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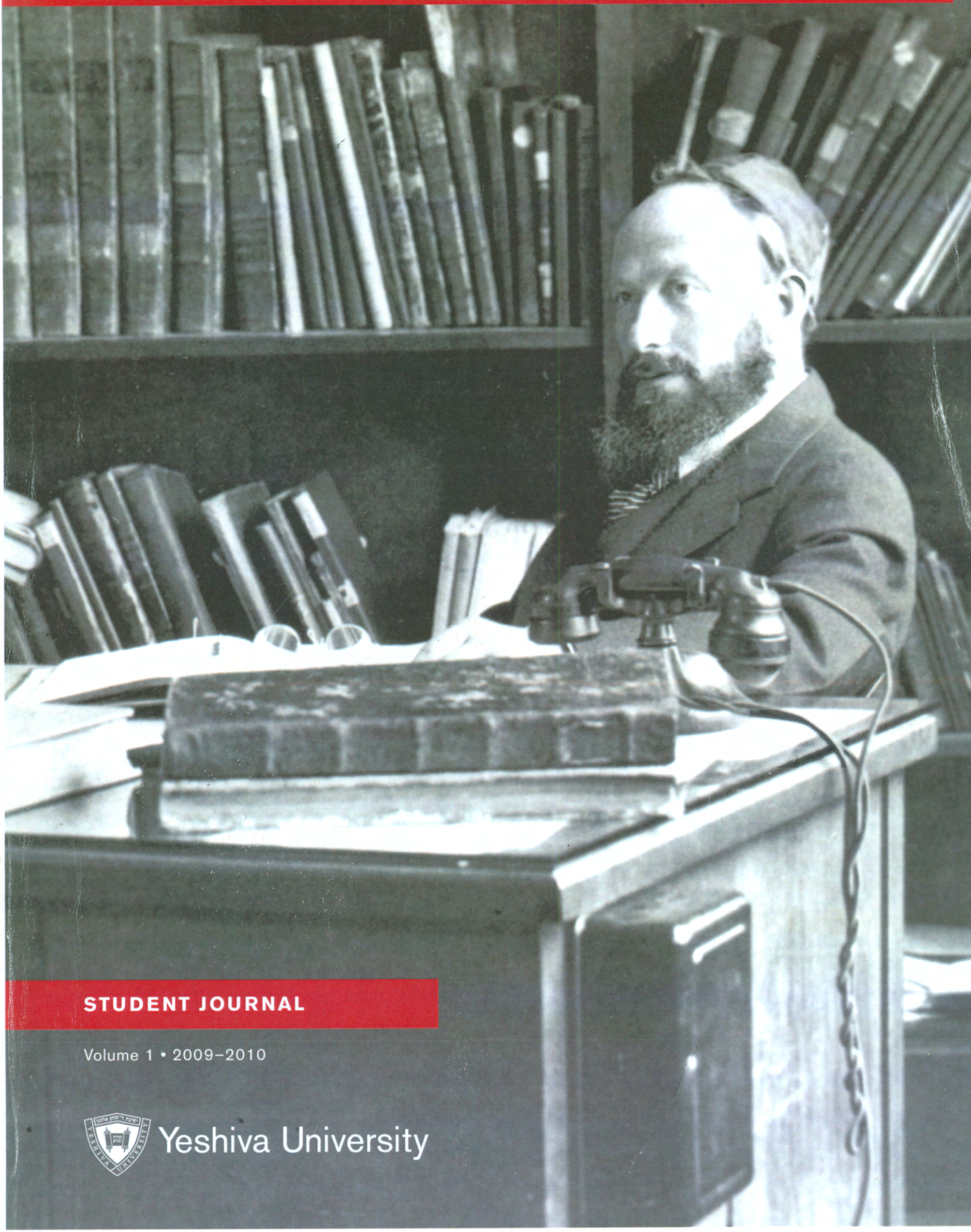

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David Moster, '10BR
Editor

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The Castilian Jews of Fez: An Early Modern Transformation from Spanish to North African Jews

DEBRA GLASBERG

The Golden Age of Spanish Jewry marked an era of Jewish cultural productivity, political power, and economic success. Ensconced in autonomous Jewish communities, Spanish Jews accrued material and spiritual wealth. [1] Jewish life under these conditions flourished until the 1492 Edict of Expulsion forced Spanish Jewry to scatter with the hope of finding refuge in places favorable for rebuilding their communities. Many of the exiled Spanish Jews, including a significant number of Jews from the Castile region of Spain, sought haven in Fez, Morocco—a city suited for relocation due to its proximity to Spain, and its reputation as a center of Jewish commerce. [2] Both the King of Fez and the native Fez Jews welcomed the Castilian émigrés and permitted them to establish in Fez a separate Jewish community, with its own laws and institutions.

The experience of the Castilian community in Fez was hardly unique among the Spanish émigrés who settled in various cities throughout the Mediterranean. Nevertheless, the Castilian contingent of Fez presents an interesting case study for understanding the nature of *kehillot* (Jewish communities) in transit during the early modern period. First, despite the Castilian Jews' relocation from Castile to Fez, the community maintained its observance of edicts enacted specifically in response to conditions present in Spain, but absent in Fez. Analysis of early communal ordinances informs us that such practice illustrates the Castilian Jews' continued identification with their Spanish legacy. Second, despite the Castilian émigrés' manifest identification with their Spanish origins, in reality this community adapted and acculturated to its new context in Fez.

There are only a few extant primary sources from the period that can shed light on the nature of the Jewish communities in Fez. Among these is a collection of the Castilian community's *takkanot* (communal ordinances), dating from 1494 until the middle of the eighteenth century. The *takkanot* are rich primary sources that reveal various aspects of Castilian communal life in Fez. However, these laws have their limitation as a historical source for they are primarily prescriptive, and accordingly do not convey a descriptive picture of the society. Nonetheless, the *takkanot* tell of more than just the substance of specific laws enacted; through analysis the Castilian ordinances reveal the self-perception and character of this Jewish community. Both the structure and content of the first eighteen ordinances, promulgated in 1494, soon after the Castilian community's arrival to Fez, demonstrate that this community did not perceive itself as building anew. Rather, it viewed itself as relocating its remnants to a new environment.

In terms of structure, the *takkanot* begin as if they continue some other unfinished document. The decision to exclude any detailed description of the organization and primary function of communal leaders resulted from the community's appropriation of its prior Castilian structures. Had this community considered itself an incipient *kehillah*, it would have delineated foundational laws establishing the framework and nature of the community. Thus, from the outset, the *takkanot* demonstrate that this community perceived itself as a direct continuation of its pre-expulsion antecedent.

Analysis of specific early ordinances reveals additional evidence of the community retaining its legacy Spanish identity. The first *takannah* states:

> No Jewish boy should marry a Jewish girl without the witness of specifically a quorum of ten, including a *hakham* (scholarly communal authority) from the *Hakhmei HaIr* (authorities of the city), or a *dayan* (judge) from the *Dayanei HaIr* (judges of the city). These individuals must also be present during the *huppah* (wedding) ceremony, and if the ceremony takes place without them, they have the right to dissolve the marriage. [3]

This law requiring the presence at every wedding of ten adult men, including prominent communal leaders, was first enacted in thirteenth through fifteenth-century Spanish Jewish communities. [4] Its goal was to prevent irregularities in Jewish marriage that often arose with regards to *conversos* performing clandestine Jewish marriages, a problem that posed a potentially fatal challenge to the community's continuity. [5] While this ordinance corresponded with the

needs of a pre-expulsion Spanish Jewish community, it was no longer necessary in Fez, where all Jews could practice their religion openly and freely. Thus, the communal authorities enacted this law in spite of its irrelevance in the new environment, showing that they did not intend to change their Spanish legacy traditions even if the reasons for those traditions no longer applied.

In a similar vein to the law prohibiting marriage in the absence of ten men, the Castilian émigrés also included in their *takkanot* a proscription against undocumented or questionably documented marriages:

> When a man marries a woman, he needs to write a *ketubah* (marriage writ) before the wedding in order for it to be signed at the time of the wedding. This *ketubah* has to be written anew, an old one cannot be used. One also cannot write on top of erased portions of the *ketubah*. If one does not write or sign a *ketubah* then he is not allowed to live with his wife, the bride, until the *ketubah* is written and signed. [6]

The ancient Jewish requirement for a man to write and give his wife a *ketubah* was intended to provide testimony to his marital obligations, specification of the amount of money he would award his wife in the event of divorce, and proof of the marriage itself. The general obligation to use this document was hardly unique to Spanish Jewish communities; however, the *converso* problem in Spain likely led to widespread disregard of this law. [7] *Conversos* assumedly eschewed *ketubot* as evidence of Jewish practice, and in turn Spanish Jews also neglected their use. This law can thus be understood as a necessary Spanish edict that should have no longer applied to the new context in Fez. The reason for the Spanish émigrés' promulgation of the ordinance is not stated in the *takkanah*; however, its intent can be surmised in a parallel fashion to the previous ordinance concerning secret marriages. The *megorashim* (exiled Spanish Jews) retained a Spanish mindset, including the objective to re-cast the Castilian community in Fez precisely as it was in Spain, causing them to enact uniquely Spanish edicts that were no longer necessary for their new environment in Fez.

In addition to these unnecessary Spanish laws, the Castilian Jewish *takkanot* also include many laws applicable to the new context as well as the old. The inclusion of both the irrelevant and relevant *takkanot* further conveys that the Castilian community perceived itself as a distinctly Spanish community, independent from the native Fez Jews. Accordingly, the historiography concerning the *toshavim* (native Fez Jews) and *megorashim* in the *mellah* (Jewish quarter of Fez) depicts these two groups as entirely separate, autonomous communities. Jane Gerber explains, in Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700, that the *megorashim* were initially given the liberty to promulgate their own laws, and consequently until the eighteenth century maintained independence from the native Fez Jews. [8] Gerber's presentation is useful for its compelling depiction of the two Jewish communities in Fez; however, her approach does not account for the specific ordinances that evidence the Castilian Jewish acculturation to their new circumstance. An examination of even the earliest *takkanot* following the original eighteen promulgated in 1494 reveals that the Spanish and Fez Jews undeniably interacted with and influenced each other.

The first of the *megorashim's* ordinances following their original eighteen *takkanot* presents the most straightforward evidence of this dialogue:

> We the signatories, the learned of the holy *kehillah* of Fez, come together to debate the words of the congregation. We have seen the *takkanot* of the *kehillot* of *megorashim*, and want to fix a few small things. [9]

The reality expressed in this ordinance—the *toshavim* read ove and commented on their new neig bor's laws—is not surprising. Yet t explicit evidence of dialogue betw these communities has profound implications for our understandin their relationship. From this *takka* we can deduce that after the Casti community issued their original ei teen ordinances, the native Fez Jew reviewed these laws. The Fez Jew then wrote their suggestions to th *megorashim*, who in turn related t dialogue in the enactment of their subsequent law. For further insigh into this correspondence, it is usefu turn to the *megorashim's* stated re tion to the *toshavim's* suggestions:

> And we keep everything that is mentioned in this *takkanah*, in order that it is written. And also from this day what we were not accustomed to, like the will and presents of the dying, we will d from here on out. [10]

Although the Castilian Jews affirm the validity of their law as stated a do not adopt the native Fez Jew's practices in entirety, they do explic accept some of the *toshavim's* sugg tions. Thus, while this ordinance not testify to a complete acculturat it does evince the Castilian émigr adaptability to their new circumsta Additionally, the *megorashim* proc their responsibility to know who among the *toshavim* is considere *hakham* or a *dayan*, and to respec those individuals' word and auth [11] This ordinance shows the Cas Jewish community's deference a receptiveness to future contribu from the *toshavim*.

Furthermore, throughout the nances, the Castilian Jews refer extol the *toshavim's* customs. E during their very early years in the *megorashim* ratify some of t practices in their *takkanot*. Such the case with the native Fez Jew community's custom for a wom dowry to be included in her *ket* a practice intended to raise her

stature. [12] Generally, incorporating this amount added one-third onto the quantity usually stipulated in the document. Because of this addition, when a woman requested her *ketubah* money, she would only receive two-thirds of the amount specified. The *takkanah* of 1550 mentions this *minhag* (custom) and upholds its validity:

> We have researched to see if this *minhag* had been preserved in literature, and have not found anything. Because of this, we are forced to reconstruct the custom, and write it down, black on white, and establish it with validity for the generations. And after the *Hakham* and the seven *Tovei HaIr* (good men of the city) testify to its truth, it should be kept in the *Sefer Ha-Zikhronot* (Book of Remembrances) of the *kahal* (community). [13]

Here, the Castilian Jews explain that they researched the *toshavim's* custom, and even after finding little basis for it in any literature, they adopted it as their own.

The subsequent ordinance also mentions this particular *minhag* by relating the case of Leah Chana, the wife of the venerable *Nagid* (political leader in the Jewish Community). Leah Chana approached the *maamad* (communal council) with the request of special privilege to collect the entirety, not just two-thirds, of her *ketubah*. The *hakhamim* of the Castilian community consider her case, but reject it due to their adoption of the *toshavim's* custom to only allow collection of two-thirds:

> And all of this we found out through much research, and decided that this was the law, and thus it will be the law in all the *batei dinim* (religious courts) from here on out. Since we established this ordinance, there is no room for anyone to change it. [14]

This *takkanah* critically shows that not only did the *megorashim* appropriate the *toshavim's* custom, they treated it with the same force as any of their original ordinances. [15]

Another testimony to the Castilian émigrés' acculturation to both the native Fez Jews and the majority population rests in the community's late sixteenth century enactments condoning polygamy. In Castile, plural marriages were officially prohibited, although certain individuals, under certain circumstances, were granted permission to marry more than one woman. [16] Consequently, the community of Castilian *megorashim* largely retained their monogamous practices in Fez. Indeed, in the first one hundred years of the community's *takkanot* there is no mention of polygamy. On the other hand, among the native Fez Jews, men frequently entered into plural marriages. Islamic law allowed men to marry up to four women; and thus it is not surprising that Jews living in Muslim societies commonly practiced bigamy and polygamy. Accordingly, it is also not astounding that the Castilian Jews were eventually influenced by this practice. Evidence of this acculturation appears explicitly in a late sixteenth century series of *takkanot* precisely detailing the circumstances under which plural marriages should be permitted.

The first *takkanah* addressing polygamy, enacted in 1593, grants permission for a man to marry a second woman only if he and his wife remained childless after ten years of marriage. [17] This ordinance also specifies that in a levirate situation, even if a man is still within his first ten years of marriage, or has children, he is permitted to additionally marry his deceased brother's widow. The reasoning that this is a positive commandment (*mitzvah*), and "the woman is acquired for him from heaven" is explicitly invoked as justification for the ordinance. On its own, this *takkanah* does not demonstrate any acculturation as Jewish communities that explicitly forbade plural marriage often allowed it either in cases of barrenness or levirate circumstance. However, the next *takkanah*, enacted in 1599, presents a comparatively lenient position: a man could marry a second woman if after ten years of marriage his wife only gave birth to sons. [18] And lastly, a third ordinance promulgated in 1600, condoned marriage to a second woman, even when the couple already had children, as long as the beit din deemed it appropriate and granted him specific permission to do so. [19] These *takkanot* proceed in quick succession from disallowing polygamy, to allowing it only in cases of female infertility, then permitting it if a couple only had male children, and finally condoning it with merely the *beit din's* approval.

The communal leaders enacted these increasingly lenient *takkanot* in order to permit the Castilian Jewish acculturation to polygamous practices, in the explicit effort to ensure against further communal transgressions:

> And it was in the time of the respected King, who issued a ruling that uprooted the strength of the condition not to marry a second woman, that people transgressed our *takkanah*. The King ruled that whoever wanted to marry another woman, even if he had male children with his first wife, should surely do it, and there is nothing to prevent him from doing so. When this was the ruling, people invoked *'Dina dmalkhuta dina*—the law of the land is our law' as justification for breaking the barrier of the *takkanah* previously mentioned, and proceeded to marry other women in addition to their first wives, even when they had both male and female children. They fulfilled their desires to the consternation of their first wives, which then led women to transgress *dat yehudit* (women's modesty laws).
>
> Therefore, in order to protect against this transgression, some men have seen the validity of the King's ruling, and have sought the approval of the members of the communal council to adopt it. The right for a man to marry a second

> woman is thus given over to the *beit din*, and it is up to them to decide what is most proper. [20]

This *takkanah* is significant for its insight into the community's changed self-perception: at this point, the communal authorities were more interested in the community's adherence to authority than in retaining popularly transgressed Spanish legacy laws. This excerpt is additionally noteworthy for its demonstration of both the power and scope of the *hakhamim's* authority, and the specific depiction of the *megorashim* acculturating to their surroundings. While this *takkanah* relates the community's deviance from monogamy as a result of the King's permission for men to marry multiple women, the Castilians undoubtedly also copied both their Muslim and Jewish neighbors who frequently followed the King's edict.

Although the *takkanot* do not explicitly relate the *megorashim's* perception of their community, or the precise extent of their acculturation, an analysis of various *takkanot* tells us of both these matters. The enactment of laws no longer necessary in the Fez context indicates the community's intent to preserve their uniquely Spanish character in the new milieu. The specific examples of *megorashim* adopting *minhagim* of the *toshavim* and acculturating to common practices such as polygamy reveal a certai degree of communal adaptation cannot be ignored in an analysis this *kehillah*. The initial self-per tion of this group of Jews as con ing their prior Spanish communi Fez does not preclude the acculti tion that undoubtedly took place fabric of Jewish life for Castilian in the *mellah* incorporated eleme of surrounding cultures, and the *kanot* indeed reflect both the sel perception of these Jews as ident primarily with their Spanish her and also the reality of their ackn edgement of and adaptation to th new communal circumstance.

NOTES

[1] Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, (London, Portland, Or.: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997).

[2] Jane Gerber, *Jewish Society in Fez 1450–1700*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1980) pp. 25. An estimated 20,000 Spanish refugees fled to Fez immediately following the Expulsion. However, due to unfavorable conditions and financial difficulties for refugees, this population radically decreased. For general Moroccan Jewish history from this period, see: Gerber, pp. 6-39 and H.Z. Hirschberg, A History of the Jews in North Africa Vol. I and II, (Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1974).

[3] Abraham Ankawa, *Kerem Hemer*, (Leghorn, 1871), vol. II, Sefer Hatakkanot (The Book of Communal Ordinances). # 1, 2a.

[4] Yom Tov Assis, *The Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry* pp. 259 provides a specific citation of Spanish enactment of this law.

[5] For a better understanding of the converso problem see: Yitzchak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* Vol. 2, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1966) pp. 244-299.

[6] Sefer Hatakkanot, #12, 3a.

[7] Yitzchak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain* Vol. 2.

[8] Gerber, pp. 113-120.

[9] Sefer Hatakkanot, #19, 3b.

[10] Ibid., #19, 3b. This takkanah details provisos for proper bequest

[11] Ibid.

[12] Sefer Hatakkanot #23, 4a.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Sefer Hatakkanot #24, 4a-5b.

[15] Ibid.

[16] Yom Tov Assis, *Golden Age of Aragonese Jewry*, pp. 261-264.

[17] Sefer Hatakkanot, #36, 6b.

[18] Ibid., #37, 6b.

[19] Ibid., #39, 7a.

[20] Ibid., #39, 7a.

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Divre Ha-Rav Ve-Divre Ha-Talmid: The Legal Philosophies of Rava and Rav Nahman son of Jacob

NOAH GREENFIELD

When listening in on the scholarly conversations between teacher and student, what should one expect to overhear? Naturally, the conversations will vary from teacher-student pair to teacher-student pair, according to their interests, personalities and chemistry. This study will listen in on the dialogue between an important Talmudic duo: Rav Nahman son of Jacob [1] and his daring and creative student, Rava. Their conversations [2] reveal their contrastive – nay, polar – *halakhic* personalities. Rav Nahman's rulings arise out of the contingent and the local. As such, there is no need for overarching exegetical or legal consistency. Instead, Rav Nahman deals with each *halakhah* on its own terms, with an eye towards the pragmatic. [3] Rava, on the other hand, does not rule in the presence of his teacher – but he challenges him, on the grounds of the universal and systematic. Rava is concerned less with practical matters as much as with theoretical ones – outliers, problem cases, and scenarios with conceptual flair, if no practical application. It would seem, then, that Rava develops his legal thinking in opposition to his teacher, Rav Nahman.

A revealing passage in `Eruvin 64a [4] offers insight into the legal personalities of Rav Nahman and Rava, and will serve as the springboard for this study.

> Rav Judah said Samuel said: Even an employee and even a farmhand may give his share of his `eruv and it is enough. Said Rav Nahman: How great is this statement! Rav Judah said Samuel said: One who drinks a revi`it of wine should not render legal decisions. Said Rav Nahman: This statement is not great, for I – whenever I don't drink a revi`it of wine, my head is not clear. [5]

Rav Nahman here expresses a preference for one *halakhah* and a marked dislike for another one. Indeed, Rav Nahman, when explaining his dislike, employs the first person singular a total of three times (שתינא, אנא, דעתאי). The *halakhah* irks him on a personal level. Rav Nahman does not disagree with the halakhah in *halakhic* terms. He does not offer an alternative teaching, source, or argument. He accepts it as law – but finds it incompatible with his person. The passage continues:

> Rava [6] said to him: How can Master say such a thing? Didn't Rabbi Aha son of Hanina say: What is written, "(Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father; but) he that keepeth company with harlots wasteth his substance" (Proverbs 29:3)? Whoever says, "This teaching is pleasant, this teaching is not pleasant" – loses the substance of Torah! Rav Nahman said in reply: I repent.

As Rav Nahman did not make a *halakhic* argument, but instead expressed his own subjective view, Rava, his student, takes him to task for such subjectivity. Rava does this by quoting authoritatively the Palestinian *amora* Rabbi Aha son of Hanina, who in turn relies on a verse from scripture, which is further provided with an interpretation. Rava, thus, relies on three levels of traditional authority to make his case. It should be noted that Rava does not only take issue with Rav Nahman's resentment of one *halakhah*, but also with his open affinity for another. Further, Rava argues that expression of subjective preferences does not only weaken one's local *halakhic* bearings – vis-a-vis that particular *halakhah* – but makes one "lose the substance of Torah", that is, one's grasp of the entire legal system of Torah. What does this rebuke say about Rava's *halakhic* personality?

If Rav Nahman appears to be too subjective in this dialogue, Rava appears as just the opposite. The thought of preferring one law over another is anathema to him. Instead, it seems, Rava would prefer a more detached approach to the law. Indeed, Rava argues that getting caught up in the likes and dislikes of individual laws makes one lose one's place in the overarching context of the legal system. He specifically makes this argument not via expression of his own personal, meta-*halakhic* views, but instead relying on *halakhic* tradition and authority – expressing his *halakhic* worldview both via the content and the form of his rebuke.

This passage not only offers insight into the *halakhic* personalities of Rav Nahman [7] and Rava – and their willingness or lack thereof to engage *halakhah* personally, but, it

may provide clues as to their conceptions of the *halakhic* system – namely, whether it is a system at all, with each part emerging from a larger whole, or, rather, a conglomerate of localized laws and rulings with no overarching coherence outside of the particulars.

Whereas 'Eruvin 64a merely hints at the meta-*halakhic* controversy between Rav Nahman and Rava, Yevamot 37a offers direct evidence of it. The Mishnah (Yevamot 4:2) notes a case where a doubt lingers: Seven months following a levirate marriage, a child is born. In this situation, it is unclear whether the child resulted from the current levirate marriage and was born after a seven-month pregnancy or whether the child resulted from the previous marriage and was born after a nine-month pregnancy.

> Rava said to Rav Nahman: Argue that this case (not be left in doubt, but be determined as follows:) follow the majority of women, in which case the majority of women give birth after nine months.

Rava does not understand why the Mishnah leaves this case in a state of doubt, as there are legitimate legal tools which can be used to determine (legally, if not actually) who fathered the child. The passage continues:

> (Rav Nahman) replied to (Rava): Our women give birth after seven months. (Rava) replied back to (Rav Nahman): Are your women the majority of the world?

Rav Nahman addresses Rava's concern by arguing that the majority of women may very well not give birth after nine months, as evidenced by the fact that his women [8] tend to give birth after seven months with enough frequency as to undermine any claims to majority status for nine-month bearing women. [9] In doing so, Rav Nahman relies on local information, namely, the birthing data of local women, or, at least, his presumption of such data.

Rava likely finds fault in Rav Nahman's argumentation for two reasons. The first: The peculiar birthing patterns of Rav Nahman's local women surely did not play into the calculations of the decisors of the Mishnah. The second, regardless of the intent of the Mishnah, but instead focusing on the law itself: Determining whether a majority pattern holds by focusing on an extremely small and familiar data set constitutes legal reasoning of the most provincial kind (literally). Both of these arguments are encompassed in Rava's frustrated question: "Are your women the majority of the world?" Surely they are not, which is precisely Rava's point. [10]

Ultimately, then, Rav Nahman and Rava disagree in their fundamental appreciation of the legal determinant of majority. For Rava, majority – as a legal claim – must conform to certain standards (e.g. a representative data set) and, when it does, will function to clarify cases of legal uncertainty. For Rav Nahman, the legal outcome is already determined, so unwelcome legal claims such as majority serve as problems, not solutions. In any case, for Rav Nahman, such legal claims can be flexibly handled, as contingent counter-data and localized counter-claims can undermine even the most universal of majorities.

Rav Nahman and Rava thus present sparring meta-*halakhic* ideologies: Through Rava's rhetorical question, it is clear that he values universality and formalistic legal reasoning. For Rava, the problem of the Mishnah cannot be understood with reference to contingent Babylonian data - such localized data cannot constitute evidence unless it represents universal facts. Rav Nahman, on the other hand, seems to have no problem squaring a Mishnaic problem with local circumstances and countenancing parochial legal evidence to substantiate his conclusion. In other words, Rava views *halakhah* as systematic, relying on rational legal argumentation based on universally acknowledged facts. Rav Nahman, on the other hand, views halakhah as particularistic and contingent – as such, he has no qualms relying on local knowledge and conclusion-directed argumentation to achieve th *halakhic* interpretation necessary.

A similar case where the meta-halakhic perspectives of Rav Nahman and Rava clash appears in Shabbat 144b. The law under consideration revolves around whether pomegranates are fruits that are customarily squeezed, in which case one would be prohibited to squeeze them on the Sabbath.

> The members of the house of Menashya son of Menahem would customarily squeeze pomegranate (on weekdays). Rav Nahman said: The *halakhah* follows the member of the household of Menashya son of Menachem.

The question is simple: Do pomegranates qualify as fruit that is customarily squeezed? Rav Nahman relies on the practice of the household of Menashya son of Menahem, ruling that in fact they are. The halakhic consequence of this ruling is that, according to Rav Nahman, pomegranates cannot be squeezed on the Sabbath. But this ruling will not be easily accepted by Rava.

> Rava said to Rav Nahman: Is Menashya son of Menachem a Tanna? And if you will say that all you mean is that the halakhah follows the Tanna (who prohibits squeezing pomegranates) because his ruling is in accordance with the household of Menashya son of Menachem – but just because this Tanna accords with Menashya son of Menachem, the halakhah should follow him? [11] Does Menashya son of Menachem constitute the majority of the world? [12]

Rava challenges Rav Nahman and hi ruling on a number of different grounds. Firstly, Rava reprimands Ra Nahman for seeming to determine a *halakhah* from an extra-legal source, instead of relying on a traditional juridical authority. Second, Rava - considering a potential defense for Rav Nahman – balks at Rav Nahman formulation insofar as it betrays a lack of formal legal reasoning: "Just

because this Tanna accords with Menashya... the *halakhah* should follow him?" In other words, Rava expresses dissatisfaction that Rav Nahman has not so much argued his case as determined it as closed from the outset. Rav Nahman does not make an argument – he just arrives at his conclusion, which conveniently coincides with a local household (whose authority Rava does not grasp). Third, Rava – again considering a potential defense for Rav Nahman by constructing a legal argument for him – decries such an argument as irresponsibly parochial. "Does Menashya... constitute the majority of the world?" We have seen this rhetorical question of Rava before. In both cases, Rava scolds Rav Nahman for his unsystematic, flexibly contingent argumentation and foregone conclusion.

Each of Rava's objections to Rav Nahman – and Rav Nahman's provocation and subsequent silence – reflect larger, meta-*halakhic* perspectives of each conversant. Rava first challenges Rav Nahman for relying on the "ruling" of an un-authoritative, non-jurist. This is surprising, because the question is not directly legal: whether pomegranates have a certain quality only secondarily impacts the *halakhah*. For Rava, it seems, even such secondary questions must be determined by qualified jurists, who can determine the answer in the context of a broader *halakhic* framework. Rav Nahman, on the other hand, who views *halakhah* as a more fragmented code of individual rulings, need not have such a concern. Secondly, Rava challenges Rav Nahman for not providing an appropriate legal reasoning, but instead relying on the practice of a particular household. For Rava, formal legal argumentation is vital. For Rav Nahman the decision, rather than the arguments that led to that decision, takes precedence, especially in the context of a pragmatic *halakhic* decision such as this. Finally, Rava challenges a reconstructed argument of Rav Nahman – familiar to us [13] from the previous section above: "Does Menashya... constitute the majority of the world?" As noted earlier, Rava requires a majority to be based on a representative set of data. Basing oneself on a local household to establish a universal principle simply will not do. Rava requires more objective and formal legal reasoning, as this decision will have ripple effects throughout the system of *halakhah*.

This point, that within the larger context of the varying *halakhic* personalities of Rav Nahman and Rava, they disagree specifically regarding legal reasoning, is substantiated by a passage in Yevamot 101b, which is preceded by a Mishnah in which an anonymous opinion is voiced.

> Rava said in the name of Rav Nahman: The *halakhah* is that the *halitzah* ceremony is performed before three, since the *Tanna* of our Mishnah taught anonymously in accordance with his opinion.

Rava records [14] a teaching of Rav Nahman, which determines that a *halitzah* ceremony must be performed in front of a court of three judges. This is based on a legal hermeneutical principle that the law accords with the anonymous Tanna recorded in the Mishnah. As we might expect, Rava challenges Rav Nahman's opinion:

> Rava said to Rav Nahman: If so, the *mi'un* ceremony, too, should require a court of three! For we learned in another anonymous Mishnah: "*Mi'un* and *halitzah* are performed before three judges."

Rava finds another anonymous *Tanna* in a Mishnah who rules that *mi'un*, like *halitzah*, requires a court of three. He insists that for Rav Nahman to be methodologically consistent, Rav Nahman would have to apply his hermeneutic – to rule like anonymous *Tannaim* – to the case of *mi'un* as well. As will be evidenced, however, Rav Nahman requires only a court of two for the *mi'un* ceremony.

> If you should say that it is indeed so that *mi'un* requires a court of three, why, it was taught in the following Beraita: "*Mi'un*: The House of Shammai said: It must be performed before a court of ordained judges. But the House of Hillel said: It may be performed before a court of ordained judges or not before a court of ordained judges. However, both these and those require a court of three." But Rabbi Jose son of Rabbi Judah and Rabbi El'azar son of Rabbi Jose rule *mi'un* valid if it is performed before two. And Rav Joseph son of Manyumi said Rav Nahman said: The *halakhah* is in accord with that pair (who rule that *mi'un* is valid before merely two judges, not three).

The problem, then, is clear: On the one hand, Rav Nahman rules that the *halitzah* ceremony must be performed before a court of three judges, based on a hermeneutical principle that rules according to anonymous *Tannaim* in the Mishnah. Yet, Rav Nahman rules that the *mi'un* ceremony may be performed before a court of only two judges, despite the fact that an anonymous *Tanna* in a Mishnah rules that a *mi'un* ceremony requires a court of three judges. Rav Nahman, then, does not consistently follow his own legal hermeneutic. This inconsistency is pointed out by none other than Rava. Rava not only points out the inconsistency, but, in so doing, takes issue with it. [15]

How would Rav Nahman reply to such accusations of hypocrisy? We have earlier seen that Rav Nahman displays a more flexible attitude towards legal reasoning than does Rava and that he does not envision *halakhah* in as systematic a fashion as Rava. Accordingly, it would make sense to argue here that Rav Nahman's legal hermeneutic was specific to the laws of *halitzah*, if not the case of *halitzah* at hand, and all of its contingent details. Rav Nahman would not embrace the accusation of hypocrisy, but would deflect it by arguing that *mi'un* and *halitzah*, despite their conceptual similarities, are two legal rituals, each

arguably Persianized values (see below) – all the other passages in this study are view either Rav Nahman neutrally or positively, especially as nearly all of them take his position over against that of Rava.

[3] This description should in no way be understood as making a value judgement against Rav Nahman's method. He was one of the greatest legal authorities of the Talmud. Cf. Ephraim Bezalel Halivni, *Kelale Pesaq ha-Halakhah be-Talmud* (Lod: Mekhon Haberman le-Mehqere Safrut, 1999), pp. 108-112; Moshe Bar, *Rashut ha-Golah be-Bavel be-Yme ha-Mishnah*, ve-ha-Talmud (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1976), pp. 75-79, 88-90; Hanoch Albeck, *Mavo le-Talmudim* (Tel Aviv: Devir, 1987), pp. 299-300. As such, he should not be taken to be unsophisticated or naïve simply because he is less systematic than his student, Rava, as will be argued below.

[4] All references are to the Vilna edition of the Babylonian Talmud.

[5] In a recent email, Professor Yaakov Elman commented: "I do think you have recognized an aspect of Rav Nahman's aristocratic Persianized personality." For more on this aspect of Rav Nahman, cf. Yevamot 37b, Yoma 18b, and Yaakov Elman, "Between Rabbi and D dwar: Rav Nahman of Mahoza," Thirty-fifth AJS Convention, Chicago, December 20, 2004. For criticism of it, and thus potential criticism here, cf. Baba Batra 173b, Shevuot 34b, Qiddushin 70a-b, Gittin 45a, and Elman, "Middle Persian Culture."

[6] Rava, for the record, also finds that wine "makes him wiser." Cf. Sanhedrin 70a. I thank Professor Yaakov Elman for the reference. Rava, then, is not arguing with Rav Nahman about whether or not wine leads to judicial clarity, but about Rav Nahman's expressed view on the subject. Rava's attitude towards wine is still more complex. Cf. ibid: "Rava said: Look not thou upon the wine,for it leads to bloodshed."

