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Wealth and Poverty in Jewish Tradition

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Wealth and Poverty in Jewish Tradition

Studies in Jewish Civilization
Volume 26

Proceedings of the
Twenty-Sixth Annual Symposium
of the Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization
and the Harris Center for Judaic Studies

October 27–28, 2013

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Wealth and Poverty in Jewish Tradition

Studies in Jewish Civilization
Volume 26

Editor:
Leonard J. Greenspoon

The Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization

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Acknowledgments

The Twenty-Sixth Annual Klutznick-Harris Symposium took place on October 27 and October 28, 2013, in Omaha, Nebraska. The title of the symposium, from which this volume also takes its title, is “Wealth and Poverty in Jewish Tradition.”

As in past years, the success of this symposium owed much to the patience and wisdom of two of my colleagues, Dr. Ronald Simkins, director of the Kripke Center for the Study of Religion and Society at Creighton University; and Dr. Jean Cahan, director of the Harris Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

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With this volume, we are completing six years in our ongoing relationship with Purdue University Press. Its staff, under former director Charles Watkinson, has made us feel welcome in every possible way. We look forward to many more years of collaboration with the press and its new director, Peter Froehlich.

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Editor's Introduction

Within the long history of Judaism, from biblical times to today, wealth and poverty have been the subject of much serious consideration. So, for example, in the Hebrew Bible the author of Psalm 37 declared: "I have been young and am now old, but I have never seen a righteous man abandoned, or his children seeking bread." True charity, the rabbis of the Talmud declared, meant "to run after the poor." And the nineteenth century Jewish thinker, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, wrote: "Do not suppress compassion or sympathy with the sufferings of your fellow man. See in them the admonition of God that you are to have no joy so long as a brother suffers by your side."

These examples, chosen from hundreds of possibilities, should serve as a corrective to anyone who thinks that the categories "rich" and "poor" are of modern-day origins or that only recently have people sought to explain the reasons for economic inequality and the means to bridge the chasm that often separates these individuals. This is not to suggest that such topics have been of interest only to religious communities or that long-established groups have spoken with only one voice about these issues.

It is, however, to assert and—through the chapters assembled here—to demonstrate that Jews have faced questions of wealth and poverty for at least as long as any other community and that they have worked out, in theory and in practice, explanations and actions that are worthy of consideration. Consideration of this sort combines close analysis of texts and historical figures with real-world awareness that wealth and poverty, while they may be viewed in the abstract, have been and continue to be linked with life and death determinations for many people as individuals and as members of a community.

The thirteen chapters collected here, all originating as oral presentations at the Twenty-Sixth Annual Klutznick-Harris Symposium, divide chronologically into two groups: six deal with the time period from antiquity through the Middle Ages; seven cover topics from the late eighteenth century to the present. For the reader of this volume, it seems most helpful to present these chapters in roughly chronological order.

Most of the chapters in the first group concentrate on classical rabbinic texts. The initial chapter, by Meir Bar-Ilan, is titled "Wealth in the World of the Sages: Why Were Korach and Moses Rich People?" This chapter analyzes the sages' thoughts concerning wealthy people by drawing attention to two different people that in the Bible had no particular connection with money but in the sages' haggadah became wealthy people. These two were

Korach and Moses, and the question arises: what made the sages say that these two were rich people?

Bar-Ilan demonstrates that the legends concerning the richness of these two are not mere traditions, but rather constitute creative commentary by using contemporary ideas as if they reflect the biblical text. In this way Korach was characterized as a wealthy person, since Korach was a symbol of a heretic Jew or someone who did not want to obey the sages. Describing Korach as a wealthy person was a way of saying that those who did not obey the rabbis were often rich people and that the rabbis wished them an end in accordance with the biblical figure, the first who rebelled against the rabbis' rule, the rule of "Moshe Rabeinu."

In different circumstances there were others who claimed that Moses himself was a rich man. Bar-Ilan shows that this statement was polemical, against rabbis who used their money to promote themselves. In all, wealth was attributed to biblical figures to explain contemporary unethical behavior; money corrupts.

Gregg E. Gardner is author of the second chapter, "Care for the Poor and the Origins of Charity in Early Rabbinic Judaism." Gardner begins by observing that poverty relief has long been a central concern of the Jewish tradition. We see this throughout early rabbinic literature, legal and exegetical texts from the third century CE that would form the foundations of the Talmuds and all subsequent rabbinic Judaism.

Following a survey of the various forms of support for the poor in early rabbinic texts, Gardner focuses on discussions of *tzedakah*—a term that meant only "righteousness" in the Hebrew Bible, but would come to denote "charity" in rabbinic literature. How was *tzedakah* conceptualized as "charity" in the Mishnah, Tosefta, and other early rabbinic texts? What are the origins of the rabbinic approaches to charity?

This chapter illuminates two kinds of charity—one collective and organized, the other individual and occasional. Reading these texts within the Greco-Roman world in which they took shape demonstrates that rabbinic ideas were deeply influenced by Hellenistic approaches to giving. That is, the early rabbinic movement formulated *tzedakah* as charity with the help of the Greeks. This chapter highlights the development of Jewish approaches to poverty relief, with a special focus on the origins of charity or *tzedakah*—which would become one of the central concepts of rabbinic Judaism.

Following Gardner is Aryeh Cohen with his chapter on "The Violence of Poverty." Gardner analyzes texts in the Babylonian Talmud to show that in the rabbinic imaginary poverty wielded an untamed violence over the lives of

those who succumbed to it. In discussions of withholding workers' wages (*b. B. Meṣ.* 111ff), a person who withholds wages is seen as akin to a murderer. This is explained partially by a previous statement that describes workers who risk their lives for their pay. If at the end of the day the pay is withheld, the Talmud claims, it is as if one had taken their lives. Finally, a poor person himself is likened to a dead person [*nechshav le-met*]. In another story, two porters who suffered a mishap and were in danger of not being paid claim that they would then go hungry, and the court accepts their claim.

In Cohen's view, one of the bright lights of rabbinic law is the institutionalization of poverty relief (*m. Pe'ab* 8 followed by *y. Pe'ab* 8, *b. B. Bat.* 8–11, and elsewhere). The interesting thing is that at the same time as poverty relief is being institutionalized and lauded, the reality of poverty, the violence that is visited upon people by poverty (hunger, disability, illness, death), is accepted as a given. (In a story of Akiva and Turnus Rufus, it is even pictured as divinely ordained.)

It is these two moments and tension between them that Cohen examines in his study. On the one hand the rabbis portray the destructive violence of poverty very dramatically and also articulate a political response in the sense of a city-based poverty relief program. On the other hand it seems that the issue is far from settled. Cohen suggests that the texts taken together show that the cultural negotiation around poverty, whether and to what extent it is the obligation of the society as a whole to offer relief to the poor, is still fraught and unsettled.

Alyssa M. Gray is the author of the next chapter, titled "Wealth and Rabbinic Self-Fashioning in Late Antiquity." Gray starts with what she calls the popular response to a query about "Judaism's attitude toward wealth," which is likely to be that Judaism is wealth-positive. While not inaccurate, this popular view requires closer study and greater nuance.

In her chapter, Gray explores such questions as: how did the rabbis of late antiquity—specifically, the Amoraim of the land of Israel and Babylonia and the post-Amoraic talmudic redactors in Babylonia (c. third to seventh centuries)—view the acquisition of wealth? Did they prefer certain ways of acquiring wealth over others? How did the rabbis view the wealthy, both wealthy rabbis and others? Can we perceive differences in how wealthy rabbis and wealthy non-rabbis (both Jewish and not) are portrayed in the late antique rabbinic compilations? How was wealth supposed to be used? By reading texts with an eye to geographical (land of Israel and Babylonia) and diachronic (Tannaim, Amoraim, and the Babylonian Talmud's anonymous, or *stam*, voice) differences as well as broader historical context, Gray is able to sketch the outlines of an ambivalent rabbinic embrace of wealth in late antiquity.

Yehuda Seif is the author of the next chapter, “Justice and Righteousness: Jewish and Christian Approaches to Charity and Poor Law in the High Middle Ages.” Seif contends that charity, as a religious act with societal implications, is fraught with complexity just like any social action that is undertaken within the framework of a religious legal system. He then asks: is it a system of norms whose purpose is societal—to improve the condition of certain classes within society? Does it have a religious purpose—to bring the individual’s conduct and character closer to that prescribed by his faith? Though the religious and social objectives of charity need not be mutually exclusive, the emphasis that is placed on each is not simply a theoretical question.

Through an investigation of Jewish and Christian charity law in the High Middle Ages, Seif attempts to distill the answers to these broad questions. He focuses particularly on the thirteenth century, when the sheer number of paupers increased to a point where thinkers were forced to articulate a system that integrated solutions that satisfied both religious law and social conditions. Seif argues that R. Isaac of Vienna (c. 1180–c. 1250), the first Jewish thinker in Ashkenaz to organize these laws, advocated for a theology of charity grounded in the sacred.

That is not to say R. Isaac ignored the plight of the pauper or that community charity did not fit into his system—indeed, he advocated for a strong communal dole that would sustain the poor. But his overall thrust, echoing the approach of *Hasidei Ashkenaz*, tended toward sacralizing even the community’s responsibility to give. This was in contrast to the approach of the majority of Ashkenazi thinkers, especially the French Tosafists, who envisioned a system of charity that emerged from community governance and social responsibility. Seif shows that much of the dispute between these authorities came from their philosophical conceptions of the biblical and talmudic categories of justice and righteousness.

A similar contrast emerges from Seif’s analysis of Christian sources. On the one hand, canon lawyers were remarkably consistent in trending toward greater civic responsibility and desacralization of charity, mirroring increasing lay participation in eleemosynary activity. On the other hand, many thinkers continued to ground charitable activity in sacred responsibility. This was true of the mendicants, whose absolution of private property and insistence on religious poverty had a deep impact on church theology in the thirteenth century. It was also the position of figures like Innocent III and Peter the Chanter, who, through their rulings, showed that they were uncomfortable ceding charitable enterprises to the laity.

The last chapter in this first section, “1Q/4QInstruction: Training for a Money-Changer?” by Curtis Hutt, takes us to the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the fragmentary reconstructed text dated to the late Second Temple period, called “MusarleMevin” (1Q/4QInstruction), at least seven copies of which were found at Qumran, training is given by an unidentified teacher to a student described as poor on a variety of topics, several of which are explicitly related to finance. Since its publication in the mid-1990s, the wisdom provided in this sectarian sapiential text with unusual apocalyptic/theophantic elements has been compared to that found in other texts like I Enoch, Ben Sira, the Book of Mysteries, and the common source behind wisdom sayings attributed to Jesus (Q, *Gospel of Thomas*). Others have focused on the social settings that have given rise to such instruction, with the target audience—perhaps, the “congregation of the poor” referred to in Psalms *pesbarim* found at Qumran—compared to underclasses in the Second Temple period and to the earliest Christian communities associated with Q as well as the so-called Ebionites.

Hutt pursues another line of interpretation, first suggested by John Strugnell and Daniel J. Harrington in the introduction to the publication of 4QInstruction found in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXXIV* but since ignored by most scholarship on 1Q/4QInstruction. Rather than understanding the instruction provided to the *maven* as wisdom generally dispensed to the impoverished, he views its target audience much more narrowly. The “poor” student, according to this reading, is plausibly a model future administrative official connected with the Jerusalem Temple. Among his sacerdotal functions, as evident especially in 4Q416, is dealing with monetary transactions. The consummate administrator at an irreproachable temple is described as “poor” because he does not unduly profit from his holy occupation.

Hasia Diner is the author of the first chapter in the second section, “Peddlers, the Great Jewish Migration, and the Riddle of Economic Success.” Diner’s presentation highlighted the keynote event at the symposium itself. Diner begins by vividly recalling that during the period from the end of the nineteenth century into the early 1930s over four million Jews from Europe and the Muslim lands left the homes of their birth to make their way to the “new world.” They moved to the Americas, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, as well as to the British Isles and Scandinavia, places that had previously had few or no Jewish residents.

Peddling, the Jews’ familiar occupation, provided one of the principal engines that drove this great migration. Generally, these poor immigrants ended their lives economically better off than when they first arrived. Some few became extremely wealthy, while most moved from peddling to modestly

comfortable lives, opening and running small stores. Diner examines the conditions for the move by immigrants from poverty to reasonable comfort (and great wealth for some), exploring the importance of Jewish economic networks and the connections between peddling and Jewish community formation. Furthermore, she asks why their non-Jewish customers embraced them and chose to buy from them rather than from local shopkeepers.

Geoffrey Claussen is next with his chapter, “The Legacy of the Kelm School of Musar on Questions of Work, Wealth, and Poverty.” He introduces the Musar movement, a modern Jewish movement focused on the cultivation of moral character, that emerged in mid-nineteenth century Lithuania in a time of increased poverty among the Jews. This movement sought to respond to that poverty in various ways.

Tensions within the Musar movement regarding how to respond to poverty are especially clear within the Kelm school of Musar, which emerged under the leadership of Rabbi Simhah Zissel Ziv (1824–1898). Simhah Zissel’s writings devote considerable attention to the imperative of developing qualities of empathy and responsibility toward those in poverty. Like many others in the Musar movement, Simhah Zissel also gave considerable attention to the moral and spiritual dangers of seeking a livelihood and possessing wealth. Compared to his colleagues, however, he had a far greater appreciation of business activity as a path out of poverty and as a way to serve the needs of others.

Those who trace their vision back to Simhah Zissel’s study hall have tended to emphasize different aspects of the Kelm school’s legacy on questions of wealth and poverty. Thus, for example, some students from Kelm who became influential within Israeli ultra-orthodoxy emphasized a path of voluntary poverty and a disdain for commerce. By contrast, a number of American Jews who trace their vision back to Kelm have shown less concern regarding the dangers of possessing wealth; they have emphasized more activist and business-oriented strategies for eliminating poverty, often reflecting the distinct values of contemporary American culture.

Jeffrey Haus is the author of the next chapter, titled “Conspicuous Charity and Jewish Unity: The Jewish *Loterie* in Nineteenth Century Paris.” As Haus points out, Jewish tradition contains built-in mechanisms designed to support the poor. In addition to moral imperatives, these mechanisms—generally categorized as *tzedakah*—promote group cohesion by balancing the wealth of some with the need of others while reinforcing the social relationship between the rich and the poor.

Historians of modern Jewry have similarly portrayed Jewish charity as a unifying force in an era of declining religious observance. In his chapter Haus

offers a counter-narrative to that interpretation through the lens of the Paris *loterie*—a raffle benefiting Jewish charitable enterprises in the city during the nineteenth century. His reading of an 1846 critique of the *loterie* in the Jewish press reveals underlying dissatisfaction with the broader system of Jewish charity and communal relations.

By conspicuously displaying the wealth of elite Jews, the *loterie* highlighted class divisions that threatened to undermine French Jewish unity. The event's reliance on female volunteers, in the view of the critique's author, also pulled at the fabric of Jewish family life, taking wives away from their husbands for planning and selling tickets. At the same time, its top-down approach to social change clashed with notions of modern philanthropy's tighter organization and efficiency.

Money thus produced a paradoxical effect within this context. As the primary vehicle for Jewish charity, it could connect Jews as funds moved from donors to organizations to recipients. The capitalization of Jewish charity, however, also exacerbated rifts within the population that Jewish philanthropy sought to unite.

The chapter that follows is Gil Ribak, "Getting Drunk, Dancing, and Beating Each Other Up: The Images of the Gentile Poor and Narratives of Jewish Difference among the Yiddish Intelligentsia, 1881–1914." Working as a traveling salesman in New York City of the late 1880s, a young Jewish immigrant by the name of Yisroel Kopelov passed through some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. A Bobroysk-born radical, who arrived in America in 1883 and became active in Jewish labor circles and the anarchist movement, Kopelov was shocked by what he witnessed: "in the Irish neighborhoods the dirtiness was exceptional!" and "roused disgust when looking at them. Just the smell from the houses was unbearable!" It was not only "the head lice, vermin, and roaches . . . the hunger, dejection, drunkenness and sight of battered faces," but also the whole atmosphere of "neglect and ignorance."

Ribak's chapter focuses on the imagery of gentile poverty and the gentile poor, especially in comparison to the Jewish poor, as expressed by the Yiddish intelligentsia both in Eastern Europe and America in the three decades before World War I. By the late nineteenth century certain negative archetypal images of the gentile poor—mainly the peasantry—were entrenched throughout Eastern European Jewish society, usually portrayed as strong, coarse, drunk, illiterate, dumb, volatile, and sexually promiscuous. That common depiction stood in sharp contrast to the Jewish poor, who were often represented—though having their own shortcomings—as much purer and more virtuous.

At a period marked by political upheavals, social dislocations, and mass emigration, Maskilim, Zionists, socialists, and Yiddishists kept reverting to similar sets of images and assumptions about the gentile poor. Interestingly, those attitudes had a distinct transnational aspect: in their interaction with non-Jews in the United States, Yiddish writers and thinkers returned to the categories and archetypes known to them: thus American non-Jewish poor, such as the Irish or Italian immigrants, were comfortably cast as Eastern European peasantry, clearly differentiated from the Jewish poor.

In his chapter, “Empty Hearts and Full Wallets: Poverty and Wealth in American Jewish Films, 1921–1932,” Lawrence Baron turns our attention to movies. Although achieving economic and social mobility were the primary goals of the Jewish protagonists in American films from the 1920s and 1930s, Baron notes that such success often came at a high communal and individual price. Americanization and affluence challenged Jewish collective solidarity, diminished religious observance, and strained familial bonds. To be sure, Hollywood motion pictures like *The Jazz Singer* (1927) unambiguously promoted the pursuit of the American dream by resolving these conflicts in the end.

Since, however, the literary sources for many of these films revolved around the problematic transition from impoverished immigrant to financially comfortable citizen, the ambivalence attributed to making it in the United States remained embedded in their dialogue and plotlines. Based on close readings and research into film production records, Baron’s work analyzes *Hungry Hearts* (1922), *His People* (1925), and *The Symphony of Six Million* (1932) to identify the explicit and implicit discontent that accompanied the success of their lead characters.

Movies are also the central feature of the next chapter, “Crossing Over: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the Baltimore Films of Barry Levinson,” by Leonard Helfgott. Helfgott begins by recalling that Levinson’s four Baltimore films—*Diner*, *Tin Men*, *Avalon*, and *Liberty Heights*—take place within post-World War II Baltimore’s complex, stratified economic and social milieu. Children of Jewish immigrants, Levinson’s main characters, struggle for security in a world that is rapidly changing. They live in a self-contained Jewish social community but operate in an economy that encompasses all of multiethnic, multiracial Baltimore. As aluminum siding salesmen, hairdressers, wallpaper hangers, bookmakers, strip-club operators, and shopkeepers, they occupy marginal positions in the economy.

Well into the last half of the twentieth century, Baltimore remained highly segregated by race, class, ethnicity, and religion. Law and custom defined this compartmentalization, limiting residency and access to social resources,

reinforced in many cases by Jewish developers and realtors. Geographically bound, the Jewish community was no exception to citywide stratification. Jewish life was shaped largely by one's place on the socioeconomic ladder. As the main roads stretched north into lush Baltimore County, wealth defined residency. Working-class Jews, many recent migrants from the city's core, lived further south.

Levinson's films are set in a period defined by an economy in transition and the nascent Civil Rights movement. The walls of tradition had not yet crumbled, but were beginning to crack. Levinson's main characters occupy precarious places in a world under siege by modernity. They sit on the cusp of class, ethnicity, and race, tied to the old yet ambitiously seeking the new. Helfgott analyzes Levinson's efforts to capture these tensions generated by economic and social marginality.

The last chapter in this section and in this collection, by Rela Mintz Geffen, is titled "The Cost of Living Jewishly: A Matter of Money or Values?" Over a half century ago, Geffen notes, President Dwight Eisenhower surprised the American public with his statement that America was actually governed through the joint efforts of a military and industrial complex. In much the same way, over the centuries Jewish communities [*kehilloṯ*] were organized and managed by leaders drawn from wealthy *baalei batim* and the leading rabbinic scholars of each generation. The two classes were also often joined through marriage. The wealthy elite married their daughters to scholars while elders of scholarly families sought wealthy suitors for their daughters. Whether in Spain, Warsaw, or Vilna, through these alliances the power and influence of the elite groups was mutually reinforced—an interlocking directorate was formed.

Geffen asks: is the same true today either locally, regionally, or nationally in the American Jewish community? Does wealth buy power? How is affluence more generally related to affiliation? Debates over the role of the cost of living Jewishly have surfaced since the last quarter of the twentieth century. Is affiliation enabled by higher income? In fact, every national and community wide demographic survey has found that organizational and synagogue connections are directly related to household income. Does this mean that Jewish tradition and values aren't important in the decision to allocate discretionary household funds to supporting Jewish identity and the Jewish community? Does the behavior of the orthodox community, with regard to cost, demonstrate that religious commitment rather than a certain level of wealth is the key to active participation and communal leadership? Geffen addresses all of these issues in her presentation.

After a presentation or similar event, my students frequently ask me what the take-away was. This use of take-away, as the main points or ideas that emerge from reading or viewing something, is new to me. But, of course, there is nothing novel in the meaning it conveys.

What then are some of the take-aways from the extensive discussion of “Wealth and Poverty” in this volume? First, and perhaps foremost, is the recognition that issues related to wealth and poverty show up in a wide variety of Jewish contexts from the earliest to the most recent. Beyond that, it is worth noting that the root causes for wealth and poverty are themselves subject to spirited debate and discussion among authorities in just about every era, social environment, and geographical context.

While differing in their interpretations, Jewish discussants have on the whole never allowed hypothetical imagining to obscure the realities of day-to-day life within their communities. Even when the discussion is seemingly centered in another time period, it is not difficult to discern that the present, and also the future, are the main considerations. This is true from written sources; it is equally the case in film and other artistically creative endeavors. This factor also allows for nuanced comparisons between Jews and the majority Hellenistic or Christian societies they inhabited.

Another factor that tends to unite Jewish thinkers about wealth and poverty is the affirmation that the community as a whole, and not simply individual members of the community, have a stake in resolving relevant issues, especially those that involve the amelioration of the plight of the poor. Along with this is the recognition that those providing such charity or *tzedakah* may in the end offer valuable resources to some who are undeserving—and that this is a “price” the community must be willing to pay.

Let me add one further observation. Although only one of these chapters (the last) deals directly with contemporary society, there are useful and relevant insights contained throughout the volume. Although this book by no means constitutes a “how-to” guide, it does provide many of the planks that would be necessary to construct an authentically Jewish platform for thinking about, and acting upon, some of society’s most divisive and pressing issues.

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Wealth in the World of the Sages: Why Were Korach and Moses Rich People?

Meir Bar-Ilan

The aim of this paper is to discuss wealth among the Jews in antiquity, not from a historical point of view, but rather from a theological perspective: how the rabbis understood wealth and how they viewed its implications. The social-historical perspective of the first and the second centuries CE should be left to well-documented papers and books,¹ while here we will concentrate on the way in which wealth was perceived. This will be done with the help of the rabbis' legends. Needless to say, there is no intention of covering the whole subject, since that goal is beyond the scope of this paper. Rather, we will look into the way the rabbis depicted two biblical figures, and this will illustrate the way in which wealth was understood in the sages' times, from approximately the first to the third centuries. In other words, this paper will focus on values and theology more than history.

It is well-known that there is a gap between the way biblical figures are depicted in the Bible and the way they are depicted in the Talmudic corpus (that contains not only the Talmud but several midrashim as well). The oral traditions are by far larger and richer than the written tradition, but it should be kept in mind that the transmitters and developers of the oral tradition saw themselves as a part of the whole tradition and from their perspective the true interpreters of the former.

In most cases the biblical personages who appear in the rabbinic corpus are depicted in detail, including dialogues and events—much more than is written in the Bible—so the biblical figures become heavier in literary terms. However, there are times when there is a great difference between the biblical figure and the way he or she is characterized by the rabbis. There are a few figures who have one character in the Bible and an opposite one in the midrash,² so we should rather ask how this occurred and what caused the rabbis to reshape a biblical figure into a character who seems so different from the one who appears in the Bible. As a matter of fact, there are many such cases, though there is no need to discuss each one at present.

However, there are cases when the biblical hero is depicted with a special touch; that is to say, there is a gap between the biblical figure and the Talmudic one, though the depictions of the individual are not polarized. Hereafter we will discuss two biblical figures: Korach and Moses, who are described in

the Bible without the glamor of wealth, while in the rabbinic narrative these two become rich. Thus questions arise: how did this occur? Why were they depicted by the rabbis as rich people?

Before we continue, we should recall that in the Bible there are few people who are depicted as wealthy. Examples are Abraham, King Solomon, and Job. That is to say, there are cases in the Bible where the narrator portrays his protagonist by making him (never her) a rich person, and it is quite clear why he does so. However, other people in the account, according to the narrator, are not rich, so it seems, and therefore it will be a kind of intellectual adventure to understand why the rabbis made these specific biblical heroes rich men.

KORACH THE RICH

As the biblical text reads, the story of Korach is a story of rebellion against Moses (Num 16). While wandering in the wilderness, Moses was the leader of the children of Israel after he saved them from Egypt. Korach, who was a cousin of Moses, came before Moses accompanied by 250 people and wanted his share in the leadership. The story is well-known, especially because of the dramatic punishment of the rebels: the earth opened its mouth and swallowed all of them, and all of their possessions, including children and family.

It is clear that the biblical story is a story about sin and punishment. This is not only a theological story but a colorful account as well, so we can understand the focus of some of the stories of the rabbis about Korach and those who accompanied him.³ However, why the rabbis said that Korach was rich is a matter of confusion. What made them point this out (unlike the biblical narrator)? How does this characterization serve the story? Hereafter we will discuss some of the explanations that might be given for this phenomenon: the richness of the protagonist as a gap between the written and the oral Jewish traditions.

THE TRADITIONAL OR TRULY NAÏVE EXPLANATION

It is assumed that for many centuries the oral tradition was accepted, *prima facie*, as an ancient truth. The oral traditions were understood to originate at the same time and place as the written Torah. There was no chronological gap and thus there was not—at least, so it was understood—any thematic or theological gap between the Bible and the postbiblical Aggadah. In former centuries the whole concept of history and historical change, or historicity, was far from being acknowledged by anyone, until about the beginning of the nineteenth century. Thus, Jewish heritage accepts Talmudic legends and merges them with biblical stories, as if all tell the same truth, without being

aware of their different literary and chronological origins. From this point of view, Korach was rich because tradition so dictates, and it does not matter whether this comes from a written or an oral tradition: both occurred together.

From a modern perspective, it should be admitted that the rabbinic Aggadah is based on stories that had been circulating for generations, telling the details of events that took place before millennia. One may see these stories as mere anachronisms and the attitude towards them—that the two media originated from the same time and place—as naive. From a modern perspective traditional societies, such as that of the Jews, seem to be naive in many ways, and thus one may say that the concept of Korach as a rich man is not based on any true history; anyone who accepts this fact displays naivety. Thus, a modern critical mind negates tradition outright and considers it a false truth. However, this critical perspective does not explain how the depiction of Korach's richness came about, so we have to continue in our search for the reason why Korach became rich in the postbiblical tradition.

THE TRADITIONAL, SOPHISTICATED EXPLANATION

In the twentieth century, within the framework of the traditional interpretation, a new type of explanation emerged that might be called the traditional-sophisticated explanation. I do not know of any other commentator besides R. Baruch Halevi Epstein (1860–1941) who developed this concept. Epstein first did so in his well-known commentary of the Torah: *Torah Temima* (first published 1902). In this book Epstein tried to connect oral and written tradition in a new way. First, he collected many of the sages' traditions with regard to the biblical text and published them on one page, and then he wrote his own observations trying to explain exactly how the sages derived their halachot or stories out of the biblical text. Epstein saw the ancient rabbis as highly sophisticated readers of the biblical text, and it appears that his appreciation is not far from being correct. As a matter of fact, Epstein himself was such a reader, and perhaps because of that he preferred not to take the rabbinical pulpit, but rather worked as a high clerk in a bank. Epstein wrote several books using his erudition as well as his linguistic and other skills to describe how one should read and understand rabbinic texts. His book *Torah Temima* became very popular, as it is until this very day—a rare case indeed.

Epstein, as his commentary demonstrates, was of the opinion that the rabbis' traditions are based on the biblical text and that the rabbis found all their traditions inside the text, just as one might hang something on a hinge on the wall. His goal in his commentary, it appears, was to find the hint that is

the hinge from which the rabbis developed their traditions. According to this view, everything is already in the biblical text, though implicit, and one should merely work to find the clue. It seems that Epstein was, to an extent, under the influence of his predecessors: the MALBIM (Meir Leibush ben Yehiel Michel Weiser), a rabbi and a commentator who quoted Philo and Kant, and the NEZIV (Naphtali Zvi Yehuda Berlin), his uncle and the head of the famous yeshiva in Volozin, Lithuania, who lived in the nineteenth century. We may see their influence on Epstein's work, though it must be stated that Epstein was more systematic than either of them in his method of explaining the rabbinic mind or the tradition makers' assumptions.

According to this view, we may look again into the biblical text in order to explain how Korach became rich in the rabbis' view. According to this way of thinking, going back to the Bible leads one to realize that the desideratum "hinge" is found there. At the end of the story (Num 16:32) it states: "And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the people who belonged to Korach and all their goods." That is to say, Korach had goods [רכושו] in the wilderness, which aroused surprise as to how Korach became rich (in the wilderness, unlike Abraham, who got his gold from Pharaoh, or Job, who was rich in the first place).

The above explanation was not given by Epstein, but is based on his method. It is true that Epstein was severely criticized by some rabbis, among them R. Menachem Mendle Kasher.⁴ However, his criticism, like that of others, focused on a different aspect of Epstein's book, namely, that 1) Epstein distorted the sources, invented them, or in some cases did not understand them properly, and 2) Epstein took most of his comments from former rabbis without acknowledging them, which suggests that he had done all his work relying on his memory alone (or worse: his work was a plagiarism). However, these accusations are not relevant to this paper, which focuses on a different aspect of Epstein's thesis, and acknowledging his critics should not hinder us from understanding his contribution. In other words, Epstein's view that all oral tradition is somehow connected, related, or rooted in the biblical text seems to be quite logical, and nobody has refuted this concept as of yet. If this is the case, we may say that it is quite clear how Korach became rich in the eyes of the rabbis: the idea was already there in the text.

THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL EXPLANATION

After stating the former way of thinking, we can move to the more modern view of understanding the sages' traditions. The main issue here is not the

theological values of the rabbis, but rather the *Sitz im Leben* of their biblical legends. The modern study of Judaism differs between the literary sources and tries to explain the circumstances under which the new values emerged. In other words: under what circumstances were the rabbis' legends articulated? Was there a connection between those legends and the times in which the rabbis lived? In what way do those legends reflect the plain text of the Bible, or do they rather reflect the lives of the sages who told them?

Adolf Büchler (1867–1939) was probably the first scholar to take rabbinic legends and interpret them as a kind of a historical evidence of the rabbis themselves. It is assumed his method was developed under the influence of the way German scholars analyzed myths at the end of the nineteenth century, though this influence cannot be seen explicitly in his writing. Büchler's method is described, in a brief manner, when he discusses Jewish leaders in Sepphoris in the second to third centuries by using their sermons on biblical figures.⁵ The basic idea is that there are circumstances when a rabbi could not openly condemn the behavior of the leaders of his time, and to be politically correct he transferred his criticism to remote biblical times and figures.

Moshe Beer (1924–2003), my former teacher, was, in a way, an intellectual student of Büchler, though they never met. Beer wrote several articles based on the aforementioned method, which he also developed. Beer dedicated papers, later to be included in his collected essays,⁶ to issues such as “The Riches of Moses in Rabbinic Aggada” and “The Sons of Samuel in Rabbinic Legends.” Only in his posthumously published paper is the topic stated explicitly: “The Historical Background of the Legend of Jonathan ben Gershom ben Moshe.” That is to say, when Beer discussed Samuel's sons he was not interested in the biblical figures at all, but rather he took the legends concerning a specific biblical figure as reflecting the rabbis', or authors', days. And there is something else in his method; while Büchler saw the historical facts and only sporadically tried to look at the other side of the coin, the depictions of biblical figures, Beer did his research the other way around: he looked at the rabbis' legends concerning a specific biblical figure and then tried to see the verso of the coin: the historical setting.

All in all, history is reflected in the rabbis' legends. These legends seem to narrate events that took place a millennium and more ago, but the truth is that they tell about the sages' lives and era. According to this concept, the legends do nothing more than mirror the world of the sages by projecting them into the biblical past.

Now that the methodology of this paper is clear, we can follow the discussion by focusing on Korach, and how, or if, the legends about Korach are in reality historical facts that are hidden in the shadows of sermons and religious sayings.

Coming to our point: the additional adjective for Korach, “rich,” comes from the sages’ own experience, but the concept is disguised under legendary and biblical heroes. The realism expressed by Korach the rich is that just as Korach rebelled against Moses, so in the sages’ times there were people who rebelled against the rabbis. Not only were they rich, but there was also a connection between their wealth and their rebellious behavior.

Now, this type of interpretation suffers from the fact that we cannot prove it definitely. However, it is needless to say that in all generations there were people who did not accept the religious leaders, and this was not only true among the Jews, of course. By stating that Korach was rich, the sages used Korach as an archetype of a rebel, a rich person in the community who disagrees with the local rabbi, thus expressing implicitly the wishful thinking that just as Korach’s life was ended by God, God would do the same to the local rich who had scorned that rabbi.

Before trying to explain the historical settings of the rabbis’ view of the wealthy Korach, we must go back to all sages’ legends concerning this figure. Reading them together shows that the rabbis were generous in their depictions of Korach, and not only by giving him the title “rich.” The rabbis had a lot to say about Korach and described him in a way that is definitely not in the Torah, so the aforementioned hinge is missing. Viewing all the legends concerning Korach together will help us to understand the rabbis’ view or perhaps their worldview.

So, except for stating that Korach was rich, what else did the rabbis have to say about him? Here are some sayings that will be discussed. After looking at each legend, we will characterize the whole figure of Korach and then move forward to understand where descriptions concerning this figure came from, if not the Bible.

To begin the discussion with the biblical Korach as a Talmudic figure, it will suffice to mention only a few traditions, and after drawing attention to history, we will go back to the legends. Now, according to the Mishnah (*Sanh.* 10:1): “All Israel have a share in the world to come. . . . But those who will not have a share in the world to come are he who says that resurrection is not in the Torah, or that the Torah was not given from Heaven, or Epicurus. R. Aqiba said: also he who reads external books.”⁷

It is quite clear that the Mishnah refers to heretical Jews who disagree with the basic theological concepts of rabbinic Judaism (about which more will be said later), among them the oral tradition as opposed to heretical writ-

ten books. In the Palestinian Talmud (*Sanh.* 10:1, 28a), as a comment on this Mishnah, it is stated: “Rav said: Korach was an Epicarsi . . . he said to Moses: a tallit that is whole *tchelet* [light blue], does it need a *tsitsit*?⁸ A house full of books, does it need a mezuzah? At that moment Korach said: the Torah was not given from Heaven, Moses is not a prophet, neither Aaron a high priest.”

One may conclude that according to Rav (R. Abba, third century) Korach was Epicurean, named after Epicurus (341–270 BCE), a name that became a nickname for any Jewish heretic.⁹ In other words, Korach is depicted as a heretical Jew who not only rebelled against Moses and Aaron, as in the Bible, but also did not acknowledge the divinity of the Torah, as heretics might have done. According to R. Akiba (*b. Sanh.* 109b), all the congregation of Korach has no share in the world to come, and this notion goes hand in hand with the aforementioned Mishnah and with a later midrash as well. In *Midrash Hagadol* (Num 16:1), a medieval midrash that contains old traditions, it is stated: “(Korach) went astray to *Minuth* [heresy], and he denied the commandments given by God.” So now it becomes clear that Korach was portrayed as a heretical Jew, and this is evident already in rabbinic sources from the third century (if not slightly earlier).

Coming to the historical setting, it was Adolf Büchler who wrote extensively on Jewish heresies in the Galilee in the second to third centuries.¹⁰ A later scholar discussed the Minim but did not mention Büchler, for some reason.¹¹ However, in both papers there are collected sayings and beliefs of the heresies in antiquity, so we can compare the historical heresies on the one hand and the biblical Korach, that is, the rabbinical Korach, on the other.

In talmudic sources there are dozens of traditions concerning confrontations of all sorts between heretics and rabbis. They discussed biblical verses, argued about certain halachot and so on. It seems that the satirical polemic of Korach against Moses, a mockery of the rabbinic rules that is recorded in the Palestinian Talmud (and later midrashim) is nothing less than a reflection of a dispute between a Tanna and a heretical Jew.¹² That is to say, the sages took contemporary dialogues between rabbis and heretics and used them when portraying biblical figures, in this case, Korach.¹³ Furthermore, according to R. Akiva, Korach and his entire congregation will not enter the world to come (*t. Sanh.* 13:9; *b. Sanh.* 109b), and by that it is implied that in the second century there were not only scattered individual heretics, but congregations of heretics (presumably with many books). Summing up this line of thought: Korach was depicted by the rabbis as a heretical Jew by applying to him the qualities of heretics that lived among the Jews in the second to third centuries.

A question now arises: Korach was depicted as a kind of archetype of a heretical Jew, one who challenges religious leadership, but why was Korach portrayed as wealthy? How does this fact substantiate the notion of heresy?

As a matter of fact, the explanation for this simple question is already stated in our sources. Ps. Jonathan (Num 16:19), an Aramaic translation of the Bible, states: "And Korach assembled all the congregation to the gate of the tabernacle and with his riches he became arrogant¹⁴ . . . and with those riches he wanted to get rid of Moses and Aahron from this world had not The Holy revealed Himself to the whole congregation."¹⁵ That is to say, according to the rabbis Korach's riches were a vehicle through which he wanted to get rid of the rabbinic leaders. Heretics could mock the rabbis, but only with money could they influence their Jewish society by getting rid, one way or another, of an unwanted rabbi.

In conclusion, according to the rabbis, the biblical figure of Korach (as well as other biblical figures) is a kind of archetype, or even a mythical figure, representing an everlasting truth that one can find in any generation. The rabbis depicted Korach as a heretical Jew who fought the rabbinic leadership with the help of his money.

MOSES THE RICH

There is another figure who is known from the Bible, but only in the rabbinic corpus is he characterized as rich, and that man is Moses. Before we continue we must stress that there is no connection whatsoever between Korach the rich and Moses the rich, since their respective wealth comes from different sources. There was never a dispute between Korach the rich and Moses the rich, and each figure belongs to a different realm (just as one cannot compare Red Riding Hood with Peter Pan). And there is something else: the riches of Moses have already been discussed by M. Beer, and hereafter I follow his steps.¹⁶ Once again the question arises: what made the rabbis proclaim that Moses was rich?

Let us look at the wealth of Moses according to the rabbis. In *p. Talmud Sheqalim* 5:2 49a it is stated:

Said R. Hama b. R. Hanina: "On the basis of the refuse of the tablets [which Moses got to keep], Moses got rich." That is in line with the following: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Cut for yourself two tablets . . . ' (Exod 34:1). This indicates that the cuttings [the refuse] should belong to Moses."

Said R. Hanin: "A quarry of precious stones and pearls did the Holy One, blessed be he, create out of his tent, and from that Moses got rich."

It is written: “Whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose up and every man stood at his tent door and looked after Moses, until he had gone into the tent” (Exod 33:8).

Two Amoraim: One said, “[They stared at him] to scoff.”

The other said, “[They stared at him] in admiration.”

The one who said they did so to scoff: “Look at those fat thighs, look at that big belly. See the meat that he eats—that belongs to the Jews. See how he drinks—what belongs to the Jews. Whatever property he owns—comes from the Jews.”

The one who said that they did so in admiration: “See the righteous man and acquire merit because you have been able to lay eyes on him.”¹⁷

In other words, the Amoraim (in the third to fourth centuries) agree that Moses was rich, though they argue concerning the source of his richness.¹⁸ According to one of the Amoraim, Moses was rich due to a blessing from God, but another Amora said Moses was rich because he used to eat from the goods of the Jews. That is, Moses took advantage of his position as a leader of the Children of Israel and became fat from their property.

Now, the methodology of our research has already been stated, and all we must surmise is what the *Sitz im Leben* of this accusation was, since it is certainly not reflected in the Bible. Therefore, a modern understanding of the richness of Moses should look at any rich person in the days of the sages who might have been a model for a rich Moses.

In general, the rabbis were not rich, except a very few of them, such as R. Tarfon, R. Elazar ben Harsom, ben Elasha (son in law of R. Judah the Patriarch), and R. Judah the Patriarch (c. 136–c. 220). In rabbinic tradition R. Judah the Patriarch, known also as Rebbi, is known not only for his leadership of the Jews and his connections with the Roman rulers but also for his wealth and, above all, for being the editor or composer of the Mishnah. In the Babylonian Talmud there are more than sixty cases where the Talmud states that “our Mishnah” is Rebbi’s,¹⁹ so it is not surprising that Rav Shrira Gaon, at the end of the tenth century, saw Rebbi as the editor of the Mishnah (either in its oral or written form). Thus, R. Judah the Patriarch becomes similar to Moses: one gave the written Torah and the other gave the oral Torah, both represented the nation of Israel before the non-Jewish ruler, and both were rich leaders of Israel. Moreover, Moses is depicted in the Torah as the most humble man (Num 12:3), while it is stated in the Mishnah that when R. Judah the Patriarch passed away, with him also passed humbleness (*m. Sotah* 9:15).

So far as one can tell, there are no such similarities between any other of the biblical and the rabbinical figures. Therefore, these similarities lead to the assumption that the accusation against Moses the rich was actually an accusation against R. Judah the Patriarch, though in order to be politically correct, or from fear of the reigning force, his name was changed. The sources of the richness of the rabbinic Moses were already studied; suffice it to say that they are not based on any biblical text. However, the richness of R. Judah the Patriarch is something else: he had lands in several places in the Land of Israel and many Jews were his tenants.²⁰ An analysis of rabbinic sources reveals that there were some rabbis who criticized R. Judah the Patriarch,²¹ so it is not difficult to assume that being so rich, with so many people working for him, might have led to such a complaint that he—Rebbi, not Moses—“ate from the Jews.”

In all, Moses the leader of Israel in the Bible finds his counterpart in R. Judah the Patriarch in the days of the sages (second to third centuries). Thus Moses became rich to express in a concealed way that there were Jews who scoffed at Rebbi, the contemporary counterpart of Moses. This type of hidden criticism is quite expected in a traditional society in which a leader with the status of R. Judah the Patriarch would not be openly criticized, and therefore such a reproach, in disguise, should not be ruled out.²²

CONCLUSION

The above study is not a story of wealthy individuals but rather a mode of penetration into the minds of the sages, trying to understand why they made certain changes in their understanding of biblical protagonists. After examining the rabbinic sources, it becomes evident that the rabbis were contemporizing biblical figures by reshaping the past. The sages took biblical heroes as living symbols, a variety of archetypal figures, and they made them rich not through historical or literary analysis, but rather by exteriorizing some fault in the inner human behavior of their contemporaries.

This study also shows ways of making criticism that were voiced in antiquity, when open criticism was unheard of. The rabbis did not refute richness per se, as did early Christians; rather, they continued the biblical notion that connects money with unethical behavior.²³ Most of the rabbis were poor people, but nonetheless they were not impressed by the wealth of their political and religious leaders.²⁴

NOTES

1. Gildas Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Ben-Zion Rosenfeld, "The Poor as a Stratum of Jewish Society in Roman Palestine 70–250 CE: An Analysis," *Historia* (Stuttgart) 60:3 (2011): 273–300.
2. Eliezer Margalioth, *Hachayavim Bamikra uzakaim Batalmud ubamidrashim* [The Guilty in the Bible and Innocent in the Talmud and Midrashim] (London: Ararat, 1949).
3. Louis Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1942), 3:286–303.
4. Kasher initiated a series of tens of volumes, *Torah Shlema*, with the same goal as that of *Torah Temima*, though with deeper and broader scholarship. However, Kasher's books are (and continue to be) used only by learned people, while *Torah Temima*, probably because it is so user friendly, became popular among many orthodox Jews (but not among the ultra-orthodox).
5. Adolf Büchler, *The Political and the Social Leaders of the Jewish Community of Sepphoris in the Second and Third Centuries* (Oxford: University Press, 1909; Hebrew translation, Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1968, 33–34).
6. Moshe Beer, *The Sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud: Teaching, Activities and Leadership*, (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2011) (Hebrew). In this book there is a study dedicated to "The Revolt of Korach and its Causes in Rabbinic Legend" (397–421), though Beer does not stress the idea of a heretic Jew, as emerges from these legends.
7. These "external books" [*sefarim Hitsoniyim*] are not far from *sifrei Minin* [books of heretics] as already stated in *b. Sanhedrin* 100b. Such books were with Elisha ben Abuya, the famous apostate, when he left the rabbinic world. See *b. Hagigah* 15b.
8. This is, of course, a mocking question, which was formulated due to the command to insert a thread of *tchelet* that appears in the former chapter (Num 15).
9. It should be noted that in medieval times and later, Epicurus came to represent the ultimate atheist. However, the historical Epicurus believed in the existence of gods, though he thought that the world functions automatically and there is no divine commandment (or, God doesn't want anything from man).
10. Adolf Büchler, *Studies in Jewish History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), 245–74.
11. Martin Goodman, *Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 163–73.
12. For a dispute between R. Simlai and an Epicurean Jew concerning the number of gods that created the world, see *Yalkut Shimoni*, *Bereshit* 14; Saul Lieberman, *Tosephta Kipsbuta*, V, *Moed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962), 1219 (Hebrew).
13. Goodman, *Judaism*, 172, came to this conclusion: "I suggest that the concept of *minuth* may have stemmed originally not from the practical need to deal with heretics but from a theoretical consideration of the impact on rabbinic thought of a category of Jews. . . . It was

much easier in practice to avoid heretics, and that is precisely what the tannaim tried to do.” However, taking into consideration the dialogue of Korach, according to the interpretation stated above, together with a large amount of evidence collected by Büchler (ignored by Goodman), it becomes clear that one cannot accept this hypothesis.

14. Korach’s arrogance and richness penetrated the Quran (28) through Muhammad’s Jewish comrades. See Haim Schwarzbaum, *Mimqor Israel weIshmael* (Tel Aviv: Don, 1975), 85–93.

15. וכנש עליהון קרח ית כל כנישתא לתרע משכן זמנא ואתנטל בעותריה דאשכח תרין אוצרין מן אוצרוי דיוסף מליין כסף ודהב ובעא למטרד בהווא עותרא ית משה וית אהרן מן עלמא אילולי דאתגלי איקרא דיי לכל כנישתא:

16. Beer, *The Sages of the Mishnah and the Talmud*, 344–61.

17. *The Talmud of the Land of Israel*, vol. 15, *Sheqalim* (trans. J. Neusner; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991), 106–07. Compare *b. Qiddushin* 33b; Tanhuma—Buber, Exod Piqudei, 4.

18. In the aforementioned study of Beer there are more sources, and one may assume that already in the second century there were traditions concerning the wealth of Moses. On the other hand, there are sources in Midrash Tanhuma, which is considered to be a later midrash. For the sake of this study there is no need to discuss all the sources here.

19. For example: *b. Shabbat* 4b, 18a, 74a, and other passages.

20. Gedaliahu Alon, *The History of the Jews in The Land of Israel in the Mishnah and Talmud Period* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1970), 2:132–38 (Hebrew).

21. Gedaliahu Alon, *The History of the Jews in The Land of Israel in the Mishnah and Talmud Period* (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hameuchad, 1970), 2:145–48 (Hebrew).

22. Beer was of the opinion that with the exception of R. Judah the Patriarch, there were other Jewish leaders who were criticized by the darshanim with the help of the name of Moses. However, it seems that only R. Judah the Patriarch had similarities with Moses (and Korach became rich disregarding any similarity with Moses, as already stated above).

23. Exodus 23:8, Deuteronomy 16:19, Ecclesiastes 5:12.

24. *m. Avot* 4:1, 6:9.

Care for the Poor and the Origins of Charity in Early Rabbinic Literature

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INTRODUCTION

Support for the poor is one of the most important religious obligations in the Jewish tradition.¹ While poverty relief is addressed in the Hebrew Bible and texts of the Second Temple era, it is in classical rabbinic compilations of late antiquity (Mishnah, Talmuds, and midrashim; edited from the third through seventh centuries CE) that care for the poor begins to take its place among Judaism's preeminent commandments. How was support for the poor conceptualized in Tannaitic texts, the earliest works of rabbinic Judaism? Answering this question will help us understand the development of attitudes toward wealth and poverty in rabbinic Judaism from late antiquity to today.

In this paper, I examine the major types of poverty relief discussed in Tannaitic compilations—the Mishnah, Tosefta, and Tannaitic midrashim—which were redacted in third century CE Roman Palestine. I find that their approaches to poverty relief can be broadly classified as either harvest gifts—produce left for the poor at the harvest—or charity. To shed light on rabbinic ideas, I consider how they relate to earlier approaches to support for the poor in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple-era writings, as well as contemporaneous modes of giving in the Greco-Roman world.

THE TANNAIM IN THEIR SOCIOECONOMIC CONTEXTS

Early rabbinic or Tannaitic texts consist of legal and ethical teachings that were compiled and edited by the early rabbis or Tannaim. These individuals numbered about one hundred or so self-proclaimed experts in Torah, all of whom were men and well-off.² Before examining rabbinic Judaism's foundational texts on care for the poor, it is illuminating to explore the socioeconomic background of the place and time in which the Tannaim lived and formulated their ideas.

Scholars have long noted the dearth of primary sources on Jews and Judaism in third century CE Roman Palestine. The period lacks a sweeping narrative account of its political, social, and economic conditions like that of Josephus's for the first century CE. Moreover, rabbinic literature was not intended as historiography, does not reliably preserve older material, and

reflects the worldview of only an elite minority.³ Archaeological remains from third century Palestinian Jews are scarce in comparison to the rich corpora from earlier and later periods.⁴ Some attribute the scarcity to the ancient Jews themselves, arguing that they failed to produce a material culture that was recognizably Jewish.⁵ Others point to difficulties in the interpretation of the finds, including the challenges of dating remains to a narrow period and the obstruction of earlier periods by later occupation.⁶

While the sources do not allow for a full reconstruction of Jewish society's political or cultural history, they do allow us to sketch the general contours of social and economic processes. For example, the necropolis of Beth Shearim features ornamented, monumental gateways that open to catacombs containing the remains of Jewish society's rich and powerful.⁷ In Sepphoris, excavations at the acropolis have uncovered a mansion whose massive dimensions and exquisite mosaic floors attest to the occupants' affluence.⁸ In Tiberias, funerary inscriptions boast of the abundant wealth of the deceased.⁹ Indeed, these finds constitute examples of personal wealth in the key sites of Jewish Palestine in the third century.

There is good reason to believe that this wealth was not distributed evenly. Recent reevaluations of the sources suggest that agriculture, the dominant sector of the economy of Roman Palestine, was far less profitable than scholars had once believed. Low crop yields suggest that little agricultural surplus was produced, and many farmers probably lived modestly.¹⁰ These delicate circumstances would be upset by occasional famines and epidemics.¹¹ In short, while Deuteronomy 15:11 is surely correct that there will always be poor individuals, it may have been an especially prominent topic of discourse in the time and place in which the Tannaim authored and redacted their texts on poverty relief.

HARVEST GIFTS FOR THE POOR

The tractates Mishnah *Pe'ah* and Tosefta *Pe'ah* work out a legal system for allocating agricultural produce to those in need. They are presented as an elucidation of the poor offerings mentioned briefly in the Hebrew Bible, primarily in Leviticus 19:9–10, 23:22, and Deuteronomy 24:19–21:

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges [*pe'ah*] of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. You shall not pick [*-l-l*] your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God. (Lev 19:9–10)¹²

And when you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges [*pe'ah*] of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I the Lord am your God. (Lev 23:22)

When you reap the harvest in your field and overlook a sheaf in the field, do not turn back to get it; it shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow—in order that the Lord your God may bless you in all your undertakings. When you beat down the fruit of your olive trees, do not go over them again; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, do not pick it over again [*'l-l*]; that shall go to the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. (Deut 24:19–21)

These verses constitute the central biblical texts on agricultural support for the poor. The rabbis explore them extensively, filling the Mishnah's and Tosefta's tractates *Pe'ah* by defining, classifying, and discussing these laws in encyclopedic detail.¹³ The Tosefta dubs these items collectively as “gifts” for the poor; for clarity and brevity, I will call them “harvest gifts” to reflect the fact that their identification and provision to the poor is tied directly to the harvest.

The first item, *pe'ah*, is subject to the most extensive treatment by the rabbis (*m. Pe'ah* 1:1–4:9; *t. Pe'ah* 1:1–2:13). In Leviticus 19:9 and 23:22, God commands the Israelites to refrain from harvesting the grain located in the corner or edge [*pe'ah*] of a field. Rather, the householder (i.e., landowner) is to leave it for the poor to collect.¹⁴ The Tannaim expand the concept's scope, applying it to everything that is harvested as a crop, edible, tended, grown in the Land of Israel, and able to be stored. This includes grains, legumes, and fruit such as carobs, walnuts, almonds, pomegranates, and olives.¹⁵ The rabbis also specify that *pe'ah* must come from the rear corner of the field and total at least one-sixtieth of the crop.¹⁶

Next, the Tannaim examine “gleanings.”¹⁷ When the householder reaps a stalk of grain, removing it from the ground with a sickle or his bare hands, whatever drops to the ground is classified as gleanings and belongs to the poor. The householder must then provide poor individuals with opportunities to collect the gleanings.¹⁸ This includes giving them access to their fields and sufficient time to gather their fill. Indeed, the Tannaim instruct the householder to keep his field open and accessible until after the elderly poor—the most feeble—have had an opportunity to gather produce (*m. Pe'ah* 8:1). Similar to the other agricultural allocations, the householder's responsibility to fulfill these laws initiates as soon as he begins reaping.¹⁹

The next gift for the poor is “forgotten things,” defined as produce that the householder has inadvertently missed during the harvest. Deuteronomy 24:19 stipulates that the cultivator may not turn back to reap what he had initially overlooked; instead, it is to be left for the underprivileged to collect. While the Hebrew Bible limits this category to grain, the rabbis expand it to include other items, such as olives, grapes, and vegetables.²⁰ Produce can only be considered “forgotten” if it was unharvested entirely by accident—human agency or intentionality cannot be a factor. For example, produce that the householder sets aside for later collection does not qualify, nor does produce that was deliberately hidden by the poor.²¹

The next two gifts, *peret* and *olelet*, come from the vineyard. For these, the rabbis expand upon concepts and terminology from Leviticus 19:10 and Deuteronomy 24:21. They define *peret* as grapes that have become detached from their clusters and fallen to the ground—that is, “separated grapes” (*m. Pe’ah* 7:3). *Olelet* is a “defective cluster,” a bunch of grapes that did not form properly (i.e., in the shape of a cone), such as those missing grapes on their shoulders and pendants (*m. Pe’ah* 7:4–8; *t. Pe’ah* 3:11).²² These items are to be left for the poor, who are given access to the vineyard to collect them (*m. Pe’ah* 8:1). These processes, as with forgotten things, must be devoid of human interference (e.g., *m. Pe’ah* 7:3). Rabbi Meir, for example, holds that misshapen clusters are specified as *olelet* at the moment in which they appear on the vine (*m. Pe’ah* 7:5). Meir’s position emphasizes the (seeming) randomness of the classification of a grape as *olelet*. Finally, the rabbis address the *poor tithe* (*m. Pe’ah* 8:5–6; *t. Pe’ah* 4:2)—produce allocated to the poor every third and sixth years of a seven-year cycle.

While seemingly by chance, the items left for the poor at the harvest have been selected by God—God selects the particular stalks that fall and become gleanings, the particular items that grow in the corners, and so on. The laws of harvest gifts are negative duties, as the householder is instructed on how to refrain from interfering with God’s direct distribution of produce to the poor. They are also perfectly defined, as the items allocated, as well as the place and time of the allocation, are all identified. These laws leave no room for personal discretion, precluding generosity and liberality, which are hallmarks of charity. Harvest gifts are more akin to acts of justice than charity—indeed, the Tannaim nowhere identify harvest gifts as *tzedakah*. As we will see, the laws of *tzedakah* are imperfectly defined, as the benefactor has a great deal of personal discretion over what, when, and to whom he gives.²

CHARITY

In later rabbinic texts (e.g., Palestinian and Babylonian Talmuds), the concept of charity is expansive, encompassing a wide variety of endeavors understood to be philanthropic, such as contributions toward the salaries of teachers, gifts to synagogues, care for orphans, burying the dead, providing dowries for poor women, visiting and caring for the sick and elderly, and ransoming captives.²⁴ In Tannaitic texts, however, charity was narrow in scope, denoting only the provision of material support (food, money, clothing, and shelter) for living poor men.²⁵ The Tannaim discuss two ways to give charity—collectively through institutions and individually.

ORGANIZED CHARITY

The Tannaim discuss two charitable institutions, the soup kitchen [*tambui*] and the charity fund [*quppa*].²⁶ They envision the soup kitchen as an entity that provides immediate sustenance to all individuals in need, regardless of their place of origin.²⁷ Because the charity fund catered only to local residents (see below), the soup kitchen was especially relevant for nonlocals, including individuals who wandered from town to town looking for work or alms. The rabbinic view of the soup kitchen is modeled on customs of hospitality, though it differs in one important respect—unlike hospitality, one who receives support from the soup kitchen is not expected to reciprocate.²⁸ The rabbis also make special provisions for the soup kitchen to supply the poor with the materials needed for observing certain commandments. For example, keeping the Sabbath in the rabbinically prescribed way requires eating three meals with special foods, which the soup kitchen would provide.²⁹

Whereas the soup kitchen supplies short-term, basic necessities to all, the charity fund provides long-term care for the poor who live in the town in which the fund is located. The soup kitchen provides the same basic provisions for everyone—for example, a 500 gram loaf of bread—while the charity fund provides items that are individualized to meet each poor person's specific needs.³⁰ The needs that the charity fund addresses, moreover, are defined by semiotics and social status, in contrast to the soup kitchen, which provides biological necessities. The goal of the charity fund is to restore each impoverished person to his previous place in society by providing him with the precise kinds of clothes that he used to wear, the types of food that he used to eat, and so forth. The rabbis instruct that the charity fund must restore the poor at any cost, which could entail expensive outlays if he used to be wealthy. Even a

horse and a servant, the Tannaim instruct, should be given to a wellborn poor individual if he used to own them.³¹

The charitable institutions are overseen by a specially appointed individual, the charity supervisor [*gabbai tzedakah* or *parnas*]. His main tasks are collecting contributions from the town's residents and distributing them to the poor.³² In Tannaitic texts, the supervisor's collection duties are modeled along the lines of a tax collector, who has the authority to demand payments from all of the town's residents. Likewise, the supervisor ought to have the authority to compel people to contribute to the charitable institutions, which the rabbis understood as a civic or communal obligation. In his distribution of alms, the supervisor is modeled after a judge, as he must first assess the claims of the poor before deciding which alms should be provided to which claimants.³³

The Tannaim formulate organized charity as an alternative to direct almsgiving, whereby the benefactor and beneficiary meet in person. Organized charity facilitates anonymous giving, helping to protect the dignity of the poor.

INDIVIDUAL ALMSGIVING

The simplest and most common form of support for the poor in the ancient world was when one individual handed over food, money, or some other material asset to a beggar. Individual almsgiving usually took place in public, especially in or near religious spaces.³⁴ Jews were likewise known to beg near sacred spaces, such as the Temple compound in Jerusalem (before its destruction in 70 CE).³⁵ The attraction of beggars to temples and other religious locales was twofold. First, because the poor were often understood to be under the special care of the divine, it followed that they would seek protection and comfort at the deity's abode. Second, the poor improved their chances of receiving alms by begging in areas with substantial foot traffic and where people gathered. It was likewise common to find beggars in marketplaces and at junctions in the road.³⁶ Beggars were also known to solicit goods at private homes, often going door to door.³⁷

While the Tannaim held organized charity as the ideal way to give, they nevertheless accepted the persistence of individual almsgiving and deigned to legislate on it.³⁸ First, like their pagan counterparts, the Tannaim were suspicious of imposters—those who presented themselves as poor but were not. Such individuals pretended to have physical ailments (blindness, broken limbs, etc.), and to be unable to support themselves. Pagan suspicions of imposters resulted in punishments (e.g., death by stoning for imposters who were exposed), formal legislation that limited begging, and perhaps above all,

simply ignoring beggars at the risk of neglecting those whose need was genuine.³⁹ By contrast, the Tannaim instruct that one should give to an individual who claims to be poor, as imposters will be duly recognized as such and punished by God (*m. Pe'ah* 8:9; *t. Pe'ah* 4:13–14).

Second, the Tannaim were particularly interested in discussing begging in private spaces. In some instances, the rabbis discourage giving to those who solicit alms at one's home, instructing the householder that he has no obligation to give. Rather, the poor man ought to appeal to the soup kitchen or (if applicable) the charity fund (*t. Pe'ah* 4:8). In other instances, the Tannaim accept door-to-door begging as a fact of life. Archaeological remains from Roman-era Galilee indicate that residential areas were densely packed and that domiciles often opened into shared courtyards.⁴⁰ It is easy to imagine, therefore, a beggar going from one doorway to the next asking for alms from everyone in a cluster of homes. The image of a beggar-at-the-doorway is employed by the Tannaim in various legal discussions. For example, the Tannaim use the hand of the beggar as it crosses a threshold to illustrate and clarify the laws of carrying objects between private and public domains on the Sabbath (*m. Shabbat* 1:1). The Tannaim are also interested in how charity relates to other commandments that involve giving (*t. Pe'ah* 4:16, 4:19). Above all, they seek to elucidate the rewards for giving charity, especially the wages and other profits that one will earn in the world to come (*t. Pe'ah* 4:17–18). Likewise, those who fail to give charity are likened to idolaters (*t. Pe'ah* 4:20).

SUPPORT FOR THE POOR IN BIBLICAL AND HELLENISTIC JEWISH WRITINGS

HARVEST GIFTS

The terminology for the poor offerings—*pe'ah*, gleanings, forgotten things, separated grapes, defective clusters, and the poor tithe—derive from a handful of biblical verses, Leviticus 19:9–10, 23:22 and Deuteronomy 14:28–29, 24:19–21, 26:12–13. In expanding these terms into legal concepts, Mishnah and Tosefta *Pe'ah* depart from the biblical laws in important ways. First, they add quantitative requirements to certain laws, such as prescribing that the produce left in the corner of a field as *pe'ah* must consist of at least one-sixtieth of the yield. Second, the Tannaim conflate the verses from Leviticus and Deuteronomy, erasing their distinctive contexts and orientations. The passages from Leviticus are embedded in the Holiness Code (Lev 17:1–26:46), whereby fulfilling these obligations is part of an effort to be holy like God. The laws in Deuteronomy, by contrast, are motivated by the promise of rewards, namely, blessings from God.

