Jan T. Gross **Law and Justice and the Holocaust in Poland**

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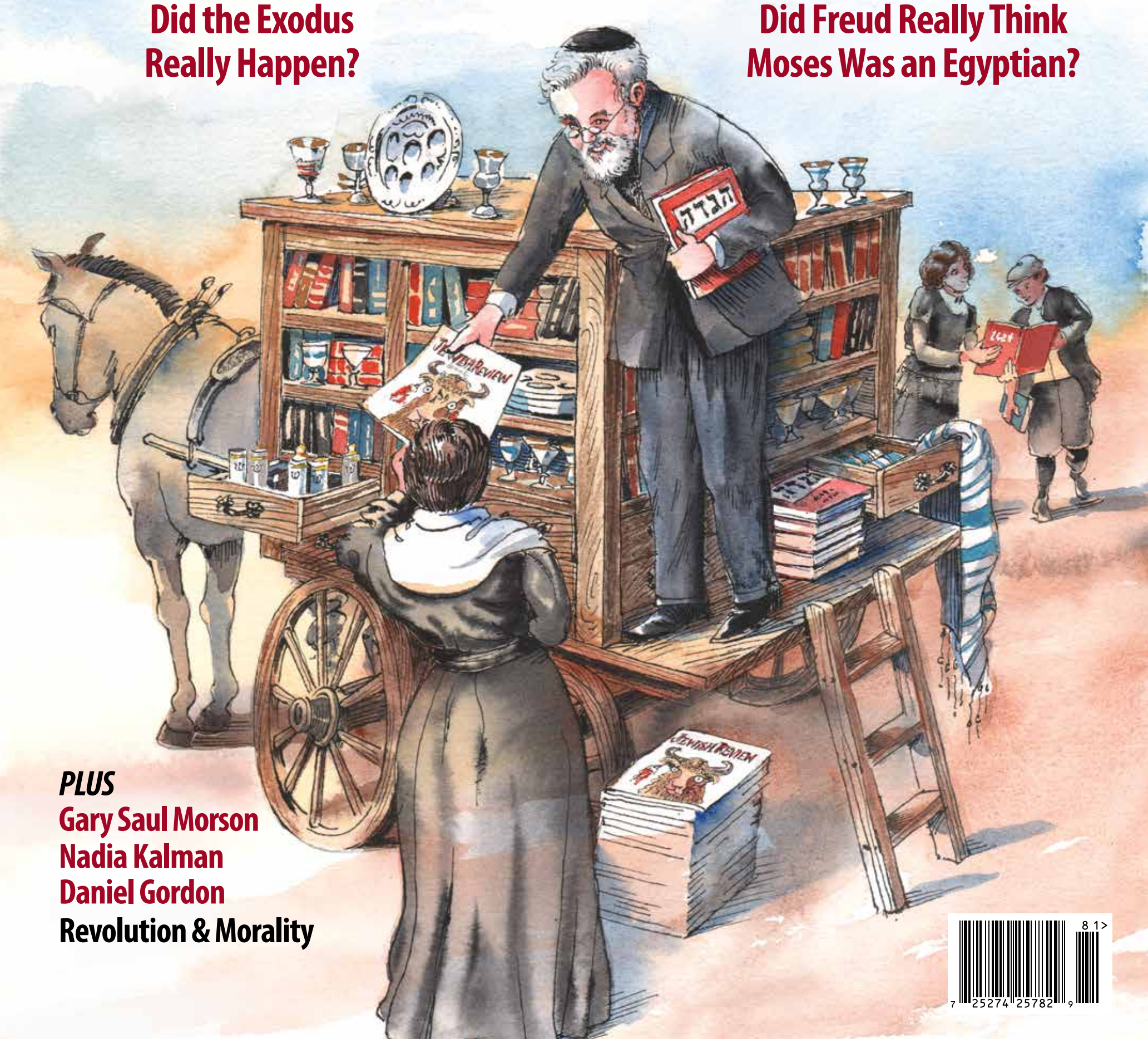

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LAST WORD

On the cover: *Mendele the Bookseller* by Mark Anderson.

Toynbee's "Zionist Card"

Simon Gordon's excellent article on Balfour's 100th anniversary ("100 Years of Solicitude: Commemorating Balfour," Winter 2018), dissecting the divides of British Jewry then and now, can be supplemented with a simple, geopolitical point. The declaration was more related to Allied war aims than any other factor. In November 1917 it was not yet clear who would win the war. There was a German-Jewish Zionist group stoutly supporting German aims with its Ottoman partners. Japan, then an ally of Britain, supported the Balfour Declaration because it would bring "world Jewry" to its side. That the foregoing is correct is further fortified by a young junior staffer at the British Foreign Office at the time who urged his superiors "to play the Zionist card" to win the war. That then-junior officer was none other than the young Arnold J. Toynbee!

Harold Ticktin
Shaker Heights, OH

Their Man in Beijing?

Bernard Wasserstein's interesting remarks about Israel Epstein ("The Family Heretic," Winter 2018) brought back memories of speaking with him when I was in Beijing as a visiting scholar in 1984. What Wasserstein does not mention, though it has been revealed by the Vassiliev Notebooks (copies of documents from KGB archives), is that Epstein worked as a KGB source under the code name Minayev. He had been recruited in China in 1937 but spent 1945–1951 living in the United States. Like some of the revolutionaries Wasserstein mentions, his own persecution by his erstwhile comrades never shook his faith. He claimed that his imprisonment during the Cultural Revolution had "helped improve him by shrinking his ego."

Harvey Klehr
via jewishreviewofbooks.com

Kibbutz Dreams

Rachel Biale's review of Yael Neeman's book ("History of a Passé Future," Winter 2018) really helps those of us who never lived on a kibbutz nor grew up in a children's house have a balanced view of the experience. The review is not only well written, but it is more meaningful coming from Biale as she herself was a child educated and raised in a kibbutz, not unlike Yael Neeman's. She conveys the author's "melancholy trajectory" from a dream that no longer can be. Biale shows sympathy and an understanding of the idealism of the early kibbutz movement, and she also acknowledges the author's feelings of abandonment. Since the social experiment of the kibbutz utopian dream has undergone so many changes and no longer exists as it did in Israel's earliest years, it is especially interesting to read a first-hand account of the experiences of those who grew up in this life. I look forward to reading Neeman's book.

Gail Taback
via jewishreviewofbooks.com

The Mortara Affair Redux

In January 2018, First Things *posted "Non Possumus," a review of* Kidnapped by the Vatican? The Unpublished Memoirs of Edgardo Mortara *by Dominican priest Romanus Cessario, defending the 1857 removal of a six-year-old Jewish child by Papal States authorities to be raised as a Catholic because he had been secretly baptized by the family's maid. Archbishop Charles J. Chaput responded on our website, spurring a vigorous online conversation, excerpts of which appear below, along with one letter.*

I was moved by Archbishop Chaput's deeply humane and ecumenical response to the baffling defense of the kidnapping of a Jewish child by papal authorities in *First Things*, a magazine that I have often found illuminating.

Rachel Cohen
New York, NY

In his editorial email to subscribers, Abraham Socher wrote that he was shocked by Romanus Cessario's defense of the kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara in *First Things*. He shouldn't have been. Father Cessario is well within the norms of Catholic traditionalists who continue to hold that the pre–Second Vatican Council claims of the Catholic Church—that its rules should be binding on everyone within its reach—remain correct.

It is also not coincidental that the author is preemptively reacting to the forthcoming film on Mortara by Steven Spielberg. The author does not mention that Spielberg is Jewish, but the implication seems obvious. Cessario's complaints—both about the forthcoming film and that Catholics were subject to opprobrium in the wake of the Mortara affair—echo the traditionalist view that they are victims in an anti-Catholic world. This is exactly Father Cessario's point: that allowing young Edgardo to remain with his Jewish parents after he was baptized would have been an offense against Catholic teachings and thus an offense against religion per se.

Archbishop Chaput's criticism of Cessario's views is welcome and appreciated. But the problem is not just Father Cessario's insensitivity and the trouble it has created in Catholic-Jewish relations. The kidnapping of Mortara by the papal police was wrong by any decent standard of human rights, not just because it was offensive to Jews.

Rabbi Lewis Warshauer
via email

Archbishop Chaput doesn't articulate his personal views. He brings his Catholic friend to say that such a baptism "would be robbery" but is silent as to what he thinks the Church must do once such a "robbery" occurred. Pope Pius IX considered Edgardo Mortara's baptism to be efficacious, creating a new reality. Does Archbishop Chaput disagree? Has Catholic doctrine changed to permit a baptized child to be raised by Jews?

Following the Holocaust, the Church directed that Jewish children baptized by the Catholics who had saved them from death be returned to their families—presuming any survived. Was that action sui generis? There are persistent reports that Jewish orphans were kept and raised as Catholics. It's clear that Archbishop Chaput does see a baptism such as Mortara's as accomplished by "robbery." It's less clear what he considers the theological reality of a child baptized in this way to be. Pius IX was quite clear: Mortara's baptism was valid. The law of the Papal States forbade a Catholic child to be raised by a member of another faith. That is why he resisted pressure to return the boy to his family, and, as near as I have been able to determine, the law in the Papal States was consonant with Catholic doctrine in this matter. If Catholic doctrine today is different, I believe that Chaput would have said so. I do not doubt his good intentions or his desire not to offend. In the absence of a more explicit statement, my questions stand.

Peter Borregard
via jewishreviewofbooks.com

Let's note the descriptive words Archbishop Chaput uses throughout his piece: toxic, stain, troubling, insensitive, ugly, wound, damage, betrayal, violence—I think the archbishop's own views are pretty obvious. He writes that "Judaism is the root from which our own faith grows. Being cognizant of that reality, and respecting it in everything we say and write and do, is the only way bitter actions in the past might one day be redeemed."

Patrice Roe
via jewishreviewofbooks.com

Archbishop Chaput does not give us his own views, precisely. He expresses sorrow for the pain inflicted on the Mortara family, but this is not the same as rebuking the Church of Pius IX. This extraordinary case lies on the fault line of a controversy in the Church: religious liberty. To rebuke the actions of Pius IX is to call into question the Church's long-standing teaching on religious liberty and assert discontinuity between the pre- and post-Conciliar Church.

Archbishop Chaput is damned if he does and damned if he doesn't: Rebuking Pius IX raises theological questions that undermine the Catholic Church's self-understanding, and supporting the actions of Pius IX horrifies (among others) our Jewish friends with whom we would like warm relations. What is the orthodox Catholic to do? One can express ache over the severing of the poor family and also recognize the historical context that clarifies it. The Papal States did not have a secular, liberal government. It recognized Catholicism as the one true religion, and this figured into its considerations of the public welfare. Citizens were regarded as not only having a natural good, but a supernatural good as well. When the natural good of a child is in jeopardy, it is just for the state to intervene in that child's life. In a society and state that recognizes not only the natural good, but also the supernatural good, the same logic applies. Of course, it is difficult for modern individuals in liberal, secular societies to sympathize with this, but that is to be expected—they believe in neither supernatural good nor in the right of the State to figure such a good into its considerations of public welfare. But this is an anachronism, and to hold this against the Papal States, however, is simply accuse it of not being a secular, liberal state, which it was not.

"nightmarcher26"
via jewishreviewofbooks.com

CORRECTION

An image in the review of David Stern's *The Jewish Bible: A Material History* ("Black Fire on White Fire," Winter 2018) was identified as a page from a Christian Bible; it was from a Jewish Bible.

Law, Justice, and Memory in Poland

BY JAN T. GROSS

On January 26, 2018, on the eve of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Sejm, Poland's lower house of parliament, passed a bill on "the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation." The key passage of this bill stated that:

> Whoever accuses, publicly and against the facts, the Polish nation, or the Polish state, of being responsible or complicit in the Nazi crimes committed by the Third German Reich . . . or other crimes against peace and humanity, or war crimes, or otherwise grossly diminishes the actual perpetrators thereof, shall be subject to a fine or a penalty of imprisonment of up to three years.

The bill was then rushed through the senate (57–23, with two abstentions) and quickly signed into law by President Andrzej Duda, of the Law and Justice Party (PiS), whose leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski has made the bill a key part of its nationalist program.

In fact, the PiS, which took power in Poland in 2015, practices historical revisionism as a constitutive element of its political strategy, and the new law criminalizing references to the involvement of the Polish Catholic population in the extermination of Polish Jews during World War II is only the latest episode in its efforts to falsify the past. The party does not have a distinct vision for the future, and it builds its legitimacy by claiming to rectify assorted wrongs that the Polish people allegedly suffered at the hands of "others," including Germans, Russians, revanchist Communists, Euro-elitists, and Jews. "Poland is getting up from its knees" runs one of PiS's most often repeated slogans—after the most prosperous and secure quarter-century in Poland's history.

The Holocaust law had originally been introduced and then tabled about a year and a half ago, after the Polish government had approved it. At the time Minister of Justice Zbigniew Ziobro described it as a big step forward in the "protection of the good name of Poland." But over the past year and a half the government received voluminous feedback objecting to the deliberate simplification of the history of Poland under Nazi occupation. Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust museum and research center, had criticized the law, as—it turned out—had the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as the recently replaced minister Witold Waszczykowski revealed to journalists.

In the storm that ensued after the passage of this legislation—the U.S. State Department strongly objected and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu flatly called it "an attempt to rewrite history"—Duda and other Law and Justice politicians feigned incredulity and outrage. What's wrong, they have asked, with protecting Poland's good name by making sure that people all over the world do not speak of "Polish death camps," when, of course, camps such as Auschwitz, Treblinka, Belzec, and Sobibor were established by Nazis on occupied Polish soil? But had they merely wished to criminalize the use of the expression "Polish death camps" as a historical falsehood, they could have done so very easily. They didn't—and it was not an oversight.

The goal of this legislation was much more ambitious: to falsify the history of the Holocaust in the service of a toxic nationalism.

Instead, the goal of this legislation was much more ambitious. Its aim was to falsify the history of the Holocaust in the service of a toxic nationalism. The Polish authorities want to gag any debate about

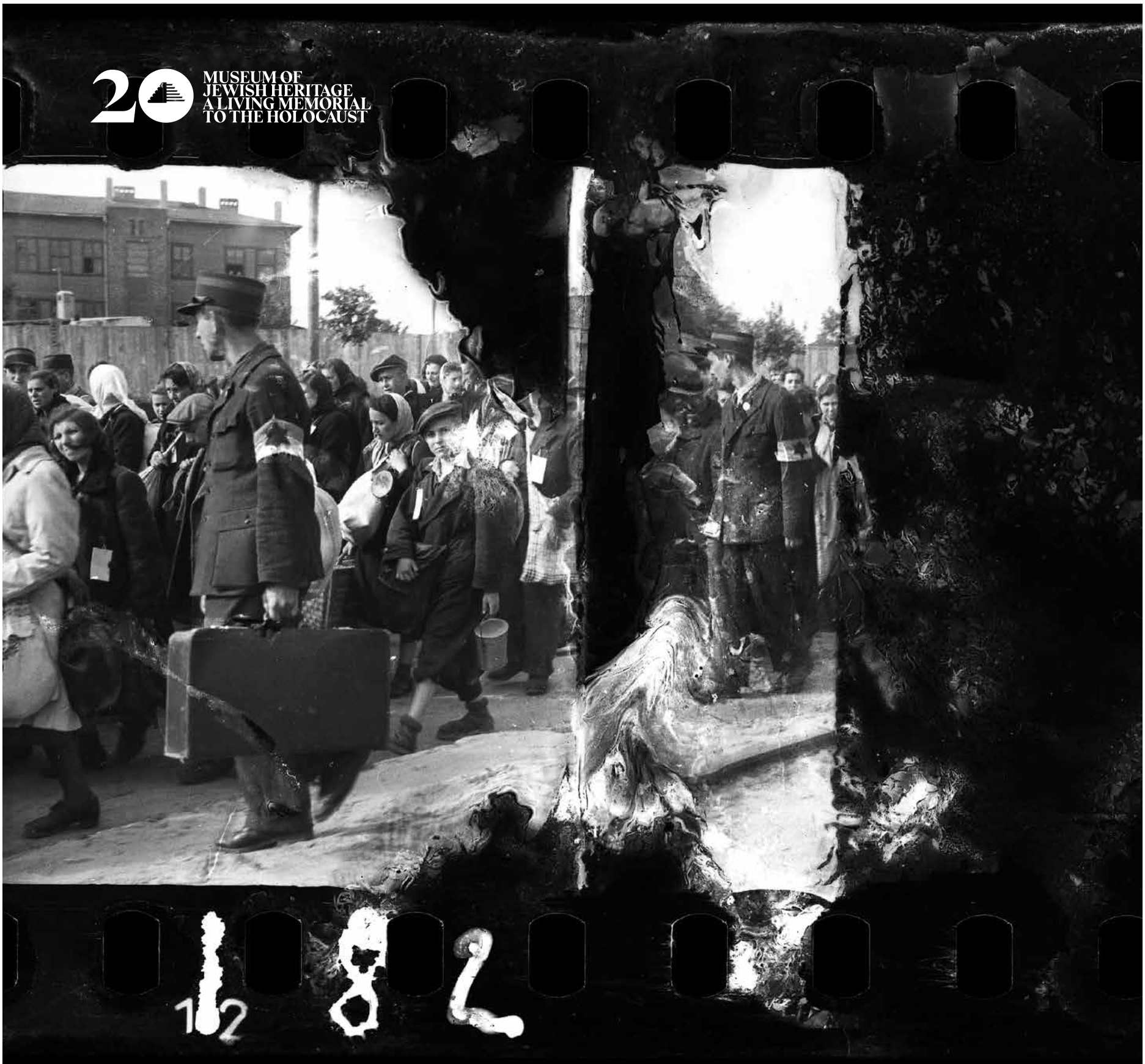
Polish President Andrzej Duda announces his decision to sign legislation penalizing certain statements about the Holocaust, in Warsaw, Poland, February 6, 2018. (Mateusz Wlodarczyk/NurPhoto/Sipa via AP Images.)

Auschwitz survivor Miroslaw Celka in the former concentration camp on the 70th anniversary of its liberation. (Odd Anderson/AFP/Getty Images.)

complicity in the persecution of their Jewish fellow citizens by Poles during the war as a significant historical phenomenon. They propose to do so by criminalizing any mention of such complicity, which is "against the facts." And, of course, they will be the ones who determine what the facts are. Given that there is an already ongoing crisis with the European Union over the destruction of judicial independence in Poland by the PiS, this is not reassuring.

The complexity of human experience does not fit into the Law and Justice Party's simplistic portrayal of Poland as always victimized and heroic. In fact, as I noted two years ago, although the Poles are deservedly proud of their heroic anti-Nazi resistance during World War II, it is also demonstrably true that during the war Poles killed more of their Jewish fellow citizens than they killed occupying Germans. Of course, there were many Poles who helped Jews during the war. Indeed, there are more Poles listed among Yad Vashem's "Righteous Gentiles" than citizens of any other nation, which is not surprising given that half of the six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust were from Poland. But these individuals typically acted on their own, against prevailing social norms. Strikingly, even after the war, many insisted on keeping their wartime heroism a secret from their neighbors. (For stating these facts—though they only summarize the historical work of myself and others—Polish government prosecutors initiated a libel probe against me in 2015. The investigation is ongoing.)

Although the new law specifically excludes those acting "within the framework of artistic or scientific activity," in fact it aims to have a chilling effect on art, scholarship, and honest discussion more generally. In particular, it aims to muzzle the extraordinarily rich and honest Polish historiography of the Holocaust produced over the last 20 years, which has provided the record of Poles' complicity in the persecution of their Jewish fellow citizens. Moreover, under the letter of this law virtually every Jewish survivor of the Holocaust from Poland would have to be prosecuted. I've read many hundreds of survivors'



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testimonies. I don't recall a single survivor who—before he or she recounted finally finding a good person who had helped them—did not describe episodes of betrayal, or blackmail, or denunciation on the part of other Polish citizens. The day after the law was passed, the pages of Israeli newspapers were flooded with testimonies of the survivors and their family members, whose life stories had now been criminalized by the Polish government.

When Israeli journalist Ronen Bergman asked Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki if he could be prosecuted for recounting his parents' experience in Poland during the Holocaust, the prime minister responded, "You're not going to be seen as criminal [if you] say that there were Polish perpetrators, as there were Jewish perpetrators, as there were Russian perpetrators as well as Ukrainian perpetrators—not only German perpetrators." The remark was not only ugly but telling in its deliberate bracketing of the Holocaust's principal victims with Polish and other Eastern European collaborators.

Under the pretense of defending Poland's dignity and freedom to act as a sovereign country, the regime has played to the worst xenophobic and anti-Semitic prejudices of the public. Public television controlled by the Law and Justice Party stirs populist outrage by repeating that outside forces, and Jews in particular, want to prevent Poland from telling the truth about its own history, that extermination camps were set up and run by the Germans and not by the Poles—a fact no one denies. Not surprisingly, one can see the rise of anti-Semitic feeling throughout social media, in television, and in the pro-government press.

The last time a Polish government used anti-Semitism in its official propaganda was half a century ago, in 1968, when the Communist Party waged its opportunistic "anti-Zionist" campaign in the aftermath of the Six-Day War. The ensuing ethnic cleansing led thousands of Holocaust survivors and their children to emigrate from Poland. Today, in a virtually mono-ethnic Poland, the PiS's populism may well lead to the purging of the country of its future elites in all walks of life. A society mobilized around such mendacious propaganda will only grow more xenophobic, until the best educated, open-minded, and curious young Poles find their homeland an inhospitable place to live. Nowadays, as citizens of the European Union, it is an easy matter for young Poles to move and settle in another, more tolerant country. The long-term cost to the country's social capital will be incalculable.

As I write, Poland and Israel are reported to be in ongoing diplomatic discussions with regard to the new Holocaust law. Meanwhile, the law has taken effect, and a nationalist NGO has just announced that it has filed the first complaint based upon it. It alleges that Argentina's *Pagina 12* newspaper has libeled Poles with an article it published about the massacre of Jews in the Polish town of Jedwabne in 1941. Apparently, an image accompanying the story erroneously illustrated it with a postwar photo of Polish anti-Communist fighters (though the resistance movement did have its own problems with anti-Semitism). The Polish League Against Defamation sees this as part of a conspiracy, not a hasty newsroom error in Buenos Aires:

Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki (center), Deputy Prime Minister Beata Szydlo (right), and Undersecretary of State Wojciech Kolarski (left) light candles at the International Monument to the Victims of Fascism. (Stanislaw Rozpedzik/EPA-EFE/REX/Shutterstock.)

> The combination of these two threads: information about the crime on Jews in Jedwabne during the German occupation and the presentation of fallen soldiers of the independence underground is manipulation, an act to the detriment of the Polish nation.

This is the paranoid PiS style in which a professed concern for historical accuracy is really its opposite. Deputy Justice Minister Michal Wojcik has been quoted as saying that he hoped the case would go to court.

Seventeen years ago, I ended my book on the Jedwabne massacre, in which 1,600 Jewish men, women, and children were massacred by their Polish neighbors, with a real sense of hope. I wrote:

> [A]s each generation rewrites national myths and calls back from the past collective experiences which have been shunted aside, I am optimistic that the subject of Polish-Jewish relations, once opened, will be revisited with honesty and sadness.

But clearly Poland's Law and Justice Party and its allies are capable of neither honesty nor sadness.

Jan T. Gross is professor of history emeritus, Princeton University. His many books include Neighbors: The Destruction of the Jewish Community in Jedwabne, Poland *(Princeton University Press) and* Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz *(Random House).*

The Jewish Critic and the Devil's Point of View

BY RUTH R. WISSE

> "What's your name?" That's the first question a Jew asks when he meets a complete stranger and offers him a *sholem aleichem*. It doesn't occur to anyone to reply, "Why do you need to know my name? Are you planning to become my in-law? My name is what they called me when I was born and mind your own business . . ."

No Jew objects to invasive curiosity, the author tells us, because enforced intimacy is such a natural part of Jewish life that he assumes you have the right to know everything about a fellow Jew, mooch tobacco from him, eavesdrop on his private conversation and if the subject is business throw in an unsolicited word of advice. And this Jewish custom is by no means restricted to our life on earth: "What's your name?" is the first question you'll be asked at the gates of heaven and it was what the Angel asked Jacob before they started to wrestle. If that's the first question posed in the beyond, it would have to apply as well to mortals, so I know that since this is my first foray into Yiddish literature I will be asked, "What's your name, Uncle?"

"My name is Mendele!"

What I've quoted above is the opening of *The Little Man* (all translations are my own), a novel published in 1864 that marked the literary debut of its author and what many scholars, including my teacher the late Max Weinreich, designate as the beginning of modern Yiddish literature. To be more precise, I have quoted and then paraphrased from the revised version of the novel the author issued a few years later. But the gist of it remained the same: Mendele Mokher Seforim (Mendele the Book Peddler) introduces himself as a member of the tribe and assumes on that basis that he can carry on about his fellow members. We have never met this Mendele before, but as we are intimately familiar with the culture, he expects us to trust him, appreciate his wit, catch his references, and share his attitudes. In a few deft lines, the author sets up a figure so democratic you don't have to look up to him, so familiar you don't have to fear him, and so appealing you won't realize you're being flogged.

Mendele, the generic insider, was a creation of genius. In the premodern world's most literate community, that of the Jews of Eastern Europe, no one was more inclusive, more all-encompassing than the Jewish book distributor who picked up his merchandise at the big-city publishers and then traveled through the Jewish Pale of Settlement to towns and villages where everyone—and I do mean *everyone*—awaited his coming. When he listed his wares you could see the breadth of his appeal: For the men he carried *sifre ruml*—an acronym for books for scholars and teachers (*Rabbanim Umelamdim*)—and also weekday and holiday prayer books, indispensable religious items such as phylacteries and prayer shawls, and *mezuzas* for the doorposts. For the women there were *tekhines*, books of common prayer, but also racy novels that were then beginning to circulate, as well as amulets, wolves' teeth, and other items thought to bring good luck or ward off the bad. He also carried current merchandise for the younger crowd, polemical literature, and translated works of instruction. For children he offered little shoes and yarmulkes and some copper household items, such as ewers for washing hands. Thus, everyone, from scholars awaiting the latest rabbinic commentary to pregnant women who needed protective prayers, looked forward to the arrival of the man who also traded in news and gossip, and occasionally delivered some documents from a neighboring town. Mendele was the provider for male and female, rich and poor, learned and simple, young and old, urban and rural, traditional and modern Jews—this last division being of special importance to the story.

Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh (Mendele Mokher Seforim) and his grandchildren, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of YIVO.)

We may better appreciate the invention of Mendele the Book Peddler as the narrator of the first Yiddish novel if we compare his literary debut with that of Robinson Crusoe in what is considered the first English novel. When Daniel Defoe published this book under Robinson Crusoe's name as "written by himself" he was readying his readers for a highly improbable adventure story, and to shore up the premise of realism he provided commonplace information about its fictional narrator—the drier the better:

> I was born in the year 1632, in the city of York, of a good family, though not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. He got a good estate by merchandise, and leaving off his trade, lived afterwards at York, from whence he had married my mother, whose relations were named Robinson, a very good family in that country, and from whom I was called Robinson Kreutznaer; but, by the usual corruption of words in England, we are now called, nay, we call ourselves and write our name "Crusoe," and so my companions always called me.

Defoe had to build trust in the reality of Crusoe's existence so that readers would suspend their disbelief and accept his fantastic story. Our real-life Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh also had to create a sense of realism, but so as to reveal his readers to *themselves* in an altogether familiar environment. He was asking them not simply to believe in Mendele's reality, but to let him make fun of them. He proved his right to joke through his joking: Only an insider could be allowed to disparage Jewish rudeness and meddling and chutzpah and other unpleasant by-products of the very intimacy that he was exploiting.

Much has been written about Abramovitsh's Mendele—the persona that swallowed its creator, the alias that displaced the author: What has gone under-reported is Mendele's function as a platform for criticism so secure that its purpose goes almost unnoticed. The creation of "Mendele" gave Abramovitsh the freedom to expose the worst of Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement.

Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh started out as one of a small group of self-styled enlighteners, *maskilim*, who aspired to correct Jewish behavior in everything from *cheder* education to treatment of animals. Like many members of the Russian and Russian Jewish intelligentsia, he based his reformist goals on Western European ideas of progress. He was by nature severe: His secure and loving childhood had been cut short by the death of his father and his mother's remarriage, which brought a sharp fall in family status. His traumatic discharge into hardship exposed him to some of the cruelest aspects of Jewish society. He spent hard years as a poor yeshiva student and ended up travelling with an itinerant hustler who tried to sell him off as a brilliant catch for a prospective wealthy bride. Although he escaped that trap, his first unhappy marriage ended in divorce.

Young Sholem put some of this bitter experience to creative use in Hebrew articles, reviews, and fiction. And then, as he tells it, "the wish to be of use to my people"—plus the temptations of a new, much wider Yiddish reading public—lured him into the

arena of Yiddish fiction that was just starting up. In 1864, two years after the publisher Aleksander Zederbaum added the Yiddish insert *Kol Mevasser* to his Hebrew weekly newspaper *Hamelitz*, Abramovitsh submitted *Dos kleyne mentshele* and launched his Yiddish literary career under the cover and name of Mendele—a traditional Jew, at 52 almost twice the author's age when he created him.

How did Abramovitsh get away with it? How did Jewish readers put up with such disparagement? Well, they did and they didn't. He later claimed that the locals forced him to leave Berdichev.

When Mendele hits town in his first appearance, the local rabbi sends for him, saying, "God has brought you here just when you are needed!" The town's wealthiest man, Isaac Abraham "Takif," has just died, leaving an autobiographical will with instructions that it be delivered to the rabbi for public reading. Mendele is then urged to publish Takif's will as a public service. Mr. High and Mighty—the implied meaning of *takif*—has not taken any chances but has waited until after his death to tell the story of his sleazy career. The confession begins with himself as a child trying to understand the "little man," *dos kleyne mentshele*, the Jewish soul that adults are always talking about.

The first time I ever laughed aloud reading Yiddish literature was when the child pounds his mother's back as she leans over the oven because he wants to knock the little man out of her eyes where he has seen his reflection. I know it doesn't sound like much, but the slapstick works, and the boy's failure to expel the homunculus teaches him the difference between literal and metaphoric language. By imitating those to whom the term is applied, Isaac learns the little man's skills of sycophancy, dishonesty, and cruelty that take him step by step to the top of the Jewish social ladder. It is hard to pull off the literary contrivance of a self-incriminating confession, and this will never rank among the author's great works, though it is an effective exposé of the kind of religious hypocrisy and abuse of authority that this schemer represents. What is interesting is, first, that despite the harsh critique of Jewish society, the figure of Mendele stays independent of this criticism, ready for any other good manuscript that will come his way, and, second, politically, that the satire stays strictly within Jewish community bounds. The Russian government does not come under assault.

To continue sour-cherry-picking through Mendele's canon, let us consider *Fishke der krumer* (*Fishke the Lame*), a novel more problematic today than when it appeared in 1869, or in its revised edition of 1888. The English word "lame" masks the term *krumer's* harsher connotations of misshapen and deformed. At the start of the novel Mendele's wagon gets entangled with the wagon of fellow book peddler Reb Alter, setting up an entanglement of sentimental romance (that pities deformity) with premodern satire (that equates deformity with corruption) as the two men meet up with a third character, Fishke, whose story then takes center stage.

Postcard of a bookseller (center) by Hayyim Goldberg. (Courtesy of the William A. Rosenthall Judaica Collection, The College of Charleston Library.)