[7] The fact that Rav Nahman repents should not lead one to assume that he adopts Rava's position. Firstly, this repentance may very well be a later addition not originating from Rav Nahman himself. Secondly, even if one assumes Rav Nahman's repentance, the question might be raised: Does Rav Nahman actually adopt the viewpoint articulated by Rava or does he merely submit to the traditional authority of Rabbi Aha son of Hanina, which would imply that he doesn't "get" Rava at all?

[8] נשי דידן may be understood as Rav Nahman speaking in the royal plural, which seems to be how Rava understands it when he rephrases it as נשי דידכן, your women". Thus, "our women" would refer to "the women of my family." Alternatively, it can be understood as a reference to the women in the local Jewish community, namely, Pumbedita, as opposed to Rava's more metropolitan residence of Mahuza, near Ctesiphon, the winter capital of the Sassanian Empire.

[9] Professor Yaakov Elman wrote me the following: "The question regarding the birth patterns of Mahozan women may be seen in a very different light than your interpretation assumes. Rav Nahman's comment may assume that Mahozan women are typical... of women in general in regard to the length of their pregnancies. Rav Nahman's comment can then be seen as a precursor of the Stam's ve-ha qa-hazinan de-leta!" I would like to respectfully question this analysis on a number of grounds. First, even if "R. Nahman's comment [assumes] that Mahozan women are typical... of women in general in regard to the length of their pregnancies," it seems that Rava does not understand it that way. After all, his next question is just that – 'Are your women to be considered typical of all women?' Second, if Rav Nahman's statement is "a precursor of the Stam's ve-ha qa-hazinan", it is a significantly different one. *Ve-ha qa-hazinan* marks an obvious, undisputed local fact which undermines a generalized principle. The three cases of it with which I am familiar all deal with local knowledge. In Gittin 58b, it is known that the "law of *anparut*" exists in the land of Babylon, in contrast to the principle that the "law of *anparut* does not exist in Babylon". In Avodah Zarah 39a, it is known that scale-less fish can live in salt water, in contrast to the assumption that no scale-less fish can live in salt water. In Zevahim 113b, it is known that wealthy people exist in Shin`ar, in contrast to principle that Shin`ar "shakes off" wealthy people. In each case, only one real case will due to make the point. Such local knowledge does not universalize – in fact, it does the opposite: It uses one local case to undermine a universalized principle. But in the case of Rav Nahman, his statement that "our women" do have seven-month births is irrelevant unless it is intended to be universalized.

[10] The passage continues as follows: What I mean, the other replied, is this: Most women bear at nine months and a minority at seven, and the embryo in the case of every woman who bears at nine is recognizable after a third of the period of her pregnancy; and in the case of this woman, since her embryo was not recognized after a third of the period of her pregnancy [her presumption to belong to] the majority is impaired.

> If in the case of every woman, however, who bears at nine the embryo is recognizable after a third of the period of her pregnancy. it is obvious that with this [woman], since her embryo had not been recognized after a third of the period of her pregnancy, it must be a seven-months child of the second husband! But say rather: When a woman bears at nine months, her embryo in most cases is recognizable after a third of her pregnancy. and with this woman, since her embryo was not recognized after a third of the period of her pregnancy, [her presumption to belong to] the majority is impaired. (Soncino Translation)

> I am led to believe that this is an addition of the redactors and not the original argumentation of Rav Nahman, for two reasons, despite the fact that as it appears, the statement is presented as coming from Rav Nahman's own mouth (תכי קאמינא, this is what I meant to say): 1) As will be seen below, in Shabbat 144b, a similar dialogical pattern ending with Rava's frustrated question, "Are X the majority of the world?" does not elicit an answer from Rav Nahman (though the redactors do propose a solution, they do not place it in Rav Nahman's mouth. Accordingly, Rava's question seems rhetorical. 2) The latter argument, which is framed as a clarification of Rav Nahman's previous statement, does not seem in any way connected to Rav Nahman's previous argument of "our women give birth after seven months." Indeed, the "clarification" removes the core of Rav Nahman's argument – his local data set.

[11] I.e. Does that constitute legitimate legal reasoning? Shouldn't the *Tanna* be accepted or rejected because of his argumentation?

[12] The redactors continue, but they do not seem to represent Rav Nahman's personal views: Yes. For we learnt: If one maintains thorns in a vineyard, R. Eleazar said: They are forbidden;but the Sages maintained: Only that the like of which is [normally] kept creates an interdict. Now R. Hanina said: What is R. Eleazar's reason? Because in Arabia the thorns of fields are kept for the camels. How compare! Arabia is a [whole] region, but here his practice counts as nought in relation to that of all [other] people! Rather this is the reason, as R. Hisda. For R. Hisda said: If beets are expressed and [the juice] poured into a mikweh, it renders the mikweh unfit on account of changed appearance. But these are not normally expressed? What you must then answer is that since he assigned value thereto, it ranks as liquid; so here too, since one assigns a value thereto, it ranks as a liquid. R. Papa said: The reason is that it is something wherewith a mikweh may not be made in the first place, and everything wherewith a mikweh may not be made in the first place renders a mikweh unfit through changed appearance. (Soncino translation)

[13] The fact that Rava comes up with this particular argument on behalf of Rav Nahman, so similar to that of Yevamot 37a, may indicate that this exchange occurred after that in Yevamot 37a, where Rav Nahman himself offered this argument of majority.

[14] The fact that the Talmud presents this case as Rava's record of Rav Nahman's teaching, instead of a "live" dialogue between the two, does not invalidate the fact that a conversation – albeit over an extended amount of time – is still taking place, with each side expressing its own position.

[15] The redactors continue to defend Rav Nahman as follows: There, only one anonymous [teaching] is available while here two anonymous [teachings] are available.

> There also two anonymous [teachings] are available! For we learned: If, however, a woman made a declaration of refusal or performed halizah in his presence, he may marry her, since he [was but one of the] Beth din! But, [the fact is that while] there, only two anonymous [teachings] are available; here, three anonymous [teachings] are available.
>
> Consider! The one is an anonymous [teaching], and the other is an anonymous [teaching]; what difference does it make to me whether the anonymous [teachings] are one, two or three? Rather, said R. Nahman b. Isaac, [the reason is] because the anonymity occurs in a passage recording a dispute. For we learned: The laying on of hands by the elders, and the breaking of the heifer's neck is performed by three elders; so R. Jose, while R. Judah stated: By five elders. Halizah and declarations of mi'un, [however, are witnessed] by three men; and since R. Judah does not express disagreement, it may be inferred that R. Judah changed his opinion. This proves it. (Soncino translation)
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> As has been argued elsewhere (cf. Leib Moscovitz, Talmudic Reasoning: From Casuistics to Conceptualization. *Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism* 89. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2002), the redactors' argumentation is greatly influenced by the legal thinking of Rava. As such, Rav Nahman's position should not be confused with the one espoused here.

[16] *Mi'un and halitzah*. See also below, regarding our discussion of Shabbat 91a. See also Berakhot 50b, where Rava applies a principle from laws of vessel purity to that of grace after meals; and Baba Batra 147b-148a, where Rava applies a principle from real estate law to inheritance law. As Professor Yaakov Elman has remarked: "I do not mean that [Rava] invented systematization, but that he carried it out more broadly and more consistently than before." (Email correspondence with author.)

[17] As of this writing, I have not been able to determine why Rava asks Rav Nahman particularly in this way, in terms of whether a Palestinian Rabbi raised this question. Perhaps, because Rava is aware of the ban as such, he wants to find a rabbi closer to the source of the banning, who would be in the know about its scope.

[18] To the best of my knowledge, this is the only place in rabbinic literature articulating this reason for restriction on marriage among converts. As such, there is no reason to assume that Rava already knew the reason behind the ban.

[19] Rav Nahman transmits a number of teachings of Samuel, who likely learned in Palestine. See, for instance, Berakhot 27b and Shabbat 57b.

[20] Some versions have Rabbi Eli`ezer

[21] The passage continues, but this is likely the redactors speaking, not Rava: But, surely, it was taught: It was stated in the name of R. Eleazar, She and her rival perform halizah; Now can it possibly be imagined that she and her rival [are to perform halizah]? Consequently it must mean, either she or her rival performs halizah! Are you not [in any case obliged to] offer an explanation? Explain, then, as follows: She performs halizah while her rival may either perform halizah or contract the levirate marriage. (Soncino translation)

[22] In respect of what [is the question]? If in respect of the Sabbath,we require the size of a dried fig? If in respect of defilement, we require food as much as an egg? After all, it is in respect of the Sabbath, [the circumstances being] e.g., that there is food less than an egg in quantity and this makes it up to an egg in quantity. What then: since it combines in respect of defilement he is also culpable in respect to the Sabbath; or perhaps in all matters relating to the Sabbath we require the size of a dried fig? (Soncino translation)

[23] The redactors nonetheless argue to defend Rava from Rav Nahman: How compare! There, immediately one takes it without the wall of the Temple Court it becomes unfit as that which has gone out, whereas there is no culpability for the [violation of the] Sabbath until he carries it into public ground. But here the Sabbath and defilement come simultaneously. (Soncino translation). The implication is that had there been simultaneity in this case an olive's volume may indeed have sufficed.

Disappointed Messianic Visions in Rabbi Hayyim Vital's *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*

MARC HERMAN

The place of messianism in the Lurianic system has long been a focus of scholarly debate. Scholem's thesis—that Lurianic kabbalah must be viewed through the lens of the Jewish "messianic idea"—has been subject to rigorous analysis in subsequent scholarship. Regardless of the relative importance and historical reasons for such eschatological overtones, the centrality and self-perception of messianism in Rabbi Hayyim Vital's (1542/3-1620) mystical thought is apparent to whoever opens his mystical diary, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*. Written as a personal record and not intended for publication, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is a remarkable testimony to the messianic fervor deeply embedded in Vital's identity and sense of self. [1]

Before embarking on a review of the messianic themes found in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, it is important to briefly summarize the major scholarly positions regarding messianism in the thought of Vital's teacher in Jewish esoteric secrets, Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534–1572). In his magnificent *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, Scholem argues that the Spanish expulsion of 1492 was the major precipitating event behind the development of Lurianic kabbalah. This "catastrophic" episode, according to Scholem, forced kabbalists to renew their heavenward gaze in an attempt to understand the religious significance of this "acute apocalyptic phase." [2] In Scholem's view, "this new Kabbalism stands and falls with its programme of bringing its doctrines home to the community, and preparing it for the coming of the Messiah." [3] Scholem applies this approach to what he sees as the central doctrine of the Lurianic system. He writes:

> The most terrible fate that could befall any soul—far more than the torments of hell—was to be "outcast" or "naked," a state precluding either rebirth or even admission to hell. [...] Absolute homelessness was the sinister symbol of absolute Godlessness, of utter moral and spiritual degradation. Union with God or utter banishment were the two poles between which a system had to be devised in which the Jews could live under the domination of law, which seeks to destroy the forces of Exile. [4]

In Scholem's understanding, the continuing Jewish exile and the heightened feelings attributed to the Spanish expulsion contribute to the absolute centrality of messianism in Lurianic mysticism, allowing the Jew to "relate the fundamental experiences of his life to all cosmic being and integration." [5]

These two central aspects of Scholem's thesis, the link to the post-expulsion Jewish self-understanding and the more general centrality of messianism in Luria's thought, have been challenged by Idel. Using sharp language, Idel dismisses Scholem's understanding of the historical processes regarding the dissemination of Lurianic kabbalah among post-exilic Jews and the impact of the Spanish expulsion on Luria. Idel writes that "notwithstanding Scholem's assessments [...] the facts seem to be different." [6] On the second part of Scholem's approach, Idel argues that he "exaggerates the spiritual messianic component." While not denying the "existence" of messianic themes, Idel claims that "their share in the general economy of this mystical lore [...] is somewhat more modest." [7] Idel further interprets Luria's gradual achievement of perfection in the world in light of the medieval mystical framework; [8] indeed, "to the extent that Lurianic Kabbalah had a messianic message, it was not greater than the messianic burden of earlier Kabbalah." [9] Thus, while obviously playing a role in Lurianic mysticism, messianism was not the predominant factor that Scholem posits.

The immediacy of messianism and its causes is one of the most pressing issues in reading Vital's *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*. In fact, Faierstein argues that Vital's entire life story must be understood in light of his messianism. In his introduction to his translation of *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, Faierstein asserts that Vital's geographic movements symbolize his messianic hopes throughout his life. Faierstein traces Vital's life from Safed, where Luria impressed messianic possibilities upon him, [10] through iterant travels to Jerusalem, where Vital hoped for messianic tidings, [11] to his eventual settling in Damascus, where his messianic pretensions were frustrated by both his rabbinic peers and the Damascene Jewish community. This story, according to Faierstein, reflects

the hopes, attempts, and eventual downfall of Vital's messianism. [12] *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, assembled and redacted by Vital towards the end of his life (Faierstein estimates between 1609 and 1612), records his messianic aspirations and, much to the chagrin of the author, their ultimate failure.

The first major messianic theme running throughout *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is that of repentance. [13] A wide variety of spirit-figures and demons, whom Vital reaches through various magical means, urge Vital to focus on repentance. Vital identifies an unnamed angel as a servant of Zadkiel, who urges him to continue with this mission. [14] He also records a man who arrives from Persia to tell him that the "complete redemption of Israel and Israel's repentance depend on" Vital. [15] Vital further writes of a dream in which a close friend brought him a letter from the Messiah that "notified [Vital] that [the Messiah] had already been invited to come to the land of Israel soon." Vital reacts by promoting penance, "for through this [he would] help [the Messiah] come more quickly." [16] In several places in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, a range of figures also rebuke him for his inability to encourage complete religious observance. He receives a letter from the sages of Jerusalem blaming the delayed redemption on the lack of repentance, [17] and is admonished by the king of the demons for this same sin. [18] Vital is even told that his daughter's death is a direct result of this. [19] This entire motif is closely connected with the drive for the coming of the Messiah. Vital writes of a dream he had, the details of which he does not recall precisely, which he relates:

> During that period I was preaching repentance to the people at night. In that year I had the same dream two or three consecutive nights. [...] I was walking along a great river, and I saw a large and mighty multitude of Israelites who were resting there in tents. I entered one tent and I saw their king reclining on his side. He was a tall person, with a black beard and about fifty years of age. When he saw me, he seated me at his side with great joy and said to me: Know that I am the king of Israel, of the tribe of Ephraim, [20] and we have come now because the time has come for the ingathering of the exiles and I only came here with great anticipation to see you. [21]

Vital sees this life-mission as his way of ensuring the coming of the Messiah. This goal explains this focus on penance, which so clearly permeates his actions and his view of his personal role.

The centrality of repentance and the focus on popular observance of the law are essential to Vital's eschatological hopes. In turn, this can only properly be understood in the context of the Lurianic system of thought, of which Vital saw himself as the faithful guardian. Broadly speaking, Lurianic mysticism views the sin of Adam as the source of evil, representing and causing the exile of the *Shekhina* from its proper place. Individual souls each contain dispersed "sparks" which must be returned, through the observance of the Torah. Man thereby participates in what Scholem calls "self-emancipation," [22] an attempt to overcome transmigration (*gilgul*) in order to reach his profound sublime purpose. Every religious rite, therefore, contains within it untold value in the cosmic order. [23] This doctrine, according to Scholem, "appealed very strongly to the individual consciousness." [24] In this system, true redemption could not come without the involvement of every single Jew. Highly democratized, Lurianic kabbalah in Vital's hands required mass adherence to the law for the ultimate redemptive triumph, if only to its exoteric aspects. [25]

Vital's exasperating efforts to spur repentance support Idel's thesis regarding the imminence of messianic arrival in Lurianism. Luria's circle, in the years immediately following his death, believed that the Messiah would come in 1575 (5335). [26] After this prediction failed to materialize, Vital and his students rededicated themselves to Luria's esoteric teachings and "reinterpreted" the significance of this year as "the beginning of the period when the advent of the Messiah could be expected." [27] Moreover, Vital redoubled his efforts to spread the message of penance. This goal is at the heart of a dream Vital had in 1609, nearly thirty-five years after the original messianic date. In a dream, Vital, who had not been visited by his dead master for some time, asked Luria what caused this delay. Luria responds, "You have already been informed that you only came into the world to cause the people to repent. Previously, you responded, but now you desist, therefore I also desisted from coming to you." [28] Reaching the long desired goal of redemption required the responsiveness of all Israel to Vital's calls for penance. [29] This process, to revisit Idel's terms cited earlier, was far more "progressive" than "imminent." This, Idel argues, is central to understanding the Lurianic system, as:

> The attribution of inward progress to a form of religion that is conceived of as emphasizing the importance of the common enterprise of whole communities cannot easily arrive at the conclusion that the time of redemption is gradually coming closer. [...] This [...] implies very slow processes which could start only with the revelation of Lurianic Kabbalah as the key to redemptive activity. [30]

Idel's understanding of Lurianic messianism accounts for both the methods of Vital's project and his ability to renew it after the disappointment of 1575. [31]

A second important theme found in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is Vital's self-perception. [32] Elsewhere in Vital's writings, it is clear that he believes his teacher had the potential to fill the role of Messiah ben Joseph, [33]

though it remains ambiguous if Luria himself preached such a position. [34] Regardless of his teacher's role, throughout *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, Vital presents himself in an important, if inconsistent, messianic position. This is likely because of his own personal uncertainty. Vital recounts a dream encounter with Luria, after the latter's death, when Luria tells him: "I do not yet have permission to tell you why you came into the world and who you are. If I were to tell you, [...] you would float in the air out of great joy." [35] Vital eventually receives word that he is Messiah ben Joseph, but unlike the Talmudic rendition of this character, he will not be killed. [36]

However, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* also recounts Vital's identification with more ambitious messianic figures, as a descendant of King David. During a dream on the night of Rosh Hashanah, 1606, Vital is equated with David ("Hayyim is David") through the use of "*gematria* of minor numbers" as the total of their names is equal. [37] This same association appears in several other places in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* as well. [38] From these stories and Vital's alterations to the Messiah ben Joseph model, it seems that Vital himself was hesitant and vague about his precise messianic role. The status of the "righteous of the generation" as the "anointed of God" in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is apparent, [39] as is his own replacement of Luria's position, but its precise contours remain ambiguous.

A third, highly consequential if somewhat less prevalent theme in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, is Vital's relationship to Christianity and Islam. Though Vital's disdain for both religions is present in various places in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, he reserves his sharpest scorn for Christianity. [40] Vital records a dream in which he is told that the Messiah has "vanquished all the Christians" in the Temple, and subsequently commanded the Jews to "purify yourselves and our Temple from the impurity of the blood of these uncircumcised corpses and the impurity of the strange gods within it." [41] In another dream, which occurred during the week of the Torah portion of the struggle between Esau and Jacob, who represent Rome and Israel, Vital fights a group of Roman soldiers over a "sword which no man has ever touched." After winning the battle, he gains audience with the emperor, and proceeds to berate him for his Christianity. Vital says, "Why did you want to kill me? You are all being led astray by your religion like blind people, for there are no true teachings except for the teachings of Moses." The emperor responds by acknowledging his error, and claims that this is the reason he sought Vital, as "there is nobody wiser and more understanding of the true wisdom" than he. [42] Tamar points to another veiled attack on Christianity. Vital tells of a dream of a "R. Caleb," who saw Vital dressed in a red robe, vowing to "impose retribution on the nations" (Ps. 149:7). [43] This vague vision, according to Tamar, is a hint to an anti-Christian passage from the Zohar, which reads: "In the future, God will dress in red (*adom*) with a red sword to take vengeance on Rome (*Edom*)." [44] Vital —while relating a dream from a Muslim by the name of Sa'ad al-Din—also turns his attention to Mohammed and Jesus. In this dream, both Mohammed and Jesus (who is called Isa, his Muslim name), [45] appear before al-Din. In turn, each of them confesses to misleading the Muslims and Christians, and claim that the time for their respective religions has passed. [46] "Millions of Muslims" then ask al-Din whom to follow, and he directs them to "Akiva," the master of the "true religion." Upon discovering that Akiva is dead, al-Din points them to his "disciple" who "'lives' in this world and 'lives' doubly in the world to come," [47] namely Vital. In this eschatological vision, there is room for neither Christianity nor Islam.

Upon careful reflection, however, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* distinguishes between the fate of Muslims and Christians. While Vital emphasizes "vengeance" on Christianity, nowhere does he talk about taking such retribution against Muslims. This distinction is relevant to one of the most heated debates in Jewish studies in recent memory, Yuval's controversial thesis regarding Sephardic and Ashkenazic eschatological visions. In a roundly criticized article, Yuval argues that whereas Sephardic Jewry looked forward to a "proselytizing redemption," the Ashkenazic world hoped for a "vengeful" one. [48] It is obviously beyond the scope of the paper to analyze exactly where Vital's corpus fits into this question, but it is important to note the divergent prediction he envisions. This vision is consistent with earlier medieval models that scholars have delineated. [49] Vital's structure does not fit neatly into Yuval's outline, and proposes a more complex vision of the forthcoming redemption.

A fourth theme in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is Vital's relationship to other sixteenth century messianic figures, particularly David Reubeni (d. c. 1538) and Solomon Molkho (c. 1500-32). [50] Vital recounts a dream in which he pulls a stone from the top of a wall and throws it down a path. The stone, however, slowly takes the form of a human head, and speaks as "Talfas." [51] Talfas says that he was placed on top of the wall in order to ensure that Israel would be under the control of the nations, but now that he has been removed, "Israel is no longer under that domination." [52] Idel points out that this vision borrows heavily from a tradition recorded in *Sipur David ha-Reuveni*, [53] and bespeaks Vital's knowledge of these myths. [54] Additionally, as mentioned earlier, Idel claims that Vital's dream where he attempts to convert the Roman emperor is similar to Molkho's failed attempt to convert the pope. [55] Aescoli, in his notes to the Hebrew edition of *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, claims that there is one more parallel to Molkho therein. During a vision shared with Vital, towards the end of a

complicated proof based on *gematria* of Vital's self-worth, Vital is told that the letter nun should be dropped from a phrase, as it signifies defeat (*nefilah*). [56] Aescoli points to a corresponding passage in Molkho's *Sefer ha-Mefoar*. [57] However, because this is based on a passage in tractate Berakhot 4b, both Molkho and Vital may just be relying on the same Talmudic source. Either way, Vital exhibits awareness of both of these failed messianic figures.

The impact of Molkho on other thinkers in Safed has long been noted, beginning with Werblowsky's biography of Rabbi Joseph Karo (1488–1575). [58] Like Vital, Karo's mysticism was an important factor in his messianism. [59] Karo writes in his *Maggid Mesharim* of his "yearning to be immolated on God's altar, burnt for the sanctification of God's name," much like Molkho's *auto-da-fé*. [60] According to Elior, "there is little doubt that Molkho's writings and letters, which were studied in [Safed mystical circles] along with the Zohar manuscript, helped shape Karo's mystical thinking." [61] Elior even sees a clear link between Molkho's death and the beginning of Karo's mystical visions. [62] Though the connection is not as blatant in Vital's *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, Molkho's ideas were part of the Safed milieu and found their way into that work. [63] The evidence within *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* is further proof of the influence of Molkho on the thinking, messianic hopes, and mystical experiences of Safed kabbalists.

A final word must be mentioned regarding the place of the messianic writings found in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* in Vital's life. As discussed towards the outset of this paper, Vital's geographic transitions are symbolic of his own messianic disappointment. He lived the last twenty-two years of his life in Damascus, teaching the public and fighting with Rabbi Jacob Abulafia (c.1550-c.1622), the leading Damascene rabbi at the time. [64] Vital's scorn for Abulafia is seen throughout *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, and he blamed Abulafia for his failure to encourage Damascus' Jewish community to repent. [65] Vital's struggles in Damascus continued until his death. It was during this later period that the vast majority of Vital's messianic visions recorded in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* occurred. Moreover, none of the dreams about himself as the Messiah, in whatever mode, happened prior to the death of his teacher in the summer of 1572. [66] This is consequential for two reasons. First, it is further evidence that Vital's personal role in the messianic hopes only developed after his teacher's premature death. Second, and more importantly, the chronological placement of Vital's messianic longings shows that the visions recorded in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* are as much hopes as they are explanations of failure. They served to both reassure and strengthen Vital, who, according to Faierstein, otherwise held himself in the highest esteem. [67] To quote Faierstein's formulation, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* can best be described as a messianic "apologia" [68] —a justification of unsuccessful mission to actualize the Lurianic dreams.

Rabbi Hayyim Vital was a failed Messiah. Under the influence of his enigmatic teacher in the esoteric Jewish tradition, Rabbi Isaac Luria, Vital believed the messianic moment to be imminent, that through his own actions he could realize the messianic epoch, and that his own role therein would be crucial. *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, the very record of those dreams, is a testament to their failure.

NOTES

[1] I have written elsewhere ("Kabbalistic Egodocuments of Sixteenth-Century Safed," submitted to Elisheva Carlebach, November 24, 2008) about the development of the "confessional genre" (2) of kabbalistic egodocuments and their place in the history of Jewish mysticism. Worth noting here is the transition from a situation in which "our sources leave us completely in the dark as regards the personalities of many Kabbalists" because of an aversion "to letting their own personalities intrude into the picture" (Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 16) to what Idel calls a greater emphasis on the "subjective" in the mystical experience (see Moshe Idel, "On Mobility, Individuals and Groups: Prolegomenon for a Sociological Approach to Sixteenth-Century Kabbalah," *Kabbalah* 3 (1998): 163-68). (Interestingly, Scholem does not take note of the rash of mystical autobiography in the sixteenth century, but sees the sixteenth century exceptions to his theory as quirks in his overall approach. See *Major Trends*, 15-16, 147.) The brief comments on this topic by Rachel Elior deserve expansion; see Rachel Elior, "Joseph Karo and Israel Ba'al Shem Tov: Mystical Metamorphasis –Kabbalistic Inspiration Spritual Internalization," *Studies in Spirituality* (2007): 269 n4.) On the term "egodocument," see Jeffrey Howard Chajes, "Accounting for the Self: Preliminary Generic-Historical Reflections on Early Modern Jewish Egodocuments," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 95:1 (2004): 2 n5, and the sources cited in the second note of my paper. Chajes' literature review is a good introduction to the field of Jewish autobiography.

[2] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 247-48. Scholem's thesis is developed in the opening pages of the seventh lecture printed therein, entitled "Isaac Luria and his School." See esp. pp. 244-50. See also Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 43-48.

[3] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 250.

[4] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 250.

[5] Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, 48.

[6] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 258. On the equally important methodological critiques put forward by Idel, see Daniel Abrams, "A Critical Return to Moshe Idel's Kabbalah: New Perspectives: An Appreciation," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 6:18 (2007), 30-40.

[7] Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 170.

[8] Idel writes: "If Lurianism is the key to redemption, it cannot be the key to a redemption that is both progressive and imminent. It is either imminent but not progressive, or progressive – starting with the disclosure of Luria's theurgy – but not imminent" (*Messianic Mystics*, 182).

[9] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah*, 258. See also his *Messianic Mystics*, 179-82.

[10] The best introduction to Safed in this period is still Solomon Schechter, "Safed in the 16th Century," *Studies in Judaism* (2nd series, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1908): 204-85.

[11] David Tamar, "Dreams and Visions of R. Hayyim Vital (Heb.)," in *Ashkelot Tamar*, by David Tamar, (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Ltd.), 103-04.

[12] Hayyim Vital, and Yizhak Isaac Safrin of Komarno, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies: Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, Morris M. Faierstein, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1999), 8-10.

[13] On this theme, see Faierstein, Jewish Mystical Autobiographies, 19-21; Morris M. Faierstein, "Rêves et dissonance dans le 'Livre des visions' de Hayyim Vital," *Les Cahiers du Judaïsme* 13 (2003): 38-40; Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 107-08, 99-100, 111-12.

[14] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.23. References to *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* refer to the book and paragraph numbers accepted in the standard editions. The Hebrew edition was published as Hayyim Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot* (Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1954), with notes and introduction from Aaron Aescoli. All translations are from Faierstein's edition.

[15] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.15. The connection between repentance and redemption is made explicitly by Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuva*, 7:5. The parallels between Lurianic "progressive" redemption and the Maimonidean conception are striking; they are both man-focused insofar as they depend on the actions of the masses to reach their ultimate goals. Regarding the post-messianic experience, however, they greatly diverge. On Maimonidean "realistic utopianism," see Amos Funkenstein, "Maimonides: Political Theory and Realistic Messianism," in *Perceptions of Jewish History* by Amos Funkenstein (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 131-55. I have yet to reach firm conclusions on this issue.

[16] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 2.42.

[17] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.23.

[18] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.47. In Faierstein's edition, this is paragraph 48.

[19] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.23.

[20] Faierstein (*Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 37 n78) identifies this individual as the king of the ten lost tribes.

[21] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 2.34.

[22] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 282.

[23] This scheme is a generalization of a much more complicated and nuanced theory which lies beyond the scope of this paper. See Scholem, *Major Trends*, 278-84.

[24] Scholem, *Major Trends*, 283. This theory about the attractiveness and success of the Lurianic system is part of Scholem's general thesis about the relative victory of kabbalah over philosophy in the battle for the hearts of adherents to rabbinic Judaism. Instead of "allegorizing" (26) religious ritual and text, Scholem argues that kabbalists created a system of religious symbolism. Scholem writes that "in particular religious acts commanded by the Torah [...] are to the Kabbalist symbols in which a deeper and hidden sphere of reality becomes transparent. The infinite shines through the finite and makes it more and not less real." Through this system, "the inexpressible mystery of the Godhead becomes visible" (28). This was something that the medieval philosophers, by emphasizing allegory and thereby downplaying the importance of specific religious rituals, were unable to achieve. See also Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 26-30, and Rachel Elior, "Messianic Expectations and Spiritualization of Religious Life in the Sixteenth Century," *Revue des Etudes Juives* 145 (1986): 43.

[25] This last point is related to the debate between Scholem and Idel about the circulation of Lurianic kabbalah in the years after Luria's death and to what extent it laid the groundwork for Sabbatian expectations. Idel writes, challenging Scholem: "The vast majority of the Jewish people were interested in being shown a way of life and detailed rituals and were not capable of delving into the intricacies of [Lurianic] basic principles. Even the fundamental teaching of "tiqqun" could not have been absorbed. The wider Jewish community was more interested in the ritual and the legendary sides than the ideological side of Lurianism" (*Messianic Mystics*, 178). Vital's public teachings, both in Jerusalem and Damascus, were limited to the exoteric law and ritual (Morris M. Faierstein, "Charisma and Anti-Charisma in Safed: Isaac Luria and Hayyim Vital," *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry*, 2 (2007): 10). Presumably linked to his efforts to encourage repentance, this would mitigate some of Scholem's thesis regarding the spread of Lurianic mysticism by Luria's direct students, at least in the immediate period after Luria's death, and support Idel's approach.

[26] Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 109. On this date, see also David Tamar, "The Messianic Expectations in Italy for the year 1575 (Heb.)," in *Ashkelot Tamar*, by David Tamar, (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass Ltd.), 187-209; idem, "The Ari and R. Hayyim Vital as Messiah ben Joseph (Heb.)," Sefunot, 7 (1963): 171-72; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 158-60.

[27] Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 7-8. See Tamar, "The Ari," 176.

[28] Vital, Sefer ha-Hezyonot, 1.20. See Idel, Messianic Mystics, 168.

[29] See above, n15.

[30] Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 182.

[31] Scholem has several fascinating formulations regarding the role of the Messiah in this system which underscore the role of the masses and encapsulate the change in emphasis on the role of the messiah. Scholem writes: "The Messiah himself will not bring the redemption; rather, he symbolizes the advent of redemption, the completion of the task of emendation. [...] The Messiah here becomes the entire people of Israel rather than an individual Redeemer: the people of Israel as a whole prepares itself to amend the primal flaw" (*Messianic Idea*, 48).

[32] Most of the sources on this issue are assembled in Tamar, "The Ari." His comments in Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 98-99, are also of use. My presentation, especially regarding the ambivalence and uncertainty of Vital towards his mission, more closely follows Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 13-15 and Faierstein, "Rêves," 35. See also Faierstein, "Charisma," 13-15. Tamar does not capture the ambiguity of Vital's writings.

[33] See Vital's writings cited in Tamar, "The Ari," 170.

[34] Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 165.

[35] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 4.45.

[36] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.9. On the identification of the characters in this vision, see Tamar, "The Ari," 174 n25.

[37] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.17. Tamar explains that this system of gematria involves ignoring the zeroes of any number over ten (e.g. *yud* is equal to one instead of ten, *kaf* to two instead of twenty, etc.). On this system in *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, see Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 108-09.

[38] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.10, 3.62.

[39] Tamar, "The Ari," 175-76. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 167.

[40] See Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 100-01.

[41] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 2.2. Tamar notes that historically, the Muslims, who are circumcised, were in control of the Temple Mount during this period ("Dreams and Visions," 101).

[42] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 2.36. Idel suggests that this dream may be reminiscent of Solomon Molkho's attempts to meet the pope (Moshe Idel, "Solomon Molkho as Magician (Heb.)," *Sefunot* 3 (1985): 216). See also Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 317 n80. For background on Molkho, see Harris Lenowitz, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 103ff. This affinity will be discussed later in the paper. On Vital's high estimation of himself, see Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 8-10, 16-18; Faierstein, "Charisma," 19.

[43] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.34.

[44] Zohar 1:238b. Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 101 n40. David Berger pointed out to me that Tamar's citation of the Zohar is unnecessary, and this idea is found elsewhere in Jewish literature.

[45] See Aescoli's notes to the Hebrew edition of *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 38 n59.

[46] Faierstein thinks this is connected to the thousandth year on the Muslim calendar, which Vital understood as a sign of its completion (*Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 312 n75). If so, this is a fascinating parallel to kabbalistic doctrine. On the history of this doctrine, see Raphael Shucha, "Attitudes Towards Cosmogony and Evolution Among Rabbinic Thinkers in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries: The Resurgence of the Doctrine of the Sabbatical Years," *Torah u-Madda Journal* (2005), 15-23.

[47] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.29. Faierstein points out that this refers to Vital's name (hayyim), which means "life" (*Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 312 n77). Additionally, the double usage here is likely a reference to the plural in lieu of the singular (*hai*).

