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VCU Menorah Review

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Winter/Spring 2011 no. 74

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A Novelist's View of Nineteenth Century Judaism

The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot by Gertrude Himmelfarb. New York: Encounter Books

A Review Essay by Matthew Schwartz

One of my pleasanter memories of high school is a beloved ninth grade teacher who recommended George Eliot's *Mill on the Floss* as part of a (voluntary) summer reading list. That and *Silas Marner* and *Middlemarch* are unquestionably among the greatest of the English novels. Another Eliot novel, *Daniel Deronda*, receives less attention and draws fewer readers, perhaps both because of its 900 page girth and its somewhat out of the way topic ? a Jewish young man in 19th century England.

Why would George Eliot, nee Mary Ann Evans, have become interested not only in Jews and Judaism but in the founding of a Jewish state in Eretz Israel twenty years before Theodor Herzl appeared? In *The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot*, Professor Gertrude Himmelfarb offers a scholarly response to this question. A respected scholar in modern European intellectual and social history with a special focus on Victorian England, Professor Himmelfarb published the first of her many books in 1948. This latest book is founded in the wisdom of experience and of sure knowledge and treats what could be a difficult topic with an inspired elegance of simplicity and clarity.

George Eliot came out of an English Protestant background that would hardly seem to have drawn her to an interest in Judaism. Yet, unlike many novelists, Eliot was a serious scholar. She collected knowledge from wide and intensive readings as well as personal observation. She mastered a number of languages and kept notebooks of excerpts from many sources including Jewish: Bible, Talmud, medieval commentaries and modern *wissenschaft*. She had translated writers like Spinoza and Ludwig Feuerbach and also Daniel Strauss's German language biography of Jesus.

Daniel Deronda, published near the end of her life, was not a response to current events but a portrayal of a man discovering himself as a Jew. The novel was an act of self-discovery for Eliot herself ? a spiritual journey into the world of Judaism. Born into a Low Church Anglican family, Eliot turned to Evangelicalism and later to agnosticism or possibly atheism. She did not practice Judaism, but she studied it seriously, as she studied many things.

The novel faced much opposition. Some critics wanted to republish it with the Jewish material deleted. Daniel Deronda's interest in Jewish settlement in Palestine would arouse the ire, a century later, of Edward Said. Eliot's interest in *Deronda* is even more remarkable given the open anti-Semitism expressed by many of Europe's leading intellectuals ? Voltaire, Proudhon, Kant, Fichte, Marx, Thomas Arnold and others. The French consul in Syria had publicly and aggressively supported the ritual murder charge in the infamous Damascus affair of 1840. Professor Himmelfarb's chapter on the Jewish question in Germany, France and England is informative and attentive both to small details and to larger trends.

Beyond her extensive readings, Eliot visited Jewish sites and synagogues in Prague, Leghorn, Amsterdam and other places, and some of what she saw is reflected, with great accuracy, in her subsequent writings. Meeting Emanuel Deutsch was a decisive moment for George Eliot. Deutsch worked in the library of the British Museum, where, knowledgeable in both Hebrew and Hellenic writings, he stirred Eliot's scholarly interests, particularly in Talmud, and provided her with both tutoring and books. In Deutsch's early death, Eliot lost a good friend, and she may have planned the *Deronda* character or perhaps the Mordecai Cohen character as a sort of memorial to Deutsch.

By 1872, when George Eliot began working on *Daniel Deronda*, she was ready to portray Judaism in its uniqueness and also as of a whole with the culture and history of mankind. For in her view, young Daniel embodies the wholeness of Judaism.

The character, Daniel Deronda, first becomes exposed to Jews when he rescues Mirah, a Jewish girl from drowning. He then helps her on a quest to find her mother and brother from whom she had been separated as a child. Eventually, Daniel learns that he is himself of Jewish origin, and he has a poignant meeting with his own mother where he learns that he is not only of Jewish birth but a scion of the distinguished Al-Charisi family. He becomes imbued with the ideal of restoring to his people a political existence in the land of their forefathers.

George Eliot's journey through Judaism did not end with *Daniel Deronda*. Two years later, she published a book, *Impressions of Theophrastus Such*, in which the last essay was entitled "The Modern Hep! Hep!" Hep Hep, an acronym for *Hierosolyma est perdit*a, had been the cry of the Crusaders attacking Jews and more recently of German anti-Semitic rioters in 1819. Eliot brought Judaism and Zionism as well out of the past and into "the national identity that Eliot attributed to all great peoples" (p. 100). Jewish History, she wrote, had become exceptional in its long exile. Kindness, tenderness, love, domestic life and other virtues had withstood centuries of persecution and oppression. Oppression breeds certain vices, but these were a condition of Jewish survival. Eliot rejected Spinoza's criticism of Judaism: "Baruch Spinoza had not a faithful Jewish heart, though he sucked the life of intellect at the breast of Jewish tradition." Still, Spinoza "saw not why Israel should not be again a chosen nation" (p. 103). *Theophrastus Such* restated in essay form Eliot's main views on Judaism and was in a sense her final bequest to the Jews and to the world. Her life ended a year and a half later, in December, 1880. George Eliot doubted that people would like the Jewish element of *Daniel Deronda*, and this often proved true. In letters, she criticized Christian prejudices toward Jews and English arrogance toward Eastern peoples. Jewish reviewers praised the book and Theodor Herzl credited *Daniel Deronda* with helping inspire his call for a Jewish state. Perhaps most significant, Eliot as a clear thinker and observer of humanity presented Judaism not largely in relation to the world but to the Jews themselves. In a time when Western peoples seem very unsure of their own identities and unable to relate to their

own innate greatness, this is an important concept. Thus Gertrude Himmelfarb's excellent treatment of George Eliot's Jewish odyssey.

Let us present an added slant. George Eliot's greatness as a novelist was achieved not by advertising but in large measure by hard work. She visited sites that she would use in novels, including synagogues in preparing for *Daniel Deronda*. She learned Hebrew and even taught some to her "husband" George Lewes so that on one occasion while visiting Switzerland they were able to hide their conversation from the hotel staff by conversing in Hebrew. A reader familiar with rabbinic literature will surely be impressed by the number of rabbinic expressions George Eliot used in *Daniel Deronda*, and she does so as appropriately as any Talmudic scholar. Lewes wrote of her in a letter that she had done so much research, she must know more than many rabbis. The novel's description of the Friday evening meal in the Cohen home is moving in its deep sense of Sabbath feeling.

Daniel himself is presented as a very Jewish character. Think of how his circumstances compare to some of the heroes of the Greek mythology and Classic theater. Like Oedipus, he was rejected at birth by parents, and like Narcissus he could not know his own identity. Yet, Daniel grows up to be a young man of unusual compassion and high intelligence. He feels a strong sense of right and wrong and seeks and uses well opportunities to do good to others. Learning his identity, that he is born Jewish and not of the English gentry as he believed, does not destroy him, as Oedipus and Narcissus implode when they learn who they are. The knowledge instead helps Daniel to do more toward fulfilling his own being. In life and not in tragic death like the Greek heroes, Daniel moves toward fulfillment. Nor is he disengaged from people as were the Greek heroes. Gwendolen, Hans, Mirah and Ezra all find him eminently human and trustworthy, a man who can support and guide them when they are failing and who can help them toward fulfilling who they are even as he fulfills himself.

Gertrude Himmelfarb's 170 pages of *George Eliot's Jewish Odyssey* and Ms. Eliot's 900 pages of *Daniel Deronda* are both well worth the

reading.

Matthew Schwartz is a professor in the history department of Wayne State University and a contributing editor.

An Evolutionary, Nonzero Approach to the Abrahamic Traditions

The Evolution of God by Robert Wright: New York: Little, Brown.