The Tannaim also expand the application of these concepts. Whereas the laws of *pe'ah* apply only to grains in the Hebrew Bible, they include legumes, fruit, and other produce in the Mishnah (*m. Pe'ah* 1:4–5). In Deuteronomy 24:19 the laws of forgotten things apply only to sheaves (i.e., bundles of cut grains), while in the Mishnah they can also include standing grain and fruit trees (*m. Pe'ah* 6:7; 7:1–2). The Tannaim invent a new category of harvest gifts that is based only loosely on the biblical terminology. Their understanding of *olelet* as a “defective cluster” (*m. Pe'ah* 7:4; *t. Pe'ah* 3:11) is not at all apparent from the word’s meaning and usage in Leviticus 19:10 and Deuteronomy 24:21, where the root ‘-l-l indicates “to glean.”⁴¹ The Tannaim also change the targeted recipients of harvest gifts. Whereas the Hebrew Bible identifies the recipients based on economic and social circumstances (including strangers, orphans, and widows), the Tannaim define eligibility by economic criteria alone.⁴²

In short, the Tannaim greatly expand the biblical concepts, elevating biblical terms to legal categories and fleshing them out in encyclopedic detail.⁴³ The Tannaim fill out these laws in ways that address distinctly rabbinic proclivities and interests, such as the propensity to quantify religious obligations.⁴⁴ Thus, while early rabbinic laws are based on the Hebrew Bible, they cannot be said to be wholly derived from it.⁴⁵ The origin of much of these laws, it must be concluded, lay in the creative minds of the Tannaim themselves.⁴⁶

CHARITY

The Hebrew Bible prescribes a number of ways to support the poor. In addition to the harvest gifts discussed above, Deuteronomy 15:7–11 advocates giving loans to the poor, even (perhaps, especially) in the years leading up to the septennial cancellation of debts. Landowners are instructed to leave their land fallow every seventh year, allowing the poor to collect the produce (Exod 23:11). Prophetic texts express special empathy for the poor, instructing one not to take advantage of the needy (Isa 3:14–15, 10:1–2; Jer 5:28; Amos 8:4–6). Some prophetic texts advocate sharing material provisions with the poor (e.g., Isa 58:7) and Esther (9:22) instructs one to give “gifts to the poor” to mark the festival of Purim. While the Hebrew *tzedakah* appears over 150 times in the Hebrew Bible, it generally denotes “righteousness” and nowhere indicates “charity.” Indeed, *tzedakah* would develop its secondary meaning of “charity” only in postbiblical writings. For these reasons, scholars have noted the absence of almsgiving in the Hebrew Bible. Rather, it would begin to develop only in the Second Temple era during the Hellenistic and early Roman ages (323 BCE to 70 CE).⁴⁷

In Hellenistic Jewish literature, almsgiving emerges as a specific expression of righteous behavior and is understood as a distinct commandment. We see this, for example, in the third century BCE Book of Tobit and the second century BCE Wisdom of Ben Sira:

Revere the Lord all your days, my son, and refuse to sin or to transgress his commandments. Live uprightly all the days of your life, and do not walk in the ways of wrongdoing; for those who act in accordance with truth will prosper in all their activities. To all those who practice righteousness give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you. (Tob 4:5–7 NRSV)

Help the poor for the commandment's sake, and in their need do not send them away empty-handed. (Sir 29:9 NRSV)

The Hellenistic Jewish conceptualization of charity benefits the poor recipient and the individual who gives earns rewards. Almsgiving atones for the giver's sins and thus is equivalent to offering a sacrifice (LXX Dan 4:24, Sir 3:30, Tob 12:9). The giver can bank on rewards in heavenly or otherworldly realms (Tob 4:10, 2 *En.* 9:1, 50:5–6, 51:1–3), while one who oppresses the poor will be punished (2 *En.* 10:5, Sir 4:1–10). Some texts promise earthly rewards, such as treasures, renown and fame (*T. Job.* 44, 53, Sir 29:11), and deliverance from imminent death. (Tob 4:9, 12:9, Sir 29:12)

Many of these themes and motivations are likewise evident in the New Testament. As with Hellenistic Jewish texts, almsgiving is seen as a form of piety and those who give alms are considered to be righteous (Matt 6:1–4, 25:31–46). Likewise, providing material relief for the poor earns the giver a heavenly reward (Matt 19:21; 25:31–46, Luke 12:33, 14:13–14) and atones for sin (Luke 11:41). Matthew 6:1–4 advocates anonymous giving, instructing the giver to eschew the earthly, social recognition that typically rewards donations. Moreover, aid for the needy is associated with love for God (Matt 25:34–45). Indeed, almsgiving is repeatedly praised in the Gospels (Mark 12:41–44, 14:5, Luke 11:41, 19:8).⁴⁸ A disciple of Jesus ought to care for the needs of the poor and destitute by giving alms. The New Testament's sympathy for the poor and reproach of the wealthy are inextricably intertwined with its interest in almsgiving (Jas 2:1–9, 5:1–6). Paul addresses almsgiving within the context of his collections from Gentile communities for the members of the Jesus movement in Jerusalem (1 Cor 16:1–4, 2 Cor 8–9, Gal

2:10, Rom 15:25–29). Here we also find the understanding of almsgiving as a way to gain divine blessings and heavenly rewards (2 Cor 9:6–11, Phil 4:17, 1 Tim 6:17–19).

Thus, in early Judeo-Christian literary trajectories, we find the adoption of almsgiving as a commandment that concretizes the broader biblical imperative to live righteously. Almsgiving in these texts is characterized by the surrender of one's personal possessions, rewards for the giver, and discretion for the benefactor over what, when, and how much to give. In what Shaye Cohen calls the rabbis' "scholastic approach," the Tannaim take this loosely defined religious concept and systematize it, filling out its laws in high detail.⁴⁹

GRECO-ROMAN GIVING

Scholars have pointed to two major differences between Greco-Roman forms of giving and Judeo-Christian charity—differences in the motivations of the benefactors and the identities of the targeted recipients. First, with regard to motivation, many have followed Paul Veyne in arguing that Judeo-Christian charity is characterized by humanitarian and altruistic motives, whereas Greco-Roman giving is characterized by the benefactor's pursuit of honor and other personal rewards such as social prestige and political power.⁵⁰ To be sure, early rabbinic texts motivate giving out of the promise of rewards and the threat of punishment. Because the Tannaim's motivations for giving are more self-interested and less altruistic than Veyne and others were ready to recognize, I find that the distinctions between Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian giving are more problematic and nuanced than previously held.

The second major difference between Judeo-Christian charity and Greco-Roman generosity lies in the identities of the targeted beneficiaries. Judeo-Christian charity is directed at "the poor"—that is, those in material need. Greco-Roman giving, by contrast, was directed at cities and their citizens. Some benefits might trickle down to those who happen to be poor, but the benefaction itself is not intended for poor people *per se*.⁵¹ These differences in beneficiaries reflect two different worldviews. Whereas the Greeks and Romans saw the world in civic terms—one is either a citizen or noncitizen—Jews and Christians saw economic divisions that cut across political affiliations. These sharp distinctions, however, should be nuanced. In particular, I find that early rabbinic discussions of charity incorporate aspects of the Greco-Roman "civic" worldview.

We see the importance of civic culture in the Tosefta's prescriptions on organized charity, where obligations to the charity fund are tied to one's duty to pay municipal taxes (*t. Pe'ah* 4:9). Moreover, the Tannaim limit eligibility

to the charity fund to only poor individuals in the town in which the fund is located (*t. Pe'ah* 4:9). Likewise, *t. Megillah* 2:15 stipulates that supervisors must give charity only to the local poor. Tosefta *Gittin* 3:13 instructs that in a town in which both Gentiles and Jews live, the supervisors are to collect from everyone, Jew and Gentile alike, and to distribute to the town's poor regardless of their religious identity. That is, civic affiliation is so important to the conceptualization of the charity fund that there is a greater obligation to provide for the Gentile poor of one's own town than the Jewish poor of another town.

The rabbis' emphasis on the role of civic identity and politics reveals the ways that their thoughts and ideas were influenced by the Hellenistic world in which they lived. In Greco-Roman culture, one's identity was defined by one's city or polis—above all, you are a citizen of Athens, Alexandria, or Antioch. One has a responsibility only to one's fellow citizens. As such, *tzedakah* is not only a religious obligation, not only a way to live a righteous life in the eyes of God, but it is also integrated into the fabric of civic life. The charity fund is envisioned as a civic institution, overseen by supervisors whose duties are modeled after municipal officials in Greek cities.

The influence of Greco-Roman civic culture is likewise seen in early rabbinic discussions of individual almsgiving. We see this in a narrative on a king named Munbaz who gives away his treasures to the needy during a famine (*t. Pe'ah* 4:18).⁵² In many ways, the move is a typical act of *euergetism* or Hellenistic civic benefaction, whereby a local notable would give a gift to a city and its people (e.g., he would finance athletic games, the local cult, or municipal services; build public infrastructure; provide grain in a time of need). In return, the benefactor would receive an honorary decree from the body politic that would be inscribed into a stele and displayed in a highly visible public location. This was usually accompanied by symbolic gifts (e.g., a gold crown, a statue in his image) carefully selected to elevate the benefactor's social standing.⁵³

In many ways, the Tosefta's Munbaz follows the Greco-Roman model. In other ways, however, the Tannaim have Judaized, if not rabbinized, Munbaz's actions. In particular, the king eschews the heavenly, otherworldly rewards that are typically given to a benefactor as counter-gifts for his benefaction. Instead of a gold crown or statue in his honor, Munbaz pursues otherworldly rewards that will await him in the afterlife.⁵⁴ As proof of the superiority of his "investment strategy" (over that of his ancestors, who prefer to hoard their treasures on earth), Munbaz cites a number of biblical prooftexts that include *tzedakah* or its root *ts-d-q*.

In this way, the Tannaim instruct that Munbaz's Judaized form of Hellenistic benefaction to the needy is an act of *tzedakah* or charity.⁵⁵ That this is an important, albeit subtle, aspect of the text at hand is confirmed by the subsequent pericope (*t. Pe'ah* 4:19), where the rabbis define *tzedakah* as the provision of material support for the living poor. In short, Tannaitic instructions on individual and organized almsgiving employ a unique combination of ideas and customs that are distinctly Israelite and Hellenic in origin, exhibiting a creative engagement with Greco-Roman urban culture. More broadly, I find that early rabbinic texts can help us contribute to, problematize, and nuance the present scholarly assessments of the relationship between Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian forms of giving.

CONCLUSION

Early rabbinic support for the poor can be classified into two broad categories—harvest gifts and charity. The former is heavily based on laws from the Hebrew Bible while the latter emerged from Hellenistic Jewish writings and was deeply influenced by Greco-Roman forms of giving. As the editors and redactors of Tannaitic texts sought to tie these two forms of support together in their texts (especially in *m. Pe'ah* and *t. Pe'ah*, where discussions of charity immediately follow harvest gifts), they surely saw them as working in combination. Harvest gifts and charity are complementary in that they address poverty in rural and urban contexts, respectively. The laws of *pe'ah*, gleanings, and so on presuppose that the poor who would collect these live within reasonable distances from fields, orchards, and vineyards. Charity best suits the urban poor, as it is most effective to solicit alms in densely packed areas, and the rabbinic laws bear the marks of Greco-Roman civic culture. Indeed, the creation of solutions to urban poverty may have been prompted by increased urbanization during the Roman era. Second, while harvest gifts and charity would be more accessible to some, it is notable that all poor people are eligible for nearly all forms of support.⁵⁶ Thus, while each allocation provides the poor man with only a small amount of provisions, they add up. If a poor man collected everything for which he was eligible, he could significantly elevate his standard of living.

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NOTES

1. On charity in rabbinic Judaism, see *m. Pe'ah* 8:7; *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–21; *t. Demai* 3:16–17; *y. Pe'ah* 1:1, 15b–c; 8:7–9, 21a–b; *y. Demai* 3:1, 23b; *b. Bava Batra* 8a–11a; *b. Shabbat* 156a–b; *b. Sotah* 14a; *b. Sukkah* 49b; *b. Ketubbot* 66b–68a; Exodus Rabbah 31:4; Leviticus Rabbah 5:4; 34:1–16; and Deuteronomy Rabbah 5:3. All abbreviations in this paper are according to Patrick H. Alexander, et al., eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody; Hendrickson, 1999).
2. Shaye J. D. Cohen, “The Rabbi in Second-Century Jewish Society,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 3, *The Early Roman Period* (ed. W. Horbury, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 936; Gregg E. Gardner, “Who is Rich? The Poor in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104 (2014): 515–36; Alyssa M. Gray, “The Formerly Wealthy Poor: From Empathy to Ambivalence in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” *AJS Review* 33 (2009): 122.
3. Philip Alexander, “Using Rabbinic Literature as a Source for the History of Late-Roman Palestine: Problems and Issues,” in *Rabbinic Texts and the History of Late-Roman Palestine* (ed. M. Goodman and P. Alexander; Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 2010), 7–24; H. L. Strack and Günter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash* (trans. M. N. A. Bockmuehl; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 45–62.
4. Recent publications of archaeological finds from sites with significant Jewish populations in northern Palestine include Douglas Edwards and C. Thomas McCollough, eds. *Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity, Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* (Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 60–61; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007); Katharina Galor, “Domestic Architecture in Galilee and Golan During the Roman and Byzantine Periods: First Century B.C. to Seventh Century A.D.” (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1996); Yizhar Hirschfeld and Katharina Galor, “New Excavations in Roman, Byzantine and Early Islamic Tiberias,” in *Religion, Ethnicity and Identity in Ancient Galilee* (ed. J. Zangenberg, et al.; Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 210; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007); Eric M. Meyers, “Jewish Art and Architecture in the Land of Israel, 70–c. 235,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (ed. S. T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 174–90; Rina Talgam and Ze'ev Weiss, *The Mosaics of the House of Dionysos at Sepphoris* (Jerusalem: Institute of Archaeology of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2004); Zeev Weiss, *The Sepphoris*

Synagogue: Deciphering an Ancient Message through Its Archaeological and Socio-Historical Contexts (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and the Institute of Archaeology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 2005).

5. See Seth Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society, 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 101–76.

6. Meyers, “Jewish Art and Architecture,” 177, summarizes the difficulties in interpretation, namely, that archaeological remains are usually most confidently dated to their latest use phase, thereby obscuring earlier phases of use.

7. Nahman Avigad, *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations During 1953–1958* (vol. 3; Jerusalem, Israel: Masada Press, 1976); Benjamin Mazar, *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations During 1953–1958: Catacombs 1–4* (vol. 1; Jerusalem, Israel: Masada Press, 1973); M. Schwabe and B. Lifshitz, *Beth She'arim: Report on the Excavations During 1953–1958* (vol. 2; Jerusalem, Israel: Masada Press, 1974). For the excavators' summaries of the finds, see Nahum Avigad and Benjamin Mazar, “Beth She'arim,” *The New Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (ed. Ephraim Stern; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, Carta and Simon & Schuster, 1993), 1:236–48; Lee I. Levine, “Beth She'arim,” *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Archaeology in the Near East* (ed. Eric M. Meyers; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 1:309–11.

8. Talgam and Weiss, *Mosaics of the House of Dionysos*, 128, argue that the city's character and composition in the third century suggests that this house was used by Jews. The Jewish character of the site is supported by the discovery of ritual baths in the area; see Katharina Galor, “The Stepped Water Installations of the Sepphoris Acropolis,” in *The Archaeology of Difference: Gender, Ethnicity, Class and the “Other” in Antiquity: Studies in Honor of Eric M. Meyers* (ed. D. Edwards and C. T. McCollough; The Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research 60–61; Boston: American Schools of Oriental Research, 2007), 201–13.

9. The inscriptions date to the second and third centuries; see Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 148–53.

10. See Seth Schwartz, “Historiography on the Jews in the ‘Talmudic Period’ (70–640 CE),” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Studies* (ed. M. Goodman, et al.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 91–95; Seth Schwartz, “Political, Social, and Economic Life in the Land of Israel, 66–c.235,” in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (ed. S. T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 38–41.

11. On the frequency of natural disturbances in ancient Palestine, see Jack Pastor, *Land and Economy in Ancient Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1997), 155n11.

12. Unless otherwise noted, all translations of the Hebrew Bible are based on *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), with my emendations.

13. This is in line with the Tannaim's broader project; see Shaye J. D. Cohen, “Judaean Legal Tradition and the *Halakhah* of the Mishnah,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the*

Talmud and Rabbinic Literature (ed. C. E. Fonrobert and M. S. Jaffee; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 121–43.

14. On “householder” as indicating a landowner in Tannaitic texts, see Ben Zion Rosenfeld and Haim Perlmutter, “Landowners in Roman Palestine 100–300 C. E.: A Distinct Social Group,” *Journal of Ancient Judaism* 2 (2011): 327–52.

15. *m. Pe'ah* 1:4–5; 2:1–4.

16. *m. Pe'ah* 1:2; *t. Pe'ah* 1:1, 1:5–6; see the explanation in Roger Brooks, *Support for the Poor in the Mishnaic Law of Agriculture: Tractate Peah* (Chico: Scholars Press, 1983), 42–48.

17. *m. Pe'ah* 4:10; *t. Pe'ah* 2:14.

18. See the explanations in Hanoch Albeck, *The Mishnah* (Hebrew) (6 vols.; 1952–1958; repr., Jerusalem: Bialik Institute and Dvir Publishing House, 1988), 1:51; Brooks, *Support for the Poor*, 82–83.

19. Brooks, *Support for the Poor*, 82.

20. Grains: *m. Pe'ah* 5:7–8, where the produce is bound and taken to the threshing floor. Garlic and onions: *m. Pe'ah* 6:10; *t. Pe'ah* 3:8. Olives: *m. Pe'ah* 7:1–2; *t. Pe'ah* 3:9–10. Grapes: *m. Pe'ah* 7:8, *t. Pe'ah* 3:16.

21. *m. Pe'ah* 5:7; *t. Pe'ah* 3:3.

22. See also Isa 17:6, 24:13, where *‘-l-l* indicates gleanings of grapes. On the development of the term, see Günter Stemberger, “Support for the Poor: Leviticus 19 in Qumran and in Early Rabbinic Interpretation,” in *With Wisdom as a Robe: Qumran and Other Jewish Studies in Honour of Ida Fröhlich* (ed. K. Dobos and M. Kőszeghy; Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 451–69.

23. J. B. Schneewind, “Philosophical Ideas of Charity: Some Historical Reflections,” in *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (ed. J. B. Schneewind; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 59, 67; Allen Buchanan, “Charity, Justice, and the Idea of Moral Progress,” in *Giving: Western Ideas of Philanthropy* (ed. J. B. Schneewind; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 99.

24. See the talmudic sources cited in the first footnote above.

25. *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–21, especially *t. Pe'ah* 4:19. On “the poor” as men, see *t. Pe'ah* 4:10. Widows, orphans, and other individuals in need who were not male adults were treated in other areas of early rabbinic law.

26. In most early rabbinic texts, *tambui* and *quppa* denote simple household vessels—a dish and a basket, respectively. In a handful of texts (e.g., *m. Pe'ah* 8:7; *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–15; *t. Demai* 3:16), however, they indicate charitable institutions. On the *tambui* as a dish, see, e.g., *m. Kelim* 16:1; 30:2; Yehoshua Brand, *Ceramics in Talmudic Literature* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1953), 539–43; Uzah Zevulun and Yael Olenik, *Function and Design in the Talmudic Period* (Hebrew) (Tel-Aviv: Haaretz Museum, 1978),

24. On the *quppa* as a wicker basket, see, e.g., *m. Kelim* 16:3 and more generally, Eduard Lohse and Günter Mayer, *Die Tosefta, Seder I: Zeraim, 1.1: Berakot—Pea* (eds. G.

Kittel, et al.; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1999), 150n74; Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome, et al., *Aruch completum* (Hebrew) (Vienna, 1878), 7:160; see also Samuel Krauss, *Griechische und lateinische Lehnwörter im Talmud, Midrasch und Targum* (2 vols.; Berlin: S. Calvary, 1898–1899), 516–17. On charity institutions in rabbinic literature, see Gregg E. Gardner, *The Origins of Organized Charity in Rabbinic Judaism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

27. *m. Pe'ah* 8:7, *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–15; Gregg E. Gardner, “Cornering Poverty: Mishnah *Pe'ah*, Tosefta *Pe'ah*, and the Reimagination of Society in Late Antiquity,” in *Envisioning Judaism: Studies in Honor of Peter Schäfer on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday* (ed. R. S. Boustán, et al.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 1:205–16; Gardner, *Origins of Organized Charity*.

28. On hospitality and the expectation of reciprocation or other forms of compensation (including expressions of gratitude), see Andrew E. Arterbury, *Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in its Mediterranean Setting* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 15–54; Ladislaus J. Bolchazy, *Hospitality in Early Rome: Livy's Concept of its Humanizing Force* (Chicago: Aris Publishers, 1977), 11–12; M. I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979); Aafke Komter, “Women, Gifts and Power,” *The Gift: An Interdisciplinary Perspective* (ed. Aafke E. Komter; Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 122; Tzvi Novick, “Charity and Reciprocity: Structures of Benevolence in Rabbinic Literature,” *Harvard Theological Review* 105 (2012): 33–52; Marshall David Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (1972; repr., London: Routledge, 2004), 193–94; Gustav Stahlin, “*xenos*,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (ed. G. Kittel, et al.; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–1976), 5:2–4.

29. Gregg E. Gardner, “Let Them Eat Fish: Food for the Poor in Early Rabbinic Judaism,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 45 (2014): 250–70.

30. *m. Pe'ah* 8:7 instructs the soup kitchen to provide a loaf of bread worth a *pondion* [a Roman coin] made from grain valued at one *sela* per four *seah* of grain. Gildas H. Hamel, *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 39–42, 243–48, converts these figures to 500 grams. Likewise, Zeev Safrai, *The Economy of Roman Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1994), 105, estimates the loaf to be 0.525 kilograms, and similar conclusions are reached by Pastor, *Land and Economy*, 5. It should be noted that the measures used in rabbinic texts can be highly problematic, as they can be internally inconsistent and difficult to convert into modern units; see Arye Ben-David, *Talmudische Ökonomie: Die Wirtschaft des jüdischen Palästina zur Zeit der Mischna und des Talmud* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms, 1974), 1:331–43; Magen Broshi, *Bread, Wine, Walls and Scrolls* (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 121–23; David Kraemer, “Food, Eating, and Meals,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (ed. C. Hezser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 404–405. Nevertheless, these calculations align with Garnsey's estimate that one's basic caloric requirements could be satisfied with 490–600 grams of bread per day. On the minimum caloric intake needed for physical efficiency, see Willem M. Jongman, “The Early Roman Empire: Consumption,” in *The Cambridge Economic History of the Greco-Roman World* (ed. W. Scheidel, et al.; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 598–99, which

is based on studies in developmental economics, particularly Colin Clark and Margaret Rosary Haswell, *The Economics of Subsistence Agriculture* (London: Macmillan and St. Martin's, 1967).

31. On the charity fund, see *m. Pe'ah* 8:7, *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–15; Gardner, “Cornering Poverty,” 1:205–16; Gardner, *Origins of Organized Charity*.
32. *m. Pe'ah* 8:7; *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–15; Steven D. Fraade, “Local Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine: The Case of the *Parnas* in Early Rabbinic Sources in Light of Extra-Rabbinic Evidence,” in *Halakhah in Light of Epigraphy* (ed. A. I. Baumgarten, et al.; Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements 3; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 157–75.
33. Compare *m. Pe'ah* 8:7 and *t. Pe'ah* 4:8–15 with *m. Sanhedrin* 1:1; *m. Sheqalim* 5:2.
34. Anneliese Parkin, “An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving,” in *Poverty in the Roman World* (ed. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 66; Dominic Rathbone, “Poverty and Population in Roman Egypt,” in *Poverty in the Roman World* (ed. M. Atkins and R. Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 110.
35. Acts 3:1–10; Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 49–50. Lysimachus (second-first century BCE) claims that when the Jews were in Egypt, they were afflicted with diseases and begged for food at temples (as cited in Josephus's *Against Apion* 1.305). Cleomedes (first century CE) mentions beggars in synagogue courtyards (*On the Circular Motions of the Celestial Bodies*, 2.1:91). Artemidorus (second century CE) also refers to Jewish beggars at synagogues (*Interpretation of Dreams* 3.53). On these texts, see Aryay B. Finkelstein, “Julian among Jews, Christians and ‘Hellenes’ in Antioch: Jewish Practice as a Guide to ‘Hellenes’ and a Goad to Christians” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2011), 134–36.
36. For beggars in the Greco-Roman world, see *Codex Theodosianus* 14.18.1; Horace, *Epist.* 1.17.58–9; Martial 12.57.12; Philostratus *VA* 4.10; Seneca *Contr.* 10.4; and the discussions in Cam Grey and Anneliese Parkin, “Controlling the Urban Mob: *The Colonatus Perpetuus of CTh* 14.18.1,” *Phoenix* 57 (2003): 284–99; Bruce W. Longenecker, *Remember the Poor: Paul, Poverty, and the Greco-Roman World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 97; Parkin, “An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving,” 70; C. R. Whittaker, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” in *Land, City, and Trade in the Roman Empire* (ed. C. R. Whittaker; Collected Studies Series; Aldershot: Variorum, 1993), 1–2.
37. On the image of beggars at private doorways in Greco-Roman sources, see Lucian, *Fug.* 14, and the wall painting in Herculaneum; Charles Daremberg and Edm Saglio, eds, *Dictionnaire des antiquites* (5 vols.; Paris: Hachette, 1877), 3:2, 1713–14. Seneca writes of children being sent out on the streets to beg from door to door; see *Contr.* 1.1.10. On these sources, see Grey and Parkin, “Controlling the Urban Mob,” 286.
38. Cf. Frank M. Loewenberg, *From Charity to Social Justice: The Emergence of Communal Institutions for the Support of the Poor in Ancient Judaism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2001), who argues that organized charity replaced individual almsgiving.

39. Grey and Parkin, "Controlling the Urban Mob," 284–99; Alan J. Kidd, "Poor Relief," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Economic History* (ed. J. Mokyr; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 4:220; Parkin, "An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving," 71n35.

40. For the archaeological evidence and its interpretation, see Cynthia M. Baker, *Rebuilding the House of Israel: Architectures of Gender in Jewish Antiquity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); Katharina Galor, "The Roman-Byzantine Dwelling in the Galilee and the Golan: 'House' or 'Apartment'?", in *Miscellanea Mediterranea* (ed. R. R. Holloway; Providence: Brown University, 2000), 109–24; Katharina Galor, "Domestic Architecture," in *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (ed. C. Hezser; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 420–39.

41. See Ludwig Köhler, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1994), s.v. 'l-l; see also Isaiah 17:6, 24:13.

42. *m. Pe'ah* 8:8–9.

43. By contrast, the brief treatments of these laws dating to the Second Temple era tend to combine and contract the harvest gifts mentioned in Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 24. See especially Josephus, *Ant.* 4:231–32; 4Q270 3 ii 12–19; and the discussions in Aharon Shemesh, "Things That Have Required Quantities," (Hebrew), *Tarbiz: A Quarterly for Jewish Studies* 73 (2004): 387–405; Aharon Shemesh, "The History of the Creation of Measurements: Between Qumran and the Mishnah," in *Rabbinic Perspectives: Rabbinic Literature and the Dead Sea Scrolls, Proceedings of the Eighth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 7–9 January, 2003* (ed. S. D. Fraade, et al.; Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah 62; Boston: Brill, 2006), 147–73. See also Philo, *On the Virtues*, 90–94, who draws upon Leviticus 19:9 to identify two types of allocations (equivalent to *pe'ah* and gleanings) and extends them to include olives, which are mentioned in Deuteronomy 24:20. To be sure, Philo's expansions are relatively limited compared to those in Tannaitic texts.

44. Yitzhak D. Gilat, *Studies in the Development of the Halakha* (Hebrew) (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1992), 63–71; Shemesh, "Things That Have Required Quantities," (Hebrew), 387–405; Shemesh, "The History of the Creation of Measurements," 147–73.

45. This is in concert with the broader findings of Cohen, "Judean Legal Tradition," 121–43.

46. The Tannaim recognize their own innovation in a remarkable passage from *Sifra*, *Tazria* 13:2, ed. Isaac Hirsch Weiss, *Sifra de-ve Rav hu sefer Torat kohanim* (Hebrew) (1862; repr., New York: Om Publishing, 1946), 68, where Rabbi Ishmael castigates the exegetical approach of Rabbi Eliezer: "You say to Scripture, 'Be silent until we interpret you.'" On this text, see Jay M. Harris, "Midrash Halachah," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism: Volume Four: The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period* (ed. S. T. Katz; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 364.

47. The root (*ts-d-q*) occurs no less than 525 times in the Hebrew Bible, which includes over 150 instances of *tzedakah* in particular. In Dan 4:24, the Aramaic *tsidqah* may denote almsgiving. On *tzedakah* and charity in the Hebrew Bible, see Gary A. Anderson,

“Redeem Your Sins by the Giving of Alms: Sin, Debt, and the ‘Treasury of Merit’ in Early Jewish and Christian Tradition,” *Letter & Spirit* 3 (2007): 37–67; Ahuva Ho, *Sedeq and Sedaqah in the Hebrew Bible* (New York: P. Lang, 1991), 143; Franz Rosenthal, “Sedaka, Charity,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 23 (1950–51): 411–30; Michael L. Satlow, “‘Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit’: Charity and Piety in Late Antique Judaism,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100 (2010): 262–63. To be sure, while “charity” is absent from the Hebrew Bible, it is notable that the early rabbinic conceptualization of charity borrows heavily from biblical terminology, particularly from wisdom texts such as Proverbs; see the discussion in A. Hurvitz, “The Biblical Roots of a Talmudic Term: The Early History of the Concept of *tzedakah* [charity, alms],” (Hebrew) *Language Studies* II–III (1987): 155–60.

48. On support for the poor in the Gospels, see also Matthew 11:5, 19:21; Mark 10:21; Luke 4:18, 6:20–21, 7:22, 14:21, 18:22, 19:8.

49. Cohen, “Judaean Legal Tradition,” 134–35; see also David M. Freidenreich, *Foreigners and Their Food: Constructing Otherness in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Law* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011), 48; Gardner, “Let Them Eat Fish,” 265–66.

50. A. R. Hands, *Charities and Social Aid in Greece and Rome* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1968), 61; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 70–74; Parkin, “An Exploration of Pagan Almsgiving,” 60–82; Paul Veyne, *Bread and Circuses: Historical Sociology and Political Pluralism* (trans. B. Pearce; London: Penguin, 1992), 19, 30, 233. See also Cicero, *De Officiis* 1.44, who writes that benefaction was driven “not so much by natural inclination as by reason of the lure of honor”; and Pliny the Younger (*Ep.* 1.8.15), “the boast of their good deed is considered to be the motive, not the consequence.”

51. Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2002), 4–5; Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 61–71; Hands, *Charities and Social Aid*, 61; Longenecker, *Remember the Poor*, 66–74; Whittaker, “The Poor in the City of Rome,” 24; Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, 20. Veyne also contended that what made charitable works of the church different was their religious grounding, whereby pagan giving was devoid of a religious context.

52. Munbaz in rabbinic texts is likely based on a memory of the historical figure Monobazus II of Adiabene, whose family famously converted to Judaism in the first century CE. Josephus credits the family with a number of acts of benefaction, including providing famine relief to the people of Jerusalem in 46–47 C.E.; see Gregg E. Gardner, “Competitive Giving in the Third Century CE: Early Rabbinic Approaches to Greco-Roman Civic Benefaction,” in *Religious Competition in the Third Century C.E.: Jews, Christians, and the Greco-Roman World* (ed. J. Rosenblum, et al.; Journal of Ancient Judaism Supplements; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014), 81–92. For overviews of Monobazus II and the royal House of Adiabene, see Jacob Neusner, “The Conversion of Adiabene to Judaism: A New Perspective,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83 (1964): 60–66; Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (Leiden: Brill, 1965), 1:58–64; Emil Schürer, et al., *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C.–A.D. 135)* (3 vols.;

Edinburgh: Clark, 1973–1987), 3:163–64; Alyssa Gray, “Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 18 (2011): 149–55, has demonstrated how this passage contributes to our understanding of redemptive almsgiving.

53. Veyne, *Bread and Circuses*, 10. First published in 1976, Veyne’s work remains the classic statement on *euergetism*; for its contributions, see Peter Garnsey, “The Generosity of Veyne,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 81 (1991): 164–68. For *euergetism* in Jewish sources, see Gregg Gardner, “Jewish Leadership and Hellenistic Civic Benefaction in the Second Century B.C.E.,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 126 (2007): 327–43; Gardner, “Competitive Giving,” 81–92; Tessa Rajak, “Benefactors in the Greco-Jewish Diaspora,” in *Geschichte-Tradition-Reflexion: Festschrift für Martin Hengel zum 70. Geburtstag* (ed. H. Cancik, et al.; Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 305–19; Michael L. Satlow, “Giving for a Return: Jewish Votive Offerings in Late Antiquity,” in *Religion and the Self in Antiquity* (ed. D. Brakke, et al.; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 91–108; Schwartz, *Imperialism and Jewish Society*, 284–87; Seth Schwartz, “Euergetism in Josephus and the Epigraphic Culture of First-Century Jerusalem,” in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East* (ed. H. M. Cotton; Cambridge University Press, 2009), 75–92; Seth Schwartz, *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society? Reciprocity and Solidarity in Ancient Judaism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Susan Sorek, *Remembered for Good: A Jewish Benefaction System in Ancient Palestine* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2010).

54. That there are limits to the power of earthly wealth is likewise characteristic of Second Temple era texts; see Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 53–69.

55. As Schwartz (“Euergetism in Josephus,” 83, 87–88; *Were the Jews a Mediterranean Society?*, 101, 106) notes, some acts of *euergetism*—such as gifts to the cult and provisions during a famine—could be construed as the fulfillment of certain biblical commandments related to the Jerusalem Temple and support for the poor.

56. With the exception of the charity fund, which was reserved only for the local poor of the town in which it was located.

The Violence of Poverty

Aryeh Cohen

“Just as virtue is its own reward, poverty is at least its own penalty.”¹

“Extreme poverty is violence.”²

Poverty and violence are usually discussed as separate things. Often a causal relationship is drawn between them, usually in that that poverty is a cause of crime and violence. Sometimes, when discussing global issues and civil wars, the relationship is drawn in the opposite direction, to wit, that violence is the cause of poverty. There is, however, a growing body of research that delineates the ways in which poverty itself is violence.³

In this essay I argue, based on materials from rabbinic literature (mainly the Palestinian and the Babylonian Talmuds), that poverty was itself recognized as a form of violence. I also argue that although this was recognized as such, the responses were not necessarily as sweeping as one might have expected. That is, given the rhetorical understanding of the violence of extreme poverty, one might have assumed that there would be some equally extreme response. This is not the case. To be sure, there were institutional responses that were very effective over the long run. However, whereas the discourse of poverty is emotional and even, perhaps, hyperbolic, the response was measured and bureaucratic. There may be no other way. It will be for further research to determine whether that was the case.

The first text is a legal narrative from Mishnah *Nedarim* 9:10. The context of this mishnah is the legal abrogation of vows. The juridic mechanism for the abrogation involves going to a court and being interrogated as to one’s state of mind or intention at the time of the vow. Reuven, the ubiquitous John Doe of rabbinic legal example, vowed that he would derive no benefit from a certain Shimon—Reuven’s exemplary partner. This would result in Reuven’s inability to conduct most forms of social or commercial intercourse with Shimon. If, in the course of time, Reuven regretted his perhaps hasty decision to cut Shimon out of his life by way of a vow, Reuven might go to court and get the vow annulled, or in rabbinic terms “allowed” or “undone” [מוותר].⁴

The court might ask Reuven, as *m. Nedarim* 9:2 suggests: “If you knew then that Shimon would become a scribe, as he has actually become, would you have taken this vow?” Or they might ask: “If you knew that Shimon would

be marrying off his son in the near future, would you have taken this vow?" If Reuven answers in the negative to these or similar inquiries, the court "allows" the vow, and Reuven and Shimon can resume their hastily ended relationship.

The specific context of the legal narrative quoted above is the case of a man who took an oath that he would not marry a certain woman because she was ugly—or a list of other reasons—and it turns out that she is actually beautiful. Not entering into the social and cultural pressures that might have been brought to bear in order to make the woman consent to marry that man now, the vow itself is considered a mistaken vow and is null. It is at this point that the mishnah introduces our narrative:

גדרים ט:י
ומעשה באחד שנדר מבת אחותו הנייה.
והכניסוה לבית ר' ישמעאל וייפיה.
אמר לו ר' ישמעאל: "בני מזו נדרת?"
אמר לו: "לאו."
והתירה⁵ ר' ישמעאל.
באותה שעה בכה ר' ישמעאל ואמר: "בנות ישראל נאות הן אלא שהעניות מנוולתן."

A [legal] narrative, One foreswore [sexual] pleasure from his niece.

She was brought to Rabbi Ishmael's house, and made pretty.

Rabbi Ishmael said to him: "My son, is this the one from whom you foreswore?"

He said: "No."

Rabbi Ishmael permitted the vow.

At that moment Rabbi Ishmael cried and said: "The daughters of Israel are pretty but poverty disfigures them."

In our tale, the man swore that he would never have pleasure or benefit from this woman. The fact of her being his niece is a marker of special intimacy in the rabbinic context. The implication is that he thought her ugly and therefore did not want to marry her. Someone then brought her to Rabbi Ishmael's house, and she was given a makeover, and voilà, she was beautiful. It is not apparent from the story who brought her to the house or who did the making over. It is not evident from the story whether the husband regretted his vow and now wanted to marry his niece or whether someone else rose to her defense lest she remain in her spinsterhood. This and much more remains unanswered. There are also interesting questions about coercion and commodification that I will not pursue. The drama continues with Rabbi Ishmael

revealing the newly beautiful woman to the man and demanding: “Is this the person from whom you forswore?” The man quickly says “no,” and, it is implied, the vow is abrogated and happy endings are on their way.

It is the coda to the tale that concerns us. Rabbi Ishmael reacts to this scene by crying and stating: “The daughters of Israel are pretty but poverty disfigures them.” It is upon the assertion in the latter part of Rabbi Ishmael’s statement that I wish to tarry: עניות [poverty] is an actor in this statement. To poverty is ascribed the action of disfiguring. Since that action is remediated by Rabbi Ishmael in the real world of this narrative, one cannot say that the reification of poverty is merely metaphorical. Poverty is acting in the world in such a manner as to cause harm, or disfigurement, to a woman. Actually, according to Rabbi Ishmael, to many women. This action is a violent action.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines violence as the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to, persons or property. It is almost in this exact sense that poverty, according to Rabbi Ishmael, is violent. While we cannot expect to see the specific blow, we can apprehend its impact—the injury upon, or the damage to, the women so afflicted. The injury is real, and the actor is named: poverty.⁶

The reason that I have gone on at length about this is to get to something in the rabbinic discourse that is not mystified in the way that it is in contemporary discourse. The rabbis readily acknowledge that poverty is violent. Whether in and of itself violent or as wielded in direct action (refusing someone hunger relief, for example, or cursing someone with impoverishment), the rabbis have no illusion about the insidious and violent impacts of poverty.

And life in the Eastern Empire in late antiquity was harsh. As Gilda Hamel has written: “In spite of all his hard work, the Palestinian farmer could not break what appears to us as a vicious cycle and which to him was the unmediated reality of long days of work, exhaustion, and anguish over diseases and catastrophes.”⁷ Poverty was a constant companion, lurking right outside the frame, waiting for the one day when there was no work, or work and no pay, or drought.

In the textual world of the rabbis, poverty is violent. A poor person is considered as a prisoner, a poor person is in danger of dying, a poor person is considered as dead.⁸ Poverty imprisons, endangers, and kills. A destitute person [אביון] is beyond shame. Commenting on the distinction between an עני and an אביון, Rashi says: “אביון: One who is oppressed by poverty. The term אביון means one who desires [אוה] and does not get any good that his heart desires. . . . the עני [poor person] is embarrassed to demand [his wages] even

though he needs them. The אֲבִיּוֹן is used to humiliation and is not embarrassed to demand his wages.” This same spectrum of poverty is found in Augustine’s sermons, as Richard Finn writes: “Pauper, as we know, can stretch from the relative poverty of a smallholder [in classical Greek usage, the *penes*] to the near-total destitution of the beggar.”⁹

All this is not surprising, considering the historical context in Late Antiquity. As Peter Brown writes, “In its ecology, in its demographic patterns, in its epidemiology, and in its structures of political and economic power, the ancient Mediterranean had long been an unforgiving place. There was little to protect individuals, communities, and indeed, entire regions, from periodic hunger, from phases of acute economic and political oppression, and from the constant necessity, for many, to wander in search of a better life.”¹⁰

In *b. Bava Batra* 10a, Rabbi Akiva is challenged by “the evil Turnus Rufus”: “If your God loves the poor why does he not support them?” Akiva initially answers: “So that we will be saved through them from gehenna.” In other words, the poor are there so that those who are not impoverished might support them and acquire merit or be saved from punishment.¹¹ Turnus Rufus does not accept this answer. He claims that if people are poor, it is God’s will that they are poor and therefore supporting them is actually contravening God’s will, “and this will actually condemn you to gehenna.”

The interesting part of Turnus Rufus’s challenge comes next. He uses a parable to illustrate his point: “It is comparable to a mortal king who became angry at his servant/subject and imprisoned him in jail and ordered that he not be given food or drink. A person then went and fed him and gave him drink. Would the king not be angry at that person?” A poor person within this metaphorical world is one who is imprisoned without food or drink. While Akiva answers Turnus Rufus’s challenge, he does not change the parameters of the debate.

Akiva says that the situation is actually comparable to a mortal king who, out of his anger, condemns his son to prison and orders that he be given neither food nor drink. In this situation, he asks, would not the king actually be happy if a person went against his will and fed his son and brought him drink? While Akiva makes his point that God would want us to support the poor, he does not challenge the basic premise of Turnus Rufus’s metaphorical world: a poor person is like someone imprisoned without food or drink.¹²

This first metaphor is a striking acknowledgement of the violence inflicted by poverty on the poor. If we read the metaphor in relation to other Akiva stories, it is even more powerful. Rabbi Akiva is associated with the phrase

חבוש בבית האסורים / imprisoned in a jail.¹³ In an aggadah in *b. Berakhot* 61b in which he is imprisoned by the Romans, he is ultimately martyred. In our aggadah, it is the nominally Roman nemesis who names the poor as imprisoned, and by analogy, the angry king is perhaps the Romans (or Turnus Rufus himself?). The deployment of the metaphor by the Roman interlocutor heightens the violence in the mind of the listener as Akiva's association with prison leads to death.

At the end of this long excursus on poverty and poverty relief in *b. Bava Batra* 11a, there is another story which tells of the lethal dangers of poverty:

It is taught: They said about Binyamin the righteous that he was in charge of the charity fund. Once a woman came before him in a year of drought. She said to him: "Rabbi, support me!" He said to her: "I swear that there is nothing left in the charity fund!" She said to him: "Rabbi, if you do not support me, behold a woman and her seven children are going to die!" He stood and supported her from his own money. After a time, he fell ill and was dying. The angels said before the Holy One of Blessing: "Master of the World, You said: 'One who saves an Israelite's life, it is as if he saved the whole world.' Meanwhile Binyamin the righteous who saved a woman and her seven children will die at such a young age?!" Immediately they tore up the decree. It is taught, they added twenty two years to his years.

This story comes at the end of the excursus on poverty and poverty relief that starts on 7a. The excursus is divided unevenly in two. The Akiva story just cited is more or less the transitional point at the end of the first part, whose theme is poverty relief—that is, the mechanisms and obligations of poverty relief—which includes discussion of assessments and collections and the like. The second part may be titled "in praise of *tzedakah*"; its purpose is to raise up poverty relief by speaking of the individual and communal benefits and rewards of giving charity. The point of the story of Binyamin the righteous is obviously in line with this agenda. After providing financial resources to this poor woman and her children, Binyamin is saved from dying young.

However, the narrative has as a given that the woman is telling the truth when she says that if she cannot get money from the charity fund, she will die. This is the hinge of the story and must be believable to the audience in order that the favorable outcome for Binyamin the righteous will have the desired effect on the reader.

That poverty leads to death, and also is like a prison without food or drink, are further explicated in two other texts, one a legal narrative and one a midrash halachah—both in the Bavli.

The latter idea is brought home in a well-known legal narrative¹⁴ in *b. Bava Metzi'a* 83a. Two porters are hired by Rabbah bar bar Hanna to carry a jug of wine. They end up accidentally smashing the jug. (While the smashing of the jug was not intended, it is debated among the medievals whether it was a result of negligence or purely accidental [i.e., אַזוֹנָה].) Rabbah bar bar Hanna takes their cloaks—either as payment or to force them to go to court.¹⁵ They go to Rav, and he forces Rabbah bar bar Hanna to return the garments.

The two porters say, “We are poor and we worked a whole day and we are hungry and we have nothing.”¹⁶ Rav then decides that Rabbah bar bar Hanna should pay them their wages. Rav bases both of his decisions on a verse in Proverbs 2:20: “So follow the way of the good and keep to the paths of the just.” In both cases Rabbah bar bar Hanna questions Rav’s decision and challenges him to say whether he is making a legal decision or demanding that he act beyond the letter of the law. In both cases Rav claims that he is making a legal decision.

For our purposes here, however, the interesting part is that Rabbah bar bar Hanna does not challenge the assertion of the two porters that they are actually without means to sate their hunger. “We are poor,” they say, “and we are hungry and have no means.” They are imprisoned in hunger, and one accidentally or incidentally broken jug can keep them there.

Later in the same tractate the discussion turns to wage theft.¹⁷ The text focuses on the midrashic reading of the various phrases in Deuteronomy 24:15. Finally the question is asked: what will be read out of the phrase וְאֵלֵינוּ נִפְשׁוֹ, הוא נושא את נפשו, usually translated as “he [or his heart] counts on it” but literally meaning “his life [or his very self] lifts toward it”?¹⁸ A midrash halachah is cited: “Why does this one go up on a ramp, hang on to a tree and give himself over to death? Is it not for his wages? Another explanation: One who withholds a laborer’s wages it is as if he has killed him.”¹⁹ The picture that emerges is of a laborer so desperate that he is willing to endanger himself for wages. This conclusion is backed up by the “other explanation” offered in the midrash: “One who withholds a laborer’s wages it is as if he has killed him.” One cannot be more explicit.

But it is not only employers who inflict poverty and/as death upon people. Poverty is cited as a violent punishment that rabbis also inflict on people in *b. Nedarim* 7b:

Rav Hanin says in the name of Rav: One who hears one’s fellow utter the name of God [for naught] has to banish him. If he does not, then he himself is banished, for every place that mentioning the

name of God [for naught] occurs, poverty occurs, and poverty is like death. As it says: “For all the people have died” (Exod 4).²⁰ And it is taught [in a *baraita*]: “Every place that Sages set their eyes upon, [the result was]²¹ either death or poverty.”

The context of Rav Hanin’s statement is a discussion of banishment or excommunication. When is a person culpable of being excommunicated and when is a sage obligated to excommunicate another? The first half of this short piece discusses the obligation that one has to excommunicate a person who utters the name of God in vain. The justification for this seems to be that if one does not ban the person who so uttered the name of God, bad things will happen; specifically, there will be poverty, which is like death. Therefore somebody has to be banned—if not the utterer, then the hearer who did not ban the utterer.

This last statement is supported by a midrash and then a *baraita*. The midrash is based on the verse in Exodus 4 in which Moses tells his father-in-law Jethro that he is returning to Egypt. Probably to assuage Jethro’s concerns, Moses relates that God had told him all the people who had wanted to kill Moses are now dead. The assumed midrash, which is made explicit in *b. Nedarim* 64b, is: “Who are these [people who died]? Dathan and Aviram. And did they really die? Rather they were impoverished.” Hence, the equivalence is made between death and poverty.

Interestingly, Ms Vatican 487.1 cites a different verse: “If they should die as all people die” (Num 16:29). This is part of the story of Korach and his rebellion and places the impoverishment (or literally, the death) in the context of punishment. This reinforces more strongly the idea of poverty as a punishment and serves as a smoother lead into the next part of the text.

The *baraita* that is cited immediately following the midrash seems to be a statement of the destructive power of the sages: “Every place that Sages set their eyes, [the result was] either death or poverty.” This statement as a whole (that is, the introduction of the statement as a *baraita* and the statement itself) appears in a number of different settings. In most of the settings, the statement is actually attributed to Rabban Shimon ben Gamliel. While the settings are different, the common thread is the sages punishing a person or people by killing or impoverishing them.

It is a given that the sages have the power to kill or impoverish, which here is understood as the same thing. The sages’ power to kill with a gaze as a punishment [נתן עיניו בו ונעשה גל של עצמות / he set his eyes upon him and he became a hillock of bones] is ascribed in the Bavli both to Tannaim (Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai in *Shabbat* 32b; Rabbi Yohanan in *Bava Batra* 75a and

Sanhedrin 100a) and Amoraim (Rav Sheshet in *Berakhot* 58a); in the Palestinian Talmud to one Tanna, Shimon ben Yohai (*p. Shevi'it*).²² Here this very power is expanded to include the power of impoverishment. Poverty is depicted as a violent punishment akin to being killed.²³

The ubiquity of these images of the violence of poverty might cause one to think that the rabbinic response to poverty would be equally dramatic and sweeping. This is not necessarily true. Side by side with the dramatic images of the impoverished, the obligations of poverty relief are laid out in a manner that is reasoned and moderate. There is no demand à la Peter Singer or Matthew's Jesus²⁴ that one sell everything beyond the necessities of survival and give them to the poor. The opposite is true. The obligations of poverty relief are bureaucratized and normalized. There are standards for giving and there are minimums that are to be received. The mishnah in *Pe'ah* sets the amount for a poor person who enters the city at "a loaf of bread worth a pundyon when four se'ahs can be purchased with a sela." If the person is staying overnight, they are to be supplied with the necessities of sleeping (a bed roll and the like). If they are staying for Shabbat, they are to be given three meals. The same mishnah also sets the threshold for receiving assistance. If a person has resources for two meals, they should not draw from the community.²⁵

Regulations are in place for tax collection and distribution (two people to collect, three to distribute). The collection and distribution must be done in such a way that there could be no doubt about the integrity of the process. The two collectors should always accompany one another. There should be an obvious and designated bag for the collection, which should be used for nothing else, and so on. The excursus on poverty relief in Bavli *Bava Batra* even contains a warning that the tax collectors not become oppressive (8b).

The regulation and bureaucratization of poverty relief solved a problem in the biblically mandated schemes of charity and poverty relief, which were all (or mostly) agriculturally based. This was all well and good if one lived in a rural area. However, the urban poor would be seriously disadvantaged under this scheme. The new rabbinic program was more efficient as it was institutionalized. Poverty relief was no longer dependent on the presence of an agricultural area in the geographical proximity of the poor. It was also no longer dependent on the good will of a person of means toward any specific poor person. It was the city that was under obligation to assure that poor people were supported and did not go hungry.

It seems then that the problem would be solved. The obligation toward the poor was to be fulfilled through the mechanisms of the city, and all would

be well. Obviously that is not the case, as we have seen in the texts cited above. What is interesting is that not only is it not the case, it is not clear that rabbinic opinion favored some more universal effort at poverty relief.

The commentary in the Palestinian Talmud to these innovative mishnaic poverty relief laws contains a series of legal narratives which are connected by the literary device of a meeting²⁶ [פגע ביה]. The drama flows out of this meeting. These four stories, taken together, speak to the ambivalence of the rabbinic reaction to poverty relief on the one hand and to the complete reification of poverty as malevolent figure on the other:

דלמא. 28 ר' יוחנן וריש לקיש עלון מיסחין בהדין דימוסין²⁷ דטבריא.
 פגע בון חד מסכן.
 אמר לון: "זכין בי."
 אמרו ליה: מי חזרון.
 מי חזרון, אשכחניה מית.
 אמרו: "הואיל ולא זכינן ביה בחייו, ניטפל ביה במיתותיה."
 כי מיטפלון ביה, אשכחון כיס דינרי' תלוי ביה.
 אמרו: "הדא דאמ' ר' אבהו אמ' ר' אלעזר צריכין אנו להחזיק טובה לרמאי
 שבהן. שאילולא הרמאין שבהן היה אחד תובע צדקה מן האדם, ולא נותן לן,
 מיד נענש."²⁸

A story. R. Yohanan and Resh Laqish went to bathe in the public baths of Tiberias.

A poor person met them.

He said to them: "Give me charity."

They said to him: "When we return."

When they returned they found that he had died.

They said: "Since we did not give him charity when he was alive, we should deal with him in death."

While dealing with him, they found a bag of dinars hanging on him.

They said: "This is what R. Abahu said in the name of R. Elazar: 'We must be grateful to the deceivers among them. For if not for the deceivers among them, if one would demand charity from a person, and [that person] would not give him, immediately he would be punished.'"

In this first tale, the tragic turn that results from the sages' meeting with the poor person has an O'Henry like ending. The poor person was not really poor, the sages' piety therefore was preserved. However, the obligation

to the poor is also reinforced in the ambiguous final statement. “If not for the deceivers among them, if one would demand charity from a person, and [that person] would not give him, immediately he would be punished.” That is, the obligation to give charity is absolute and the punishment for not being charitable would be meted out immediately, if not for the presence of some legitimate skepticism about the poverty of the poor.

In the next narrative, a Sage is out battling poverty at night, and he meets poverty himself:

רבי חנינא בר פפא הוה מפליג מצוה בליליא.
 חד זמן פגע ביה רבהון דרוח'י.
 א"ל: "לא כך אולפן רבינו: אל תסיג גבול רעיק."
 א"ל: "ולא כן כתיב מתן בסתר יכפה אף."
 והיה מתכפי מיניה וערק מן קמוי.

Rabbi Hinena bar Papa dispersed charity [*mitzvah*] at night.

One time, the Master of the demons met him.

He said to him: “Did our master not teach us: ‘You shall not transgress your fellow’s boundary?’” (Deut 19:9)

[Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa] said to him: “Does it not also say ‘A gift in secret averts anger?’”

He was rebuffed from him and fled from him.

The third generation Babylonian Amora Hinena bar Papa is “met” during his outing by the master of demons or spirits [רבהון דרוחיא]. The master of demons challenges Rabbi Hinena bar Papa with a verse from Deuteronomy, which grounds the idea that one person is not allowed to overstep his or her boundaries and encroach upon the boundaries of another. This is applied rabbinically to matters ranging from actually moving boundary stakes of a piece of land to intellectual property. The master of demons challenges the sage, since, first, the night is presumably the domain of the demons (this idea is prevalent in rabbinics and is how the rabbis understand, for example, Lilith’s name as the demon of the night). This master of demons is not named here.²⁹ However, I suggest that in the context of these stories, the master demon is also protesting Hinena bar Papa’s effrontery in relieving poverty while trespassing on poverty’s domain. That is, the master demon in this narrative is poverty.

Rabbi Hinena bar Papa’s response is a direct rebuff. The Hebrew אף יכפה can be translated literally as “bending his nose.” Hinena bar Papa’s scriptural retort is a virtual punch in the face, in which he runs poverty, the master demon, off his property.

The next narrative, as the first one, ends in tragedy.

נחמיה איש שיחין פגע ביה ירושלמי אחד.
 א"ל: "זכה עמי חדא תרנגולתא."
 א"ל: "הילך טימיתיה וזיל זבון קופד."
 ואכיל, ומית.
 אמר: "בואו וספדו להרוגו של נחמיה."

Nemiah of Sichin met a Jerusalemite.

He said to him: "Give me a turkey [as charity]."

He replied: "Here is its value, now go buy meat."

He ate and died.

[Nehemiah] said: "Come eulogize Nehemiah's victim."

Nehemiah of Sichin for some reason did not want to give the Jerusalemite enough money to splurge on turkey and only gave him enough for meat. For some reason the meat disagreed with him and he died. (There are a number of stories about the aesthete tastes of some previously wealthy poor people in this extended text, so that it is plausible that this is what happened here.) After the Jerusalemite dies, Nehemiah takes responsibility for having killed him.

The final narrative of this type, in which a meeting produces a drama, is the most extensive:

נחום איש גם זו היה מוליך דורון לבית חמוי.
 פגע ביה מוכה שחין א'.
 א"ל: "זכה עמי ממה דאית גבך."
 א"ל: "מי חזה"
 חזר ואשכחוניה ומית.
 והוה אמר לקיבליה: "עיינוהי דחמונך ולא יהבון לין יסתמיין. ידיים דלא פשטן
 למיתן לך יתקטעון. רגליי דלא רהטן מית' לין יתברון."
 ומסת' כן.
 סליק לגבי ר"ע.
 א"ל: "אי לי שאני רואה אותך כך."
 א"ל: "אי לי שאני אין רואה אותך בכך."
 א"ל: "מה את מקללני?"
 א"ל: "ומה את מבעט ביסורין."

Nahum of Gamzu was bringing a present to his inlaws.

He was met by a person afflicted with boils.

He said to him: "Give me charity from what you have with you."

He replied: "When I return."

He returned and found him dead.

He said in front of him: "The eyes that saw you and did not give to you, should be blinded. The hands that did not reach out to give you should be cut off. The legs that did not run to give you should break."

And thus it happened.

Rabbi Akiva once came to him.

He said: "Woe is me that I see you in such a state!"

He replied: "Woe is me that I don't see you in such a state!"

He said: "Why do you curse me?"

He replied: "And why are you dismissive of suffering?"

As opposed to the earlier tale of Rabbi Yohanan and Resh Laqish, wherein it was revealed after the fact that the "poor person" was not actually poor at all, in this final tale no doubt is cast upon the veracity of the claim of poverty. The unmoving gaze of the narrative is focused upon Nahum's missed opportunity—he could have saved this poor person from death. He did not, and therefore he brings upon himself a life of suffering, which he considers meet compensation for ignoring, or deferring attention to, the suffering of the poor wretch.

In these stories, as in the others we have seen, the one constant is the violence of poverty, the necessity for people to act, and the tragic results of inaction. We also met here poverty himself, who is driven out only by the efforts of Hinena bar Papa's poverty relief.

Finally we return to the Bavli's excursus on poverty relief mentioned above. At the beginning of that text there is a story that is at best ambivalent about the worthiness of supporting all the poor:

Rabbi [Yehudah the Prince³⁰] opened the grain stores in the years of drought.

He said: "Masters of Scripture, Masters of Mishnah, Masters of the Study should enter.³¹ *Amei Ha'aretz* cannot enter."

Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram forced his way and entered.

He said: "Rabbi, feed me."³²

He said: "Have you studied Scripture?"

He said: "No."

He said: "Have you read Mishnah?"

He said: “No.”

—“If so, with what shall I feed you?”³³

He said: “Feed me as the dog and the raven.”

He gave him food.

After he left, Rabbi sat and worried.³⁴

He said: “Woe is me for I have given my bread to an *am ha'aretz*.”

R. Shimon bar Rabbi said to him: “Perhaps it was Yonatan ben Amram your student, for he does not want to profit from the honor of Torah.”

They checked and found that it was as he said.

Said Rabbi: “All should enter.”

Our tale starts with an act of magnanimity and concern. In a year of drought Rabbi opened the grain stores to feed the hungry. From most of the textual witnesses, it is not clear whose grain stores these were. There are many stories in the Babylonian Talmud that speak of Rabbi's great wealth.³⁵ However, we can also surmise that as the patriarch, Rabbi was responsible for the communal grain stores and it was these that he opened. One manuscript does have the reading “his grain stores,”³⁶ which adds a larger degree of generosity (and, perhaps, control) to this opening.

This act of generosity is immediately circumscribed in the second line. The grain is only for members of the rabbinic guild, those who are marked by having studied the rabbinic curriculum—Torah, Mishnah, and the investigations and inquiries into Mishnah.³⁷ Those who are not proficient in these disciplines should not enter. (Those who are not proficient are named עמי הארץ.)³⁸ The difference between inside and outside here could not be more stark—guild members eat while nonmembers potentially starve.

Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram is a member of the rabbinic guild who for some reason does not want to identify himself as such. Interestingly, some of the manuscripts have him as Yonatan ben Amram without the title Rabbi³⁹—colluding with him, as it were, in his subterfuge. From the end of the story we find out that Rabbi Yonatan ben Amram is actually a student of Rabbi. One is led to wonder how he disguised himself. Perhaps in the surprising answers to the rote questions, his actual identity was veiled. Perhaps in just this act of denying his knowledge his identity actually changed.

In any event, Rabbi did not recognize him and did not want to feed him. Yonatan ben Amram's answer to Rabbi's challenge: “If so with what

shall I feed you?" is very interesting. The specific reference, especially to the dog, is unclear.⁴⁰ There is a reference in I Kings 17:4 to Elijah being fed by the ravens when he is in hiding. However, the general rhetorical move has resonance with sayings of Jesus in the synoptic gospels: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them";⁴¹ "Consider the lilies, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."⁴² This rhetorical flourish on the part of Yonatan ben Amram was perhaps intended to both reinforce his status as outsider, and yet, at the same time argue for his inclusion as one who deserves to be fed.⁴³

The argument seems to work, as Rabbi gives him food.

However, all is not well.

Rabbi, it seems, had not changed his mind. He had been swayed by Yonatan ben Amram's rhetoric, but minutes later he regrets it. He is convinced that Yonatan is an עַם הָאָרֶץ and also that it is a bad thing to sustain those who are not part of the rabbinic guild. At this point in the narrative, Rabbi is still firmly of the opinion that "the poor" are not a class that is deserving of support. Specific poor people who are members of the rabbinic class are worthy of support. Moreover, Rabbi's experience of giving Yonatan food has apparently intensified his feelings about those who are not members of the guild.

Rabbi's son intervenes at that moment, raising the possibility (which the reader knows is correct) that the anonymous pauper was actually a member of the guild all along and not actually an עַם הָאָרֶץ. Moreover, Rabbi Shimon suggests that the mystery guest was actually a student of Rabbi who did not want to benefit from his status as a sage. There is a short investigation and this is found to be true.

This last bit of evidence seems to cause Rabbi's resistance to collapse. After it is presented to him in irrefutable terms that the person seeking sustenance was his student Yonatan ben Amram, Rabbi completely reverses himself and allows everybody to enter. Why is that?

The turning point in the story is when Yonatan ben Amram emerges from anonymity. Until that moment, Rabbi, though swayed by Yonatan's argument, is not moved to change the policy. In fact he regrets what he did, and it seems that he is worried that he will in some way pay for it.⁴⁴ The interesting point here is that the anonymity itself is not simple. If in fact Yonatan ben Amram is Rabbi's student and not just a member of the rabbinic guild,⁴⁵ how could Rabbi not recognize him? This must have been an intentional avoidance

of recognition. Rabbi might have refused to look Yonatan in the face until he proved his *bona fides*, until it was obvious that Yonatan was an insider. If this is true, it follows that once Rabbi is forced to recognize Yonatan, to see him, to encounter him face to face, as it were, Rabbi is unable to hide behind the policy. It is only at this moment—the moment that Rabbi recognizes that there could be many people who are being denied food, who are also people, that is sages—that the doors swing wide.⁴⁶

To paraphrase Amartya Sen, this *aggadah* is a perfect example of the deployment of the violence of poverty by means of identitarian boundaries.⁴⁷ It is Rabbi's privileging of his identity as a sage over his identity as a Jew, let's say, or as a person, that leads him to deny food to Yonatan ben Amram (and all others who are not sages). In the end it is only the possibility that he cannot reliably distinguish those in the rabbinic guild from others that convinces him to desist from this exclusive policy.

I want to raise up one final fragment of a well-known legend. This is the story, as told in *b. Berakhot* 28a, of the deposing of Rabban Gamliel from the patriarchate as a result of his denigration of Rabbi Joshua. At the end of the lengthy story, after many twists and turns, Rabban Gamliel, now the expatriarch, decides he must apologize to Rabbi Joshua. He goes to Rabbi Joshua's house and the following exchange occurs:

Rabban Gamliel said: . . . I will go and appease Rabbi Joshua.

When [Rabban Gamliel] came to his house, he saw that the walls of his house were blackened.

He said to him: From the walls of your house it is obvious that you are a smith.

[Rabbi Joshua] said to him: Woe to the generation whose leader you are, for you do not know the troubles of scholars, with what they earn a living and with what they eat.

In some senses the whole story subtly turns on class differences.⁴⁸ However, the ending highlights the fact that the rich do not know about the poor. Rabban Gamliel is surprised that Rabbi Joshua is so poor, and Rabbi Joshua upbraids him: "for you do not know the troubles of scholars, with what they earn a living and with what they eat."⁴⁹

This ending is virtually the same in the shorter and earlier version of the story in the Palestinian Talmud. This might suggest that Rabban Gamliel's obliviousness to Rabbi Joshua's poverty no longer resonated with the audience of the Bavli's version. However, the Bavli's version, as many scholars have commented, differs from the Palestinian version. Some of the most pronounced

differences have to do with wealth or the lack thereof. Among other things, in the Bavli, Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is qualified to be the patriarch because he is “smart and *wealthy* and a tenth generation descendant of Ezra.” “Wealthy” is not in the Palestinian Talmud. I would suggest that this ending remains in the Bavli because it is still a live issue in the rabbinic imaginary.

So where does all this leave us?

For the sages, poverty was a violent actor in their daily lives. While there was a radically innovative move to create a system of poverty relief that had no basis in biblical law, poverty itself obviously remained a point of anxiety. The rabbis both confronted poverty head on as a violent actor, whose actions brought real damage to the lives and persons of real people, and deployed poverty as a weapon that could result in horrible consequences.