[48] Yuval's original article appeared as Israel Yuval, "Vengeance and Curse, Blood and Libel," Zion 58:1 (1993): 33-90 and was reprinted and reformulated in the third chapter of his *Two Nations in Your Womb* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006). Responses can be found in the subsequent volume of *Zion*. For a good summary, see David Berger, *From Crusades to Blood Libels to Expulsions: Some New Approaches to Medieval Antisemitism*, (New York: Second Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History, 1997), 16-22.

[49] On this distinction, see for example, David Berger, "On the Image and Destiny of Gentiles in the Ashkenazic Polemical Literature (Heb.)," in *Facing the Cross: The Persecution of Ashkenazic Jews in 1096*, by Yom Tov Assis (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 2000), 88-90.

[50] Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 15. The date of Molkho's death is a matter of dispute. I have followed Elior ("Joseph Karo," 270 n6).

[51] Idel has suggested this should be amended to "Talmas," based on the Arabic. See Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 318 n93.

[52] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 2.44.

[53] See Idel's introduction to David Reuveni, *Sipur David ha-Reuveni* (Jerusalem: Mosad Byalik, 1993), xxxvi-xxxix.

[54] Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 318 n93.

[55] See above, n42 and Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, 167-68.

[56] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 3.14.

[57] See Aescoli's notes to the Hebrew edition of *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 93 n120.

[58] R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo: Lawyer and Mystic* (2d ed., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1977), 97-99, 151-54.

[59] Elior, "Joseph Karo," 271.

[60] Elior, "Joseph Karo," 270.

[61] Elior, "Joseph Karo," 271. On these circles, see Elisheva Carlebach, "Rabbinic Circles as Messianic Pathways in the Post-Expulsion Era," *Judaism* 41:3 (1992): 208-16.

[62] Elior, "Joseph Karo," 270-72.

[63] Though beyond the scope of this paper, I have little doubt that there would be further examples of this elsewhere in Vital's voluminous writings.

[64] Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 9-10.

[65] Vital, *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*, 1.21.

[66] Tamar, "Dreams and Visions," 106. Vital dutifully records the date of each vision and story throughout *Sefer ha-Hezyonot*.

[67] See above, n42.

[68] Faierstein, *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies*, 18.

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Traditions Against Astrology: An Examination of the Curious Role of Tradition in Maimonidean Epistemology

DANIEL LOEWENSTEIN

With respect to the veracity of the theoretical underpinnings of astrology, one finds almost complete uniformity amongst medieval Jewish philosophers. [1] There are strong differences to be found in the opinions of these philosophers as to the practicality of astrology, [2] as well as to the permissibility of relying upon astrological calculations, [3] and there seems to be a range of views as to precisely how absolute or irrevocable the fates found in the stars are. [4] Yet the majority view seems to have been that there is (or is likely to be) at least some truth to the general assumptions underlying astrological science. Virtually alone in stark opposition to astrology, on all of its levels, is Maimonides.

Though the faults Maimonides finds in the claims of astrological theory can be found in various places throughout the corpus of his literature, [5] he musters his main attacks in his *Letter to the Sages of Marseilles*. Here his main agenda is to warn against any reliance on astrology, and he offers numerous types of reasons to prove his point. Specifically, Maimonides claims toward the beginning of the letter that overreliance on astrology can and has led to the neglect of important matters, and that in fact the lack of emphasis placed on things such as conquest and warfare by the Jews of Ancient Israel, because of their reliance on astrology, is what caused the loss of the Davidic dynasty and the Temple. This seems to constitute a *practical* argument against reliance on astrology: it is wasteful and potentially disastrous. Next, within the section containing the above argument, Maimonides mentions, somewhat in passing, that the claims made by the stargazers are in fact the foundations of idol worship, a notion upon which he elaborates (as he himself notes) in the *Mishneh Torah*. [6] This comment also seems to constitute an argument, this time a *religious* one, namely that astrology is dangerous because of its potential to lead to the prohibited act of idol worship. And finally, in the brunt of the letter, Maimonides attempts to show that, based upon sound epistemological principles, one has no reason to believe, and in fact has reason *not* to believe, astrological theory; these will be clarified shortly. The rest of the letter addresses a different matter.

Within the last argument against astrology, Maimonides does several things. He first claims that by breaking up one's methods of acquiring knowledge into categories, one can see that belief in astrology does not come from any of the three legitimate ones, namely *sense data*, *rational conclusions*, and *reliable tradition*. Further, proofs against the veracity of astrology have already been offered by the Greek philosophers. Maimonides does not actually elaborate in the letter as to what these proofs are, only insists that they exist. The only proof Maimonides himself offers is the necessity of astrology's falsehood in light of the truthfulness, known from tradition, of the concepts of free will and reward and punishment; that, and, perhaps, the fact that the Greeks did not believe in it either.

Each of these claims – again, that (1) no epistemological category supports the veracity of astrology and that the opinions of (2) the Sages and (3) the Greeks prove its falsehood – seems to be predicated, to a certain extent, on particular assumptions about the exact nature of tradition as a legitimate and independent source of knowledge. Thus, these claims speak volumes not just regarding the veracity of astrology, but also of an important branch of Maimonidean epistemology. The remainder of this paper will attempt to analyze these claims in the hopes of clarifying, at least slightly, Maimonides's conception of tradition. While much of the evidence is inconclusive, certain elements clearly indicate that Maimonides conceives of tradition, at least relatively speaking, as a feeble form of knowledge.

I. The Argument from the Greeks

Maimonides makes reference to the works and opinions of the Greeks [7] in the letter several times. In the very beginning of his application of epistemological principles to the matter at hand – the claims that the stars foretell events or predispositions – he writes:

> ...There are lucid, faultless proofs refuting all the roots of those assertions. And never did any one of those genuinely wise men of Greece busy himself with this matter or write on it...rather the Chasdeans, the Chaldeans, the Egyptians and the Canaanites

made that mistake, that they called it a science... But the wise men of Greece – and they are the philosophers who wrote on science and busied themselves with all kinds of knowledge – mock and scorn and ridicule these four nations that I have mentioned to you, and they rally proofs to refute their entire position root and branch. [8]

Maimonides mentions these wise men again in conjunction with his arguments from Jewish tradition. He writes:

> And know, my masters, that it is one of the roots of the religion of Moses our Teacher – and one that all the philosophers also acknowledge – that every action of human beings is left to them... The roots of the religion of Moses our Master, we find, refute the positions of these stupid ones, in addition to reason's doing so with all those proofs that the philosophers maintain to refute the position... [9]

Thus, time and again, Maimonides quotes the position of the philosophers in support of his arguments.

With Maimonides's own insistence on being sure of the acceptability of potential knowledge by scrutinizing its source as a background to the entire discussion, one is led to wonder what exactly Maimonides was hoping to accomplish in his citation of these wise men's positions. It does not seem possible to write off their mention as a mere aside to the larger context of mentioning that concrete proofs exist, or as an indication of where one may find these proofs were one to attempt to look them up. He seems to be adamant that there is some significance to the fact that these wise men held his position, as though the fact somehow bolsters the overall argument. Yet the only way for it to do so would be if it constituted one of the legitimate sources of knowledge. If so, which? Of the three – sense data, rational conclusions, and reliable tradition – tradition sounds, offhand, as though it fits the bill the best. Assuming that this was indeed Maimonides's intention in emphasizing the opinion of the Greek wise men, the simplest way to formulate the underlying assumption here would be something along the lines of the following: because the Greek wise men are demonstrably known to be truly wise, their beliefs can be trusted on the authority of "tradition" – i.e. even without knowing the specific arguments behind them.

Were this to be the case, several important points would emerge vis-à-vis the nature of the epistemological role of tradition. First is the matter of its scope. One could have understood that knowledge through tradition is something of which one can only be said to be certain when the source is a religious one, which does not necessarily need to answer to human logic. All other assertions may be said to be likely, or unlikely, based on the relative trustworthiness of those who make them, but trustworthiness alone would not be enough to know with certainty any statement's "truth" value. Yet Maimonides would seem to be saying here that in fact certainty of truth through tradition is a rather wide and inclusive epistemological category.

Second, moving beyond the theoretical question of what could, potentially, constitute a valid tradition, one comes to the practical question – which traditions are the actual valid ones? Maimonides's opposition to astrology was certainly not mitigated by any tradition-based authority that the Chasdeans might have claimed for themselves. What, then, made the Greeks better?

Answers to this question can only be speculative. One might be tempted to suggest that, for Maimonides, the Greek philosophers have somehow proven their validity more so than their opponents, and thus earned their epistemological status. Yet this position would make the classification of tradition as an independent category of epistemology somewhat circular – only by confirming the trustworthiness of a potential source of knowledge through other epistemological means can it become a true source in and of itself. [10] Further, the fact that the trustworthiness of these sources stems from their having been demonstrably correct about other matters should mean that demonstration through other means will always trump tradition, as the latter is only based on the former. [11] Tradition would thus emerge as a fundamentally weaker source of knowledge. [12] Again, one cannot know, but if this is the underlying principle behind Maimonides's favoring the Greeks, then tradition seems to embrace a wide scope of potential contributors, and yet where it is wide in scope, it is narrow in power.

The discussion thus far has assumed that the purpose of the mentioning of the Greeks was to make some sort of argument from tradition. It would be remiss not to mention alternate possibilities to its meaning before closing this part of the discussion.

Firstly, one could make the case that the argument is really one of reason, instead of tradition. The argument would then be virtually identical to the formulation of the tradition argument, i.e. because it has been established that the Greek wise men are indeed wise, they are trustworthy, and one should take what they say to be true. This formulation would be fraught with the same corollaries as the prior one – the need to establish criteria for classification as trustworthy, and susceptibility to better arguments (which would now create divisions of quality of argument within one epistemological category) – and the probabilistic rather than definite nature of the argument calls into question whether this would actually qualify as "logic" in Maimonides's book at all. [13] This reading certainly seems the least likely; yet, it accomplishes something significant, namely that it leaves the category of tradition out of the discussion, thus leaving it potentially much narrower or stronger

than previously suggested.

Another, more interesting alternative would be that Maimonides is not trying to make an argument here, but rather to break one. Already the question of scope has led to speculation as to why or why not a source might be included in the category of tradition. Perhaps what Maimonides is trying to accomplish by quoting the opinion of the Greeks is to demonstrate that tradition does not support astrology. The common opinion, seemingly dating back for centuries, seemed to have been in support of astrology; people likely suggested that this constituted some sort of proof. Maimonides would then have needed to explain why this was not so. If his insistence that the Greeks never believed a word of astrology is indeed his response, it would seem that Maimonides's argument here is that tradition does not support astrology because there was never a universal acceptance of it. Were this to be the case, it would constitute another indication of the wide scope of tradition in Maimonides's thought, albeit a narrower width; for the argument here would be completely unnecessary unless there was some legitimacy to the opposing claim that astrology carried some kind of authority because of its universal acceptance. Maimonides undoes this argument by proving that there was never universal acceptance – but does not contest the fact that universal acceptance would indeed render a proposition authoritative. [14, 15] This formulation would not go so far as to admit any one particular tradition as authoritative alongside the Jewish Sages, but would allow for the entirety of the world to have a similar authority, a kind of middle ground.

Finally, there exists the possibility that no argument was intended here at all. It has been noted throughout that the potential arguments that might emerge from this point about the Greeks all seem to do more with probability than certainty – perhaps this was the intention. Maimonides never wrote explicitly that the conclusion one should draw from the fact of the Greek's beliefs is that astrology is false; perhaps he merely meant that one should conclude that, with wise men such as these making a stand against astrology, one shouldn't be too quick to jump to conclusions. The presence of the fact creates a doubt, calls for prudence; it is presented, not for logical, but for psychological reasons. Were this to be the case, obviously the point would be irrelevant for the discussion at hand.

This is as far as the possible argument from the Greeks goes.

II. The Argument from the Jewish Sages

Towards the end of the letter, Maimonides defends the Jewish position regarding fate on two fronts, that of the astrologers and the philosophers. The astrologers claim that man's free will is limited to what is written in the heavens, as are the occurrences that befall him, while certain philosophers claim that man is in complete control of his own will, but what befalls him has no particular connection to his will, rather is simply a matter of chance. Maimonides denies both of these opinions:

> The true way upon which we rely and in which we walk is this: We say regarding this Reuben and Simeon that there is nothing that draws on the one to become a perfumer and rich, and the other to become a tanner and poor. It is possible that the situation will change and be reversed, as the philosopher maintained. But the philosopher maintains that this is due to chance. We maintain that it is not due to chance, but rather that this situation depends and the will of Him who spoke and the world came into being; all of this is a [just] decree and judgment... Rather we are obliged to fix in our minds that if Simeon sins, he will be punished with stripes and impoverished and his children will die and the like. And if Reuben repents and mends his ways and searches his deeds and walks in a straight path, he will grow rich and will succeed in all his undertakings and see [his] seed and prolong [his] days. This is the root of the religion. [16]

This is an unequivocal example of Maimonides' use of tradition as an authority. Astrologers assert a claim that conflicts with the doctrine of free will, and the philosophers assert a claim that conflicts with the doctrine of reward and punishment. Jewish tradition is clear on these points; it is for this reason that there can be no question that both alternative positions are wrong. As Maimonides puts it, just before the above quotation, "The position of the philosophers who maintain that these things are due to chance is also regarded as falsehood by us because of the religious tradition." [17]

Unlike the case of the Greeks, there is no ambiguity here as to the nature of the proof . However, the question of whether tradition truly bears out Maimonides's claims against astrology and chance is not a simple matter. Many medieval Jewish thinkers who believed in astrology did not find it to be in conflict with the principles of free will and theodicy at all; one suggestion that bears the sentiments of several others was that the meaning of the phrase "Israel has no constellation" [18] is that every Jew is given the power to *overcome* the fate written for him in the stars by exercising his free will, but essentially the fate is there, as the default. [19] Indeed, as Maimonides notes and addresses later on, many of the other statements of the Sages seem to directly support the veracity of astrology. Were this to be the case, the statements of the Sages would force subscribers to astrological science to tailor their formulations of the science to accommodate certain points, but they would not seem to lead to the conclusion that the assumptions behind astrology are necessarily incorrect.

The diction employed by Maimonides in his elaboration of the statements of the Sages *seems* to indicate that he was aware of this alternative, and tried to preclude it. Maimonides writes that the doctrine of free will maintains that there is both no "*mosheih*" and no "*kofeh*" [20] to man's decisions – nothing that draws or forces man to do anything. If indeed it is against the notion of free will to say that something *draws* man one way or the other, then the notion of a default disposition, at least – say, for people born under certain zodiacs to have certain temperaments or similar claims – would certainly seem to be against tradition. One wonders, though, why it is that Maimonides favors this particular formulation of free will. It is possible that the issue is hermeneutical – that Maimonides felt that there was some implication from the texts themselves that the Sages believed there could be no *mosheih* – but in light of this author's ignorance of any such text, it would be prudent to suspect that Maimonides is convinced of the point on logical grounds. In other words, the notion that man is given free will to then be rewarded for choosing correctly and punished for choosing incorrectly would make the notion that one can have an incorrigible [21] predisposition, one way or the other, ludicrous and simply untenable.

If so, we find ourselves not so far from the Greeks as we may have thought. Maimonides's rejection of the alternatives to belief in free will and theodicy is stated clearly as being on the basis of tradition – yet in the end, it would seem that in fact the tradition itself only proves as much as one invests one's own logic into it – or, in other words, the real thrust of the proof here is self-evident reason, and not tradition at all. Yet Maimonides claims that his proof is tradition. This seems, again, to reflect the extent of tradition's independence as an epistemological category in Maimonides's thought. Even when tradition speaks, reason coats its larynx; because the tradition relies upon the reason, so to speak, in order to make its meaning clear, the reason is subsumed under the heading of the ever-permeable tradition, even when it is discernable as the only part of the tradition-reason mass that is relevant.

Here, too, though, a different understanding of Maimonides's intent is quite easy to imagine. Until now it has been assumed that Maimonides here rejects both of the alternate worldviews on the thrust of tradition. It is true that Maimonides rejects the views on the grounds that man has no *mosheih* or *kofeh*, and that positive and negative occurrences are rewards and punishments and are caused by man's choices. But the explicit usage of tradition to uphold this opinion in the face of opposing views only occurs in discussing the philosophers. Thus, tradition is only explicitly used to reject happenstance. Whatever technical issues arise with respect to what authority proves that man has free will without predispositions, it is certainly the authority of tradition, the meaning of which is perfectly clear, that insists on man's will being the ultimate cause of subsequent positive and negative occurrences, and thus rejects any alternate views. Thus, while it seems that Maimonides uses the authority of tradition to reject both the astrologers and the philosophers, reading the argument as stemming from tradition alone only with regard to the philosophers would avoid drawing the aforementioned conclusions about the independence and permeability of tradition.

III. The Suggestions to Circumvent the Sages

Perhaps the most telling of all with regards to the nature of tradition are the arguments Maimonides did not advance, i.e. those pieces of evidence that might have had the authority of tradition yet did not seem to weigh into the deliberation. If we are to assume some sort of tradition status for the confirmed-as-wise Greek philosophers, for example, Sarah Pessin raises the problem that several authorities that Maimonides viewed favorably and seem to be no less worthy than their opponents did, in fact, believe in astrology. [22] Even without Pessin's observations, Maimonides himself seems equally unaffected by the fact that the philosophers he quotes had agreed that the fortunes of men come about by chance. And perhaps the most revealing issue, especially as Maimonides addresses it directly, is that of the Sages and their frequent assumption of the veracity of various astrological contentions throughout their literature. One wonders if and why tradition does not matter in these instances, and what their exclusion can tell about the nature of tradition. Maimonides explains, at least with regard to the matter of the Sages, some of the picture:

> I know that you may search and find sayings of some individual sages in the Talmud and Midrashoth whose words appear to maintain that at the moment of a man's birth the stars will cause such and such to happen to him. Do not regard this as a difficulty, for it is not fitting for a man to abandon the prevailing law and raise once again the counterarguments and replies [that preceded its enactment]. Similarly, it is not proper to abandon matters of reason that have already been verified by proofs, shake loose of them, and depend upon the words of a single one of the sages from whom possibly the matter was hidden. Or there may be an allusion in those words; or they may have been said with a view to the times and the business before him. (You surely know how many of the verses of the Holy Law are not to be taken literally. Since it is known through proofs of reason that it is impossible for the thing to be literally so, [Onqelos] the Translator rendered it in a form that reason can abide.) A man should never cast his reason behind him, for the eyes are set in front, not it back. [23]

Maimonides here offers three [24] reasons as to why these rabbinic opinions do not pose a problem, and all are set within the context of the fact that the opinions are only minority views. [25] First, the espouser of the opinion could simply have been misinformed (this possibility would certainly explain the problem of the alternate philosophical views as well, and in fact is likely the best suited of Maimonides's suggestions here to do so [26]); second, there may be some deeper meaning to the statement; and third, the statement may have been made as an outgrowth of the then-current scientific theory, only intended to reflect it but not necessarily to endorse it. Given these three options, and this context, Maimonides feels that there is no good reason to abandon otherwise solid logic in the face of this so-called opposing tradition.

In the latter two suggestions we find again the fundamental weakness of tradition; for in deriving knowledge from *other* sources, we tend to derive specific meanings. But in tradition (or at least the kind that comes in the form of literature), all that can be said to be true is a string of letters that form specific words and sentences, *not* specific meanings or intentions. Thus, Maimonides here reminds the reader that all of the statements of the Sages were either intended literally or figuratively, and all scientific propositions may have been assumed either as an endorsement or simply as an act of convenience without attaching any particular authority to them. Each statement could just as easily be one or the other; or, if there is some default, one does not seem to need to go to great lengths to demonstrate why the statement should be put into the other category. This flexibility allows Maimonides to shift tradition into almost whatever position he would need it to take to avoid a contradiction between tradition and other epistemologically sound facts. Thus, again, as Ralph Lerner puts it, "... Maimonides is led to the case...where tradition and reason pointing different directions. In this...case, it is tradition that must yield." [27]

However, some brief speculation into a similar issue may serve to bolster the strength of tradition somewhat. Never, as was previously mentioned, does Maimonides seem to stop and consider the veracity of the philosophers' views on happenstance; this is because it is against tradition. Yet might not tradition yield to some degree of reinterpretation, to allow for this view? Doesn't the possibility exist that the notion of reward and punishment could simply be a metaphor, so to speak? [28] Some distinction needs to be drawn between those statements that support astrology and those that support reward and punishment.

Here, again, any suggestions would be purely speculative. One could easily suggest that there is some textual basis for a distinction, some difference in emphasis or connotation in the way the ideas are written that indicates the literal intention of one and the possible figurative intention of the other. This idea is especially appealing in light of Maimonides's belief that the doctrine of reward and punishment is not only true, but a tenet of Jewish faith. [29] Alternatively, one could suggest a difference stemming from external pressures; i.e. that only in the context of compelling proofs indicating something to the contrary of a statement of the Sages is it correct to begin speculating on the possible alternative ways of reading the statement. Maimonides certainly agrees, as quoted earlier, that reinterpretation of both the Bible and the literature of the Sages is often necessary in the face of compelling evidence. Perhaps it is exclusively in this context. Either of these suggestions would limit to at least some extent the otherwise extreme flexibility of tradition.

The first suggestion Maimonides offers, though, that "possibly the matter was hidden," seems qualitatively different from the others. Here, tradition accommodates contradictory evidence by ceasing to exist. One *could* have assumed that any statement within the corpus of the literature of the Sages intended as authoritative is authoritative, and the only way to circumvent it would be to understand it figuratively. But it is not so; here, the suspicion that a statement had been based upon faulty or incomplete information allows Maimonides to suggest that the statement was simply wrong. Maimonides's assumption of his ability to even suggest such a possibility truly creates more confusion than any other of his claims as to what exactly tradition is, and precisely how potent a force it is in the world of epistemology.

It seems unclear whether there is any more to be said in terms of qualifying the implications of this statement beyond those suggestions already mentioned; namely, that (1) there may be discernable differences between the various statements of the Sages that indicate the susceptibility of some more than others to be disregarded or dismissed, and (2) that the presence of strong contradictory evidence may be a very relevant, or, more likely, a necessary factor in determining when it would be possible to disregard an otherwise authoritative statement. It is important to emphasize that these qualifications, assuming they are correct, *do* preclude all but the best of arguments from being able to interfere with the authority of tradition, and they also seem fair, in that, as *some* solution as to what to do when evidence is contradictory must be offered, these parameters not only leave tradition on the bottom only when faced with a proper epistemological argument, but also allow for the fallibility of human logic by providing ways for tradition to surmount even these arguments as well. Thus the blow to astrology might not be as harsh as it seems – but still, there remains a certain degree of surprise in the fact that anything could force a tradition-worthy statement to become irrelevant, without even going through the formalities of qualifying it as an allegorical statement or the like.

Conclusions

Maimonides felt tradition to be worthy of being counted as one of a very small number of acceptable sources of knowledge, and that fact is certainly telling. Certainly, Maimonides's utilization and rejection of potential sources of tradition seem, overall, to indicate a rather exploitable weakness in the nature of tradition-based knowledge, and this weakness, however limited it may be, will in certain situations cause it to bend or even break. Focus on the test cases, though, should not color our picture of the overall strength of tradition, which Maimonides sports proudly as the certifier of our beliefs. Still, when epistemological contradictions arise, tradition, central as it is, does seem to be the more susceptible branch of epistemology to yielding.

NOTES

[1] Alexander Altmann, "Astrology," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* (2nd ed.), ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007): 619; but see also Y. Tzvi Langerman, "Maimonides' Repudiation of Astrology," *Maimonidean Studies* 2 (1992): 123-158.

[2] Abraham bar Hiyya, for instance, is reported as having advised a friend to change the time of his wedding to a more favorable one, while such thinkers as Judah haLevi claimed that it is impossible to determine the influence of the stars with any precision. See Alexander Marx, "The Correspondence between the Rabbis of Southern France and Maimonides about Astrology," *HUCA* 3 (1926): 312-313, and Altmann, *Encyclopedia Judaica* 618.

[3] Abraham bar Hiyya claimed, against other members of his community, that consultation of Chaldeans in matters of astrology was forbidden, but heeding their words, or studying astrology one's self, were not. See Marx, "Correspondence."

[4] See Altmann, *Encyclopedia Judaica* 618-619

[5] For an analysis of Maimonides's arguments not found in the *Letter*, see Langerman, "Maimonides' Repudiation," and Sarah Pessin, "Maimonides' Opposition to Astrology: Critical Survey and Neoplatonic Response." *Al-Masaq: Islam and the Medieval Mediterranean* 13 (2001): 25-41.

[6] *Laws Concerning Idolatry* 1:1-8. See Langerman, "Maimonides' Repudiation," 129-131, for further analysis.

[7] Based on I. Shailat, *Igrot haRambam* vol. II (Ma`ale Adumim: Hotsa`at Ma`aliyot le-yad Yeshivat "Birkat Mosheh", 5747-5748 [1987-1987 or 1988]): 478-490. However, it is sometimes rendered more generally as "the nations" in Lerner's translation, "Letter on Astrology," in *Maimonides' Empire of Light*, R. Lerner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000): 178-187.

[8] Lerner, *Empire* 180, with minor changes based on Shailat's text.

[9] Lerner, *Empire* 184-185

[10] It would be fair to assume that the existence of the category of tradition altogether is based upon the other categories, as Sa'adia claims (see J. Guttman, *Philosophies of Judaism* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964): 64), this itself being somewhat circular. However, the degree of reliance here is much more severe, relating instead to the individual occurrences of tradition – one would only be able to claim proof from tradition for an assertion if there is existed a proof from logic for a second assertion made by the same source.

[11] Maimonides discusses such a situation later. See pp. 10-14

[12] It is important to emphasize the unique usefulness tradition would still present in the face of criticism from the views of logical positivists, where no demonstrability seems to exits through any other means.

[13] The distinction between dialectic and demonstrative proof may be relevant here.

[14] One could complicate the point further by suggesting that Maimonides is simply refuting the proof on the grounds of its own theory, but is not endorsing it himself. Yet this seems an unlikely thing to do in light of his constant insistence that all theories must be treated as questionable unless they come from one of the real epistemological categories.

[15] Maimonides' depiction of the history of monotheism and the generation of Abraham, in *Laws Concerning Idolatry* 1, seems potentially quite relevant to the topic of universally-accepted tradition butting heads with logic.

[16] Lerner, *Empire* 185

[17] Ibid.

[18] Babylonian Talmud, Shab. 156a

[19] See Altmann, *Encyclopedia Judaica* 618

[20] Shailat, *Igrot* 486.

[21] Maimonides certainly recognized the ability of innate dispositions to influence man's behavior, as is evident from his discussion in *Laws Concerning Dispostions* 1. If there is a difference to be found, then, between the notion of a mosheih stemming from an astrological source, which would contradict free will, and that of natural dispositions, which would not, it is most likely that in Maimonides' eyes, dispositions are mutable, and are in fact meant to be corrected. The mosheih of astrology, though, while it may be overcome, will always be present; thus the usage of "incorrigible."

[22] Pessin, Maimonides' *Opposition*

[23] Lerner, *Empire* 185-186

[24] Lerner, in "Maimonides' Letter on Astrology," (History of Religions 8 (1968): 156) counts four, for he includes the prudence of leaving resolved matters resolved as a separate argument to legitimize ignoring the Sages' opinions. Yet it seems from the text that Maimonides is presenting this point simply to explain his *motives* for disagreeing with, or circumventing, the Sages' opinions. Indeed, were it an argument, it would seem to be a thinly veiled repetition of the misinformation suggestion.

[25] Altmann (*Encyclopedia Judaica* 617) lists many instances where the veracity of astrology is assumed by different Sages. It is hard to know how to respond to the claim that this is a mere minority opinion – no standard has been set in this matter.

[26] The suggestions of allusion or the assumption of contemporary scientific theory without commitment to it wouldn't quite work, as the purpose behind the writing of these other sources was presumably to espouse their authors' true beliefs and theories, and there is no indication that hiding their true intent was important to them at all.

[27] Lerner, *Letter* 156. Here, "yield" would simply mean that the straightforward explanation would have to yield to a more subtle one; however, Maimonides' suggestion that one of the Sages may have missed something altogether, as will be discussed, truly does seem to make the full meaning of the term here warranted.

[28] In fact, some later thinkers employ such a method with regards to free will; see M. J. Leiner, *Sefer Me ha-Shiloah* (Bene Beraq: Mishor, 1990): 27.

[29] See Lerner, Empire 185. See also Maimonides' *Commentary to the Mishnah*, Sanhedrin 10.

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The Exception: The Failure to Implement "The Final Solution" in Nazi-Occupied Denmark During World War II

MOSHE MILLER

The Holocaust evokes images of millions of dead civilians, their brutal murderers, and the apathy of most of the bystanders. The case of Denmark presents a well-known exception to this image. While the story of the rescue of Danish Jewry during the Holocaust may be well known, the underlying reasons for *why* Denmark was the exceptional case are either not widely known or contested. Some have suggested that it was the peculiar circumstances of Denmark—its location, the time of the German action, the nature of the Jewish community, etc.—that engendered the unique response of the Danish people. Others have argued that it was primarily (though not *only*) the attitude of the Danish people toward human rights and its aversion to tyranny and oppression that accounts for their courageous efforts in saving their Jewish population when many other Europeans stood by idly as the Jews were exterminated. In this paper, I will argue in favor of the latter view, which I believe is the only factor that can truly explain the uniqueness of the Danish case. While many factors were certainly at work, the national character and culture of Denmark played the most important role.

Denmark's Jewish population on the eve of World War II was nearly eight thousand out of a total population of four million. Of these, over one thousand were recent immigrants from Poland and Russia, who had sought asylum in Denmark. The native Danish Jewish community was acculturated, and participated fully in their country's cultural life. This does not mean, however, that most Danish Jews were assimilated. Although there was a high rate of intermarriage, most Danish Jews maintained a sense of Jewish identity. The only official representation of the Jewish religion in Denmark was the Orthodox variety—the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen was (and still is) conducted along Orthodox lines, and the Chief Rabbis who served in the twentieth century were all Orthodox. Additionally, there was the Strictly-Orthodox *Mahzike HaDat* synagogue that was founded in 1910 by a former Chief Rabbi after a dispute with the Copenhagen community, which primarily served the needs of the East European immigrants. [1] (Since 1914, the synagogue was affiliated with the Orthodox Agudath Israel organization.) [2] Many members of the Great Synagogue, however, were less than strictly Orthodox in their personal practice. In many ways, then, the Danish Jewish community parallels that of Germany and England during the same period.

The ratio of Jews to Danes in Denmark is clearly smaller than that between Jews and Germans in Germany but the discrepancy is not so wide as to render all comparisons unjustified. There were approximately 500,000 German Jews amidst a population of forty million, making Jews approximately 1.25 percent of the population. In Denmark, where there were nearly 8,000 Jews amidst a population of four million, Jews constituted approximately 0.2 percent of the general population. [3] Although this figure is lower than the figure in Germany, it should be noted that the bulk of Danish Jewry resided in Copenhagen, where the ratio of Jews to Danes was clearly higher than the ratio nationwide. More important than the precise ratio of Jews to Danes as compared to the ratio of Jews to Germans is the prominence of Jews in the cultures of their adopted homelands. It is clear that Jews played a disproportionate role in the cultural life of Germany. This very fact was exploited by the Nazis for their propagandistic purposes. However, it is equally clear that Jews also played a disproportionate role in the cultural life of Denmark. [4] By contrast, this fact was *not* exploited by the Danes for propagandistic purposes. Thus, although there *was* a significant difference between the ratio of Jews to Christians in Denmark and that in Germany, this factor alone clearly cannot account for the different images of Jews in Danish and German societies.

Before we examine theories regarding the reasons for the rescue of Danish Jewry, let us briefly recount the events themselves. Germany invaded Denmark on April 9, 1940 despite the Non-Aggression Pact signed in the previous year. The Danish army surrendered within hours to the superior German forces in the hopes that Germany would make good on its promise not to infringe on Danish sovereignty. [5] The Danish government presumed that its minorities, such as

Jews, would not be denied their rights in any way. [6] In the early period of German occupation, there seemed to be a sense that life would not be made difficult for Danish Jews. This would soon change.

In the summer of 1942, Werner Best, the plenipotentiary of Germany to Denmark, notified Denmark's Prime Minister, Erik Scavenius, that anti-Semitic measures would be introduced in Denmark. Scavenius replied that should such a move be made, "he and his entire cabinet would resign in protest." [7] The early relationship between Germany and Denmark was cold but free of open antagonism, prompting Hitler to declare Denmark "a model protectorate." [8] Soon, however, the Danish people began to feel that the German occupation was encroaching on their freedom. A Danish resistance movement began to emerge; it took part in the sabotage of German military installations, disrupting Germany's hold on Danish society. The situation reached a crisis level in the summer of 1943, prompting the Germans to declare a state of emergency in Denmark and to suspend Danish governmental autonomy which, in turn, prompted the Danish government to resign in protest. [9] It was this act that led to the initiation of anti-Jewish persecutions.

On September 8, 1943, Werner Best sent a telegram to Berlin urging immediate action to bring about a solution to the "Jewish problem in Denmark." [10] The shipping expert at the German embassy in Copenhagen, Georg F. Duckwitz (a member of the Nazi party), learned of this telegram and resolved to play no role whatsoever in implementing it. It was Duckwitz who then informed the leaders of the Danish Social Democratic Party, whose chairman was Hans Hedtoft, of the German plans for the Jews. Duckwitz "was white with indignation and shame" at the plans of his German superiors. Hedtoft personally informed the president of the Jewish community, C. B. Henriques, whose first reaction was to exclaim, "You are lying." [11]
After Henriques accepted the situation, word was spread to other Jewish leaders and acting Chief Rabbi Marcus Melchior informed his congregation on the morning before the Jewish New Year that tomorrow there would be no services. (The Nazis planned their operation specifically for the evening after the holiday, which was Friday night [the Sabbath], because they knew Jews would be home with their families at that time.) [12]

The Danes arranged for Jews to be hidden on the night of the search (October 1), both in private homes as well as in hospitals and churches. The Germans were able to arrest only 472 Jews by the end of October 1943; these were shipped to the Theresienstadt concentration camp. [13] (Most of these survived the war; 51 of them died in the camp.) [14] An elaborate plan to ship the hidden Jews to neighboring neutral Sweden was developed by the Danish underground. Over the next few weeks, these Jews were transported by Danish fishing boats — at great risk to the lives of the fishermen and others involved in the operation — to Sweden where they lived safely for the duration of the war. [15] Nearly 95% of Danish Jewry survived the Holocaust.