A Review Essay by Cliff Edwards

Robert Wright has taught a course or two in philosophy at Princeton and religion at the University of Pennsylvania, but is best known for his award-winning books, *The Moral Animal: Evolutionary Psychology and Everyday Life* (1994) and *Nonzero: The Logic of Human Destiny* (2000). Former President Bill Clinton had required White House staff to read *Nonzero*, and "The Economist" lauded *The Moral Animal* as a work "destined to become a classic?like Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species*."

In his new work, *The Evolution of God*, Wright turns his attention to religion, particularly the Abrahamic Traditions, and the question of the existence of God. His interdisciplinary approach to the subject through Darwinian insights, game theory, and evolutionary psychology, challenges readers to re-think their views on Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, the Bible and the Qur'an, and the relationship of science and religion. Further, he challenges the current multiplication of works arguing for atheism from a scientific perspective. Wright's counter-claim to a science-based atheism is that scientists "do something that is in some ways analogous to believing in a personal god" when they "believe" in a posited source they name "electron" responsible for patterns they detect in the physical world. Wright suggests that "electrons and God" might both be located somewhere "between illusions and imperfect conceptions" useful in describing the patterns and directions of the invisible forces that shape our universe, including its moral domain.

For those of us in the field of religious studies, particularly those focused on the Abrahamic traditions, Wright's interdisciplinary location of a developmental pattern moving from shamans, through "Chiefdoms,"

"Ancient States," Ancient Israel's polytheism, monolatry, and monotheism, to Philo's "Logos: The Divine Algorithm," encourages a testing of established religious studies assumptions. After about 200 pages devoted to developments in Israelite religion and its Scriptures, Wright devotes 75 pages to Christianity and the New Testament and another 75 to Islam and the Qur'an. A final chapter, "God Goes Global (or Doesn't)", deals with the positive meaning of the underlying pattern revealed in the "manifold existence of a moral order" in history, and advises that Abrahamic religions should take a tip from Hinduism and Buddhism, "relaxing their sense of specialness" in the interests of truth and global cooperation. Wright's embracing of a non-zero-sum-game, a game that does not require that if some win others must lose, becomes important to his view of mutual cooperation among religions on a global level.

That last chapter is not the end of the book, as an "Afterword" of 16 pages and an "Appendix" of 20 pages turn to the topics, "By the Way, What is God?" and "How Human Nature Gave Birth to Religion." If the 567 pages of the book strike one as too much of an investment of reading-time, I suggest turning directly to the "Afterword" on the nature of God. There, the "expansion of humankind's moral imagination over the millennia is interpreted as moving toward a "source of this higher purpose" that qualifies for the label "god", either in the sense of Paul Tillich's "ground of being" or Philo's "Logos" as the underlying logic of life which is a "direct extension of God." Further, Wright suggests that "relating to this source, as if it were a personal god is actually an appropriate way for human beings to apprehend that source." Bringing his search back to the relation of science and religion, Wright claims that physicists exploring the sub-atomic world "commonly do something that is analogous" to this imaginative step taken by many religious believers.

Cliff Edwards is Professor of Religious Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University and consulting editor of Menorah Review.

Author's reflections

Bible Babel: Making Sense of the Most Talked About Book of All Time (Harper, 2010)

By Kristin Swenson

The Bible. That's all a person needs to say to elicit swift and definitive reactions. Everybody seems to have a notion of what you mean and strong ideas and feelings in response. One of the greatest challenges I've faced in introducing *Bible Babel* to people has been correcting the clear but frequently misplaced preconceptions that they have about my book and what I've hoped that it would do out there in the world.

Some assume that *Bible Babel* champions the "Good Book" with interpretations of its words for our lives. Others, by contrast, figure that with it I must be trying to undermine the power and validity of God's Word in some academic evisceration of the foundations of their faith. Truth is, both of those preconceptions are well-grounded; but not because I do what they expect. Rather, there are oodles of books and authors that fit the profiles they assume.

I published *Bible Babel* to do something different. It is not a religious book. Neither is it scornful or dismissive of those for whom the Bible is their sacred text. I feel privileged to have had the opportunity to learn in great detail (and to make a living continuing to learn) all sorts of things about the Bible, from its original languages to the ways that people interpret and apply it in movies, literature, music, and art. I wanted to put some of that information into the hands of general readers so that people could interpret the Bible for themselves and evaluate the ways that others use biblical texts.

Just before the book came out, I had an impassioned conversation with my cousin's wife's father. (Ok, the relationship doesn't matter. Here's the point.) He asked about *Bible Babel*, and I gave him a kind of half-hearted explanation thinking that he probably wouldn't be all that interested anyway. He was incredulous.

"How can you possibly talk about the Bible without promoting your own interpretation?! It's the Bible after all!" was his reaction.

Taken aback, I asked, "What is the first book in the Bible?"

"Genesis."

"Right-o, and that's not a matter of interpretation. Whether you like it or not, Genesis is the first book you read when open the Bible, any Bible. *Bible Babel* simply gives people information like that and hopefully a bit of fun along the way."

The Bible is a unique and complicated book. It's tough to read, much less to make any sense of, without a reliable guide and some solid background information. I wrote *Bible Babel* simply to give people access to basic information about the Bible ? what the Bible is, where it came from, what's in it, and how people get so riled up about it ? and I wanted to do so in a way that's inviting and engaging, whatever one's religious beliefs or lack thereof. I also hoped that with such information people would hesitate to turn the Bible into a weapon to beat up on others.

The Bible is everywhere. Hollywood, politics, literature, and pop music are rich with biblical references, language, and themes. Yet there are few opportunities to learn *about* it. Some people learn particular texts, even memorize passages, in their religious communities, and they may be intimately familiar with what's in the Bible. But seldom have they had the chance to learn what "the Bible" means to other faith groups, about the Bible's original languages and the implications of translation, how the Bible developed, an unbiased treatment of the ways in which people use the Bible to argue different sides of the same controversial issues, and to identify and make sense for themselves of the ways in which biblical texts show up in contemporary culture.

With *Bible Babel* I have tried to package such information into one book ? readable and even entertaining for anyone curious about the Bible. Although I have a Ph.D. in biblical studies ("the history and literature

of ancient Israel," to be exact), I wanted to avoid jargon or, frankly, excessively detailed information of an academic sort. I sought to pack the book with the kind of information about the Bible that makes my students react with "that is SO cool!" and "How come nobody every told me that?!"

Publishing the book with Harper was a great experience. I have a terrific agent who "got" the book, and I lucked out with a sharp, committed editor who was delightful to work with. I'm happy to say that those common preconceptions I mentioned above evaporate when people read *Bible Babel*. And the books received some fair, keen (and kind) reviews, which help prospective readers understand what they're getting into.

I continue to conduct book talks and signings around the country; to chat with people in person (book clubs and religious reading groups), on the television, and radio; to write about the Bible and biblical literacy for online and print publications; and to participate in events celebrating the joys of reading, exploring and developing the craft of writing, and discussing intriguing and perplexing ideas and issues. I am now in the process of developing a reading guide for book clubs and reading groups and a study guide for college classes.

As much as I enjoy visiting with people interested in *Bible Babel*, I've also been happily working on my next book project, a fuller treatment of a subject, the Bible's supernatural beings, that I treat only briefly in *Bible Babel*. Bringing in regular references to popular culture and traditional images and ideas (angels and demons and even vampires, oh my!), it's been great fun already. We Bible scholars may be a dusty, musty bunch, and our books may quickly be replaced or otherwise go out of style, but the subject of our study ? the world's all time best-seller ? is ever new.

Kristin Swenson, a contributing editor, is associate professor of Religious Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Visit her and her Bible Babel blog at www.kristinswenson.com.