NOTES

1. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (Issues of Our Time; 1st ed.; New York: Norton, 2006), 142.

2. Anne-Claire Brand Barón and Beatriz Monje, *Extreme Poverty Is Violence: Breaking the Silence, Searching for Peace* (Vauréal, France: International Movement ATD Fourth World, 2013), 33.

3. See the research cited in Barón and Monje, 71.

4. See, e.g., *m. Uqtzin* 2:6, where להתיר is opposed to חבור.

5. MS Parma has והתירו which changes the object of the permitting from the vow to the man (i.e., being permitted to marry the woman).

6. The impacts of poverty and hunger on the bodies of people are also seen in Christian writings. See, for example, Basil of Caesarea’s homilies about the famine in Cappadocia in 368. Hunger, Basil writes, is “the supreme human calamity, a more miserable end than all other deaths. . . . Famine is a slow evil, always approaching, always holding off like a beast in its den. The heat of the body cools. The form shrivels. Little by little strength diminishes. Flesh stretches across the bones like a spider web. The skin loses its bloom, as the rosy appearance fades and blood melts away. Nor is the skin white, but rather it withers into black. . . . The knees no longer support the body but drag themselves by force, the voice is powerless. . . . The eyes are sunken as if in a casket, like dried up nuts in their shells; the empty belly collapses, conforming itself to the shape of the backbone without any natural elasticity of the bowels.” Basil, Homily 6.6., cited in Susan R. Holman, *The Hungry Are Dying: Beggars and Bishops in Roman Cappadocia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 77.

7. *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E.* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 112.

8. *b. Nedarim* 7b.

9. Richard Finn, "Portraying the Poor: Descriptions of Poverty in Christian Texts from the Late Roman Empire," in *Poverty in the Roman World* (ed. Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 135.

10. Peter Brown, *Poverty and Leadership in the Later Roman Empire* (Hanover: University Press of New England: 2002), 16. Walter Scheidel, "Stratification, Deprivation and Quality of Life," in *Poverty in the Roman World* (ed. Margaret Atkins and Robin Osborne; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 40–59, has a more skeptical view of the possibility of currently being able to assess levels of "deprivation" or "poverty," since much more has to be taken into account than merely income or resources.

11. This argument is also made by Augustine in the *Ennarationes*, in his attempt to convince his wealthy listeners to support the poor. "Give alms, atone for your sins, let the needy person rejoice in your gift, so that you may rejoice in God's gift. That man is in want; you, too, are in want; he is wanting something of you, and you are wanting something of God. When you despise the person who wants something of yours, will not God despise you for wanting something of his? Supply, then, what the needy person lacks, so that God may fill your inner being." Augustine, *Ennarationes* in Ps 37:24, cited in Finn, "Portraying the Poor," 134.

12. The polemic with Turnus Rufus goes on, but the rest is not relevant to our point here.

13. In addition to the following aggadah, see too *b. Sanhedrin* 12a. This aggadah, wherein Akiva teaches or decides law while he is בבית האסורים חבוש, appears in various sources with differing scenarios (see also *b. Pesahim* 112a and Midrash Mishlei 8:3). See Zvi Septimus, "The Poetic Superstructure of the Babylonian Talmud and the Reader It Fashions" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2011), 281: "As previously mentioned, the Bavli's implied reader—the GB reader—is familiar with the entire book to the extent that all obscure references sprinkled throughout the Bavli are already known to this reader."

14. All the debates amongst the medieval commentaries concerning how to embed this narrative in the given halachic traditions support Barry Wimpfheimer's point that "Jewish legal discourse is not unlike other legal discourse of other cultural languages in presuming its own authority monologically. This is one of the reasons why that discourse—sometimes in the Talmud itself and sometimes in post-talmudic literature—struggles with talmudic legal narrative. The more dialogical such a narrative is—framing the normative in the context of conflicting semiotic characterizations—the more palpable the sense that the narrative resists the authoritarian single consciousness of a uniform legal discourse." Compare his comment from another narrative context: "Because of the way its own poetics intentionally play with the expectations of law in order to establish authority beyond the law, the story does not fit easily with legal precedent. It is this ill fit that is palpable within all of the talmudic interpretations." Barry Wimpfheimer, *Narrating the Law: A Poetics of Talmudic Legal Stories* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion; 1st ed.; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 22, 57.

15. See also Rashi and Meiri *ad locum*.

16. This line, arguably the climactic line in the narrative, appears in many different versions in the various manuscripts. The version that I cited is translated from the Vilna printing and is supported with very slight variations by the Hamburg, Oxford, and Escorial manuscripts. The fullest sample of the alternative version of this line is found in the Florence manuscripts: “They cried and said to him: ‘We are poor people, we labored for a whole day and we have nothing to eat.’” This version is close to the version in MS Vatican 115, which ends “shall we go away empty?” Vatican 117 has the shortest version: “They stayed and cried out/shouted ‘what shall we go and eat?’” The narrative is found in *p. Bava Metzi’a* 9:6 (11a) with significant changes. First, the characters are different. It is not a sage who hires the porters but a potter, and the sage they go to is R. Yosi bar Hanina. In the Palestinian version, the laborers don’t act independently, they merely do what R. Yosi bar Hanina tells them to. Finally, this climactic statement is absent in the Palestinian version. One could make a credible argument for a development of the narrative from the Palestinian skeletal version to the Babylonian version. However, the narrative has changed significantly during the journey, highlighting the fact that the Bavli’s version is most interested in the fate of the laborers—that at the end of the day they have no food.

17. There are two types of wage theft, עוֹשֵׂק and שֹׁכֵר הַלֵּנָה. While the Talmud initially attempts to distinguish between the two, ultimately the reason given for having both prohibitions is to hold the transgressor liable for two sins rather than one.

18. The former is Robert Alter’s translation, and the latter is his suggestion for a more literal translation. Robert Alter, *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: Norton, 2004).

19. This midrash is found in a slightly different version in *Sifri* Deuteronomy 379. Louis Finkelstein, *על ספר ספרי* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1969), 297. In the *Sifri* version, the idea of withholding wages as killing is not as explicit.

20. Ms Vatican 487.1 cites rather the verse from the Korach story, כָּל הָאֲנָשִׁים יָמוּתוּן אִלָּו, אִם כְּמוֹת.

21. Ms Vatican 487.1 has אֹמְרִים instead of אָו. The translation would then be “they say death or poverty [strikes]” or something to that effect.

22. Sages also kill in other ways. See *b. Gittin* 7a, *b. Yoma* 87a.

23. See also *b. Sotah* 48b, where the Talmud recalls Elisha’s killing of the children and supports the miraculous nature of it by citing the baraita that we quoted above (every place that sage set their eyes).

24. Jesus told him, “If you want to be perfect, go and sell all your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me” (Matt 19:21).

25. *m. Pe’ah* 8:7.

26. *p. Bava Batra* 8:9, 21b.

27. From the Greek δρᾶμα.

28. Following the Leiden MS. The printed editions have גַּיְמוּסִין.

29. He is named in another context (ed. Margalijot) 101:1. There the Master of Demons is called Ashmedi. See Leviticus Rabba.
30. All the manuscripts have only the letter ר, which is an abbreviation for Rabbi as signifying Rabbi Judah the Patriarch, or simply signifying any rabbi. From the continuation of the narrative in which Rabbi Judah's son takes part speaking to Rabbi Judah, it seems likely that the reference is to Rabbi Judah the Patriarch.
31. תלמוד, which obviously does not refer to the Talmud, but probably rather to the study of the discussions of mishnah. See also Rashi *b. Sukkah* 28a s.v. תלמוד.
32. The Hebrew is פרנסני which means “support me,” or, perhaps more accurately, “sustain me.” However, from the context (the year of drought and Rabbi opening his grain stores) and the continuation of the story (Rabbi bemoaning that he gave of his “bread” פת to an עם הארץ, it is clear that “feed me” is the preferred translation.
33. “With what,” as in “on what basis.”
34. The printed editions have במצער, “pained.” However, the manuscripts either don't have anything (i.e., they read “Rabbi sat and said”), or they have דאג, “worried.” This latter version seems proper as דאג in the Bavli usually means “worried about some consequence.” See also *b. Berakhot* 40a, 57b, *b. Shabbat* 106a, *b. Yoma* 88a.
35. For example, *b. Bava Metzi'a* 85a.
36. Paris: Bibliotheque Nationale, Suppl. Heb. 1337; אוצרות rather than אוצרות.
37. MS Vatican adds, בעלי הלכות בעלי אגדות [masters of law and masters of lore]. This just extends the curriculum.
38. I do not translate this term, since it is more textured than simply “the ignorant” or “rabbinically illiterate” in the way its meaning has evolved. The term עם הארץ is rather benign in its early biblical career (Abraham bought a burial ground for Sarah from Efron, who was called an עם הארץ), where it probably meant “native”—as its literal meaning suggests. By the time of the Bavli there are vociferous denunciations of the עם הארץ (*b. Pesah.* 49b), which suggest to me that something else was going on. I would suggest that the עמי הארץ were non-rabbinic Jews who did not accept rabbinic authority.
39. Paris, Vatican.
40. And compare Rashi *ad locum*.
41. Matthew 6:26.
42. Luke 12:27.
43. It is also possible that this story is partaking of another rhetorical tradition, similar to that of the King Katzya and Alexander story (y. *B. Met.* 8c) in which the point is that one's wealth is not as a result of his or her own efforts. One's wealth is due to God, and therefore there is no justification in withholding food from anyone. This tradition in rabbinic sources grounds itself on Psalms 36:7: “Man and beast You deliver, O LORD.” See Lenn Goodman, *On Justice: An Essay in Jewish Philosophy* (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 8.

44. Going with the reading אַרְבָּ, which suggests worry that something bad will occur.
45. The manuscripts are divided on this.
46. One could read this point in a more minimalist way; i.e., that Rabbi is afraid that there are more Yonatan ben Amrams out there and, if that is the case, Rabbi would not be supporting the sages. This reading seems unlikely, since in Rabbi Shimon's description of Yonatan it sounds as if he is the one who does this, this is an indentifying mark of his—not that he is part of a group that does this.
47. Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence* (New York: Norton, 2007)
48. Rabbi Elazar ben Azaryah is qualified to be the patriarch because he is “smart and wealthy and a tenth generation descendant of Ezra.” Further, Rabban Gamliel had turned away those whose outside (their clothes) did not match their inside. That is, they had to be able to afford the uniform or be of the class of the sages.
49. There is a version of this story in the Palestinian Talmud. This part of the story is remarkably similar, except that Rabbi Joshua is making needles.

Wealth and Rabbinic Self-Fashioning in Late Antiquity

Alyssa M. Gray

Wealth is ubiquitous in late antique rabbinic literature, especially the post-Tannaitic compilations that are this essay's principal concern.¹ This essay's interest in wealth is rhetorical and ideological, not social-historical; the animating questions of this essay are not "were the rabbis wealthy" or "which rabbis were wealthy?" but rather, "what role did wealth play in the rabbis' construction of their image and role as rabbis and in their portrayals of their relationships with nonrabbis?"²

This essay will survey a range of evidence in order to explore the deployment of "wealth" as part of the toolkit of concepts by which the amoraim in the land of Israel and Babylonia discursively constructed themselves and their place in Jewish society. To borrow Peter Brown's metaphor, this essay will use the theme of wealth "as a doctor uses a stethoscope," in order to listen in on how the rabbis imagined late antique Jewish society and thereby discern what role this particular social distinction—wealthy and poor, here with a focus on wealth—played in their construction of Jewish society and their place within it.³

The first section will begin with a small group of Babylonian amoraim described as having risen to wealth and will engage in a literary archaeology, moving from the Bavli back into Palestinian rabbinic literature in order to explore the intertextual web of links from which the "rising to wealth" traditions were constructed. This section will also explore why the Bavli and Palestinian compilations forge a link between wealth and leadership, what the sources of leaders' wealth should be, and the appropriate attitude leaders should have about it. The second section will employ a more conventional chronology, beginning with Palestinian rabbinic literature and moving forward to the Bavli, examining the role that wealth plays in rabbinic constructions of their relationships to nonrabbis.

WEALTH AND RABBINIC LEADERSHIP

The Babylonian amoraim described as having risen to wealth include, in chronological order, Rav Huna, Rav Hisda, Rava, Rav Papa, and Rav Ashi.⁴ Rav Huna worked as an irrigator and was described as too poor to afford kid-

dush wine,⁵ but later was said to have invited “all who are hungry to come and eat” at his home before each meal.⁶ Rav Hisda mentions being both poor and rich and attributes his wealth to his attention to ritual hand washing.⁷ According to an alternate tradition [*ikka d’amrei*, there are those who say], he stated that he would not have become wealthy were he not a beer manufacturer.⁸ Rava is described as wealthy.⁹ In another source, he attributes his wealth to his having attained the wealth of his father-in-law Rav Hisda, one of three things for which he asked from Heaven.¹⁰ Rava’s portrayal is unique in that he is also portrayed as suffering a plundering of his wealth, and he is also linked in two other sources to the plundering of the wealth of others.¹¹ These unique aspects of Rava’s portrayal will receive sustained attention later in this study. Rav Papa is described as wealthy,¹² and he attributes his wealth to his having been a beer manufacturer and,¹³ elsewhere, to his having married a priest’s daughter.¹⁴ Rav Ashi is said to have become wealthy after seeing the tops of turnips.¹⁵

A thick web of intertextual links makes plausible the suggestion that these Babylonian rises to wealth are rhetorical and ideological constructions, not transparent social historical data. *T. Yoma* 1:6 is key. It provides that a high priest must be greater than his brother priests in “beauty, strength, wealth, wisdom, and appearance.” The Tosefta asks from where it is derived that the other priests must provide for the elected high priest if he has no wealth, and the answer comes from a close reading of Leviticus 21:10 (“The priest who is exalted above his fellows”).¹⁶ This language is interpreted to mean that, if need be, “his fellows will exalt him.” The Tosefta goes on to illustrate the application of this principle in the case of one Pinhas of Habata. The first of two recollections in the Tosefta of Pinhas’s election as high priest was that when he was chosen by lot for that office, a delegation of financial overseers found him digging a quarry and filled the hollow space with golden dinars. *T. Yoma* 1:6 is later quoted in eight places in the Bavli, two of which pertain to rabbis. *B. Hullin* 134b attributes R. Ami’s acceptance of a “sack of dinars” that mysteriously came to the house of study to the fulfillment of *t. Yoma* 1:6.¹⁷ *B. Sotah* 40a recounts that Ulla stepped aside as head of the academy so that R. Abba of Akko could assume the post and be supported, implicitly through application of *t. Yoma* 1:6.

In a related tradition—also without explicit reference to *t. Yoma* 1:6—Samuel is quoted as saying that whoever is appointed a parnas on the community becomes wealthy.¹⁸ (The parnas was a communal official in Palestine with some responsibility for social welfare.)¹⁹ *T. Yoma* 1:6 and its application to rabbis in the Bavli have a dual significance. First, it stresses that high priests

must be wealthy; if they lack wealth when elected, their peers must provide it.²⁰ Generalizing beyond the office of high priest—defunct by the amoraic period, and, in any case, irrelevant in Babylonia—*t. Yoma* 1:6 teaches that leaders must be wealthy. Second, its application to rabbis in the Bavli suggests that Babylonian rabbis are to be seen as the structural equivalents of *t. Yoma* 1:6's priests. Just as an impecunious high priest elect must be enriched by his fellows—and thereby be made to be appear “exalted” and, one presumes, more like a leader in the people's eyes—so must rabbinic leaders be wealthy; if they lack wealth, their rise to rabbinic leadership requires a concomitant rise to wealth. Wealth and priestly leadership go hand in hand, as do wealth and Babylonian rabbinic leadership.²¹

Apropos, the Bavli's construction of rabbis as priests is not limited to its deployment of *t. Yoma* 1:6. The Sasanian King Mother Ifra Hormiz was said to have sent a sacrificial animal to Rava with the instruction that it be offered up “in the name of Heaven.”²² Rava instructed Rav Safra and Rav Aha bar Huna to take two young Gentile men, go to a place where the sea left behind mud that had dried (which could be used as an altar), take fresh twigs, make fire with an unused flint, and offer up the sacrifice in the name of Heaven. The story does not make clear how Ifra Hormiz understood Rava's role, but she implicitly sees him as some sort of priestly mediator.²³ In another story, a certain man brought some fish to Rav Anan.²⁴ The latter thereupon refused to hear the man's legal case, but did accept the gift as *bikkurim* [first fruits]. “First fruits,” of course, are one of the biblically mandated gifts to the priests.²⁵

Rava and Rav Safra—the same sage deputized by Rava to see to the disposition of Ifra Hormiz's sacrificial animal in Bavli *Zevahim*—were said to have visited the home of one Mar Yuhna. Rava asked Mar Yuhna's servant to give him the *matnata* [gifts], meaning the priestly gifts.²⁶ The servant did so, although the story ends on a critical note suggesting that Rava may not have acted appropriately. The martyr Ketiah bar Shalom leaves this world with a bequest of his wealth to “R. Akiva and his companions,” which R. Akiva interprets in light of Exodus 29:28 (“to Aaron and his descendants”)—“half to Aaron, and half to his descendants.”²⁷ In other words, R. Akiva understands Ketiah's bequest to the rabbis in light of the Torah's description of a particular gift to the Aaronide priests. Finally, recall Rav Papa's observation that he became wealthy because he married the daughter of a priest (*b. Pesah.* 49a). Rav Papa links priesthood and his rise to wealth; although not a priestly descendant himself, he gained merit and wealth through his marriage to one.

T. Yoma 1:6 and these Bavli sources suggest an ideational link in amoraic Babylonia between priestly and rabbinic leadership, with a rise to wealth as a key point of connection between them. Wealth is one way that Babylonian sages are linked to the biblical- and Second Temple-era priestly leadership in the Jerusalem Temple (as imagined by the rabbis), a prestigious link that could do important cultural work in buttressing their view of themselves as the rightful leaders of the Jews—certainly in Babylonia, and perhaps even beyond.²⁸ Although a study of the Bavli's portrayal of select rabbis in a priestly vein goes beyond the scope of this essay, it is worth pointing out that in the contemporaneous eastern Christian account of the martyrdom of Simeon bar Sabba'e, the Persian Shah orders the slaughter of other Christian clergy, who are referred to as *kāhne w-lewāye* [priests and . . . Levites]. Adam H. Becker notes the parallel between this description of the Christian clergy and Babylonian amoraic interest in priestly and levitical descent. The evidence assembled above, little though it is, may suggest a bit more: Babylonian amoraim may have shared with their eastern Christian neighbors a self-perception that they were the "priests" of their community.²⁹

The Bavli's portrayal of the rises to wealth of select Babylonian amoraim is also reminiscent of the Bavli's construction of the career of R. Akiva, a second important intertext.³⁰ R. Akiva is a poor shepherd who becomes wealthy when his initially hostile father-in-law Kalba (or Ben Kalba) Savua sees his successful rise to rabbinic prominence, repents of his disinheritance of his daughter, and allows the couple to inherit his wealth. *B. Nedarim* 50a's version of the story of R. Akiva and his long-suffering wife ends with a set of six literary allusions to different tales of how he acquired his wealth. Three of these are allusions to how R. Akiva found his wealth from the sea, one is the story of his inheritance from Kalba Savua, one is a reference to the wealth he acquired by marrying the wife of the Roman general Tineius Rufus, and one is an allusion to the wealth he acquired as a bequest from the martyr Ketiah bar Shalom.

There are allusions to the motif of R. Akiva's rise to wealth in the Yerushalmi—although no parallels to these Bavli narratives—but not even a bare hint in Tannaitic literature. The Yerushalmi alludes cryptically to R. Akiva's rise to wealth in a dialectical elaboration of a story about his role as a *parnas*.³¹ In Yerushalmi Shabbat, Rabban Gamliel says that R. Akiva's wife had supported him during his years of study by selling her hair, for which he later rewarded her with the gift of a Jerusalem-of-gold hair ornament.³² Although a rise from poverty to wealth is clearly implied here, the source of R. Akiva's wealth is unspecified. The Bavli's multiple literary allusions to R. Akiva's rise to wealth

show that this motif had some currency in Babylonia, where it was likely further elaborated and expanded.

The Bavli links R. Akiva and Moses in the well-known story of Moses's visionary visit to R. Akiva's lecture, where he was stunned at R. Akiva's Torah virtuosity.³³ The Bavli's linkage of R. Akiva and Moses points us in the direction of a third critical intertext—the Palestinian rabbinic tradition of Moses's rise to wealth. Leviticus Rabbah 32:2 represents that Moses became wealthy from a sapphire quarry that God created for that purpose in his tent. Thus when God said to Moses "Carve *lekha* [literally, "to," or "for," "yourself"] two tablets of stone" (Exod 34:1), he meant that Moses could keep the *pesolet* [fragments, like *p'sol*, carve] for himself, whereupon Moses gratefully exclaimed: "It is the blessing of the Lord that enriches" (Prov 10:22).³⁴ This tradition also appears in the Yerushalmi, along with a distinct tradition in the name of R. Hama b. R. Haninah that Moses was enriched from the unused chips left over after carving the second set of tablets. It is this latter tradition that appears in the Bavli.³⁵

Wealth—or, more specifically, the rise to wealth—is thus the scarlet thread that links the Bavli's construction of some of its leading sages as priests and as sages modeled upon Moses and the Tannaitic hero, R. Akiva. The nature and provenance of the wealth acquired by Moses and R. Akiva also deserve attention. In Palestinian sources, Moses's wealth is pure; he did not acquire it through the rough and tumble of the marketplace—or through any effort of his own at all—but was given it directly by God. It was a serendipitous windfall: either buried treasure that he dug out of the earth or the remains left over after carving the tablets on which God's words would be inscribed. The Yerushalmi is silent about the source of R. Akiva's wealth, leaving the impression that his rise to wealth "just happened."

The Bavli, as noted, presents the tradition that Moses's wealth was due to his keeping the remains of the tablets of stones, thus preserving the idea that his rise to wealth was due to his serendipitous acquisition of pristine wealth. The Bavli's elaborations of R. Akiva's story also preserve the Palestinian mystery surrounding his wealth by noting that he became wealthy either through serendipity or through marriage. While it is certainly possible that one might acquire ill-gotten gains through marriage, wealth acquired through marriage is pure in relation to the recipient himself. Such wealth is not wealth that he has to earn through his own, possibly compromising, activity in the world.

An interesting variation on this idea of pristine wealth is found in Leviticus Rabbah 17:6.³⁶ There, R. Shimon ben Yohai teaches that the Canaanites

hid their treasures in their houses and fields upon hearing of the Israelites' approach. God responds to this by recalling his promise to the patriarchs that their descendants would inherit "houses full of all good things" (Deut 6:11). He thereupon promises to bring about the "eruptive plague" of *tzara'at* (Lev 14:34) on the Canaanite houses the Israelites will take over so as to compel the Israelites to disassemble the houses and thereby find the treasures. While Canaanite wealth would seem almost certainly to be impure wealth, God himself points to this wealth as being what he promised the patriarchs their descendants would inherit. The people took Egyptian spoils with them when they left Egypt (Exod 12:35–36), and they acquire this Canaanite wealth upon settling in the land of Israel. God thus provided for them both "coming and going" with wealth that he made available (and licit) for their taking.

Why this insistence that Moses's and R. Akiva's wealth was pristine wealth? Arguably, the preference for such pristine wealth has a biblical antecedent in Abram's (later "Abraham") public refusal to accept gifts from the King of Sodom, thereby depriving the latter of the ability to say, "It is I who made Abram rich" (Gen 14:21–24).³⁷ Regarding rabbinic Palestine, we may note that wealth extracted from the ground is related to landed property generally, which had greater prestige in the Palestinian rabbis' late Roman cultural context than wealth obtained through trade and artisanship.³⁸ (That does not mean, however, that Palestinian rabbis were entirely opposed to engaging in trade and artisanship. Hayim Lapin points to evidence from Yerushalmi *Nezikin* that some rabbis engaged in artisanship or shopkeeping, noting that this points to a rabbinic acceptance of these activities as appropriate for students of Torah.)³⁹

But the Palestinian—and then the Babylonian—insistence that Moses's and R. Akiva's wealth was pristine wealth also reflects a certain ambivalence about wealth in general and a conviction that the wealth of leaders whose authority derives from the Torah should not be compromised by the manner in which it was acquired. Palestinian amoraim were well aware that in their world, great wealth could be amassed through oppression or other unsavory means. *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 10 presents a striking, contemporary example of such compromised wealth: the oppressive landowner who, after abusing his tenants, then wishes to gather the poor, distribute charity to them, and be seen as a munificent donor and public benefactor.⁴⁰

Apropos of *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 10, the Palestinian rabbinic fantasy about pristine wealth is also related to their awareness that the people may come to be suspicious of the source of their leaders' wealth, suspecting that

this wealth was taken from the people themselves and is somehow unjustifiable. The Yerushalmi's account of Moses's enrichment is immediately followed by two interpretations of Exodus 33:8: "all the people would rise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he had entered the Tent." The second interpretation puts a positive spin on the verse, while the first is quite negative. According to that first interpretation, the people were gazing at Moses and saying: "Look at his thighs, look at his legs, look at his roll of fat! He eats [the substance] of the Jews, he drinks [the substance] of the Jews, all that he has is of the Jews."⁴¹ Pristine wealth, coming as it does from God, renders the wealthy leader immune to this charge (although the discreet means by which he obtains the wealth could lend the charge some support).

Moses is not the only biblical leader whose rise to wealth is described in Palestinian rabbinic literature. The Yerushalmi describes the wealth of Moses's cousin Korach—the anti-Moses, the archetypal rebel against divinely instituted, and eventually rabbinic, authority—as having come from his discovery of a treasure hidden by Pharaoh.⁴² Note the critical distinction: Moses's wealth came directly from God, Korach's from Pharaoh, an undoubtedly compromised source and one not "rendered kosher" by God's approval, as were the spoils of Egypt and the treasures of Canaan. Putting all these traditions together, we see again a Palestinian ambivalence about wealth: it is a necessary part of the profile of a communal leader and, ideally, the wealth of a leader whose authority comes from the Torah should come from similarly pristine sources. The rabbinic fantasy is that a communal leader's wealth ideally should be a windfall, a treasure dug up from the ground or the leftover remains of an encounter with the divine. Yet, in the real world, wealth may be of a murkier and more ambiguous provenance: it may stem from activities lacking in prestige, or ambiguous, even troubling, sources. Even if wealth does not stem from such compromised sources, the people might suspect that their leaders' wealth was somehow improperly acquired, and at their expense.

The parallel portrayal of Korach's rise to wealth in the Bavli illustrates another, ancillary, point: the Bavli's greater willingness than Palestinian compilations openly to appreciate the benefits of wealth of ambiguous origin. According to one Bavli tradition about how Korach became wealthy, he found one of three treasures that Joseph had hidden in Egypt.⁴³ Joseph accumulated these treasures by gathering up the wealth of the world in his capacity as Pharaoh's viceroy. The Bavli does not portray Joseph's hoarding of this wealth in an entirely positive light. *B. Pesahim* 119a notes that this hoarded wealth passed to Israelite kings and then from conqueror to conqueror, finally ending up at

Rome. Joseph's hoarding of Egypt's wealth thus led directly to the wealth and (presumably) might of hated Rome.

Another of Joseph's treasures was later found by the Roman emperor Antoninus ben Asverus. The references in Bavli *Pesahim* to "Joseph" and "Antoninus ben Asvurus" are intertextual links to *b. Avodah Zarah* 10b, where Antoninus's daily interactions with R. Judah the Prince are described, with subtle allusions to verses about the biblical Joseph's interactions with his brothers in Genesis 42:25–28 and 44:1.⁴⁴ As described in Bavli *Avodah Zarah*, Antoninus is an ambivalent figure at best, but he uses the found and not quite pure wealth for a good purpose—giving it to Rabbi to enable the Jews to fulfill their tax obligations to Rome.⁴⁵ To the Bavli, then, the wealth Joseph hoarded in Egypt both helped build and sustain the hated Roman Empire (bad) and support Rabbi Judah the Prince's effort to meet the Jews' tax obligations to that empire (good, or at least a necessary evil). Some of that hoarded wealth also ended up enriching the rebel Korach (bad). To the Bavli, then, wealth of ambiguous origin can be a necessary evil; the Bavli simply presents this ambiguity, making no attempt to resolve or explain it.

To return to the Bavli's portrayal of select amoraim's rise to wealth: The thick web of intertextuality we have unraveled thus far suggests strongly that the Babylonian rise to wealth is a literary construct based on Palestinian literary precedents. Other Bavli traditions hint at widespread poverty in Bavel, which further calls into question whether these accounts of rising to wealth should be taken at face value. That these poverty traditions may themselves be literary constructs does not detract from the shadow of doubt they cast over the social historical reality of the rabbinic rags-to-riches portrayals. Two of these traditions are particularly relevant. A hostile story about Rava implies that most of the rabbis—unlike Rava—are poor; Rava's wealth is held against him.⁴⁶ Rav Papa—himself described as becoming wealthy—states that if one hears that his peer has become wealthy, one should not believe it.⁴⁷

Why must these particular Babylonian rabbis—and R. Akiva and Moses—become wealthy? Earlier, attention was drawn to *t. Yoma* 1:6's teaching that the elected high priest had to be "exalted" above his fellows; wealth is necessary to make a leader appear elevated and worthy of leadership in the eyes of those he will lead. Although *t. Yoma* 1:6 is not explicitly linked to Moses's wealth in the Yerushalmi or Leviticus Rabbah or to R. Akiva's rise to wealth, there may well be an ideational link between all these traditions. There is more. Palestinian sources forge a link between being wealthy and possessing strength. In *b. Nedarim* 38a, R. Yohanan (a Palestinian amora) says that God

allows the divine presence to rest only on one who is “strong [*gibor*], wealthy, wise, and humble.” His juxtaposition of “wealth” and “strength” echoes Genesis 34:29’s use of *cheilam* [literally, their strength] to mean wealth, a usage later perpetuated in Ben Sira’s Second Temple-era description of wealth (*Ben Sira* 5:1a) as *chayil*.

Wealth is “strength” in a basic sense: it gives its possessor the wherewithal to act—and act effectively, strongly—in the world. Similarly, R. Eleazar observes in the Bavli that a person’s money sets him on his feet.⁴⁸ If wealth imparts strength and sets a person upright on his feet, the lack of wealth is then weakness, and an inability to stand upright. This weakness and inability to stand upright are hauntingly captured in Genesis Rabbah’s description of the poor man R. Yehoshua ben Levi encountered in Rome: he is lying down and covered with reed mats and does not speak a word in the passage.⁴⁹ Wealth puts a person on his feet and gives him strength and a voice.

In the Bavli, becoming wealthy—especially through serendipity—has additional importance. R. Yohanan also says that Moses was forgetful of his Torah until God gave it to him as a “gift.”⁵⁰ The Bavli thus links Moses’s mastery of Torah (“wealth” in Torah) to God’s gift to him of material wealth. R. Akiva’s rise to wealth in the Bavli is also linked to his public recognition as a Torah master. Rava applies this link between attainment of wealth and Torah mastery to Rav Papa and Rav Huna breih de-Rav Yehoshua, who report to Rava that they became richer and acquired some land after mastering a particular tractate.⁵¹ For the Bavli, Torah mastery and acquiring wealth go hand-in-hand. Wealth would logically seem to be indispensable to the acquisition of Torah mastery, as it affords its possessor the leisure and tranquility of mind for study. Yet the Bavli seems to emphasize the acquisition of Torah mastery and wealth in tandem; indeed, there are narratives and traditions—although mostly involving Palestinian sages—that seem to be at pains to illustrate that poverty is not necessarily an obstacle to Torah mastery, and, correlatively, that wealth is not necessarily a prerequisite for the acquisition of Torah expertise.

Hillel is famously described as having been too poor to afford the entrance fee to the house of study. He fell asleep on the skylight in the snow and was taken in to the academy by the kindly Shemayah and Avtalyon.⁵² R. Yohanan and Ilfa were described as poor scholars. Ilfa took time off from his studies to engage in business; R. Yohanan did not and became a greater scholar than Ilfa.⁵³ The Bavli’s version of the deposition of the autocratic Rabban Gamliel as head of the academy is noteworthy for its description of

the class difference between the aristocratic Rabban Gamliel and the poor R. Yehoshua—both renowned scholars.⁵⁴ The third-generation Babylonian amora Rabbah is described as having been poor, as is the fourth-generation amora Abaye and the contemporaneous Rav Huna son of Moshe bar Atzri.⁵⁵ *B. Nedarim* 81a recounts that the scholars of Palestine sent word to Babylonia that care must be taken with the children of the poor, from whose ranks Torah might come.

A closer look at these traditions shows that most of them deal with Palestinian sources or, as in the case of *b. Nedarim* 81a, are at bottom Palestinian traditions (or are represented as such). *B. Nedarim* 81a, in particular, finds an echo in the Yerushalmi, where R. Hoshayah wonders aloud why R. Hama b. Haninah's wealthy ancestors couldn't have supported poor Torah scholars rather than built synagogues.⁵⁶ The cases of the high-profile Babylonian amoraim Abaye and Rabbah deserve closer attention (Rav Huna son of Moshe bar Atzri is a relatively minor sage). Abaye is typically associated with Rava as the latter's partner in dispute and, like Rava, has a priestly element to his portrayal.⁵⁷ He is portrayed as being acutely conscious of social and economic differences between the rich and poor and applies to himself the popular saying: "the poor man is hungry and does not know" (*b. Meg.* 7b).

His poverty is an interesting inversion of Rava's wealth. Abaye's senior contemporary, uncle, and teacher Rabbah (of the amoraic third generation) is a Babylonian sage and even communal social welfare leader whose poverty the Bavli emphasizes.⁵⁸ While the matter requires more research, it seems that the Bavli means to construct the pair as socioeconomic opposites: Rava having an intellectual pedigree, family background, and existence that includes wealth, and Abaye as being of an impoverished background and existence—although the existence of two traditions suggesting that Abaye may have had means complicates this seemingly clear contrast.⁵⁹

One possible effect of a contrasting portrayal of the socioeconomic statuses of this rabbinic pair (the intention behind it, of course, being impossible to discern) is to illustrate graphically that rabbinic Torah and the rabbis are relevant for and to the entire gamut of Jewish society—from poor to rich—despite the Bavli's ideal of a rabbinic rise to wealth. Such a socioeconomic contrast between a rabbinic pair is also visible in the Bavli's reconstruction of the encounter between Rabban Gamliel and the impoverished R. Yehoshua in Bavli *Berakhot*, mentioned earlier. There, one message of that narrative is that (rabbinic) Torah is for everyone, and Rabban Gamliel is targeted for criticism for restricting access to the house of study.

At a minimum, we may conclude that the Bavli seems keener to emphasize the acquisition of Torah mastery in the midst of poverty for Palestinian sages, while acknowledging that select Babylonian amoraim may have been poor. With the exception of Rabbah, a rise to wealth seems to be required for Babylonian sages who become communal leaders; Torah mastery is portrayed as coming in tandem with a rise to wealth. Reflection on the well-known caste stratification of Sasanian society may shed some additional light on all this. The Sasanian-era *Letter of Tansar* describes four castes: the highest is clergy, and the lowest is merchants, artisans, and those who support themselves through trade.⁶⁰ Rising to wealth makes these rabbis structurally similar to the high-caste Zoroastrian priests (and recall this essay's earlier observation about how the Babylonian amoraim describe themselves by reference to the Jerusalem Temple priesthood).

It is noteworthy that like Palestinian sources, the Bavli describes some Babylonian amoraim as engaging in trade, despite the low-caste status of that occupation in Sasanian Iran.⁶¹ Indeed, the Bavli presents R. Yehoshua ben Hananyah's response to the Alexandrians that in order to get rich, one should engage much in business and do so honestly; if that doesn't succeed, then prayer will also be necessary.⁶² The Bavli, like the Yerushalmi, clearly does not see engagement in trade as ipso facto precluding a rise to Torah mastery and rabbinic leadership, notwithstanding the majority culture's disdain for it. One rhetorical effect of the Bavli's portrayal of select amoraim's rise to wealth is to show just how far up the restrictive Sasanian social ladder Torah mastery can cause a sage to rise, from lowly artisanal to high-caste priestly status.

Interestingly, notwithstanding the Palestinian provenance of the "rise to wealth" motif, Palestinian compilations do not emphasize the rise to wealth of Palestinian amoraim the way the Bavli does with its select group. This may well be because they lacked the Babylonians' Sasanian-inspired motivation to construct themselves as having a high-caste status. Palestinian compilations do, however, hint that rabbis were by and large (meant to be) a wealthy group. For example, the Yerushalmi is clear that a judge must have enough wealth to have someone else do his manual labor.⁶³ The Yerushalmi's anachronistic accounts of R. Akiva and R. Eliezer serving as *parnasim* show R. Eliezer hosting the poor in his home, which requires means.⁶⁴ The story of R. Shimon ben Yohai's engineering of his nephews' appointments as *parnasim* also makes it clear (albeit implicitly) that those who serve as *parnasim* must have wealth.⁶⁵ Apropos, R. Hama bar Haninah proudly points out to R. Hoshayah all the

synagogues built by his (wealthy) ancestors, who are portrayed in good Roman provincial fashion as exemplars of a Jewish euergetism.⁶⁶

Rather than highlighting rabbinic rises to wealth, Palestinian compilations twice highlight—with disapproval—rabbinic falls from wealth through voluntary renunciation. R. Yishebab gives away of all his money to charity—an act disapproved of by Rabban Gamliel⁶⁷—and R. Hiyyah weeps (also a form of rejection) upon seeing R. Yohanan's sale of all his real estate for the sake of Torah study.⁶⁸ This duality in the Palestinian portrayal of rabbis and wealth is an echo of the duality that existed in the rabbis' late Roman environment. To the extent the rabbi was a *parnas*—or any kind of communal leader—he required wealth, like other Roman provincial leaders. To the extent he was portrayed as a holy man, he could be portrayed as poor. But while a Palestinian rabbi could be poor, voluntary renunciation of wealth was disfavored—although not universally, as the need for the anti-renunciation polemic indicates. Babylonian rabbis do not voluntarily renounce wealth.

Apropos of falls from wealth, it is time to return to the pivotal Babylonian amora Rava, whose portrayal is uniquely bound up with the despoliation of wealth and with tensions about wealth generally. Rava married Rav Hisda's daughter and was said to have sought and acquired his father-in-law's wealth. In a strange story in *b. Hagigah* 5b, the rabbis do not see him as one of Israel on account of his wealth (!). He tells them they don't know how much he sends to the king in secret; nevertheless, they “cast their eyes on him,” and royal officers despoil him of his wealth. Rava's alleged use of his wealth is reminiscent of Antoninus's use of wealth in *b. Avodah Zarah* 10b: he is using it for the benefit of the rabbis and of the Jews generally. Yet the comparison with Antoninus—an ambivalent figure in the Bavli—is unflattering to Rava, and, in any case, his secret acts of financial solidarity do not shield his wealth from despoliation.

Rava is also linked to wealth despoliation in four other contexts. In *b. Avodah Zarah* 65a Rava interacts with Bar Shishak. Bar Shishak is portrayed as lounging about with naked prostitutes, a scene interestingly reminiscent of the early Roman emperor Tiberius on the island of Capri. Bar Shishak asks Rava if the Jews have anything like this in the coming future, and Rava responds that what they have is better—the Jews, unlike Bar Shishak and his people, have no fear of the empire. Bar Shishak scoffs at this response, whereupon a troop of soldiers comes to take him away. As he is carted off, Bar Shishak exclaims that the eye that wishes to look evilly upon Rava should be plucked out.⁶⁹ This exclamation is of course deeply ironic in light of the fate of Rava's

wealth in *b. Hagigah* 5b. In *b. Sanhedrin* 109a, Rava expounds Job 24:16 (“In the dark they break into houses; by day they shut themselves in; They do not know the light”) to refer to the people of Sodom, who would deposit fragrant persimmon with the wealthy. The wealthy would put the persimmon in their safes, whereupon the people of Sodom would come at night and sniff out their wealth (quoting Ps 59:15: “They come each evening growling like dogs, roaming the city”).⁷⁰ It is also noteworthy that Rava is discomfited as a result of his interaction with one of the formerly wealthy poor—that is, a person who has lost his wealth (*b. Ketub.* 67b)—and that Rava is portrayed as compelling Rav Natan bar Ami to give the large sum of 400 *zuz* to charity (*b. B. Bat.* 8b), a form of legally sanctioned despoliation.

Rava’s association with the loss of, looting of, or compulsory giving of, wealth is interesting and suggestive. It is possible—although certainty is impossible—that this association is an echo of a rabbinic tradition about Rava’s own loss of wealth or of instability of social status in his time, for which he—the pivotal amora of his generation—is a visible symbol. At the very least, these traditions point to a Babylonian anxiety about the possibility of losing wealth and falling back into poverty. Elsewhere I have described how the Bavli—like the Yerushalmi, but quite unlike Tannaitic literature—is noticeably ambivalent about people who fall from wealth to poverty.⁷¹ Fear of the loss of wealth—and of the loss of social status that would entail—may well underlay these various Rava traditions, with Rava made into a high-profile focal point of these worries.⁷²

Rava’s relationship with Gentile authorities—notably the Sasanian King Mother Ifra Hormiz and the Sasanian hegemon Bar Shishak—also deserves attention.⁷³ In the latter case, as discussed earlier, Rava is portrayed as an observer of Bar Shishak’s arrogance and the loss of wealth that results from it. In Bavli *Bava Batra*, R. Ami objects to Rava’s willingness to accept charity money for distribution from Ifra Hormiz, although both sages are said to agree that the overriding interest in *shalom malkhut* [maintaining peaceful relations with the Gentile kingdom] can justify accepting it for distribution to the Gentile poor. Putting these various data together, there seems to be a duality in the Babylonian approach to rabbis and wealth. When facing outward, toward the Gentile world—particularly Gentile authorities—a posture of humbleness and even of detachment from material wealth is appropriate. But when turning inward—toward Jewish society and their own smaller circle within it—rabbinic leaders must be seen as having risen to wealth. That rise to wealth and attainment of leadership can of course lead to recognition of a rabbi as a Jewish leader by the Gentile authorities, as the case of Rava also illustrates.

We will conclude this first part of the essay with the observation that both rabbinic cultures caution that wealth can lead to arrogance, which can lead to rebellion against God.⁷⁴ Korach's response to his own found wealth is arrogant rebellion; this is hardly surprising considering that, in the Yerushalmi, that wealth was already compromised because it stemmed from a compromised source—Pharaoh. Debei R. Yannai teaches that the excessive wealth God allowed the Israelites to have when they left Egypt caused them to worship the Golden Calf.⁷⁵ We have already noted the bad end to which the Gentile Bar Shishak's arrogance about his social station brought him in the Bavli. In the Yerushalmi, R. Yohanan bar Torta teaches a related notion that the love of money, together with baseless hatred, was the cause of the Second Temple's destruction—despite the intensive engagement in Torah at that time.⁷⁶

Moses's portrayal in *Leviticus Rabbah* and the Yerushalmi is paradigmatic of the rabbis' idea of the right attitude toward wealth: he rejoices in his found wealth and thanks God by reciting Proverbs 10:22. King David's general Joab is also an exemplar of the right attitude to wealth: his house was “ownerless to everyone,” that is, he freely shared his bounty with all comers.⁷⁷ Apropos, recall Rav Huna's generous invitation to all the hungry to come and eat at his table at his mealtimes.⁷⁸ Arrogance is a temptation to which the wealthy are subject, a temptation wealthy rabbinic leaders must avoid. As we will see below, some Babylonian rabbis especially are portrayed as being acutely conscious of, and sensitive about, the arrogance of the (nonrabbinic) wealthy.

WEALTH AND RABBINIC CONSTRUCTIONS OF THEIR RELATIONSHIPS TO NONRABBIS

There is a discernible difference in how wealth figures into the construction of relationships between rabbis and nonrabbis in Palestinian compilations and the Bavli. As Richard Kalmin has pointed out, Palestinian rabbis, unlike their Babylonian counterparts, actively solicit support from nonrabbis. Hayim Lapin has noted that this may be one index of rabbinic institutionalization.⁷⁹ There is more. Palestinian compilations portray donating to rabbis as a sound investment strategy (a metaphor both Gary Anderson and I have used vis-à-vis charity): even if one has lost a good deal of wealth, the way to make it back—and even augment it—is to give to the rabbis.⁸⁰ Moreover, donating to the rabbis is an insurance policy that will preserve one's wealth. Palestinian rabbis thus construct themselves and their donors as being in a symbiotic sociotheological relationship.⁸¹

By contrast, the first generation Babylonian amora Rav and the fourth generation Rava describe tensions between rabbis and the nonrabbinic wealthy, and there are other hints of such tensions besides. The Bavli—mostly through Rava—describes a policy of rabbinic independence from wealthy nonrabbis, far different from the Palestinian symbiotic relationship. To the limited extent that individual Babylonian rabbis do receive gifts from nonrabbis, they construct these gifts on the model of gift giving to the Jerusalem priesthood.

Leviticus Rabbah 5:4 is a parade example of the Palestinian rabbinic “investment strategy.”⁸² Interpreting Proverbs 18:16 (“A man’s gift eases his way and gives him access to the great”), the story is told of Rabbis Eliezer, Yehoshua, and Akiva, who went to Antioch on the Orontes to engage in a “collection for the sages.” Abba Yudan, their reliable source of funds, had fallen on hard times. His wife suggests he sell half of his one remaining field and contribute the proceeds to the rabbis. He does so, and they pray “may God make good your loss.” While plowing his remaining half-field, his cow falls and breaks her leg. As he helps his cow he finds a treasure, which makes him fantastically wealthy.

When the rabbis return, they announce that they have already put Abba Yudan at the head of their list of donors [*timos*]. They seat him with them and recite Proverbs 18:16. Abba Yudan’s faith in selling half his property and the rabbis’ prayer on his behalf result in his finding a treasure and becoming even wealthier than before. His new wealth resembles that of Moses—buried treasure, the paradigm of “pure” wealth. It is this pure wealth that he is able once again to give to the rabbis. The message could not be clearer: giving to the rabbis is a good “investment strategy” for nonrabbis. Apropos, (the Palestinian) R. Yohanan is quoted in the Bavli as teaching that “one should tithe [*aser*] in order that one become wealthy [*titasher*],” a play on words that pithily conveys this investment strategy.⁸³

Leviticus Rabbah 34:13 highlights the Palestinian rabbinic insurance policy for wealth.⁸⁴ One interpretation provided there of the phrase “the wretched poor” (Isa 58:7) is that this refers to householders who have lost their wealth, who became impoverished because they did not extend their hands in good deeds [*mitzvotb*] to do the will of their Heavenly Father. This is juxtaposed to another interpretation that “to take the wretched poor into your home” (Isa 58:7) refers instead to the rabbis, who come into people’s houses and teach them Torah and the difference between pure and impure, forbidden and permitted, and, in general, teach people how to do their Heavenly Father’s will. This juxtaposition of interpretations demonstrates once again that sup-

porting the rabbis is an insurance policy for the preservation of one's wealth. The rabbis will teach donors how to do the will of their Heavenly Father, and the donors' consequent fulfillment of God's will guarantees that they will keep their wealth.

The Palestinian rabbinic "investment strategy" and "insurance policy for wealth" imply a commonality of interest between rabbis and the wealthy, each of whom has something to gain from the interaction. Tension between rabbis and the wealthy would thus seem to be counterproductive, although advising the wealthy to see to the easing of any such tensions might be viewed as a "rider" to the Palestinian "insurance policy." Apropos, the Yerushalmi portrays tension between a rabbi and a wealthy man in the case of the first generation Babylonian amora Rav, and this portrayal of Rav as having a rocky relationship with the wealthy is carried over into the Bavli. In the Yerushalmi, a certain man wished to sue a wealthy man and have the case adjudicated by Rav. The wealthy man responded arrogantly to the summons, flaunting his great wealth and implying that it was undignified for him to come to court. Rav, offended, said "How is he arrogant about something that is not his? May it be diminished immediately!" Right away the man's property was confiscated for the imperial treasury. Chastened, the now-poor man asked Rav to pray that his "soul" be restored. Rav did so, and the man recovered his wealth.⁸⁵

This Rav story in the Yerushalmi is a variation on the Palestinian "insurance policy" idea: offending the rabbi results in a loss of wealth, and appeasing him can lead to its restoration. Rav's prayer on behalf of the man and its efficacy are reminiscent of the power of the rabbis' prayer on behalf of Abba Yudan and the restoration of his wealth in Leviticus Rabbah. Yet it is significant that this portrayal of tension between a rabbi and a wealthy man involves a Babylonian rabbi, as tension is the scarlet thread that runs through the Bavli's portrayal of interactions between rabbis and the wealthy.

The Bavli paints a somewhat different picture overall of relations between rabbis and the wealthy than the irenic interdependence we see in Palestinian compilations. The Bavli's Rav is quoted as saying that the wealthy of Bavel are "descenders into hell," a turn of phrase associated with him elsewhere in reference to the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar.⁸⁶ Rav's harsh statement is supported by the story of one Shabtai bar Marenus—a name that appears only once in the Bavli—who came to Babylonia and whose requests for a business opportunity and then for sustenance were spurned.⁸⁷ Shabtai reacts to this rejection by identifying those who refused him with the "mixed multitude" who left Egypt. Shabtai's related exegesis of Deuter-

onomy 13:18 excludes those who fail to show mercy from being counted among Abraham's descendants.

Moving on to the second amoraic generation, Rav Huna explains the biblical word *cabul* (1 Kings 9:13's "land of Cabul") to refer to the inhabitants of that land, who were smothered [*m'cuvalin*] in silver and gold. Rava asks why, if that is so, King Hiram of Tyre was said to be displeased with them (1 Kings 9:12)—could he be displeased because they were smothered in silver and gold? Rav Huna's response is a chilly reflection on the rich: "because they were wealthy and pampered, they did no work"—probably referring to their refusal to participate in compulsory royal service.⁸⁸ Their pampered refusal to work annoyed the king.

Rava himself (fourth amoraic generation) identifies the "cows of Bashan" (Amos 4:1) with the wealthy and, in his view, lazy women of Mehoza.⁸⁹ Elsewhere, as noted above, he accedes to Rav Huna's linkage of wealth and laziness.⁹⁰ In *b. Rosh HaShanah* 17a an extended discussion of the punishment of the wicked in Gehinnom draws to a close with the idea that major sinners who cause others to sin, notably sectarians [*minim*], informers [*mesorot*], heretics [*apikorsim*], and sinners like Jeroboam ben Nevat and his companions, will never cease to be punished after death.⁹¹ Rava glosses the conclusion of this discussion by noting that the most beautiful of the people of Mehoza are among these undesirables, who are called "children of Gehinnom."

As part of the discussion of *apikorsim* in *b. Sanhedrin* 99b–100a, Rava identifies the *apikorsim* as those like the household of Benjamin the doctor, who ask what good the rabbis are to them—the rabbis can neither permit the raven nor declare the dove forbidden. Benjamin's dismissive attitude toward rabbinic Torah echoes Korach's mocking dismissal of the mitzvot of *tzitzit* and *mezuzah* in the Yerushalmi.⁹² Aside from the content similarity, the redactional juxtaposition of Korach and Benjamin as part of the Bavli's discussion of *apikorsim* highlights their connection. Ironically, the Palestinian R. Yishmael b. R. Yose teaches that the wealthy of Babylonia earn their wealth because they "honor the Torah," a notion not taught by any Babylonian sage and one that may have surprised them.⁹³

We may also discern small indications of hostility toward the wealthy in *b. Gittin* 36b–37a and *b. Bava Batra* 8b. In Bavli *Gittin*, Rav Hisda presents a fanciful etymology for the Greek-derived word *prosbul*; *buli* is said to refer to the rich, as it is written (Lev 26:19): "and I will break your proud glory." Rav Yosef taught that "your proud glory" refers to the *bula'ot* [from the Greek *boule*, or town councils], which naturally consisted of the wealthy.⁹⁴ Note that

God promises that this “proud glory”—to Rav Yosef, the wealthy and presumably nonrabbinic town councils—will be “broken.”

Additionally, in Bavli *Bava Batra*, R. Yitzhak bar Shmuel bar Marta in the name of Rav applies Jeremiah 30:20 (“And I will deal with all his oppressors”) to tzedakah collectors, thereby implying that their earnest weekly pursuit of donations—even on Sabbath eves—is “oppressive.” Yet the Bavli immediately qualifies this by introducing a hypothetical wealthy person into the discussion. While extracting a charity pledge from a busy nonwealthy householder on Friday is “oppressive,” extracting one from a wealthy householder is not.⁹⁵

The Bavli even introduces conflict with the wealthy into its portrayal of a Palestinian amora. R. Mani complained to R. Yitzhak ben Elyashiv that his father-in-law’s wealthy family was troubling him, whereupon R. Yitzhak exclaimed “Let them be impoverished!,” which came to pass. R. Mani then complained that they were pressing him for support, whereupon R. Yitzhak called for the restoration of their wealth, which also came to pass (*b. Ta’anit* 23b).

Finally, and apropos of Bavli *Gittin*, Julia Watts Belser’s insightful reading of the destruction narratives (*b. Git.* 55b–58a) demonstrates how they point to the physical and moral dangers of wealth and extravagance; the well-known (in the Bavli) wealthy woman Marta bat Boethus is said to have caused her own death through her stubborn unwillingness to surrender her high-class desires and felt entitlements.⁹⁶ Belser’s findings about the destruction narratives’ negative portrayal of the Second Temple-era nonrabbinic wealthy are consistent with this essay’s findings and demonstrate the Bavli’s consistent thematization across different types of sources of this negativity toward the nonrabbinic wealthy.

In contrast to all these Babylonian traditions, *b. Eruvin* 86a recounts that Rabbi and R. Akiva—both major Tannaim—are described as “honoring the rich.” No Babylonian amora is similarly described.⁹⁷

Rava’s overall portrayal in the Bavli is a magnetic field attracting various traditions—some of which appear to be reworkings of others—about tensions surrounding wealth and the wealthy. It is difficult to know to what extent these traditions reflect a social reality of tensions between Rava and the nonrabbinic wealthy. Whether or not they do, Rava’s traditions—and the earlier story of Shabtai bar Marenus—point to a Babylonian ideal of rabbinic independence from the wealthy. Note that Shabtai bar Marenus had asked first for an independence-creating business opportunity, although he was also willing to accept direct sustenance. In the end, he got neither.

Rava provides a principled basis for rabbinic independence in his comment on 1 Samuel 7:17 (“he would return to Ramah, for his home was there”) that the redundant “his home was there” meant that “wherever he went, his home was with him”—in other words, the prophet Samuel took nothing from anyone.⁹⁸ Rava goes on to point out that while Moses would rent an Israelite’s animal with the latter’s consent, Samuel would not do even that—his independence from his people was total. This independence ideal is echoed in the statement of Abaye (or R. Yitzhak) in *b. Berakhot* 10b that one who wishes to benefit from others should benefit like the prophet Elisha—in a minimal fashion—and that one who wishes not to benefit should do so following the example of Samuel, who was entirely self-sufficient. This ideological emphasis on amoraic independence from the nonrabbinic wealthy also helps to make sense of the rise to wealth of select Babylonian amoraim, discussed in the first part of this essay. Their rise to wealth—whether unexplained or attributed to their own business acumen—ensures rabbinic independence from the nonrabbinic wealthy.

This may also account in part for why Babylonian amoraim—unlike select Palestinian amoraim—are not described as impoverishing themselves. The handful of poor Babylonian scholars we find are involuntarily so. Poverty is not at all presented as a Babylonian rabbinic ideal. (Nor, for that matter, was ascetic self-denial a Zoroastrian ideal in Sasanian Iran.)⁹⁹ Adam H. Becker has also pointed to an Eastern Syrian Christian comfort with wealth, exemplified by the School of Nisibis’s acceptance of the donation of a village that was purchased for its support.¹⁰⁰ The Bavli’s emphasis on the rise to wealth of select amoraim may then be an echo not only of the high-caste status of the Zoroastrian priests and of the Zoroastrian distaste for asceticism, but also of the rabbis’ eastern Christian neighbors’ acceptance of wealth, an acceptance that dovetails with their own ideological conviction of the indispensability of wealth for rabbinic independence.

This Babylonian insistence on rabbinic independence is underscored in R. Yohanan’s statement that the prophets all prophesied about one who marries off his daughter to a sage, makes a business opportunity for him, or benefits the sage from his possessions.¹⁰¹ This tradition has been “Bavlicized” by the mentions of marriage and business opportunity, both of which are conducive to financial independence and neither of which appears in Palestinian compilations as ways that nonrabbis support rabbis. The Bavli similarly reworks a dialogue between R. Yohanan and R. Eleazar about *amei ha-aretz* [literally, the peoples of the land, meaning, in context, the unlearned] and support for rabbis.¹⁰²

Why is independence so important to the Babylonian rabbis? One possibility is that this indeed reflects a historical reality of tense relations between rabbis and the nonrabbinic wealthy. While compounding speculations is a hazardous business, it is possible that the rabbis felt themselves to be in competition with the nonrabbinic wealthy for social influence. Although recent scholarship continues to emphasize—not unjustifiably—the rabbis' marginality to late antique Jewish society, the portrayals of select Babylonian rabbis as communal social welfare leaders strongly suggests that they saw themselves—and wished to be seen—as having influence outside the walls of their schools [*batei midrash*].¹⁰³

Apropos, in a brief but suggestive statement, Rav Hisda explains the noun *sudna* [beer] as a contraction of the Hebrew *sod na'eh* [beautiful secret], the beautiful secret being that the beer business makes one rich, which allows for the practice of *gemilut hasadim* [reciprocation of kindnesses, or simply acts of kindness, meaning, in this context, charity].¹⁰⁴ Aside from being an important mitzvah, the practice of charity is certainly a way to increase one's influence among Jews outside the narrow rabbinic circle—and perhaps also to compete successfully with the nonrabbinic wealthy for social influence.

As this essay has noted, the caste stratification of Sasanian society—in which clergy ranked highest—may also be a relevant factor, as the rabbis construct themselves as their own high-level caste, independent of others.¹⁰⁵ Rav's (as related in the Yerushalmi), Shabtai bar Marenus's, and Rava's interactions with the nonrabbinic wealthy show the latter to be high-handed and proud, reflecting their sense of privileged social status. The rabbis' portrayal of their own wealth and independence may be an effort to construct themselves as a social group distinct from, yet equal or even superior in status and dignity to, wealthy nonrabbis. Their distinction comes from Torah, mastery of which goes hand in hand with the acquisition of wealth. Their wish to be seen as a distinct, high-status social group analogous to the Zoroastrian clergy dovetails with their self-portrayal in other contexts as latter-day priests: a distinct Jewish group in Babylonia uniquely set aside for the service of God and the leadership of the Jews.

CONCLUSION

The Talmud Yerushalmi, Palestinian midrash compilations, and Talmud Bavli all include a plethora of wealth traditions. This essay's wide-ranging survey of these traditions leads to the conclusion that they are best viewed not as straightforward nuggets of social history, but as specific instances of the use of

“wealth” as a concept and idea through which the amoraim in Palestine and Babylonia discursively constructed themselves. Unraveling a complex intertextual web, this essay shows that the well-known motif of the rises to wealth of select Babylonian amoraim is rooted in Palestinian traditions, and it is suggested that this motif may be related to their self-portrayal as being similar to the high-caste Zoroastrian priests and as independent of—and equal in dignity to—the Jewish nonrabbinic wealthy. Palestinian amoraim, by contrast, portray themselves as important players in the lives of nonrabbinic Jews. By teaching that giving to rabbis is a sound “investment strategy” and “insurance policy” for wealth, Palestinian rabbis forge a symbiotic sociotheological relationship between themselves and nonrabbis.

Both rabbinic cultures idealize “pristine” wealth, while acknowledging that rabbis may engage in commerce and artisanship, activities that did not have prestige in their ambient non-Jewish cultures. Palestinian compilations and the Bavli are more willing to portray Palestinian rabbis as poor and even as impoverishing themselves for religious reasons, while the handful of poor Babylonian sages are involuntarily so, and their poverty is neither idealized nor sacralized. The Babylonian sages Rav and Rava are distinguished by their portrayals as being hostile toward the nonrabbinic wealthy, and the Bavli preserves other evidence of such amoraic hostility besides. Palestinian rabbis are portrayed—in the Bavli as well—as being more respectful of the wealthy. This Babylonian hostility is possibly related to their desire to construct themselves as an independent caste, while the Palestinian respect for the wealthy may be related to their desire to gain support from them. Examining the role that wealth plays in rabbinic self-fashioning is a fruitful endeavor that expands our understanding of how the rabbis saw themselves and their place in Jewish society of late antiquity.

NOTES

1. The classical rabbinic period (70–ca. 600 CE) is divided into two subperiods: that of scholars called the Tannaim [repeaters], active in the land of Israel between 70–220 CE, and the succeeding period of the amoraim [sayers]. The latter period extends from ca. 220–360/370 in the land of Israel and until ca. 550 in Babylonia. The Talmud Yerushalmi and the classical midrash compilations date to approximately the late fourth to early fifth centuries, while the Talmud Bavli is now conventionally considered to be a product of the seventh century.
2. I should also note that this essay is not about the important question “what should one do with one’s wealth?” This sort of legal-ethical inquiry is beyond the scope of this essay, except insofar as it is part of the rabbinic texts under analysis.

3. See Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350–550 AD* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), xxvi. Different ways of imagining social divisions—and changes in these imaginings—can tell us much about changes in the rabbis' external contexts, theology, approaches to law [halachah] and self-perception. For a medieval example, Jacques Le Goff pointed out the fourth through twelfth century division of society into *potentes* and *humiles* [the strong and the weak], followed by the thirteenth through fifteenth century division into *dives* and *pauper* [rich and poor]. The change followed upon a thirteenth century economic revival that altered people's perceptions of how society was constituted. See Jacques Le Goff, *Money and the Middle Ages* (trans. Jean Birrell; Cambridge, UK: Polity, 2012), 2.

4. See as well the miraculous account of Elijah's enriching Rav Kahana with golden dinars to save him from the poverty that made him prey to the sexual advances of a *matronita* [a great lady] (*b. Qidd.* 40a). As to the general phenomenon of Babylonian amoraic rises to wealth, earlier scholars have noticed and studied the phenomenon. See Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta ki-Feshutah* (Order Nashim, part 8) (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1973), 762, lines 44–64; Jacob Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* (1969; repr., Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 3:126–30; Moshe Beer, *Amora'ei Bavel: perakim be-hayei ha-kalkalah* (Ramat-Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1982), 258–71; Yaakov Elman, "The Socioeconomics of Babylonian Heresy," in *Studies in Mediaeval Halakhah in Honor of Stephen M. Passamanek* (ed. Alyssa Gray and Bernard Jackson; Jewish Law Association Studies 17, 2007), 81–86. Beer tended to see these portrayals as reflective of social historical reality, hypothesizing that *t. Yoma* 1:6's direction that priests must enrich their impecunious brother in the event he is elevated to the high priesthood was "a sanctified norm, or nevertheless accepted and obligatory." This essay will challenge this assumption. See also the brief discussion in Alyssa M. Gray, "The Formerly Wealthy Poor: From Empathy to Ambivalence in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 33:1 (2009): 130–32. While other Babylonian amoraim are described as wealthy—e.g., Rav Nahman in *b. Berakhot* 51b—this essay's principal concern is with those amoraim described as having risen to wealth.

5. *b. Ketubbot* 105a; *b. Megillah* 27b.

6. *b. Ta'anit* 20b.

7. *b. Shabbat* 140b; *b. Shabbat* 62b.

8. *b. Pesahim* 113a.

9. *b. Hagigah* 5b.

10. *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 28a. Rava is described in *b. Hagigah* 5a as being married to the daughter of Rav Hisda.

11. *b. Avodah Zarah* 65a, *b. Sanhedrin* 109a.

12. *b. Pesahim* 111b.

13. *b. Pesahim* 113a. An alternate tradition [*ikka d'amrei*] claims that it was Rav Hisda, not Rav Papa, who was enriched through the manufacture of beer.

14. *b. Pesahim* 49a.

15. *b. Berakhot* 57b; see *Diqduqe Soferim* to *b. Berakhot* 57b, note *zayin*.

