarship might be applied to the Jewish case. Contributions along such lines serve to introduce these ideas and methods to many in the field of Jewish Studies. Regardless of whether or not they become convinced of the utility of such an approach to the Jewish past, students of modern Jewry are at a disadvantage if they remain unaware of the ideas themselves, and that post-colonial studies has now made inroads into Jewish studies. In a similar vein, the need to take account of the postmodern turn in Jewish Studies, and in scholarship more broadly, makes a volume such as this timely. Postmodernity is a subject in and of itself, an unavoidable component of the development of scholarship and intellectual life in the second half of the twentieth century; inevitably, it has consequences for how we conceive and narrate Jewish modernity, and we encouraged contributors to incorporate aspects of the postmodern perspective in their essays when appropriate. A new history of modern Judaism must

demonstrate awareness of, and engagement with, postmodernity, while at the same time resisting its less persuasive positions and demands. It is necessary to steer a course between, on the one hand, the wilds of a postmodernist fragmentation that denies the very existence of any collective "Jewish experience" and, on the other, an older ethnocentric dispensation that viewed Jewish history and culture as a unitary field and accordingly minimized the substantial differences between scattered Jewish societies. Surely, not all or perhaps even most of the essays here engage directly with this or other recent intellectual developments; but we hope that those that do suggest the possibility and need for further work in this direction.

It is worth noting that many of the most significant developments over the past few centuries, developments that have undoubtedly had a hand in making Jews modern, are not addressed here in any systematic way: revolutionary changes in transportation and communication, in food production and distribution, medicine and hygiene, and the myriad other realms that transformed the lives of everyone over time, Jews included. These, we might say, are the undergirdings of the more particular shifts or changes within the Jewish communities explored in these essays. In a number of cases individual Jews figured prominently in the creation of these revolutionary shifts or changes that in turn produced "modernity": for example, the medical research that resulted in identifying the cause of and developing a cure for certain diseases; the research in physics that resulted, *inter alia*, in the discovery of nuclear weapons and energy; the development of the modern department store; the invention of mass advertising, and the emergence of a host of new scientific and scholarly disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychoanalysis that purported to make sense of these enormous changes. The stories of these individuals are certainly worth telling. However, one could argue that it was and is the enormous effects, the collective benefits and dangers that resulted from their work that in the end is vastly more important for the story of Jewish modernity.

The Cambridge History of Judaism series offers students and scholars exemplary scholarship, "snapshots" of the best of contemporary work. In the case of Volume Eight, we would hope that, in so doing, it comes to play a significant role in shaping the field's understanding of itself. It will, we hope, help determine how students of modern Jewish life grasp the general contours of the modern Jewish experience. At the same time, it strives to guide the direction of future research. Thus, we sought to pay due attention to popular and material cultural expressions of Jewishness; to non-traditional or alternative forms of religious expression; and to the methodological insights that come from disciplines such as gender and body studies, none of which have occupied much space in most comprehensive histories of modern Jewry to date. All, however, have contributed greatly to the dynamics of modern Jewish life, influencing the new and different ways in which historians, literary critics, religious and cultural studies scholars tell the story of Jews and modernity. The Cambridge History of Judaism is an ideal forum, we believe, for writing these innovations into the normative or mainstream narrative of the modern Jewish world.

Inevitably, as we've remarked, there are major gaps in areas covered in this volume. We have tried to be comprehensive geographically and thematically, but we recognize that the volume lacks essays in a number of crucial areas. Thus, there is no essay devoted specifically to the involvement of Jews, or the representation of Jews, in European popular culture — theater, song, film, and television — while we do have essays on this theme for the American and Middle Eastern contexts. Nor is there an essay devoted to Jews and art, or Jews and music. Again, such gaps reflect only a lack of space, not a judgment about the relative significance of these subjects.

Part I, History and Geography, lays the foundation for what follows by presenting a series of interlocking surveys that address the history of diverse areas of Jewish settlement. The loose organizing principle for Part II is the magnetic pole of emancipation, broadly conceived; chapter themes here are grouped around the challenges posed by and to this elemental feature of Jewish life in the modern period. Our intent here is not to

imply that emancipation was the sole determinant of Jewish modernity. Rather, it allows for a flexible approach that does not fixate on the role or importance of emancipation, but uses it as a plausible and convenient framework to generate an appropriately wide choice of themes. Building on these, Part III adopts a thematic approach organized around the category "culture," with the goal of casting a wide net in terms of perspectives, concepts and topics. Part IV then focuses on the twentieth century, offering readers a sense of the dynamic nature of Judaism and Jewish identities and affiliations. Surely there will be overlap between sections, as it is neither possible nor desirable to attempt to maintain rigid boundaries when it comes to matters as fluid and dynamic as cultural and intellectual expression and influence. Indeed, it is one of the goals of this volume to explore the variety of ways in which Jews have reinvented and reinvigorated Judaism, Jewish cultural expression, and Jewish forms of community over the past two hundred years. It is imperative to keep in mind that while this is not an attempt to compile an exhaustive catalog, the choice of themes ought not to appear scattershot. Its intent has been the construction of a stimulating and challenging wide-lens portrait. Collectively, these chapters offer a window on to the breadth and depth of Jewish societies and their manifold engagements with aspects of the modern world.

[The Jewish Museum: History and Memory, Identity and Art from Vienna to the Bezalel National Museum, Jerusalem](#) by Natalia Berger [Brill, 9789004353879]

In [The Jewish Museum](#) Natalia Berger traces the history of the Jewish museum in its various manifestations in Central Europe, notably in Vienna, Prague and Budapest, up to the establishment of the Bezalel National Museum in Jerusalem.

#### Excerpt: Why Jewish Museums?

... I am as far as I know the most typical Western Jew among them. This means, expressed with exaggeration, that not one calm second is granted to me, everything has to be earned, not only the present and the future, but the past too—something after all which perhaps every human being has

inherited, this too must be earned; it is perhaps the hardest work.

The history of the first Jewish museums reflects the spirit of Kafka's words—it is the record of the efforts made by the modern Jew to forge a new identity, by formulating historic and cultural memory during the tempestuous and tragic period that began towards the end of the nineteenth century with the rise of nationalism and racial anti-Semitism, and culminated in World War II. Already in the seventeenth century, Baruch Spinoza, the first modern Jew, defined memory, as an essential element of identity, and described loss of memory as an indicator of the type of change that suggests imminent death. In Greek mythology, Mnemosyne the goddess of memory is mother of the Muses. Memory is therefore a vital element of identity, culture and art.

In the nineteenth century, in the wake of the Emancipation in Western and Central Europe, many of the leading intellectuals, Jewish and Christian alike, agreed with Friedrich Schleiermacher who wrote in 1799 that "Judaism is long since a dead religion." They often saw only two options: either traditional Jewish practice, or radical assimilation through intermarriage or conversion. In the course of the nineteenth century, Jewish intellectuals tried to create a third alternative. They established and developed the Wissenschaft des Judentums (Science of Judaism) movement that played a positive role in defining and preserving Jewish identity. The earliest Jewish museums to be established in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century served to consolidate these efforts, along the same lines. Unique among the Jewish museums, the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem was the first to declare that it aimed to engage in art as part of the Zionist narrative and national revival.

The development of the Jewish museum is a fascinating subject of study, especially when the study looks into the circumstances underlying the establishment of the institution, and specifically the manner in which the individuals involved strove to preserve memory, and, through this, shape their public's conceptions of the past, and thus bear influence on the present and future.

Contrary to popular belief, a museum is not simply a passive repository of artifacts. Rather, it is an institution with a complex history, which, notwithstanding its focus on memory, is inseparable from the spirit of its own time. Directors and curators carefully pick and choose, selecting the items to be put on display as well as those to be rejected. As such it plays an important role in the formulation of culture and art. In other words, studying the Jewish museum is fascinating because it essentially represents an examination of the politics of memory.

For instance, had Boris Schatz, founder of the Bezalel Museum, been convinced that the works of Isidor Kaufmann—who painted nostalgic portraits of ghetto Jews—were no less important than works by Samuel Hirschenberg, who portrayed the persecutions of Jews in the Diaspora, then it is quite likely that the collection of images that dominated Bezalel, and served as a source of inspiration for many generations of Israeli artists, would have been entirely different. Consequently, the development of Israeli art over the past century would have taken an entirely different course.

The development of the Bezalel Museum represents an everlasting testament to the potential power of a museum curator and director to create culture, and mold attitudes towards it. Out of one room, with a small collection that Boris Schatz began assembling a hundred years ago, grew an institution which, in spite of seemingly impossible circumstances, would one day become the Israel Museum, Jerusalem—the most important of Jewish museums.

Another example, perhaps even more exceptional, is the Jewish Museum of Prague, which grew and developed because of and in spite of historical circumstances, and on account of the efforts of the people who managed it. Its first director, Salomon Hugo Lieben, began assembling this museum's collection early in the twentieth century, following the destruction of the city's Jewish ghetto. The collection was dramatically expanded during World War II. Under the directorship of the museologist Josef Poláček, collections taken from the Jewish museums of the towns of Mladá Boleslav and Mikulov were housed here. In addition, the

contents of the synagogues, libraries, and archives of 153 Jewish communities from across Bohemia and Moravia were collected and brought to the museum, even as the owners were being sent to the death camps. Consequently, in the shadow of the destruction of the community in the course of the Holocaust, a small number of museum professionals succeeded in preserving their cultural heritage, and in so doing, created one of the largest and most important collections of Judaica in the world.

Every museum originates as the function of a particular agenda—whether formally enunciated or not. A museum is also the product of a theory, or of a conscious way of looking at things. Directors and curators carefully pick and choose, selecting the items to be put on display as well as those to be rejected. As such, the museum plays an important role in the and formulation of culture and art. An analysis of the development of the Jewish museum will therefore reflect the emerging dynamics that defined Jewish identity during the stormy period that began in the late nineteenth century, around the time when the earliest Jewish museums were being established. These dynamic processes and changes can be examined by looking at the composition of the collections, the permanent and temporary exhibitions, and the day-to-day functioning of the museum, and then analyzing these factors with respect to the differing perspectives they reflect, regarding Jewish past and the manner in which they ought to be presented.

On the basis of these principles, this book will address the question of the degree to which, as a phenomenon, the Jewish museum beginning with the earliest of Jewish museums—reflects the complexity of Jewish identity in the modern world. It will also illustrate how, through the course of this period, the emerging and constantly changing perceptions of the Jewish world with regard to history and art were expressed in terms of a particular museum's approach to the preservation of memory, and the strengthening Jewish identity.

With this in mind, I shall first discuss the theoretical and practical background to the establishment of Jewish museums, and subsequently examine the changes in the principal subject matter of the



museums during the period in question. Finally, I will examine the processes that initiated the transition from collection and research to assembling a type of collection that would serve to inspire new art.

I have chosen four museums for this study: the Bezalel Museum in Jerusalem, and three Central European museums, namely those of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest. Each one of these museums represented a unique approach to the manner of representing Jewish identity: the Vienna Jewish Museum—established in the capital of the multinational and multi-ethnic Austro-Hungarian Empire—was the first of its kind and represented the view that a museum should reflect, through its output, the historical and cultural ties among the various Jewish communities; the Prague Jewish Museum represented an aspiration to document a particular community by specifically presenting the items that were regarded as those that best reflected the character of the community; and the Jewish Museum of Budapest focused on the identity of Hungarian Jewry. In contrast to all these, in Palestine, the Bezalel National Museum represented the world's first attempt to establish an institution that would serve as a source of inspiration for the creation of a new Jewish identity, culture, and art.

In the framework of my discussion of these museums, I shall attempt to chart the changing nature of the Jewish museum by examining the important chapters in the histories of the institutions in question, and point to the processes and forces at work in molding the special character of each. In this context, it is interesting, for instance, to look at the manner in which the community responsible for a particular museum related to the society around it, the conflicts between various groups within the community, and, above all, the manner in which the museum directors and curators addressed important, difficult questions related to these issues.

This book raises three main questions with regard to each of the museums discussed: Who were the personalities who established the museum, and what were the main themes they focused on in assembling the collections and exhibitions? How did the exhibits serve the museum in its efforts to define Jewish identity? And to what extent was the nature

of the museum determined by its directors and curators as opposed to other personages with different points of views?

Other questions to be addressed are the issues of nationalism anti-Semitism, and the extent to which changing attitudes towards Jewish nationalism would find their expression in the transformation that the Jewish museums would undergo, from institutions representing a religious ethnic minority—as in the cases of the Jewish museums of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest—to an institution representing a nation striving for sovereignty in its own land, as in the case of the Bezalel National Museum in Jerusalem. The questions of nationalism and anti-Semitism have hardly been explored in this context, and yet they underlie the heart and soul of Jewish museology, both in the past and in the present.

### Jewish History and Art—the Background to the Development of the Jewish Museum

The origins of the Jewish museum are inextricably linked to the transformations that began in the nineteenth century in the wake of the Emancipation. These changes encompassed the fields of historical research and aesthetic perception, and various approaches towards collection, documentation, and preservation. The founders of the first Jewish museums were influenced by the historic and aesthetic views of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (“Science of Judaism”) scholars. But in practical terms, the foundations for these museums were laid by the first exhibitions of Judaica and Jewish history staged in Paris and London.

The Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the Napoleonic Era were all factors that prepared the groundwork for the departure of the Jews of Central and Western Europe from within the physical and spiritual confines of the ghetto. Emancipation also encouraged Jews to seek a rapprochement between traditional Judaism and modernity, and between Jewish and secular culture, giving birth to the Reform movement. The aforementioned historical events also produced a desire to place Jewish culture on a par with European culture. Jews began studying their own history, and refashioning their religious practices and beliefs to adjust to their own changing

circumstances. These new interests derived from the changes taking place in the worldview of the young Jewish generation in response to its encounter with European culture—especially the new emphasis in German philosophy on history. They also derived from a perceived need to respond to derogative Christian attitudes toward Jewish practice and culture, and to all the other various manifestations of German anti-Semitism.

National ideas played an important role in the changed political and cultural conditions in the new era following Emancipation, and Reform Judaism was in part conditioned by the need to come to grips with nationalism.

Emancipation placed demands on the Jewish population. Specifically, it necessitated allegiance to the national entities that characterized the lands where Jews lived, and Jews were thus forced to revise their self-perception with regard to their own national affiliation. According to the Reform movement, Judaism as a whole was involved in a process of change, and the very nature of the Jewish people was changing as well. In this view, the Jews had constituted a nation in the past, but this was no longer the case, and messianic hopes had to be interpreted in universal terms rather than as aspirations for national revival. Nationalism worsened the already difficult situation of the Jews. Many Christians regarded Judaism as a nation within a nation, and Jews and Christians alike sometimes made use of the term “host state” in order to characterize the status of Jews as “guests” or “strangers” in their native lands.

As we shall see, prior to World War II, the directors and curators of the Jewish museums of Vienna, Prague, and Budapest all tried to utilize their permanent and temporary exhibitions as vehicles, to convey the message that Jews were loyal citizens with deep roots in their native countries.

Nationalistic Jewish movements—Zionism in particular—represented an additional threat to the process of integration, and acculturated Jews feared that such movements would exacerbate anti-Semitism. “We are first and foremost Germans, Frenchmen, Englishmen, Americans—only then Jews,” reacted a hostile reviewer to Moses

Hess’s *Rom und Jerusalem*, published in 1862. Thirty-three years later, in his essay-book, *National-Judentum* (National Judaism), published in 1897, Moritz Güdemann, the chief rabbi of Vienna and one of the founders of the Jewish museum in Vienna, reacted in a similar way to Theodor Herzl’s *Der Judenstaat*, published in 1896.

Acculturated Jews wanted to be accepted as belonging to the European nationalities among whom they lived; they wanted to think of themselves as part of European history. However, to many Europeans, the Jewish religion represented an ahistorical entity, and governments in Central Europe enacted laws that seemingly aimed at making Judaism disappear. As Franz Kafka wrote in 1920, fifty years after the Emancipation, Jews still had to work hard to earn their past. They had to find a way to remain Jewish and yet become European, and adapt to the present while retaining the Jewish religion’s ties to tradition. Some of them, aware of the contemporary obsession with historical development, claimed that Judaism, like Christianity, had never ceased to evolve in accordance with changing circumstances. In the course of the nineteenth century, Jewish intellectuals established and developed the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism), a movement that related to various branches of Jewish literature, history, and culture.

### Wissenschaft des Judentums: Science of Judaism

In 1819, the year of the Hep-Hep anti-Jewish riots, a group of young Berlin Jews headed by Leopold Zunz and Eduard Gans (the latter a noted jurist and pupil of Hegel), created the *Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden* (Society for Jewish Culture and Science). Established as a project aimed at combating anti-Semitism through culture and education, the *Verein* was the first attempt to interpret Jewish existence in the terms of the nineteenth century, and the first organized scholarly attempt to develop and disseminate the Science of Judaism. It attracted the most brilliant of Germany’s Jews, including Heinrich Heine and David Friedlander. This circle of young intellectuals reasoned that the persistence of anti-Semitism following Emancipation was the result of European

society's ignorance of Jewish history, and of Judaism's contribution to European culture. These intellectuals shared ambitious goals, and sought to make use of cultural and educational tools to alter reality and enhance the image of contemporary Judaism.

The thirty-five founders of the Verein hoped to achieve their goals with the use of an academic, research-based approach to the various branches of Jewish learning, literature, and history. The members of the Verein were convinced that Judaism, like any other culture, deserved respect in its own right. They regarded Jewish history as a subject worthy of academic study, and believed that scientific research could serve to improve the image of Judaism in the eyes of the Christian world, and thus help Jews attain equality and integration in contemporary life and culture.

The Society's members declared that the new historiography—derived through the respected and objective critical tools of the scientific method— would be their principal weapon in combating anti-Semitism. They hoped that a “scientific” correction of misinformation regarding Jews and Judaism would dispel prejudice, win the support of German scholars, and contribute to the self-respect and pride of the acculturated Jew, whose self-image had been undermined by anti-Semitic accusations. In an early manuscript, Leopold Zunz, one of the Society's leading members, spoke glowingly of the potential power of the Science of Judaism movement to battle the prejudices of anti-Semitism.

The Society's members believed the new “science” would serve as a medium for presenting, preserving, and transmitting the corpus of Jewish literary works. They hoped to achieve their goals by establishing an academic institution, organizing lectures on Jewish history, founding schools, and sponsoring teachers' seminars.

Although the Society was disbanded in 1825 after only five years of activity, and although some of its leading figures—such as Eduard Gans and Heinrich Heine—subsequently converted to Christianity, it managed to initiate the publication, under the editorship of Leopold Zunz, of the *Zeitschrift für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Periodical of the

Science of Judaism). The spirit of the “Science of Judaism” persisted thanks to Zunz, who believed in the movement's regenerative power, and succeeded in laying the cornerstone for its eventual successor, the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) movement.

The goals of the Science of Judaism were similar to those of the Verein, namely to bring Jews into the orbit of German culture and, at the same time, reinforce Jewish identity by bridging the gulf between secular and religious education.

From the outset, the Science of Judaism movement found itself in competition with the Jewish Reform movement. Indeed, intellectually these were two opposing movements; whereas the members of the Reform movement were striving to erase as best as possible the differences between Jews and Christians by moderating previously axiomatic aspects of the Jewish religion (for instance, by emphasizing the universalistic elements of the Jewish commandments), the founders of the Science of Judaism were attempting to underline all that is special and distinctive about Judaism, and familiarize the public—Jews and Christians alike—with these distinctions.

Jewish self-justification paralleled the historical justifications to which Christians resorted in order to gain renewed insights into their own religion. Both the Science of Judaism and the Christian historical understanding were products of historicism; both were reactions to the Enlightenment. However, because its main purpose was to assist Jews to integrate into European culture, Science of Judaism rarely associated its aims with nationalism. Few of the movement's supporters were favorably disposed toward Zionism. Heinrich Graetz stood out as an exception in this regard.

The renewed interest in Jewish history had already begun in the generation of Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) and Naphtali Herz Wessely (1725–1805). Nevertheless, the serious study of Jewish history only began in the second decade of the nineteenth century with the publication in 1820 in Vienna of the book *Vorlesungen über die Neuere Geschichte der Juden* (Lectures on the modern History of the Jews) by the Hungarian poet and scholar Solomon Lewison (1789–1821); and

with the writings of Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), who insisted that a scientific, historical approach was the appropriate means by which to render Judaism compatible with the spirit of the times.

Zunz, who eventually dissociated himself from the Reform movement, believed as stated earlier, in the regenerative powers of scientific scholarship, and in the need to present Judaism as a growing spiritual phenomenon. His works did in fact apply the scientific historical approach in an attempt to unify Jewish studies with general studies, in the hope that these fields would complement and enrich each other. The many topics of his scholarship in the field of Jewish studies included rabbinical literature, history, and literature. In his articles, Zunz tried to prove that Jewish culture was one of the primary forces contributing to the progress of Western culture, and proposed answers to questions involving the transition from traditional Jewish learning to Western education and culture.

One of the most ardent supporters of Zunz's work was Frederick David Mocatta, who was among the organizers of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition in London in 1887. At this exhibition, two letters bearing Zunz's signature were put on display, and in the accompanying label, Zunz was described as the greatest scholar of his kind of the nineteenth century. A portrait of Zunz appeared on display at the first Jewish museum in Vienna.

Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891), one of the leading scholars of the Science of Judaism and editor of the *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* between 1868 and 1887, was the author of the first book to give a detailed history of the Jewish people. Although it was preceded by other attempts to chart the course of Jewish history, Graetz's eleven-volume *Geshichte der Juden* (History of the Jews), published between 1853 and 1875, represented the first effort to treat the subject of Jewish history as the narrative of a living people. Throughout his book, Graetz describes the struggle for existence, the torments of the Diaspora, and national aspirations, while at the same time documenting the phenomenon of Jew-hatred throughout history.

Graetz based his research mostly on literary sources, and general historiography was referred

to only sporadically in his work. As a result, Jewish history was portrayed as an isolated, internal matter. This approach would stir criticism from later Jewish historians like Salo Baron and Simon Dubnow, who took issue with Graetz for detaching Jewish history from world history, and opposed his definition of the Jewish experience through the ages to be “suffering and spiritual scholarship.” In contrast, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi believed that viewing the narrative of the Jewish people as something focused mostly on culture and suffering, as Graetz had done, was an approach that represented a necessary link between the Middle Ages and modern history, and a natural outgrowth of the Jewish preoccupation with martyrology and Kabbalistic mysticism.

Severe criticism of Graetz also emanated from outside the Jewish world. In 1879, the nationalistic Prussian historian Heinrich von Treitschke launched a devastating attack against Volume 11 of Graetz's History of the Jews, which dealt with the later periods of history. Treitschke accused Graetz of plotting, for all intents and purposes, to establish a Jewish-German culture on German soil. Graetz refuted Treitschke's arguments in articles he published in the local media, in which he insisted that the glorious past of the Jewish people did not prevent them from integrating successfully into Western European life, and that the Jews were patriotic subjects of their native lands.

Many of Germany's assimilated Jews also took issue with Graetz's views on Jewish history. In 1885, he was pointedly not invited to take part in the establishment of the “Jewish Historical Committee,” whose purpose was to collect source material on the subject of Jewish history in Germany. However, the broader Jewish public did express its recognition of his work on the occasion of his 70th birthday in Berlin, and with the publication of the book *Ateret Tzvi* (Crown of Glory), a Biblical play on words on Graetz's Hebrew first name, Tzvi). In that same year, 1887, Graetz was honored in a manner similar to the honor conferred on Leopold Zunz, when he was invited to London to deliver a lecture at the opening ceremony of the Anglo-Jewish Historical Exhibition.

Alongside the Central European Science of Judaism movement, a Jewish Enlightenment movement arose in Eastern Europe. The two movements coexisted in parallel. The proponents of the Eastern European movement, mainly from Vilna and Odessa, had been exposed to traditional education; they included such authors as Sholem Yankev Abramovitch (Mendele Mocher Sforim), Yehuda Leib Gordon, Moshe Leib Lilienblum and Peretz Smolenskin. They fostered literary creativity in Hebrew, and created a new Hebrew literature, imbued with the values of the past along with a positive outlook with regard to the distinctiveness of the Jewish nation. This philosophical approach laid the groundwork for the birth of the most far-reaching Jewish experiment of modern times—one that would strive to release the Jewish people from trying to prove their allegiance to foreign nations and enable them to redefine their nationalism and be masters of their own fate—namely the Zionist movement. The transition from *Haskalah* (Enlightenment) to nationalism took place in the early 1880s, when deep disillusionment with the meager gains of emancipation drove several of the *Maskilim* to be among the main leaders of the *Hibat Tzion* (Love of Zion) movement. As we shall see, Peretz Smolenskin became a role model for the young Boris Schatz, the future founder of *Bezalel*. Smolenskin's death in 1885 was, according to Schatz, a formative event in his life.

The two goals, as well as the inevitable first two consequences, of the Jewish Enlightenment movement were therefore the opening of the gates of the Jewish social ghetto, and a diminished role for the formerly dominant preoccupation with Torah studies. The exit from the ghetto gave Jews a new perspective, and served to sharpen their awareness of just how absent an appreciation for the concept of beauty had been in their own Jewish cultural experience. Along with a general desire for change, this awareness at first stimulated discussion, and subsequently encouraged scholarship on the subject of Jewish art. Soon these trends would be accompanied by a massive unleashing of Jewish artistic and creative energy.

### Aesthetics in Jewish Thought

With regard to Jewish attitudes toward aesthetics, for all intents and purposes, practice derived from theory. As far as theory was concerned, in ancient times, as a matter of religious principle, Jewish thought was negatively biased against any preoccupation with aesthetics. The Second Commandment, forbidding graven images—and many other restrictions in the Bible, all intended to prevent submission to man-made idols and deities—had a negative impact on the artistic development of the Jewish people. Another aesthetic disincentive can be found in the Mishnaic tractate *Ethics of the Fathers*, in teachings attributed to Rabbi Jacob or Rabbi Simon Bar Yohai (*Ethics of the Fathers* 3:7) to the effect that it is harmful to allow things of beauty to take one's attention away from what the Jewish Sages regard as most important—namely religious studies. Such a notion was hardly unique in the ancient world, and similar ideas were expressed by Greek philosophers, including Socrates. According to Plato, Socrates argued that painters, like poets, misinterpret the truth, and arouse the wrong parts of the human soul, thus weakening its best part, that is to say, the intellect.

Only at a later stage in history was a distinct religious, philosophical dimension added to the prohibition, namely that the essence of God, and by the same token, the essence of the human being created in His image, were by definition spiritual, and as such, could not be rendered in appropriate visual or plastic terms. With the consolidation and spread of monotheism, and with the dissipation of the threatening challenge of paganism, the emphasis shifted to prohibiting the practice of abstract idolatry, in other words, proscribing any expression of the non-visual in visual terms. Judaism's disapproving attitude towards the figurative arts was therefore rooted in theological and philosophical principles, first and foremost the fear that giving visual form to spiritual concepts represented a violation of the very nature of the Divine Being or the human being.

In general, these prohibitions and Judaism's inherently resistance to the plastic arts did not stand in the way of the development of Jewish

artistic creativity and practice. This is obvious from the Torah's description—in a narrative which relates to a period that even precedes the building of the First Temple—of the talents of Bezalel son of Uri and Aholi'av son of Achisamach, the first Hebrew artists, who were entrusted with the design of the Tabernacle and its vessels: “He has filled them with wisdom of heart, to do all manner of work, of the engraver, and of the craftsman, and of the embroiderer” (Exodus 35:35).

In the modern era, only a handful of Jewish thinkers dared venture into the field of aesthetics. One such thinker was Moses Mendelssohn, who wrote a number of essays on the subject, but even he, who was among the first to display a renewed interest in Jewish history, in this regard, only ventured into the field of general philosophy and not Jewish philosophy. Moreover, the first generations of scholars of the Science of Judaism movement, did not relate to the subject of Jewish art seriously. An example of this can be found in Leopold Zunz's seminal work, *On Rabbinic Literature* (1818), which initiated the Science of Judaism; while listing the contributions Jews had made to culture in different fields, and hence the subjects that should be included in a Science of Judaism curriculum, Zunz mentions art, but only in a footnote: “An aficionado could gather some material even on painting and embroidery, at least in modern times.”

Other scholars of the first generations of the Science of Judaism dealt with the subject in a manner that only embraced the Christian claim that Jews lacked the capacity for the visual arts. These scholars used it as a strategy in combating anti-Semitism; they cited the dearth of Jewish art and its basis in the Second Commandment to connect Jewish aniconism with Jewish ethics.

In his book *The Artless Jew*, Kalman Blant argues that the modern discourse on Jewish art was profoundly influenced by anti-Semitism and Jewish assimilation. He shows that the myth of the Jewish aniconism was created by Jewish German intellectuals parallel with the building of a modern Jewish identity, and in response to Kant and Hegel's opinions on Jewish art. In 1790, in his *Critique of Reason*, Immanuel Kant expressed his admiration for aniconism, writing that the Second

Commandment is “perhaps the most sublime in the Jewish Law,” and that “this commandment alone can explain the enthusiasm that the Jewish people in its civilized era felt for its religion when it compared itself to other peoples’, or can explain the pride that Islam inspires.” On the other hand, Hegel argued, post-Christian Judaism no longer had a real history, only a protracted existence. He faulted Judaism for failing to represent God visually, and claimed that the spiritual emptiness of the Jews was reflected in the emptiness of all their creations. In the introduction to the lectures on fine art delivered in Berlin in the 1820s, he argued that “everything genuine in spirit and nature alike is inherently concrete and, despite its universality, has nevertheless subjectivity and particularity in itself. Therefore the Jews and the Turks have not been able by art to represent their God, who does not even amount to such an abstraction of the understanding, in the positive way that the Christians have.”

In an effort to cope with those arguments, Heinrich Graetz, like other Jewish intellectuals, gave expression to a theme central to the Science of Judaism, namely that Jewish aniconism was consistent with the Jewish belief in the primacy of the ethical over the aesthetic. In *Konstruktion der jüdischen Geschichte* (*Structure of Jewish History*, 1846), he delineated a clear distinction between the pagans, who experience the divine as something visible, and the Jews, who experience God through the medium of the ear; and between immoral Greek art and pure Jewish aniconism. In the introduction to the first volume of his *History* (1874), Graetz defines Jewish aniconism as an ethical choice, and argues that “Israel neither sculptured nor painted gods, for it considered the deity as an object of solemn and devote reverence and not as a subject of frivolous play.”

Heinrich Heine, a prominent member of the Verein who converted to Christianity in 1824—having expressed an admiration for Greek culture and disdain for Judaism's hatred of visual imagery and the plastic arts—apparently changed his mind toward the end of his life. In 1854, two years before his death, reflecting on his rediscovery of Judaism, he confessed that his earlier enthusiasm for Greek culture had been inappropriate, and

that despite Judaism's lack of appreciation for the visual arts, the Jewish religious culture possessed strength and moral clarity, notwithstanding the centuries of persecution and misery suffered by its adherents. As we shall see, the organizers of the Historic Anglo Jewish exhibition of 1887 displayed a facsimile of the signature of Heinrich Heine alongside the signatures of prominent Jewish scholars like Leopold Zunz.

Speaking of Heine, and other poets and composers of Jewish origin, in his anti-Semitic pamphlet "Judaism in Music", (published in 1850 and reprinted in 1869), Richard Wagner insisted that Jews were biologically inferior and unable to contribute anything of value to German culture. Moreover, as an "authentic" German nationalist, Wagner claimed that Jews were distinguished by the very nature of their being from the organic community of the Volk (the "People"), the only body from which true art could spring. As far as visual arts were concerned, he argued that:

The Jews' sense of beholding has never been of such a kind as to let plastic artists arise among them: from ever have their eyes been busied with far more practical affairs, than beauty and the spiritual substance of the world of forms. We know nothing of a Jewish architect or sculptor in our times, so far as I am aware: whether recent painters of Jewish descent have really created in their art, I must leave it to connoisseurs to judge, however, these artists occupy no other standing toward their art, than that of modern Jewish composers toward music.

Wagner's expressions of anti-Semitism were unexceptional in his day. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, racial forms of anti-Semitism, and a growing interest in Jewish art, as expressed, for instance, in the first exhibitions that displayed collections of Jewish ceremonial art (the Strauss Collection in Paris in 1878, and the Anglo-Jewish exhibition in London in 1887), compelled Jewish intellectuals to modify their views. Members of the new generation of scholars belonging to the Science of Judaism movement, were among the first to make serious attempts to change public attitudes towards Jewish art.

Heinrich Graetz was not one of them. He did not change his opinion on Jewish art, and even in his lecture at the Anglo Jewish exhibition in 1887, which displayed some of the best contemporary assemblages of Jewish ritual objects, such as the the Strauss and the Sassoon collections, were put on display—art was not mentioned in his proposal for the creation of a Jewish academy. In his lecture, Graetz lamented the fact that the "People of the Book" did not study their own origins, and stated that such an academy's curriculum should include the study of Bible, the Talmud, and Jewish philosophy, history, and archaeology.

It was David Kaufmann (1852–1899), Graetz's pupil at the Breslau Rabbinical Seminary and a scholar of the Science of Judaism, who, following his visit to the exhibition of the Strauss Collection in Paris in 1878, published the first academic article on the importance of ritual objects as an expression of Jewish art. Kaufmann was the first to concentrate his efforts in proving the existence of Jewish art. In his historical study "Art in the Synagogue" published in the London Jewish Quarterly Review in January 1897, Kaufmann specifically refuted the assumption that the Second Commandment prevented Jews from producing images. In 1897, he joined the scientific committee of the first Jewish museum in Vienna, and his article on the subject of "Art in the Synagogue" was published in the museum's first report.

Kaufmann, the first dedicated promoter of the study of Jewish art, continued his collaboration with members of Jewish museum in Vienna. In 1898, along with Julius von Schlosser, an art curator at Vienna's Kunsthistorisches Museum, and David Heinrich Müller, a professor of Semitic languages at the University of Vienna, he published a facsimile edition of the Sarajevo Haggadah. Funded by the Jewish museum, it was the first major academic study of a Jewish work of art. Kaufmann was responsible for writing an appendix to this edition, on the subject of the history of Jewish manuscript illumination.

Micha Josef Berdyczewski (1865–1921), a younger member of Kaufmann's generation, was the first to relate to the subject of Jewish art in a comprehensive manner, in an attempt to unify ethics

and aesthetics. He believed that both subjects were of equal importance, and ought to be combined. He himself made an earnest attempt to combine the two subjects in Jewish thought. In Germany, at the time when the first Jewish museum was opening its doors in Vienna, and David Kaufmann was conducting his research on Jewish art—and some twenty years after the Strauss Collection was put on display at the Exposition Universelle, the Paris World's Fair—Berdyczewski produced a doctoral thesis in philosophy. It was entitled *On the Connection between Ethics and Aesthetics* (1896), and it introduced a new theme.

Berdyczewski attempted to “merge the good with the beautiful.” In his opinion, such a combination was necessary in order to integrate a modernizing Jewish community into Western culture. But nevertheless, when he began writing his thesis, it occurred to him that, from the standpoint of traditional Jewish thought, the concept of unifying the good with the beautiful might be interpreted as a serious departure from the norms of acceptable conduct. He therefore consulted with a number of different people, including Rabbi Avraham Yehoshua Tahon, Ahad Ha'am, and Rabbi Mordechai Ehrenpreis. All of these personalities were later involved in the establishment of the Bezalel Museum.

As stated, the main thrust of Berdyczewski's essay was the development of a way of thinking that would require a blending of the good with the beautiful. Such a way of thinking would not be narrowly limited to Jewish needs, and would instead represent a comprehensive philosophical system of thought. In the preface, Berdyczewski pointed out that early Jewish thought did not engender an epistemological theory. Further on in the essay, he proposed that even the ancient Hebrews recognized the internal connection between an ethical worldview and an aesthetic worldview, but despite this, they imparted a divine dimension only to morality.

Unlike Berdyczewski, who believed that ethics and aesthetics, were of equal value and worthy of being combined, Ahad Ha'am was convinced that the latter was meant to serve the former. Consistent with this approach, he insisted there was no

justification for the existence of aesthetic studies, or even for the existence of artistic creative work, if such work superseded the philosophical or social discussion of the real existential issues facing humanity. In the years when he served as editor of the journal *Hashilo'ach*, he restricted the literary column to those poems and stories he deemed to bear a relevant message to the lives of the Jewish people. In founding the Bezalel School and Museum, Boris Schatz adopted Ahad Ha'am's concept regarding the role of the aesthetic studies and the existence of artistic creative work.

This book opened with the reasons for setting up the first Jewish museum in central Europe, and continued with a description of the museums' activities. Following that, it documented the subsequent radical change of the Jewish museum, which turned from a museum representing a religious and ethnic minority that sought to be integrated into European society, into a museum of the Jewish people in Palestine.

In founding Bezalel, Schatz aimed not only to collect the creative output of the Jewish people but also to inspire new art—art that would draw on Jewish sources and affect all walks of life, including architecture, design, and art, ultimately doing away with the difference between arts and crafts. To that end, he founded a museum alongside an arts and crafts school and workshops. Schatz envisioned Bezalel as a national museum, a repository of memory which would enable the creation of authentic Jewish art free of the apologetic outlook which continued to reign supreme among European Jews even after the emancipation. Because the Bezalel museum was, in its early years, just one part of the institution which also included the workshops, Schatz made use of the traveling exhibitions which dovetailed with the Bezalel's school's marketing strategy. As demonstrated above, these exhibitions played a key role in the museum's development. They inspired museums—both Jewish and non-Jewish—to purchase and exhibit works from Bezalel. Some of these works are on view in Jewish museums around the world to this very day.

It is clear today that Boris Schatz's vision regarding art and the Jewish museum as a national



institution—a vision expressed in his book *Jerusalem Rebuilt*, a utopian view of the future, from the perspective of someone living Palestine in 2006—has been realized. A hundred years after the founding of Bezalel, Jewish museums around the world display works by Israeli artists in permanent and temporary exhibitions. In Israel, permanent exhibitions on the history of Israeli art have been presented by the Israel Museum, Jerusalem (since 2010) and the Tel Aviv Museum of Art (since 2011). And Jewish museums around the world include works by Israeli artists in their permanent and temporary exhibitions.

The case of the Bezalel Museum and Boris Schatz, proves, beyond a doubt, that the museum director's personality is critical to the institution's success and relevance. On the one hand, Schatz was almost single-handedly instrumental in turning Jerusalem into the center of artistic endeavor in Palestine, simply by the virtue of the fact that he had established Bezalel. But on the other hand, he was unable to maintain Bezalel's leading status, due to his insistence on restricting the institution to the confines of Jewish art. This attitude caused young Bezalel artists to turn their backs on the institution, and as a result, in Schatz's own lifetime, the museum degenerated into a dated, irrelevant institution.

The museum's image was turned around by Mordechai Narkiss, Schatz's student, who opened it up to modern art and young Israeli artists. Narkiss, a researcher by vocation, realized that permanent exhibitions were not sufficient in maintaining a modern and relevant museum. He therefore organized temporary and traveling exhibitions, through which he sought to expose the collections to as broad and variegated a public as possible. Narkiss believed in the ability of the museum to serve as an educational and unifying factor. He stressed the importance of Bezalel as a national museum, and as such, he believed its role was to rescue, preserve and display the art treasures of different ethnic Jewish groups.

Mordechai Narkiss also worked to build a new building worthy of the museum, thereby laying the foundation for the founding of the Israel Museum, which opened to the public in its new abode in May

1965. Its collection, consisting of items collected by Schatz and Narkiss, has become the most important collection of Jewish art. Narkiss's original plan to incorporate in the Judaica wing of the new museum—galleries dedicated to each and every ethnic Jewish group was eventually realized in the Israel Museum's ethnographic wing, and then only partially. This was mainly because of a cosmopolitan aspirations on the part of the museum's directors, their disdain for provinciality, and their desire to attract donors and transform the Israel Museum into a world class museum with exhibits worthy of international recognition. Consequently, to this day, the directors are investing large sums in acquiring works of art from around the world. To some extent this has come at the expense of Israeli art, and it is certainly a departure from Narkiss's idea of assembling collections and displays dedicated to all ethnic Jewish groups.

Mordechai Narkiss' vision has inspired the founding of museums focusing on the history and art of ethnic groups in Israel since the 1950s. As I have previously pointed out, he encouraged and collaborated with the first ethnic Jewish museum to be established in Israel, the museum of Italian Jewish Art, first created in Jerusalem in 1955.

In 1959, two years after the passing of Mordechai Narkiss, the World Jewish Congress first adopted a proposal to establish a museum in Israel devoted to the subject of Jewry in the Diaspora. The proposal, formulated by Nahum Goldmann, then president of both the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization, was similar to Narkiss' plan. It envisaged the creation of a museum dedicated to the different ethnic groups. The galleries of this museum would be used to showcase exhibits from every region of the Jewish world.

Alternatives to this idea were put forward in the 1960's, and eventually it was decided that the goal of the museum would be primarily educational, with the focus being on Jewish history and identity. The concept of the museum's permanent exhibition was laid out by Abba Kovner, a poet and intellectual, who took issue with the Israeli notion of a uniform Jewish identity. He believed that memory was a crucial element of

identity, and that the role of the museum was to show how the present and future of the Jewish people are inextricably linked to the Jewish past. In conceiving the museum, Kovner was thinking mostly of the younger generation of Israelis, and how ignorant it was of its own history:

When I immigrated to Israel after World War II, I would meet the youngsters of Israel and listen to their songs and their chatter and view it as a first among Jews/human beings—people who are fully conscious of the fact that they are indeed writing a new scroll of genealogy, which begins with them. And as I thought about the scroll of genealogy which was burned in Europe, I was doubly saddened at the thought that the members of this wonderful generation of young Israelis—when they grow up and grow old—may never even know what they should be crying about.