Heroes from the lower depths of society were staples of 19th-century literary realism, and Fishke fits that bill, a bathhouse attendant conned by the town into a marriage with a blind woman, Basye, who drags him into the society of professional beggars, pimps, and thugs. Fishke's involuntary descent from underclass to underworld subjects him to the predatory cruelty of the Jewish beggar gang, but also highlights his heroic potential as he becomes the loving protector of a hunchbacked girl whom the gang has kidnapped. This wins him the special enmity of the gang leader, the Red Bastard, who is cuckolding Fishke with his wife. Trapped by the villain in a cellar and left for dead, Fishke is discovered by the book peddlers, whose horses have been stolen by the same beggar gang. The sentimental strand of the story approaches positive resolution when Reb Alter realizes that the hunchback whom Fishke has protected is the daughter he deserted many years earlier. On the plane of sentiment, this leaves us hoping that Fishke and a repentant Reb Alter will rescue the poor girl. But on the plane of criticism, the beggar gang is still out there at the end of the book, threatening Jewish life and reputation.

Here is where the novel risks as much censure as it dispenses. If the portrait of the wicked Fagin that Charles Dickens draws in *Oliver Twist* is an anti-Jewish defamation, what shall we say about a Jewish gang that exploits human disfigurement, whose vicious leaders—male and female—kidnap and enslave weaker members of a Jewish society that abets this criminality? Abramovitsh far exceeds Dickens or any other Gentile writer in his negative portrayal of Jews, for his Mendele knows more about Jewish society than any other writer of his time and can penetrate its darkest corners. In fact, it is not unusual for Mendele to stumble into some dark corner or state of inebriation in which he experiences a nightmarish vision of the reality that is already bad enough by the light of day. And he has the verbal facility to get the worst of it across. In the way solo instruments take off in jazz, Mendele takes over from Fishke's description of what it is to be a beggar to riff for a couple of pages on Jewish beggar folk, from the infantry of foot paupers through the cavalry of horse-drawn paupers and all the types of spongers and moochers and indigents, including Hebrew authors who peddle their books door to door, culminating in Reb Alter's summation that *Kol yisroel—eyn kabtsn*: "All Jewry is poverty (or beggary)—and that's it." Mendele declares the beggar's pouch to be the symbol of the Jew.

How did Abramovitsh get away with it? How did Jewish readers put up with so disparaging a representation of themselves? Well, they did and they didn't. The same year that Abramovitsh published his first version of *Fishke* he also wrote a play called *The Meat-Tax* about the corrupt Jewish administrators in a certain town who artificially raise the price on kosher meat, skim profits, bilk the poor, and denounce to the government authorities anyone who stands in their way. The play is shrill and adversarial, maskilic agitprop. Abramovitsh claimed that the locals who recognized themselves in the caricatures forced him and his family to leave Berdichev, and even if this was not strictly accurate, he did leave the city at that point and thereafter redirected some of his literary focus. But it was more than fear of Jewish reprisal that affected Abramovitsh's political adjustment. When Odessa experienced the first modern pogrom in 1871 the governor of the province, to whom Abramovitsh had dedicated *The Meat-Tax*, did not stop the carnage. He did not turn out to be the benevolent ally who Abramovitsh had hoped would help him and his colleagues forcibly "improve" the Jews.

When Abramovitsh revised and expanded the Yiddish and later the Hebrew versions of *Fishke*, he included a sequence in which Mendele goes searching at night for Reb Alter, who is looking for the missing horses. After working himself

into a nervous state worrying that he might miss the deadline for his book deliveries, Mendele drinks hard liquor on an empty stomach and cries with self-pity at the memory of his mother's love for him. In this inebriated state he strays into a vegetable patch, where he takes a cucumber and is apprehended by a constable who hauls him into police headquarters. The officer in charge, just for the fun of it, shears off one of his *payes*. Mendele breaks down and cries a second time, for the earlock his mother once caressed that now lies on the floor. The Russian repents of his action, tries to comfort his victim, and bawls out the constable who brought him in over the "theft" of a cucumber. This is the only time the book steps into Russian officialdom, and the narrator, Mendele himself—not Fishke—is its victim.

Mendele is driven to tears by his impotence, his author by the knowledge that over and above whatever happens within Jewish society a far more sinister power controls it from outside. In the book's merciless critique of Jews as a top-to-bottom society of beggars, this sadistic act of the authorities is so relatively mild that the Russian censor would hardly have paid it attention, yet there it is, in full view: the repressive, malevolent, and arbitrary political context within which Jews must operate, and the larger political and moral framework within which the Jews are found wanting. Abramovitsh admits it behind the excuse of drunkenness, because it might otherwise be construed as protest. Mendele can cry only when drunk because the rest of the time he must swallow his pride and function as a fully responsible adult.

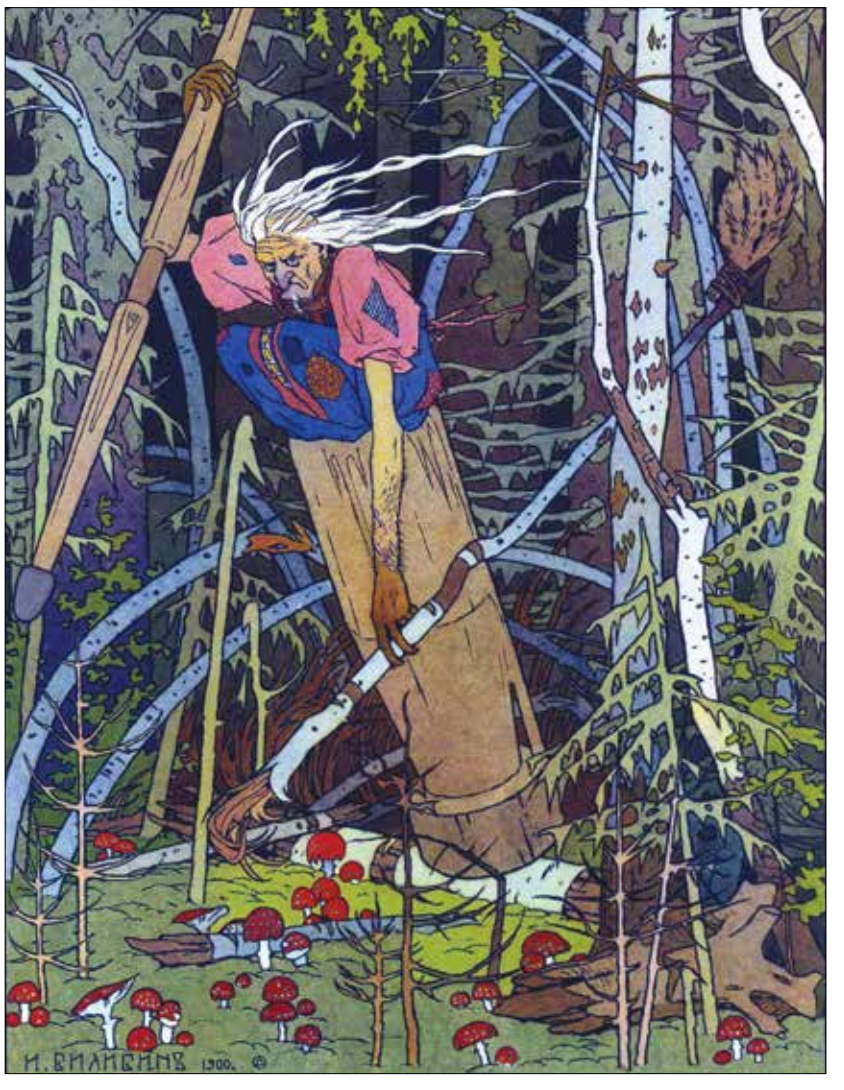
We don't know exactly when in the 1870s Abramovitsh wrote this chapter, but by the early 1870s he was situating his criticism of the Jews within the overarching political framework of tsarist rule. In contemporary terms we would say his politics had changed. Thus, in his 1873 masterwork *Di kliatshe* (The Mare), Mendele brings us the story of *Isrolik der meshugener*, a young and wholly rational young man who is driven to madness by the real-life political constraints that prevent him from becoming the reformer he aspires to be.

Isrolik's mother wants him to hurry up and marry and become a dutiful Jewish householder. He wants first to study medicine, the exemplary healing profession, so that he may improve her life and the lives of Jews and Gentiles alike. He stuffs himself with required reading for the entrance exams but is foiled by the anti-Jewish examiners who require that he also demonstrate knowledge of Russian folklore—including of the witch Baba Yaga—a requirement whose only purpose is to cause him to fail. The shock of this injustice tips his fragile balance, and he suffers a mental breakdown. In that state of alleged madness, he "sees" a bedraggled mare being pursued and attacked by a gang of hooligans and yapping dogs. Isrolik vainly tries to chase them off. When the human and canine attackers tire of their sport and retreat, the Mare emits a human sigh, and surprises Isrolik by beginning to speak.

The Mare recounts how she was once a noble prince—"fine, handsome, intelligent *mit ale mayles*, with all the virtues"—until envious rulers had their sorcerers transform him into the Wandering Mare. Briefly restored by the great miracle worker who led her out of bondage to the Promised Land, the Mare was then transmogrified once again into her miserable state. When Isrolik asks her, "*Vi lang*—How long have you been in this condition?" the Mare replies, "*Lang vi der yiddisher goles*." The Mare breathes life into the dead idiom: She has been in this condition for the duration of the Jewish exile, which is both the manifestation and the cause of her torment. This curse of exile—like Isrolik's failure to pass his exams—is inflicted from the outside.

Forget Baba Yaga, the Devil himself lifts Isrolik high off the ground to reveal the surrounding landscape.

Isrolik is stirred and angered by the Mare's desperate condition. A member in good standing with the Russian version of the Humane Society, he declares himself her loyal protector and advises her how to regain her standing: If only . . . if only . . . and he trots out the Jewish enlightenment agenda.



Baba Yaga by Ivan Bilibin from* Vasilisa the Beautiful*, ca. 1900.

If only she were to improve her appearance, reform her behavior, prove herself useful, and get a proper education, she would be accepted among the other steeds. *But the Mare has had enough.* Against her Gentile pursuers she has no recourse, but she will not submit to the false bromides of a fellow Jew. She accuses him of being disingenuous. His membership in high-minded groups did not help him drive off the dogs, so what is the real value of his goodwill? Other horses don't have to prove their right to graze:

> What do eating and basic needs have to do with education? What right do you have to prevent someone from eating, from breathing freely, until he masters some trick or other? Every creature that is born is a living thing. Nature has provided it with all the senses, all the organs, for its own use, to get everything it needs to live.

The Mare sums up her disquisition on natural rights with the phrase, "The dance performance does not precede the food": Human rights cannot be *earned*.

Mendele's Mare corrects the false premise of Isrolik's rationalism**.** Jews may be in need of reform, but they cannot and should never have to prove their right to flourish. Isrolik should not be trying to whip up sympathy for the poor Jews on the one hand and blaming them for the aggression they inspire on the other. The principle of human rights for the individual citizen applies equally to minorities in the family of nations. Toleration and equal opportunity are the preconditions of citizenship, not rewards to be meted out by capricious authorities. Isrolik's compassion for the Mare is no substitute for ensuring political equality.

"Wow!" exclaims the young man when the Mare concludes her peroration. "Why the devil's gotten into you!" And at that point our Isrolik is whisked away by the Devil for the third and final section of the book, which constitutes the climax of his real education. Unlike Abramovitsh's previous works, this book soars above the Jewish society it depicts.

Forget Baba Yaga, the mythical evil spirit: In the final section of the book that Abramovitsh was to expand over the next several decades, the Devil himself takes Isrolik on a flight across eastern central Europe, where mobs are attacking Jewish communities and officials and writers are disgorging rivers of ink in anti-Jewish polemics. The Devil displays the horrifying effects of the Industrial Revolution, and also of intra-Jewish rivalries. Abramovitsh had translated Jules Verne's *Five Weeks in a Balloon; or, Journeys and Discoveries in Africa by Three Englishmen* into Yiddish, and he adapted the perspective of that adventure story to this overview of Europe.

He had created Mendele as a narrative platform for criticism of whatever was visible at eye level in the Jewish world—socially, economically, and culturally—but here Isrolik is lifted high off the ground to reveal the surrounding landscape. The wide aerial shot from the much higher elevation provides the political context within which the action is taking place. And the Devil has a plan for Isrolik: He will drop him back down on earth so that he can *ride* the Mare, taking advantage of her misery and pretending always to be doing so for the common good. Lull her with soothing lullabies, put her off with false promises, and threaten her with exposure if she doesn't obey him.

The Devil shows Isrolik how to become the kind of leader we find among minorities who exploit the weaknesses and dependencies of their constituents. When Isrolik refuses to take this advice, the Devil drops him, and Isrolik awakes from his trance. Nothing has been resolved—nothing has been improved—but at least it has been established what keeps the Jews in a state of danger.

One of my luckiest breaks in life was when my teacher Max Weinreich proposed that I begin my graduate studies in Yiddish literature with a semester-long tutorial in "all of Mendele." Most teachers today would probably begin the study of modern Yiddish literature earlier (say, with Nachman of Bratslav), but, at the time, some teachers would not have chosen Mendele at all. They did not like the idea of studying the satire of Jews who had just been erased from the face of the earth. Did it make sense to celebrate Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh for his incisive critique of a world that was so mercilessly destroyed? By 1960 many did not think so.

The first Hebrew educators who set up the curricula for the Hebrew high schools of Tel Aviv and Haifa in the early 20th century naturally taught Mendele (as they referred to Abramovitsh) to show off the achievement of modern Hebrew fiction. But after the Shoah they no longer wanted their students to view the martyrs through this negative portrayal. Even Jacob Glatstein—the Yiddish poet who in his brilliance most resembled Abramovitsh—wrote a withering essay on *Fishke the Lame*, berating literary critics and historians who dared suggest that his beggar's pouch was the symbol of the Jew, and taking the author to task for his heartless treatment of a destitute population.

But there are few Jewish authors as important as Abramovitsh, creator of Mendele the Book Peddler. I say this not just for his literary achievements as the founding figure of both Yiddish and Hebrew literatures, or because literary history should stay true to itself, or for many other good aesthetic, pedagogic, or national reasons, but because the work of Abramovitsh cumulatively and in some of its parts provides the most incisive analysis I know of modern Jewish politics and of politics generally. Isrolik, our would-be Jewish reformer, dramatizes the cognitive dissonance of the classic "enlightened" Jew who doesn't *want* to know the Devil's point of view, even when he is forcibly exposed to it. From Abramovitsh one learns the dangers of moral solipsism that concentrates on its own moral perfection to the exclusion of everyone else's, and how much perspective matters in political analysis.

As the most scathing social critic Jews have ever produced, Abramovitsh came to understand the distortions of intramural satire in a polity under siege. He raised his platform of criticism up, up, up to see such corruption as a speck on the continent where the Devil holds sway.

Ruth R. Wisse recently retired from the Martin Peretz Professorship of Yiddish Literature at Harvard University. She is currently a distinguished senior fellow at the Tikvah Fund. This essay is an adaptation of a talk at the Jewish Review of Books *3rd Annual Conference and grew out of the Daniel E. Koshland Memorial Lecture at Congregation Emanu-El of San Francisco in 1992.*

Exodus and Consciousness

BY BENJAMIN D. SOMMER

The Exodus: How It Happened and Why It Matters
by Richard Elliott Friedman
HarperOne, 304 pp., $27.99

The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times
by James L. Kugel
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 496 pp., $30

A few years ago, the rabbi of Manhattan's Park Avenue Synagogue, Dr. Elliot Cosgrove, began a sermon with a sobering question:

> If every single Jewish studies professor, from every campus across North America, were to get on an airplane that took off, flew away, and never came back again, would Jewish life change at all? Our synagogues, our Hebrew schools, our Jewish summer camps, our UJAs, our relationship with Israel—if there were no Jewish studies departments on campus, would it have any effect on the Jewish community?

If one peruses titles of papers that professors of Jewish studies deliver at conferences and publish in journals, one finds little that would interest most committed American Jews—and even less that would engage the many more who enact their Jewish identity only a few times a year. Of course, the question could be rephrased more generally: How much of the not infrequently esoteric work of contemporary professors of the humanities matters to, well, humans?

But things don't have to be this way. Two recent books by senior scholars drawing on a lifetime of study and teaching provide an antidote to the sense that life and scholarship have nothing to do with each other. James Kugel retired in 2013 from Bar-Ilan University's Bible department, where he taught for over two decades; earlier he served as the Starr Professor of Hebrew Literature at Harvard University. Richard Elliott Friedman spent the first three decades of his career building the Jewish studies program at the University of California, San Diego before moving on to the University of Georgia to become the Davis Professor of Jewish Studies there. The two share not only a set of renowned mentors at Harvard (where they both trained in the 1970s) but a longstanding commitment to serious biblical scholarship that addresses a general audience. If, before stepping into one of my classes, a first-year undergraduate or rabbinical student has read a single work of modern biblical scholarship, the odds are that it is Friedman's 1987 blockbuster, *Who Wrote the Bible?* If it isn't that, it's likely to be Kugel's 2007 *How to Read the Bible*. In these and other books, both Kugel and Friedman bring their own insights along with concise summaries of modern biblical criticism not only to academic colleagues but to interested lay readers.

For Friedman, the most important result of the exodus and the fusion of Levitical and Israelite identity was the creation of monotheism itself.

The subjects of their new books, which both appeared this past fall, reflect their different interests and approaches. Kugel examines the changing nature of perceptions of God and self in the Bible, while Friedman investigates the history behind the book of Exodus. However, it turns out that reconstructing the nature and evolution of biblical monotheism is crucial to both of these books.

Friedman poses a straightforward historical question: Did the exodus from Egypt really happen? He notes that many scholars regard scripture's narrative concerning Moses, Pharaoh, and the Israelites as a fiction concocted by authors who lived in the first millennium B.C.E., long after the events were supposed to have happened. After all, no archaeological evidence of the presence of Israelite slaves in Egypt has ever been found, much less evidence of their sudden liberation one early spring night in the Late Bronze Age. This line of reasoning doesn't impress Friedman. To be sure, some details of the exodus story cannot be historically accurate. For instance, the book of Numbers tells us that the liberated slaves included 603,550 adult males. If we extrapolate conservatively from this number, we would conclude that at least two million Israelites left Egypt, which would be a lot of missing slaves to go unnoticed by ancient Egyptian historians. But ancient historians did not use numbers the way we do, so getting bogged down over what were probably intended as typological figures is hardly necessary. (Furthermore, some parts of the Bible suggest that the number of escaped slaves was far smaller.) The absence of specific references to Israelite slaves in Egypt is hardly surprising, since Egyptian texts do not indicate the precise ethnicity of slaves. Israelites would simply have been considered "Asiatic," and references to Asiatic slaves abound in the relevant time period.

But Friedman goes beyond doubting the doubters. He brings together several converging lines of evidence that point toward a smaller exodus in the latter part of the second millennium. He focuses especially on an odd pattern: Though the Bible tells us that all 12 tribes of Israel were enslaved in Egypt, every named character in the story comes

Moses and the Israelites crossing the Red Sea, from the* Nuremberg Bible. *(Biblia Sacra Germanaica, The Stapleton Collection/Bridgeman Images.)

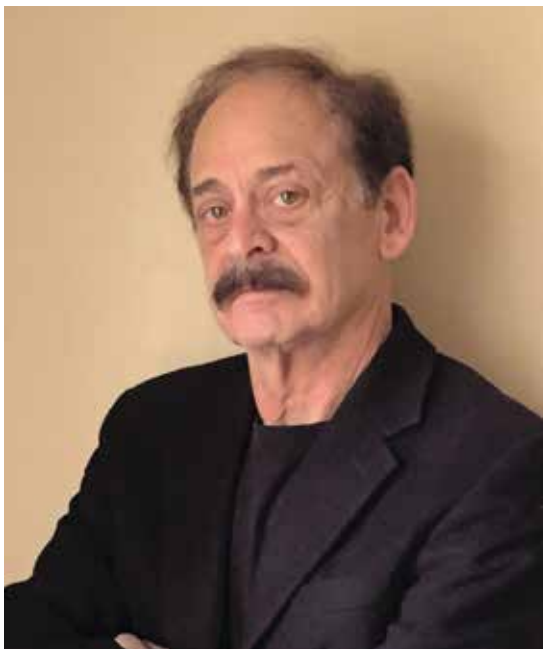
from the tribe of Levi. Further, the Bible mentions Levites who have Egyptian names (for example, Moses, Phinehas, and Pashhur), but members of other tribes never bear them. It might be suggested that some characters were given Egyptian names to provide an authentic flavor to the narrative, but, if so, why isn't the occasional man from Ephraim or woman from Manasseh given an Egyptian name? There is, in short, a disconnect between the way the Bible wants to portray the exodus and the data the Bible uses to do so, and this suggests that the data was not made up. A pure fiction would hold together better; historical reports based on real evidence tend to have rougher edges.

Consequently, Friedman believes that there really was an exodus, but only of the Levites. In fact, he proposes, it is possible that the Levites were not originally part of the nation Israel; alternatively, they were separated from their Israelite brethren precisely by the fact of their sojourn in Egypt, a sojourn that the other tribes never experienced. Friedman notes that the oldest parts of the Bible depicting Israelites in the Land of Canaan, such as the Song of Deborah in Judges 5, don't include Levites in their list of Israelite tribes. Conversely, another very old poem, the Song of the Sea in Exodus 15, talks about the exodus but doesn't specify that *Israelites* left Egypt. That poem's closing verses identify arrival at a temple ("the sanctuary, O Lord, which Your hands established") as the ultimate goal of the exodus; thus, this poem reflects specifically priestly, Levitical concerns. All this leads Friedman to conclude that the Levites united—or perhaps reunited—with the Israelites only after they had left Egypt. When these Levites merged with the Israelites they brought memories of bondage in Egypt, liberation, and the creation of a covenant with the desert deity whom they credited as their savior. Those historical memories were eventually adopted by all the Israelites, and the Levites then came to serve as Israel's priestly caste.

In support of this theory, Friedman notes similarities between the priestly Tabernacle described in the book of Exodus and second-millennium Egyptian ritual and military structures. He agrees with the scholarly consensus that the biblical story as we have it was composed in the first millennium, but he argues persuasively that this story contains historical memories that go back much further.

To this Friedman adds what he sees as another clue. For close to two centuries, many biblical critics have upheld what is known as Documentary Hypothesis, the theory that the five books of the Torah combine four originally separate documents, which biblical scholars famously named J, E, P, and D. Three of these documents, in Friedman's view, were composed by Levites: E, P, and D. The authentic second-millennium Egyptian elements of the story, Friedman claims, show up specifically and only in those three documents. Further, those three documents, unlike the non-Levitical J document, use the exodus experience as the underpinning of Israelite identity, law, and morality. For example, E, P, and D—but not J—repeatedly tell us to treat aliens with compassion, because we were once aliens in Egypt; all three of these sources—but not J—require Hebrew slaves to be freed after a term of service rather than forcing them to remain slaves forever.

In short, at some point after the Levites escaped from Egypt and joined the Israelites who were already established in Canaan, what was originally a Levite story came to be remembered as a story about all Israelites. And, most crucially for Friedman, that ethnic merger was accompanied by a theological merger. The desert deity of the Levites, known by the Tetragrammaton, was identified with the high god of the Israelites, known as El. One might have imagined, in the polytheistic world of the ancient Near East, that the newly unified Israelite nation would simply have two main gods. After all, the Egyptians managed perfectly well with a divine menagerie. But the newly merged Israelites did not create a mythology that told the story of the relationship between two distinct gods; instead, they came to believe that these were merely two distinct names for one unique god.



Richard Elliott Friedman. (Photo by Jade.)

For Friedman, then, the most important result of the exodus and the consequent fusion of Levitical and Israelite identity was the creation of monotheism itself. And that fusion involved not only a theology but an ethics, for at the heart of Levitical religion was the view that aliens and even slaves had to be treated with compassion and dignity. "[T]he birth of monotheism," Friedman writes, "was paralleled with the birth of love of neighbors, even alien neighbors. The exodus led both to monotheism and to the exceptional attitude toward others."

Thus, a significant part of Friedman's project in this book is a defense of biblical religion. Not only is the Bible's central historical narrative based on a real event, but the essence of its teaching is the opposite of what some cultured despisers of monotheism have claimed. Monotheism is not essentially exclusivist or intolerant, for the event that led to Israel's acceptance of a single deity also demanded a compassionate attitude toward others. Friedman does not deny the presence of ethically problematic texts in the Bible, such as those calling for the wholesale slaughter of Amalekites. But he shows that those laws sit alongside others that call for humane treatment of other nations, and it is those verses that predominate and remain in force in the postbiblical era.

Like Friedman, Kugel understands monotheism as a complex religious phenomenon that emerged gradually. In the early stages it often

acknowledged the reality of lesser deities other nations could legitimately worship; its full theological implications took time to express themselves consistently. But Kugel's main concern is not just historical but anthropological. He is interested in what the Bible's ideas about God teach us about the Bible's views of humanity.

In some of the older sections of the Bible, God appears suddenly to human beings, who are sometimes surprised but never entirely flabbergasted to meet the deity. Indeed, Kugel points out that God's appearance seems so commonplace that some characters initially fail to realize who is addressing them at all. They are in a sort of fog that prevents them from fully perceiving what is happening until there is a kind of click, and the fog clears. Even then, they are not always overwhelmed; they often speak with God as one would address a respected fellow human.

In the world of these early stories involving Adam and Eve, Abraham, Hagar, Moses, and Gideon, God seems very much of this world, ready to slip easily into a person's consciousness. Kugel argues that God's sudden appearance in these stories suggests an understanding of the human self as semipermeable. God's voice could enter a person's head, as could a visual image of God standing in front of the person. Or perhaps God's occasional appearances imply a different sense of the world, one in which multiple realities can coexist in the same space, though only one such reality is visible to us most of the time. In Eden, but also in the world of Abraham or Jacob or Gideon, divinity may be present often (always?), though fully manifest at few times and even then to only a few people. This view of the world is not unique to the Bible. Something similar shows up, for instance, in Homer and other polytheistic writings contemporaneous with or earlier than the Bible.

On Kugel's reading, "our complicated modern psyche has been purchased for a sky emptied of angels."

Kugel shows that this view of God, humanity, and world is slowly displaced by another one that thinks through the implications of a single deity who rules not only over His people Israel but the whole cosmos. While the God who speaks to Abraham in Genesis 18 appears to be human in size (it takes a while for Abraham to realize the man he is speaking with is God at all), Israelites began over time to assume that a cosmic deity must have been enormous (too big, as the last chapter of the book of Isaiah puts it, to be encompassed by the heavens, much less the earth). This God, Kugel writes, "no longer stepped across the curtain separating ordinary from extraordinary reality. Now He was not seen at all—at first because . . . visual sighting was held to be lethal, and later because it was difficult to conceive of. God's voice was still heard, but He Himself was an increasingly immense being, filling the heavens; and then finally (moving ahead to postbiblical times), He was just axiomatically everywhere all at once." This is the great shift of Kugel's title: from a God who was, as the poet Friedrich Hölderlin put it, "Nearby . . . / and hard to hold" to one who is distant yet omniscient, and thus always accessible.

Kugel's central point is that this shift in the view of God entailed a shift in the conception of what it means to be a human. For precisely as God recedes into the highest heavens, to use a revealing early postbiblical phrase, Jews begin to speak of what we call the soul, a core piece of one's self present in yet distinct from the body. This soul can endure after death precisely because it is not physical, and it can connect directly with the one God who is in no one place for the same reason. For Kugel, the soul that emerges from the great shift serves the same purpose as ancient Near Eastern temples such as Solomon's: It is a meeting place for heaven and earth. But now this meeting takes place inside a person. After this, prayer and the study of sacred texts, not just sacrifices that had to be offered at a temple, can allow for God and the self to connect.

By the end of the biblical period, God no longer spoke to prophets by stepping from behind the curtain separating our perceptual reality from another deeper one with which it shared space. He was no longer next door, ready to cross over into the semipermeable mind of a human messenger. Rather, He was ever-present through the words of scripture and ever-accessible through prayer.

This shift to a more distant God moves us, surprisingly enough, in a democratic direction. For if God is accessible in a book rather than in a ritual that can be performed only by a descendant of Aaron or in the unique and irreproducible experience of a Moses or a Jeremiah, then anyone can seek God out, not only the priest or the prophet. If for Friedman biblical monotheism implies an ethics, for Kugel it implies an epistemology and a metaphysics. The great shift brought with it a new view of the human self. Humans were no longer inhabitants of a mysterious world of multiple overlapping realities; their bodies dwelled instead in a more straightforward world, even as their souls connected them to a distant realm.

Before the great shift, humans were deeply embedded within family, clan, and nation, through which they achieved a kind of ongoing existence. After it, people could endure as individuals after death. Kugel hardly claims that there was no concept of the individual early on, nor does he allege that family, clan, and nation disappeared from

James L. Kugel. (Photo by Rick Taft.)

Jewish thinking after the great shift. But he argues that ancient Jews placed increasing value on the individual as their monotheistic God grew in size, moved further away, and finally lost His corporeality altogether. These changes in how Israel understood God opened up a space for humanity. Consequently, the great shift Kugel describes encouraged a sense of inwardness that was far less prominent in early biblical texts.

Yet, Kugel maintains, the idea that the soul has a special connection with the distant God also taught that "in the end, man is not the whole point, but that the inward turn ultimately leads outward, to a divine reality beyond oneself." These developments continued long after the eras that Kugel describes in his book, becoming especially strong in our modern world, in which the sense of inwardness has become so intense that, paradoxically, it has ended up engulfing the turn toward what is outside the self:

> Our modern, sealed-off individualism has emerged in part thanks to the reconfiguring of what was once the semipermeable mind, and our complicated modern psyche has been purchased for a sky emptied of angels. . . . Many modern Westerners . . . adrift in today's version of the self . . . cannot imagine trying to see beyond it in order to address an unknown You.

Thus, Kugel does not simply portray the great shift as progress. We paid a price for it, and Kugel seems wistful at times as he describes the earlier view more common in Genesis and Judges.

Kugel's book, then, is not only about encountering God, and it is not only about biblical times. He is concerned with modern conceptions of the self as well as ancient ones. Thus, it is appropriate that he takes frequent detours through the cognitive sciences, anthropology, and philosophy, offering surprisingly lucid summaries of their varied discussions of human selfhood. In this, his book resembles Friedman's, who is also adept at summarizing and employing the work of other scholars. Both authors also write with clarity and with wit. Friedman is fond of pop-culture references (one short paragraph manages to allude to *Godfather* I and III, along with the Eagles' "Hotel California"), while Kugel tends to be drily elegant. But there are also revealing differences in the ways these two books bridge the gulf between the academy and a wider readership.

Friedman tells us early on that he is a fan of mystery novels, and, like a good detective, he draws what seem like unrelated bits of data into tight arguments in which every detail has its place. It was *only* the Levites who left Egypt, Friedman insists, and *only* Levitical sources that preserve authentic memories of second-millennium Egypt and base Israelite law and morality on the exodus. But Friedman can make this claim only because he identifies a great deal of material as stemming from E that almost all other biblical critics credit to J. Further, Friedman tells us that Levites wrote E without pausing to note that few of his colleagues agree; some specialists attribute E to prophetic circles, while others acknowledge that we cannot know which scribes or storytellers were most responsible for the traditions that crystallized as E. Further, some scholars do detect occasional Egyptian names among non-Levitical Israelites, though all agree that they are much more common among Levites. Similarly, for Friedman the fact that monotheism emerged from an event involving oppressed foreigners in Egypt resulted in monotheism's distinctive emphasis on loving the stranger. Yet solicitude for strangers is hardly the exclusive domain of monotheists. It was one of the bedrock values of Greek polytheists, a key mark of truly civilized humans in Homer's *Odyssey*.