16. All scriptural citations are according to the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation.

17. The first explanation given is that R. Ami took possession of them on behalf of the poor.

18. *b. Yoma* 22b.

19. Scholars—most notably Shmuel Safrai and Lee Levine—have pondered the Palestinian communal office of *parnas* for decades. See, most recently, Steven D. Fraade, “Local Jewish Leadership in Roman Palestine: The Case of the *Parnas* in Early Rabbinic Sources in Light of Extra-Rabbinic Evidence,” in Fraade, *Legal Fictions: Studies of Law and Narrative in the Discursive Worlds of Ancient Jewish Sectarians and Sages* (Supp. Journal for the Study of Judaism 147; Leiden: Brill, 2011), 555–76. Babylonian sages do not apply the term *parnas* to themselves; indeed, the term disappears from Babylonian amoraic discourse after the third amoraic generation. The Babylonian amoraim who employ the term in the sense of communal leader principally include Rav and Samuel (first generation), Rav Yehudah (second generation), and Rav Hisda (third generation). See *b. Rosh HaShanah* 17a; *b. Qiddushin* 70a.

20. There are other linkages of priesthood and wealth in the Bavli. See, e.g., *b. Yoma* 26a, where the offering of incense is said to enrich.

21. See also *b. Nedarim* 38a, where R. Yohanan observes that all the prophets were wealthy, pointing to the specific examples of Moses, Samuel, Amos, and Jonah. Ephraim Urbach draws out the point that R. Yohanan links these figures’ divine inspiration with wealth; presumably absent the wealth, they could not have been prophets. See Ephraim Urbach, “Megamot Dativot V’hevrativot B’torat Ha-tzedakah Shel Hazal,” *Zion* 16:3–4 (1951): 19n137.

22. *b. Zevahim* 116b. The manuscript evidence complicates the Vilna-Romm edition’s attribution to Rava. While New York-Columbia X 893 T 141 and the Venice printed edition (1522) also read “Rava,” Munich 95 reads “Rav,” which is problematic, however, on chronological grounds. Vatican 121 reads “Rabbah,” and Paris—AIU H 147A reads “rabanan.” Given the likelihood that the attribution to Rava is correct in *b. Bava Batra* 10b’s account of his interaction with Ifra Hormiz, we will proceed on the assumption that “Rava” is also the correct attribution in *Zevahim*.

23. I have hypothesized elsewhere that the contemporaneous Zoroastrian institution of the pious foundation may underlay the Bavli’s portrayals of Ifra Hormiz’s interactions with Rava and Rav Yosef. For more on the pious foundations and the rabbis’ interactions with Ifra Hormiz, see, e.g., Alyssa M. Gray, “Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 18:2 (2011): 166–67 and n. 91.

24. *b. Ketubbot* 105b.

25. Deuteronomy 26:1–11, see also Mishnah *Bikkurim*.

26. *b. Hullin* 133a.

27. *b. Avodah Zarah* 10b. For more on Ketiah bar Shalom, see Alyssa M. Gray, “The Power Conferred by Distance from Power: Redaction and Meaning in *B. AZ* 10a–11a,” in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada* (ed. Jeffrey L. Rubenstein; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 23–69.

28. The Yerushalmi and the Palestinian midrash compilations also draw connections between the Jerusalem priesthood and Palestinian rabbis, particularly between sacrifice, giving gifts to God, and giving gifts to rabbis. See Galit Hasan–Rokem, “Gifts for God, Gifts for Rabbis: From Sacrifice to Donation in Rabbinic Tales of Late Antiquity and Their Dialogue with Early Christian Texts,” in *The Gift in Antiquity* (ed. Michael L. Sattlow; West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 221–44. I would add that the interrelationship of sacrifice, sacred giving, and gifts to rabbis studied by Hasan–Rokem is related as well to the interrelationship of sacrifice, sacred giving, and charity in rabbinic, and even prerabbinic texts (as she notes briefly at the end of her study). On the linkage between sacrifice, sacred giving, and charity, see also Gary A. Anderson, *Charity: The Place of the Poor in the Biblical Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), 136–61. Yet, to the best of my knowledge, Palestinian amoraim are not represented as priestly mediators for Gentiles as we see in the portrayal of Rava.

29. See Adam H. Becker, “Beyond the Spatial and Temporal *Limes*: Questioning the ‘Parting of the Ways’ Outside the Roman Empire,” in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages* (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 381. Becker points out in n. 37 that ch. 8 of the Syriac *Didascalia Apostolorum* justifies the gifts that priests are to receive in light of Numbers 18:1–32’s discussion of priestly and levitical gifts. This is particularly interesting in light of the Bavli sources cited.

30. *b. Ketubbot* 62b–63a, *b. Nedarim* 50a. See the discussion of R. Akiva’s youth and the role of wealth and poverty in his portrayal in Azzan Yadin, “Rabbi Akiva’s Youth,” *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100:4 (2010): 573–97.

31. *y. Pe’ah* 4:9, 18c (Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001), 97.

32. *y. Shabbat* 6:1, 7d (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 395. See also *y. Sotah* 9:14, 24c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 950. On the Rabbi Akiva narratives, see also Shamma Friedman, “A Good Story Deserves Retelling—The Unfolding of the Akiva Legend,” in *Creation and Composition: The Contribution of the Bavli Redactors (Stammaim) to the Aggada*, 71–100.

33. *b. Menahot* 29b.

34. *Leviticus Rabbah* 32:2 (ed. Mordecai Margulies; 3rd printing; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1993), 740–41.

35. See *y. Sheqalim* 5:2, 49a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 621; *b. Nedarim* 38a.

36. *Leviticus Rabbah* 17:6 (ed. Margulies), 384–85.

37. In the Bavli, Rava says that the reward for Abram's refusal was the *mitzvot* of *t'khelet* [the thread of blue included in the fringes to be placed on four-cornered garments] and the leather strap of the phylacteries (*b. Sotah* 17a).
38. See Hayim Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans: The Rabbinic Movement in Palestine, 100–400 CE* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 70–76.
39. *Ibid.*, 73.
40. *Pesikta de-Rav Kahana* 10 (ed. Bernard Mandelbaum; 2nd ed.; New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1987), 161.
41. *y. Sheqalim* 5:2, 49a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 621.
42. *y. Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27d (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 1316.
43. *b. Sanhedrin* 110a.
44. See Alyssa M. Gray, “The Power Conferred by Distance from Power,” 23–69, especially 40–41.
45. For a detailed discussion of the ambivalent portrayal of Antoninus in the Bavli, see Gray, “The Power Conferred.”
46. *b. Hagigah* 5b.
47. *b. Gittin* 30b. See also *b. Shabbat* 145b (the holidays are happy in Babylonia because the people are so poor) and *b. Qiddushin* 49b (ten measures of poverty descended from Heaven; Babylonia took nine, and the rest of the world, one).
48. *b. Sanhedrin* 110a.
49. See Genesis Rabbah 33:1 (ed. J. Theodor and Chanoch Albeck; 2nd printing; Jerusalem: Shalem Books, 1996), 300–01. The connection between “wealth” and “strength” is found in other periods and cultures as well. As noted earlier, Jacques Le Goff pointed out the transition from dividing society into *potentes* [strong] and *humiles* [weak] in the fourth through the twelfth centuries to dividing it into *dives* [rich] and *pauper* [poor] later. Yet he also shows that even with the appearance in ca. 1050 of the word *riche* [rich] in place of *dives* in old French, the essential meaning of *riche* was still “powerful.” See Jacques Le Goff, *Money in the Middle Ages*, 13.
50. *b. Nedarim* 38a.
51. *b. Horayot* 10b.
52. *b. Yoma* 35b.
53. *b. Ta'anit* 20b–21a.
54. *b. Berakhot* 27b–28a.
55. See *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 28a, *b. Megillah* 7b, and *b. Bava Batra* 174b, respectively. There is also a reference in *b. Shabbat* 33a to Abaye's having suffered from dropsy, but it is possible in context that this is due to fasting, not chronic hunger.
56. *y. Sheqalim* 5:5, 49b (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 622.

57. See *b. Hullin* 133a (Abaye also took priestly gifts); *b. Rosh HaShanah* 18a (Abaye was a descendant of the biblical priest Eli; see also 1 Samuel 1–3).

58. *b. Mo'ed Qatan* 28a. Rabbah is portrayed as a communal charity collector in *b. Bava Batra* 8b.

59. My thanks to Aryeh Cohen for initially calling my attention to the apparent wealth disparity in this rabbinic pair. Yet we must also consider *b. Berakhot* 45b, according to which Abaye would respond to the third blessing of the Grace after Meals in a loud voice, so that the workers would hear and know to return to their work. Although this account is ambiguous—were these Abaye's workers or not?—it is possible that they were, which of course implies that he was wealthy. See also *b. Hullin* 105a, which describes Abaye as daily overseeing what was transpiring on his property. Such inconsistency in the portrayal of an amora should not surprise us, since amoraic portrayals could well vary according to the group and the purpose by and for which they were formulated and circulated.

60. *Letter of Tansar* (trans. Mary Boyce; Rome: Istituto Italiano Per Il Medio Ed Estremo Oriente, 1968), 38. In her introduction to the work, Boyce notes (22) the controversy surrounding the authenticity of the document; she opines that it has “at its core an authentic document,” which may be dated to the late Sasanian period.

61. See, e.g., *b. Bava Metzi'a* 83a, where Rav orders Rabbah bar Rav Huna to pay the wages of workers who had carelessly broken his wine jugs. The latter obviously was engaged in trade.

62. *b. Niddah* 70b.

63. *y. Sanhedrin* 2:5, 20c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 1279.

64. *y. Pe'ah* 8:7, 21a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 111. I refer to R. Eliezer's and R. Akiva's portrayals as *parnasim* as anachronistic because Tannaim are never portrayed in Tannaitic compilations as having served as *parnasim*. Only in the Yerushalmi and Palestinian midrash compilations are rabbis—amoraim as well as selected Tannaim—portrayed as such.

65. *Leviticus Rabbah* 34:12 (ed. Margulies), 796–99.

66. *y. Sheqalim* 5:5, 49b (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 622.

67. *y. Pe'ah* 1:1, 15a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 78.

68. *Leviticus Rabbah* 30:1 (ed. Margulies), 688–90.

69. This story should be compared to a similar one involving Rav in *y. Nedarim* 9:4, 41c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 1044. The latter story involves a wealthy defendant who arrogantly refused to appear for adjudication before Rav. Rav was offended at his arrogance and cursed him, whereupon representatives of the empire came and despoiled the man's wealth. He asked Rav to pray that his “soul” be “restored” to him. Rav did so, and the man's wealth was restored to him.

70. This tradition seems to be a variation on *Leviticus Rabbah* 17:6, where R. Shimon ben Yohai taught that the Canaanites hid their treasures in their houses and fields upon

hearing of Israel's approach. God brought about the plague of *tzara'at* on houses so that the Israelites would be compelled to tear apart the houses and would thus find the treasures. See the discussion of this teaching earlier in this essay.

71. See my "The Formerly Wealthy Poor: From Empathy to Ambivalence in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity," *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 33:1 (April 2009): 101–33.

72. Apropos, note Rava's observation that people tend to be "agitated" over their property; see *b. Shabbat* 117b.

73. For his relationship with Ifra Hormiz, see, e.g., *b. Bava Batra* 10b–11a and *b. Zevahim* 116b; for Bar Shishak, see *b. Avodah Zarah* 65a.

74. Gary Anderson discusses the concern about the arrogance of wealth in his recent *Charity*, 53–69.

75. *b. Berakhot* 32a; *b. Yoma* 86b.

76. *y. Yoma* 1:1, 38c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 562. Interestingly, the Bavli parallel in *b. Yoma* 9b omits the reference to the Destruction generation's being "lovers of money."

77. *b. Sanhedrin* 49a.

78. *b. Ta'anit* 20b.

79. See Richard Kalmin, *The Sage in Jewish Society of Late Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1999), 29–33; Lapin, *Rabbis as Romans*, 43.

80. Anderson, *Charity*, 3–4, 35–52.

81. Michael Satlow has made a similar point. See his "Fruit and the Fruit of Fruit': Charity and Piety among Jews in Late Antique Palestine," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 100:2 (2010): 245, 261.

82. *Leviticus Rabbah* 5:4 (ed. Margulies), 110–13.

83. *b. Ta'anit* 8b–9a. The Babylonian Rav Huna similarly describes the sayings (literally, "the language") of the sages as productive of blessing, wealth, and healing (*b. Ketub.* 103a). One may presume, then, that "investing" in the sages may result in, among other things, wealth.

84. *Leviticus* 34:13 (ed. Margulies), 800–01. *M. Avot* 3:13 is an early instance of the insurance policy for wealth. R. Akiva there says that tithes are a fence for wealth; that is, tithing preserves one's wealth. This may be a source, or perhaps an alternate version, of R. Yohanan's *asher bishvil she-titasher* [tithe in order to become wealthy] in *b. Ta'anit* 8b–9a.

85. *y. Nedarim* 9:4, 41c (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 1044.

86. *b. Shabbat* 149b.

87. *b. Betzah* 32b.

88. *b. Shabbat* 54a.

89. *b. Shabbat* 32b–33a.

90. *b. Shabbat* 54a.

91. For more on the category *minim*, see, e.g., Richard Kalmin, “Christians and Heretics in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” *Harvard Theological Review* 97:2 (1994): 155–69. As to the apikorsim, see Jenny Labendz, “‘Know What to Answer the Epicurean’: A Diachronic Study of the ‘Apiqoros’ in Rabbinic Literature,” *Hebrew Union College Annual* 74 (2003): 175–214.

92. *y. Sanhedrin* 10:1, 27d–28a (ed. Academy of the Hebrew Language), 1316.

93. *b. Shabbat* 119a. It is possible that the Babylonian rich referred to here are meant to be scholars, but if so, it is odd that they are said to earn their wealth by “honoring” rather than “studying” or “teaching” Torah. The earlier parallel at Genesis Rabbah 11:4 (ed. Theodor-Albeck, 91) phrases the question differently, as “the people of Babylonia—by the merit of what do they live?,” with the answer being “by the merit of the Torah.” Theodor interprets the question to mean “by the merit of what do they live *lives of wealth*.” The response—“by the merit of the Torah”—implies that Genesis Rabbah’s “the people of Babylonia” are in fact scholars, not the nonrabbinic wealthy. One—admittedly speculative—possibility for what happened in transmission is that Genesis Rabbah’s reference in the same place to the Diaspora Jews’ “honoring” of Sabbaths and festivals came to be applied to the separate, but related tradition that the Babylonians earn life (and wealth) by the merit of the Torah. This hypothesized blending of the two traditions may have resulted in what we now see on *b. Shabbat* 119b—the Babylonians (by which the Bavli means the nonrabbinic wealthy, not scholars) earn wealth by “honoring” the Torah.

94. My thanks to Aryeh Cohen for pointing me in this direction.

95. The tensions with the wealthy described by Rav, Shabtai bar Marenus, and Rava contrast sharply with the experience of the sixth generation Ravina, who, in his capacity as a charity collector for the poor, was given chains and bracelets by the wealthy women of Mehoza (*b. B. Qam.* 119a)—daughters and granddaughters of the women Rava had earlier stigmatized as rich, lazy cows (*b. Shabb.* 32b–33a).

96. See Julia Watts Belser, “Opulence and Oblivion: Talmudic Feasting, Famine, and the Social Politics of Disaster,” *Association for Jewish Studies Review* 38:1 (April, 2014): 89–107. The reference to Marta is on 102.

97 The Bavli goes on there to say that Rabbi and R. Akiva acted consistently with the (later) scriptural exposition of the amora Rabbah bar Mari, who interpreted Psalm 61:8 (“May he be enthroned before God forever, appoint mercy and truth that they may preserve him”) to mean that one will be honored (“enthroned before God forever”) when they exercise “mercy and truth” (referring gifts to the poor)—an exercise that is most capable of execution when one is wealthy. Although a Babylonian amora, Rabbah bar Mari is distinguished throughout the Bavli as a conduit for Palestinian learning in Babylonia, and thus his perspective is not a reliably “Babylonian” perspective. On Rabbah bar Mari, see Alyssa M. Gray, “Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity,” 168 and n. 94.

98. *b. Nedarim* 38a.

99. Although it held to a dualism as regards divinity, Zoroastrianism firmly rejected a mind/body dualism and had a distinct distaste for asceticism, especially fasting. See, e.g., Arthur Vööbus, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient* (Louvain: Catholic University, 1958), 1:256, and the discussion about the relevance of this to the Babylonian amoraim in Eliezer Diamond, *Holy Men and Hunger Artists: Fasting and Asceticism in Rabbinic Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 131–32.

100. Adam H. Becker, *Fear of God and the Beginning of Wisdom: The School of Nisibis and the Development of Scholastic Culture in Late Antique Mesopotamia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2006), 80.

101. *b. Berakhot* 34b (= *b. Sanhedrin* 99a).

102. *b. Ketubbot* 111b.

103. See, e.g., *b. Megillah* 27a–b (Rav Huna); *b. Bava Qamma* 36b (Rav Yosef); *b. Bava Batra* 8b–9a (Rabbah and Rav Ashi); and *b. Bava Qamma* 119a (Ravina).

104. *b. Pesahim* 113a.

105. See this essay's earlier discussion of the Sasanian-era *Letter of Tansar*.

Justice and Righteousness: Jewish and Christian Approaches to Charity and Poor Law in the High Middle Ages

Yehuda Seif

Charity, as a universal problem facing both Christians and Jews, stands out as an important field in which to examine the relationship between Jewish and Christian law and practice; it is an area that is driven by ethical concerns, but it is also definitively regulated. Both communities developed laws of poor relief and put them into practice, yet they show significant theological and sociological differences, which became paramount with the shifting economic climate of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

The focus of this paper will be legal discussions of charitable distribution. Perhaps the most important development in this area of charity law was the issue of distinguishing between worthy and unworthy recipients of charity. In medieval canon law, more was written on this particular point than on any other problem in the field of poor relief.¹

In comparing Jewish and Christian traditions on this issue, early Jewish scholarship emphasized a significant contrast. For example, in a 1903 speech, Kaufmann Kohler stated, “But while giving the church fullest praise for this meritorious work of unparalleled beneficence and for the new impetus and inspiration she gave to the world, we cannot exonerate her from the charge of narrow-minded exclusiveness and want of discretion and of practical common sense.”² Similarly, Ephraim Frisch stated, “In Jewish charity the ideal of righteousness is invoked more as an impelling motive than in Christian charity, whereas the ideal of love is more appealed to in Christian benevolence than in Jewish.”³ Ephraim E. Urbach, as well, in a 1951 article, explained that Christian charity, which emphasized love and kindness that are manifested in the charitable act, assigned less weight to the donation’s reaching its intended recipient. In contrast, Jewish law focused on charity as a mechanism for social betterment, and hence conditioned discharge of the precept of giving charity on the donation’s reaching its intended recipient.⁴ Even in contemporary writings, this approach has not been significantly challenged.⁵

In the analysis that follows, I reinvestigate these claims and show that a nuanced understanding of both the Jewish and Christian approaches to the issue of deserving poor yields a complex conclusion, thus making it

difficult to assert sweeping conclusions regarding resultant different attitudes toward charity.

EARLY CHRISTIANITY

As a rule, in line with the scholarship just cited, early Christian thinkers did not advocate distinguishing between recipients of charity. The Christian doctrine of poverty had little to do with social reality; poverty was treated as a purely spiritual value and a means by which one could obtain salvation. The poor were glorified by comparison with the external signs of poverty in the lives of Jesus and the apostles, and the accumulation of wealth was rejected. "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle," Jesus said in the book of Matthew, "than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of God."⁶ In antiquity and the early Middle Ages, poverty existed to allow salvation through mercy and patience, and Christ identified with the poor.⁷ Susan Holman has noted that the dominant theme throughout all three Cappadocians' writings on poverty relief is the metaphor of Matthew 25, in which ministering to the poor is ministering to Christ.⁸

Augustine and many of his contemporaries focused, however, on another way of conceiving the role of the poor in charitable exchange: in patristic eyes, the poor had a gift to offer in return to their benefactors. Augustine drew on the biblical injunction to store up treasure in heaven to characterize the destitute as porters, who ensured that earthly goods given to them as alms were transformed into spiritual wealth. In exchange for material necessities, the poor used their sacrosanct position in God's sight to offer an essential spiritual service.⁹ Charity, in the form of almsgiving and donations to the church, was presented as a way of redeeming one's sins in the world, and the pauper would reciprocate by praying for the salvation of the benefactor's soul.¹⁰

This attitude had obvious ramifications for the distribution of charity. If the purpose of charity focused solely on the redemption of the giver, then no effort would be necessary to investigate the worthiness of the receiver. Charity became highly institutionalized and ritualized; at the courts of kings and feudal lords, it became customary to feed the same poor on a daily basis—often twelve, corresponding to the number of apostles.

ECONOMIC TRENDS IN THE HIGH MIDDLE AGES

The focus on the donor was sufficient so long as the numbers of the poor were manageable and there was little attempt or need to differentiate among the needy—all were equally worthy of alms as the "poor of Christ."¹¹ The concern

of early scholars focused more on fraudulent hospitallers and on collectors of alms who were able to deceive unwary donors; it did not consider “unworthy” paupers.¹² Similarly, charity given from usurious gain or other unlawful activity could not be accepted as charity.¹³ However, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, with changing economic trends and the growing number of poor and scarcity of funds, canon lawyers were forced to address the problem of discrimination in charity.

As many European historians have shown, Europe underwent major urbanization throughout the twelfth century, money came to be used more universally as an instrument of exchange, and new urban professions were created. The shift in the economic landscape altered demographic patterns of poverty. Michel Mollat and Bronislaw Geremek describe the dramatic increase in the number of poor due to population increases in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries of over 300 percent, the extension of the cash economy into the countryside, and the rapid growth of the cities. The impoverished, as a group, were also becoming increasingly visible, resorting with greater frequency to vagrancy and rebellion.

The institutions providing poor relief also shifted dramatically during this time. For the first time, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, charitable initiatives came from laymen. The growth of a cash economy enabled increasing numbers of laymen, especially those from the emerging merchant class, to rival the generosity of lords, parishes, and monasteries. Hospitals were founded at this time, but were not only institutions providing medical care for the sick, these also included almshouses or settlement houses—homes for the aged and destitute and centers of all kinds of charitable activity. Many different kinds of benefactors endowed these houses of charity, including kings, bishops, feudal lords, wealthy merchants, guilds, and municipalities.

Looking at the prevalence of these lay institutions, many historians argue that an important paradigm shift took place in the thirteenth century. Before this period, charity had been the responsibility of the church; now it passed into the hands of merchants and tradesmen and became secular. Mollat argues that this trend began even in the middle of the twelfth century in Germany, northern and southern France, England, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. He carefully documents the beginnings of charitable confraternities and hospitals in cities like Paris, Anjou, Angers, Metz, and Béthune already in the mid-twelfth century, with German, Italian, and Provençal institutions emerging during the same period.¹⁴

Despite the emergence of these lay institutions in the twelfth century, the consensus of most historians, including Mollat, is that there was a gradual

transition to them as the primary orchestrators of poor relief. In their early stages, many hospitals were governed, in some degree, by the church or church officials, but in the thirteenth century, existing institutions began to shift toward lay or royal control, and more lay-initiated institutions increasingly emerged. By the end of the century, the shift away from church poor relief was almost complete.

This trend was not limited to the main European continent. For England, the studies of P. H. Cullum in York and Miri Rubin in Cambridge agree that by the early thirteenth century new foundations were the work of guilds, individual merchants or artisans, and municipalities; and Rubin believes that by 1300, all hospitals had moved into the secular sphere.¹⁵

Spanish-speaking countries also saw a similar trend. In Iberia as a whole, Carmen López Alonso traces a trend of secularization during this time, arguing that prior to the thirteenth century, the works of charity were organized by bishops, secular lords, and, in the twelfth century, Cluniac and Cistercian monasteries. Afterward, there was a proliferation of urban hospitals supported by the bourgeoisie.¹⁶ Backing up this general contention, in Catalonia, according to James Brodman, the evidence shows increased charitable participation by laymen, both as individuals and as organized groups like confraternities. By the mid-thirteenth century, no new hospitals can be traced to a bishop or his chapter.¹⁷

Similarly, Steven Epstein, in his study of medieval Genoa, argues that the church naturally took the initiative for establishing a network of charity in the twelfth and early thirteenth centuries because material conditions favored such a development—it had the personnel and ideology to accomplish the goal. Municipal institutions, on the other hand, were in their infancy, and town officials had other tasks to perform. By the middle of the thirteenth century, however, the balance of power had shifted.¹⁸

MEDIEVAL CANON LAW

As these trends were developing, medieval canon lawyers struggled with the increasing number of poor and how to prioritize charitable giving. The twelfth century canon lawyer, Gratian, in his seminal *Decretum*, hesitates between two contrary opinions, at one point arguing for openhanded generosity to all and at another point insisting on the need for cautious discretion in almsgiving. As Brian Tierney shows, the argument mainly turned on Gratian's citations from three early church fathers: John Chrysostom, Ambrose, and Augustine. Chrysostom appears in the *Decretum* as the champion of indiscriminate giv-

ing: “In hospitality there is to be no regard for persons, but we should welcome indifferently all for whom our resources suffice. Let us have no more of this ridiculous, diabolical, peremptory prying.”¹⁹ Only a stranger presenting himself as a priest would be subject to investigation.²⁰

Gratian himself, however, adopts a contrary point of view and systematically defends a theory of discrimination in *Distinctio* 86, arguing that charity to all is possible only in times of abundance. Gratian turns to Ambrose, who specifies the classes of persons who were to receive preferential treatment in the administration of ecclesiastical charity. Priority is to be given to faithful Christians, those who are unable to work through age or sickness, and those who are victims of misfortune. The administrator of charity also must concern himself especially with those needy persons who are ashamed to beg publicly for alms.²¹

For Ambrose, no classes of undeserving poor are actually excluded from receiving alms—he merely establishes an order of preference among applicants. Rigid exclusion is suggested, however, by Augustine, who holds that no alms are to be given to followers of “infamous professions” such as actors, prostitutes, and gladiators.²² Another text of Augustine, cited twice in the *Decretum*, could have formed the basis for a severely punitive system of poor relief if followed literally: “It is more useful to take bread away from a hungry man than to break bread for him if, being sure of his food, he neglected righteousness.”²³ In his commentary on the *Decretum*, Teutonicus cites a corroborating statement of Augustine to prove that relief should not be given to able-bodied idle beggars who are able to work.²⁴

The twelfth century Italian canon lawyer Rufinus summarizes the generally accepted approach of the canonists in his *Summa Decretorum* (1168). After citing authorities against indiscriminate charity, he writes: “By all this, it is shown that we ought not to show ourselves generous indiscriminately to all who come. But it should be known that in providing hospitality these four things are to be considered: the quality of the one seeking alms, the resources of the giver, the cause of the request, and the amount request.”²⁵ Huguccio, another twelfth century Italian canonist, adds a distinction between poor who are known and those who are strangers. The stranger is to be helped without examination unless he claimed to be a priest. Among those who are known, all are eligible for help according to Huguccio, except “one whom, being sure of his food, neglects righteousness.”²⁶ Those who are ineligible are those who are healthy and able to work, yet choose to idle their time away. In a similar vein, Huguccio holds that even followers of “vile professions” are eligible for

help whenever they are in need—as long as they are not idle. Canon lawyers through the end of the thirteenth century accepted these general principles, with minor variations.²⁷

Faced with new social strata threatening the power structures of medieval Europe, medieval canon lawyers needed to develop a theology of charity that did not focus only on the salvation of the giver, but also on the condition of the recipient. Sharon Farmer argues that as attitudes toward dishonest beggars became harsher, a stigma of dishonesty was attached to all poor, both deserving and undeserving. Poor women were particularly targeted by moralist clergy members through accusations of sexual immodesty.²⁸

Especially in cities where there was a large concentration of poor, a uniform and well-delineated system of control became necessary to distinguish between worthy and unworthy poor. The distribution of special tokens was one of the first attempts to identify and keep track of those who were entitled to aid. This system prevented the beneficiaries from collecting alms twice in the course of a single distribution. Geremek traces the first mention of tokens to Richard Fishacre, a Dominican from Oxford, in 1240. As charity began to move from the church into secular institutions, distinguishing between “deserving” and “undeserving” poor became an essential practical concern.²⁹

RABBINIC JUDAISM

Turning to the Jewish approaches, in contradistinction to the approach of early Christian thinkers, early Jewish sources highlight the presence of undeserving poor and lay out principles of discrimination between potential recipients of poor relief. The last Mishnah in tractate *Pe'ah* states,

Anyone who does not need to collect [charity], but collects, [as punishment for this action] will depart from this world only after he [in fact] comes to depend on other people. And any person who is neither lame, blind, nor crippled, but acts as if he had [such a condition], [as punishment for this action] will die of old age only after he actually [suffers from this condition].

In its elaboration of this Mishnah, the Palestinian Talmud relates two stories surrounding the issue of false poor:

Samuel ran away from his father. He went and stood between two huts of poor people. He overheard their voices saying, “With which vessels shall we dine today, with golden vessels or with silver vessels?” He went and told his father [what he had heard]. His father said to him, “We must be grateful to the frauds among them.”

Another incident: R. Yohanan and R. Shimon b. Lakish went up to bathe in the hot springs of Tiberias. A poor person met them. He said to them, "Provide me [with charity]." They said, "When we return." When they returned, they found him dead. They said, "Since we did not provide for him during his lifetime, let us attend to him in death [i.e., prepare his body for burial]." While attending to him, they found a purse of dinars hanging on him. They said, "This is what R. Abahu said in the name of R. Lazar, 'We must be grateful to the frauds among the poor, for if not for the frauds among them, if one of them were to demand charity from a person and he would not give him, he would be punished immediately.'"³⁰

These stories, which appear, with variation, in the Babylonian Talmud and the Midrash, suggest a fascinating theological basis for the existence of deceitful beggars.³¹ As Rashi (R. Shlomo Yitzhaki, Troyes, 1040–1105) states, "We would have been sinners because we ignore the poor, but now, the fraudulent cause us to do so."³² According to this conception, deceptive poor justify the presumed universal Jewish negligence of charity, and there is no obligation to give to one who is fraudulent. Moreover, since the pauper's claim of poverty is of questionable veracity, the general requirement to give to any poor person is less pressing. However, once one verifies the miserable condition of the pauper, the obligation to give would apply immediately.

The Babylonian Talmud, however, mitigates this conclusion and considers circumstances in which the poor seeking charity should be examined to verify their claim. It presents a difference of opinion between two rabbis, ultimately deciding in favor of the second:

R. Huna said: Applicants for food are examined [to see that they are not imposters] but not applicants for clothes, because the one [who has no clothing] is exposed to contempt, but not the other. . . . R. Judah, however, said that applicants for clothes are to be examined but not applicants for food because the one [without food] is actually suffering but not the other. It has been taught in agreement with R. Judah: If a man says, "Clothe me," he is examined, but if he says, "Feed me," he is not examined.³³

These practical considerations are also expanded in the Tosefta. It rules that a poor traveler is given food immediately, but if he is known, he must also be given clothing.³⁴ Based on these sources, medieval authorities such as Maimonides (1135–1204) developed systematic methods to verify deservedness in poor relief.³⁵

MEDIEVAL ASHKENAZ

The most significant medieval rabbinic figure in Ashkenaz who addresses charitable distribution is R. Isaac b. Moses of Vienna. His work *Or Zarua* is one of the most important halachic works composed in the mid-thirteenth century. The author, who studied under the great medieval rabbis of Germany and France, compiled both of those traditions and teachings into his treatise. While in the twelfth century there may have been clearer differences between German and French rabbis, these two traditions melted into one in the generation of R. Isaac. *Or Zarua* stands as a bridge between the disparate French and German Tosafistic traditions of the twelfth century and the later Ashkenazic halachic compilations.

The significance of *Or Zarua* to this study is the prominence of the laws of charity in his work. The order of *Or Zarua*, at least in the first volumes, generally follows that of the Talmud. However, R. Isaac inserts the laws of charity prior to any of his other legal commentary—even before the laws of the Shema, which is the first topic addressed in the Talmud. R. Isaac's laws of charity contain an exhaustive compilation of the different discussions of charity in both Talmuds, Midrash, extant case law, and rulings of earlier rabbinic authorities, as well as R. Isaac's own comments on these works. Within this compilation of laws, R. Isaac stakes out innovative approaches to charity—often at odds with both the prevalent custom and the Talmud.

Surprisingly, R. Isaac omits the entire dispute between R. Huna and R. Judah in his *Or Zarua*. The weakness of an *argumentum ex silentio* notwithstanding, it does seem significant that R. Isaac would omit this major discussion in his work, which is the most exhaustive treatment of the laws of charity in Ashkenaz. This is also in marked contrast to most other Ashkenazi authorities, who cite this law despite their relatively brief discussion of charity law. R. Eliezer b. Nathan of Mainz cites the ruling authoritatively,³⁶ as do the thirteenth century French authorities R. Moses of Coucy³⁷ and R. Isaac of Corbeil (d. 1280).³⁸ It seems that in this area, R. Isaac of Vienna was influenced by a particular approach taken by the German Pietists, as recorded in *Sefer Hasidim*.

Both in regard to charity and in other contexts, *Sefer Hasidim* is replete with distinctions between *mehuganim* and *eyno mehuganim*, literally “decent ones” and “indecent ones,” apparently in reference to a particular discussion of charity in the Babylonian Talmud:

R. Isaac further said: What is the meaning of the verse; He that follows after righteousness [tzedaka] and mercy finds life, righteousness [tzedaka], and honor? [Prov 21:12] Because a man has followed after

righteousness, shall he find righteousness? [i.e., because he gives charity, shall his reward be that he shall obtain charity when he requires it?] The purpose of the verse, however, is to teach us that if a man is anxious to give charity, the Holy One, blessed be He, furnishes him money with which to give it. R. Nahman b. Isaac says: The Holy One, blessed be He, sends him men who are fitting recipients of charity [mehuganim], so that he may be rewarded for assisting them. To exclude whom?—Such as those mentioned in the exposition of Rabah, when he said: What is the meaning of the verse, Let them be made to stumble before thee; in the time of thine anger deal thou with them? [Jer 18:23] Jeremiah said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Sovereign of the Universe, even at the time when they conquer their evil inclination and seek to do charity before Thee, cause them to stumble through men who are not fitting recipients, so that they should receive no reward for assisting them.³⁹

Accordingly, if someone were to give charity to one who was not considered to be one of the *mehuganim*, the donor would not fulfill the commandment of charity and would not be rewarded for it. As proof, the Talmud relates that Jeremiah, frustrated that the House of Judah ignores his exhortations, asked God to provide unworthy poor so that even when the people try to give charity, they would not be rewarded.

The term *eyno mehuganim* in the Talmud seems to refer exclusively to fraudulent poor. *Sefer Hasidim*, on the other hand, uses the term more expansively. It extends the meaning of *eyno mehuganim* to include those who would spend money on inappropriate pursuits, such as alcohol or prostitutes,⁴⁰ those who are wicked or sinners,⁴¹ and perhaps even those Jews who were non-Pietists.⁴² Taking this idea to an extreme, *Sefer Hasidim* actually regards charity to the wicked as a sin for the donor.⁴³ Charity to the wicked helps the unworthy sin more effectively and enables their deviant activity, so any sins committed with those funds would actually be transferred to the benefactor. E. Horowitz argues that in this position, which has no Jewish precedent, the Pietists were influenced by Augustine as transmitted by Gratian and Peter the Chanter.⁴⁴

This extreme position of transferring the sin of the recipient to the donor was not accepted by most Ashkenazi halachists. R. Eliezer of Metz who, according to Ephraim Kanarfogel, was a proto-Pietist, rules that there is no obligation to give the wicked charity, although he does not prohibit this practice categorically.⁴⁵ Thirteenth century authorities like R. Moses of Coucy and R. Isaac of Corbeil cite R. Eliezer's ruling authoritatively.⁴⁶ A compromise position was suggested by another thirteenth century scholar, R. Samuel b.

Solomon of Falaise, cited in R. Abraham b. Ephraim's (France, thirteenth century) *Kitzur Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*.⁴⁷ He prohibits lending money or giving charity to heretics, but the donor does not violate the actual sin that the recipient commits. Rather, he violates a separate prohibition of "Do not place a stumbling block before the blind"⁴⁸ by enabling the sin when it could not have been committed otherwise. I. Ta-Shema posits that R. Samuel of Falaise was the son of R. Solomon b. Samuel *ha-Tzarfati*, who studied with R. Judah he-Hasid in Speyer and Regensburg, which would suggest pietistic influence.⁴⁹

While both the German Pietists and other scholars of Ashkenaz call for distinguishing between deserving and undeserving poor, the pietistic motivation for this distinction is similar to that of the Church Fathers. For *Sefer Hasidim*, careful discernment is necessary, for charity directed to improper recipients will have no utility in heaven. Emphasis on a redemptive and reward-focused motivation for charity is clear from the language of *Sefer Hasidim* in a number of other places. For example, "Everyone—poor and rich alike—must give charity to show that he is enslaved to God . . . and that which he gives will be for the expiation of his soul."⁵⁰ Similarly, "Charity that is given is similar to the *eglah arufah* [literally, the decapitated calf, referring to the procedure in which the elders of a community break a calf's neck as expiation for an untraced murder], and it expiates [one's sins] even retroactively."⁵¹ Charity should also be given before going on a long trip for protection from evil.⁵²

Strategies for discriminating between worthy and unworthy poor would be affected drastically by this conception of charity. God sends authentic poor to donors who are worthy of redemption, thus obviating the need for practical methods of assessment like those found in the Babylonian Talmud. Discussions of different standards of distinction, such as food versus clothing or rules that would differ based on whether the poor is recognizable, are thus completely absent from *Sefer Hasidim*: "One should always pray to God so that *He* will present you with deserving poor."⁵³ Similarly, giving to undeserving poor has communal impact:

If one sees both an important person and one who is not worthy who have come to his city, and gives more [charity] to the unworthy one than he gives to the important person; he causes a situation to arise that the community will not receive reward; more and more unworthy people will be summoned from Heaven to come to that city, diminishing the good [i.e., the reward that would result from giving charity]. Further, it shows that the donor's father and mother were wealthy, but in order to self-aggrandize, they gave to those who were unworthy. Moreover, when worthy poor or relatives came

for funds—yet giving them would not aggrandize the donor—they minimized what they gave to them [i.e., the relatives who were worthy poor]. Therefore, this person is repaid exactly and properly, and God is merciful on others but not on him or his seed.⁵⁴

Proper distribution of charity, then, increases the communal reward, leading God to send more deserving poor to that community, further increasing their reward. Giving improperly, on the other hand, initiates a reverse cycle, provoking God to send more undeserving poor to the city, decreasing the reward for all of the inhabitants of the city. *Sefer Hasidim* is remarkably silent on how one should determine if a pauper is worthy. Although in some cases it may be self-evident, the donor must usually rely on God to send “worthy” poor to him.

When viewed against this background, R. Isaac’s silence on practical methods of distinguishing between poor is understandable. R. Isaac mentions unworthy poor only twice in his *Hilkhot Tzedaka*, and neither reference is in his legal discussion. Rather, they appear in an introductory homily, in which he collects numerous rabbinic statements regarding the value of charity and its rewards. One of the statements is a direct quote from the portion of Babylonian Talmud cited above, which highlights God’s role in sending worthy poor to a donor.⁵⁵ Another is a quote from Rashi, who says that one must consistently work to give charity in order to be worthy of finding deserving poor.⁵⁶ Otherwise, he does not enter into a practical discourse determining how to distinguish between worthy and unworthy poor or any discussion of what constitutes categories of deservedness at all—it is for God to provide the worthy recipients of poor relief, and it is for Him to judge whether charity was given properly. The marked contrast to Maimonides, who is consumed by these considerations for nearly an entire chapter of his code,⁵⁷ serves to further highlight the absence of these laws.

Unlike early rabbinic sources that call for distinguishing between worthy and unworthy poor and that provide guidelines for proper practice in ambiguous cases, R. Isaac, following the lead of the German Pietists, thus follows a religious-mystical approach regarding the recipients of charity.⁵⁸ This has legal ramifications as well: R. Isaac is driven by these concerns in a ruling concerning impoverished heirs who made a claim on the charitable bequest of a wealthy deceased relative. Although, in general, relatives take priority over strangers when distributing personal charity,⁵⁹ R. Isaac rules that relatives cannot claim a portion of the inheritance designated for charity if they were not poor at the time of death. R. Isaac explains:

Even if [the deceased relative] were to have known that his relatives would become impoverished, he would have designated the charity for the general poor. For the reason he donated [the funds] was only for atonement, so the charity would benefit him in Heaven [v'halakh tzedakato l'fanav, lit., so that his charity should walk in front of him]. And now [at the time of his death] his relatives are wealthy, the atonement will not occur until after they become poor—and at that point he will have already been judged [in Heaven].⁶⁰

While charity might abet the deceased as atonement, this would only be so before the stage of heavenly judgment. By diverting the funds to his relatives who were not poor at the time of death, reward for his donation would come too late to help the deceased—rendering the act itself less valuable to the donor.⁶¹

Thus, even R. Isaac's practical rulings on legal issues were influenced by a highly sacramental notion of charity. Whatever his motivations were, they stand in sharp contrast to the trend in canon law, which moved away from such a notion in the thirteenth century. Especially when considering R. Isaac's approach in light of the increasing number of secular charitable initiatives in the society around him and the emergence of a highly practical and regimented approach to poor relief, his approach is a stark countertrend.

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NOTES

1. Brian Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law: A Sketch of Canonical Theory and Its Application in England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 54.
2. Kaufmann Kohler, "The Historical Development of Jewish Charity," in *Hebrew Union College and Other Addresses* (Cincinnati: Ark Publishing, 1916), 245.
3. Ephraim Frisch, *An Historical Survey of Jewish Philanthropy, from the Earliest Times to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1924), 85.
4. Ephraim E. Urbach, "Megamot Datot v'Hevratot b'Torat ha-Tzedaka shel Hazal," *Zion* 16: 3–4 (1951): 22–23.
5. Benjamin Porat, "Charity and Distributive Justice," in *Windows onto Jewish Legal Culture: Fourteen Exploratory Essays* (ed. Hanina Ben-Menahem, Arye Edrei, and Neil S. Hecht; Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 2:62.

6. Matthew 19:24.

7. Boniface Ramsey, "Almsgiving in the Latin Church: The Late Fourth and Early Fifth Centuries," *Theological Studies* 43:2 (1982): 226–30, 252–53; Allan Fitzgerald, "Almsgiving in the Work of St. Augustine," in *Signum Pietatis: Festgabe Fur Cornelius Petrus Mayer OSA Zum 60. Geburtstag* (ed. Cornelius P. Mayer and Adolar Zumkeller; Wurzburg: Augustinus-Verlag, 1989), 445–47; Richard Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire: Christian Promotion and Practice (313–450)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 182–83. Eric Shuler, "Almsgiving and the Formation of Early Medieval Societies, A.D. 700–1025" (PhD diss., University of Notre Dame, 2010), 84–96, argues that the idea of the poor offering a prayer for his benefactor eroded in the ninth century, but was reintroduced later in the High Middle Ages.

8. Susan Holman, "The Entitled Poor: Human Rights Language in the Cappadocians," *Pro Ecclesia* 9:4 (2000): 483.

9. Augustine, *Sermon* 53A. 6 and *Sermon* 114A. 3–4, in Augustine of Hippo, *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century*, vol. 3, *Sermons* (ed. John E. Rotelle; trans. Edmund Hill; Hyde Park: New City Press, 1990). See Blake Leyerle, "John Chrysostom on Almsgiving and the Use of Money," *Harvard Theological Review* 87:1 (1994): 41–42; Abigail Firey, "'For I Was Hungry and You Fed Me': Social Justice and Economic Thought in the Latin Patristic and Medieval Christian Traditions," in *Ancient and Medieval Economic Ideas and Concepts of Social Justice* (ed. S. Todd Lowry and Barry Gordon; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 336–37. Also, see Finn, *Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire*, 182, who explores this idea and the different meanings of early Christian almsgiving. He distinguishes between four different images in describing the relationship between the donor and the recipient in terms of: 1) a form of friendship; 2) parents and offspring; 3) a fraternal relationship; and 4) a relationship in which both are fellow servants of God.

10. Lester K. Little, *Religious Poverty and the Profit Economy in Medieval Europe* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1–41; Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty: A History* (trans. Agnieszka Kolakowska; Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 15–29, 47–48; Michel Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages: An Essay in Social History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), 15–37; Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, 44–54; Brian Tierney, "The Decretists and the Deserving Poor," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 1:4 (1959): 1–41. See also Roman Garrison, *Redemptive Almsgiving in Early Christianity* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); for some early Jewish parallels, see Alyssa M. Gray, "Redemptive Almsgiving and the Rabbis of Late Antiquity," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 18 (2011): 144–84.

11. Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, 70–72, 251–58; Ramsey, "Almsgiving in the Latin Church," 232–33; Miri Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 68–71, 91–93; Anastassios Karayiannis and Sarah Drakopoulou Dodd, "The Greek Christian Fathers," in *Ancient and Medieval Economic Ideas and Concepts of Social Justice* (ed. S. Todd Lowry and Barry Gordon; Leiden: Brill, 1998), 175, 190; Firey, "For I Was Hungry and You Fed Me," 339, 361–62; Shuler, "Almsgiving," 87.

12. James Brodman, *Charity and Welfare: Hospitals and the Poor in Medieval Catalonia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 1–8.
13. See the discussion in Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II–II.32.7.
14. Mollat, *The Poor in the Middle Ages*, 87–102.
15. Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge*, 146–47; P. H. Cullum, *Cremetts and Corrodies: Care of the Poor and Sick at St. Leonard's Hospital, York, in the Middle Ages* (York: University of York, 1991), 1.
16. Carmen López Alonso, *La Pobreza en la España Medieval: Estudio histórico-social* (Madrid: Centro de Publicaciones Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1986), 479–84.
17. Brodman, *Charity and Welfare*, 125–43.
18. Steven Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150–1250* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 169–70.
19. Emil Friedberg, ed., *Decretum Magistri Gratiani*, in *Corpus Iuris Canonici* (vol. 1; 1879; repr., Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 1959), Dist. 42 post c.1. Translation from Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, 55; see also Tierney, “The Decretists and the Deserving Poor,” 362.
20. Teutonicus confirms, in his *Glossa Ordinaria* on this passage, that according to Chrysostom, alms were to be given indiscriminately to all.
21. *Ibid.*, cc. 14–18.
22. *Ibid.*, Dist. 86 cc. 7–9.
23. *Ibid.*, C. 5q. 5 c. 2 and C. 23 q. 4 c. 37. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, 58, points out that Gratian gave this passage a significance in charity law that is different from its meaning in its original context, where Augustine argued for coercive measures to suppress heresy.
24. Teutonicus, Dist. 30 C.1.
25. Rufinus, *Summa Decretorum* (ed. Heinrich Singer; 1902; repr., Aalen: Scientia, 1963), Dist. 42, ante c. 1.
26. Huguccio, *Summa ad D. 42, dictum Gratiani post c. 1*, cited in its entirety in Tierney, “The Decretists and the Deserving Poor,” 373.
27. Tierney, *Medieval Poor Law*, 60–63.
28. Sharon A. Farmer, *Surviving Poverty in Medieval Paris: Gender, Ideology, and the Daily Lives of the Poor* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 124–26.
29. Geremek, *Poverty*, 38.
30. *y. Pe'ah* 8:8.
31. See *y. Ketubbot* 67b–68a, which says, “We must be grateful for the frauds, for without them we would sin every day, as it says (Deut 16:9), ‘And he [the pauper] will call out

to God and it will be a sin for you.” See, also, Leviticus Rabbah 34:10, Ruth Rabbah 5:9. For a full discussion of the variant talmudic discussions on this topic, see David Assaf, “Bo’u v-Nahzik Tova l’Remaim: Al Itzuvam Shel Sippurei Tzedaka b’Olamam Shel Hazal,” in *Iturim: Pirkei Iyun Li-Khvod R Moshe Karona*, ed. Moshe Ishon (Jerusalem: Sifriyat Aliner, 1986).

32. Rashi, *y. Ketubbot* 68a.

33. *b. Bava Batra* 9a.

34. *t. Pe’ah* 5:8.

35. Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah*, Gifts to the Poor, 7:6, and *Commentary on the Mishnah* Pe’ah 8:7. See Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 72–108, who connects Maimonides’s laws with documentary evidence of common practice based on Genizah documents.

36. Eliezer ben Nathan, *Sefer Raban* (Jerusalem: H. Vagshal, 1983), *b. Bava Batra* 9a.

37. Moses ben Jacob, *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (Brooklyn: Lazar Samet, 1959), sec. 162.

38. Isaac ben Joseph, *Amudei Golah, Asher Nikra be-Shem Sefer Mitzvot Katan* (Jerusalem, 1986), sec. 248. R. Eliezer of Metz also does not cite this law in his *Sefer Yere’im*. In Southern France, R. Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne, *Sefer Ha-Eshkol* (Jerusalem: H. Vagshal, 1984), 211a, cites this ruling in the twelfth century, as do *Orhot Hayim* (Berlin: Hots’at Hevrat Mekitse Nirdamim, 1902), Laws of Charity, 1, and *Kol Bo* (Jerusalem: D. Avraham), 1990, sec. 82, which are both attributed to R. Aharon ha-Kohen of Lunel in the thirteenth century. Mordekhai also leaves these laws out of his halachic compendium.

39. *b. Bava Batra* 9b.

40. See SHP 855.

41. See SHP 840.

42. See SHP 913, 1706, 1711. Haim Soloveitchik, “Three Themes in the Sefer Hasidim,” *AJS Review* 1 (1976): 337n86, and Ivan Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 1981), 101–02; both hold that the Pietist conception of charity was elitist, and envisioned charity only to other Pietists. See, however, Elimelekh (Elliott) Horowitz, “V-Yihiyu Aniyim (Hagunim) Benei Beitecha: Tzedaka, Aniyim, u-Pikuah Hevrat b’Kehillot Yehudei Eropa bein Yemei ha-Beynaim l-Reishit ha-et ha-Hadasha,” in *Dat ve-Khalkalah, Yahasei Gomlin: Kovets Ma’amarim* (ed. Menahem Ben-Sasson; Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1995), 227, who argues convincingly that *mehuganim* does not refer only to Pietists.

43. SHP 840.

44. Horowitz, “V-Yihiyu Aniyim,” 228. For a discussion of the possible Christian influence on the German Pietists, see Yitzhak Baer, “ha-Megama ha-Datit-ha-Hevratit shel Sefer Hasidim,” *Zion* 3 (1937): 27, reprinted in Ivan Marcus, ed., *Dat ve-Hevrah be-Mishnatam shel Hasidei Ashkenaz: leket ma’amarim* (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986), 107. Also, see Gershom Gerhard Scholem, *Major Trends in*

Jewish Mysticism (Jerusalem: Schocken, 1941), 104–05, who suggests a similar connection. See also the important contribution by Talya Fishman, “The Penitential System of Hasidei Ashkenaz and the Problem of Cultural Boundaries,” *Journal of Jewish Thought & Philosophy* 8:2 (1999): 201–29 on this issue. Among those who deemphasize Christian influence on the German Pietists are Marcus, *Piety and Society*, 54, 150ff.; Ivan Marcus, “Hierarchies, Religious Boundaries and Jewish Spirituality in Medieval Germany,” *Jewish History* 1:2 (1986): 20–21, 25ff., 24; Peter Schäfer, “The Ideal of Piety of the Ashkenazi Hasidim and Its Roots in Jewish Tradition,” *Jewish History* 4:2 (1990): 9–23; Yosef Dan, “Toratam Ha-Musarit V’ha-Hevratit Shel Hasidei Ashkenaz,” *Tarbiz* 51:2 (1982): 310n5; Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 204. For a recent overview of the scholarship on this issue, see David I. Shyovitz, “He Has Created a Remembrance of His Wonders’: Nature and Embodiment in the Thought of the Hasidei Ashkenaz” (PhD Dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 2011), 5–11.

45. Eliezer ben Samuel, *Sefer Yere'im al Mitzvot ha-Torah* (Jerusalem, 1983), secs. 156, 167. See Ephraim Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000), 195–97.

46. Moses ben Jacob, *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, sec. 162; Isaac ben Joseph, *Sefer Mitzvot Katan*, sec. 247.

47. Abraham ben Ephraim, *Kitzur Sefer Mitzvot Gadoled*. Yehoshua Horovits; Jerusalem: Mekitsei Nirdamim, 2004), sec. 78, 131.

48. Leviticus 19:15.

49. Israel Ta-Shma, “Mashehu al Bikkoret ha-Mikra bimei ha-Benayim,” in *Ha-Mikra bi-Re'i Mefarshav: Sefer Zikaron le-Sarah Kamin* (ed. Sara Japhet; Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1994), 453–59. But see Kanarfogel, *Peering Through the Lattices*, 98–99, who says, “aside from his hesitancy in ruling leniently against established customs (even when the halachic reasoning behind the customs is somewhat questionable), R. Samuel of Falaise displays no overt tendencies toward *hasidut* or *perishut*.” In note 11, though, he does suggest some minor Pietist connections.

50. SHB 61.

51. SHP 35; SHB 170.

52. SHP 900; SHB 326. See Shuler, “Almsgiving,” 115–40 for parallels in Christian thought.

53. SHB 61 (emphasis added).

54. SHP 913; SHB 332.

55. *b. Bava Batra* 9b.

56. Rashi to Sukkah 49b. See Horowitz, “V-Yihiyu Aniyim,” 225. Horowitz’s reading of *Or Zarua* is imprecise—he assumes that Rashi’s comments, interpolated into R. Isaac’s citation of the Talmud, are actually R. Isaac changing the *girsā* [textual version] of the Talmud or are a result of an alternative text. However, this is a common stylistic technique

employed in the *Or Zarua*, not an addition made by R. Isaac himself. Horowitz's conclusion, that R. Isaac "stressed the need to distinguish between worthy and unworthy," is thus misleading.

57. See his *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilkhot Matnot Aniyim*, ch. 7.

58. See Michael Rosensweig, "Tzedaka ke-Hiyuv u-ke-Mitzvah," *Torah Sheba'al Peh* 31 (1990): 151, who suggests another possible ramification, based on *Sefer Or Zarua* 1:140, regarding which commandments require a blessing before they are performed. As opposed to other authorities, who exempt charity from a blessing because of its bilateralism, R. Isaac rules that there is no blessing on charity because it does not occur at a fixed time, implying that were it not for this exemption, the commandment is one that is sacramental in nature and would require a blessing.

59. *b. Baba Metz'a* 71a, based on Leviticus 25:36. R. Isaac rules this way in sec. 8 and 22 of his *Hilkhot Tzedaka*.

60. *Sefer Or Zarua*, sec. 8.

61. It is interesting to note that the Christian idea of purgatory and its penitential value also received the concentrated attention of theologians in the twelfth century. Although the concept existed throughout the Middle Ages, it reached its full scholarly formulation only around 1170–90. See Jacques Le-Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), esp. 130–209; and the review by R. W. Southern, "Between Heaven and Hell: Review of J. Le Goff, *La Naissance Du Purgatoire*," *Times Literary Supplement* (18 June 1982); Rubin, *Charity and Community in Medieval Cambridge*, 64–66.

Rubin explains that almsgiving and charity were of great utility in helping those in purgatory: if purgatory was the place where truly confessed believers complete their penance during a limited period of suffering, meritorious acts could alleviate their torments by transferring to them grace accumulated on earth. The doctrine of purgatory grew into a fundamental belief in the High Middle Ages and weight was added to it by the growing preoccupation with death.

Were all alms efficacious in aiding the souls in purgatory? If the act of almsgiving was not meritorious, then the alms would not help in spiritual attainment. For example, according to the twelfth century *Summa Parisiensis*, ad 14.5, "Alms cannot be given from usurious [gains]. . . . And if in fact alms are given from unlawful gains, then it will not benefit you but rather the person whose money it had been" (translation from Rubin, 67). Canon 25 of Lateran III clearly confirmed this ruling, stressing that illicit gains could not be used for the acquisition of merit from charitable activity.

1Q/4QInstruction: Training for a Money Changer?

Curtis Hutt

In the fragmentary reconstructed text dated to the late Second Temple/Commonwealth period often referred to as *Musar leMevin*, *Sapiential Work A*, or *4QInstruction* (415ff.) but that I refer to as *1Q/4QInstruction*,¹ at least seven copies of which were found at Khirbet Qumran, training is given by an unidentified teacher to a student described as poor on a variety of topics—several of which are explicitly related to finance. Since its publication in the mid-1990s, the teachings provided in this sapiential text with unusual “apocalyptic” elements have been compared to those found in other sectarian texts, biblical wisdom books (e.g., Sirach), Enochic traditions, and the common source behind wisdom sayings attributed to Jesus (Q, *Gospel of Thomas*). Others have focused on the social settings that have given rise to such instruction. Was this instruction addressed to a “poor” *maven* [I prefer: “expert to be”] meant for those who were actually impoverished; that is, members of a socioeconomic underclass in the Second Commonwealth period? Alternatively, others have asked whether the term “poor” is meant metaphorically, adopted as a title or emblem for a group, or a combination of both.

Here, I pursue another angle of approach to *1Q/4QInstruction* prompted by research performed for a recent paper published in the *Journal of Biblical Literature* (2012).² In this former piece, which focused on a saying [*agraphon*] attributed to Jesus in which he praised “approved money changers,” I did extensive research into Second Commonwealth period “money changers” working for the Temple in Jerusalem. Such financial activity when performed on behalf of Temple interests was regarded as a religious activity, especially at the time of year when Jews had to pay their annual half-shekel Temple tax—an offering that could be made only using the highest quality silver. From rabbinic sources and those found in the Second Commonwealth period (from Josephus to the Dead Sea Scroll covenanters and the Christian Testament), we know that this occurred annually for the expiation of the sins of the Jewish people.³ In the process of combing through historical sources (literary and the remains of material culture)⁴ for this chapter, I turned to *1Q/4QInstruction* primarily in order to examine the description of several types of financial dealings described in this text—conceivably associated with the Temple in Jerusalem.

Rather than understanding the instruction provided to the *maven* as wisdom generally dispensed to the impoverished, I view—following John Strugnell and Daniel J. Harrington in the introduction to the publication of *4QInstruction* found in *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*⁵—the target audience much more narrowly as a group of religious specialists. According to this reading, the “poor student” to whom instructions found predominantly in Cave 4 but also in Cave 1 are addressed represents “experts to be” in providing religious services. Amongst his/their sacerdotal functions, in a world where the religious field is not differentiated from the financial, is dealing with monetary transactions. The *maven* is much more than “money changer” though—he was a banker, tax collector, judge, and oath taker involved in the implementation of a wide range of essential communal activities from serving as an arbiter over financial deals and marriages to, if a connection between *1Q/4QInstruction* and the Jerusalem Temple is substantiated, the management of offerings and sacrifice. I agree with Strugnell and Harrington that *1Q/4QInstruction*—the largest fragmentary “wisdom text” found at Qumran (approximately sixty percent of the text is missing from possibly eight to nine existing reconstructed manuscripts)—was “important, authoritative” and “perhaps even ‘canonical’” among the Qumran community estranged from, though obsessed with, the Temple in Jerusalem.⁶ I go one step further though, arguing that at least part of the work possibly originated in Jerusalem.

1Q/4QINSTRUCTION TO A MAVEN

Before turning to *1Q/4QInstruction*'s relatively unique mix of apocalypticism and wisdom as well as its curious take on “poverty” with few parallels in earlier biblical and later rabbinic literature, I want to highlight what can be learned about the text from the specific material locations where it was found. I believe, like the late Hartmut Stegemann and Stephen Pfann,⁷ that distinct profiles for each of the Qumran caves can be developed on the basis of the palaeographic dates, literary genre, and content of the scrolls found therein. What this means for our understanding of *1Q/4QInstruction* is significant. First of all, the presence of multiple copies found in Cave 4—the broadest collection found in any of the caves—is indicative of its popularity amongst the community associated with Khirbet Qumran. This is the case even though many scholars, following the *DJD* editors Strugnell and Harrington, have noted that the text—on the basis of differences with other sectarian documents in “vocabulary and thought”—has possibly presectarian/nonsectarian origins.⁸

The fact that fragments of the text, a nonbiblical scroll inscribed on costly parchment and interred with great care, was also discovered in Cave 1 alongside many scrolls of a “liturgical nature” (multiple copies of Psalms, along with the *Thanksgiving Hymn Scroll*, *Testament of Levi*, *Rule of the Congregation* and *Rule of Benedictions*, *Three Tongues of Fire*, and the *Serek haYahad* [Community Rule]) points to its use in a library likely at one point connected with religious specialists in Jerusalem.⁹ This hypothesis is only secured further when the content of *1Q/4QInstruction* is examined at length. As summarized by Armin Lange in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, the fascination with “priestly questions and concerns” indicates that it was “written in a priestly milieu which was connected with the Jerusalem Temple.”¹⁰

The presence of *Musar leMevin* in Cave 1 also strengthens the postulated connection between this text and the Teacher of Righteousness, as it is found amongst other scrolls providing sectarian instruction by this figure. This does not, it must be emphasized, rule out a connection between *1Q/4QInstruction* and priestly practices related to the Temple. According to the *Serek haYahad*, the religious specialists of the *yahad* are priests with a long historical connection to this Jerusalem institution and reputedly to its first high priest Tzadok. They have been exiled from Jerusalem by rivals led by a “wicked priest.” *1Q/4QInstruction*, by my reading, is a text used by a community that associates itself with the Teacher of Righteousness but—like biblical texts from Cave 1—was originally used in connection with the Temple in Jerusalem.

1Q/4QInstruction, at first glance, appears to be an unusual “wisdom text” framed by apocalypse—similar to other sectarian texts found at Qumran like the *Book of Mysteries*, *Wiles of the Wicked Woman*, and *4QBeatitudes*. The bulk of the reconstructed text consists of admonitions given by a teacher to an “understanding” student. The instructor in the text is not presented, however, as a nonhuman entity (e.g., an angel), or personified/hypostasized Wisdom (Prov 8:22; Sir 1:4, 24; Wisdom of Solomon; Philo’s *logos*). Instead, he is a religious superior providing a trainee with specific instructions for how to handle a wide variety of practical situations—oftentimes related to financial matters. Critical to being able to do so, is the need for the student to gain wisdom through study and contemplation of the “mystery to come” [רז נהיה].¹¹ The future fate of the *maven*, which hinges upon the impending experience of divine judgment, provides a seemingly apocalyptic context or frame for the implementation of instructions provided.

Such combinations of wisdom and apocalypse, as emphasized by scholars like John Collins, are not only unusual but awkward. Whereas sapiential reli-

gious texts or “manuals of conduct” focus on human activity in “this worldly” settings, apocalyptic traditions are generally concerned with the influence of the supernatural in human affairs. Wisdom is not pursued—for example, in biblical “wisdom” literature like Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Job, several Psalms, and Deuterocanonical works like the Wisdom of Solomon, Tobit, and Sirach—out of a concern for rewards or punishments to be meted as a result of divine judgment at the end of days. In such texts, this world is not “the problem”—unlike in apocalyptic literature where this flawed existence will be replaced in the future with a new ideal order.¹²

The fact that instructions for practical conduct are mixed with apocalyptic concerns in *1Q/4QInstruction* has led some scholars like Torleif Elgvin to speculate that the reconstructed text contains two distinct literary layers with the apocalyptic elements connected to a later redaction.¹³ While this is a distinct possibility, given the fragmentary and largely underdetermined state of *1Q/4QInstruction*, it is probably impossible to prove without some new textual discovery. Clearly at some point in time wisdom and apocalyptic encountered in *1Q/4QInstruction* fit well together.¹⁴ It is no coincidence that this instructional text is found alongside the distinctly apocalyptic *Serek haYahad* and the *War Scroll* in Cave 1 at Khirbet Qumran. Certainly its interpretation and use could have varied from community to community, or changed within a single group over the course of time.