Kovner believed that by combining history and art, museums could serve as powerful educational vehicles reaching out to broad audiences. He felt museums could and should be more effective than history books in influencing society. The educational mission that Beth Hatefutsoth (the Diaspora Museum) set for itself was followed by an innovative idea, namely that it is not sufficient to conserve artifacts and present exhibitions of collections. The main goal of a museum should be to effectively fill the role of storyteller, and stir its visitors to think and to meditate. Kovner and Jeshajahu Weinberg, the first director of Beth Hatefutsoth, and a former theater director of the Tel Aviv's Cameri theatre, believed that story telling is a powerful way to induce emotion, and thus to influence and educate.

The central theme of the Museum's permanent exhibition, the survival of the Jewish people in the Diaspora, was presented thematically, and the messages of Jewish history, creativity and continuity were conveyed through portrayals of the central aspects of Jewish life, culture and spiritual values.

As planning progressed, the difficulty of assembling a coherent picture of Jewish life and history through the exclusive use of authentic exhibits became evident. Consequently, Beth Hatefutsoth was the first Jewish museum to construct a coherent historical narrative using a variety of

new tools, including reconstruction, and the production of "artificial" exhibits, namely works of art and crafts commissioned especially for the display. These exhibits included models of synagogues, monuments and sculptures. Artistic installations and texts from Jewish sources were also used to convey the message. In addition, the large-scale use of photographs, films, audiovisual devices, and computer technology represented a central characteristic of the museum.

Not long after it opened, the museum acquired a reputation as an innovative and iconoclastic institution, presenting history in a very compelling manner. Not surprisingly, it exerted a great deal of influence on the Jewish museums of the United States, Europe, and Israel. Many new museum projects, have admittedly emulated Beth Hatefutsoth's concept and display model. One good example in this regard is the Jewish Museum in New York, which built a new wing devoted to the history of the Jewish people that opened in the year 2000. These days, most of the Jewish museums being newly built or restored are making use of those methodological innovations, although in their display, they make ample use of original items. Included in this category is Warsaw's Polin—Museum of the History of Polish Jews, opened in 2013.

One of the most interesting examples of a museum inspired by Beth Hatefutsoth is the new Jewish Museum in Vienna, which opened in November 1993. The new museum's founders headed by Felicitas Heimann-Jelinek, envisaged having their institution serve as a cultural center, in which memory, and a dialogue between past and present define both the museum's form and content. Heimann-Jelinek received her PhD from the University in Vienna. From 1982 to 1984 she worked at the Eisenstadt Jewish Museum established by Kurt Schubert, and in 1984 she curated an exhibition of pieces from the Berger Collection, which was donated to the new Jewish Museum in Vienna upon its establishment in 1988.

Engaging with memory had been a central aspect of Jewish Museums since the first one was opened in Vienna, but its definition by the fragmented character of the collections as a key conceptual

axis was novel. Moreover, the museum's curators stressed that the display was not meant to teach Judaism, and the Jewish community's history by means of a linear narrative. Instead, it focused on presenting important issues through an open narrative that was meant to challenge the viewer, and arouse debates. All in all, Vienna's new Jewish Museum—like Vienna's original Jewish museum in its day—was introducing challenging, and innovative concepts and ideas.

The exhibitions in the museum were on view on three floors. The Installation of Memory by New York artist Nancy Spero was placed in the museum's central space, namely the entrance hall and auditorium. A display cabinet with items from the Max Berger collection was also located in this vicinity. Installation of Memory engaged with the religious, social, and cultural life of Viennese Jewry at different times in history, through texts and images, presented in fresco-like fashion on the ceiling and walls. The items of Judaica from the Max Berger Collection (in memory of the members of Berger's family who died in the Holocaust) were presented in a display case designed to look like as a glass cube. The walls of the cube were inscribed with texts from Jewish sources, giving details regarding their original purpose as well as the values they represented. Both installations were visible from all other floors.

The display on the second floor also dealt with the theme of memory. It featured subjects from the history of Viennese Jewry, presented as flashes of memory in the form of twenty-one holograms. On the third floor, items from the collection of the old Jewish Museum's collection were exhibited as a "visible storage."

In terms of their goal of focusing attention on memory and engaging in a dialogue between past and present, the curators had apparently succeeded. The first hall presented items collected after the Holocaust, while the last hall presented the collection of the old Jewish museum. In this sense, the order in which things were presented in the new museum resembled that of the old museum. There, too, the first hall showcased the new, contemporary identity of Viennese and Austro-Hungarian Jewry, whereas the last hall related to

the community of days gone by. But in terms of the objective of preserving the memory of the past and keeping it alive, with all its emphasis on the fragmented nature of collections, the new museum produced little more than an abstract jigsaw-puzzle which was unable to stimulate interest, or convey the richness and diversity that characterized this important community.

An examination of the agenda and exhibits of the new Jewish museum, Vienna will show that the concept is on one hand reminiscent of Beth Hatefutsoth, and on the other hand a reaction to it. The influence is evident in the Viennese's museum's self-definition as a cultural center, and its focus on memory and Jewish values. In addition, a degree of influence is also apparent with respect to display methods, including the use of art installations and texts. For instance, Installation of Memory at the Jewish Museum, Vienna recalls the Memorial Column in the central hall of Beth Hatefutsoth. However, as far as the concept of the display is concerned, the Jewish museum in Vienna, rejected the role of the museum as storyteller, and decided to focus on the fragmentary state of its collection old and new. Consequently, in its display, it makes ample use of original items. Moreover, the display relied entirely on art installations, thanks, perhaps, to the influence of the new exhibition at the Vienna's Max, the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts in Vienna, which like the Jewish Museum, first opened in 1993.

While the sincere effort of the Jewish Museum's curators may be commendable, many visitors and critics have claimed that although the exhibit may be effective as art, it falls short as a vehicle for preserving memory, and stimulating curiosity or emotion. Given the fact that most of the visitors, Jews and non-Jews, have little or no knowledge or background in Jewish history, the result was disappointing since it did not impart essential information regarding the Austrian Jewish community—the type of knowledge required to stimulate a meaningful dialogue. The fine temporary exhibitions mounted by the museum for many years thereafter engaged with a multitude of important subjects. But although they were meant to complement the permanent exhibition, they could not function as an adequate substitute for it.

A change occurred in the management of the Jewish Museum, Vienna in November 2009, and the journalist Danielle Spera was appointed to serve as the new director. Upon taking office, Spera declared her intent to open up the museum to diverse public, and provide that public with insights regarding the past and present of the Austrian Jewish community. Her statement, specifying that she intended to achieve her aim through a new permanent exhibition, was an implied criticism of the display organized by her predecessor.

The museum reopened in 2011, after being closed for remodeling. Most of the displays in it were replaced, and two new art installations were introduced. At the entrance to the museum a light installation by Vienna-born artist Brigitte Kowitz was installed, with the word Museum in Hebrew. The Nancy Spero Installation of Memory remained in place, but the Berger exhibit was replaced by the exhibition entitled “From Alef to Tav—From Beginning to End”—an exhibition about the Jewish festivals.

Changes were made on the second floor as well. The hologram exhibition was replaced by a new permanent exhibition entitled “Our City, Jewish Vienna!—Then and Now,” centered on the history of the Viennese Jewry, and its role as a vital part of the city’s cultural and economic life, with an emphasis on the Jewish community after World War II. In 2014, an installation entitled The Sabbath Room, by Israeli artist Maya Zack, was added to the new permanent exhibition. This work reconstructed the Sabbath Room exhibit that was part of the old museum and destroyed when it was closed in 1938. The current installation makes the connection between the old Jewish museum and the new.

The third-floor exhibition which had presented the old museum’s collections in “visible storage” form was also changed. The changes mostly involved the order in which the display items were arranged, and the addition of explanatory texts. The new exhibition curated by Gabriele Kohlbauer-Fritz now included items from the old museum’s collection, alongside the current museum’s new acquisitions, and items from the private collections of Berger, Stern, and Schlaff. The display of items

from the Schlaff collection—pertaining to the subject of anti-Semitism is particularly remarkable. The display cases were lined with mirrors—with some items being presented in a rear view—so that the visitor would be shown a given item in reflection, while also viewing his or her own reactions in the mirror. Overall, the museum’s new permanent exhibitions reflect a desire to present a refined concept the narrative exhibition while still making use of the same new display techniques—including artistic installations.

A year after the opening of the Jewish museum in Vienna, in October 1994, the Jewish Museum in Prague was returned to the management of the small Jewish community, which was now governed by the post-communist Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic. Leo Pavlat, a journalist and former anti-communist dissident, was appointed director. Since then, a significant deal of work has been done at the museum. In a sense, this may be viewed as a natural sequel to the activities that took place here during World War II and its aftermath. The synagogues have been renovated, exhibitions have been renewed, and research papers—regarding the museum’s history, collections and staff—have been published.

The Jewish Museum’s new permanent exhibitions engage with subjects similar to those presented by Josef Polák and his team of curators during the war: the history of the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia, and Jewish customs. The exhibitions are housed in four synagogues, as well as in the Burial Society building located next to the old Jewish cemetery. The displays at the Meisel and the Spanish synagogues present two parts of a historical exhibition about the Jews of Bohemia and Moravia. A similar exhibition, never actually staged, was originally supposed to have taken place during the war.

A two-part exhibition on the subject of Jewish life cycle, customs and holidays is featured at the Klausen synagogue and in the Burial Society building. An exhibition on a similar subject had been presented at the very same synagogue during the war. The memorial site at the Pinkas synagogue, which had been closed after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, was reopened in 1996

with an exhibition of children's paintings from Terezin. The new historical exhibition is making use of new display techniques, such as a virtual tour of Jewish Prague based on Antonin Langweil's renowned model of the city (created 1826–37),<sup>9</sup>—and digitized material, including ancient manuscripts, historical maps of Jewish settlements, and information regarding prominent personalities.

Curators and historians from the Jewish Museum in Prague contributed to the realization of this project. Noteworthy among these individuals—for his sheer dedication and perseverance, as well as scope and volume of his work—is Arno Pařík. Born in Prague, Pařík received his PhD from Charles University, and has been curator of the fine arts collections and researcher at the Jewish Museum in Prague since 1978. He has curated many exhibitions and published articles on the Prague Ghetto, Jewish artists, and the History of Jewish Museums in Czechoslovakia. Since 2008, Pařík has been, taking an active part, in the restoration of the historical buildings in the Czech Republic, and in the planning of exhibitions in the restored buildings.

The project of revitalization of Jewish Sites in the Czech Republic was initiated by the Federation of Jewish Communities and the Prague Jewish Museum in 2006. In the framework of this project, fifteen historical sites—including synagogues, former apartments of rabbis, and other community buildings, were restored in ten localities in Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia. Displays were installed in the renovated buildings, and in the context of the authentic surroundings, these facilities today afford visitors the opportunity to learn about Judaism and Jewish history of the Czech Lands. The staff of the Jewish Museum in Prague is making every effort to carry on the tradition of keeping the memory of the Jewish communities alive, a tradition which began with the museum's founding in 1906 and reached its peak during World War II.

In Budapest—notwithstanding the city's sizable Jewish population, estimated at anywhere between 60 and 150 thousand—the Jewish Museum, despite the sponsorship of the Jewish community institutions, suffered from many years of neglect. Beginning in 2014, however, efforts were made to reverse this situation. The Jewish Museum was linked to the

Jewish community archives, and the name given to this joint institution was “The Hungarian Jewish Museum and Archives.” Zsuzsanna Toronyi was appointed director. Toronyi had been working at the Jewish Museum's archives since 1994, and was involved in research regarding the collections of the museum and the history of the Hungarian Jewish Communities. Toronyi and the museum staff are currently hard at work to make up for all lost years. They seek to fulfill the museum's mission, dedicated to documentation, research, and the staging of new exhibitions.

The museum marked its centenary in 2016 with a temporary exhibition “100 years—100 objects” and a new modern permanent display, comprising two exhibitions and an open archive. The first exhibition will focus on the history of the Pest Jewish Quarter using documents, a variety of objects, and photographs of Jewish people and the streets and buildings in which they lived. Another exhibition, will focus on the history of Hungarian Jewry, and a third exhibition—the open archive mentioned above, will present items from the museum's collections. Overall, the new permanent display will present narrative exhibitions combined with new display techniques, similar to those found in a number of new and renovated Jewish museums.

The Jewish museums examined in this book, are among the few early museums that survived throughout the twentieth century. They all started with small collections and displays, and developed into modern institutions with some of the most important collections in the world and modern sophisticated displays. However, since the late 1980s, a significant number of new Jewish museums have been established in Europe and Israel. In Europe, these institutions reflect a renewed interest in Jewish identity and culture, and many museums have been founded in cities and towns with very small or nonexistent Jewish communities. Some of these were sponsored by local authorities, both Jewish and non-Jewish, while others were products of private initiatives. The people involved with these museums, Jews and non Jews, are making valiant efforts to document and illuminate neglected chapters of Jewish historic and cultural memory in European history. Had it not been for these efforts, many priceless documents,

photographs, and artifacts would be lost forever, and historical sites would disappear.

Meanwhile, in Israel, Beth Hatefutsoth—through its permanent exhibition and through the excellent temporary exhibitions it created in the first two decades of its existence—has inspired ethnic groups to found their own museums. Among these institutions are the Memorial Museum of Hungarian-Speaking Jewry established in Safed in 1986, the Libyan Jewish Heritage Museum, and the Museum of Babylonian Jewry, both established in Or Yehuda in the years 2000 and 2003, respectively, the German Speaking Jewry Heritage Museum, established in Tefen in 2005.

Most of those new museums were initiated by Holocaust survivors and immigrants—many of whom gave their wealth and personal collections, and dedicated themselves to bringing it to fruition. In Europe, the wish of the survivors to document their community's history coincided with the wish of the local authorities to integrate Jewish history and culture into European history. In Israel, museums of different Jewish ethnic groups were established, because their founders felt the story of their community was not sufficiently documented or displayed, or totally neglected in the framework of The Israel Museum and Beth Hatefutsoth.

What will become of these museums in the future remains to be seen. They may grow and develop, or stop to exist and become part of larger institutions. The development of those new museums and their role in defining Jewish identity in the twenty-first century is certainly worthy of special attention. In any case, such an enquiry would move beyond the present one. What is certain is that their very existence reflects the efforts—on the part of both Jews and non-Jews—to contend with the same old issues that originally led to the creation of the first Jewish museums, namely the sinister forces of prejudice, xenophobia, nationalism, and anti-Semitism. Beyond that, their very existence reflects their wish to keep the memory of their communities alive, and add new dimensions of history and culture to the ever changing concept we call “Jewish identity”.

Contents

Acknowledgments

List of Figures

Introduction: Why Jewish Museums?

PART 1: The Strauss Collection and the Anglo-Jewish Exhibition

1 Isaac Strauss and His Collection

2 The Historic Anglo-Jewish Exhibition in London, 1887

PART 2 : The Jewish Museums of Austria-Hungary: Vienna, Prague, and Budapest

3 Introduction: The Jewish Museum in Vienna

4 The Determining Factors in the Establishment of the Museum

5 The Jewish Museum of Vienna, 1895–1906

6 The Exhibits

7 The Jewish Museum of Prague

8 The Jewish Museum of Budapest

PART 3: The Bezalel National Museum in Jerusalem

9 Historical Background

10 To Realize a Dream: Boris Schatz and the Bezalel Museum in the Formative Years, 1906–12

11 The Years 1909–14

12 Boris Schatz's Utopian Museum as Charted in His Book, Jerusalem Rebuilt

13 The Bezalel Museum in the Years following World War I, 1919–26

14 From The Bezalel National Museum to The Israel Museum: Mordechai Narkiss's Vision and Achievements: 1932–57

Conclusion

Epilogue

Bibliography

Index <>

[Jewish Love Magic: From Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages](#) by Ortal-Paz Saar [Magical and Religious Literature of Late Antiquity, Brill, 9789004347885]

“I could not begin better than by informing you regretfully that I am not in the possession of love charms, potions, or philtres. Nor am I in the least capable of influencing the favors of any young lady as may appeal to you.”

“I have no need of artificial aids in that respect, sir.” The complacency undeniably

present in the general's voice was stirred with amusement. "Do you receive many requests for such commodities?"

"Enough. Unfortunately, an uninformed public tends to confuse scholarship with magicianry, and love life seems to be that factor which requires the largest quantity of magical tinkering."

"And so would seem most natural. But I differ. I connect scholarship with nothing but the means of answering difficult questions."

The Siwennian considered somberly, "You may be as wrong as they!" ISAAC ASIMOV, *Foundation and Empire*

Excerpt: Written more than two millennia ago, the words of the Song of Songs, 'Love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave', still hold true. Love, that basic emotion which eludes any attempt at definition, is responsible for spiritual loftiness but also for denigration and debasement, for superb works of art as well as bloody crimes, for heavenly joy and abysmal sadness. Its force has led humans to resort to countless means in order to attain their hearts' desires. This book focuses on one of them: the magical means.

By appealing to supernatural entities or by manipulating plants, minerals and animal substances, people of old attempted to instill feelings of love in the hearts of men and women or to remove them therefrom. In the following pages I will relate the story of love magic in the world of late-antique and medieval Judaism. It is a story of power and coercion, of professional magicians and yearning clients, but above all, it is the story of a fascinating aspect of cultural and social Jewish history.

### Research Motives and Objectives

From the Hebrew Bible to the present day, Jewish literature abounds with references to, and expressions of, magic. The prohibition of Exodus 22:17, 'thou shall not allow a witch to live', has enjoyed a variety of interpretations that led to the acceptance of magical practices among many Jews. Magic (whose definition it is better to postpone, if only for a short while) was intended to modify reality according to the needs and desires of those who resorted to it. It addressed a variety of aims, and almost all the domains of life were

represented among Jewish magical practices: conceiving children, assistance with their delivery, healing diseases, obtaining money, procuring love, improving scholarly capacities, harming enemies, evading robbers and talking to the dead. Studying these

topics as a graduate student I found the area dealing with inter-human relations the most interesting, since it provided a wide perspective into the lives and desires of people of past ages, turning them from forgotten shadows into actual individuals. The topic of love stood out as particularly fascinating. When I realized that Jewish love magic had not been thoroughly studied, I decided to devote my doctoral dissertation to it, and this book is the fruit of that decision.

A few years ago the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* published a story titled 'The Hidden Secrets of Rav Kaduri Unveiled'. The story presented for the first time a book of 'Practical Kabbalah' penned by the Rabbi's hand. The journalist who authored the story, Avishai ben Hayyim, mentioned that 'The topic that opens the book and enjoys the largest number of sections, perhaps because it is the most sought-after human commodity, is love.' Remarkably, this journalistic statement closely reproduces the conclusions of scholars of magic. A statistical survey of binding spells from Late Antiquity shows that approximately a quarter were devoted to matters of the heart. Hundreds of attestations of love magic found in European sources indicate that it was employed pervasively also during later periods, and in a study of North African magic Edmond Doutté referred to love as 'the most important chapter of magical literature among all peoples'. An examination of late-antique and medieval Jewish manuscripts indicates that love magic left a similarly strong impression in Judaism, as the present volume will demonstrate.

This book seeks to describe and analyse the magical methods employed by Jews in order to implant love and sow hate. Chronologically, I have chosen to focus on the period encompassed by the end of antiquity (second-fourth centuries CE) and ending with the late Middle Ages (thirteenth-fifteenth centuries). Geographically, the book will cover many of the areas populated by Jews during

the above periods: Palestine, Egypt, Babylon and parts of Europe. A full chronological and geographical definition will be found below, in the Methodology section, but for now it is essential to answer three preliminary questions, central to understanding the objectives of this book: How are the terms 'love', 'love magic' and 'Jewish love magic' to be defined?

### Some Definitions, or: 'When I Use a Word', Said Humpty Dumpty ...

Before explaining what will be included in the following three sections, I should indicate what they will not contain. I will not attempt to put forward a universal definition of the terms that appear in this book's title. While there is no need to explain why I will not be so presumptuous as to define the term 'love', one may ask why I refrain from defining the terms 'magic' in general and 'Jewish magic' in particular. An exhaustive definition of these terms deserves a broad separate study. More likely, several such studies. Some have already been published, and they will be listed below, in the section titled 'What is Magic'. My research does not analyse these terms, but the phenomena they represent in the present context. Therefore, I shall explain how 'love', 'love magic' and 'Jewish magic' are defined in this book, and not universally. Each of these terms may be employed by other scholars in ways different from my own, which is not surprising, since the manner in which they will be used henceforth stems from a unification of all three: 'Jewish love magic'.

### What is Love?

To define is to limit. OSCAR WILDE, *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

Many have attempted to reply to the above question, seriously or humorously, from an emotional or a scientific point of view, and it seems that few, if any, have been successful. In what follows I will not propose a definition of the word and of its antonym, hate. Rather, I will describe the spheres they encompassed for the people practising magic throughout the periods and areas studied in this book. The three elements usually designated as 'love' in the context of 'love magic' were:

- a. arousing physical and emotional passion between the members of a couple (actual or potential)
- b. sowing enmity and separation between lovers (usually in favour of a third party)
- c. obtaining favour with another person (usually a superior or a judge) or with certain factions of the community.

While these may appear as three separate spheres, a second inspection shows them to be closely related. The first among them is relatively easy to comprehend: love magic seeks to arouse love between partners, in the erotic and 'sentimental' (not to say 'romantic') sense of the word. The 'erotic' entails physical passion (the Greek ἔρως) as well as emotional attraction and friendship between the members of a couple (what the Greeks would call ἀγάπη). While the Jewish textual corpus from the periods under discussion does include some instructions for preparing aphrodisiacs, these will not be included in the present study because they form a distinct category. The stated ends of this category are not the instalment of love, but improving sexual performance and physical pleasure by resorting to medico-magical means.

The second element to be discussed in this volume is essentially the opposite of the former. Some of the magical practices intended to instil love were directed against men or women whose hearts and bodies were already devoted to someone. In such cases, the first action would have been to separate the intended 'target' from his or her present partner (or love object), so that they would be free to love another. Occasionally, there may have been other motivations to cause separation: domestic, social or economic. This type of magical practice, intended to sow enmity between lovers, is included in the present book not only because often its end was inducing love, but also because a thin line separates the creation of love through magical means and its annulment through equal measures.

The third element included in this study are spells for obtaining grace, either in the eyes of a specific person (usually a superior) or in the eyes of a group of people (customers of a shop, citizens of a



town). In the Jewish magical tradition, the notion of grace matched 'love' in the social sense of the term. Practices that were intended to achieve love often served, with minor or no modifications, to obtain 'grace and favour', as this category was named already in antiquity. An early example of this terminological affinity appears in Esther 2:17, where it is related that 'The king loved Esther more than all the other women, and she won his grace and favour more than all the virgins'. Grace and favour were considered a category of love (also nowadays we may say that we love our friends), hence rituals intended to instil love also served to gain social acceptance. This phenomenon is not exclusive to Jewish magic. For instance, the word *φιλία*, whose basic denotation is 'love', bore a variety of meanings in ancient Greek magic, ranging from sexual attraction to social appreciation, that is, 'grace and favour'. The meaning of the noun derived from this root, *φίλος*, is 'friend', while the related adjective means 'beloved, dear-one'.

I have attempted to ostensibly define the term 'love' by pointing at the forms it took in the corpus of Jewish magic. Items related to the three elements mentioned above, that is, love, hate and grace, form the database on which this book relies.

### What is Magic?

Magic stubbornly resists our efforts to distinguish it from religion. DAVID HALL

Attempting to provide a definition of magic is not much easier than attempting to define love. This word, originating in Old Persian (*maguš*), where it denoted a priest of the Zoroastrian religion, had become an offensive term already in the fifth century bcE, when the Greeks used it to describe an array of unaccepted ritual practices. The term was similarly altered in the Roman world. Numerous studies devoted to ancient magic include attempts to define it. Since the term first appears more than two millennia ago and remains in use until this very day, its definition proves a difficult task. Has its meaning changed during the centuries, and if so, in what way? Moreover, the term 'magic' is used in modern scholarship to define phenomena external

to the Western world, in societies where this word has never been used, though it had local parallels. Can these parallel terms be translated through the word 'magic'? Is their content identical to that covered by the term in the Western world?

A theoretical analysis of the subject began already in the nineteenth century, with the work of the British anthropologists Edward Taylor and James Frazer. Since then much ink flowed in the river of scholarship, and the propositions of the two were altered, making room for new theories. These, however, often leave the reader with the frustrating feeling that the question of definitions remains open. It is now clear that 'magic' in the context of a pre-industrial African tribe (a term that replaced Taylor's 'savages') does not have the same meaning as it does in a Graeco-Roman context. It seems that the attempt to establish universal definitions proved unsuccessful, and the present approach is to examine the term independently for each culture and period.

In the geographical areas discussed in this book the terms 'magic' and 'religion' usually differed from each other (though not always their contents). The difference, however, was relative to the place, time and even to the speaker. The word 'religion' also bore a variety of meanings, and scholarly attempts to provide a comprehensive and all-inclusive definition for it have run into similar difficulties as those concerning the word 'magic'. The situation is more complex when one tries to distinguish between the contents of the two terms.

To borrow Peter Schäfer's words, magic maybe viewed as 'an integral part of religion in antiquity', and an examination of later periods continues to confirm the veracity of this statement. It remains to be seen which parts of the religious map were occupied by magic. I believe their location and size fluctuated incessantly, according to the relative elements mentioned above. The only element that seems to have remained undisputed is that magic was a type of ritual behaviour or activity. What was included in this activity, which purposes it served, what were its motivating forces—all these were subject to constant dispute, although there was usually a consensus as to the lack of legitimacy of this activity in the eyes of the speaker, even

when it was perfectly legitimate in the eyes of the performer. Consequently, the word 'magic' became an empty shell that was filled with different content each time anew. It remains to be decided which content it will bear in the present volume.

Intuitively, a modern Western person has little difficulty distinguishing 'magical' practices from those that are not so. But scholars (especially those who have come out from the folds of Malinowski's and Evans-Prichard's overcoat), cannot allow themselves to be satisfied with an intuitive definition. How can we, therefore, phrase a definition of the term 'magic' that would suit the requisites of the present study? Institutionalized Jewish religion possessed a parallel idiom that appears already in the Hebrew Bible. This is the term *kishuf* and its derivatives. *Kishuf* is prohibited in the Bible and is further proscribed in the Mishna and talmudic literature. Nevertheless, the rabbis formulated a series of concessions, eventually tolerating the existence of practices that might be defined as *kishuf*. For instance, 'deceiving the eyes' was not prohibited, even when the results appeared identical to magic, since 'he that performs some act is culpable, and not he that [only] deceives the eyes' (Mishna Sanhedrin 7:11). Another example concerns the use of amulets. These were sometimes outlawed by rabbis, as can be seen in the discussion concerning 'going out' with an amulet on Shabbat (Mishna Shabbat 6:10): 'Rabbi Meir says: Even on ordinary days this is forbidden as following in the Ways of the Amorite' (a term designating a variety of magical and 'superstitious' practices). However, other rabbis permitted wearing amulets both on Shabbat and on weekdays, 'as a means of healing' (*ibid.*), and a survey of rabbinic literature indicates that amulets were usually acceptable. Elements from the world of magic thus penetrated into the legislative (halakhic) literature, allowing modern scholars a glimpse into the ways they were perceived in ancient times. Nevertheless, one cannot derive from such cases an emic definition of magic to suit the present research, because the definitions constructed in rabbinic sources were not based on general discussions of the subject, but usually stemmed from specific issues and were tailored upon them. Love magic is not, unfortunately, one of

these issues. It is not impossible that references to love spells originally appeared in the rabbinic literature but were deleted in its redaction process. The texts that have come down to us, however, relate almost no such practices.

Lacking 'insider' information that may elucidate the term 'magic' for the present study, a different starting point is needed. This would be a definition combining ancient sources with modern research hypotheses. As mentioned above, already in antiquity it was usually agreed that magic was a form of ritual activity. This description, however, fits religion equally well. Moshe Idel once defined Jewish magic as 'a system of practices and beliefs that presupposes the possibility to achieve material gains by means of techniques that cannot be explained experimentally'. It is nevertheless clear that this definition also fits some religious actions. What is the difference, then, between a religious item and a magical one? How may one distinguish the recitation of a prayer from whispering a magical formula? The most efficient method in our context would be to examine the presence of that item (be it a practice, an object or a text) in the religious canon valid for a specific period and a specific location. From the ways this item is mentioned (or ignored) in the canon, one may learn about its magical character. Obviously, in order to conduct such an examination, it must first be established that the examined item might be a magical one. That is to say, the proposed test has an unavoidable circular nature: one decides that a certain practice or text is potentially magical, and then verifies or disproves this assumption using predetermined tools. For example, in order to evaluate the magical character of *Sefer ha-Razim* (The Book of Mysteries), usually dated approximately to the fourth century ce, we should examine the corpus of the Mishna and Tosefta. To establish the magical character and even the halakhic legitimacy of Mesopotamian incantation bowls dated to the fifth-eighth centuries ce, we should refer to the Babylonian Talmud. However, the fact that institutionalized religion also contains occasional magical elements hinders the attempts to reach an overarching and clear-cut definition of the term.

Luckily, the textual material on which the present study is based displays clear differences from Jewish and non-Jewish 'religious' sources. These differences maybe only partial (for example, the Havdalah de-Rabbi Aqiva is based on the canonical havdalah formula but adds to it a plethora of magical elements), or they may be substantial (for instance, a text instructing the practitioner to write in semen on an egg and bury it in a grave is considerably remote from the Jewish religious canon).

A combination of the two elements detailed above, i.e. ritual activity and absence from the religious canon, generates the definition of the term 'magic' that I will use hereafter:

For the present study, magic is defined as a ritual behaviour or activity, be it practical or theoretical, intended to achieve a specific end, detached (partly or in full) from the institutionalized religious ritual at a certain period and location.

This definition says nothing about the ways in which people practising magic regarded themselves. There is no way of knowing if the rabbinic scholar who wrote an amulet against sixty demons (bt Pesaḥim 111b) viewed himself as engaging in magic, or whether he believed he was performing a genuine religious act. We may assume that the latter option is correct, but the information does not allow us to rule on this point. Based on the proposed definition, I would suggest his deed should be viewed as a magical act, since writing amulets is: (a) a practical ritual action; (b) was meant to achieve a specific end; and (c) it did not constitute a full part of the institutionalized Jewish religious ritual. Similarly, it is usually difficult to determine how rabbis regarded the composition of manuals that are classified in the present book as 'magical', or the manufacture of amulets and other objects that will be associated in the following chapters with the world of magic. Only in a few cases do we encounter a discussion of the halakhic legitimacy of such acts. Again, it is likely that some, and perhaps many, of those practising 'magic' did not view it at all as an activity detached from the institutionalized religious ritual. Some of them probably believed their actions adhered to halakhic rules and were entirely legitimate.

Regrettably, our sources do not disclose the attitude and beliefs of those practising (what was defined above as) magic, as far as Jewish love magic from the periods under discussion is concerned. What is left, therefore, is to use an external definition, based nonetheless on ancient sources, as proposed above.

It is important to note at this point that the present book will not treat the topic of Jewish mysticism. The Hekhalot and Merkavah literature and the various forms of Jewish Kabbalah are not included in our textual corpus, even though they contain erotic motifs. The reason for this is simple: Jewish mystical literature (unless one expands this term to magico-mystical compositions such as *Sefer ha-Razim*) lacks references to love magic in the sense of the term detailed above. The Jewish mystical corpus contains erotic elements and metaphors, as several scholars have shown so far,<sup>37</sup> but their aim is not to instil love, grace or hate. And even though there are instances in which quotations from the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature appear in textual items of love magic, the reverse is not true, and magical recipes related to love are missing from this corpus. Similarly, the rich Kabbalistic literature that developed in Europe from the twelfth century onward includes references to love and eroticism, yet these differ from the material which will be discussed in this book.<sup>39</sup> Kabbalah is not magic, even though it includes magical elements and at times utilizes practices taken from the realm of magic. As Ithamar Gruenwald stated, 'Phenomenologically and also literarily speaking, close connections do exist between myth, magic and mysticism.' The present book, however, will focus solely on one of these three disciplines: magic. The ends found at the basis of Kabbalah were fundamentally different than the ones sought by Jewish magicians and their clients. Some kabbalists expressed a profound contempt of magical practitioners, though it is not impossible that others occasionally engaged in this occupation. The relations between Jewish love magic and the erotic elements from mystical literature deserve a separate academic investigation and must remain outside the scope of this book.

## What is Jewish Love Magic?

We are far away from any theory of magic in the religion of Judaism (...) I do not find it appropriate, given the present state of research, to try to develop one.  
Peter Schäfer

Two decades have passed since Peter Schäfer wrote the above words, and they still hold true. There seems to be a gap between the research of Jewish magic and a theory which explains and defines this term. The former has been flourishing since the twentieth century, largely thanks to the pioneering project of Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked (*Amulets and Magic Bowls, Magic Spells and Formulae*) and to the subsequent project, conducted by Shaked and Peter Schäfer (*Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*). The academic bloom is manifested in the increasing number of publications related to the sphere of Jewish magic, and more generally, in the fact that it has become a legitimate branch of Judaic Studies. However, in view of this flourishing the paucity of theoretical analyses is even more evident. While most publications dealing with Jewish magic commence with a theoretical examination, usually, as is also the case with the present book, this is done merely in order to provide a definition of the research topic. An overarching theoretical discussion, as those generated for other magical traditions, like the Hellenistic and Roman ones, is still in its infancy. Since my book does not intend to elaborate on the theoretical aspect of the subject, it is useful to present some of the studies that have dealt with it so far.

Most information about Jewish magic stems from textual sources, be they manuals of magic or finished products such as amulets. Hence, theoretical studies focus on the word, written or uttered. Identifying an ancient Jewish text as a 'magical text' is much easier than defining it or theoretically analysing it as such.<sup>48</sup> The excellent paper by Michael D. Swartz, 'Scribal Magic and Its Rhetoric', started from a database composed of Jewish amulets uncovered in the Cairo Geniza that were pre-identified as magical texts, and used them to reach wider theoretical conclusions regarding their magical character. According to Swartz, Jewish amulets contain three rhetorical elements that

express the magical mode of action: (a) mentioning the name(s) of God; (b) adjuring intermediary figures, be these angels or demons; (c) creating a link between the first two elements and the advantage of specific individuals. My study indicates that Swartz' conclusions are largely applicable also to Jewish love spells, including those that did not employ amulets of the familiar type.

In a similar methodological article Yuval Harari put forward a series of features characterizing a Jewish magical text. Harari's intention was to reach a 'quasi-ostensive' definition of Jewish magic (p. 107). He noted, however, that in order to examine a series of magical items (in this case, Jewish texts), one has to rely on a prior definition of the term 'magic', or at least know how to employ this term. Hence, Harari was forced to circularly examine Jewish magical texts and derive from them a definition for Jewish magical texts. His first conclusion was that they are adjuration texts. Next, he listed eight features that may determine whether a given text is an adjuration, e.g., an appeal to supernatural powers, the use of verbs from roots. These features expand the contents of the term 'Jewish magical text' so that it comprises also '(...) Rabbinic traditions about the powers of sages and their struggles with heretical sorcerers, or demonic beliefs and related acts, and even parts of the liturgy (...)' (pp. 120–121). In the present book the rabbinic traditions mentioned by Harari will not serve as Jewish magical texts but as literary/ religious texts concerned with magic, from which information about it may be extracted.

I have looked into some theoretical discussions of the term 'Jewish magic' but I have not yet proposed my own definition for it. The reason for this is that my book does not examine Jewish magic in its entirety, but only one of its domains: that of love magic. Some of the conclusions that will be reached in the following chapters may ultimately be relevant also for other branches of the Jewish magical tree, but the essential question is how may 'Jewish love magic' be defined? I suggest the following definition:

Jewish love magic is a ritual behaviour or activity that is detached (partly or in full) from the

institutionalized religious ritual; intended to engender love, grace or hate; and performed by Jews, whether in a practical form (e.g., wearing amulets) or in a theoretical form (e.g., composing manuals of magical recipes).

I do not intend to suggest at this point any characteristic features of Jewish love magic, as was done by the scholars mentioned above. I also prefer to withhold the question whether Jewish love magic differs from other magical traditions, or in other words, what is 'Jewish' in Jewish love magic. These considerations will emerge in chapter 5, where I will use the information collected and analysed in the course of this study in order to examine the 'Jewishness' (if any) of our research topic. For now, the term 'Jewish' should be taken to represent merely a religious identity. The designation of a textual item as Jewish will be based on two criteria: context and language. It is plausible that an item which was uncovered in a Jewish context, such as the repository of a synagogue (*genizah*), was employed by Jews, or even manufactured by them. An item written in one of the languages identified with Judaism, such as Hebrew, Judeo-Arabic or Jewish-Aramaic, was probably inscribed by Jews and most often utilized by them.

The definitions for the terms 'love', 'love magic' and 'Jewish love magic' were composed for the purpose of the present study and should be regarded as valid solely for it. It may well be that a book on love magic in Mesopotamia, ancient Egypt or Pre-Colombian civilizations will require different descriptions for the terms in its title. That being said, the definitions proposed above fulfil their intended aims, namely: (a) to explain what will be included under the term 'love'; (b) to propose a method for distinguishing between a 'magical' act and a different type of act; and (c) to determine which source materials will be included in a study of 'Jewish' love magic. A combination of these three elements will form the basis of this book.

### Research History

As mentioned above, the study of magic has sustained several changes since the beginning of the nineteenth century, when an academic interest in the subject began to develop. One major change

is the specialization process it underwent. Treatises bearing titles such as *Une théorie générale de la magie* or *A Study in Magic and Religion* are now rare. The broad studies of Mauss and Frazer, published in the first quarter of the last century, have made room for a focused and detailed analysis, one that attempts to trace magical practices and theories at a particular time, geographical area and cultural context. Examples of such treatises are the monographs by Tzvi Abusch and Matthew Dickie, exploring Babylonian and Graeco-Roman magic. Alternatively, scholars may point a spotlight to a particular aspect of magic, such as gender or racial stereotypes, and examine it across different periods and for various traditions, as exemplified by the work of Kimberly Stratton. Concomitantly there is a rise in publications focusing on a specific branch of magic, such as military rituals as discussed by Richard Beal, impotence magic as researched by Catherine Rider, and, in the case of the present volume, love magic.

### The Study of Love Magic in Non-Jewish Traditions

Liebe und Zauberei sind Schwestern, die einander nicht verlassen. LUDWIG BLAU

A study of ancient love magic appears highly attractive, and yet until the mid-twentieth century scholarly attention to this field was rather limited. This may have stemmed from feelings of modesty that conflicted with the tumultuous emotions (and often, with the blatant sexual terminology) characteristic of this research topic. One may recall the uneasiness expressed by scholars like Paul Smither when publishing homosexual love spells ('The embarrassing identity of the sex of the charmer and charmed ...'). The first studies of love magic tended to focus on Graeco-Roman literary sources, such as the *Second Idyll* of Theocritus or Virgil's *Eight Eclogue*, occasionally comparing these literary depictions with genuine magical material, such as the Greek magical papyri. The first step into a comprehensive research of love magic relying entirely on primary sources was Robert Biggs' monograph from 1967 on potency incantations from ancient Mesopotamia. More than three decades passed before the next major

treatise in this field saw light. Christopher Faraone's book from 1999, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, is a significant milestone on the road leading to understanding the role of magic in personal relations during antiquity.

The last decades have witnessed an increase in scholarly discussions of love magic from different periods and traditions. For the Hellenistic world one ought to mention the work of John Winkler, and for Coptic Egypt the volume edited by Marvin Meyer and Richard Smith and an article by David Frankfurter. Articles by Andrzej Wypustek present the magical-erotic overtones attached to early Christian rhetoric by members of Graeco-Roman society, and the use of love spells to improve marital life.<sup>60</sup> One of the chapters in John Gager's volume on binding spells was devoted to sex and magic. A doctoral dissertation on the same subject was composed in France by Gaëlle Ficheux, and further comments on this type of 'curses' were added by Esther Eidinow.

Love magic in medieval Europe has been researched by Richard Kieckhefer in an excellent concise article. A doctoral dissertation submitted in Italy by Monica Di Bernardo focuses on a fifteenth century trial against a 'witch' accused of engaging in love magic, and an extensive study by Catherine Rider explores spells meant to cause impotence and the magical solutions for this problem. Other articles discuss medieval attitudes to love magic as expressed, for example, in Irish penitentials, in Nordic myths and trials, or in the work of theologians like Burchard of Worms.

Research on love magic during the Renaissance is headed by Guido Ruggiero, who relies on court depositions in order to describe the practices and accusations prevalent in Italy during the sixteenth century. Other studies dealing with this period were published by Mary O'Neil, Maria Helena Sanchez Ortega, Anna Brzezińska, and Lynn Mollenauer.

In addition to the above listed works, general studies on the magical tradition of a particular culture devote discussions to the topic of love spells. Modern anthropologists also explore practices of love magic among various cultures, and their studies enable a glimpse of present-day manifestations of the subject.