Friedman's narrative of ancient Israel's journey from polytheism through what he calls henotheism (exclusive worship of one god without denying the existence of others) finally to arrive at what he regards as true monotheism is clear and incredibly neat: All the verses, all the archaeological evidence, all the datings of the texts fit perfectly into the three-stage developmental pattern he lays out. But history doesn't actually work that way. In the humanities, you know something is amiss if all the data supports your thesis. A mystery writer must account for every single piece of evidence; after all, she created them. But a historian who does so should be questioned closely.

Happily, I can report that scholars familiar with the material Friedman works with know that some of these verses aren't really from E, and that E might not have been a Levite anyway. Moreover, the relationships among polytheism, henotheism, and monotheism are far messier and the archaeological evidence far more ambiguous than Friedman reports. But for precisely these reasons, his conclusions are believable. Not all of his arguments are equally valid, and some are overstated, but his core historical theses are convincing. (In fact, there is a good deal of additional evidence for genuine historical memories from second-millennium Egypt in the exodus story collected by other scholars that he does not mention.)

Kugel, too, finds patterns within the history of Israel's religion, but he portrays them as being far less tidy. When he describes the development of biblical and postbiblical ideas concerning God's body, its proximity to us, the extent to which we can see it, and even whether there is one at all, he stresses that this evolution "is in no sense a straight-line progression."

> The history of divine encounters as reported in the Bible is not one step forward and then the next, but includes lateral jumps, idiosyncratic depictions that become traditional for a time, followed by later imitations and slight modifications, then fresh starts and various subsequent resumptions and reiterations.

Consequently, some texts after the great shift move to a model of a distant God who, being accessible through every human's soul, is really quite nearby all the time. A famous lyric Friedman quotes in his book in a different connection does a good job of describing the relationship Kugel finds between radically new ideas and the notions they intend to replace: "You can check out any time you like, but you can never leave." Kugel's model for the development of religious cultures may seem frustrating to some readers, since the monumental changes he so painstakingly describes bring us back to a place that is similar in important respects to the one we thought we had left. He presents the history of ideas as slippery, and he avoids nailing things down the way that Friedman does. It is remarkable how many of his chapters end with a question rather than a conclusion.

Both Friedman and Kugel do a magnificent job of bringing important ideas from the academy to a broad readership. Friedman upends widely repeated but erroneous beliefs about the origin of the Israelites; Kugel gives readers a sense of history's convoluted texture, its ironies, and thus its beauty. In an essay on the idea of history, Immanuel Kant famously wrote, "From such crooked wood as a humanity is made of, nothing entirely straight can be assembled," a line that recalls Koheleth's query, "Who can make straight what God made crooked?" (Ecclesiastes 7:13). At their best, scholars of the humanities don't try to straighten things out. They explain why it is that even though God made everything in its own apt time, we can never grasp the whole from beginning to end. And they show that there is a sweetness in our foggy understanding of history, a music whose counterpoint is at once exquisite and elusive. Such scholars don't allow us to arrive at any one conclusion even after much deliberation. Rather, they help us to turn our subject and to turn it again, so that we begin to see everything in it.

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God's Law in Human Hands

BY RICHARD HIDARY

What's Divine about Divine Law? Early Perspectives
by Christine Hayes
Princeton University Press, 432 pp., $26.95

A Judean, a Stoic, a Jewish philosopher, a Jesus follower, and a rabbi walk into a seminar room at Yale, and Professor Christine Hayes asks them, "What do you mean when you say divine law?"

Speaking first, Ezra the Scribe holds up a scroll and declares, "This is the Teaching of Moses with which God had charged Israel. He came down on Mount Sinai and spoke to them from heaven; He gave them right rules and true teachings, good laws and commandments." The laws of the Torah certainly aim to instill righteousness, faith, and continuity, but their authority and divine status derive not from their contents or their aims but rather from their source. This divine law is particular to the people of Israel as part of a mutual covenant, which God can change at will. Indeed, humans can even instigate a change, as when the daughters of Zelophehad petitioned to inherit from their father.

Cicero, representing the Stoics, defines divine law as "right reason, in agreement with nature, diffused over everyone, consistent, everlasting." The divine status of such law rests on its character, not its origin. It is universal and therefore not subject to interpretation, modification, or variation. If it could be changed and improved, then it was not perfect or true to begin with. For Cicero, Ezra's written scroll has all the markings of human, fallible law. To a biblical Israelite like Ezra, on the other hand, the idea that a law can be divine not because God commanded it but just because it is rational would sound like gibberish, if not blasphemy.

These two world views could be kept separate for only so long. With Alexander the Great's conquest of the Middle East, Hellenism penetrated into every crevice of the empire. Alexander may not have discussed the nature of God and divine law during his storied meeting with the Jewish high priest as he passed through Judea, but the subject was discussed in Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Rome over the next centuries. How might a committed, Bible-loving Jew react to the Stoic's definition of divine law?

During the early 1st century C.E., the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria reconciled his Hellenistic world view with the Bible by boldly retrofitting biblical law to conform to the standards of Greek divine law. Philo answered that the Torah is divine law precisely because its statutes are eternal expressions of the law of nature. While the Bible, for the most part, commanded the laws to Israel alone, Philo predicted a day when Israel's law would become the universal law of a single world polity. This law preceded Sinai; even Abraham observed the law, not because he was commanded by God but because the law was ingrained in his natural constitution.

Ironically, Philo's defense of Torah as natural law opened a path toward dispensing with it altogether.

In a famous midrash, God throws truth to the ground to sway His own judgement.

If one could access and internalize the laws of nature directly as Abraham did, then what need was there for the external rituals? Paul's answer to Professor Hayes's question is that divine law certainly *isn't* the Torah. Mosaic law was a temporary set of rules promulgated at Sinai in order to keep the sinful Jews in check until Jesus's redemption by faith.

Finally, Rabbi Joshua exclaims, "The Torah is not in heaven!" Divine law is not immutable natural law. It *was* given from heaven at Sinai, but it is now the possession of the sages to interpret as they best see fit.

A less confident moderator might not have the courage or talent to keep such a symposium of strong, clashing voices under control, but Hayes keeps the discussion proceeding civilly and productively in *What's Divine about Divine Law?* She sets up Philo and Paul as polar opposites who both accept the Greek dichotomy between human and divine law and pull the Torah to one extreme or the other.

For Hayes, however, these and other writers in the Second Temple period serve as foils for rabbis such as Rabbi Joshua. The authors of the Talmud and *midrashim* inherited Ezra's definition of divine law and affirm the authority of the Torah on account of its being commanded by God. They were aware of claims like Cicero's that divine law must conform to reason, but they took the bold step of acknowledging the Greek canons of reason and rationality while subsuming them within a system of law based on God's will.

Thus, the rabbis derive hundreds of laws from biblical verses through a fortiori, or *kal va-chomer*, reasoning and other modes of Greco-Roman rhetoric. More generally, in classical midrash, human rational interpretation is presupposed as a necessary ingredient for unpacking the meaning of scripture, since it is addressed to a thoughtful, logical reader. Nevertheless, Hayes demonstrates that, according to the rabbis, Torah law need not always conform to logic because divine fiat ultimately trumps human reason.

Divine law, for the rabbis, then, incorporates rational logic, but need not answer to it. In fact, Hayes shows that the rabbis defined truth, *emet*, not in the Platonic sense of a universal static fact, but rather as an affirmation of trustworthiness, sincerity, and, in legal contexts, procedural validity. They viewed scripture as a legal code of divine origin that was nevertheless flexible, multilayered, and subject to interpretation. Various *midrashim* describe the Sinai experience as a revelation that provided the basis for 49 ways to reason for one ruling and an equal number of ways to argue for its opposite. Thus, the famous formulations: "These and those are the words of the living God," and "There are 70 facets to the Torah."

It is true that the Talmud accepts the concept of a single correct ruling, or *din*. However, Hayes shows that even in these cases, the Talmud feels free to declare that the normative ruling must, on occasion, deviate from the formal truth. Thus, in some halakhic texts, the value of peace outweighs that of truth so that a compromise settlement between two parties is preferred over a ruling based on strict justice. Other talmudic texts distinguish between the theoretically correct law (*shurat ha-din*) and the superior operative ruling (*lifnim mi-shurat ha-din*) that will engender a better outcome.

In one famous midrash, God throws truth to the ground in order to sway His judgment toward mercy so that He can forgive humankind for its sins and allow the world to survive. As Hayes observes, "The divorce of law and truth is not in itself remarkable"; after all no one imagines that the rules of a legal system express metaphysical truths. But "[w]hat *is* remarkable is that the Rabbis divorce truth from *divine* law, not human law." And yet she argues that it is really surprising only if one adopts Cicero's definition and those within the classical natural law tradition.

Some groups in Jewish antiquity did express more or less this kind of outrage over the rabbinic and Pharisaic willingness to divorce law from reason and mind-independent reality. The Greeks and the Qumran sect tend toward realism, while the Rabbis tend toward the nominalist position that some legal categories and definitions exist only in the minds of jurists and can incorporate subjective intentions and legal fictions. For example, the Qumran scrolls describe a solar calendar of 364 days in which each holiday always occurs on the same day of the week every year without change or need for human calculation. One scroll warns the members of the sect not to "make their times earlier nor postpone any of their holidays." The Rabbis, in stark contrast, legislate a lunisolar calendar requiring witnesses to testify to each new moon and a court to continually intercalate months and declare when the holidays would fall. In one well-known story, Rabban Gamaliel the Patriarch declares the new moon on the wrong day. He then pressures Rabbi Joshua to accept his legal authority to do so, even to the point of violating the day they all know to be the astronomically correct date for Yom Kippur. After some anguish and deliberation with his colleagues, Rabbi Joshua accepts Rabban Gamaliel's calendar along with the nominalist lesson that rabbinic authority trumps natural truth because God grants humans the right to legislate divine law.

One way that Hayes shows how various conceptions of divine law play out in different historical

periods is by carefully tracing the development of the laws of conversion to Judaism. The Pentateuch allows for the possibility of foreigners joining the Israelite nation through circumcision and marriage. Ezra, the priest and scribe, however, requires that "holy seed" never become intermingled with foreign seed. This requirement of genealogical purity is picked up by the Qumran sect in the Second Temple period and coincides with its view that Torah law must map onto natural reality. The Talmud, continuing the earlier tradition, accepts the possibility of conversion, and some rabbis offer a legal fiction to explain conversion as being newly reborn as a Jew. For these rabbis, even something as essential as Jewish genealogical identity is decided by a human court without recourse to heaven or nature.

Although the legal fiction that a convert is a newborn has enough force to sever his or her family relationships for some legal purposes (for instance, inheritance or testimony as a witness), Hayes notes that it "does not take hold completely, for rabbinic law is cognizant of the convert's foreign origin" in that a convert cannot, for instance, marry a priest. One's non-Jewish origins are not entirely erased and remain a factor in determining class status.

Indeed, the Mishnah rules that converts may not recite "God of our fathers" in their prayers. However, Rabbi Yehudah in the Yerushalmi disputes this since Abraham was the father of all nations. On this point, Hayes writes, "R. Yehudah . . . shows his notion of lineage to be statutory and nominalist, rather than realist." Although Hayes is undoubtedly right and generally illuminating on the nominalism of the Rabbis, this is probably an overstatement, since Rabbi Yehudah seems to be basing his ruling on the simple historical claim that Abraham was indeed the father of the nations.

In one of the most fascinating insights of her book, Hayes demonstrates that the Rabbis were keenly aware of the realist criticism directed at their nominalist views. One poignant example that illustrates her point involves a woman whose husband leaves on a trip and does not return. A reliable report comes back that he has died, and a court accepts the testimony, allowing her to remarry. One day, the first husband returns alive and well, making her an adulterer with the second man, whom she must now leave, and rendering their children illegitimate *mamzerim*. To add insult to injury, the Mishnah forbids her from remaining married to her first husband now that she has been with another man. In order to resolve this woman's tragic situation, the 3rd-century Babylonian sage Rav proposed a bold legal fiction quoted in the Talmud Yerushalmi:

> Rav Nahman bar Jacob said in the name of Rav: "If she married based on two witnesses [who testified that her first husband was dead], then even if he returns, we say to him, 'You are not him.'"
> Rabbi Samuel the son of Rav Isaac queried: "Ask yourself, what if he is a specifically known person like Imi?"
> Rabbi Yose the son of Rabbi Bon responded: "Are there not many people who resemble Rabbi Imi?"
> Such a case came before the rabbis there [in Babylonia]. They told him, "You are not him." Aba the son of Aba arose and whispered to him in his ear; he told him, "By your life, give her a divorce document just in case." The students of Rav arose and hit [Aba the son of Aba] . . . Such a case came before Rabbi Imi. He [Rabbi Imi] told him [the second husband], "Indeed it is clear that she is permitted to you. However, you should know that your children are *mamzerim* before Heaven." Rabbi Zeira praised him that he upheld the matter with clarity.

Rabbi Imi's formulation of Rav's law reveals his assimilation of the Stoic categories of human versus divine law. Every line of the Yerushalmi tussles with the tension between a realistic acknowledgement of the first husband's return and Rav's nominalist legal fiction, which conveniently ignores him. The Bavli, however, describes the sages of Israel laughing at Rav's opinion: "In the West, they mocked him, saying, 'The man came and stands here, and you say there is no requirement to divorce [the second husband]!'" Hayes insightfully analyzes this as an indication that the Rabbis were aware of the realist critique. While she admits that one can point to some talmudic statements that assume a Greek notion of truth and divine law, nevertheless, she shows that the vast majority of the rabbinic corpus is comfortable with the biblical notion of law as divine will that incorporates human involvement.

A mosaic, ca. 5th century C.E., discovered in a synagogue in Huqoq, Israel, depicts a meeting between, possibly, Alexander the Great and a Jewish high priest.

Far from being universal, unchanging, and true, God authorizes and takes pride in the human endeavor to augment, amend, and sometimes even to correct His law. One midrash has Moses arguing with a repentant God over His biblical threat to visit the guilt of parents upon their children. This is an extreme example, but there are hundreds of times when the Rabbis self-consciously legislate enactments, safeguards, modifications, and interpretations that serve to uproot, limit, and redirect the biblical law. As Hayes writes, "for the most part rabbinic sources represent divine law as responsive to the shifting conditions of human existence, and humans as active participants in its ongoing evolution." She elegantly explains that the Rabbis "constructed a portrait of divine law whose very divinity was enhanced rather than impugned by its divorce from truth, its particular and arbitrary character, and its susceptibility to moral critique and modification."

Although Hayes claims to provide only a descriptive historical analysis, her framework also offers prescriptive wisdom for contemporary approaches to law. *What's Divine About Divine Law?* invites readers to rethink their relationship to whatever legal system they subscribe to, be it religious or secular. She quotes legal thinker Robert Cover's influential essay "Nomos and Narrative," which argues that law springs forth from a normative world of "history and destiny, beginning and end, explanation and purpose." Applying this to the framework of biblical law, Hayes writes,

> Insofar as biblical law is grounded in the nation's story about itself—a story that encompasses past historical experience and future aspirations, and employs narrative techniques to mold and shape character—it may be described as teleological and aspirational. . . . [I]ts addressees and ideal human type are members of a covenant community whose *historical encounter* with a divine sovereign underwrites its continuing fidelity to his *will* for the formation and preservation of a holy, just, and *wise* community.

The italics, which are in the original, highlight the elements of historical narrative, divine will, and sensible reason that combine to create a normative world. Hayes's encyclopedic and nuanced study shows how this biblical model was distorted by Second Temple Jewish writers who accepted a Greek dichotomy of divine versus human law. The biblical vision, however, found continuity in the Talmud, only to be cross-bred again with Hellenistic notions of divine law by later philosophers, kabbalists, and halakhists—though this last medieval and modern development is not really part of her story.

Hayes's conclusion that the Rabbis were the primary inheritors of the biblical notion of divine law will be certain to provoke many scholars of classical Judaism who take for granted that the Rabbis moved farther away from biblical religion than did other Second Temple groups. The common assumption is that in their struggle to create a version of Judaism that would help them survive the trauma of loss of the Temple, the Rabbis turned to various forms of midrash to radically reinterpret the Bible, while incorporating at least some Greek terms and notions. The Qumran sect and others, by contrast, eschewed Greek and explicitly Hellenistic ideas and insisted upon a more literal interpretation of biblical law. Yet Hayes convincingly shows that although the Rabbis often deviate from biblical law in its details, their fundamental understanding of the divinity of Torah law directly continues that of the Bible itself. Conversely, the avoidance of Greek words in the Qumran scrolls only masks their own thoroughly Hellenized approach to divine law as a permanent natural order. In fact, the rabbinic willingness to modify the Torah's laws follows from precisely the biblical understanding of law as the expression of a divine will that can change, and, in any case, must be interpreted.

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In the City of Killing

BY MARK MAZOWER

Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History
by Steven J. Zipperstein
Liveright Publishing, 288 pp., $27.95

When in late May 1903 Prince Sergey Urusov learned he was to be appointed governor of Bessarabia, a province in the far southwest of the Russian empire, on the border with Romania, he knew—or so he wrote later—as little about the region as he did "of New Zealand or even less." One thing he did know was that there had been anti-Jewish riots there, in the city of Kishinev, the previous month; the governor had been dismissed and Urusov was being sent in to clean up the mess. Around the world, the affair had made headlines and the imperial government was keen to see calm restored.

The basic facts were already well known. On the afternoon of April 19, Easter Sunday, after church services had ended, gangs of youths had begun picking on Jewish homes and shops. Amid shouts of "Kill the Jews!" they had gone on a two-day rampage that ended with 49 people dead, many women raped, hundreds injured, and much destruction of property. The local police failed to intervene, and the bloodletting and violence were only brought to an end when troops finally began to patrol the streets and make arrests.

Although there had been a wave of anti-Jewish violence following the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, such an event was still unusual and shocking. Indeed, the casualty toll at Kishinev in one day exceeded the number of dead in the more than 200 pogroms that erupted across the empire in 1881–1882. It was Kishinev that popularized a Russian word—*pogrom*—and made it common currency in English. When a translation of Urusov's memoirs was published in America in 1908, the editor helpfully cited a recent entry from Murray's *New English Dictionary*: "Pogrom. Devastation. Destruction. An organized massacre in Russia for the destruction or annihilation of any body or class, chiefly applied to those directed against the Jews."

Organized by whom was the question asked from the start. For some the finger pointed directly to the highest levels of the Russian government, and in particular to the known Judeophobe Minister of Interior Vyacheslav Plehve. *The Times* (of London) published a leaked letter that appeared to show the minister himself had directed Governor von Raaben, Urusov's predecessor, not to obstruct the rioters. The Russian ambassador in Washington suggested by way of alternative that the problem was one of class hatred—the peasants were poor, and moneylenders tended to be Jewish—so that what looked like a religious animosity was, in fact, economic in its origin. Nevertheless, the fault—so far as the ambassador and many other Russian conservatives were concerned—lay with the Jews themselves for their purported economic exploitation of the peasants in the countryside. Some Russian anti-Semites even believed the Jews had instigated the pogrom deliberately in order to bring international embarrassment to Russia.

Zipperstein draws upon the diary of Michael Davitt, a one-armed Irish journalist whose extraordinary life included republican gunrunning before he was sent to Russia by Hearst.

None of these explanations really work. Although Plehve's animosity against the Jews was well known, the letter was a forgery, almost certainly composed by enemies of his who believed it corresponded to his sentiments. Urusov himself was convinced from the start that, much as he detested Plehve, the cause of the troubles lay elsewhere. Anti-Semitism, whether economic in origin or religious, was clearly a factor, but since it was endemic across the empire, it could hardly explain why the violence erupted when and where it did. Easter had always been a sensitive time, but many Easters had come and gone with no trouble, and this was the first to cause such bloodshed.

The story of the Kishinev pogrom is a useful reminder that fake news, conspiracy theories, and rumor-mongering did not begin with the rise of Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube. Indeed, the era of the pogrom was, as the distinguished historian of Russian Jewry Steven Zipperstein emphasizes, in some ways where all this began. The pogrom itself originated in a rumor, widely disseminated and believed around Kishinev that Easter, that the imperial authorities had given permission for several days of uninterrupted violence against the Jews. Peasants had actually made their way into the town in that belief, though it should be noted that most of the rioters appear to have been townspeople. And many believed another rumor that Jews had ritually murdered a Christian in a nearby town a few days earlier.

A street in the Jewish quarter of Kishinev, ca. 1900. (Courtesy of Yad Vashem Photo Archive, Jerusalem.)

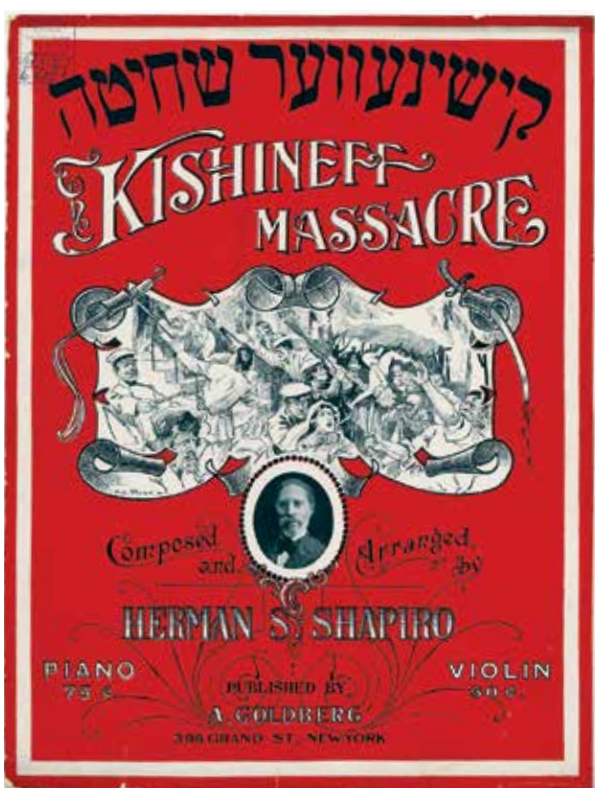
The forged Plehve letter helped spread the mistaken view worldwide that the pogrom's instigators were to be found at the apex of the imperial regime. More significantly, there was another forgery that came to light in those days, carried in the newspaper of one of Kishinev's most notorious Jew-baiters, Pavel Krushevan, that claimed to reveal the truth about the Jewish bid for world domination: Yes, as Zipperstein shows, drawing upon the research of Italian linguist Cesare De Michelis and others, the first version of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* seems to have sprung directly out of the ideological ferment that followed the 1903 pogrom.

About the 1903 pogrom's wider significance there can be little doubt. Although Kishinev was soon to be dwarfed by the anti-Jewish violence that erupted amid the revolution in 1905–1906 and again, on an even larger and bloodier scale, in the aftermath of war in 1918–1919, it was a major event in its day and one that became both an abiding stain on the reputation of tsarist Russia and a collective trauma in the modern Jewish consciousness. It is not surprising that the whole tragic story should have attracted Zipperstein's attention. A professor at Stanford University, whose writings include books on the Jews of Odessa and a biography of Ahad Ha-Am, Zipperstein is ideally suited to explore the history of the Kishinev pogrom. Equally at home in Russian, Hebrew, and Yiddish,

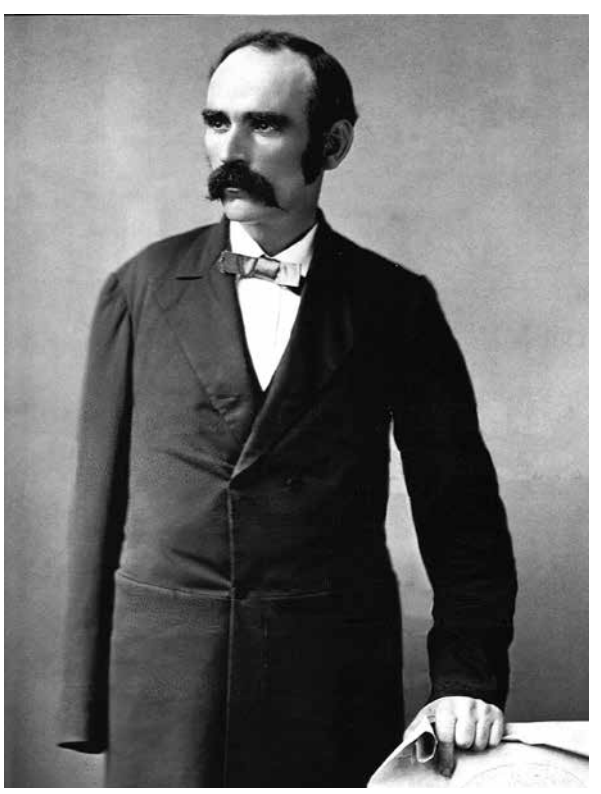
he is able to explore the event from all sides. Since the pioneering work of his teacher Hans Rogger and John Klier, there has been a sustained debate among professional historians about the nature of the mass violence that erupted through the pogroms, and Zipperstein's book is enriched by this discussion and builds upon it.

"On the surface Bessarabia seemed quite beautifully sylvan, a land of rolling hills and pastures full of grazing sheep, wooded in its north, with fewer trees in the south." Thus begins Zipperstein's pen portrait of Bessarabia, a former Ottoman province relatively recently incorporated into the empire and a large agrarian society increasingly connected to the global wheat trade, positioned strategically between the granary of Ukraine and the boom port of Odessa. As for the city at the heart of this story: "by the early twentieth century, Kishinev had grown into a prosperous, commercial entrepôt, its vibrancy the product of the region's agricultural bounty, a lively black market, and a superb mayor who bludgeoned local businessmen to contribute to the city's improvement." While always in Odessa's shadow, Kishinev was growing rapidly, and, as in other cities, it was home to a large and expanding Jewish population. This was itself only part of a larger and immensely polyglot society: Urusov's waiting room was filled with petitioners speaking 10 languages. Yet despite this heterogeneity—little of which, it must be said, has made its way into the pogrom discussion (which generally presents a world bifurcated into Jews and Orthodox Russians)—Bessarabia did not have a history of unusual ethnic violence and indeed had remained unscathed in the early 1880s. This was a frontier society in which the imperial state was strained to provide effective administration. The grand buildings in the new part of town and fine central boulevard could not hide the poverty down by the river—more like a brook—that trickled through the town.

Where the etiology of the pogrom is concerned, Zipperstein follows in the path forged by Rogger and Klier. Dispensing with the old myth that this had been ordered from above is a key task and easily done. Urusov and others had made it quite clear at the time that the problem did not lie there. Rather, the violence was whipped up by local elites, town boosters like the journalist Pavel Krushevan, who combined work as a Kishinev publicist with intense anti-Semitism that he propagated in his newspapers. Alongside Krushevan was a wealthy contractor in the construction business named Georgi Pronin, a magistrate, a doctor, and a few workers. These activists had used the fake news of the supposed ritual murder in nearby Dubossary and distributed leaflets and circulars in the town's taverns and cafes, and later passed around weapons such as axes and iron bars, as well—men in the construction business were always valuable from this point of view.



Kishinev Massacre Elegy ***by Herman S. Shapiro, published in 1904. The illustration depicts the April 1903 pogrom. (Irene Heskes Collection, Library of Congress.)***



Photograph of Michael Davitt by Napoleon Sarony, New York City, ca. 1882. (The Library of Congress.)

If we return to Urusov, we see other less-tangible factors invoked as well, less dramatic perhaps than the figures of the culpable but equally important in understanding what happened. As an operator within the bureaucracy and a connoisseur of its workings, the governor remains a superb guide to the way Russian rule itself prompted events that caused the regime deep embarrassment. He notes the lack of resources available in the event of a breakdown of public order and the fact that both policemen and local troops were unreliable. The police in particular had a special animosity toward the Jewish population, in part because the special legislation surrounding Jews was almost impossible to enforce and constituted an immense burden on their time. In addition, there was what amounted almost to a local tradition of what Urusov called "Jew-baiting" within the provincial administration that normally expressed itself in demands for money but could, on occasion, emerge as a kind of tolerance for rioters.

But the Russian dimension is not Zipperstein's sole focus. He is also concerned with tracing the pogrom's reverberations among the Jews, reverberations which, as he rightly emphasizes, were international in their scope. He shows its enormous impact upon Zionist thought, thanks in no small measure to Ahad Ha-Am's emissary to the town, the 30-year-old poet Chaim Nachman Bialik, whose extraordinary on-the-spot investigation in the immediate aftermath of the pogrom resulted not only in five notebooks of eyewitness testimonies (in Yiddish) but also in his great Hebrew poem "In the City of Killing," which Zipperstein describes as "the finest—certainly the most influential—Jewish poem written since medieval times."

But there were other investigators too whose work left more lasting traces than that of the tsarist police. One was Michael Davitt, a one-armed Irish journalist whose extraordinary life included republican gunrunning, a stint in solitary confinement in Dartmoor, and pro-Boer activism during the war in South Africa before he was sent to Russia by William Randolph Hearst, producing a series of hard-hitting articles on the Kishinev pogrom, along with a revealing diary that Zipperstein also draws upon. Another was the remarkable Anna Strunsky. She was a young Jewish emigrant to the United States from Russia who had become a socialist and travelled back to Russia in the aftermath of the 1905 revolution with her partner, William English Walling. What makes Strunsky and Walling important is less their journalistic work on the plight of the Jews in Russia and more the connections they drew between the pogroms and ethnic violence in the United States. When race riots broke out in Springfield, Illinois in August 1908, the first to target African Americans in the North in half a century, the parallel with what they had seen in Russia immediately occurred to them. One of the outcomes was the formation in their New York apartment, a year later, of the NAACP.

Despite the work Zipperstein has done in the archives, *Pogrom* is less a new interpretation of Kishinev than a narrative account together with a probing but incomplete analysis of its larger significance. Its achievement is to make connections that have not been made previously or are still too rarely made and to do so in an accessible, sometimes elegant way. There is one inexplicable omission, however, and that is the absence of any real treatment of the pogroms and the Russian left, the Russian Jewish left, and the Bund in particular. Zipperstein writes that "the Bund's keen preoccupation with the pogrom was silenced by its insistence on its internationalism." But, in fact, not only did Bundist publications extensively discuss Kishinev, the pogrom contributed to an animated argument about the place of violence in the revolutionary movement, and in short order to the formation of armed self-defense units. As Zipperstein later mentions, these units played an important part in minimizing the bloodshed a few months later when another pogrom erupted in the town of Gomel. If not quite a comprehensive account of Kishinev and its aftermath, then, *Pogrom* is a wide-ranging survey by a major historian of one of the defining events of modern Jewish history.

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Child of Occupation

BY LIAM HOARE

Pedigree: A Memoir
by Patrick Modiano, translated by Mark Polizzotti
Yale University Press, 144 pp., $15

The Occupation Trilogy: La Place de l'Étoile, The Night Watch, Ring Roads
by Patrick Modiano, translated by Caroline Hillier, Patricia Wolf, and Frank Wynne
Bloomsbury USA, 352 pp., $18

Dora Bruder
by Patrick Modiano, translated by Joanna Kilmartin
University of California Press, 128 pp., $19.95

When the French novelist Patrick Modiano was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2014, he was invested "for the art of memory with which he has evoked the most ungraspable human destinies and uncovered the life-world of the occupation." Born in Paris on July 30, 1945—two months after the Second World War ended in Europe and a little under a year after the French capital was liberated—the author of uncomfortable, penetrating novellas such as *La Place de l'Étoile*, *The Night Watch*, and *Dora Bruder* has dedicated a good part of his literary life to inhabiting the French experience of Nazi German occupation and themes of collaboration and resistance.

"Like everyone else born in 1945, I was a child of the war and more precisely, because I was born in Paris, a child who owed his birth to the Paris of the occupation," Modiano remarked in his Nobel lecture. Those who lived through the occupation fought to forget it, such that "when their children asked them questions about that period and that Paris, their answers were evasive. Or else they remained silent as if they wanted to rub out those dark years from their memory and keep something hidden from us. But faced with the silence of our parents we worked it all out as if we had lived it ourselves."