It should be noted that Denmark's rallying behind its Jews did not signify any specific philo-Semitism. Thus, the aid that was extended to Jews included only Jewish residents of Denmark, both citizens with established ties to the country as well as recent immigrants from Eastern Europe who had not yet obtained citizenship and were not well integrated into society. However, from 1933 onward, there were limits on the number of immigrants that were allowed into Denmark. Hence, some Jewish refugees fleeing Germany were turned back at the Danish border or were given temporary visas. [16] However, it is clear that this policy was not directed against Jews; these laws were in effect in all European countries at this time, intended primarily to combat unemployment among the native population. The financial crisis in the United States had repercussions throughout the world, including Denmark, and its government felt compelled to regulate the entrance of immigrants to the country. In any case, the Jewish community of Denmark organized a committee to deal with Jewish refugees from Germany, some of whom were able to stay in Denmark while others were sent to other countries. [17]

There were occasional outbursts of philo-Semitism, however, such as was evidenced in the following incident:

> In January 1943, at a student festival in Gjørslev, the Danish students announced that they wished everyone in the audience to participate in the singing of two songs—national anthems of countries dear to the hearts of the Danes. The Germans present were not at all surprised when the first song presented was the Danish national anthem, but were quite startled and chagrined when, following the Danish anthem, instead of hearing, as they may have expected, "Deutschland über Alles," the Zionist flag was unfurled and several Danish students sang "Hatikvah," the Zionist national anthem. [18]

The question of why specifically the Jews of Denmark were rescued, while virtually all other European countries [19] that were either occupied by Germany or under its direct control lost large proportions of their Jewish populations to the Nazi genocide has been raised by a number of scholars. Often, pragmatic considerations are said to have been decisive. The small number of Jews living in Denmark at the outbreak of the Second World War and their high degree of acculturation into Danish society are sometimes cited as key factors in their rescue. However, we have already noted that the percentage of Jews in Danish society, though lower than that in German society, was still substantial enough to have raised the ire of anti-Semites.

Furthermore, as noted, the contributions of Jews to general society —in the arts, sciences, intelligentsia, etc.—in Denmark paralleled those of the Jews in Germany. [20] Since anti-Semites often seize upon Jewish involvement in the various spheres of the majority culture's national life as proof of either undue Jewish influence or a Jewish conspiracy to corrupt or take over society, we would have expected this phenomenon to have occurred in Denmark in a manner mirroring its occurrence in Germany. Instead, we find the virtual non-existence of Danish anti-Semitism on the eve of World War II. [21]

Another factor often cited is the character of German rule in Denmark as com- pared to that in other European countries. The Danes were treated relatively benevolently, whereas, for example, the Poles were treated rather brutally by the occupying Germans. Thus, the argument goes, the Poles were in need of a scapegoat who could be blamed for their problems and who could deflect the Germans' attention away from them. Further, a population that was allowed to carry on with its life relatively undisturbed was in a better position to come to the aid of a persecuted religious minority than a country whose entire civic life was disrupted.

Yet, this point can be refuted on purely logical grounds. Jews can either be turned into a scapegoat, those who bear the brunt of a population angered by its treatment by the occupying force or, conversely, a sense of solidarity with the Jews can be developed as a result of the sense that those with a common enemy ought to be friends. We thus cannot scientifically gauge the relation of common suffering *per se* [22] as a basis of accounting for the differing amounts of aid offered Jews in Poland and in Denmark. However, a directly related factor—the inhuman conditions that Poles found themselves in—is of great significance in judging the *moral culpability* of the actors involved. This aspect of the issue will be discussed further below.

Further, it is alleged, the *length* of the German occupation played a significant role in the success or defeat of the Nazis' plan against the Jews. Where the German rule was followed immediately by action against the Jews, as in Poland, there was little possibility of resistance; where the occupation lasted for several years before anti-Jewish measures were taken, as in Denmark, resistance had a greater chance of success.

While there seems to be some truth to this view, [23] it oversimplifies a more complex picture. The reason that anti-Jewish measures were not taken in Denmark before 1943 was due to *the opposition of the Danish people and government* to such actions. [24] By contrast, the Nazis expected a high degree of collaboration on the part of the Poles in rounding up Jews for deportation. The same could be said of Austria, Latvia, Lithuania, and Yugoslavia. [25]

Helen Fine has concluded [26] that one of the most pertinent factors, possibly the decisive one, in assessing this issue ought to be the degree of pre-war anti-Semitism in the different European countries. It is logical to assume that in a country that produced a strong anti-Semitic movement independent of the agitation of Nazi Germany, the population would be likely to display less sympathy for Jews who are victimized by the occupying Germans. On this count, there is little debate: Denmark has virtually no history of anti-Semitism. When the idea of creating a Jewish ghetto was suggested in 1690 by a Danish police chief, he was dismissed from his job. Immediately after, the Danish Parliament passed a resolution condemning the idea of a ghetto as "an inhuman way of life." [27] Following the lead of France, Denmark passed a bill in 1814 granting full civic rights to *all* citizens, without regard for race or religion. [28]
By contrast, most of the European countries that had such a high rate of pro-Nazi collaboration had a prior history of discrimination against Jews, in some cases in effect well into the twentieth century.

Many of these countries passed bills granting Jews full civic rights much later than Denmark had done so. More importantly, even countries that had passed bills guaranteeing equality did so only after undergoing a long and arduous process in which the question of the Jews' "suitability" for equal rights was discussed and debated. The Jews had to "prove" their readiness for emancipation. Often, after the equality was granted, a significant anti-Semitic movement mobilized to revoke the privileges that Jews had been granted. Germany is the most well-known example of this phenomenon. [29] By contrast, Denmark faced no opposition to its equalization bill—it was passed without protest and became an accepted norm thereafter. As noted, anti-Semitic agitation was minimal even in the 1930s, and that too was spurred on primarily by the German minority. It is thus not surprising that there was general sympathy for the plight of Jews when they became the targets of German violence.

Other European countries occupied or controlled by Germany had produced sizable anti-Semitic movements before the war. According to B. C. Pinchuk, [30] "Poland on the eve of the invasion was one of the more antisemitic countries in Europe. There were severe limitations on Jewish higher education, job discrimination that reached the level of almost complete exclusion from state employment, boycotts of Jewish-owned businesses, and widespread street violence reaching often pogrom levels." Similarly, Slovakia, Croatia, Rumania, Austria, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, and Serbia, [31] among others, had all produced sizable anti-Semitic movements by the 1930s. There is a clear correlation between prewar anti-Semitism and failure to aid Jews during the Holocaust.

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what occurred during the war, we should draw attention to the position of the Jewish community in Denmark before the advent of World War II. In April of 1933, King Christian X paid an official visit to the Great Synagogue in Copenhagen to commemorate its one hundredth anniversary. This was at a time during which Germany was imposing an iron grip on its Jewish population, three months after Hitler's ascent to power. "The event was a source of joy and admiration at the very time when our brethren on the other side of the border were being humiliated by their government," wrote one contemporary Danish Jew. [32] Leni Yahil regards this event as having been of deep significance: "from the beginning of the Nazi persecutions it was made clear to the Jews of Denmark that the Danish people and its leaders, with the king foremost, were fully and unreservedly on their side." [33]

Helen Fine has noted that "the Danish consensus was a product not simply of the absence of Jew-hatred but also of the acceptance of the positive obligations of Christians towards Jews." This assessment is confirmed by a reading of a first-hand account of the rescue of Danish Jews written by a member of the Danish resistance, *October '43*. The author, Aage Bertelsen, tells us:

> It is absolutely necessary, in the name of civilization and humanity, to insist on the right of the Jews, even the orthodox Jews, to live their lives within the framework of a civic community in conformity with their traditions, their philosophy, and their religion. One of the supporting pillars of our democratic civilization is shaken when antisemitism gets the upper hand. [35]

That Bertelsen's statement is not mere rhetoric is confirmed by the fact that the Danish Churches, after having learned of the Nazi plan for the Jews, issued proclamations of protest (authored by Bishop Fuglsang-Damgaard) from the pulpits stating:

> We understand by freedom of religion the right to exercise our faith in God in accordance with vocation and conscience and in such a way that race and religion can never in themselves be a reason for depriving a man of his rights, freedom, or property. Despite different religious views, we shall therefore struggle to insure *the continued guarantee to our Jewish brothers and sisters of the same freedom we ourselves treasure more than life itself...* Our conscience obliges us...to maintain the law and to protest against any violation of rights. We will therefore unambiguously declare our allegiance to the doctrine that bids us obey God more than man. [36]

While churches in other European countries did issue statements of protest against Nazi brutality, none of them expressed the sort of solidarity with their Jewish "brothers and sisters" that the Danish Church issued. In the case of most of the other churches, the main issue was the irreconcilability of inhumane treatment of people with Christianity, a point that was also made by the Danish Church. The latter, however, exceeded all other churches in expressing the view that Jews are to be considered no different than Christians in the sphere of human rights and that absolute *struggle for the rights of Jews* was demanded by the circumstances. [37]

Even more striking was the ecstatic reaction of the Danish people to the returning Jews. Here is one representative passage from Yahil's classic account:

> In Haderslev the returning Danes [i.e. Jewish Danes] met a tumultuous welcome: flags were waved, songs were sung, and the schoolchildren and the whole population lined the streets and showered them with flowers, sweets, and cigarettes. Cilla Cohen describes how people were beside themselves with joy. The liberated found it difficult to grasp that all this joy was directed at them... [38]

Rabbi Marcus Melchior, who became Denmark's Chief Rabbi in 1947, tells us of the most persuasive evidence of the goodwill of the Danish people:

> When all is said and done, one doesn't yet know anything really vital about a nation merely because, as the Danes did during those days, it sends its Jews away under the very nose of the enemy, and because it helps them reach a foreign country. *It just might be* that, basically, one was delighted to get rid of the Jews—even in such a decent manner. While some nations banished or murdered their Jews, Denmark rescued hers—and rid herself of them. The decisive proof, however, that the world's high opinion of Denmark is correct, is to be found in *the manner in which we were received, when we came back home...* It is Denmark's undying honor, *the truly great deed*, that the repatriates were met with a hearty 'welcome home;' that there was a sincere, and not just a hypocritical, expression of joy at our good fortune; that many insisted that only now that the Danish Jews were back home was Denmark *whole* again. The stain cast by the occupation power on the Danish coat of arms when, in 1943, it declared the Jews had been 'eliminated from Danish society,' [39] had at long last been washed away. Denmark had shown herself able to defend her Jews, and this provided a sense of cleanliness and pride. Sure, there were the very best reasons for Denmark's good name in the wide world: 1943—all very well! 1945—all-decisive! [40]

This primary source reveals that there can no longer be any doubt that Danish attitudes toward human rights, which they specifically applied to their Jewish citizens, played a decisive role in the rescue of Danish Jewry. As important as the other factors that have been cited are, [41] they cannot account for the post-war reception of Jews in Denmark. Clearly,

the length and character of German occupation, the proximity of neutral Sweden, and the size of the Jewish community, among others, cannot explain why Jews were given a hearty "welcome back home" when they returned to Denmark. [42] Even the fact that Jews did not constitute a large percentage of the population, which could serve to lessen popular hostility toward them, does not explain why many Danes felt that Denmark was not yet "whole" (in Rabbi Melchior's words) until their Jews returned. The only explanation for this must be the Danish conception of human rights and equality.

The question that now remains to be asked is: Did Danes have a propensity for tolerance that other Europeans lacked? Were Germans innately chauvinistic and xenophobic, while Danes were inherently universalistic and humanistic? Clearly, for anyone who rejects racialist pseudo-science, the answer to the above must be a resounding "No." [43] Nevertheless, we can trace aspects of Danish culture that contributed towards the humane attitude Danes displayed during the Holocaust. Religious historian Jaroslav Pelikan [44] has traced Danish tolerance to the influence of "the greatest spiritual force in Denmark's history," Nikolai F. S. Grundtvig (1783-1872). Grundtvig has been credited with the foundation of a "Christian humanism" that would have decisive influence on Danish attitudes toward non-Christians and non-believing Christians in their midst. [45] Grundtvig emphasized the creation of man as the central event in all of history. This contrasts with other Christian denominations' emphasis on the events recorded in the New Testament as the most significant aspects of religion. Grundtvig's view led to the popular Danish motto: "First a human being, then a Christian: this alone is life's order." One of Grundtvig's poems states, "Gently the Gospel fulfills its task; mercy is given to all who ask." The oneness of God and, hence, the brotherhood of mankind, was the essential teaching of Grundtvig. It seems likely that this conception, fostered by the Danish Lutheran Church, and widely held even by non-devout Danes, played a significant role in the rescue of the persecuted Danish Jews during World War II. [46]

It seems that Europeans, who were faced with the most horrific circumstances during the Second World War, made moral choices to behave in the manner they did. This is the heart of Daniel Goldhagen's thesis that alleges that ordinary Germans who participated in the genocidal policies of the Nazis were acting on ideas they held regarding Jews and their supposed pernicious influence on society. The need to remove them from society by any means necessary—what Goldhagen terms "eliminationist antisemitism"—was the overriding motivation for the deeds perpetrated by these people. [47] It is no accident, then, that Goldhagen is quoted on the jacket of Herbert Pundick's *In Denmark It Could Not Happen* [48] as saying:

> The countless and courageous acts of ordinary Danes confirm that the fate of Jews during the Holocaust rested in the hands of millions of individuals who made decisions to help either Jews or those who sought to kill them. This...conveys why *In Denmark It Could Not Happen* and, in so doing, helps us understand why it did happen elsewhere.

Does this view ignore the numerous other factors that played a role in the genocide of the Jews? Was it really that simple: people were free to choose how they wished to conduct themselves vis-a-vis the German occupiers and were motivated primarily by ideology? J. H. Grudzinski is quoted as saying, "I have often found that man is human in human conditions, and I have always thought cruelly nonsensical the attempts to judge him by the deeds done in inhuman conditions—as if water could be measured by fire, and earth by hell." [49] We have to accept this assessment as entirely valid in *inhuman conditions*. Thus, Poles cannot be said to have been entirely free moral actors, applying their posture toward Jews to the amount of aid they offered them. Clearly, they were greatly constrained by the severity of the German occupation—which included the penalty of death to any Pole caught harboring Jews—and cannot be judged as moral actors. The fact that at least two to three hundred Poles, and probably more, were executed by the Nazis for harboring Jews [50] was surely a great impediment to potential rescuers from taking the risks necessary to save Jews. Thus, an important distinction, not sufficiently recognized, ought to be made between *positive action* to aid Jews and the *passive inaction resulting from fear or inability* to do more. Therefore, it is imprudent to judge the moral failings of Poles based on what they did *not* do. [51] Insofar as they were living in inhuman conditions, with the threat of death looming over their heads, they cannot be said to have been acting as free moral actors in the decisions they made.

Goldhagen's thesis is more useful when comparing the fate of Jews in Western European countries, whose Christian populations were regarded by the Germans as fellow "Aryans." The fact that the Danes rallied behind their Jews, refused to implement any anti-Jewish measures, and galvanized a large-scale rescue operation for them ought to be contrasted favorably with the fate of Jews in France, Holland, Belgium, and Austria. In those countries, despite the lack of brutal measures applied to the Christian population, large portions of their Jewish communities were exterminated by the Nazis. Popular attitudes toward Jews in these countries varied from some sympathy to general apathy or hatred—and the result was the partial success of the Nazi Final Solution. Despite the favorable treatment meted out to the Christian populations, there was general compliance with Nazi directives on the part of the govern-

ment apparatus. [52] (This contrasts with Denmark where, as noted, the Nazis hesitated to agitate the population by insisting on the carrying out of anti-Jewish measures.) The one other exception was Finland, where the government adamantly refused to hand over its Jews when the Germans demanded they do so. [53] This was despite the fact that Finland was actually an ally of Nazi Germany, unlike any of the other Western European countries cited above. The explanation, while necessarily taking into account the smaller Jewish population in Finland than in the other countries, must surely lie in the virtual nonexistence of anti-Semitism in Finland, just like in Denmark. This fact corroborates Helen Fein's thesis that the level of prewar anti-Semitism bore a direct relation to the success or failure of implementing Nazi policies in the countries in question. This is why France, Holland, Belgium, and Austria, which had considerable anti-Semitic movements in the prewar period, fared much worse than did Denmark and Finland, which had no sizable anti-Semitic movements in that period.

To be sure, there was one factor that was crucial for the ability of the Danes to rescue their Jewish population: Denmark's proximity to neutral Sweden, which accepted the Danish Jews. Without this, it is not clear what the fate of Denmark's Jews would have been. What is, however, abundantly clear is that the treatment of Jews in Denmark would still have stood in stark contrast to virtually every other European country. The refusal to implement anti-Jewish measures and the solidarity with the Jews displayed by the Danes would, naturally, still have occurred even in the absence of a nearby neutral country in which to place the refugee Jews. The same cannot be said of other European states. The fate of the Jews of Norway testifies to this, as emerges from Helen Fein's assessment:

> The difference between the ranks of Jewish evaders of Denmark and Norway, both of whom were offered refuge in Sweden, illustrates this [i.e., the centrality of the refusal of local authorities to comply with Nazi orders] well. It was not the fortuitous proximity of the Swedish coast that explains the immediate rescue of 94% of Denmark's Jewry but the Danes' unity of will, which led to immediate organization of a defense movement. *It was easier to reach Sweden from Norway* because escape routes had been earlier established over the adjacent border...while the hazardous sea route by which the Jews escaped from Denmark had not been devised before the Danes organized the rescue of their Jews. But only 57% of Norwegian Jews escaped, the exodus...beginning apparently after the raid by Quisling's police imprisoning male Jews over 16 without warning in October 1942. *The consensus of state and social authority against discrimination in Denmark, as contrasted with the dissensus in Norway under Quisling's rule, explains the readiness of the Danes to mobilize so swiftly to prevent the seizure of the Jews* and the availability of the Danish police to help the Jews circumvent German police while the Norwegian police rounded them up. [54]

Thus, the only factor that can adequately account for the uniqueness of Denmark during the Holocaust is the national character of the Danish people and its history of tolerance and equality for all religious and ethnic groups. This type of assessment is undoubtedly unpopular in many scholarly circles today. It sounds too romantic, too idealized, to constitute a realistic explanation of the rescue of Danish Jewry. In a generation that has made dispassionate scholarship a hallmark of historical research, there seems to be little room for such a quaint and sentimental view. Nevertheless, the other explanations that have been offered cannot account for the Danish case; they play an important role, no doubt, but without the climate of tolerance and humanism prevalent in Denmark during the Nazi occupation, the other factors would not have been sufficient to allow events to occur as they did. Indeed, if the Holocaust was the darkest moment in human history, the heroic rescue of Denmark's Jews from the Nazis by its Christian population will forever stand out as one of humanity's brightest moments.

NOTES

[1] Marcus Melchior, *A Rabbi Remembers*, pp. 26-37; Bamberger, *The Viking Jews*, p. 66.

[2] *Encyclopedia Judaica* 5, p. 953.

[3] Nehama Tec, *When Light Pierced the Darkness*, p. 7.

[4] The sources treating Danish Jewry do not make a point of highlighting disproportionate Jewish representation in Denmark's cultural life for obvious reasons. Nevertheless, this fact can be inferred from Bertelsen, *October '43*, passim, esp. pp. 7-8, and Melchior, *A Rabbi Remembers*, passim. See also Bamberger, *The Viking Jews*, pp. 109-113 and *Encyclopedia Judaica* 5, p. 1537.

[5] Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, pp. 19-20.

[6] Barfod, *The Holocaust Failed in Denmark*, p. 9.

[7] Flender, op. cit., p. 32.

[8] Flender, ibid, p. 25.

[9] Werner, *Conspiracy of Decency*, pp. 23-25.

[10] Ibid, pp. 29-31.

[11] Bertelsen, *October '43*, Introduction by Hans Hedtoft, pp. 17-19.

[12] Yahil, *The Rescue*, pp. 183-184; Werner, *A Conspiracy of Decency*, pp. 41-42.

[13] Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, p. 64.

[14] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, p. 148. The Jews sent to Theresienstadt "were protected by the constant inquiry and intercession of Danish officials, and their health was maintained by packages sent monthly by other Danes, often strangers." Ibid.

[15] The details of the hazardous journey to Sweden are chronicled dramatically by A. Bertelsen, a participant in the rescue, in his *October '43*, as well as by Marcus Melchior, a rescued Jew, in his *A Rabbi Remembers*. Synopses of these events can also be found in the secondary literature on the rescue of Danish Jewry.

[16] Werner, *A Conspiracy of Decency*, p. 15.

[17] Bamberger, *The Viking Jews*, pp. 119-120.

[18] Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, p. 33.

[19] The notable exceptions to this are Finland, Bulgaria, and Albania. We discuss the Finnish case below.

[20] This is not to suggest that the presence of Jews in Danish society *equaled* that of Jews in German society but only to note that the Danish Jewish presence was *also* conspicuous.

[21] There was, to be sure, a Danish Nazi Party (including several subgroups) with its own anti-Semitic newspaper, but its following was small, receiving less than 2 percent of the 1939 vote, the bulk of which coming from *ethnic Germans* living in Denmark. See Werner, *Conspiracy of Decency*, p. 13 and Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 84-102, for a thorough account of Nazism in Denmark. Cf. ibid, p. 383: "The Nazi minority in the country was in fact always isolated."

It should be noted that the acculturation of Jews in Denmark does contrast with the cultural separatism of Jews in Poland, who were also a much more sizable portion of the general population. Taken together with their low level of cultural integration, this made them more conspicuous and may well have been a factor in the development of anti-Semitic movements there and may also have played a role in the low rate of rescue there. My point here is to contrast Denmark with other West European countries where Jews were accul- turated and represented a smaller portion of the population—particularly Germany, the center of European anti-Semitism—in order to demonstrate that a small, integrated Jewish community does not necessarily lead to absence of anti-Semitic sentiment. That this was the case in Denmark is what made it unique.

[22] This issue has been discussed and debated in *Polin* 2 (1987), pp. 338-358, in the context of Nazi-occupied Poland. Conflicting first hand accounts of the Jewish experience in Poland are recorded there. It is clear from that discussion that it is not possible to determine in any precise manner the role of mutual suffering in the question of whether Jews were aided or abandoned. We therefore cannot take this factor into account when examining other European countries and their record vis-à-vis their Jewish population.

[23] See below regarding the relevance of the nature of German control as it relates to thwarting any resistance to the genocide by employing the entire state apparatus to carry out the Nazis' goals.

[24] The German emissary to Denmark, Cecil von Renthe-Fink, wrote to his superiors in Berlin on April 9, 1940 (six days after the German occupation began): "If we were to go any further than strictly necessary (for instance in the matter of persecuting Jews in Denmark) it would have a paralyzing effect and cause serious disturbances..." Cited in Pundik, *In Denmark it Could not Happen*, p. 142.

[25] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, pp. 90-91. The case of Yugoslavia is treated extensively in Cohen, Serbia's Secret War, who calls into question the view that Serbia was largely anti-Nazi and pro-Jewish.

[26] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, passim. See especially pp. 79-92. See also Tec, op. cit., p. 7.

[27] Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, p. 30.

[28] Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 5-6.

[29] See Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto*, for a thorough analysis of this process.

[30] B. C. Pinchuk, "Facing Hitler and Stalin," Chapter 5 of J. Zimmerman (ed.), *Contested Memories*, p. 63.

[31] Discussions of all of these countries can be found in Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*. I have added Serbia in accordance with Philip Cohen's study, *Serbia's Secret War*, which revises earlier views on Serbian attitudes toward Jews based on previously unexamined documentary sources.

[32] Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 13-14.

[33] Ibid, p. 14.

[34] *Accounting for Genocide*, p. 146. Yahil, *The Rescue*, emphasizes that the Danish defense of the Jews was regarded as part of its general struggle for freedom: "[The Danes] knew that freedom and equality were indivisible and that in defending the Jews they were in fact defending their own freedom" (p. 389).

[35] *October '43*, p. 228.

[36] Cited in Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 235-236. Also cited in Barford, *The Holocaust Failed in Denmark*, p. 15. Emphasis is my own.

[37] For example, the Greek Orthodox Church was rather tepid in its defense of Jews and made a point of noting that it did not "intend to defend or criticize international Jewry and its activities in the sphere of the political and financial problems of the world." The protest of the French Catholic Church was more strongly-worded and without disclaimers. It was, however, devoid of the Danish conception of brotherhood with Jews; instead, it appealed to Christian compassion and justice. See Fine, *Accounting for Genocide*, pp. 117-118.

[38] Yahil, p. 317. Cf. the reaction of Chief Rabbi Friediger to the visit of the Swedish Red Cross (acting at the behest of the Danish government) to the Theresienstadt concentration camp: "I told myself that if heaven opened its gates to me, the grandeur I would see there would make no greater impression upon me than this message. I remained perfectly motionless, paralyzed... Was it once more a dream? One of my own self-constructed dreams? No, it was a reality." Cited in Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, p. 250.

[39] This refers to the statement of Werner Best, in defense of the failure to round up the Danish Jews, that at least the Danish Jews have been removed from society.

[40] Melchior, *A Rabbi Remembers*, pp. 151-152. Cf. Flender, *Rescue in Denmark*, p. 254, for R. Melchior's statement to the author: "When we returned, our fellow Danes did say 'welcome back.' And how they said it—emotionally, with open arms and hearts. Our...property and money had been taken care of and returned to us. In most cases we found our homes newly painted, and there were flowers on the table. You cannot imagine how happy it made us feel...The welcome we received from the King, from everybody, is the most important event in Danish-Jewish history."

[41] Cf. Joshua D. Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, Introduction, p. 8, who notes: "Comparative studies have revealed a multiplicity of factors accounted for the fate of different Jewries during the Holocaust. The most formidable barrier to rescue was the type and character of German military and civilian

rule... Where German occupying forces had total control over government machinery, they used all the means at their disposal to exterminate the Jews without any toleration for individual or group opposition... Timing was also significant. In those countries where the Nazi Final Solution was applied prior to the formation of an effective underground resistance movement (Holland, in particular), the Jews were deprived of aid from the only anti-German force in the country. All these factors reveal that the most optimal conditions for aiding Jews existed in countries such as Denmark and Italy..." While I agree with Zimmerman's assessment, I would highlight the fact that the issues of police collaboration with the Nazis and the Church's response to the persecutions were crucial in the states cited. Denmark contrasts with these states favorably regarding these factors (no police collaboration and strong, unified Church protest), which can only be attributed to its culture of tolerance and humanism. This is why I regard this factor as the most decisive of them all.

[42] Cf. Werner, *A Conspiracy of Decency*, pp. 150-154, for details on the warm reception of Jews when they returned to Denmark and the care that was given to all the personal belongings they had left behind when they fled. One Jewish woman recalled the condition of her home, which had been used by members of the Danish resistance in her absence: "[It] was in perfect condition on our return. I remember my surprise at opening my closets in my room and seeing all the things I owned... My father had at the last moment transferred his considerable wine cellar to a friend's house. The friend was very upset that *one* bottle of brandy was missing and kept apologizing for this to my father!" (p. 151). See also Bamberger, *The Viking Jews*, p. 146, who notes that his home, which had been prepared for the Jewish New Year—and which he had to desert before the holiday to go into hiding—looked exactly as he had left it nearly two years earlier (including set table and arranged candlesticks!) when he returned in May 1945. There were, of course, exceptions to this general pattern. See Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 377-378.

[43] Cf. Yahil, *The Rescue of Danish Jewry*, pp. 382, 385: "The Danish people are a normal people." "The Germans under the Third Reich did not behave like a normal people... The normal man's instinctive shrinking from murder was replaced by the suppression of this abhorrence as the desirable end... [These darker sides of man] found an echo in certain elements in almost every nation. Denmark was one of the few countries where they failed to gain a foothold..."

[44] J. Pelikan, "Grudtvig's Influence," in Leo Goldberger (ed.), *The Rescue of the Danish Jews*, pp. 173-182.

[45] Ibid, pp. 174-176.

[46] Ibid, pp. 177-180. Grundtvig's humanistic influence on Denmark's culture obviously contrasts with Martin Luther's more chauvinistic conception of Christian and German identity, which undoubtedly had deleterious effects on German attitudes toward Jews. It is noteworthy that the humanistic attitude that prevailed in Denmark also influenced German officials there, such as Duckwitz, who leaked the Nazi plan.

[47] Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, passim. See also Goldhagen, *A Moral Reckoning*.

[48] Presumably excerpted from a book review of Pundick's book. (No source is given for the quote.)

[49] Cited in Polonsky, "Beyond Condemnation, Apologetics, and Apologies," p. 190.

[50] Zimmerman, *Contested Memories*, Introduction, p. 15 n. 36. See also Tec, op. cit., pp. 63-64.

[51] Cf. Polonsky, op. cit., p. 193, who calls into question the relevance of "counterfactual" history—what people *didn't* do—in assessing the degree of responsibility that ought to be laid on populations in Europe for things they did not do to save Jews.

[52] I have simplified matters a bit for the purpose of contrasting Western European countries' policies regarding Jews the case of Denmark. Of course, the circumstances and degree of compliance with Nazi directives varied between the countries cited. See Fein, *Accounting*, p. 153.

[53] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, p. 56. Finland was never actually occupied by Germany, so its record has been treated independently of Denmark's (see the title of this paper).

[54] Fein, *Accounting for Genocide*, p. 70. (Emphasis added.)

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The Discovery of Ugarit and its Impact on Biblical Studies

DAVID MOSTER

In 1928 a farmer unearthed an ancient burial vault at Minet el-Beida, a port town near Ras Shamra, Syria. [1] This led to the discovery of Ugarit, an ancient kingdom that reached its peak during the Late Bronze Age (15th–13th centuries BCE). This paper, which will be divided into three sections, will begin with a brief introduction to this important site (Part I). Part II will illustrate how Ugarit has impacted the field of biblical studies and Part III will focus on one topic in particular, namely the ancient Israelite practice known as "Baal worship."

I. The Findings

Ugarit is located half a mile [2] off the Syrian coast of the Mediterranean, just 7 miles north of Latakia. [3] The walled city encompasses a mere 15 acres, [4] but the entire kingdom covers approximately 1,240 sq. mi. [5] Ugarit "is surrounded by a large architectural plain, fertile and fairly well irrigated, separating the hills from the sea... [and] has a climate favorable to Mediterranean cultures." [6] The farmers grew vines, olive groves, cereals, nuts, and raised small livestock, and the architects had access to nearby cedar forests and stone quarries. [7] The port at Minet el-Beida "permitted Ugarit to trade with countries accessible from the sea (Egypt, the Levantine coast, Cyprus, the Anatolian coast, the Aegean) at the same time that it welcomed caravans from the interior that put it in touch with Mesopotamia, north and interior Syria, the Hittite world, the Mitannian kingdom, and other powers." [8] This combination of a ripe climate, a rich agricultural countryside, and an active port helped Ugarit flourish during the Late Bronze Age.

Although Ugarit's best-known period is the Late Bronze Age, [9] the site has a five millennia long history. [10] The site can be broken into five archaeological strata:

V. Neolithic period (seventh millennium–5250 BCE)
IV. Chalcolithic period (5250–3000 BCE)
III. Early Bronze Age (3000–2000 BCE)
II. Middle Bronze Age (2000–1650 BCE)
I. Late Bronze Age (1650–1189 BCE)

According to *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East*, [11] the Neolithic period saw the building of stone houses, the manufacturing of containers, and the breeding of domesticated animals. With the Chalcolithic period came painted pottery, the development of crafts, diversified architecture, and the breeding of small livestock. This period also witnessed the appearance of copper. With the coming of the Early Bronze Age the site evolved considerably: urbanization developed, architecture utilized cut stone in addition to baked bricks, and metal tools and weapons began to replace those of stone. However, like many sites in the Levant, the mound was mysteriously abandoned in approximately 2200 BCE. [12] The site took on new life with the coming of the Middle Bronze Age. Local and nomadic populations came together and covered the entire mound, built three temples, and enclosed the city with a wall. Many Egyptian objects have been found from this time, and some scholars believe that Ugarit was one of Egypt's vassal states. The Late Bronze Age saw an urban expansion, spectacular prosperity, and growth in the importance of royal power. Although it is difficult to calculate Ugarit's population, some archaeologists estimate that in the 13th century BCE the capital had between 6,000 and 8,000 inhabitants, with 25,000 people living throughout the empire. [13] However, due to its lack of military strength, Ugarit fell into the hands of the Egyptians in approximately 1400 BCE. It was then struck by an earthquake and never fully recovered. [14] Then, in 1350 BCE, Ugarit fell under the Hittite sphere of influence. The troubles continued, and the city was destroyed by the "Sea Peoples" in approximately 1200 BCE. [15] With the exception of a few small occupancies in the Persian and Hellenistic periods, Ugarit was never occupied again.

The excavations at Ugarit and the surrounding areas have revealed a city wall, a royal palace, two large temples (known as the "Temple of Baal" and the "Temple of Dagan"), a few smaller temples (including the "Hurrian Temple"), a house belonging to the high priest, and a Residential Quarter. In regards to texts, Kenton Sparks writes:

[Archaeologists have] unearthed

nearly fifteen hundred texts, most of them in Ugaritic or Akkadian, although Sumerian, Hittite, and Hurrian exemplars are known as well... According to figures from 1994, these texts fall into the following generic categories: (1) lists and business documents, 767; (2) unclassified, 217; (3) literary and religious texts, 161; (4) letters, 72; (5) labels, 63; (6) unreadable texts, 30; (7) school texts and abecedaries, 22; (8) treaties, 9. [16]

With all of these finds, historians are able to reconstruct many aspects of the religious, economic, political, educational, and daily life of the ancient Ugaritians.

II. Biblical Studies

Ugarit's discovery has impacted biblical studies in the subfields of literary interpretation and historical analysis. Examples from each area will now be presented.