## The Study of Love Magic in Judaism

The first scholar to discuss Jewish love magic was Ludwig Blau, in his seminal volume *Das altjüdische Zaubrewesen* published in the late nineteenth century.

Among other things, Blau edited a Greek spell, which he assumed had a Jewish origin, intended to ignite perpetual love in a man's heart towards the woman who commissioned it. Yet although he affirmed that love magic was pervasive in ancient Judaism, Blau did not devote a thorough investigation to the subject, perhaps because it is rarely mentioned in the rabbinic sources that formed the core of his study. This is probably also the reason for the absence of the topic from the pioneering works of Gideon Brecher and David Joël.

The first detailed discussion of Jewish love magic in its various forms, including spells for favour and grace, appeared only in 1998 as part of a doctoral dissertation by Yuval Harari. Harari elaborated on the subject in a later article, whose title, 'For a Woman to Follow You', is a citation from the magic manual *The Sword of Moses*. His captivating paper probably represents the most complete discussion of Jewish love magic until the publication of the present volume.

## Methodology

This monograph will be constructed in a circular manner. The first chapter explores the concept of love magic in various traditions, advancing chronologically. The order of the next three chapters (2–4) is loosely based on the division generated by Maimonides in *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Part iii, 37, where he described the magical acts as being of 'three kinds'. Each chapter will focus on a key aspect of Jewish love magic: the operational aspect (the types of practices it comprised), the verbal aspect (a discussion of the magical rhetoric, be it theoretical or practical), and the temporal aspect (an analysis of the specific intervals in which magical practices were performed). The fifth and last chapter will revert to the starting point, and employ the data gathered throughout the book to explore the distinctive character of Jewish love magic in comparison to that of other traditions.

## The Sources

As mentioned above, research into Jewish magic relies largely on textual sources, which holds true also for the present volume. These primary sources include 'insider' information on the one hand, i.e. texts (complete or fragmentary) that fit the definition of 'magical items', such as amulets or recipes, and 'outsider' information on the other hand, for instance references to love magic in the rabbinic literature or in the Jewish responsa. One could also have wished to incorporate archaeological artefacts in this study. I exclude from this rubric textual items that have been unearthed in archaeological excavations, such as incantation bowls, since these actually constitute a type of textual source. By archaeological artefacts I refer to non-textual items that could still be linked, for various reasons, to the present corpus. Such artefacts have been uncovered, yet they pertain to other branches of Jewish magic, mainly apotropaic, for instance magical mirror plaques or amuletic glass medallions bearing Jewish symbols. The Graeco-Roman world has yielded numerous non-textual items (mostly binding figurines) that shed light on practices of love magic, but none of these derive from a Jewish context. The reasons for this will be considered later.

The primary sources on which this book relies maybe divided into Jewish and non-Jewish. The former's designation derives, as explained above, from criteria of language and context. However, since no tradition operates in a cultural void, I decided to include in my research also comparative material: published primary sources from non-Jewish traditions that coexisted with Judaism. Three main traditions will be considered: the Graeco-Roman, the Christian and the Islamic, without disregarding pertinent comparisons to other civilizations, such as ancient Egypt or Mesopotamia.

It should be noted that research on primary sources relating to love magic from the Christian and the Islamic traditions is still in its infancy, like that of Jewish magic. Most of the relevant texts still lie dormant in manuscripts, awaiting publication. Furthermore, we ought to keep in mind that these monotheistic traditions comprise different currents (one need only recall the differences between Latin

and Coptic Christianity). Given the scope of this volume, no attempt will be made to distinguish the internal traditions of each religion. Additionally, given my own research interests, I will not attempt an in-depth analysis of these non-Jewish materials. For instance, Islamic magical literature, parts of which survived in Arabic in the Genizah, must have impacted to some extent that of Cairene Jews. Hopefully, a study of Islamic love magic will be published in the future, perhaps including a discussion of its reflections in the Cairo Genizah and its interactions with Jewish magic. This task, however, deserves a scholar who is a specialist in Arabic and Islam. The comparisons I suggest between Jewish love magic and that originating in non-Jewish traditions constitute only a first impressionistic attempt, and more extensive scholarly work in this field is a desideratum.

## Insider Sources

The first type of sources to be included in this book maybe divided into two main categories: recipes and products. A magical recipe is a text comprising a series of instructions that, when put into practice, are meant to achieve a specific, predetermined end, such as regaining the heart of a deserting lover or separating a married couple. Recipes are generic and usually contain no manifest information about the individuals who employed them. The places in the text where personal names should appear contain instead the words *ploni/t ben/bat plonit*, that is, *n son/daughter of n*. Thus, the recipes may be described as theoretical sources placed at the disposal of individuals who had access to magical literature, in order to be put into practice.

Occasionally, magical recipes were assembled into a single theoretical composition that was further redacted and acquired a coherent textual framework. The earliest example relevant for the present study is *Sefer ha-Razim*, a collection of magical recipes arranged according to a system of seven firmaments. Each firmament contains hosts of angels identified by name. Every angel is attributed a specific function and can be manipulated so that he performs the magician's will. The first modern editor of *Sefer ha-Razim* placed its date of composition around the fourth century ce, yet it probably preserves much earlier

material. While the book displays non-Jewish influences, such as parallels to the Greek magical papyri, it is clearly a Jewish composition and not a translation of a Hellenistic or Roman magic manual. Sefer ha-Razim contains four recipes pertaining to the field of love magic. Another literary composition belonging to the genre of theoretical magic is *Ḥarba de-Moshe* (The Sword of Moses), dated to the second half of the first millennium ce. The book is centred on a list of magical names that purportedly bestowed upon Moses an amazing power, akin to that of a sword. These names, along with the manipulation of additional materials, were supposed to solve a wide range of problems and needs. Seven of the magical recipes included in *Ḥarba de-Moshe* were meant to deal with matters of love. Other examples of Jewish literary manuals of magic are later and date from the medieval period. One of them is *Sefer ha-Nisyonot* (The Book of Experiences), a medico-magical compilation originating around the tenth century, but preserved only in a twelfth century version.<sup>80</sup> Another example is *Sefer Ahavat Nashim* (The Book of Women's Love), dated approximately to the thirteenth century and similarly preserved only in a later manuscript. *Sefer Raziel ha-Malakh* (The Book of the Angel Raziel), a magical composition from around the thirteenth century partly based on

*Sefer ha-Razim*, also contains several recipes for love magic. Another work that should be mentioned is *Sefer Shimmush Tehillim* (The Book of the Use of Psalms), a medieval compilation of magical recipes based on Psalm verses, that also mentions which verses should be used when one wishes to instil love and bestow grace on another person.

Such examples of literary manuals of magic are rare. Magical recipes were usually collected in some sort of notebook, like the one of R. Kaduri mentioned earlier, and often remained scattered, inscribed on single leaves. The best analogy for describing these materials is to modern food recipes: some of them are collected in well-edited cookery books, some are gathered together in an organized notebook, while others are jotted on a piece of paper, perhaps a leaf torn from a booklet, bearing a non-culinary text on its other side.

The use of magical recipes results in the second type of sources, namely magical products. These include textual amulets and other items that employ writing, such as Babylonian incantation bowls<sup>84</sup> or the shard uncovered in excavations at Ḥorvat Rimmon. Jewish love magic included also non-textual items, yet in most cases these were not preserved, since they consisted of organic substances, like eggs or plant leaves (and even if they had survived there would be almost no way to recognize them as 'magical'). Similarly, some of the textual products did not survive to the present day, due to the use of perishable materials, such as parchment or papyrus, and a climate that did not support their preservation. Despite this, a significant number of products has reached us, illustrating the practical aspect of theoretical magical recipes. In these products 'n daughter of n' turns into Baḡiḏa daughter of Ḥaiza, and 'n x son of n' into her beloved, Mufaḏḏal son of Iraq, who is due to be tormented in the bonds of the spell until 'his heart will burn after her'.

The sources used in this book rely primarily on the Cairo Genizah and not on information from Europe. Most of the European Jewish manuscripts of magic have not been transcribed or surveyed extensively, and they have not been arranged yet into an accessible corpus. Consequently, I was not able to examine them in the way I have examined the Genizah magical corpus and scan them for items related to love magic. The discussion of 'insider' sources originating in Europe is thus limited to the following:

- a. Published sources. These include whole magical manuscripts, such as the literary compilations *Sefer Ahavat Nashim* or *Sefer Raziel* mentioned above, and also disparate magical items that have been published in secondary literature.
- b. Unpublished sources discovered using the database of the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem. These are Jewish European manuscripts, both Sephardic and Ashkenazi, comprising occasional recipes of love magic.



Thus, except for the information drawn from late-antique compositions along with medieval European manuscripts and a relatively small number of other items, most of the recipes and products discussed below derive from the famous genizah of the Ben Ezra synagogue in Fustat (Old Cairo). Out of the hundreds of thousands of textual fragments uncovered in the Cairo Genizah about 2,500 deal with magic. And yet, until recently these fragments were not a favoured research topic, as maybe surmised from the way scholars like Solomon Schechter and Shlomo Dov Goitein, the forefathers of Genizah studies, regarded this subject. The last two decades have witnessed the publication of several collections of magical texts from the Cairo Genizah, yet the unpublished material remains much greater. Luckily, microfilm and digital copies of the texts are available to scholars and they served as the chief means of research for this book. A significant part of the corpus discussed in the following pages derives from a research project titled 'Magical Recipe Books from the Cairo Genizah', headed by Gideon Bohak. The project relies on the work of Shaul Shaked, who painstakingly surveyed the Genizah materials and compiled an initial list of hundreds of magical texts included in it. This list was subsequently expanded by Bohak and a major part of its contents was meticulously studied.

The first stage of my research was to select from the constantly increasing corpus of the above project the fragments related to love, grace and hate. These were added to the fragments previously published in the collections listed in note 89. Since the fragments included in Bohak's project were pre-identified as magical ones (either based on textual characteristics, e.g., the presence of adjurations, or on formal characteristics, e.g., reverse writing or magical signs), I mainly had to search for keywords pertinent to the topics of my research. At times this was not a difficult task, for instance when a recipe bore the title 'For love'. Yet even when the texts were poorly preserved, it soon became clear that a fragment containing only the words 'between nn and nn like between Amnon and Tamar and between a dog and a cat' was part of a recipe for sowing hate between two lovers. Learning the textual style characterizing Jewish

love magic from those recipes and products fully preserved allowed me to recognize also fragmentary texts as belonging to this corpus. And indeed, the state of preservation of the fragments is far from uniform, ranging from complete pages filled with a clear text to small scraps of paper containing but a few words.

A significant part of my research took place in front of the microfilm viewer, through which I gazed at copies of the ancient fragments that for the most part have not been published. I also had at my disposal transcriptions and high-resolution photographs of some of the fragments, thanks to Bohak's project as well as to several websites like the Friedberg Genizah Project or the Princeton University Geniza Project.

The corpus on which this monograph is based is not final. Textual and non-textual sources pertaining to the field of late-antique and medieval Jewish love magic will continue to surface after its publication. One should also remember that the corpus is incomplete to begin with, since a large part of it has been lost over the centuries: magical texts that did not end up in the Genizah or in other collections, metal amulets that crumbled and vanished long before the hands of archaeologists reached them, inscribed fragments of clay that were buried deep in the bowels of the earth, etc. Consequently, my conclusions cannot rely on a full and comprehensive corpus. This fact has loomed before me throughout my research, hence my caution when performing statistical analyses or putting forth general statements. My database consists of over 300 items: more than 270 magical recipes and at least 46 products. While these are impressive numbers, the corpus of primary sources whose foundations are laid in the present book will continue to grow in the future.

### Outsider Sources

The title of the present section denotes writings related to love magic that are not magical in themselves. These texts are taken from different periods and traditions, and are not limited to a discussion of Jewish love magic. They will serve to examine various opinions regarding love magic, to depict its features as reflected in the eyes of theologians, philosophers, historians and poets, and

to compare such descriptions with practices found in the 'insider' sources. The 'outsider' sources derive from numerous literary genres: the prose and poetry of the periods discussed in the book, rabbinic literature and responsa collections, canonical religious writings like the Quran, ecclesiastical guidebooks like the *Malleus Maleficarum*, writings of thinkers like Maimonides and Abraham Abulafia and so forth.

'Outsider' sources dealing with magic must be treated with an extra dose of caution. For example, accusations of magic found in court depositions should not be taken as evidence for practices that actually occurred. However, also the descriptions of magical practices contained in such records should not be ignored, since sometimes a similar or identical depiction appears in the 'insider' sources. We should keep in mind that 'outsider' sources may be biased or untruthful in part, especially when they stem from one segment of the population and are directed against other segments (e.g., a church tribunal on the one hand and women accused of witchcraft on the other, or Karaite Jews on the one hand and rabbis accused of magical actions on the other). Nevertheless, they contain enough useful information to be included in the present study.

### Chronological Frame

The chronological scope of this book is a wide ranging one. It starts with the late-antique period (second-fourth centuries CE) and ends with the late medieval period (thirteenth-fifteenth centuries). In order to establish the chronological frame, I appealed to the earliest 'insider' source on love magic, *Sefer ha-Razim*. As explained above, this composition is usually dated approximately to the fourth century, though it probably incorporates earlier material. No earlier sources pertaining to Jewish love magic have survived, and thus I have decided to use Late Antiquity as my chronological starting point. The end of the chronological frame had to be determined differently. Love magic continued to exist in the Jewish tradition also after the fifteenth century, and in fact it obtains to this very day. However, following my academic interests, I have decided to focus on ancient magic and its medieval ramifications rather than modern

magic. Therefore, the end of the medieval period serves as an arbitrary finish line for the present study.

The chosen chronological scope encompasses 1,400 years that may be divided into several different periods, overlapping at times, some of which are relevant only for certain geographical regions: the Roman-Byzantine period, the period of Islamic rule, the Middle Ages, the beginning of the Renaissance. However, my study will not follow a chronological division, but will be a horizontal one. The reason for this approach stems from a central feature of Jewish love magic: continuity. As was previously shown by other scholars, the Cairo Genizah, on which the major part of the corpus relies, preserves information about magical practices that were conceived many centuries before they were put down in writing during the Middle Ages. Norman Golb stated that 'the magical and esoteric literature of the medieval Egyptian Jews bears evidence of considerable antiquity, and at least some of it undoubtedly maybe traced back to the Byzantine period'. Golb's words were proved true following the discovery of the magical potsherd from Ḥorvat Rimmon and its later parallels. The shard, dated to the fifth or sixth century, bears an adjuration for obtaining love whose phrasing continues to appear in medieval recipes from the Cairo Genizah. This item exemplifies the continuity of practices and formulae from the Byzantine period into the Middle Ages, and also the high fidelity of this continuity—even some of the magical signs accompanying the adjuration formula were preserved through the centuries. If the Ḥorvat Rimmon shard had not been uncovered during an archaeological excavation, and scholars only had the Genizah fragments at their disposal, it could be assumed that this particular formula was the fruit of medieval Jewish love magic. Yet the uncovering of a parallel formula dating to several centuries earlier proves things to be different. This is in fact an instance of magic from the Byzantine period, and perhaps even earlier, which continued to be transmitted over the centuries, and was also preserved in the recipe handbooks deposited in the Cairene synagogue. Interestingly, the Ḥorvat Rimmon spell continued to prevail up to the twentieth century, as attested in a study by

Reginald Campbell Thompson on the folklore of Iraqi Jews.

Given the fact that Jewish love magic featured such a significant level of continuity, it will not be appropriate to divide the chronological frame into different periods and to study the magical items pertaining to each of them separately. Undoubtedly, during the 1,400 years examined in this book changes occurred in practices and formulae, yet for the most part they are not of a sub-substantial nature. There are changes in language (for instance, in certain regions, following the Islamic conquest Aramaic made way for Judeo-Arabic); some modifications of the magical technique (for example, the astral aspect is more or less emphasized), or changes in the nomenclature of supernatural entities. However, one cannot observe significant gaps between the prominent practices of Late Antiquity and those of the late Middle Ages. The same cannot be said for other branches of Jewish magic. It seems that love magic is a 'discipline' of a comparatively conservative character. The conservatism and continuity that characterize it allow a horizontal study that advances chronologically from the second to the fifteenth centuries without deviating significantly.

### Geographical Frame

The title 'Jewish love magic' does not distinguish between Jewish groups according to their geographical origins, although it is clear that such a distinction did exist. Ashkenazi Jewry was different from Sephardic Jewry, and the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt differed from their fellows in Babylonia. The question is, however, whether this cultural distinction can be securely traced in the primary material on which this book is based.

Among the magical items that will be discussed in the following chapters only one category allows for a certain geographical identification: the Mesopotamian incantation bowls. As their name indicates, these bowls are characteristic of a specific area and do not appear in other regions of the ancient world. This situation differs where the other items, making up the major part of our corpus, are concerned. While the literary compositions such as *Sefer ha-Razim* or *Sefer Ahavat Nashim* permit some degree of certainty

concerning their place of compilation, the geographical origin of the hundreds of magical items that ended up in the Cairo Genizah is much more difficult to trace. Palaeographical means may point to an Oriental or Sephardic script, but these methods only indicate where a certain manuscript was inscribed, not where its text was composed. To illustrate this fact we may resort once more to the magical shard from Horvat Rimmon. A palaeographical analysis of its medieval theoretical parallels from the Cairo Genizah may show where these were committed to paper or parchment, but it cannot point to the fact that a nearly identical formula was employed by Jews in Palestine hundreds of years earlier. And even assuming that the source of a specific magical recipe could be traced back and its place of composition established, would this teach us much about its users throughout the ages? A survey of Jewish and non-Jewish love magic from the periods under discussion indicates that it involved a significant cultural exchange, expressed also in a geographical exchange. As will be shown below, practices from magical recipes inscribed in Hebrew and uncovered in the Cairo Genizah appear in Christian court depositions from medieval Italy. Consequently, how justified would it be to separate the love magic used by Egyptian Jews from that employed by their Italian co-religionaries? I believe that such a distinction would not serve the purpose of this book, since it relies on artificial boundaries.

The consequence of the above assertion is that this study will be a horizontal one also in the geographical sense. Instead of isolating a Jewish group based on geographical frontiers and analysing the love magic of a certain area (a false term in my view), I have chosen to survey the phenomenon of love magic practiced by Jews in general, be they inhabitants of Palestine, Egypt, Sepharad or Ashkenaz.

### Character of Research

As explained above, this will be a horizontal study exploring a specific phenomenon across the axes of time and space. This method is usually described as diachronic, but it also includes inter-cultural comparisons, that is, a synchronic history.<sup>98</sup> The

comparisons with the Graeco-Roman, the Christian and the Islamic traditions serve a three-fold purpose: first, to identify parallels, be they close or partial, present in the magical material (for example, recipes transmitted from non-Jewish traditions to Judaism and vice-versa); second, to pinpoint central motifs prevalent in different traditions, irrespective of chronological and geographical gaps (for instance, the motif of fire as a metaphor for love, as expressed in practices of sympathetic magic in which an object is thrown into the flames); and last, but certainly not least, to determine whether Jewish love magic possessed singular features that distinguished it from the magic of its neighbours.

I have listed the types of sources on which this volume relies and explained that in most cases these are primary sources, the majority of which have never been published. Dozens of fragments of recipes and products related to love, grace and hate will see light for the first time in the following pages. The challenges and beauty in a research of this kind are many, and I confess they outnumber the difficulties it presents. It is important to note that my research is a deductive one, whose conclusions stem from an analysis of initial data, and not from external theories applied to this data. In fact, this book maybe said to make a restricted use of theories. I believe that it is proper to lay at first the detailed and sound descriptive foundations for the study of Jewish love magic, and only in the next stages to begin building upon these foundations with theoretical bricks of various types.

#### Contents

	Acknowledgements
	List of Figures
	Abbreviations
	Introduction
1	What Do We Talk About When We Talk About Love (Magic)? A Survey of Ancient Love Magic
1	Historical Background
1.1	Mesopotamia
1.2	Egypt
1.3	Greece
1.4	Rome
1.5	Christianity
1.6	Islam
2	Main Features of Love Magic

3	The Magical Rationale
4	The Uses and Abuses of Love Magic
4.1	Justifying an Impossible Love
4.2	Explaining Impotence
5	The Silence of the Targets: Reactions to Love Magic and Counter Spells
6	Summary
2	Making Love, Making Hate
	Practices of Jewish Love Magic
1	Introductory Remarks
2	Magical Practices: An Overview
2.1	Writing Magical Formulae
2.2	Uttering Magical Formulae
2.3	Manipulation of Materials without Writing
3	Products of Magical Practices
4	From Theory to Practice
3	Of Loviel and Other Demons; The Verbal Aspects of Jewish Love Magic
1	Introductory Remarks
2	Linguistic Aspects
2.1	Language, Person and Gender in the Magical Recipes
2.2	Language, Person and Gender in the Finished Products
3	Appeals and Demands: The Magical Formulae
4	Literary Devices in the Magical Formulae
4.1	Biblical Analogies
4.2	Biblical Quotations
4.3	Non-Biblical Analogies
4.4	Metaphors
5	Magical Signs
5.1	Magical Signs in Jewish Magic
5.2	The Erroneous Term 'kol qatiraya'
5.3	Magical Signs in Jewish Love Magic
4	A Time to Love and a Time to Hate: The Temporal Aspects of Jewish Love Magic
1	Written in the Stars
2	The Timing of Magical Practices
2.1	Defining the Hour of the Day
2.2	Defining the Day of the Week
2.3	Defining the Day of the Month
3	Temporal References in Magical Products
4	Summary

5	You Shall Not Walk in Their Statutes? The 'Jewishness' of Jewish Love Magic
1	Introductory Remarks
2	Prohibited or Permitted Love? The Legitimacy of Love Magic in Judaism
2.1	Love Magic in the Talmudic Literature
2.2	Love Magic in the Halakhic Literature of the Geonic and the Medieval Periods
3	Traits of Jewish Love Magic
3.1	Abstaining from Non-sanctioned Foods
3.2	Refraining from Desecration of the Shabbat
3.3	The Attitude towards Supernatural Forces
3.4	Nomenclature of Supernatural Forces
3.5	Employing Biblical Analogies and Verses
3.6	Logocentrism
4	Jewish and Non-Jewish Love Magic: Some Differences
4.1	Magical Practices
4.2	Explicit Sexual Terminology
5	Conclusions
	Summary
1	In the Previous Chapters ...
2	What is Jewish Love Magic? A Second Look
	Bibliography
	Index of Manuscripts
	Index of Subjects <>

**Essay: Beit El Kabbalah Kavvanah Prayer**  
Kabbalah studies have thus far equated Kabbalah, which is a system of metaphysics, with "Jewish mysticism." Scholars of Kabbalah have fought for its place among the mystical teachings of world religions. It is unusual to uncover a living kabbalistic tradition in Judaism, and unnerving for a Kabbalah scholar. The sources of most of our studies have already folded themselves into the creases of Jewish history or invested effort in covering their tracks, which demand to be uncovered. In this case, Shar'abi and his heirs have been hiding in plain sight. Shar'abi's followers have remained active and, in recent years, have grown as a group, yet they have not been given scholarly attention. There

are many reasons for this. For one thing, Kabbalah scholars have come from a different stratum of Israeli society, separated from the practitioners in the field by social, ethnic, and religious barriers.

In order to examine Beit El in the context of the study of Kabbalah, an initial question is, What is the nature of the mystical experience in the Beit El tradition? How do the activities of the school reflect the substance of Shar'abi's teachings? The answer reveals a problematic truth in the study of Kabbalah, namely that, in fact, there is little of the mystical experience in Beit El Kabbalah. The metaphysical object of the practice is clear, however, and nobody in the Jewish or kabbalistic communities disputes the authenticity of Beit El in the kabbalistic lineage and pantheon. In examining Beit El, a distinction must be made between Kabbalah as a form of mysticism, to be equated with the other mystical traditions of civilization, and Kabbalah as the inner metaphysic of much of traditional Judaism. Beit El is the acme of the kabbalistic doctrine in early modernity, yet it has little about it that would conform to many Western typologies of the mystical experience. Is the academy to exclude Beit El from the realm of Kabbalah because it doesn't conform to Western notions of "mysticism"? Is Kabbalah really to be considered a form of mysticism, or is it best defined as Judaism's salient esoteric, metaphysical tradition?

An astonishing admission, by Shar'abi's son Hizkiahu Yizhak Mizrahi Shar'abi, emerges from the very heart of the Beit El school. As cited in the enormous review of the Beit El rite *Divrei Shalom*, Avner Efg'in quotes the younger Shar'abi:

Even if we intend [mekavven] according to our intellects, each one according to his capacity we do not know the explanation of "kavvanah," how it is and what the explanation of what the Rav wrote ... when he said "intend thus" and so forth, what does "intend" [tekavven] mean? What is kavvanah? I have not achieved any spiritual level, [yet] because of our many sins, it has transpired that people think of me that I have the proper intention, and that I am expert in the words of the Ray,

and this causes me all of the evils of the world, body and soul.

This revelatory remark suggests that for all of the complexity of Shar'abi's system of kavvanot, the writings of the Beit El kabbalists provide little description of the experience of the practice. This truth also emerges after an exhaustive review of the Beit El literature. The cultivation of a personal feeling and the achieving of a mystical state were not goals of the practice, and directives about achieving ecstasy or cleaving are largely absent from the literature. Rather, prayer with kavvanot was a transitive experience, directed at the object(s) of prayer.

This does not mean that the members of the Beit El school were oblivious to the pietistic and experiential aspects of their practice. In fact, in matters overtly spiritual, they were simply dependent on the rich ethical literature coming out of the Safed tradition, exemplified by the writings of Hayyim Vital, Eliahu de-Vidas, Elazar Azikri, and others. The widely circulated works of the ethical (mussar) tradition were also universally acceptable to them. The Beit El kabbalists were also empathetic with the Hasidic masters. Like their North African counterparts, they felt that some Hasidic thought was talking to them, as well. Otherwise, the spiritual dimension of their practice was derivative and unoriginal, based on earlier kabbalistic traditions. The only exception to this rule is the works of Yosef Hayyim, the "Ben Ish Hai," who was an exceptional theologian, operating in every homiletical field of Jewish literary expression.

Conventional notions of emotional intensity are not absent from the kavvanot tradition. The nineteenth-century Beit El kabbalist Hayyim Shaul Dweck, for instance, was renowned for his emotional intensity at the time of prayer and for the beauty of his melodies.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, with regard to the nature of kavvanah, the Beit El kabbalists relied on the precedents of early writings. If even Hizkyahu Yizhak Mizrahi Shar'abi was uncertain regarding the authenticity of his practice, what can a mere scholar accomplish in determining the inner spirituality of Beit El Kabbalah? Yet, the Beit El kabbalists had an idea of what they were trying to do, and their assumptions were based on

traditional Jewish notions of concentration in prayer, or kavvanah, and from these notions came the religious practice that defined the Beit El school.

### Kavvanah in Prayer

The term kavvanah emerges out of Jewish law. In the rabbinic tradition, there is concern as to whether ritual and other acts are performed with the proper intention. This preoccupation is particularly sharp with regard to the act of prayer, in which the rote act may be manifestly insufficient. The concept of kavvanah, meaning "intention" or "sincere feeling," is the product of a certain religious tension in early Judaism. The rote performance of a commandment was often contrasted with the spiritual dimension of the act, which was termed its "intention," or kavvanah. In the case of fulfilling commandments through actions, the intention implies will or volition. Certain commandments could not be fulfilled by the act alone; the act had to be accompanied by the "intention of the heart," or kavvanah. In the case of prayer, the rabbis were highly conscious that the rote recitation of the words of prayer had to be accompanied by an emotional commitment to the words being uttered. As the idea of kavvanah evolved, the sages of the Talmud self-consciously acknowledged that they were legislating the spiritual component of Judaism.

Although there are exceptions to the rule, it is a standard theme of the prophetic tradition that prayer and repentance are the equal of sacrifice in their positive effect on the Divine will. In later antiquity, when most Jews were isolated from the Jerusalem Temple, they formally turned to prayer as the replacement for the soteric agency of the sacrificial rite.<sup>1</sup> The impetus for Jewish prayer remains anxiety over the need for atonement. As the sacrificial altar removed the effects of sin, so the act of prayer allayed punishment and misfortune. Quietistic or meditative understandings of prayer must grapple with the fact that the core of the exoteric prayer derived from the sacrificial rite is petitional, tefilat bakashah, a laundry list of needs, couched in communal terms. The primary goal of prayer was to achieve the supplicants' physical needs. Whether or not prayer may have brought the adherent to an elevated state was

beside the point. With prayer so heavily freighted with tension and need, it became evident that there had to be an extra dimension to individual prayer beyond the rote recitation of the words. Tannaitic discussions already posit the need for an extra dimension of attention or sincerity in one's prayer, termed "intention," or kavvanah.

Inherent in the practice of kavvanot is a tension between the mental object of concentration and the words coming out of one's mouth. In the most protean Jewish prayer, the person praying vocalizes the name of God with the word Adonay even as he or she reads the name YHVH. Hence, in all formal Jewish prayer, there may be a disparity between the aural expression of the word and the intention expressed.<sup>1</sup> Even in common Jewish prayer, it is possible to ask the question that Joseph Weiss posed about the kavvanot: "Was the mind completely separated from lips except insofar as the spoken word of prayer acted as a springboard for the contemplative journey to the corresponding sefirotic realities?" The answer to his question must be in the affirmative; the purified mind was the main instrument of the theurgy of prayer.

### Kavvanah in Kabbalah

As earlier stated, in medieval Kabbalah, kavvanot are ideas, texts, or formulae to be contemplated while reciting the liturgy. In the annals of Kabbalah, there was a transition from the idea of kavvanah, which means, simply, "intention" or "concentration" in prayer, to the kavvanot, which, in the parlance of medieval Kabbalah, were ideas, texts, or formulae to be contemplated while reciting the liturgy. Scholarly research has traced a single thread of the notion of kavvanah leading from early Kabbalah to the classical forms of the eighteenth century. The development of kavvanot accompanied the emergence of Kabbalah

in Gerona, Provence, and the Rhineland. In each case, the preexistent format of the prayers was the instrument of the kabbalistic practice. In Azriel of Gerona's "Gate of Kavvanah of the First Hasidim," kavvanah is a "systematic absorption in the Divine Will and the desire to be united with it." The German Pietists who flourished in the Rhineland roughly concurrently with Azriel's activity in Spain are described as "interpreters of the listed [dorshei

reshumot], weighing and counting the sum and number of the letters of prayer and blessings [Tur Orah Hayim i13]," namely that they interpreted the words of the prayer service according to its linear unfolding. Hence, the practice of kavvanot was defined, at its outset, as the imposition of independent meaning onto a preexistent "list," namely the traditional prayer service. With the advent of this practice among the Ashkenazi Hasidim, two ancillary values were developed, as well, as has been noted by Joseph Dan. The first was the understanding that the prayer book, as sacred canon, may not be altered in any way. The second value was that prayer is not merely the fulfillment of a legal demand but is "a vehicle for becoming a participant in a mystical, Divine harmony.

The kabbalists were cognizant of their antecedents. Hence, elements of the earliest statements about kavvanah remain relevant in classical and later Kabbalah. The main anthology of lore for subsequent kabbalists was the Zohar, and its ideas regarding the mythology of prayer were authoritative for most subsequent kabbalists. The Zohar served as a warehouse for many ideas from the early Kabbalah, the Safed kabbalist Moshe Cordovero derived his ideas from the Zohar, and his student Isaac Luria operated in the same tradition, so that ideas regarding such a central idea as kavvanah remained consistent throughout the development of Kabbalah up to the emergence of Polish Hasidism.

The Zohar locates the effects of prayer in the overlapping swirl of Divine emanations. These various emanations include a number of contradictory systems anthologized in the Zohar: the sefirot, or hypostases of the Divine, the successive worlds of existence, and the celestial palaces filled with denizens of the celestial and rabbinic hierarchies. The proper recitation of the set prayer service is the way into these theosophical hierarchies. Hence, kabbalists saw the structure of the liturgy as a code for the interaction of the sefirot and the prayer book as a tool for influencing this interaction.

The structure of the prayer service, as rabbinically established, is time based. Moreover, in the

worldview of the Zohar, the liturgical time represented in the Jewish day, week, month, and year and marked by the prayer rite is, in effect, the basis of secular time. Hence, the performance of liturgical prayer is a portal into the realm of the true time, God's time. Prayers, like the sacrificial cult, have the effect of setting the world in its proper order, as instruments of renewal.

### Symbols and Kavvanah

The study of Kabbalah has widely emphasized the role of the symbol as the main agent of esoteric meaning. The contemplation of symbols through the reading of sacred texts with this charged hermeneutic is widely understood as the central religious act of Kabbalah. Nonetheless, kavvanah emerged as a second venue of kabbalistic contemplation. In allowing the adept another way to access the transcendent, Gershom Scholem explained that:

Kavvanah ... bridged the gap between the ancient forms of Jewish prayer and its new forms. In this way, kavvanah did for a changed understanding of the religious act in prayer ... what on a different plane and with different means, the symbol and symbolic exegesis did for a changed understanding of the Torah.

In the history of kabbalistic practice, Scholem considered the practice of mystical intentions to be as important as the widely discussed hermeneutic tradition. In this vein, the practice of kavvanot also provided a bridge between two understandings of kabbalistic theosophy. The practice advocated by the Zohar is largely one of contemplative hermeneutics. As Elliot Wolfson has pointed out, the central noetic of Kabbalah is the apperception of meaning through the constant unfolding of the ever-hidden symbol. Other scholars, particularly Yehudah Liebes, have stressed the role of participation in a given mythos as an essential aspect of the kabbalistic experience. That is, the essential act of the theosophical kabbalist in the tradition of the thirteenth-century Spanish Kabbalah, as exemplified by the Zohar and the works of Joseph Gikatilla and others, was to read sacred texts, interpret the symbolic meanings that lie within them, and then look out at the world through the lens of that symbolic tradition. The

imagery of the phenomenal world also expanded to become a symbolic universe, and the mystic "read" the nature of reality through the archetypal symbols that had been honed in his reading of the Bible.

In larger terms, the symbolic universe posited by the Zohar could be strung together into a larger mythos. The surface nature of reality was not its real nature but only an external sheath, hiding the true reality, which could be perceived through the symbols and clues that it proffered. The kabbalist lived with engagement in the mythos of larger forces at work beneath the surface of phenomenal reality. One widely known example of this is the myth of the Shekhinah, her estrangement from her consort, the cosmic God in heaven, and her reconciliation with her consort on the Sabbath eve, when she is escorted to the nuptial bower by her knightly escort, the kabbalists. This mythos is presented many times in the Zohar and reflected in the structure of the Friday-night service.

The employment of prayer kavvanot served as a device that took the kabbalist beyond the realms of both myth and symbol in Kabbalah. By engaging themselves in the prayer rite in this proactive way, theosophical kabbalists left the passive role of theosophical apperceivers and became intercessors in the processes of the Divine. The adept who practiced the kavvanot contributed to the workings of the Divine mythos, which he had understood only passively through his study.

The content of a given set of kavvanot derives from the system of metaphysics, or the given mythos through which the prayers are being interpreted. For example, the Safed kabbalists identified many prayers as occasions for the unification of the sefirot. To that end, it was widely accepted in the common religion of Safed that the prayers and meals attending the Sabbath eve were rites for the unification of the God and the Shekhinah. Another product of this underlying rationale for the performance of commandments and the recitation of prayers was the *le-shem yihud* prologue, in which a given rite was preceded by the admission that it was being performed in order to expedite "the union of the Holy Blessed One and his Shekhinah." Contemporary editions of the prayer



book are still apt to contain the Le-Shem Yihud ascription, namely "for the sake of the union of the Holy Blessed One and his Shekhinah, behold I am ready and about to perform the mitzvah of as it is written." The sacred wedding on the Sabbath eve and the Le-Shem Yihud prologue are examples of kavvanot that became part of common folk religion. Knowledge of these rites was an acceptable Jewish metaphysic in most religious communities.

It was a given of Beit El practice that "before every mizvah or prayer one says Le-Shem Yihud. Even on the days when one does not practice the kavvanot, such as the counting of the Omer, and the days between Rosh ha-Shanah and Yom Kippur, one says Le-Shem Yihud." The Beit El rite emphasized the recitation of special versions of this prayer. The usual prologues to the Sabbath service were excised from the Beit El rite in favor of the recitation of a special version of the Le-Shem Yihud, and another version was instituted before the additional (musaf) service of the Sabbath and festivals. On the eve of the Day of Atonement, the congregation similarly recited a particular version of the Le-Shem Yihud for each of the five forms of self-affliction prescribed on that day.

In their wide inclusion of the Le-Shem Yihud formula, the Beit El kabbalists, it is clear, intended to draw down and enmesh the transcendent Divine in the mundane and corporeal world. The practice of such rituals with their accompanying intentions was based on certain theoretical premises. These themes have been addressed by the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel. For contemporary Beit El kabbalists, the goal of worship is to effect the union of God and the world through the drawing of the light of the infinite through the five levels of the soul. Kavvanot practice brings about a sublime repair (tiqqun), drawing down the light of the infinite (Ein Sof) into union with the world. Kabbalistic prayer unifies and links all the worlds in the highest levels of the cosmos, to make the Divine flow, or shefa', descend into the corporeal world.

### Prayer as Union

Maimonides identified the consciousness of God's unity, mizvat ha-yihud, as a specific commandment of the Torah, namely to always know that there is

one God. In Kabbalah, this understanding of yihud, or unity, evolved from the idea of consciousness of the oneness of God into a specific act. Rather than passively knowing that God is one and unique, the individual, through the act of yihud, performs an act of unification: of the individual with God, of God with the world, and of the sundered world itself. In the late zoharic work *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar*, unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain mizvot. A similar point is made in the prayer book commentary of Isaiah ha-Levi Horowitz, the author of the monumental work *Two Tablets of the Covenant*. In one instance, Horowitz quotes the sixteenth-century kabbalist Meir Ibn Gabbai's *Avodat ha-Kodesh*:

The true unification is the root of the religion and faith, of which the Torah commands us in the verse Hear O Israel, the Lord Our God the Lord is One. The inner truth of this tradition is to link and unify the emanation, which is the Divine. These are the powers that are gathered in the special Name, in One. The term *Shema'* implies gathering and assembly.... The essence is that one must link and unify the branches to the root. Hence one must unify with intention and with thought purified from any other impulse, so as not to make any rupture or separation.

Similarly, according to the Zohar, kavvanah is necessary for the successful act of union with the Divine: "If one comes to unify the holy name and did not intend [hitkavveh] it in his heart, the desires and fears that within him are blessed, the lower and the higher. Then his prayer is cast out and evil is decreed on it." In both of these expositions of the relationship between the two terms, unification is the end for which kavvanah is the means.

The image of erotic union is common through classical Kabbalah and no less so in the literature of the kavvanot. The erotic component of the prayer experience emerges from the fact that in Lurianic Kabbalah, no less than in that of the Zohar, the Universe is gendered. The theme of prayer as sexual union is already present in the earliest Lurianic writings, as it is already a theme in the Zohar, expressing the intention that the male and the female be united "as they were at the creation

of the world!" In the later strata of the Zohar, unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain mizvot. The prayers are a form of seduction, geared toward raising the "feminine waters" of the Divine superstructure.

One of the earliest, most central, and most widely circulated kavvanot is the premise that a given mizvah facilitates the union of the masculine and the feminine elements of the emanated Divine, the Holy Blessed One, and the Shekhinah. This view is central in the early Kabbalah and is evident in many documents from the Safed renaissance and later that view themselves as fulfilling the mission of the Zohar.

In the Zohar literature and prior to it, the fitting object of union was the Shekhinah. One of the broadest and most popularly circulated kabbalistic ideas was that prayer consists of the unification of the Shekhinah with her consort in the upper realms. Any Jew who prays is standing in the phenomenal world and gazing upward. Hence, the first entity that he or she will encounter is the indwelling of God in the World, namely the Shekhinah. In the time of the Jerusalem Temples, the Shekhinah literally "dwelled" in the Holy of Holies and was the object of the earliest synagogue prayer. Shar'abi acknowledged the centrality of the original Temple to Beit El practice:

The goal of our turning in prayer is to pray and to pour out our souls to the Blessed God, to redeem the Shekhinah from the exile and to break down her prison and to free the prisoners.... If there is one who is aroused in repentance to break down her prison, the Holy Blessed One will answer and return the Shekhinah to him, for this is many days and years that the Shekhinah remains in the exile. Since the destruction of our holy and glorious Temple and the blocking of all prophetic vision, the Holy Spirit has ceased, and many of the mizvot of the Torah are hidden in the corner, the harvest has passed and the summer is ended and everything is contingent on repentance.

This idea has many antecedents, and many commandments, according to classical Kabbalah, have the sole purpose of bringing about the union

of the Shekhinah and her celestial consort. In the Zohar literature, particularly, prayer is a way of invoking the presence of the Shekhinah in the world. Certain prayers also bring about the eroticized union of the male and female aspects of the Universe. The idea of prayer being a form of communion with the Shekhinah was retained by the Beit El kabbalists, as is evident from this admonition by Hayyim Shaul Dweck:

Things that help attainment: It is a great mizvah to teach oneself to always do the acts of unification that relate to the Shekhinah. There is nothing to control the sins and support her but the one who knows how to perform these acts of unification.