As a novelist Modiano is somewhere between a provocateur and a detective, working the war years out for himself. The often-wild prose style of his earliest novellas, *La Place de l'Étoile* and *The Night Watch*, certainly feels like an effort to needle the French reading public, published as they were in the late 1960s. Consider not only that France was undergoing a period of political and social tumult but that the country was very much fortified behind its national myth of mass resistance. As Tony Judt wrote in *Postwar*, the notion of French responsibility for Jewish suffering simply wasn't part of the national conversation at the time.

Modiano's debut protagonist in *La Place de l'Étoile*, Raphäel Schlemilovitch (literally the son of a schlemiel), is the most unreliable of unreliable narrators, whose hallucinogenic ramblings often parody the ways in which Jews were portrayed in prewar anti-Semitic French literature. "I resolve to become a Jewish collaborator," he says at one point. "I am the only Jew, the 'good Jew' of the Collaborationist movement." Every anti-Semite, Schlemilovitch ponders, has a "good Jew." He even gives advice to the author of an anti-Semitic column. "I've always thought that goys are like bulls in a china shop when it comes to understanding Jews," he says. "Even their anti-Semitism is cack-handed."

In constructing his memoir, in bringing his parents back to life, Modiano blurs the distinction between his novellas and autobiography.

Patrick Modiano delivers his Nobel lecture at the Swedish Academy in Stockholm, after receiving the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature. (Photo by Anders Wiklund/AFP/Getty Images.)

In a Rothian scene, Schlemilovitch reveals himself to have been the lover of Eva Braun since 1935. "I am skulking around the Berghof when I meet Eva for the first time. The instant attraction is mutual." Hitler, we learn, has gracefully accepted Schlemilovitch's position as Braun's consort. "In the evenings, he tells us about his plans. We listen, like two children." Schlemilovitch has even been given the position of honorary SS Brigadeführer. "I should dig out the photo on which Eva wrote, '*Für mein kleiner Jude, mein gelibter Schlemilovitch—Seine Eva.*'" I am, he says, the official Jew of the Third Reich. *La Place de l'Étoile*, whose title is taken from the traffic circle or star at the Arc de Triomphe, but also bitterly evokes the star Jews were made to wear in occupied France, forced French readers to confront their own anti-Semitism.

In his early novellas, Modiano was a sensationalist, excoriating his readers. He was especially adept at parroting the sneering anti-Semitism prevalent in polite society. The assorted characters of *Ring Roads*, who ride out the war in bacchanalian splendor, complain about those "bastards" who are able to live it up, supposedly, on the south coast of France. "I've just come back from Nice," one of them remarks. "Not a single human face. Nothing but Blochs and Hirschfelds. It makes you sick . . ." Another explains the rules of a game he calls Jewish tennis. From what the narrator is able to gather:

> [I]t was a game for two players and could be played while strolling, or sitting outside a cafe. The first to spot a Jew, called out. Fifteen love. If his opponent should spot one, the score was fifteen-all. And so on. The winner was the one who notched up the most Jews. Points were calculated as they were in tennis. Nothing like it . . . for sharpening the reflexes of the French.
> "Believe it or not," he added dreamily, "I don't even need to see THEIR faces. I can recognize THEM from behind! I swear!"

But hidden in those explosive novellas is a desire for answers, a quest for understanding, perhaps even a search for identity, all of which becomes clearer as his writing matures and his methodical qualities rise to the surface.

The impetus for Modiano's 1997 novella *Dora Bruder* came when he was perusing an old copy of the periodical *Paris-soir* from December 31, 1941 and saw a notice for a missing girl. It contained her name and age (15), a description including of her dress (maroon pullover, navy-blue skirt), and an address in Paris. The book is his attempt to reconstruct this little girl lost.

Over the course of his investigation, Modiano discovered that Dora was rounded up in June 1942, moved to Drancy transit camp in August, and then deported to Auschwitz in September to be murdered. "Ever since," Modiano writes, "the Paris wherein I have tried to retrace her steps has remained . . . silent and deserted . . . I walk through empty streets. . . . I think of her in spite of myself, sensing an echo of her presence in this neighborhood or that." *Dora Bruder*

is a truly brilliant novella. It possesses an emotional clarity that simply isn't present in his earliest work.

La Place de l'Étoile and *The Night Watch* vibrate with youthful urgency; they read like wretched, sweaty fever dreams. By the time Modiano published his third novella, *Ring Roads*, in 1972, the heat had come off his prose. These three works were recently retranslated and published as *The Occupation Trilogy*. In his preface to the volume, the Scottish novelist William Boyd observes Modiano's "noticeably shorter sentences" and the "clipped objectivity" in his novella about a son's search for his missing Jewish father, who has attempted to dissolve into a community of debauched internal exiles:

> We should get away from this place as quickly as possible. But where would we go? People like you and me are likely to be arrested on any street corner. Not a day goes by without police round-ups at train stations, cinemas and restaurants. Above all, avoid public places. Paris is like a great dark forest, filled with traps. We grope our way blindly.

Modiano's narrator protests that he is writing, not because it is of interest to him, but because if he didn't do it, no one else would. "It is my duty, since I knew them," he says of the characters in *Ring Roads*, "to drag them—if only for an instant—from the darkness. It is a duty, but for me it is also a necessary thing." He focuses on misfits, on outsiders, "so that, through them, I can catch the fleeting image of my father. About him, I know almost nothing. But I will think something up."

"I will not trouble you with my own personal story, but I do think that certain episodes from my childhood planted the seed that would become my books later on," Modiano said in his Nobel lecture. Indeed, the keys to unlocking Modiano are to be found between the covers of his memoir, *Pedigree*.

> I was born . . . to a Jewish man and a Flemish woman who had met in Paris under the Occupation. I write "Jewish" without really knowing what the word meant to my father, and because at the time it was what appeared on the identity papers. Periods of great turbulence often lead to rash encounters, with the result that I've never felt like a legitimate son, much less an heir.

The pedigree of the book's title refers to Modiano's feelings of social inadequacy. "My mother and father didn't belong to any particular milieu. So aimless were they, so unsettled, that I am straining to find a few markers, a few beacons in this quicksand, as one might attempt to fill in with half-smudged letters a census form or administrative questionnaire."

In constructing his memoir, in bringing his parents back to life, Modiano blurs the distinction between his novellas and autobiography. As in *Dora Bruder*, he comes across not so much as an autobiographer but as a reporter, a historian, perhaps

Paris during the occupation was a silent city, where people disappeared and nothing was ever spelled out or made clear.

even a coroner. He builds his story, his case, forensically and deliberately, even dispassionately, out of the little evidence he has. *Pedigree* overflows with names of friends, family members, and associates that substitute for documents, memories, and heirlooms. No space is given to reflection or contemplation. Details are provided but not in order to elicit emotions, sympathetic or otherwise.

Jewish women washing laundry in the Drancy transit camp, near Paris, in German-occupied France, while detained there prior to being deported to Nazi concentration camps during World War II, ca. 1942. (Rue des Archives/ GRANGER.)

Indeed, the key moment of Modiano's childhood is the one he devotes the least time to in *Pedigree*. "In February 1957, I lost my brother," he recounts matter-of-factly. His father and uncle had come to collect him from boarding school, and, on the road to Paris, "[i]n the car, my father told me that my brother had died. . . . I will never forget the look on his face, that Sunday." Apart from the death of his brother, "I don't believe that anything I'll relate here truly matters to me." Many of Modiano's books are dedicated *For Rudy*.

In the end, Modiano's style and methods create a certain distance between the author and his life, as if he were writing about a childhood not quite his own, giving *Pedigree* a haunting objectivity. As he describes it, "I lived through the events I'm recounting . . . as if against a transparency—like in a cinematic process shot, when landscapes slide by in the background while the actors stand in place on a soundstage."

His mother, Louisa, was an actress from Antwerp, Belgium. Throughout his childhood, she toured, and her absence marked the young Modiano. "I can't recall a single act of genuine warmth or protectiveness from her," he recalls. "Her sudden flares of temper upset me deeply, and since I went to catechism, I prayed for God to forgive her." When the work dried up, she was destitute, reduced to petty theft. Modiano remembers having to ask his father for money on his mother's behalf. "On certain days, I brought nothing home, which provoked furious outbursts from her."

> [N]othing softened the coldness and hostility she had always shown me. I was never able to confide in her or ask her for help of any kind. Sometimes, like a mutt with no pedigree that has too often been left on its own, I feel the childish urge to set down in black and white just what she put me through, with her insensitivity and heartlessness. I keep it to myself. And I forgive her.

It is Modiano's father, however, who haunts his work. Born in Paris, Patrick's father, Albert, was originally from Thessaloniki and belonged to a Jewish family from Tuscany, although relatives were scattered to points that ranged between London and Alexandria, Milan and Budapest. "Four of my father's cousins . . . would be murdered by the SS in Italy, in Arona, on Lake Maggiore, in September 1943," Modiano notes.

During the war, his father did not register with the authorities as a Jew. The police picked him up once in February 1942 and on another occasion in the winter of 1943, when he was denounced by someone close to him, but he somehow managed to survive. He earned a living in the black-market world of grift and barter. His parents, Modiano writes, were "two lost, heedless butterflies in the midst of an indifferent city." The underworld in which they resided was "the soil—or the dung—from which I emerged."

After the war, Albert would move around a lot: Canada, Guyana, Equatorial Africa, and Colombia, "searching for El Dorado, in vain." His son remained in France, living the life of an unwanted boarding-school child. "I wonder," Modiano writes, "whether he wasn't also trying to flee the Occupation years. He never told me what he had felt, deep inside, in Paris during that period. Fear? The strange sensation of being hunted simply because someone had classified him as a specific type of prey, when he himself didn't really know what he was?"

When he was 13, Modiano and his father went to see a documentary on the Nuremberg trials, the first time Modiano saw images of the extermination camps. "Something changed for me that day. And what did my father think? We never talked about it, not even as we left the cinema." Throughout his career, Modiano has tried to understand—or at least depict and realize—people like his father. They are Modiano's Thénardiers, beggars at the feast in occupied Paris, getting by however they can, regardless of the moral implications of their actions. Modiano's father broke off contact with him in 1966, when he was 21, just two years before he published *La Place de l'Étoile*.

In one of the hallucinations that make up *La Place de l'Étoile*, Schlemilovitch becomes part of the "white slave trade." Those who collaborate with

The last copy of French writer Patrick Modiano's* L'Herbe des Nuits *is snatched from the table at a Stockholm bookstore minutes after Modiano was declared the winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Literature, October 9, 2014. (Henrik Montgomery/AFP/Getty Images.)

the police and Gestapo in *The Night Watch* also have an air of debauchery about them. They reside on one of the "small islands in Paris where people tried to ignore 'the disaster lately occurred,' where a pre-war hedonism and frivolity festered."

The Night Watch's protagonist is torn between his work with the Gestapo and the Resistance, the life of a double or even triple agent. "My bosses were utterly disreputable . . . I had to provide for maman, who had little enough to live on. . . . You might think I have no principles. I started out as a pure and innocent soul. But innocence gets lost along the way." He describes himself as "a straw in the wind" who committed wrongs whether "through cowardice or inadvertence." He is somewhat conscious of his moral failings. "I looked at my reflection and saw the face of Philippe Pétain," the head of the collaborationist Vichy government.

> Cowards, apparently, always die a shameful death. The doctor used to tell me that when he is about to die, a man becomes a music box playing the melody that best describes his life, his character, his aspirations. . . . When your turn comes, *mon petit*, it will be the clang of a can clattering in the darkness across a patch of waste ground.

Paris during the years of occupation was a strange place, as Modiano remarked in his Nobel lecture. Superficially, life continued as it had before. Theater and cinema attendances were in fact much higher during the occupation than before it. But it was also a silent city, where people disappeared and nothing was ever spelled out or made clear. It was like living in a bad dream. "That is why for me, the Paris of the occupation was always a kind of primordial darkness," Modiano said. "Without it I would never have been born. That Paris never stopped haunting me, and my books are sometimes bathed in its veiled light."

Modiano is fastidious and obsessive as he summons up Paris in the pages of his novellas. On one page of *The Night Watch*, the reader approaches an "avenue lined with glittering street lights" that looks like a vision from the future, full of promise, only to discover it is the Champs-Élysées with its "cosmopolitan bars" and "call girls." There is the "bleak sadness of the Lido," the sleaziness of the Madeleine-Opéra district, the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli.

Few have written about France's capital as well as Modiano. His Paris is filthy, dirty, gritty, alive, and multitudinous. As deft as he is with the details—the smells, sights, and sounds—he is also adept at conveying its atmosphere, as in this passage from *Ring Roads*:

> Have you noticed, Baron, how quiet Paris is tonight? We glide along the empty boulevards. The trees shiver, their branches forming a protective vault above our heads. Here and there a lighted window. The owners have fled and have forgotten to turn off the lights. Later, I'll walk through this city and it will seem as empty to me as it does today. I will lose myself in the maze of streets, searching for your shadow. Until I become one with it.

Modiano began as a slaughterer of sacred cows in the raucous *La Place de l'Étoile*, but in the novels that followed, he employed memory and imagination to capture what the Nobel committee called "the life-world of the occupation," where suffering occurred underneath the banality of the everyday life, while collaborators resided in a kind of suspended opulence, built upon the misfortune of others.

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Strange Miracle

BY ALLAN ARKUSH

God's Country: Christian Zionism in America
by Samuel Goldman
University of Pennsylvania Press, 248 pp., $34.95

"It was the faith of the Jewish people that gathered the scattered fragments of a people and made them whole again; that took the language of the Bible and the landscape of the Psalms and made them live again." As the *Jerusalem Post* noted, U.S. Vice President Mike Pence took this and similar statements out of the books of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks and inserted them (in collaboration with Rabbi Sacks) into his impressive speech to the Knesset in January. If Pence had given this address a bit sooner, some of his own words would almost certainly have made their way into Samuel Goldman's new book, for the evangelical Christian vice president's affirmation of the Jews' return to the Land of Israel perfectly illustrates the phenomenon Goldman describes and underscores its continuing importance.

God's Country: Christian Zionism in America draws on several earlier studies to assist "readers who want to learn more about Christian Zionism but have little background in theology, history, or political theory—let alone all of these fields." Yet, as a political scientist, Goldman has a broader theoretical point to make as well: to provide an example of the contemporary persistence of political theology—"a way of thinking about the order and purpose of politics oriented by God's will."

The political theology in question is almost entirely Protestant. By the time of Augustine in the 4th century, the New Testament texts that would later serve as foundations for Christian Zionism had been relegated to "the margins of Christian thought." Only a few pages into his narrative, Goldman is already at Luther, though it was not Luther himself, or even Calvin, but Puritans inspired by the latter who first took Paul's assertion that in the end "all Israel shall be saved" to imply not just the Jews' ultimate recognition of Christ as the Messiah but their restoration to the Land of Israel. As eager as these Puritans were to identify the New England in which many of them were settling in the 17th century as a promised land, they never mistook it for *the* Promised Land. Indeed, Massachusetts clergyman John Cotton predicted that "a willing people among the gentiles" would "convey the Jewes into their owne Countrie, with Charets, and horses, and Dromedaries."

Neither Cotton nor any of his colleagues envisioned their own neighbors playing this role, but some of their spiritual descendants were ready to shoulder the responsibility. John Austin, a Yale-educated Presbyterian minister in New Jersey, moved in 1797 back "to New Haven, where he began preparations for the restoration of the Jews, buying ships and warehouses to convey them and their goods to Palestine." Austin seems to have been a bit deranged, but, as Goldman puts it, he nevertheless "made an impression on more balanced minds," including that of Elias Boudinot, a one-time president of the Continental Congress, a member of the first two U.S. Congresses, and the first president of the American Society for Meliorating the Condition of the Jews. The conversion of the Jews to Christianity was, in his eyes, essential, but his organization's "goal was also to help the people of Israel return physically to God's country."

"Niebuhr was a Christian Zionist, not just a Christian who supported Zionism."

U.S. Vice President Mike Pence and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visit the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial Museum, Jerusalem, January 23, 2018. (Photo by Alex Kolomoisky/POOL.)

The series of American Christian proto-Zionists who took their bearings from the letters of Paul, the biblical prophets, and the apocalyptic writings included, among others, a 19th-century NYU Bible professor and abolitionist by the name of George Bush, an ancestor of the two similarly named presidents. Bush believed that Christians should not be "waiting for a miracle" but "should concentrate on creating the political conditions for a Jewish return to the land" (after which, of course, their conversion would eventually follow).

It is not until the middle of his book that Goldman discusses the theologians widely and, as he shows, mistakenly believed to be the original forbears of Christian Zionism, the "premillennial dispensationalists." The foremost among them, the British clergyman John Nelson Darby (1800–1882), taught that the last seven years before Christ's return would witness "the territorial restoration of Israel, the establishment of a covenant between Israel and the Antichrist, the Antichrist's betrayal of that agreement and ensuing persecution of Israel, and finally the rescue of a pious remnant by the visibly returned Christ." While Darby himself kept his distance from Jews and had no interest in politics, some of his successors in this country fused dispensationalism with "more positive conceptions of American destiny" that involved responsibility for the status of the Jewish people. This brought them into contact with early American Zionists.

Of these, the most noteworthy was the dispensationalist theologian William Eugene Blackstone, who is best remembered for initiating the Blackstone Memorial, a petition that called upon President Benjamin Harrison to do for the Jews what Cyrus had performed for them in antiquity a full six years before the First Zionist Congress. As Goldman notes, however, the petition "includes no explicitly dispensationalist arguments" and is based mainly on "humanitarian considerations." Later, in the middle of World War I, Blackstone was encouraged by American Zionist leaders to revise the proposal for President Woodrow Wilson. It was endorsed by 81 prominent figures and a variety of church organizations. "The ecumenical character of the signatories," Goldman tells us, "reflects the fact that Christian Zionism was not then associated with apocalyptic expectations or conservative politics." Included among them were "theological and political liberals such as the Methodist bishop J. W. Bashford; F. M. North, president of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ; and YMCA leader John R. Mott."

Goldman's account of Christian Zionism between the Balfour Declaration and the establishment of the State of Israel highlights the extent to which Zionism won the support of theological liberals as well as conservatives, though he does not ignore the liberals who were critical of it. On the one hand, there was Adolf A. Berle, a professor of applied Christianity at Tufts University (and the father of A. A. Berle Jr., the FDR adviser), for whom Zionism seemed to herald "the new Messianic Kingdom," as well as an opportunity for the renovation of Judaism. On the other hand, there were clergymen like Harry Emerson Fosdick and John Haynes Holmes who believed that the Zionist project would lead to the usurpation of Arab rights unless it eschewed the idea of Jewish statehood.

The liberal Protestant figure to whom Goldman devotes the most attention is, of course, the great theologian Reinhold Niebuhr. Although Niebuhr "did not appeal to biblical prophecy in the same way as Blackstone," his pro-Zionist argument was "based on his theological commitments and aimed to weave contemporary events into the continuing story of God's covenant with Israel. Niebuhr was a Christian Zionist, not just a Christian who supported Zionism."

Niebuhr was not oblivious to the problems that had disturbed Fosdick and Holmes. He granted that the creation of a Jewish state would entail some measure of injustice to the Arabs of Palestine, but he argued that it "would be less serious than the consequences of denying a state to the Jews." The Jews needed a country of their own in order to survive as a nation, whereas the Palestinian Arabs, who "understood themselves as generic Arabs rather than a distinct people attached to a particular place," could exercise their national rights effectively enough in neighboring lands. Afflicted also by a "sense of shame" with respect to the Christian past, Niebuhr argued already in 1938 that the establishment of a Jewish state could serve as "'a partial expiation' for the vexed history of Jewish-Christian relations."

After the creation of the State of Israel, Niebuhr consistently defended it against both theological and political critics. In early 1957, he denounced the Eisenhower administration's harsh policy toward Israel after the Suez War. Writing in the *New Republic*, he spoke of Israel not only as a small and beleaguered nation but as a "'glorious spiritual and political achievement' that embodied Western civilization." Later, he emphasized, as Goldman puts it, that the United States and Israel "were yoked together in a providential task."

> Despite all the risks of combining politics with religion, "there is the strange miracle of the Jewish people, outliving the hazards of the diaspora for two millennia and finally offering their unique and valuable contributions to the common Western civilization, particularly in the final stage of its liberal society." In order to fulfill its role as defender of Western civilization, America was called to defend the "peculiar historical miracle" in the Middle East.

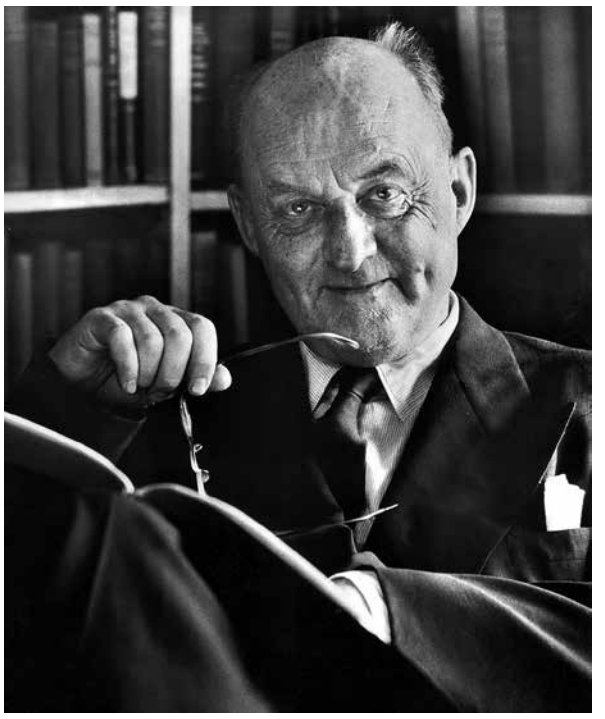
This is a far cry from "the politically conservative, prophetically inflected version of Christian Zionism" that is most in evidence today and to which Goldman devotes the last chapter of his book. His survey of recent Christian Zionist figures, such as Hal Lindsey, Jerry Falwell, and John Hagee, shows how thoroughly they have absorbed and adapted the eschatology of the previous century's premillennial dispensationalism. But as remote as they may be from Niebuhr's sober *Weltanschauung* and his liberalism, they arrive at a bottom line parallel to the one he drew. They believe, in Goldman's words, that American Christians

> should not hope to take Israel's place in God's affection. But they could bask in the reflected glory of Israel by acknowledging its chosenness. God Himself promised to bless those who blessed the Jews. So long as it supported Israel, America would enjoy more divine favor than it actually deserved. The catch was that America's relationship to God was conditional, unlike Israel's irrevocable covenant. If it became derelict in its duty, God would withdraw His support.

Interestingly, Goldman argues that in the case of Hagee and several others, this position was also partly motivated by their historical awareness of the Holocaust.

Goldman's review of the history of American Christian Zionism demonstrates striking continuity from the Puritan era to the present, with theologians of very different orientations reaffirming, century after century, the need for America to exert itself in support of the Jewish people. But what

John Cotton by John Smibert, ca. 1735.



Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, 1956. (Photo by Alfred Eisenstaedt/Pix Inc./The LIFE Picture Collection/ Getty Images.)

does Goldman himself think of them, the dispensationalists in particular? Clearly, he does not share their penchant for looking to the Bible for political guidance. He is, after all, only "a minimally observant Jew," and a rationalist who understands that premillennial dispensationalism is "flamboyantly irrational to secular eyes" and that this only "encourages the sensationalist treatment it often receives," not least in the liberal Jewish press.

After noting this, Goldman makes an interesting point. He writes that the determinism of the dispensationalists' political theology "shares an important quality with an avowedly atheist doctrine that emerged around the same time. Like Marx's philosophy of history, premillennial dispensationalism establishes a logic of transformation through catastrophe and suggests that the final stage is about to commence." But Goldman is not making this observation in order to rehabilitate the dispensationalists in the eyes of secular skeptics; he wishes only to show that their theology places them in a dilemma somewhat similar to the one faced by Marxists: In a world where all is determined, may one just wait for things to unfold as they necessarily will, or is there still a need to act?

For decades now, American Jews have reacted to dispensationalist supporters of Israel by holding debates about whether their help is worth having. Goldman, an admirer of the modern State of Israel, apparently has no doubts about this, but he does see the downside. If Christian Zionists' support for Israel is rooted in "unsettling eschatological visions," it is easy to see them "as a radical and potentially subversive influence on the United States, Israel, the Middle East, and the world." One of Goldman's aims, therefore, is to dispel the idea of any necessary connection between Christian Zionism and outlandish prognostications about the end times. Nonetheless, it remains the case that few of today's Christian Zionists are the heirs of Reinhold Niebuhr. As Goldman himself notes, after Israel's victory in the Six-Day War, mainline Protestant "intellectuals and clergy drifted away from Israel, which they increasingly regarded as an outpost of imperialism, colonialism, and other sins."

If contemporary Christian Zionists, however, are often inspired by strange apocalyptic imaginings, this has not moved American policy in irrational ways. As Goldman shows, no one has ever "demonstrated that these strategies diverted U.S. foreign policy far from its recent course." What they have done is helped to get out the vote for pro-Israel candidates. It is also important to note that "themes of covenant have become more prominent than prophecy in Christian Zionist appeals."

What is disturbing to supporters of Israel is that Christian Zionism may be losing support among young evangelicals. Goldman cites Christian Middle East activist Robert Nicholson's claim that "more and more American evangelicals are being educated to accept the pro-Palestinian narrative—on the basis of their Christian faith." Goldman himself takes this in stride. It would be premature, he says, to write Christian Zionism's obituary. It may be waning in the United States, but it seems to be growing elsewhere, in Brazil, for instance. But how many of the people who are alarmed by the trend Nicholson describes, and its political implications, are likely to be consoled by this news?

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Not of This World

BY AMY NEWMAN SMITH

Adam & Thomas
by Aharon Appelfeld, translated by Jeffrey M. Green
Triangle Square Books, 160 pp., $14.95

When the Israeli writer Aharon Appelfeld died in January, I had a copy of one of his books, *Adam & Thomas*, in the to-read stack on my nightstand. Published in English in 2015, his first book for young readers tells the story of two young boys, left in a forest in some unnamed corner of Europe by their respective mothers, both of whom have returned to the ghetto to find hiding places for their grandparents. Adam's father, a religious carpenter, and Thomas's father, a secular schoolteacher, have already disappeared in the labor brigades.

Appelfeld's prose is spare, built by stacking one economical sentence upon another. There is little to no exposition. The narrator knows no more than do the two boys themselves; consequently, young readers are left to puzzle out such things as "labor brigades" on their own. For an adult reader, the weight of the knowledge of what the two boys uncomprehendingly accept as reality is devastating, giving the slim volume a weight far beyond its pages. Adam's mother, leaving him alone in the forest, is reassuring:

> "Don't be afraid. You know our forest very well, and everything that's in it. Sit down under a tree, like that one with the round top, read the book by Jules Verne, or play jacks. The time will pass quickly."
> His mother hugged him and said, "I have to run. I'm going to hide your grandparents." She slipped out of his arms and set out.

She is as matter-of-fact as if she is leaving to run a quick errand, although many modern-day parents would be loath just to leave a nine-year-old alone in their own home, even with a cell phone.

In a 2011 interview with Israeli artist Shachaf Dekel, Appelfeld said, "Writing is a long process of remembrance. It's not a matter of memory, but rather a slow remembrance. From within, you draw childhood visions: tiny, glowing details that illuminated your life when you were a child." *Adam & Thomas* unfolds in exactly that fashion, one tiny detail leading to the next—an injured man fleeing unseen pursuers below a treetop nest the two boys have built, a discarded sheepskin cloak that keeps them warm and dry when rains begin to fall, Adam's dog Miro who finds them after his own escape from the ghetto, a classmate hidden with a Gentile peasant who leaves corn pie and other bits of food for the boys near a cow she milks every day. This girl, Mina, gives the book its Hebrew title, *Yalda she-lo min ha-olam ha-zeh* (The Girl Who Was Not of This World), and her appearance in the field milking the cow and later reappearance wandering beaten and hungry in the forest herald hope and survival for Adam and Thomas in a way that is both eminently real and completely magical. While Appelfeld tells us that "Mina's father died when she was five, and her mother worked as a housekeeper," he also signals that he seems to believe, as Adam does, that "God sent Mina to us to rescue us from hunger."

Appelfeld seems to have needed the memories of both his assimilated parents and his observant grandparents to carry him through the war and the difficult years after.

Illustration by Philippe Dumas from **Adam & Thomas** *by Aharon Appelfeld, published by Triangle Square Books for Young Readers/Seven Stories Press.*

"I was a child, and I lived in a kind of fairytale," Appelfeld told Dekel in 2011.

> As in a fairytale, there were fears, there were imaginings, and there was a small bit of joy in the center. It was a fairytale. That is the Holocaust, because I was a child, was also a fairytale. At times I would tell myself, tomorrow my parents will come to take me away. And I would give myself signs; if I see a white horse, it means that my parents will come to take me. And each time I would look for a white horse in the meadow, in the pasture.

In *Adam & Thomas*, it is a cow in a pasture that leads the boys to Mina, who keeps them alive first in body and then in spirit, when she in turn needs Adam and Thomas to care for her and ensure her life.

In writing this book, Appelfeld seems to have split himself and his life story between the two title characters: resourceful Adam, a boy of the land whose knowledge of the forest keeps them safe and fed, and bookish Thomas, a doubter in both faith and his own abilities. In the novel, alert Adam cannot survive without inward-looking Thomas. Appelfeld himself seems to have needed the memories and teachings of both his assimilated parents and his observant grandparents to carry him through the war and the difficult years after. The split is doubly fitting, because at its heart, *Adam & Thomas* explores a theme that has fascinated Appelfeld—Jewish survival as "a people who lived for more than 2,000 years among aliens, and by being so different, and by being a minority, developed a kind of character that is very different from the character of the surroundings," a character marked by both "restlessness, a permanent alertness, a kind of insecurity" and "deep belief . . . deep philosophy, mysticism."

Appelfeld himself escaped from a concentration camp when he was just eight and survived in a Ukrainian forest for three years until he met up with the Soviet army and became a cook in a field kitchen. His mother, though, had already died at the hands of the Nazis when he and his father were sent to the camp. Unlike Adam's, his mother did not literally leave him alone in a forest.

Adam & Thomas is, in a way, a bookend to Appelfeld's *Badenheim 1939*, his first work translated into English, and the one that marked his entry into the international literary world. Heavier, more dreadful, it too has the feel of a fairy tale, but one from the Brothers Grimm, not Disney.

In the vacation resort of Badenheim, somewhere outside Vienna, in the long months of 1939, everything is a sign, a portent. While the well-heeled and seemingly well of body and mind vacationers and residents look forward to the town's annual arts festival, only Trude, the wife of the town's pharmacist, sees the truth of their situation: "The whole world looked transparent to her. It was poisoned and diseased . . . [Her husband's] attempts to reassure her were in vain. She had stopped listening."

Here again, the reader knows what the Jewish vacationers and townspeople don't, that the people who "left their baggage in the hotel and streamed toward the forest" won't be coming back from their "resettlement" in the east. We understand why the inspector from the "Sanitation Department" asks the pharmacist for all kinds of "peculiar details" about who owns his business, how he acquired it, and its value, while he, perplexed and "surprised, explained that everything had been whitewashed and thoroughly disinfected." With each sentence of *Badenheim 1939*, tension builds. The hints of impending disaster are heavy and thick on the ground, a trail of breadcrumbs mixed with sawdust.