Books in Brief: New and Notable

Trials of the Diaspora: A History of Anti-Semitism in England by Anthony Julius

New York: Oxford University Press

The author presents the long and troubling history of anti-Semitism in England from the middle ages to the 21st century, identifying four distinct versions of English anti-Semitism, which he then investigates in detail.

The first is the anti-Semitism of medieval England, a radical prejudice of defamation, expropriation, and murder, which culminated in 1290, the year of Edward I's expulsion of the Jews from England, after which there were no Jews left to torment.

The second major strand is literary anti-Semitism: an anti-Semitic account of Jews continuously reappearing in English literature, from the anonymous medieval ballad "Sir Hugh, or the Jew's Daughter" through Shakespeare to Charles Dickens, T.S. Eliot, and beyond.

Thirdly, Julius addresses modern anti-Semitism, a quotidian anti-Semitism of insult and partial exclusion, pervasive but contained, experienced by Jews from their "readmission" to England in the mid-17th century through to the late 20th century.

The final chapters then deal with contemporary anti-Semitism, a new configuration of anti-Zionisms, emerging in the late 1960s and the 1970s, which treats Zionism and the State of Israel as illegitimate Jewish enterprises. It is this final perspective which, in Julius's opinion, now constitutes the greatest threat to Anglo-Jewish security and morale.

This book, the first history of its kind, is sure to provoke much comment and debate, and comes as a timely reminder that English culture has been in no way immune to anti-Semitism?and in certain ways is still not to this day.

Elijah and the Rabbis: Story and Theology by Kristin H. Lindbeck.

New York: Columbia University Press

Through an innovative synthesis of narrative critique, oral-formulaic study, folkloric research, and literary analysis, Lindbeck reads all the Elijah narratives in the Babylonian Talmud and details the rise of a distinct, quasi-angelic figure who takes pleasure in ordinary interaction.

During the Talmudic period of 50-500 C.E., Elijah developed into a recognizable character quite different from the Elijah of the Bible. The Elijah of the Talmud dispenses wisdom, advice and, like the Elijah of Jewish folklore, helps people directly, even with material gifts. Lindbeck highlights particular features of the Elijah stories, allowing them to be grouped into generic categories and considered alongside Rabbinic literary motifs and non-Jewish tradition of late antiquity. She compares Elijah in the Babylonian Talmud to a range of characters—angels, rabbis, wonder-workers, the angel of death, Christian saints, and even the Greek god Hermes. She concludes with a survey of Elijah’s diverse roles from medieval times to today, throwing into brilliant relief the complex relationship between ancient Elijah traditions and later folktales and liturgy that show Elijah bringing benefits and blessings, appearing at circumcisions and Passover, and visiting households after the Sabbath.

Old World, New Mirrors: On Jewish Mysticism and Twentieth-Century Thought by Moshe Idel

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

There emerged in the 19th and 20th centuries a new Jewish elite, notes Idel, made up no longer of prophets, priests, kings, or rabbis but of intellectuals and academicians working in secular universities or writing for an audience not defined by any one set of religious beliefs. In this book, Idel turns his gaze on figures as diverse as Walter Benjamin and Jacques Derrida, Franz Kafka and Franz Rosenzweig, Arnaldo

Momigliano and Paul Celan, Abraham Heschel and George Steiner to reflect on their relationships to Judaism in a cosmopolitan, mostly European context.

One of the world's most eminent scholars of Jewish mysticism, Idel focuses in particular on the mystical aspects of his subject's writings. Avoiding all attempts to discern anything like a single "essence of Judaism" in their works, he nevertheless maintains a sustained effort to illumine especially the Kabbalistic and Hasidic strains of thought these figures would have derived from earlier Jewish sources. Looming large throughout is Gershom Scholem, the thinker who played such a crucial role in establishing the study of Kabbalah as a modern academic discipline and whose influence pervades Idel's own work; indeed, the author observes, much of the book may be seen as a mirror held up to reflect on the broader reception of Scholem's thought.

Moses of South Carolina: A Jewish Scalawag during Radical Reconstruction by Benjamin Ginsberg

Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press

Franklin Moses, Jr. is one of the great forgotten figures of American history. Scion of a distinguished Jewish family in South Carolina, he was a firebrand supporter of secession and an officer in the Confederate army. Moses then reversed course. As Reconstruction governor of South Carolina, he shocked and outraged his white constituents by championing racial equality and socializing freely with former slaves. Friends denounced him, his family disowned him, and enemies ultimately drive him from his home state.

In this book, Ginsberg rescues the protean figure and his fascinating story from obscurity. Though Moses was far from a saint—he was known as the "robber governor" for his corrupt ways? Ginsberg suggests that Moses nonetheless deserves better treatment in the historical record. Despite his moral lapses, Moses launched social programs, integrated state institutions, and made it possible for blacks to attend the state university.

As a Jew, Moses grew up on the fringe of southern plantation society. After the Civil War, he envisioned a culture different from the one in which he had been raised, one that included the newly freed slaves. From the margins of southern society, Moses built America's first black-Jewish alliance, a model, argues Ginsberg, for the coalitions that would help reshape American politics in the decades to come.

Revisiting the story of the South's "most perfect scalawag," Ginsberg contributes to a broader understanding of the essential role southern Jews played during the Civil War and Reconstruction.

Displaced Persons by Ghita Schwarz

New York: William Morrow

This novel tells the tale of four Polish Jews, following through in three distinct periods in their lives: from their first meeting in the Bergen-Belsen displaced persons camp, to their early attempts at family histories, concluding with the year 2000. In haunting, unsentimental prose that mimics the characters' native cadences of Yiddish and Polish, Schwarz explores the self-conscious strivings of a community that sees survival as a lifelong project and history as the responsibility of those who have lived it. Through this compelling story of ordinary, imperfect women who are neither mythically noble nor irrevocably broken, the author documents joy, sadness, love, loss, humor, anger and hope into the present and future.

Kiev, Jewish Metropolis: A History, 1859-1914 by Natan M. Meir

Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Populated by urbane Jewish merchants and professionals as well as new arrivals from the shtetl, imperial Kiev was acclaimed for its opportunities for education, culture, employment, and entrepreneurship but cursed for the often pitiless persecution of its Jews. This volume limns the history of Kiev Jewry from the official readmission of Jews to the city in 1859 to the outbreak of World War I. It explores the Jewish community's politics, its leadership struggles, socioeconomic and

demographic shifts, religious and cultural sensibilities, and relations with the city's Christian population. Drawing on archival documents, the local press, memoirs, and belles lettres, Meir shows Kiev's Jews at work, at leisure, in the synagogue, and engaged in the activities of myriad Jewish organizations and philanthropies.

In Ishmael's House: A History of Jews in Muslim Lands by Martin Gilbert

New Haven, CT: Yale University Press

The relationship between Jews and Muslims has been a flashpoint that affects stability in the Middle East and had consequences around the globe. In this absorbing and eloquent book, Martin Gilbert challenges the standard media portrayal and presents a fascinating account of hope, opportunity, fear and terror that have characterized these two people through the 1400 years of their intertwined history.

In Ishmael's House sheds light on a time of prosperity and opportunity for Jews in Muslim lands stretching from Morocco to Afghanistan, with many instances of Muslim openness, support, and courage. Drawing on Jewish, Christian and Muslim sources, Gilbert uses archived material, poems, letters, memoirs and personal testimony to uncover the human voice of this centuries-old conflict. Ultimately, the author's moving account of mutual tolerance between Muslims and Jews provides a perspective on current events and a template for the future.