Literary Interpretation

Umberto Cassuto was an early pioneer in the field of comparing Ugaritic and biblical material. In a lengthy but important passage he writes:

> When we examine the initial stages of Biblical literature, we are struck by a fact that, at first, appears surprising: they do not give the impression of being 'first steps' or 'first fruits', and they show no signs of experimental groping or of searching for techniques. On the contrary, they are perfected and polished writings, which bear witness to the existence of an artistic tradition that had evolved in the course of many centuries. But there was no time for such development in Israel's history, since the first phase of Scriptural literature coincides with the inception of the nation's life. This phenomenon calls for an explanation...
>
> Hebrew literature is heir to the Canaanite literary tradition, which had already taken shape among the Canaanite-speaking populations before the people of Israel had come into being... The rules and techniques of literary expression had long ago been established in the ancient Canaanite dialects, and consequently when the Israelites came to express their thoughts for the first time in literary form, they had no need to fashion for themselves modes of expression. These were already to hand, and there was no difficulty in using them for the purpose of creating a new literature, new in its content and spirit, but continuing the old tradition in its linguistic form—new wine, as it were, in an old vessel.
>
> The Ugaritic writings prove this. They are Canaanite literary works pertaining to a period anterior to the burgeoning of Israel's literature, and in them we actually find numerous features that are identical with those that characterize the Bible. It is evident, therefore, that these literary qualities are actually a heritage bequeathed both to the people of Ugarit and to the Israelites by the Canaanite tradition hailing from earliest antiquity. [17]

In other words, the Bible employs a writing style similar to that of Ugaritic literature. Thus, Ugaritic texts can be used to elucidate the meaning of certain words, idioms, and passages found in the Hebrew Bible. The following examples will demonstrate this point.

Certain Hebrew words have secondary meanings that only become apparent in light of Ugaritic cognates. For example, while the Hebrew root זמר normally means "to sing," it is also related to the Ugaritic root *dmr* "to be strong." Consequently, the phrase עזי וזמרת יה (Ex 15:2) should be translated as "The Lord is my strength and might," not "The Lord is my strength and song." [18] Another example is עזב תעזב עמו (Ex 23:5) which should be translated as "you shall surely help him load the ass's back," not "you shall surely abandon him." This is because the Hebrew root עזב, which normally means "to abandon," is related to the Ugaritic root *'db* "to load a donkey." [19]

Many idioms are found in both the Hebrew Bible and Ugaritic literature. One example is the lengthy phrase "And so-and-so (the head of the family) took so-and-so and so-and-so (his family members) and such-and-such possessions and he went." This formula is used when a person uproots his family and resettles in another land (e.g. Gen 11:31; 12:5; 36:6). One might ask: Why is all of this superfluous information being presented in the Bible? Yet, this question disappears in light of Ugaritic studies. This is because the formula appears in texts such as *The Baal Cycle*:

> As for you, take your clouds, your wind, your watering devices, your rain, with you your seven lads, your eight officers, with you *Pidray*, daughter of *'Aru*, with you *T'allay'* daughter of *Rabbu*. [20]

Thus, when the Bible enumerates a person's family members and possessions it is not adding any additional information. Rather, it is following a literary convention already attested to in the Ugaritic writings.

Many metaphors and similes in the Bible can be understood in the same manner. For example, Psalm 42:4 uses the enigmatic metaphor of "eating" tears: היתה לי דמעתי לחם "My tears have been my food." [21] The Ugaritic parallel is strikingly similar: "She was sated with weeping, drank tears like wine." [22] Another example is the metaphor "Every night I drench my bed, I melt my couch in tears" (Ps 6:7) which has the following Ugaritic parallel: "His bed... was dissolved by his weeping." [23] While these metaphors might sound strange to modern readers, they were conventional during ancient times.

Another area of juncture is repetition. Cassuto writes:

> Ugaritic poetry, like all epic poetry, whether Eastern or Western, is fond of repetitions. This phenomenon flows from the very nature of the epos, which is primarily intended to be

heard and not read. People who are gathered to listen to heroic songs rendered by a singer are particularly delighted when he commences a passage that they already know and love, for then it is easier for them to follow him and to participate, as it were, in his singing... Since we have already established that Biblical narrative prose continues in a sense the tradition of the Canaanite epos, then wherever we find in Scripture repetitions of an epic character, we may regard them as indicative of an underlying ancient Canaanite epopee. [24]

Like Ugaritic poetry, repetition occurs often in the Hebrew Bible. Some examples are the twelvefold repetition of the chieftains' sacrifices in Numbers 7:12-83, the repetition of Pharaoh's dreams in Genesis 41, and the fourfold repetition of Abraham's servant's prayer for and reception of a heavenly sign in Genesis 24. [25] While these repetitive sections might seem monotonous to modern readers, they were conventional for their time and place.

All of the above examples demonstrate the strong affinity between biblical and Ugaritic literature. Indeed, the biblical authors inherited a style of writing already attested to in the Ugaritic texts. It is for this reason that the Ugaritic texts can be used to explain difficult passages in the Hebrew Bible.

Historical Analysis

The ancient Israelites interacted with their neighbors called the Canaanites. Indeed, many biblical passages assume that the reader is familiar with the Canaanite way of life. The following examples will demonstrate how Ugarit's discovery can shed light on these passages.

The funerary cult at Ugarit is attested to in many written sources. Some texts describe how the Ugaritians (and their gods) would mourn their dead by lacerating themselves. For example, *The Baal Cycle* [26] contains a description of the god El's reaction to the news that Mot has killed Baal: "He scraped his skin with a flint, incisions with a razor, he cut his cheeks and beard, he raked the bone of his arm." Similarly, in a text called *The Righteous Sufferer* [27] the protagonists "bathed in their own blood like frenzied prophets" when they heard about their brother's death.

These texts shed light on biblical passages such as Deuteronomy 14:1: "You are the sons of the Lord, your God. You shall not lacerate yourselves and you shall not make a bald spot on your head for the dead." Similarly, Leviticus 19:28 says "Do not make incisions on your body for the dead or give yourselves tattoos, I am the Lord." These verses, which are referring to funerary practices like those practiced at Ugarit, are now better understood. [28]

In addition to cutting themselves, the Ugaritians honored their deceased relatives by "feeding" the dead. [29] These meals, which are called *marzeah* meals, are explicitly proscribed in Jeremiah 16:5-8:

> Thus says the Lord: 'Do not enter a funeral banquet house [בית מרזח]; do not go in to lament or offer sympathy, for I have withdrawn my peace from this people... the great and the lowly will die in this land, but they will not be buried or mourned, and no one will cut himself or shave his head for them... do not enter a banquet house [בית משתה] to sit with them, eating and drinking.

Archaeological finds provide insight into how these meals were carried out. Sparks writes:

> Textual evidence reveals that the king and the nation honored Ugarit's deceased rulers with regular sacrifices, and archaeologists have discovered pipes from ground level that pass down into tomb vaults below. [30]

Thus, biblical verses such as Jeremiah 16:5-8 are better understood in light of Ugarit's discovery.

Ugaritic texts can shed light on non-ritualistic passages as well. One of the texts found at Ugarit is the *Legend of Aqhat*, and it describes a righteous man named Danel. [32] Many scholars believe that this text can shed light on two obscure passages in the book of Ezekiel. God gives a warning in 14:19-20: "Or, if I send pestilence to that country, and I pour My fury upon it in blood, to eliminate from it man and animal, even if Noah, Dan[i]el, and Job would be in it... [they] would save [only] their souls." In 28:3 God addresses the prince of Tyre and asks: "Are you wiser than Dan[i]el?"

While many once considered Dan[i]el to be the biblical Daniel, scholars now believe that he is the Danel described in the *Legend of Aqhat*. Sparks writes:

> Ezekiel's references to Danel mention him in the company of Noah and Job. Because these two figures can be legitimately identified as non-Israelites, Danel was probably a foreign hero. This likelihood is reinforced by Ezekiel's oracle against the king of Tyre (Ezek 28), which presupposes that the Phoenicians were familiar with Danel. Although at first sight it may seem artificial to assume a connection between second-millennium Ugarit and first-millennium Phoenicia, we should recall that Ugarit was a cultural ancestor of Phoenicia and that there is substantial evidence the Ugaritic epic tradition was preserved in Phoenicia at least until the Hellenistic period. [33]

Thus, these biblical passages seem to describe a famous non-Israelite hero, not the protagonist of the Book of Daniel.

The temples at Ugarit are also important for biblical studies. When describing the building of the temple at Jerusalem, 1 Kings 7:13-14 says: "King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre... he was full of wisdom, insight and knowledge to do all sorts of work with copper; so he came to King Solomon and performed all his work." Thus, it should come as no surprise that the first Temple might reflect, to some degree, Canaanite structural influence. Indeed, the *Interpreter's Bible Dictionary* gives a basic description of

the Temple of Baal and the Temple of Dagon found at Ugarit.

> They had a great inner room, the 'holy of holiest,' where the images of the gods were placed. Before it was another room, an anteroom for the inner room. Outside this was a forecourt with the remains of an altar. Here the people are supposed to have gathered. *The construction of the Baal temple is much the same as that of King Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem.* [34]

While more research in this subject is required, the similarity between Ugaritic and Israelite architecture is yet another example of how the discoveries at Ugarit can shed light on biblical material.

All of these examples demonstrate how Ugaritic studies can illuminate the history that surrounds the Bible. Indeed, recent studies such as Mark Smith's *Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* [35] illustrate how Ugaritic studies can change one's entire understanding of Israelite religion. With this in mind, let us now turn to the paradigmatic example of Israelite Baal worship.

III. Baal Worship

The word בעל ("Baal" in English) is a common Semitic word for "owner, master, husband." [36] According to the Ugaritic texts, Baal was also the name of the most active and prominent of all deities. The text titled *The Baal Cycle* depicts him as a warrior; at times he brandishes two clubs, one representing thunder and the other lightning, to defeat his enemies. [37] His primary consort was Anath, but at times he is helped by another goddess called Astarte. [38] His dwelling was 25-30 miles to the north of Ugarit on Mt. *spn*, which is today called Jebel al-Aqra (1,780 m high). Jebel al-Aqra is the tallest mountain in Syria. [39]

It seems that the Israelites practiced Baal worship from the beginning of their desert wanderings until the destruction of the first Temple. In Numbers 25:1-11 the Israelites "attached themselves to Baal-Peor, ate sacrifices for the dead, and indulged in sacred sexual orgies." [40] They also worshipped Baal during the period of the Judges (Judg 6:25-32). 2 Kings 11:18 describes the aftermath of Queen Athalia's execution (835 BCE): "All the people of the land came to the Temple of Baal and tore it down; they smashed its altars and images; and Mattan, priest of Baal, they slew in front of the altars." 2 Chronicles 28:2 describes how Baal worship was again taken up in the days of Ahaz (r. 732-716 BCE): "He went in the ways of the kings of Israel; he even made molten idols for Baal." Manasseh (r. 697-643 BCE) gave Baal worship royal support (2 Kgs 21:3) and was presumably followed by many of his successors until the destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. Thus, Baal worship is well attested to in biblical literature.

One might wonder: If there were so many ancient Near Eastern deities, why were the Israelites so enticed by Baal worship? Based on Ugaritic texts, Marvin Pope proposes the following answer:

> The worship of Baal in Syria-Palestine was inextricably bound to the economy of the land which depends on the regularity and adequacy of the rains. Unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, which depend on irrigation, the Promised Land drinks water from the rain of heaven (Deut. 11:10-11)... Thus in any year anxiety about the rainfall would be a continuing concern to the inhabitants which would suffice to give rise to rites to ensure the coming of the rains. Thus the basis of the Baal cult was the utter dependence of life on the rains which were regarded as Baal's bounty.

Thus, the Israelites were attracted to Baal worship because of their dependence on rain for survival. It was Baal, they believed, who could deliver the much-needed rain.

It is in this light that the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18) should be understood. As Ulf Oldenberg writes, "To many Israelites it became a question who was the stronger god, [Israel's God] or Baal. Only a contest between the two gods could decide this question, who was the most efficient god to provide the rain upon which their welfare depended." [41] Thus, immediately after demonstrating how the prophets of Baal were fraudulent, "Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go up and eat and drink, for a rumbling sound of rain [is coming]!" (1 Kgs 18:41). Elijah is making the point that it is the Israelite God, and not Baal, who delivers the rains.

Pope observes that once Baal was proven to be inefficacious "it was natural and fitting that some of Baal's titles would be taken over [by Israel's God]. Portions of ancient Baal liturgy were adapted to the praise of Israel's God, as the Ugaritic poems have shown." [42] One example is Amos 5:8 where Israel's God is described as the one "who summons the waters of the sea and pours them upon the face of the earth, the Lord is His name." Pope believes that Psalm 68:5 presents a more direct link: Baal is described in Ugaritic texts as a "cloud rider" *(rkb 'rpt)*, a direct parallel to this psalm's phrase סלו לרכב בערבות "Extol Him who rides the clouds." However, others like Day disagree:

> It is a sound principle that if a Hebrew word makes good sense in its normally attested meaning, it should be accepted, rather than creating an unnecessary *hapax legomenon*. Therefore, since *'araba* in Hebrew means 'desert', it would seem wiser to translate *rokeb ba'arabot* as 'rider through the deserts', rather than 'rider of the clouds'... This rendering makes excellent sense in the context, which clearly reflects the Hebrew traditions of the Wandering and the Settlement.

While Psalm 68:5 is mired in scholarly debate, the possibility of Ugaritic influence still exists. [43]

Whether a specific epithet of the Israelite God (or even the structure of an entire psalm [44]) can be traced to the Baal liturgy is of lesser import than the overall conclusion that the Bible attributes Baal's supposed capabilities to the Israelite God. As Elijah demonstrates, it is the Israelite God, and not Baal, who brings the rains to the Promised Land. And, as has been thoroughly established, one can only appreciate the significance of Elijah's triumph if one understands the reasons why Baal worship was so tempting to the Israelites to begin with.

Conclusions

Although Ugarit is not mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, it has had impacted the field of biblical studies immensely. Its influence can be seen in two areas, namely the subfields of literary interpretation and historical analysis. One area of interest is ancient Israelite Baal worship. While the Bible bears witness to this practice, it does not explain why the Israelites were attracted to this particular deity. By analyzing Baal worship at Ugarit it becomes apparent that the Israelites were serving Baal in order to bring the much-needed rains.

NOTES

[1] Anson Rainey and S D. Sperling. "Ugarit." *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (New York: Macmillan, 2007), p. 225.

[2] A S. Kapelrud. "Ugarit." *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1962) 724.

[3] Rainey & Sperling, *Ugarit*, 225.

[4] Marguerite Yon. "Ugarit." *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) p. 259.

[5] Yon, *Ugarit*, 255

[6] Dennis Pardee and Pierre Bordreuil. "Ugarit." *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992) p. 698.

[7] Pardee & Bordreuil, *Ugarit*, 698.

[8] Pardee & Bordreuil, *Ugarit*, 698.

[9] Yon, *Ugarit*, 258.

[10] Yon, *Ugarit*, 257.

[11] Yon, *Ugarit*, 258.

[12] This was also the period that marked the end of the Old Kingdom in Egypt. See Pardee & Bordreuil, *Ugarit*, 699.

[13] Pardee & Bordreuil, *Ugarit*, 705 and Yon, *Ugarit*, 260.

[14] Kapelrud, *Ugarit*, 729.

[15] Kapelrud, *Ugarit*, 729.

[16] Kenton L. Sparks. *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2005) 36.

[17] Umberto Cassuto. *The Goddess Anath* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1971) 18-20.

[18] Nahum M. Sarna. *The JPS Torah Commentary: Genesis.* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989) 299. I thank Dr. H. Tawil of Yeshiva University for showing me this source.

[19] Umberto Cassuto. *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1987) 297.

[20] Dennis Pardee, "The Ba'lu Myth" *Context of Scripture* (William W. Hallo ed.; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 1.86: CTA 3.

[21] Also see Psalm 80:6; 102:10.

[22] Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 21.

[23] Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 21.

[24] Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 41.

[25] Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 42.

[26] Theodore J. Lewis. *Cults of the Dead in Ancient Israel and Ugarit* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1989) 100.

[27] Lewis, *Cults*, 101.

[28] It must be emphasized that although these discoveries give us insight into *what* was done at Ugarit, as of yet we still do not known *why* these practices were done. (Lewis, *Cults*, 101) Also, it is the subject of much scholarly debate whether the Bible is combating a cult of the Dead that existed in Ancient Israel, or if it is merely combating the ways of the Canaanites. (Lewis, 99)

[29] Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 200.

[30] Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 199.

[31] Cassuto, *The Goddess Anath*, 50-51.

[32] See *COS* 1.103

[33] Sparks, *Ancient Texts*, 295.

[34] Kapelrud, *Ugarit*, 726. Emphasis mine.

[35] Mark S. Smith, *Origins of Biblical Monotheism: Israel's Polytheistic Background and the Ugaritic Texts* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

[36] Marvin H. Pope "Baal Worship." *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 2007) 9.

[37] John Day. "Baal." *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), p. 545.

[38] Day, *Baal*, 545

[39] John Day. *Yahweh and the Gods and Goddesses of Canaan* (New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), p. 107. (From here on "Gods and Goddesses).

[40] Pope, *Baal Worship*, 12

[41] Ulf Oldenburg. *The Conflict Between El and Ba'Al in Canaanite Religion* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1969) 179.

[42] Marvin H. Pope. *Probative Pontificating in Ugaritic and Biblical Literature* (Munster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1994) 89.

[43] Another example of possible Baal influence is Psalm 48:3 where the psalmist applies the name צפון (the name of Baal's dwelling place) to Jerusalem. Day points to an intriguing extra-biblical parallel: "Interestingly, in the Demotic/Aramaic Papyrus Amherst 63, which contains a paganized version of Psalm 20, Zion has been replaced by Zaphon." See Day, *Gods and Goddesses*, 108-109

[44] See Day, *Gods and Goddesses*, 95-98

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Jewish Martyrdom in the First Crusade

SARA POLLACK

The First Crusade, which occurred in 1096, occupies an important place in the history of Judeo-Christian relationships. Urged to march to the Holy Land to reclaim it from the hands of the Muslims, the Crusaders became infused with a religious fervor that was further awakened as they realized that the perceived killers of Jesus, the Jews, were still living comfortably among them. This led them to attack many Jewish communities, particularly in the German Rhineland, and offer them the choice of conversion or death. When the old tactic of turning to the authorities for protection failed, the Jews lacked a unified response. [1] The choice of martyrdom by many Jewish communities is unprecedented and surprising from a perspective of Jewish *halakha*, religious law; rather than face death by the oncoming armies many Jewish communities chose to take not only their own lives, but the lives of their loved ones as well. Despite the normative Jewish prohibitions against suicide [2] and more importantly, against murder, [3] these Jewish communities saw no alternative course of action in their situation. This was due to a visceral negative reaction toward Christianity, as evidenced by the texts of the Crusade Chronicles. Lacking historical or precise *halakhic* precedents, and faced with the uniqueness of their circumstance, these Jewish communities created precedent by basing their actions on *aggadic* Talmudic portions and incorporating their actions into the established framework of Jewish religious ritual.

In analyzing the Jewish response to the First Crusade it is crucial to realize that the Crusades were entirely unexpected by the Jews living along the Rhine. One of the surviving Hebrew Crusade chronicles records a letter sent by French Jewish communities to warn their German brethren of the impending violence. The chronicler recounts the response of the community of Mainz to this correspondence:

> All the communities have decreed a fastday. We have done our duty. May the Omnipresent one save us and you from all the trouble and affliction. We are greatly concerned about your well-being. As for ourselves, there is no great cause for fear. We have not heard a word of such matters, nor has it been hinted that our lives are threatened by the sword. [4]

Despite some warning, the impending violence was unanticipated. Jewish-German relations until this point had been amicable; the imminent catastrophe was unfathomable from such a perspective. Lacking the proper preparation, the Jews had no clear precedents to guide their reactions to the onslaught of the Crusaders. Therefore, the decision of a significant number of these Jews to kill themselves and their families to sanctify the name of G-d has to be examined with this understanding. These actions reflect a hurried response to the unknown; little planning or collaboration between communities could occur. It seems that these particular acts of martyrdom were not so much a developed, examined choice of action but a primarily emotional result to the sudden choice of apostasy.

Three Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade have survived to provide some understanding of the mentality and motivations of the martyred German Jewish communities. Many different theories explain the relationship between these three; most historians see the *Narrative of the Old Persecutions*, or *Mainz Anonymous*, as the oldest text and the source of the other two chronicles, dating its authorship either contemporaneously to the Crusade or before 1106. [5] The other two chronicles, the comprehensive *Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson* and the liturgical *Chronicle of Rabbi Eliezer bar Nathan*, are based on this first text and were written in the first half of the 12th century. The interdependence of these two texts is also debated; Robert Chazan sees the *Chronicle of Eliezer* as predating the *Chronicle of Solomon*, while Lena Roos argues the converse, that Solomon used both Eliezer's Chronicle and the *Mainz Anonymous* as sources. [6] A few historians do digress from this position however; Shlomo Eidelberg writes that the Solomon Chronicle is the oldest, dating it even before 1099. [7] He attempts to prove this by pointing to the fact that the Crusaders' arrival in Jerusalem is not included in the narrative. [8]

Since these chronicles were not written by those who actually martyred

themselves, the distance between these texts and the real attitudes of those Jews must be kept in mind in drawing any type of conclusion about their motivations. Many historians purport the historical accuracy of the chronicles and agree that they are a wealth of information because they are based on eyewitness accounts. [9] Robert Chazan believes that the variety of responses exhibited by the Jews points to the historical accuracy of the chronicles; not only were the instances of martyrdom recorded, but there are also examples of conversion and even of Jewish defenders. However, it is more difficult to assess the accuracy of the chronicles in reflecting the actual attitudes of the martyrs toward their own acts of self-destruction. Eidelberg argues that parts of the Chronicles were written with the express agenda of glorifying the martyrs and presenting their actions as the ideal option in times of persecution. [10] Nevertheless, Chazan contends that the Chronicles can be trusted to mirror the thinking of the actual martyrs. [11] Further support for this notion can be drawn from the fact that the chroniclers were contemporaries of the martyrs and were exposed to the same cultural influences. [12] If one assumes that the texts shed historical light on the attitudes of the martyrs, it is possible to use them in an attempt to explain the unprecedented historical phenomenon of mass Jewish martyrdom.

The most striking feature of all three Crusade narratives is the centrality of the experiences of those Jews who took their own lives. These martyrs do not only include those who committed suicide; there are also many examples of parents killing children, spouses slaughtering each other, even entire families murdering one another all for the sake of *Kiddush Ha-Shem*, the sanctification of God's name. While other responses to the violence are mentioned in the chronicles, it is the martyrs who are praised and portrayed as *kedoshim*, or holy ones. The centrality of the martyr experience in Jewish historical consciousness supports the understanding that these *kedoshim* were the ideal, and that such actions deserve reverence. This is further evidenced by the fact that many *piyutim*, liturgical poems, commemorating the events of 1096 were added to Ashkenazic liturgy and are still recited by the descendents of those communities. Not only were these dirges to be recited on days commemorating persecutions, but a special prayer entitled *Av Harachamim*, Father of Mercy, which concluded with a reading of a list of martyrs, was inserted into the liturgy to be recited on the Sabbath. [13]

Still, the question remains, what made such actions so clearly worthy of reverence by the Chroniclers and the following generations? What were the causes of the attitudes and the beliefs of these German Jews that led them to such a clear conviction that there was no alternative choice to martyrdom in 1096? The first part of the answer lies in the chronicles themselves, not in how they depict the martyrs, but in how they depict the murderous Crusaders and their religion. There are frequent references to the Crusaders as "erring ones," [14] the waters of baptism are euphemistically called "a stench" [15] and "evil waters." [16] Jesus is described as the "son of promiscuity," [17] and "a rotting corpse that can not avail and can not save." [18] The Pope is even called "Satan." [19] Furthermore, the chroniclers insert these beliefs into the mouths of the Crusaders themselves. In the attack on the city of Sla, Solomon bar Simson records the Crusaders as demanding that the Jews "Accept our mistaken belief!" [20] These examples are reflective of the Jewish mentality toward Christianity and the Crusaders. Consequently, Haym Soloveitchik notes that the main Jewish reaction was not "hatred," but rather "disgust." [21] He argues that it was this inbred revulsion that kept Jews from converting despite the overwhelming benefits and pressures.

While the aversion toward the Christian religion pervades the Chronicles, one specific incident typifies this attitude. David ben Nathaniel, the *gabbai* of Mainz, is not content to merely die a martyr in a refusal to accept Christianity. Prior to his murder he seizes the opportunity to denounce the Christians and their religion in a passionate soliloquy penned by the chronicler and ascribed to him:

> You are the children of whoredom, believing as you in a god who was a bastard and was crucified... If you slay me, my soul will abide in the Garden of Eden- in the light of life. You, however, descend to the deep pit, to eternal obloquy. To Gehenna are you and your whoreson god condemned, and to boiling excrement will you be cosigned. [22]

His words illustrate the attitudes that some Jews held toward the Christian faith, and the choice to voice his views is evidence of the fact that his feelings were more crucial than the desire to live through conversion. Scholars have argued that the different diatribes against Christianity in the Chronicles were linked to the martyrdom phenomenon; the choice of conversion or death led the victims to be consumed by hatred toward the attacking religion. [23]

However, there is a much deeper source of influence on Jewish attitudes manifesting itself in these rants. The impact of anti-Christian texts circulating in these times, specifically the *Toldot Yeshu*, a perversion of the gospels, is clear in these attitudes. *Toldot Yeshu* has been dated as early as the year 200, [24] and although the existing manuscripts do differ in content, four main ideas are common to all of them. In its style of parodying the gospels, *Toldot Yeshu* tells of the illegitimate birth of Jesus, his abilities as a sorcerer and the maltreatments he suffered as a prisoner. The narrative then concludes describing his body being exhumed and dragged through the streets. [25] These ideas reflect

an attack on the basic tenets of the Christian religion. The message of such a text is that the claims of Christianity are false and that the Jewish faith is still valid. [26] Moreover, these ideas are reflected in the insults leveled at the Christian religion in the chronicles illustrating that such stories were ingrained in the German Jewish consciousness. These impressions colored their perceptions of the Christian faith and the historical choice presented to them in 1096. Raised with the knowledge that Jesus was the son of a whore, that he was a sorcerer and not a god, and that his divinity was invalid since his body was disgraced, the Rhinish Jews could not emotionally respond to the Crusaders with anything other than pure abhorrence.

Beyond the understanding of the emotional response of the Jews of 1096, one must look to their source of religious law, *halakha*. The German Jewish communities living in the Rhineland prided themselves on their scrupulous adherence to *halakha*, [27] so the most natural basis for their decisions would be normative *halakhic* practice. Jewish law stipulates one to choose death only over three sins: adultery, murder and the worship of idolatry. [28] Based on the attitudes toward Christianity expressed in the Crusade Chronicles and the *Toldot Yeshu*, the Jews believed the worship of three entities as understood in Christian doctrine to be idolatry. Moreover, such an opinion was even put forth by the influential French scholar, *Rashi*, Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac, (1040-1105) in a gloss to Babylonian Talmud Avodah Zarah 11a. [29]

However, while Jewish law requires one to be killed rather than worship idolatry, it does not require a person to actively kill himself, let alone anyone else. Although the Jews of Ashkenaz might not have followed Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, his formulation of these laws can shed light on normative *halakhah*. Maimonides rules that in a situation where one is permitted to perform a transgression to save one's life one must do so. Suicide and voluntary martyrdom are forbidden; one who allows oneself to be killed rather than transgress something permissible is said to have committed the prohibited act of suicide. [30]

To see how the local *Halakhists* of this era responded to this tragic and crucial question of martyrdom one must turn to the glosses of the Tosafists. When discussing the Tosafists of this time period the most eminent were R. Jacob of Ramreux (d.1171), also known as *Rabbenu Tam*, and his nephew, R. Isaac of Dampierre (d. ca. 1198) colloquially referred to as the *Ri*. [31] The Tosafists revolutionized the learning of the Talmud, and their methodology, developed by 1184, was applied to the entire canon of the Talmud. [32] While it must be understood that Tosafist thought is not entirely representative of the martyrs themselves – both *Rabbenu Tam* and the *Ri* lived in the generation after these disasters – nevertheless their *halakhic* rulings on this topic can shed light on the enigmatic Jewish response of mass martyrdom. As leaders of the generation they most certainly had to understand the motivations of the communities which they led. Therefore, studying their responsa is the next step to understanding the mentality of the martyrs. Contrary to the opinion of Maimonides, the Tosafists ruled that there are three circumstances where voluntary martyrdom is permissible. First, when one is presented with the choice of death or performing a transgression that is allowed under coercion, he *may* choose death rather than perform the transgression. Second, one may choose martyrdom if one is not strong enough to endure the torture and may come to voluntarily perform the transgression. Finally, parents may slaughter their own children in order to prevent them from being raised by the Christians.[33]

Again, it is essential to remember that these responsa were all written after the tragic fact. Soloveitchik, in examining their methodology in these *halakhic* rulings observes that there are inconsistent holes in the arguments of the Tosafists. This leads him to conclude that their legal decisions were influenced by an "angle of deflection," [34] a preconceived assumption that shaped all subsequent thought. He argues that the cultural norm of martyrdom had pervaded their faculties of *halakhic* reasoning forcing them to dismiss the simple meanings of texts if they were incomprehensible in light of recent history and accepted practice. This argument is bolstered by the fact that the *halakhic* rulings regarding martyrdom are glossed on *aggadic* passages in the Talmud. This is not the normative style of codifying *halakha*; one uses *aggadah* as a basis for *halakha* only in extenuating circumstances. [35]

Lacking *halakhic* precedent, the Jews would look to the *aggadah* for precedent, as we see in the examples of the Tosafists. Two examples of *aggadic* precedents referred to in the chronicles are the death of Rabbi Akiva, [36] and the story of 400 children [37] who were captured for immoral sexual purposes and chose instead to martyr themselves by drowning in the sea. The incident of the 400 children is of particular interest since they rationalized their behavior based on a biblical passage, "I will bring them back from Bashan, I will bring them back from the depths of the sea." [38] Significantly, the *Chronicle of Solomon bar Simson* quotes the exact same biblical passage describing four women from Colonge who drowned themselves. [39] Although this biblical reference is inserted by the chronicler, it implies knowledge of the passage in Gittin as well as the implicit understanding that these martyrs were in a situation analogous to that of the 400 children. Furthermore, it suggests the presence of these *aggadic* precedents in the minds and attitudes of the martyrs, if interpreted in light of Chazan's claim that these chronicles do reflect the mentality of he actual martyrs them-

selves. At the very least, it is further proof that the position of the Tosafists was contemporary in the immediate aftermath of the Crusades since others also viewed the same *aggadic* passages as indicating some precedent in regard to the martyrs of 1096.

The main passage in the Talmud that deals with the martyr directive is Sanhedrin 72a, and it forms the basis of Maimonides' ruling regarding the martyr question. However, the Tosafists do not elucidate their understanding of martyrdom in a gloss on Tractate Sanhedrin; perceiving this issue through the lens of cultural norms in the Rhinish communities they did not understand how this could encompass the entirety of the martyr obligation. As an example of the strange interpretations given by the Tosafists Soloveitchik cites three *aggadic* texts, the two already mentioned and Avodah Zarah 18a, a description of the death of another leading Talmudic figure, Rabbi Haninah ben Tradiyon. [40] The most revealing of these in perceiving the assumptions held by the Tosafists is a gloss that appears alongside the passage in Avodah Zarah 18a. The text tells of the Romans who find Rabbi Haninah teaching Torah despite their decrees forbidding such behavior. They kill him in a tortuous and unusual manner, by wrapping him in a Torah scroll and lighting him and the scroll ablaze:

> They then brought tufts of wool, which they had soaked in water, and placed them over his heart, so that he should not expire quickly... His disciples called out, 'Rabbi, what do you see?' He answered them, 'The parchments are being burnt but the letters are soaring on high.' 'Open then thy mouth' [said they] 'so that the fire enter into thee.' He replied, 'Let Him who gave me [my soul] take it away, but no one should injure oneself. [41]

This passage seems to intimate that suicide is not only prohibited, but even in a martyr's situation one cannot actively hasten one's own death. Such a position is problematic in light of the Crusade martyrs. Sensing a contradiction, the Tosafists write in a gloss to the words "Let Him who gave me [my soul]":

> Rabbi Jacob [*Rabbenu Tam*] says that in the case where one kills oneself because one fears that he be driven to apostasy as a result of either torture of [threat of] painful death, fearing that he would not withstand them, it is permissible to do so. As in the case of those who "jumped into the sea" [BTGittin 57b]. Even though that proof text is not much of a proof... nevertheless it is logical that [suicide] is permitted, indeed one who has done so has acted meritoriously. [42]

This interpretation comes to limit the implications of the previous Talmudic text by providing cases where the ramifications of Rabbi Haninah ben Tradiyon's statement do not apply. Moreover, *Rabbenu Tam* goes as far as to say *"mitzvah hi,"* one who does so has performed a commendable deed. This passage itself clearly indicates that the permissibility of suicide existed as an assumption in the minds of the Tosafists. Evidence for this is the phrase *"sevara hi,"* it is logical, and the admission of the failings of the cited proof-text. In the words of Soloveitchik, "It is hard to avoid the tentative conclusion that this was a premise of *Rabbenu Tam* rather than a conclusion, a premise derived from sources other than the Talmud." [43]

The notion that the Tosafists had preconceived assumptions regarding suicide ties back to the previous idea: the inbred aversion toward Christianity pervaded the thought of Jews of that era. Seeing how these cultural norms shaped the *halakhic* process illustrates the depth of these emotions and attitudes toward Christianity. The perception that baptism would lead to spiritual ruin while martyrdom would lead to eternal salvation was so etched into the mind of the German Jews that it even colored the logic of the thinkers and *halakhists*.

Furthermore, the feelings of abhorrence that caused self-martyrdom most likely inclined parents to murder their own children for *Kiddush HaShem*. The perception of the Christians as "impure uncircumcised ones" [44] was deeply rooted in Jewish perceptions. Martyring one's self while leaving one's children to be raised by the "errant ones" would most certainly result in their being brought up in a life of sin and idolatry. Mothers who committed this inconceivable act are described as "compassionate women [who] strangled their children in order to do the will of their Master." [45] Having the perception that there is another world, an afterlife, these mothers saw their actions as means to allow their children to enjoy the "Garden of Eden... the light of life" rather than be converted or raised by the idolaters and join them in the "eternal obloquy... Gehenna" of which David the *Gabbai* so passionately spoke. [46] Therefore, it was perceived not as cruel but justified and compassionate for mothers to kill their own children.