Dweck's admonition appears in one of the popular devotional works that he helped to publish. Hence, it is clear that in Beit El, during the period of its first great flourishing, union with the Shekhinah was the goal of the practice. Therefore, it may be assumed that the Beit El kabbalists of today, as at the turn of the twentieth century, see themselves as part of the union of the Shekhinah with the upper realms of Divinity during their times of prayer.

### Union in the Lurianic Rite

The theme of prayer as sexual union is present in the earliest Lurianic writings, just as it is in the Zohar. Lurianic Kabbalah differed from the interpretations that preceded it in that it emphasized a different structure of the Divine. Instead of the sefirot that formed the basis for the Kabbalah of the Zohar and the mainstream Safed Kabbalah, Isaac Luria emphasized a different system that was first presented in the last sections of the main part of the Zohar. This universe is visualized in anthropomorphic terms and structured according to a hierarchical family, including a patriarch (Attika Kadisha), a set of parents (Abba and Imma), a son (Zeir), and his consort (Nukvah). The family, moreover, has been traumatized by its history, following the well-known mythos of the "breaking of the vessels" of Divinity and the need to restore the world through the act of Divine repair. In the midst of this general catastrophe, Abba and Imma must conceive and nurture their offspring, Zeir, and betroth him to Nukvah. The various members of the cosmic Divine family, the

parents (Abba and Imma), the youth (Zeir Anpin), and his consort (Nukvah), have turned away from one another to confront the chaos in the world following the breaking of the vessels. With their backs turned toward one another, they face outward to confront the chaos of the world outside. This turning out is called the back-to-back embrace.

The goal of the adept in the Lurianic rite was to bring about the harmonious and untroubled union of the various countenances, thereby causing the conception and nurturing of Zeir Anpin, the central countenance. This union is described as the goal of the kabbalistic practice in the later strata of the Zohar, where unification with the Divine is a positive act that takes place through the contemplative practice of certain mizvot. The goal of Lurianic practice is to turn these dysfunctional figures toward each other, thus effecting "face-to-face" union and repairing the broken cosmos. Similarly, the aim of prayer with kavvanot is to effect unions among these familial elements of the cosmic structure. The role of the kavvanah is to draw the Divine effluence from above to below. The initial move of the kavvanot is to arouse the ascent of the mayyin nukvin, the "feminine waters," which provoke the excitement of the male countenances. The various prayer intentions and rituals mandated by the culture of Lurianic Kabbalah were exercises in the adept's self-immolation at the orgasmic center of these unions.

Early Lurianic teachings indicated the prayers that facilitated specific unions and embraces. There are embraces to be repaired at every passage of the day, and these are associated with specific prayers. The recitation of central prayers, such as the Shema' prayer and the reader's repetition of the silent devotion, serves to turn Zeir and Nukvah toward each other and bring about their union. The recitation of the Shema' also effects the Divine union, turning the consort, Nukvah, from the back-to-back union to the face-to-face through the ascent of the "feminine waters." The prostrations during the silent prayer are considered particularly efficacious in bringing about the unions of the countenances.

Hence, the real function and meaning of the Jewish liturgy are not to simply profess faith in God and

then ask for things, as it would seem from the manifest structure of the Shema' and the silent devotion. These prayers are really devices to bring about processes that have nothing to do with the plain meaning of the words but rather evoke supernal mysteries available only to those who are adept in Kabbalah.

### Devekut and Thought

One constant in the contemplative aspect of kavvanot practice is the principle of devekut, or "cleaving" to God. Devekut has its origins in the biblical adjuration to "cleave to Him" (Deuteronomy 10:20). This "cleaving" has been described as the central goal and preoccupation of kabbalistic prayer from the early kabbalists to the Lurianic practitioners, and, of course, it is also ubiquitous in Hasidism. The achievement of devekut is intimately attached to the presence and application of kavvanah, as Moshe Halamish has defined it:

Kavvanah is the path to the actualization of this cleaving through the stripping of the religious act (in this case, prayer) of its concrete, external nature, through ongoing contemplation of its inner nature. In this way the human thought (or will) combines into this Divinity, and the gap between the two shrinks.

Ephraim Gottlieb portrayed the relationship of devekut and kavvanah in the medieval period by describing two forms of kavvanah. The first kind was a nontransitive form, directed inward, that endeavored to bring the individual to devekut. The second form of kavvanah was transitive in nature in that it endeavored to repair the Divine world. Gottlieb understood devekut as a kind of meditation in that it was the nontransitive aspect of kavvanah. The act of devekut placed the individual at the center of prayer, rather than the community.

Prayer is largely defined by the first kind of kavvanah, according to Gottlieb, in which the core of the practice of prayer with kavvanot is a quest toward contemplation, or hitbonnut. The tool, or vessel, for the process of kavvanah is the kabbalist's thought. The kabbalist uses the prayer form to cleave his thought and soul to the Divine world, shedding the outside world and locating himself in the path of the Divine flow. Thought is the materiel that fuels the union of the individual and

the Divine. According to Isaac the Blind, "the way to prayer is through the finite things that a person receives and raises in thought to the infinite." The early kabbalists spoke of the "cleaving of thought" (devekut ha-mahshavah), as opposed to the absorption of the self into God, the unio mystica that serves as one of the markers by which scholars recognize "mysticism."

The idea that thought could ascend linked the experience of kabbalistic prayer to classical prophecy. This association with prophecy, in which the prophetic mind is the vessel of the experience, is pronounced in such works as Hayyim Vital's Sha'arei Kedushah. Such "raising of thought" is also ascribed to the ancient pietists of Talmudic legend, the Hasidim Rishonim, who "elevated their thought to the source and emptied themselves of their thought."

The authors of the Zohar repeatedly concretized thought into a dynamic instrument of theurgy. Similarly, Ezra and Azriel of Gerona convey the power of thought as "a spring of water which flows from its source," as demonstrated in this well-known passage from Ezra's commentary on the legendary material in the Talmud:

Thought expands and rises to its place of origin. The simile is: A spring of water flows from its source. If you dig a dam to prevent the water from dissipating then it will go to the source and no further. The early pious ones would raise their thought to the place of its origin and through the adhering thought the [sefirot] would be blessed and enhanced and receive from the emptiness of thought. It is like a person who opens a pool of water so that it flows all over. For the adhering thought is the source and blessing and endless flow and from this emanation and adhering of thought, the things would be increased and multiply, and from the joy they would be revealed to him, and thus was the extension of prophecy, when the prophet would concentrate and direct his heart and adhere his thought above. According to his adherence the prophet would see and know what is going to happen.

For Azriel, thought is literally the instrument for "channeling" the Divine flow and its positive effects.

Like prophets, who have a tension between their public function and their individual experience, the practitioner separates his activist/theurgic role from his contemplative practice.

In this vein, Elliot Wolfson has identified the constant factor in the development of the kavvanot as the formation of sacred space in the mental realm. From the rabbinic period through the thirteenth-century pietists of the Rhineland, visualization of the Shekhinah, from its original locus in the Temple to the inner emptiness of the mind, is the object of kavvanah. Through the time-based rhythms of the liturgy, prayer with the appropriate kavvanah represents a union of this sacred space with sacred time. In the case of the Rhineland pietists, the image of the Temple and the Shekhinah were interchangeable. Wolfson further defines the constant and unchanging essence of the role of kavvanah as a "phenomenology of affinity" that links the Rhineland pietists, theosophical kabbalists, and prophetic kabbalists in the Abulafian mold: "Kavvanah is ... the internal state of consciousness by means of which the worshipper creates a mental icon of God." Visualizing the image of the Temple resolved the tension of how to imagine an imageless God who could not be visualized, for "utterance of the Divine names results in the visual manifestation of the Divine glory."

Eventually, the object of prayer became linked to specific sefirot. A manuscript of Jacob the Nazir, a Provençal kabbalist who preceded the emergence of the Zohar, cites a tradition of Avraham ben David of Posquieres (RaBa"D). The latter stated that the prayers of thanksgiving that begin and close the silent devotion were directed to the Ilat ha-Ilaot, the highest level of the Divine.

According to his point of view, the middle, petitionary prayers were to be directed toward Binah, the highest levels of the Divine. In the proof texts of the Lurianic Kabbalah, the Idra literature of the Zohar, prayer reaches the ears of the secondary anthropos, Zeir Anpin, and thence enters the Divine mind. Following this reasoning, in the later Lurianic model, thought may indeed cleave to God, but prayer could rise only to a given point within the Divine anthropos. Accordingly, Gershom

Scholem defined the role of Lurianic prayer as an aspect of the world's need for repair (tiqqun):

In fact, the Lurianic system appears as a highly developed technique for speeding up the otherwise slow and long process of tiqqun. By correlating the words of the daily liturgy with the dynamic movements and the corresponding rising toward God and falling earthward of the mystical worlds, Lurianism taught its adepts to inject new strength into them and to lift them out of the depths into which they had fallen at the "breaking of the vessels." The proper kavvanah establishes a hidden harmony between the meditating kabbalist and the cosmos.

This unification is expressed, from the Zohar's Idra literature through the Lurianic Kabbalah, as a kind of immolating self-abnegation. Luria stressed that a person, during prayer, should have intention and prepare himself as if he were a dwelling and a throne for the emanation. It is a preparation for martyrdom. In the Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot, he declaims:

We have to give over our souls for the sanctification of the Name... and one must have the intention of receiving the four death penalties of the court.... [This] must be through our merits and good actions. Through our sins we bring it down and from our sins we raise it. So now it is impossible to rise but for the saints among us who rise to the level of Imma.... However, in the present, when we have nobody to rise to this level ... we have a partial tiqqun, that we commit our souls totally to death for the sanctification of the name with all of our heart, for if so, even if we have no good deeds and we are wondrously evil, through giving ourselves over to martyrdom, our sins are forgiven ... as it says, great is repentance from it brings one to the throne of Glory.

For the contemporary kabbalist Ya'akov Moshe Hillel, Luria's goal of martyrdom is transformed into a general stance of self-abnegation. This value, which is manifested in Hasidism as the notion of bittul, is a personal and social forsaking of this world, though not an invitation to literal martyrdom. Hillel states:

The one practicing the intentions of Luria, as set forth by Rav Shalom Shar'abi in his holy prayer books, show that he totally deprecates himself and his lowly existence in this limited world, in favor of the grand terrible goal of repairing the upper worlds, to remove and raise everything to the transcendent without any personal or earthly accounting of this world ... to fix the worlds, for one services the needs of a higher power.

The second-generation Lurianic kabbalist Natan Neta' Shapira portrayed this self-abnegation as necessary to channel Divine energy into the world and bring about the process of the repair of the world:

This is the reason for kavvanah in our prayers and precepts, for through this the sefirot will be unified. For through the service of the heart, which is prayer, this is the secret of the drawing forth of Divine effluence to the sefirot above, that the individual might be a part of God from above, linked in the chain of holiness through the chain of the outpouring of his soul from level to level. Behold, let this aforementioned out flowing be a ladder on which the arousal of his actions should rise until they unify all of the sefirot, drawing down the flow of blessing from the first sefirah to the last, until in all comes to dwell on him through that ladder.

For these three traditional kabbalists, the cessation of personal needs was the empirical goal of the practice. Only by negating their personal needs could the kabbalists accomplish the soteric ends to which prayer was devoted. Hence, the condition of prayer, that of self-abnegation, was the method for achieving the goal of prayer, which was to immolate oneself and have one's consciousness become, literally, a brick in the wall of the Divine superstructure.

Put simplistically, it might be said that in Hasidism, the experience of devekut was the object of the practice, whereas, for Lurianic practitioners, it was merely one of the tools of the rite.

### Silence

Since its initial development and among contemporary practitioners, the practice of

kavvanot has been a mind-only ritual. It was not meditation for its own sake, because it was subsumed into the mechanics of Jewish prayer rituals.

One zoharic value that would survive into later kabbalistic practice is a stress on the virtue of silence. Hence, the Zohar provides various rationales for why prayer is best recited in a whisper, a "still small voice." In contrast, then, to the virtue of boisterousness that characterizes some schools of Hasidic spirituality, the Zohar stresses the importance of silence in the process. This sensibility comes to the fore in the teachings of Shar'abi and in the practices of the Beit El community. The rules of prayer included a legal stipulation that the lips should move and that the recitation should be audible. The accompanying kavvanah, or intention, was never uttered; it remains in the mind and is never sounded out.

While the kavvanot are daunting in their complexity, the complexity of the system is brought into sharp relief according to this account of the early-twentieth-century Beit El kabbalist Hayyim Shaul Dweck. Dweck was afflicted by blindness late in his life, yet he continued the full practice of the kavvanot. This perplexed and impressed his students, as is clear in the following vignette:

Once [R. Suleiman Mozfi] asked Rav Shaul Dweck ... how was he able to practice so many details of the kavvanot laid out in Shar'abi's prayer book, and so quickly, without the help of the prayer book to guide his eyes. Dweck compared the question by gesturing towards the window of the room, "What is this?" Ray Suleiman answered, "a window." The master answered, "Yet how many details are combined in it, and yet you say, 'it is a window.' So it is with everything that a man is expert in and knows well, with all of its many component elements from which it is grafted and created, and they are all apprehended by thought in one apprehension. So it is with the kavvanot of Shar'abi, the one who is expert in the paths of the effluence and the stages of the details of the worlds, the order of their ascent and descent, in an instant they are all apprehended and remembered

mentally, etched in his imagination as the rabbis said `the paths of the firmaments are as clear as the paths of Neharda'ah."

Clearly, Dweck was also able to practice the kavvanot through the intuitive application of their theoretical principles. Memory and the application of the basic rules of the kavvanot as a "mind-only" aspect of the practice were the tools of its execution.

### Garb: Kavvanot and Power

The Jerusalem scholar Yonatan Garb has discussed kavvanah, from late antiquity to the civil religion of Safed, in ways that might be useful in understanding the Beit El practice of kavvanot. Garb understands the primary nature of kavvanah, from practically the inception of the term in antiquity, as referring to the channeling and harnessing of Divine power. In harnessing kavvanah, the adept may draw down the power from the cosmic realm (hydraulic), or he may provoke Divine expression through the relationship between the cosmic form and the human (isomorphism). The premise of the spatial, isomorphic, and hydraulic understandings of prayer is that, through the empowered consciousness, human and Divine thought connect and intersect. Power is "called forth" by the actions of the adherent, which may be linguistic, auditory, or visual, although there are distinctions among these different forms of power. In these cases, the radical isomorphism is that the human chassis is a microcosm of the Divine.

The hydraulic and spatial models posited by Garb are present in the teachings of the Zohar. In Garb's terms, the Zohar presents ideas that are both hydraulic and isomorphic. The hydraulic drawing down of Divine energy into the world is described as inherent in the term brakhah, or blessing. Brakhah is derived not from the Hebrew BRKH of the bended knee but from the breikhah, the collecting pool of Divine flow. The prayers of the righteous draw down Divine effluence. Prayers are also independent entities that may be dispatched, particularly with the metaphor of the sling so common in the Zohar.

To illustrate his point, Garb has constructed several models in which power is manipulated through

kavvanah. Each path to the infinite is unique. In spatial models of kavvanah, power is transmitted over a lineal distance that is transcended by kabbalistic practice. This theurgy is based on a basic premise of theosophical Kabbalah, namely that human actions influence the Divine. Human and Divine states resemble each other and converge isomorphically, through a relationship between humanity and the cosmic superstructure. For example, one presentation of the Shema' prayer portrays the act in terms of aligning the embraces and the proper intonations of the letters with the physical layout of the adherent's own body. Another spatial model posits a drawing down of energy from higher to lower realms, energy that can be mobilized by the gifted adherent. Garb calls this model "hydraulic," because the material being brought down is the stuff of Divinity, flowing from an endless source. Many popular sources attest to this view: the Bahir, for instance, describes power as a flowing stream, directed by reservoirs and pipes, a portrayal echoed in a well-circulated section of the Zohar (Ra'aya Meheimna)

Garb rejects models of kavvanah that are insular in that they view the individual as remaining in constant contact with the Divine. Kavvanah is not a meditative experience, because the experience itself is not noetic. Finally, the experience is not quietistic, and the adepts who are using kavvanah want to manipulate the processes of the Divine to their own ends in human history.

For Garb, the core of the kavvanot lies in the performance and action of the adherent, rather than in the nature of the Divine object being contemplated. Garb sees the model of kavvanah as nascent in rabbinic Judaism from its inception in antiquity. From the studies of Rebecca Lesses, Garb adopts the term "ritual power" after the Merkavah tradition's use of the term "power," or Gevurah. Rabbinic texts characterized Gevurah as being strengthened or weakened by human activity. Garb argues that, rather than apposing "magical" and "theurgical" elements in the rabbinic tradition, that there is a "cycle of empowerment" in rabbinical notions of kavvanah in which God is supported by the righteous and then imparts thaumaturgic power to them. Hence, the rabbinic dictum "Make God's will your will, so that he will

make your will his will. Negate your will before his will, so that he may negate the will of others before yours" is an empirical, as opposed to a figurative, remark, as is the related statement "a mizvah follows a mizvah, a transgression follows a transgression."

The Zohar's model of prayer is based on isomorphism between the human and the Divine. The human form is the ultimate model for both the existential and the Divine realms, based on an anthropomorphic theology and anthropology.

This tradition is reflected poignantly in the image of the God who observes the commandments, on whose phylacteries the name "Israel" is inscribed. In the same way, the Lurianic rite of intentions directs the adherent to think of the word "throat" (garon) at the point in the service at which the energies spread to God's throat. In the words of Elliot Wolfson, "the ultimate goal of contemplation may be the separation of the intellect from the body, but the consciousness fostered by intention in prayer is predicated on the iconic visualization of the Divine Presence in bodily terms." Hence, most human actions, if they fall within the realm of halakhah, affect the Divine realm.

Garb's models of power are further combined and come to the fore in the Kabbalah of the sixteenth century, including the civil religion of Safed. The sixteenth century was a time of efflorescence of theories of power in many world religions. A monolithic figure in the Safed renaissance, Moshe Cordovero, synthesized hydraulic, astral, personal, and linguistic models of power, in Garb's parlance. Cordovero's "Gate of Kavvanah" portrays the mode in which the zaddik is able to draw down the power of the Shekhinah. Similarly, in the mainly non-Lurianic kavvanot of the Rashkover prayer book, there are many instances of the community coalescing at moments of particular Divine effulgence. The early and late Lurianic literature repeats that the goal of prayer with kavvanot is that the light of the infinite (Ein Sof) be drawn down below, as "the whole world is filled with his glory" and his unification.

Whatever the final conclusion, the models employed by the practitioners of kavvanot in the eighteenth century had long been established by

earlier generations, and they were walking along trails that had been blazed by others. Menachem Kallus has pointed out that "by the sixteenth century virtually all of [Garb's] models were employed by the major kabbalists of that age, [so that] such a message ceases to be a useful tool for distinguishing the unique features of Lurianic theurgy from that of ... Cordovero or ... Ibn Araby, as all the models adduced by Garb are locatable in them all."

In all analyses of kavvanah, the reality is that there is no monolithic statement that can be made, because there are so many different types of Kabbalah and so many different understandings of the role of kavvanah in them. Ephraim Gottlieb's portrayals of kavvanah, the inward-looking, nontransitive form of devekut and the transitive, tiqqun-oriented form, were rooted in the early Kabbalah of Provence and Gerona.<sup>88</sup> Garb has based his suppositions on the middle period, from the Zohar up to Kabbalah's spread throughout the world, with particular attention to the saints of Morocco. Joseph Weiss seems to have assumed that the practices posited by Gottlieb were normative for the practice of kavvanot that was rejected by Hasidism, when, in fact, as Kallus has observed, the Lurianic practice of kavvanot was already too complex to categorize according to one model or another. Although Garb's models are of great value, it can be assumed that the Beit El practice incorporated all of them.

In Judaism, the prayer experience fulfils the same role as the noetic, meditative, or revelatory one in other disciplines; it is the practice that defines the essence of the religion's given theology. The quintessential Jewish moment is the turning of the individual, whether Abraham, Moses, or Hannah, to God in prayer. In all of Judaism, prayer, liturgical or extralitururgical, is the instrument of breakthrough to God. Whether kabbalistic or not, the goal of Jewish prayer is to access the highest levels of the Divine, for purposes of theurgy, and thence to affect Divine providence. It must follow that the experience of prayer must be "felt" and sincere. But besides that quality of existential sincerity, what should the experience be?

The paradoxes of kavvanah as intention are an enormous topic in rabbinic theology. The broadly defined "kavvanah" of rabbinic theology evolved into the more narrowly defined "kavvanot" of Kabbalah. In each case, the intentions that might accompany the performance of a mizvah became far more specific when applied to the act of prayer. Evaluating the effects of kavvanah in the context of prayer, with its concomitant values of devekut and technical acuity, is challenging because all that is available for this evaluation is the textual record.

The scholar of mysticism Steven Katz has argued that, with regard to the study of mysticism, there are no unmediated religious experiences and that, in interpreting the mystical record, scholars have only the texts before them as witness. In the case of the practice of kavvanot, we also have the communities, which are party to the resurgence of these practices. The analysis of lost traditions, such as the works of Abraham Abulafia and the circle of the Zohar, differs from the study of the practice of kavvanot because the latter are being practiced by living communities. The first question that must be asked of these circles is whether the practice of these communities is authentic to the spirit of the theoretical writings that they are implementing. A second question is whether there is an unbroken chain of this tradition, extending from Shalom Shar'abi to the present acolytes of the tradition.

The person standing next to the scholar in a synagogue may be in a state of mystical ecstasy, but the scholar cannot enter his mind to see, and modern practitioners may and in fact probably will be hostile to questions from the academic sector. This raises another question of authenticity, namely the effect of scholarly writing on Kabbalah and its tacit dissemination to the traditional communities.

For example, in one prayer circle in Jerusalem, I noticed a man standing outside the main synagogue on the balcony. During his prayer, he would sob despondently during the silent devotion. The researches of Moshe Idel and Eitan Fishbane have addressed the role of weeping in classical kabbalistic practice, so I was intrigued to encounter this experience in the field. Upon investigation, I determined that the young man in question was felt



by all to be mentally unbalanced, that he was a social pariah, and that he was verbally abused by the other kabbalists. He certainly came from outside the community and may, in fact, have been influenced by Idel's articles. If such a "freak" enters the community and recovers practices described in academic writings and then practices them in the community, is this practice "authentic"?

The vast literature of the kavvanot does not emphasize the nature of the experience. There are, in general, few accounts of the experience of mystical ecstasy in comparison to the myriad accounts left in other traditions, and some of the accounts that we do have remain unexamined. Shalom Shar'abi's contemporaries in Poland, including but not limited to the saints of early Hasidism, made great strides toward an emotional and theologically rich tradition of kabbalistic prayer, which is addressed in a further chapter. Yet this was not the understanding of Isaac Luria's teachings that pervaded Beit El. The Lurianic prayer system, as conceived by the Beit El adepts, is a rite, not a meditative process. Therefore, personal sensation is beside the point, because the object of the rite is not the receiving of a noetic experience but simply the completion of the rite. Hence, the experience of the contemplative is one in which the practitioner enters a realm in which he is no longer motivated by the liturgy's overt concern with human needs. Hence, the search for the inner experience of the Beit El practice of kavvanot can proceed only in the knowledge that the answers will be hard to define, if not unknowable.

### The Names of God in the Beit El Kavvanot

The actual texts of the kavvanot usually consist of arrangements of the various names of God. The idea that God has different names is, of course, biblical in origin, and traditions of various Divine names may be found at every stage of Jewish intellectual history. Throughout the history of Kabbalah, the premise of the tradition remained constant, namely that sacred names accompanied the emanation of the Divine into present reality and served as instruments for channeling that emanation. As Gershom Scholem expressed it:

The Divine Names ... are aroused through meditative activity directed toward them. The individual in prayer pauses over each word and fully gauges the kavvanah that belongs to it. The actual text of the prayer, therefore, serves as a kind of banister onto which the kabbalist holds as he makes his not unhazardous ascent, groping his way by the words. The kavvanot, in other words, transform the words of the prayer into holy names that serve as landmarks on the upward climb.

In the kabbalistic tradition there are innumerable names of God, for, as the thirteenth-century sage Nachmanides observed, ultimately the whole Torah was nothing but a random collection of names of G0d.<sup>1</sup> These names are taken apart, vocalized in new forms, repeated, and recombined. In their rearranged form, they make up the actual content of the kavvanah that accompanies the intoning of the prayer. This statement from Joseph Dan regarding the thirteenth-century pietists of the Rhineland is equally true of the Beit El kabbalists, namely that "it sometimes seems that where other readers would see letters and meanings in the Bible. [They] would see only rows of figures and numbers, mystically connected." Shar'abi's system of names is by far the most abstract and complex of all of the kavvanot systems.

The practice of Lurianic kavvanot had a period of efflorescence in Poland from the seventeenth century until the early generations of the Hasidic movement and for a while, operated concurrently with the Beit El school. This Polish rite, which is discussed later in this study, was constructed around the same name traditions, although it is less developed and complex. When viewed from without, the manipulation of sacred names in Shar'abi's system seems completely impenetrable, yet the component aspects of the system are clear enough.

The four-letter name of God, YHVH, is the foremost object of contemplation, while its biblical compatriots AHYH, Elohim, El Shaddai, and ADNY make up a second tier in terms of their importance. Other names grow out of ancient Jewish myths and were incorporated into the Lurianic mythos. Yet more names are developed artificially through the permutation of letters and other methods. Names

were plucked from acronyms of biblical verses and recovered through the numerical coefficients (gematriot) of different vocalizations of the name YHVH. Names are also generated by acrostics of sacred verses and by replacing one letter of a given name with another.

Name traditions developed throughout the course of kabbalistic history. As mentioned earlier, most essential names were the various names of God employed in the Bible itself. Other sacred names are referenced in rabbinic writings and explained in Gaonic materials.<sup>1</sup> In the Heikhalot literature of late antiquity, sacred names accompany and underlie the workings of the Divine.<sup>1</sup> These traditions then spontaneously "recrudesced" in Provence, Gerona, and the Rhineland in the great resurgence of Kabbalah in the twelfth century. Joseph Dan has pointed out that the name HVYH, used "to express Divine Presence and Divine will," emerged as an important terminological innovation in the thirteenth century. This term emerged simultaneously in the thought of two early kabbalists who seem otherwise to have been unaware of each other: Rabbi Eliezer of Worms and Isaac the Blind of Provence.<sup>1</sup> This and other sacred-names traditions developed and percolated beneath the surface of kabbalistic history.

It is well known that the renowned kabbalist Abraham Abulafia's kabbalistic system along with the contemplation of sacred names in their permutations. According to Idel:

was based in sacred names, and it is tempting to try to find parallels with and precursors to Lurianic practice in Abulafia's system. However, Abulafian practice emphasized posture, breathing, and bodily movement, Abulafia's method is based upon the contemplation of a constantly changing object: one must combine the letters and their vowel signs, "sing" and move the head in accordance with the vocalization, and even lift one's hands in the gesture of Priestly Blessing<sup>1</sup> ... the letters of the Divine Name are not only a method of cleaving to God; the process of imagining the letters in the first stage precedes the vision of the letters in the final stage of the ecstatic process.

This physical dimension and, moreover, any prescriptive understanding of what the experience entails is absent from the Lurianic literature. The Lurianic practice of kavvanot is silent ("mind only") and draws on the halakhic prescriptions for prayer as its mode of implementation. The names are never enunciated but only kept in the mind as silent objects of contemplation. The substance of the name traditions, that is to say certain patterns of vocalization, survived from one tradition to another, while the implementation did not.

### Sefirotic Coefficients

The practitioners of the Lurianic kavvanot, including Shar'abi and his students and their contemporaries in Eastern Europe, incorporated a number of contributing elements from earlier traditions. These include the linking of Divine names to elements of the sefirot, the vocalization of the name YHVH in ways that have different numerical coefficients, and, finally, the recovery of traditions of sacred names whose origins are in antiquity.

The essential associations of the names with sefirot date at least to the early Spanish Kabbalah. The Zohar, as well, specified sefirotic coefficients for various Divine names, whether biblical or postbiblical. The name ADNY, which is the name that is uttered in the practical liturgy, is linked to the sefirah Malkhut, the realm of present reality. AHYH is the name associated with Keter, the highest of the sefirot. The name Elohim can represent the sefirot Binah, Din, or Malkhut. Zoharic traditions also link names to archetypal aspects of the sefirot. The name YHVH represents the central trunk of the sefirotic tree, the sefirah Tiferet. As Moshe Cordovero put it, "All names come from YHVH. In the Tiqqunim, the name HVYH is called 'the sap of the tree.'" Hence, the mythic "Tree of Life," which is the way of expressing the flow of Divine reality into the present world, is also reducible to the function of Divine names, a principle that would become important to Shar'abi.

In the sefirotic system favored by the Zohar and Moshe Cordovero, the sefirot were the most important element of the system. In the Zohar's latter strata and the Lurianic canon, the countenances, which sit over the sefirot, come to the fore. Luria was haunted by the imagery of the

countenances and recast the Zohar's Kabbalah on the basis of this system. The sefirah Tiferet, for instance, is replaced, in the Lurianic system, by the countenance Zeir Anpin. Luria embellished the status of Zeir Anpin further. He maintained that there were three levels of Zeir Anpin, which are indicated by three construct forms of the name YHVH. The first is YHVH AHYH; the second level is YHVH Elohim; and the third level is YHVH ADNY. These permutations of these basic biblical names form the basis of many subsequent kavvanot. In Luria's full system, sacred names were interpreted as standing for the various countenances of the cosmic anthropos (parzufim), and they also were the energy behind the circulation of the mohin, channels of consciousness through the same anthropomorphic structure.

A master list of the combinations of AHYH, HVYH, ADNY, and ELOH and ELOHIM was compiled by the nineteenth-century Lithuanian kabbalist Shlomo Eliashiv, himself the author of the magisterial work *Leshem Shevo ve-Ohalamah* (acronym Rav ShB"H, for Shlomo Bar Heikel). Eliashiv's chart is based on Cordovero and the Vilna Gaon and was reproduced in the printed editions of *Ez Hayyim*. Eliashiv developed 320 combinations in all. According to Menachem Kallus, the source for these vocalizations is in Luria's commentary to the zoharic composition *Idra Zuta*. That particular text served as the ur-text for the kavvanot of the daily priestly blessing, as well as for the Shabbat service.

### Miluyyim: The Vocalizations of the Name YHVH

Luria's system is also reliant on the secret of miluyyim, or, as Kallus called them, the "fillings of the Tetragrammaton." This tradition consists of the name YHVH, transliterated, with the vocalization being implemented with different block letters as vowels, rather like the vocalization of Yiddish or Ladino. The numerical sum of these names is then added up, and the names are signified by the gematria, or numerical coefficient, of that name, as well as the number of letters or words in a given text. The four miluyyim are as follows. The name "seventy-two" is based on the transliteration using the letter yu"ד, as follows: YVD HY VYV HY. The name "sixty-three" makes use of the aleph in the

letter vav, producing the formulation YVD HY VAV HY, forming the gematria "sixty-three." The name "forty-five" vocalizes the HV"H with the letter aleph so as to produce YVD HA VAV HA. The name "fifty-two" makes more extensive use of the letter hey: YVD HH VV HH. Hence, the miluyyim are identified by the gematriot that they produce, rather than by the random consonant that vocalizes them.

These names are implemented in various ways during the Lurianic prayer rite. Different blessings call for different various vocalizations or miluyyim of the name YHVH. The miluyyim, being four in number, are naturally linked to four countenances of the Lurianic system, Abba, Imma, Zeir, and Nukvah. They are also employed as instruments and signposts in one of the central practices of Lurianic prayer, the ascent through the four worlds.

The miluyyim are ubiquitous in the kavvanot literature. In his recent sweeping study of Lurianic prayer, Menachem Kallus has emphasized one text that, in his opinion, clarifies and exemplifies the use of names in the Lurianic prayer system. Significantly, it identifies the name "sixty-three" as the most intrinsic of the miluyyim for the meditative aspect of the kavvanot. Kallus has prepared a composite version of this text culled from the various versions. It is daunting in its complexity but still provides the best window into the origins of the kavvanot tradition:

It is appropriate for a person to have intention always, particularly before study and before prayer, to set himself as a dwelling and throne for the holy emanation. For is man not created in the image of God (Gen. 9:6)? In this will his prayer and Torah be answered and accepted! For through this one may link all of the worlds, thereby letting the higher holiness come to rest on it. How [to do this]? He should have intention to prepare his head to be a throne for the name HVYH with the vocalization kamaz and its two mohin, Hokhmah and Binah, and well as the HVYH(s) of patah and zeirei. And his two arms are segol and sheva', and his body is holem. And his two palms kubuz and hirik and the yesod vocalized with

shruk and the diadem is HVYH without vocalization.

The first section of this charge links the various vowels of the Hebrew language to the limbs of the body. The adept is charged to see himself as a vehicle for the energies of the Divine name. This name is infused with the energies of the Hebrew vowels, which are manifested with all of the vocalizations possible in the system of the Hebrew language. The patah and zeirei, which make an "ah" and an "ay" sound, respectively, are vocalized by the adept in his mind in order to prepare his consciousness to be filled by the presence of the name HVYH. It seems that by visualizing the most auditory aspect of kavvanot practice, the mind psychically resonates with the audible aspect of that vowel. Each one of the vowels of classical Hebrew has a certain role in the act of meditative prayer as linked to the physical body of the adept and, one would assume, isomorphically to the Divine body, as well. This is the closest that the Lurianic kavvanot tradition comes to anything resembling the mantra practice of Eastern meditation traditions, insofar as each vowel resonates with the limb to which it is assigned.

The text continues:

As it says in the Tiqqunim (129a), he should intend that the "man" is the name of sixty-three.... He should have the intention that his ear is the name sixty-three, excepting the last he"h, and perhaps with this he will apperceive hearing some higher holiness in prayer and at the time of his study. Also his nose is the name of sixty-three, for this is its gematria, and perhaps he will smell some holy scent. Also his mouth is the name of sixty-three, and the twenty-two letters from the five linguistic families, perhaps [thus] he will apperceive that the spirit of God will speak to him and the word of his tongue will be at the time of his study and prayer.

Even the orifices are thought of as receptacles for the powers of the sacred names. The name "sixty-three" (YVD HY VAV HY) is particularly efficacious in the basic preparation for prayer. This name is linked here to the linguistic theories first propagated in the ancient text Sefer Yezirah, in which the five consonantal families are linked to

five essential energies in the creation the Universe. The text continues with a preparation for the ascent through the four Worlds of Creation, an idea that is addressed elsewhere in this study:

Everything is contingent on the depth of his intention and cleaving [hitdavkuto]. And the secret of the eyes: if he is the realm of the world of Assiyah, let him intend the five HVYH(s) whose sum is ayi"n, five times twenty-six, let him intend the name with the milui of he"y. And in Yezirah, which is from the prayer "Blessed is He who Spoke" up to "Let Your Name be Praised Forever Our King," let him intend the HVYHot of aleph. And in prayer "Creator of Light," which is the world of Briah, let him intend the five HVYH(s) of sixty-three. And in the silent devotion, which is Azilut, he should intend the five HVYH(s) of seventy-two. And if he is walking in the market he should intend that his two feet are Nezah and Hod. And when he looks, he should intend that his two eyes are Hokhmah and Binah. And so on with all individual things. He should intend that he is a throne for the highest holiness. Doubtless, if he practices this for some time, he will be able to apperceive anything that he wants to and he will be as one of the angels who serves in the firmament.

This text presents a basic charge for the adherent and combines a number of central aspects of the theories that underlie the use of sacred names. These include the Divine names, their vocalizations and numerical coefficients (miluyyim), and the Divine countenances. It is striking that the text is as dense as it is, yet does not even bring in the theory of the countenances that so characterized Lurianic Kabbalah into its thick forest of associations. It goes without saying that the creation tradition of the Divine withdrawal (zimzum), the breaking of the vessels (shevirah), and repair (tiqqun) so beloved of those who read Scholem is nowhere to be found here.

Kallus provides a concise analysis of the text:

We find here that the practitioner is transforming himself into a "dwelling place" for the emanation of the Divine manifestation, in order to pray effectively with the kavvanot. Also it counsels that one

integrate the ordinary uses of the senses into the service of the Divine presence. The contemplator rises to different levels of spiritual existence and activates the qualities of Divine manifestation, corresponding to the different configurations of the Name contemplated. It is as if the Name empowers the person to see one's own qualities as Divine manifestation. This practice uses the different fillings of the Tetragrammaton to invoke the levels of shared human-Divine ontological realms i.e. realms of Being, and transforms the human faculties by invoking the Sefirot in connection to the inner-vocalizations of that Name. Its success depends on "the power of one's kavvanah and devekut, one's intention and mystical union."

In his presentation of this seminal text, Kallus notes the conflation of the major spiritual traditions of later Kabbalah (devekut, kavvanah, and union) into the charge for kavvanot practice. Clearly, the practitioners of old viewed the text as important; otherwise, it would not have been so widely reproduced. Kallus is correct in emphasizing the centrality of this work, and it remains one of the best indications of the outcome for which the contemplation of the names is intended. It also documents, for the late sixteenth century, the extent to which the contemplation of the sacred names was linked to a spiritual and contemplative state. The attainment of the state would not be so emphasized in the later writings coming out of the Beit El school.

### The Name of Forty-Two Letters and the Seventy-Two Names

The compilers of the kavvanot appropriated two ancient sacred name traditions with origins in antiquity. Such names derive from whole sections of scriptural text, reduced to acronyms and recombined. Perhaps the most widely reproduced of these is the forty-two-letter name, which was retained in the Hasidic rite. The forty-two-letter name of God is literally ABGaYTaZ KR'A S'TaN NGaD YaKhaS B'TaR Z'TaG HaKBaTN'A Y'GaL PZaK SaKVaZYT. The name is created by the rearrangement of the first words of the first chapter of Genesis. The forty-two-letter name is a popular object of contemplation; it appears in the

Friday-evening service as the "prayer of R. Nechuniah ben ha-Kanah" and is widely circulated among the popular practices of the contemporary Kabbalah Centers.

The forty-two-letter name is invoked in the Talmud, one citation stating that it is not to be transmitted except to one who is modest, humble, mature, never angry, never intoxicated, and not arrogant. The forty-two-letter name crossed from tradition to tradition, albeit with different rationales and explanations.

According to Hai Gaon, in the eighth century, the forty-two-letter name originated in the Merkavah tradition. The name was also seen as emanating from the world of the angels and as being an instrument for influencing their activities. In discussion of its structure, many ancillary explanations according to gematria were also associated with the Name. The kabbalistic tradition produced a plethora of associations and commentaries for the forty-two-letter name, as well as a number of etiological formulae for its derivation from scripture. In the later edition of Luria's teaching, Meir Poppers's *Ez Hayyim*, the forty-two-letter name is explained as a quadrupling of the name AHYH.

Kabbalists eventually began to define the function of the forty-two-letter name. The twelfth-century Ashkenazic pietist Eliezer of Worms wrote an entire work, *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, as a commentary on the name. He saw it as an instrument for influencing the activities of the Shekhinah. *Tiqqunei ha-Zohar* described the name as emanating from the realm of the sefirah *Gevurah*. The nineteenth-century Vilna kabbalist Pinchas Eliahu Hurvitz echoed the opinion that the name was the original instrument that God used to create the World. The *Zohar* alludes to the use of different parts of the forty-two-letter name for magic, or "practical Kabbalah." The segment KR"A ST"N is applied as the kavvanah for the blowing of the shofar, particularly in rites attending exorcism, a meaning inherent in the overt translation of the words ("tear Satan"). The name was also applied in toto as the kavvanah for specific prayers, such as the recitation of the biblical chapters associated with specific sacrifices and the mourner's Kaddish. Finally, the

forty-two-letter name is the acronym for the widely circulated "prayer of R. Nehuniah ha-Kanah," also known as Ana be-Koah, which is a widely circulated kabbalistic meditation. These uses of the forty-two-letter name imply that it has a protective function and is employed in petitional prayer in times of crisis.

A second tradition, that of the seventy-two names of God, occupies a role in the kavvanot traditions similar to that of the forty-two-letter name. The seventy-two names are constructed as an acronym that originates in the three verses of Exodus 14:19-21. The first letter from the first verse is combined with the last letter from the second verse and the first letter of the third verse. Hence, the first aspect of the name is w"hw, after which one begins with the second letter of the first word, the second letter from the end of the second verse and the second letter of the third verse, making y"ly. Hence the name is artificially synthesized from a concrete reduction of biblical text into acrostic signifiers.

The seventy-two names have a long history in classical Judaism. The earliest reference to the seventy-two names is in Genesis Rabbah (44), although the actual names are not cited. The formula for deriving the seventy-two names is first cited by Hai Gaon. Rashi alludes to the seventy-two names during a Talmudic discussion of the Exodus. The seventy-two names appear in the first kabbalistic text, the Bahir, while a passage in Abraham Abulafia's work Sefer ha-Heshek is devoted to instructions for properly reciting the names. For the Beit El kabbalists, the recitation of the seventy-two names became associated with the processes of repentance and routinely served as the kavvanah for the second and third paragraphs of the Shema' prayer.

The seventy-two names have been revived in the activities of the Kabbalah Centers, under the direction of the Berg family. It has been acknowledged by Yehudah Berg that his affective psychological interpretation of the seventy-two names was influenced by the work Herev Pifiyyot. This work was composed by Yeshayahu Ya'akov of Alesk, a member of the kloiz of kabbalists in Brody that operated at roughly the same time as the Ba'al Shem Tov. This work presents a method in

which the forty-two-letter name and the seventy-two names serve as the inner kavvanah of the recitation of the Shema' prayer. Herev Pifiyyot presents a psychologized version of the names, much as contemporary Hasidic works render a psychological interpretation of kabbalistic ideas. This psychological interpretation has been adapted by the Kabbalah Centres as one of the institution's most compelling doctrines. Hence, the forty-two-letter name of God and the seventy-two names have their origins in the dawn of Jewish esotericism but remain very much in play among present-day acolytes and enthusiasts.