A Short History of the Jews by Michael Brenner

Princeton University Press

The story of the Jewish people is told in a sweeping and powerful historical narrative. Brenner chronicles the Jewish experience from Biblical times to today, tracing what is at heart a drama of migration and chance, yet one that is also deeply rooted in tradition. He traces the latest scholarly perspectives in Jewish history, making this short history the most learned yet broadly accessible book available on the subject.

Brenner takes readers from the mythic wanderings of Moses to the atrocities of the Holocaust, from Babylonian exile to the founding of the State of Israel; from the Sephardic communities under medieval Islam to the shtetls of eastern Europe and the Hasidic enclaves of modern-day Brooklyn. This richly illustrated book is full of fascinating and often personal stories of exodus and return through the centuries and highlights the important contributions Jews have made to the arts, politics, religion, and science—a compelling blend of storytelling and scholarship that brings the history of the Jewish people marvelously to life.

The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot by Gertrude Himmelfarb

New York: Encounter Books

George Eliot is perhaps the most beloved literary figure of the Victorian era, but what distinguishes her even further from her contemporaries is her final and most unusual novel, *Daniel Deronda*. The novel, a work that affirmed the idea of the Jewish state long before Zionist thinkers had even introduced the concept, bewildered Eliot's admirers and critics alike when it was published in 1876. Even today, many dismiss *Daniel Deronda* as an anomaly and fail to acknowledge the work for what it is—a meticulously executed novel with uncanny prescience on a major issue of our time.

In her book, Himmelfarb, a leading Victorian scholar, unravels the confusion surrounding the work and Eliot herself. Indeed, the fact that George Eliot was a Victorian agnostic makes her novel a mystery for those who wish to fully grasp Eliot and her body of work. As Himmelfarb reveals, Eliot was in fact fiercely committed to the novel, and to "the Jewish question" it answers. Thus the work must be examined with the same care and rigor as Eliot's masterpiece.

In her book, Himmelfarb asks:

a) Why did this Victorian novelist, born a Christian and an early convert to agnosticism, write a book so respectful of Judaism and so prophetic about Zionism?

b) Why at a time when there were no pogroms or persecutions to provoke her?

c) What was the general conception of the "Jewish Question," and how did Eliot reinterpret that "question" for her time as well as ours.

Himmelfarb gives new life to a virtually forgotten work?one that is undoubtedly more relevant to the world we live in today than to the world in which it was born.

Judah L. Magnes: An American Nonconformist by Daniel P. Dotzin

Syracuse University Press

Judah L. Magnes (1877-1948) was an American Reform rabbi, Jewish community leaders, and active pacifist during World War I. In the 1920s he moved to British Mandatory Palestine where he helped found and served as first chancellor of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Later, in the 1930s and 1940s, he emerged as the leading advocate for the binational plan for Palestine. In these varied roles, he actively participated in the major transformations in American Jewish life and the Zionist movement during the first half of the 20th century.

Kotzin tells the story of how Magnes, immersed in American Jewish life, Zionism, and Jewish life in Mandatory Palestine, rebelled against the dominant strains of all three. His tireless efforts ensured that Jewish public life was vibrant and diverse, and not controlled by any one faction within Jewry. Magnes brought American ideals to Palestine, and his unique conception of Zionism shaped the Jewish public life in Palestine, influencing both the development of the Hebrew University and Zionist policy toward Arabs.

A New Shoah: The Untold Story of Israel's Victims of Terrorism by Giulio Meotti

New York: Encounter Books

Every day in Israel, memorials are held for people killed simply be-

cause they were Jews? condemned by the fury of Islamic fundamentalism. This is the first book devoted to telling the story of these Israeli terror victims. It centers on a previously unheard oral history of the Middle Eastern conflict from the viewpoint of the Jewish victims and their families.

Ten years ago, Palestinian terrorist groups launched their Second Intifada, resulting in an Israeli "Ground Zero" with 1700 civilian victims. Israel is a tiny country, and this number would be proportionally equivalent to about 70,000 terror victims in the United States. The hundreds of attacks in Israel, day after day, amount to a sort of "new Shoah," as Roger Scruton explains in his foreword.

Meotti spoke to many of the Israeli families that have been destroyed by terror attacks in all the ordinary places of everyday life. Many of these survivors told their heartbreaking stories of loss for the first time. In these human fragments lie the *raison d'être* for the State of Israel, the first country in the world to experience suicide bombings on a massive scale, the fruit of jihadi-nihilism.

Norman Podhoretz: A Biography by Thomas L. Jeffers

New York: Cambridge University Press

This is the first biography of the Jewish-American intellectual, longtime editor of the influential magazine *Commentary*. As both an editor and a writer, he spearheaded the countercultural revolution of the 1960s and after he "broke ranks" the neoconservative response. For years he defined what was at stake in the struggle against communism; recently he has nerved America for a new struggle against jihadist Islam; and always he has given substance to debates over the function of religion, ethics, and the arts in our society.

The turning point of his life occurred at the age of 40, near a farmhouse in upstate New York, in a mystic clarification. It compelled him to "unlearn" much that he had earlier been taught to value, and it also made him enemies.

Revealing the private as well as the public Podhoretz, Jeffers chronicles a heroically coherent life.

Hermeneutics of Holiness: Ancient and Christian Notions of Sexuality and Religious Community by Naomi Koltun-Fromm

New York: Oxford University Press

Koltun-Fromm examines the ancient nexus of holiness and sexuality and explores its roots in the biblical texts as well as its manifestations throughout ancient and late-ancient Judaism and early Syriac Christianity. In the process, she tells the story of how the biblical notions of "holy person" and "holy community" came to be defined by the sexual and marriage practices of various interpretive communities in late antiquity.

The author seeks to explain why sexuality, especially sexual restraint, became a primary demarcation of sacred community boundaries among Jews and Christians in fourth-century Persian-Mesopotamia. She charts three primary manifestations of holiness: holiness ascribed, holiness achieved, and holiness acquired through ritual purity. The development of these three concepts are traced, from their origin in the biblical texts to the Second Temple literature (both Jewish and Christian) to the Syriac Christian and rabbinic literature of the fourth century. In so doing, the importance of biblical interpretation for late-ancient Jewish and Christian practices is established, in addition to the centrality of holiness as a category for self-definition, and the relationship of fourth-century asceticism to biblical texts and interpretive history.

Spiritual Envy: An Agnostic's Quest by Michael Krasny

Novato, CA: New World Library

The contention between the "new" atheists and the devout is causing a resurgence in agnostic studies. Krasny maintains a position that "stands open to verification of either side of the God question." Deftly balancing biography and literary scholarship, the book is both a per-

sonal examination of agnosticism and a balanced voice in the complex debate over faith's role in society. Krasny grew up a strong believer in his Jewish faith, until adolescent questioning led him to declare he just wasn't sure. Despite a lost connection with God, the young Krasny continued to seek a divine presence, even admitting to feelings of envy toward those possessing "the consolation of faith." In this book, agnosticism is a tool to philosophically engage with various manifestations of faith including organized religion, spiritual-but-not-religious sentiments, and even paranormal theories. Krasny remains agnostic to the end, even while declaring his respect for the benefits religion can bring to believers.

**A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy
by Thomas Buergenthal**

New York: Little, Brown and Company

In Katowice, Poland, in 1939, Buergenthal's mother goes to see a fortune-teller. The fortune-teller immediately knows that she is married with one child, though she looks considerably younger than her 27 years and has removed her wedding ring. Her son, she is told, is a "lucky child" and will emerge unharmed from the future that awaits him.

Thomas Buergenthal, who has just finished a decade of service as the American judge at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, had no idea at the time how harrowing that future was to be, or how lucky he would become.

The young Buergenthal refuses to let the weight of responsibility for his own life deflate his childlike spirit. He sneaks a heavenly sip of milk from a kitchen in Auschwitz, "borrows" a bicycle from an SS guard, and is presented with a pony by the Polish army that liberates him.