In addition to using *aggadah* to contextualize their actions, the martyrs of 1096 incorporated their actions into the framework of Jewish ritual observance. Traditional Jewish figures and types, as well as varying established Jewish customs were frequently associated with martyrdom. This entire ritualistic framework arose to provide some sense of normative Jewish practice to the martyrs.

Often cited in the chronicles is the parallel between the massacre of children by their parents and the *Akeidah*, the binding of Isaac by Abraham. This biblical story is seen as a paradigm of service to God; Abraham is called upon to sacrifice his son in service to God, yet God stops Abraham before he commits such an act. [47] The martyrs of 1096 are depicted as surpassing their forefather in their dedication to God by actually commencing the act of sacrifice.

There are many examples of martyrdom in the chronicles that parallel the

Akeidah; one in particular is the story of Rachel, the daughter of Isaac. The chronicler describes her as righteous and pious because she murdered her four children in an effort to save them from being "raised in ways of error." [48] This is a very significant passage because it links the martyrs to famous and righteous biblical personages such as Abraham. While there are no overt references to the *akeidah* in this passage, the author uses language which precisely parallels that found in the story of Abraham. Solomon bar Simson writes, "She took the knife to slaughter her son" [49] using the exact same language found in the verse in Genesis 22:10 which reads, "And he [Abraham] took the knife to slaughter his son." [50] Except for changes in gender, the Hebrew words in these two instances are precisely the same. Furthermore, the Hebrew word for knife is an unusual one, *me'akhelet*. The word *sakin* is more commonly used to refer to a knife; in the very same chronicle it is even used a few pages later. [50] The use of parallel language in this case is not unique; it is also used to describe Meshullam and his son Isaac. [52] This again reflects the mentality of the martyrs and those who recorded their actions. The precedent of Abraham, although the biblical story has a drastically different ending than the story of Rachel, is used to guide the reader in viewing and understanding radical sacrifice in the name of God.

Other famous righteous personalities were seen as comparable to the Crusade martyrs. The chroniclers describe how these martyrs will "sit in the realm of the saints- [with] Rabbi Akiva and his companions... Hananiah Mishael and Azariah." [53] These are all people who either died or were willing to die for the sake of God. All of these symbols were incorporated into the background that became the integral tool to understanding the martyrs of 1096.

An additional dimension in the minds of the martyrs was the perception that the events of 1096 were a punishment from God, a punishment that was going to prepare them for the immediate arrival of the Messiah. They viewed this persecution as another chapter in the long history of Jewish suffering that would culminate in a Messianic era. The chronicler entreats God, asking, "May their... sacrifice be a good advocate for us before the Most High; and may He deliver us from the exile of the wicked Edom speedily in our day, and may our Messiah come." [54] There is further textual proof for this idea, as in the phrase "a woman in travail," [55] a common allusion to the historical time immediately signaling the arrival of the long-awaited Messiah.

Therefore, the anticipation of the coming of the Messiah caused the concepts of the Jewish Temple and its rituals to be at the forefront of Jewish consciousness. There are frequent allusions to parents slaughtering their children as sacrifices analogous to those of the Temple. Isaac the son of Jacob even takes the blood of his children, according to the chronicler, and sprinkles it before the Ark in the synagogue while praying to God that this blood should serve as atonement for his sins. [56] In the Temple the priests also sprinkled the blood of sacrifices; this direct parallel comes to provide another point of reference, another dimension to the understanding of the martyrs' actions within the accepted norms of Jewish observance.

The actions of the martyrs were further incorporated into Jewish ritual through the recitation of a benediction before commencing the murder or suicide. Benedictions precede many Jewish ritualsh, and allowing this commonplace, ordinary custom to introduce such radical and tragic behavior added an element of normalcy to the whole phenomenon. This symbol intersects with the paradigm of Abraham and the *Akeidah* in the events surrounding the death of a certain Meshullam and his son, Isaac from Worms. "He bound Isaac, his son, and took the knife in his hand to slaughter him, reciting the blessing for ritual slaughter. The boy responded: Amen." [57] This blessing on ritual slaughter allowed the martyrs and the Jews who lived in the following generations to see this sacrifice as part of Jewish custom or observance, with the familiar rite of a blessing applying in this instance as well.

Furthermore, the Jews applied the religious laws of how to slaughter an animal to the current situation to guide them in how exactly to slaughter themselves and their progeny. There is a Jewish religious law that a ritual knife used to slaughter an animal must be free of nicks or imperfections. Likewise, there are many instances in the chronicles where individuals checked their knives to make sure they met this *halakhic* standard before proceeding to use the knife to end their own life or those of their loved one. [58] These rich parallels to Jewish ritual and symbolism illustrate that despite the lack of examples, the choice of martyrdom was seen not only as an acceptable response, but as a pious decision.

There is no precise way to understand and evaluate the thoughts and motivations of the martyrs of 1096. While the chronicles do not serve as an exact mirror of the martyrs' rationales, they do provide a point of departure in an attempt to evaluate and understand the cultural influences and norms that existed at the time and influenced the martyrs. Despite these limitations, an analysis of these texts and those of the Tosafists, who had to explain such extreme martyrdom, allows for the examination of the motivations of the *kedoshim*. While no text can explain exactly why they committed such radical sacrifice, the chronicles and the Tosafist glosses do suggest that a strong aversion toward Christianity and the Crusaders was the crucial factor in compelling the German Jews to commit self-sacrifice. Additionally, by examining the biblical passages and complex ritualistic symbols applied to the martyrs, one recognizes the underlying influences which are manifest in the chronicles and in the overall Jewish consciousness of the 1096 Jews.

NOTES

[1] Robert Chazan, *In the year 1096: The First Crusade and the Jews* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 76.

[2] Gen 9:5; Masekhet Semachot 2:1 describes what is denied to one who commits suicide. For example his family does not tear their clothing in mourning nor is he eulogized.

[3] Exodus 20:13

[4] Shlomo Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders* (Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1977), 100.

[5] Lena Roos, *"God Wants It!" The Ideology of Martyrdom of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles and its Jewish and Christian Background* (Uppsala, Sweden: Akademitryk AB, 2003), 25; Chazan *In the Year 1096*, 21.

[6] Roos, *God Wants It*, 25.

[7] Shlomo Eidelberg, "The Solomon bar Simson Chronicle as a Source of History of the First Crusade," *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, XLIX (1958-1959): 282-287; Shlomo Eidelberg, *Medieval Ashkenazic History* (Brooklyn, NY: Sepher-Hermon Press Inc., 1999), 21.

[8] Ibid., 27

[9] Roos, *God Wants It*, 27.

[10] Eidelberg, "Solomon Bar Simson Chronicle," 284-285.

[11] Chazan, *In the Year 1096*, 86.

[12] Ibid., 86-87.

[13] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 141.

[14] Ibid., 100; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 93.

[15] Ibid., 25.

[16] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 24, 51; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 25

[17] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 22; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 24.

[18] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 99; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 93.

[19] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 26; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 26

[20] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 67.

[21] Soloveitchik, "Halakhah, Hermeneutics and Martyrdom, Part I," 105-106.

[22] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 38.

[23] Jacob Katz. *Exclusiveness and Tolerance: Jewish Gentile relations in the Medieval World and Modern Times* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 89.

[24] Sapir Abulafia, Anna. "Invectives Against Christianity in the Hebrew Chronicles of the First Crusade," in *Crusade and Settlement*, edited by Peter W. Edbury, (Great Britain: University College Cardiff Press, 1985), 68.

[25] Sapir Abulafia, "Invectives Against Christianity," 68.

[26] Ibid., 68.

[27] Chazan, *In the Year 1096*, 82.

[28] Moses Maimonides, *Misheneh Torah*, "Hilchot Yisode HaTorah" 5:2. While Maimonides' rulings might not have been authoritative in Ashkenaz, his formulation of this *halakhah* is both concise and reflective of normative *halakhic psak*.

[29] Incipit, *bagola*

[30] Ibid., 5:5

[31] Soloveitchik, "Catastrophe and Halakhic Creativity," 72-73

[32] Ibid., 73.

[33] Rabbi Yitzchak of Couerville, *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*, (Bar Ilan Responsa Project), Responsa #3.

[34] Soloveitchik, "Halakhah, Hermeneutics and Martyrdom, Part I," 77.

[35] Ibid., 82.

[36] Babylonian Talmud Berakhot 61b

[37] Babylonian Talmud Gittin 57b

[38] Psalms 68:23

[39] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 66.

[40] Ibid., 83-86.

[41] Trans. A. Mischon, "The Babylonian Talmud" Isidore Epstein, Ed. http://www.come-and-hear.com/zarah/zarah_18.html

[42] Translated in Soloveitchik, "Halakhah, Hermeneutics and Martyrdom, Part I" 86.

[43] Soloveithcik, "Halakhah, Hermeneutics and Martyrdom, Part I," 86.

[44] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 51.

[45] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 110.

[46] See note 22.

[47] Genesis 22:1-19.

[48] Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 35.

[49] "*Va'tikakh et ha'meakhelet li'shkhot et bana*," Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 35.

[50] "*Va'yikakh et ha'meakhelet li'shkhot et bino*," Gen 22:10.

[51] Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 34.

[52] Eidelberg, *The Crusaders and the Jews*, 103-104.

[53] Eidelberg, *The Crusaders and the Jews*, 31-32.

[54] Eidelberg, *The Crusaders and the Jews*, 49.

[55] Ibid., 72.

[56] Eidelberg, *The Crusaders and the Jews*, 40-41.

[57] Ibid., 103-104; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 96.

[58] See the story of Samuel and Menachem in Eidelberg, *The Jews and the Crusaders*, 52; Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz*, 45.

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The Extreame Crueltie of Shylock the Jewe: Literary & Historical Perspectives on an Elizabethan Polemic

ARI SCHWAB

The disciplines of literary criticism and historical reconstruction appear to operate on different planes. While the former examines supposedly timeless pieces of art, the latter explores narrow context and gritty realia. [1] A combination of these dual modes of inquiry, though rare, allows proponents to utilize literature as a window into the milieu of its creation. Among the instances where a particular work or specific period cries out for this interdisciplinary approach is William Shakespeare's (in)famous *The Merchant of Venice*. The usurer Shylock, though not the eponymous merchant, continues to capture interest and imagination. [2] For centuries, the battle lines have been drawn: was Shakespeare a rabid anti-Semite or a revolutionary philo-Semite?

Shakespeare's elusive beliefs are all too often bandied about by critics in an eternal quest for the great playwright's touchstone character. Alas, this question remains unanswerable. While it seems unlikely that Shakespeare identified with the vitriolic hatred, however justified, that spews from Shylock, we do not know if he agreed with Portia, the play's more balanced spokesperson. A more pertinent (and answerable) question ignores the author and focuses on the play as a whole: how does *Merchant* itself present its Jewish moneylender? Following this line of thought, the work is usually transformed into some sort of polemic, directed either against Jews or the intolerant Christian audience. Unfortunately, this inquiry is no less thorny, as the past few centuries have uncovered the sympathetic side of Shylock. [3] Though several recent books have attempted to uncover *Merchant's* initial impact, most studies have lacked the requisite methodology, either analyzing the play in a historical vacuum or merely plucking out several relevant excerpts to bolster a thesis about Elizabethan England. This paper seeks to rectify these errors, examining a specific snapshot of Jewish-Christian history, the turn of the 17th century England, through the eyes of its most notorious fictional Jew. [4] *Merchant* certainly does not paint the complete picture. However, it helps illuminate some perspectives of the time. Acknowledging both text and context allows us to understand the full import of Shakespeare's play.

In his well-researched *Shakespeare and the Jews*, James Shapiro is "concerned with what Shakespeare and his contemporaries thought about Jews." [5] He makes no claim to offer an exhaustive interpretation of *Merchant*, merely using the play as a crystallization of the cultural moment he wishes to explore. While he does make some insightful points about the play, it is admittedly not a full explication. In a review of Shapiro's book, Martin Yaffe called for a more holistic interpretation of Shakespeare's drama. [6] Such an analysis, Yaffe argues, asks a complementary question: instead of focusing only on cultural perceptions, the study of *Merchant* itself could reveal whether Shakespeare (and some of his viewers) shared the beliefs of their contemporaries. Shapiro presented the Jewish stereotypes that comprised Shylock; Yaffe wishes to view the differences between *Merchant* and the prevailing beliefs. While Yaffe's intentions are valid, his actions are somewhat misguided. In his *Shylock and the Jewish Question*, his argument ultimately falls short. [7] As has been noted by several reviewers, Yaffe's conclusion of a philo-Semitic Shakespeare calling for politically mandated religious toleration is hardly convincing: Yaffe appears to be imposing his own biases on *Merchant's* words. [8] Both of these attempts, then, lack the requisite literary analysis to reconstruct the cultural perceptions and impact of Shylock. [9]

This paper, then, attempts to fulfill Yaffe's mandate of examining *Merchant* within the cultural surrounding so masterfully analyzed by Shapiro. Unlike Shapiro, we do not accept as foregone conclusion that Shakespeare's play necessarily jived with his literary tradition and context; while this exploration may ultimately be misguided, it is a hypothesis worth pursuing nonetheless. By correcting Yaffe's mistake, we will add a chapter to Shapiro's work, one that views *Merchant* as both consonant with and dissonant from England's perception of the Jews. In the first part of this essay, I will explore the Elizabethan scene at the time of *Merchant's* composition, while pinpointing the specific predecessors and broader themes that contributed to the creation of Shylock. To that end, we will utilize Shapiro's book as a point of departure.

Setting the Stage

Shapiro reconstructs the Elizabethan mindset based on a plethora of primary sources including "travel diaries, chronicles, sermons, political tracts, confessions of faith, legal textbooks, parliamentary debates, and New Testament commentary," and, of course, *Merchant of Venice*. [10] His first two chapters explore the existence of Jews in Elizabethan England, discussing the famed expulsion of 1290 and lowering the number of Jews affected to several thousand. [11] In line with modern scholarship, Shapiro asserts that "small numbers of Jews began drifting back into England almost immediately after the Expulsion, and began to arrive in larger numbers during the Tudor period." [12] Though impossible to quantify, there most certainly was a Jewish presence in Shakespeare's England. For Shapiro, the exact number of Jews in England is not as relevant as the reigning "cultural preoccupation" with Jewish questions. [13] Shapiro ties this phenomenon into the burgeoning definition of "English"; the Jews, whether present or in absentia, served as the "other" used to sketch the contours of an English identity.

In the middle two chapters of his book, Shapiro explores the accusations of Jewish crimes. During this period, the medieval corpus of anti-Semitic [14] legends went through some significant changes. Gone were the well-poisonings, host desecrations, and threats of foreign invasions. [15] The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions, the Protestant Reformation, and the expansion of English overseas travel and trade heralded a new type of Christian fear, one concerned, nay obsessed, with Jewish *identity*. [16] This is not to suggest that all of medieval folklore disappeared. Rabid anti-Semitism, the claims of ritual murder, and the economic/ethical polemic against usury remained in full deadly force. Though some of the tales may have changed, the hatred was no less virulent.

Shapiro leans heavily on his cultural identity thesis, perhaps pinning a little too much of Elizabethan anti-Semitism on this single cause. The insidious alpha and omega of these polemics seems to transcend any one impetus. Shapiro himself hints at another possible motivation, though he leaves it mainly unexplored. By the 16th century, hatred of the Jew had long since been an ingrained part of the Christian psyche. Though they may not have been a visible presence, the Jewish influence on Christianity was ever-present. European culture, even a partially secularized one, continued to promulgate tales of its religious predecessors as part of their Western heritage, one bequeathed to them by the Church fathers. [17] Jews were the horror stories of the Middle Ages, ones used to frighten and educate children. This twisted version of supersession, imbibed almost with their mother's milk, was a hard influence to discard, even for a generation where Jews were a barely visible presence.

Understanding the cultural context leads us to the next stage of our inquiry: how did these ideas manifest themselves in the sphere of theater? *Merchant* stemmed from more than just its milieu; dramatic Jewish predecessors also contributed to Shylock's development. [18] Before we turn to *Merchant*, some broad strokes about the stage Jew are necessary for our analysis. Harold Fisch's *The Dual Image*, as its title indicates, presents two types of fictional Jews. In the medieval Corpus Christi plays, this duality was realized in the different forms of demonized murderers (a la Judas) and the glorified Patriarchs of the Hebrew Bible. [19] Consequently, Jews could be both a source of loathing and of love. Elizabethan drama bonded these disparate characteristics into one figure. The first of these revolutionary conglomerates was Christopher Marlowe's Barabas in *The Jew of Malta*. [20] Though we are not examining Barabas per se, as the immediate predecessor of Shylock, he deserves some special attention.

In his *Shylock: Four Hundred Years in the Life of a Legend*, John Gross argues that Barabas served as a monumental watershed. [21] For the first time, a Jew is a central character with his own viewpoint and grievances. In some ways, Barabas is the capstone of medieval anti-Semitism, a gleefully evil murderer and usurer. Fisch believes that Barabas added a new element to the stage Jew: political ambition. [22] Yet Barabas breaks his bounds by being twisted to the point of caricature. The exact nature of Barabas is not relevant to our present inquiry; the pertinent point is that Marlowe paved the way for Shakespeare's innovative Jew, one who would fit the medieval mold and yet herald a new age of anti-Semitic thinking. Like Barabas, Shylock would at once satisfy stereotypes while also redefining expectations. And for whatever confluence of historical or aesthetic reasons, Shylock far outshone his predecessor. Now that we have examined the relevant cultural and literary contexts, we can turn to the play itself.

The Merchant of Venice

As there is no critical consensus about Merchant, a presentation of some differing opinions is in order. Fisch believes that Shylock evolved from medieval portrayals of the Jew: "at once, he is heir to the monstrous, bloodthirsty, murderer-usurer of medieval legend filtered through stage melodrama and also Shakespeare's study of the Jewish problem imaged in a figure of tragic dimensions, hated and hating, but above all things, human." [23] Gross takes a rosier view, arguing that the playwright muted some of his uglier sources to create the moneylender. [24] Shylock is far more than archetypical Jew: he "would not have held the stage for four hundred years if he was a mere stereotype." [25] Comparing Shylock to Barabas is not enough; neither is viewing the usurer in light of his sources and

surroundings. These are but pieces of the puzzle, ones that add complex, if not contradictory, ingredients into Shylock. While Shakespeare's Jew was decidedly different, it is not clear where the exact distinction lies.

Yaffe argued that a holistic interpretation of the play would lead to another layer of meaning within *Merchant*:

> we are forced to look again at the manifestly derogatory things said of and by Jews in Shakespeare's play, to see whether they are indeed the play's last word or whether instead they might also call to mind other, more salutary images of the behavior of Jews—and Christians—embedded as well on the psyches of his viewing and reading audience. [26]

Overall, he contends that Shakespeare is more ambiguous, allowing for a more sympathetic viewpoint on the Jewish question. Specifically, Yaffe argues that Portia serves to educate Venice about the pitfalls of religious intolerance. This sentiment, while sanguine, seems extremely unlikely within the world of Shakespeare's Venice. Yaffe, following the mistake of many illustrious critics before him, ignores the final act in Belmont. In Portia's palace, there is no talk of religion: the resolution can relate to any number of themes, but pluralism would not be among them. In the words of literary critic Harold Bloom, "the Belmont joys of Act V are deliciously secular." [27] While her stirring speech about mercy may have religious undertones, Portia is far from being tolerant herself, let alone an advocate for such a cause. Though the forced conversion is not her idea, she has no qualms with threatening Shylock's life, placing him at the mercy of the Duke. As the final straw, let us not overlook her treatment of Jessica; she is far from accepting the turned Jewess, ignoring if not shunning Shylock's daughter.

Yaffe argues that Shakespeare portrays Shylock as a "bad Jew," and not as a negative image of Judaism. [28] He bases himself on the internal contradiction between Shylock's initial hesitancy to feast with fellow Venetians and his later acquiescence; in Yaffe's eyes, Shylock's "clear" decision to ignore the strictures of *kashrut* remove him from being viewed as a loyal adherent to Judaism. [29] Indeed, Shylock's un-Jewishness had been noted thirty years earlier by Fisch, who described the moneylender as "a Jew without Judaism." [30] Fisch, however, did not grant Shakespeare the benefit of the doubt; he assumes that the playwright, never having seen a Jew, could not create a realistic representation. Yaffe, perhaps placing more faith in the playwright's abilities, assumes Shakespeare knew enough about authentic Judaism to distort it. This, however, may be misplaced confidence. Reviewing Yaffe's book, Kenneth Hart Green suggests that had Shakespeare intended this sentiment, he should have written an explicit line to convey this point. Startlingly, Green actually goes through the trouble to compose a Shakespearean line to the effect. [31]

Though Green's point appears cogent, a far greater counterargument exists. After all, while searching for examples of how Shylock diverges from Judaism, his flouting of *kashrut* is hardly the starkest instance of his non-orthodoxy: Leviticus 19:18 is quite explicit about revenge, Shylock's stated purpose. [32] Though the moneylender's *raison d'être* contradicts a Judaic commandment, the players—and the play—consistently conflate Shylock with his religion. While Portia indeed cautions Shylock to show mercy, she at no point lambasts him for ignoring Judaism; he is a paradigmatic Jew, down to the purported cruelty. Indeed, no explicit distinction between Shylock and his co-religionists exists. Overall, then, Yaffe's point seems extremely tenuous: Shylock is constantly, almost incessantly, referenced as "Jew." For Elizabethan audiences, Shylock's bloodthirsty nature and miserly stubbornness would be swallowed without question as consonant with Judaism. Shylock is a Jew first, and a usurer second.

Now that we have dismissed Yaffe's wishful reading of *Merchant*, we can attempt our own explication. While there can be little doubt about the polemical elements that went into Shylock, Shakespeare molded a new whole out of his predecessors' parts. The exact breakdown of Shakespeare's audience remains a matter of scholarly debate. Neither the number nor the class of the playgoers is known for certain. While they may have been slightly homogenous in terms of race, class, and religion, it is difficult to assert that thousands of people would have come away with one interpretation of this play. *Merchant*, boasts the First Quarto, had been performed "divers times," further lessening the chances of obtaining a singular viewing.

In a rare bout as literary critic, Shapiro observes that

> *The Merchant of Venice* is thus not "about" ritual murder...any more than it is about usury, or marriage or homosocial bonding, or mercy, or Venetian trade, or cross-dressing...plays, unlike sermons, are not reducible to one lesson or another, nor do they gain their resonance from being about a recognizable central theme. [33]

When it comes to *Merchant*, things get slightly more complicated. Several recent scholars have addressed the issue of unity in *Merchant*. This play is so replete with contrasting themes and threads that some articles have rendered it devoid of any single meaning. [34] Others have struggled to pinpoint specific issues that the play addresses. This position, combined with the observation about the disparity in the experience of the individual playgoer, makes for an important caveat in our reading of *Merchant*. With these qualifications in mind, it is still possible to claim that in crafting his "Jewe," Shakespeare took ingredients endemic to the prevailing stereotypes, but tampered with the recipe. Aside from his masterful ability to portray complexly realistic human charac-

ters, he added a few extra spices into Shylock.

While Shakespeare drew heavily from his sources, he still altered the material significantly enough to give *Merchant* its own identity. We will begin with the Bard's modifications, and then discuss the elements he created. The first category features the polemic against usury and the perspective on the pound of flesh; the second includes the double plot involving Jessica and Lorenzo, and Shylock's forced conversion.

Shylock's vocation as usurer is a necessary aspect for the plot; the bond of flesh is hardly imaginable without the Jewish moneylender. Shapiro explains that as usury became legal for Christians in the 16th century, their polemic against Jews shifted from usury per se to the exorbitant rates they charged. [35] Yet Shylock is not hated for his fees; the notion of usury itself is consistently criticized by the merciful Antonio. Though moneylending was an ingrained part of the economic milieu, Antonio (and Venice) hates Shylock for this trade, even though they are necessary concessions. Shylock's miserly nature is hardly complimentary; his juxtaposed cry of "daughter" and "ducats" is harsh and belittling enough to reinforce audiences' expectations of Christian "mercy." [36] As hypocritical as it may have been, Christians still harped on usury as one of the quintessential Jewish crimes. [37]

The nature of this specific polemic is furthered when contrasted to Joseph Shatzmiller's *Shylock Reconsidered.* Shatzmiller documents how a 14th century Jewish moneylender was respected and even liked by Christian customers of Marseilles. The friendly Jewish-Christian relationship portrayed by Shatzmiller seems antithetical to fictional Venice. It is hard to imagine Shylock calling Antonio as a character witness; while the moneylender attempts to gain the Christian's love, the Christian response is unending kicking and spitting. Bondavid Draguigen's existence indeed forces us to reconsider Shylock, but not in the way Shatzmiller intended. While he wishes us to "cast aside the perception of an unbroken history of hatred and misunderstanding between Jews and Christians," the testimony of Bondavid's clients only makes for a *more* lachrymose perspective of Shylock. [38] Shakespeare's creation of such a hated moneylender, despite the other legitimate possibilities, deepens the anti-Jewish vibes prevalent throughout the play. Usury, while a necessary element for the plot, is still changed by Shakespeare's stamp. Hearkening back to earlier times, he presents usury as *inherently* evil, further darkening the Jew's image. Additionally, Shylock's vengeful streak stands out as more monstrous when faced with Shatzmiller's noble moneylender.

We now arrive at the gruesome heart of the play, Antonio's pound of flesh. Shapiro devotes an entire chapter to Christian fears of circumcision and castration evoked by the bloody bond. Yaffe critiques some of this analysis, noting that Shylock's bond must be examined from within the play, not merely as part of English cultural consciousness. Shapiro perhaps places a bit too much psychological import into the bond: as I note in the next section, Antonio pledges his soul later in the play; the bond of flesh can not be inherently negative. The significance of this plot device is not only latent fears, but also something more explicit. Before a captive audience, Shylock publicly (and no doubt dramatically) whets his knife and approaches his victim. What better way to reinforce notions of Jewish ritual murder? The dramatic suspense and masterfully interwoven plots make for a more memorable and theatrical reminder of Jewish bloodthirstiness. Ditties about murdered children and even Chaucer's *Prioress' Tale* pale in comparison to Shylock's malicious intent. In those works, the action occurs off-stage. Here, the villain stood in full view ready to commit his most heinous of crimes. The grinning, deadly Shylock is so perversely intent on his bond that he surely made an indelible imprint on Elizabethan audiences. Antonio's pound of flesh, then, is more than an allusion to circumcision; it is a twist on medieval anti-Semitism's most deadly charge. This is not the hidden murder of a child: in full view of the Venetian court, Shylock intends to brutally mutilate an upstanding merchant. And by combining this stereotype with that of usury, Shakespeare lends greater imaginative force to the notion of usury as a deadly trade.

Shakespeare's additions, what he created *ex nihilo*, serve as stark examples of what he accomplished in the realm of dramatic Jew. An element added by Shakespeare (perhaps inspired by Marlowe) is the double plot: alongside Antonio and Shylock is the love of Jessica and Lorenzo. Jessica is a complicated character; at once, she is unlike Shylock yet is simultaneously bonded to her biological father. Though the final scene heralds playful banter for her and her lover, something is rotten in Belmont: their rhetoric centers around cases of tragic and ill-fated love. [39] Shapiro explains that Jessica's ambivalence played on the fears of England that women could easily oscillate between religions without any mark or reminder. [40] Indeed, Barabas' daughter "turns" Christian twice (with only the second conversion being sincere). Yet Shakespeare's presentation, though accounting for these reservations, seems overwhelmingly positive. The parallels between Jessica and Portia—both "enslaved" by a father, both cross-dress, both financially secure—certainly allow for this type of reading. While Jessica slinks away through the darkness disguised as a boy, she is not that different from the theatrical Portia, pretending to run to a convent while dressing as a "Doctor of Law."

There is another layer of complexity in Jessica's decision to embrace Christianity: she does not merely abandon her parent, but steals his

money and jewels, provoking him on his dark course of revenge. Like the clown Lancelot, she is torn between the forces of filial duty and personal conscience. It is not clear how different she is than her father's erstwhile servant. While she stole the ducats and Shylock's ring, an Elizabethan audience would have probably applauded this mindful decision. Jessica, then, also addresses the line between Jew and Christian, but by nature of her voluntary conversion is seen as a fully righteous and accepted Christian who is allowed access into the serene paradise of Belmont. [41]

Yet the most stirring deviation from any of Shakespeare's sources remains the conclusion. In earlier versions of this tale, the usurer is prevented from taking his bloody bond, and forfeits the loan. But Portia suggests a far darker fate for Shylock: a forced conversion. Even more shocking, his penultimate speech begins with "I am content." Much ink has been spilt over this sentiment—how should it be read/viewed? Obviously, much depends on the actor, as it can be played as dejected and broken or cynical and unaccepting. Gross contends that Shakespeare himself didn't accept this dramatic dénouement; Shylock's time had ended, and the playwright needed to be rid of the persistent moneylender. [42] However, viewing the play in its holistic entirety forces us to accept this conversion: Shylock is indeed broken. After all, we must not forget, as some Shylockian critics are apt to do, that the play does not end with Shylock. This is not *his* play, despite the attention that he rightfully demands. The lead actors in this drama are Antonio and Portia; the final act resolves the conflict in the serene world of Belmont. The play is a comedy, despite some insistences that it be classified as the first "problem play." There can be no shadow looming over the characters; the messy incident with Shylock has been relegated to the past, in distant Venice where Shylock remains incarcerated. We might find it unbelievable for the character, but it is certainly necessary for the play. Conversion, or lack thereof, was a constant thorn in the side of Christians; nothing else was a greater indicator of stubbornness (and blindness) than Jewish recalcitrance. For Elizabethans, Shylock should be all too content with his fate.

Why critics have so often missed this point is understandable: Bloom notes that modern audiences (unless one gathers a crowd of rabid anti-Semities) can't find a forcible conversion comedic. [43] While we may find the slurs and jeering of Gratanio to be offensive, Shakespeare's audiences would probably have laughed at his every joke. For these viewers, it was a fitting end for the moneylender. There is one element in Act V that appears to cement this point, one I have never seen discussed. Antonio binds his soul to another pledge, this time by Bassanio to Portia: "I dare be bound again / My soul upon the forfeit". [44] There is no dangerous lesson about placing oneself as bond; the only issue is the presence of a Jew in the deal. But now, in Belmont, Shylock and his Jewish evil are long gone. Christians and their righteousness are the order of the day. This conclusion, then, at once highlights and undermines the distinction between Jews and Christians, a dichotomy that Shakespeare portrays more fully than his predecessors. By casting light on the possibility for Jews to abandon their sinful ways, Shakespeare heightens their evil—not only are they blind, but stubborn as well. Yet the solution to this problem is readily accessible: force the Jew to abandon his Judaism. For at least one dramatic Jew, the sin of stubbornness has been rectified, and he is indeed "content."

Shakespeare's two additions to his sources share this common denominator: both conversions highlight the notion of Jewish identity, vis-à-vis Christianity (and not just "English," as Shapiro maintained). At once, the difference between Christian and Jew seems unconquerable: who would mistake the gentle Antonio for the murderous Shylock? "The Hebrew will turn Christian," Antonio says upon his first meeting with Shylock, "he grows kind." [45] Yet Shakespeare muddies these waters by reminding his audience that the line between these two religions can be overcome with a simple act of conversion, willing or forced. The chasm separating Jews from Christians was never so wide, and yet never so passable.

Aide from Jewish identity, there is another Shakespearian invention within Shylock. In a rare aside – and the dearth of Shylock's soliloquies is surely an important point – the moneylender comments on the appearance of Antonio: "I hate him for he is a Christian." [46] This theme continues throughout the play. Many critics accept Antonio's perspective on this hatred, making it merely economic:

> His reason well I know:
> I oft delivered from his forfeitures
> Many that have at times made
> moan to me.
> Therefore he hates me. [47]

Yet it is infinitely more than that. Shylock's most famous speech, full of his characteristic passion, lists several reasons beyond finances (though economic concerns are scattered throughout his tirade):

> ...He hath disgraced me, and
> hindered me half a million; laughed
> at my losses, mocked at my gains,
> scorned my nation, thwarted
> my bargains, cooled my friends,
> heated mine enemies; and what's
> his reason? I am a Jew. [48]

If we are to believe Shylock, and I contend we are (for among his lists of flaws, even the Christians don't accuse him of deceit), then the motive is an amalgam of economic, personal, and racial issues. Ultimately, Shylock's hate, while extreme and ultimately self-destructive, is shockingly realistic. This latter notion, the *actuality* of Shylock's character, seems like Shakespeare's greatest contribution to the stage Jew. Shakespeare's Jew

couldn't just be a recapitulation of stereotypes; his character is rife with conflicting emotions and motives – in a word, with humanity. Though the audience will hardly sympathize with the loss of his daughter, his ducats, or his forced conversion, they were forced to view him as a human character, inhabiting a similar plane with his Christian counterparts. The humanity of the Jew is not found in Barabas; Fisch saves that distinction for Shylock. A predictably evil human, yes, but not the demon or dog of Shakespeare's predecessors. Alone on the Venetian stage, Shylock abounds with personality and life.

Conclusions

This analysis has followed Gross' remark that Shylock "belongs to literature, and his greatness can only be properly appreciated in literary terms; but he belongs equally to the history of folklore and mass-psychology, of politics and popular culture." [49] A close reading of the play and the cultural context allows for gleaning several conclusions. Shakespeare certainly drew from Jewish stereotypes, but he also built on these prevailing beliefs. His Jew is not merely a collection of Elizabethan perceptions; the ambiguities and the sheer darkness of Shylock are far greater than Shakespeare's contemporaries could have imagined (even if they had the dramatic skill of Marlowe). Shylock's nagging insistence on his bond, and his gleeful acceptance of Portia's initial permission cast a rather dark image of the Jew. Betrayed by his daughter and bound to Antonio in a pact of hate, Shylock's revenge far outweighs even a pound of flesh. In this way, Shakespeare opened a new chapter in the polemic against Jews, providing it with a new and even more heinous villain. For most Englishmen of Shakespeare's day, the only Jews they knew were those of legend, folklore, and dramatic representation. Shylock, then, is both result and creator of a perpetuating cycle of negative stereotypes about Jews.