The other major area of research into *1Q/4QInstruction*, which will be discussed at length below and is my primary focus in this paper, is on its approach to issues related to wealth, poverty, and finance. In addition to reviewing the instructions provided to the students on these topics, I will examine—as several before me¹⁵—the curious use of the appellation “poor” for the named recipients of the text’s teachings. Repeatedly, the instructor addresses his student with the words: “You are poor [אביון אתה].” Several scholars, in addition to attempting to determine the details of the “instructions,” have made extensive efforts to understand why this specific title is used for the recipients of this unusual “wisdom.” For example, should the “poverty” of the *maven* be taken literally or metaphorically? Special attention will be given to the comparatively unique character of *1Q/4QInstruction* on these topics vis-à-vis what we find in texts associated with earlier and later traditions—from the wisdom literature of the Hebrew Bible to later rabbinic traditions as well as what is found in writings associated with the earliest Christian communities.

For biblical and rabbinic traditions, generally speaking, poverty is not a state usually praised, and the designation “poor” is rarely used in a positive sense. Instead poverty is commonly deemed a great affliction to be avoided. In

contrast to what is found in early Christian ascetic traditions, wealth is considered a blessing from God (as long as it is not gained dishonestly; e.g., through the use of false weights and measures as seen in Lev 19:35, *b. B. Bat.* 88b-89b). Poverty, on the other hand, is often presented as a result of divine judgment for sin (Deut 28:48). When the rabbis “set their eyes against” someone, it results in poverty and death (*b. Mo’ed Qat.* 17b; *b. Hag.* 5b; *b. Ned.*7b). “All the days of the poor are evil” (Prov 15:15; see also Sir 31:5; *b. Ketub.* 110b). Unlike what is found in several Christian monastic and social justice traditions (see the example set by Basil the Great and his new city of the poor¹⁶), there is for the rabbis little virtue in poverty. As shown by Mark Cohen in his review of texts related to poverty and charity in the Cairo genizah, Jews are forbidden to give away their fortunes, impoverish themselves, and become poor.¹⁷ If poor, one cannot perform acts of charity [צדקה—literally, “righteousness”], which are required of all (Deut 15:7–11; *b. Bat.* 9a: “Giving charity is equal to all other religious precepts [מצוות] combined”).

The approach to poverty and use of the designation “poor” in a positive sense in *1Q/4QInstruction* are not entirely unique. Several scholars, for example, have postulated some connection between *1Q/4QInstruction* and *1 Enoch*, where the righteous are identified with the “lowly and oppressed” and sinners with the rich and powerful.¹⁸ The writer of *1 Enoch*, however, never addresses the recipients of this work as “poor,” and *1Q/4QInstruction* does not contain specific injunctions or criticisms against the wealthy. Other texts found at Qumran, in addition to emphasizing the righteousness of the poor, do specifically refer to or associate their devout/elect recipients with the “poor in spirit” [עניי רוח—1QM 14:7; עניי רוח—1QH 6:3], “the congregation of poor” [עדת האביונים—4QpPs 1:21; 2:9–10],¹⁹ or simply “the poor” [אביונים—1QM 11:13; 1QpHab 12:3, 6, 10]. It is important to note, like G. J. Botterweck,²⁰ that in the *Serek haYahad*’s discussion of the “community of goods” of the *yahad* there is no mention at all of these terms for “the poor” [עניי, סענוי, or אביונים]. It seems that this terminology, while found in the works just cited above, do not describe the general members of the *yahad* who share property in common. Instead, I will present a unique solution to this specific conundrum, arguing that those referred to in this way perform sacerdotal functions not completely unconnected to the economic life of the *yahad*.²¹

THE MASKIL

Before examining the content of the fragmentary instructions contained in *1Q/4QInstruction*, I am going to put forward my hypotheses regarding the

identities of the instructor and his students. Even though I am quite aware that a diversity of opinion exists on this topic and that my own conclusions will be underdetermined, I am willing to hazard these speculations—mostly based upon evidence gleaned from the instructions themselves. My overall task is best modeled as a conditional: If x then we should encounter y. What is unearthed in the process of this inquiry will hopefully add to our knowledge of priestly, levitical, and scribal practices associated with Judaisms during the period of the Second Commonwealth period.

Specifically, I postulate that the instructor of this text—at least in the recension(s?) encountered in Caves 1 and 4 at Qumran—is “a maskil/teacher of righteousness” (or possibly even “the Maskil/Teacher of Righteousness”). Such an identification would certainly be cemented if Eibert Tigchelaar’s reconstruction of the first lines of *4QInstruction* were incontrovertible, namely, that fragment 4Q418 238 is a “maskil heading”²² that belongs at the beginning of the text. Such “maskil headings” לְמַשְׁכִּיל—“of/for the maskil” can be found in the *Serek haYahad*, *The Rule of Blessings*, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *Words of the Maskil to the Sons of Dawn*, *Songs of the Maskil*, *Ways of Righteousness*, *Hodayot*, 4Q510 and 511, 4Q433a ii 2, as well as possibly the *Damascus Document*. Elsewhere in the texts that make up *4QInstruction*, the term maskil occurs in 4Q417 1 i 25 and 4Q418 81 17 where it appears to be “synonymous”²³ with the term *maven*. The teaching found in the text is thereby not only theoretically derived from a maskil but also for future maskilim.

But before we continue, who is/are the maskil(im) responsible for statutes and teachings found in texts like the *Serek haYahad*,²⁴ *1Q/4QInstruction*, and elsewhere? The first historical usage of the term maskil, which is derived from the root “to enlighten,” does not refer to a person or position but instead to a certain type of musical composition—a psalm of instruction or “wisdom psalm,” of which there are thirteen examples in the canonical Psalms, several of which are attributed to the sons of Korach (the son of Levi). These maskilim were produced and performed by prophetic singers recruited from ranks of the Levites (see 1 Chron 9:33, 15:16, 25:1–6). Like the Levites who worked in and for the Temple, the musicians responsible for these psalms were engaged not only in ritual practices but also religious instruction.²⁵ For Levites, scribal activities broadly conceived were a critical part of their sacerdotal activities, assisting the priests who were descendants of Aaron by maintaining the Temple archives and performing administrative tasks. First and foremost, they were the keepers of the written Torah. As noted by Mark Leuchter, “legal, liturgical, poetic, sapiential, prophetic, and historiographic sources all point to Levitical

activity in the production of texts for purposes spanning the spectrum of the mundane to the holy.”²⁶

Over time, the term “maskil” appeared as a title designating those involved in religious instruction—assumingly, through the medium of music.²⁷ As evidenced in Daniel 12:3, these “teachers of righteousness” are not simple scribes subservient to Temple priests, but are described with language from Genesis (1:6–8, 14–18) usually associated with priests: “shining like the brightness of the firmament . . . and the stars for ever and ever.” While Leuchter thinks that the position of the maskil emerges as a result of the proliferation of literacy and scribal techniques formerly monopolized by royal and Temple scribes during the Hellenistic period (a general condition of the times that must certainly not be ignored), I am less certain that maskilim even in Daniel are in principle necessarily opposed to or in competition with Temple priests and scribes. Exile from Jerusalem, and later, disappointment with and alienation from specific groups of Temple authorities provide a powerful impetus for the emergence of maskilim who do not argue for ancestral priestly and levitical privileges to be superseded, but for those serving in these capacities to perform their tasks properly.

Maskilim perform in the *Damascus Document* (12:20–22) the vital Temple function of keeping the “unclean apart from the clean, and distinguishing between Holy and profane.” In the *Serek haYahad* (1QS 3:13–15; 9:12–19), the duties of the maskil are outlined with some detail. Not only does the maskil serve as a religious guide for the *yahad* who abstains from accumulating personal wealth, but in 9:14 he is even given power over priests, as he must “weigh the sons of Zadok . . . according to their spirits.” Most relevantly, in *Ways of Righteousness* (4Q421 1 ii 5–17) the maskil, following Daniel 12:3, is described as providing training in righteousness.

Of course, in the *Damascus Document* and other texts found at Qumran like the Habbakuk peshet, a teacher of righteousness [מורה הצדק] is described as the founder of a group that has been driven out of the Jerusalem Temple but ever looks forward to their return. His, seemingly, is the first person voice of the *Thanksgiving Hymns*:

They have banished me from my land
like a bird from its nest;
all my friends and brethren are driven far from me
and hold me for a broken vessel.

And they, teachers of lies and seers of falsehood,
have schemed against me a devilish scheme,

to exchange the Law engraved on my heart by Thee
for the smooth things (which they speak) to Thy people.
(1 QHa 4:7–10)

In the Psalms pesher on 37:23–4 (4Q171 ii 19, iii 13), this Teacher of Righteousness is actually designated as a priest as well. His enemies are described with vitriol in a variety of places as followers of a “wicked priest”/“man of the lie”/“Belial” (1QHab viii 4, ix 8, xi 3; 4Q171 i 24, ii 11, iv 8) and members of a council of “futility”/“deceit”/“hypocrites”/“the wicked of Ephraim and Manasseh” (1QHa 10:22; 1QHa 15:34; 4Q171 ii18). In the fragments of the pesherim to Micah found in Cave 1, his enemies are explicitly identified with priests in Jerusalem (1Q14 11 1). In contrast, those who remain true to God, the Temple, and the Teacher of Righteousness are called a “congregation of the poor/chosen ones” (4Q171 i 21, iii 5, iii 10, iii 16).

I don't think that there is any need to necessarily associate the instructions of maskil(im) in documents found at Qumran with either the leadership of the *yahad* or the Teacher of Righteousness mentioned in the *Damascus Document*. Some texts, like *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, appear to be pre-sectarian set in the Temple itself.²⁸ Other important concepts, like that of the “mystery to come,” present in the *Serek haYahad* (1QS 11) and *4QInstruction* are clearly pre-sectarian.²⁹ On the other hand, maskil(im) are a force in the *yahad* by all accounts.

THE MAVEN

Who are the *mavens*, the “experts to be” or “understanding ones,” addressed by the instructor of *1Q/4QInstruction*? Repeatedly, they are labeled “poor” [e.g., אתה אביון—4Q415 6 2, 4Q416 2 iii 8, 12; ראש אתה—4Q416 2 iii 2; אתה רש ונדיבים—4Q418 177 5; מילד—4Q418 126 ii 7]. But what do these references mean? Several commentators have made important suggestions that I will draw upon in what follows.

First, many have insisted that the “you are poor” statements should be understood literally; that is, the recipients of the instructions live in an impoverished or relatively impoverished state. Eibert Tigchelaar, Benjamin Wright, Catherine Murphy, and Daniel Harrington each assert this in one way or another, though they have characterized this poverty differently. When confronted with passages like 4Q416 2 iii 3, which suggest that the supposedly poor *maven* still participates in substantial financial activity, Tigchelaar asserts that all of the “you are poor” statements should be treated as conditionals; that is: “If you are poor.”³⁰ Wright alternatively, in his examination of the social set-

ting of the author and recipients of *4QInstruction*, which follows up his similar work on Sirach, argues that the addressee is “among the poor but not destitute” because he “still can participate in financial dealings, sometimes even having a loan or collateral deposited with him.”³¹ Unlike with the students of Shimon ben Yeshua ben Sira, who Wright argues trained a professional class of scribes to work with the rich and politically powerful or “masters of the banquet,” the *maven* has no relationship with the upper classes. According to Tigchelaar and Wright, the *maven* is not a “professional sage” but “could be anyone in society.”³²

Catherine Murphy, who connects *1Q/4QInstruction* with the *Damascus Document* and *Serekh haYahad*, thinks it predates these texts as it displays “Essene” openness to outsiders. Given the instructions related to wives, daughters, and families, it cannot be directed to a “monastic” community where marriage is set aside.³³ According to Murphy, those addressed are basically farmers. This is why instructions provided to those engaged in agricultural work (4Q423) are prefaced by metaphorical reference to the Garden of Eden. Religious instruction, as it is for Matthew Goff, is provided via reference to actual impoverishment—something its recipients could understand.³⁴

Of all the accounts characterizing the recipients of *1Q/4QInstruction* as actually impoverished, I prefer that of Daniel Harrington, who—while presumably still identifying, with Strugnell, the *maven* as a cultic official in training—also thinks the “you are poor” statements should be taken literally.³⁵ Following Josephus and the *Damascus Document*, Harrington, building on work by Strugnell³⁶ suggests that *1Q/4QInstruction* originates in “Essene” communities living in מחנות [camps] where second-tier members of the group still get married and participate in usual economic practices. In these groups, poverty is the norm.

The main dissenter to the view that the poverty of the *maven* in *1Q/4QInstruction* refers mainly to literal, material impoverishment is Benjamin Wold. In his article “Metaphorical Poverty in ‘Musar leMevin,’” Wold argues that the poverty of the *maven* in this work should be read metaphorically: it alludes to the state of lack experienced by human beings in this world in contrast to the “superior” nature of angelic beings referred to on several occasions in this text. For example, humans in fragments 4Q418 55 11 and 4Q418 69 11–15 are subject to negative comparison with angels. Most people are “lazy and mortal.” Angels, on the other hand, are the model students who are eternally focused and never tire—“exemplary pursuers of wisdom.”³⁷ While Wold thinks that some of the use of the language of poverty refers to economic, mate-

rial impoverishment, when it comes to the “you are poor” statements this is not the case. In 4Q416 2 iii, where we encounter some of the most prominent reminders to the *maven* of his poverty, they precede and follow references to the “mystery to come” and future participation in the company of נדיבים [Wold translates as “angels” instead of the more common “nobles”].

In 2 iii 9–14 it reads:

But if men restore you to your glory walk in it
and by the mystery to come [רז נהיה] seek the origins/birth-times
thereof
And then you will know its share/inheritance,
and in righteousness you will walk,
for God will shine His countenance upon all your ways.
To the One honoring you, give honor
and His name praise always,
for out of poverty He lifted your head.
And with nobles/angels [נדיבים] he has seated you,
and over a glorious inheritance he has placed you in authority.
Always strive after His good.
You are poor [אביון אתה].
Do not say “I am poor [רש אני] and will not seek knowledge . . .”
Seek the mystery to come. . . .

This is followed shortly thereafter in *4QInstruction* 416 2 iii 15b–16a by the curious passage:

Honor your father in your poverty, and your mother in your low estate/“littleness” [במצעריכה].

According to Wold, the author of *4QInstruction* equates the human condition with poverty. In 4Q423 1–2 i, the *maven* should aspire to the state of humans in the Garden of Eden, where they carefully and without fatigue tended trees of wisdom.³⁸ In the world of the *maven*, God and angels, as well as father and mother, are of a “higher stature.” They are thereby deserving of veneration and honor. By this reading, the designation “you are poor” is in no way a positive one.³⁹ It does not, however, have a solely economic meaning.

While I think the “you are poor” statements in *4QInstruction* must be read metaphorically, my approach is very different from that of Wold. First, I maintain that the poverty of the *maven* is a positive ideal. Just prior to the section analyzed at length by Wold, we read in 4Q416 2 ii—in a passage containing explicit instructions related to financial matters that the *maven* must not enrich himself in the performance of his duties. In 2 ii 6–7 he is warned: “Do

not for any money exchange your holy spirit, for no price is adequate.” Again, in 2 ii 17–18, the expert-to-be is told: “Do not to sell yourself for money. It is better that you are a servant in the spirit, and that you serve your overseers/oppressors for nothing. And for money do not sell your glory, and do not mortgage your inheritance for it.” The poverty of the *maven*—who I postulate is a Temple administrator and “money changer” in training—is not to be taken in an economic sense, but is an ethical action guide. As has been raised by several commentators, the description of the *maven* engaging in financial activity simply does not point to his existing in an impoverished state. If this is the case, the *maven* can be said to honor his father and mother in his metaphorical poverty and humility. In keeping with traditional Jewish ethics, there is no honor before one’s parents if existing in an actual impoverished, abject state.

THE INSTRUCTIONS

So if the instructor is a *maskil* “teacher of righteousness” connected to the Jerusalem Temple, either in practice (presectarian) or in expectation, who attends to the education of the “poor” *maven* or Temple administrator in training, is this confirmed by the content of his instructions? Utilizing research about the work performed by Jerusalem Temple “money changers” presented in my earlier paper cited above, I will see if there is any correlation between this and the fragmentary content of *1Q/4QInstruction*, which I will break up into five main parts. The information gained from *1Q/4QInstruction* will be seen not only to fit well with earlier findings but potentially also add interesting new details to what we know about the activities of those religious specialists working at the Jerusalem Temple.

In “Be Ye Approved Money Changers!” I argue, following scholars like Shemuel Safrai, E. P. Sanders, Jacob Neusner, and Daniel Harrington, that the Jewish money changers described in the Christian gospels not only worked at the Jerusalem Temple but also for this institution.⁴⁰ These religious specialists performed essential services for the Temple, facilitating ritual sacrifice and offerings [קרבנות] of several different types (e.g., food and drink, agricultural products, and domesticated animals) for those coming to Jerusalem, especially at festival time. Most notably, once a year they collected the half-shekel Temple tax for daily home offerings that were arranged in order to atone for the sins of every Israelite. In the weeks leading up to the first day of Nisan, they converted local currencies into the only coinage accepted, the high-grade Tyrian silver shekel. These money changers/tax collectors most likely possessed lists of taxpayers.⁴¹ Like Temple officials elsewhere around the Mediterranean,

these highly literate administrators took deposits for safekeeping and perhaps offered interest. In keeping with what is written about them in the Babylonian Talmud, I assume that they made loans. They also performed the critical functions of administering oaths and exacting pledges.

The first share of instructions that I will discuss are the most difficult for contemporary readers to connect up with the activities of ancient Jerusalem “money changers,” as they do not concern collecting taxes and offerings, taking deposits, making loans, keeping lists, or endorsing the equivalent of ancient contracts. One must remember though that in the world of the ancient Mediterranean the religious field, to use the language of Max Weber and Pierre Bourdieu, was not differentiated from the economic field.⁴² The training for Temple “money changers” that I will now refer to deals with interacting with angels and in the case of the Qumran convenanters preparing for the “the mystery to come.” Of course, if the recipients do prepare for work in or related to the Jerusalem Temple, it is not difficult to understand why they might need such lessons. The curious “apocalypticism” wed to “wisdom” found in *1Q/4QInstruction* and other texts like the *Book of Mysteries* is not only especially at home in priestly contexts (as has been noted by Marvin Sweeney building on the work of Stephen Cook)⁴³ but is also centered around theophanic experiences.

As noted by Daniel Harrington in his entry on the “mystery to come” [רז נהיה] in the *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, it can only be known only as a result of divine revelation.⁴⁴ By my view, the *maven* trains for just such an experience as well as interaction with angelic hosts. Rather than reading, following Wold, references to life with angels or living as an angel in a state of “angelic poverty” as being exemplary metaphors for what those receiving instruction should strive to attain, I prefer to emphasize the “literal” nature of such training.⁴⁵ That is, not only do the members of the community of the instructor expect to march into battle with angels at their sides as is described in the *War Scroll* (1QM 7 6), but they will also return to an ideal state of communion with the divine/divine beings in the near future.

Like Wold, I do think it is important to emphasize the metaphorical nature of references made to the Garden of Eden in *4QInstruction*, but this is not solely on account of its signifying an ideal past location/state for attaining wisdom. Rather, as is found in the Hebrew Bible and Christian Testament, as well as in extracanonical and postbiblical literature, the Garden is commonly used as a metaphor for and often identified with the Temple in Jerusalem or its heavenly counterpart with which it is linked.⁴⁶ I take the instructions found in this fragmentary text regarding how the *maven* should interrelate with angelic

beings to have been understood as representing an “actual” state of affairs. The Jerusalem Temple—in texts like Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 28, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and the *Book of Watchers*—is ground zero for such interaction. This is the import of several passages from *4QInstruction*, like 4Q418 81 4–5a, which reads: “Honor him by this: by consecrating yourself to him, in accordance to the fact that he has placed you as a holy of holies [over all] the earth and among all the divine beings [reconstructed: אלים] he has cast your lot.”

Whether or not we follow Wold’s translation of נדיבים as “angelic beings” or as the more commonly rendered “nobles” in 4Q416 2 iii 11–12 just cited above, I postulate that this should be understood literally as opposed to Wold and Goff.⁴⁷ Not only has the *maven* been/will be placed aside [נדיבים] but this will also happen in the Temple, where “he has given you authority over an inheritance of glory.” As is described in *4QFlorilegium* (4Q174) 1 i 4, following biblical texts like Isaiah 6:3–4, the presence of “holy ones” [קדושי or יקדושי?] in the Temple requires that bastards, foreigners, and proselytes be forbidden from entering. In addition to believing that the writers and recipients took literally references to the “mystery to come,” I also take seriously allusions to the interaction between humans and angels described in the text as well as Wold and Loren Stuckenbruck’s assertions that *4QInstruction* potentially provides us with examples of the veneration of angels.⁴⁸ It is tempting to envisage the heavenly book(s) of remembrance that the instructor and *maven* will be provided with in the preface to *1Q/4QInstruction* (see also the so-called “vision of Hagu” in 4Q417 1 i 13–18) as having taken some physical form.⁴⁹ I am convinced that *1Q/4QInstruction*, like what Torleif Elgvin has asserted about the “wisdom” text *4QWays of Righteousness*, provides us with guidance and requirements for entrance into the presence of the sacred.⁵⁰ The *maven* trains for future theophanic experiences in the Temple or future reclaimed Temple.

The sections of *4QInstruction* dealing with financial matters are more easily linked to the practices of ancient money changers that I outlined in my earlier work. Admittedly, the reason I initially turned to *1Q/4QInstruction* was on account of the detailed descriptions of how one should deal with creditors and debt found therein. Several commentators have noted that such discussions are a “preoccupation” of this text.⁵¹ Metaphors related to finance and economics, found strewn throughout the text, are deployed regularly even in discussions of eschatology and revelation—such as just described in the preface to *1Q/4QInstruction*, where the book(s) of remembrance are given to the mysterious human named “Enosh.” In this introduction, the present is

described as the addressee's "inheritance" [נחלה]. The future is referred to in terms of "punishment"/"deposit" [פקודה], "recompense"/"repayment" [להשיב] [שלו] and "reward" [פעלה].

In 4Q415, amidst references to the angels or nobles [נדיבים], the "mystery to come," and the holy inheritance, we find metaphorical references to measurements/weights [משקל—6 5; 11 9; איפה—11 3; עומר—11 3] and scales [כמוזני—9 11]. In 4Q418 126 ii 3, we find seemingly metaphorical reference to units of measurement, where it reads "the epha of truth and the weight of righteousness" and in fragment 167 "scales of justice." As noted by Harrington and Strugnell, the terms "epha" and "shekel" in *1Q/4QInstruction* are used "disproportionately" when compared to all other texts found at Qumran—though in their view as well as that of Murphy and obviously Wold, which I will dispute shortly, only metaphorically.⁵² Most importantly, even if the bulk of the uses of this terminology is figurative, what does its repeated deployment tell us about the instructor and those that he trains? As noted constantly by Clifford Geertz, metaphor and allegory work only when those signaled have a "thick" or "deep" understanding of the relevant subject matter.⁵³

No one doubts the presence of advice on practical financial and economic matters in *1Q/4QInstruction*. Murphy and Wright have extensively catalogued these instructions, which cover topics related to how one must interact with nobles or "advantaged/successful ones" [הכשר—4Q417 2 i 1–6; see above, נדיבים] as well as the oppressed. The *maven* is counseled on how to deal with difficult, unjust men in addition to the righteous. Even though the "expert to be" is described as poor, he is expected to pronounce judgments like a "righteous ruler" (4Q416 2 i 13). In the next paragraph, I will review some of the discussions related to ancient banking and tax-collecting practices. It is important that these be contextualized. In *1Q/4QInstruction* the specific symbolic or plausibly literal locus in relation to which these activities are carried out is the "storehouse" or "treasury" [אוצר] of the Lord. In 4Q417 2 i 17–9 we read that when the *maven* has a surplus or lacks food, he should go to the "storehouse" of God, which has no lack. More intriguingly, in 4Q418 81 + 81a 11–2, after the *maven* is told in line 9 that he has been placed in a position of authority over "His treasure" [באוצר], he is instructed to glorify "His holy ones" [קדושי] by singing them a song before receiving their inheritance from His hand. This is to be done before "sitting on the bench for judgment."

In a portion of *1Q/4QInstruction* for which three fragmentary copies exist (4Q416 2 i 16–20; 4Q417 2 i 21–7; 4Q418 7b 4–12 + 26 2 + 27 1) we find quite detailed information about problems the *maven* might face if

unable to pay back his creditor. He must work with “no rest for his soul” until the money or possibly other goods are returned and should be sure not to lie about the situation he is in. While most readings of these passages assume that the addressee is literally poor and has borrowed money in his personal need, according to my reading this may not necessarily be the case. It is interesting to postulate whether the creditor is a more senior, powerful Temple official—like the “master” of the parable of the pounds in Matthew and Luke.⁵⁴ Shortly thereafter (4Q416 2 ii 4–7; 4Q417 2 ii 6–10; 4Q418 8 3–7), the *maven* is advised to pay back loans quickly—even those secured for friends that he has put up collateral for. Elsewhere, it appears that the *maven* is told not to put up collateral at all [אל תערב]—4Q415 8; 4Q416 2 ii 18 = 4Q417 2 ii 23).

Central to my overall argument, the Temple administrator in training must not be dishonest and is warned against not returning loans deposited with him for safekeeping (4Q416 2 iii 3–8). By stealing from those he serves, the *maven* risks being scorched and burned. The *maven* also receives instructions about who to do business with. In 4Q416 2 iii 5–6, the *maven* is told not to take money from someone (as a deposit?) who he does not know. The *maven* is also warned about becoming indebted to or oppressed by another as his own loyalties may be compromised (also 4Q417 2 ii 10–9; 4Q418 8 7–14, 21 2; 4Q418a 19 1–2). Like the lessons taught in lines 4 and 6 of the 1Q/4QInstruction-like text 4Q424 1, it is important not to engage in business with a “dissembler”/“hypocrite” [נעלם] or a stupid man who cannot keep a “secret” [אט]⁵⁵ or the *maven*’s business private.

One specific matter that requires discretion is the gathering of taxes [בלו הון] by the *maven*. After being reminded in 4Q416 2 ii 8 not to make “ineffectual” his oath or to reveal his secrets, the teacher begins a section on tax collection (lines 10–18); presumably, the “half-shekel” for the Temple. The *maven* must set his hand to the service of the divine with, following Strugnell and Harrington’s reconstruction and translation, “humility, insightfulness, and secrecy.” He must beware of “enviousness” and a “deceitful heart.” The *maven* must act as a “wise servant” and a “father” to his constituents. In line 14, which is quite difficult to translate clearly, it appears that “oppressive” tax collecting is warned against. In general, I am in agreement with Catherine Murphy, who writes that this passage seems “to imply that the servant might be tempted to skim money from the master’s payment in kind or coin, or to overcharge his master’s dependents to the master’s discredit.”⁵⁶ Murphy connects the just mentioned 4Q424 1 (lines 4–13) with the collection of taxes as well, which might refer to agricultural goods and livestock in addition to money.⁵⁷

So-called “money changers” associated with the Temple in Jerusalem performed several other vital religious functions that depended upon their professional training. They were able, as described at length in my earlier article on the topic, not only to discern between authentic and counterfeit currencies but also to perform a variety of tasks that depended upon their literacy. Even as they were required to maintain the accounts of taxpayers in addition to depositors and those to whom loans had been made, their other official functions would have involved “officially” recording other transactions and agreements. These would have included claims of ownership related to several forms of property, the designation of succession and inheritance, deeds of obligation, conveyances, and judicial oaths and contracts—such has been discovered in mini-archives of the Jewish community at Elephantine (5th century BCE) and of Babatha and Salome Komaïse in caves in the Judean desert (early 2nd century CE).⁵⁸ While the documents of Babatha and Salome were executed in Roman legal courts a couple of decades after the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, it can be assumed that officials at the Temple provided similar services—especially on matters with clear connections to Jewish religious traditions like marriage. This would particularly have been the case in the period before literacy had widely disseminated beyond scribes linked to the monarchy and the Temple.

In *1Q/4QInstruction*, the *maven* is provided with substantive instructions about marriage and, more specifically, marriage contracts. This has confused some commentators like Benjamin Wright, as so-called “Essene asceticism” would seem to rule out marriage among the covenanters. As noted above, this may be evidence for the presectarian origins of this text. In any event, the *maven* appears to be in training to serve as an arbitrator of marriages. This is evident in 4Q415 2 ii 1–9, where instructions are not directed to the *maven* who is male but instead, via the *maven*, to a woman who is either to be married or already married. As is signified by instructions given using the second person feminine singular, she is supposed to “honor” either her husband or father-in-law as her own father. Two, or perhaps even three times in this passage, she is reminded of her “covenant” [בְּחֻקֵי בְרִיתְךָ, בְּרִית קֹדֶשׁ, בְּרִית].⁵⁹

Elsewhere, in 4Q415 11 (+ 4Q418 167 and possibly, 4Q418a 15), the *maven* is presented with guidelines for arranging a suitable marriage. A daughter must be judged in public (line 5). This must be done, not on the basis of her looks or bodily defects, but on the nature of her character or spirit. Then she will not become a problem or “stumbling block” for her husband (lines 6–7). Immediately following are instructions related to the bearing of

children. In 4Q416 2 iii 21–iv 13, rules governing marital relations are laid out. The husband is placed in a position of unquestioned control over his new wife. The bride’s father cedes authority over his daughter, and her mother is “separated” from her (lines 2–7). This is followed up with instructions related to the annulment of vows. “And every binding oath of hers to vow a vo[w], (you must) annul with an utterance of your mouth. According to your free will cancel” (lines 8–10). While these instructions are directed to the *maven*, as if they concern his own marriage or that of his daughter, I do not think that they apply solely to him. Rather, by my reading, they are guidelines used by official arbitrators/judges for “proper litigation”⁶⁰—here specifically related to the sanction of proper marriage and the negotiation of marital disputes. It is the official’s job, as we can infer from 4Q418 228 3 on the same topic, to make a judgment [קח משפט].

Several scholars, most notably Murphy and Wold, have highlighted the directives provided to the *maven* in 1Q/4QInstruction related to agricultural matters. On the basis of fragments like those found in 4Q423, which importantly overlap with 1Q26 1–2 and 4Q418 188, Murphy postulates that at least some of the recipients of 1Q/4QInstruction are farmers.⁶¹ Wold, alternatively, prefers to view many of these same passages metaphorically. The references to the Garden of Eden that preface advice given in 4Q423 fragments (1, 2 i; 5 line 6) have instead, like other references to commercial language, primarily cosmological and eschatological significance.⁶² I prefer to split the difference between Murphy and Wold. The instructions are to be conveyed by the *maven* to those he serves, many of whom are engaged in agriculture. They are, like the guidelines related to marriage, authorized via reference to the ideal past and future Edenic states.⁶³ Critically for my argument, as has been spelled out by Martha Himmelfarb in detail, the Garden of Eden is a metaphorical image of the Jerusalem Temple itself.⁶⁴

Several passages in 1Q/4QInstruction appear to relate to sacrificial offerings presumably made, or to be made, during the appropriate feasts and seasons at the Temple in Jerusalem. Amongst these is 1Q26 and 4Q423, the second of which has been shown to be a more intact copy of the former. In 4Q423 3 4–5 we read, following a reference to the above discussed “mystery to come”: “You shall come before your God with the firstborn of your womb and the firstborn of all [your cattle. You shall come before you]r[God] and say: ‘I consecrate [to God] everyone who opens the womb.’” This is followed up in 4Q423 5 by the injunction to “give back to Levi the priest” (l. 1a) and “observe the appointed times of the summer . . . and the season of harvest” (lines 5–6).⁶⁵ These are, once again, curious insertions into a wisdom text, put-

ting *1Q4QInstruction* into the same category as 4Q421 (*Ways of Righteousness*), which, as Torleif Elgvin has, I think plausibly, suggested includes criteria for entrance into the Temple.⁶⁶

In the most substantive and fascinating of the fragmentary texts on this topic, 4Q418 103 ii, instructions are provided related to agricultural offerings and the law of mixed species [כלאים]. After seemingly referring to the collection of first fruits in the appropriate season (lines 2–5), a section addressing the law of mixed species derived from Leviticus 19 and Deuteronomy 22 is found. Here it reads: “Do not mix your merchandise with that of [your neighbor] . . . And also your crop will [be for you like that of] one who sows mixed species together, for whom the seeds and the full growth and the crop [of] the [vineyard] will be sanctified together.” The recipients of *1Q4QInstruction* are by this reading “judges of mixed species” (4Q481 1 2) working for the Temple. They are engaged in securing ritual purity, such as is emphasized in 4Q414. While Lawrence Schiffman links 4Q418 103 ii with 4QMMT B 75–82 and marriage guidelines found in *1Q4QInstruction* just discussed, there is nothing in this text explicitly related to the topic of either priests marrying outside priestly families or non-Jews.⁶⁷ In 4Q418 103 ii, the law is found in a passage more clearly related to Temple offerings.

CONCLUSIONS

To summarize, in this review of *1Q4QInstruction* I have accomplished my primary objective and much more. Building upon earlier work on “money changers” at the Jerusalem Temple during the Second Commonwealth period, I have encountered a fresh source of material germane to contemporaneous financial and scribal practices. If my assertions about this text are deemed justified, then a substantive connection between the instructions examined and the “ideal” administration of the Jerusalem Temple has been convincingly established. Much more than just training for “money changers,” the instructions supplied by a religious leader—most likely, a *maskil*—for “experts-to-be” is wide-ranging. It covers a variety of administrative and sacerdotal functions consistent with what might have been expected from an official working at the Jerusalem Temple. By my reading, the recipients of these instructions are at various times either members of an administrative community working at the Temple or part of a community of priestly/levitical exiles who plan on resuming their sacred duties in the future.

The *mavens*, especially when compared to the most powerful Jerusalem families or when living in exile, certainly may have been economically

“poor.” They definitely were assigned and probably embraced this as a title as well though—both as individual trainees and collectively as the “congregation of the poor.” In this case, as described above, the “poverty” of the *maven* has a positive meaning. This is established through contrasting righteous behavior with that of “corrupt” Temple administrators, who have made themselves wealthy through their religious service. Unlike those working for the “wicked priest,” who have made themselves rich at the expense of Jewish pilgrims to Jerusalem, the poor *maven* is characterized by his integrity, honesty, and concern for the common Israelites.

NOTES

1. The titles *Musar leMevin* and *4QInstruction* for this text are not optimal for a couple of reasons. First, the literal meaning of the term מָבֵן in Hebrew and Yiddish (whence the English “maven” is derived) refers to “one who understands,” not a student in the process of learning. Second, the title *4QInstruction* is also inadequate as (quite notably, according to my view) fragments of the text were not only found in Cave 4 at Khirbet Qumran but in Cave 1 as well. I will, when discussing the fragmentary text as a postulated “whole,” use the title *1Q/4QInstruction*.
2. Curtis Hutt, “‘Be Ye Approved Money Changers!’ Reexamining the Social Contexts of the Saying and Its Interpretation,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 131:3 (2012): 589–609. In wide-ranging orthodox, heterodox, and proto-orthodox Christian sources dated from the early to late years of the first millennium of the common era can be found multiple citations of an obscured, disregarded saying attributed most often to Jesus praising at least some Jewish money changers. The result of this research rehabilitating the saying for historians of the ancient world and others is the undermining of Christian antisemitic traditions denigrating ancient and more recent Jewish money changers.
3. This practice is described in other texts from the time of the Second Commonwealth period: Josephus (*Jewish War* 6.335–39), Dead Sea scrolls (4Q159 1 ii 6), and the Christian Testament (Matt 17:24–27). Later rabbinic sources, especially *m. Sheqalim*, also provide discussions of these practices. See Jacob Neusner, “Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah’s Explanation,” *New Testament Studies* 35 (1989): 289; E. P. Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 61–76, and especially Shemuel Safrai, “The Temple,” in *The Jewish People in the First Century: Historical Geography, Political History, Social, Cultural and Religious Life and Institutions*, vol. 2 (ed. Shemuel Safrai, Menahem Stern, and David Flusser; CRINT 1.2; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 865–907.
4. There is also a growing body of evidence related to the material culture involved in ancient banking, money-changing, and finance derived from archaeological investigations like those performed by Nahman Avigad in the upper city of Herodian Jerusalem on the house of the priestly Bar Qatros family (the “Burnt House”).
5. See the introduction to *Discoveries in the Judean Desert (DJD)* 34 (ed. John Strugnell and Daniel J. Harrington; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 20–21. On primarily the

basis of 4Q418 81, where the *maven* appears to have priestly or quasi-priestly power, Strugnell and Harrington point toward the recipient of this text being a sage/Temple official in training.

6. *DJD* 34, 2

7. Hartmut Stegemann, *Die Essener, Qumran, Johannes der Täufer und Jesus* (Freiburg: Herder, 1993); Stephen Pfann, "Reassessing the Judean Desert Caves: Libraries, Archives, *Genizas* and Hiding Places," *Bulletin of the Anglo-Israel Archaeological Society* 25 (2007): 147–70.

8. See Strugnell and Harrington's comments in *DJD* 34, 30.

9. Devorah Dimant, "The Composite Character of the Qumran Sectarian Literature as an Indication of Its Date and Provenance," *Revue de Qumran* 22/88 (2006): 615–30.

10. See Armin Lange, "Wisdom Literature and Thought in the Dead Sea Scrolls" in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 462.

11. This curious terminology occurs twenty times in fragmentary *1Q/4QInstruction*.

12. See John Collins' chapter titled "Wisdom, Apocalypticism, and Generic Compatibility," in *Seers, Sybils and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 385–404. More recently, see John J. Collins, "The Eschatologizing of Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls," in *Sapiential Perspectives: Wisdom Literature in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Sixth International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 20–22 May, 2001* (ed. John J. Collins, Gregory E. Sterling, and Ruth A. Clements; STDJ 51; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 49–65.

13. Like me, Torleif Elgvin in "The Reconstruction of Sapiential Work A," *Revue de Qumran* 16 (1995): 559–80, and *An Analysis of 4QInstruction* (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1997), 11–35, argues that *1Q/4QInstruction* is presectarian—though primarily on the basis of his argument that the beginning of the text in 4Q416 1 is a later redaction containing new eschatological material of a shorter and earlier introduction in 4Q417 1 i. See also Torleif Elgvin, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Early Second Century BCE—The Evidence of 4QInstruction," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997* (ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam; Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society/Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000), 226; also, "The Mystery to Come: Early Essene Theology of Revelation," in *Qumran between the Old and New Testaments* (ed. Frederick H. Cryer and Thomas L. Thompson; JSOTSS 290; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 113–50. Bilhah Nitzan, however, in "The Ideological and Literary Unity of 4QInstruction," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 12 (2005): 157–79, convincingly argues that 4Q417 also contains eschatological material, thereby undermining Elgvin's central claim. Before Nitzan, Strugnell and Harrington in *DJD* 34, 19, also found fault with Elgvin's reconstruction of the beginning of *1Q/4QInstruction*, following the unpublished work of Annete Steudel and Birgit Lucassen, but not necessarily—as just noted—with his conclusion that parts of the text are presectarian. While I too am suspicious of Elgvin's

assertions that 4Q417 1 i constitutes an earlier beginning than that found in 4Q416 1, as well as that apocalypse and wisdom are themes from separate sources forced into an uncomfortable union in the later redaction, I think *1Q/4QInstruction* likely contains material derived from presectarian, priestly sources. When attempting to delineate these layers, scholars have additionally highlighted the differences between instructions usually given to the student in the second person singular and less frequently to second person plural addressees in 4Q418 55, 4Q418 69 ii (which can likewise be found in the *Book of Mysteries* and *1 Enoch*). Burton Mack, *The Lost Gospel: The Book of Q and Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 37–38 has argued that something similar occurred in the evolution of Q, the hypothesized shared source of common material found in the canonical gospels of Matthew and Luke. Mack's overly "simplistic" view has been challenged by John S. Kloppenborg, *The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections* (1987; repr., Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1999), 322–25; and Matthew Goff, "4QInstruction and the Sayings Source Q," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 124 (2005): 668. See also Goff, "Discerning Trajectories," 657–73.

14. This is the view of Daniel Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran* (London: Routledge, 1996), 91.

15. See especially the work of Torleif Elgvin, "Priestly Sages? The Milieus of Origins of 4QMysteries and 4QInstruction," in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 67–87; Harrington, *Wisdom Texts of Qumran*, 45–47; Catherine Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Qumran Community* (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 175–99; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, "The Addressees of 4QInstruction," in *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies* (ed. Daniel K. Falk, Florentino García Martínez, Eileen M. Schuller; STDJ 35; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 62–75; Benjamin Wold, "Metaphorical Poverty in *Musar leMevin*," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 58 (2007): 140–53; and Benjamin G. Wright III, "The Categories of Rich and Poor in the Qumran Sapiential Literature," in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 101–23.

16. Gregory Nazianzen, "Funeral Oration on the Great St. Basil of Caesarea in Cappadocia," *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* II, 7 (ed. Philip Schaff; Edinburgh: T&T Clark and Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997), 395–422.

17. Mark Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 245.

18. See also *1 Enoch* 94:8, 96:5–6, 97:8–98:2, 103:9–15. For extensive discussion on the relationship between *1Q/4QInstruction* and *1 Enoch*, refer to Elgvin, "The Mystery to Come: Early Essene Theology of Revelation," 146; Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *To Increase Learning for the Understanding Ones: Reading and Reconstructing the Fragmentary Early Jewish Sapiential Text 4QInstruction* (STDJ 44; Leiden: Brill, 2001), 212–17; Loren Stuckenbruck, "4QInstruction and the Possible Influence of Early Enochic Traditions: An Evaluation," in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought* (ed. Charlotte Hempel, Armin Lange, and Hermann Lichtenberger; BETL 159; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2002), 245–61; Matthew Goff, *The Worldly and Heavenly Wisdom of 4QInstruction* (STDJ 50; Leiden: Brill, 2003), 85–88; and John

Collins's summary of this work in "The Eschatologizing of Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 49–65.

19. Note that in 4QpPs 2:9–10 the term used in Psalms 37:11, עניים [the poor/humble] is transformed by the author of the peshet to עדת האבינונים [congregation of the poor].

20. G. J. Botterweck, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren; Grand Rapids: W. B. Eerdmans, 1977), 1:41.

21. *Ibid.* I disagree with Botterweck, when he writes that the "terms have no economic or social dimension at Qumran."

22. See especially Charlotte Hempel's articles, "The Qumran Sapiential Texts and the Rule Books," in *The Wisdom Texts from Qumran and the Development of Sapiential Thought*, 277–96; and "Maskil(im) and Rabbim: From Daniel to Qumran," in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission: Essays in Honour of Michael A. Knibb* (ed. Charlotte Hempel and Judith Lieu; JSJSup 111; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 133–56. A maskil is responsible for providing instructions to the "sons of light" in the *Serek haYahad* (1QS 3.13). A leader of the *yahad* known as the "teacher of righteousness" [מורה הצדק] refers to himself as a "maskil" in 1QHa 20.11–3 and 4Q427a 3 ii 5, 12.

23. Hempel, "The Qumran Sapiential Texts and the Rule Books," 287.

24. Many scholars, beginning with H. W. Huppenbauer, *Der Mensch zwischen zwei Welten* (ATANT; Zurich: Zwingli, 1959), 44n45, have argued that the *Serek haYahad* contains instructions for leaders of the *yahad* or community—including maskilim. See n. 20 above.

25. See William Schniedewind, *The Word of God in Transition: From Prophet to Exegete in the Second Temple Period* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 163–88; also, David L. Petersen, *Late Israelite Prophecy: Studies in Deutero-Prophetic Literature and in Chronicles* (SBLMS 23; Missoula: Scholars' Press, 1977).

26. Mark Leuchter, "From Levite to Maskil in the Persian and Hellenistic Eras," in *Levites and Priests in History and Tradition* (ed. Mark A. Leuchter and Jeremy M. Hutton; SBLAIL 9; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 215. See 215n2 for a list of recent publications emphasizing the role played by Levites as scribes and exegetes.

27. In the texts found at Qumran, the maskil is responsible for several teaching *Hodayot* like the *Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. On the work of the maskil, see Charlotte Hempel, "Maskil(im) and Rabbim: From Daniel to Qumran," in *Biblical Traditions in Transmission*, 133–56; Leuchter, "From Levite to Maskil," 229–32; M. H. Henze, *The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar: The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4* (JSJSup 61; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 217–14; Hans Kosmala, "Maskil," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society of Columbia University* 5 (1973): 235–41; Carol Newsom, "The Sage in the Literature of Qumran: The Functions of the Maskil," in *The Sage in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. John G. Gammie and Leo G. Perdue; Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1990), 373–82.

28. See Newsom, "The Sage in the Literature of Qumran," 375, 380n11.

29. Hempel, "The Qumran Sapiential Texts and the Rule Books," 284–85.

30. Tigchelaar, "The Addressees of 4QInstruction," 71.
31. Wright, "The Categories of Rich and Poor in the Qumran Sapiential Literature," 120.
32. Tigchelaar, "The Addressees of 4QInstruction," 62–75, esp. 75, in *To Increase Learning For the Understanding Ones*, 248; and Wright, "The Categories of Rich and Poor in the Qumran Sapiential Literature," in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 101–23, esp. 116.
33. See, for example, Benjamin Wright III, "Wisdom and Women at Qumran," *Dead Sea Discoveries* 11 (2004): 258, who raises the issue of what the presence of women in 4QInstruction, which we might gather from the number of copies found at Qumran was popular with the community there, means for understanding family life amongst the covenanters. Of course, if the text predates the *yahad* there is no reason to jump to this conclusion.
34. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 175–98. For Matthew Goff in *The Worldly and the Heavenly*, 127–67, esp. 150, the economic status of the *maven* and his community is referred to in order to teach them about their divine inheritance.
35. Harrington, *Wisdom Texts from Qumran*, 45.
36. See Josephus, *Jewish War* 2.8, 4 sect. 124–27, and *CD* VII 6–7. In addition, see Strugnell and Harrington in *DJD* 34, 21, as well as Elgvin, "Wisdom and Apocalypticism," 246. Collins, in "The Eschatologizing of Wisdom in the Dead Sea Scrolls," found in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 64, following Lawrence Schiffman's argument in "Halakhic Elements in the Sapiential Texts from Qumran" also found in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 89–100, argues—on the basis on differences between 1Q/4QInstruction and other sectarian documents on the topic of halachah related to the vows of women—that this cannot be the case.
37. Wold, "Metaphorical Poverty in 'Musar leMevin,'" 145–46. See also *Women, Men, and Angels: The Qumran Wisdom Document Musar leMevin and its Allusions to Genesis Creation Traditions* (WUNT II 201; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).
38. *Ibid.*, 150–52.
39. *Ibid.*, 153. See also J. J. Collins, *Jewish Wisdom in the Hellenistic Age* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1997), 118–19.
40. Hutt, "Be Ye Approved Money Changers!," 595–600. See Safrai, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 865–907; Sanders, *Jesus and Judaism*, 61–76; Neusner, "Money-Changers in the Temple: The Mishnah's Explanation," 287–90; and Daniel Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 353n27.
41. Hutt, "Be Ye Approved Money Changers!," 596n22.
42. Curtis Hutt, "Pierre Bourdieu on the *verstehende Soziologie* of Max Weber," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 19 (2007): 241.
43. Marvin A. Sweeney, *Form and Intertextuality in Prophetic and Apocalyptic Literature* (FAT 45; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 239n1. See especially Stephen L. Cook's work on the emergence of the apocalyptic genre in priestly rather than in "marginalized or disenfranchised groups" in *Prophecy and Apocalypticism: The Postexilic Social Setting* (OBT; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

44. Daniel Harrington, "Mystery," *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. Lawrence Schiffman and James C. VanderKam; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:588–89. See also Daniel Harrington, "The *Raz Nihyeh* in a Qumran Wisdom Text (1Q26, 4Q415–418, 4Q423)," *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996): 549–53.
45. See Wold, "Metaphorical Poverty in 'Musar leMevin,'" 150–52. Wold's discussion of the "poverty" of angels is underdeveloped and elicits a basic skepticism. To cite Meir Bar-Ilan, who has generously offered comments on my project, Wold's reference to angelic poverty is remarkable as angelic beings in Second Commonwealth traditions are simply never—to his knowledge—described as poor.
46. See especially Martha Himmelfarb, "The Temple and the Garden of Eden in Ezekiel, The Book of Watchers, and the Wisdom of ben Sira," *Sacred Places and Profane Spaces: Essays in the Geographics of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (ed. Jamie Scott and Paul Simpson-Housley; Westport: Greenwood, 1991), 63–78. Also refer to Joseph Baumgarten, "Purification After Childbirth and the Sacred Garden in 4Q265 and Jubilees," in *New Qumran Texts and Studies: Proceedings of the First Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Paris 1992* (ed. George J. Brooke and Florentino Garcia Martinez; STDJ 15; Leiden: Brill, 1994); Daniel Lioy, *Axis of Glory: A Biblical and Theological Analysis of the Temple Motif in Scripture* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008); and J. M. Lundquist, *The Temple of Jerusalem: Past, Present, and Future* (Westport: Praeger Publications, 2008).
47. Wold, "Metaphorical Poverty in 'Musar LeMevin,'" 146–48; Goff, "Discerning Trajectories," 671–72.
48. Loren Stuckenbruck, "'Angels' and 'God': Exploring the Limits of Early Jewish Monotheism," *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. Loren Stuckenbruck and Wendy North; JSNTSS 263; London: T. & T. Clark, 2004), 63–66.
49. See John Collins, "Mysteries of God. Creation and Eschatology in 4QInstruction and the Wisdom of Solomon," *Wisdom and Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Biblical Tradition* (ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez; BETL 168; Leuven: Peeters, 2003), 301–03. Cana Werman, "What is the *Book of Hagu*?" in *Sapiential Perspectives*, 140, argues that at the time of the writing of 1Q/4QInstruction the "vision of Hagu [read: meditation]" was not yet the book mentioned elsewhere in other texts found at Khirbet Qumran.
50. Torleif Elgvin, "4QWays of Righteousness b," *DJD* 20, 197–200. Note that Elgvin views 4Q421 12 1–5 as a composite text with presectarian priestly origins.
51. Wright, "The Categories of Rich and Poor in the Qumran Sapiential Literature," 113.
52. In *DJD* 34, 353–54, Strugnell and Harrington note three uses of the term "epha" in 1Q4QInstruction and only two in all other Qumran manuscripts combined. The term "shekel" is found seven times in the former and nine times in the rest. See also Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Qumran Community*, 171–72; Wold, "Metaphorical Poverty in 'Musar LeMevin,'" 143. Daryl Jefferies, *Wisdom at Qumran: A Form-Critical Analysis of the Admonitions in 4QInstruction* (Piscataway: Gorgias Press, 2004),

- 55–57, supplies us with a less than comprehensive list of words in *4QInstruction* related to wealth and poverty.
53. See, for example, the first and last chapters of Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973) on “thick description” and “deep play.”
54. See Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 353n27, as well as Hutt, “Be Ye Approved Money Changers!,” 606–07, esp. n. 48.
55. The meaning of this term found fifteen times in *4QInstruction* and only once elsewhere (see also 4Q424 1 6) in the Dead Sea Scrolls is disputed. See Strugnell and Harrington’s review of this term in *DJD* 36, 31–32.
56. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 183.
57. *Ibid.*, 176–77.
58. Various legal papyri from Elephantine are published in the *Textbook of Aramaic Documents from Ancient Egypt A-D* (ed. Bezalel Porten and Ada Yardeni; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1986–1999). Regarding the archives of Babatha and Salome Komaïse, see Naphtali Lewis, *The Documents from the Bar-Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters: Greek Papyri* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989), and Hannah Cotton, “The Archive of Salome Komaïse Daughter of Levi: Another Archive from the ‘Cave of Letters,’” *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 105 (1995): 171–208.
59. See Strugnell and Harrington’s comments on the use of this terminology in connection with marriage contracts in *DJD* 34, 47–49.
60. Murphy, *Wealth in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 177.
61. *Ibid.*, 204–06.
62. Wold, “Metaphorical Poverty in ‘Musar LeMevin,’” 142–43.
63. This occurs in the Christian Testament in statements linked to Jesus (Matt 19:4) and Paul (Eph 5:31), as well as in the work of Philo (e.g., *Legum Allegoriae* 2, *Quaestiones et Solutiones in Genesim* 1).
64. See n. 46 above.
65. See also 4Q416 1 3 and 4Q418 118 3.
66. *DJD* 20, 197–200.
67. Schiffman, “Halakhic Elements in the Sapiential Texts from Qumran,” 94–99.

Peddlers, the Great Jewish Migration, and the Riddle of Economic Success

Hasia Diner

The history of Jews and the history of peddling went together across the centuries. From the early modern period into the twentieth century, in nearly every place they lived, some, in fact many, and at times most, of them put packs on their backs or clambered up to take their seats on carts, pulled by draft animals, and set off on countless roads to sell, something. As a lived phenomenon, peddling linked their lives in one part of the world and another. Regardless of geography or time, into the early twentieth century it served as their economic *métier* and helped define relations within their communities and between them and their non-Jewish neighbors.

It served furthermore as the vehicle that propelled their migrations from one place to another. Starting slowly at the end of the eighteenth century and then accelerating in intensity and scope, it provided the engine that drove their movements out of Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and North Africa to the big new world, including most importantly the United States. It was an ordinary, and literally pedestrian, occupation. It brought them as well to Canada, Central and South America, Australia, and South Africa. It also opened a path for them into the British Isles—England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland—as well as Sweden, not part of the Europeans' new world, but places where no or few Jews had ever lived and as such new for them.

They had no choice but to make the roads their homes. Whether male or female, whether, like most, consigned to a lifetime of this kind of selling or for a few, able to leap to more comfortable and stable livelihoods, peddling consumed the energies of the masses of the world's Jews from the early modern period, if not before. It mattered little if they sold to Christian customers in Europe or to Muslims in North Africa and the Middle East, the words "Jew" and "peddler" went together. The fact of peddling gave shape to their encounter with lived time, as their families and communities reflected the reality of peddling as a nearly universal Jewish experience.

Across this epic swath of time and space, Jewish peddlers moved in and out and around their territories, traversing chunks of space that many defined as inherently hostile. Even when and where they developed positive relations with their customers, which seems to have happened with some regularity, even when they interacted positively with the non-Jews to whom they sold,

their lack of rights and their fundamental otherness made the environments around which they moved sites of potential danger.

At times they inspired pity, although nearly always tinged with disgust, in others, like that expressed by the nineteenth century Austrian Romantic poet Nikolaus Lenau who addressed the paradigmatic

Wretched Jew, forced to wander,
Peddling wares through village and dale,
Poorly fed and shivering cold
Forever hawking, "Goods for sale."¹

Lumped together with the other poor Jews who filled particular degraded and related economic roles, including "the pawnbroker, the money-lender, the dealer in second-hand goods, the huckster, the old-clothes man, the usurer, the stock-jobber, always the same," as enumerated by Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu in 1900, peddlers stood at the bottom of the Jewish economy, while they represented cosmopolitan consumption, even material excess, to their customers, who with some justification saw them as the agents of the market.²

In the modern period, and even before it, the Jewish peddler represented someone in need of rescue and rehabilitation, someone upon whom "all possible scorn and disdain," had been "heaped," as described in a novel of the 1840s by the French writer Ben-Levi, the nom de plume of Eugene Sue. Yet at the same time the Jewish peddler constituted "the pivot around which all important transactions took place" when it came to the rural folk who constituted the majority populations of these societies. Both in reality and in the imagination of customers, local elites, the Jewish peddlers themselves, and the Jewish notables who fretted over the condition of the Jews, particularly in the age of Jewish emancipation, peddling constituted something more than an occupation. It connected Jews and non-Jews but also appeared to be a shameful way of life and a degraded way of making a living.³

That process of emancipation, starting in the latter part of the eighteenth century, by which Jews could and would become citizens of their various countries and experience integration, had as its goal making Jews more like the people among whom they lived. But peddling, which continued well into the twentieth century, made Jews different from the peoples around them. It exacerbated their essential differences while it structured the basic relationship between Jews and non-Jews and between Jewish peddlers and their fellow Jews.

The Jews' peddling experiences of the many regions that they would leave as they looked for new worlds beginning at the end of the eighteenth century had a history that extended, depending on the definition of peddling,

from the Middle Ages, or even earlier, into the twentieth century. Whether in Europe or in the Muslim lands, peddling occupied the lowest level of the Jewish ladder of trade. But despite its lowly placement, it made possible trade, which in turn defined Jewish existence.

Jewish life fostered a commitment to trade, and conversely, trade underlay the basic patterns of how and where Jews lived. The two, trade and the Jews, cannot be disentangled, or as put by the Polish Jewish historian Simon Dubnov in 1928, the two have always been “so entwined . . . they cannot be divided.” Unlike the histories of “other European peoples, Jewish economic history involves not only 3,000 years,” but also took place across the canvas of “the whole world.”⁴

The riddle of Jewish trade of all kinds, whether peddling or fixed place, the question why so many of them gravitated to trade has puzzled scholars and commentators, both detractors and defenders of the Jews, for centuries. Did, they have asked, Jews trade because they suffered disabilities all over the world, which barred them from engaging in that most fundamental and normal activity by which most human beings “earned their bread,” namely, agriculture? Did, particularly starting in the medieval period, the exclusion of Jews from the guilds relegate them to commerce and from commerce on to the roads with their misery and backpacks?⁵ The long history of Jewish forced migrations, commencing even before the onset of the common era, has been enlisted as an explanation of the fact that wherever and whenever they lived, they turned to trade in one form or another. As perpetual outsiders, always strangers and different than the autarkic people of the places where they resided, they could not assume that they would be able to remain in place, unchallenged in their right of residence.

After all, they had once lived and even thrived in Spain, the Rhine Valley, the south of France, and England, four places from which they experienced painful expulsions. Those expulsions as well as others less famous conditioned them to cast their lot with trade, investing in assets that they could carry with them to wherever they went next and to hone skills transferrable from one place to another. Even if not actually expelled, they endured waves of violence, massacres like those that convulsed Europe at the time of the Crusades, and this too pushed Jews to seek new places that seemed to offer both greater security and enhanced prospects for making a living. Intuiting that they might have to pick up and leave a place quickly, the logic runs, conditioned Jews to turn to trade, something they could do anyplace. It constituted their movable asset.

These negative explanations of the Jewish proclivity towards trade assume that Jews would have, if circumstances or the law had allowed, become

farmers and lived like the majority of the world's population, tilling the soil and building a life that took its basic structure from the needs and rhythm of the agricultural life. But other more positive explanations have been enlisted to puzzle out the origins of the Jewish encounter with trade. These positive explanations, and not positive in the sense of good or correct, have rather asserted that something about the Jews themselves facilitated their embrace of trade.

Some commentators, many who can be considered antisemites, presented biological or instinctive explanations. The innate Jewish character included a compulsion to trade, and with that a proclivity to cheat and to do anything for profit. Their greed and materialism inspired their economic activities, from the peddler trudging the road to the financiers who controlled the world economy, as presented so graphically and grotesquely in the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This racialized analysis in its extreme culminated in the writings of scientific racists of the late nineteenth century, which in turn received their most elaborate and horrific embodiments in Nazi rhetoric and policy.

Even if not categorically racist, many of the foundational figures of the field of sociology and political economy saw the Jew as fundamentally business obsessed, whether because of his religion, which allowed him to treat non-Jews differently than his own people, or his basic nature, which some writers attributed to his more highly developed intellect, a factor that facilitated business transactions. Karl Marx, the most complicated of these, in his "The Jewish Question" of 1844 suggested, "Let us look at the actual . . . Jew of our time . . . the Jew of everyday life. What is the Jew's foundation in our world? Material necessity, private advantage. What is the object of the Jew's worship in this world? Usury/huckstering. What is his worldly god? Money. . . . Money is the zealous god of Israel." As to peddlers, Marx did not ignore them. The Jewish peddler, with "his goods and his counter on his back, thought only of making money . . . the bill of exchange is the real god of the Jews."⁶ With a bit more subtlety, Werner Sombart in 1911 in *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* reiterated how Judaism as a religious system, undergirded by its canonical texts of Torah and Talmud, enabled the Jew, *homo Judaeus*, to transform himself into *homo capitalisticus*.⁷

The history of Jews and trade could be perhaps better understood in terms of their long history as a migratory people. Millennia of global migrations liberated the Jews from the limitations and rigors of farming and allowed them to trade. Those migrations created vast Jewish networks across continents, rendering the Jews a worldwide people whose communal contacts made it possible for them to secure credit and gain access to goods through Jewish

channels, regardless of where the individual Jewish trader may have lived. That transnational Jewish world, embedded in religious practice, undergirded by education and literacy, linked by the idea of collective responsibility and the ties of trade, in turn stimulated linguistic flexibility, which also shaped Jewish economic history.⁸

Because of their centuries-long immersion in world trade, Jews stood poised to take advantage, and indeed help shape, modernity and the emergence of capitalism. Business demanded of them a need to be aware of new markets, new products, and new tastes, which all had to come together to inspire women and men to want to consume items they had never had before. Whether luxury goods, textiles, jewelry, furs, hides, watches, eyeglasses, or coffee, among others, Jewish traders depended on the expansion of markets and the accumulation of capital. Freed from a commitment to any land—England, France, Westphalia, Podolia—or any plot of land, not chained to landowners like the serfs, then peasants, they had much to gain by following their hunches that told them that some new place offered opportunities for a better future, a better field of operation for them to do what they had long been doing, buying and selling. For many scholars, this long history helps not only to contextualize the deep history of Jews and trade, but also goes a long way to understanding their relationship to capitalism in the modern period.⁹

Counter to the notion that Jews turned to trade because anti-Jewish restrictions prevented them from doing anything else, it in fact liberated them from agriculture, from its unpredictability and its rootedness in a single and fixed place. Likewise, in numerous times and places, trade actually protected the Jews. Jews brought goods to towns, regions, principalities, and nations, enriching the coffers of the state and extending credit. In most places, this ensured that the Jews would be allowed to stay, even if they had no formal rights. Jews, peddlers included, often played a crucial role in mediating between the poor agriculturalists who did the basic work of the society and the landowners. Jewish peddlers exchanged goods for agricultural products and engineered the transactions between fields and marketplaces. This too, a function that at many times inspired hatred and resentment against the Jewish peddler, made possible the basic operation of the local economy. The Jew who brought the wheat or flax to market, who negotiated the sale price and provided the peasant farmers with goods, occupied a crucial niche in maintaining the status quo. No less an exalted figure than the Emperor Franz, the august ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in 1795 lauded the peddlers, endowing them with a privileged status:

Since peddling promotes and multiplies the more rapid trade of manufactured products . . . for the benefit of the producers, and also creates the advantage for the greater part of consumers that they may obtain some wares more cheaply than in stores, and given that each individual is free to buy from the peddler or merchant, peddling thus belongs among the useful trades and livelihoods; thus one does not put an end to it because of abuses, which creep into all human interactions, but rather only the abuses are to be dealt with.¹⁰

Those with political power recognized the Jews' crucial place in this system, protecting at least the useful Jews from expulsion and harassment. Not discounting or diminishing the history of expulsions or dismissing the reality that Jews in deeply religious Christian and Muslim societies faced a kind of omnipresent danger, in most cases and at most times Jews did not find themselves cast out and wandering the roads in search of some safe place to live. Trade, whether high end or low end, provided some modicum of security to an otherwise insecure existence.¹¹

Explanations that see trade as liberating for the Jews rather than as the negative result of discrimination have also emphasized the absence of any distrust of business and material acquisition within their religious system. Jews traded because they could. Judaism mandated universal male literacy in Hebrew and not coincidentally trade required the ability to read and write, as well as to do sums, keep account books, calculate percentages, even know something about world geography. Throughout the Jewish world, over the course of centuries, young people grew up with trade all around them. They breathed in the idea, almost from the air around them, learning from life itself that business defined everyday existence. Since trade depended upon numeracy, literacy, and linguistic flexibility, young people entered adulthood knowing with a degree of certainty that they would trade. To them, the circumstances of the Jews made business seem just the normal and expected thing to do, whether they entered the field among the lucky few at the higher rungs or the more typical masses who inhabited the lower ones, including the peddlers. The reality that trade demanded literacy, and that the Jewish tradition did also, further cemented the bond between trade and Jewish life. Both their religion and their livelihood pivoted on access to the written word. These two needs for literacy conjoined with each other.

Other details of Jewish life fostered trade, and conversely trade sustained Jewish ties and commitments. Judaism mandated that Jews provide *hachmassat orchim* [hospitality for visitors]. It required that they as individuals or through the aegis of their organized communities had to make available places for Jew-

ish wayfarers to lodge, partake of kosher food, and spend Sabbath and holidays. Those on the road in need of such services included traveling merchants of whatever class.