Most astonishingly, he forgives his Nazi captors and devotes his life to human rights law, becoming an international law professor, human rights lawyer, and international judge. After a decade at The Hague,

he has returned to the United States to resume teaching at the George Washington University School of Law.

Silver From the Land of Israel: A New Light on the Sabbath and Holidays From the Writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hakohen Kook, edited by Rabbi Chanan Morrison Jerusalem: Urim Publications

Abraham Isaac Kook, the celebrated first Chief Rabbi of pre-state Israel, is recognized as being among the most important Jewish thinkers. Just as his writings reflect the mystic's search for underlying unity in all aspects of life and the world, his unique personality united a rare combination of talents and gifts. A prominent rabbinical authority and active public leader, Rav Kook was, at the same time, a deeply religious mystic. He was both Talmudic scholar and poet, original thinker and *tsaddik*.

Because of their poetic and mystical nature, Rav Kook's writings are difficult even for readers who are fluent in Hebrew and rabbinic texts. Freundel uses a clear, succinct style to provide the reader with a window into his original and creative insights.

Why We Pray What We Pray: The Remarkable History of Jewish Prayer by Barry Freundel

Jerusalem: Urim Publications

Freundel details the various factors that influenced six important Jewish prayers and shaped how and when Jews recite them. This book shows that each prayer has a complex history of which contemporary worshippers are mostly unaware. When we learn about the factors and forces that shaped these prayers and Jewish liturgy in general, our appreciation of what Jewish worship is all about becomes that much more profound. The author also sets forth important moments in Jewish history with depth and detail.

The Witness House: Nazis and Holocaust Survivors Sharing a Villa during the Nuremberg Trials by Christian Kohl

New York: Other Press

Early in 1946, six Jewish concentration camp survivors arrived at a little house in Nuremberg where they were to stay while serving as witnesses in the Nuremberg Trials. In a curious yet fascinating twist, they, along with other witnesses for the prosecution, were housed under the same roof as those to testify for the defense. In this co-called Witness House, perpetrators and victims confronted each other in a microcosm that reflected the events of the high court. Presiding over the affair was the beautiful Countess Ingeborg Kalnoky, a woman who took great pride in her ability to keep the household civil and the communal dinners pleasant. Though accounts of this extraordinary house exist in many World War II memoirs, this riveting new book is the first to explore in detail its history.

Operation Exodus: From the Nazi Death Camps to the Promised Land by Gordon Thomas

New York: Thomas Dunne Books

As the horrors of World War II swirled around the world, a single man from Palestine began to have the new vision of a home for his people as madness exploded all around him. David Ben-Gurion wanted to find a way to bring every Jew back to their home in Palestine. His efforts along with that of the underground Jewish movement, Haganah, heightened their passion to see the *Aliyah Bet* (immigration of Holocaust survivors) come to fruition. Could there finally be a Promised Land? In his new book, Thomas replays the event that led many survivors on a journey to start a new nation. Enriched with new survivors' testimonies and previously unpublished documentation, this book is a deeply moving story of people who risked it all to find a home.

The Jew Is Not My Enemy: Unveiling the Myths that Fuel Muslim Anti-Semitism by Tarek Fatah

Ontario: McClelland & Stewart

A liberal Muslim and critically acclaimed author explores the histori-

cal, political, and theological basis for centuries of Muslim animosity towards Jews, debunking long-held myths and tracing a history of hate and its impact today. Fatah uses extensive research to trace how literature from as early as the seventh century has fueled the hatred of Jews by Muslims. Fatah debunks the anti-Jewish writings of the Hadith literature, takes apart the Arab supremacist doctrines that lend fuel to the fire, and interprets supposed anti-Jewish passages in the Koran. In doing so, he argues that hating Jews is against the essence of the Islamic spirit and suggest what needs to be done to eliminate the agonizing friction between the two communities.

Moreshet: From the Classics

Rabbi Mendel's hasidim asked him why he did not write a book. For a while he was silent, then he answered: "Well, let's say I have written a book. Now who is going to buy it? Our own people will buy it. But when do our people get to read a book, since all through the week they are absorbed in earning their livelihood? They will get to read it on a Sabbath. And when will they get to it on a Sabbath? First they have to take the ritual bath, then they must learn and pray, and then comes the Sabbath meal. But after the Sabbath meal is over, they have time to read. Well, suppose one of them stretches out on the sofa, takes the book, and opens it. But he is full, he feels drowsy, so he falls asleep, and the book slips to the floor. Now tell me, why should I write a book?"

Post-Zionism... Post-Holocaust

By Elhanan Yakira. New York: Cambridge University Press.

A Review Essay by Steven Windmueller

Professor Elhanan Yakira's essays on the "uses and abuses of the Holocaust as an ideological arm in anti-Zionist campaigns" appear for the first time in English. This volume follows an earlier edition of Yakira's work that appeared several years ago (2007) in Hebrew.

The first essay focuses almost exclusively on a group of French left-wing Holocaust deniers. The substance of the arguments generated by these writers has generally been documented elsewhere, but the depth and scope of the research here is revealing and clearly disturbing.

The second piece seeks to study the ideas of a number of Israeli intellectuals who are identified with the post-Zionist movement. The primary focus here is on how elements of the Israeli intellectual community have sought to introduce the Holocaust into their criticism of that state's policies and political practices.

The third essay deals with Hannah Arendt and her relationship with Zionism and the State of Israel; in this piece Professor Yakira specifically references how the anti-Zionist camp seeks to apply Arendt's ideas to their anti-Israel agenda. For the author, a Palestinian agreement that leaves a two-state solution in place represents a reasonable and achievable outcome, despite the claims of some in the post and anti-Zionist camp to move toward a one-state plan.

The author offers a post-script that encompasses more recent events, examining how the enemies of the Jewish State incorporate these same negative anti-Israel concepts to the contemporary scene. He introduces in this essay several overarching themes. One notion suggests that the Jews do not deserve a state of their own. "Religions simply do not have states, it was argued." Yakira also points to a "campaign of delegitimation and vilification that is fueled by this anti-Zionist

ideology.” Similarly, the systematic use of the Holocaust is designed to confirm that the existence of the State of Israel is “illegitimate and must cease to exist.”

An accomplished author, who has published extensively over the past fifteen years, principally in French, Dr. Yakira holds the Schulman Professorship in Philosophy at Hebrew University. His work in this edition adds to his significant body of work covering a lifetime of research and reflection.

One cannot help to appreciate the comments offered on this particular body of work by leading academics from both the United States and Israel, who uniformly praise Yakira for his in-depth and challenging work. Dina Porat of Tel Aviv University summarizes this work in the following manner: “Yakira takes the reader on a stage-by-stage intellectual journey, in the course of which he demonstrates how, without scholarly honest research, his protagonists use the Holocaust as a political tool to delegitimize the Zionist movement and Israel.”

Michael Walzer of Princeton finds Yakira to be “an engaging writer” and his work to be “brilliant, disturbing, provocative, and engrossing...” Calling the text “a luminous intellectual history”, Fouad Ajami of Johns Hopkins suggests that this volume “takes us deep into the consuming debate between Zionists and post-Zionists.”

The data and substance of these essays has significant value in highlighting the subtle and comprehensive ways that the enemies of Israel seek to ideologically and politically deny the Jewish State’s credibility and legitimacy. As Yakira noted, “one of the things that make the anti-Zionist movement so effective is that it is on the offensive. It is also strengthened by powerful academic and intellectual trends in the West? The movement has succeeded to a large degree in putting Israel on trial.”

This book is an uncomfortable but essential read, as the material here is both particularly relevant as well as alarming.