### The Sha'ar ha-Shemot

These basic name traditions—the biblical names, the miluyim, the forty-two-letter name, and the seventy-two names—dominate the early version of Luria's teaching, particularly in the work known as the early work Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot. It is a matter of record that the kabbalists of the Beit El yeshivah of Jerusalem much preferred to use the later redaction of the Lurianic teaching exemplified in Meir Poppers's widely circulated work Ez Hayyim. The compositions Sha'ar ha-Shemot in Poppers's Ez Hayyim and the chapter of the same title in Ya'akov Zemakh's Ozrot Hayyim present a more involved doctrine of the names, in which the systems of miluyim, gematriot, and letter combinations are taken far beyond their original provenance. The Sha'ar ha-Shemot serves as the basis of the kavvanot used in Beit El and, moreover, is the key to the circle's ontology and, perhaps, to its renewed popularity today.

Poppers's Sha'ar ha-Shemot is a restatement of the entire Lurianic system from the beginning. Since it came late in the development of the Lurianic canon, the Sha'ar ha-Shemot incorporated all of the ideas that had been brought into the Lurianic writings in their later version. The work begins with a description of the entire kabbalistic cosmology to date: the ten sefirot, the four worlds, the sefirot within the worlds, the lights that shine through them to the Divine countenances, the celestial palaces, and the world of the soul. The system is presented in its full baroque complexity; the Divine countenances, besides having internal sefirot, contain aspects of inner and surrounding light,

essence and vessels, five levels of the soul, and four worlds of creation, as well as shadow aspects of each countenance.

Having presented the most baroque and abstruse portrayal of the kabbalistic universe, the Sha'ar ha-Shemot then links each tier of the system to an extant sacred name. Each letter of YHVH is linked to a sefirah, and each name has an individual soul at its core.<sup>56</sup> The various permutations of the Divine name enliven various levels of the Universe, for the soul of the Universe dwells in the consonants, while the vowels are enlivening soul of the letters. Further complicating the system, the Sha'ar ha-Shemot adapts an earlier scholastic discussion between those who believed that the sefirot were the essence of God and those who believed that the sefirot were merely the vessels (kelim) for Divinity.<sup>57</sup> According to the formulation of the Sha'ar ha-Shemot, each of the Divine countenances has an essence but also has a secondary system of vessels.

When the ideas of the Sha'ar ha-Shemot are implemented, the kabbalistic universe is portrayed as nothing more or less than a series of cascading names. As a consequence of this aggregate representation of the kabbalistic universe, many new names are required in order to have a specific name for every countenance, with its component sefirot, worlds, palaces, essence, vessels, and soul levels. In response to the need to project names on all of these aspects of the system, the names and their permutations began to multiply exponentially. Each of these new names was subjected to new miluyyim, leading to more and more gematriot, which themselves required analysis.

It was Shar'abi's innovation to recast the system of kavvanot, which was more or less universal in its manifestations from Poland to Jerusalem, in terms of the Sha'ar ha-Shemot. He incorporated the linguistic theory of the Sha'ar ha-shemot, which is not specifically directed to prayer, into the prayer kavvanot. Every prayer, then, had to be recast in the new system of names presented in the Sha'ar ha-Shemot. Shar'abi acknowledged his reliance in this exhortation from Nahar Shalom:

I am not warning, but merely reminding to strive to have intention in all the details of the kavvanot of the Names, the sefirot and

their surrounding energies, as is explained in the Sha'ar ha-Shemot, and the names of [the five aspects of the soul] which are the forms of HVYH as vocalized, and their surrounding energies, to draw them down clothed in the names of the mohin which are the un-vocalized names. They are clothed in the form, to draw down the form into these names of the ten sefirot of that countenance that relates to those mohin, and [the five aspects of their soul]. This is whole kavvanah. Without the kavvanah of the vocalized names, that are the [five aspects of the soul], all of these kavvanot are like a body without a soul!

Shar'abi took what was ultimately a theoretical construction at the far end of the development of the Lurianic system and wrote it back into the prayer service. The great labor of perfecting Shar'abi's kavvanot, which was undertaken by his students in the generations after his death, consisted of taking the linguistic theory of the latest version of the Lurianic system, namely the Sha'ar ha-Shemot, and incorporating it into the prayer service, for which it had not originally been conceived.

### A Retreat into Pure Theory

Members of Shar'abi's school differed as to whether one should contemplate the Lurianic myth in its figurative mythic essence, as initially presented in the Zohar and in the Safed Kabbalah, or whether the system should be reduced to the disembodied system of names. The abandonment of kabbalistic mythos was presaged centuries before the Beit El community in the remarks of the Spanish philosopher-kabbalist Isaac Ibn Latif, who advocated contemplation of the Divine name and declared:

The desired end is to strip the Name of all matter and to imagine it in your mind, although it is impossible for the imagination to depict it without some physical image, because the imagination is not separate from the senses, and most of what is attained by the activity of the imagination is performed through the contemplation of the shape of the letters and their forms and number.

There was a strong tendency, spearheaded by European kabbalists, to accept the

anthropomorphic metaphors of the Lurianic myth in order to understand the relationship of the various elements of the system. This view is exemplified by Moshe Zakhut (acronym RM"Z). Zakhut was a venerable authority in the early circulation of Lurianic Kabbalah. Zakhut advised that the adept should concentrate not on the vocalized names of YHVH but only on the names of the sefirot that are germane to a given prayer. His reasoning is somewhat different from the prevailing opinion and bears citation:

It is inappropriate to write the HVVH names with the letters, such as, for instance, inflecting the name of God with a segol, or Eloheinu with a sheva, because the HVVH names with vocalization imply the inner nature of the soul.

Zakhut's objection was a lonely voice against the emerging consensus among later Lurianic authorities that, at the moment of prayer, in order to not imagine God physically, it is necessary to use the metaphor of the Divine names. Such was the position of Shlomo Eliashiv, for whom the letters of the names were a more appropriate object of prayer than the images of the myth. Eliashiv warned that the only appropriate version of the kavvanot was Shar'abi's version, because of its erudition in the use of the letters. For study, one may use the anthropomorphic images. This was also the opinion of the influential Hasidic scholastic Zevi Hirsch of Zidhitchov, who admitted that "everything that a man imagines is corporeal." Hence, one could not avoid imagining the Lurianic system in mythic terms, as that was the imagery of the Zohar and the Lurianic canon.

Shlomo Eliashiv and Zevi Hirsch of Zidhitchov may have been influenced by a similar discussion regarding the nature of kabbalistic symbolism that had occurred among the generations that preceded them. This discussion took place between two groups, literal and figurative theorists, a distinction that has been explored by, among others, Elliot Wolfson and Nissim Yosha. According to this division, one group of kabbalists tended to view the processes described in the Lurianic system as metaphors for processes too ineffable to explain. Such figurative theorists include Avraham Herrera (author of *El Puerto del Cielo*), Moshe

Hayyim Luzzatto, and the Gaon of Vilna. On the other side were the literalists, who believed in the empirical existence of forces such as the parzufim, or Divine Countenances. Among such thinkers were Immanuel Hai Ricci and Schneur Zalman of Liadi. The theological problem of the discussion, of course, is the temptation to idolatry inherent in the bold anthropomorphic nature of the myth of the countenances. The tension is evident in Hayyim Vital's exclamation:

Indeed it is clear that there is neither a body or the force of a body above, Heaven forbid ... hence permission is given to speak in terms of forms ... above there are only ephemeral lights, essentially spiritual.

Moshe Hayyim Luzzatto also allegorized the Lurianic myth and was perhaps the most influential of the allegorical kabbalists.' A statement of Luzzatto's position with regard to symbolization is included on the first page of many of his books, in an "announcement and warning on distancing oneself from physical imagery [gashmiyyut] in the kabbalistic allegories, particularly those of Luria." These concern knowledge of the Tree of Life as explained in Luria's writings and its relationship to the existential state of human beings.

R. Yosef Hayyim, the "Ben Ish Hai," as well, interpreted a remark of Vital's as a defense of the allegorical reading. He insisted that the realities are above contemplation, even though one might find physical forms attached to them. Every letter, on the other hand, points to a separate Divine light. The letters and the linguistic system were therefore a more direct and undeniable vehicle and conduit to the Divine because they were unclouded by the myth.

Accordingly, Shar'abi himself was a figurativist, advocating a metaphorical view of the Lurianic system. He made extensive use of parable, concluding that both the names and the mythos were substitutions for processes too ineffable to recount. This became the opinion of a plurality of Beit El kabbalists. Inevitably, symbols are necessary to explain the spiritual in this base physical world. The objects of the metaphors are but devices to condition the student to the interplay of transcendent forces. So it was that Shar'abi



defended the mashal, for without it humans would grasp nothing of the spiritual secrets. As one grasped the external metaphor, the sparks of the inner light would clarify the inner nature of the parables. Hence, the Beit El kabbalists are drawn to systems, such as the use of names, which elide the mythic content found in the Lurianic canon. In setting the priorities of contemporary Beit El kabbalists, Ya'akov Moshe Hillel insists that, while there may be gradations in the nature of study and understanding, they serve the same esoteric purpose. Those who study the parable in its mythic form will attain full understanding in the world to come. In fact, it is improper to attempt to understand the essential reality of the processes of emanation.

Ultimately, Shar'abi had no choice but to be a figurativist, for it is the effect of late Lurianic doctrine to reduce the study of Kabbalah from its original myth to a mere linguistic theory. In late Lurianic practice, the mythos of the Divine family was expressed through various names. As a result of this reduction to linguistic-theory names, the system began to be distanced from its original mythic content. The kabbalists no longer visualized the system in terms of the myth of the countenances, the interaction of the sage Arikh Anpin, the parents Abba and Imma, the son Zeir Anpin, and his consort, Nukvah. The implication is that these names depict the essence of the reality, rather than the mythos of the countenances or parzufim. In offering the possibility of a world shorn of myth, the Lurianic system finally cut its moorings from the world of mythos, just as the world of mythos had shut the door on the symbolic systems offered by the Zohar literature.

The impulse to move from mythos to sacred names as the focus of kabbalistic practice seems rooted tacitly in kabbalists' discomfort with the bold anthropomorphisms of the Lurianic system. Anthropomorphic images, such as the unification of the Divine parents, Abba and Imma, and the conception and nurturing of the wonder child Zeir, must always exist in tension with normative, exoteric Judaism. This view portrayed the entire process as a passage through the names, with Divine effluence flowing through the permutations of the names. Immanuel Hai Ricci's *Mishnat Hasidim* portrays the emanation of the names and the

drama of the countenances as unfolding simultaneously, two sides of the same coin. For many kabbalists to this day, however, the question has been more a case of either/or.

Shar'abi's insistence on the primacy of names over mythos led the Beit El kabbalists away from the images of the Lurianic myth and toward pure theory, devoid of symbolism, imagery, or poetics. It is as if computer users were to put away their easier operating systems and run their computers only with MS-DOS. Prayers no longer have any of their exoteric meaning but are now completely given over to esoteric formulae. The overt subject matter of the liturgy, the national and creaturely concerns that it expresses, is missing. The very idea of petitional prayer, emotional investment, and the essential sense of prayer as communion and dialogue have been discarded in favor of a faith in the most abstruse reaches of the Lurianic method, its numerology and linguistic method.

In the absence of another rationale, perhaps this insistence on the farthest reaches of esotericism was another response to modernity. The Middle Eastern kabbalists of the nineteenth century turned inward, away from Kabbalah's earlier mythos, as a response to the implicit criticism by the rationalism of Enlightenment thought, with its concomitant criticism of myth and superstition. The emphasis on sacred names and their theoretical construct erected a blank wall of metaphysics in the face of rational analysis, defending the circle against the societal changes and existential challenges to which no religiously community was altogether inured. Did the kabbalists of Beit El respond to the emergence of a culture of science and technology with an alternative, metaphysical theory of Divine energy? Or does the turn to a pure name theory reflect a discomfort with the rationalist critique of the mythic element in Kabbalah? Whatever the impetus, this branch of late Kabbalah turned inward, toward an insular theory, rooted in traditions that were primordially old and mysterious, beyond the realm of myth, symbol, or the physical image.

### Mysticism, Metaphysics, and the Limitations of Beit El Kabbalah

This book is a combination of a historical survey of a kabbalistic school and a study of a "lived

tradition," that is, a living community of kabbalists. The kabbalists of Beit El have become the most influential single kabbalistic order of the past two hundred years. Their influence crossed into Eastern Europe practically from the inception of the fellowship, and they become the flagship institution for all kabbalists who clung to the study and application of the most abstract form of Kabbalah. The Beit El scholars arguably produced the most complex and linguistically theoretical interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah, as well as a mystical practice based on the contemplation of the most abstruse prayer intentions (i.e., kavvanot).

In approaching Beit El, I was guided by a few premises that form the basis for the way Kabbalah is viewed by the academy and the general Israeli community. First, whether one likes it or not, Beit El is surely the last link to the old schools of Kabbalah in its classical period, the last school of "pure" kabbalistic endeavor, in that its interest was in kabbalistic study and practice for its own sake. Beit El maintained a direct historical link to earlier schools going back to the Safed revival. As a living kabbalistic school, or "mystical" school, it would, a scholar would assume, have a definition of mystical experience to which adherents were aspiring and that would come out of the application of adherents' lifestyle. It is unusual to uncover a living kabbalistic tradition, and, in proceeding to analyze it, one has to determine the set of scholarly rules and negotiate various anxieties.

In order to examine Beit El as a source of Jewish mysticism, the "academy" asks certain initial questions and makes certain assumptions. In forcing Beit El practice into the definitions inherent in "the study of mysticism," I began to come to some unsettling conclusions.

Among these assumptions are that Kabbalah is Jewish mysticism and that, as "mysticism," it shares common properties with other mystical traditions in the religions of the world. As stated, the study of Kabbalah as a metaphysical tradition has thus far been equated with "Jewish mysticism," and scholars of Kabbalah have fought for its place among the mystical teachings of world religions. Kabbalah has been accepted as Jewish mysticism in the industry

of academia, and it is in that context that investigations of Kabbalah have gone forward.

An organizing principle of the study of mysticism is based on the "mystical experience." Hence, the first question to be asked is, What is the mystical experience in Beit El? How do the activities of the school reflect the substance of Shar'abi's teachings? After surveying its literature and observing its practices in the field, however, the observer will find little of the mystical experience in Beit El Kabbalah. The metaphysical object of the practice is clear, however.

As has been discussed, this involves the surrender of the mind to the processes of divinity coming down into the world, even though these processes are apparently not felt or otherwise perceived. Beit El Kabbalah is obviously an authentic form of Jewish esotericism. Nobody in the Jewish or kabbalistic communities disputes the authenticity of Beit El in the kabbalistic lineage and pantheon. It is a lineal descendant of the kabbalistic tradition coming out of Safed into Jerusalem and applies the metaphysical system of Isaac Luria in its most refined and theoretical form. However, it manifestly lacks the characteristics of a mystical school as defined by the theorists of mysticism and therefore drives a wedge into the association of Kabbalah with the academic construct of "mysticism." The distinction between mysticism and metaphysics must be examined in defining Kabbalah as an area of study.

There are kabbalistic movements that are mystical, such as Hasidism, but it is not necessarily a given that the content of a given kabbalistic school will fit into the contemporary definition of mysticism. Kabbalah represents the prevalent metaphysical traditions that have lain beneath the surface of traditional Judaism. Occasionally, the practice of Kabbalah overlaps into the realm of mystical experience as defined by the Western academy, but not always. Certainly the original definition of mystical experience by William James, namely that it was pantheistic, optimistic, antinaturalistic, and in harmony with "otherworldly states of mind," is simply too broad for an intelligent assessment of the varieties of spirituality proffered in medieval Jewish thought.

## Scholem

Shar'abi and his heirs have been hiding in plain sight. They have remained active and, in recent years, have grown as a group, yet they have not been given scholarly attention. The reasons for this reluctance to confront Beit El are social and historical, dictated by the mores of the academy, as well as the internal politics of Kabbalah study. Professor Boaz Huss of Ben Gurion University has addressed these reasons with a bracing clarity in recent years.<sup>1</sup> Otherwise, they are only beginning to be acknowledged, as the study of Kabbalah moves out from the hegemonic influence of its founder, Gershom Scholem.

To tell the story simply, Gershom Scholem and his older colleague Martin Buber began their activity in the early twentieth century, when the academy was largely closed to the study of Jewish religion, if not closed to Jews altogether. Enlightened Jews were apt to view Kabbalah and Hasidism in the way that North American intellectuals might view Pentecostal snake handlers in the Florida panhandle or late-night televangelists on obscure public-access channels. There was a social gap between the "enlightened" world and the world of the practitioners. Buber and Scholem "dropped out" of enlightenment Germany with a socially quixotic interest in recovering and exhuming Hasidism and Kabbalah, respectively, and presenting them to the academy, as well as to the Jewish community. In the course of this endeavor, Scholem continued the earlier equation of Kabbalah with "Jewish mysticism" in order to introduce it to the Western academy.

The "study of mysticism" has often devolved into a Christological attempt to define the religions of the world in Western terms, all in the name of "understanding." But the "mysticism" proffered by William James and Evelyn Underhill emphasized one experience as the common thread linking all mystical traditions. As the latter put it: "The mystic act of union, that joyous loss of the transfigured self in God, which is the crown of man's conscious ascent towards the Absolute, is the contribution of the individual to this, the destiny of the cosmos."<sup>2</sup> From William James and Evelyn Underhill to the present, Western scholars have sought, with mixed success,

to force the square pegs of various mystical systems into the round holes set out by the "purest" forms, which often tend to be Christian or maybe Sufi. The original tendency of the study of religions was to assume that all mystical experiences are the same. This idea may have developed from missionary concerns. Often, the premise of a unified comparative field that united various mystical schools served as a device that allowed theorists to bludgeon all other positions into the mold of their teleological bias. Even Aldous Huxley, in reducing mystical experience to a series of physiological reactions (his chemical dimension of the *philosophia perennis*) was practicing this sort of intellectual imperialism.

The theorists who came after, such as W. T. Stace and Jess Hollenback, along with Aldous Huxley's advocacy of the drug experience and R. C. Zaehner's theological response,<sup>3</sup> kept "mystical union" as the central definition of the experience. The unifying element of such systems was the meeting between the individual and the transcendent, defined in Western theism as God.

Such union might be entirely creaturely in nature, available to anyone through the act of philosophical contemplation, according to Jacques Mauritian, or through the ingestion of a drug, according to Aldous Huxley and others.

In portraying Kabbalah to the eyes of the world, Scholem adopted various strategies to make the field palatable to the academy. For example, the ancient Merkavah tradition became, for Scholem and Saul Lieberman, "Jewish Gnosticism," even though, as has been pointed out by Moshe Idel, Gnostic ideas could very well have had their origins in Judaism and therefore the Gnostic tradition itself might really be "Gnostic Judaism."<sup>4</sup> In this way, Kabbalah was recast as "Jewish mysticism," in order to place it in the continuum of experience defined as "mysticism." Scholem campaigned for Kabbalah's place at the table, even as he allowed that there may be no "mystical union" in kabbalistic practice, which had been one of James's main criteria. Nonetheless, he insisted that Kabbalah was, in fact, "Jewish mysticism."

Huss has explored the association of Kabbalah with mysticism in his article "The Mysticism of Kabbalah

and the Myth of Jewish Mysticism." Huss dates the adaptation of the term "Jewish mysticism" to the second half of the nineteenth century. It springs from the general attempt to couch Jewish religious expression in Western terms. Adolph Jellinek termed Kabbalah "Jewish Mysticism" in 1853. Buber echoed this view in his initial studies of R. Nahman of Breslav, whom, in 1906, he termed "Die Judische Mystik." Huss points out the speciousness of equating Kabbalah with the romantic nineteenth-century construction of mysticism. When in doubt about the mystical nature of Kabbalah, scholars turned to the phenomenological methodology, which located given mystical systems in the context of seemingly similar understandings. Such a phenomenological impulse is in the air presently in the popular mercantile syncretism of the new-age movement. Psychological forms, particularly Jungian symbolism, have proven to be a fertile ground for analyzing the Zohar's psychological imagery.

Scholem repeated the anecdote about a young secular scholar who comes to a venerable kabbalistic academy asking to study with the acolytes. He is accepted, provided that he "ask no questions," a response that caused him to withdraw in alarm, such a proviso being anathema to his whole conception of the didactic and justified nature of Jewish study and scholarly inquiry. The student was Scholem himself, of course, and the academy was Beit El. Huss observes that, "paradoxically enough, by his negative response Scholem effectively accepted the condition proposed by the kabbalist, for he chose not to ask questions about—and not to study—Kabbalah as a living contemporary phenomenon" and adds that "Scholem's meetings with contemporary kabbalists left no impression whatsoever on his vast corpus of scholarly work." He rejected the possibility of studying from contemporary sources, even their textual record.

Huss has argued that this rejection was an ideological one, influenced by Scholem's embrace of the Zionist mythos, which required the marginalization of all previous ethnic categories and the cultural identity of Diaspora Judaism. According to the devastating critique offered by the late Arthur Hertzberg: "Scholem was quite

clearly re-evoking these fascinating shades but ultimately, to use the language of his charge against the scholars of the Wissenschaft school, in order to bury them with due respect. It was part of the Jewish past, the present was Zionism." Scholem's reference to Beit El as the expression of "the Sephardic and arabized tribes" even as his interlocutor at Beit El was the Ashkenazi kabbalist R. Gershon Vilner points to his orientalist distancing.

Huss notes that this tendency to reject the present-day manifestations of Kabbalah has continued into the activities of contemporary scholars. For much of the academy, the forms of Kabbalah taken up by the masses are, with the exception, perhaps, of Chabad Hasidism, regarded as false or at least declassé. According to Huss:

This approach is typical of hegemonic Israeli discourse.... Early kabbalistic literature and the academic investigators who work with it are regarded as worthwhile, authentic and "professional," but contemporary kabbalistic belief and practices (such as prostration on the graves of the righteous, ritual reading of the Zohar and the exorcism of dybbuks) and the kabbalists who believe in and practice them are considered to be the primitives, charlatans and even a menace to modern Western-Israeli culture.

Two impulses in Scholem's school have emerged as problematic at the present juncture. The first of these is the tendency to isolate "true" Kabbalah in the historical past. The second problematic element is the general tendency to define Kabbalah in terms of mysticism, in the frankly appropriationist, Christological way. The anxieties in Israeli social life played their part in this, as well, particularly the coercive tendencies of the religious establishment and the rabbinate.

### Contemporary Forms of Kabbalah

These anxieties have blinded scholars to certain new developments in the history of Kabbalah that have come about as recently as the late twentieth century, and there has been some resistance, in the scholarly community, to the examination of contemporary trends in the development of Kabbalah. Contrary to the apparent belief of

many scholars, Kabbalah did not cease to evolve in 1948, and its recent manifestations may in fact bear the sin of inelegance.

The most notorious of these developments is the recent flourishing of the Kabbalah Centre, founded on the teachings of the impoverished Jerusalem scholar and Marxist Yehudah Ashlag and flowering, in recent years, under the direction of Yehudah Berg and his family. This particular circle has put the word "Kabbalah" on the lips of the general populace, to the chagrin of both the scholarly and the general Jewish communities. The Kabbalah Centre has promoted a doctrine of psychological understandings for a number of classical sacred names, apparently derived from the eighteenth-century work *Herev Pifiyyot* by Isaiah Alesker of the kloiz in Brod. The Kabbalah Centre's tradition of citing without attribution is maddening to the scholar but not an insurmountable obstacle. Like Beit El, the Kabbalah Centre is a late-Lurianic school that has emerged in modernity and that bears scrutiny on a purely historical basis.

The Jewish renewal movement, which has formed in the context of North American liberal Judaism, is also evolving new approaches to Kabbalah. This movement evolved from the Jewish student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, dovetailing with the activities of two prodigies of postwar Hasidism who in turn embraced the counterculture, Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and Rabbi Zalman Schachter. Another example of contemporary Kabbalah is to be found in the activities of Jewish evangelists such as R. Amnon Yizhak, who operates in Israel and among expatriate Israel communities in the Diaspora. Such figures draw their apparent spiritual lineage from the Moroccan wonder-working rabbis of the twentieth century and the Beit El school of the Middle East, but their function is a post-Zionist religious evangelism. Finally, there are late-twentieth-century mutations of Hasidism. The messianic irruption in the Chabad movement is well known. There has also been a revision of Breslav Hasidism, which has split the group into various camps, some of which have transgressed the social limits and restrictions of the conventional ultra-Orthodox social milieu.

These movements represent late, manifestly inelegant interpretations of aspects of the kabbalistic tradition, shaped by modernity yet emerging from within the closed walls of each sect. All of these circles are arguably "popular," as they have been embraced by broader elements of the modern Jewish community, beyond the traditional closed circles of classical Kabbalah. Neo-Breslav Hasidism, in particular, has made inroads into Israeli youth culture, particularly as embodied in the phenomenon of the post-army trip to India and the sensibilities brought back to Israel by the returning youth. The evangelical groups, neo-Breslav, and Kabbalah Centres have also served to blur the traditionally rigid lines between religious and secular in Israeli society.

The academy lags behind the polis in the acknowledgment and analysis of these phenomena. Anecdotally, it seems that academic papers and articles on the subject are greeted with some skepticism; postings of syncretistic material on Web sites have been greeted with dismay or looked upon askance or with ambivalence. It is understandable that scholars of Kabbalah might be resistant to new manifestation purely because they are doing more elemental work themselves; the field is in its infancy, and many central themes and schools remain unexplored. Is contemporary Beit El Kabbalah an accurate representation of the intention of its founder, Shar'abi? Is the Kabbalah Center an accurate portrayal of the ideas of Isaac Luria? Are Jewish Renewal, Chabad, or Breslav true reflections of Hasidism? These questions remain open. It is not enough to say that contemporary Kabbalah is "fluffy" or "not serious" or inauthentic. In fact, it is possible that many of the historical irruptions of kabbalistic activity were not pleasing to the refined religious esthetes of the period.

There were certainly many who found the early manifestations of Hasidism to be not a pretty sight.<sup>1</sup> In order to examine these phenomena, if only for the larger good of the community, text scholars must sometimes turn into anthropological observers, as is the case in the recent studies of the Kabbalah Centre by Jody Myers as well as in this author's review of the Beit El school. For the conventional historiographer, whose mission may be to recover and secure the textual record, the monitoring of

new developments in such a fashion is likely to induce vertigo.

A further impediment to the clear consideration of the Kabbalah Centre, as well as Beit El, is the relatively few Kabbalah scholars who work with the most sophisticated and obscure Lurianic texts from which these groups derive their doctrinal innovations. For instance, many scholars have held forth on the subject of "kabbalistic hermeneutics," but there have been few who, like Joseph Dan and Lawrence Fine, have waded in and grappled with the raw material of the various Name traditions of Kabbalah. Few scholars are prepared to explain why the Kabbalah Centres have the success that they have had.

Scholars are drawn to Kabbalah for its elegance and profundity, as well as for its psychological insight. Admittedly, there is no way that an encounter with contemporary Kabbalah is not going to be painful to one who prefers Kabbalah to be ideologically pure and elegantly rendered, unsullied by syncretism, learned, and literate.

Another area of tension is social. There is clearly social discomfort between the academy and, in particular, the adepts of the Beit El school, a discomfort rooted in religion and class. The question of a social gap between the scholarly community and the working and pietistic classes in Mahaneh Yehudah and the Nahlaot may in fact prove to be a painful one. As a result of the academic community's origins in the Jewish enlightenment of early modernity, there may remain disgust for the willfully inelegant naïveté of enthusiasts in contemporary Breslav and Chabad. With regard to much contemporary Kabbalah, members of the academy had best check such biases at the door in order to proceed.

Additionally, there is a historical problem in considering contemporary enthusiastic movements within the Jewish community, Boaz Huss has alluded to the complexities inherent in Gershom Scholem's personal history and its effect of the academic study of Kabbalah. Scholem, although certainly personally polite and respectful toward his conventionally religious friends and acquaintances, nonetheless rendered himself anathema to the larger community by virtue of many of his boldest

historical assertions. These include, famously, his defense of the late authorship of the Zohar, his belief in the Shabbatean origins of many of the Ba'al Shem Tov's teachings, and his confirmation of Shabbatean connections for such religious icons as Yonatan Eibschuetz and Ya'akov Koppel Lipschuetz. These positions made Scholem a pariah in the religious community and shadow interactions between contemporary scholars and the pious populations that support the development of Kabbalah. Although such scholars as Moshe Idel have called for the forming of relationships between scholars and practitioners, interactions remain tinged by suspicion.

### What Is Kabbalah?

In querying the lineal construction of Kabbalah according to Scholem's historiography, Huss has begun to examine the critical differences between the various things that are called "Kabbalah" and has asked serious questions about their relevance to one another and to the Western definition of "mysticism." Huss has taken issue with one aspect of Scholem's historical arrangement of Kabbalah. According to Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, disparate historical movements, such as the apocryphal compositions of the Merkavah tradition, the radical pietism of the German Hasidism, Abraham Abulafia's teachings, the theosophy of the Zohar, and its reception in the Safed and Lurianic Kabbalah, are considered part of one historical continuum, which he calls "Jewish mysticism." In fact, these various phenomena may contain certain common elements, but, as religious forms, they often end up at wild variance with one another. For example, the zoharic sensibility, in which the phenomenal world is portrayed as a universe of symbols segueing in and out of the sacred text, is largely absent in Beit El. Yet the Beit El tradition sees itself as the lineal descendant of the Zohar and Lurianic traditions, and the Zohar is studied reverently as canon. Huss notes that the various kabbalistic movements in Scholem's historiographical scheme differ elementally from one another. In many cases, there is no phenomenological commonality that necessarily leads a given form of Kabbalah to be called "mysticism."

Huss contends that "Kabbalah" has been reduced by the academy to an aspect of the Western construct of "mysticism." Huss has even questioned the validity of the expression "experience" (Heb. *havvaya*), noting that the Hebraic use of the term originated with the early Zionist ideologue A. D. Gordon, as has been pointed out by Melila Hellner-Eshed. Huss concludes:

"Mysticism" and "Jewish mysticism" are scholarly categories, Christological terms couched in an imperialistic and colonialist context in order to categorize non-European cultures in terms, texts, doctrines and practices. The use of the category "mysticism" to catalog different traditions, based on the premise of the universalism of the mystical experience, creates a synthetic connection between phenomena that are unrelated and alienates them from their historical and social context.... In other words, Kabbalah has no connection to prior definitions of world "mysticism."

Huss presents two models of contemporary scholarship in mysticism. There are those who equate all forms of mystical experience, comparing mystical systems according to psychological, social, or other reductionist methodologies. At the other extreme, there are scholars who argue for the specificity of every individual tradition and contend that there cannot be one understanding of the mystical experience. As noted earlier, the initial impulse to equate all forms of mysticism was impelled by a Western wish to appropriate other cultures. This saccharine tendency underlies perennial and universalist views, which appropriate the compliant systems and critique the obstinate traditions that refuse to be so digested.

Scholem's remark that "there is no mysticism as such, there is only the mysticism of a particular religious system, Christian, Islamic, Jewish Mysticism, and so on" is echoed in the school of comparative mysticism founded by Steven Katz. Throughout his long association with the subject, Katz has maintained that world mysticism cannot be reduced to a single, common core of pure, undifferentiable, unmediated experience, for such a common well of experience does not exist. Experiences are processed through, organized by, and available through complex epistemological processes, most often embodied in

the mystical doctrines of one's own tradition. Katz's rejection of the universal mystical experience was a response to the reductionist element in the perennialist school. His arguments against a "unified theory of mystical consciousness," a Buddhist concept in itself, may be the last redoubt of Kabbalah scholarship in the study of mysticism.

With all of his objections to the shortcomings of typologies, Katz does offer a model of some common elements of mystical experience. Mystical experience can be an instantiation of the proper attitude or practice to be emulated or an existential representation of its source tradition. It can be a demonstration of the lived reality of doctrinal truth or proof of the continuing presence of the reality of the tradition. With regard to the existent structure of the religious tradition, the mystical experience can critique the existing practices of the tradition, be a potential source of a new revelation, or provide the basis for a new interpretation of an existing doctrine. Within these models, I do find common elements in the doctrines and practices of the Beit El kabbalists and their lifestyle. The attempt on the mystics' part to fuse their minds to the processes of the Godhead, their devotion to the production of new sacred names based on Shar'abi's models and new didactic presentations of their kabbalistic systems, and their continued development of Shar'abi's linguistic theories all are ways in which Beit El Kabbalah might still be counted in the study of world mysticism.

### The Mystical Experience in Beit El

Beit El Kabbalah certainly sees itself as the final link in the kabbalistic lineage. It models itself on the traditions of the Zohar and the Safed Kabbalah. These traditions valorized the exploits of wandering pietists, illuminated by mystical visions and drawing their experience from the symbols proffered by the phenomenal world around them. This is the avowed tradition of Beit El, from Shimon Bar Yohai to Isaac Luria and thence to Shar'abi.

Yet, in practice, the Beit El milieu is one in which the literary tone, spiritual elegance, and contemplative poetics of the Zohar and the Safed Kabbalah are subsumed in the battle against exhaustion. The mekavvenim are the watchmen over Jerusalem; it is

their mental labor that guards the city and its inhabitants. The point of Beit El practice as I have observed it is to keep going, at all costs, to stay awake through the rigor of the practice itself. Many are the times that I have seen Beit El mystics doze in the midst of prayer or study; they are nudged awake and continue their activity without penalty. In this, they are torn by two impulses, namely to commence their prayers as early as possible and not to neglect the kavvanot. The only factor that keeps them from constantly praying at the crack of dawn is the realization that to do so would leave the mekavvenim insufficient time to complete Shar'abi's kavvanot. Were one to ask them how they felt, or to reflect on the nuances of their experience, they would frown and turn back to their activity. They are no more contemplative than soldiers at war.

Beit El kabbalists spend their waking hours enmeshed in the kabbalistic myth. The central concern of the Beit El adept is to commit the very functions of his mind to a union with the most abstruse processes of kabbalistic metaphysics. When the very mind is being devoted to God, there is little point in the cultivation of the personal. In a sense, the adept's whole attention is given over to a larger struggle, and personal reflection is not important. Otherwise, if the adept falls asleep in the course of his exhausting prayer schedule, he is simply nudged awake and recommitted to the task. If he desists from practicing a given kavvanah, he is still counted in the community as completing the prayer quorum and providing cover and contexts for the practitioners who are going deeper and higher into the rite. Adepts do not display any of the radical self-consciousness that characterizes Eastern European spiritual forms, either of the Hasidic variety or as is found among their fatalistic opponents, the mitnagdim. In the Beit El literature, the personal, expressive, and contemplative aspect of Judaism is ceded to earlier sources in the tradition, with no loss of standing for Shar'abi and his students. From the Safed kabbalists to the Ben Ish Hai in the nineteenth century, there has been no shortage of ethicists and homileticists preceding and operating within the traditions, but it is not the central business of the Beit El kabbalists.

Two decades ago, I knew one Beit El kabbalist who made a practice of fasting every day, eating only at night. There is a contemporary obsession in Israel with external signs of one's religious allegiance; this kabbalist flouted such concerns with an affect that was sui generis. Although obviously of Middle Eastern origin, he wore the striped robes of the most recidivistic Jerusalem Ashkenazim (except for his headgear, which was a turban made up of a fez with a sort of khaffiyeh wound around it). To the best of my knowledge, he would get up from his garret somewhere in the nexus of the Mahaneh Yehudah and Geulah neighborhoods and make his way to the Nahar Shalom synagogue. He would recite Tiqqun Hazot, the midnight prayer, probably immerse himself in the mikveh, return to the synagogue, and commence the three-hour morning service. He would study for the rest of the morning and make his way to the Bukharian quarter, two neighborhoods over from the Beit El centers. In the Bukharian quarter, he would go to sleep on a bench in the Shoshanim le-David synagogue, renowned as the headquarters of R. Ya'akov Hayyim Sofer, author of the halakhic work Kaf ha-Hayyim. He would sleep the heavy, hypoglycemic sleep of the fast until midafternoon, when he would get up, wash his hands, and make his way back to the Geulah quarter. There he would begin the three-hour commitment to the afternoon and evening services, after which he would eat something and go back to sleep, presumably to begin the process all over again. Had I asked him about his mystical experience, I doubt that he would have been able to articulate an answer. He simply carried out his practice, with all of its effort and struggle, secure in the faith that he was working to realize soteric rewards for the greater good of his community.

One might say that in Beit El Kabbalah, meaning proceeded from the "top down," whereas in conventional Kabbalah it was gathered "from the ground up." An adept fortified himself with an aggregate knowledge of the Talmud and the Zohar, with a strong sense of the symbolic associations of the kabbalistic system. Combining these learnings with a pious and ascetic lifestyle, the adept could hope to peer beneath the fabric of present reality and see, from time to time, the inner



meaning of things. Through the study of the material, combined with the purifying practice of Jewish religious life, the kabbalist might attain a state of perception through which he could gain a deeper meaning of reality and even act on his predictive powers.

Beit El Kabbalah and other forms of late Lurianism manifestly do not work this way. The contemplation of the sacred name is the focus of the practice. These names are mathematically or linguistically derived and lack the sensibility characteristic of the Zohar and the mainstream Safed Kabbalah. Conventional Kabbalah is composed of symbolic associations culled from the sacred texts and the phenomenal world. As a consequence, the Beit El practice can be described as being apodictic and otherworldly. The Beit El kabbalist mystic begins with the power and force of names that are largely without psychological or literary valence or religious content. One would think that this willfully obscurantist view would not be compelling or popular in the contemporary milieu, yet it has captured the imaginations of both the Beit El circles and the doctrines of the contemporary Kabbalah Centres.

A self-conscious doctrine of mystical experience as a lens through which to view the world is conspicuously absent in Beit El. Socially, the kabbalists are in many cases indistinguishable from the most unassuming elements in the religious population of Jerusalem, with the exception of their sometimes flamboyant leaders. The theology of Beit El is avowedly late Lurianic, but its personal dimension is altogether conventional and ceded to earlier branches of the Jewish intellectual canon. When the kabbalists want to draw on the personal aspect of Judaism and Kabbalah, they go elsewhere; they have not produced a literature or tradition of personal experience themselves. Hence, in the parlance of scholars of mysticism, it doesn't matter whether or not there are mediated or unmediated "mystical" experiences. Beit El Kabbalah doesn't claim to have them.

The Beit El school is acclaimed in the Jerusalem community as existing at the apex of Kabbalah, but nonetheless it has few of the characteristics of what various romantic Englishmen call "mysticism." It

is contemplative and based in religious practice, but it has not recorded a body of instances of transcendent, ecstatic practice. The Beit El kabbalists trace their origins to a circle that is frankly legendary, the central cast of the Zohar. The Safed kabbalists straddled the fence between legendary accounts of mystical revelations and associated thaumaturgic activities and a strong scholastic tradition devoted to the elucidation of their sacred texts. The Beit El kabbalists are manifestly concerned with a contemplative practice and the review of their mystical tradition.

However, they are manifestly not a "mystical circle" according to the terms in which that is usually construed, because they do not emphasize personal experience.

Yet, "Kabbalah" is not an artificial construct, and the roots of the spiritual community that calls itself kabbalistic are very deep. Kabbalistic ideas saw the light of day in the medieval period, in the free market of ideas in traditional rabbinic discourse. If, in that context, one consistently favored the arguments of Nahmanides over those of Abraham Ibn Ezra and Maimonides, what would that person be called? The resiliency of antirational aspects of Judaism cannot be denied, even when theologians such as the Maharal of Prague chose to clothe them in nonkabbalistic language. The kabbalists established themselves as the response to rationalist philosophy in the Middle Ages. Kabbalistic ideas and schools of thought are not constructs that exist in the imaginations of scholars. In fact, Kabbalah came to stand, in the public eye, for "that which is not Maimonidean," and this became the position that encompassed "that-which-is-not-philosophical," or "antirationalism." The consistent "essentialist" points of kabbalistic belief, namely that ritual impurity is palpable, that prophets need be of no particular gift or talent, because God is all powerful, that God can subvert the natural order at any time and work miracles, that there is a pantheon of angels in heaven standing by to do God's bidding, and so forth, presage the eventual kabbalistic view. Hence, if one adheres to these positions consistently then one is surely not a philosopher, but one need not be, in Evelyn Underhill's terms, a "mystic." One has merely taken a view of Judaism in which given sets of

metaphysics are salient and the transcendent is assumed. Thus, we retain, in Beit El, an avowedly kabbalistic circle whose relationship to mysticism demands a rethinking of the term itself. <>

[The Reception of Ancient Virtues and Vices in Modern Popular Culture: Beauty, Bravery, Blood and Glory](#) edited by Eran Almagor and Lisa Maurice [Metaforms: Studies in the Reception of Classical Antiquity, Brill, 9789004347717]

In [Ancient Virtues and Vices in Modern Popular Culture](#), Eran Almagor and Lisa Maurice offer a collection of chapters dealing with the reception of antiquity in modern popular media, and focusing on a comparison between ancient and modern sets of values.