Trade in fact brought Jews from one region into the homes, synagogues, and communal institutions of others, with the bonds of Jewishness far surpassing the potential suspicion of strangers. Jews in one place, as they hosted Jewish merchants in their time off the road, developed an understanding that Jewishness trumped differences of place of origin or dialect. When the bishop of Paderborn in the 1770s issued an edict allowing Polish Jewish peddlers to come in and sell in his territory, he exposed the Jews of his German speaking Westphalian town to their coreligionists from the east; while that no doubt had not been his goal, he provided one more link in a Jewish chain of belonging.¹²

Jewish communities took their shape from trade, with peddling a crucial part inasmuch as all credit came from within the Jewish world. The well-off gave credit and goods to the poor merchants, who in turn extended credit to even smaller operatives, down to the peddlers. The larger Jewish merchants depended upon the more humble ones to sell their goods, and Jewish enclaves functioned as virtual lending institutions, making religious life, collective identity, and business dealings tightly intertwined. When Jews moved either as individuals, families, or as full communities, they turned to the Jews already resident in these places to facilitate their adjustment, to help them settle in, and not coincidentally, to get started in business. In Europe, furthermore, ties of trade, from the top to the bottom, depended on a common language, and from the year approximately 1000 CE, Yiddish in its many variants served as the Jews' lingua franca. Hebrew also came to be used by Jews as the language of contracts. Trade, like belief and adherence to the Judaic system, held the Jews together.

While trade united Jews, it also stimulated intra-Jewish class antagonisms. The concentration of Jews in business meant that Jews essentially competed with one another. Which peddler had access to the best stash of goods? Who could get their hands on the newest items with which to entice customers? Within families, offspring rivaled one another for an opportunity to get started and make a living in the exact same line of work. The route functioned as an economic asset, and disputes arose in families, for example, as to which son could inherit the father's customers. These settings of petty and itinerant traders, particularly the ones who labored under the limitations of state-imposed restrictions, meant that every Jew in a town found himself or herself in rivalry with every other Jew.

The poor peddlers relied upon the same merchants to provide goods and credit. While Jewish law required that peddlers not encroach on one another's territory, their *medinah* [state], the fact of being in the same enterprise involved a competitive reality that made for communal tension. Also, as some Jews did spectacularly well, while others, in increasing numbers, languished at the bottom, resentment spread from top down and bottom up, challenging Jewish unity. Describing seventeenth century Italy (but it could be applied to other situations), one historian has noted, "two different sorts of Jewry-laws existed, one for the privileged loan bankers and one for the *universita' degli ebre*, a miserable proletariat of peddlers, second-hand dealers, woolcarders and ragpickers."¹³

Rulers and state officials played a role in exacerbating conflict within the Jewish communities. Governments divided Jews by their class status, crafting different laws for the well-off and for the poor, offering privileges to those with means and imposing burdens on those without means, the peddlers in particular. As such the two parts of the Jewish community, unequal in both numbers and rights, had different stakes in communal and political matters. Repeated in one form or another around the world until the modern era, where a Jew stood in the class and spectrum legally determined his bundle of privileges.

Regardless of the explanation for the Jewish embrace of commerce, it had been a fact of life for them. Certainly some Jews did make a living in crafts, and artisans always took their place in Jewish communities. But most of the artisans sold their products directly to the public, erasing the difference between commerce and craft. But even with that, the balance between trade and craft favored trade. Within the context of trade, peddling functioned as part of an integrated Jewish economy that descended from wealthy importers and international merchants down multiple steps with the peddlers as merely the bottom of that hierarchy.

The Jewish concentration in trade and the visible presence of peddlers took place in the context that other people peddled as well. Depending on time and place, Jews did not even make up a majority of the peddlers, but their Jewishness in both the Christian and Muslim worlds made their peddling different from the peddling of Christians in Europe and Muslims in the Levant and the Middle East. Some of those peddlers came from the ranks of the local people, with whom the customers shared language, a common narrative, and a set of religious beliefs. Even if they did not know them personally, they recognized in them a familiar person. Even the Scottish and Swiss peddlers who could be found in the German states and Poland still could meet their customers with a kind of familiarity, in as much as they adhered to a core religious idea, built around the acceptance of Jesus and the New Testament. All those

other peddlers had a fundamental right to go back to a region or community if their operations failed or if they succeeded so well that they could get off the road. The Jewish peddlers, on the other hand, stood out as different, had no place to return, and those differences allow their story to be told separately and on in its own terms.

The Jews also lived with a set of canonical texts and religious documents that endorsed and also regulated trade. While the Jews of antiquity made a living as farmers, early on trade became an element in their lives. Not only does the Hebrew Bible abound with references to trade and traders, stipulating obligations of sellers to buyers and buyers to sellers, but it also contained a pesky reference that would plague the Jews for centuries: Leviticus 25:37, which forbade Jews from charging interest to other Jews and by omission allowed them to do so if the transaction involved someone not their “brother.”

The Talmud and other early rabbinic sources make clear how much trade pervaded community life, abounding with the details of business transactions. Discussions of business run through the tractates of the Mishnah and Gemara, which together constitute the Talmud, while midrashim dealing with commerce abounded. Peddlers show up in these classic sources. Referred to as *rokhlīm*, peddlers inspired suspicion within the Jewish world, and the name itself comes from the word *rokhel* [gossip].¹⁴ While tagged with this unflattering moniker, the idea of the peddler in rabbinic sources often took on positive connotations. The commentator Johanan ben Nuri of the first century of the common era was known as “the peddler’s box” [or the *kuppat rokhlīm*] because he provided so many good answers to questions dealing with Jewish law and practice that his admirers compared him to the seemingly limitless range of goods that the peddlers carried. Like the *rokhel*, who could bring forth from his sack or box a variegated trove of items, all pleasing, so too ben Nuri could pull forth an abundance of fine solutions to problems posed.¹⁵

Later, the Cairo Genizah, the stash of documents hidden for centuries in the attic of the Ibn Ezra synagogue in Cairo, contained vast amounts of material about traders, including itinerant ones, who shuttled back and forth around the Mediterranean basin as far back to the ninth century of the common era.¹⁶ Jewish trading, including the peripatetic kind, went so far back into the Jewish past that Arthur Ruppin, an early Jewish demographer and economist of the turn of the twentieth century, noted in 1911, “it was not in Europe that the Jews first became traders: since the Babylonian exile they had devoted themselves in ever-increasing numbers to trade in Syria, Egypt, Babylon,” among other places. Ruppin indeed stated categorically that “law would never have succeeded in confining the Jews to work as traders and pedlars if

the Jews had not already come to Europe in these capacities,” referring back to the time of the Roman conquest of the continent.¹⁷

The medieval and particularly the early modern eras served as the jumping-off point for extensive global Jewish trade, with peddling in particular emerging as a ubiquitous factor in Jewish life. The fact that Jews lived and traded in these places as far back as the beginning of the first millennium came later on in the emancipation period to be a Jewish line of argument, asserting that Jews had been present for centuries in whatever given place and that their presence had shaped these countries. Guido Kisch, an historian writing in 1944, commented in an article on “The Jews’ Function in the Medieval Evolution of Economic Life” that “it was, no doubt, as itinerant merchants that many of the Jewish pioneers penetrated Germany in the early centuries. In the Carolingian era, ‘Jew’ and ‘merchant’ were used as almost interchangeable terms. The economic structure of the early medieval town, still markedly agrarian in complexion, did not allow considerable place for commerce.” The Jews, Kisch wrote at a time when Germany engaged in its ruthless campaign of annihilation of the Jews, “were needed and used for certain pioneering functions. . . . This need existed as long as the majority of the population had no interest in or no ability for such economic services.”¹⁸

In the transition from the medieval to the late medieval and then the early modern period, monumental changes in Jewish geography took place, as Jews penetrated western Europe and then began to move eastward, and that movement depended on trade. So too, trade facilitated their dispersion from Spain in the forced exodus of the latter part of the fifteenth century and early sixteenth. As the refugees from the Iberian Peninsula settled in the Mediterranean littoral or in northern Europe, their trading activities continued and reached an even wider geographic scope. Whether carrying utilitarian goods or luxury items brought through Jewish trade networks, the place Jews occupied in society emanated from their trading roles, and the peddlers made the day-to-day, immediate contacts between the Jewish merchant class and the customers.

That this history spans no less than nine centuries, from approximately 1000 to 1800, and covers a geographic scope that included the world of the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean, western Europe, eastern Europe, and even the Americas, makes it neither possible nor necessary to try to tell a detailed history of Jews and trade or even Jewish peddling before the modern period.¹⁹ Suffice it to say, the vast subject of Jewish history in this period, only two centuries short of a millennium, has spawned sagging shelves of books, journals, and articles running into the hundreds of thousands, many of them specific to particular periods of time and specific places, others broader in geographic or

chronological scope, and few of them fail to mention the centrality of trade. That literature might be summarized by saying that Jewish trade expanded exponentially in the Middle Ages as Jews began to enter throughout the Christian and Islamic worlds into the interstices of the world's economy, where they shuttled back and forth between the classes, the nobility and the peasantry in particular.

As those states and their agents forbade Jews from making a living in some areas, trade emerged as the opening wedge for the Jews as they sought to make a living someplace else. Officials of one jurisdiction or another found ways to make this work in their interests, allowing, or pushing, the Jews to take on crucial mercantile functions that the populace did not want to undertake, but that those officials considered important. In the years 1756 through 1763, the Seven Years' War, for example, Frederick the Great pursued a policy of currency devaluation, a measure many in Silesia in particular found to be odious. So he turned to a knot of Jewish men, Veitel Ephraim, his sons, and Daniel Itzig. The men, elite merchants, employed Jewish peddlers, those who honeycombed the countryside selling their goods, to convey currency from other nearby countries and to distribute the worthless currency there as well. Those who got stuck with the currency no longer worth much in Frederick's domain referred to the bad money as "Ephraimites."²⁰ Fortuitous or not for either the Jews or the state, Jews and trade became organically bound up with each other.

Throughout this lengthy period of time, authorities, often under pressure from the non-Jewish merchants and town residents, began to enact restrictions on Jewish traders. Bans, for example, on urban Jewish retailers hastened the move toward Jewish concentration in the rural and itinerant trade, while simultaneously, rulings in Europe that forbade Christians from taking interest also opened up new vistas for Jewish traders, peddlers among them, who extended credit to customers unable to pay the full amount for the goods that they bought.²¹ With the passage of centuries, restrictions on where Jews could trade, when they could trade, and what goods they could carry peppered the law books of a multiplicity of jurisdictions. No jurisdiction just let them trade what they wanted.

Because guilds, states, and other agencies of the non-Jewish society limited the Jews from some activities, usually those most fundamental to the working of the societies and their economies, and prevented them from dealing in certain goods, Jews had to experiment with new items, new modes of commerce, and develop those activities not covered by the law. This kind of dealing in novelty, and indeed the act of going out on the road and selling

directly to people so different than themselves, involved a degree of risk. Peddling involved, in fact, all kinds of risks.

Contemporary Jewish sources focused on the experiences endured by their own, and the global Jewish press monitored and reported attacks on Jewish peddlers, whether accompanied by anti-Jewish rhetoric or not. Whether such plunders took place in Egypt, Lithuania, Morocco, Bavaria, Tunisia, or Bohemia, newspapers like London's *Jewish Chronicle*, launched in 1841, chronicled such outrages with regularity. "A Jewish hawker was robbed in Algeria," it told its readers in 1875, and as "Algerians sleep in the street during the summer . . . someone must have seen it." In 1877, the newspaper told of a similar event in Tunis, where a "19 year old Jewish hawker was lured into an Arab home and murdered. The murderers ripped him and put him in a sack and carried the sack through the streets to burn it. Another Jew was suspicious and cut a hole in the sack and saw the dead man. The murderers fled."

In 1881, the *Chronicle* reported on an attack in the Russian province of Zhitomir, where "several Jewish hawkers were attacked by hundreds of peasants and the hawkers' goods were destroyed," and the like. Hundreds of such tidbits showed up in the *Jewish Chronicle*, in a column at times titled, "Crime, Anti-Semitism Global News," and such stories confirmed the view that peddling in the old world exposed Jews to dangers on the road.²² The frequency of such pieces, which could be read as well in French, German, Russian, and American Jewish newspapers, all confirmed the precariousness of peddlers' lives, the vulnerability of their lives in their premigration homes, and the global dimensions of Jewish peddling.

Peddlers trod or rode the roads laden with desirable goods and cash in one form or another. A tasty target for thieves wherever they went, and vulnerable to physical attacks by those who wanted their goods and would kill for it, Jewish peddling, like that undertaken by all who tried to support themselves and their families by means of this trade, involved risk of bodily harm.²³ As unarmed men on the road they fell prey to banditry. Because of that, they consistently hailed the spread of state authority in the nineteenth century, when central governments made some progress in promulgating order on the roads, doing so in large measure to improve the flow of commercial goods, including those carried by the peddlers. Improvements in the enforcement of the law and in transportation, with better roads, canals, and eventually the railroad, made the peddlers' lives easier, and they could more easily go from place to place and could with greater ease go back home for the Sabbath and holidays.²⁴

In most all the places where peddlers brought their goods to customers' homes, serious differences in language, religion, and nationality divided the

local populations. Jews not only had to learn to negotiate multilingual environments, but also had to cope with vast, and often hostile, conflicts between Greeks and Turks, Galician Poles and Galician Ruthenians, Arabs and Berbers in Morocco, and French and German speakers in Alsace, among many such groupings. In the lands that would become a unified Germany in 1871, religion rather than nationality or language split people into hostile camps, with Lutherans, Catholics, Pietists, and Evangelicals all living in proximity to each other and all customers of the Jewish peddlers.

And in each of those places from which they hailed, peddling had long been established as a Jewish way of life. All of the emigrants would have known peddling and peddlers and would have understood it to be a normal, reasonable, and natural way to make a living. References to the culture of peddling in the places they left run through their memoirs, autobiographies, family chronicles, and the biographies written about them and their postmigration experiences, in such profusion that they cannot be counted. While not all or even most of the actual emigrants peddled before emigration, they grew up in worlds in which simply put, Jews peddled.

Everywhere in the Jews' old world, the peddlers provided their customers with goods that they wanted or that they had just learned to want. Plagued by bad roads and poor transportation, the peasant masses had little access to towns and markets, and Jewish peddlers with their sundry goods went from village to village and to the cottages in the countryside. The Jews lived in small clusters in the countryside so that they could organize their selling on a weekly cycle. Typically, they set off on Sunday and returned for the Sabbath. As one writer described them, "these unfortunate peddlers may be seen all week long trudging along the roads, stick in hand, their backs bent under the weight of a load of merchandise, representing their entire wealth; they wander over hill and dale, living on black bread and water." Some walked, while the better off among them had a horse and wagon. By the middle of the nineteenth century, as local western and central European Jews abandoned peddling as a result of multiple factors including the entry of the railroad into the region, the Jews' eventual emancipation, the move of many of them into the lower strata of the commercial bourgeois, and their exodus to both French cities and the United States, east European Jews moving from east to west got on those same roads and took up the peddler's pack.²⁵

Each one of the places Jews left during the great migration had extensive and complicated histories, including peddling histories, of their own. Each deserves to be described in its own terms, as a unique narrative involving local resources, power relationships, agricultural and geographical details, and the

specific history of their Jews. But in the most profound sense, these histories resembled each other more than they differed one from the other, in that in all of them Jews, on the eve of migration, lived in societies shaped by their marginal status and their immersion in peddling. Arthur Ruppin in his 1913 portrait of *The Jews To-Day* linked in one sentence “Russia, Roumania and Turkey,” all places that “have made it impossible for the Jews . . . to make the best use of their talents; so they,” in all those places despite the otherwise great differences between them, “eke out a miserable existence with petty handicrafts and peddling.”²⁶

Peddlers labored under different names in the various places. In German a peddler could be a *Hausier* [denoting the fact that he went from house to house], a *schacherjude* [a deprecating term that indicated the low-class goods he carried and his haggling style],²⁷ a *dorfgeher* [or one who goes to the villages], a *dorfloyfer* [one who runs to the villages], or a *pakeltreger* [package bearer], while in French he operated as a *colporteur* [to bear a burden], a term used for French Jews who like their sisters and brothers to the east and south also made a living bearing goods on their backs. In Yiddish a whole range of terms developed, including *vocher* [or weekly man] because of the peddler’s weekly circuit, *tendler*, *pakntregger*, *karabalnik*, and *dorfgeyer*. *Handelsman*, yet another German designation for the peddler, had a bit more dignity attached to it—someone who deals—but still denoted the merchant who trod the roads. On the other hand, to say someone dealt in *Nothandel*, used to describe the peddler’s merchandise, connoted the degraded state of the goods, the peddlers, and the customers. After the migration to America took off the English word “peddler” came to be used in Europe as a Yiddish word, written in Hebraic characters, with the verb *gepeddlet* and the noun *peddlerei*, referring to the peddler’s goods, grafted into the Yiddish lexicon. In Hungary the peddler sometimes bore the name *dorsarius*, from the Latin word for back, because as Marx put it, their backs doubled as their stores.

Because of the personal and communal linkages between Jewish peddlers at the bottom of the economic chain and the better-off urban Jewish merchants at the top, those who went out to the villages had broad access to a wide array of goods. They used intra-Jewish trade connections to bring to the women of the rural areas and small towns wares often only available in the larger cities. The humble peddlers could bring the newest, the most au courant fashions and the novelties that the local merchants could not. The Jewish wholesalers who got those goods likewise relied on communal networks that extended far beyond the boundaries of the countries in which they operated, increasing the range of goods that the peddlers could stuff into their bags.

The Jewish peddlers' ability to get goods from a broad range of places held for everywhere they peddled. Particularly in the German-speaking lands, so broken up and divided into multiple jurisdictions, this gave them an advantage, at least when it came to what they could bring to their customers. Although there had been a Jewish presence in the Germanic-speaking lands since the beginning of the common era, only after the Thirty Years War of the mid-seventeenth century did Jewish peddling take off. As it became forbidden for Jews to go into retail trade, they instead turned to the roads and basically transformed their bodies into stores of their own. As villagers came to want and be able to buy more nonessential consumer goods, the peddlers satisfied these yearnings. As in so many other places in Germany or in fact elsewhere, the peddlers diversified by also collecting old paper, rags, bones, and bits and pieces of fur, carrying them on their backs or in their wagons and then selling them for recycling, as it were.

One estimate of the latter part of the eighteenth century put the size of the peddler population as constituting more than half of the Jews of what would become Germany. Baden, a particularly rural area, had a Jewish population in which three-quarters supported itself through the *schacher* trades.²⁸ Wurttemberg enumerated in 1812 that 85.5 percent of its Jews fell into the "huckster" category, another way to denote peddlers.²⁹ Prussia provided particularly detailed information, based on the 1843 census, a moment in time when emancipation had already begun for some Jews. Of 62,185 gainfully employed Jews, 43.1 percent made a living in trade. Of these 1,140 were wholesalers and bankers, 6,003 owned their own shops, while 13,238 stood at the bottom, and among them, 4,499 exclusively labored as peddlers.³⁰

Jews settled in the small villages in part because they faced onerous restrictions in the larger towns and cities and because of the poverty of the road system and the paucity of local merchants, taking advantage of the lacunae in the local infrastructure, both physical and human. Jews living in these villages perforce had to travel far distances by foot or wagon to go from customer to customer and then to wend their way to markets in larger towns to buy more goods. In most of these transactions the Jews also bought up agricultural surpluses, which they also had to carry to the markets to sell for the peasant farmers. In all of this the Jewish peddler extended credit and loaned money to his customers, often for a pawn.³¹

No matter the closeness of the Jews and their Christian customers, the amount of time the peddlers spent in their homes, or the number of years that they sold to the same family, the gentile population associated Jews only with trade. They to some degree saw only a difference in kind between the Jewish

merchants at the top and the peddlers who crossed their thresholds. An early nineteenth century commentary in Wurttemberg opined, vis-à-vis the Jews, “If they are wealthy, they use their money for the most contemptible usury; they trade in debts themselves, unload bad livestock on the poor peasants for exorbitant prices on credit. . . . If the Jews are poor, they deceive the ignorant and gullible peasants with their hawking, delivering inferior wares and stealing wherever they have a chance.” Such rhetoric, however, did nothing to lessen the dependence of the Jews on the Christians and conversely.³²

Whatever language used, by whatever appellation they went, they peddled. Modern Jewish history could indeed be told as a history of peddling, and then its eventual demise. Examples from a few places can stand for the totality of the experience. For example, peddling thoroughly dominated Jewish life in France, Alsace in particular, the most easterly part of France, sandwiched between it and the German states. Here peddlers outnumbered all other Jews. A French Jewish newspaper, *Univers Israelite* in 1863, as peddling plummeted from its previous dominance, described how earlier in the century, not only did Jewish peddlers peddle from months on end, from Passover until winter, but also “during the First Empire,” the rule of Napoleon, peddling was the chief occupation of the Jews. Thus, according to the census of 1808, 20 of approximately 26 Jewish families of Fontainebleau were so engaged; and in Versailles, Orleans, and Nantes all the Jews were peddlers.”³³ Even more so in Alsace and Lorraine, the French-German borderland, Jews made a living, meager at best, as peddlers.

They shared the roads with other Jewish itinerants, who made their own paltry living as cattle dealers, another Jewish occupation that demanded a life built around going from farm to farm, dealing directly with farmers, and that took Jews for lengthy periods of time away from home. In the late eighteenth century the Prince of Birkenfeld, in Alsace, declared the Jews to be useful to the dwellers of the small villages, as the peddlers could bring the goods directly to their homes and the peasants would have no need to travel, perhaps avoiding the possibility that those same peasants would be spared contact with new, potentially dangerous ideas. If, he reasoned, the peddlers came to the peasants’ homes, the peasants would not be able to congregate in public spaces and maybe would not cause trouble and become parts of mobs, so threatening to the public order.³⁴

Notably with the French revolution and the emergence of a different kind of political order, the government came to find the peddlers problematic, their numbers so overwhelming in Alsace and Lorraine that when the French National Assembly emancipated the Jews of France in 1789 as part of the revolutionary mandate, it excluded these Yiddish-speaking poor Jews.

This thumbnail description of Alsace, again holding the specifics of political and legal developments aside, could have been Hungary and other parts of the Hapsburg Empire.³⁵ Thomas Masaryk, the Moravian-born first president of newly independent Czechoslovakia, recalled from his youth one Jewish peddler, a Mr. Fueschl. The Masaryk family, like the others with whom they lived, “were educated in anti-Semitism. . . . The Jews we were told, used the blood of Christian children for their Easter holidays.” Yet Mr. Fueschl, the peddler who came to their home, from whom his mother purchased sheets and linens, they put in a different category. They enjoyed his company, and “he would entertain his customers with stories of the factory from where he bought his goods, how many of each he had already sold and to whom. He would relate . . . news of Horodnin and other towns he visited. In short he brought a glimpse of the outside world into the monotonous life.”³⁶

Mr. Fueschl, the Masaryk family’s peddler, differed little from the “largest number” of Jewish peddlers in Moravia and Bohemia, Hungary, and Austria, who, according to an 1848 letter from Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch to the governor of Moravia, “must seek their bread” on the road away from the Jewish quarter. They mostly carried their packs on their backs selling sundry goods and collecting rags, hides, honey, and feathers, intended for resale but which they still had to tote. As of 1876, a relatively late date in the process of modernization of the economy and the emancipation of the Jews, in the town of Mattersdorf, in the Kingdom of Hungary, an equal number of Jews, 36, labored as peddlers, more than in the 14 other occupations combined.³⁷

But despite their degraded status, despite the reality that by their carrying their goods on their backs they resembled beasts of burden, they stimulated desires for material goods and at the same time encouraged the expansion of agricultural produce.³⁸ Peddlers in the Hapsburg Empire spoke Czech, German, and Slovak so as to cater to all their customers, although in the Jewish schools where the peddlers would send their children, they learned German, a nod to that language as the one that dominated the higher rungs of commerce, the state, and cosmopolitanism. The fact that the peddler knew the peasants’ language meant that his dealings with them transcended the simple sale of goods, although that lay at the heart of their relationship. As one observer noted, “In the country the Jew lives off the peasants, he trades, haggles, buys and sells. He is the supplier of the country people, their adviser, treasurer, in short their factotum.” As the Jews of the Hapsburg Empire began to enjoy their move into the middle and upper middle classes by the mid-nineteenth century, their coreligionists from the east came in and substituted for them as the people of the road. By the 1880s Jews from the eastern lands of the

Empire, specifically Galicia, had come to Vienna, and from there they went out to the towns and villages to sell finished products.³⁹

So too in Rumania, a complicated nation-state that in the nineteenth and twentieth changed borders and incorporated large swathes of territory where hundreds of thousands of Jews lived, peddling consumed the energies of many Jews. Jews brought city-made and western industrial goods into the homes of peasants in the region of Moldavia, for example, making trade possible there in a land with little in the way of its own commercial class.⁴⁰ Peddling in fact played such a central part in sustaining Jewish existence, that when in the 1880s the state outlawed peddling, the Jews experienced a massive, collective setback. Dripping with sarcasm, one writer for the *American Jewish Yearbook* of 1901-02 noted, "To ruin a thousand Jewish families assuredly is a meritorious deed, but there is one still more meritorious—to ruin five thousand families." A newly empowered liberal government brought this distress upon the Jews by passing the law of March 17, 1884, on "peripatetic commerce." This law completely suppressed the Jewish peddler of the towns, "and as for his confrere of the country, practical usage did the same for him."⁴¹ One estimate concluded that 20,000 Jews became instantly impoverished, or better further impoverished, when this peddling ban went into effect.⁴²

During the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, Jews who peddled, or even more so Jews who had parents who peddled, moved from the rural areas to the cities, as they traded peddler's boots for the shopkeeper's apron. Starting in western Europe, Alsace, and the German states, and then increasingly in parts of eastern Europe, political emancipation and economic modernization spread, and that meant that fewer and fewer Jews peddled. Young men in particular with the requisite general education, language skills, and some capital went into sedentary commerce in central Europe, while in eastern Europe factory employment, in particular the garment trades, loosened peddling's grip on Jewish life. The sons, and daughters, of peddlers found other ways to make a living.

A number of forces came together to make the number and proportion of Jews as peddlers, and peddlers as Jews, dwindle. On the one hand, moving again from west to east, the penetration of the railroad into the countryside, the rise of peasant cooperatives, and peasants' migrations to the cities in search of industrial work, as well as the migration of millions of non-Jews to the United States and elsewhere, shrank the need for the peddlers and the size of their pool of customers. Fewer Jews lived in the small towns that served as the peddlers' hubs. In the small Hessian town of Breidenbach, one of thousands

of examples to demonstrate this decline, 104 Jews made their home in 1858. By 1890 only 18 remained. The small towns ceased to provide Jews with a reason to stay put.⁴³

The spread of state-mandated secular education provided young Jews with the skills needed for commerce at levels beyond those of peddling. The erratic and piecemeal lifting of restrictions on Jews, every place except the Czarist lands, in terms of right of residence, marriage, or livelihood, liberated new generations of Jews from replicating their parents' lives on the road. Incalculable numbers of young Jews made the move from trudging the road as rural peddlers to becoming city shopkeepers and even to urban department store owners. Many of these benefited from remittances sent from faraway places by their siblings who had left home and participated in the great migration, sending back money that paid for new entrepreneurial ventures or sisters' dowries, which then ended up as the nest eggs for their husbands' stores. But this leap upward involved not so much peddlers themselves but their children.

True, some nineteenth century Jewish peddlers ended their lives as Jewish shopkeepers or entrepreneurs. The distance in terms of class between where the rare peddlers who started their adult lives on the road and ended up better off demonstrated the fluidity of conditions for the Jews in the nineteenth century and the opening up of opportunity.⁴⁴ But most Jews who began peddling in their youth continued to do so into old age. No doubt they took great pride in the fact that their sons did not have to peddle, but in the main those who got their start in life as peddlers, ended up doing it.⁴⁵ New world peddling, however, always constituted a fleeting experience. Shorter or longer periods of time may have been involved, but it never consumed a lifetime of labor.

The fact of peddling as a lifelong occupation shaped its basic character in the Jews' old world. So too the degree to which the state had not only restricted where, how, and what Jews could peddle, but also how it pursued policies to diminish the number of Jewish peddlers, distinguished it from postmigration Jewish peddling. The great Jewish migration, when millions of Jews sought out new homes in lands removed from those where they had been born and grown up, constitutes one of the watershed phenomena of Jewish history. Over three million Jews cast their lot with the new lands, places where they wagered life would be vastly better for them and their children. In that decision-making process and in the actual details of their journeys, new roads opened up to them. Peddling, their old and accursed *métier* from "back home," helped launch them.

NOTES

1. Qtd. in Amos Elon, *The Pity of It All: A History of Jews in Germany, 1743–1933* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 22
2. Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, *Israel Among the Nations: A Study of the Jews and Antisemitism* (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1900), 180.
3. Qtd. in Maurice Samuels, *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 103.
4. Simon Dubnov, "Voss Felt in Unser Economisher Geshikhte," in *Shriftn far Economic un Statistic* (ed. Jacob Leschinsky; Berlin: YIV, Economic and Statistical Branch, 1928), 1:180–83.
5. Jews clearly functioned as craftsmen as well as traders, and a literature exists from the nineteenth century onward trying to prove how artisanship equaled trade as the focus of Jewish economic activity. Most of these craftsmen, however, also sold their goods either directly to the public or, more often, relied on Jewish merchants, including peddlers, to get those goods to customers. As such artisanship did not exist independent of trade.
6. Qtd. in Marcus Arkin, *Aspects of Jewish Economic History* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1975).
7. For excerpts from these, see Marvin Perry and Frederick M. Schweitzer, *Antisemitic Myths: A Historical and Contemporary Anthology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), 75–89. See also Gustav Mayer, "German Socialism and Jewish Emancipation," *Jewish Social Studies* 1:4 (October 1939): 409–22.
8. Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004); Jerry Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010); Jonathan Karp, *The Politics of Jewish Commerce: Economic Ideology and Emancipation in Europe, 1638–1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Derek Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Modern Jewish Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Jonathan Israel, *European Jewry in the Age of Mercantilism: 1550–1750* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985); Maristella Botticini and Zvi Eckstein, *The Chosen Few: How Education Shaped Jewish History, 70–1492* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012).
9. Robert Chazan, *Reassessing Jewish Life in Medieval Europe* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
10. Qtd. in Penslar, *Shylock's Children*, 33.
11. Jersch-Wenzel, Stefi, "Jewish Economic Activity in Early Modern Times," in *In and Out of the Ghetto: Jewish-Gentile Relations in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia and Hartmut Lehmann; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 91–101.
12. Moses Shulvass, *From East to West: The Westward Migration of Jews from Eastern Europe During the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1971).

13. Mark Wischnitzer, *A History of Jewish Crafts and Guilds* (New York: Jonathan David, 1965), xix.
14. My thanks to Joshua Teplitzky and Yigal Sklarin for dozens of rabbinic references to peddlers.
15. *b. Gittin* 67a.
16. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the World As Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 1:157.
17. Arthur Ruppin, *The Jews of To-Day* (New York: Henry Holt, 1913), 48–49.
18. Guido Kisch, “The Jews’ Function in the Medieval Evolution of Economic Life,” *Historical Judaica* 6:1 (April 1944): 1–26.
19. There is to date no history of Jewish peddling in the Middle Ages or the early modern period, either globally or specific to a particular region. Likewise, no scholar has heretofore written a history of Jewish peddling and modernity.
20. Alex Bein, *The Jewish Question: A Biography of a World Problem* (Rutherford: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990), 176.
21. Arkin, *Aspects of Jewish Economic History*.
22. “An Example to the Authorities of Morocco,” *Jewish Chronicle* (June 25, 1975): 237; “Murder of a Jew in Tunis,” *Jewish Chronicle* (September 3, 1980): 5; “The Jews in Russia,” *Jewish Chronicle* (December 23, 1981): 16.
23. There is no history of peddling in general other than Laurence Lafontaine, *History of Peddlars in Europe* (Cambridge: Polity, 1996). As such we know relatively little about violence against non-Jewish peddlers or the extent of the discussion about their merits or demerits.
24. Annette B. Fromm, “A Ritual Blood Libel in Northwestern Greece,” in *From Iberia to Diaspora: Studies in Sephardic Culture* (ed. Yedida Stillman and Norman Stillman; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 49–57; Laskier and Simon, “Economic Life,” 39.
25. Vicki Caron, *Between France and Germany: The Jews of Alsace-Lorraine, 1871–1918* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988); Paula Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Zosa Szajkowski, *The Economic Status of the Jews in Alsace, Metz and Lorraine (1648–1789)* (New York: Editions Historiques Franco-Juives, 1954); Zosa Szakowski, *Poverty and Social Welfare Among French Jews (1800–1880)* (New York: Editions Historiques Franco-Juives, 1954); Samuel, “Jews, Modernity, and the Fiction of Ben-Levi.”
26. Ruppin, *The Jews of To-Day*, 56.
27. One commentator suggested that this widely used term came from the Hebrew word “shakhor,” or black, literally denigrating the peddler and the goods he carried.

28. Avraham Barkai, *Hoffnung und Untergang: Studien zur deutsch-judischen Geschichte des 19. Und 20 Jahrhunderts* (Hamburg: Hans Christian Verlag, 1998), 8; Emily C. Rose, *Portraits of Our Past: Jews of the German Countryside* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 151.
29. David Landes, "The Jewish Merchant: Typology and Stereotypology in Germany," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 19 (1974): 11–23.
30. Rurup, "Jewish Emancipation and Bourgeois Society."
31. See Bernard D. Weinryb, "Prolegomena to an Economic History of the Jews in Germany in Modern Times," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 1 (1956): 279–306.
32. Qtd. in Michael Brenner, Stefi Jesch-Wenzel, and Michael A. Meyer, eds., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 70.
33. Qtd. in Zosa Szajkowski, "Growth of the Jewish Population in France," *Jewish Social Studies* (1946): 297–401 (307).
34. Werener J. Cahnman, "Village and Small-Town Jews in Germany: A Typological Study," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 19 (1974): 109.
35. Qtd. in Wilma Abeles Iggers, *The Jews of Bohemia and Moravia: A Historical Reader* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 78.
36. *Thomas G. Masaryk and the Jews: A Collection of Essays* (New York: B. Pollak, 1941); Michael Lawrence Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution: The Jews of Moravia in the Age of Emancipation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011); Michael K. Silber, ed., *Jews in the Hungarian Economy: 1760–1945* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992); Zahava Szasaz Stessel, *Wine and Thorns. Tkay Valley Jewish Life in Hungary: The History of Abaujszatnto* (Madison: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 1995).
37. "Destroyed Jewish Community: Mattersdorf—Mattersburg (Since 1924)," <http://www.burgenland-bnch.org/JH/Mattersdorf/JH-Mattersdor-2.htm>, 2.
38. *Thomas G. Masaryk and the Jews*; Miller, *Rabbis and Revolution*; Silber, *Jews in the Hungarian Economy*; Stessel, *Wine and Thorns*.
39. Klaus Hodle, "Galician Jewish Migration to Vienna," *Polin* 12 (1999): 147–63.
40. James W. Parkes, "The History of the Jewish Community in Gentile Society," *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* 17 (1950): 18.
41. E. Schwarzfeld, "The Situation of the Jews of Roumania Since the Treaty of Berlin (1878)," *American Jewish Yearbook* (1901–02): 71.
42. Carol Iancu, *Jews in Romania, 1866–1919: From Exclusion to Emancipation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966); Ismar Elbogen, *A Century of Jewish Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1944); Lara Rabinovich, "'The Gravest Question': Romanian Jewish Migration to North America, 1900–1903" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2012).
43. *Sonneborn Beginnings: Distributed in Honor of the 80th Birthday of Rudolf G. Sonneborn*, Jewish Museum of Maryland, Vertical Files.

44. Kenneth Pomeranz and Steven Topik, *The World that Trade Created: Society, Culture and the World Economy, 1400 to the Present* (Armonk: M. E. Sharp, 2006), 172–74.
45. On the Jewish move out of peddling, see W. E. Mosse, *The German-Jewish Economic Elite, 1820–1935: A Socio-Cultural Profile* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989); Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace*, 90–95, 133; Cahnman, “Village and Small-town,” 114; Landes, “The Jewish Merchant,” 13–16; Richarz, *Jewish Life*, 9–13; Michael Brenner, ed., *German-Jewish History in Modern Times* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 80; Shulamit Magnus, *Jewish Emancipation in a German City: Cologne, 1798–1871* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 154–55; Raphael Mahler, “The Economic Background of Jewish Emigration from Galicia to the United States,” *YIVO Annual* 7 (1952): 255–67.

The Legacy of the Kelm School of Musar on Questions of Work, Wealth, and Poverty

Geoffrey Claussen

The Musar movement, a Jewish pietistic movement focused on the cultivation of moral character, emerged in mid-nineteenth century Lithuania at a time of increased poverty among the Jews, and it sought to respond to that poverty in various ways. One of the primary streams of the movement, the Kelm school of Musar, devoted considerable attention to questions of wealth and poverty, balancing its concern for helping people out of poverty with its focus on the dangers of wealth. Contemporary thinkers building on the legacy of Kelm have often focused on particular aspects of this legacy, leading to radically divergent conclusions that reflect different cultural settings—some stressing the dangers of wealth and commercial activity, some stressing the goodness of wealth and the alleviation of poverty by means of commercial activity, and some stressing the alleviation of poverty through structural changes to the economic order.

THE CONTEXT FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE MUSAR MOVEMENT

The Musar movement emerged under the leadership of Rabbi Israel Salanter (1810–1883) in the mid-nineteenth century, during a time of severe poverty for the Jews of Lithuania. Czar Nicholas I had introduced a series of new restrictions limiting Jewish settlement and job opportunities, which left thousands of impoverished and underemployed Jews packed into a limited number of cities.¹ Visiting the city of Vilna in the 1840s, at the same time that Salanter began building the Musar movement there, the German rabbi Max Lilienthal described a “swarming beehive of Jews,” most of them in “a state of suffering and misery which is entirely unheard of in Germany.”²

Lilienthal was a fierce advocate of the Haskalah—the Jewish Enlightenment movement—seeking to bring intellectual, cultural, and economic modernization to the Jewish communities of the Russian empire. Like other *Maskilim* [Haskalah supporters], Lilienthal thought that poverty would be alleviated both through the bestowal of equal civil rights to Jews and through a new model of education that would stress science, foreign languages, and vocational training alongside moral education.³ He was heartened to find the vision of the Haskalah flourishing at one modern school in Vilna, where

worldly concerns were stressed; but elsewhere in Vilna, he encountered a dominant culture of rabbinic pietism that scorned “the transient and perishable business of everyday life” and embraced poverty.⁴ Those who were endowed with wealth were commanded to share their resources with the poor, but at the same time the poor were “taught to submit patiently to the inscrutable wisdom of an all-kind Providence.”⁵

Lilienthal was especially disturbed to find students immersed in Talmud study who learned to forgo worldly success and ignored “the laws of exclusion and the slights they experience at every step,” since “their books tell them of a brilliant future that will compensate them richly for all the sufferings they are enduring.”⁶ Lilienthal found men who idealized being “entirely absorbed” in the study of Talmud, “entirely forgetting the world around [them].”⁷ This cultural ideal had been given its most extreme formulation by the hero of Lithuanian traditionalists, Rabbi Elijah (Eliyahu) the Vilna Gaon, who praised men who immersed themselves in study, “even though their home be without bread and clothing and their families cry out, ‘bring us something to support and sustain us, some livelihood.’” The true hero, the Gaon wrote, “pays no attention at all to them nor heeds their voice.” He instead has “perfect trust” that God will provide, and he does not trouble himself with seeking to earn a living.⁸ The Vilna Gaon’s model looked back to the talmudic figure of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who counseled against engaging in a worldly occupation and who was himself miraculously sustained by God for many years while he lived in a cave and did nothing but study.⁹

As the historian Immanuel Etkes has argued, Salanter sought to respond to the social and economic realities of his time by rejecting the approach of the Vilna Gaon and developing a movement more focused on social responsibility and more tolerant of economic activity; on the other hand, Salanter rejected the worldly, naturalistic approach to responding to poverty favored by Maskilim like Lilienthal.¹⁰

RABBI ISRAEL SALANTER ON WEALTH AND POVERTY

Though Salanter did trace his intellectual lineage to the Vilna Gaon, he sought to create a movement of traditionalists who would be far more concerned with the suffering of the poor. His own focus on poverty did indeed achieve legendary status, and the sayings that have been attributed to him often focus on his concern for prioritizing the physical needs of the poor. He is said to have wished, for example, that his fellow Jews who stood on street corners recruiting passersby to join their prayer quorums might muster equal enthusiasm

in recruiting the hungry to come into their houses and eat: “I am astounded by those people who wish to benefit their fellow by standing outside of the synagogues calling out ‘Kedushah! Kedushah! [thus calling them to prayer]—Please come in. . . .’ Why do they not also stand at the gates of their home when a rich and bountiful meal is spread on the table and cry out, ‘A feast! A feast! Please come in.’”¹¹ Salanter clearly did also care about the spiritual and intellectual needs of the poor—as seen by his efforts to set up study houses that would encourage poor workers to study classical Jewish texts¹²—but he seems to have had a particular concern for tending to the material needs of others and has been widely quoted as saying that “the material needs of my neighbor are my spiritual needs.”¹³

As Etkes has pointed out, Salanter’s extant writings do show some of his concern for the physical needs of the poor, and especially his concern to guard against poverty that might threaten survival. One published sermon that considers poverty, for example, dwells on the goodness of welcoming impoverished individuals into one’s home, seeking to feed them and keeping in mind how responsiveness to a poor person may save his or her life. There is no talk, here, of needing to prioritize one’s studies, as the Vilna Gaon might advise. Rather, Salanter writes that when encountering someone afflicted by poverty, “the host is required to hasten as much as possible in order to provide him with something to eat immediately, without any delay or preparation whatsoever, for perhaps [the guest] has not eaten for several days, and [otherwise] it would be as if he were shedding blood.”¹⁴

Compared to the Vilna Gaon, Salanter was also somewhat more willing to encourage commerce as a path out of poverty. Most individuals, Salanter wrote, should seek to earn a livelihood rather than simply trusting in God’s miraculous intervention, since for the masses “it is forbidden to rely on miracles.”¹⁵ He viewed seeking a livelihood as having little value in and of itself, but as a necessary evil that would facilitate Torah study: “any involvement in the world,” he contended, is “only out of necessity, for it is impossible to serve the Creator when one is ill or hungry.”¹⁶ But while he permitted some involvement in business, he followed the Gaon in counseling that for “the perfect servant” of God, “in matters of earning a livelihood, no exertion is required—only trust in God.” Exceptional individuals may dedicate themselves to study and be kept alive by miracles, as was the Talmud’s Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai. And even for the masses for whom “it is forbidden to rely on miracles,” Salanter counseled that “it is forbidden to exert oneself too much,” since “increasing one’s exertion shows a lack of trust.” Indeed, making significant efforts to

acquire wealth through one's own actions is "the path of heretics who do not believe that the Blessed Lord guides the world."¹⁷

And so while Salanter may have encouraged economic activity more than other traditionalist rabbis in Lithuania, he nonetheless idealized those who immersed themselves in study and refrained from seeking a livelihood, and he viewed overly great efforts to seek out wealth as a sign of heresy. Whereas the Haskalah sought to ameliorate the economic situation of the Jews through developing new economic opportunities, altering political reality, and generally encouraging Jews to make great efforts to pull themselves out of poverty, Salanter refrained from such activism. And he was particularly appalled by Maskilim like Max Lilienthal who sought practical changes such as the introduction of vocational training and foreign languages into Jewish school curricula.

According to one testimony, Salanter had thought that altering traditionally Talmud-centered curricula would weaken students' fear of heaven—and that, in fact, this loss of fearing God would turn students' attention away from the needs of the poor.¹⁸ Salanter was also concerned about encouraging students to enter the world of business, which he saw as a breeding ground for sins such as greed and dishonesty; his writings consistently list "dishonesty in business" as a sin prevalent among both the rich and the poor.¹⁹ And he was concerned about any activities that would threaten the cultivation of trust in God, which he saw as requiring a certain willingness to accept divinely decreed realities.

Salanter clearly saw God as responsible for all that happens on earth, though he offered a range of interpretations as to how and why God might bring wealth or poverty. As Hillel Goldberg has argued, Salanter's later writings show him concluding that one's economic situation is generally predestined, "in accord with the laws of causation which God Himself is said to have implanted in the world." Poverty is thus "not necessarily indicative of sin," but "may simply reflect the natural course of events to which the sufferer has fallen heir." While God will always reward the righteous and punish the wicked, those rewards and punishments are often postponed until after death: a righteous individual may be impoverished during his or her lifetime but rewarded after life. Then again, in Salanter's view, God always has the option of intervening in history, and God may do so to influence economic fortunes—for example, by providing sustenance to the sorts of individuals described above who have proper trust in God.²⁰

Salanter ultimately indicates that God's ways are inexplicable, such that one cannot seek to understand anyone's economic fate.²¹ And while he was concerned that his fellow Jews cultivate sympathy for the poor, especially

insofar as “questions of life and death” were on the line, he also counseled that one should also cultivate trust in God, avoiding an activist posture and any extensive forays into the morally fraught world of business.

RABBI SIMḤAH ZISSEL ZIV ON THE ALLEVIATION OF POVERTY

Salanter’s closest disciple was Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv (1824–1898), founder of the Kelm Talmud Torah yeshiva—and of an approach to Musar often described as the “Kelm school,” distinguished by its focus on equanimity, compassion, and the difficult and slow process of developing moral virtue.²² Simḥah Zissel’s writings contain extensive meditations on the issues surrounding wealth and poverty that Salanter raised. Following his teacher, Simḥah Zissel gave considerable attention to the dangers of business activity and the dangers of gaining wealth. He showed some appreciation of commerce, however, as a potential arena for loving-kindness and not just as a necessary evil. He also devoted considerable attention to the importance of developing qualities of empathy and responsibility toward those in poverty.

Simḥah Zissel’s writings often stress the difficulty of developing such qualities. Thus he laments that even the person who “engages in charity and acts of loving-kindness, who provides food and drink for the poor” can easily “revert to being reborn with a cruel nature.”²³ Simḥah Zissel sees this natural cruelty as springing from the human tendency to focus on our own needs and our inability to empathize with those who are unlike us. He therefore emphasizes the importance of actively working on imagining oneself in the place of others who are in need. When he considers the commandment to freely lend to “the poor that is with you” (Exod 22:24), for example, he builds on Rashi’s understanding that the language of “with you” teaches that you must “see yourself as if you are the poor person.” Simḥah Zissel takes this to mean that one must make an effort to visualize oneself in poverty, actively considering how one would like to be treated:

Scripture is giving advice to a person, that he should not refrain from lending, for it is human nature to refrain from doing so. And so Scripture says: see yourself as if you are the poor person, and see whether it would be good for you if the lender refrained from lending; now, therefore, you should not refrain from lending. Our words should be explicated to emphasize that Scripture commands bringing the matter into one’s sense-experience so that it is as if you were the poor person, so that then giving the loan will be easy for you.²⁴

Responding to the needs of the poor, here, is difficult when one cannot see oneself in the place of the other; it becomes easy only when the experience

of the poor is made palpable to one's senses through this sort of visualization exercise. Similarly, another text from Simḥah Zissel's study hall (likely written by him, though perhaps by one of his students) explains that it is "natural" to feel mercy for a poor person in one's presence, but that it is human nature to ignore the poor person's plight when he or she is no longer before one's eyes. It is therefore imperative to visualize the suffering of those in poverty even when they are not physically there; in this way, mercy can be "rational" and not merely guided by who happens to be before one's eyes:

Mercy is naturally only through the senses, and one will only have mercy for the time that the poor person is in front of him, and when he moves on he will not remember the poor person and he will not use this character trait. The *rational* character trait, on the other hand, will know and bring itself into the details and will always remember, so that [the person] will not depart from memory. Even if the poor person has already moved on, this force has placed a mental image of all of the details of the poor person's suffering before him.²⁵

Thus, although the suffering of others is easily forgotten, Simḥah Zissel argues that the work of *musar*—disciplined efforts, guided by reason, to nurture moral virtue—can help to develop a constant sense of empathy, generosity, and responsibility. His Talmud Torah yeshiva gave ample time for visualization exercises designed to cultivate such virtues and for conversation in small groups reflecting on these virtues. Groups often focused on one virtue at a time, and students considered how these virtues played out in their lives and how they could play out better.²⁶

To cultivate generosity, Simḥah Zissel especially urged his students to focus on giving to those in need, not just in line with but also beyond what is required by Jewish law. His writings suggest that consistently giving to those in poverty will help cultivate a disposition to give naturally, and not merely on account of the legal commandment:

We are warned to slowly, slowly accustom ourselves to the character trait of generosity to such an extent that one gives charity [*tzedakah*] in the way that one gives to one's children, to whom one does not give because of the commandment of charity but in the way that one puts food in one's own mouth: a person finds joy whenever he is able to give clothes and food and drink to his family. Thus should a person accustom oneself to the character trait of generosity, to such an extent that he finds joy in helping and providing for the poor, as if they are truly part of his family. . . . And this is like the matter of "loving your fellow as yourself."²⁷

Simḥah Zissel often emphasizes the need to be especially gracious and forgiving in providing for those in poverty. For example, responding to one talmudic discussion about liability claims against poor workers who are guilty of negligence, he stresses the ideal of forgiving those claims rather than causing undue suffering.²⁸ In other passages, however, he cautions that alleviating suffering must not be overly indulgent. Often, “a person’s mercy will be stirred by the sight of [another] person suffering before one’s eyes, and he will be filled with mercy to fulfill the wishes of the person’s heart, even if it be to his detriment.” Proper responsiveness to a person in poverty, however, must be guided by a reasoned and unbiased assessment of what that person needs:

The character trait of loving-kindness seeks the good of one’s fellow even if it is not what he wants. When a poor man begs at the door, there is an obligation to provide for him. A beneficent person cannot say to the poor person, “Why are you benefitting from others? Go, work, that you may eat!” One does not know if this is truly for the good of the other or if he is saying this simply because he is being ungenerous towards the poor person. And perhaps the poor person is not able to work because of some illness. But since habituating himself to beg at doorways is very detrimental to him, and (God forbid) many dishonorable character traits may come from this: if one truly knows that the poor person is in fact able to take a job, and one is certain [from examining] oneself that one is not speaking motivated by stinginess, then one may speak to the poor person in order to say, “Go, work, that you may eat,” like a father who seeks the good of his son. It is the custom of fathers to teach a trade to their sons, so that they will be able to support themselves. After doing so, [a father] instructs [his son] to go and support himself . . . by the labor of his hands. And he will avoid receiving handouts or stealing. This is the way of the Torah, [which teaches that] “he who does not teach a trade” [it is “as if he had taught him to be a bandit”] (*b. Qidd.* 29a).²⁹

One can see here the concern for introspection that Simḥah Zissel sought to instill in his students at the Kelm Talmud Torah: in considering one’s response to a beggar, one must examine oneself and the self-serving motives that might inform that response. One can also see Simḥah Zissel’s concerns about those who are impoverished because they are not engaged in productive labor and his stress on the importance of learning a trade—a point made in the Talmud but de-emphasized by many Lithuanian traditionalists who idealized a life more exclusively devoted to study.

The talmudic teaching that Simḥah Zissel quotes regarding the father’s obligation to teach his son a trade is traditionally understood to teach that

having a trade will prevent the son from falling into a life of poverty, which might then turn into a life of crime.³⁰ Simḥah Zissel seems to endorse this understanding; but he also understands the Talmud's talk of "being a bandit" metaphorically, as he explains that engaging in commerce and providing things of value to others can be a form of loving-kindness towards others, whereas retreating from commerce altogether is a sort of crime:

The human being is naturally political, meaning that the world was created so that we would be partners with each other, serving one another . . . and, therefore, when one learns a trade, one can intend to show loving-kindness to people with it. Then the activity is good in its essence, reflecting God's attributes, and the activity becomes eternal. And so the philosopher Aristotle, when he investigated human conduct in light of the goal of happiness, said: the conduct of ascetics who go off to the forests and deserts is not good. Although the virtue of those who practice "withdrawal" is good in moderation, when one [both] receives benefits from others and provides benefits to others, those who unwittingly benefit from others to satisfy their few needs but who do not benefit others are found to be "cheating the laborer of his wages" (Mal 3:5). And we find that the Torah verifies this for us. Our sages taught: "the Torah begins with loving-kindness and ends with loving-kindness" (*b. Sot.* 14). And they included among the 48 virtues "sharing the burden of one's fellow" (*m. Avot* 6:6), which is the essence of the way of God, that one abstain from the world for oneself but benefit others. And thus our sages taught: "one who does not teach his son a trade" (*b. Qidd.* 29a)—he does not benefit others, and so he is "cheating the laborer of his wages" and so it is "as if he had taught him to be a bandit."³¹

Participation in commerce, here, not only offers an opportunity to keep oneself from poverty but also an opportunity to serve others and provide for their needs. Those who are able to engage in productive labor but choose to avoid it are, on the other hand, described as like bandits who benefit from their environment but do not give to others. Another of Simḥah Zissel's letters offers this critique to one of his students who sought to follow in the model of the Vilna Gaon and become a recluse. While Simḥah Zissel acknowledges the benefits of a "moderate" level of withdrawal from society (as he says in the above passage), he urges his student to find a way to contribute to society; as he explains in this letter to his student, even profiting from the marketplace can feed directly into the service of others:

The world was created such that a person would be concerned for his fellow, and this is in fact being concerned about himself. Similarly, one who works the earth is concerned to prepare bread for people, and this is a preparation for himself [as well], since he will profit from this, and will come to have other human needs (for clothing, etc.) fulfilled. So too the merchant travels to far-off places to prepare clothing for people, and this is a preparation for himself. So too with all of the goods of the world.³²

Those who seek to provide goods for others end up serving themselves as well; profit, here, is described as emerging out of concern to serve one's fellow.

This sentiment undergirds Simḥah Zissel's understanding of the rabbinic sage Ben Zoma, who is described in the Talmud as standing in a crowd, looking at all the people around him, and thanking God "who created all these to serve me." After all, Ben Zoma explains, people produce food, clothing, and other goods, and he is able to purchase these goods ready-made without having to create them by himself.³³ As Simḥah Zissel explains, buying and selling in the marketplace might seem to be driven by the pursuit of wealth, but—when commerce is conducted with honesty and integrity—the market can in fact produce a sense of partnership and love, as those seeking profit become habituated to serving each other. As he interprets it, Ben Zoma is saying that:

All . . . are my partners, and they prepare for me what I need, and I also prepare for them, with love, what they need. And in this way one will become habituated to always think that everyone is making preparations for each other—in order that love of God's creatures (whether Jewish or not) can be implanted in his heart.³⁴

Business transactions that seem to benefit the self can, in this model, also inculcate deep bonds with others. Some forms of work may be particularly conducive to moral growth—Simḥah Zissel gives particular attention, elsewhere in his writings, to the work of Moses as a shepherd, which trained him to be especially sensitive to the needs of animals and, consequently, the needs of other people³⁵—but in fact all forms of work that involve selling goods to others involve being responsive to others' needs. And so if Simḥah Zissel might (cautiously) advise a beggar at his door to find a job that can lead him out of poverty, his advice would seem to be animated in part by his sense that commerce may be a path of dignity. Whereas "habituating himself to beg at doorways is very detrimental to him, and (God forbid) many dishonorable character traits may come from this," entering the world of commerce would not only provide a path out of poverty but would also have the potential to habituate the beggar to love all human beings.

RABBI SIMḤAH ZISSEL ZIV ON THE DANGERS OF WEALTH

Simḥah Zissel Ziv's appreciation of commerce may have encouraged his adoption of one of the central recommendations of the Haskalah movement: incorporating general studies into the curriculum of the Kelm Talmud Torah. The Talmud Torah was the first traditionalist yeshiva in Eastern Europe to set aside time for general studies—mathematics, geography, and Russian language, literature, and history. When the Talmud Torah moved to Grobin in the 1880s, bookkeeping was also taught as a professional skill, and German language and some study of science were reportedly added to the curriculum.³⁶ All of these subjects would have helped give students basic skills that would open up new economic opportunities for them, especially as political conditions changed in the 1860s. Liberal reforms introduced by Czar Alexander II, seeking to integrate Jews into Russian society, opened up new economic opportunities, which stimulated the Jewish interest in general studies. Simḥah Zissel appears to have supported his students' efforts to develop marketable skills. As a model to his students he himself studied the craft of bookbinding, and two of his closest disciples—his own son, Naḥum Ze'ev Ziv, and his close disciple Reuven Dov Dessler—became businessmen.³⁷

The introduction of these subjects at the Kelm Talmud Torah was the sort of reform that Max Lilienthal had hoped for in the 1840s and that Israel Salanter had strongly opposed. As suggested above, Salanter seems to have been especially concerned that general studies might encourage a focus on business, potentially diminishing students' fear of heaven and trust in God and potentially abetting dishonesty and greed. But Salanter allegedly viewed Simḥah Zissel as uniquely capable of administering a yeshiva that could teach general studies while guarding against the dangers stemming from such a curriculum. Simḥah Zissel by and large shared Salanter's concerns, and so while his teachings did describe commerce as potentially expressing loving-kindness, he also warned his students against the dangers of business and of wealth, counseling that pursuing a livelihood typically leads to pride, greed, dishonesty, distraction, and a lack of concern for other people.

Simḥah Zissel argues that proper concern for others depends upon cultivating equanimity, which allows one to focus on the needs of others,³⁸ and he sees that equanimity as threatened by the accumulation of wealth. He makes this point in a letter to his son Naḥum Ze'ev by sharing the following folktale:

They say that a philosopher was extremely poor, and the king gave him much silver and gold to save him from the distress of poverty. He awoke in the morning, and he took the money in his hand, and

he came before the king, and he said, “Here is the money which you gave me. Take it for yourself, for I do not desire it.” The king was astounded and said to him: “What is this that you have done to me? Why have you rejected the gift which I have given you?” The philosopher answered the king: “My lord, in all of my days on the earth until this day, I have sat in tranquil rest and secure dwelling-places, for I never yearned for wealth, and I was always satisfied with necessities, and this was sufficient for me, and all of my wisdom was in natural science, seeking out how manifold [God’s] works are. Yesterday, when I took the portion of money, the items of my sadness in pursuit of vanity, [I began] to think: What should I do with the money? Should I buy merchandise, to pursue profit, or is it good for me to deposit it in the hands of a trustworthy man, or should I buy land to provide sustenance for my family? Sleep departed from my eyes, and my heart was like a troubled sea, for waves of thought surrounded it and a crowd of anxieties encircled it, and my soul was agitated, wavering between two paths, and so I could not go on like this. Therefore the money is given back to you.”³⁹

Possessing wealth, Simḥah Zissel believes, is thus a source of distraction. He seems to have taken this lesson to heart, living with his family in relative poverty throughout his life, often with limited food on the table and limited heat in the winter.⁴⁰ He counseled that one should be satisfied with a minimum of worldly comforts, following the rabbinic advice that “the way of Torah” demands eating only “bread with salt, and rationed water,” to “sleep on the ground,” and to live a “life of privation” (*m. Avot* 6:4).⁴¹ By minimizing consumption, one could give away one’s excess wealth to those in need—whether to fund an education at an institution like the Kelm Talmud Torah or to fund basic physical needs. In one discourse on giving charity, Simḥah Zissel underscores the lesson by pointing to a classic midrash that condemns King David for gathering wealth to build the Temple during years of famine when he should have been using that wealth to provide for his starving and impoverished subjects.⁴²

Simḥah Zissel’s discourses are filled with admonitions regarding the improper use of wealth, and he has a long list of other biblical and rabbinic figures who stumbled in their relationship to money. Even those with great wisdom, he emphasizes, can easily be led astray because of their improper attitudes toward money—above all, because of their greed and covetousness. Thus the biblical characters of Laban and Esau, for example, “were great wise men,” but their eyes were blinded by their desire for wealth because they “did not bring [their wisdom] to serve as moral discipline [*musar*] for their hearts.”⁴³ So too,

Simḥah Zissel sees the biblical character of Achan—described in the book of Joshua as illegally taking spoils from the destroyed city of Jericho—as a man of great spiritual insight, “but, nonetheless, he stumbled in coveting money. . . . See how dangerous business and the coveting of money was for the great ones of Israel—and all the more so for the generations following—and especially for our generation!”⁴⁴ Simḥah Zissel often notes the talmudic teaching that “most people [sin] by stealing” (*b. B. Bat.* 165a), and he sees his own generation as particularly prone to covetousness and to other transgressions in the realm of business that cause people to acquire wealth that is not rightfully theirs.⁴⁵

In Simḥah Zissel’s view, “the Torah knows how greatly the human mind is attached to coveting money,” and so much of the Torah seeks to address the deep-seated human desire for wealth. It does so in part through legal restraints on business practice and also by demanding that people limit their time devoted to business so that they are able to also devote themselves to study: “one should not engage in too much business, in time or in the quantity of goods, so as to weaken one’s laboring in Torah (or, certainly, one’s [efforts to] properly set aside fixed times for focused study).”⁴⁶ In particular, Simḥah Zissel highlights the need to combat human desires with practices of *musar*—techniques that might help to provide additional moral discipline for the soul.⁴⁷ One recommended practice involves a brief meditation to remind oneself of one’s desires: “when one comes to do business involving money, one needs to forewarn oneself: I know that my mind is inclined to covet profit; given this, I must constantly beware and strengthen myself so that I do not distort Torah law.”⁴⁸

Those working on improving how they handle wealth must also set aside time and develop techniques for focusing on the pride that naturally emerges among those who earn money. He follows the book of Deuteronomy’s warning that, upon entering the land of Israel and acquiring wealth, “you will forget the Lord your God . . . and you will say in your heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth’” when, in fact, it is God “who gives you power to get wealth” (Deut 8:14–18). As Simḥah Zissel underscores in his discussions of these verses, it is natural to ascribe success to “my power and the might of my hand”: “it is very difficult for a person *not* to think this, for it is human nature.”⁴⁹

The natural tendency to take credit for creating wealth is, in Simḥah Zissel’s view, misguided, resting on a faulty view of how God works in the world. While the creation of wealth might seem to be a “natural” process, caused by human beings, Simḥah Zissel emphasizes that what we typically call “natural” is, in fact, a divinely caused miracle:

What seems to be like nature, in truth this is not nature, but is rather also a miracle. And if so, we can learn from this that all of the paths of nature which seem to be effects necessarily proceeding from causes—this is not so, but rather it only appears so. Rather, truly, nature is also a miracle, and this is simply to teach us that the miraculous also applies to the path of cause and effect.⁵⁰

Our ordinary language of describing causes and effects, then, is misleading: we should train ourselves to see all that happens, including the accumulation of wealth, as “the will of God.”⁵¹

But this theology does not lead Simḥah Zissel to conclude that one should adopt a passive posture and refrain from work, trusting that God will provide sustenance. Though he sometimes speaks of the virtue of trusting God, he emphasizes that God generally works through natural means. Thus God provides wealth through human beings when they exert themselves and engage in business, and so “the Torah commands doing all that is possible by means of nature, and not to rely on [supernatural] miracles at all.”⁵²

Indeed, human beings are obligated to work in the world, an obligation that Simḥah Zissel sees as implicit in God’s curse to Adam: “By the sweat of your brow, shall you get bread to eat” (Gen 3:19).⁵³ What makes work a sort of curse is not only its inherent difficulties but also the way that it challenges human beings to pass a difficult test: they must make supreme efforts to sustain themselves, and at the same time they must assign credit for their efforts to God rather than to themselves. To be able to accomplish both of these goals is extraordinarily difficult, as it requires human beings to develop qualities that are in tension with one another, which Simḥah Zissel describes as “contrary powers” [*koḥot hafukhim*]:

A person needs to have learned to possess contrary powers: on the one hand, he should be immersed in the way of nature, on the other hand, within his heart, everything should be miraculous, a hidden miracle. . . . All day long, without end, everything is a hidden miracle—and yet it has been decreed for the human being: “by the sweat of your brow, shall you get bread to eat,” that one should do business in the world with one’s hands . . . and this is a very difficult matter.⁵⁴

It is, Simḥah Zissel goes on to say, as difficult as asking someone to break a cask and yet preserve the wine within it:

See what a great labor has been placed upon the human being—“Break the cask but preserve its wine!”—for business very, very much endangers the human being, but it is the decree of the king to guard one’s soul from danger. Tell me, my brothers, is this “guard-

ing” possible without great learning? It requires immersion in Torah [i.e., traditional Talmud study] and *musar* [i.e., focusing on character traits] together, with focused study and great effort.⁵⁵

Meeting the challenge of (seemingly) creating wealth but not taking credit for it is a tremendous accomplishment:

The labor is very great and, as a result of it, “people of reason will shine like the firmament” (Dan 12:3)—especially businessmen, if they constantly make an effort to beware of [thinking of] “my power and the might of my hand,” while knowing that this is the decree that “by the sweat of your brow, shall you get bread to eat” (which makes the test greater, [as it requires one] to seek advice and stratagems to know “that it is [God] who gives you power to get wealth”). Through this, one’s level may grow very much greater, [as one is] changing materiality into spirituality.⁵⁶

Even though Simḥah Zissel values the spiritual focus of Torah study more than the physical focus of a businessman,⁵⁷ he sees something particularly praiseworthy in the work of the businessman who can change “materiality into spirituality.” Indeed, the businessman who is also dedicated to Torah study and *musar* may well be able to reach a higher level than the scholar who is immersed in full-time study and does not work in the world. Business may “very, very much endanger the human being,” as wealth can lead to pride, greed, dishonesty, distraction, and a lack of concern for other people; but business can also be an arena for loving-kindness and for heroically overcoming all of the challenges that wealth presents. Business, Simḥah Zissel writes in one of his discourses on this subject, may ordinarily be considered a “sin,” but if one can guide one’s business “for the sake of heaven,” then it can be described as “a great mitzvah”—as the fulfillment of a commandment.⁵⁸ Thus, while he followed Israel Salanter in speaking of the dangers of business activity, Simḥah Zissel went well beyond his teacher in seeing the potential merits of business.