Dr. Steven Windmueller holds the Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk Chair in Jewish Communal Service at Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles.

The Jewish Experience in 17th century Barbados

By Ryan Hechler

The European colonization of the Caribbean represented the start of the incessant violence and exploitation that came to define much of Europe's international colonial endeavors. England was quite possibly one of the most prepared European countries for island colonization within then temporal logic since England was able to "practice" and "perfect" her oppressive tactics through the colonization of Ireland by Norman warlords in 1169 and the subsequently English-encouraged Scottish occupation of Ireland in 1609. The initial monarchial instability in pushing colonial endeavors farther from European metropolises and its originating romanticization of piracy and freedom echoes the actual North American Jewish experience in Barbados; an island that offered so many career opportunities (with its own colonial strings attached, of course) that Jews could be merchants, informants, masons, pirates, and, on the rare occasion, plantation owners.

Barbados was a nationally and ethnically diverse island since its establishment as a colonial settlement. Henry Whistler noted in 1655, when stopping by Barbados to prepare for the conquest of Jamaica from Spain for England, that "[Barbados] is inhabited with all sorts: with English, French, Dutch, Scots, Irish, Spaniards they being Jews, with Indians and miserable Negroes born to perpetual slavery, they and their seed." (qtd. Dunn 1972: 77). The Jews were but one community of a communal plurality that composed the island. Historian Richard Dunn explained in 1972, in his seminal work *Sugar and Slaves*, that the "[Jews of Barbados] lived a ghetto existence on Jew Street and Synagogue Street, tolerated for their business skill, but even more ostracized than the Quakers. The Jews were not only listed separately on the census but taxed separately ? and very heavily." (Dunn 1972: 108). Thus, while the Jewish presence was accepted, it was done so rather begrudgingly by the colonial powers that be, powers whose very greed outweighed their religio-ethnocentrism. It should also be duly noted that Jew Street and Synagogue Street were established as

the main Jewish communities of Bridgetown, the capital and original settlement of Barbados. Jew Street and Synagogue Street, through their very titular dubbing, have not been historically clarified as having been self-named by the Jewish communities or established by English authorities and it is a matter that should be further researched, since it would suggest a whole other tier of political and social power dynamics in the early Barbadian colonial system.

Barbados was either "discovered" by the Spanish in 1518 under Rodrigo de Figueroa, at the command of King Charles V (Drewett 2006: 209-210), or in 1536 when Portuguese Captain Pedro a Campos happened through and, according to a quasi-historical legend, left behind hogs for future sailors that may stumble upon the island and need sustenance (Drewett 1991: 1). Both of these accounts are highly disputed amongst academics, but then there is also the possibility that Barbados was found by other European endeavors prior to either of these. Regardless, Barbados was officially claimed by Captain John Powell as a British territory for King James I on 14 May 1625 and in 1627 the island was royally promoted as the site of a British colony (Beckles 1990: 7). While there may have been an Amerindian population during the Spanish and Portuguese arrivals, Amerindian communities were supposedly no longer present upon English arrival.

One of the most difficult historical facts of the Jewish experience in Barbados to prove is the exact date of the first Jewish inhabitants' arrival. The evidence suggested by Sir Robert H. Schomburgk in 1848 of the Jewish presence is perhaps still the most relevant and accurate:

According to the best information that can be obtained it appears that the earliest settlement of the Jews in this Island dates from about 1628. A tomb is at present standing in one of the burial grounds bearing date 1658. (Schomburgk 1848: 97)

As Schomburgk suggests, Jews arrived very early in the English colonial process, yet their presence was by no means legal; however, Jews appear to have been tolerated early on, especially since it likely made no sense to the colonial powers of Barbados to cause communal strife when the island's fledgling community was simply trying to survive in

its earliest stages. Thus, if Schomburgk is correct, Jews began arriving to Barbados within a year of the island officially being dubbed a British colony.

England's King Edward I legally banished Jews from England and her territorial holdings in 1290. While many Jewish communities continued their religious practices in hiding, they were not officially allowed re-entry to the country until 1656 under Oliver Cromwell, two years after Jews were expelled from Brazil in 1654 (Johnson 1988: 249) which perhaps was a resultant of Portuguese mistrust developed from Jewish aid to Brazil's invasion by the Dutch. While a noticeable surge in the Barbadian Jewish population occurred in the 1650s, waves of Jewish immigrants came to Barbados even earlier in the 1640s. Barbados was at the forefront of the 1640s' Sugar Revolution, however the technology utilized in sugar mills was not of English origin. Exiled Sephardic Jews that just recently fled the failing Dutch colonial drive into Portugal's Brazil and relocated to Barbados, brought with them Dutch-developed, and often Sephardic-developed, sugar mill technology.

While the Sugar Revolution was a peculiar window of opportunity for Jewish colonial settlement in Barbados, it was Cromwell's seizure of power that truly allowed Barbadian Jewish communities to flourish. Cromwell took control of England during a period of increasing Christian extremism and, in his book *Jewish Pirates of the Caribbean*, historian Edward Kritzler's narrative of this time period properly conveys how such a temporality allowed a moment of stability for Jewish communities:

The midseventeenth century was a time when True Believers ruled and every action was righteous and backed by Scripture. It was the politics of Holy Inevitability, and Cromwell liked to frame his policies in those terms. Along with commerce, and intelligence, Cromwell's religious convictions presented him with an irresistible motive for Jewish resettlement: Only when Jews were allowed back in England, he believed, would the Messiah return. His public expression of this religious rationale garnered him the fervid support of England's philo-Semites, who saw this as necessary for the

redemption of the whole human race. (Kritzler 2008: 195)

Cromwell also encouraged them to settle throughout England's colonies, particularly to Barbados since it was quickly becoming viewed as the gem of England's rapidly developing empire. Thus the presence of Jews in Barbados served an immediately dualistic purpose under Cromwell, they were there to insure economic flourishing as well as for the sanctification of Jesus Christ's second coming.

Settlement passes had been commonly granted by Cromwell to case-specific Jewish settlers even prior to his decree of 1656. The following is an example of the typical outline of passes given out:

Calendar of State Papers. Domestic Series. April 27, 1655. Pass for Abr. De Mercado, M. D., Hebrew, with David Raphael de Mercado, his son, to the Barbadoes, where he has an order from His Highness [Cromwell] to exercise his profession. (Reprinted in Kohler 1896: 223)

There are two distinct permissions that were granted in such passes as these. Firstly, it was approved to allow a "Hebrew" to live on the island. Secondly, the ability for one to "exercise his profession." Regardless of de Mercado's actual career, Cromwell took interest in him and wanted Barbados' colonial authorities to understand that both de Mercado's profession and his religion of choice were both personally deemed acceptable by Cromwell.

General Richard Venables was the leader of England's conquest of Jamaica from the Spanish; however, as with any military endeavor, one needs to rally the proper number of soldiers to their cause to fight an effective war. Thus Venables traveled to Barbados and found volunteers from English colonists, Jewish colonists, as well as through Barbadian Jewish contacts to Portuguese Jews in Jamaica. Venables was quite excited to learn that the Portuguese Jews of Jamaica were enthused to oust the Spanish, a reason being that many of them were survivors of both the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions. On 13 June 1655, Venables wrote a letter to Secretary John Thurloe:

Since my last we have only taken some [few] prisoners; the rest continue in the mountains, wanting Houses, Bread,

&c. willing to submit, if not aw'd by a few, and discourag'd by some Soldiers that are unruly occasion'd by extream want, which to redress was the work of this day; and we have to make them good subjects, being most of them Portuguese; the Spaniards we shall remove, and endeavor to gain all of them by our civility. (Venables 1900: 47)

During England's early colonization of the Americas, the term "Portuguese" was often synonymous with "Jewish" when used to describe a person found within the non-Portuguese controlled New World. It is particularly impressive that Venables immediately found his new "Portuguese" civilians to be "good subjects." General Venables' only Biblical-Semitic reference during his Jamaica campaign was in regards to the ancient Israelites and, curiously, the only semantically direct comment was in regards to one of his officers learning a sound argument from the "20th of Judges [in which] he might have found the Israelites who prosecuted a good quarrel, and by the Express Command of God, yet fell twice before the Benjamites, but he then covers this unhandsomely by the Servants disobeying the commands of their Masters, but shews not wherein, pretends selfe seeking, but gives no instance, and Casts blemishes without Cause or ground upon all." (Venables 1900: 90). Overall, Venables seemed to be quite fond of the Jews of the West Indies, especially since they were interested in aiding his militaristic campaign for revenge against the injustices that the Iberian Peninsular kingdoms inflicted upon them.