Excerpt: It is not surprising to find moral concerns, ethical questions and the issue of values in the field of Classical Reception Studies. Since the current, gradually growing, scholarly field was recast as one of 'reception' in the 1990s, its working assumption—almost by definition—is that there is a gap between the 'giving' era and the 'receiving' one. This hiatus is precisely the subject matter of this fascinating scholarly field, and values play an important role in this difference. The concern with morality was also predominant when this field assumed the model of 'influence' or 'legacy' in works dealing with the Classical Tradition, or in 18th and 19th centuries' discussions on the relevance of the classical values to the modern period. As an instance of cultural reception studies, Classical Reception deals with the appropriation of phenomena belonging to one culture by another or with the appreciation of one society by another; it addresses the ways phenomena gained new cultural meanings, functions and forms as they were absorbed in new ethical settings. Yet, this field stands outside cultural studies proper in its corresponding interest with the Classical past, assuming that the classical set of values is the object of study worthy of itself.

In fact, Classical Reception Studies are about the Classical as well as about the modern. By "Classical" we refer to the ancient Greek and Roman world, and include here examples from mythology and history, as well as examples from what ancient contemporaries would term

"barbarian" culture, namely, Jewish ancient history. By "modern" we mean roughly the 19th, 20th and 21st centuries, although the early modern period (approximately the 17th to 18th centuries) is sometimes mentioned as well. The working model of Reception Studies we adopt in this volume is largely that of a meeting of these two worlds, contiguous in various points and especially in the plane of values. In order to understand the way these two worlds interact in our volume, let us examine first the key concepts addressed or alluded to in the following contributions: the features of ancient morality, or what was considered virtue or vice; the meaning of modern popular culture and modern reception. At the end of this introduction we shall explore how the following chapters contribute to a better understanding of the issue at hand.

### Ancient Virtues and Vices

As we shall see, the studies presented in this volume trace the interaction between two sets of values, the modern and the ancient, in various means and modes. The ancient and modern periods display a wide diversity of popular value systems. These include not only ethical attitudes and codes of conduct or systems of values delineating good and bad, but also the interweaving of artistic and literary appreciation of artefacts and narratives (e.g., attitudes towards heroes and villains, their traits and character) and aesthetic judgment of what is considered beautiful, complete, grotesque or ugly.

There are many different ideas about, and approaches to, the nature of morality. These include popular notions of morality, and philosophical or theoretical ideas on the subject, as well as philosophical ideas of morality and religious notions, both of which may prescribe proper ways of conduct to adopt and reject. When it comes to reception, there is a variety of ways in which these approaches can interact. Thus, a philosophical or religious ethical notion from one period could be appreciated and acclimated in a popular way at a later period, and vice versa: an exemplum of popular morality typifying an older historical community could be integrated into philosophical or religious notions in a later society.

Of course, two other possibilities of adaptation (historical popular morality in a later popular notion and an ancient philosophical ethical reasoning taken on by later religious or philosophical theorists) may exist as well. In this volume we examine the reception of the ancient world in modern popular presentations, which by definition applies more to popular morality than well-argued and systematised philosophical reasoning.

Unfortunately, our knowledge of ancient Classical ethical notions is impaired by the meagre sources we possess of the great civilisations of the past. We are still in the dark concerning the “Dark Age”, the time before writing became an essential means for communication and recording thoughts and impressions. Due to acts of chance, such as the demise and disappearance of libraries or political and natural upheavals, entire centuries are under-represented in the extant corpus of texts. With the coming of Christianity, Pagan religious and cultural values (reflected in ancient works of philosophy, drama, oratory, poetry, art, legality and more), now identified as “Hellene”, were deemed utterly repugnant to the extent that complete volumes and artefacts were purged and destroyed. Although this Early Christian form of reception (religious-theoretical as well as popular) was admittedly not conducive to the preservation of the ancient world, it was thanks to the Christian espousal of Greek texts that not a few of them have been preserved, so that a canon of pagan, non-representative body of texts was maintained in a new curriculum.

Among other hindrances in the study of ancient morality is the fact that many of the philosophical ideas and texts concerning morality (both before Plato and in the Hellenistic period) are lost, and only fragmentarily preserved in later texts. The fact that almost all extant sources are literary, that is, artistically (and even artificially) created, is also an obstacle to understanding popular morality; these sources may not reflect authentic popular attitudes. In his well-known volume on Greek Popular Morality in the Time of Plato and Aristotle, Kenneth Dover attempted to bypass certain of these problems and arrive at what “most people” say and think. While his methodology is to be commended, there are still various problems that

must be acknowledged in attempting to fathom a better understanding of this facet of ancient life. Of course, the value judgments and attitudes of philosophers may reflect popular morality or even influence it, either immediately or after a great period of time, but the two are notionally dissimilar.

Scholars have noted other methodological problems involved in the study of ancient pagan religion or ancient aesthetic values from the sources we possess. Even the different semantic fields of concepts like “Beauty”, “Bravery” or “Glory” are not phenomenologically given in our ancient texts and must be discovered and defined by scholars. There is no unanimous scholarly opinion on these matters or indeed on the vexed question whether the ancients even defined the notions of “religion” or “sexuality/gender” or aesthetic appreciation as we do.

Without even attempting to encompass the entire vexed and vast issue comprehensively, or to assume that the ancient value system could ever be condensed into a series of brief observations, we may note three important marks of ancient Classical mentality concerning what is morally (and aesthetically) prescribed. This last vague concept (“ancient Classical mentality”) is taken here as broadly as possible in terms of periodisation (8th century BCE till the 4th or 5th centuries CE), geography (Greek and Latin speaking world, mainly Mediterranean and in areas where cultural Greek and Roman influence extended) and the agents/social strata involved (from various sectors and groups, mostly from free members of society).

The first of these three characteristics is the idea of balance, whereby a balance of character is to be achieved between extremes, deemed as vices. This line of thought is most characteristic of the Platonic idea of (mild, not utter) suppression of passions/irrational side by reason or the Aristotelian “doctrine of the mean” (i.e., that excellence of character is a state between two vices). This also applies to finding the right measure between the individual and society, the private and public, man and nature and so forth. One might say that this idea has a classical formulation in the dictum written on the Delphic temple of Apollo:

meden agan ('nothing in excess'). Vice would generally be construed as the opposite of this balance, but in certain unique contexts and circumstances it is the un-balanced which is admired and noteworthy; this is as a rule applies to mythological situations and heroes, who almost by definition have to be "larger than life" figures and serve as models because of their uniqueness.

The second sign of virtue entails completeness, both in the sense of excluding partiality or isolation (unity) and in the sense of fulfillment of nature (entirety). This is true of the place of the person in larger units, like his or her family, community and natural surroundings or the cosmos. One form of this mark of virtue stresses the completeness of life-span. This attitude also advocates taking into account the entirety of the human person, that is, either the rational capacity alone or his or her rational, physical, sensual and emotional aspects all at once, so that one element should not come at the complete expense of another—which also links this feature with the idea of balance. As above, there were instances where it was the incomplete or the fragmentary which was underscored as virtuous, having ideological or artistic significance. One famous example is the Olympieum, or the Temple of Olympian Zeus, in the city of Athens, begun by the Peisistratids, around 520 BCE. Only the platform and columns were completed when Hippias was ousted (510 BCE) and work on it was discontinued. For centuries (till the reign of Hadrian in the 2nd century CE), the foundations of the Temple of Zeus were still laid bare and unfinished, a memory of the failed Athenian tyranny.

A third aspect of ancient virtue concerns the notion of happiness (eudaimonia) as the aim of life. Virtue was considered linked with happiness, whether as a necessary and sufficient requirement to attain it (Plato's Socrates; the Stoics who believed virtue to be identical with happiness); necessary, but with insufficient means to attain it (Aristotle); generating it (Epicurus) or its major constituent (Plato). One unique aspect to the ancient moral thought is the use of the model of the virtuous; that is, what virtuous behaviour the virtuous agent ("the wise man") would adopt in order to be happy.

There were certainly other moral theories and popular approaches which tended to disregard these precepts and to adopt an intentionally contrary and provocative position. For instance, the so-called Cynic, Cyrenaic or Sceptic schools, either challenged the idea of balance and completeness or denied that happiness is the end of life (and that virtue is required for it). Whether intellectually or psychologically stimulated, these attitudes are to be seen as confrontationally introduced against the background of the three earlier notions, and their existence should also be taken into account when ancient set of values are treated.

To these features of the Classical ancient thought, we should add ancient Jewish attitude and thought, which are also included in the present study of reception. Again, the concept "Jewish" should be taken as broadly as possible, as a belief and cult system that ultimately stems from the divine commandments prescribed in the Bible, especially the ethical Decalogue (Exodus 20:2–17, Deuteronomy 5:6–21). It applies to Jews in the areas mentioned above, as well as in territories of the Achaemenid and Sassanian Persian Empires or the Seleucid and Parthian kingdoms in the east; the locations relevant to this volume would be the Land of Israel, Egyptian Alexandria and Babylon (broadly defined), and the period is that of the so called Second Temple era (largely extended to cover the years 516 BCE to 135 CE). The notions of virtue and vice applicable here ultimately go to the biblical injunctions and their interpretations in the period signaling the beginning of Rabbinic literature. This introduction of the ancient Jewish example into discussions of reception of antiquity thus broadens the concept of the "Classical". On this point, it should also be noted that this is far from new. Hellenized Jews (especially from Alexandria) attempted to find parallels and points of contact between Jewish beliefs and the ethics, if not the religious-philosophical principles held by polytheistic Greeks. Since ancient Judaism, even in its Hellenized form, was strictly speaking a different culture than the classical pagan one, these attempts may thus be construed as an early example of reception of Greek philosophy and culture.

## Modern Popular Culture and Reception Studies

The last example brings us to the forms of reception studied here. What exactly is the relation between the past and the present in Classical Reception Studies? One approach would privilege the past, and interpret modern modes of reception as merely influenced by the past event. This approach lays weight on the historical settings of that moment in the past (historicism); among its assumptions would be that the paths to the ancient period are given, and that the past can be established as it really was (positivism), before tracing its influence on the later period. On the other extreme there lies the view that privileges the present (presentism, as Martindale calls it). According to this approach, the past always changes in accordance with the current modern perceptions, which are in a better position to lend it its real significance. According to the former view, the concept of “modern” may in a narrow sense simply mean the accidental feature of its postdating the ancient, being postclassical, and the recent period under consideration (from the Latin *modo, modernus*). According to the latter approach, there is something unique to the modern era which defines itself by the notion of newness or novelty, in areas of technology or scientific progress. This feature marks this period as better.

One well known understanding of the modern period as allegedly superior to the past is its association with notion of “secular”. Yet, this association does not necessarily imply “better” and it may not be the only one. The present volume is concerned with the culture that has emerged in Europe and America and hence described as “Western”. When we speak of modern Western civilisation, we have to concede that according to one dominant view, its origins come from principles held by pious followers of the sacred books and from the injunctions or stories told within them (the so called “Judeo-Christian” precepts, which go back to the example of Hellenized Jews mentioned above).

Indeed, among the interesting variants of the secularisation theory, the model of Karl Löwith stresses that progress is in fact a secularisation of

these Jewish and Christian beliefs: “philosophy of history is ... entirely dependent on theology of history, in particular on the theological concept of history as a history of fulfillment and salvation”, so that there is no rupture between the modern mind and the past, although there is a break between paganism and Jewish-Christian faith. This model still presents a linear scheme concerning modernity, in which there is an unbreakable chain between our modern western culture and its beginnings (Jewish/Christian in Löwith’s scheme) in ancient times. An alternative model would be that proposed by Hans Blumenberg, to the effect that the modern and ancient (coupled with medieval) cultures are two distinct and independent epochs, without historical continuity, the modern characterised by a reaction to theological absolutism. Löwith and Blumenberg therefore display two variants of “presentism”, but define the notion of “present” differently and draw the dividing line between the epochs at different points.

The concept of “popularity” adds another dimension to the understanding of the relation between the past and the present. It has two aspects which should be considered. One is Formal, the means which enables widespread access to a varied and manifold people (*populus*). Modernity has introduced various sophisticated modes of communication and transportation, which make it distinct from ancient, pre-modern channels of interaction. One notable means is the use of mass media (newspapers, film, theater, radio, television, Internet etc.). Other descriptions stress the components of widespread consumption in a market-based economy. Another facet of “formal” popularity is the active participation of a larger number of people in the reception than in the premodern society. The massive participation in or reaction to art works/events have changed the very notion of “popular” to be flexible and all-encompassing, so that sometimes the very presence of an artefact in a context which in theory could be reachable to a wide audience makes it popular, regardless of actual figures of spectators. It was this aspect that came under attack in the moral criticism of the Neo Marxist Frankfurt School, which even used the terms “culture industry” and “mass

culture” instead of “popular culture”. This was because in their opinion, the current culture did not come from the people, but was rather manufactured, market-tested and spread in the interest of capitalist market mechanism, by means of manipulating mass consciousness. A different view was introduced by Walter Benjamin,<sup>46</sup> who saw popular culture as a positive development, in that the masses’ accessibility made the exclusive “aura” component accompanying works of art disappear, and thus no longer limited to the hands of higher social classes; this process was regarded as tantamount to a democratisation of arts and the liberation of imagination.

The second aspect concerns the content of the popular work or event. In order for its substance to be accessible and understandable to as many people as possible, the content should be simplified. In the field of reception, it signifies that the message has to be clear and direct for it to reach its audience. This fact means that some complexity is lost by an appeal to the lower common denominator. This trait accounts for the aspect of visualisation and accessibility, stressed by several scholars as the sign of popular culture. It was this simplification, closely related to standardisation and repetition, which led Adorno and the Frankfurt School to castigate this culture as “pseudo-culture”, where the artefacts produced in it were not coherent vital “organisms”, as in high-culture, but merely collections of separate contents generating atomised effects on the souls of desociated individuals. One of the criticisms levelled against popular media was thus this charge of lowering standards. It has been extended against modern adaptations of Classical works, and is voiced as a warning against the present scholarly field, in that the study of these forms of acclimatisation seems to aim at an audience unfamiliar with the ancient texts, or in media which was alien to the ancients.

On the other hand, some scholars have approved of what is termed as the “democratic turn”, in which the Classics were taken down from a cultural Mount Olympus, as it were, and from the connotation of elitist Classics and the superior *scriptores classici* (Aul. Gel. iva 19.8.15), to be discussed in modern new contexts and as received by less privileged

groups. Without commenting on the political or moral side of popularity introduced by mass media, it is our belief that there is in fact no grim vision of lowering of standards in culture when it comes to Classical reception: while the spectators/readers may not all be familiar with nuances of the classical allusions, they may be aware of the reference; similarly, while some form of complexity is lost, another is introduced. Hence, the study of the reception of the Classical world in popular culture is an intellectually enriching and fascinating field.

The classical heritage remains pivotal, and indeed in many modern examples, the issue of belonging to Western cultural heritage is central. As we shall see in the studies presented in our volume, the question of belonging appears in various forms in the subject matter of the adaptations and is reflected in the very media, involving the participation or appreciation of the spectators/readers. Nevertheless, there is more than one way of studying the interactions of the ancient and modern value systems. One means of research is tracing a diachronic or developmental process from the old era to the modern popular one, however intricate this historical approach might be. Historicism properly belongs here, as the focus is on the original past moment of the creation and the subsequent history as stemming from it. The “tradition” approach may easily fit in here as well.

The second is by a synchronic comparison, which takes into account “ideal types” (to use a Weberian sociological notion) of the two cultures (the old and the modern one), and sees the parallel approaches in the two value systems. This last method does not imply a cyclical historical perception known in antiquity, or a “natural” approach to civilisation introduced by Spengler or Toynbee, in which cultures are the same in that they begin, rise, reach their apex and then decline and disappear. The latter approaches, however, may be interesting to think with, given the (temporal) gap between the two sets of values, the analogical parallels which are found in the comparison between them, and the focus on the receiving culture and not on any cross-cultural “tradition”. In a way, this comparative approach goes well with “presentism”.

The model to be prescribed in Classical Reception Studies is perhaps a combination of these two, which provides us with a “golden mean”, as it were. The scholarly field deals not only with the manner ancient images and texts are disseminated in modern culture, but also with the way these very images and texts are transformed, and are in constant change, because of this dissemination. There is a reciprocal dimension between the ancient and modern that exists in the reception of the Classical world, by which the gap between the two worlds is largely diminished. The way modern society treats the distant culture of the past resembles an “ethnographic” investigation and the “translation” of one society to the other. Since one feature of ethnography is that of perspective and vantage point, and since descriptions are always told of one group from the viewpoint of the other, theoretically, the two sides can interchange, so that one group objectified in an “etic” account can in its turn describe the other.

The combined approaches of presentism and historicism may be analogically presented in an interesting interpretation of Plutarch’s *Parallel Lives* (*Paralleloi Bioi*), in which a hero from Greek history (or mythology) is paired with one from Roman history (or mythology). In one sense, the two Lives, which artistically should be read as one work, imply a diachronic approach, as most pairs begin with the previous Greek protagonist and move on to the Roman one, thereby signalling the heritage of Greece in Rome. In the transition between the two, we see how the Greek hero is received in Rome (for instance, Alexander by Caesar, Demosthenes by Cicero). Yet, the two Lives are also separate, and insinuate a repetition of history in the recurrence of character. In another important sense, the two Lives present a unified Greco-Roman culture (since the Romans adopt and absorb Greek culture and *paideia* in various degrees), thus displaying the two histories as part of the same tradition, same set of values (in the same Greek moral vocabulary, yet still varied according to ethnicity) and the same components of the imperial identity. Moreover, the two heroes may display a joint personality, each highlighting positive and negative traits, which together make an ethical model to be followed (an Alexander-Caesar or a

Demosthenes-Cicero, so to speak). This is a model worth considering in Reception Studies, in which both the old and modern cultures are not treated as entirely separate, but as co-existing and affecting each other. In this model, both the historically old and the present sets of values share in the creation of the identity of the modern person who also acknowledges the significance of the past in today’s world.

### Ancient Virtues and Vices in Modern Popular Culture

The impetus for the conference from which this book developed was a growing recognition that ancient Greece and Rome (as well as ancient Judaism and Christianity) are rarely depicted objectively in modern popular culture, and that these ancient cultures are idealised and glorified, or demonised, according to the constantly changing needs and attitudes and the contemporary society that produces that interpretation. Our starting point was to reflect on how relevant the ancient past is to modern society, both as the heritage from which modern beliefs have evolved, and as a medium for projecting contemporary visions, not only about the ancient world, but also about ourselves. As society changes, so its ideas of morality, vice and virtue change, and depictions of the ancient world, now laden with new meanings, are one of the vehicles used to convey these altering values.

Accordingly, the papers in this volume address the place of ancient morality and ancient values in modern popular culture in two contexts. The first context is the appearance of ancient virtues and vices within forms of mimetic performance, which re-enact the past, as it were, in the present. The first section in the first part deals with performances on stage, and the second section is concerned with the media of the screen, namely, cinema and television. The structure of the first part thus moves from a rather direct representation of the action before a relatively small audience to mass media, which involve larger crowds and in which the relationship of the action and the audience is indirect. Thus, the media addressed in the first part progress with respect of the popularity involved. It is surely no wonder that the reception of ancient values in modern performance

on stage, the subject matter of the first three studies of this volume, can be more easily traced, since the medium is not new and has close connections with ancient theatrical presentation, making the contrast with modern morality more evident.

Thus, in the first chapter, Lisa Maurice examines stagings of the *Oresteia* over the last two and a half decades, demonstrating how issues such as translation, adaptation and staging are used to promote agendas that address contemporary attitudes. Showing how different elements are emphasised as virtues or vices in accordance with current ideas, Maurice traces the influence of feminism, warfare, imperialism and fears about changing values, through the varying depictions of the House of Atreus, topics which reflect on the understanding of the *Oresteia*.

Similarly, Hannah Roisman investigates in her study the strengths and flaws of Thornton Wilder's play, *The Alcestiad* or *A Life in the Sun*, showing how his attempt to infuse it with Kierkegaardian philosophy leads to a subordination of character and plot that weakens the production. Thus, ironically, this rendition of the tale of sacrifice, retold by Wilder with overtones of a modern morality, sacrifices plot and characters, thereby leaving the work with little moral punch or impact.

Ariadne Konstantinou shows how the Greek playwright Margarita Liberaki, in her play *Candaules' Wife*, uses the Herodotean episode of Candaules, his wife and Gyges, to create a play that is a vehicle for tackling contemporary issues of gender and myth in the modern society of post-war Greece. This chapter thus plays upon the modern attempt to marry the ancient medium of the poetic drama with an ancient theme of prosaic historiography.

Broadly speaking, this group of studies point at the artistic practice of instilling new content in an old form, and more precisely, of turning an ancient moralistic context into a modern moralistic product, with varying degrees of sophistication, while interweaving the old and the new.

The second section in the first part of the volume is more firmly rooted in the modern period, since by definition the medium addressed is a more recent

invention. The six studies included in this section progress from modern reception of ancient texts to modern reception of ancient characters and ideas, thus paving the way towards the more notional forms of reception in Part II. The first four studies deal with the classical Greco-Roman world, while the last two tackle Christian Biblical reality and stories.

The first chapter is ostensibly a simple case of reception. Eran Almagor looks at Walter Hill's movie *The Warriors* (1979), based on Sol Yurick's novel of the same name (1965), and more importantly on Xenophon's *Anabasis*. The fact that both the ancient work and the novel are significant for the understanding of the movie is demonstrated in various manners, and also by an examination of the moralistic themes noticeable in the movie and its depiction of heroes and villains. Examining how the three works interact with each other, Almagor shows how the virtues and vices of Xenophon's original protagonists are reconstructed by both Yurick and Hill, and reinterpreted against the background of ancient and modern ideas of individualism and community. Thus, through the combined study of the two works, the ancient text and the new modern interpretation receive layers of meaning not immediately observable by the separate audiences.

The next two cases address not a specific ancient text, but ancient stories. These stories are found in a group of ancient texts which respectively created images of a (semi-)divine hero and a mortal hero, namely, Hercules and Oedipus. The chapter of Emma Stafford looks at the well-known late fifth-century tale told by Prodicus of Ceos. This is the story of Hercules' choice between two ways of life—symbolised by female figures who personify Virtue and Vice. Stafford demonstrates how the tale has exercised an unconscious influence on the genre of the peplum (or sword-and-sandal) movie. Stafford focuses on four movies, two by Pietro Francisci—*Le fatiche di Ercole* (1958) and *Ercole e la regina di Lidia* (1959)—as well as Vittorio Cottafavi's *Ercole alla Conquista di Atlantide* (1961) and Giorgio Capitani's *Ercole, Sansone, Maciste e Ursus gli invincibile* (1964). Continuing and representing the ancient image of Prodicus, Hercules is depicted in these cinematic artifacts as



facing a choice between the paths of virtue and vice, each path being embodied by a female figure.

Some of Woody Allen's films and movie segments based upon Greek tragedies are studied in Anna Foka's chapter. The end result of these modern interpretations is a reconstruction of the myths, a dismantling of Classical Hellenic culture and a rearrangement intended for a modern 20th century (mostly New York) setting. In this manner, the Greek tragic content is transformed into a contemporary moral context, in which the comic is enhanced and with which a Jewish setting is merged.

Emma Southon's chapter turns from Greece to Imperial Rome. Southon considers two different depictions of Caligula and Drusilla: the 1976 BBC adaptation of Robert Graves's *I, Claudius* (1934) and the controversial pornographic movie *Caligula* (1979). The chapter shows the manner in which the modern popular fictional depiction develops ancient innuendos and suggestive images, brings to the fore implicit notions and thus complicates the moral problems of the ancient texts.

In his chapter, Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones outlines the historical reception of the figure of Salome on screen, and focuses on the portrayal of the character by Rita Hayworth in *Salome* (1953). Llewellyn-Jones demonstrates how the superficial morality of Hollywood star system and Hayworth's virginal depiction of Salome, a necessary by-product of the actress' wholesome image, conflicted with the historical tradition, influenced by Greek historiographic motifs, and the moral import of the ancient story found in the Greek biblical text.

Panayiota Mini's chapter, which concludes the first part of the volume, addresses an ancient image rather than an ancient text in two popular representations rather than one. She examines two landmark epic movies and shows how the portrayal of the female leads in *The Sign of the Cross* (1932) and *Quo Vadis* (1951) reflects important shifts in the popular discourse on female virtue in two eras of American history, the Great Depression and the aftermath of World War II. This study in the development of modern moral ideals and values with ancient themes as the backdrop for such an exploration brings us to the second part of the

volume. In all the case studies of this section we may see how old content is incorporated in a new medium and is transformed thereby.

The second part of the book looks at ways in which ancient vices and virtues help shape contemporary ideas and contemporary existence. The studies in this section relate to modern moral notions and values in which the ancient world is not seen as a dead past but rather as continuing to live within modern experience. It is divided into two parts, each with three chapters, concerned with modern Greek and Jewish perspectives respectively. This division in itself highlights the tension between Judaism and ancient Greece, with "Hellenism" (in the sense of adopting the Hellenic system of values), being seen as opposed to the Jewish set of values, an important notion in the religious identity of ancient Jewish existence and a concept which still finds currency today.

The first chapter in this part addresses the complex and contemporary volatile issue of Macedonian identity. Maria Pretzler deals with the influence of ancient rhetoric and images on modern cinematic depictions of Philip II and Alexander the Great, and thus provides a link between this section and the previous one. Pretzler uses the fascinating question of the portrayal of ancient Macedonia as between barbarian and Greek values in Robert Rossen's *Alexander the Great* (1956), Oliver Stone's *Alexander* (2004) and the TV miniseries directed by Peter Sykes, *The Search for Alexander the Great* (1981). In her study, Pretzler addresses contemporary attitudes and observes the effect of the excavations in the two royal Macedonian cities of Pella and Aigai and the political upheavals surrounding the area as a result of the dispute between Greece and the now independent, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In the next chapter, Luca Asmonti examines how the topos of the Greek origins of European values has been with relation to Greece's admittance into, and role within, the European Union. Asmonti shows how the very notion of democracy as an underlying and central value of the European Union, was flagged by Greece in the process of her entry into the European community, being the birthplace of democracy. Further, Asmonti goes beyond Greece

to show the relevance of classical Athens to the modern crisis-ridden European Union, as an extraordinary model of a political space of outspoken debate and confrontation.

In the final chapter of this section, Aggeliki Koumanoudi looks at the reception and continuation of Greek religious ideals and values in modern day Greece. Outlining the portrayals of the Greek God Pan in festivals and carnivals, as well as the adoption of the god by secret societies and even by political figures, Koumanoudi shows that the pagan deity is still alive and well in the modern world, where he is exploited, as he has always been, for his qualities that may be regarded variously as virtues or vices.

The last three chapters address the reception of ancient Jewish values in modern Judaism and in Israel. Second Temple Judaism (a term broadly understood here) has dealt with the surrounding pagan (mostly Greek) society, culture, religion and values in two ways: a partial or entire assimilation and debate or confrontation. These two manners can be seen in the studies presented here. We start with reception modes which largely assimilate ancient Jewish traditions, memories and notions of virtue and vice to modern values. Here, more than the counterpart reception of ancient Hellenic culture and values in modern Greece, the Jewish or Israeli reception of ancient Judaism at times involves an outright and visible reversal of the ancient values.

Thus, David Schaps looks at the transformation of the ancient Maccabees into Jewish musclemen and heroes in recent history. Looking at various receptions and incarnations of the Maccabees, particularly in light of Zionism, he argues that the varied depictions in the modern world each reflect the pressures and requirements of individual Jewish communities in contemporary environment.

Haim Weiss, following a similar trajectory, examines the reception of the figure of Bar-Kosibah (or Bar Kochba), the leader of the Jewish revolt against Rome (132–135 CE). Weiss demonstrates the theological, nationalistic, and political significance of the depiction of this person as having unique physical prowess, from ancient rabbinic times to contemporary popular literature, showing that the early rabbinical ambivalence to

Bar-Kosibah is toned down in contemporary popular discourse, as he consciously became a model for the modern, strong “warrior” Jew.

Finally, Gabriel Danzig examines the reception of a disputation concern-ing the respective values of Judaism and paganism, between Rabbi Akivah and Tineius (Turnus) Rufus, the governor of Judaea during the period leading up to the Bar-Kosibah / Bar-Kokhba revolt. Danzig discusses both the reception of Tineius Rufus and this debate in ancient Jewish literature (mostly the Talmud) and in modern day Israel. Danzig argues that both sets of receptions stem from attacks by hostile foreign nations who were depicted as polar opposites of Judaism, but also that the attacks themselves on Jewish practices influenced the response in similar ways, stimulating Jewish thinkers to be creative in their efforts to find intellectual justifications for their practices.

It is with this study concerning ancient and modern receptions that we choose to end this section and indeed the volume. Not only does it show that the occupation with the ancient past and values is relevant to modern notions of identity and popular morality, but it also demonstrates the modern awareness of this very reception. Indeed, one of issues presented in the debate in the final chapter (concerning Jewish circumcision) addresses the merits of an original form (here, of nature) visan adapted form (conventional practice), a variant of the physis vs. nomos debate, as it were. Arguments have been voiced on both sides. Yet, the merit of the adaptation, revision or variation should not be discarded. We believe that this volume shows the value of the study of popular reception of ancient values, and the virtues of Reception Studies as a legitimate scholarly field. <>

[The Intellectual World of the Italian Renaissance: Language, Philosophy, and the Search for Meaning](#) by Christopher S. Celenza [Cambridge University Press, 9781107003620]

In this book, Christopher Celenza provides an intellectual history of the Italian Renaissance during the long fifteenth century, from c. 1350-1525. His book fills a bibliographic gap between Petrarch and Machiavelli and offers clear case studies of contemporary luminaries, including Leonardo Bruni,

Poggio Bracciolini, Lorenzo Valla, Marsilio Ficino, Angelo Poliziano, and Pietro Bembo. Integrating sources in Italian and Latin, Celenza focuses on the linked issues of language and philosophy. He also examines the conditions in which Renaissance intellectuals operated in an era before the invention of printing, analyzing reading strategies and showing how texts were consulted, and how new ideas were generated as a result of conversations, both oral and epistolary. The result is a volume that offers a new view on both the history of philosophy and Italian Renaissance intellectual life. It will serve as a key resource for students and scholars of early modern Italian humanism and culture.

This book grew out of three trajectories. The first has to do with a continued interest in Italian Renaissance intellectual life, especially in its Latinate variety. The remarkable I Tatti Renaissance Library, under the general editorship of James Hankins, has provided an ever-expanding series of Renaissance Latin texts (with corresponding English translations). The field can be taught and researched now by a much broader constituency than ever before. As that project has grown and come to maturity, there has been a second, more recent scholarly emphasis on what we can call "vernacular classicism." Under this rubric one can include studies of the diffusion, in Italian vernaculars, of thought-worlds identified with the culture of ancient Greece and Rome.<sup>1</sup> But there has as yet been little work attempting to unite the Latinate and vernacular tendencies; to discuss their qualitative differences; and to show, indeed, that they were linked. Finally, the third trajectory has to do with the broad meaning that "philosophy" possessed in the Renaissance. There are historiographic reasons as to why Italy's long fifteenth century has traditionally taken up so little space in the history of Western philosophy.<sup>1</sup> But suffice it to say that, instead of fitting fifteenth-century thinkers

into Procrustean beds of "philosophy" versus "literature," "Latin" versus "vernacular," the goal here is to let Renaissance thinkers speak on their own, premodern terms.

Premodern: recognizing the differences in the basic conditions under which Renaissance intellectuals operated is paramount. A key precept of this book is that technologies condition, though they do not determine, literary output. Much of fifteenth-century intellectual life occurred before the existence of printing with moveable type, and all of the long fifteenth century is circumscribed within a culture in which the basic circumstances of reading and writing were vastly different from those of today. Importantly, for the Italian Renaissance intellectuals highlighted in this book, reading was social and generational. The material consulted, the reading strategies adopted, and the conclusions reached tended to be the results of conversations both oral and epistolary. And those conversations played themselves out among intellectuals who were parts of discernible generational cohorts.<sup>1</sup>

This book is episodic, rather than synthetic, more a series of soundings than a linear narrative; because of the themes pursued, it circles back chronologically on more than one occasion. Most of all, it is an invitation to future work.

One final note: This is a book about intellectuals in the Italian Renaissance. Simple as that sentence might sound, the terms "intellectual," "Italian," and "Renaissance" all need explanation. It is best to begin with "Italian," since it will give us a sense of place; to have a sense of place make sense, we also need a feeling for time. The time in question is what I will be calling the "long fifteenth century." For now, it is enough to know that the period in question runs from about 1350 to about 1525 — a "long" century indeed. Italy during this period was not a country, the way we think of countries today. It was instead a collection of city-states, small political units bigger than cities and possessed of a powerful sense of independence and cultural identity. Living in one of them, one would have felt patriotism toward the city and a strong belief that it — not "Italy" — was one's real home. Still, there were times during the long fifteenth century when certain intellectuals did refer to Italy as a unity. Usually these instances occurred when the person in question was in exile or when invaders from beyond the Alps found their way into the Italian peninsula. In other words, only threat or absence could evoke the idea of Italy as a whole. So there

never emerged the kind of national spirit that later arose in, for example, France and England by the sixteenth century. Italy remained fragmented, something to keep in mind when we refer to the "Italian" Renaissance.

As to "Renaissance," this term is much less complicated. Among certain segments of society, a renewed and concentrated interest in the ancient world — in the language, art, and culture of ancient Rome and then ancient Greece — took hold in Italy. This tendency had its origins in a time much earlier than the long fifteenth century and can be documented even in the thirteenth century, in the northern Italian city of Padua.<sup>6</sup> If the term itself is uncomplicated, the questions surrounding it have multiplied over the past three or four decades. Was the Italian Renaissance a phenomenon only for male elites? The answer, more or less, is yes, especially if we are thinking about the long fifteenth century. Accordingly, the question arises: How can it still be relevant and important, given the concerns of scholars in the twenty-first century?

The answer to this third question revolves around, and radiates outward from, the meaning of the third term: intellectual, which conjures up different things for different people. Today "intellectual" can sometimes bear negative connotations. For some, it evokes snobbish elitism or, even worse, a lack of effective participation in the world: the intellectual does not matter and is on the margins. For others, the term can sometimes suggest the classic stereotype of the romantic individual, alone and thinking deep thoughts, who, when ready, puts pen to paper and releases writing into the world.

To get beyond those stereotypes, in any era, one needs to look at intellectuals in a broad fashion, considering how they worked, their stated goals, their unstated assumptions, what sorts of professional positions they filled, how they situated themselves in relation to current institutions, what sort of materials they had at hand when doing their work, and so on. This book reveals Renaissance-era intellectuals as they were: social creatures, immensely learned in a deep but in many respects limited way, and enmeshed in a thoroughly premodern world when it came to everything from living conditions to theories of human rights. Far

from Romantic individuals, most of the Renaissance intellectuals we will meet were highly social, whether in the traditional sense (privileging social interactions with others) or through letter writing, reflecting thereby an intellectual's sociability, something that does not require personal contact in the literal sense but that implies a conversation: that the enterprise of reading and writing is something to be shared.

The short version: we are talking primarily about a period that spans the years 1350-1525 in what we now consider Italy, and the primary subject matter will be the lives, careers, and writings of intellectuals.

### Beginnings

History of any sort involves choices about where to begin. Any cultural development, political movement, or religious evolution can be extended backward almost infinitely. One can find causes, of causes, of causes ... without end. This dilemma — where to begin — comes into special relief when thinking about Italian Renaissance culture, since the one thing that most of the intellectuals we will meet in this book had in common was that they looked to the distant past, to the epoch of ancient Greece and Rome, to find cultural ideals. Yet in many ways they were all fundamentally connected to the social and material conditions of their day, medieval people looking to distinguish themselves from the culture they saw around them and in which they were embedded. At some point, you simply have to decide that you need a beginning. So we'll begin in the fourteenth century. For in many ways, when it comes to intellectual life, developments that occurred in the fourteenth century shaped the evolution of the Renaissance definitively.

More specifically we'll begin in 1364, with a letter. Intellectuals were and are many different things, but above all they are readers and writers. Listening carefully to what they say by analyzing what they write offers the best entryway into their world. Done right, it can give us context, a sense of the thinker's personality, and an opening to consider the various perspectives from which we can consider the writer. So here is what Petrarch wrote to Boccaccio in 1364. The two were close friends, Boccaccio a little younger and, sometimes,

in awe of Petrarch. Petrarch had heard that Boccaccio had burned some of his Italian poetry when he encountered Petrarch's poetry, so in awe was Boccaccio of Petrarch's talent. Petrarch writes that he too had undergone some ambivalence in his career. While now he was devoted primarily to Latin literature, there had been a time when he hoped "to devote most of my time to this enterprise of writing in the vernacular." Latin, he went on,

had been cultivated to such an extent and by such great geniuses of antiquity that nothing significant could be added, either by me or by anyone else. On the other hand, the vernacular, having been but recently discovered and still quite rustic owing to recent ravagers and to the fact that few have cultivated it, seemed capable of ornament and augmentation.'

Petrarch lived from 1304 to 1374 in a tumultuous century. By 1364, he was immensely famous by the standards of his day, as a vernacular poet and as a learned writer in Latin whose accomplishments were the envy of the educated.

What then does this letter tell us? First, Petrarch reveals an assumption regarding the Latin language that was widespread in his time, something that, considered in its fullness, should stop modern readers in their tracks. Educated people in Petrarch's time and place were bilingual in ways difficult to imagine today, with their education after the elementary level occurring in Latin. To be educated was to be considered *litteratus*, a word that meant not only "literate" the way we consider this status today, which is to say "able to read and write in one's native language." Being *litteratus* also signified fluency as a reader (especially) but also as a writer and to an extent speaker of Latin specifically.

Part of Latin's appeal had to do with permanence and tradition. This was an era before mass transit and well before anything like radio or television, when many people could not hear "standard" versions of native languages in a relatively uniform way. Owing to these factors, vernaculars (native languages, learned by children in the home) seemed inherently unstable. In Italy, the dialect of Tuscany differed substantially from that of Naples, which was very different from that of Milan, and so

on. Decade by decade and region by region, people's "mother tongues" proved so variable that they did not seem appropriate for serious writing. Latin, on the other hand, did.

Latin, first, had a long and continuous history by the time the fourteenth century rolled around. Latin itself ceased to be a native language about two centuries after the Roman Empire fell in 478. But it experienced great success as an official language used by the Church in all its dealings, from the Mass to the many theological and administrative writings the Church's growth inspired. The twelfth and thirteenth centuries saw the rise of universities, where new, standardized forms of Latin evolved. Meanwhile, in what are now France, Spain, Portugal, and Italy, the "Romance" languages of French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian developed. Yet they did so in unorganized ways, emerging as they did from spoken versions of Latin but developing their own grammars, vocabularies, and, importantly, dialects. This latter aspect, dialects, proves crucially important in understanding why, from the time of the Roman Empire's fall to the fifteenth century, little attention was given to writing and promoting grammars of those languages (one noteworthy exception occurred in the case of Tuscan). These vernaculars, or commonly spoken languages, did not exist in one fixed form in the European Middle Ages. Instead, even within one broad language group, Italian, for instance, there would be countless local variants, from region to region and, importantly, decade to decade.

Only one language was thought to stand the test of time, to be permanent enough to study, to teach, and to use for official purposes: Latin. Indeed, the word "grammar" — *grammatica* — meant one thing throughout the Middle Ages: Latin. When we observe, as we often do in the Middle Ages and Renaissance, someone saying that he studied *grammatica*, what that meant was he studied Latin. When Petrarch says that at a certain point he believed "nothing significant could be added, either by me or by anyone else" to the store of Latin literature, he reveals an anxiety shared by many when they looked at ancient literary achievements. What could you add to something already perfect?

It is also worth highlighting that Petrarch says that the vernacular was "recently discovered and still quite rustic." "Recently discovered": Petrarch points here to two communities of writers: first, to the "Sicilian school" of poets, who, inspired by medieval French troubadours and their tales of love and heroism, flourished in the thirteenth century and wrote love poetry of great beauty in the vernacular. Elsewhere, in another work of his, Petrarch says that the Sicilian poets "were the first." Certain writers in Tuscany, members of the so-called Sicilian-Tuscan school, joined them in the early canon of recognized and important Italian poets. In other words, relatively recently (from Petrarch's perspective), a group of writers had succeeded in writing literature in the vernacular that was worthy of being read and considered seriously. It was poetry, to be sure, and it dealt with matters of love, predominantly, rather than history, philosophy, or theology. But it was worth taking seriously. If these early poets represented one of the two communities of writers, the other community was, instead, a community of one: Dante Alighieri (1265-1321).

Absences often tell as much, or more, about a writer's frame of mind than things that are overtly present. The fact that Petrarch could say that the vernacular possessed "that few have cultivated it" is astonishing, since by the time he was writing this letter, Dante's *Comedy* (*Commedia*) was well known. In its three "canticles," *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Paradise), Dante had expressed with beauty and elegance a magnificent journey. Dante, the poet himself, is the *Comedy's* principal character, and we follow him as he explores the realms of hell, purgatory, and heaven. Along the way we meet notable figures from the ancient world; famous characters from Italian history; and, most importantly, Dante's two main guides, the ancient Latin poet Virgil, who accompanies Dante through purgatory, and then, in paradise, Beatrice, the woman who served as Dante's muse.