MUSAR AND THE HAREDI REJECTION OF COMMERCE

Rabbi Reuven Dov Dessler (1863–1935) was a disciple of Simḥah Zissel’s who spent many years working as a businessman, achieving a good deal of financial success in the timber industry while following Simḥah Zissel’s instructions to balance his time devoted to business activities with time devoted to Torah and *musar* study.⁵⁹ His son Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler (1892–1953) grew up around the Talmud Torah of Kelm, spent many years studying there, and married one of Simḥah Zissel’s granddaughters. One of Kelm’s most influential students,

Eliyahu Dessler became a dominant voice in shaping what came to be called “Haredi” Judaism [or, in English, “ultra-orthodox” Judaism], which sought to fiercely reject the legacy of the Haskalah.⁶⁰ Dessler’s teachings have been especially influential in shaping Haredi attitudes towards wealth, work, and poverty. These teachings generally reflect Simḥah Zissel’s vision but see significantly less merit in business activity.

Simḥah Zissel’s vision is perhaps best reflected in Eliyahu Dessler’s emphasis on cultivating generosity and empathy towards the poor. Dessler stresses that love requires continually “giving” to others and ridding oneself of the natural human tendency to “take” from others. Like Simḥah Zissel, he stresses that one should give to all people and thereby habituate oneself to greater generosity, ultimately seeking to give to those in need as freely as one gives to one’s own family members and to oneself:

[Most people] tend to restrict their giving and their love to a narrow circle of relatives and friends. They look on everyone else as strangers and deal with them in ways dominated by the power of taking; envy, exploitation, grasping and greed rule the day. If one were only to reflect that a person comes to love the one to whom he gives, he would realize that the only reason the other person seems a stranger to him is because he has not yet given to him; he has not taken the trouble to show him friendly concern. If I give to someone, I feel close to him; I have a share in his being. It follows that if I were to start bestowing good upon everyone I come into contact with, I would soon feel that they are all my relatives, all my loved ones. I now have a share in them all; my being has extended into all of them. Someone who has been granted the merit to reach this sublime level can understand the command, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” in its literal sense: “As yourself: without distinction; as yourself: in actual fact.” By giving to him of yourself you will find in your soul that you and he are indeed one; you will feel in the clearest possible manner that he really is to you “as yourself.”⁶¹

Like Simḥah Zissel, Dessler also speaks of how giving to those in need may be facilitated by using one’s power of visualization: he urges his students to “try to picture to ourselves our neighbor’s worry and distress in all their details and nuances. The sympathy and compassion thus engendered may move us to actions of loving-kindness.”⁶² And, like Simḥah Zissel, Dessler stresses the joy of giving away one’s wealth and of living in voluntary poverty, taking little for oneself: only “bread and salt, rationed water, and a place on the ground to sleep—these are the necessities of life.”⁶³

So too, Dessler supports the idea that commerce is dangerous for human spirituality but that it may provide opportunities to show loving-kindness to others. Like Simḥah Zissel, he speaks of the pride, greed, and a lack of concern for others that business might produce: thus, for example, he speaks of those who “take the maximum and give the minimum,” as exemplified by “the merchants and middlemen who take advantage of every opportunity for profit.”⁶⁴ But Dessler can also imagine forms of doing business that are fundamentally about giving. Thus, for example, he shares a teaching that he heard in the name of Israel Salanter, an interpretation of a classical midrash that describes the biblical figure Enoch as a cobbler who “with every single stitch that he made, achieved mystical unions with his Creator.” As Dessler teaches in Salanter’s name, it would be forbidden to pay attention to other matters while carrying out labor for his customers; rather, “the mystical unions which Enoch achieved were nothing more nor less than the concentration which he lavished on each and every stitch to ensure that it would be good and strong and that the pair of shoes he was making would be a good pair, giving the maximum pleasure and benefit to whoever would wear them.”⁶⁵ This teaching from Salanter that Dessler applauds parallels Simḥah Zissel’s vision of learning a trade as a form of service to others.

And, like Simḥah Zissel, Dessler condemns those who take pride in their accomplishments by pointing out that all that happens is caused by God. “The truth is that there is no essential difference between the natural and the miraculous,” he writes. “Everything that occurs is a miracle. The world has no other cause but the will of the Lord.”⁶⁶ But if “every person’s needs are provided for by the Lord,” Dessler asks, why do people seem to be required to work in order to survive? Dessler brings the answer given in the Kelm Talmud Torah:

Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv answered this question by telling us that the Lord laid the burden of endeavor on us as a test. We have been put in a world where the Lord’s constant providence is unseen. . . . [A person] can easily make the mistake of thinking, “My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth.” But his task is to rouse himself to see, in the midst of this obscurity, that “nature” has no power; everything is from the hand of the Lord.⁶⁷

The test is to “see in his heart that nature is an illusion” at the same time that one is “working for his living in the world of nature.”⁶⁸ It appears that people are thus obligated to work in the world, at least for some small amount of time each week—in line with what Simḥah Zissel had taught.

Dessler is clear, however, that this obligation to pursue a livelihood exists only for those who lack perfect trust in God. Such people have not fully internalized that “nature and miracle are . . . completely equal,” and they must continue to “struggle with the ‘nature’ test,” working “naturally” in the world and training themselves to realize that “nature” has no independent reality. Such people cannot simply engage in study and expect miracles, as they are “not worthy of miracles.”⁶⁹ But the person on the highest possible level

has successfully passed his test and . . . now sees the natural and the miraculous both as open miracles, having realized that “nature” has no independent existence at all. For such a person there is no longer any need for the test of “By the sweat of your brow, shall you get bread.” It will not be of any further use to him. On the contrary, he should now spend all his time on devotion to the Lord and His Torah. His worldly needs can now be given to him in ways that are openly miraculous. There is no longer any need to conceal the miracle from him.⁷⁰

As Dessler goes on to note, this is the model experienced by the Talmud’s Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, who warned against work, trusted that God would provide, and was himself sustained by supernatural miracles. Like Salanter (and like the Vilna Gaon), Dessler makes it clear that this path of complete trust is the ideal path.

Simḥah Zissel had given particular praise to the businessman who carried out his business “for the sake of heaven,” performing a mitzvah by fulfilling his obligation to obtain bread “by the sweat of one’s brow.” Dessler acknowledges this perspective but explains that “this kind of endeavor is not a mitzvah at all, but a penalty and a curse.”⁷¹ Economic endeavor is permitted and is a necessary stage in human development, but one should not speak of it as “commanded”: yes, “you may labor” for six days of the week, Dessler acknowledges, but it is not true that “you must labor” during those days. And Dessler scorns those who think that “business endeavors . . . are truly ‘for the sake of heaven,’” as Simḥah Zissel thought they could be.⁷²

In his writing, Dessler also shows his scorn for the general studies curriculum at the Kelm Talmud Torah that Simḥah Zissel had instituted, which his father supported and which was a part of his own education. In one letter, he writes of his preference for the model of a yeshiva that teaches no general subjects but only “Torah,” that seeks only students who will become dedicated “Torah scholars,” and that by and large rejects those who pursue other professions.⁷³ Dessler’s disdain for economically productive paths, his advocacy of voluntary poverty, and his trust that God will provide for the needs of Talmud

scholars became especially popular in Haredi communities. These views found a particularly hospitable climate in the State of Israel, where Dessler eventually settled, as Israel developed a system for providing basic financial support to Haredi men who rejected commerce and devoted themselves exclusively to Talmud study.⁷⁴

This vision of rejecting commerce may not have been endorsed by Simḥah Zissel Ziv, but it finds support in Israel Salanter's teachings and within other schools of Musar beyond the Kelm school—particularly in the rival school of Musar known as the Novaredok school.⁷⁵ Others in the Kelm school also developed perspectives resembling Dessler's. Thus Eliyahu Lopian (1876–1970), who personally studied with Simḥah Zissel and became his disciple, also disparaged involvement in commerce as an inferior path to a life fully devoted to Torah. Like others in the Kelm tradition, Lopian taught at length about the evils of “coveting money” and the dangers of commerce.⁷⁶ And, like Dessler, he became a leader in the Haredi yeshiva world in Israel and generally counseled his students to avoid commerce altogether—despite the resistance of their parents, as he recounts in the following anecdote:

A man sends his son to a yeshivah to study Torah. After a time the father reflects that his son will not obtain a matriculation certificate [as this would not be granted by a such a yeshivah]. The son will surely eventually need such a certificate, or he will not be able to obtain a good job and livelihood. If you say to the father that the Holy One who sustains all living beings will surely not forsake his son, he simply cannot understand what you are saying, and will reply, “Do you really believe that nowadays one may rely upon God alone?! Will God open the heavens and send down a livelihood to my son. We need to do our bit, as the verse says, ‘And He will bless you in all that you *do*.’” (Deut 15:18)⁷⁷

According to the father's understanding of the verse, one needs to take productive actions in order to receive God's blessings; Lopian contended, by contrast, that God would provide for those who did not seek a livelihood at all, if they trusted in God. This, he recalls, is what he insisted upon when he and his own family lived in extreme poverty:

During the First World War, when I was still young but already married and with children to support, the Germans conquered Lithuania, staying in my town four years. The inhabitants suffered hunger because the Germans took everything, only providing the citizens with oats and, then, in insufficient quantity. Our condition was too terrible to describe. My sons were studying at the Telsh

Yeshivah and they too suffered hunger. We steeled ourselves and sent them food parcels, as much as in our poverty we could afford. Once a neighbour came into our poor abode and, seeing how poor and hard-pressed we were, turned to my wife and said, “You have nine children . . . and you suffer such hardship and hunger in order that all your nine children should sit and learn, why not send some of them to work and then your own condition will be a lot easier?” My pious wife, of blessed memory, replied: “In this world, I have no wish that they should help me; I rely upon the Creator of the universe to help me. When I shall be in the world of truth, the eternal world, it is then that I have an overpowering desire for their help.”⁷⁸

One should, from this perspective, avoid commerce and be content with poverty in this world, and instead store up spiritual wealth that one may enjoy in the world to come.

RABBI DANIEL LAPIN: MUSAR AS A GUIDE TO MAKING MONEY

It is perhaps surprising, then, that a self-described disciple of Eliyahu Lopian would be the author of a financial self-help book, titled *Thou Shall Prosper: Ten Commandments for Making Money*, that enthusiastically trumpets the virtues of business activity and guides his readers to “make far more money than you now make.”⁷⁹ But this is one way that the legacy of the Kelm school of Musar is manifest in contemporary America, encouraged by trends in contemporary American orthodox Judaism and contemporary American culture on the whole.

The author of *Thou Shall Prosper* is Rabbi Daniel Lapin, a conservative American political activist, radio host and business consultant, who devotes much of his time to teaching “ancient Jewish wisdom” to Christians in America and beyond.⁸⁰ Lapin is no doubt the best-known American Jew to have been shaped by the Musar movement. His website describes him as “America’s rabbi,” and he also describes himself there as a “disciple of my great-uncle, the revered Rabbi Eliyahu (Elijah) Lopian.”⁸¹

Lapin’s father, Rabbi Avraham Haim Lapin, had studied at the Kelm Talmud Torah and, later, with Eliyahu Lopian; he named Daniel after one of Simḥah Zissel Ziv’s successors at the Talmud Torah.⁸² When Daniel was a teenager, his father sent him to study with his great-uncle Lopian in Israel, and Daniel Lapin describes his experience with this Musar master as transformational: “watching and listening to a man who was a giant of ancient Jewish wisdom opened my eyes to spiritual reality,” he has written.⁸³ Daniel Lapin also spent significant time with others who traced their legacy back to Kelm,

including at the Gateshead Yeshiva in England, an institution deeply shaped by Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler.⁸⁴

Lapin rejected the path of voluntary poverty recommended by Lopian, Dessler, and Simḥah Zissel Ziv. Instead, his writings on the subject of wealth and poverty are filled with advice on how people can increase their wealth. Rather than writing about how one should trust in divine providence, he also focuses on the power of human action to create wealth. But his vision of the ideal of engaging in business does have some significant parallels with Simḥah Zissel's vision.

Lapin begins *Thou Shall Prosper* with the sort of critique of traditional Lithuanian pietism that the Haskalah offered and that Simḥah Zissel of Kelm seems to have shared. As we have seen, the traditionalism of the Vilna Gaon—embraced to a great extent by Israel Salanter, Dessler, and Lopian—idealized the man who devoted himself to study and avoided the world of business altogether; Simḥah Zissel, by contrast, often idealized the path of the businessman who could balance his study with moral behavior in business. Lapin places himself in the latter's camp, as he speaks of his decision to be a rabbi who would work in the business world and thereby emulate “the patterns from ancient Jewish tradition, in which the community's leaders and teachers were themselves also engaged in earning their own livings.”⁸⁵ He supports this behavior with a story that his father had told him about the Vilna Gaon, who once invited a fellow rabbi, Jacob Kranz (the Dubner Maggid), to help him critique his own behavior in advance of the “ten days of penitence” on the Jewish calendar. Kranz offered the following critique of the Gaon, a critique which Lapin affirms as valid:

As the respected and well-compensated leader of the entire Vilna Jewish community, you enjoy the benefits of being able to spend your days in rabbinic research, prayer, and answering questions. You seldom even have to leave your home other than to attend services in the nearby synagogue. Obviously everyone thinks you are a saint. Why shouldn't you be? What real challenges do you ever have to confront? You have absolutely no idea at all of what life is like for ordinary people who have to struggle in the marketplace each day in pursuit of a livelihood. In the midst of a hundred daily opportunities for dishonesty and discourtesy, they still conduct their affairs honorably. During the coming Ten Days of Penitence, you cannot even begin to compare yourself with those members of your synagogue who are earning a living in business, raising their families, and are engaged in communal welfare.

This critique resembles what Simḥah Zissel Ziv might have said to the Vilna Gaon, insofar as Simḥah Zissel emphasized the heroism of those who met the challenges presented by involvement in the business world. Lapin suspects that his own father, who served as a rabbi and did not have a career in business, “felt that he too deserved the same censure.” Lapin’s own internalization of this critique, he notes, helped to propel him to combining his work as a rabbi with a career in business.⁸⁶

Simḥah Zissel had suggested that business could ideally serve as an arena in which to serve the needs of others, as the ancient rabbi Ben Zoma had recognized with his thanks to God “who created all these to serve me.” This idea is at the heart of Lapin’s *Thou Shall Prosper*. He stresses the Jewish teaching that, in order to prosper in the marketplace, one must find what other people need and provide for those needs: “deep within traditional Jewish culture lies the conviction that the only real way to achieve wealth is to attend diligently to the needs of others and to conduct oneself in an honorable and trustworthy fashion.”⁸⁷ Following Simḥah Zissel, Lapin points to Ben Zoma’s insight: “like Ben Zomah,” he writes, “I see other people as vital contributors to my well-being.”⁸⁸ The quest for money helps people find ways to serve others, and so Lapin sees himself as following Ben Zoma by encouraging people to seek wealth. As he puts it:

I sincerely hope you want more money. The more money you want, the more you will be willing to work and produce for me and for countless other people. It makes me happy to know that there are many humans just like you out there, all eager to have more money and therefore all eager to do things for me.⁸⁹

And this eagerness to serve others, even if it is motivated by one’s desire for wealth, reflects a kind of love. Just as Simḥah Zissel saw Ben Zoma as finding love reflected in the exchange of goods in the marketplace, so too Lapin writes that “to love others . . . means to give to them—to serve them.”⁹⁰ Loving others through attending to their needs requires realizing that “serving that other person no longer need irritate you or violate your sense of self-importance.” Rather, “the secret to learning how to love serving others is to develop the character trait of humility.”⁹¹ Seeking profit in the marketplace generally requires serving others and so it should—and, in Lapin’s opinion, generally does—teach an individual to be more humble, to be responsive to others, and to cultivate honest relationships with those with whom one interacts: “the wonderful thing about learning how to make money is that it does inevitably teach you how to improve your relationships with others.”⁹²

Like Simḥah Zissel (and in contrast to Eliyahu Dessler or his great-uncle Eliyahu Lopian), Lapin's vision of the goodness of commerce leads him to value vocational training. He turns to the same talmudic text that Simḥah Zissel turns to regarding the importance of teaching a trade to one's sons. As Lapin puts it, a father "must teach them an occupation by means of which they can become useful to humanity and thereby earn their living."⁹³ Rather than instructing one's child to trust that God will provide, one must teach one's child to enter the marketplace to seek a livelihood; so too, Lapin sees business leaders as responsible to provide vocational training for employees.⁹⁴ But he also places responsibility on those in poverty, urging them to adopt an entrepreneurial spirit in seeking out job opportunities, echoing Simḥah Zissel's counsel to "go, work, that you may eat." Lapin's instruction is that those in poverty should "find ways to interact with other people and find ways to be of use to them."⁹⁵

But whereas Simḥah Zissel was willing to consider the possibility that commercial activity might be a moral endeavor—despite his substantial misgivings—Lapin is quite confident that business is "inherently moral." "Jewish tradition views a person's quest for profit and wealth to be inherently moral," he writes. "The process and practice of business, although as vulnerable to misdeed as any other, is inherently dignified and moral," since seeking profit requires tending to the needs of others. At the core of Lapin's message is that one must possess "a deep *conviction* about business being an honorable profession," which will, in turn, help one to make more money.⁹⁶ This is the heart of Jewish wisdom: "feeling virtuous about what you do is an enormous advantage and one that has been a part of the Jewish tradition since time immemorial."⁹⁷ "It is no surprise that Jews have never been handicapped in business by feelings of moral confusion about money."⁹⁸ Lapin is passionately rejecting not only the path of avoiding commerce that his great-uncle had championed, but also the particular concerns about business that had led Simḥah Zissel to see business as "very, very much endangering the human being." Lapin does admit to concern about people who spend too much time focused on money,⁹⁹ and he does note his concern that a quest for profit may cause people to "focus on yourself and your needs, rather than on others and their needs," but he is confident that charitable giving can help to combat that danger.¹⁰⁰ Notably, he makes his case for charity not by advocating empathy for those in need but by urging his readers to consider how engaging in charitable giving in fact trains a person to be a more financially successful businessperson.¹⁰¹

So too, throughout Lapin's book, other ideas and practices favored by the Musar movement are subordinated to the goals of economic profit. Thus,

for example, when Lapin refers to the emphasis on changing moral character in *musar* literature, he describes the discipline of *musar* as culminating not in “love of God’s creatures” but rather in “effectiveness” and “profit”:

Modifying the real you for maximum effectiveness is what ancient Jewish wisdom advises its devotees. An entire body of ancient Jewish literature called *Mussar*, which means “redirecting,” teaches how to *be* different, rather than merely how to *act* differently. You too need to build a kind of spiritual prism through which you can more clearly see yourself without being distracted by the glare of your own ego. Using this spiritual tool helps equip you to interact with all people more effectively and ultimately more profitably.¹⁰²

So too, Lapin follows earlier Musar movement traditions in counseling deep introspection. Like his forebears in the Kelm school of Musar, for example, he urges his readers to keep a private record in writing of the way that they conduct themselves each day. But his emphasis is that “getting to know yourself is vital” for “your quest to increase the amount of money that flows toward you.”¹⁰³ So too, like earlier Musar masters, he urges his readers to recite a daily “affirmation of faith” regarding their own personal challenges—but the goal of such “affirmations” is, ultimately, prosperity.¹⁰⁴ Like earlier Musar masters, he also urges his readers to harness the power of visualization—but rather than empathically visualizing experiences of poverty and suffering, he recommends visualizing one’s own economic success.¹⁰⁵ He does think that focusing on those who suffer in poverty is important, but he is skeptical of the efforts of well-intended humanitarians; he is more impressed with those who create wealth through their business activities because, even if they do not intend it, “business and industry have the capacity to eradicate many of the causes of that suffering.”¹⁰⁶

Like Simḥah Zissel and other Musar teachers, Lapin also gives particular attention to virtues of self-control, self-discipline, and humility.¹⁰⁷ But his focus is ultimately on “increasing your ability to create wealth” and “feeling pride and passion for your work”¹⁰⁸—and not on disciplining the self to renounce wealth and humbly acknowledge the idea that God is in fact the creator of all wealth. Though Lapin may well personally believe in the doctrine that all wealth comes from God, he chooses in *Thou Shall Prosper* to instead use the dominant language of American business culture and conservative American political culture, focusing on how human beings can use moral discipline to create wealth.¹⁰⁹ One can see here the same sort of transference that Max Weber described occurring among Christian businessmen in his

Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism; Lapin resembles the Calvinists who transformed the self-discipline of the monastery into the self-discipline of the marketplace and saw the quest for profit as a religious vocation. His rhetoric seems particularly suited for an American cultural context, moreover, especially insofar as his efforts resemble those of many contemporary American Protestants who also emphasize the goodness of prosperity.¹¹⁰ Such an emphasis is also attractive to a certain segment of the centrist orthodox Jewish community in America within which Lapin places himself, though Lapin's own efforts are especially directed at the much larger audience of Christians interested in the profitable vision of *musar* that he preaches.¹¹¹

AMERICAN JEWISH WORLD SERVICE: MUSAR AND THE QUEST FOR GLOBAL JUSTICE

Lapin is not the only contemporary American to draw on the *musar* tradition in seeking to address questions of wealth and poverty. A rather different sort of effort comes from American Jewish World Service (AJWS), the leading Jewish organization focused on alleviating and ending poverty in the Global South. *Musar* practice has been incorporated into AJWS's World Partners Fellowship, a ten-month-long service-learning program based in India for recent American college graduates and young professionals. In this program, fellows work at a variety of nongovernmental organizations focused on human rights and international development, and they also follow a curriculum that helps them engage in study and reflection on their work. This curriculum is designed to help fellows consider "fundamental questions of justice and responsibility that arise for people engaged in international volunteer service," provide "a framework and vocabulary with which to analyze and confront injustice as thoughtful Jews and global justice advocates," and ultimately "inspire [fellows] . . . to return home motivated and prepared to take action."¹¹²

Part of the curriculum asks fellows to engage in *musar* practice, focusing on a series of character traits that may help them in their work. Building on the model pioneered at the Talmud Torah of Kelm, fellows focus on a series of five character traits [*middot*] and devote a month to each of them, working with a study partner [*chavruta*]. The curriculum's editor, Julie Gersten, explains:

We incorporate and blend some methods of mussar into the curriculum in order to create a practice that enables participants [to] cultivate *middot* that are critical for a meaningful volunteer experience. The *middot* we emphasize—humility, patience, loving and honoring

others, equanimity and responsibility—represent traits that are integral to participants’ success as volunteers and global justice advocates. For example, in the second month in their placements, participants work on cultivating the *middah* [character trait] of patience. They study a series of texts with their *chavruta* to identify how patience takes shape in their lives and when they have either lacked or shown excessive patience in their time in India. They set a goal to achieve a balance of patience in their volunteer placement, and work with their *chavruta* to develop a mantra and practice to support this goal. The practice and mantra become daily reminders of the change they hope to cultivate within themselves, and their *chavruta* becomes a person who can support them to achieve their goal.¹¹³

Gersten recommended that I speak with Misha Clebaner, a former fellow now on the path to becoming a rabbi and someone she viewed as engaging in *musar* practice in an exemplary way while he volunteered as a World Partners Fellow. As a fellow, Clebaner worked for a local, community-based NGO in an impoverished area of India, assisting its efforts to establish a new vocational training center that would combine technical training with training in English language and “personality development”¹¹⁴—a model very much resembling the sort of school that Max Lilienthal had hoped would take root in nineteenth century Lithuania. As Clebaner told me, engaging in *musar* study on the character trait of patience was particularly helpful while seeking to respond to pleas for changed social conditions: “you want things to happen relatively soon,” he told me,

but the honest answer is that it will take years. . . . So for my practice of musar I would return to a mantra throughout the day, to something like a definition of patience: “a quiet, steady perseverance,” “the ability to endure or delay hardship.” By coming back to this notion during everyday sorts of activities, my hope was to try to build the greater patience that is so necessary in development work, especially given the focus on confronting structural inequalities.¹¹⁵

As Clebaner indicated, AJWS’s approach to questions of poverty focuses on confronting what the curriculum describes as “the deeper structural causes of poverty,”¹¹⁶ and addressing structural causes may take a good deal of time. As the curriculum notes, AJWS seeks “to respond to poverty in the Global South holistically and not in ad hoc ways,” challenging supporters “to go beyond the kind of immediately gratifying help that an ad hoc gift represents and to instead make a lifelong commitment to working for and on behalf of the people of the Global South.”¹¹⁷

Clebaner also noted that focusing on the character trait of “responsibility” was central to his *musar* practice in India. This brought him into direct contact with the Kelm school of Musar, as the AJWS curriculum asked fellows to consider a teaching from Simḥah Zissel Ziv during their month of focusing on responsibility. Simḥah Zissel “defined responsibility as ‘bearing the burden of the other,’” the curriculum notes, and it goes on to bring one ancient midrash on responsibility that Simḥah Zissel urged his students in Kelm to consider: Moses, as a shepherd, finds one of his lambs drinking by a watering hole and admits that he had not realized the lamb was thirsty; now realizing that the lamb must be tired, he picks it up and brings it back to the flock.¹¹⁸ Clebaner found that this text helped him focus on how “people can get really complacent in leadership positions and forget to have a more empathetic position.” And yet, he pointed out, his consideration of notions of responsibility encouraged him to think critically about the praise given to Moses for his focus on a single sheep:

There’s a kind of a fine balance in that Moses actually had to leave the rest of his flock to go chase this lamb, and so the question of how you shift your priorities is here. It’s all very variable and really just depends on the kind of community that you have. I don’t think this story really points that out, but instead valorizes his going after that one specific sheep. There are good intentions, but it’s important to think carefully about going beyond good intentions. When you try to follow the one sheep as far as you can, you may realize that you wanted to do the right thing but you’ve lost the rest of your flock.¹¹⁹

This sort of reflection seems to be precisely what is encouraged by the AJWS curriculum, which stresses “going beyond good intentions” and using *musar* practice in order to help promote more “effective” development work—which requires “navigating the sometimes uncomfortable tension between our desire to help and the actual needs of communities facing poverty and marginalization.”¹²⁰ With his dedication to the character trait of responsibility, Clebaner seems to have been able to use the methods encouraged by the Kelm school to think critically about how to apply the qualities of “bearing the burden of the other” that the Kelm school emphasized.

In many ways, such efforts to harness the *musar* tradition resemble the efforts of Daniel Lapin. Like Lapin, AJWS supports responding to poverty with vocational training and business activity. Like Lapin’s *Thou Shall Prosper*, the AJWS curriculum does not advise trusting in divine miracles and does not depict divine intervention as directly causing prosperity or poverty—though whereas Lapin sees belief in God as a central value for the marketplace, AJWS

does not advocate for belief in God and seeks to appeal to atheist Jews and theist Jews alike.¹²¹ Both Lapin and AJWS are also interested in investigating what approaches will most effectively eliminate poverty, and both are skeptical of well-intended humanitarian efforts that don't investigate these questions—but whereas Lapin is confident that economic growth and prosperity will bring entire societies out of prosperity, the AJWS curriculum criticizes “trickle-down growth models” and cites examples where, despite overall economic growth, “any benefits that came from this growth were limited to a very small number of people with power and influence.”¹²² AJWS also notes the ways that business interests have been complicit in denying rights to land, food, and water, and in creating threats to public health.¹²³ The curriculum does not emphasize the transgressions of businesspeople in the way that Simḥah Zissel does, but it does clearly reject Daniel Lapin's vision of how business is “inherently moral” and almost always a force for good in the world.

The curriculum speaks in the language of many prospective fellows, appealing to the broad range of young American Jews who see Judaism as defined by its commitment to justice and “repairing the world,” and especially to Jews who are open to critiquing popular models of policy reduction that focus on economic growth above all. Not all those accepted into the program were eager to engage with the *musar* component of the tradition, as Gersten told me. And yet, she said, she saw *musar* as offering a promising means for accomplishing two AJWS goals—helping Jews to think critically about poverty reduction and helping them to do so by drawing on Jewish ideas and traditions.¹²⁴

Clebaner told me that it struck him that “*musar* is a great tool for supporting whatever philosophy an organization, community, or individual is trying to advance.” AJWS, as he observed, is able to harness the tradition to further its vision of global justice. So too, it seems to me that Lapin has been able to harness the tradition to further his own vision of economic growth; and Israeli ultra-orthodoxy has harnessed the tradition to further its own preference for Torah study over commerce.

Developing habits of moral discipline might, of course, also cause one to challenge one's vision or the vision of one's own community—and, notably, the AJWS curriculum goes to great lengths to encourage the study and appreciation of approaches to poverty reduction that the organization does not endorse and encourages its fellows to ask challenging questions about AJWS's organizational priorities.¹²⁵ AJWS offers an especially promising model insofar as it encourages critical thinking and does not just support fidelity to a

predefined set of values. But it is worth noting that, on the whole, focusing on character traits will often lead to an increased fidelity to the values of the institutions and cultural settings that are encouraging that focus. This was certainly the case in the original Kelm Talmud Torah, where the focus on *musar* seems to have supported the various values regarding wealth, poverty, and work that Simḥah Zissel advocated—cultivating responsibility towards the poor, appreciating charity and appreciating commerce, while also seeing the potential dangers of charity and the potential dangers of commerce. Aided by the models of *musar* that the Kelm school developed, the modern Jews profiled above have selectively taken up those ideas and have strengthened their own distinct approaches to confronting questions of wealth, work, and poverty.

NOTES

1. Michael Stanislawski, *Tsar Nicholas I and the Jews: The Transformation of Jewish Society in Russia, 1825–1855* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983); Immanuel Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter and the Mussar Movement: Seeking the Torah of Truth* (trans. Jonathan Chipman; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1993), 153–55.
2. Max E. Lilienthal, *Max Lilienthal, American Rabbi: Life and Writings* (ed. David Philipson; New York: Bloch, 1915), 240, 261.
3. On Lilienthal's educational and political ideals, see Bruce Ruben, *Max Lilienthal: The Making of the American Rabbinate* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2011), 74, 84.
4. Lilienthal, *Max Lilienthal, American Rabbi: Life and Writings*, 286.
5. *Ibid.*, 293.
6. *Ibid.*, 287.
7. *Ibid.*, 292.
8. As quoted in Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 18. The Gaon, unlike many of his contemporaries, also did not approve of women's participation in economic life; see Shaul Stampfer, "On the Creation and the Perpetuation of the Image of the Gaon of Vilna," in *Ha-Gera U-Veit Midrashe [The Vilna Gaon and His Disciples]* (ed. Moshe Hallamish et al.; Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2003), 50.
9. Shimon bar Yochai's advice is in the Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 35b; the story of his time in the cave is at *b. Shabbat* 33b. See the discussion at Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 156–57, and the view of the Vilna Gaon's student Hayyim of Volozhin discussed there.
10. See Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 156–62, 173–74.
11. *Ibid.*, 167, citing Dov Katz, *Tenu'at Ha-Musar* (2nd ed.; Tel-Aviv: Avraham Tzioni, 1954), 2: 371.
12. Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 185–86.

13. This quotation was made famous by Emmanuel Levinas, *Nine Talmudic Readings* (trans. Annette Aronowicz; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 99.
14. Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 160–61; the original text is in Israel Salanter, *Even Yisra'el* (ed. Shneur Zalman Hirshowitz; Warsaw: Yitzhak Goldman, 1883), 11.
15. Salanter, *Even Yisra'el*, 15; see Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 156–57.
16. Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 149, quoting Salanter, *Even Yisra'el*, 17.
17. Salanter, *Even Yisra'el*, 15.
18. Etkes, *Rabbi Israel Salanter*, 147; also see 159, 278–79.
19. Hillel Goldberg, *Israel Salanter: Text, Structure, Idea: The Ethics and Theology of an Early Psychologist of the Unconscious* (New York: Ktav, 1982), 107–08.
20. *Ibid.*, 184–90. On the possibility of miraculous divine guidance in Salanter's earlier writings, see also 146–48.
21. See Goldberg, *Israel Salanter*, 188.
22. Regarding these characteristics and Simḥah Zissel's thought on the whole, see Geoffrey Claussen, *Sharing the Burden: Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv and the Path of Musar* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2015).
23. Simḥah Zissel Ziv, *Sefer Hokhmah U-Musar (HuM)*, vol. 1 (New York, 1957), 91. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 43–44, 53, 127.
24. *Ibid.*, 1:56. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 165–66.
25. *Kitvei Ha-Sabba Ve-Talmidav Mi-Kelm* (Benei Berak: Siftei Ḥakhamim, Va'ad Le-Hafatzat Torah U-Musar, 1997), 1:148. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 164–65.
26. Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 16–18.
27. *Kitvei Ha-Sabba Mi-Kelm: Inyanei Elul Ve-Yamim Nora'im* (Benei Berak: Siftei Ḥakhamim, Va'ad Le-Hafatzat Torah U-Musar, 1997), 147–48. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 154–55.
28. *HuM*, 1:175. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 123–24.
29. *Sefer Hokhmah U-Musar*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1964), 26.
30. See the commentary of Rashi ad loc., *b. Qiddushin* 29a.
31. *Kitvei Ha-Sabba Ve-Talmidav Mi-Kelm*, 1:95.
32. *HuM*, 1:12.
33. *b. Berakhot*, 58a.
34. *HuM*, 2:7. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 145–46.
35. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 160–62.
36. See Geoffrey Claussen, "Rabbi Simḥah Zissel Ziv: The Moral Vision of a 19th Century Musar Master" (Ph.D. diss., Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 2011), 66–68.

37. *Ibid.*, 69–73, 76–77.
38. *Ibid.*, 215–18; Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 83–85.
39. *HuM*, 1:51. Simḥah Zissel copied the story from Natan ben Ḥayyim Amram, *Sefer No'am Ha-Middot* (Salonika, 1857), 71a. On this folktale motif, which often serves to rationalize poverty, see Jane Garry and Hasan M. El-Shamy, eds., *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 54–5. For further discussion of wealth damaging equanimity in Simḥah Zissel's writings, see *HuM*, 1:283.
40. Katz, *Tenu'at Ha-Musar*, 2:64.
41. See *HuM*, 2:99. I am following Joshua Kulp's translation of the Mishnah.
42. *Kitvei Ha-Sabba Mi-Kelm: Inyanei Elul Ve-Yamim Nora'im*, 146, citing Yehonatan Eybeschütz, *Ya'arot Devash*; the original midrash is Yalkut Shimoni Ruth #603.
43. *HuM*, 1:463–64.
44. *Ibid.*, 1:113.
45. *Ibid.*, 1:104, 163, 205, 274, 380.
46. *Ibid.*, 1:101.
47. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 1:371: “one must set aside fixed times for *musar*” regarding “coveting money.”
48. *Ibid.*, 1:174.
49. *Ibid.*, 1:114. Emphasis added.
50. *Ibid.*, 1:97.
51. *Ibid.*, 1:96.
52. *Ibid.*, 1:110. See Claussen, *Sharing the Burden*, 104–07.
53. New Jewish Publication Society translation.
54. *HuM*, 1:110–111.
55. *Ibid.*, 1:114. See also the continuation of the passage above at *ibid.*, 1:111.
56. *HuM*, 1:107.
57. See, on this point, *ibid.*, 1:242.
58. *Ibid.*, 1:113.
59. See the preface to Elijah Eliezer Dessler, *Strive for Truth* (trans. Aryeh Carmell; Jerusalem; New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1978), 1:10; Yonason Rosenblum, *Rav Dessler: The Life and Impact of Rabbi Eliyahu Eliezer Dessler, the Michtav M'elياهو* (Brooklyn: Mesorah, 2000), 20.
60. See Jacob Lupu, *New Directions in Haredi Society Vocational Training and Academic Studies* (Jerusalem: Floersheimer Institute for Policy Studies, 2005), 21–22; Benjamin Brown, “Orthodox Judaism,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (ed. Alan Avery-Peck and Jacob Neusner; Malden: Blackwell, 2000), 332.

61. Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, 1:130.
62. Ibid., 1:145. It is worth noting that, compared to Simḥah Zissel, Dessler is more critical of these techniques and of being motivated by compassion: see *ibid.*, 1:144–46. Dessler tends to be more concerned with the need for complete purity in one’s moral motivation, ridding oneself of any self-regard, whereas Simḥah Zissel tends to appreciate how benefitting others may also benefit oneself.
63. Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, 1:111; in keeping with the translation above, I have substituted “rationed water” for “a measure of water.”
64. Ibid., 1:121.
65. Ibid., 1:124.
66. Ibid., 2:240, with “Hashem” changed to “the Lord.”
67. Ibid., 2:283, with “Hashem” changed to “the Lord,” “Simḥah Zissel Sieff” changed to “Simḥah Zissel Ziv,” and the biblical translation modified.
68. Ibid., 2:284. See also the continuation of the discussion at 2:285.
69. Dessler, *Strive for Truth*, 2:292.
70. Ibid., 2:288–89.
71. Ibid., 2:265.
72. Ibid., 2:266.
73. Elijah Eliezer Dessler, *Mikhtav Me-Eliyahu* (ed. Aryeh Carmel and Alter Halpern; London, 1955), 3:356–57. See further discussion in Shimon Schwab, “Mikhtav Be-Inyan ‘Shitat Frankfurt’” [A Letter Regarding the “Frankfurt Approach”], *Ha-Ma’ayan* 6:4 (1966): 4–7; Shnayer Z. Leiman, “R. Shimon Schwab: A Letter Regarding the ‘Frankfurt’ Approach,” *Tradition* 31:3 (1997): 71–77; Jacob J. Schacter, “Facing the Truths of History,” *The Torah U-Madda Journal* 8 (1998): 200–73.
74. Lupu, *New Directions in Haredi Society Vocational Training and Academic Studies*, 21.
75. Meir Levin, *Novarodok: A Movement That Lived in Struggle and Its Unique Approach to the Problem of Man* (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1996), 88–89.
76. See, e.g., Eliyahu Lopian, *Sefer Lev Eliyahu* (ed. Shalom Mordekhai Shvadron; Jerusalem: 2005), 1:158–60, 3:253–58.
77. Eliyahu Lopian, *Lev Eliyahu: A Collection of Talks* (trans. B. D. Klien; Jerusalem: Eliezer Fisher Publishing, 1989), 104–05. I have added the italics and altered the punctuation slightly.
78. Ibid., 106. (I have added some punctuation.)
79. Daniel Lapin, *Thou Shall Prosper: Ten Commandments for Making Money* (2nd ed.; Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2010), 11.

80. Daniel Lapin, "Teaching Torah to America's Christians," in *Movers & Shakers: Sixty Prominent Personalities Speak Their Mind on Tape* (ed. Elliot Resnick; New York: Brenn Books, 2013), 24–29; Lapin, *Thou Shall Prosper*, 344.
81. "Home Page," *Rabbi Daniel Lapin*, <http://www.rabbidaniellapin.com/index.php>; "FAQ," *Rabbi Daniel Lapin*, <http://www.rabbidaniellapin.com/dynpage.php?id=4>, accessed July 15, 2014.
82. Daniel Lapin, e-mail message to author, August 7, 2013.
83. Daniel Lapin, "Soul Snatchers," *Rabbi Daniel Lapin*, <http://www.rabbidaniellapin.com/blog/2011/soul-snatchers>, accessed July 15, 2014.
84. See Lapin, "Teaching Torah," 24. Lapin's teachers also included Yaakov Yitzchok Ruderman, a student of Simḥah Zissel's student Natan Tzevi Finkel, the Alter of Slobodka.
85. Lapin, *Thou Shall Prosper*, 15.
86. *Ibid.*, 16.
87. *Ibid.*, 29.
88. *Ibid.*, 3.
89. *Ibid.*
90. *Ibid.*, 83.
91. *Ibid.*, 85.
92. *Ibid.*, 5.
93. *Ibid.*, 185.
94. *Ibid.*, 186.
95. *Ibid.*, 149.
96. *Ibid.*, 31.
97. *Ibid.*, 22.
98. *Ibid.*
99. *Ibid.*, 119–20.
100. *Ibid.*, 305.
101. *Ibid.*, 305–17.
102. *Ibid.*, 94.
103. *Ibid.*, 125.
104. *Ibid.*, 203.
105. *Ibid.*, 263, 267, 295, 321.
106. *Ibid.*, 152.
107. See, e.g., *ibid.*, 85, 95, 102, 122, 123, 231.

108. Ibid., 21.

109. On human beings as creating wealth—and as resembling God in making such efforts—see also Daniel Lapin, *America's Real War* (Sisters: Multnomah Publishers, 1999), 228.

110. Nina Shapiro, “Blessed for Success,” *Seattle Weekly* (October 9, 2006), <http://www.seattleweekly.com/2003-11-05/news/blessed-for-success>, accessed July 15, 2014. Shapiro explains how Lapin's efforts compare to related Christian efforts. She also quotes Martin Jaffe making the connection between Lapin and Weber's *Protestant Ethic*.

111. On the focus on Christians, see Lapin, “Teaching Torah.” On the attraction of this sort of vision for American centrist orthodoxy, see Alan Brill, “The Emerging Popular Culture and the Centrist Community,” in *Developing a Jewish Perspective on Culture* (ed. Yehuda Sarna; New York: Krav, 2014), 50.

112. Julie Gersten, ed., *Live the Questions: A Service-Learning Curriculum for the World Partners Fellowship in India (Facilitator Edition)* (American Jewish World Service, 2011), iii.

113. Julie Gersten, “Best Practice: Integrate Jewish Text and Tradition as a Source of Guidance When Grappling with Big Questions,” *RepairLabs*, <http://repairlabs.org/part-5-best-practice-integrate-jewish-text-and-tradition-as-a-source-of-guidance-when-grappling-with-big-questions/3104>, accessed July 15, 2014.

114. “Sahbhagi Shikshan Kendra, a Regional Centre for Participatory Learning, Action and Research: Annual Report, 2011–2012,” 21, [http://www.sahbhagi.org/AnnualReports/AnnRep Pdf/Annual Report 2011–12.pdf](http://www.sahbhagi.org/AnnualReports/AnnRep%20Pdf/Annual%20Report%202011-12.pdf), accessed July 15, 2014. (Clebner assisted with the preparation of this annual report.)

115. Misha Clebner, in discussion with the author, August 21, 2013, quoting the definitions of patience given in Gersten, *Live the Questions*, Mus:7.

116. Gersten, *Live the Questions*, 2:5.

117. Ibid., 3:16.

118. Ibid., Mus:14. The curriculum cites Alan Morinis, *Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar* (Boston: Trumpeter, 2007), 204. The translation “bearing the burden of the other” stems from Rabbi Ira Stone, e.g., from *A Responsible Life: The Spiritual Path of Mussar* (New York: Aviv Press, 2006).

119. Clebner, in discussion with the author, August 21, 2013.

120. Gersten, *Live the Questions*, 3:1.

121. In the paper by Lisa Goldstein that inspired AJWS's Lisa Exler and Julie Gersten to utilize *musar* in the World Partners Fellowship curriculum, Goldstein emphasizes that “the cultivation of middot does not assume a ‘religious’ orientation; one doesn't have to believe in God or speak Hebrew or master certain ritual practices to engage in the work.” The unpublished paper is titled “Towards a New Vision of Jewish Contemplative Justice Work.” For Lapin's sense of the links between belief in God and business, see Lapin, *Thou Shall Prosper*, 163–64.

122. Gersten, *Live the Questions*, 2:43.

123. *Ibid.*, 2:17–18.

124. Julie Gersten, in discussion with the author, July 12, 2013. On how *musar* may appeal or not appeal to contemporary American Jews, see Geoffrey Claussen, “The American Jewish Revival of Musar,” *The Hedgehog Review* 12:2 (2010): 63–72. As Gersten told me, this article also played a role in her thinking about incorporating *musar* into the program.

125. See Gersten, *Live the Questions*, 2:1–27.

Conspicuous Charity and Jewish Unity: The Jewish *Loterie* in Nineteenth Century Paris

Jeffrey Haus

Charity has traditionally played a central role in Jewish communal life. It has a long history in the Jewish legal and religious traditions, which have dictated the responsibility of Jewish communities to tend to their more unfortunate members. This obligation to care for the Jewish poor has in turn spurred the formation of various Jewish communal institutions. Historians of modern Jewry tend to agree that, in addition to promoting social welfare, caring for indigent and immigrant Jews has served as a source of Jewish communal unity in an age of emancipation, enlightenment, upward economic mobility, and religious and social fragmentation.¹ In contemporary times, charity is still considered “communal glue”: a Google search of “Jewish Charity Unity,” for example, generates more than five million hits.

This chapter explores an alternative view of the traditional narrative connecting Jewish charity and Jewish unity within the microcosm of mid-nineteenth-century French Jewry. As a significant body of scholarship has shown over the past twenty-five years, French Jewry was neither culturally, religiously, nor experientially homogeneous during the nineteenth century (or thereafter).² This diverse reality existed, however, behind a public image of unity that had its roots in the revolutionary and Napoleonic eras.³ The outward portrayal of unity assumed not only internal cohesion among French Jews, but also their uniform loyalty to the French nation. As a visible enactment of Jewish existence in France, charity represented a manifestation of French Jewish adherence to both traditional Jewish principles and modern French values.

On a number of levels, charity did encourage communal unity among French Jews who participated in fundraising events and organizations. Charitable activity, however, could also exacerbate economic and social fragmentation within French Jewry. Often, as the ensuing pages will show, these divisive forces emanated subtly from Jewish charity’s conspicuous aspects. French Jewish charity thus generated division within the very population it sought to unite. These elements of fragmentation illustrate charity’s limitations as a source of Jewish communal unity, not only in France but in other contexts as well. Investigating a critique of the Jewish *loterie* in mid-nineteenth century Paris reveals some of the contours of these divisions, their roots, and to an extent their potential consequences.

Over the last ten to fifteen years, the study of charity and philanthropy has constituted a rich field for historians of the Jewish experience. The majority of these studies stress the unifying aspects of charitable and philanthropic endeavors. Derek Penslar's path-breaking *Shylock's Children*, for example, examines how European Jews—mostly in German-speaking lands—navigated their upwardly mobile status in light of their integration and eventual emancipation and how they responded to gentile perceptions of Jewish economic activities. Penslar argues that in the course of the integration process European Jews internalized these responses, rendering them essential components of the Jewish communal fabric. As one of these components, aid for the Jewish (and non-Jewish) poor took on added importance: instead of remaining an element of religious responsibility, helping the poor became significant in its own right. “The centrality of philanthropy as a source of collective Jewish identity,” he writes, “is indeed the hallmark of modernity.”⁴

This charitable focus went beyond the integration process, taking on a broad scope that linked Jews across geographic and cultural boundaries. Rebecca Kobrin's study of the Bialystok Jewish diaspora, for example, identifies charity as an essential pillar in the construction of a transnational Jewish group identity. Charitable enterprises helped to maintain connections among dispersed Bialystokers in America and Europe, creating a context for ongoing communication and cooperation between different communities of émigrés. In this manner, Kobrin explains, charity established not only the basis for interaction between Jewish émigrés and their native land, but also “the foundation for Bialystoker culture in the years following the First World War.”⁵

For nineteenth century French Jews, charity also constituted a source of unity. On the one hand, the work could bring them into social contact with gentiles, as Jews took part in nonsectarian charitable events and non-Jews in Jewish ones. Charitable work also connected Jews with their non-Jewish compatriots by demonstrating Jewish acceptance of a universal set of charitable values.⁶ Conspicuous Jewish charity sought to convey these values, to establish them as an essential component of French Jewish existence. Joint endeavors in philanthropy and charity highlighted a common compassion for the poor, elderly, and infirm. In 1846, for example, the *Archives israélites*—one of the two main Parisian Jewish periodicals—reprinted a report by the Paris municipal council announcing a subvention for the Comité israélite de secours et d'encouragement [Jewish Committee for Aid and Assistance] as a “mark of sympathy” from the council and the Prefect of the Seine toward French Jews.⁷ Later that same year, the journal summarized the annual report of the Société

de l'encouragement du travail [Society for the Encouragement of Work], remarking that its contents offered "new proof of the high utility of this institution and of the growing favor it justly enjoys in public opinion and among the Jews of the Lower Rhine."⁸

Gentile participation in Jewish efforts especially affirmed and validated Jewish membership in the French nation. The 1846 article in the *Archives israélites* found it "especially glorious," for example, that the Société de l'encouragement du travail counted among its donors and supporters "men [*hommes*] of other religions."⁹ In 1853, the *Archives israélites* led its issue by acknowledging that a "French woman living in Greece" had sent them 1000f to aid the persecuted Jews of Salonika.¹⁰ French Jewish philanthropic institutions also mirrored their non-Jewish counterparts in terms of both mission and structure.¹¹ Through charity, upwardly mobile French Jews could authenticate their rootedness in republican values and their indisputable membership in the French nation.

In the same way that charitable endeavors enabled Jews and non-Jews to unite for common cause, they likewise allowed French Jews to bridge internal religious differences. As Céline Leglaive-Perani has written, elite French Jews considered philanthropic activities their "link with Judaism . . . the means of affirming a [Jewish] identity and solidarity with [other] Jews."¹² Jewish observers of the period thus portrayed charity as a neutral territory, a staging area for the construction of a Jewish communal unity that transcended religious observance and theological belief as well as social and economic class. An 1845 article in the other main Parisian Jewish periodical, the *Univers israélite*, highlighted this concept, stating that "[While French Jews] no longer agree upon the obligation of certain religious practices that were sacred to our fathers . . . the long standing [tradition of] Jewish charity . . . forms the divine chain that will unite us eternally to the charitable patriarch [Abraham]."¹³ In 1865, its pages echoed this already well-worn theme. Touting the success of the Jewish hospital in Mulhouse, the journal's editor, Samuel Bloch, marveled that "the members of the community, without distinction of opinion [and] forgetting all the old disagreements, concur largely in this holy enterprise, and that there is only one heart and one soul alone, uniting them in one Jewish work and one Jewish thought."¹⁴

In general, accounts of French Jewish charitable work during this period contained a common thread: charity linked French Jews on a level beyond their religious beliefs, cultural practices, or financial or social status. Philanthropic efforts formed the foundation for "bonds of solidarity" connecting

French Jews in the Metropole to their coreligionists in the North African colonies and beyond.¹⁵ Bathed in the light of charitable activity, French Judaism took on a more universal sheen: it became more inclusive of Jews and more compatible with French bourgeois values.

Despite such idyllic depictions, the ability of charity to unite French Jews remained limited and dissatisfaction with the system occasionally spilled over into public discourse. One notable example indicated internal communal divisions that charity could not remedy and, in some cases, helped to perpetuate. In 1846, an author calling himself Ben-Lévi published a lengthy article in the *Archives israélites*. Ben-Lévi was in fact the pseudonym of Godchaux Baruch Weil, a Parisian Jew with an eye toward both reforming French Jewish life and preserving the moral integrity of Jewish tradition. The son of a wealthy family of porcelain manufacturers (and a great-uncle of Marcel Proust), Weil became a regular contributor to the *Archives israélites*, publishing nonfiction, editorials, and fiction in a style that Maurice Samuels has termed “Jewish Realism.”¹⁶ As Samuels observes, Ben-Lévi’s pieces in the *Archives israélites* “display [both] a worldly, witty, playfully sarcastic tone [as well as] a uniquely satirical edge, seeking to hold up a critical mirror to the assimilating French Jewish bourgeoisie.” In this way, Samuels concludes, Ben-Lévi’s writing “challenge[s] readers to consider what they left behind in their social ascent.”¹⁷

This two-edged attitude pervades Ben-Lévi’s analysis of the Paris *loterie*, which he found a noble effort full of contradictions. Different aspects of the *loterie* (as well as his treatment of it) illuminate divisive elements within nineteenth century French Jewish charity. Ostensibly, Ben-Lévi sought to promote interest in the event, an annual charity raffle held from 1844 until the early twentieth century whose proceeds benefited several of the capital’s Jewish charities.¹⁸ However, as Mordechai Rozin has written, nineteenth century charity and philanthropy generally assumed a society fractured between donors and recipients, between rich and poor, and often between the morally weak and the morally virtuous.¹⁹ As an exclusive event aimed at the wealthier segments of Jewish society, the *loterie* enhanced these sorts of social and economic rifts within Parisian Jewry. Ben-Lévi’s article, as we shall see below, brought these fissures into sharper relief.

In addition, the *loterie* exemplified what I will call “conspicuous charity”: charitable acts that served an outer-directed function as well as an internal communal purpose. This concept parallels the more common notion of conspicuous consumption outlined by the social theorist Thorstein Veblen at the fin de siècle. Veblen coined the term to describe the spending habits of what

he called the American “leisure class,” those with enough accumulated wealth to avoid the need for daily labor. Public displays of wealth, Veblen argued, illustrated the existing power structure within society; one accumulated items to enhance one’s own “comfort and well-being,” but also as a means of establishing and maintaining a position of social superiority.²⁰ Transposing this concept to nineteenth century France, the historian Whitney Walton observes that French social and economic elites erected practical obstacles to consumption that only they were able to hurdle. “[French] bourgeois consumers,” she concludes, “promoted a standard of taste that effectively limited the acquisition of durable, stylish, comfortable furnishings and clothing to their own class.” By making luxury goods “a visible sign of membership,” the culture of conspicuous consumption placed an entry fee on elite status.²¹ Nineteenth century French consumption practices also reinforced gender divisions, classifying certain products as masculine and others as feminine.²² These barriers effectively impeded upward mobility, preserving separation between the elites and everyone else. The outwardly divisive elements of conspicuous consumption thus inhered in its definition.

When viewed through this lens, charity appears to have fulfilled a similar demonstrative function that produced similar social fragmentation. Just as Veblen’s leisure class purchased material emblems of affluence and status, donors could exhibit their accumulation of wealth through charitable acts. In his comparative study of philanthropists in Toronto, Boston, and Leipzig, Thomas Adam has offered a similar interpretation. The wealthy, he writes, participated in philanthropic enterprises “not only out of feelings of responsibility but also out of a desire to be recognized by their peers.” Their endeavors had the additional benefit of asserting positions of cultural and social power.²³ In fact, the mere possession of sufficient wealth to distribute to the needy necessitated the perpetuation of a certain chasm within the community. How could one be rich, after all, if there were no poor? Charity at once delineated this social and economic gulf, acknowledged its existence, and maintained it even as charitable activities sought to ameliorate its effects.

French Jewish charity did not, however, result solely from an attempt to keep up with the Rothschilds. Many French Jews worked sincerely and extensively to alleviate the suffering of their poor, indigent coreligionists and provide them with vital services while simultaneously strengthening communal ties.²⁴ Examining the records of Jewish charitable organizations in nineteenth century Paris, one finds vast evidence of the dedication and genuine concern for others that drove this system forward. Wealthy French Jews, like their

counterparts in Europe and America, accepted the traditional obligation to help the poor and certainly took their responsibilities seriously.

At the same time, nineteenth century French Jewish charity reflected the outer-directed dynamics of conspicuous consumption. As upwardly mobile Jews adopted the cultural trappings of French bourgeois life, charitable works became a badge of achievement signaling their move up the social and economic ladders. Through charity, French Jews could demonstrate membership in the French bourgeoisie, signaling adherence to the social and moral guidelines befitting that group.²⁵ French Jews therefore had an incentive to give publicly and to announce their good works. Consequently, publicized donations began to replace the anonymous gifts of traditional Jewish charity [classified under the Hebrew term, *tzedakah*]. In turn, French Jewish charity became more conspicuous, with the built-in divisiveness of consumption reinforcing lines of social and economic separation within the very community it purported to unite.

Conspicuous charity could also inoculate wealthy Jews against charges of moral debasement and material excess. During the 1830s and 40s, numerous French commentators lamented the perceived corrupting influence of the burgeoning market economy. In response, other writers looked for ways to render the market more “virtuous,” a place where, as Victoria Thompson has argued, “making money would be seen as an honorable pursuit, [where] self-interest accorded with the public good [and] freedom did not degenerate into license.”²⁶ Mid-nineteenth century perceptions connecting economic gain to immorality perhaps struck at French Jews more deeply, as this correspondence was embedded in anti-Jewish writings of the period. The 1830s and 40s saw the emergence of a strain of harsh public criticism in France directed at what Julie Kalman has termed the “Rothschild-Jew.” In the eyes of anti-Jewish writers and social utopians, the financial mogul Baron James de Rothschild became the stereotype for all Jewish financiers and industrialists, providing “a superbly efficient receptacle . . . [for] all of society’s ills.”²⁷

Charitable works offered a means of refuting such portrayals, both for Rothschild and other wealthy Jews who found themselves lumped into this category with him. Unlike conspicuous consumption—which Veblen associated with the wastefulness of disposable income²⁸—charity demonstrated the productive use of excess wealth: a caring society, a sense of social responsibility, and thus a reason to accumulate capital in the first place. In short, if consumption corrupted, charity redeemed; by associating money with virtue, conspicuous charity publicly justified the possession of wealth. Aiding the poor could offer moral examples of righteous living along with material sus-

tenance, helping to stimulate projects essential to communal well-being. As a corrective for Jewish conspicuous consumption, Jewish charity had to become more conspicuous as well, demonstrating not only affluence but moral virtue untainted by material wealth and acquisition. French Jewish charity therefore adopted a more outer-directed profile partly in response to public criticism.

The external projection of Jewish charity required a communication vehicle, and the French Jewish press abetted this shift by publicizing Jewish charitable acts. The two leading Parisian Jewish periodicals, the *Archives israélites* and the *Univers israélite*, assumed significant roles in emphasizing the various benefits of Jewish charity.²⁹ In 1840, the editor of the *Archives israélites*, Samuel Cahen, declared that his recently founded journal would thereafter announce acts of charity in order to encourage similar acts among French Jews.³⁰ True to his word, the *Archives israélites* constantly praised individual acts of giving; announced the launch of charitable and philanthropic projects; and regularly published donations to existing institutions such as the Rothschild Hospital, Jewish burial associations, and other communal organizations.³¹ The *Univers israélite* followed suit, making both publications forums for trumpeting Jewish aid to the unfortunate.³²

Within the pages of the Jewish press, charity and philanthropy became visible components of French Jewish life while their practitioners became role models to be extolled and emulated. Donor names (and often the amounts of their donations) appeared regularly in both journals. An 1867 issue of the *Archives israélites*, for example, listed twenty-seven separate donations (some of which remained anonymous) made during the month of July to the Comité de bienfaisance israélite [The Jewish Benevolent Committee] of Paris. By the 1870s, the journal regularly included a detailed list of “donors to religious and charitable institutions” and to Jewish communal institutions in Palestine.³³ The establishment of new benevolent societies received special commendation. In 1843, the *Archives israélites* announced the launch of the *Société pour l'établissement des jeunes filles israélites* [The Society for the Support of Jewish Girls] in Paris by publishing the organization's bylaws and lauding its founders.³⁴

Hoping to merit some mention and attract future donations, Jewish charitable organizations began to send their annual reports to both journals. Life-cycle announcements also emphasized charity whenever possible. Obituaries ranked charitable works high among the achievements of the deceased. The *Univers israélite*, for example, praised the late Mme. Halphen in 1864 as one who lived at the “highest level of society” but preferred to work to relieve the suffering of the poor and afflicted.³⁵ The death notice of a Mme. Wolf in

1865 likewise praised her as “charitable and pious,” among her other virtues.³⁶ This practice became long-standing, as evidenced by a wedding announcement in 1906 praising the bride as “the valiant vice-president” of an organization that provided trousseaux to indigent women.³⁷

Through these announcements, the Jewish press helped to shape a public Jewish ideal in which charity as a source of unity stood near the forefront. When, for example, the *Archives israélites* published excerpts of the first annual report of the Société pour l'établissement des jeunes filles israélites in 1844, it highlighted the project's potential to catalyze closer relations among all French Jews. Most of all, the article admonished its readers not to forget, “the bond of *fraternité* that . . . links . . . rich and poor; because preserving this bond between us all has been the principal goal of the Society.”³⁸ As portrayed in the Jewish press, conspicuous charity possessed the ability to transcend communal divisions. These accounts also helped to mold the moral parameters of conspicuous charity, especially applauding acts undertaken for religious purposes or within a religious framework. In this manner, the Jewish press attempted to construct what Benedict Anderson famously termed an “imagined community”: a group of readers linked to each other by a constructed value system conveyed through print.³⁹ Consequently, the unifying goals of Jewish charity dovetailed with those of the Jewish press.

The Jewish press also sought to mend other sources of division within the community. In an effort to bridge geographic distances between French Jews, both the *Archives* and the *Univers* published news from Jewish communities around the country and abroad, with short items regularly reporting charitable efforts undertaken by Jews in Strasbourg, Bordeaux, and elsewhere.⁴⁰ Both journals also worked to downplay economic and religious divisions. On one hand, the *Archives israélites* and the *Univers israélite* were clearly aimed at acculturated French Jews: the articles and advertisements appeared in French and included intellectual and political news of the day as well as updates on communal events. At the same time, even though the *Archives israélites* espoused a more reformist outlook than the *Univers*, both periodicals tried to convey a set of values that linked Jews both observant and nonobservant, Ashkenazic and Sephardic, rich, poor, or somewhere in the middle.

The portrayal of charity in their pages served this purpose. As the editors of the *Archives israélites* noted in praising an 1847 appeal for charity from the Chief Rabbi of Nancy, “He has the good taste of knowing that one cannot create controversy in an appeal to charity, and when the agreement of all is necessary, he addresses himself to everyone.”⁴¹ Consequently, the Parisian Jewish

press “imagined” a community linked across the lines of class and, especially within the pages of the *Archives israélites*, religious belief and practice. Press depictions of charity thus not only described the present state of communal affairs, but also prescribed an ideal state of French Jewish communal existence.

The Paris *loterie* provides a useful example of how these different factors converged. The *loterie* was a common event within various French Jewish communities for much of the nineteenth century. A random sampling of the Jewish press reveals Jewish communal *loteries* in Nancy, St. Esprit, and Mulhouse as well as in Paris during the 1850s.⁴² Proceeds from the Paris *loterie* benefited the capital’s Jewish charity committee [*the Comité de bienfaisance israélite*], which distributed the funds to institutions such as the Maison de refuge pour jeunes filles israélites, a shelter and vocational program for poor Jewish girls.