Though Shakespeare drew from all major anti-Jewish polemics, Shylock wasn't mired by historical precedent. His speeches, though brief, reverberate throughout the play; his explosions of passion, though painting a dangerous portrait of a Jew, also add complex hues to this image. Not only is his visceral anger quite singular, but his passion is also unrivalled in Venice. Portia (or the Venetian court) may not have been swayed by Shylock's distinctive rhetoric, his repetitive speech patterns and nervous explosive energy, but we do not know if an Elizabethan audience, amidst their jeering, would have been affected by the second half of Shylock's famous speech: "Hath,"

> not a Jew eyes? hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and summer, as a Christian is? If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? if you poison us, do we not die? and if you wrong us, shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. [50]

The similarities he so belabors might not seem jarring nowadays, but to a society obsessed with differences between Jews and Christians, Shylock's "if we are like you in the rest," though used to justify revenge, may have struck another chord. The moneylender adds a hefty dose of pathos, one that might have resonated with Elizabethan audiences. Certainly audiences would not have been *sympathetic* to Shylock: he admirably fulfills his role as comic villain, blending humor with genuine danger. But Shylock's unswerving honesty cast a different type of shadow over the play, one divergent from other portrayals of dramatic Jews.

This examination, blending literary criticism with the relevant historical context, has yielded several nuances within the anti-Semitism of *Merchant*. Shakespeare portrayed a profoundly evil Shylock, yet imbued him with enough humanity to make him truly monstrous. In a celebrated essay, C.S. Lewis referred to Shylock as a "wicked ogre of a Jew," espousing the perspective of *Merchant* as a fairy tale. [51] Ogres are material for bedtime stories; nightmares stem from these creatures. *Merchant* is anything but surreal; its heroes and its villains occupy a decidedly human stage. Raising them from the level of dogs, Shakespeare gave Jews a whole new dimension. He basically invented the Jew as human, making him all the more loathsome. Aside from the dangers of usury or the blood libels, Shakespeare identified a whole new evil. Precisely *because* a Jew has eyes are his quests for revenge so twisted: demons are expected to be villainous. Men, and stubborn ones at that, deserve all the spitting and kicking they can get. Antonio would probably receive a standing ovation for his continued treatment of Shylock.

Ultimately, the conversion of Shylock is the perfect redemption for this audience, seeking to remove this burdensome evil from amongst their midst. Not only must Shylock be bent or even broken, but he must transform out of character – gone is the eloquent and passionate Jew, harbinger of the play's evil. The "content" Christian takes his place. Portia's "quality of mercy" is indeed not strained, as Jews have a quick path towards salvation. Shakespeare's Jew, and *Merchant* as a whole, outclassed any Elizabethan notions of Jewishness: Shakespeare both highlighted and erased some of the fundamental lines between Jew and Christian. At the same time, Shylock's contributions, his pathos and his rage, set a new standard for "Jew," one that was no longer a medieval devil or caricatured Barabas. Shylock, now "like you in the rest"—profoundly human—was all the more villainous.

NOTES

[1] Though somewhat of an oversimplification, this dichotomy is still instructive. The relationship between works of literature and their historical context is the subject of much discussion in the realm of literary theory. "New Historicism" pioneered by Stephen Greenblatt, contends that literature both portrays and subverts the predominating ideas of its time.

[2] Shylock's co-opting of the play can already be seen in the subtitle of the First Quarto, published in 1600:

> The most excellent Historie of the *Merchant of Venice*. With the extreame crueltie of Shlock the Jewe towards the sayd Merchant, in cutting a just pound of his flesh, and the obtayning of *Portia* by a choyse of three chests.

This description, replete with antiquated spelling, is also the source of this paper's title.

[3] Though I am not concerned here with later portrayals of Shylock, these interpretations offer some insight into the character itself and how he might have been played in the 1590s. As there are no records or eyewitness accounts of how Shakespeare's company acted Shylock, we are left to speculation.

[4] The most infamous "real" Jew would be Dr. Rodrigo Lopez, although this point is debatable. Perhaps not coincidentally, Lopez's trial in 1594 occurred around the same time as Merchant's composition.

[5] James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

[6] Martin D. Yaffe, "Review Essay: *Shakespeare and the Jews*," (AJS Review 23:2, 1998), 235-244.

[7] I will deal with the specific details of Yaffe's reading later in this paper.

[8] See, for example, Jay L. Halio's Review in *Shakespeare Quarterly* 51:2 (Summer 2000), 258-260, and Kenneth Hart Green's in *Modern Judaism* 19:3 (October 1999), 311-317. Several others of the same sort are readily available on JSTOR. Though he does not address it directly, we can assume Harold Bloom would also vociferously disagree with Yaffe: he begins his article with "One would have to be blind, deaf, and dumb, not to recognize that Shakespeare's grand, equivocal comedy *The Merchant of Venice* is nevertheless a profoundly anti-Semitic work" (171). Presumably, this does not bode well for Yaffe.

[9] I devote several paragraphs throughout this paper to issues of methodology. This was not my original intent, but after my research uncovered several recurring tactical errors in assessment, I am left with no other choice.

[10] Shapiro, 11-12.

[11] Shapiro, 46.

[12] Shapiro, 62.

[13] Shapiro, 88.

[14] Shapiro notes that the terms "antisemitic" and "philosemitic" are "anachronistic terms, inventions of nineteenth-century racial theory" and therefore "fundamentally ill-suited for gauging what transpired three hundred years earlier." Additionally, he argues that the motives of Elizabethan philosemites and antisemites were not that different: neither was religiously tolerant. (11) Nevertheless, I will use these terms sparingly for the sake of convenience.

[15] Shapiro, 93-94.

[16] Shapiro, 13-14.

[17] In his "Introduction," Shapiro hints at the religious and childhood indoctrination of "Jew-hating," but does not develop these seeds further.

[18] See Shapiro's Introduction, footnote 25, for a listing of books that survey the place of the Jew in drama. Though representation may overlap with cultural context, this need not be the case; as this study aims to prove, literature can sometimes deflect or redirect prevailing notions.

[19] Harold Fisch, *The Dual Image*, (UK: Ktav Press, 1981), 18.

[20] Fisch, 28.

[21] John Gross, Shylock: *Four Hundred Years in the Life of a Legend*, (London: Chatto & Windus, Ltd, 1992), 36.

[22] This appears to contradict Shapiro, who classifies political dealings as part of the "usual" trope of anti-Semitic accusations (93).

[23] Fisch, 32. I will return to the "humanity" point later in this paper.

[24] Gross, 19.

[25] Gross, 51.

[26] Yaffe, 19.

[27] Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human* (New York: Riverside Books, 1998), 176. Bloom uses this point to debate Shapiro's premise about the forced conversion assuaging Protestant anxieties.

[28] Martin D. Yaffe, *Shylock and the Jewish Question*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 1997, 4.

[29] Cf. *Merchant* 1.3.29-34 with 2.5.11-15.

[30] Fisch, 34.

[31] Kenneth Hart Green *"Review Essay, " Modern Judaism* 19:3, Oct 1999, 311-317. See the "appendix" for Green's line placed in context.

[32] Though we can not hold Shakespeare responsible for the niceties of Talmudic law, the chance of Shylock's case holding up in Beth Din are slim to none. See Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *Mishpat Shylock Le'Or HaHalakha in Le'or HaHalakha* (Tel Aviv: A. Tsiyoni, 1957), 310-338.

[33] Shapiro, 121.

[34] See, for example, Norman Rabkin's *Shakespeare and the Problem of Meaning.*

[35] Shapiro, 23.

[36] See Merchant 2.8.15-17, though it is important to note that we do not see Shylock himself utter "My daughter! O my ducats! O my daughter!"; those lines are reported, with much gleeful malice, by Solanio.

[37] Gross notes that usury didn't concern Shakespeare as much as "justice and resentment" (38). This remains speculation. Shakespeare's audience, however, would be unable to divide the fusion between cruelty and usury: Shylock himself gleefully describes his practice in unnatural terms (comparing it to Jacob's trick with Laban's sheep): "I cannot tell; I make it breed as fast" (*Merchant* 1.3.94). Additionally, his memorable opening words are: "Three thousand ducats, well" (3.1.1). More than anything else, Shylock's speeches are dominated by "ducats," "bond," and "jewels."

[38] Joseph Shatzmiller, *Shylock Reconsidered: Jews, Moneylending, and Medieval Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 123. Shatzmiller describes conditions in Medieval France; the differences with premodern England are far from slight, including the different laws governing usury. He believes, however, that his model serves as more than a shocking exception.

[39] *Merchant*, 5.1.1-24.

[40] Shapiro, 141.

[41] This is not to say that Jessica is devoid of any ambiguity. It is interesting that her name has no Jewish connotation to it. Additionally, Portia's eventual treatment of Jessica is not as positive as one would have expected.

[42] Bloom has a parallel, if not equally sentimental explanation, arguing that Shylock was threatening the bounds of the play. While these are aesthetically intriguing ideas, Shakespeare's intentions in silencing Shylock are not our present focus. The audience, presumably, would not be aware of the dramatic struggles between playwright and character: they would see a Jew being forcibly converted and broken.

[43] Bloom, 183.

[44] *Merchant* 5.1.251-252.

[45] *Merchant* 1.3.177.

[46] *Merchant* 1.3.39.

[47] *Merchant* 3.3.21-24.

[48] *Merchant* 3.1.51-55. Cf. 1.3.45, where Shylock claims Antonio "hates our sacred nation."

[49] Gross, 1.

[50] *Merchant* 3.2.55-64.

[51] C.S. Lewis, "Hamlet: The Prince or the Poem?" in *Selected Literary Essays*, ed. Walter Hooper (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969).

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In Defense of Scholem: A Re-evaluation of Idel's Historical Critiques

YIGAL SKLARIN

In numerous forums Gershom Scholem presents an original explanation for the initial outbreak and two century long success of Sabbateanism. While he admits that the Sabbatean movement should be connected to the Spanish expulsion in 1492, he believes that Sabbateanism was a direct result of the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah. Scholem assumes that Lurianism became the pervasive ideology of the Jewish intellectual world during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and eventually dominated Jewish thought. He explains that the concepts contained therein spoke to the exiled Jews in terms with which they were painfully familiar. It was an ideology laden with images of exile and redemption on the cosmic level that provided many Jews with solace from the tribulations they had endured in the fifteen hundred year exile. [1] Scholem also believes that Lurianism was *the* reason for the success of the Sabbatean movement. In other words, Sabbatai Sevi was not merely the leader of a messianic movement, but the concretization of a mystical philosophy as well. It was this substantiality that allowed Sabbateanism to survive and flourish long after Sevi's apostasy and death. [2]

Scholem's theory, which was once accepted by the scholarly community, [3] has only recently been viewed with skepticism. Moshe Idel argues that Sabbateanism could not possibly have been a manifestation of Lurianic mysticism for numerous ideological reasons inherent to Lurianism. He also asserts that Scholem grossly overstated both the pervasiveness of Lurianic mysticism and its influence on Sabbateanism. [4] This paper will analyze both of Idel's arguments. While the conceptual argument will be presented as is, two possible defenses for Scholem against Idel's historical argument will be introduced. The first will come from the writings of two prominent Polish Rabbis from the 16th and 17th centuries, and the second will come from the thought of Gerson Cohen.

One of Idel's main goals is to conceptually separate Lurianism from Sabbateanism. While Scholem argues that the messianic elements of Lurianic mysticism led to "the explosive manifestation" of the Sabbatean movement, [5] Idel counters that there is actually nothing unique to Lurianic mysticism that would have led to a messianic movement. [6] Furthermore, many of Luria's eschatological concepts were already prevalent in pre-Lurianic Kabbalah and therefore cannot be considered as the direct and singular cause of the Sabbatean movement. [7] In addition, many of those familiar with Luria's Kabbalah in the seventeenth century did not perceive it as a particularly messianic ideology; they tended to focus on the mythical, demonic, and theurgical aspects of Lurianism. [8]

Also, while Sabbateanism was centered around Sabbatai Sevi, Idel asserts that Lurianic Kabbalah would never have led to a messianic movement that included a Messiah figure. This is because Lurianic Kabbalah focuses on the return to the cosmic "perfect state" as a culmination of collective Jewish theurgical activity, not that of an individual. As Scholem himself explains, Lurianism declares that the end of days will result from human activity on a cosmic plane, not from a Messiah or messianic movement. [9] Idel consequently asserts that the individual messianic figure of Sabbatai Sevi is a clear indication that the movement's initiation must have come about from classical messianic inclinations, or at best from Zoharic theosophy. It could not have been a result of Lurianic Kabbalah. [10]

Idel's main argument from a historical perspective is presented in his article "One from a Town, Two from a Clan." He claims that Scholem had overstated the dissemination of both kabbalah and Lurianic mysticism amongst the masses. Idel then argues that even if Lurianism could have led to a messianic movement, a comprehensive and widespread understanding of its mystical teachings would have been a necessary prerequisite for any messianic movement. [11] However, it was only in the aftermath of the Sabbatean movement, in the early decades of the eighteenth century, that the concepts contained in Lurianic Kabbalah became a part of the Jewish layman's consciousness. [12]

Idel begins his historical criticism of Scholem's theory by reevaluating the evidence for the diffusion of general kabbalistic teachings. He writes:

> Let me examine one of the proofs for the alleged dissemination of kabbalah in Poland, not so much in order to establish the status of kabbalah in this country as to show how the evidence was interpreted by Scholem. According to Scholem: "In its continued advance, the kabbalah reached Poland from the second half of the sixteenth century. Public enthusiasm reached such proportions that 'he who raises objections to the science of the kabbalah' was considered 'liable to excommunication.'" [13]

Idel continues by questioning the validity of this source. Scholem's evidence comes from a responsum of R. Joel Sirkes, the late sixteenth century rabbinic figure from Krakow. [14] However, if one reexamines the actual text of the responsum, it is very difficult to see how kabbalah had reached a proportion of 'public enthusiasm.' In fact, one can learn very little about kabbalah at all. This responsum was directed at an individual who had been mocking the teachings of the sages along with the wisdom of kabbalah. Sirkes' ruling that this individual deserved excommunication was primarily in response to the individual's disregard for the words of the sages, and not necessarily a reflection of the public's view of and interest in Lurianic kabbalah. [15]

Idel continues: "It is therefore strange to see how 'public enthusiasm' was created out of a single phrase. Scholem endeavored to demonstrate the expansion of kabbalah in Poland. At his disposal was a rather concise remark which he overemphasized in order to prove his point." He adds that even if Scholem's proof from the Sirkes responsum were to be accepted at face value, it proves more about the expansion of kabbalah in general than it does about Lurianic Kabbalah specifically. [16]

Idel's second historical critique is in regards to the prevalence of Lurianic Kabbalah in particular. He analyzes the number of references to Luria in kabbalistic texts in order to determine the kabbalist's respective sphere of influence. [17] He argues that the traces of Lurianic Kabbalah can only be found in ethical, moralistic and *minhag* literature. Idel cites the work of Ze'ev Gries, who, based on a detailed survey of all the kabbalistic *hanhagot* literature beginning at the end of the sixteenth century, concluded that this literary genre only became popular and influential in the second half of the seventeenth century. [18] Idel believes that this proves that the spread of Lurianism was too late for what Scholem had argued, and that the spread of Lurianism had not preceded Sabbateanism. Gries takes this a step further, claiming that the proliferation of Lurianic material was a result of Sabbateanism, not a factor that could have caused the movement. [19] Thus, based on "the paucity of Lurianic study in the first half of the seventeenth century [amongst the masses]," [20] Idel calls into question Scholem's "exaggerated description of the 'proliferation' of Lurianic Kabbalah." He argues that if, in Scholem's eyes, the dissemination of Lurianic material is directly proportional to an increase in messianism, then that would have called for an increase in Lurianic study. [21]

While Idel's critiques have merit, there are two rabbinic figures that can bolster Scholem's position. Scholem's claim that general Zoharic Kabbalah had already achieved prominence among laymen by the second half of the sixteenth century can be corroborated by the writings of one of the most authoritative Polish rabbinic figures of the period, R. Moshe Isserles. R. Moshe Isserles (1520–1572) was the preeminent decisor of Ashkenazic halakhah. R. Isserles (also known by the acronym "Rama") wrote both the *Darkhei Moshe*, a commentary on Rabbi Yosef Karo's prominent *Bet Yosef*, and the *Mapah*, a running Ashkenazi commentary to R. Karo's *Shulhan Arukh*. His two non-halakhic works, *Torat ha-olah* and the *Mekhir yayin*, clearly reflect his familiarity with the Zohar and many of the works of the pietists. [22] While Rama bemoans the recent publication of many kabbalistic works and their distribution to the masses "who do not know their right from their left...[nor]... how to explain basic understanding of the Torah, yet jump to study kabbalah," [23] he clearly and repeatedly asserts its holiness and dually acknowledges it as the "word of God." [24]

The influence and prominence of kabbalah in Isserles' thought can even be seen from a cursory glance at his halakhic works. This fact makes one wonder why Scholem would cite a responsum, regardless as to how "famous" (as branded by Idel) it is, to prove his point. It almost leaves the reader with the impression that either Scholem was not familiar with classic rabbinic texts of the period or was not really interested in what they could offer. [25]

There are passages in the *Darkhei Moshe* in which Rama quotes the Zohar and other kabbalistic sources, though how he addresses these sources varies depending on the specific halakhic circumstance. There are times when Rama ignores the Zohar as an authoritative text, incapable of overturning the Talmud, classic commentators, halakhic authorities, or even prevalent *minhagim* (religious customs). On other occasions, however, he quotes the Zohar in order to substantiate certain practices. [26] There are even instances in which Rama uses the Zohar as a possible source for a halakhah. [27] These examples show that R. Isserles viewed the Zohar as an authoritative work, and kabbalah as an authoritative source for halakhah. Since Rama expected his code to be read and used by the masses, and not merely the rabbinic elite, one can view his dissemination of Zoharic Kabbalah as an indication that lay people had accepted basic kabbalistic ideas.

In regards to Idel's second critique, namely that Lurianic Kabbalah was

not pervasive in seventeenth century Europe, one can find support for Scholem in the writings of R. Abraham Gombiner. R. Gombiner (1633–1683) was a rabbi and a leading religious authority in the Jewish community of Kalisch, Poland and is known for his commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh*, the *Magen Avraham*. [28] He began writing his glosses well before the outbreak of Sabbateanism, and completed them in 1671 (they were, however, published posthumously in 1692). [29] Gombiner's son writes that his father had intended to write a commentary that was "pleasant and acceptable in the eyes of masses." [30] Gombiner's main goals were not simply to explain the *Shulhan Arukh*, but to provide a commentary that incorporates both the customs of Polish Jewry and the kabbalistic and pietistic customs of Safed. The fact that his commentary was written in the years preceding Sabbatai Sevi is significant; his inclusion of the Lurianic kabbalism is a strong testament to the masses' acceptance of, and familiarity with, Lurianism.

From even a quick glance at Gombiner's glosses, one can easily detect Lurianic customs and mystical theory. In fact, Gombiner quotes Luria at least fifty-one times in his commentary, citing the *Kitvei HaAri*, the *Sefer Kavanot HaAri*, and other teachings taught in Luria's name. As pertaining to halakhic rulings, Gombiner cites Luria twenty-six times, [31] sometimes for a stringency, [32] and, on rare occasion, for a leniency. [33] While many of these rulings seem devoid of mystical depth, the twenty-one pietistic customs that he references are kabbalistic in nature. [34] These citations are derived from kabbalah, sod (secret) [35] and Luria's personal stringencies. [36]

While the bulk of the pietistic customs lack a kabbalistic explanation, [37] in two instances Gombiner cites a halakhic ruling of Luria, and then provides its mystical explanation. In the laws of liturgy, Gombiner cites Luria in regards to *piyyut*. Luria ruled that one should not recite *piyyutim* other than those ancient ones that had been arranged by the *Rishonim*, such as Eleazer HaKalir. However, in terms of the different *nushaot* of the Jewish communities, one should not change one's custom from that of the community. Luria explained that each of the twelve tribes has a specific gate into which their prayers are received in heaven. This gate is only open to the prayers that correspond to the liturgy of one's specific tribe. Therefore, people should be cautious when it comes to altering a customary *nusah*. [38] While Gombiner could have stressed the importance of custom to explain this ruling, he instead cites Luria's mystical explanation.

On another occasion, Gombiner references the Lurianic concept of uprooting the *qelipot*. Gombiner asks why the passage of *pitum haqetoret*, which is recited before the morning prayer, is not recited *after* the morning prayer. The question is based on the assumption that the order of the prayers corresponds to the order of the Temple service (the *qetoret* was brought *after* the *tamid shel shahar*). Gombiner quotes Luria who explained that the reason for the disorder lies in the hope of scattering and uprooting the *qelipot*. [39]

From an analysis of Gombiner's glosses, two observations can be made. First, a respected rabbi wrote about Lurainic Pietism with the intent that the masses would read his works. Second, although they might not have understood the depths of Lurianic mysticism, the general public was probably familiar with the basic terminology quoted by Gombiner. This can be seen from the fact that Gombiner casually quotes the concept of *shevirot haqelipot* but does not feel the need to explain what it means.

While these sources indicate that the masses had a rudimentary knowledge of Lurianism,one might argue that if one were to prove that Scholem's theory is correct, more than a simple or cursory understanding of Lurianic ideology would be required. In order for the masses to experience increased messianic tensions, they would need a deeper understanding of Lurianism and not simply a familiarity with its terminology. Matt Goldish has pointed out that Scholem himself was troubled by the fact that "Luriah's name was freely used because of the Lurianic legend... whereas Lurianic theories were still unknown to the majority of kabbalists." [40] Goldish continues that it is hard to reconcile Scholems's insistence on the centrality of Lurianic Kabbalah with Sabbateanism if in fact so few individuals were actually familiar with the ideology. [41]

Perhaps this question can be answered by borrowing a theory originally proposed by Gerson Cohen in a different context. While many parts of Cohen's arguments have come under attack in recent scholarship, [42] he attempts to explain why the Jews of Sepharad had a disproportional number of messianic movements relative to their Ashkenazic brethren. Cohen argues that one of the main differences between Sepharad and Ashkenaz was the scholastic focus of the respective scholarly elite. While in Spain eschatology was a constant topic of discussion within rabbinic circles, it was not a popular area of interest in France and Germany. [43] Cohen writes:

> Having seen that underneath the consistent rabbinic opposition to messianic movements there was a vast difference between the rabbis of the Sepharadim and of the Ashkenazim in their treatment of the traditional messianic dogma, the question that commands our attention is whether there is any discernable relationship between elitist expression and the behavior of the laity... Is it not possible to correlate Spanish intellectual expression with the messianic behavior of occasionally rebellious Spanish laity? [44]

What Cohen argues is that the messianic and eschatological theory discussed by the elite inevitably trickles down to the masses, thus encouraging the resulting practical messianic movements.

Returning to Sabbateanism, even if Lurianic mysticism and its messianic elements were not completely understood by the masses, its increased popularity amongst the elite might have spurred the laymen towards messianism. As Cohen states, the elements that were meant to stay amongst the rabbinic elite would eventually be incorporated into the ideology of the masses. Therefore, the study of Lurianism by the rabbinic elite (such as Isserles and Gombiner) might have inadvertently caused a messianic movement amongst the masses.

In sum, Idel questioned Scholem's thesis on both conceptual and historical grounds. While Idel's historical critiques are legitimate, they are not insurmountable. It has been shown that the popular works of R. Isserles and R. Gombiner casually incorporate Zoharic and Lurianic Kabbalah, thus indicating that the masses had accepted and were familiar with basic Lurianic ideas. Additionally, even if the masses did not know about the intricacies of Lurianic thought, the mere fact that the scholarly elite was studying Lurianic Kabbalah might have caused a "trickle down" effect that led to a messianic revolution.

NOTES

[1] Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*. Translated by R.J. Zwi Werblowsky (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 7-8, 20, 44, 67-68; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1941), pp. 248-249, 287-288, 297-299; Scholem, "Redemption Through Sin," in *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), pp.87-88.
Scholem argues that by 1650, only one generation after the initial dissemination of Lurianism and only fifteen years prior to the beginning of the Sabbatean movement, Lurianism had achieved unchallenged supremacy and was the only well-articulated and generally accepted form of Jewish theology at the time (Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi, p. 25).

[2] See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 2-3; Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 302-303, 306, 320-321.

[3] For example see Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 184-197, esp. pp. 187-188; Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism* 1550-1750 (Oxford and Portland, Oregon: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1998), pp.170-177, esp.170-171.

[4] Moshe Idel, "'One from a Town, Two from a Clan'- The Diffusion of Lurianic *Kabbalah* and Sabbateanism: A Re-Examination," *Jewish History* 7:2 (Fall 1993), pp. 82-91; Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 258.

[5] See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 287-288; Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 66-68.

[6] Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 182.

[7] Moshe Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," pp. 80-82; *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 258.

[8] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 258.

[9] Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 44-50.

[10] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 259. "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 94.See Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 296-297, who addresses this specific question and answers that this was one of the necessary contributions and explanations that Nathan provided in bridging the gap between traditional messianism and Lurianism.
See also Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 265-266. Scholem had attempted to draw a direct correlation between the expulsion from Spain and the formulation of Lurianism. Idel argued that on a methodological level this is problematic; no Lurianic texts mention the Expulsion specifically. Secondly, there is no reason why Luria, of Ashkenazic descent, would have been so affected by a Sephardic event that he would base an entire ideology on it.

[11] Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 183-184; Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 259-260.

See also Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 259-260, who acknowledges that while one cannot argue that Lurianic mysticism led to Sabbateanism, Sabbateanism definitely benefited from the Lurianic ideology. Both Nathan initially, and Sabbatai's follower later, predominantly used Luria's language and concepts to explain their messianic ideology.
Furthermore, Idel (ibid.) argued that Scholem's use of Nathan's philosophy of Lurianic mysticism as 'the smoking gun' does not translate into significant proof. While both Nathan and some of Sevi's disciples used complex concepts in Lurianism to explain Sevi's actions, and rationalize the continuation of Sabbateanism, it continued unnoted by the masses.

[12] Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 260.

[13] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 82, citing from Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), p. 79.

[14] R. Joel Sirkes, *Shut Ha-Bah*, Older version, # 5.

[15] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," pp. 82-83.

[16] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," pp. 82-83. This paper has attempted to deal with Idel's specific critique of Scholem. However, it is important to note that Idel presents Scholem in an extremely biased way. While Scholem in *Kabbalah* does use the Sirkes responsum alone to prove the pervasiveness of *kabbalah*, in *Sabbatai Sevi* (pp. 55-90), Scholem dedicates the first section of his work to providing proofs to this specific issue.

[17] See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 74-79; Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," pp. 84-90.

[18] Zeev Gries, "The Fashioning of Hebrew Conduct Literature at the End of the 16th Century and in the 17th Century and its Historical Significance" (Hebrew), Tarbiz 56 (1987), pp. 521-587, cited in Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 91.

[19] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 91.

[20] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 91.

[21] Idel, "One from a Town, Two from a Clan," p. 91.

[22] Asher Siev, *Rabenu Mosheh Iserlish* (Rama): chayav, yetzirotav vedeotav, cheveirav, talmidav v' tzetza'av (New York: Yeshiva University, 1972), pp. 238-239; p. 252; Yonah Ben-Sason, *Mishnato ha-iyunit shel ha-Rema* (Jerusalem, Israel: ha-Akademyah *ha-le'umit ha-Yisre'elit le-mada'im*, 1984), pp. 33-40, p. 8 fn. 37.

[23] R. Moshe Isserles, *Torat ha'olah*, 3:4; Asher Siev, *Rabenu Mosheh Iserlish (Rama)*, p. 240; Yonah Ben-Sason, Mishnato ha-'iyunit shel ha-Rema, p. 14. Scholem himself cites this passage of Isserles in *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 75.

[24] Asher Siev, *Rabenu Mosheh Iserlish (Rama)*, p. 240.

[25] For another example of this phenomenon see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 19, where he writes that "R. Joseph Karo deliberately ignored kabbalism in his great rabbinic code *Shulhan Arukh*." This is puzzling since it is clear that Karo used the Zohar extensively and authoritatively in both *Shulhan Arukh* and its precursor, the *Bet Yosef*. Already in Karo's introduction to the *Bet Yosef*, he specifically mentions the Zohar as one of his authoritative source texts. See also Israel M. Ta-Shma, *ha-Nigleh sheba-nistar: le-heker shei'e ha-Halakhah be-sefer ha-Zohar* (Tel Aviv, Israel: ha-kibuts ha-me'uhad, 2001), pp. 90-91, and Jacob Katz, *Halakhah ve-kabalah: mehkarim be-toldot dat Yihra'el 'al medoreha ve-zikatah ha-hevratit* (Jerusalem, Israel: *Hotsa'at sefarim a. sh. Y.L. Magnes, ha-Universitah ha-Ivrit*, 1984), p. 67. In only the first one hundred and fifty *simanim of the Bet Yosef, Orakh hayim*, R. Karo quotes the Zohar twenty three times and kabbalistic sources an additional eight times (Zohar: *Bet Yosef, Orah hayim*: 4:8; 25:1,6; 25:2; 25:13; 25:5; 27:2; 31:2; 32:44; 46:1; 50:1; 51:3; 56:1; 59:3; 61:3; 66:7; 101:2; 111:1; 117:5; 128:7; 128:12; 131:4; 132:1; 141:3. Kabbalistic Sources: *Bet Yosef, Orakh hayim*: 11:12; 25:11; 35:1; 36:1; 128:7; 131:2). Considering that Karo based *Shulhan Arukh off the Bet Yosef*, claiming that *Shulhan Arukh* 'ignor[es] kabbalism' is difficult.

[26] Asher Siev, *Rabenu Mosheh Iserlish (Rama)*, pp. 240-242.

[27] See *Darkhei Moshe, Orah hayim* 101:2 and *Darkhei Moshe, Orah hayim*, 25:2.

[28] See Introduction to *Magen Avraham*, written by his son Hayim Gombiner.

[29] Shlomo Spitzer, "Gombiner, Avraham Abele ben Hayim Ha-Levi," *The YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), edited by Gershon D. Hundert, vol. 1, pp. 616-617.

[30] Introduction to *Magen Avraham*, written by his son Hayim Gombiner.

[31] See *Magen Avraham, Orah hayim*, from *Kavanot HaAri:* 8:3; 8:13; 25:18 and repeated in 28:3; 47:5; 51:7; 56:4; 56:7 (not to recite extra *piyyutim*); 131:17; 174:14; 204:10; 260:1; 366:1; 423:6; 583:6. From *Kitvei HaAri:* 8:6; 24:1; 32:1; 51:7; 56:4; 267:1; 551:42; 651:4. In the name of the *Ari (be'shem HaAri):* 296:2; 285:1; 651:17; 664:8 ("Luria was very scrupulous with regard to this ruling").

[32] See for example, *Magen Avraham, Orah hayim*, 664:8.

[33] See for example, *Magen Avraham, Orah hayim*, 8:6; 56:4; 260:1; 583:6.

[34] See *Magen Avraham, Orah hayim*, from Kavanot HaAri: 25:3; 90:28; 93:2; 101:3; 151:3; introduction to 240: 251:5; introduction to 260; introduction to 262; 293:3; 551:45; 605:1. From *Kitvei HaAri*: 8:2; 170:19; 559:14; 607:3; 607:7. In the name of the Ari (be'shem HaAri): 95:2 (see the counter position of R Moshe Cordovero); 125:3; 605:2; introduction to 621.

[35] See *Magen avraham, Orah hayim*, "al pi *kabbalah*": 605:1; "al pi sod": 8:2.

[36] See *Magen avraham, Orah hayim*, 125:3; 151:3; 251:5; introduction to 260.
While one could contend that Magen Avraham was written during the rise of Sabbateanism, and therefore historically irrelevant to our discussion, see for a less explicit example of this phenomenon the glosses of David HaLevi Segal (1586–1667), the Taz, who quotes Luria nine times in his commentary (*Orah hayim* 11:16; 25:9; 27:8; 53:1; 174:9; 240:2; 260:2; 460:2) which was completed years before Sabbatai's messianism.

[37] See however, e.g. *Magen Avraham, Orah hayim*, 21:2; 25:3, where halakhic reasoning is provided.

[38] *Magen avraham, Orah hayim*, introduction to 78.

[39] *Magen avraham, Orah hayim*, 132:3; "in the writings of the Ari [it is explained] that the reasoning behind this is to scatter the qelipot (shards)." See also *Taz, Orah hayim*, 460:2, who quotes from the *Kavanot HaAri* that it is proper for a person to exert himself in the preparation of their matzot for Passover, since through the toil of the preparation one will sweat. This sweat will destroy the qelipot that were created by the individual through the sin of seminal emission. See also Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets* (Boston, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 3-4, who places this concept of the creation of qelipot and the cosmic disaster associated with masturbation in the personal historical context of *Sabbatai Sevi*.

[40] Gershon Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 84. See also Scholem, ibid., p.52, that "the masses continued to cling to the conceptions of ancient apocalyptic legend, as is evident from the course of events as well as from the type of messianic propaganda which they conducted. [While] the spiritual elite, on the other hand, tended to interpret everything in terms of tiqqun."

[41] Matt Goldish, *The Sabbatean Prophets*, p. 174 n. 20.

[42] See Elisheva Carlebach, *Between History and Hope: Jewish Messianism in Ashkenaz and Sepharad. Third Annual Lecture of the Victor J. Selmanowitz Chair of Jewish History* (New York: Touro College, 1998).

[43] Gerson Cohen, "Messianic Postures of Ashkenazim and Sephardim (Prior to Sabbathai Zevi)," in *Studies in the Variety of Rabbinic Cultures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), p. 276.

[44] Ibid, 286.

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Maimonides' Redeemer and Redemption

MICHAEL STEIN

No other rabbinic authority has had as large an impact on the Jewish approach to the messianic period as Maimonides has. Presumably, even without Maimonides' contribution, belief in Messiah would have been sustained throughout ensuing generations due to an emotional and psychological need to yearn for a redemptive period, but, without him, critical questions would have been left unanswered. His writings have filled in many blanks and have answered many questions, including: Is there an obligation to believe in the Messiah's future arrival, and, if so, what is the content of that belief? How, if at all, will the world during the messianic age differ, politically, economically and physically from the present? What will be the process through which the Messiah will reveal and prove his identity? How will the messianic age affect the rest of the world's population?