Dante wrote, very deliberately, in the Tuscan vernacular, that variety of Italian spoken most purely in Florence, that would later serve as the model for "literary" Italian. The work that we know as *The Divine Comedy* (the adjective "Divine" was

added only later) elicited admiration, fascination, and comment, so much so that a bit later, in 1373, the city of Florence asked Boccaccio himself to lecture publicly on Dante's *Comedy*. Another thing, then, that we learn from this letter of Petrarch's is that he had a ghost hanging over his head, the ghost of a writer, Dante, who had so perfectly expressed a vision of the cosmos that his work seemed indeed divine. He had done so not in Latin, but in Italian: a surprising fact, given that many of the themes that pop up in the *Comedy* deal with subjects — philosophy, theology, science — that traditionally would have been addressed in Latin.

Dante himself had early on written a work called *On the Elegance of the Vernacular* (*De vulgari eloquentia*), a work in which he argued that the vernacular should be cultivated as a serious language. Paradoxically, he wrote this text in Latin, in the hopes that it would reach intellectuals, but the arguments he made there were powerful: the vernacular was natural and learned in the home, and matters expressed in the vernacular could reach more than just a small section of the well educated. To be sure, it would need cultivation, rules, and hard work to make it worthy of serious literature, since man was "a most unstable, variable animal" (*instabilissimum et variabilissimum animal*).

As to Petrarch, he informs us in that letter that, if early in his life he too thought one might raise the vernacular to the level of a language of craft and precision, soon thereafter he abandoned that plan. What Petrarch is doing is making a symbolic leap over Dante, shaping and refining a carefully polished persona: Petrarch the serious, pious, scholarly intellectual who has left vernacular poetry behind. He is offering a carefully staged presentation of self.

The truth is that Petrarch worked on his vernacular poetry his entire life: a manuscript in the Vatican Library shows that throughout his life he revised and reordered his poems, called *Rime sparse* in Italian — "Scattered Rhymes" — or, as he would refer to them in Latin, *Rerum vulgarium fragmenta*: "Fragments of things in the vernacular." All of this might sound terribly academic, but for one fact: Petrarch's definitive shifting of gears — moving from the vernacular to Latin, from idealizing love

poetry to historical studies, from a more or less secular attitude toward life to one marked by a profoundly religious outlook — effected a definitive change in attitudes toward literature and scholarship in Italy. For the next five generations, the field on which leading Italian intellectuals would play, work, and occasionally battle was a primarily Latinate one. The long fifteenth century saw a lot of attention to the Italian vernacular, increasingly so as the fifteenth century wore on. But Petrarch's powerful presence signaled the beginning of a cultural movement whose main linguistic vehicle was the Latin language.

### Backgrounds

When we study the past, we tend to examine it through categories that make the most sense to us. This tendency is natural and unsurprising. But a problem arises: sometimes the categories that make the most sense to us would not have made sense in the same way to the people from the past whom we are studying. The question becomes: should we use the categories that make sense to us or try to understand what categories were operative in the period we are studying? The perspective I am advocating in this book is the latter. Take one example: philosophy. Today, those who study philosophy are disposed to believe that it deals primarily with verbal arguments: that the best philosophy is one in which a thinker makes clear, rationally delineated arguments that cohere with one another into a system. Religion, with all its ambiguities and its necessity of appealing to a higher power above human reason, has no place in this scheme. But in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth centuries things were different.

On the one hand, as we shall see, in universities one could find significant antecedents for the more modern view. The notion was common and widely accepted that philosophy as a discipline was separate from religion, based on human reason alone, and as such could function autonomously within a limited intellectual realm. On the other, when we look at university life as it was situated within intellectual life generally, we can see that this view, though operative, is misleading. Most thinkers would have thought of academic philosophy (considered in this just-sketched way) as

the minor partner when it came to religion. And indeed, universities were structured in such a way that philosophy served as basic preparation for the study of theology, seen as something higher and more important. The relationship between the two fields, philosophy and religion, is the reverse today in academic, intellectual circles, with philosophy seen as the higher intellectual discipline. The example of "philosophy" as a discipline is one among many that one could name to make this case: certain categories as we understand them today were different in the past, despite their name, which on the surface might have been the same.

So a word to the wise: looking into the past, we should not fear difference. There is nothing wrong with looking for antecedents to the way we think and live today, to find things that "look like us" in the past. But history would not be history if we did not recognize fundamental differences in outlook (when these are clearly present and can be substantiated by evidence) that shaped thinkers in the past. Since we are dealing with intellectuals, the best place to begin is with education.

### CONTENTS

Preface
Acknowledgements
List of Abbreviations
1 Beginnings
2 Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio
3 The Italian Renaissance Takes Root in Florence
4 Florentine Humanism, Translation, and a New (Old) Philosophy
5 Dialogues, Institutions, and Social Exchange
6 Who Owns Culture? Classicism, Institutions, and the Vernacular
7 Poggio Bracciolini
8 Lorenzo Valla
9 The Nature of the Latin Language: Poggio versus Valla
10 Valla, Latin, Christianity, Culture 11 A Changing Environment
12 Florence: Marsilio Ficino, I
13 Ficino, II
14 The Voices of Culture in Late Fifteenth-century Florence
15 "We barely have time to breathe." Poliziano, Pico, Ficino, and the Beginning of

the End of the Florentine Renaissance 16  
 Angelo Poliziano's Lamia in Context  
 17 Endings and New Beginnings: The  
 Language Debate Epilogue  
 Bibliography  
 Index

[Interactive and Sculptural Printmaking in the Renaissance](#) by Suzanne Karr Schmidt [Brill's Studies in Intellectual History / Brill's Studies on Art, Art History, and Intellectual History, Brill Academic, 9789004340138]

Art always requires a beholder, but some artworks also need to be handled. Interactive and sculptural prints pervaded the European reading market of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but remain little known today. These single sheets and book illustrations featured movable flaps and dials, or functioned as separate kits for building three-dimensional scientific instruments.

The hybrid nature of these constructions—part text, part image, and part sculpture—engaged readers as much as did their content. By using dials and flaps, or building instruments themselves, viewers learned to read images as interactively as they read text. Manuscripts had been indiscriminately copied with or without their movable parts since the thirteenth century; now mass production allowed those parts to be sold as complete, interchangeable packages. The viewer decided whether or not to use them, but the choice was theirs. Thus, interactive prints insisted on an actively personal, tactile, and autodidactic viewership. The implications of this interdisciplinary medium expand beyond art history and the history of the book—and broaden the understanding of the ephemeral tools of early modern propaganda, science, and medicine. Interactive and sculptural prints assumed many roles: as surrogates for devotional objects; as dissectable models of anatomies both normal and deformed by religious polemics; as scientific instruments for personal experimentation; as lavish, yet functional book illustrations and artworks for noble and humanistic patrons; and finally, as moralizing emblems in Stammbücher. The latter led to the trivialization of the genre and its ultimate use as pop-ups in children's literature. The interactive and sculptural print was pervasive during its

sixteenth-century heyday, and offered its viewers a dynamic new way to experience art.

Almost three hundred unique interactive and sculptural books and prints survive from the sixteenth century. The fact that these prints still exist in such variety and numbers indicates that a much greater body of work has already been lost. Their integration into every published format—from inexpensive broadsheets with letterpress or ornate single sheets, to modest handbooks or richly-decorated folio volumes—points to their frequent use in an increasingly visually-literate middle class and court culture. Printed globes, finely-engraved paper astrolabes and even portable woodcut sundials in fantastic shapes could also be cut out and mounted on wooden supports. Their flexibility suited impecunious students (who could assemble them themselves) and nobles alike—for pre-constructed colored versions took pride of place in the richest of collections. Anatomical and polemical flap prints in particular were available hand colored, as well as in black and white, again suggesting the market supported both types. Although colored works would have been more expensive, none of the broadsheet examples extant have been painted with special care, and some suggest a large edition (due to the use of stencils). While the poor and illiterate might not have owned many of these interactive images, they would certainly have been aware of them. Anatomical flap charts were likely displayed by barber surgeons in bathhouses and by charlatan doctors at fairs, while paintings of public taverns imply that their owners posted bawdy, playful, and even polemical sheets. The topical imagery and playful tenor of many interactive prints—especially those revealing the pope as a devil or lifting a woman's skirt—would have particularly endeared them to a lustful, inebriated audience.

Estimates of European broadsheet runs in the sixteenth century suggest that at least a thousand copies may have been lost for each surviving woodcut—woodblocks could often support as many as three or four thousand impressions. The fine lines on copper plates wore down more quickly, but engravings were likely more expensive and thus may have been better conserved for their rarity. Although interactive examples have generally



survived with three or four impressions at most, a thousand to two thousand copies in good condition might have been produced from each plate. Given the approximately hundred and ninety different prints and roughly three hundred and seventy-five impressions of all media of interactive prints that now survive—there may have been 190,000 in circulation in the sixteenth century alone? Since a book which sold 20,000 copies was considered a rare best seller during the Renaissance, a body of prints of this size must have been easily accessible, universally owned and enjoyed, and even more easily broken and discarded. Only a small percentage has survived, many of which are unique, and yet abundant evidence exists to suggest their one-time prominence, especially in Germany and Northern Italy, and their lasting influence throughout Europe. Forging beyond the mere imitation of existing objects, interactive and sculptural prints replicated the experimental uses of those objects. The hands-on format of a folding paper print could arouse as much devotion as a private painted diptych, or could serve as a functional sundial or astrolabe. Although the imperfect survival of these ephemeral objects has hampered our understanding of the genre, this book will leave readers in no doubt of its existence. Anonymous artists collaborating with scientists and other figures outside the standard realm of art history produced a number of these devices. However, the possibilities of interactive and sculptural prints also attracted many name artists, among them: Jost Amman, Sebald Beham, Pietro Bertelli, Cornelis Bos, Theodor de Bry, Lucas Cranach the Elder, Albrecht Dürer, Peter Flötner, Maerten van Heemskerck, Hans Holbein the Younger, Conrad Goltzius, Matthäus Greuter, Lucas Kilian, Hans Rudolph Manuel Deutsch, Hans Springinklee, and Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder.

Like the small, but well-preserved editions of engravings, Peter Apian's volvelle-laden, self-published *Astronomicum Caesareum* in collaboration with Michael Ostendorfer had already become a collector's item in his own day.

About a hundred and eleven copies are now known; an astounding number considering he likely published only a few hundred overall. This was not the case with all books with interactive parts.

Though most have fewer than a dozen copies remaining, and many are unique, a predominant number went into multiple editions in different languages. Apian's more accessible *Cosmographicus liber* textbook with four volvelles, for instance, entered about forty editions, though his massive *Astronomicum* only necessitated a single German pamphlet translation. Even the less-scientific volvelle randomizer dial that told fortunes in a 1539 book by Jörg Wickram became so popular that the text went into at least twenty interactive editions and variations in the sixteenth century. Apian's *Astronomicum* volvelles were based on a serious study of the heavens—yet his dials could yield more work-intensive horoscope readings than Wickram's unicorn dial, if their users so chose.

Although most movable prints survive in unique impressions, several reappear with differing texts and layouts, which suggest their greater popularity. The anatomy sheets were the most frequently reissued of any movable print, and they survive in identical as well as revised or plagiarized editions from as early as 1538. Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder's anatomy prints appeared that year with an imperial sanction, but that award hardly deterred his audience from demanding copies. One major woodcut type outside the anatomy tradition has four surviving variants, with two identical impressions: the German Pope is the Devil. Printed after his death in 1555, these images attack the militancy of Pope Julius iii (ruled 1550-1555) against the Protestants. The user lifted the upper body of the seemingly benign Borgia Pope Alexander vi (ruled 1492-1503), to find him not only possessed by, but transformed into the devil beneath. Some editions even included a damning portrait of Julius iii on the verso of the flap. If they so desire, the current reader may photocopy, or cut out and construct reduced-scale, working facsimiles of this German eschatological broadside, and of an Italian cryptographic volvelle, at the end of this introduction. In a different approach to the liftable skirt, publisher Pietro Bertelli's Venetian Courtesan survives in five impressions, while two flap engravings of a memento-mori *Pride* by Conrad Goltzius from around 1600 exist in four impressions each. Printed scientific instruments are now little

known, but some have even better survival rates: the seventy-five engravings and woodcuts by the Nuremberg mathematician and instrument maker Georg Hartmann range from unique to nine impressions each, and together total nearly two hundred. Together, the extant examples of these disparate formats and types of printed objects highlight the creativity of early modern printmakers, mathematicians, and humanists capitalizing on the flexibility of a very new medium. Only a small percentage of all of these prints and books have survived, many of them unique, and yet abundant evidence exists to suggest their one-time prominence, especially in Germany and Italy, and their lasting influence throughout Europe.

Thus interactive and sculptural prints were both artworks themselves, and arbiters of the increasingly personalized reception of art. While initially developed in tandem with the revolution of printing itself, these prints offered a technological innovation preceding a much later concept of interaction. Indeed, Lev Manovich's twentieth-century concept of new media art holds true interactive and sculptural prints as the second new media of the early modern era:

In contrast to design, in art the connection between content and form (or, in the case of new media, content and interface) is motivated; that is, the choice of a particular interface is motivated by a work's content to such degree that it can no longer be thought of as a separate level. Content and interface merge into one entity, and no longer can be taken apart.

Interactive prints transcend design and a single medium, becoming functional objects that are also works of art when they reach beyond the two-dimensional page to their viewer. Unlike modern so-called "new media" computer applications which do not affect the program and its user reciprocally, in this context interactive implies a visual and physical contact that alters both the user and his object. Though performing some early computing functions, these prints transcended the spatial limitations of the page, or the modern screen.

As a playful, hand-printed and colored woodcut dial with a duo of performing apes from the early

1440-1450s shows, these devices may even have been mass-produced before presses, movable type, and the Gutenberg Bible. While interactive prints could aid the calculation of horoscopes or the date of Easter, they could also be enjoyed entirely on their own merits. This, the earliest surviving print with a dial, is still the most curious and unexplained. Its mischievous, anthropomorphic apes are connected by a rotating band with stripes on the ends painted the color of their skin. Whenever their dial turns ninety degrees, they appear to exchange positions, bending over backward from their prancing steed to blow on the bagpipes or toss a mirror or ring through the air. Though scholars have suggested a moral, political, and even a courtly basis for this conceit, these creatures are not chained in servitude to masters or morality. Like the reckless monkeys stealing a peddler's goods in other fifteenth-century prints, they could almost have purloined such colorful toys, and possibly even their charger. Not entirely blameless in their pursuits, the bagpipe offers boisterous phallic overtones. Yet the ring and the bar from which they swing refer back to the turning motion of the print as the viewer takes a vicarious part in their games and twists them about. While exploding into motion that breaches their two-dimensional space, the apes implicitly celebrate the sensory freedoms that this new application of print has brought to their capers.

Interactive prints invented a more monumental, hybrid artform when they expanded the scope of their supports. Static pictorial hangings or codices with individual pages became bas reliefs with many layers. Flat sheets transformed into sculpture in the round. The least known category of prints—printed scientific instruments—best demonstrates the interactive print's own unique ability, that of combining painting and sculpture. Any number of these designs could be fitted to geometrical or fantastical forms, decorated with iconography in any graphical style, and they would still remain unique objects.

Hitherto, no one has compiled comprehensive lists of either single-sheet prints or books with moving parts. Many items remain unpublished, while the scattered literature alternates between surveys of the general types and catalogs with specific

information on particular impressions without much context. Andrea Carlino's *Paper Bodies: A Catalogue of Anatomical Fugitive Sheets 1538-1687* offers a nearly integrated approach by balancing his catalogue entries with essays on workshop practice and plagiarism, as well as the dissemination and users of the prints. However, he pays insufficient attention to the evidence supplied by the prints themselves, including coloring trends, types of supports, and means of survival, as well as the visual difference between copies (a term Carlino equates too often with impressions). Perhaps due to the variable graphic quality of these images, few artists have been successfully associated with their interactive output. Georg Hartmann may have been the first and only artist of purely interactive prints; thus his printed instruments and their means of manufacture by the viewer are the focus of Part Three. The historian of science Ernst Zinner detailed Hartmann's output in the 1950s, but overlooked several important collections.

The historians John Roger Paas and Wolfgang Harms have carefully cataloged many anonymous political broadsheets with moving parts in the context of the long seventeenth century. Harms extensively documented the entire broadsheet collection at Wolfenbüttel, and is one of very few scholars to include the term *Klappbild*, or flap print, in his index. William Coupe's older corpus of seventeenth-century broadsheets also remains valuable in its discussion of the themes of interactive broadsheets in a larger context, without relying on a bare bones catalogue format or reflecting the biases of a single collection.

Robert Scribner's groundbreaking social historical text, *For the Sake of Simple Folk*, remains the most cohesive discussion of propaganda broadsheets from the sixteenth century. In his insistence that the semiotics of the broadsheet images provided more effective arguments than the text, Scribner opened up a vital new field of visual analysis. Christiane Andersson, Keith Moxey and other art historians contributed important articles and books to the topic in the 1980s building upon Scribner, and examining important issues of the audience for other types of secular printing. This book addresses a wider variety of interactive objects, in part

because the new format dovetailed admirably with Protestant efforts. It exemplified the binary distinctions of their propaganda, while exponentially increasing its visual impact. These studies must be seen in parallel with the classic, though sometimes oversimplified works of Adolf Spamer on the *Andachtsbild*, as well as David Freedberg's *Power of Images*. Yet the genre of so-called popular print can never be entirely reconstructed due to the ferocity of belief and destructive use of images--painted, printed and sculpted alike.

An outpouring of feminist readings of anatomical illustration brought some renewed attention to the flap anatomies. These focused anachronistically on violent images, rather than the genre's use as teaching tools for students, as well as the curious and the mildly voyeuristic. For instance, the literally deconstructionist reading in the introduction of the 1997 anthology *Body in Parts: Fantasies of Corporality in Early Modern Europe* took one of the allegorical flap engravings designed by Johannes Remmelin and Lucas Kilian in 1613 even further, describing it as a Lacanian fantasy of "a body in bits and pieces." While opened flaps reveal organs in a confusion akin to the scattered components of a jigsaw puzzle, a castration-anxiety inducing Medusa flap presides over the genitalia of the female torso in the center of the image. This analysis, while it makes compelling use of Kilian's imagery, does not account for the history and broader popularity of the flap prints preceding it. The second and third plates of Remmelin and Kilian's series, less frequently mentioned by scholars until recently, present a more normal conception of Adam and Eve with the goal of scientific dissection rather than haphazard amputation. Nor was the idea female anatomy was considered an inferior variation of the male the only conclusion to be drawn from these models—although the female models were depicted as pregnant—usually with a evidently male fetus. Curiosity about where babies come from had long been a human preoccupation, but few dissections were performed upon pregnant corpses to improve the available knowledge on the topic. Karen Encarnacion's 2002 article on the generative imagery of these prints, while rooted in a discussion of the gendering of the images rather

than their functionality, is a valuable source for discussing anatomy prints in the context of contemporary polemical works, and for locating the long-missing Hans Guldenmund anatomical woodcuts (Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst, Vienna. Likewise, Lyle Massey's 2013 "Alchemical Womb" article dealt with important issues of secrets and revelation in all three Rummelin plates that reflected publisher Stephan Michelspacher's influence.

The current author's *Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life*, (2011), discussed in detail production issues based on copy-specific evidence and the set of related plates surviving into the eighteenth century.

Paper conservator Kim Nichols contributed significantly to this analysis and publication, and other copies at the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek Munich, and elsewhere have since been studied in depth. Questions of the intended userbase remain open in both polemical and anatomical works, but they never existed as isolated phenomena.

Another relatively recent addition to the broadsheet canon, is Jörn Münkner's 2008 *Eingreifen und Begreifen: Handhabungen und Visualisierungen in Flugblättern der Frühen Neuzeit* thesis. It discusses this specific category of letterpress sheets with flaps, dials, optical illusions, and other visual games, with some overlap with the present work. The authors were in conversation about the topic in Berlin in 2007. Indeed, Münkner cites the current author's 2006 dissertation, saying it "can be seen as a pendant to my study" in its focus on the interactive functions and materiality over the wide spectrum of the printing arts. Münkner's emphasis on the hand and handling (or manipulation) has particular resonance for the present, revised text as well. His corpus includes broadsheets with accompanying text and a variety of visual puzzles that do not require physical interaction. While touching on anatomy, his study does not consider scientific instruments, separately-produced engravings, or the expanded use of these print technologies in book format.

While the implications of broadsheets have been much examined, a number of recent studies also have explored the use of prints in the fifteenth

century. A culmination of this effort was the joint National Gallery of Art and Germanisches Nationalmuseum exhibition in Fall 2005, *The Origins of European Printmaking: Fifteenth-Century Woodcuts and Their Public*. Curators Peter Parshall and Rainer Schoch organized this exhibition, supported by the research of Peter Schmidt, David S. Areford and Richard Field. Schmidt and Areford wrote dissertations on the subject of *Gebrauchsgrafik*, studying the contemporary use of images pasted into codices. Areford's thesis and related 2010 book, *The Viewer and the Printed Image in Late Medieval Europe*, reinforces the tactile relationship between early prints and their collectors, who frequently altered their prints' format or coloring, and grouped them within albums, manuscripts, or printed books to suit their own devotional purposes. Similarly, Kathryn M. Rudy's ongoing work on medieval prints inserted into manuscripts engages closely with important issues of early materiality and interaction, including her 2016 *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* initiative to analyze dirt, abrasion, and other signs of use in manuscript illuminations, "Dirty Books: Quantifying Patterns of Use in Medieval Manuscripts Using a Densitometer."

This object-specific research is often best presented in the form of an exhibition. Prints in the Golden Age: from Art to Shelf Paper, at the Museum Boijmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam in Winter 2006 complemented the Origins show by integrating acclaimed masterworks with everyday printed material in its roles as wall coverings, as a lining for cabinets, and a sea chest, and even as hats worn on festive occasions. The present author explored many of the same themes in earlier artworks from the Art Institute of Chicago collection in her 2011 exhibition catalogue noted earlier, *Altered and Adorned: Using Renaissance Prints in Daily Life*. The scientific instrument print received scholarly and public exposure in Susan Dackerman's *Prints and the Pursuit of Knowledge in Early Modern Europe*, on display at Harvard Art Museums and the Block Museum of Art at Northwestern University in 2011 and 2012. This major loan show involved numerous collaborators from the history of science as well as art history. It also set a new precedent in display of interactive

prints by including several printed sundials by Georg Hartmann, as well as numerous constructed models of globe gores, sundials, astrolabes, and anatomical flap prints for the public to handle. The present author's essay on Hartmann and numerous catalogue entries in that volume were written after the bulk of Part Three of this text, and take it in different directions.

This book builds upon these exhibitions and the continuing discussions of materiality in art, for its subject matter inhabits a temporal and functional niche between the functional art of the fifteenth century and the sophisticated applied ornament of the seventeenth. This text focuses on the sixteenth century, when interactive printmaking was at its most creative and influential. The individuality of the viewer can be glimpsed through physical evidence showing how the ways the prints were used diverged from the ways that they were meant to be used.

This book includes four roughly chronological sections, each establishing the context and sculptural sources for a specific type of user interaction, primarily in the sixteenth century. *Revelatory Playthings* establishes the interactive print's origins in the artworks and rituals of the Catholic Church, especially in the restriction of the Eucharist. *Anatomy of Reformation* compares the technical and political interconnections of the flap anatomy and the Protestant propaganda broadsheet. *Instrumentle auff Papier* introduces the accomplishments of printed scientific instrument's most prolific inventor, the Nuremberg mathematician and engraver, Georg Hartmann. *Consumption and Exploitation* explores the production and plagiarism of lavish interactive books and prints for science and divination, with concluding sections on erotic flap engravings of women—and the logical results of such promiscuity, the memento mori. Two online appendices catalogue early modern interactive prints ca. 1440-1700 and books with interactive components ca. 1474-1750.

Part One, *Revelatory Playthings*, examines the religious origins of the interactive print, especially in Northern Europe. The Catholic tendency to allow visual access to its mysteries only from a distance

restricted tactile interplay with the body of Christ, consequently heightening the power of Communion, and increasing the demand for hands-on devotional objects as its surrogate. The new medium of interactive printmaking began as such a substitute, whether for triptych-format canon tables containing the words of consecration, or for the Host itself. The Christological volvelle guiding the viewer through radical printmaker and publisher Heinrich Vogtherr's 1539 *Christlichen Lofbuchs*, or *Christian Lottery Book*, bears particular witness to religious source of the format. These tactile explorations set the stage for the more libelous interactive propaganda of Protestant broadsheets subsequently discussed. By relying on similarly interactive revelations, Reformation polemicists simultaneously embraced and denounced the religious origins of the medium.

Part Two, *Anatomy of Reformation*, compares the technical and political interconnections of two of the most influential subjects for interactive printing: the flap anatomy and the Protestant propaganda broadsheets. These have not previously been linked in substantial discussions. Yet they both explored and problematized man's assumptions about his own body—or the health of the ecclesiastical body in charge of the faith—and allowed the viewer to dissect it, one flap at a time. The popularity that greeted Heinrich Vogtherr the Elder's male and female anatomies with liftable organs from the late 1530s partially inspired Vesalius's more anatomically correct printed manikins in his 1543 *Fabrica and Epitome*. The contemporary rash of sheets against the Catholic clergy, the Interim, and the Pope functioned on a similar system of revealing dissection, whether uncovering illicit desires among monks, or the devil himself lurking within the pontiff. Paradoxically lively and cadaverous at once, the works create their sense of interiority and recreate the act of dissection by becoming increasingly sculptural objects through creative positioning and double-sided printing and pasting of the flaps.

Part Three, *Instrumentle auff Papier*, introduces the genre of printed instruments through the context of the humanist circle of the Nuremberg cleric, mathematician and engraver Georg Hartmann. These sculptural objects are closely linked to the

invention of printing, for unlike the earliest thirteenth-century theological volvelles, no manuscript precursors survive that were meant for building actual objects, rather than for serving as schematic models. Although hand-drawn globe gores mounted on customized wooden spheres are extant from the late fifteenth century, no paper instruments marketed as kits for later construction were left intact for study until the sixteenth century. Hartmann was the most inventive and consistent producer of sculptural prints, bringing them to the attention of the nobility as well as the humanistic and artistic community. His work raises issues of secular versus religious iconography, and illustrates the visual and spatial difficulties of planning two-dimensional printed instruments for building in three dimensions. Hartmann's most impressive design, a woodcut sundial in the form of a crucifix, takes a central role in this section for its connections to influential personages, from the invading Turks, Philipp Melancthon, Duke Albrecht of Prussia, to Anna, Queen of Hungary and Bohemia.

Part Four, Consumption and Exploitation, continues to discuss the markets for these innovative prints by exploring the expansion of the interactive book trade. The first part details the manufacture of the most lavish interactive books and prints of the period, particularly for book illustrations of such complexity that the owner could not construct them by themselves. In the second part, the German secular lottery book, or *Loft buch*, phenomenon and its relationship to Lorenzo Spirito's Italian text offers a telling contrast with the great scientific works of Regiomontanus, Peter Apian and Johannes Schöner. The final section deals with a group of mildly-erotic flap prints of women popular in the late sixteenth century. Neither as explicit nor as censored as the *Modi*, these allegorical or earthly women and their liftable skirts ostensibly dissuaded their handlers from the evils of pride and promiscuity.

However, the international success of the genre belied its serious message.

Copies of these interactive entertainments contributed to the approval for deluxe engraved *Stammbücher*, and by doing so began to make themselves obsolete. These were intended to be

filled with the arms of illustrious people and their decorative platitudes for the owner of the volume. Such albums combined the cult of personality with interactivity on an individual level. As the interactive print became increasingly popular during the seventeenth century, their once outré subject matter became more normalized as ornamental and mildly moral emblems, which finally subsided into the didacticism of children's literature.

Regardless of the format and the didactic or provocative content of interactive prints, it was the viewer's need to build them, or to simply pick them up and manipulate them that made them so innovative. In their hands these printed objects came alive, and this dependence on interplay with fingers, palms, and even wrists activated the encounter:

The hand wrenches the sense of touch away from its merely receptive passivity and organizes it for experiment and action. It teaches man to conquer space, weight, density and quantity. Because it fashions a new world, it leaves its imprint everywhere upon it. It struggles with the very substance it transmorphoses and with the very form it transfigures. Trainer of man, the hand multiplies him in space and in time.

In more recent and less mystical terms, scientific historian Davis Baird underlined the value of instruments not purely as technological, mathematical or scientific tools, but as "crafted artifacts" in which "visual and tactile thinking and communication are central to their development and use." Baird's argument for revised thinking about the importance of instrumentation as a form of "material knowledge," and the "reading" of instruments can also be applied broadly to the manufacture and impact of interactive prints. He cites Anthony F.C. Wallace on the importance of the hands-on creation process to communicate meaning:

Speech (and writing) will provide only a garbled and incomplete translation of the visual image. One must make the thing—or a model, or at the least a drawing—in order to ensure that one's companions has

approximately the same visual experience as oneself.

The handmade, or self-crafted, artifact, especially literal printed instruments like sundials and astrolabes, offered access to new forms of knowledge through its material and physical connection to its audience. But all these prints were functional instruments for their time, whether their task was time-telling, dialing, or a simplistic before-and-after revelation, and all benefitted from their relative technological advancement. Indeed, interactive and sculptural printmaking flourished during the early modern era due to its flexibility, relative inexpensiveness and exceptionally direct appeal to the viewer's sense of touch. Through manipulating these images, the viewer learned to read their dual meanings as if the act of handling them had brought the ideas themselves into a more concrete and understandable form. This radical medium took on the formal qualities of the printed line, folding codex, and self-sufficient sculpture, and by demanding participation, made every viewer both its subject and its artist. In a time of significant religious and cultural change, visual statements which could be easily grasped held sway over the imagination. The religious and social issues raised by these prints were too powerful to be restricted to the two dimensions of inert printed pictures. Forging beyond the mere imitation of existing objects, interactive prints replicated the experimental uses of those objects. By facilitating repeat acts of revelation, concealment, and calculation, these mechanically-reproduced artworks implicitly taught people from many levels of society that they deserved to access artworks of all types and functions regardless of their rank or wealth. When the format of a folding paper print could arouse as much devotion as a private painted diptych, or could serve as a functional sundial or astrolabe, it was up to the viewer to learn from their hands-on experience of the image. These prints would have failed utterly in their function if they had never been used. Judging from the small sample that remains, they were. Focillon's active hand was already an inherent part of humanity, but with its help, the interactive and sculptural print too became a "trainer of man."

Contents

Acknowledgments	
List of Illustrations	
Abbreviations	
Introduction	
PART 1: Revelatory Playthings: The Religious Origins of the Interactive Print	
1	Handling Religion
2	Folding Triptychs
3	Dials and the Printed Host
PART 2: Anatomy of the Reformation: Nosce Antichristum	
4	Anatomies both Normal and Deformed
5	Bodily Shame
6	Indecent Exposure to the Anatomically Incorrect
PART 3: Instrumentle auff Papir: Georg Hartmann of Nuremberg and the Printed Scientific Instrument Trade	
7	Georg Hartmann as Interactive Printmaker
8	Instrument Printmaking before Hartmann
9	Hartmann as Collaborator
PART 4: Consumption and Exploitation: The International Expansion of the Interactive Book	
10	Conspicuous Consumption and Private Presses
11	Lotteries, Gaming, and the Public Reaction
12	Liftable Skirts and Deadly Secrets
Afterword: A User's Guide to Art?	
Bibliography	
Index of Names	
Index of Modern Scholars	
Index of Subjects	
Online Appendices	
Catalogue A: Interactive and Sculptural Single-Sheet Prints 1466—1700	
Catalogue B: Interactive Books 1474—ca.	

1750 <>

[Measured Words: Computation and Writing in Renaissance Italy](#) by Arielle Saiber. [Toronto Italian studies, University of Toronto Press, 9780802039507]

[Measured Words](#) investigates the rich commerce between computation and writing that proliferated in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy.

Arielle Saiber explores the relationship between number, shape, and the written word in the works

of four exceptional thinkers: Leon Battista Alberti's treatise on cryptography, Luca Pacioli's ideal proportions for designing Roman capital letters, Niccolò Tartaglia's poem embedding his solution to solving cubic equations, and Giambattista Della Porta's curious study on the elements of geometric curves. Although they came from different social classes and practiced the mathematical and literary arts at differing levels of sophistication, they were all guided by a sense that there exist deep ontological and epistemological bonds between computational and verbal thinking and production. Their shared view that a network or continuity exists between the arts yielded extraordinary results. Through measuring their words, literally and figuratively, they are models of what the very best interdisciplinary work can offer us.

#### Excerpt: Well-Versed Mathematics

The union of the mathematician with the poet ... this is surely the ideal. — William James

There were computers in Renaissance Italy. Excellent and varied computers: they were the people who calculated quantities, formulated algorithms, proposed new mathematical objects and equations, tested proofs. These *matematici*, *aritmetici*, *computisti*, *contisti*, *geometri*, *misuratori*, and *pesatori*<sup>2</sup> worked in tandem with writers — some of them also exceptional computers — who took calculated risks, formulated rules for good lettering (calligraphic, epigraphic, and typographic) and textual style, proposed new ways of thinking about alphabets and language, tested their mathematical ideas in words. In this period of Italy's history, both computation and writing were in a dynamic process of identity conjuring. Like others among Italy's increasing number of upwardly mobile citizens, Renaissance computer-writers were not only calculating and measuring their words: they were actively seeking to demonstrate their value to society and to showcase their contributions to the larger search for knowledge. As Neil Rhodes, Jonathan Sawday, and the contributors to their 2000 edited volume, *The Renaissance Computer: Knowledge Technology in the First Age of Print*, have shown, the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries experienced an information explosion much like the end of the twentieth and

the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. Then, as today, writers and "computers" were faced with radically new, powerful ways to produce knowledge, circulate it, and understand it. Some might say that "information theory" and the digital humanities began hundreds of years ago.

Tomaso Garzoni, in his encyclopedic 1585 study *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo* [Universal Piazza of All the World's Professions], spoke for many of his contemporaries when he pronounced, "without mathematics it would be hard to arrive at the perfect philosophy." Leon Battista Alberti, in a brief piece he titled "Paintings" (c. 1430-40), described Mother Humanity (*Humanitas Mater*) as a woman with "numerous hands [that] extend from her shoulders, some holding pens, others lyres, some a highly polished gem, others a painted or carved emblems, some [holding] various mathematical instruments, and others books." The Renaissance *studia humanitatis*, based on classical models for educating the liberal ("free") man, approached human nature via the three arts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic), and the related arts of history, literature, and moral philosophy. Yet Renaissance humanists like Alberti and Garzoni knew that to study human nature through words alone was to study humanity only in part. On the flip side — or, rather, the other side of the equation — were the arts of the quadrivium (geometry, arithmetic, astronomy, music), natural philosophy (fields we would now call sciences, such as physics, biology, and medicine), and other arts that required empirical study and computation. Through translations by Leonardo Bruni and Marsilio Ficino, predominantly, and numerous commentaries, Renaissance humanists knew the theory that the Egyptian god Thoth (or Theuth, or the Greek Hermes) was the originator of both numbers and letters.<sup>1</sup> And many humanists paired Protagoras's concept of "man as the measure of all things" together with Lorenzo Valla's alternate "rhetoric as the measure of all things:

From the early 1400s through the early 1600s, Italy nurtured an especially large cast of imaginative thinkers who esteemed all the arts, and these artists borrowed from one another with great freedom. Italy was, at this time, Europe's centre for mathematical study. Universities like Padua's



attracted foreigners including Copernicus, Regiomontanus, Albrecht Dürer, and Nicholas of Cusa. Humanists engaged in the herculean recovery of ancient learning, translating and interpreting codices that Giovanni Aurispa, Francesco Filelfo, and others had brought to Florence from Byzantium. Previously lost ancient works — and works hitherto unavailable in Latin — by Archimedes, Pappus, Apollonius, Hero, and Diophantus became part of the humanist's library, and central to the mathematician's curriculum. Powerful patrons including Cardinal Bessarion and the Farnese in Rome, the Medici in Florence, the Dukes of Urbino, and Popes Pius II, Nicholas V, and Marcellus II encouraged humanists to seek out, translate, and print mathematical treatises as well as literary works. Humanists such as Coluccio Salutati, Pier Paolo Vergerio, and Angelo Poliziano argued that mathematics was a crucial study for orators, writers, and philosophers, and Bernardino Baldi initiated the history of mathematics with his late sixteenth-century biography of mathematicians, *Vite de' matematici*. Literary academies and scientific academies were emerging — and in some instances, such as the *Infiammati* in Padua, were merging. Pietro Bembo, Lodovico Castelvetro, Galileo, and many other scholars debated the nature and form of literary expression, and "computers" of all sorts were asking many of the same questions: Whose wisdom is greater — that of the ancients or the moderns? Do I lean towards Plato or Aristotle? Which language — Latin or the vernacular — should I use in my writing? Do I invent or discover ideas? Is novelty a good or a dangerous thing? Is mimesis better? The answers to these questions were as varied as their askers. Computation and writing, like the arts themselves, were developing rapidly in this particular place and time, and they were doing so not in isolation, but precisely because they were in dynamic dialogue with one another.

Before going any further, I should define more precisely what I mean by "computation" and "writing." By "computation" I intend calculations both in pure (abstract) mathematics and in applied mathematics — primarily calculations based in arithmetic, algebra, and geometry. The statistical analysis of a letter's frequency in an alphabet; the

ratio between a letter's height and the angle of a pen stroke; a solution to a long-unsolved equation; an attempt to square the circle: all are forms of computation. By "writing" I intend production in three general categories: 1) alphabetic letters as the atomic building blocks or symbols of syntax and semantic meaning; 2) the manual act of lettering (handwritten scripts, lapidary inscriptions, and typeface design); and 3) text (its genre, form, style, register, audience, and content). Investigating the convergence in Renaissance Italy of computation and writing (broadly defined as I have suggested here), we come to see how many among the intelligentsia fashioned their work as, necessarily, a merging of number, form, and word.

I have long sought to understand what mathematics and literature have in common, in terms of both practice and ideas. I have often pondered the claim that "mathematics is a language." Over the years, as I have continued reading widely in both early modern literature and early modern mathematics, I have come to think more about the particulars of the relationship between literary and mathematical languages. If mathematics is a language, then what kind of language is it? Are numbers, mathematical objects, and functions equivalent to letters, phonemes, and words? Are equations, operations, and proofs mathematics' counterparts to narrative? As I have increasingly sought to understand what it means to say that "mathematics is language," I have seen this question addressed, from myriad angles, by mathematicians, philosophers of mathematics, cognitive scientists, neuroscientists, and educators. Some of these scholars have focused on how natural language and counting emerged together and both become symbolic through writing; some have seen the aesthetic qualities of mathematical language as comparable to metaphor, or to a linguistic form like poetry; others have considered natural language's centrality to mathematics' development. We can, in fact, examine the utility of storytelling and word problems in teaching mathematics, compare the similar imaginative processes involved in abstract mathematical thinking and abstract literary thinking. We can, to some degree, trace neural activity in a brain engaged in mathematical thinking, and compare it

to the neural patterns that emerge when the brain does the work of reading, writing, remembering, recounting, or inventing a fictional world. These studies, along with many others, have vastly enriched my thinking about — as George Lakoff and Rafael Núñez would say — "where mathematics comes from." I am not in the business of drawing conclusions about how mathematics as a cognitive process is or is not like those employed in spoken language and writing, although I have devoted some thought to mathematics in its relation to the imaginations. My aim here is to bring some awareness of these questions to my present study of the cultural factors and intellectual practices that characterized interdisciplinary exchange in Renaissance Italy.

My questions about language and mathematics first drew me to the connections between Euclidean geometry and rhetorical tropes in the works of Renaissance philosopher-poet-playwright-mathematician Giordano Bruno. In *Giordano Bruno and the Geometry of Language*, I noted the many ways in which Bruno's extensive use of tropes such as circumlocution, hyperbole, and oxymoron (and many others) demonstrates his awareness of the geometric forms and spaces that underpin verbal and written syntax and the production of meaning. Bruno deployed his strategy of what I call "geometric rhetoric" to reinforce his most cherished theories: heliocentrism; the universe as infinite and containing infinite possible worlds; and his theory that knowledge of divine mystery is approached via *coincidentia oppositorum*. As I articulated the confluence of Bruno's geometry with his philosophical and literary studies, I began to realize that Bruno's was just one voice — albeit a powerful one — in a larger conversation about, and between, the worlds of mathematics and literature. Not only did numerous computers and writers actively borrow from each other during the Renaissance, they also often described explicit relationships between their two modes of expression and inquiry, and the ways those relationships strengthened each field's development.

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw extensive scholarly production on connections during the Italian Renaissance between

mathematics and the visual arts, between mathematics and architecture, between mathematics and music. The equally notable convergence of mathematical computation and the written word in this period in Italy has been less explored, although early modern Europe as a whole, and especially Northern Europe, has seen a recent upswing in interest in studies such as Timothy Reiss's *Knowledge, Discovery and Imagination in Early Modern Europe: The Rise of Aesthetic Rationalism*; David Glimp and Michelle R. Warren's volume of essays, *Arts of Calculation: Numerical Thought in Early Modern Europe*; Jessica Wolfe's *Humanism, Machinery, and Renaissance Literature*; Henry S. Turner's *The English Renaissance Stage: Geometry, Poetics, and the Practical Spatial Arts 1580-1630*; Tom Conley's *The Self-Made Map: Cartographic Writing in Early Modern France*; and Katherine Hunt and Rebecca Tomlin's edited special issue for the *Journal of the Northern Renaissance*, *Numbers in Early Modern Writing*.