Appelfeld described his writing process as one of leaving his pages in a drawer and going back

Aharon Appelfeld, 2012. (Photo by Yossi Zamir/Flash 90.)

to them until there was nothing left to add in and nothing left to take out; at 148 pages, *Badenheim 1939* includes as much as the reader can stand. A few chapters in, and we are both weary and on edge, trapped alongside the Jews of Badenheim, all registered with the Sanitation Department.

Although the Holocaust is a near-constant presence in Appelfeld's work, it would be false to characterize him simply as a "Holocaust writer." As Alan Mintz observed, "Everything having to do with what the French call the concentrationary universe—the transports, the camps, the *Einsatzgruppen*, the fascination with the Nazis and the paraphernalia of evil, that is to say, the entire stock-in-trade of conventional Holocaust literature—all this is left out. Before, after, parallel to—yes; anything but the thing itself."

Instead, Appelfeld gives us characters who are archetypes for the Jews the Nazis tried to eradicate: the *Ostjude* and the assimilated Jew who longs above all for "an artistic experience," the Jew who asks for acceptance in a voice that is "soft and conciliatory," and the one who demands admittance in a tone that is "clear and sharp." In his Alpine allegory, the village becomes a fenced-in ghetto and the organizer of a summer festival morphs into the head of the Judenrat, the purveyor of readings of Rilke and nostalgic Yiddish songs that distract from thoughts of escape.

In the end, the titular characters of *Adam & Thomas* are saved in a narrative that echoes Appelfeld's own lucky and unlikely forest survival story. Appelfeld's widow, Yehudit, told his long-time translator Jeffrey M. Green that he left behind drawers "full of manuscripts." Whether the worlds we have yet to explore with Appelfeld are those of doomed villages like Badenheim or the miraculous forest of his first book for young readers remains to be seen.

Amy Newman Smith is the managing editor of the Jewish Review of Books.

Telling the Whole Truth: Albert Memmi

BY DANIEL GORDON

Tunisie, An I
by Albert Memmi, edited by Guy Dugas
CNRS Editions, 232 pp., €10

"I continue to think, in spite of frequent hesitations, that I must tell not only the truth but the whole truth. And this will be not only my aesthetic signature . . . but my most important political contribution." With this diary entry from 1956, the young Tunisian writer Albert Memmi summed up the attitude that has earned him both admiration and enmity over an intellectual career that has spanned more than half a century.

Memmi has defended Third World revolutions while condemning their tyrannical by-products ever since his native country drove out its Jewish population soon after attaining independence. The recently published *Tunisie, An I* (Tunisia, Year I) is Memmi's diary from the years 1955 and 1956. This was when Tunisia ceased to be a French protectorate and became, as its new constitution stated, "an Islamic state."

Born in 1920 and still active, Memmi grew up on the border of Hara, the Jewish ghetto of Tunis, and an adjacent Muslim neighborhood. His family spoke Judeo-Arabic at home, but he became a scholarship student at the best French schools. In the early 1950s, he emerged as a prize-winning French novelist, then turned his hand to political theory. In 1957, his most widely read and translated work, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, appeared with a preface by Jean-Paul Sartre. Memmi's book, with its far-reaching conceptions of colonial privilege and racism, was essential reading in radical theory until the 1970s, when he began to fall from grace in leftist circles, partly because of his defense of Israel, partly because of his criticism of the new Muslim nations of North Africa and the Middle East.

The seeds of Memmi's separation from the left are already evident in some of the diary entries in *Tunisie, An I*. Guy Dugas, a professor at the Paul Valéry University in Montpellier, is to be congratulated for editing the diary, and for including several articles by Memmi from the 1950s that dealt with the pressure faced by Jews in decolonizing North Africa. In one of these articles, an essay published in 1956, Memmi argued that how a polity treats its Jews is the best index of its level of freedom. "A society that wishes to liberate humankind must naturally liberate its Jews . . . At least in our historical era, the destiny of the Jew is consubstantial with the destiny of man."

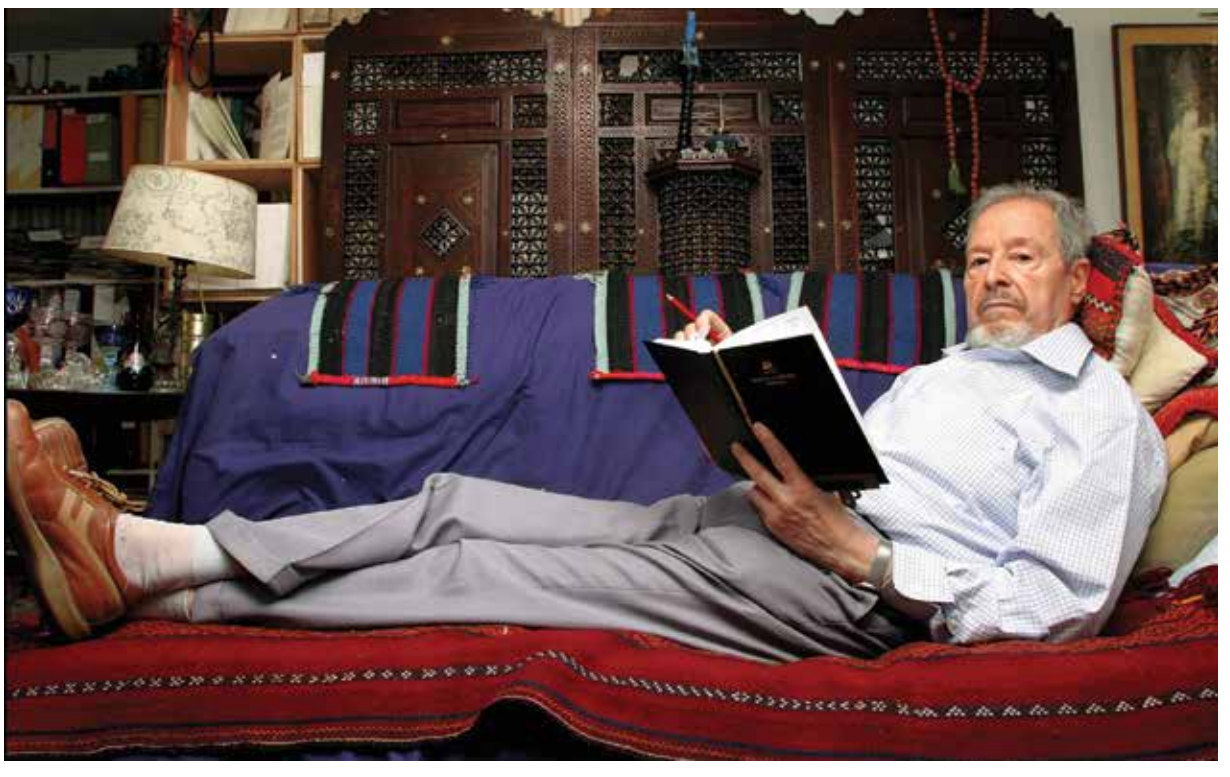
Memmi's startling independence of mind has always been linked to his Jewish partisanship. His sensitivity to the persecution of Jews in political regimes of all types meant that he had no a priori attachment to socialism, nationalism, capitalism, or any other "ism." He has combined, perhaps more than any other writer since World War II, the compassion needed to articulate the suffering of oppressed groups with the forthrightness needed to censure them for their own acts of oppression. "[I]f we are to help decolonized peoples," Memmi wrote in 2004, "we must . . . acknowledge and speak the truth to them, because we feel they are worthy of hearing it."

In the diary, Memmi chronicled how the newly independent regime in Tunisia downgraded the status of its Jewish subjects. Jews were removed from their positions in the bureaucracy; anti-Semitic poems were broadcast through government radio stations. He recounted how the president of the new Constituent Assembly, Habib Bourguiba, summoned Jewish leaders and ordered them to stop showing support for a foreign power, Israel. The president of the Jewish community, Charles Haddad, was defiant. He asked Bourguiba this question: If allegiance to other countries is treason, why do you constantly pledge support to the Arab League? The debate was especially impressive, Memmi noted, because Haddad previously was a man of "unctuous prudence."

Memmi himself possessed a medallion, bearing his family name, that dated to the Punic Wars, long before the arrival of Islam in North Africa.

Memmi showed how his fellow North African Jews came to realize that they could no longer fantasize about assimilation or acceptance in a multiethnic postcolonial society, despite the fact that many of them did not descend from European colonists. Memmi himself possessed a medallion, bearing his family name, that dated to the Punic Wars, long before the arrival of Islam in North Africa. He later donated it to Yad Vashem as evidence that Jews were as native to Tunisia as any other group. As Memmi noted in the diary, he and other progressively minded Jews initially thought they were comrades in arms with the Muslim population against colonialism. Now they had to recognize that they had enjoyed more liberty under colonialism than in the newly liberated states.

"I have to aid the Tunisians [against the French] because their cause is just," Memmi wrote. "And I have to leave Tunisia because their cause is not mine." He departed for France at the end of August 1956. He was not alone. The historian Michael M. Laskier wrote that there were 65,000 Jews in the capital of Tunisia in the 1940s. In 1961, there were 250; most of these were soon to leave.



Albert Memmi at home in Paris, July 2, 2004. (Photo by Marc Gantier/Gamma-Rapho via Getty Images.)

In a 1962 article in *Commentary* magazine, Memmi wrote that "the fate of North African Jewry is the most important world Jewish problem of our postwar period, just as the fate of the Jews of Central and Eastern Europe was the leading problem for Jews before 1939." The need for a Jewish homeland, he observed, was "not the result of Auschwitz but of the Jewish condition everywhere, including the Arab countries."

"The Jewish condition" would remain central to Memmi. In *Portrait of a Jew*, he coined

the French word *judéité* (Jewishness) to describe the sentiment of belonging to a Jewish community as distinct from subscribing to the tenets of Judaism. *Judéité* is largely a nostalgic bond—a warm recollection of festivities celebrated at home, for example. Near the beginning of his first novel, *Pillar of Salt* (1953), Memmi evoked this ambiance.

> Friday was always born in an excited dawn, and it blossomed majestically into a triumphant Sabbath . . . The men would then drink their little glasses of *araki* as they ate force-meat balls, chick-peas, and strongly seasoned pickled carrots and squash. . . . I suppose I used to fall asleep while still at table . . . Sleep, when one has no worries, tastes like honey.

Yet, *judéité* for Memmi is also a bitter condition imposed from outside; it is a community of fate abetted by persecution. In his preface to *Pillar of Salt*, Albert Camus praised the young author's decision to identify as Jewish. "By writing about the difficulty of being a Jew, the author ultimately chooses to be one (and so much the better), replacing the traditional religious awareness of his ancestors with an awareness that is more modern, dramatic and intellectual, a solidarity without illusions."

Memmi did not seek to displace Judaism with an allegedly higher or more universal commitment. Unlike Marxists and other internationalists, he sought to make the world a place in which Jewish people could continue to be Jewish. In his 1975 essay "What Is a Zionist?," Memmi wrote:

> The reasoning used by people on the left proceeds from that open-sesame simplification that they apply to so many problems: let's bring about the revolution, they say, and the Jewish problem will take care of itself . . . This theory does not seem to be borne out by what we know of the U.S.S.R. and the Eastern European people's democracies . . . The Marxists, following the example set by Marx himself, apply to the Jewish problem a pattern that is obviously irrelevant; for they persist in understanding it in terms of economics and of class struggle, whereas it is a phenomenon of an altogether different kind . . . That is why I protested so strongly when attempts were made to reduce the colonial problem first, then the Jewish problem to a matter of class struggle—in other words, when you come down to it, to an economic employers-workers problem. It is reductions such as these that have made the ideology of the political left in Europe impotent.

According to Memmi, the liberation of the Jew would not be an incidental by-product of generically framed ideals of equality and social justice. In a world of real nations, many of which had incubated hatred of the Jewish people for centuries, an explicitly national solution was needed. "This," he wrote, "is how I came to Israel—step by step, logically, not through some transport of religious or impassioned feeling."

> The essential and undeniable fact is that from now on, the State of Israel is part of the destiny of every Jew anywhere in the world who continues to acknowledge himself as a Jew. No matter what doubts or even reproofs certain of Israel's actions may arouse, no Jew anywhere in the world can call its existence in question without doing himself grave harm.

Pillar of Salt captured two major prizes for French literature and was quickly translated into English, Hebrew, and German. The main character in this heavily autobiographical tale is Mordekhai Benillouche, whose early years pass innocently in his "alley," or working-class Jewish neighborhood, in Tunis.

Memmi warned of the likelihood that anticolonial revolutions would fail to produce tolerant societies.

The Jewish community provides a scholarship for Mordekhai to attend one of the best French lycées, where the rich Jewish students ridicule his ghetto accent, while the Gentile students, and some of the teachers, insult him for his conspicuous Jewishness. In spite of his isolation, or because of it, he immerses himself in the French curriculum and falls in love with European literature and philosophy. He also withdraws from the family's Sabbath celebrations, repulsed by their "sacred triviality," and stops accompanying his father to synagogue.

Charles Haddad, president of the Jewish community, speaking at the annual conference of OSE (organization for child care, health, and hygiene among the Jews) in Tunisia, May 8, 1955. (Courtesy of Charles Haddad, Marseilles, © Beit Hatfutsot, Tel Aviv.)

> Great problems, true values, and a serious philosophy of life were elsewhere; I found them each day at school . . . Were we heading toward a Socialist society? Is poetry rooted in mysticism? Would the machine age bring social justice? Are art and morality bound together? Here were problems that were far more noble than whether one should ride a streetcar on the Sabbath.

Piercing quarrels with his father ensue. "[W]e dealt each other wounds that would never heal."

At school, he continues to excel, and wins a prize as the best high-school student in the country. Though alienated from his family and his religion, he continues to hope that academic success will guarantee happiness. Then comes the German occupation. Thousands of Jews are conscripted into labor camps where they are forced to wear yellow stars. Since the wealthy pay a tax to the occupying power, Jews who attended elite schools are often spared. By virtue of his diploma from a prestigious school, Mordekhai is mistaken as one of them, but he refuses the exemption.

> How was it possible to stay in the offices while all those young Jews were being beaten, humiliated, and killed in the camps? To the astonishment of our directors and the half-ironic surprise and respect of my colleagues, I asked to be allowed to join the camp workers. I am not trying to pride myself on my decision.

Curiously, in the camp, he leads a Torah study group—not, he claims, out of religious belief, but to raise the morale of the others. He then escapes and tries to join the Free French Forces, but discovers that Jews are not welcome. He will be accepted only if he enters a Muslim name in the registration book. At the end of the novel, he inscribes his Jewish name and walks out. Feeling that "my past has again risen like vomit in my throat," he decides to emigrate to Argentina. Like Lot's wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt, he will die if he looks back again.

As painful as *Pillar of Salt* is, it is less excruciating than Memmi's second novel, *Strangers* (1955). The original French title was *Agar* (Hagar), the name of Abraham's non-Jewish spouse; the novel is about the deterioration of a marriage between a Tunisian Jewish doctor (who is never named) and Marie, his French Catholic wife, whom he met while studying in Paris. (The characters bear some resemblance to Memmi and his wife, though their actual marriage endured happily.)

When the doctor returns to Tunis with Marie and takes her on a tour of the favorite sites of his youth, her only response is that she cannot bear the smell. She finds it repulsive to share the kiddush cup with his family on the Sabbath and finds the Passover Seder to be "barbaric." As she pressures him to separate from his family and religion, he persists in dragging her "down sordid lanes, where the gutters ran with muddy water."

> I did not spare her the smells from meat stalls and rubbish heaps. I made her eat in taverns where I would never have thought of going myself.

He is torn between his *judéité* and his growing tendency to see his past through Marie's disdainful eyes. The birth of a son brings more problems to the fore. In a later book, *The Liberation of the Jew*, Memmi wrote that in a mixed marriage "children bring to light the problems inherent in the situation . . . Suddenly all theoretical options which had been

relegated to the background and left in a convenient and equivocal shadow require urgent attention."

Memmi began writing his first work of social theory, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, soon after publishing *Strangers*. He would later describe a connection between the two books.

> I discovered that the couple [in *Strangers*] is not an isolated entity . . . on the contrary, the whole world is within the couple . . . I felt that to understand the failure of their undertaking, that of a mixed marriage in a colony, I first had to understand the colonizer and the colonized, perhaps the entire colonial relationship and situation.

Memmi went on to write several more works of fiction, but with the appearance of *The Colonizer and the Colonized* in 1957, the novelist who wrote like a sociologist became a sociologist who wrote like a novelist.

"[T]he idea of privilege is at the heart of the colonial relationship," Memmi wrote in *The Colonizer and the Colonized*. Privilege meant more than economic advantage. Memmi swept away the Marxist assumption that colonialism was primarily an economic system. What was needed was an analysis of racism that treated it as more than a buttress of economic inequality. Racism was "[a] mixture of behaviors and reflexes acquired and practiced since very early childhood, established and measured by education," and it was "incorporated in even the most trivial acts and words."

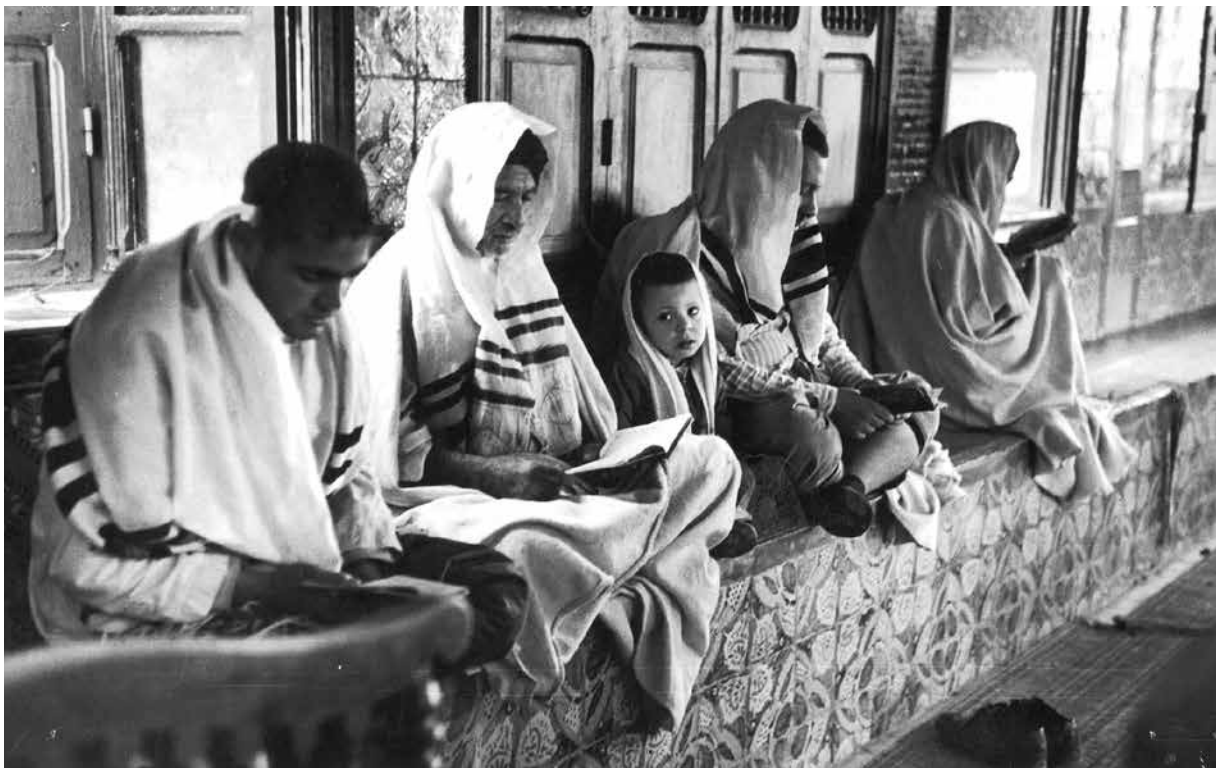
> fundamental discrimination between colonizer and colonized . . . but it also lays the foundation for the immutability of this life.

For the colonizers, the need for cultural superiority even took precedence over the quest for financial profit.

Contemporary reviewers of *The Colonizer and the Colonized* on the left generally did not begrudge Memmi his focus on culture rather than economics, for he was still explicating the broad Marxist themes of inequality and injustice. In his preface, however,

In *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Memmi wrote that "the tree of national independence" has produced only "stunted and shriveled crops."

Sartre was at times critical of this incipient heresy: "[H]e sees a situation where I see a system," Sartre wrote. Indeed, while portraying colonial racism with a broad brush, Memmi also inventoried what he called "situations" that defied class analysis. One such situation was the relatively equal and familiar rapport between Corsicans and native Muslims in North Africa. Another was the status of Jews in



Jews in a synagogue on the island of Djerba, near Tunisia. (Photo by Haywood Magee/Picture Post/ Getty Images.)

In spite of making claims to modernize, the colonialist never wished to raise the level of the natives. "The colonialist stresses those things which keep him separate, rather than emphasizing that which might contribute to the foundation of a joint community."

> Racism appears then, not as an incidental detail, but as a consubstantial part of colonialism. It is the highest expression of the colonial system and one of the most significant features of the colonialist. Not only does it establish a

North Africa. The Jews often tried to assimilate to the culture of the colonizers, but the colonizers did not admit them as equals. Thus, the Jews lived in "painful and constant ambiguity." "Rejected by the colonizer . . . they reject the values of the colonized as belonging to a decayed world from which they eventually hope to escape."

Memmi departed from the Marxist script in one other respect: He warned of the likelihood that anticolonial revolutions would fail to produce tolerant societies. While the European left hoped that international socialism would emerge from native revolts, the reality, Memmi noted, was a renaissance of religious and ethnic self-absorption. Near the end of the book, Memmi predicted that the insurgents "will forego the use of the colonizer's language, even if all the locks of the country turn with that key." They "will prefer a long period of educational mistakes to the continuance of the colonizer's school organization." Everything that belonged to the colonizer was unfit for the colonized, after all "[t]hat is just what the colonizer always told him." Memmi gave a name to this reproduction of rejection: He called it the "counter-mythology."

Memmi's cautionary remarks in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* were the beginning of a skeptical, heterodox strand in his work. He increasingly drew attention to the failure of colonial liberation movements to create inclusive polities. In *Jews and Arabs* (1975), he wrote, "unlike many people, I never believed in the liberals' naïve assumption nor in the communists' sly claim that after independence there would be no problems, that our countries would be lay states wherein Europeans, Jews, and Moslems would cohabit on good terms with one another." He reproved French leftists for believing that the flight of 800,000 Jews from Arab nations was a voluntary response to the creation of Israel and not a deliberate purge.

With respect to the Palestinian refugee problem, Memmi affirmed that the Palestinians had a right to a national existence of their own. "Any leaders who do not subscribe to that interpretation at all, or who feel that it would run completely counter to Israel's existence, must start taking much more serious steps to integrate the Palestinians [into Israeli society]." But a major component of the Palestinian problem, according to Memmi, was that the Palestinians accepted neither integration into Israel nor the creation of a Palestinian nation alongside Israel. They "think of only one thing: reconquering Israel."

In his 2004 work *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Memmi wrote that "the tree of national independence" has produced only "stunted and shriveled crops." The new societies have not curbed violence against women; imprisonment and execution are used more frequently than they had been under colonialism; writers are more persecuted for free thinking than they had been under the colonial governments. Horrible tribal wars have broken out. Economic inequality is extreme in the Arab world, with "certain Bedouin families" possessing "fabulous wealth from lands where they arrived more or less by accident." Political dynasties and military despots rule in place of popular government.

In a section of the book called "Diversions, Excuses, and Myths," he wrote, "The ruler will do his best to convince his citizens that others are the cause of their problems, not his own machinations, the dysfunctional economy, administrative disorder, or their own shortcomings." The evil is always foreign domination. "If the economy fails, it's always the fault of the ex-colonizer, not the systematic bloodletting of the economy by the new masters, not the viscosity of their culture, which fails to address its present and the future." Sometimes the stagnation "is attributed to a new ruse of global capitalism, or 'neocolonialism,' a term sufficiently vague to serve as a screen and rationale." But in Arab countries, it is often the Jews and Israel that are blamed.

A negotiable solution to the Palestinian problem would be realistic, according to Memmi, if the problem were taken for what it is: a "minor drama" compared to "the magnitude of the problems—demographic, economic, political, social, cultural, and religious" that face the Arab world as a whole. The Palestinian problem is in fact "a rather ordinary struggle between two small emerging nations, whose national claims unfortunately turned out to involve a territorial conflict." The Second Intifada, Memmi noted, cost two thousand lives.

> That's two thousand too many. But a quick glance at any collection of newspapers will show that, in the past few decades alone, there have been more than a million deaths in Biafra, five hundred thousand in Rwanda, uncounted massacres in Uganda and the Congo, three hundred thousand deaths in Burundi . . . the eradication of Communists in Indonesia, estimated at five hundred thousand, and the terrifying massacres of the Khmer by their own people.

If the Germans and French could make peace, Memmi said, so could Palestinians and Israelis. But "the conflict extends beyond the Palestinians and Israelis, involving nearly all the Arab-Muslim countries and the majority of the world's Jews. The Palestinians are not as isolated as they claim; they are the foot soldiers of the Arab world, which flatters them as it leads them to the slaughter." Israel, according to Memmi, "is not a colonial settlement, which would therefore be legitimate to destroy, an idea the Arab states have tried to promulgate." For aside from its domination of the Palestinians, which Memmi called "unacceptable," Israel "has none of the characteristics of such a state."

In the English translation of *Decolonization and the Decolonized*, Memmi recounted how he was finally expelled from the ranks of distinguished postcolonial thinkers. Numerous interviews and reviews, scheduled before his book's publication in French, were canceled after the work appeared in print. "[T]his weighty silence," he wrote, "suggests . . . the accuracy of my claims. This includes my remarks about the irresponsibility, if not blindness or cowardice, of many intellectuals, who have taken refuge in outdated theories instead of daring to confront a novel situation." One of the book's few reviewers was an American, Lisa Lieberman, who rebuked the author in an essay entitled "Albert Memmi's About-Face." Memmi, she wrote, had distanced himself "not only from his radical fellow travelers, but also from his earlier self." But, of course, Memmi's refusal to place unconditional faith in liberationist movements had been a hallmark of his thought since the 1950s.

A few years later, during the Arab Spring, Memmi presciently commented that he observed no fundamental change taking place—only "revolts" coopted by theocrats and not "revolutions" that would enhance the rights of women and minorities. Asked by a journalist if he was concerned about the "recrudescence" of anti-Semitism in Tunisia since the flight of President Ben Ali in January 2011, he tartly replied, "In Tunisia there is no recrudescence of anti-Semitism but rather a permanent anti-Semitism."

The midcentury struggle against colonialism in North Africa produced major works including those of Memmi, Mouloud Feraoun, and Albert Camus. The most celebrated text, however, is Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*. Born in Martinique, Fanon moved to Algeria, where he advocated violent revolution.

A psychiatrist, Fanon had profound insight into the neuroses of oppressed natives. But his single-minded purpose was to justify bloodshed. Colonialism, according to Fanon, turns the native into a "thing." He becomes a "man" and "finds his freedom in and through violence." Violence is not only a means of regime change; it is the very end of the process of self-transformation. Killing is, then, a kind of therapy, facilitating the rebirth of the formerly oppressed. In a preface to Fanon's book—one that was much warmer than the one he had written for Memmi a few years earlier—Sartre validated this bloody philosophy: "The Nation marches forward; for each of her children she is to be found wherever his brothers are fighting . . . they are brothers inasmuch as each of them has killed and may at any moment have to kill again."

Memmi demurred. In 1971, he published a penetrating essay on Fanon's paroxysmal politics entitled "The Impossible Life of Frantz Fanon."

> When social despair is too great, men succumb to the temptation of messianism. They are gripped by a lyrical fever, by a manicheanism that constantly confuses ethical demand and reality . . . Frantz Fanon's success is probably due more to this uncompromisingly prophetic attitude than to his particular theses or the correctness of his analysis. So that here, as in the rest of his life, it is his failure itself that has become the source of his far-reaching influence.

It was, one might say, precisely the renunciation of such brutal Manichean politics that has kept Memmi from having the kind of far-reaching influence that Fanon has enjoyed.

While Memmi never denied that violent revolt was sometimes necessary, he insisted on a distinction between the process of liberation from oppression and the achievement of durable liberty. This is, arguably, a characteristically Jewish distinction. As readers of the Bible from Moses Maimonides to Michael Walzer have noted, the book of Exodus vividly depicts the difference between the Israelites' liberation from Egyptian bondage and their maturation as a people in the desert for 40 years. The great cultural Zionist Ahad Ha-Am summed up this tradition when he wrote that "[a] people trained for generations in the house of bondage cannot cast off in an instant the effects of that training and become truly free." At the end of *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Memmi made a parallel point about the postcolonial revolutionary: "In order that his liberation may be complete, he must free himself from those inevitable conditions of his struggle."

Although Albert Memmi burst upon the intellectual scene as someone who had brilliantly dramatized and theorized the injustices of colonialism, his full message was one that neither violent rebels nor armchair theorists ultimately wished to hear. His work was too subtle, too unflinchingly honest, and too unabashedly Jewish for that. He began telling the "whole truth" in the 1950s, and while he is now 97 years old, one hopes that he still has more to say.

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Black Money

BY A. E. SMITH

Harpoon: Inside the Covert War Against Terrorism's Money Masters
by Nitsana Darshan-Leitner and Samuel M. Katz
Hachette Books, 352 pp., $27

Early in his long and eventful career, an ambitious Israeli intelligence officer named Meir Dagan recognized a core fallacy in our understanding of terrorism. Yes, $150 worth of hardware, fabric, and cheap explosives can transform a human being into an IED. But, as the authors of *Harpoon: Inside the Covert War Against Terrorism's Money Masters*, the latest addition to the Alexandrian library of books on Israeli intelligence, tell us, any suicide bomber is just the "final link in a long supply chain of men, machines and infrastructure that cost tens of thousands of dollars." Terrorism is not cheap. It is a costly endeavour, especially for substate organizations without recourse to legitimate funding and dependable revenue streams. Find a way of taking terrorists' money, the logic would seem to dictate, and you may have a way of shutting them down.

Working on that assumption, Dagan, who eventually became one of Mossad's longest-serving directors, introduced a "follow the money" ethos into the high-stakes world of Israeli counterterrorism during the Second Intifada. He was assisted by a handful of visionary intelligence and special operations officers as well as one of *Harpoon*'s authors, Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, an Israeli lawyer specializing in advocacy on behalf of the victims of terrorism. Working closely with U.S. authorities, Dagan created a multidisciplinary team—code-named *Tziltzal*, or Harpoon—whose sole purpose was to find creative ways of denying funding to the terrorist groups routinely unleashing carnage on the streets of Israel. How they did this makes for lively, suspenseful reading.

Early on, the Harpoon team dangled a Latin American front company with a seemingly rock-solid investment portfolio in front of a prominent PLO financier. Encouraged by initial profits, the PLO and its chairman, Yasser Arafat, sank more and more money into the enterprise. Inevitably, and with more than a little help from Harpoon, the company, its assets, and its infrastructure vanished overnight, taking an estimated $100 million in PLO funds with it.

In another operation, code-named Green Lantern, Harpoon used IDF and Border Police units to conduct a coordinated series of bank raids in Ramallah, Jenin, and Tulkarm. The day's haul consisted of 40 million shekels' worth of funds earmarked for West Bank terror cells, along with a trove of computer hard drives and bank records documenting terrorist cash flows from sources that included everything from state-owned slush funds to global Islamic charities and benevolent foundations. But the United States was not pleased. President George W. Bush apparently said that it reminded him of the

"So what are you going to do," thundered one old field operations warhorse, "ruin Hezbollah's FICO score?"

"Wild West," and Israeli security was called onto the carpet by then-ambassador Daniel Kurtzer:

> The ambassador lambasted the optics of driving tanks and armored vehicles straight up to a bank entrance . . . simply to steal bags of cash. Kurtzer emphasized that these John Dillinger tactics should not be used again.