Maimonides wrote quite prolifically about the messianic age, and did so in a few different venues. His primary treatments appear in the *Mishneh Torah* and his *Epistle* to the Yemenite community. But, Maimonides also discusses the Messianic age tangentially in his *Treatise on Resurrection* and in his *Commentary on the Mishnah*. For the most part Maimonides presents a consistent and integrated conception of the messianic age. Nevertheless, there are a few seeming inconsistencies. It is the goal of this paper to trace Maimonides' view of many facets of the messianic age, and to explain some of the seeming inconsistencies in his various presentations.

The Nature of the Messianic Age

Regarding the nature of the messianic age, David Hartman sums up Maimonides' position in the *Mishneh Torah* as follows:

> Human nature will not change. Isaiah's picture of the lamb and the lion is allegory... There will be neither a new law nor a new man. The distinction between the messianic and the premessianic period is in the nature of the political domain. The novelty of the messianic period is in the growth of spiritual seeking among a large part of the population. This unprecedented enlargement and intensification of spiritual pursuits will result from the political and economic security of the messianic age. [1]

In other words, the underlying nature of Jewish law, humanity, and the world will not change. Yet, the peaceful political situation will allow for heightened spiritual sensitivity and achievements.

Maimonides' repeated iteration of the amoraic (Shemuel's) adage "the sole difference between the present and messianic days is delivery from servitude to foreign powers" [2] has rung in the ears of not only Hartman but of generations of Maimonidean scholars. His allegorization of the scriptures that literally describe the messianic age in miraculous terms, and his unequivocal formulas, "that in the days of the Messiah [none] of the Laws of nature will be set aside," and that "the world will follow its normal course" [3] are regarded as indicative of Maimonides' naturalistic perception of the messianic age. [4] Various details in Maimonides' description of messianic times are further symptomatic of his naturalistic posture, most prominently, his criteria for determining the identity of the Messiah, which excludes the need for his performance of miracles. [5]

Yet, at the same time Maimonides describes a few details about the messianic age that seem to be far from naturalistic, that clearly fall outside of what Maimonides' calls the solitary difference between the pre and post messianic period. He delineates an existence that is void of war, famine, jealousy or competition [6] and a time of unprecedented material abundance, during which delicacies will be as prevalent as the dust of the land. [7] It is hard to imagine that these are just the result of world-wide peace and Israel's political sovereignty. Elsewhere in his *Mishneh Torah*, again Maimonides seems to contradict his own adoption of the realistic view of the messianic age in *Hilkhot Melakhim* with the espousal of a different conception in *Hilkhot Teshuva* and in *Hilkhot Shabbat*. [8] In both sections he assumes the perspective of Shemuel's amoraic challenger, which has been traditionally understood as the apocalyptic view of the messianic era. [9]

It is surprising that so many scholars have been satisfied to describe Maimonides' view of the messianic age as simply, realistic, without noting these seeming inconsistencies. Among Maimonides' earliest commentators, Rabbi Joseph Karo in his *Kessef*

Mishneh [10] and Rabbi Abraham de Boton in his *Lehem Mishneh*, raise the question. Boton's understanding of Maimonides begins with his unique rendering of the two Talmudic opinions regarding the messianic age. He interprets Shemuel's opinion to mean that, literally, nothing about the messianic age will be different from the present period other than Jewish sovereignty. [11] Rabbi Hiya bar Abba's opinion is that there will be many differences in the messianic age but that the underlying laws of nature will remain unchanged. [12] Boton then claims that Maimonides essentially adopts Rabbi Hiya's view, notwithstanding his repeated quotations of Shemuel's declaration. For Boton, Maimonides' quotations of Shemuel serves as a convenient phrase, excised from its original context, used to reject only the idea that there will be changes in the laws of nature.

In the class of later interpreters, Amos Funkenstein was sensitive enough to raise the issue, asking, "Is not a perpetual peace of the kind Maimonides envisages in itself a miracle, a change in human nature?" [13] Funkenstein effectively offers the same explanation as Boton, but he fits it into Maimonides' general categorization of miracles. Funkenstein notes a distinction in the *Guide* between miracles that defy the natural order and miracles that are "taken from the reservoir of the remainder of contingency on all levels of nature." [14] The second type of miracle is simply a previously undetermined result of an already determined natural principle. In this sense, Funkenstein suggests that Maimonides is perfectly consistent – the miracles that will occur in the messianic age do not undermine natural law – they are just alternative outcomes of the same natural law that currently exists. Echoing Boton, Funkenstein explains for Maimonides that the laws of nature will remain intact.

With this argument, along with his thesis that the messianic age will bring the world full circle, back to a stage in which monotheism is the exclusive religious preference, Funkenstein is able to claim that according to Maimonides, "The messianic age... is in all aspects a part of history." [15] In truth though, whether or not one considers the messianic age as part of history is more a question of focus than anything else. If one attends to the naturalism and to the religious beliefs of the messianic age then one will have little hesitation about siding with Funkenstein. But, if one is to focus on the political structure, economic reality, interpersonal relationships and personal pursuits during the messianic age one would likely consider it ahistorical.

The Messiah's performance of miracles

There are also discrepancies between the *Mishneh Torah* and Maimonides' other works. One such contradiction is in the realm of the Messiah's performance of miracles. In the *Epistle to Yemen* Maimonides claims that the Messiah will indeed carry out miracles to affirm his true identity. [16] This statement seems to contradict Maimonides' understanding of the messianic age in the *Code* in two ways. Firstly, Maimonides writes explicitly in *Hilkhot Melakhim* 11:3, "Do not think that King Messiah will have to perform signs and wonders, bring anything new into being, revive the dead, or do similar things." Secondly, it implicitly contradicts his ruling that the natural world will remain unchanged during the messianic age. [17] In order for the Messiah to prove his identity through miracles presumably those miracles will indeed defy the natural order. [18]

There is no shortage of attempts to reconcile Maimonides' position in the *Code* and his view in the *Epistle*. One suggestion offers a resolution to the second problem, namely the incongruence between Maimonides' generally rationalist view of the messianic age and the ability for the messianic figure to perform miracles. This proposal is that the miracles discussed in the *Epistle* will be limited to the battlefield. As such they are not inconsistent with the way the world generally functions. [19]

But, of course, this resolution does not help with the other problem, namely, the explicit contradiction in *Hilkhot Melakhim*. Additionally, there is little evidence that Maimonides confines the Messiah's ability to perform miracles to the battlefield. Scholem's suggestion is based solely on the juxtaposition between Maimonides' discussion of miracles and of the Messiah's role on the battlefield. It is difficult to rely on juxtaposition alone for such a sharp limitation on Maimonides' otherwise explicit description.

Isaac Shailat offers another suggestion to reconcile the *Epistle* with the *Mishneh Torah*. He thinks that according to Maimonides, as long as the claimant only expresses messianic wishes and hopes, he need not perform miracles to prove his identity. However, once such a person claims with certainty that he is the prophetic Messiah, he is required to prove his identity through miracles just as all other prophets are required to do. [20] This reconciliation is problematic because it assumes that according to the *Mishneh Torah's* conception, miracles would eventually be required of the messianic figure. However, this requirement is nowhere to be found in *Mishneh Torah*; certainly, this is too important a detail to teach through implication. [21]

Twersky quotes the *Treatise on Resurrection* in his discussion about contradictions in Maimonides' writing, saying, "It is proper that each group be addressed in accord with its capacity." [22] It has therefore been suggested that the contradiction about miracles is due to the *Epistle's* diverging purpose and audience. In the *Mishneh Torah* Maimonides presents jurisprudence, his legal conception about the messianic age. The *Epistle to Yemen* on the

other hand has a polemical purpose. In his *Epistle to Yemen* Maimonides is attempting to ensure that the Yemenites will never again be fooled by future messianic impostors. As a result, Maimonides is willing to push the envelope in order to mollify the despair and to quell the messianic anxiety that gripped the community of Yemen. [23]

This thesis is compelling but it leaves a lacuna that must be addressed. In the words of Isadore Twersky, "Must skillful communication with different audiences inevitably involve self-contradiction?" [24] In other words, does Maimonides lie to his audience in Yemen and/or to his audience in the *Mishneh Torah*? Did he write something to them that he thought was untenable because each audience needed to hear the position which Maimonides provided?

It is likely however that Maimonides simply changes his mind or that he is uncertain of the one correct decision. As unattractive as it may seem the fact that his contradictory views appear in two different works makes the suggestion more acceptable. And, although this general approach is tenable for resolving other contradictions in Maimonides' writings, in this case it is especially appealing because of his own admissions. Maimonides explicitly expresses uncertainty regarding details about the messianic age in two of his writings.

In *Melakhim* 12:2 Maimonides writes:

> Some of our sages say that the coming of Elijah will precede the advent of the Messiah. But no one is in a position to know the details of this and *similar things* until they have come to pass. They are not explicitly stated by the prophets. Nor have the rabbis any tradition with regard to these matters. They are guided solely by what the Scriptural texts seem to imply. Hence there is divergence of opinion on the subject. But be that as it may, neither the exact sequence of those events nor the details thereof constitute religious dogmas.

Maimonides declares the ambiguity of the *midrashim* regarding the chronological order of redemption. Due to the ambiguity, he pleads his ignorance and calls on his readers to admit the same lack of knowledge and resist the urge to attempt such determinations. Based on Maimonides' equation between messianic chronology and "similar things," presumably the same ambivalence can be assumed about Maimonides' other information about the messianic age, including whether or not the Messiah will perform miracles.

In the *Treatise on Resurrection* his ambivalence is even more pronounced regarding elements of the messianic age other than the chronology. Here he suggests something explicitly contradictory to his generally naturalist conception of the messianic age. He entertains the possibility that the verse regarding the peaceful coexistence between lambs and wolves will be realized in the literal sense on the Temple Mount during the messianic age. [25] His justification for such a view is another admission of ignorance regarding the secretive matters of the messianic age:

> Know that these promises and their like, regarding which we say are allegory, that our words are neither a definitive decree, for we have not received a revelation from God to teach us that it is an allegory, nor have we found a tradition of the sages from the Prophets that explains the details of this thing as an allegory... However, we desire to combine the Torah and the rational and we proceed with everything in accordance with the harmony of what is possible in nature on all that except for what is openly declared as a miracle and is not adequate for interpretation at all, and then we have to say that it is a miracle. [26]

In other words, Maimonides admits that although he is inclined to think that the messianic age will be entirely without unnatural miracles, he cannot be certain about it.

If this same uncertainty can be assumed of Maimonides' opinion about whether or not the Messiah will need to perform miracles then the contradiction is resolved. Maimonides tends toward a naturalist/rationalist perspective regarding the messianic age, showing more favor to the *Mishneh Torah* perspective. However, at no point is he necessarily convinced that the opposite opinion is untenable. In the *Mishneh Torah* he allows his rational tendencies to carry the day. In his *Epistle*, his sympathy toward a community that is plagued by messianic impostors makes him realize that the view that he had until then deemed less likely, may very well be the correct one. [27]

Messiah's prophetic abilities

The *Epistle to Yemen* touts the prophetic prowess of the Messiah. According to Maimonides "the Messiah indeed ranks above all prophets after Moses in eminence and distinction." [28] However, in *Hilkhot Melakhim*, the only prophet of which Maimonides speaks, to appear in the messianic age is Elijah, who may or may not be a harbinger for the Messiah's arrival. [29] Maimonides does not even mention the requirement for the Messiah to be a prophet, let alone to be one whose greatness is only dwarfed by Moses'. Maimonides in fact, conspicuously stops short of calling the Messiah a prophet when he describes how the Messiah will, with divine assistance, determine everyone's pedigrees. "In the days of the King Messiah, when his kingdom will be established and all Israel will gather around him, their pedigrees will be determined by him through the *Holy Spirit* which will rest upon him." [30] Maimonides describes his knowledge of the pedigrees as coming from the "Holy Spirit which will rest upon him," not from prophecy. [31]

Only in *Hilkhot Teshuva* does Maimonides refer to the prophetic ability of the Messiah. "Because the king who will arise from the seed of David will possess more wisdom than Solomon and will be a great prophet, approaching Moses our teacher, he will teach the whole of the Jewish people and instruct them in the way of God." [32] Why doesn't Maimonides discuss the prophetic ability and superiority of the Messiah in *Hilkhot Melakhim*, the primary locus of his messianic discussion?

Regarding the messianic figure in the *Epistle* Maimonides' objectives are to make sure that the Yemenite community is never again tormented by messianic impostors and to fortify the Yemenite community's belief and pride in Judaism and its utopia. As such, it is important for Maimonides to highlight in the *Epistle* the Messiah's stature as a prophet. This would provide the community in Yemen a strict standard against which to test the Messiah's identity, and pride in their eventual future leader, who will overshadow all other world leaders. However, prophecy is not an essential component of the messianic mission.

In *Hilkhot Melakhim* of *Mishneh Torah* on the other hand, Maimonides' primary concern is to describe the messianic mission. This section of the *Mishneh Torah* does not preclude the possibility that the Messiah will be a prophet; it simply excludes that characteristic from the list of salient features of his charge. His mission is to be a teacher for all of Israel, to "prevail upon Israel to walk in the way of the Torah and to repair its breaches." [33] He is further expected to establish Jewish sovereignty, rebuild the Temple on its site and to gather the exiles. The fact that he will be a great prophet may be a testament to his stature but is not an essential part of his assignment.

However, one could argue that the *Mishneh Torah's* silence regarding the prophetic abilities of the Messiah is attributable to a different concern. Amos Funkenstein addresses the question of why messianic doctrine before Maimonides is so incomplete. He writes:

> Whenever definite characteristics of the Messiah and the messianic age were given, no matter how restrictive, a generation pregnant with the acute messianic hopes found it all the easier to recognize such criteria in the present age and in some present contender. The more vague the criteria, the less room there is for an actualizing interpretation. [34]

Perhaps this claim can also be used to explain Maimonides' silence regarding the Messiah's prophecy. If Maimonides had touted the prophetic abilities as a significant characteristic of the Messiah, it would be available for some group in the future to exploit it. [35]

Messianic Activism

Because there is no known set date [36] for the redemption there remains a question as to whether or not specific activity should be pursued to hasten the Messiah's arrival. The two major primary sources that deal with this question appear in the Talmud and *Midrash*. [37] Yet, the question has remained open for discussion for multiple reasons. Firstly, neither source clearly proscribes messianic activism; the discouragement of messianic activism is relayed in the form of an "oath." In fact, the more authoritative source – the one in the Talmud – has a questionable text. Depending on which of two texts one adopts, one may emerge from the passage with two almost opposite interpretations, one of which could easily be construed as *encouraging* messianic activism. [38] Secondly, even if activism is indeed discouraged, it is not clear what kind of activity the Sages disapproved. [39]

The question has likewise remained open regarding Maimonides' posture. It has been claimed by many that Maimonides calls for messianic activism of some form or another. Categorization of the different forms of activism is critical to understanding Maimonides' approach; I will classify them in one of two general ways. There is the type of activism that is not inherently messianic, but is only considered as such because of the underlying motivations. The other type of activism involves behavior that is inherently premessianic/messianic, independent of the underlying intentions.

Activities of the first category cannot be seen exclusively through messianic lenses; those behaviors may be espoused outside the context of the messianic arrival as well. Thus, any encouragement by Maimonides to engage in those activities cannot necessarily be seen as advocacy of messianic portending. However, any activity categorized as the second type, only has messianic connotations. As such, supporting those behaviors would, by definition, be tantamount to promoting messianic activism.

The best example of the first type is mass repentance specifically for the sake of hastening the Messiah's arrival. In Maimonides' writing, the relationship between repentance and redemption is not clear. Scholem views Maimonides' position regarding the relationship between repentance and redemption as limited. According to Scholem, Maimonides does not believe there to be a

> causal relationship between the coming of the Messiah and human conduct. It is not Israel's repentance which brings about redemption; rather, because the eruption of redemption is to occur by divine decree, at the last moment there also erupts a movement of repentance in Israel itself. [40]

In other words, Scholem thinks that according to Maimonides a mass movement toward repentance cannot hasten the Messiah's coming. The repentance in the messianic period is promised to occur at the same time as the Messiah's arrival but not to cause it.

However, in *Hilkhot Teshuva* 7:5 Maimonides writes, "All the prophets charged the people concerning repentance. Only through repentance will Israel be redeemed, and the Torah promised that in the end, at the end of their exile, Israel will repent and immediately they will be redeemed." [41] From this passage, contrary to Scholem's rendering, it seems that indeed repentance will play a causal role in accelerating the Messiah's arrival. However, even here, Maimonides certainly does not advocate a mass movement of repentance exclusively for the sake of realizing the messianic dream. And, even if Maimonides were to encourage mass repentance, there are reasons to do so, other than for the sake of bringing the Messiah.

According to Funkenstein, Maimonides is suspect of encouraging other type of activity to precipitate the messianic age. In the *Commentary on the Mishnah* and more hesitantly in the *Code*, Maimonides offers a prescription for renewing the institution of *semikha*. Since Maimonides believes that *semikha* is necessary to create a *Sanhedrin* that will eventually recognize the Messiah, Funkenstein and Katz view the *semikha* controversy of the 16th century, initiated by Jacob Berab, as an attempt to advance the messianic age. [42] Noting the discrepancy in Maimonides' certainty in the *Mishnah Commentary* and in the *Code*, Funkenstein admits that Maimonides "refrained in the *Code* from making an all too radical judgment." But, he continues, "There is no reason to assume that he actually gave up the messianic connotation of the renewal of some elements of the pristine judicial system. He just may have chosen not to invoke them as a definite, binding part of the messianic doctrine." [43] In other words, according to Funkenstein, the *semikha* controversy was not an unintended consequence of Maimonides' messianic posture; rather it was an intended result of his messianic ideology.

Funkenstein's understanding is based upon two questionable assumptions. First, he assumes that Maimonides encourages the reinstitution of *semikha*. While Maimonides certainly offers guidelines for its recreation, nowhere does he state that it should be actively pursued. Second, Funkenstein takes it for granted that the only purpose for reinstating *semikha* and the Sanhedrin is to hasten the Messiah's arrival. This is not obvious at all; a *Sanhedrin* might have inherent significance even if it does not herald the Messiah's arrival. [44] Therefore, even if Maimonides can be seen as encouraging its recreation, it would not necessarily be indicative of a positive posture toward messianic activism.

Even examples of the second type of messianic activism that are attributed to Maimonides are not clearly espoused by him. Aryeh Botwinick's innovative suggestion rests on a seeming aforementioned contradiction between two passages in the *Mishneh Torah*. As mentioned above, in *Hilkhot Shabbat* regarding the laws of carrying weapons on *Shabbat*, Maimonides rules stringently in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Hiya bar Abba even though he codifies Shemuel's naturalist conception of the messianic age in two other passages. Botwinick explains that according to Maimonides, Shemuel's and Rabbi Hiya's opinions are not mutually exclusive; they are complementary. He thinks that Rabbi Hiya adopts Shemuel's opinion that there will be "historical continuity" [45] between the present age and the messianic one. However, he thinks that there will be "a sharp rupture...before and after...a transvaluation of values." [46] That rupture will emerge through the activity of humans who will change those values "by enacting a little bit of redemption now in the grossly unpropitious circumstances of our world." [47] For Botwinick, Maimonides believes that, "To bring redemption a little closer one has to approximate in the present his/her individual action to that collective state of affairs where the action one is engaging in would be the societal norm." [48]

The obvious problem with Botwinick's thesis is that there is no explicit indication in Maimonides' writing of any such prescription. If Maimonides is really offering his readers guidelines about how to bring the Messiah presumably he would have done so exoterically and within his primary discussion of the messianic age in *Hilkhot Melakhim*, instead of hiding it in *Hilkhot Shabbat*. Another problem with Botwinick's thesis is that it is contrary to Maimonides' general conception of the messianic age. Maimonides makes it clear in *Hilkhot Melakhim* that not one iota of Jewish law will change. If this is the case then what does it mean to bring the expected future behavior into the present? If there is no difference between the religious expectations of the future and of the present then there can be no "transvaluation of values."

Maimonides' description of the messianic age is also said to have inspired the religious Zionist movement in one form or another. [49] In particular, his naturalist view of the messianic age is seen as calling for a preamble borne out by people, not miraculously by God. To claim that Maimonides intended for this position is untenable. Regarding the establishment of the sovereignty, the building of the Temple and the influx of the exiles, Maimonides says that the Messiah, not the preceding generation, will cause them to occur. Regarding the signs spoken of in the Talmud and *aggadah* that are to herald the Messiah, Maimonides says explicitly in *Hilkhot Melakhim* 12:2, "no one is in a position to know the details of this... nor have the rabbis any tradition with regard to these matters....one should not study them." If he discourages people from trying to understand the heralding events then how could he possibly simultaneously encourage people to advance them?

Rather, David Berger's thesis about Maimonides' posture seems to be most accurate. Maimonides does not

offer guidelines for hastening the Messiah's arrival, nor does he encourage his readers to derive them on their own. Maimonides' injunction regarding messianic calculation is no less relevant to the issue of messianic heralding. One must wait patiently for the Messiah's arrival. [50]

But, the theme of "waiting" in Maimonides' conception of the messianic age perhaps goes even further than precluding messianic computation and activism. Maimonides highlights the importance of *mehakheh*, "waiting" for the Messiah in two passages in *Hilkhot Melakhim*. As mentioned above there is one reference in the context of messianic calculation. The second is in the opening lines of his discussion of the messianic age. In 11:1, as part of his formulation of the foundational principle of faith in the Messiah's arrival he says, "and he who does not believe and *wait (mehakheh)* for the coming of the Messiah denies not only the teachings of the prophets but also those of the Law and Moses our teacher." [51] The word "wait" has two implications. First, the word "wait" implies expectation - one only "waits" for something when it is *expected* to arrive. Second, "wait" implies passivity; taking action toward obtaining some future goal/event is, by definition, not "waiting." This second implication is particularly relevant to the issue of speeding the Messiah's arrival. Part of the fundamental belief in the redemption and the messiah's advent is to wait patiently for his arrival. According to this interpretation, messianic activism would not only be discouraged, but would be a violation of the fundamental principle of faith in the Messiah's arrival.

Indeed Maimonides' views regarding the many facets of the messianic age are complex. There are many seeming inconsistencies in his writings, many of which have sparked discussion among scholars, and a few of which I have tried to reconcile. The various attempts to achieve harmony reflect the complexity of the subject matter and the profundity of Maimonides' sensitivity and intellect. It is undoubted that even in the face of the inconsistencies Maimonides' works on the matter will continue to be studied and lauded by many Jews as authoritative.

NOTES

[1] David Hartman, "Maimonides Approach to Messianism and its Contemporary Implications," Da'at 2-3, (1978-1979), pp. 9-10.

[2] The phrase appears in the name of Shemuel in the Babylonian Talmud six times, in *Brakhot* 34b, *Shabbat* 63a, *Shabbat* 151b, *Pesahim* 68a, *Sanhedrin* 91b and *Sanhedrin* 99a. Maimonides repeats the phrase and alludes to it throughout his writings. See *Mishneh Torah Hilkhot Teshuva* 9:2 and Melakhim 12:2. See also the Introduction to his *Mishnah Commentary* on *Perek Helek* and his *Treatise on Resurrection.*

[3] See *Mishneh Torah Melakhim* 12:1 where Maimonides paraphrases a passage in BT *Avodah Zarah* 54b. The translation is from Isadore Twersky, A Maimonides Reader, (New York, 1972), 224.

[4] See the following scholarly publications that refer to Maimonides view of the messianic age as "naturalistic" or "realistic," either as the crux of their work or tangential to their primary theses. This is not an exhaustive list; I cite only these works because they will be further referenced throughout this paper. See Abraham Hiyya de Boton, *Lechem Mishneh* in MT *Teshuva* 8:7, Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, New York, 1971), pp. 24-32, David Hartman, "Maimonides Approach to Messianism and its Contemporary Implications," Da'at 2-3, (1978–1979), pp. 5-33, Isadore Twersky, *Introduction to the Code of Maimonides*, (New Haven, 1980), pp. 450-451, Jacob Blidstein, *Ekronot Mediniyim be-Mishnat ha-Rambam*, [Hebrew], (Ramat Gan, 1983), pp. 243-254, J.L. Kraemer, "On Maimonides' Messianic Posture," *Studies in Medieval Jewish History and Literature, II*, (Cambridge, 1984), pp. 109-142, Aryeh Botwinick, "Maimonides' Messianic Age," Judaism, 33, (1984), pp. 418-425, David Berger, "Some Ironic Consequences of Maimonides' Rationalist Approach to the Messianic Age," [Hebrew] *Maimonidean Studies vol. 2*, ed. A. Hyman (New York, 1991), pp. 1-8, Aviezer Ravitzky, "To the Utmost of Human Capacity: Maimonides on the Days of Messiah," *Perspectives on Maimonides*, ed. J.L. Kraemer, (Oxford, 1991), pp. 221-256. Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, (Los Angeles, 1993), pp. 131-155, Dov Schwartz, *Ha-Ra'ayon ha-Meshihi ba-Hagut ha-Yehudi Bimei ha-Beinyaim*, (Ramat Gan, 1997), pp. 69-111.

[5] See *Mishneh Torah Melakhim* 11:3. Rabbi Joseph Karo, *Kessef Mishneh* on *Melakhim* 11:3 connects Maimonides' acceptance of Shemuel's dictum to the idea that the Messiah will not need to perform miracles.

[6] It should be noted that Judah Loew ben Bezalel (Maharal), *Netsah Yisrael*, Annotated by Yehoshua Hartman, (Jerusalem, 1997), vol. 2, pp. 810-814 thinks that there is no contradiction between Shemuel's maxim and the elimination of people's propensity to sin. He thinks that even according to Shemuel, the "יצר הרע" – each person's "evil inclination," will cease to exist during the messianic age. However, given Maimonides' rationalist predilection, the same cannot be assumed about his position.

[7] *Melakhim* 12:5

[8] See *Hilkhot Teshuva* 8:7 and *Hilkhot Shabbat* 19:1. In *Hilkhot Teshuva*, Maimonides quotes the opinion of Shemuel's apocalyptic challenger. In *Hilkhot Shabbat*, Maimonides quotes the ruling of Rabbi Eliezer who taught that carrying weapons not normally worn as clothing, is prohibited on *Shabbat*. BT *Shabbat* 63a states that Rabbi Eliezer's opinion is inconsistent with Shemuel's conception of the messianic period. Rather, it is associated with the apocalyptic view of the messianic age, that of Rabbi Hiya bar Abba.

[9] Looking to other Maimonidean literature only exacerbates the problem. See Moses Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Translated into English with introduction and notes by Fred Rosner; Foreword by Aaron D. Twerski, New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981, p. 148 where he postulates that there will be a "removal of worries and sufferings" and claims that "great perfection will accrue to every person living in those days."

[10] See *Kessef Mishneh* in Teshuva 9:2. He leaves this question unanswered.

[11] There will not be changes even in the "מנהג של עולם" – "the manifestation of the world."

[12] According to Rabi Hiya, there will be changes in the "מנהג של עולם" but there will be no changes in "טבע של עולם" – "nature of the world." In other words, according to Boton there is no Talmudic basis for the view that there will be a total upheaval of human nature or of the laws of nature, during the messianic age. Also, the implication of Boton's explanation of Maimonides' view is fascinating. If he is correct then according to Maimonides, competition and jealousy, which will disappear in the messianic age, are *per force*, not an inherent part of human nature; they are simply consequences of an inequitable reality.

[13] Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 137. Funkenstein is not interested in Maimonides' simultaneous adoption of dissenting opinions in the Talmud.

[14] *Ibid*, 141.

[15] Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 152.

[16] See the English translation of Maimonides' *Epistle to Yemen* in Abraham Halkin and David Hartman, *Crisis and Leadership*, (New York, 1985), p. 125.

[17] Rabbi Joseph Karo in his *Kessef Mishneh Hilkhot Melakhim* 11:3 first makes the connection between Maimonides' quotation of Shemuel's adage and the Messiah's performance of miracles. He thinks that one who accepts Shemuel's opinion in the Talmud must also accept the fact that the Messiah will not need to perform miracles. See fn. 5.

[18] In *Igrot ha-Rambam*, vol. 1, translated and annotated by Isaac Shailat, (Ma'ale Adumim, 1988), pp. 157-159, Shailat has another suggestion to reconcile the *Epistle* and the *Mishneh Torah*. First, he assumes correctly that the *Mishneh Torah* does not preclude the possibility of the Messiah performing "more natural" miracles, such as predicting the future. Then he says that the miracles to which Maimonides refers in the *Epistle* will not defy the natural order, and will therefore be consistent with the *Mishneh Torah* conception. However, this reconciliation only resolves half of the problem. Even if the *Mishneh Torah* leaves room for the possibility that the Messiah will perform miracles, the *Mishneh Torah* certainly does not *require* those "more natural" miracles of the Messiah to prove his identity. If this was a messianic requirement, surely Maimonides would have stated it explicitly in the *Mishneh Torah*.
Also, there is a logical problem with Shailat's suggestion. If the miracles do not defy the natural order it might be difficult for the Messiah to convince an audience that he is authentic. Skeptics could easily attribute those miracles to a fluke, rather than to his superior abilities.
In addition, Yael Sagiv-Feldman, "Living in Deferment: Maimonides vs. Nahmanides on the Messiah, Redemption and the World to Come," *Hebrew Studies* 20-21 (1979-1980), p. 109 thinks that the ensuing passages in the Epistle make it clear that the Messiah will be called on to perform quite unnatural miracles, including, killing his enemies with words alone. The basis for her assertion is a literal interpretation of a passage in the *Epistle of Yemen*, p. 125 in *Crisis and Leadership*, "He will slay whom he will by the word of his mouth." I do not agree with her rendering, but if she is correct then Shailat's suggestion would be negated.

[19] See Blidstein, *Ekronot Mediniyim be-Mishnat ha-Rambam*, 244 who quotes the Hebrew version of Gershom Scholem, *Messianic Idea*, p. 342, fn. 25.

[20] *Mishneh Torah Yesode ha-Torah* 10:1.

[21] One might argue in Shailat's defense (especially in light of Shailat's formulation in *Igrot*, vol. 1, 358) that the requirement for the Messiah to prove himself through miracles may be subsumed under the general rule that a purported prophet must be tested via his performance of miracles. However, this defense is inadmissible because if that were the case then Maimonides would have made it clear in this context that the Messiah is a prophet. The Messiah is not referred to in *Hilkhot Melakhim* as a prophet. One needs to turn to *Hilkhot Teshuva* to find that the Messiah will have prophetic abilities.

[22] Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, 449.

[23] David Berger, "Some Ironic Consequences," [Hebrew] 6. and Ephraim Kanarfogel, "Medieval Rabbinic Conceptions of the Messianic Age," *Me'ah She'arim: Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, edited by Ezra Fleisher, Gerald Blidstein, Carmi Horowitz and Bernard Septimus, (Jerusalem, 2001), p. 150, fn. 7.

[24] Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, 449.

[25] Moses Maimonides, *Treatise on Resurrection*, translated by Elimelekh Polinsky, (New York, 1982), 52.

[26] *Ibid*, 50.

[27] The fact that Maimonides codifies so many details about the messianic age without a hint of uncertainty may be symptomatic of the overall style of the code. For discussion about the MT's authoritative form, see Twersky, *Introduction to the Code*, 97-99. Furthermore, Maimonides' particular expression of certainty regarding the issue of miracles may have been polemical, consistent with his tendency in MT to highlight the naturalism of the messianic age.

[28] *Epistle to Yemen in Crisis and Leadership*, 124.

[29] *Mishneh Torah Melakhim* 12:3

[30] *Ibid.*

[31] See Moses Maimonides, *Moreh Nevukhim*, translated and annotated by Yosef Kapah, (Jerusalem, 1972) vol. 2, pp. 430-434.

[32] *Mishneh Torah Teshuva* 9:2

[33] *Melakhim* 11:4

[34] Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 134.

[35] See Berger, "Some Ironic Consequences," [Hebrew] 1-8, who demonstrates that Maimonides' messianic criteria have been misused throughout history.

[36] Moses Maimonides, *Commentary on the Mishnah*, Translated into English with introduction and notes by Fred Rosner; Foreword by Aaron D. Twerski, New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981, p. 157.

[37] See Babylonian Talmud *Ketubot* 111a and *Songs Rabbah* 1:20.

[38] It is not clear if the text should be "ירחקו" or "ידחקו." See Rashi and the Maharsha on cite whose commentaries are near opposites of each other because of the questionable text.

[39] Rashi interpreted the passage to mean that one should not force the end of days through "excessive prayer."

[40] Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, 31.

[41] This translation is taken from Hartman, "Maimonides' Approach to Messianism," 11-12.

[42] Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 153-154. See also Jacob Katz, "Mahloket ha-Semikhah bein Rabbi Ya'akov Beirav be-ha-Ralbah," *Ziyyon* 15 (1951): 28-45; David Berger, "Some Ironic Consequences" [Hebrew], pp. 1-8 and Amos Funkenstein, *Maimonides: Nature, History and Messianic* Beliefs, translated by Shmuel Himelstein (Tel-Aviv, 1997), pp. 76-81 and J.L. Kraemer, "Maimonides' Messianic Posture, 123.

[43] Funkenstein, *Perceptions*, 154.

[44] While Maimonides emphasizes that the institution of *semikha* will precede the messianic age and is symbolic of its imminence, it is clear that the *Sanhedrin* has significance beyond as a prelude to the Messiah. In fact, in *Hilkhot Sanhedrin* 4:11 and in the *Commentary on the Mishnah Sanhderin* 1:3, Maimonides explicitly highlights another advantage of *semikha* and the *Sanhedrin*, namely, the ability to mete out judicial punishments (קנסות). This function of the *Sanhedrin* is of paramount importance regardless of whether or not the Messiah arrives in its wake.

[45] Botwinick "Maimonides' Messianic Age," 423-424.

[46] *Ibid*, 424.

[47] *Ibid.*

[48] *Ibid.*

[49] See Berger, "Some Ironic," [Hebrew] 6-7; Shubert Spero, "Maimonides and the Sense of History," *Tradition* 24:2 (1989): 135. See also, Menahem Kellner, "Messianic Postures in Israel Today," *Modern Judaism* 6 (1986): 197-209 who seems to incorrectly equate the idea of incremental messianic activism with the notion of a messianic process that will occur gradually on its own.

[50] See Berger, "Some Ironic," [Hebrew], 1-8 and Aviezer Ravitzky, "To the Utmost of Human Capacity," 240.

[51] It should be noted that Twersky, *Maimonides Reader*, 222 translates "מחכה" as "looking forward to," not as "waiting."

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