Richard Ligon, an early British visitor of Barbados, wrote in regards to a fortress wall that was being built at some point during his stay in Barbados, which was from some date in 1647 to 15 April 1650, this being perhaps one of the earliest mentions of Barbadian Jews in any published text (i.e. not within the context of a letter):

Many effayes we made, whilst I was there, for the making and burning of bricks, but never could attain to the perfection of it; and the reason was, the over fatness of the clay, which would alwayes crackle and break, when it felt the great heat of the fire in the Clampe; and by no means could we find the true temper of it, though we made often tryals. There was an ingenious *Jew* upon the Island, whose name was *Solomon*, that undertook to teach the making of it; yet for all that, when it came to the touch his wisdom failed, and we were deceived in

our expectation, I doubt not but there is a way of tempering, to make it far better than ours in *England* ; for the pots which we find in the Island, wherein the *Indians* boyl'd their Pork, were of the same kind of Clay, and they were the best and finest temper'd ware of earth that ever I saw. (Ligon 1657: 42)

Ligon seems to have been clearly frustrated at the Jewish mason Solomon's inability to make his masonry truly come to fruition, however he holds no grudge since no European could effectively utilize the island's clay and only, in Ligon's opinion, the previous Amerindian settlers were the best at creating "temper'd ware of earth." Solomon was possibly then the island's only formally trained mason and Ligon did emphasize that he regarded him as an "ingenious Jew." Ligon also included detailed maps of Barbadian sugar mills, maps that were reflective of the blueprints that Caribbean Jews carried with them throughout their West Indian diaspora (Ligon 1657: 42, 85). An ironic factor about such a technological aid that was often provided by Jews is that, even though their science created the very hearts of extremely profitable Barbadian plantation systems (i.e. the sugar mills), they were legally not capable of owning land in Barbados (however, the occasional exception did occur).

In April 1661, it was legally approved by King Charles II of Britain for Jews to settle *and trade* in Barbados as well as in the British colony of Suriname. This motion's benevolence to Jews was historically significant for its monarchical support from the other European powers that be, most specifically due to the garnered support of King Frederick III of Denmark (Kritzler 2008: 309-310n24). While, as previously mentioned, Cromwell legalized the travel and settlement of Jews, perhaps Charles II wanted to clarify his support of such a statute as an anti-discriminatory motion since he was able to take control of England only after Cromwell's death and especially because many of Cromwell's extreme legal motions were largely condemned after his death and his son's ousting.

However, settlement passes continued to exist under Charles II. A typical example of a monarchical permissive settling is such as follows, a legally sanctioned acceptance that Charles II approved on 24 July

1661:

A Denizacon granted to Daniel Bueno Henriques M^r chant Native of Sivile in Spaine & now Resident in the Barba-dos, whereby he is invested wth the priviledges belonging to a free denizen. Provided, that he yeild obedience to the Lawes of this kindome, & pay such Customes as Aliens doe. Subsor by S^r Phillip Warwick vpon Significacon of Ma^{ts} pleasure vnder his Signe manuall. Procur vt supra. [*i. e.* by M^r Secr Nicholas] (Reprinted in Friedenwald 1897: 65)

The real issue of the Jewish presence in the eyes of the English is perhaps most well conveyed in this settlement pass, the fact that “obedi-ence” had to be able to be guaranteed. Many Englishmen fed off the stereotype that since Jews possessed no true geographical nation, they would too readily shift between states and thus their alliances were only between Jews; it should be clarified that most Europeans during this time period perceived Jewish communities as being simply one part of an ever *mobile nation*. Thus, even with their legally sanctioned presences, Charles II, as Cromwell before, had to constantly prove that individual Jewish settlers were in fact welcomed within his empire.

Even with the Jewish presence legalized in Barbados, the island’s courts would not allow Jews to testify, most especially since it was believed that any Jewish person would not feel shame for lying under a Biblical oath. Thus, with some deliberation, “An Act appointing how the testimony of People of the Hebrew nation, shall be admitted in all Courts and Causes” was passed in 1674, 18 years after the English legalization of the Jewish presence. The Act in its entirety is as follows:

Wherfas His sacred Majesty hath signified his Royal pleasure, that all persons of the Hebrew nation residing in this Island, that are made free Denizens, may be admitted to give their Testimonies on their Oaths, in all Courts and Causes, in such manner and form, as the religion of the said Hebrews will admit: Be it therefore enacted and ordained by his *Excel-lency* Sir *Jonathan Atkins*, Knight, Captain General and chief Governor of this, and other the *Caribbee-Islands*, the Council and Assembly of this Island, and are Men of Credit and Com-merce, shall from henceforth be freely admitted before all Judges, Justices and other Officers, in all Courts and Causes whatsoever, relating to Trade and Dealing, and not other-wise, to give their Testimony upon their Oaths, on the five

books of *Moses*, in such manner and form as is usual, and the religion of the said Nation doth admit. (Hall 1764: 94)

"Read and passed the Assembly, *Nemini Contradicente, February 17th 1674.*" (Hall 1764: 94). This act was signed by John Higinbotham, Clerk of the Assembly. "Read and passed the Council, and consented to by his Excellency, this 18th day of *February, 1674.*" (Hall 1764: 94). It was subsequently signed by Deputy Secretary Edwyn Stede. As is evident by the Act, the Old Testament was determined to be the proper half for any Jew to swear a testimony on since it was compatible with "the religion of the said Nation." Schomburgk even referenced this passage in 1848; however, he was not accurate with the date:

Although [the Jews] are occasionally subjected to persecution and oppression, the policy they exhibited in keeping on good terms with the powers that were, caused their civil rights to be extended in 1680, and their testimony which had long been rejected in the courts of law, was from that time admitted in all civil suits (though not in other cases) upon an oath taken upon the five books of Moses, according to the tenets of their religion. (Schomburgk 1848: 97)

Schomburgk was correct in asserting that Jewish civil rights were "extended" from this point onward. In 1676 it was noted by the governor of Barbados that the island possessed "not above thirty Jew families of Dutch extraction from Brazil." (qtd. Faber 1998: 277n2). These Jews were Sephardic Jews that escaped the Spanish and Portuguese inquisitions via the Netherlands, however most likely to these Jewish families' delight was the fact that their available rights in Barbados were better than anywhere else back in Europe, the mainland Americas, or, arguably, even in the West Indies.