Nitsana Darshan-Leitner in front of the District Court of Jerusalem. (Photo courtesy of Aviram Valdman.)

Although she never drove a tank up to a Hezbollah bank, Darshan-Leitner's role in this story is fascinating. She is co-founder of Shurat Ha-din (Hebrew for "letter of the law"), an organization self-consciously modeled on the U.S. Southern Poverty Law Center, which has had tremendous success using the courts to go after the KKK and neo-Nazi groups. With its focus on victims' rights, Shurat Ha-din uses U.S. antiterrorism legislation and Israeli tort law in U.S. courts to target an array of terrorist front organizations and Middle Eastern financial institutions with offices and branches in the United States. And it works. In one civil case linking the PLO to a series of attacks by the al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade, Hamas, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Shurat Ha-din secured damages of $655 million for the 10 families it represented in the case.

As an NGO, Shurat Ha-din is obliged to remain at arm's length from any Israeli or U.S. government agency, but Darshan-Leitner recounts some productive off-the-record exchanges of tactics and information. Indeed, there was apparently sufficient cross-pollination for her organization to function as a sort of civil society proxy, balancing Harpoon's direct action with a highly effective application of "lawfare."

In describing the genesis of Harpoon, the authors get at some of the inevitable dilemmas that underlie intelligence work. Attempting to sell his concept, Dagan struggled with the deep divide between operations and analysis, between the door-kickers and the eggheads. The project barely got off the ground as senior military and intelligence officials balked at the prospect of partnering with lawyers and bean counters. "So what are you going to do," thundered one old field operations warhorse, "ruin Hezbollah's FICO score?" And in an early executive posting as director of the prime minister's Counterterrorism Bureau under Shimon Peres, Dagan embarked upon the Sisyphean task of assembling a multiagency financial intelligence task force, again with no support from key figures in the Israeli military and security establishments. While integration and coordination are critical in an environment where intelligence agencies guard their turf like street gangs, the people tasked with carrying out the work all too often end up as neutered kings.

This is all tremendously informative and highly topical, but *Harpoon* sometimes fails to rise to the potential of the story it is telling. In an apparent effort to inject some operational verisimilitude into the narrative, the authors often resort to thriller boilerplate. Nobody in this book ever just gets on a plane; they "shuttle" between Dulles and Ben-Gurion. Sources are met in "eateries"; Harpoon operations set out to relieve terrorists of "every dollar, euro, dinar, and drachma"; intelligence work is inevitably "the spy game." And, more damagingly, the characters lack depth.

Even Dagan, a man whose office featured a

photograph of his grandfather kneeling before the smirking SS troopers who were about to murder him and who was so stricken by his experience of war in Lebanon that he became a lifelong vegetarian, is little more than a cut-out, albeit a surpassingly noble one. The terrorists, meanwhile, all seem to merge into a single villainous knuckle-dragger. In reality, intelligence agencies abound with oddballs, misfits, and eccentrics. So do terrorist networks. A little more of that, and a little less Manichaeism, would have made *Harpoon* a better book.

Meir Dagan, center, in Lebanon after Israel invaded in June 1982. (Photo by Miki Tzrfati, courtesy of Bamahane/IDF and Defense Establishment Archives.)

Counterfeit Israeli shekels found by Israeli forces inside the Muqata, Arafat's Ramallah headquarters, March 30, 2002. (Courtesy of the IDF.)

Adulation can also inhibit critical analysis. During the Second Lebanon War in 2006, Dagan demanded that the Air Force bomb Lebanese banks. Prime Minister Olmert demurred, perhaps mindful of U.S. warnings not to focus on targets that could weaken the Lebanese state. The authors observe that this is something that Israeli forces have never done and that even in the darkest moments of the Yom Kippur War, Defense Minister Moshe Dayan refused to countenance firing on Arab financial institutions. But "Dagan," we are told, "despised decisions with far-reaching national security implications based solely on political pandering." Right or wrong, Dayan had a point: A failed state on Israel's borders serves nobody's best interests. Compelling as the swashbuckling world of intelligence operations is, blowback from those operations can have real and lasting foreign policy and national security consequences. That's the place where *Harpoon* rarely goes. (Spoiler alert: With the support of his longtime friend and ally Ariel Sharon, Dagan ultimately prevailed, and $100 million went up in smoke.)

Harpoon raises fascinating questions, both about terrorism and about the way we respond to it. For example, in describing the extent of terrorist financing networks, it refers to the "collection plates—placed in mom-and-pop operations, basically—in Palestinian- and Arab-run businesses . . . worldwide that solicited donations of coins and trinkets." The role of charities in channelling money to terrorist groups is well known. The Irish Republican Army and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam were also adept at co-opting goodwill in their respective diasporas. Since the vast majority of individual Muslims are not cruel and Islamic definitions of *sadaqah* are rigorous, it is important to understand precisely how terrorists manipulate both legitimate social institutions and people's better motives in order to get them onside. This has profound implications for our understanding of terrorist financing and for our relationships with communities at risk. With their privileged access to Israeli and U.S. sources, the authors could have explored such issues to much greater effect.

Today, most Western countries have enacted terrorist financing legislation and, following Israel's example, have found ingenious ways to stop terrorist money flows. "Lawfare" of the kind pioneered by Darshan-Leitner and Shurat Ha-din is also becoming more and more common. But, like the Latin American drug cartels that were hammered with proceeds of crime legislation back in the 1980s and 90s, the terrorists are still with us.

Clandestine organizations are much nimbler than governments. Unconstrained by bureaucracy or oversight, they adapt quickly to changes in the operational environment. Intelligence, law enforcement, and regulatory agencies, by contrast, operate within a strict set of limits. Darshan-Leitner and Katz know a great deal about both terrorism and intelligence work, certainly more than enough to help us think about what the future might hold. In *Harpoon*, they tell an inspiring and instructive story, but one wishes that they had been more curious in exploring some of the byways that they came upon, or paused more often for deeper analysis, instead of always hurtling forward to the next operation.

A. E. Smith is a writer and intelligence official in Ottawa, Canada. He writes about Jewish and Russian culture, music, counterterrorism, crime, and national security.

Out-of-Body Experiences: Recent Israeli Science Fiction and Fantasy

BY MICHAEL WEINGRAD

***Ha-kavua ha-yechidi* (The Unswitchable)**
by Yoav Blum
Keter, 376 pp., 98 NIS

***Ha-orchim* (The Guests)**
by Ofir Touché Gafla
Keter, 368 pp., 96 NIS

***Lachatsot nahar pa'amayim* (Crossing a River Twice)**
by Yoav Avni
Kinneret Zmora-Bitan Dvir, 368 pp., 94 NIS

Shadrach
by Shimon Adaf
Resling, 160 pp., 64 NIS

***Teet* (Mud)**
by Dror Burstein
Keter, 336 pp., 98 NIS

***Ha-masa el lev ha-tehom* (Into the Abyss)**
by Hagar Yanai
Modan and Okeanos, 286 pp., 74 NIS

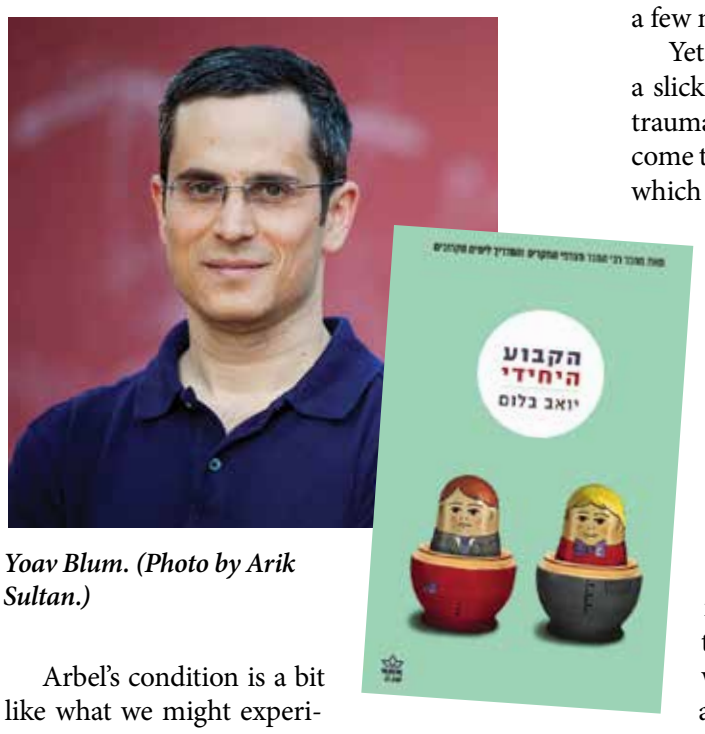
In 2017, the Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy awarded its Geffen Award for best novel to Yoav Blum's *Ha-kavua ha-yechidi* (The Unswitchable). The novel, Blum's third (his first will soon appear in English translation as *The Coincidence Makers*), imagines the invention and proliferation of bracelets that allow the wearer to "switch": to swap consciousnesses with other bracelet wearers by dialing them up as if on a phone. The technology finds all sorts of applications, from the practical to the illicit. Telecommuting for work often becomes a jump into someone else's body, while some couples periodically have sex from the other partner's perspective. There are even fellowships of people who agree to set their bracelets on a randomized mode for months at a time, during which their minds bounce around from body to body without knowing who, what, or where they will be from day to day.

The novel, then, reflects uncertainty about identity in our new virtual world. The protagonist is a private eye named Dan Arbel, who is the sole "unswitchable," the only person for whom the bracelets don't work. In a world in which you're never sure who you're really speaking to, he is, for better and for worse, always himself. As he reflects:

> What does it really mean to be grounded in yourself in such a world? It means going around in a little universe of yourself while everyone else speeds by in front of you. . . . You move from place to place, imprisoned in the same old weakening body . . . without even the privilege of

Is there room enough in the Yarkon for sea monsters? Is being the start-up nation enough reason to start up each day?

> a nice morning run in the body of a 20-year-old, the ability to leave it all suddenly and jump for a half hour to the view from the top of the Empire State Building or a quick dive into the Caribbean or the sunset over the African savanna, then back for dinner, toothbrush, and sleep.



Yoav Blum. (Photo by Arik Sultan.)

Arbel's condition is a bit like what we might experience being the only person in the world without internet access. Though we may not need the novel's reminders that the rush of social media can corrode the self, Arbel's outsider standpoint makes him sensitive to more enduring technologies for escaping and discovering our true identities: love and religion. Not that this potboiler focuses much on such lofty matters—Blum is having too good a time spinning out a fun thriller that combines the sci-fi, detective, and action genres.

The novel starts off with a literal bang as the wealthy Caitlin Lamont enters Arbel's office and confides that, despite her body, she is really his old flame Tamar—just before getting shot by a sniper across the street. Blum wears his genre markers proudly, referring by name to Arthur Conan Doyle and sci-fi writer Philip K. Dick, even writing one section of the novel in the form of a Hollywood screenplay with notes such as "Outside, an owl makes the noise owls make in movies at night." Yet even while stretching credulity like taffy, Blum signals his awareness that, long before his book, the rabbis similarly presented the mind-body problem as a whodunit in the parable of the lame man and the blind man (that is, the soul and the body) teaming up to commit a crime with a mutually reinforcing alibi intended to outwit the divine judge.

As it happens, another book on the Geffen Award shortlist, Ofir Touché Gafla's *Ha-orchim* (The Guests), also features a private-eye protagonist in a world in which people switch bodies. This coincidence is surely the reason why Gafla includes a late subplot, unconnected to the rest of the book, about an author who seeks revenge after his novel is preempted by another writer who coincidentally treats the same science-fiction theme a few months before his book is published.

Yet *Ha-orchim* portrays body-switching not as a slick technological innovation but as a universal trauma. The novel opens five years after what has come to be called "The Metamorphosis," an event in which nearly all adults on the planet wake up to find themselves transformed in their beds into the physical form of the person they hate most. Holocaust survivors wake up looking like their Nazi tormentors, countless people look in the mirror and see their ex-spouses, racists are turned into composite stereotypes of their targets, and long-hidden grudges take on corporeal reality.

Gafla, though, is less interested in the implications of this cosmic prank than he is in what he depicts as humanity's primary response to it: an obsessive preservation of their former identities, through journals, websites, and electronic archives. Both Blum's and Gafla's novels are works of our moment, with characters who specify their preferred pronouns. Yet if Blum's novel is inspired by technology's creation of a fluid, ungrounded identity, Gafla's focuses on our relentless chronicling of the minutiae of the self on social media. Perhaps these are two sides of the same coin, and the concern with recording and disseminating the activities of the self becomes more all-consuming as those selves grow more superficial and interchangeable. Gafla drives the point home with an Israeli protagonist named Adam Kor who finds himself in the body of a Japanese woman named Yuniko, punning on the words "core," "unique," and the Hebrew "*mekor*" (original).

Gafla's first book, *The World of the End* (released in English in 2013), is one of Israel's best novels of the fantastic (it won the Geffen Award in 2005),

and he is a superb writer. Unfortunately, I think he misses the mark this time. (I say this while mindful that a critic in *Ha-orchim* is named Alma Mort, rather close to the Spanish phrase for "dead soul.") There are structural problems: The slow revelation, accomplished partly through diary entries, of information that everyone in the novel is supposed to know seems unjustified, and it does not help that the protagonist seems to be the only person in Israel without a smartphone and so constantly requires his friends to deliver long expositions of current events. Gafla is at his best here when he writes of night landscapes—empty city streets, glowing windows in distant apartment buildings, dark highways with solitary hitchhikers—and of lovers who are lost and, as in a number of his earlier books, may not wish to be found. Though, on the whole, this effort disappoints, I look forward to his next book.

The main character in Yoav Avni's fish-that-got-away tale *Lachatsot nahar pa'amayim* (Crossing a River Twice) stays in his own body the whole time. Itamar Goren, who has abandoned his job in high-tech and gone to work for yet another private investigator in Tel Aviv, might even be considered stuck in himself. Largely cut off from social interactions with anyone other than his pet goldfish, he prefers to avoid human entanglements and instead spends his free time contemplating his beloved Yarkon, the river that meanders through north Tel Aviv.

Things get complicated when Itamar's boss goes missing and the physically imposing thug to whom he was in debt holds Itamar responsible for the owed shekels. Meanwhile, the Yarkon is invaded by foreboding deep-sea creatures whose presence drives the action of the book. While unraveling these mysteries, Itamar finds a partner in the charming Nufar, a woman who possesses the intuition and emotional intelligence he lacks, and they are joined by Ian Banks, an elderly Englishman in search of the Loch Ness monster.

Yoav Avni. (Photo by Maya Levkovich.)

Not far below the surface of this quirky tale is something closer to social allegory—closer, in fact, to Avni's earlier novel, *Herzl amar* (Herzl Spoke), which won the Geffen Award in 2012. In that earlier novel Avni meditates on the nature of Israel by depicting an alternate history in which the Jewish state was founded, as Theodor Herzl briefly proposed, in Africa. Here, Itamar's isolation and aimlessness seem to pose the question of whether the secular, high-tech face of Israel possesses the emotional and spiritual resources—the sense of magic—on which to base a thriving culture. Is there room enough in the Yarkon for sea monsters? Is being the start-up nation enough reason to start up each day?

Avni doesn't have encouraging answers to these questions. Nufar is delightful, to be sure, but she is a Mizrahi version of the American "manic pixie dream girl" film trope, not an answer to the malaise that Avni both depicts and embodies. By the end, the Englishman Ian Banks is screaming at the IDF soldiers who have cordoned off the river and its sea monsters behind a security wall. "You Israelis!" he shouts, "You shoot at anything you don't understand!"

It seems significant that Itamar has lost touch with his two brothers: One left to make his fortune in the United States, the other became religious. The reader ends the book sensing that Itamar, without capitalism or Judaism as compelling options, will go back to spending his days by the river, musing on what might have been.

The Yarkon is as good a site as any for pondering the relationship between Israel and the imagination. After all, a few decades ago who would have imagined that polluted canal as it is today, with its beautiful park, bike paths, and bridge of lover's locks? Yet it's also interesting that Avni chooses not to ride the river further back to its ancient springs by the Roman Antipatris or the biblical Aphek, let alone to any imagined Israel of the science-fiction future. Other recent Israeli sci-fi and fantasy novels, however, do draw on Near Eastern antiquity or explore the far future—and sometimes both.

Ofir Touché Gafla. (Photo by Aviram Valdman.)

Shadrach is the latest sci-fi novel by Shimon Adaf, considered by many to be the most talented and interesting of Israel's current science-fiction and fantasy writers, though others find his novels overly self-referential and unsatisfying. Both camps will find support here. The slim novel, which is dated 2011 though it was published in 2017, cuts back and forth between an Israel of the far future, in which the main character is a teenager named Shadrach, and the early 1980s of Adaf's childhood, in which the main character is a boy named Hanania. These names conjure the biblical book of Daniel, in which Hanania (whose Babylonian name is Shadrach) is one of Daniel's three Jewish companions who are thrown into a furnace for refusing to worship an idol set up by the Babylonian emperor. (Adaf may have been inspired by the 1976 novel *Shadrach in the Furnace* by the American science-fiction writer Robert Silverberg, which takes place in a postapocalyptic future and features a short interlude in Israel.)

The novel's future is certainly bleak—and heavily laden with political allegory. Apart from the domed city of New Sderot, Israel has been decimated by a "nano-gas" attack (possibly launched by America) that has turned its citizens into bloodthirsty zombies. In the resulting chaos, a fascistic faction known as the Guardians of Zion seizes power in collusion with the Americans. Adaf is not the first left-wing Israeli writer to give vent to his political nightmares in dystopian fiction. Here he describes an Israel that calls itself Zionist and is awash in Jewish symbols but which no longer possesses knowledge of the Jewish sources and history from which these names and symbols derive. As one character laments:

> Yes, they tell us that their source is in ancient stories, but what precisely is the source? Our children inject the ten sefirot [in Adaf's future the kabbalistic term refers to something between junk food and recreational drugs], we say House of David, we say Seed of Kings, and the words are filled for us with awe, weight, importance. Where do they come from, if we don't really know from our own experience that awe, weight, importance? What is the meaning of this unending war with the Palestinians? Why are most of us in favor of this occupation?

Meanwhile, for reasons never fully explained, Shadrach throughout the novel uses technology to send his consciousness back to the 1980s, where he melds with the mind of Hanania, who is trying to help a neighbor look for her missing brother. These two parts of the novel seem arbitrarily fused, however, and for all of the novel's lyric moments and occasional science-fiction pleasures none of the characters or their quests are convincingly realized. As one sees from the passage above, moreover, the political dimension of the novel is heavy-handed and simplistic.

Indeed, *Shadrach* is the latest in a series of novels by Adaf that are suffused with melancholy brilliance but feel disjointed and unfinished. In part this is because much of his work orbits around the untimely death of his sister; they are performances of mourning as much as or even more than conventional narratives with beginnings and endings. "In dreams I can see my sister, hear her," says Shadrach, "but everything fades. If there were a way to draw up something from the past, to hold onto it, I would want to, I want to." In trying again and again to apprehend an elusive past, Adaf produces poems disguised as novels. The futuristic technology of *Shadrach*—

self-contained "evolution bubbles" and time-jumps into the minds of Sderot teenagers—seems above all an attempt to use sci-fi as a kind of objective correlative for his search for lost time.

In contrast to Adaf's oblique references to the Bible, Dror Burstein's novel *Teet* (Mud) retells in detail the story of the prophet Jeremiah. He does so, however, in an unsettling way. The setting is contemporary in that the events take place in a world much like that of today, with smartphones and airplanes, yet different in that prophets are common as public relations specialists, and Israel's neighbors are Babylonians, Assyrians, and pharaonic Egyptians. Though the novel was an early nominee for the Geffen Award, it was not shortlisted, despite its literary merits, and it may fairly be asked whether this absurdist novel, despite a few fantastic elements such as a talking dog, is what we conventionally recognize as fantasy or science fiction. In that the story and actors are biblical yet the technology and mentality are modern, we might call *Teet* a science-fiction novel for Iron Age readers.

The novel delights in Jerusalem's present-day topography. Jeremiah rides the light rail, King Yehoyakim resides in the Holyland apartment complex, and episodes are set variously at the Cinemateque, Teddy Stadium, and the Givat Ram campus of the Hebrew University. Yet everything is simultaneously defamiliarized, as the hipsters get their tattoos in Akkadian, the literary journals publish prophets alongside poets, and the Babylonian army makes its entrance in attack helicopters. While the story of Jeremiah has been an occasion for writers to make contemporary ideological statements—the Hebrew poet Y. L. Gordon turned the Judean king Zedekiah into an Enlightenment mouthpiece while Stefan Zweig gave voice to World War I pacifism in his drama *Jeremiah*—Burstein is mostly content to let Israelite and Israeli rub against each other and enjoy the heat generated by the friction. The novel will surely generate discussion when it appears in English translation later this year.

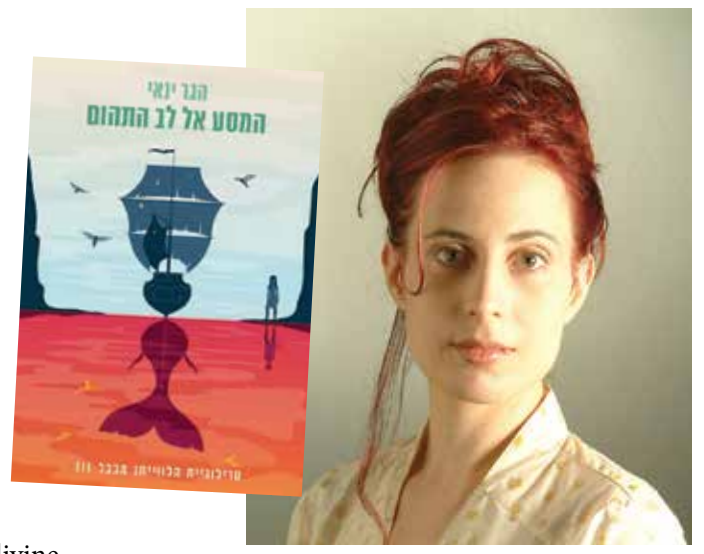
What is ultimately most striking about *Teet's* take on Jeremiah, and where it falls entirely on the side of the modern, is the near-total absence of any experience of the divine. Prophets in this novel are poets, inspired less by the word of God than by the possibility of a good review. The biblical Baruch is transmuted here into an infamously intemperate literary critic who bashes Jeremiah over the head with his own computer keyboard.

Not long after reading *Teet,* I read Bible scholar James Kugel's new book, *The Great Shift: Encountering God in Biblical Times*. Kugel argues that in asking why the palpably physical, shatteringly immediate encounters with God about which we read in the Bible become more distant, remote, and abstract as we move into the postbiblical (let alone modern) period, we should look not to God but to a changing sense of human self. This self grows progressively more "buffered," to use philosopher Charles Taylor's phrase—more self-sufficient, internally complex, sealed off from external forces. Prophets become poets, and poets find it difficult if not impossible to become prophets. *Teet* reads as a prooftext for Kugel's book, a retelling of Jeremiah with modern, buffered selves.

We might call *Teet* a science-fiction novel for Iron Age readers: Jeremiah rides the light rail, and King Yehoyakim resides in the Holyland apartment complex.

Shimon Adaf. (Photo by Eldad Refaeli.)

Dror Burstein.



Hagar Yanai.

The ancient and the modern also come together in a book readers have waited nearly a decade to read. With *Ha-masa el lev ha-tehom* (Into the Abyss), Hagar Yanai has completed her young adult *Leviathan of Babylon* trilogy—the previous volumes appeared in 2006 and 2008—about the Israeli teens Yonatan and Ella, who enter a fantasy world populated by demons, princesses, and godlings and discover there the reasons for their father's murder back in Tel Aviv. Way back in the inaugural issue of the *Jewish Review of Books* I expressed reservations about the first two volumes—admittedly, I'm not the audience for teen fantasy romance—but I have to say that I enjoyed the third book and found it both more satisfying and in some ways stranger than the earlier ones.

In this concluding volume Yanai makes most use of the Near Eastern mythologies with which she peppered the first two books. When the princess Nino (Yonatan's crush) and the warrior Hillel Ben Shachar (Ella's boyfriend) descend into the underworld as part of their world-saving quest, one understands that Nino is a version of the ancient Sumerian Inanna and Hillel a version of her sometime consort Tammuz, infusing the teen romantic drama and screwball slapstick with death-and-resurrection myths. More strange is the Freudian intensity Yanai packs into the book: Yonatan confronts his mother, who turns out to be the devouring abyss and only one of the book's multiple mother-monsters; Ella, while disguised as her dead boyfriend Hillel, must battle a villain who is also the reincarnation of her father.

Yanai has left aside some of the stray plot ends of the first two books, likely in her determination to finish the task. She has also noticeably switched course between the second book, which presented the darkness of the abyss as a salutary psychic force to be embraced, and the third, in which the characters must resist its destructive allure. Whether or not this sunnier shift facilitated Yanai's return to finish the series, one is grateful to see the completion of the first-ever Hebrew fantasy trilogy.

As an American reader, one is tempted to mine these novels for insight into the Israeli national psyche. Common themes exist among some if not all of these books: the fluidity of identity in our social media world, the nature of Israeli identity more specifically and whether it is something to be sought in the ancient past or the far future, escape from the body whether via technology or death, the power of imagination, and, of course, private detectives. Yet what we see here is mostly a varied and steady stream of speculation and play, and this is not a bad thing. Not every work of Israeli fantasy has to deal with specifically Israeli issues.

Consider, as a final instance, another book shortlisted for the Geffen Award. Ronit Dintsman's children's book *Lev ha-ya'ar* (Heart of the Forest) is set in the woods of the Carmel outside Haifa. Yet it is simply a fairy story, about the tiny sprites that protect the flowers and animals of the forest, an innocent importation of Disneyfied European folklore with nothing Israeli about it apart from the location. Well, it is true that the sorting of novice fairies into their proper units does have a whiff of army life about it. (The heroine, Lev, begins her career under the rather bureaucratic designation "Fairy Number 17.") And when an evil witch in the forest begins abducting fairies, the fairy queen convinces her people to try negotiating, saying, "One makes a peace agreement with an enemy," which happens to be what Yitzhak Rabin proclaimed during the Oslo process. Let's hope things work out better for the fairies.

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Strategic Imperatives

BY AMOS YADLIN AND ARI HEISTEIN

Israeli National Security: A New Strategy for an Era of Change
by Charles D. Freilich
Oxford University Press, 496 pp., $39.95

Israel began as an exceedingly small country surrounded by vastly larger, more populous, and wealthier enemies. In the early 1950s, David Ben-Gurion and several Israel Defense Forces (IDF) generals responded by formulating a national security strategy that rested on the three pillars of "deterrence, early warning, and decision." Since Israel could never attain total victory over its neighbors, it could only aim to defeat the enemy in each round of battle and delay the next round for as long as possible. To do so, Israel had to be perpetually prepared and alert. It had to maintain strong intelligence capabilities and be ready to launch preemptive strikes and preventative wars based on that intelligence whenever necessary. It would have to augment its small standing army with a large pool of reserves that could be mobilized on short notice and rapidly move any fighting onto the enemies' territory. Maintaining a qualitative edge in terms of technology and human resources would be vitally important, and it would be necessary to have strong airpower and armored forces. Finally, Israel had to avoid going to war without the support of a global power, and, once it began a war, it should endeavor to keep it short and to obtain decisive results.

Looking back, it is clear that the Six-Day War of 1967 was the last conflict in which these principles were entirely relevant. The Yom Kippur War in 1973 resulted from Israel's failure to implement them fully, and in the years after that Israel's strategic environment altered decisively. Peace was reached with Egypt in 1978, with Jordan in 1994, and the threat from Iraq vanished following the U.S. attacks in 1991 and 2003. As a result, Israel's conventional force is decidedly stronger than that of its enemies, and the old asymmetry has now been largely reversed. But Israel's enemies have developed a system of warfare based on long-term attrition through nonconventional means by nonstate actors (terrorist attacks, indiscriminate missile launches, and so on). Meanwhile, a new existential threat to Israel's very existence has emerged: Iran's drive for nuclear weapons. In short, Israel is in a radically different position than it was under Ben-Gurion.

This shift in the balance of power and enemy tactics requires a new security strategy, but three main obstacles have made it difficult to update Israel's security concept. First of all, it is impossible to think through national security without discussing borders, which means discussing the future of the territories captured in 1967, but this drags professional assessments into uncertain and highly politicized terrain. Second, the strategic capabilities attributed to Israel's facilities in Dimona have not been included in the country's public discourse on national security despite potentially comprising an important component. Third, most of the experts on Israel's national security strategy are either current or former senior IDF officials, and so it is no surprise that their perspectives are heavily focused on military factors and often fail to adequately integrate diplomatic and political factors into a broader strategy to advance Israel's national interests.

Israel's conventional force is decidedly stronger than that of its enemies, and the old asymmetry has now been largely reversed.

Charles Freilich doesn't come from Israel's officer corps, though he has worked for its government as a senior analyst at the Ministry of Defense and as deputy national security advisor. His 2012 book *Zion's Dilemmas: How Israel Makes National Security Policy* demonstrated the depth of his understanding of the ways in which previous Israeli leaders have dealt with their nation's fundamental defense predicaments. Now, in *Israeli National Security: A New Strategy for an Era of Change,* he brings this knowledge to bear on the question of how future governments ought to cope with them. His comprehensive and thoughtful treatment of these matters nicely complements *IDF Strategy,* the document presented to the Israeli public in 2015 by Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, which approached national security from an operational point of view.

Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion at a graduation ceremony of the Israeli Air Force flight course, August 1950. (Photo by Fritz Cohen, courtesy of the National Photo Collection, Israel.)

National security, as Freilich understands, involves a great deal more than military capacity. Israel "faces foreign policy and demographic challenges," he writes, "that may prove to be almost as dangerous to its long-term future as the military threats, in some ways maybe more so." To escape these dangers, Israel should seek to resolve its conflict with the Palestinians. Freilich correctly suggests that Israel should not only win the "blame game" by demonstrating that it remains willing to accept a peaceful solution along the lines of the "Clinton Parameters." But, Freilich argues, Israel should also be willing to take independent action if no agreement can be reached and unilaterally initiate a disengagement process from the Palestinians. Unfortunately, a two-state solution will be more difficult to successfully implement now than it would have been around the time of the 2000 peace negotiations at Camp David because the radical organization Hamas has grown so much stronger and divided Palestinian governmental authority, while, at the same time, the Palestinian Authority has staked out hardline positions. Nonetheless, Freilich's advice is timely: The Trump administration may have provided a window of opportunity for Israel to make progress on this issue under favorable conditions. If so, this would allow Israel to channel its resources more effectively towards countering dangers that likely cannot be resolved with diplomacy—like the Iran-Syria-Hezbollah threat.

Freilich devotes the bulk of *Israeli National Security* to providing a framework for Israel to assess such threats. The greatest of these is, of course, the danger that lies behind the proxy skirmishes on the northern border: a nuclear Iran. "The dangers posed by a nuclear Iran," writes Freilich, "include the possibility of actual use of nuclear weapons, devastating for any country, but certainly tiny Israel, whose population is concentrated in a small area and which, as former Iranian president Rafsanjani once infamously stated, could be destroyed by one bomb." But even the mere threat of the use of such weapons could have "dire ramifications for

Israel's strategic calculus and freedom of maneuver."