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Paul Lawrence Rose's 1975 historical study, *The Italian Renaissance of Mathematics: Studies on Humanists and Mathematicians from Petrarch to Galileo*, is one of the earliest works, and to date the most in-depth, to track the interactions between mathematicians and humanists in the Italian Renaissance. Any scholar working today on mathematics in the Renaissance is indebted to Rose's findings, particularly his detailed reconstruction of individual humanists' access to and interest in specific mathematical treatises. I have built on Rose's study, but have shifted the focus to examine the intersection of computation and writing in only four texts by four Renaissance Italian authors. I chose these authors after an extensive survey of primary works of mathematics from the period — consulting numerous manuscripts and exemplars in libraries and archives in Florence and Rome. I was also able to benefit from the exceptional digital resources for early mathematical publications now available through the efforts of the "Biblioteca matematica" project of the Giardino di Archimede museum in Florence and the Max Planck Institute for the History of Science in Berlin. While I have ultimately narrowed my study to four texts, my reading of each has

been enhanced by the opportunity to consider these sources within the larger context of Renaissance mathematical writing.

Helping me both to focus my vision historically and to expand it conceptually have been studies on the relationship between science and humanism," the state and status of mathematics in the Renaissance, the early print history of mathematical treatises, the history of Renaissance schooling, and discussions in the field of "Literature and Science." While rooted in Renaissance cultural, literary, and mathematical history, my analyses of the four texts in this study are also the product of close reading: an examination of the use of "writing" within computational works, and the use of "computation" within texts engaging the art of writing.

### The Four

The four computer-writers I selected for this study embody the period's spirit of interdisciplinary exchange; their contributions to the world of Renaissance thought unequivocally demonstrate how mutually beneficial conversation between computational arts and writing arts can be. I have arranged the case studies — Leon Battista Alberti (1404-1472), Luca Pacioli (1445-1517), Niccolò Tartaglia (circa 1499-1557), and Giambattista Della Porta (1535-1615) — chronologically, from the mid-fifteenth century to the turn of the seventeenth. This is a century and a half that, significantly for my thinking on this project, sees the birth of the printing press at one end and the beginnings of modern calculus at the other. The aesthetic, commercial, and intellectual uses of the printing press loom large in all four case studies. Calculus, by comparison, is barely present: its development occurred towards the end of the sixteenth century, and that development would eventually shift the mathematical centre of Europe from Italy to the north. The kinds of computation and writing analysed vary between the chapters, as do the authors' reasons for participating in an active exchange between the arts of mathematics and literature, and the socio-economic or biographical factors that complicated their access to or participation in that exchange. There is no question that this period in Italy exhibited a particularly fluid dialogue between computation

and writing, but there is also no question, I would argue, that wherever numbers and figures coexist with letters (or characters), there is opportunity for convergence and conversation.

I begin with Leon Battista Alberti's 1466 groundbreaking work on cryptography: *De componendis Cifris*. *De Cifris* was the first known treatise on cryptography in the Western world, and Alberti's revolutionary two-disc "polyalphabetic substitution" system anticipated modern cryptographic techniques by more than four hundred years. Alberti makes it clear that his work was intended exclusively for Vatican use, though his system seems quickly to have travelled to courts in Renaissance Italy and beyond. Notwithstanding the text's relatively rapid dissemination, its coding systems were not widely understood or used until the 1800s. In my discussion of *De Cifris* I explore, among other fascinating characteristics of this text, the subtle autobiographical fingerprints that Alberti left among his calculations and words. An excellent mathematician and expert writer, Alberti studied the shape of language and analysed the letters that constituted its smallest parts. Catalysed by the invention of moveable type and the accompanying promise of quick information diffusion, *De Cifris* teaches its readers intricate systems for manipulating those letters to conceal or reveal meaning. *De Cifris* contemplates what it means to see, to be seen, and to hide — states of awareness that reappear throughout Alberti's writing and in both his personal and professional life.

Chapter 2 likewise focuses on the confluence between mathematics and the atoms of language during the first years following the printing press's arrival in Italy. This time, however, the alphabet is not scrutinized by statistical analysis or combinatorics; it becomes, instead, a carefully developed cast of "characters" that a user can manipulate to project beauty, virtuosity, and power. In the 1509 print version of his *Divina proportione*, Franciscan friar and mathematician Luca Pacioli included specific rules and ratios to construct what he considered the most perfectly proportioned Roman capital letters — letters that could be engraved on stone, inked on paper, worked in gold, cut as punches, or painted in

miniature. Pacioli's idealization of geometrically formed letters emblemizes changes in the domains of calligraphy, typography, and literary production in this period. Beyond his choice of the vernacular to describe his letters' divine proportions;<sup>1</sup> his emphasis on the practical project of re-creating an aesthetic ideal in a range of media demonstrates his commitment to disseminating mathematical knowledge among people of all classes, professions, and trades. For Pacioli, mathematics was the foundation for all the human arts and sciences, and on its foundation was laid the path towards understanding the divine; mathematics guided even language itself. By understanding mathematics' operations and uses, he believed humans might better understand the "characters" of the natural world, ourselves, and the divine.

Chapter 3 considers an algebraic calculation that has a curious connection to poetry. In 1535 (1534 on the Venetian calendar), Brescian mathematician Niccolò Tartaglia discovered a long-sought solution to the cubic equation, and then wove that solution into a poem. Tartaglia's poem was part mnemonic — to help him recall the procedure — and part encryption — to hide the solution from others who wanted it. Renowned mathematician Girolamo Cardano was among those pressing Tartaglia for his method for solving cubics: Tartaglia resisted, fearing that Cardano would publish the solution more quickly than Tartaglia could himself. Eventually, he gave Cardano the solution embedded in a poem — stalling Cardano's efforts to extract the solution, and demonstrating his own awareness of poetry's ability simultaneously to reveal and to conceal. 'When read in the larger context of Tartaglia's life and thought, his "poetic solution" comes into focus as a display of an autodidact's pride in his triumphs over adversity, but also of the anxiety he felt as he moved on the periphery of scholarly circles. Tartaglia's poem is a powerful example of literary writing's ability to participate in computational strategies in this period — a period before conventions of symbolic notation were stabilized and most mathematical operations were still written in words.

The final case study operates in a zone far removed from Alberti's and Tartaglia's

mathematical innovation, and equally far from Pacioli and Tartaglia's desire to reach as many readers as possible. Neapolitan playwright, natural philosopher, and magus Giambattista Della Porta is a bit of anomaly in the history of Renaissance mathematics, and his 1610 treatise entitled *Elementorum curvilinearum libri tres* [The Elements of Curves in Three Books] is a bizarre text with no connection to the mathematical discourse of its time. It garners no critical response from contemporary mathematicians or otherwise; it simply disappears. And it is its very oddness that makes it fascinating. Della Porta invents neologisms to describe a myriad of curves, clearly revelling in the language and the wonders of geometry: he makes simple operations look difficult, the monstrous appear innocuous, and everything seem marvellous. Although advancing claims to precision and rigour, his text proves itself to be something quite other than a traditional mathematical treatise. Hidden within it is a comedy of errors, colourful coinages, and sensational pronouncements, not unlike a play he might have written for the Neapolitan stage. In Della Porta's hands, geometric computations perform spectacular roles on the printed page.

Alberti, Pacioli, Tartaglia, and Della Porta — with their varied ways of enacting interdisciplinary exchange — form an exemplary slate of early modern computer-writers working and networking across the major intellectual hubs of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Italy: Florence, Milan, Rome, Venice, Urbino, and Naples. They also offer four different examples of the impact social class had on Renaissance computer-writers, four ways of thinking about the questione della lingua (whether to write in Latin or Italian) and audience, and four different writing styles that reveal much about their backgrounds, goals, and thoughts about the uses of both mathematics and language. Most importantly, however, these four authors' works not only display a heightened awareness of the relationship between computation and writing, but also, in the instances I have isolated for study, actually depend on that relationship to achieve their goals and to convey meaning.

As will be noted throughout the chapters that follow, the four at times echo one another and

intersect in numerous ways. Pacioli and Alberti — both Tuscans — were friends; and when Pacioli stayed with Alberti in Rome for a short period, he may have served as the aging Alberti's amanuensis and learned much about the construction of Roman capital letters from Alberti's own efforts. Both authors, as De Cifris and the *Divina proportione* show, exemplify ways of thinking computationally about writing's smallest parts.

Alberti and Della Porta wrote more frequently in Latin than did Pacioli and Tartaglia. The fact that writers at this time had to make a calculated choice regarding which language to use for the composition of their works, and that the two authors from higher social classes (Alberti and Della Porta) chose to write primarily in Latin, reflects the charged debates around the access to knowledge in this period. Della Porta embraced his elite (minor nobility) status, while Alberti — the illegitimate son of a wealthy Florentine merchant — always felt insecure about his identity; his stellar career and interaction with the highest rungs of Renaissance society did not seem to free him of his angst. Both Alberti and Della Porta wrote cryptographies (in Latin), exploring language's ability to reveal and conceal: an art they both found particularly compelling, albeit for vastly different reasons.

Tartaglia also toyed with language's possible "reveal-conceal" duality with his "poetic solution" to the cubic equation. In this and elsewhere, Tartaglia shows similar social anxiety to Alberti: that of being misunderstood, dismissed, or exploited. Tartaglia's works frequently display defensiveness regarding his lower-class status, poverty, and lack of formal education; but like Alberti, Tartaglia demonstrates pride at having accomplished much, despite myriad challenges.

Pacioli, unlike the other three authors under consideration — even though he was highly connected to a large network of nobility — expresses little concern in his writing regarding his own social status. This is not to say that he was not aware of status and was not an excellent self-promoter. Like Tartaglia, however, he cared deeply about writing in Italian as a means to bridging the educationclass gap. Alberti and Della Porta — while they seem to have been less

interested in furthering a "universal education" mission — did occasionally write in Italian and often had their works translated into Italian. All four enthusiastically sought to reach large audiences with their publications, although only Pacioli, Tartaglia, and Della Porta were able to make good use of the new printing press technology. Alberti, even if he could have had the press easily at his disposal, did not intend for his cryptographic treatise to circulate beyond the Vatican.

Pacioli and Tartaglia never met, but the connections between the two scholars are nevertheless numerous and deep. Besides the aforementioned commonalities

of lower social status origins and their fervent commitment to writing in the vernacular to reach more readers, both were active, life-long teachers. Tartaglia revered Pacioli, fifty years his senior, citing him constantly in his mathematics, imitating his writing style, even echoing Pacioli's rare but targeted use of poetry and mottoes within mathematical works. Both released Latin editions of Euclid's *Elements*, and both translated the *Elements* into Italian (although Pacioli's translation has never been found). Pacioli met the Bolognese mathematician Scipione Dal Ferro, who found the solution to one case of the cubic equation; Tartaglia would independently discover his own solution for the same case, and for other cases of the cubic.

In an era in which mathematical information was conveyed primarily in natural language, readers of mathematical treatises, it seems, could not resist commenting on the quality of a contemporary, or near contemporary, mathematician's writing. Even if a mathematician's mathematics were elegant and flawless, if his writing in Latin or Italian were poor, he would generally be made quite aware of this by his peers. Of the four authors, one was considered an excellent writer, two terrible writers, and the fourth a powerful writer but problematic computer. The indefatigable historian of mathematics Bernardino Baldi (1553-1617) praised Alberti's Latin mathematical writing as highly eloquent and was a great admirer of Alberti's literary works. In contrast, he condemned both Pacioli and Tartaglia as awful writers,

although he considered them great mathematicians." Della Porta does not ever enter into his discussions.

In two cases, members of our four intersect in Garzoni's *Piazza universale di tutte le professioni del mondo*: Alberti and Tartaglia are both in *Discorso 107* with the architects, fortress fortifiers, machine makers, and engineers; and Pacioli and Tartaglia are together in *Discorso 15* with arithmeticians and calculators. But Della Porta overlaps with none of the other three. Garzoni offered him mixed praise, locating the physician-playwright among professors of secrets (respectable inventors of medicines, cosmetics, consumer goods, and marvels), magicians (a dark, insidious group), and pimps (obviously up to no good). He did, however, include Della Porta with one somewhat computationally oriented group: mirror-workers. Garzoni may not have known Alberti's work in cryptography; he would otherwise likely have grouped him with Della Porta and the other professors of secrets, since he included cryptographers in this category. In Garzoni's assessment, Alberti and Della Porta were far-ranging, supple minds, though curiously he did not discuss in the *Piazza universale* either author's extensive literary production (even though he was certainly acquainted with many of their works). Garzoni presented Pacioli and Tartaglia as much less multifaceted in their talents.

Unlike Garzoni, Baldi did not include even a quick reference to Della Porta in his biographies of mathematicians. Della Porta's *Elementa* is, in fact, a rather unusual mathematical treatise, and Della Porta's only attempt at a purely mathematical work. Della Porta's absence from Baldi's *Vite* and from the major computational groups detailed in Garzoni's *Piazza universale* may, however, reflect chronology rather than a lack of esteem for Della Porta's mathematics: the *Elementa* had not yet been published when Baldi and Garzoni were writing. What we can see that Baldi and Garzoni could not, however, is how Della Porta's interest in curvilinear shapes recalls Alberti's and Pacioli's work on the morphology of letterforms; Della Porta's impulse to catalogue all conceivable curves parallels Pacioli's efforts to catalogue everything mathematical he could find or invent; and Della Porta shared

Tartaglia's tendency (as well as Pacioli's and Alberti's to some degree) to seek mathematical opportunities for displays of intellectual pride, with both writers frequently boasting regarding their unique mathematical gifts.

Of the four, only Della Porta and Alberti ventured into literary writing (and, as mentioned earlier, only these two explored cryptography, wrote primarily in Latin, and were of high social status). I chose them intentionally as bookends to this study, where they operate as each other's inverse, although not as one might anticipate. Alberti's 1466 *De Cifris*, with its exasperated critique of man's tendency to deceive one another and its subsequent revolutionary invention of the polyalphabetic cypher, demonstrates powerful, forward-looking thinking; while Della Porta's 1601/10 *Elementa* fundamentally gazes backwards, conveying a nostalgia for the magical power of the circle, and for the comforting, authoritative format of the classical mathematical treatise par excellence, Euclid's *Elements*. Pacioli and Tartaglia fall chronologically between Alberti and Della Porta, and given their many similarities and ideals, they form a kind of unit, both pushing for the preservation, progress, and availability of mathematical knowledge to people of all classes. The nearly hundred and fifty years covered in this study show both the seeds of the Scientific Revolution to come and devotion to notions regarding the marvellous, magical, and divine character of numbers, proportions, and shapes occurring in the world around, and within, us.

### Beautiful Minds

Though the chapters that follow will allow me to illustrate the beauty of just four early modern mathematical minds, the Italian Renaissance offers numerous other figures whom I might easily have chosen to be case studies for this book: Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519) (who worked closely with Pacioli to illustrate parts of the latter's *Divina proportione*); Antonio Manetti (1423-1497), Alessandro Vellutello (active in the first half of the sixteenth century), and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), all of whom attempted to calculate the shape, size, and location of Dante's hell; the unknown author of the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili*

(1499), who penned a tragic dream-sequence in exquisite architectural detail; or Francesco Patrizi (1529-1597), who wrote treatises on both poetry and mathematics. I might have included a chapter on Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), who produced highly regarded Pythagorean, Hermetic, and Platonic translations and studies of the age; or on mathematician Giorgio Valla (1447-1500), who collected a massive library of mathematical texts, translated Aristotle's *Poetics* into Latin, and wrote an encyclopedia (*De expetendis et fugiendis rebus*, published posthumously in 1501) that offered translations of newly discovered fragments from Apollonius, Archimedes, and Hero; or the philosopher Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), who developed eighty-five mathematical "conclusions," many of which were almost immediately deemed heretical; or Angelo Poliziano (1452-1494), poet and avid collector of mathematical manuscripts; or the physician, mathematician, astrologer Girolamo Cardano (1501-1576), who wrote an intriguing encomium to geometry (and played a key role in the drama around Tartaglia's cubic solution); or Tommaso Campanella (1568-1639), who imagined a utopia that blended the quadrivium and trivium in equal parts; or the architect Daniele Barbaro (1513-1570), with his commentary on the appropriate Vitruvian proportions to use in building stage sets for tragedies and comedies. That any of these thinkers, and many more, could have illustrated the dynamic, extensive commerce between computation and writing in this period underscores the book's ultimate point: there existed an immense community of Renaissance writers and mathematicians who explicitly sought and celebrated the mutual benefits gained by dialogue between computation and writing.

Bernardino Baldi — poet, linguist, historian, theologian, mathematician, and translator of ancient mathematics — labored to give an overview of historical and contemporary computer-writers in his immense compendium of mathematicians' biographies, the *Vite de' matematici* (written between 1586 and 1590), and in his more concise *Cronica de' matematici* (written contemporaneously). We might see Baldi's two works as weathervanes, indicating the directions

and ways in which computation and writing in the Italian Renaissance were forming and intersecting. And we might see Baldi, further, as the right person in the right place at the right time to author these works: an observer with the expertise to notice — and celebrate — the evolving dance between literary and mathematical fields at the close of a two-century period when these arts were undergoing rapid change.

Baldi's *Vite* is nearly 2000 manuscript pages in length and presents 200 mathematicians (or 201, depending on how you count them) from Pythagoras to Christopher Clavius (d. 1612). His *Cronica* offers 366 brief notes (not a random number choice, given Baldi's obsession with time) on mathematicians from Euphorbus (seventh century BCE) to Guidobaldo del Monte (d. 1607). Baldi modelled both texts, but especially the *Vite*, on well-known biographies by Diogenes, Plutarch, Petrarch, Boccaccio, and Vasari: by association with these illustrious predecessors, he suggests mathematicians deserve as much admiration as the politicians, rulers, philosophers, and artists profiled in other influential *vite*. In his prefaces, and often throughout the biographies and chronicle entries, Baldi articulates the extensive contributions mathematicians have made to the arts, to society, and to humanity as a whole.

Most of Baldi's *vite* (and *croniche*, albeit in a more condensed fashion) follow a similar format. He begins by indicating where each mathematician was born; his (all Baldi's mathematicians — except Hypatia — are male) religion or philosophical beliefs; which languages he spoke; and in which languages he wrote (a topic of great interest to Baldi, who is said to have known twelve languages, including Arabic and Greek, both of great importance to Renaissance mathematics). Each *vita* would then describe its subject's mathematical texts, his teachers and *studia*, his students and where he taught, his friends, and finally where and how he died. Baldi also often adds further details: where he (Baldi) found his information; what errors a given mathematician made; which mathematicians later improved upon a subject's works, and which mathematicians should have read each other's work (or done so more carefully); when possible, he even describes where texts are available for

consultation. Sometimes Baldi mentions where a mathematician's texts were published and who translated and/or commented on them; and occasionally (as in the cases of Alberti, Pacioli, and Tartaglia) he adds his critical opinion on the merit of a given mathematician's writing style.

Peppering his *Vite* are numerous neologisms Baldi devised to name mathematical objects and fields of study — a practice of naming that all four authors in this study followed when they were writing about and doing mathematics. In the sixteenth century, even more than in the fifteenth, scholars from all fields were racing to invent new terms for the new ideas, discoveries, inventions, and knowledge being transmitted more quickly than ever before. Standardized conventions for mathematical operations and functions had not yet stabilized, and most

mathematical texts were still written in natural language. Words, writing, symbolic language, and mathematics were evolving rapidly and, necessarily, together. As historian Warren Van Egmond has written, "[t]he ways in which we write our numbers, calculate with and think about them, the techniques and symbolism of algebra, which provides the basic language of modern mathematics, and our remaining knowledge of classical mathematics — all these are the results of work done by mathematicians in the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries:

I would add that these accomplishments are also the result of the *computisti*'s contact with writers — intellectuals who were as committed to seeking new forms, formats, styles, and conventions for their work — and of the Renaissance *computisti*'s own experience as highly conscious writers.

While Baldi says little about what writing offered mathematics, he often speaks of mathematics' contribution to humanistic fields such as philosophy, theology, literature, law, and history. As a historian, he particularly sought to demonstrate the importance of mathematics — or, rather, the mathematical approach of objectivity — to the writing of history. In his *Breve trattato dell'istoria* Baldi says, point blank, that a true historian should know mathematics. What kind? He does not

specify. But he does explain that the writing of history requires eloquence and objectivity: the historian, he explains in the *Breve*, can give his opinion on the events of the past but "must do so carefully" and "without passion or affect: Baldi admits that historians (and readers) must judge at times, but the ideal historian (and reader) would do so rarely and would try to let facts speak for themselves. Given the context in which he was writing, Abbot Baldi might himself be commended for reserving judgment on the many potentially controversial figures he included in his *Vite*: Arab and Jewish mathematicians, not to mention a few heretics. Even when criticizing certain mathematicians as enemies of the faith or "barbari" [barbarians], Baldi ultimately focuses on their mathematics: if the math is good, he says so. He often employs superlatives to describe a mathematician's "ingegno" [genius], ranging from *eccellentissimo*, *celebratissimo*, *sottilissimo*, and *prontissimo* to *curiosissimo*; he excused great mathematicians for making mistakes or having inelegant writing, "as to err is human," though he did not hesitate, as we know, to chastise those who wrote exceptionally badly.

Still, for modern readers (especially those of us drawn to biopics of mathematicians and scientists like John Nash, Alan Turing, Stephen Hawking, and the women of *Hidden Figures*, such as Katherine Johnson) it is rather disconcerting that a text called "The Lives of Mathematicians" should say so little about its subjects' personhood. Of course, Baldi did not have access to extensive data for the majority of his ancient, medieval, and foreign mathematicians, but even when he wrote biographies of mathematicians he knew personally, he tended to avoid saying much about their private lives. Readers glimpse tidbits here and there: we learn that Hippocrates of Chios was inept in running a household; that Xenocrates was melancholic and partook of abstinence (although Baldi's *vita* does not specify from what Xenocrates abstained). But a number of *vite* — including the first he wrote, in honour of his beloved teacher Federico Commandino — do offer more insight into the life and humanity of a mathematician. Baldi speaks, for example, of Commandino's physique, his impressive study regime, snappy dressing, despair at losing his



wife, weakness for women, and general temperament

What the *Vite* convey overall, I would argue, is that the practice of mathematics and its results are more important than the mathematicians themselves. Despite Baldi's claim, in the Preface to the *Vite*, that the world should know as much about the lives of mathematicians as it does about the lives of other great minds (grammarians, orators, sophists, and painters), his "biographical" collection might as easily have been called "Works of Mathematics." Granted, he organized the entries by the mathematicians and not by their publications. But Baldi's *Vite* give readers a mixed message: on the one hand, the *Vite* exalt mathematicians because of their mathematics, and value a person's professional output over his class, race, religion, and education; on the other hand, the *Vite* essentially hold the mathematicians at a remove from the reader, raising them up as heroes somewhere between the human and divine. We might even compare them to the mechanical movers of (forgive the coincidental name) Hero's Automata, a text that Baldi translated. Gleefully reversing the human sense of superiority over inanimate objects or machines, Baldi presents the human as frozen in awe, as he witnesses a moving automaton: "O come l'arte imitatrice ammiro / Onde, con modo inusitato e strano, / Movesi it legno, e l'uomo ne pende immoto!" [Oh how I admire art the imitator / where, with a new and strange way / it moves wood, and man hangs before it, immobile!] For Baldi, computational and verbal arts — especially when the fusion of the two is at its best — seemed able to trump even humanity's humanness.

With Ovid in mind, Baldi exclaims in his description of Urbino's Palazzo Ducale that "niuna forza è superiore a quella delle lettere nel far resistenza agli assalti e alle screte e potenti macchine del tempo" [no force is superior to that of letters in resisting the assaults and powerful mechanisms of time]. What a meaning-rich statement from a writer who cared about retrieving the past and immortalizing ideas for the future, a computer who studied, most enthusiastically, the physics of force and the dynamics of machines, and a historian who wrote extensively on the practical means to measure and understand time, as well as

accomplishments within time. The very fact that someone decided to compile the lives and works of mathematicians at this point in the Italian Renaissance — someone who was himself an exceptional computer-writer — is indicative of the growing status of mathematicians in this period, as well as the urgency of writers to write about them, and of mathematicians to write in such a way that more people could access their knowledge.

### With Measured Words

At the core of both computation and writing are mathesis — "knowledge" or "learning" — and poesis — an act of making and creating. The mathesis of poesis, the knowledge of making, and the poesis of mathesis, the making of knowledge: the awareness of these two acts is not limited, of course, to the Italian Renaissance, nor to mathematicians and writers. Yet Renaissance mathematicians were particularly "well versed" in the humanities, and Renaissance writers were drawn to the proportions, harmonies, and objective truths that computation so beautifully narrated.

Early modern computer-writers have, in many ways, paved the way for our present forms of computation, writing, computational writing, and writerly computation. Although the conversation is alive and well between today's writers and today's human computers (and digital computers), the interlocutors are less likely than their Renaissance peers to move as consciously, or as freely, between the worlds of words and mathematics. This involves a loss on both sides. It does not take much, however, to observe how writers today actively construe their production in terms of data: word counts and searches, text mining, digital presentation and delivery, visualizations of networks and other kinds of relationships across space and time, statistical analyses of citations and reviews. Equally, today's computers must use natural language to support and popularize their work through grant writing, blogs, and lectures — and some of the most intractable computational problems in artificial intelligence centre on the acquisition and production of natural language. In the centuries since Alberti, Pacioli, Tartaglia, and Della Porta, interest in the connections between computation and writing has ebbed and flowed. In

a post-modern, tech-driven world that increasingly speaks the language of big data, however, such algorithmic-linguistic connections (and the thinkers capable of making those connections) are becoming newly prized. Alberti's calculations on how to mask an alphabet through code, Pacioli's instructions on how to render letters beautiful through geometry, Tartaglia's choice to place a prized solution to a long-sought equation in a poem, and the physician-magus-playwright Della Porta's foray into the mathematics of curves are digital humanities. These four Italian Renaissance computer-writers show us what interdisciplinary discourse can look like: its challenges, its triumphs, and its remarkable value to all disciplines involved.

By studying examples of the conversation between computation and writing through an author's historic context, opus, personal history, and the meanings with which they endowed their works, we start to see the deep ontological and epistemological bonds that exist between mathematics and letters/words/ language. We see how both mathematicians and writers necessarily measure their words: literally and figuratively. And in seeing the remarkable benefits of such concerted interdisciplinary commerce, we may be inspired, or re-inspired, to further notice and further develop active disciplinary exchanges in our own world.

- Contents
- List of Figures
- Acknowledgments
- Introduction: Well-Versed Mathematics  
The Four / Beautiful Minds / With  
Measured Words
- CHAPTER ONE
- Cryptographica: Leon Battista Alberti's De  
componendis Cifris  
(1466)
- Deciphering De Cifris / Writing in Code
- CHAPTER TWO
- The Calculated Alphabet: Luca Pacioli's  
"degno alphabeto Anticho"  
(1509)
- Prelude: Pacioli Portrait / The Nexus of the  
Divina proportione /  
Lettergons / Not All That Glitters Is Gold /  
Divine Characters
- CHAPTER THREE

Word Problems: Niccolò Tartaglia's  
"Quando chel cubo" (1546)  
The Cubic Scandal / A Poetic Solution  
CHAPTER FOUR  
Hidden Curves: Giambattista Della Porta's  
Elementorum curvilinearum  
libri tres (1601/10)  
The Vanishing Act / A Wave of the Hand  
Notes  
Bibliography  
Index <>

[Florentine Patricians and Their Networks: Structures Behind the Cultural Success and the Political Representation of the Medici Court \(1600–1660\)](#)  
by Elisa Goudriaan [Brill, 9789004346529]

The cultural life of the city of Florence in the period between 1600 and 1660 has been associated almost exclusively with the ruling Medici family. This book aims to change this view by showing that educated members of the Florentine patriciate contributed substantially to the cultural success of the Medici court and that their networks were responsible for many cultural innovations in Florentine society. But was this unidirectional influence? Did the Medici only profit from the patricians' activities, or did they also stimulate these activities, directly or indirectly? Were they forced to cede benefits to the patricians for fear of revolts, or was it a more organic mode of cooperation? Could the Medici court have functioned without the patricians and could the patricians have been so influential without the Medici? This book focuses on the area of tension revealed by these questions.

### The Traditional View

In the 1970s, Cochrane and Diaz presented the view that patricians in the period under consideration withdrew from society and politics and became landowners without influence in the economic, cultural, social, or political life of Florentine society. Although economic, political, and social historians began revising this idea in the 1980s and 1990s, many cultural historians continued to cling to this view. The fact that the cultural heritage of the Medici is so carefully preserved, while many patrician collections have been dispersed has done much to fix this image.

Moreover, the Medici were already manipulating the historiography centuries ago by glorifying themselves as the arbiters and defenders of Florentine culture and neglecting the important contribution of the patricians. Palaces and villas of the Medici can still be visited, while those of the patricians are only shown on demand and have escaped from the attention of most art historians. The consequence of all this is that cultural studies and books on Florence of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries focus on the Medici family. In reality, a large group of patricians who supported the Medici regime from the beginning continued to live in the city and manifested themselves culturally, economically, and socially.

### A New View

Over the past fifteen years, an increasing number of books and articles have appeared on the cultural activities and patronage of individual patrician families. This book has a broader scope, as it aims to highlight the patricians' contribution as a group, and to provide insights into the mechanisms behind their cultural input.

My main concern is to demonstrate the ways in which the patricians contributed to the cultural climate of Florence and to the cultural success and social representation of the Medici court, in the period 1600–60. I do this by looking at their art patronage and collections, their brokerage activities, their cultural academies, their relations with Medici princes, their friendships, their gift relations, their cultural exchange and the accompanying innovations and experiments, and finally their role in the cultural and sociopolitical representation of the Medici court.

Many of the new findings presented here are drawn from the extremely rich and well-preserved archives of the Niccolini, Guicciardini, and Buonarroti families, which cover several generations. This is the reason for a special focus on four patricians – Giovanni Niccolini and his son Filippo, Piero Guicciardini, and Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger – who reappear in different chapters, one time as ambassador, the other time as patron of the arts or broker. The wealth of the sources from their family archives is unparalleled for the period under discussion, and

offers a touchstone for a better understanding of the cultural activities of other members of the Florentine elite.

### Periodization, Methodology, and Structure

I chose to focus on the years 1600–60 because after the thirty-year reign of Cosimo I de' Medici in the sixteenth century, several grand dukes and grand duchesses succeeded each other (Francesco I, Ferdinand I, Cosimo II, the regents Christina of Lorraine and Maria Magdalena of Austria, and Ferdinand II), which meant a continuous tension in power relations and regular shifts in cultural interests and areas of focus. The Florentine patricians anticipated and reacted to these changes with much intelligence, as will be shown throughout the book. On top of that, the Medici princes that did not reign (mainly the brothers of Cosimo II and Ferdinand II) all had their own courts and cultural worlds, which were themselves a rich source of inspiration for the patricians and served as the ideal places for cultural exchange. There was a lot of space for experimentation in art, music, poetry, and theatre. The long reign of Cosimo III de' Medici (1670–1723) was a period of distinctly different political and cultural characteristics that I chose not to include in my book.

The arrangement of the chapters of my book is thematic rather than chronological. Every chapter covers the period 1600–60 and investigates a specific topic in which patricians contributed to the cultural climate of Florence or to the cultural and social representation of the Medici court. The introductory first chapter analyses the current state of scholarship and focuses on the changing economic and sociopolitical position of the Florentine patricians between the end of the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth centuries. It serves as a sociopolitical framework for the following chapters.

On a practical and methodological level, I am indebted to two research traditions in the Netherlands. At the University of Groningen, Professor Henk van Veen as early as 2006 initiated his research on the cultural activities of Florentine patricians, with an emphasis on the

sixteenth century. One outcome was the international conference: *A forgotten world. Florentine patricians as Patrons, Collectors, Cultural Brokers under Medici rule (1530–1743)*, while a PhD thesis on the Salviati family (by Klazina Botke) was defended in March 2017, a PhD thesis on Bernardo Vecchiotti (by Bouk Wierda) is nearly complete, and other related research has begun. Among the topics that are central to Van Veen's investigations are the sometimes tense relationship between family pride and the patricians' relationship to the Medici court (that is, between independence and dependence), and the city of Rome as a reference point for the Florentine elite.

Equally important for my own research is the Dutch tradition of the study of (cultural) networks in early Modern Europe, which is particularly well developed at Leiden University.

### Social Networks

An important part of this book is dedicated to the social networks of Florentine patricians and the cultural academies in which they participated. Their social networks are the key to many answers to my central question. Florentine patricians associated with each other in several ways: at court, on the occasion of the organization of ceremonial events, within cultural academies, and in large correspondence networks. Already at an early stage, patricians formed the cores of their networks through cultural academies in which patricians, artists, and Medici princes met each other a couple of times a week (because they were members of several academies and confraternities at the same time) and got to know each other informally, which proved very useful for the success of brokerage networks.

An advantage of these strong networks was that as they attained more important positions and found themselves in foreign courts, the patricians continued to correspond and exchange cultural news and objects. Some patricians became bishops at little Tuscan towns such as Arezzo and Cortona, while some were sent as ambassadors to Italian or European courts such as Rome, Madrid, and Vienna. Others became secretaries or cardinals at the papal court, or knights in military orders, or worked in the Medici household as chamberlains. Still others

attained the position of senator in the Medici government. Wherever they were, very often these patricians built up new patronage networks outside Florence, which could be useful for their Florentine friends. There was a brisk correspondence between Florence and the imperial cities of Vienna and Prague, the royal capitals of Madrid and Paris, the papal court in Rome, and numerous episcopal cities around Europe.

Together with their letters, patricians exchanged cultural and scientific information concerning innovations they heard about at different European courts. Besides that, they exchanged cultural objects such as books, poems, plays, political treatises, music compositions, manuscripts, and more. This constant stream of cultural information created a community of cultured men who were well informed about the political and social position of the Medici. This was one of the strong points of the patrician networks and the reason why they contributed so much to the social representation and stability of the Medici court.

### Archival Research in Florence and Rome

The personal correspondence held in the Buonarroti, Guicciardini, and Niccolini archives makes it possible to discover the ways in which politics, social life, and cultural activities tended to merge in early modern society. Furthermore, because this tends to cover several generations, one can follow closely how patricians became increasingly involved in the cultural and political affairs of the Medici court between 1600 and 1660.

My research and findings in the aforementioned archives could be fruitfully combined with an analysis of sources from the Florentine State archives, the National Central Library of Florence, and archives in Rome, in particular the Vatican archive and library, Roman family archives (Sacchetti and Fondazione Camillo Gaetani), the Archivio Capitolino, and the Roman State Archive. Moreover, one of the strong points of Florentine sources compared to Roman ones is that the Florentines often made copies of their original letters or kept their drafts. As a result, it is generally possible to read both the incoming and outgoing correspondences in one place, even when

original letters have not been preserved. Therefore, the information is rich and lively enough to bring to life a world from four centuries ago. It is on this basis, and by integrating my findings with the results of previous studies on the cultural activities of Florentine patricians, that I hope to convince the reader of the remarkable skills and creativity of the seventeenth-century Florentine patricians as a group.

### Insights into a Rich Cultural and Intellectual World

For the first time, the cultural world of the Florentine patricians is presented as a coherent whole, with due consideration to their musical, theatrical, literary, and artistic activities as well as to the ways in which these activities contributed to the cultural success of the Medici court and Florentine society in the seventeenth century. At the same time, the role of ritual and ceremony in their activities is made clear, as well as the mechanisms behind their patronage networks, recruiting processes and brokerage activities, which can be seen as a model for these kinds of mechanisms in other early modern elite networks. Together, these findings create an idea of the rich intellectual and cultural world of the patricians.

Naturally, culture does not exist on its own and this book gives insight into the ways in which culture and politics interact with each other in the Florentine society. Cultural exchange was often used to achieve political goals and artistic creations and inventions were used as means of communication during political ceremonies, to represent and increase the political power of the Medici family. This is elaborately illustrated throughout the book. The many archival sources, mainly correspondence, make this book a lively reading experience and offer a new perspective on seventeenth-century Florentine society.

After a period in which the Medici excluded the Florentine patricians from the administration of the government and from functions in their household, in the seventeenth century, the Grand Dukes started to involve the patricians in their regime so that they felt themselves participants of it. The patricians' contributions proved to be decisive for the political and cultural success of the Medici court and

furthermore determined the diversity of cultural life of seventeenth-century Florence to a surprising degree.

By carefully combining original archival research and the results of previous case studies to individual patrician families, I strived to give the first broad overview of both the diplomatic significance of the Florentine patricians and their cultural importance as a group. Moreover, I placed the patricians' cultural activities into a sociopolitical and historical context. The themes discussed in this book are directly related to the multiplicity of functions and roles in which the patricians manifested themselves. Members of major Florentine families such as the Guicciardini and the Niccolini were active in many fields that together determined the social, political, and cultural representation of the Medici court in different ways: as ambassadors and agents; as political advisors; as chamberlains and tutors of Medici princes; as vice patrons and members of cultural academies; as artistic patrons and brokers with large cultural networks; as supervisors of architectural projects; as organizers of public ceremonies; as writers of treatises; and as librarians. In all these functions patricians gave appropriate advice with their large insight into local customs and cultural trends at other courts, their comprehension of Florentine history and identity and of the historical and actual political position of Tuscany in relation to other states. Clearly, most of the patricians' cultural activities were of both cultural and political importance. This is most obvious when it comes to their roles as ambassadors and chamberlains and in the organization of ceremonial events, but it is also true for their other activities such as the exchange of gifts and information.

Essential for our understanding of the patricians' contribution to the cultural climate in seventeenth-century Florence and to the cultural success of the Medici court is the concept of mutual profit. Many patricians enjoyed social esteem thanks to their work in service of the Medici family. Thanks to this role, they could associate with important patrons and artists at different courts and see their art collections and theatrical activities, which was useful for their own cultural development and prestige, but also for the cultural success of the Medici court.

Without the patricians, the Medici could not have met all the ceremonial needs of a European court and therefore they continued to bestow political privileges and important positions on the patricians.

Thanks both to their travels to other courts in Italy and around Europe as diplomats and ambassadors and to their large correspondence networks, the patricians were constantly able to circulate cultural news and objects from several courts to Florence and vice versa. They discussed all these new influences within their academies. Moreover, the experience of the patricians at other courts helped the Medici to have original and modern programs for marriage festivities or commemoration ceremonies. The patricians' travels kept Florence up to date about cultural events and innovations at other courts and could take this as an example for future events, while at the same time the patricians brought the cultural achievements of Florence to other courts, which used the Florentine events as a model for their own celebrations.

The Medici trusted the cultural authority of the patricians as a group, and gave them considerable freedom to experiment within the academies in the fields of poetry, art, literature, music, and especially theatre. The most successful concepts could then be applied in a larger form for cultural events of the Medici court, as was the case with the first opera performances and with the famous intermedi and improvised plays. Without the patricians as the driving force behind all the Medici festivities, the Medici could never have been so innovating and could never have anticipated or responded to all the European artistic and cultural trends.

Thanks to this concept of mutual profit, this book has given greater insight into the forms of power alignments that could exist between rulers and elites.

Most of the conclusions presented here are based on the rich evidence I found in the Florentine archives about subjects as diverse as food gifts, the exchange of musical compositions, cultural brokerage activities, the social and geographic mobility of employees and artists, the social representation of the Medici and their representatives and cardinals in Rome, and about

the diplomatic etiquette at the Roman court. It is through the richness of the source material that the true scope of the patricians' contribution to Florentine culture can be put into sharp focus and that the general mechanisms behind their activities can be made clear. In some cases, notably the brokerage activities of Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger, one can look far beyond the boundaries of seventeenth-century Florence, when extensive correspondence sheds unexpected light on the complexity of recommendation and recruiting mechanisms using informal networks.

The insight acquired into the mechanisms of patronage, cultural exchange and recruiting processes, and in the way in which all kinds of cultural activities were related to each other and to political and ceremonial rituals, can be used as a model for researching other early modern elite networks. More particularly, I believe that the Florentine elite can function as an important touchstone for the study of informal patrician networks and their contribution to the functioning and success of a territorial court in general. This issue surely requires more investigation and inevitably leads to new questions that could not be addressed in this book. What happened for example, after the patricians carried out their functions as ambassadors abroad? Did they stay in close contact with the European elite, or did their relations dissolve after their missions were concluded? And what were the similarities (or differences) between the activities of Florentine patrician ambassadors in Rome and at other European courts? And more specifically about Rome: what kind of relations existed between diplomats from other states at the papal court? Did they also form informal networks? Research on these kinds of topics can shed more light on cultural contacts and diplomatic relations between Tuscany and other states.

What fascinated me most while doing research for this book is the patricians' versatility. In my opinion, the combination of political functions with artistic patronage activities, membership and active participation in cultural academies and confraternities, and the organization of ceremonial events, was something unique to the Florentine

patricians, with their rich cultural history and specific historical identity.

Relations between the Medici and the patricians were not static but highly dynamic. Power balances changed continuously and the active participation of the patricians influenced the political decisions of the Medici court and the many international cultural connections of the Florentine society, which was not at all in decline in the seventeenth century. <>

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