Dunn noted that in 1680 Bridgetown, Barbados that there were a total of 54 Jewish households in comparison to the 351 English households. While none of the Jewish households held servants (there has been suggestion that it was illegal for a Jew to have indentured Europeans in their service, most especially Christian servants), the Jewish community possessed a total of 163 slaves (whether the enslaved persons were African or Amerindian is not specified), in comparison to the 1,276 slaves possessed by the English. Dunn averaged the mean

number of people per family to be 6.4 Jews and 7.4 English; however the mean number of white people per family were 3.4 Jews and 3.7 English, which already suggests that both the social construct of race was mentally and socially established and that interracial relationships were already developing, especially since the Jews kept up with the English with their average number of 3 slaves per household and the English's 3.6 slaves per household (Dunn 1972: 107, Table 9). During this same time period, Jewish burial records were not being sent back to London (Dunn 1972: 109).

Barbadian Jews were able to flourish commercially due to their linguistic capabilities, a resultant of European languages that were learned throughout diaspora. Jews of Barbados were teaching their children English, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, and, of course, Hebrew. Such linguistic abilities even occasionally allowed Jewish people to be colonial interpreters for the various empires they chose to reside under (Faber 1998: 69). Jewish merchant Isaac de Mella had his 1768 will in Portuguese for the sole possibility of if, as de Mella clarified, "one of my Nephews Sons to my Brothers and Sisters who reside in the Kingdom of Portugal or Spain shall come and embrace Judaism." (Trans. & Qtd. Faber 1998: 69). Historian Eli Faber noted that this was *in* 1768, more than a century after the original Barbadian Jewish community began, thus the very fact that such linguistic traditions continued well into colonization is remarkable. However, what did de Mella mean by "embrace?" If anything, it seems that the Caribbean itself came to be the new homeland for the Jews, that Jewish communities from all over western Europe could pull themselves out of a politico-religious pandemic of a colonial fervor to perpetuate their diaspora for the sole intention of religio-preservation, that instead of holding the title of *converso* in Spain or Portugal, the Sephardic Jews could flee and truly embrace their familial roots without such a facade or a social stigma of a label.

Controversial in regards to mainstream American notions of the history of Hebrews and Judaism, Jewish academic Jos? V. Malcioln pushed the notion of Judaism's tendencies of ethno-cultural amalgamation in his

book *The African Origins of Modern Judaism*. Malcioln is a Panamanian national whose mother is of Moroccan-Hebrew heritage, and throughout his work Malcioln explored the African religio-cultural binding contribution and beginnings of Judaism. Malcioln noted in regards to Barbados the following:

... [M]any of the refugees who were given shelter in Barbados were also allowed to have Bajan [colloquial term in Barbados for a Barbadian] women whom they kept on the side. Those Jewish men became the negligent fathers of the dark-skinned Mendes, Lindo, Blackman, Angus, Maduro, Henriquez, and other Jewish people all over the West Indies and Latin America. Most of those poor women raised their children with very little assistance from their pious fathers. Naturally, the children were more concerned with survival than being interested in ethnic or religious traditions. But once their primary needs were met, they, too, began searching for satisfaction of their cultural needs and spiritual guidance on a higher plane than the one where Christians lynch others for having a different skin color or non-Protestant affiliation. Moreover, the Romans took a Jew and Romanized Him [i.e. Titus Flavius Josephus]. So why shouldn't the Barbadians of color seek and practice an African religion which Judaizes them? And why should someone seek to worship the Son, when he can worship the Father? And, after all, most people want to be God's chosen people! (Malcioln 1996: 361-362)

Perhaps a topic that is uncomfortable for many to confront, Malcioln emphasizes an important point, that many European colonists, regardless of past victimizations they faced, embraced a racial hierarchy so that they could feel some sense of privilege over another group of people. While traditional "Jewish heritage" is to be passed down matrilineally, the Americas provided a transcontinental forum for a plasticizing of the traditional rules of unilineality, in which typical tradition was sacrificed since ambilineality provided the most prime means of Judaism surviving in a colonial world in which one's mere presence was at the whims and interests of international, land-hungry European powerhouses. But while some religio-law was bent for survival purposes, others were bent for commercial purposes and thus solely for economic gain, such as the ignoring of the seven (or six depending on regional practice of Judaism) years forgiveness of debts and the freeing of slaves. To survive, adaptation to Christian European rules became a must, that or perpetual diaspora, and thus many Jews found

themselves sucked into playing into the racial hierarchies that European metropolises were quickly establishing by the mid- to late-seventeenth century. Some Sephardic Jews participated in the African slave trade, perhaps in a twisted attempt to escape persecution from their European homelands, however through such a commercial fleeing they themselves became perpetually bound into the grinding gears of colonialism in which they were as much the oppressive pawns of the very metropolises that they loathed for their own persecution.

The Jewish experience in colonial Barbados was by no means continuously placid, however the Barbadian colonial endeavor was arguably an unparalleled temporality for Sephardic Jews to flourish since possibly the times of the Umayyad Caliphate of the Iberian Peninsula. Barbados came to be a place of sanctuary for Jews, a place where socio-economic privilege finally became a reality devoid of physical persecution. While the New World was a place of devastation for many, Jews included, at least there were niches like Barbados that offered Jews havens away from the Inquisitions of Spain and Portugal.

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Two Poems

by Richard E. Sherwin

The New Moon of Av

The new moon of Av--[nine days until]
the day when the temples are destroyed
the day remembering the night we wept
falsely at the spies report
our lack of faith and theirs a fire
not centuries of tears could quench

before sundown the synagogue in Sefad
where the mystic lion prayed receives
another torah scroll another bride
anew

slowly we have learned to live the ways
the Lord has kingdomed time to
now we mourn the temple not yet built
the temple not descended yet from heaven
repenting what still needs repentance

only the Lord knows if we're ready
we can only keep torah and glory
in the scroll the gift
the lion named the many levels of
so much that we not in the holy heights
that we beside the sea
can feel the darkness radiant still
and mourn our mournings true and false

eight days to lamentation night and tears
and candles light the hope this fast
becomes the feast
we are invited to

Marina Lights: Before Sunrise, Sunrise, Morning

the green lights out. the red one spins and blinks.
the suns unrisen. its later than it thinks.

three railings down. the waves can wet the rocks
the seas at ebb. the surfs asleep. who knocks

why hassle my sleeping soul with ought atonement
me and the breakwater empty enjoy this moment

so what if nothing comes to nothing so
no harbors safe forever let them go

*

the harbor lights blink green and red together
the fishingboat backs up and trawls between them

i think the trauma lights blink unrepentant
fishing off the rocks at dawn goes easy

still it seems the sea gives up its fish
as hard as humans giving up the ghost

the seas no place for Gd to harbor men
eat and die be eaten and survive

the sea has caught my bait my fishing lines
caught me as taut about to snap alive

who will cut the line the light and free
me hungry for the fishing sealess sea

*

the sun is up the harbor lights are off
enter and exit as you please unwarned

learn the laws and live by them or crash
charity's to keep you from killing others

alive or dead who cares your gene pool covers
most of what you call yourself that matters

the little ion here or there that's free
that's you stays unredeemed stupidity

yes it's a shame when kids don't get the chance
to screw their lives away the human dance

study hard so ignorance can thrive
and you live long enough perhaps alive

who knows but what together we might save
some human good from our too human graves

Zachor: From the Records of the Nuremberg Trials, 1945-6

WITNESS: (a Polish guard at Auschwitz): Women carrying children were always sent with them to the crematorium. The children were then torn from their parents outside the crematorium and sent to the gas chambers separately. When the extermination of the Jews in the gas chambers was at its height, orders were issued to the effect that the children were to be thrown into the crematorium furnaces, or into the pit near the crematorium, without being gassed first.

SMIRNOV (Russian prosecutor): How am I to understand this? Did they throw them into the fire alive, or did they kill them first?

WITNESS: They threw them in alive. Their screams could be heard at the camp.

SMIRNOV: Why did they do this?

WITNESS: It is very difficult to say. We do not know whether they wanted to economize on gas, or if it was because there was not enough room in the gas chambers.