Freilich acknowledges that the Iran nuclear deal (the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action or JCPOA) "set the Iranian program back by several years at least," assuming that the deal holds, but he soberly notes that "Iran will be better positioned to 'break out' in 2025–2030 than it was prior to the agreement." The only way forward is to use the coming years to find new military and diplomatic ways to prevent Iran from going nuclear. In our view, at the same time that Israel invests in a viable military option to deal with the potential threat from Iran, it should work with the United States to design a parallel agreement to the JCPOA, rather than a formal defense treaty. This would constitute a joint plan of action for Washington and Jerusalem focusing specifically on concrete measures to roll back Iran's nuclear ambitions and subversive regional activities.

Freilich, who teaches courses at the Kennedy School of Government, has a keen appreciation and understanding of the "special relationship" between the United States and Israel, but he also worries about it. "The price of the extraordinary bilateral relationship with the United States, including a de facto security guarantee, has been a significant loss of Israel's independence and freedom of maneuver." To regain some of this lost sovereignty, Freilich boldly suggests that Israel begin to phase out U.S. foreign assistance. But, assuming the JCPOA stands the test of time, any such phase-out would more or less coincide with the "sunset" phase of the nuclear agreement with Iran. Would this really be the moment to forgo American aid? The $3.8 billion of annual funding provided by the United States is about one-fifth of Israel's defense budget and is not something that an Israel facing a renewed nuclear challenge from Iran could easily forgo.

Admittedly, proactively discontinuing this financial assistance might enable Israel to plan better in the short term than it could if aid were unexpectedly withdrawn, but it could also mean that Israel would be worse off in terms of arms and technology when a crisis occurs. Indeed, as anyone who has worked closely with Israel's defense budget will attest, it would be extremely difficult to make even minor cuts without damaging the country's defense industry and qualitative military edge.

President Trump's repeated remarks about decreasing foreign aid and similar sentiments expressed by his predecessor against "free-riders" reflect a shift in Washington away from expenditures abroad to investment at home. However, the United States has little reason to unilaterally end its aid to Israel, which is its most loyal and dependable ally in the region. Moreover, it sees excellent returns in the form of shared technology and intelligence, as well as joint operations on the cyber and kinetic battlefields, according to U.S. media reports. Freilich is right that Israel must think through the possibility that the United States might cease providing aid to Israel at some point (the present commitment extends until 2027), but it would harm its capabilities by preemptively phasing out U.S. assistance of its own accord.

While seeking to diminish its dependence on the United States, Israel cannot avoid the conclusion that the U.S.-Israel alliance is irreplaceable. Russia or China might agree to sell weapons platforms to Israel—or not. But would either of those countries use a UN Security Council veto to defend Israel against the relentless and preposterous onslaught that Israel endures at the United Nations? Washington provides Israel with the kind of support it cannot find elsewhere. The alternative to dependence is not independence but isolation.

Scale model of the atomic reactor building designed by architect Yaacov Tzamir under construction at Nahal Sorek near Dimona, August 1959. (Photo by Moshe Pridan, courtesy of the National Photo Collection, Israel.)

Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, left, and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, during a visit to the northern border of Israel, August 18, 2015. (Photo by Amos Ben Gershom/Government Press Office, Israel.)

Descending from the level of existential threats to the more mundane problem of responding to terrorist actions, Freilich argues that "the very frequency of the attacks suggests that the deterrent effect has not succeeded." But one cannot conclude from the common tit-for-tats across the border with Gaza and Syria that Israel's responses are not working. For, as the "broken windows theory" has taught us, taking care of small violations can prevent further escalation. While there is undoubtedly a good deal of logic behind the idea of saving one's resources and energies for major issues, there is also a clear relationship between policing minor violations and preventing major transgressions. Moreover, since the outbreak of the Syrian civil war, much of the fire that has hit the Israeli side has been spillover from a chaotic situation and unprofessional armed forces.

Deterrence involves demonstrating the ability to destroy enemy assets as leverage in order to discourage conflict, yet Israel is under attack from Sunni and Shi'ite jihadists who seek "martyrdom" and are therefore very hard to deter. Nevertheless, there are several examples in which Israel has managed to deter the "undeterrable," including seemingly unpredictable or irrational actors, as Graham Allison outlines in a 2016 article for the *National Interest* entitled "Why ISIS Fears Israel." "Israel's approach to ISIS," he writes, "is straightforward. Israel seeks to persuade ISIS not to attack it by credibly threatening to retaliate. If you attack us, the thinking goes, we will respond in ways that will impose pain that exceeds any gain you can hope to achieve."

Whatever qualms he has about the measures Israel has been taking to achieve deterrence, Freilich is surprisingly ready to describe Israeli policy towards the civil war in Syria as an example of "smart restraint." "In many cases," Freilich writes, "a policy of noninvolvement, even in the face of potentially significant consequences, or near noninvolvement, such as Israel has pursued regarding the Syrian civil war, is the wiser course of action." What this ignores, of course, is that by adopting a passive approach to the Syrian civil war Israel not only permitted the resurgence of a mass-murdering dictator who had been on the brink of defeat but also set the stage for Damascus's Iranian allies to gain a second foothold along Israel's northern front.

While Freilich correctly classifies the threats along Israel's northern front as strategic, one cannot ignore the degree to which they are intertwined

with the existential threat posed by Iran. Whether it is as a result of the relaxation of nuclear enrichment restrictions as part of the JCPOA's "sunset" clauses or because the deal has collapsed, Iran will likely advance closer to a nuclear weapon within the next decade, and there can be little doubt that it has learned from the way North Korean artillery threatens Seoul the importance of holding U.S. allies hostage with conventional weapons. If Israel is insufficiently vigilant or proactive in Syria, Iran could succeed in similarly positioning its forces or proxies vis-à-vis Israel and posing a vital threat that could effectively eliminate a military option to stop its nuclear program. Now that Iran has had the opportunity to set up camp in Syria and is determined to move forward with its plans to build advanced military infrastructure and capabilities, the stage has been set for a conflict that will preoccupy Israel—which is determined to stop Iran—instead of allowing it to enjoy the short-term benefits of JCPOA.

Potential threats to the homefront are for this and other reasons very much on Freilich's mind. Freilich points to the need for further investment in defensive capabilities to protect the homefront, very much in the spirit of former deputy prime minister Dan Meridor's addition of conventional "defense" to Ben-Gurion's three pillars of "deterrence, early warning, and decision" in his comprehensive strategic review in 2006. As Freilich himself observes, Meridor's 250-page confidential report was "probably the most ambitious attempt ever undertaken to formulate an Israeli defense doctrine," though it "was never formally discussed by the IDF or cabinet, let alone adopted." In addition to devoting special attention to the menace that a nuclear Iran would pose, Meridor's report "stressed that in the absence of adequate defenses, rocket attacks could seriously disrupt efforts to mobilize the reserves and make it impossible for the IDF to respond to an attack rapidly." Without denying the importance of these considerations, "defense" has two serious limitations. First, as we learned from the Maginot Line, the aboveground barrier around Gaza, and many other examples, every defensive measure can be neutralized by a skillful foe who leaves the defender playing "catch-up." The advantage of bringing the fight to the enemy is that it forces him to adapt rather than the reverse. Second, although investing more in defense might lower the cost of war in terms of infrastructural damage as well as civilian casualties, no measure of deterrence can be established simply through defense. In this Ben-Gurion and his generals remain correct: The best defense for Israel is still a good offense.

In this important, perceptive book, Charles Freilich writes that Israel's national security situation is as good as it has ever been, but this reality brings its own dangers, since it can encourage a more passive or complacent approach. If the next 70 years of Israel's history are to be as successful as the past 70 years, Israel must maintain a proactive national security strategy with the goal of ensuring a secure, Jewish, democratic, and morally just state at its center. Freilich's work is a very good start.

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Moses, Murder, and the Jewish Psyche

BY LAWRENCE J. KAPLAN

The shocking story that Freud tells—or appears to tell—in *Moses and Monotheism* is well known. Perhaps no one has given a clearer and more concise account of it than Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi at the beginning of his brilliant tour de force *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable*.

> I presume that the bare plot (though not the essential drama) of Freud's *Moses* is, by now, notorious. Monotheism is not of Jewish origin but an Egyptian discovery. The pharaoh Amenhotep IV established it as his state religion in the form of an exclusive worship of the sun-power, or Aton, thereafter calling himself Ikhnaton. The Aton religion, according to Freud, was characterized by the exclusive belief in one God, the rejection of anthropomorphism, magic, and sorcery, and the absolute denial of an afterlife. Upon Ikhnaton's death, however, his great heresy was rapidly undone, and the Egyptians reverted to their old gods. Moses was not a Hebrew but an Egyptian priest or noble, and a fervent monotheist. In order to save the Aton religion from extinction he placed himself at the head of an oppressed Semitic tribe then living in Egypt, brought them forth from bondage, and created a new nation. He gave them an even more spiritualized, imageless form of monotheistic religion and, in order to set them apart, introduced the Egyptian custom of circumcision. But the crude mass of former slaves could not bear the severe demands of the new faith. In a mob revolt Moses was killed and the memory of the murder repressed. The Israelites went on to forge an alliance of compromise with kindred Semitic tribes in Midian whose fierce volcanic deity . . . now became their national god. As a result, the god of Moses was fused with [this god] and the deeds of Moses ascribed to a Midianite priest also called Moses. However, over a period of centuries the submerged tradition of the true faith and its founder gathered sufficient force to reassert itself and emerge victorious . . . though the memory of Moses' murder remained repressed among the Jews, reemerging only in a very disguised form with the rise of Christianity.

As Yerushalmi notes, behind "the bare plot" of Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* lies its "essential drama." Again, we can do no better than to cite his description of that psychological drama.

> In the beginning the primeval father was slain by his sons. Ultimately, in polytheism, he was completely forgotten, his memory repressed. In its very essence, therefore, monotheism represented the return of that long latent memory in the form of the one omnipotent God beside whom there is no other. The tremendous impact of what Moses revealed to the Israelites lay, one might say, in a shock of recognition, in their profound sense of reunion and reconciliation with the long lost Father for whom mankind had always unconsciously yearned. This, indeed, was the origin of their feeling of being the Chosen People. But even then Moses' teachings could not become a "tradition." For this, in a repetition of the primal patricide, Moses had first to be slain and his teachings forgotten. Only after another period of latency that lasted some five to eight centuries did the Mosaic religion return to group consciousness and grip the Jewish people for all ages to come.

From the very moment of its appearance until today *Moses and Monotheism* has been controversial. Yet amid all the discussion and debate, criticism and defense, historical analysis and, yes, psychoanalysis—Freud had, after all, always identified personally with Moses—one point of *Moses and Monotheism* that has stood firm and unchanging is its "bare plot," Freud's story. But is this story as stable as is generally believed? Scholars have all been struck by the work's unusual and ungainly structure: prefaces that cancel each other out, hesitations, apologies, the imbalance of its parts, repetitions, stops, and starts. And yet they have all tacitly assumed that throughout the winding, discursive, and digressive course of the three essays that comprise the work—"Moses an Egyptian"; ". . . If Moses Was an Egyptian"; and "Moses, His People and Monotheistic Religion" (this last essay consisting of two parts)—the story itself, though repeated and repeated again, remains the same. But does it?

As Yerushalmi's account makes clear, Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* sets forth three exceptionally controversial historical claims: Moses was an Egyptian, the Israelites murdered him, and there were actually two Moseses, an Egyptian Moses and a Midianite Moses. And yet, although Freud never explicitly repudiates any of these claims, a close reading of his text shows that he silently drops *all* of them. Moses was an Egyptian: gone. The Israelites murdered Moses: gone. There were two Moseses: gone.

That Freud wrote *Moses and Monotheism* near the end of his life, after the Nazi rise to power, and as he himself began to reread the Bible his father had inscribed to him and rethink the nature of the Jewish psyche, is crucial for understanding Freud's intellectual biography. And any analysis of his famous claims must both subject them to historical criticism and put them in the context of postbiblical discussions of Moses that go back to late antiquity. Jan Assmann, Richard Bernstein, and others have done so, and yet they, and innumerable others, have presumed that we know the story that Freud settled on. But do we?

A close reading shows that Freud silently drops all three claims: Moses was an Egyptian: gone. The Israelites murdered Moses: gone. There were two Moseses: gone.

I will work my way backward, starting with Freud's thesis of the two Moseses, moving to the murder of Moses, and finishing with Moses the Egyptian.

First the two Moseses: Freud proposes that there was first an Egyptian Moses and later a Midianite Moses, in the second essay of *Moses and Monotheism*.

> [T]he Jewish tribes . . . in a certain locality known as Meribah-Kadesh . . . took over the worship of [the volcano] god, probably from the neighboring Arabian tribe of Midianites. . . . The mediator between God and the people [that is, the Jewish tribes] in the founding of this religion was named Moses. He was the son-in-law of the Midianite priest Jethro, and was keeping his flocks when he received the summons from God.

However, in his historical résumé at the beginning of the third essay, he writes that after the Jews who had left Egypt had murdered Moses, they wandered in the desert, "and . . . in a well-watered locality named Kadesh, under the influence of the Arab Midianites, they took on a new religion, the worship of the volcano god." Freud speaks here, as he did in the second essay, of the "Arab Midianites," but of their Midianite Moses, who in the second essay played such a key role, he has nothing to say. This second Moses, Jethro's non-Egyptian son-in-law, has simply disappeared from the story, never to be mentioned again. How are we to account for this?

In truth, Freud doesn't need the second Moses. As we just saw, it suffices for him to assert that after the Jews had murdered the Egyptian Moses and rejected his religion, they at some later point, under the influence of Arab Midianites, adopted a new, lower, more primitive form of religion, consisting of the worship of the volcano god. So why did Freud introduce this second Moses to begin with?

To understand this, we must realize that the first two essays of *Moses and Monotheism* take the form of a detective story or quest. Freud keeps trying to develop his story, but at key points he seems to arrive at a dead end, an insuperable problem. But then he somehow manages to overcome the diffi-

culty and proceed with his account. Indeed, the very insuperable difficulty turns out to be the vehicle for further progress. So it is with the two Moseses: In the second essay, Freud develops his view that Moses was an Egyptian. But now he faces a problem. The noted scholar Eduard Meyer seemed to have demonstrated, in Freud's view, that it was a Midianite Moses, who could not possibly be identified with Freud's Egyptian Moses, who gave the Israelite tribes at Kadesh a rather primitive form of religion, centered around the worship of the volcano god. So, who was the real Moses? "Unexpectedly," Freud writes, "here once more a way of escape presents itself."

At this point, Freud introduces his controversial claim, based on, it must be said, a rather flimsily grounded argument of the German biblical scholar Ernst Sellin, that the Israelites killed the Egyptian Moses. So, both Freud is right and Meyer is right, because there were two distinct Moseses. The reason, then, that Freud introduces Meyer's thesis of a second Moses is in order to pose the problem of the two Moseses, which problem requires for its answer the murder of the Egyptian Moses—and this has been Freud's true goal all along.

However, in the historical résumé with which he begins the third essay, Freud takes the murder of Moses *as a given*, and he thus no longer needs the thesis of a second Moses for his basic story. Indeed, when Freud in a letter of June 1935 to Lou Andreas-Salomé provided her with an ordered summary of *Moses and Monotheism*, he omitted any mention of a second Moses, saying only that Midianite priests later introduced a new god to the Israelites.

Why was it important to Freud to claim that Moses was an Egyptian and that he was murdered by the Israelites? As we get further into *Moses and Monotheism*, it turns out that its real goal is to suggest a historical scenario that would explain the Jewish psyche. As Freud wrote to an unidentified "Herr Doktor" in 1937, "Several years ago, I started asking myself how the Jews acquired this special character and, following my usual custom, I went back to the earliest beginnings." More specifically, he wished to understand the emergence of what might seem to be the paradoxical, but in his eyes undeniable, combination of Jewish self-confidence and Jewish guilt. The repression of the memory of their savior's murder served to account for Israelite guilt. And the fact that this savior, the Egyptian Moses, had chosen the Israelites helped Freud to account for the emergence of Jewish self-confidence.

Again, working our way backward, let us look at Freud's claim regarding the murder of Moses. The murder and, perhaps even more so, the repression of its memory are the key elements of both the second essay in *Moses and Monotheism* and the first part of the third essay. As Freud writes:

> The Jewish people under Moses were just as little able to tolerate [his] highly spiritualized religion . . . [T]he savage Semites took fate into their own hands and rid themselves of their tyrant. . . . There came a time when people began to regret the murder of Moses and to seek to forget it. . . . [T]he distressing fact of his violent end was successfully disavowed.

But then, unexpectedly, as the book is coming to a close, Freud minimizes the murder's significance and, indeed, even seems to doubt whether it occurred at all. "And if they happened to strike their great man dead, they were simply repeating an atrocity that in primal times had been directed as a sanction against a divine king, and that went back, as we know, to an even older example." Freud is referring, of course, to his speculative theory in *Totem and Taboo* that both human guilt and religion have their origins in the killing of the primal father by a horde of jealous brothers. Even more unexpected, after this deflationary reference to the Israelites "happen[ing] to strike their great man dead," "if" indeed they did so, there is *no* reference

Funerary figure of Ikhnaton, ca. 1353–1336 B.C.E. (Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art.)

at all throughout the third essay's second part to Moses's murder. It is simply dropped. Thus, while Freud goes on to refer in several subsequent passages to the Jewish people's rejection of the Mosaic religion, he never mentions their murder of Moses again. What is going on here?

Originally, as I briefly stated earlier, Freud needed his thesis of the murder of Moses to account for Jewish guilt. It was the murder of Moses that partially brought to the surface the Jews' memory of the "original sin," that is, the murder of the primal father described in *Totem and Taboo*. The Jews repressed both memories, but, as all good Freudians know, repressed memories are the most potent ones. Hence the "growing sense of guilt [that] . . . seized the Jewish people" and its neurotic power. But, as Freud retells his story, it turns out that it was *not* the repressed memory of the murder of Moses that triggered Jewish guilt, but something else entirely. But if it was not the repressed memory of the murder of Moses that triggered Jewish guilt, what did? In order to answer this, we must put the question to the side for the moment and turn to the third of Freud's controversial historical claims, namely, that Moses was an Egyptian, the claim with which he begins *Moses and Monotheism*.

All scholars agree that the evidence that Freud advances in favor of Moses being an Egyptian is extraordinarily weak. Regarding "Moses" being an Egyptian name, Yerushalmi replies: "[W]hat's in a name? Both Philo and Josephus knew that the name Moses is etymologically Egyptian, but they did not conclude from this that he was of Egyptian stock." Regarding Freud's attempt to deduce Moses's Egyptian origin from the fact that he introduced the allegedly Egyptian custom of circumcision to the Jewish people, Richard Bernstein responds that one could very well imagine that "even a (Hebrew) Moses who led the Jews out of Egypt appropriated the Egyptian practice of circumcision in order to enhance the self-esteem of the slaves." Indeed, to sharpen Bernstein's point, one could very well imagine that this is *precisely* what an assimilated, Egyptianized Hebrew would have done, just as the assimilated, Westernized Theodor Herzl insisted that the delegates to the First Zionist Congress follow Western practice and wear white ties and tails to the festive opening session in order that "[p]eople should get used to seeing the congress as a most exalted and solemn authority."

The question arises, then, as to why it was so important for Freud to make this claim. After all, he begins his book with the arresting declaration, "To deprive a people of the man whom they take pride in as the greatest of their sons is not a thing to be gladly or carelessly undertaken, least of all by someone who is himself one of them." So why does Freud make Moses an Egyptian? I ask here not about his psychological motivations or what this means for his sense of himself as a Jew, but rather about the function that Moses being an Egyptian plays within the book's overall argument.

For Freud, as he states time and again, the source of the Jewish people's extraordinary self-confidence is their belief in their election by God. But, of course, for Freud, who does not believe in God, who is one of those who, as he puts it, "are poor in faith," election by God means election by Moses. For him, just as God is the great other, so Moses has to be *other* than the people he chose. And here we come to the significance of Moses being an Egyptian. For, to begin, Moses's otherness, for Freud, is an *ethnic* otherness. Moses, the Egyptian, chooses the Israelites, who as a group of Semitic tribes are *foreigners*, are ethnically other than him, to be his new people.

In his second essay, ". . . If Moses Was an Egyptian," after Freud develops his "hypothesis" that Moses was an aristocratic Egyptian, an "ambitious and energetic . . . convinced adherent of the new religion [of the Aton]," he further suggests that after Ikhnaton's death and the ensuing rejection of the religion of Aton, Moses decided to find "a new people to whom he would present for their worship the religion which Egypt had disdained."

> Perhaps he was . . . Governor of the frontier province (Goshen) in which certain Semitic tribes had settled . . . These he chose to be his new people . . . He came to an agreement with them, put himself at their head and carried the Exodus through "by strength of hand."

One might assume that these Semitic tribes were oppressed by the Egyptian empire, but there is nary a word about them being enslaved, much less of their being Yerushalmi's "crude mass of . . . slaves." What is significant for Freud here is that Moses, the Egyptian aristocrat, chose foreigners to be his

new people. Indeed, it is striking that while Freud in *Moses and Monotheism* always refers to the biblical Israelites anachronistically as Jews, here he refers to them as "certain Semitic tribes," emphasizing their ethnic otherness. This, then, is why Moses, for Freud, had to be an Egyptian, for his election of the Jewish people to be "his" people could have meaning only if they, to begin with, were *not* his people.

But in a famous passage near the end of the book, Freud paints Moses's election of the Jews very differently, though most scholars, including Yerushalmi, conflate it with the earlier ones. He writes that Moses as "a mighty prototype of a father . . . stooped to the poor Jewish bondsmen to assure them that they were his dear children." Here there is no mention, as earlier, of the biblical Israelites being a group of Semitic tribes, and there is no need for Freud to make Moses into an Egyptian. For Moses's otherness, here, is not an *ethnic* otherness, but a *social* otherness. Moses's election of the Jews consists in his being an aristocrat who stoops to the level of Jewish slaves and chooses them to be his children. Note that he does not choose them to be his *people*—they already are his people. Here Freud's Moses is, to return to my earlier remark, something of a Theodor Herzl type: the assimilated Jew who returns to his people to redeem them from persecution and oppression. (Freud admired Herzl as a "fighter for the human rights of our people" and inscribed a copy of his *Interpretation of Dreams* to Herzl.) Therefore, while Freud in this section states that Moses took his monotheism from Ikhnaton, he *never* refers to Moses as an Egyptian. For it is no longer necessary for Moses to be ethnically other than the Jew in order to elect the Jews.

I can now answer my earlier question. If it was not the repressed memory of the murder of Moses that triggered Jewish guilt, what was it, according to Freud? I would now answer that it was the fatherhood of Moses, his stooping down and choosing poor slaves as his "dear children," that *at one and the same time* was the source of the Jewish people's extraordinary self-confidence and extraordinary guilt. For the appearance of Father Moses, alongside the appearance of God the Father that constituted the substance of his teaching, and behind both the submerged memory of the primal father, elicits both love and hostility. The love toward the father—Moses, God, the primal father, or all three blended together—and the sense of being chosen by him give rise to the sense of self-confidence, while the unacknowledged and repressed hostility toward him gives rise to guilt. In the last section of *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud writes:

> The first effect of meeting the being who had so long been missed and longed for was overwhelming and was like the traditional description of the law-giving from Mount Sinai. Admiration, awe and thankfulness for having found grace in his eyes—the religion of Moses knew none but these positive feelings towards the father-god. . . . A rapture of devotion to God was thus the first reaction to the return of the great father. . . .
> Yet . . . [a]mbivalence is a part of the essence of the relation to the father: in the course of time the hostility too could not fail to stir, which had once driven the sons into killing their admired and dreaded father. There was no place in the framework of the religion of Moses for a direct expression of the murderous hatred of the father. All that could come to light was a mighty reaction against it—a sense of guilt on account of that hostility, a bad conscience for having sinned against God and for not ceasing to sin.

Note that here it is "the murderous hatred of the father," whether the father be Moses or God or the primal father—more likely all three—that gives rise to the "sense of guilt." To be sure, that hostility "had once driven the sons into killing their admired and dreaded father," but there is no indication here that it drove the Israelites to kill their admired and dreaded Father Moses. And indeed, no repressed memory of an actual murder is necessary in order to instill any sense of guilt in the Israelites; the unexpressed hostility and murderous rage are more than sufficient. For, as Freud has taught us, in the depths of the unconscious, the wish is as potent as the deed.

Moses and Monotheism is a detective story.

In truth, in both Freud's earlier account in the book and his later one it is the memory of the father that serves as the source of Jewish guilt and the consequent "deep impression" that the "monotheistic idea made upon them." However, in the earlier account, *the very first time* Freud describes Moses as a father figure is at the very moment he, Moses, is murdered. "Fate had brought the great deed and misdeed of primeval days, the killing of the father, closer to the Jewish people by causing them to repeat it on the person of Moses, an outstanding father-figure." It is almost as if the Jewish people's murder of Moses turned him into an "outstanding father-figure." In the later account, however, Moses's initial appearance to the Jewish people is in the role of a father. To cite the full passage that I excerpted earlier:

> There is no doubt that it was a mighty prototype of a father, which, in the person of Moses, stooped to the poor Jewish bondsmen to assure them that they were his dear children. And no less overwhelming must have been the effect upon them of the idea of an only, eternal, almighty God, to whom they were not too mean for him to make a covenant with them and who promised to care for them if they remained loyal to his worship. It was probably not easy for them to distinguish the image of the man Moses from that of his God, and their feeling was right in this, for Moses may have introduced traits of his own personality into the character of his God—such as his wrathful temper and his relentlessness.

To be sure, this passage is immediately followed by Freud's statement, "And if they then happened to strike this their great man dead, they were simply repeating an atrocity that in primeval times . . . ," but, given that, as we have seen, the unexpressed hostility and murderous rage toward the father were more than sufficient to instill guilt in the Israelites, we can now understand why he minimizes here the significance of the actual murder of Moses—"if," indeed, it "happened" at all—and why throughout the rest of the third essay's second part he drops all mention of it.

In sum, in Freud's first account, the one everyone knows, it is the repressed memory of the murder of Moses, who becomes a father only when he is murdered, that is the source of Jewish guilt. However, in Freud's second account, at the close of his book, it is the repressed hostility that the Jewish people felt toward Moses, who from the very beginning appeared as an "adored and feared" father in the eyes of his "dear children," that serves as the source of their guilt.

In the first account it is the election of the "Semitic" Israelites by the Egyptian Moses that gives rise to their sense of self-confidence, while it is the repressed memory of Moses's murder that triggers Jewish guilt. But in the second account it is the appearance of Moses, the father, together with his teaching about God the Father and the ambivalent feelings they trigger that, at one and the same time, elicit both Jewish self-confidence and Jewish guilt. This is, at least as psychoanalysis, a plausible claim, and it requires none of the historical pyrotechnics of Freud's more famous story.

A deep and striking narrative irony, then, lies at the very heart of *Moses and Monotheism*. At the very beginning of the second part of the third essay Freud writes, "The [second] part of this study . . . is nothing other than a faithful (and often word-for-word) repetition of the first part [of the third essay], abbreviated in some of its critical enquiries and augmented by additions relating to the problem of how the special character of the Jewish people arose." And readers have taken him at his word. However, in the course of discussing "the problem of how the special character of the Jewish people arose," Freud changes the book's storyline radically, dropping the claims about Moses, the Egyptian governor, and his being murdered by the very people he liberated and replacing them with his new picture of Moses, the admired and dreaded "mighty prototype of a father" who, though he was rejected by his "dear children" and served as the object of their (unconscious) "murderous hatred," was never literally murdered by them.

When someone retells a story—especially a story of great importance—it is never told the same way, despite the teller's protestations to the contrary. It changes in ways of which the teller may be unaware. This was, of course, a lesson taught by the master, Freud himself, but that does not mean that he himself was exempt from it.

Strikingly, when Jews sit down to retell the story of the exodus on Passover night, the account, as found in the Haggadah, differs radically from that in the Bible. While the biblical account focuses on Moses's critical role in liberating his people, the account in the Haggadah famously, almost shockingly, makes no mention of Moses at all; the focus is exclusively on God. But this change in the retelling, far from being inadvertent or unconscious, was deliberate. It was as if the Rabbis wished to make sure that Moses's people would always be able "to distinguish the image of the man Moses from that of his God." For the rabbis, unlike Freud, were men of faith.

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Jews, Revolutionism, and Doublethink

BY GARY SAUL MORSON

In her memoir of Russian intellectual life under Stalin, *Hope Against Hope*, Nadezhda Mandelstam recalls that her husband Osip had "an occasional desire . . . to come to terms with reality and make excuses for it. . . . At such moments, he would say that . . . he feared the Revolution might pass him by if, in his short-sightedness, he failed to notice all the great things happening before our eyes." She immediately explains that this mood can't just reflect one person's psychiatric stress since it was so widely shared. "It must be said that the same feeling was experienced by many of our contemporaries, including the most worthy of them, such as Pasternak." Her most-quoted sentence follows:

> My brother Evgeni Yakovlevich used to say that the decisive part in the subjugation of the intelligentsia was played not by terror and bribery (though, God knows, there was enough of both), but by the word "Revolution," which none of them could bear to give up. It is a word to which whole nations have succumbed, and its force was such that one wonders why our rulers still needed prisons and capital punishment.

This phenomenon of "revolutionism," a love and veneration for revolution not as a mere means but as an end in itself, had already been recognized in Mikhail Gershenzon's famous 1909 anthology, *Landmarks: A Collection of Articles on the Russian Intelligentsia*. But, of course, Gershenzon and his contributors could not know how revolutionism would evolve during and after the revolution. For convenience, we can distinguish three kinds of revolutionism: the prerevolutionary embrace of terrorism and wholesale destruction, a second sort experienced during the Russian Revolution itself and its immediate aftermath, and a third predominating after the new regime was established.

Nadezhda Mandelstam was describing the third type of revolutionism, on which I intend to focus, but of course this phenomenon would not have been possible without the experience of the revolution itself. When the Bolsheviks overthrow the provisional government in November of 1917, Pasternak's Doctor Zhivago muses, "This unprecedented thing, this miracle of history, this revelation comes bang in the very thick of the ongoing everydayness . . . Only what is greatest can be so inappropriate and untimely" as revolution, he notes. But he soon recognizes that he has allowed words and abstractions to blind him, and he envisions the consequences: "Was it possible that he must pay for that rash enthusiasm all his life by never hearing, year after year, anything but these unchanging, shrill, crazy exclamations and demands, which became progressively more impractical, meaningless, and unfulfillable as time went by?"

What entranced Zhivago was an experience of time that anthropologist Victor Turner famously called liminality: a moment of transition when all definitions are in flux and everything seems possible. It is easy enough to see how revolution could seem like such a moment. To use Engels's famous phrase, this was the leap from the kingdom of necessity to the kingdom of freedom—with freedom here meaning not the power of the individual to do what he likes but of the collective to reshape all life. As Trotsky argued, "Communist life will not be formed blindly, like coral islands, but will be built consciously . . . Life will cease to be elemental."

Doubling of the conscience, which destroys the integrity of the person, is a crucial aspect of revolutionism.

Trotsky confidently predicted that all nature would be transformed, or as he put it, "nature [itself] will become 'artificial.' . . . In the end, he [man] will have rebuilt the earth, if not in his own image, at least according to his own taste. We have not the slightest fear that this taste will be bad." Idealists speak of the eternal poetry of earth, but, Trotsky instructs, "the poetry of earth is not eternal. . . . [M]an in Socialist society will command nature in its entirety, with its grouse and sturgeons." Human beings will even redesign and improve their own bodies: "The human race will not have ceased to crawl on all fours before God, kings, and capital, in order later to submit humbly before the dark laws of heredity and a blind sexual selection." People will become stronger, more beautiful, more intelligent. "The average human type will rise to the heights of an Aristotle, a Goethe or a Marx. And above this ridge new peaks will rise." The effect of such revolutionism was, in fact, unprecedented environmental degradation. During the revolutionary period, it led to the death of millions.

Poster advertising the movie* Doctor Zhivago*, 1965.

Since liminality cannot go on forever, *someone* will eventually impose a new everyday reality. Natural and social laws return with a vengeance. Revolutionaries continue to say you can't make an omelet without breaking eggs, but as the economist Aron Katsenelinboigen would reply, we can see the broken eggs—the millions dead—but where is the omelet?

"It turns out," Zhivago tells Lara, "that those who inspired the revolution aren't at home in anything except change and turmoil . . . For them, transitional periods, worlds in the making, are an end in themselves . . . they don't know anything but that . . . they are incompetent. Man is born to live, not to prepare for life. Life itself, the phenomenon of life, the gift of life is so breathtakingly serious! So why substitute this childish harlequinade of immature fantasies, these schoolboy escapades?"

Once a regime is firmly established, the third kind of revolutionism takes hold. We can recognize it by the special kind of blindness it induces. The point is not just that people unwittingly, or even wittingly, close their eyes to every disconfirmation. No, they also make a virtue of the very act of blinding themselves! The ability to do so became a special Bolshevik virtue. In Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry* stories, the autobiographical narrator Lyutov struggles to keep his faith in the revolution despite all evidence to the contrary. The soldiers' constant, and often sincere, use of terms such as treason and counterrevolution to justify unnecessary brutality raises an obvious question: Is it reasonable to expect "wild beasts with principles" to rule with compassion? The question applies even more to professional revolutionaries. Babel's stories trace the efforts of his fictional counterpart *not* to see what he sees and to treat his doubts as shortcomings.

Evgenia Ginzburg's celebrated memoir of life in the Soviet camp system, *Into the Whirlwind*, is a study in such doubts, and its most terrifying moments are the ones in which the prisoners are shown maintaining faith in the revolution. Even Ginzburg's fellow prisoner Garey Sagidullin, whose last name had become a famous counterrevolutionary "ism," insists to her that "I was and I remain a Leninist, I swear by my seventh prison." Another prisoner needs to confide in someone after the horrors of interrogation and chooses Ginzburg as a fellow lifelong party member: "Sh-sh, Jenny dear, I don't want the non-communists to hear me, they might get the wrong idea." Yet another asks Ginzburg for help deciding whether to denounce a prisoner for concealing her jewelry: "It's disgusting,

but on the other hand, this is a Soviet prison and for all I know she may be a real enemy." "And what about you and me, Katya?" Ginzburg asks, only to get the standard reply, "You can't make an omelet without breaking eggs."

Then there is Julia, who still believes that there really are millions of anti-Soviet agents. "Do you know what's happening in the country?" she asks. "Treason! Appalling treason which has worked its way into every link of the party and government apparatus." Ginzburg replies: "But if everyone is supposed to have betrayed one man, isn't it simpler to think that he has betrayed them?" Julia went pale and said tersely, "I'm sorry, I made a mistake [talking to you]." Ginzburg also recalls her friend Olga, a person of "keen intelligence," who shared her horror that "whole strata of the population were being 'removed.'" Only after conversing with her for close to two years did Ginzburg discover, "on our way to [the prison camp] Kolyma . . . that in spite of everything, she worshipped Stalin" and wrote verses praising him. What is the mental mechanism that makes this possible? Ginzburg learns of one such mechanism grounded in Marxist-Leninist thought from "the conscience of the Party," named Yaroslavsky:

> He first explained to me the theory which became popular in 1937 that "when you get down to it, there is no difference between 'subjective' and 'objective.'" Whether you had committed a crime or inadvertently "added grist" to another's mill, you were equally guilty—even if you had not the slightest idea of what was going on.

Thus, when Ginzburg was accused of participating in Kirov's assassination and proved that she was not even in Leningrad at the time, that made no difference because she was "objectively" guilty anyway. This makes it possible to know both one's innocence and the party's correctness at the same time. Of course, more generally speaking, the concept of "dialectical" reasoning allowed for self-contradiction. There is a famous story about Stalin asking his audience which is worse, the right deviation or the left? After dismissing both answers, he concludes: "both are worse." It was just such dialectics that suggested George Orwell's concept of "doublethink."

Stalinist propaganda poster, ca. 1942. The slogan reads, "Long live the Komsomol fellowship." (Pictorial Press Ltd/Alamy Photo.)

Ginzburg describes how, as a dedicated Leninist with unshakeable faith in the party, she gradually began to entertain questions. "For the first time in my life I was faced by the problem of having to think things out for myself." She was 30 years old, and she had not once thought things out for herself! Moreover, Ginzburg's depiction of revolutionism and the doublethink it entails is so devastating that her admiring readers have tended to ignore the fact that she never quite frees herself from its coils. She remains a Leninist and retains her faith in the party. For her, the problem is Stalin, and that's all. The idea that in a one-party state, with no law to restrain whatever the party does, a Stalin is not surprising never occurs to her.

She is also quite aware that according to Leninist doctrine, truth is whatever the party says it is and morality whatever the party finds expedient, while the assertion of any other standards is bourgeois "idealism," if not "rotten liberalism." When she tells an interrogator that she just wants to act according to conscience, he asks if she is some sort of Christian. When she replies, no, she just wants to be "honest," "he gave me a lecture on the Marxist-Leninist view of ethics. 'Honest' meant useful to the proletariat and its state." She never disputes that this is precisely what Leninism entails.

In chapter 39, she is still able to write, "And yet even now, after everything that had happened to us, would we have voted for any regime other than the Soviet, the one that had grown as close to us as our hearts and as natural as breathing? All I had—the thousands of books I had read, the memories of my youth . . . I owe to the revolution." Does she really think she could not have read those books under the Mensheviks?

In her postscript to the first volume, written after Khrushchev's de-Stalinization reforms, Ginzburg reaffirmed her unshaken faith in "the great Leninist truth." How different is she from her friend Julia, who maintained the great Stalinist truth? Ginzburg has been clear that her Leninist beliefs entail her full approval of collectivization as one of the "basic points of the Party line." Collectivization, of course, included "the liquidation of the kulaks as a class," followed by the deliberate starvation of millions.

Earlier in the book, while suffering from mortal terror and indignation, Ginzburg exclaims "What d'you think you're doing to people, *to Communists*, you devils?" Tellingly, Alexander Tvardovsky, the famed editor of *Novy Mir*, observed, "She only noticed that there was something wrong when they started jailing Communists. She thought it quite natural when they were exterminating the peasantry." When her book ends, her affirmation of Leninism sounds to me like the end of *1984*. She loved Big Brother.

In Vasily Grossman's great novel *Life and Fate*, Krymov, a convinced party man, wonders how all those people who had helped Lenin create the party could have been spies? Krymov realizes that he sincerely believes contradictory things. Can it be, he asks himself, "That I am a man with two consciences? Or that I am two men, each with his own conscience?" This doubling of the conscience, which destroys the integrity of the person, is a crucial aspect of revolutionism.

Krymov also wonders why he and other party members had had nothing to do with the families of arrested comrades, while illiterate old ladies took in their orphans. "Were these old women braver and more honorable than old Bolsheviks?" He arrives at an insight similar to Nadezhda Mandelstam's: "Fear alone cannot achieve all this. It was the revolutionary cause itself that freed people from morality in the name of morality . . . *This* was why it was right for a woman—because she had failed to denounce an innocent husband—to be torn away from her children and sent for ten years to a camp. People's fear of death had been joined with the magic of the Revolution."

Everyone I have discussed—the Mandelstams, Gershenzon, Pasternak, Trotsky, Babel, Ginzburg, and Grossman—was of Jewish background. Grossman explicitly wonders at how so many Jews became possessed by what he calls "the mystical worship and adoration" of revolution even at those times when the governing ideology demanded the persecution of Jews. This leads one to ask a terrible question: Were Russian Jews especially susceptible to revolutionism and doublethink? Either because of a history of persecution or the continuing resonance of the prophetic tradition? That would be unfortunate because whenever "the magic of revolution" divides the world into the good and the evil, Jews—as Babel notes in his *1920 Diary*—will be subject to special violence.

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In (Partial) Defense of Doublethink

BY NADIA KALMAN

To be honest, it was a relief to laugh. The previous talk at YIVO's recent conference on "Jews In and After the 1917 Russian Revolution" had been Eli Lederhendler's aptly titled "Lamentations: The Politics of Jewish Sustenance and Succor," in which he recounted the pogroms and repressions of the tsarist era and the even worse pogroms of the Russian Civil War. And there was more, much more, to come: multicolored "Terrors," assorted anti-Semitic campaigns, and mass killings and arrests.

Our laughter was, in part, at the willed blindness of Evgenia Ginzburg, one of those arrested in Stalin's Terror and the subject of Gary Saul Morson's talk on the dangers of "revolutionism." Ginzburg was a loyal communist accused of "playing a double game" (a common accusation against Jews) and imprisoned in the Gulag.

Her memoir, *Into the Whirlwind*, finished in 1967 and smuggled out of Russia to be published abroad, is a classic of its kind, with a frustrating mixture of insight and obtuseness that seems to have been characteristic of many of those in her generation. Morson read aloud some of her unselfaware statements; for example, an epilogue in which she pledges her continuing fealty to the "great Leninist truth," which presumably includes the sophistries persecutors used against her and millions of other innocents.

At times, Ginzburg shows tremendous insight, particularly into other inmates' self-delusions. It's likely that some part of her understood Lenin's culpability in her imprisonment, and that the whole barrel of Bolshevism, rather than just a few uncomradely apples, was to blame. But another part of her did its best to guard her from this knowledge. In other words, she was practicing something like Orwellian doublethink.

Orwell, who is invoked almost superstitiously by writers grappling with Soviet history, like a statue whose nose students rub before exams, defines doublethink this way:

> To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out . . . and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself . . .

Thus, praising the record harvest while stomachs grumble, fervently extolling—and believing in—the beauty of Soviet justice while shivering in the Gulag on trumped-up charges.

As Morson continued to discuss Ginzburg's memoirs and we continued to laugh, I began to feel uneasy, perhaps because of the sharp distinction he was drawing between Ginzburg's muddled, doubled vision and our own purportedly clearer view. But I have seen doublethink in myself and in other immigrants from the former Soviet Union. Could this tendency have something to do with the defunct country we left decades ago?

As the most eager and earliest converts to the new ways, the Jewish "Old Bolsheviks" offer an extreme example of Soviet doubling of the self. As Yuri Slezkine details in his massive new chronicle of early Soviet true believers, *The House of Government: A Saga of the Russian Revolution*, Jewish revolutionaries often swapped out their last names for hard words like "stone" and "hammer" (Kamenev, Molotov) and clothed themselves in head-to-toe leather: a self-conscious transformation allowing them to perform the "bloody but honorable revolutionary work" that would have horrified the book-

Stories of coming to Marxism are filled with images of enlightenment, but what was needed after the revolution were eyes that were willing to close.

Evgenia Ginzburg in an undated photo.

ish, idealistic boys and girls they had—until recently—been. (Perhaps, as Steven Zipperstein suggested in his conference keynote address, it was precisely this promise of transformation from wordiness to action that attracted many Jews to communism.) The party names and costume changes facilitated a splitting of the self into two parts: the living human (the Jew?) who reflects, worries, and doubts, and the unfeeling instrument of party will.

The "great prophesy" had purportedly been fulfilled, yet poverty and many other social ills persisted, even grew. This was not simply a mismatch between hopes and actualities; the disconnect was between what people saw and what the state wished them to see, between what they were meant to have seen yesterday and today. In his conference talk, Samuel Kassow quoted a Leningrad friend as saying that "in this country, the hardest thing to predict is the past." Thus, although, as Slezkine notes, stories of coming to Marxism are filled with images of enlightenment, what was needed after the revolution were eyes that were willing to close.

Who was the ideal citizen of such a world? Masha Gessen, in her incisive new book *The Future Is History: How Totalitarianism Reclaimed Russia,* describes a large-scale sociological study conducted in the USSR in 1987. Under the direction of sociologist Yuri Levada, this study attempted to define "Homo Sovieticus," the human being shaped by the Soviet regime and on whom it depended. Like Ginzburg and so many others, "Homo Sovieticus" was fragmented, but *both* parts of his mind were shaped by Soviet government dictates. Sometimes he spouted one piece of propaganda and sometimes another, depending on which best assured his safety at the moment. Completely isolated, dependent on a government he considered his true parent, he was the perfect creature of the totalitarian state.

Despite what was for many an earnest desire to satisfy the state's demands, an inclination to make, in Morson's words, "a virtue out of blindness," most Jews were simply incapable of doing so. They were too used to relying on their "good Jewish brains" (a common Russian idiom), too habituated to the outsiders' habits of vigilant perception and difference. They could, however, create separate selves—credulous, half-blind, fully obedient—which at least met this need part-way. As several conference speakers argued, a history of trauma and an intellectual tradition of fostering paradoxes aided in the task.

These Jewish Soviets created within themselves a mental space in which to believe whatever was most convenient to the state. Within that space, they might countenance the perpetrators of violence, or even become them. Thus, Ginzburg could approve of Stalin's wholesale "liquidation" of those peasants who owned anything at all. More extreme ideologues than Ginzburg could countenance the targeting, even, of family. Both Ginzburg and Gessen describe communist women siding with the state against their innocent husbands, disbelieving the evidence of their own experiences, even gratefully shaking hands with those who've come to arrest their spouses.

The most loyal believers found reasons to accept their own persecution. As Morson noted, one of Ginzburg's fellow prisoners wrote paeans to Stalin throughout her two years of solitary confinement and recited them as the women were transported to the infamous Kolyma prison camp. Another swore his fealty to Leninism by the seven prisons to which Leninists had sent him. My personal his-

tory, and that of many other ex-Soviets, includes similar cases: My great-grandfather Lev remained a communist even throughout Stalin's last, brutal "anti-cosmopolitan" campaign. So did his wife, even after she was widowed by his early death, which was almost certainly a result of his persecution.

In later, milder Soviet eras, milder examples of split selves were common. In the 1970s, an acquaintance of my mother's spent a bus ride chatting excitedly with her about the wonders of America, then publicly denounced her plan to emigrate once they arrived at their destination, a Komsomol meeting. He'd assembled different parts of himself for different situations: One had grown up proudly wearing the Young Pioneers' red kerchief, another listened to smuggled Western records.

Once we emigrated, doublethink sometimes took on a comical form. I had to quit my high-school debate team because I kept arguing for my opponents' positions. And I spent at least one afternoon being lectured by my grandmother and her friends—an electrical engineer, a mechanical engineer, and a physicist, all used to heading teams of male subordinates—who sat me down to explain that I needed to be more subservient. The explanation was interrupted by one of their husbands, wondering whether we had seen some mayonnaise-potato salad; he was immediately shouted out of the room.

In contemporary Russia, doublethink may be facilitating the accommodations some Jews are making to the Putin regime's gradual fostering—ably delineated by Gessen—of a totalitarian ethos. When I last visited, I was surprised to hear former dissidents speak of the need to "restore the empire."

Demonstration on October 17, 1905 ***by Ilya Repin, 1906. (Courtesy of the Russian Museum.)***

In fact, as Gessen's book reports, Homo Sovieticus has proved surprisingly durable: Follow-ups to Levada's study show a rise in public approval of Stalin in post-Soviet Russia, and a few years ago, a program on Radio Svoboda reported a similar duality among young adults, who considered Stalin a "strong leader" even as they recalled their own families' experiences of famine, imprisonment, and execution under his rule.

In Russia, the state-run media, manufactured "youth movements," and other propaganda tools may be prodding people toward doublethinking. But what about emigrants like my family members, who left decades ago? Why does my grandmother ignore the evidence of her own family history to voice her approval of Stalin?

To hear the phrase "Evil Empire" in the 1990s, one had only to ask a Soviet immigrant if he had any regrets about leaving.

There is an odd combination of political credulity and cynicism among many of my fellow ex-Soviet immigrants. One can see this coming out in our private lives, our public opinions, and in the radical disconnections that occasionally arise between them. Last spring, National Public Radio interviewed several Russian immigrants on the Brighton Beach boardwalk who continued to hail President Trump as, of all things, a bulwark against Russian incursions. Something deeper than propaganda is driving these minds—and, often, my own—in self-contradictory directions.

During much of the Soviet century, survival was foremost in most people's minds. And doublethink was a particularly useful survival tool for Soviet Jews, who could not break themselves of the habit of thinking altogether. That may be why the habit of doublethink persisted after immigration and continues in forms ranging from the merely neurotic to the pernicious. What helps us survive will itself survive, defying time and logic.

To return to the particular case of Ginzburg's ideology and "Leninism": What, exactly, did they mean? During her imprisonment, not much. Whatever ideological specificity the terms held for her when she was a teacher or a student, her Leninism in prison seems purposefully vague and flexible. She uses it interchangeably with communism and pairs it with such adjectives as good, decent, true, and honest, and when she wants to remind herself, or others, that she is still a member of the human race. In fact, Ginzburg uses communist terms to denote such humanistic (and Jewish) ideals as respect for individuals and equality under the law. When another prisoner calls her "comrade," she bursts into tears: "So I was not just Cell Number 3, north side, after all." Her humanity—not any particular ideology—has been recognized.

Beyond a professed adherence to "the basic points of the Party line" in her memoir's first chapters, Ginzburg never discusses Leninist or Stalinist doctrine. She even seats herself away from the ideologues on the train to Kolyma. This analytical thinker, a teacher and journalist, capable of magnificent and nuanced linguistic dissection, shies away from specificity when it comes to what is supposedly the central fact of her mental life.

Morson is correct that, strictly speaking, Leninism is responsible for all that Ginzburg suffers; as he points out, a belief in Lenin's goodness is just as counterfactual as the Stalinism Ginzburg deplores in her "lunatic" fellow prisoners. But I do not think that actual, ideological Leninism factors much in Ginzburg's thinking during the period she depicts. Her memoir accords to Leninism a vague and undifferentiated positivity, something like the "Supreme Good" she credits for her survival in the epilogue. I doubt Ginzburg intentionally doublethought herself into this version of Leninism. But, as I read, I marveled at its superior functionality, at all it enabled her to do and to keep of herself.

The Soviet state did its best to be all-encompassing, a Big Brother, but more, the One Father, on which all depends. This father was often erratic as a drunk, lurching from one group of supposed enemies to another, killing millions on impulse. By the time of Ginzburg's arrest, it was clear that no group, and certainly no individual, was free from fear of sudden displacement, imprisonment, and murder. Once marked for punishment, there was no protecting oneself, as Ginzburg sees with a "merciless clarity of vision" after her final interrogation in Moscow.

What would it be like to live, knowingly, under the complete control of chaotic evil? As a matter of psychic survival, many people could not. Writer Lidiya Chukovskaya, whose husband was murdered during Stalin's Terror, wrote:

> The regime had attacked its citizens for no imaginable reason and was beating them, torturing them, and executing them. How were we to understand the reason for such whimsy? If you let it sink in that that there is no reason . . . then your heart, though no bullet has pierced it, will be torn apart, and your mind, in its intact shell of a head, will grow shaky.

As Anne Frank wrote in her underquoted postscript to the famous line about believing people good at heart: "It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering, and death." Some belief in an overarching good

is necessary for survival. So, people denied the evidence of their eyes and forced themselves to believe in the state's benevolence, seeking safety in childlike loyalty.

Credulousness was also tied with a childlike seeking of approval from the parent-state. The more extreme the belief the state demanded, the greater the loyalty of the believer, and the more worthy the believer might become. Perhaps that is part of the reason why Ginzburg and her cellmate Julia are so nostalgic for their childhoods, when belief was more easily achievable. "You and Pavochka are a trusting pair . . . with the mentality of grown-up children," Ginzburg's bunkmate Tanya comments, when Ginzburg wonders about a hospital car on their prison train. Meanwhile, other prisoners are praising and poetizing Stalin. As this scene suggests, within that narrow band of childlike loyalty demanded by the state, there were two apparently similar but fateful options: Stalinism—the more popular and ideologically "correct" position of the 1930s—and Leninism.

Counterintuitively, Ginzburg's Leninism was the better choice when it came to survival because—in contrast to Stalinism—it was not in danger of dissipation upon contact with reality. Imagining that particular authorities are benevolent can lead one into dangerous attempts to invoke that benevolence—for example, via a personal audience with Stalin, which Ginzburg turned down. Stalinism also included a belief in the rightness of his policies; how to hold onto such belief as one beheld the torture of innocents, or oneself? There are limits to even the most practiced doublethink.

Ginzburg sidesteps this trap by emphasizing the "ism" in her Leninism, creating a mental construct so vague it can neither be proven nor disproven, and thus, ironically, represents a sturdy, flexible, abstract, yet still ideologically permissible idea of the Soviet good that is not dissimilar to certain Jewish conceptions of God. An ideal outside of lived experience has a greater chance of enduring the horrors of real life. In a further twist of restorative doublethink, she fans her own fantasy of salvation with a poem invoking Jewish traditions and promising, "Next Year in Jerusalem!" Never mind communism's demands for strict atheism; she draws on whatever spiritual resources she has to doublethink her way through another prison year.

In the afterword to her memoir, Ginzburg declares her fantasy of rescue has been realized: "All that this book describes is over and done," she begins; after all, she and a few others have lived to see Stalin denounced during the Khrushchev thaw. She describes the era of her memoir as "the time of the cult of personality" in Russia—as if there are not other cults, as if she didn't herself, as Morson points out—support the cult of Lenin.

The idea that all iniquity is in the past, the willed belief in a bright present and ever-brighter future, helps her bat away regrets, as well as such questions as why the Supreme Good ensured her survival but not her friends' (whose deaths she movingly depicts). Toward the end of his presentation, Morson read aloud Ginzburg's summing-up of her thoughts on the Bolsheviks: "All I had—the thousands of books I had read, the memories of my youth . . . I owe to the revolution."

Morson asked, "Does she really think she could not have read those books under the Mensheviks?" Perhaps she couldn't allow herself to imagine that; not every imagined possibility is survivable. Similarly, to hear the phrase "Evil Empire" in the 1990s, one had only to ask a Soviet immigrant if he had any regrets about leaving: A fiercely anti-nostalgic reaction staved off wonderings about what might have been, had we stayed.

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Ginzburg's doublethink also helps her retain a capacity to love. Her counterperceptual belief in a guiding force for good allows her to believe in the goodness of others. She pours love into whatever vessels are available, whether "worthy" or not, and, most often, she has neither time nor inclination to delve into the question of worthiness. She thinks kindly of, and smiles affectionately at, the young guards at her sentencing ("What nice faces"); she wonders how she will ever be able to live without the company of a woman doctor she briefly meets in a prison shower; she and her cellmate Julia become like sisters. She keeps in practice with the human emotions of affection and trust, even though she finds herself trapped in the era when "the prisoner's destruction became the object of the operation."

After prison, Ginzburg remarried another former prisoner and adopted an orphan girl. Her belief in an ultimate benevolence, driven as it was by doublethink, allowed her to build a family, despite the horrifying knowledge that her former family had been scattered and her eldest son had died of starvation. Her enduring capacity for love and trust extends to us, her readers. She believes we will understand her story, that we will emphasize with her (like the guard to whom she cried about her innocence early in her arrest, and who, against all odds, offered reassurance and care).

When we discuss the Soviet era, people in my family will sometimes say, "It could have been worse." This refrain has in it some self-protective doublethink, but, also, I believe, some truth. *We* could have been worse. We ought not conflate Ginzburg's doubling with erasure of the self; we ought not to consider this distinction purely semantic.

Early in the memoir, when the Terror is just beginning, Ginzburg's mother-in-law says, "It's happened before," recalling to Ginzburg King Solomon's words, "This too shall pass." Is Ginzburg willfully mishearing, doublethinking her way to some hope? Or, has she understood correctly?

Yes, she believed in "Leninism": She could not bring herself to let go of the only permitted source of belief in benevolence. But she still produced a record that includes a great deal of truth. As Morson pointed out, a doubled conscience destroys one's integrity. But it also leaves an honest part of the soul intact. That is why Ginzburg was able to witness and lament the blindness of her fellow prisoners even as she suffered from the same affliction. Ginzburg lived to tell her tale, leaving it to others to learn from it and, perhaps, to judge.

The Queue ***by Alexander Ivanovich Vahrameev, ca. 1921. From the collection of the State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. (Photo by Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Getty Images.)***

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Shabbtai at Seventy

BY STUART SCHOFFMAN

I was born with the State, in 5708. The heroic narrative of Israel, miraculously risen from the ashes, was planted in my marrow. In the heady summer of '68, I made my first visit. I flew from Athens, dropped my bags at Aunt Betty's, and made straight for the Kotel. It was Friday, and that evening I went to the Hebrew University Hillel, on Balfour Street. After the davening I saw people milling around an elderly man whom I failed at first to recognize. And so it came to pass that on my very first day in Israel, I shook the hand of President Zalman Shazar (1889–1974), journalist, poet and historian, sentimental scion of Chabad—and unabashed aficionado of Shabbtai Zevi (1626–1676), the underrated false messiah.

Twenty years later, I made aliyah from the opposite pole of modern Jewish dreaming: Hollywood. I traded Malibu for Jerusalem, smack in the middle of the First Intifada. "Why on earth would a working screenwriter do such a crazy thing?" marveled the young woman sent by *Yediot* to interview me. "*Livnot u'lhibanot,*" I replied. "To build and be *rebuilt*? You *believe* that stuff?" I did. At 70, I still do.

In 1899, in a startling essay in the *American Hebrew* titled "The Family Affliction," Theodor Herzl described his Zionism: "We have stepped in as volunteer nurses, and we want to cure the patients—the poor, sick Jewish people—by means of a healthy way of life on our ancestral soil. . . . When we live there again, we, too, will enjoy a good name!" Herzl famously saw himself as a messianic figure, and not always with ambivalence. In his utopian novel *Altneuland,* the protagonists enjoy an opera called *Sabbatai Zevi*, for which Herzl provides a helpful logline: "Even his enemies were overawed by the personality of the leader of the masses." The leader soared, then died at 44, in 1904. Rav Abraham Isaac ha-Cohen Kook, newly arrived in Jaffa, eulogized Herzl as "Mashiach ben Yosef," the suffering harbinger of the Davidic redeemer. Other rabbis were duly horrified.

In 1950, while serving as Israel's first minister of education and culture, Shazar published a touching, elegant memoir called *Kokhvei Boker* (*Morning Stars*). Born Shneur Zalman Rubashov (he adopted his acronymic surname only at age 60), he grew up in a Chabad family in a village called Steibtz, in White Russia. His father, a pious, well-read merchant, leaned toward Zionism. The father's wealthy friend Reb Mendel, a supporter of the fiercely anti-Zionist town rabbi, warned him: "It is a very serious matter. God forgive me, but the end of Dr. Herzl may easily be like Shabbtai Zevi." This was the first time Shazar heard that name.

At age 18 he went to Saint Petersburg, where he studied under Simon Dubnow, then writing his 10-volume *World History of the Jewish People*. Dubnow, wrote Shazar, held that "all Jewish history constituted a single human creation, each period being rooted in the one preceding it." In his twenties, Rubashov trained as an academic historian in Freiburg, Strasbourg, and Berlin, where he roomed at the same Jewish boarding house as Gershom Scholem, eight years his junior. At meetings of Zionist youth, "Rubashov was a spellbinding, often ecstatic speaker," Scholem wrote in *From Berlin to Jerusalem*. "We had never heard anything like it, and the most remarkable thing of all was that he really had something to say."

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And not merely on the subject of Zionism. Throughout his life, Rubashov produced a variety of articles in exquisite Hebrew about Sabbateanism. The first, "The Messiah's Secretary," was published in *HaShiloach* in 1913. The young author explored the career of Samuel Primo, who zealously promoted Shabbtai's abolition of the Tisha b'Av fast, but eventually became a fierce rabbinic opponent of the movement. Just as historians have begun to reevaluate Hasidism, Rubashov declared, they should appreciate the vital "sap" of Sabbateanism, its power to inspire the Jewish nation.

Shazar's scholarship merited no fewer than 14 footnotes (picky on occasion) in Scholem's magisterial *Sabbatai Sevi*: *The Mystical Messiah*. His biggest project was published only posthumously: an annotated Hebrew translation, from an original Yiddish manuscript (given him by Bialik), of *Bashraybung fun Shabsai Tsvi*, a narrative penned in early 18th-century Amsterdam by one Leyb ben Ozer.

Let's face it, Herzlian Zionism needed that messianic buzz, which is why the "Uganda plan" was a nonstarter. The wittiest salesman of territorialism was Herzl's friend and ally, the Anglo-Jewish author Israel Zangwill. Amidst the post–Balfour Declaration euphoria, he bemoaned: "There is, indeed, much in common between these hysteric and hyperbolic manifestations and the popular frenzy that attended . . . Sabbatai Zevi." And this masterful sentence: "Zion is a bride who after her divorce from Israel has been twice married to Gentiles—once to a Christian and once to a Mohammedan—and when Israel takes her back he will find his household encumbered with the litter of the two intervening ménages." Putting it bluntly: "Zionism is not safe even from the restoration of animal sacrifices." Zangwill would not be shocked by today's Temple Mount fantasists.

A tsunami of punditry—"Whither Israel at 70?"—clogs the mind. Was Reb Mendel of Steibtz right all along? And if Zionism was Sabbatean, is that so terrible?

In 1924, Zalman Rubashov made aliyah. The next year, he went to work for a new newspaper, *Davar*. In July 1925, on the eve of Tisha b'Av, he wrote an editorial entitled "*Yom Shabbtai Zevi*." Tradition holds that the messiah would be born on the lugubrious ninth of Av, and if we Jews were "*b'nei shoresh*," fully rooted in our history, we would honor Shabbtai Zevi on this, his 300th birthday. (Whether we should fast, he doesn't say.) Shabbtai built a "popular movement such as the *golah* had never known." He "overcame the diaspora, vanquished the medieval nature of Judaism, and forced open the gates of a new Hebrew history." He "struck new fire from the eternal rocks of religion, to redeem the people and the individual." In other words: The Great Pretender was a tragic Promethean hero who ignited an enduring revolution. Writing in Hebrew in secular Tel Aviv, Shazar boldly spun a messianic fiasco into a Zionist manifesto.

Several years ago, the Israeli historian David Assaf posted a blog about Scholem and Rubashov. In 1937, when Scholem published "*Mitzvah haba'ah b'averah*" ("Redemption through Sin"), the seminal article that evolved into his monumental biography, he gave his old friend an offprint with a mischievous inscription: "To the last *Shabbtai-Zvinik* Zalman Rubashov / From a heretical believer and loyal admirer (*ma'amin kofer v'ohev ne'eman*)." In his blog, Assaf noted that in Yiddish the idiom *Shabbtai-Zvinik*—"Sabbatean"—also means "hypocrite."

Shazar was anything but. On a state visit to America in 1966, he went to Brooklyn to see the Lubavitcher Rebbe. Israeli critics carped: This was unbecoming; the Rebbe should come to the president. They failed to understand that the unorthodox Shazar was a warm Chabadnik at heart, true to his roots. He served two five-year terms, until May 1973, and died the following year. Scholem delivered a tribute at the *shloshim*: "In a certain sense, it was Shazar's personal tragedy that he was unable to fulfill his destiny as a historian . . . The scholar and statesman within him strove to dwell together but could not find balance and compromise."

I met him only once, on Balfour Street, but beg to differ. Leafing through the Sabbatean studies of Israel's third president, I hark back to his mentor Simon Dubnow, who wrote in 1893: "We recount the events of the past to the people, not merely to a handful of archaeologists and numismaticians. We work for national self-knowledge, not for our own intellectual diversion." Some historians do it best on the page, others on the stage of Jewish history.

Stuart Schoffman spent 25 years writing columns on culture and politics for Jewish publications in Israel and abroad. His translations from Hebrew include books by A. B. Yehoshua, David Grossman, and Meir Shalev.

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