From the beginning, the Paris *loterie* was both exclusive and conspicuous. The event was spearheaded by Baroness Betty de Rothschild in 1844, emulating similar *loteries* organized by Catholic society women; throughout its history, the *loterie* remained a mostly female-led enterprise.⁴³ The *loterie* committee—mostly made up of prominent Jewish women, the wives of wealthy Jewish businessmen, lawyers, and physicians—saw to most of the event’s details. They not only solicited donations of prizes and sold tickets, but also handled most of the other logistics for the event, even down to the rental of table linens and dishes and the securing of police permits. After Betty’s death, the event’s leadership passed to subsequent generations of Rothschild doyennes.⁴⁴ Jewish *loteries* throughout France followed this same leadership pattern. An 1844 account of the Jewish *loterie* in Nancy, for example, boasted that its attendees included “the elite of Nancy society.”⁴⁵

This leadership model places the *loterie* and the women who ran it firmly within the historical context of the period. As Benjamin Maria Baader’s analysis shows, the deterioration of religious authority among upwardly mobile German Jews paralleled the diminution of the religious character of many Jewish communal associations. The resulting system afforded women greater opportunities for participation and leadership within German Jewish communal life.⁴⁶ During this same period, bourgeois French women were assuming expanded public roles as a result of changing dynamics within the economic marketplace. As the market shifted toward a more conspicuous consumer culture, French women—as managers of their households—increasingly served as arbiters of taste for material goods.⁴⁷

Charitable work—such as planning the *loterie*—imprinted a moral framework upon these trends.⁴⁸ Just as the consumer choices of middle- and

upper-class French women helped to determine the standards of tasteful fashion, furnishings, and manners, their conspicuously charitable activities established a template for moral behavior. For both Jewish and non-Jewish women, this moral component facilitated the justification of their growing presence in the public arena. Consequently, Jewish *loteries* represented a nexus where features of economic, gender, and social development intersected.

Bolstered by the Rothschild name in Paris and notable Jews in other cities, the *loteries* attracted a select clientele as well as the attention of the Jewish press. Each year, at least one of the capital's two main Jewish periodicals usually published reports on the display of the prizes to boost the sale of tickets. While these articles emphasized the causes that the *loterie* sought to support, they also played up the participation and approval of notable non-Jews. The *Archives israélites*, for example, took great pride in mentioning that the 1844 Jewish *loterie* in Nancy counted the local bishop and Protestant pastor as among its attendees, and King Louis-Philippe himself as a donor.⁴⁹ Press treatments regularly praised the *loterie* as a community jewel worthy of support from all ranks of the community. The *loterie*, like Jewish charity and philanthropy in general, united Jews and non-Jews alike.

Ben-Lévi's 1846 critique of the *loterie*, however, diverged from this public portrayal. Instead of the reverential tones usually reserved for such occasions, he employed his aforementioned sardonic style. His piece began, for example, with the following lines: "Last week, I strolled like a good bourgeois to the Hôtel-de-Ville, scurrying into the salle Saint-Jean in order to admire the pretty things donated . . . to the *loterie* for the benefit of our charitable establishments. I thought to myself that nothing resembles one *loterie* like another *loterie*. In fact, it seemed to me to duplicate the exposition of the previous year." He then asked rhetorically which prize he would have chosen for himself if he could have had his heart's desire and listed ten of the lots: a rug in a Renaissance design, a riding crop, a toiletry case "decorated with fur," a waste-paper basket adorned with tapestry, a designer bathrobe, an inkwell made of gold and bronze, a wine basket containing expensive Port, a box of cigars, an oil painting, and a doll.

After evaluating each item, he concluded that ultimately none suited him. The wastebasket, for example, would have made a perfect receptacle for the "useless letters" that he received and the failed poetry that he composed; but unfortunately, he accumulated so much of both that he would have had to hire a servant to empty it constantly. He would have proudly hung the oil painting in his living room, "But . . . why [should] this work be buried in my

house where neither millionaires nor *grand seigneurs* come?" The bathrobe was beautiful, but too small to hide his ankles, which, he pointed out, "would gain nothing from a public exhibition." He continued on in the same vein about the rest of the items, advising readers who might find his words of "little interest" to "come back in a quarter of an hour."⁵⁰

In the final section, Ben-Lévi lamented the *loterie's* negative effect on the Jewish women who were most responsible for organizing it. Although he praised their dedication, their role in selling tickets struck him as undignified. "Does anyone have any idea," he wrote,

of the "steeple chase" in which these excellent ladies competed to sell the most tickets? . . . What innocent tricks, what persuasive eloquence, what tyrannical propositions [they had to make] to sell tickets and to obtain the prizes! This [situation] finally reached the point [at which] . . . I no longer entered houses where I had to dread encountering these solicitations, so amiable and so seductive that one cannot resist them; it even happened [that I went] . . . to visit one of these ladies, [and found] her absent; as I handed my calling card to the chambermaid, she said to me in an engaging tone: "Madame has gone out, but if monsieur comes to request tickets for the *loterie*, here they are."

Despite the drawbacks of this event, Ben-Lévi concluded that French Jews had little other choice. The Catholic Church, he observed, used Sunday collections and holidays like Holy Week to raise large amounts of funds; Jews, by contrast, did not engage in such practices on their Sabbath or festivals. Finding the options limited, he advised his readers,

Let us attach ourselves strongly to this admirable institution of ladies charged with sponsoring all of our establishments of charity; let us dream that the women are the advance troops of the grand army of charity, and let us surround with our reverence and respect this noble phalanx of ladies that we can hold up with pride to the charitable women of other religions. . . . Continue therefore, continue, noble and holy women, the task that you have undertaken with such great good will. Amid so many dead beliefs and such cruel disillusionments, may the sacred fire upon the altar of charity not cease to be kept by your hands.

In the end, Ben-Lévi lamented the event itself, writing that upon returning home he had "sadly count[ed] the 85 tickets that I had purchased for this *loterie* . . . and I cursed the *loterie*, this pleasure in leaves and flowers whose fruit we never receive." He also noted that, although the *loterie* had

generated over 18,000f for Jewish charities, it had taken nearly a year to raise that amount.

Ben-Lévi's article thus points out economically divisive elements within the *loterie*, despite its general portrayal as a unifying event for French Jews. One may read his jabs at the prizes as a broader criticism of both the dynamics of Jewish charity and of the growing French Jewish bourgeoisie. The prizes he mentions are all luxury items, donated by the wealthy. Each of these, he noted, would be out of place in his own more humble residence and, one would assume, the abodes of other more modest Parisian Jews. The sale of tickets also exemplified this division, with the bourgeois Jewish ladies calling upon largely their own social and economic cohort. This system circulated material items—the badges of conspicuous wealth and taste—among the rich while distributing the funds they raised to the poor through the various organizations supported by the lottery. The money itself thus constituted the main connection between rich Jews and poor Jews; personal bonding remained distant at best. The *loterie* took place in a bubble of wealth, disconnecting wealthier Jews from the very people they wished to help. Likewise, its conspicuous portrayal in the Jewish press emphasized the distance between rich and poor. As a result, the *loterie* exacerbated gaps within French Jewry rather than erasing them.

Ben-Lévi's musings on the role of Jewish women in the *loterie* also suggest some of the tensions created by their expanding role in charitable enterprises. Paralleling a persistent thread of his fiction, Ben-Lévi implies that the developing landscape of Parisian Jewish charity produced both positive and negative consequences.⁵¹ Clearly, the conspicuous charity in which Jewish women engaged demonstrated Jewish affinity with French values. Not only the act of charity, but also the direction of the proceeds to organizations assisting poor Jewish women with dowries, education, and layettes for new mothers grounded them safely within the mainstream of suitable female activity. This conspicuous virtue held ancillary value for bourgeois French Jews beyond the funds raised in charitable work. As Kalman has argued, anti-Jewish writers during the Restoration and July Monarchy (1818–48) held up Jewish women as paragons of virtue and purity in contrast to the degradation of Jewish men. The source of this male deficiency lay, for many of these writers, in commercial enterprise: too much contact with money made one immoral and unclean. When Jewish women married Jewish men, they, too, became tainted by this affliction.⁵²

Certainly, Ben-Lévi was no antisemite; nevertheless, he appears to have adopted a similar approach in his essay. He depicted Jewish women as “holy,”

and the keepers of the eternal flame of Jewish charity; at the same time, however, the act of maintaining that “sacred fire” threatened their noble character because it involved the solicitation of funds. Aside from the distasteful nature of this practice, Ben-Lévi also noted that women used their charitable work as an excuse to get away from their husbands and children, a sort of “conjugal liberty.” The system of Jewish charity, he suggests, therefore threatened to denigrate women morally and undermine Jewish family life, all the while remaining an inefficient fundraising tool and the province of (largely) the middle and upper classes.

The increasingly conspicuous nature of French Jewish charity thus contained an inherent contradiction for French Jewish women. On the one hand, their conspicuous involvement in Jewish charity reinforced the image of Jews as united with French bourgeois values. Treatments of their activities in the Jewish press therefore described charitable Jewish women within traditional gender roles: as noble wives of influential men, as upholders of morality within the family and community, and as caring surrogate mothers to the poor young women aided by their benevolence. While acknowledging these qualities, Ben-Lévi’s critique expressed discontent with the social consequences required of this expanded public role. One may read his closing lines as bemoaning the necessity of women’s involvement in conspicuous charity, honorable as it may be. In this way, Jewish women experienced a different variety of the paradoxes familiar to other French women since the Revolution.⁵³ As the communal structure created space for them to extend their traditional level of charitable leadership and participation, their response to these opportunities created friction with the very values they were expected to exemplify and uphold.

In conclusion, while charity could transcend Jewish religious divisions, it simultaneously accentuated other sources of communal fragmentation along economic and gender lines. The expansion of charitable activity as the unifying element of Jewish community in France thus contained the seeds of broader conflicts and tensions. Ben-Lévi’s description of the *loterie* illustrates several levels of dissatisfaction with the existing structure of Jewish charity in France. First, it was largely top-down and conspicuous, enhancing the separation of the rich and the poor instead of promoting closer connections between all Jews. In addition, Jewish charity required the solicitation of funds, a process that degraded the solicitor and nurtured resentment among those called upon to donate; it weakened respectable Jewish family life and destabilized traditional gender roles. Worst of all, it did not raise enough money to justify all of these problems.

This critique of the Paris *loterie* suggests the need for a more nuanced interpretation of the relationship between charity and unity within French Jewish life. Charity did not necessarily generate greater interpersonal cohesion due to the inherent social and economic barriers separating donors and recipients. Whatever unity it did produce resulted from taking part in the charitable system: monetary contributions to a cause or attendance at an event connected benefactors with the individuals on the receiving end of their largesse. Donors gave and recipients received, but they all participated in the same structure. Buying a ticket for or donating a prize to the *loterie*, or receiving support from one of the organizations that benefitted from it, placed one within the flow of money and services from the wealthy to the poor.

In this regard, money constituted a type of communal “glue” as the one element common to every level of the system. Yet, as those involved in fundraising know all too well, not everyone participates in the charitable system; the same was true in nineteenth century France. The *loterie*, like Jewish charity generally, could promote communal unity only in a broad sense.

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NOTES

1. See for example, Chaim Waxman, “American Jewish Philanthropy, Direct Giving, and the Unity of the Jewish Community,” in *Toward a Renewed Ethic of Jewish Philanthropy* (ed. Yossi Prager; New York: Yeshiva University Press, 2010), 53–77; Idana Goldberg, “‘Sacrifices upon the Altar of Charity’: The Masculinization of Jewish Philanthropy in Mid-Nineteenth Century America,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues* 20:2 (2010): 34–56; Céline Leglaive-Perani, “Le judaïsme parisien et le comité de bienfaisance israélite (1830–1930),” *Archives juives* 44:1 (2011): 37–53; Nicolas Delalande, “L'entrée en philanthropie des Rothschild: l'hôpital israélite de Paris (1852–1914),” *Archives juives* 44:1 (2011): 54–69. For an older view, see Léon Kahn, *Le comité de bienfaisance: l'hôpital, l'orphelinat, les cimitières* (Paris: A. Durlacher, 1886), 10.

2. See for example, Vicki L. Caron, “French Jewish Assimilation Reassessed: a Review of the Recent Literature,” *Judaism* 42:2 (1993): 134–59; Nadia Malinovich, *French and Jew-*

ish: *Culture and the Politics of Identity in Early Twentieth-Century France* (Oxford: Littman, 2008); Pierre Birnbaum, *Jewish Destinies: Citizenship, State, and Community in Modern France* (trans. A. Goldhammer; New York: Hill and Wang, 2000); Jay Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press), 2004; Nancy L. Green, *Ready to Wear and Ready to Work: A Century of Industry and Immigrants in Paris and New York* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Paula E. Hyman, *The Jews of Modern France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

3. Ronald Schechter, *Obstinate Hebrews: Representations of Jews in France, 1715–1815* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 178–93 and 248–55.

4. Derek J. Penslar, *Shylock's Children: Economics and Jewish Identity in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 96.

5. Rebecca Kobrin, *Jewish Bialystok and Its Diaspora* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 131.

6. Bonnie Smith outlined this dynamic among bourgeois Catholic women in France during the nineteenth century. See her pioneering study, *Ladies of the Leisure Class: the Bourgeoisies of Northern France in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton University Press: Princeton, 1981), 136–45. Lee Shai Weissbach later placed nineteenth century Jewish philanthropy into this context. See his article, “The Nature of Jewish Philanthropy in France and the *Mentalité* of the Jewish Elite,” *Jewish History* 8:1–2 (1994): 191–204.

7. *Archives israélites* (1846): 22–26. In citing both the *Archives israélites* and *l'Univers israélite*, I have included the year and page numbers, as they are numbered successively within each volume.

8. *Archives israélites* (1846): 191–93.

9. *Ibid.*

10. *Archives Israélites* (1853): 481.

11. Weissbach, “Nature of Jewish Philanthropy,” 197.

12. Leglaive-Perani, “Le judaïsme parisien,” 50.

13. “Nouvelles diverses,” *l'Univers israélites* (1845): 467.

14. S. Bloch, “Hospice-hôpital israélite de Mulhouse,” *Univers israélites* (1865): 275.

15. Lisa Moses Leff, *Sacred Bonds of Solidarity: The Rise of Jewish Internationalism in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006), 134–36.

16. Maurice Samuels, *Inventing the Israelite: Jewish Fiction in Nineteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 74–111.

17. *Ibid.*, 84.

18. G. Ben-Lévi, “Loterie de bienfaisance au profit des établissements israélites de Paris,” *Archives israélites* (1846) : 376–83.

19. Mordechai Rozin, *The Rich and the Poor: Jewish Philanthropy and Social Control in Nineteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Drake International Services, 1999), 22.
20. Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions* (New York: Mentor, 1953), 64.
21. Whitney Walton, *France at the Crystal Palace: Bourgeois Taste and Artisan Manufacture in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 47–48.
22. See, for example, Leora Auslander, “The Gendering of Consumer Practices in Nineteenth-Century France,” in *The Sex of Things* (ed. Victoria de Grazia, with Ellen Furlough; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 79–112.
23. Thomas Adam, *Buying Respectability: Philanthropy and Urban Society in Transnational Perspective, 1840s to 1930s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 7–8.
24. See, for example, Léon Kahn, *Le comité de bienfaisance*, 19–64.
25. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*, 145 ; Leglaive-Perani, “Le judaïsme parisien,” 8–9.
26. Victoria Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830–70* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 9.
27. Julie Kalman, *Rethinking Antisemitism in Nineteenth-Century France*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 145–47.
28. Veblen, *Theory of the Leisure Class*, 77.
29. Leglaive-Perrani, “Le judaïsme parisien,” 44.
30. Samuel Cahen, “de la Bienfaisance,” *Archives israélites* (1840): 600–01.
31. See, for example, “Nouvelles,” *Archives israélites*, (1843): 158; “Société pour l’établissement des jeunes filles israélites à Paris,” *Archives israélites* (1843): 223–25; “Nouvelles diverses,” (1890): 39. Of course, these sorts of items appeared in every issue.
32. See, for example *l’Univers israélite* (1850): 549–52
33. *Archives israélites* (1867): 710. See also, for example, *Archives israélites* (1874): 2, and (1875): 130.
34. *Archives israélites* (1843): 223–25.
35. *l’Univers israélite* (1864): 188.
36. *l’Univers israélite* (1865): 533.
37. Émile Cahen, “Nouvelles diverses,” *Archives israélites* (1906): 7.
38. *Archives israélites* (1844): 340.
39. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 33–46.
40. See, for example, *Archives israélites* (1853): 355 and 414; *l’Univers israélites* (1850): 161–65
41. *Archives israélites* (1847): 221.

42. "Société des demoiselles de Nancy: tirage de la loterie," *Archives israélites* (1844): 254–56; "Nouvelles diverses," *l'Univers israélite* (1853): 323–24; *l'Univers israélite* (1854): 569–71.
43. Laura S. Schor, *The Life and Legacy of Baroness Betty de Rothschild* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 114.
44. Legalive-Perani, "Le judaïsme parisien," 114.
45. "Société des demoiselles de Nancy: tirage de la loterie," *Archives israélites* (1844): 254–56.
46. Benjamin Maria Baader, *Gender, Judaism, and Bourgeois Culture in Germany, 1800–1870* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 161–71.
47. Walton, *France at the Crystal Palace*, 64–65.
48. Smith, *Ladies of the Leisure Class*, 12.
49. "Société des demoiselles de Nancy: tirage de la loterie," *Archives israélites* (1844) : 254–56.
50. *Archives israélites* (1846): 377–80.
51. Samuels, *Inventing the Israelite*, 85–95.
52. Kalman, *Rethinking Antisemitism*, 94–99, 117–23.
53. See Joan Wallach Scott's classic book, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4–14.

Getting Drunk, Dancing, and Beating Each Other Up: The Images of the Gentile Poor and Narratives of Jewish Difference among the Yiddish Intelligentsia, 1881–1914

Gil Ribak

Working as a traveling salesman in New York City of the late 1880s, a young Jewish immigrant by the name of Yisroel Kopelov passed through some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. A radical born in the town of Bobroysk (then in Tsarist Russia's Pale of Settlement), Kopelov arrived in America in 1882 and became active in Jewish labor circles and the anarchist movement. As he walked through those poor neighborhoods, Kopelov was shocked by what he witnessed: "In the Irish neighborhoods the dirtiness was exceptional!" and "roused disgust when looking at them. Just the smell from the houses was unbearable!" It was not only "the head lice, vermin, and roaches . . . the hunger, dejection, drunkenness and sight of battered faces," but the whole atmosphere of "neglect and ignorance."¹

EASTERN EUROPE

By the late nineteenth century, Eastern European Jewish society featured identifiable patterns of thought and behavior toward various strata in the non-Jewish environment, which distinguished between the surrounding peasantry and those seen as carriers of higher culture, like Germans and later Russians.² Certain archetypal images of the Gentile poor—mainly the peasantry—were entrenched throughout Jewish society. The peasants were usually portrayed as strong, coarse, drunk, illiterate, dumb, volatile, and sexually promiscuous. That common depiction stood in sharp contrast to the Jewish poor, who were often represented—though having their own shortcomings—as much purer and more virtuous. That attitude led to Yiddish sayings such as "when the Jew is hungry he sings. When the Gentile is hungry he beats up his wife" or "when the Gentiles have a feast they beat up Jews" and "the Jew is small and Vasil [a common Ukrainian name] is big."³

The juxtaposition of the characteristics of Jewish and Gentile poor was affected by events such as the wave of pogroms in Russia, which began in 1881: even a longtime *maskil* [proponent of the Haskalah—Jewish enlightenment—movement], the newspaper publisher and editor Aleksander Tseder-

boym, who always called Jews to integrate into Russian society, felt compelled to write in 1882, “a Jew is rarely wanton . . . Jewish women are pure and clean . . . rarely do you see a drunken Jew.” The peasant was so closely associated with rudeness and dullness, that as late as 1952 Yiddish linguist and folklorist Hirsh Abramovitch argued that one should not use the word *poyer* [peasant] when referring to Jewish farmers or agricultural workers: “my pen does not let me write down the word *poyer*” when discussing Jewish farmers. The image of the peasant was deeply rooted in the Yiddish language and folklore, where the words *poyer* or *muzhik* [which also means a peasant] denoted rusticity and small-mindedness.⁴

When a poor Gentile is portrayed as a thief in numerous Yiddish folktales, he is usually also depicted as violent and murderous; yet when a Jew is a delinquent, he is typically portrayed not only as nonviolent, but also as honest. One folktale from the town of Boryslav tells the story of a Gentile (Ukrainian) coachman called Michaelu, who axed to death a Jewish passenger after robbing him. But after Michaelu gets drunk and tells his mistress, he is caught and hanged. In another folktale a *porets* [Polish lord] is wearing a disguise in order to catch a thief. The thief turns out to be a simple and poor Jew, who helps the *porets* to uncover a plot to assassinate the lord.⁵

The images of poor Gentiles (mostly peasantry) were rooted in a prevalent economic reality, in which peasants from surrounding villages came to the shtetl’s marketplace to sell their grain, fruits, vegetables, fish, livestock, and hides, and bought in exchange products imported by the town’s Jews like tools, dry goods, and clothing. In addition, on Sundays and Christian holidays many peasants used to drink up their earnings at the Jewish-owned taverns and inns.⁶ Meyer Kushner, who was raised in the Ukrainian city of Kremenchug in the 1880s and 1890s and would later be a member of the socialist Bund and a labor activist in New York, recounted that when the peasants came every Sunday to the city’s churches, the Jews were frightened, since the peasants “were easily agitated to a pogrom.” Future garment worker Avrum Pinkhes Unger, who grew up in the Polish town of Strykov in those years, recollected how during local fairs peasants sometimes got drunk and, thinking a Jew cheated them, began shouting “beat up the Jews” and fights broke out. The Yiddish author Yisroel Yoshua Singer, who grew up in Bilgoray (Poland) at the turn of the twentieth century, described how during Christian holidays thousands of peasants swarmed into town: right after the religious ceremonies, the peasants “got drunk, danced, and beat each other up.” Singer mentioned the alarm of the Jewish merchants in the shtetl’s market square when fights broke out between

drunken peasants, who used to crack each other's skull with big wooden rods; the Jews used to pack their goods, fearing that "it's starting" again.⁷

Singer's younger and more famous brother, Isaac Bashevis Singer, often portrayed Gentile peasants in an unflattering way. In one of his most famous novels, *The Slave* (1962), Singer described the fate of a Jewish man, Jacob, who survived the seventeenth century Khmelnytsky pogroms but was sold as a slave to half-pagan Polish peasants. Singer portrayed the peasant women as follows: "They [women] sought him out and talked and laughed and behaved little better than beasts. In his presence they relieved themselves, and they were perpetually pulling up their skirts to show him insect bites on their hips and thighs. 'Lay me,' a girl would shamelessly demand. . . . These women were unclean, and had vermin in their clothes and elflocks in their hair; often their skins were covered with rashes and boils, they ate field rodents and the flesh of rotting carcasses of fowls. Some of them could scarcely speak Polish, grunted like animals, made signs with their hands, screamed and laughed madly."⁸

Furthermore, as many Jews in Eastern Europe owned taverns and inns, they associated certain types of behavior with the Gentile poor. A leading figure in the Jewish enlightenment movement in Russia and a prolific recorder of Jewish life, Avrom Ber Gotlober, lived as a (married) teenager in the town of Chernikhov (Ukraine) in the 1820s. Gotlober remembered the peasants who frequented his father-in-law's tavern: "anyone who beat up his wife when he cheated on her or she cheated on him" visited the inn. The peasants guzzled "until they were drunk and exposed themselves." After drinking and hugging each other, they usually began to fight amongst themselves "until blood was spilled." Similar imagery appeared in the memoir of the socialist Yiddish poet Avrom Lesin, who did not grow up in a shtetl but in a city (Minsk) in the 1870s and 1880s, and had a completely different background from Gotlober. As a child he visited a local tavern whose owner he knew. There he saw "[Gentile] drunkards lay around on the dirty floor, embracing and jostling one another, singing with hoarse voices, snoring" as the Jewish owner stood at the door and "laughed with such deep contempt that his whole body shook."⁹

Alongside expressions of contempt, however, Yiddish folklore often portrayed non-Jews as down-to-earth, no-nonsense people, whose directness and simplicity were not corrupted in comparison with the tortuous ways, sophistry, and nervousness among Jews. Yiddish idioms such as "a good Gentile is better than a good Jew"; "when a Jew has a lot of money and a Gentile just a little, he lives better than the Jew"; or "sometimes it's harder to depend on a Jew than on a Gentile" exemplify that ambivalence. Peasants were coarse

and simple, but they did not suffer from *goles* [exile] complications and lived happily on their land.¹⁰

No less important, by the turn of the twentieth century a vocal yearning for normalcy and to be *ke-khol ha-goyim* [like all other peoples] in economic and cultural life had become widespread among Jewish nationalists and radicals of different stripes. Jewish nationalists habitually alleged that Jews fell short of non-Jews in assorted respects, whether physical strength, willpower, or national dignity. The ideal of normalcy did not change the traits attributed to the peasantry but rather their evaluation: as before the peasant was seen as simple, strong, and coarse, but by the turn of the twentieth century such features became gradually more desirable by modernizing Jews in Eastern Europe. Many of the Jewish nationalists and radicals embraced the ideal of “back to the soil” and viewed the peasantry as the healthy stratum of society, whose conduct could serve, to a large degree, as a model for the “New Jew.” Small numbers of young Jews in Tsarist Russia of the 1870s and 1880s idealized the peasantry and left the universities in the hundreds for the villages, joining radical groups such as the populists [*narodniki*] that espoused popular agrarian revolt and land redistribution. A pioneer of Jewish socialism in London and New York, Morris Vintshevsky, who became a narodnik in Kovno in the mid-1870s, remembered how he and his comrades felt: “our natural brethren are the peasants. Chaim-Yankl the cobbler can wait.”¹¹

Moreover, some shtetl or city Jews employed non-Jewish maids and servants, who lived with them. Those Christians often became very attached to the family and learned to speak excellent Yiddish. Female maids sometimes said the blessings with the children and referred to other Gentiles as “goyim.” Growing up in Vitebsk (Byelorussia) in the 1870s, future revolutionary and Yiddishist Chaim Zhitlovsky remembered a Christian maid at his parents’ house called Yulke, who was “assimilated”: she spoke spicy Yiddish, called the local janitor an *orl* [derogatory for Gentile], and before Passover warned he might contaminate the house with *khomets* [leavened products]. Playwright and theatrical designer Mordecai Gorelik, who grew up in a small shtetl near Minsk after the turn of the twentieth century, recalled how the local Gentiles spoke Yiddish and even went to the Jewish bathhouse. The regular hiring of a *shabes goy* [Sabbath Gentile] to perform necessary work on the Sabbath also made certain Gentiles very familiar with Jewish customs. The level of familiarity with those lower-class Gentiles rendered their relations with Jews more multilayered, revealing a level of friendliness and even intimacy with the “next-door,” nearly household Gentiles.¹²

In the same vein, some Jewish reformers criticized what they saw as a Jewish culture of poverty and inefficient livelihood that needed to be uprooted. One of the most famous examples of such critique was by Sholem Yankev Abramovitsh, known after his literary creation Mendele mokher sformim [Mendele the Book Seller]. In 1869 he published the novel *Fishke der krumer* [Fishke the Lame]. In that novel Abramovitsh described Jews in Russia as having armies of beggars: there was the infantry, the foot beggars, and the cavalry; that is, the beggars who ride with horses and wagons. But apart from them there were field beggars and city beggars, and the city beggars were divided into many subcategories. Abramovitsh's reform-minded attitude even led him to write some harsh depiction of the Jews, and especially the Jewish poor: "Today it's really easy to tell a Jewish house from the outside. There's a little pile of garbage, a little puddle of sewage. . . . The smell alone tells you that a Jew lives here."¹³

Abramovitsh was hardly alone. Maskilim, Zionists, and reformers attacked what they saw as a culture of poverty in traditional Jewish society, which based its livelihood on nonproductive business, such as being middlemen, salesmen, and estate managers. The Hebrew and Zionist author Yosef Chaim Brenner wrote in 1914 about "the contempt for everything that is contemptible in our character, in our lives . . . the historical contempt for us was not for nothing! . . . Yes, the environment dissipated, but hasn't changed . . . working people, a real proletariat didn't exist also back then. Paupers and slackers—existed and still exist."¹⁴

AMERICA

As Eastern European Jews began immigrating to the United States en masse—2.4 million Jews from Tsarist Russia, Habsburg Galicia, and Romania came to America between 1881 and 1924—they largely retained the Old-World Pattern that differentiated between low-class, poor Gentiles and those seen as carriers of higher culture. Those who were cast as the New-World peasantry were often the Irish, Italians, and Slavic immigrants (Poles, Ukrainians, etc.): Jews repeatedly depicted them also as strong, coarse, drunk, illiterate, dumb, and volatile. In reference to the Irish, one of the prominent Jewish socialists in America, Benyomin Faygnboym, wrote in 1917: "when a Jew thought about antisemitic troubles in America, the Irishman immediately appeared in his mind," and Jews "were especially afraid of the crude Irish masses."¹⁵

By the turn of the twentieth century, urban displacement, residential congestion, social dislocation, hooliganism, and local politics converged to

bring about an unflattering image of the Irish among immigrant Jews. In New York City, the East Side bordered what the urban reformer Frank Moss termed in 1897 the “lowest elements” of the Irish community, concentrated in tenements along the East River.¹⁶ In numerous recollections immigrant Jews related their encounters with their Celtic neighbors. The reminiscences usually tell how Irish youths and men, clustered together on street corners and outsides saloons, used to accost and curse Jewish passersby, especially picking on peddlers and those who looked “green” (recently arrived) and pulling their beards and sidelocks. The reform rabbi and scholar Max Raisin, who came (1893) to the East Side from his native Byelorussia, argued that among the neighboring Irish “many were robbers and murderers.” Some of the notorious streets, like the Bowery and Cherry Street, were unsafe for traditional-looking Jews. Mordecai Gorelik, who lived on Manhattan’s East Seventy-Third Street in the early 1900s, recounted how Irish boys had constantly beat him up and called him “Christ Killer.” After some of the boys made him swallow some pesticide, Gorelik’s mother went to look for them: a “fat Irish woman” answered her question with “Shut up, you God-damned Jew-kike.”¹⁷

The Jackson Street Park, right by the East River waterfront, was also infamous, since Jewish visitors to the park relayed how Irish gangs accosted and assaulted them. Yiddish writer Mordkhe Danzis and garment worker Sam Shershevsky described how “Irish gangs” and thugs terrorized them and drove them out of the park. Edward A. Steiner, an Eastern European Jew, who came to America in 1886 and shortly afterward converted and became a Congregational minister, related how an Irishman tripped him over on top of a cattle train, leaving him with a twisted leg. Steiner admitted, “I pride myself upon not having any race prejudice, but smoldering within me . . . is a prejudice against the Irish.” A Buffalo Jew by the name of Yankev Shiller complained in 1910 that “Irish bums and loafers” were particularly vicious toward Jewish peddlers in the city. Irish violence and hostility added to their negative image: New York City park worker Max Feigan, who came to America in 1909 and worked primarily among Irish Americans, described how his Irish coworkers “cursed Jews”; he believed that “in general . . . the majority of Irish [are] big Jew haters.”¹⁸

The sociologist Thomas Jesse Jones, who studied an East Harlem block between 1897 and 1901, reported that the Jewish residents thought the Irish were “drunken,” “thrifless and careless.” One elderly Jewish woman confessed she “doesn’t like” the Irish. In August 1900 a crowd of mostly Irish Americans on a Madison Street block tried to drive out the newly settled Jewish tenants,

and a fight ensued. The image of the Irish found its way to literary works: in a 1909 Yiddish story called *Kleyninke neshome'lekh* [Little Souls], writer Leon Kobrin depicted Mr. McCarthy, the fat, short, red-nosed and double-chinned Irish foreman at a cigar-making shop. The foreman repeatedly mocks Jewish job seekers, imitates their Yiddish accent, and greets them, “hello whiskers! A job? There isn't any. Go to Jerusalem!” A towering figure in the Jewish labor movement, the editor of the *Forverts* [Jewish Daily Forward], Abraham Cahan, tried to show (1910) how cultured Jewish workers were by juxtaposing them with their Gentile colleagues. It was very common to see on a train “a Jewish passenger absorbed in a novel. . . . that an Irishman, for example, would be enthusiastic about a novel—such a picture is hard to imagine.”¹⁹

The Irish were not the only low-class group that immigrant Jews encountered. In the 1890s Italian immigrants began to enter New York's garment industry in large numbers, and by 1900 several Little Italy sections in New York sprang up in close proximity to Jewish neighborhoods, where about 225,000 Italian-born immigrants lived (hailing mainly from Sicily and southern Italy).²⁰ Whereas in general immigrant Jews rarely viewed Italians with the level of antagonism and fear shown toward the Irish, their images of the Italians displayed a mixture of exoticism and aversion. Apart from the omnipresent image of the Italian organ-grinder (with the inevitable monkey), the Yiddish press abounded with stories about knife-brandishing Italians, who were willing to stab almost anyone over a trifle dispute.

Dovid M. Hermalin, who came to New York in 1885 from Vaslui (Romania) and would become one of the most popular columnists in the Yiddish press, wrote (1887) about criminality in the city, rhetorically wondering: “Is there a bigger murderer or thief than the Irish and the Italian?” Stories about one Italian stabbing to death another Italian (because the latter parked his horse and carriage at the former's stable without permission), a young Italian who cut up his ex-girlfriend's face after she married another man, or two Italians shooting each other due to a card game were never in short supply in turn-of-the-century Yiddish newspapers.²¹

A reality wherein Jews were occasionally the victims of crimes committed by Italian perpetrators tended to fortify the image of Italian hotheadedness and the ensuing Jewish trepidation. New York Police Commissioner (1904–1906) William McAdoo remarked that Jewish immigrants showed an ill-concealed distrust of the Italians, since Jews feared the “baser sort” of Italians who were armed with deadly weapons. There were a few cases when Jewish jewelry peddlers, whose merchandise and installment plans were especially popular in the

Italian quarters, were attacked and murdered by Italian buyers over a conflict about payments. Different background and languages caused unavoidable misunderstandings between Jewish and Italian immigrants: Galician-born Louis Borgenicht, who came to New York in 1889 and would later become a successful clothing manufacturer, peddled in the Italian sections of Hoboken in the 1890s. He recounted how his Italian customers tried to steal from him. Had he dared say anything, they “might kill you” on the spot. In 1901 a crowd of Jews nearly attacked an Italian fruit vendor on Ludlow Street, after the latter stabbed a Jewish peddler. When the crowd saw the peddler’s bloody face, people began shouting in Yiddish and English, “beat the Italian” and “lynch the murderer,” and possibly roughed him up before the police arrived. The Yiddish sweatshop poet Morris Rosenfeld (whom Leon Kobrin described as Italian-looking, “with the fiery black eyes, pitch-black mustache and black curly hair”) portrayed in one of his feuilletons an Italian shoeshine, who was testy and “ready to grab a stiletto” and stab a nearby loud Jewish customer.²²

By the turn of the twentieth century, the significance and number of Italian workers were on the rise in New York’s predominantly Jewish garment industry. In 1889 a New York factory inspector found not a single Italian clothing-manufacturing place in all Manhattan; two years later there were hundreds. In 1900 the headworker of the University Settlement House reported, “The Italians are underbidding the Jews in the garment making.” A year later the U.S. Industrial Commission echoed that: “the Italian is able to crowd the Jew out of the trade.” At first Italians were typically employed at semiskilled tasks, while many Italian women worked at home as finishers. Homework suited the demands of Italian husbands that their wives would stay home, care for the family, and supplement its earnings. After the turn of the century, when state legislation and trade unions curbed the extent of homework, the locus of production gradually shifted to the factory and increased the contacts between Jewish and Italian workers. John A. Dyche, a Yiddish-speaking Russian Jew who served as the General Secretary of the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union (ILGWU), stated in 1904, “This influx of Italians is the primary cause for the comparative inferiority of trade unions in cloaks.”²³

From an early stage on, Jewish workers and labor organizers did not hold their Italian coworkers in high esteem. Italians were seen as scabs, tainted by their ignorance and volatility, qualities that made them poor material for a militant union. The ILGWU president Abraham Rosenberg recalled how in the union’s early years (it was founded in 1900) in “tens of times” Italian workers (with several Jews) used to go on wildcat strikes and turned to the union for

help. But within a few hours “all the Italians went back to work,” and the few Jews were left with no work. Working to organize (1908) female workers in different trades, the secretary of the New York Women’s Trade Union League (WTUL), Helen Marot, wrote, “The Jewish woman is quicker to organize than the Italian; she is full of confidence, while the Italian is retiring. The Jewish girls therefore control the union.” Marot noted that many Italian girls did not attend union meetings, since Yiddish was spoken there “for the most part.” As union meetings usually took place at late hours, Italian parents objected to their daughters being out late at night: “The Jewish girl seldom discovers why the Italian does not attend meetings. She says they are ‘slow’ or ‘stupid.’” The WTUL report of 1907–08 concluded that, “There is a general impression that they [Italian women] are difficult to organize.” Jewish women were reported to have greater self-confidence, “without appreciating the strong points of the Italians or sympathizing with their weaknesses.”²⁴

Numerous reports, accounts, and memoirs illustrate that Jewish workers believed their Gentile coworkers did not share—at best—the Jewish level of commitment and self-sacrifice and were willing to betray the common cause. Italians, the second-largest group in New York’s needle trades, were continually looked down at as untrustworthy and volatile. ILGWU organizer Pearl Halpern remembered that while Jews were more acquainted with the labor movement, Italians “just . . . didn’t want to organize.” She maintained that Italians and others scabbed and were very different from the Jewish workers, who “built the union.” Louis Painkin, who was also active in the union (Local 10), claimed that, “Italians were very bad work [*sic*].” Ida Seltzer, who came to New York from Byelorussia in 1910 and worked alongside Italians at a nonunion Brooklyn shop, got the impression that Italian girls did not like unions, were willing to work for cheap, and were overall “dumb.” Berl Baum, who began working at the Triangle Waist factory in 1906, remembered that “all” nationalities (he mentioned Italians, Greeks, and Poles) scabbed, but Jews refused to do so.²⁵

Jewish observers repeatedly referred to the Italians as unreformed peasantry. Some Jewish socialists believed the Italians’ purported passivity was partially derived from their religiosity and Catholic background. The General Secretary of Arbeter Ring, Benyomen Faygnboym, argued in 1903 that where religion and moralizing were stronger—“especially in Italy”—socialism was weaker and there was more “drunkenness, murder, thievery, brawls” and crime in general. Louis Hollander of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) wrote in 1916 that a few years back “it was impossible to talk to” Ital-

ian women in the shops because “dark superstitions reigned over their minds” and the employers could safely assume to have an Italian “reserve army of scabs.” Menashe Tsinkin, a garment worker who wrote short autobiographical sketches, described what he saw as the negative influence of Catholicism: an Italian coworker called Margie used to come to the shop on Mondays looking “as if she is still in another world. In a world of church, crosses, burning wax candles, hypnotic organ music.” Imbued with that spirit, she hated all nonbelievers “and especially Jews,” who were not only Christ killers, but also heretics and radicals. As the week progressed, Margie used to talk and joke with the other girls and help a Jewish tailor, and on Fridays she was “a sweet girl . . . another Margie.” Tsinkin wished that she would not go to church on Sundays and that “the priest would not damage her and hand us again a wicked, hard, Monday Margie.”²⁶

More than the Italians, poor Slavic immigrants fitted almost naturally to the role of America’s peasants: tens of thousands of Poles, Lithuanians, Ukrainians, and Romanians settled in New York City by the first decade of the twentieth century. Some of them formed small enclaves in heavily populated Jewish neighborhoods, a ghetto within a ghetto among people whose language they knew. Yiddish poet and journalist Judd L. Teller, who grew up on the East Side after World War I, wrote that the local Poles and Ukrainians shuttled between saloons and “smelled of incense, vodka, and vomit.” But since those Slavic immigrants were outnumbered and dependent on Jews for their livelihood, usually employed as janitors, handymen, Sabbath Goy, or sweepers in the garment industry, Teller wrote they were “too humbled . . . to erupt even when drunk.” Novelist Harry Roskolenko, who grew up on the East Side in the 1910s, remembered running into “a few mustached drunk Poles” and “some fighting, bellowing Russians.” Yiddish newspapers buttressed that image in their occasional descriptions of what they saw as the superstitions and violent temper of Slavs in America: in its report on a fight that broke out (1916) at a Polish wedding in Brownsville, one Yiddish weekly commented, “Our Polish countrymen in America cannot do without a war, so even at a wedding there must be one.”²⁷

Moreover, during World War I and especially in its aftermath, as a civil war wreaked havoc on the former Pale of Settlement (especially in Ukraine), Bolsheviks fought Counterrevolutionaries, Poles fought Ukrainians, Poles fought Bolsheviks, and Ukrainians fought amongst themselves: in that huge battlefield, Jews were attacked and murdered in the tens of thousands.²⁸ As the Yiddish press as well as American papers carried ghastly reports about the

horrors that befell Jews in Poland and Ukraine, Jewish resentment toward the Eastern European nations involved in the atrocities reached new heights. Hundreds of thousands of New York Jews took to the streets to manifest their anger and frustration in two separate days of mass parades and demonstrations against the continued slaughter of Jews in Eastern Europe. The first day, on May 21, 1919, focused on Poland: after noontime nearly all Jewish workers left their shops and Jewish children stepped out of their classrooms to take part in one of the dozens marches and rallies across the city. In the black-framed *Forverts* on the day of protest, Avrom Lesin blamed “those Poles, those murderers of old men, of women, of children.” On November 24, 1919, New



Lola (Leon Israel), from *Der Groyser Kundes* [The Big Stick], April 25, 1919, 3. The heading reads: “How he looks without the mask”; the mask: “Free Poland”; and the hat: “Polish pogromist.” Courtesy of the Dorot Jewish Division at the New York Public Library.

York Jews observed a “day of mourning” in protest of the unrelenting murder of Jews in Ukraine. More than half a million Jews in Greater New York left their workplace as a somber procession of 25,000 men, women, and children, representing hundreds of Jewish societies and organizations, marched from various boroughs to a rally at Carnegie Hall. Yiddish poet and essayist, Aren Glanz, wrote in 1919 a scathing indictment of Polish and Ukrainian “national characteristic”: Jews were “intrinsically incapable” of committing “unspeakable massacres like the Poles and Ukrainians.” Glanz argued, “The Slavs are the most backward people. . . . The soul of the Slavs . . . is dark, a bleak night.”²⁹

Yet just like with the Old-World Gentile poor, immigrant Jews also praised what they saw as those lower-class Gentiles’ normalcy and healthy traits. Especially to the young immigrants, the Irish presented an Americanization model: they spoke the language and displayed toughness, and as they served as the policemen, firemen, politicians, and boxers; they emanated authority and self-confidence. The Irish exemplified a type of manliness that attracted some young Jews: Jewish prizefighters and ballplayers frequently assumed Irish names, as Cohen turned to Callahan and Moskowitz to Moran. The *Sun* reported in 1904, “The majority of Jack O’Briens and young McCoys are Hebrews.”³⁰

Politics was a major arena where one could find among Jewish commentators admiring words about Irish political shrewdness, national pride, and how they came to be the rulers of “New Cork,” while reflecting ongoing ambivalence. The same *Yidische gazeten* that published Irish jokes, called its readers in 1902 to emulate the Irish, who struggled against the derogatory portrayal of Irish in the press and vaudeville. In 1911 another Jewish magazine praised the Irish who “talked little and did much” to raise their status: “And behold, a race of reputed street cleaners and hod carriers . . . has come to be the ruling element in so many of the states.” The same Dovid M. Hermalin who in 1887 rhetorically asked, “Is there a bigger murderer or thief than the Irish?” had kinder words in 1911. The Romanian-born journalist commended the Irish Americans who damaged a theater that showed a movie that included offensive portrayal of an Irish robber. Implicitly criticizing purported Jewish submissiveness, Hermalin noted that such an act “has summoned up respect for the Irish, because the Irish have respect for themselves.”³¹

The same can be said regarding the Italians. The same Ida Seltzer who termed her Italian coworkers “dumb” moved to another shop, where “the Italian girls were nicer than the Jewish girls.” Seltzer befriended them and invited a couple of the Italian women to her wedding. Louis Hollander, who complained

about the Italians' superstitions, also commented (1916) that the Italians were "the pride of our organization" and ready "for the greatest struggle" to improve their conditions. Jewish locals frequently debated what to do with the Italians, Hollander wrote: the prevalent opinion was that the Italians could have been dedicated to the union precisely like the Jews, had they received "enlightening" education. Cooperation between Jews and Italians in the garment industry became stronger, especially after the big strikes of 1913. In 1914, the Yiddish organ of ILGWU, *Naye post* [The New Post], put on a pedestal the Italian workers of a certain shop, since "their unity is really admirable" and they served as a model to other workers. Moreover, Jewish and Italian garment workers cooperated in the establishment of the ACWA and managed to form a stable union. To be sure, expressions like Hollander's and others revealed some paternalism toward the Italians and union leaders' proclivity for heralding workers' solidarity. But they show a budding appreciation for the Italians as combative comrades as well. As time passed, interethnic friction tended to soften somewhat. In some cases it would lead to a fruitful cooperation.³²

During World War I, Jewish observers extolled the Irish and Ukrainians in America for forming their own national organizations, something that highlighted Jewish disunity and feet dragging about forming their own representative national organization. In early 1916, Yiddish writer Avrom (Abe) Goldberg, who edited the Zionist movement's Yiddish organ *Dos yidische folk* [the Jewish People], wrote an editorial titled "They and We," where he played on the gap between the images held by Jews and those groups' achievements: "These Ruthenians [Ukrainians] are simple people, peasants with a peasant head, cannot quibble and split hairs, they behaved like sensible people with healthy souls." Goldberg hailed the Irish in America as well for organizing, sardonically remarking, "The Irish are not a people with two-thousand-year culture, they had given the world no God or faith . . . but they have not been in exile as long as we have. That is why they behave so directly, so natural." Yiddish historian Elias Cherikover articulated a similar analogy when he described the national history of the Ukrainians and the Irish and their movements in the United States: "We [Jews] are excellent theoreticians, grand hair-splitters . . . we do nothing, while they are very simple people, and without further theorizing they get down to work." Labor Zionist educator and journalist Yoel Entin also commended the Irish and Poles in America for showing national unity with their brethren in Europe.³³

Interactions were also easier with what Jewish immigrants termed "heymishen goy"; that is, with Eastern European clientele. In 1911 the Yiddish

daily *Varhayt* [Truth] reported that Poles, Romanians, and Lithuanians formed “a ghetto within a ghetto” in New York’s Jewish neighborhoods and concluded: “It’s easier for the Jew to deal with the familiar goy than with the Irish or Italians.” Sociologist Ewa Morawaska, who studies the relations between Jewish immigrants and Eastern European non-Jewish immigrants in Johnstown, a Pennsylvania mining town, also found a level of familiarity between the groups, although suspicion and tension remained.³⁴

As for the Jewish poor in America, similarly to the Old-World pattern, Jewish leaders and commentators regularly praised the Jewish poor for ostensibly exhibiting purer and more virtuous traits than the Gentile poor. Famed Jewish philanthropist and leader of the American Jewish Committee (AJC), Jacob Schiff, stressed Jewish self-reliance, saying in 1914 that “a Jew would rather cut his hand off than apply for relief from non-Jewish sources.” Schiff alluded to ideals that had become axiomatic throughout American Jewish communal history: self-reliance and self-sufficiency. Rooted in the talmudic principle of “all Jews are responsible for one another,” that legacy harked back to 1654, when the first Jewish settlers arrived in New Amsterdam. Governor Peter Stuyvesant asked his superiors at the Dutch West India Company to prohibit Jews from settling in the colony; the company decided to allow Jews to settle, yet the permit was based on the condition that poor Jews would “be supported by their own nation,” meaning that Jews should always take care of their own poor. Generations of American Jews adhered to the “Stuyvesant Pledge” by establishing and administering Jewish philanthropic organizations and stressing that Jews take care of their own.³⁵

One of the leading social and communal workers in America was the Moscow-born Boris D. Bogen. He headed United Hebrew Charities, then during World War I became the director of the Joint Distribution Committee, and in the 1920s he was the international secretary of the B’nai B’rith order. In 1910 Bogen wrote in the organ of the Jewish Charities about the Jewish “tramp.” The Jewish tramp is rarely a drunkard, and usually refrains from applying to non-Jewish charity: the Jewish beggar has “considerable pride,” Bogen wrote, and “does not want to be treated like a non-Jew.” A year later (1911), Bogen wrote that in Russia “while on the whole, poverty among the Jews is appalling, still in the matter of education, art, and morals, the Jews stand very much higher than the peasants and city workers.”³⁶

Beyond the concept of self-reliance, some American Jews differentiated between Gentile poor who turn to crime and Jews who allegedly were above that. A denial of Jewish criminality penetrated into some recollections of that

period. An East Side Jew by the name of Herman Robinson, who grew up on Allen Street in the 1890s, remembered that there were many prostitutes and vice was everywhere to be seen, but “the Jewish [*sic*] separated themselves from these Christian vices.” Julius Gershin, a garment worker and member of the Workmen’s Circle who came to America in 1904, recalled that although there were a few Jewish prostitutes on the East Side, “most of the prostitutes were Irish.” In 1902, after a few Jewish names were mentioned in connection to crime in New York, the editor of the conservative *Yidishes tageblat* [Jewish Daily News], John (Yoyn) Paley, wrote that Jewish thieves were not really Jews. According to him, these so-called Jewish criminals were often actually “Catholic Poles, whose last names also end with a ‘Ski’ or ‘vich,’ or Negroes, who carry biblical first names.”³⁷

Yet again, just as with the Jewish poor in Eastern Europe, Jewish social workers and reformers complained at times about the Jewish poor. One complaint was that despite what Schiff, Bogen, and others argued, needy Jewish immigrants did occasionally approach the missions that offered clothing, medical clinics, English classes, sewing classes for women, and a host of activities for children. With their treats, outings, parties, and lectures, missionaries were often indistinguishable from genuine settlement houses. In 1905, for instance, the Federation of Churches and Christian Organizations of New York City sponsored eight summer vacation Bible schools in the East Side that enrolled more than 2,000 Jewish children. As late as 1912 a Jewish newspaper, *American Hebrew*, complained about the “indifference” of Jewish parents in Brooklyn that rendered “helpless” those who fought the missions. Boris Bogen, who hailed the traits of the Jewish poor in comparison to the Russian peasantry, still described how the Jewish tramp “takes it for granted that his co-religionists owe him a living” and termed that group a “class of parasite.”³⁸

In conclusion, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, maskilim, Zionists, socialists, and people from other ideological strands kept reverting to similar sets of images and assumptions about the Gentile poor. Interestingly, those attitudes had a distinct transnational aspect. In their interaction with non-Jews in the United States, Yiddish writers and thinkers returned to the categories and archetypes known to them: thus American non-Jewish poor, such as the Irish, Italian, or Slavic immigrants, were comfortably cast as Eastern European peasantry, clearly differentiated from the Jewish poor. The Jewish poor, on the other hand, were usually depicted as leading a more moral life, as being purer in spirit (and sometimes even in body) than poor or lower-class Gentiles poor.

Nevertheless, the portrayals of both Gentile and Jewish poor or lower classes were not one-dimensional: there was a less common phenomenon, where both in Eastern Europe and in America Jewish observers commented on Gentile lower classes as matter-of-fact, no-nonsense people—normal people—who stood in sharp contrast to the casuistry and edginess among Jews. In some cases there was familiarity with the Gentile poor. Likewise, while the characterization of the Jewish poor as more moral and purer than non-Jewish poor was more common both in Eastern Europe and in America, some Jewish commentators criticized them for being unwilling to work or indifferent to Christian proselytizing. Hence both the more ubiquitous, damning imagery that distinguished between the Gentile and Jewish poor and the less common imagery that saw positive aspects among non-Jewish lower classes and criticized the Jewish poor featured an important transnational aspect and were noticeable both in Eastern Europe and in America.

NOTES

1. Y. Kopelov, *Amol in amerike* [*Yesterday in America*] (Warsaw: Brzoza, 1928), 157, 164. All translations from the Yiddish and Hebrew were done by me, unless otherwise noted.
2. Israel Bartal, “Non-Jews and Gentile Society in East European Hebrew and Yiddish Literature 1856–1914,” *Polin* 4 (1989): 53–69; David G. Roskies, *The Jewish Search for a Usable Past* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 45–46. For examples of that distinction between the strata (Polish gentry, Russian officialdom, German burghers, and the peasantry), see the memoirs of Shmaryahu Levin, *Me-zichronot chayai* [*From the Memories of My Life*] (trans. Z. Vislevsky; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1935), 2:116–18, 173; 3:15–16; and Mordkhe Spektor, *Mayn lebn* [*My Life*] (Warsaw: Achisefer, 1927), 1:50–51, 67; 2:5, 51–63. See also Yisroel Aksenfeld, *Dos shterntikhl un der ershter yidisher rekrut* [*The Headband and the First Jewish Recruit*] (1861; repr., Buenos Aires: Literary Society of YIVO, 1971), 68–69.
3. The most illuminating studies of Jewish folklore are in Yiddish. The quotes are from I. L. Cahan, *Der yid: vegn zikh un vegn andere in zayne shprikhverter un rednsortn* [*The Jew: About Himself and Others in His Proverbs and Sayings*] (New York: YIVO, 1933), 25–32; Nakhum Stutchkov, *Der oytser fun der yidisher shprakh* [*The Treasure of the Yiddish Language*] (New York: YIVO, 1950), 167–68; Yudl Mark, “A zamlung folksfarglaykhen” [A Collection of Folk Similes], *Yidishe sprakh* [*Yiddish Language*] 5 (1945): 99–140; Amos Funkenstein, “The Dialectics of Assimilation,” *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1995): 1–13. See also B. Borokhov, “Di oyfgaben fun der yidisher filologye” [The Tasks of Yiddish Philology], in *Der pinkes* [*The Journal*] (ed. Sh. Niger; Vilna: B. A. Kletskin, 1912–1913), 11; Dov Sadan, *Ka'arat tsimukim* [*A Bowl of Raisins*] (Tel Aviv: Mordecai Newman, 1952), 395–411; Chaim Schwartzboym, “Yisrael ve-‘umot ha-‘olam be-‘aspaklariyat ha-folklor” [Jews and Gentiles through the Mirror of Folklore], *Yeda-‘am* [*Folklore*] 15 (1971): 56–61.

4. Tsederboym wrote in the popular Yiddish weekly he established in St. Petersburg, *Yudishes folks-blatt* [*Jewish People's Newspaper*] (January 5, 1882): 197. Hirsh Abramovitch, “Onvayzungen un bamerkungen” [*Statements and Remarks*], *Yidishe shprakh* 12 (1952): 122–23. On the 1881–1882 pogroms in Russia, see Michael Aronson, “The Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia in 1881,” in *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (ed. John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 44–61.

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7. Meyer Kushner, *Lebn un kamf fun a kloakmakher* [*Life and Struggle of a Cloak Maker*] (New York: Published by a committee from local 9, International Ladies' Garment Workers Union, 1960), 56; Avrom Pinkhes Unger, *Mayn heymshtetl strykov* [*My Hometown Strykov*] (New York: Arbeter Ring, 1957), 49–50. See also Borekh Tsukerman, *Zikhroynes* [*Memories*] (New York: Yidisher kemfer, 1962), 1:22–23, 47–48; I. J. Singer, *Fun a velt vos iz nishto mer* [*From a World That Is No More*] (New York: Matones, 1946), 208, 217.

8. Isaac Bashevis Singer, *The Slave* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962), 9. On Singer's portrayal of Polish peasantry, see Thomas S. Gladsky, *Princes, Peasants, and Other Polish Selves: Ethnicity in American Literature* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 202–13.

9. Avrom Ber Gotlober, *Zikhronot u-masa'ot* [*Memories and Travels*], (ed. Reuben Goldberg; Jerusalem: Bialik, 1976), 1:114–15. Gotlober published his memoirs in the late 1870s. Avrom Lesin, *Geklibene verk: zikhroynes un bilder* [*Collected Works: Memories and Pictures*] (New York: Cyco, 1954), 24. See also Velvel Ze'ev Lefkovitsh, “Der mark zuntik” [*The Sunday Market*], in *Bobroysk: yizker-bukh far bobroysker kehille un umgegent* [*Bobroysk: Commemoration Book to the Bobroysk Community and the Surrounding Area*] (ed. Yehuda Slutsky; Tel Aviv: Tarbut ve-chinukh, 1967), 1:638–40.

10. Cahan, *Der yid*, 25–32; Stutchkov, *Der oytser*, 167–68; Ignatz Bernshteyn, *Yudishe shprikhverter un rednsarten* [*Jewish Proverbs and Sayings*] (1908; repr., Wiesbaden, Germany: Fourier, 1988), 53; Israel Steinberg, *Mi-ma'ayan ha-khokhma shel 'am yisrael* [*From the Wisdom Fountain of the Jewish People*] (Tel Aviv: I. L. Peretz, 1962), 80–81.

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13. Mendele Moykher seforim, “Fishke der krumer” [Fishke the Lame], in *Geklibene verk* [*Collected Works*] (New York: YKUF, 1947), 3:135. See also, David Aberbach, *Realism, Caricature, and Bias: The Fiction of Mendele Mocher seforim* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1993), 49–56.
14. Yosef Chaim Brenner, “Ha’arachat ‘atmenu be-shloshet ha-kerakhim” [Self-Evaluation in the Three Volumes], http://benyehuda.org/brenner/haaraxat_atmenu.html (accessed on May 27, 2014). On that kind of critique, see Eliezer Schweid, *The Ideas of Modern Jewish Culture* (trans. Amnon Hadary; ed. Leonard Levin; Brighton: Academic Studies Press, 2008), 30–31, 125–29.
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18. Mordkhe Danzis, *Eygen likht* [*Own Light*] (New York: Self-published, 1954), 26–27; Sam Shershevsky, *American Jewish Autobiographies Collection* (YIVO), #131: 29; Edward A. Steiner, *From Alien to Citizen: The Story of My Life in America* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1914), 46, 65–66, 207–08. Shiller's letter appeared in *Yidishes tageblat* [*Jewish Daily News*] (hereafter *YT*) (March 21, 1910): 4. Max Feigan, *American Jewish Autobiographies Collection* (YIVO), #4: 23. See also Rose Cohen, *Out of the Shadow* (1918; repr., Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 104–07.

19. Thomas Jesse Jones, *The Sociology of a New York City Block* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904), 12, 15, 64. On the Madison Street incident, see *YT* (August 28, 1900): 4. Kobrin's story appeared in *Tsukunft* [*Future*] (January 1909): 40–44. Cahan's article was titled “Unzer inteligents” [Our Intelligence/Intelligentsia], in *Tsukunft* (January 1910): 41, and (February 1910): 109.

20. Donna R. Gabaccia, *From Sicily to Elizabeth Street: Housing and Social Change among Italian Immigrants, 1880–1930* (Albany: New York State University Press, 1984), 63–64, 94–95, 109–11; Robert Anthony Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 14–21, 31–33; George E. Pozzetta, “The Italians of New York City, 1890–1914” (Ph.D. Diss., University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 1971), 76, 94–96, 185–86; *The Italians of New York: A Survey* (Federal Writers' Project, WPA; New York: Random House, 1938), 18–22.

21. Hermalin wrote in *Ha-magid* [*The Herald*] (February 10, 1887): 44. *Yidishe gazetn* [*Jewish Gazette*] (August 15, 1902): 2; (August 22, 1902): 6. See also *YT* (January 13,

- 1899): 1. On Italian violence see also the *Forverts* (September 3, 1900): 1; (October 2, 1905): 1. See also the memoir of Meyer Kushner, *Lebn un kamf fun a kloakmakher*, 144, 148; and Sam Liptzin, *Amol iz geven [Once Upon a Time]* (New York: Amcho, 1951), 38–40, 101–02.
22. William McAdoo, *Guarding a Great City* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1906), 148–49; Borgenicht, *Happiest Man*, 221–22, 226. *YT* (January 18, 1901): 1; (February 3, 1901): 1. *Forverts* (October 2, 1905): 1; (June 8, 1908): 1. Morris Rosenfeld, “Nesies in yidishen qvartal,” in *Shriftn fun Morris Rosenfeld [The Works of Morris Rosenfeld]* (New York: A. M. Evalenko, 1908), 3:172. Leon Kobrin, *Mayne fuftsik yor in amerike [My Fifty Years in America]* (New York: YKUF, 1966), 31–32. See also, Max Davis, *American Jewish Autobiographies Collection* (YIVO), #129: 14–15, 20–21.
23. Thomas Kessner, *The Golden Door: Italian and Jewish Immigrant Mobility in New York City 1880–1915* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), 56, 72–75; “Headworker Report” (March 1900), *University Settlement Society of New York Papers* (Wisconsin State Historical Society), series #4. U.S; Industrial Commission, *Report of the Industrial Commission* (1901), 14:xxvi; 15:326. See also 61st Congress, 3rd Session, *Reports of the Immigration Commission* (1911; repr., New York: Arno, 1970), 27:322–25. Dyche is quoted in Jesse Eliphalet Pope, *The Clothing Industry in New York* (1905; repr., New York: Burt Franklin, 1970), 54n15; “Report on Conditions of Woman and Child Wage-Earners in the United States” in *Paul Abelson Papers* (Kheel Center, Cornell University), box #47, folder #5; Louise C. Odencrantz, *Italian Women in Industry: A Study of Conditions in New York City* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1919), 13, 27, 38–44, 60; Gabaccia, *From Sicily*, 63–64, 94–95.
24. Abraham Rosenberg, *Di kloakmakher un zeyere junyons: erinerungen [The Cloak Makers and Their Unions: Memoirs]* (New York: Cloak Operators Union, Local 1, 1920), 103–04, 131. Marot wrote in the *Weekly Bulletin of the Clothing Trades* (February 28, 1908): 6; WTUL-NY, *Annual Report 1907–08* (Tamiment Library), reel #R 3099: 10–11. See also Edwin Fenton, *Immigrants and Unions, a Case Study: Italians and American Labor, 1870–1920* (1957; repr., New York: Arno, 1975), 485–89.
25. Constance D. Leupp, “The Shirtwaist Makers’ Strike,” *Survey* (December 18, 1909): 384. The strikers are quoted in the *New York Call* (December 26, 1909): 14. The interview with Halpern is in the *Irving Howe Collection* (1965) (YIVO), 10–12. The interview with Painkin is in the *Irving Howe Collection* (1968), 6. See also the interview with Abraham Kazin, *Irving Howe Collection* (1968), 13. Ida Seltzer, tape I–132, *NYC-Immigrant Labor History Project* (1974) (Tamiment Library); Berl Baum, *American Jewish Autobiographies Collection* (YIVO), #85:58. See also B. Khazanov, *Teg un yorn: funim lebn fun a yidishn arbeter [Days and Years: From the Life of a Jewish Worker]* (New York: Khazanov yubilee komitet, 1956), 74. Rosenberg depicted what he saw as Italian untrustworthiness, *Kloakmakher*, 212–15. WTUL-NY, *Annual Report 1910–1911* (Tamiment), reel # R 3099:3–4, 6–7.
26. Faygnboym wrote in a publication for Arbeter Ring’s third annual convention, *Workmen’s Circle Collection* (American Jewish Historical Society), box #2, folder #18. Louis Hollander, “Di italyenishe arbeter in unzer organizatsyon” [The Italian Workers in Our

Organization], *Fortshrit* [Progress] (December 1, 1916): 5. Menashe Tsinkin, *In shap un oysern shap* [In the Shop and Out of the Shop] (New York: Aber, 1951), 83–85.

27. *Varhayt* [Truth], (February 23, 1911): 8; Judd L. Teller, *Strangers and Natives: The Evolution of the American Jew from 1921 to the Present* (New York: Delacorte, 1968), 6; Harry Roskolenko, *The Time That Was Then: The Lower East Side 1900–1914, An Intimate Chronicle* (New York: Dial, 1971), 83. Russian and Polish members of ILGWU claimed they were discriminated against—Shub, *Amolike yorn*, 441. The wedding story is in *Bronzvil un east nu york progres* [Brownsville and East New York Progress] (November 10, 1916): 1. Similar images appeared in *YT* (May 14, 1906): 4; *Morgen zhurnal* [Morning Journal] (November 2, 1909): 2; *Forverts* (August 24, 1916): 4. See also, Ewa Morawska, “Polish-Jewish Relations in America, 1880–1940: Old Elements, New Configurations,” *Polin* 19 (2007): 71–86; Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto* (1928; repr., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1956), 229; Victor Greene, *For God and Country: The Rise of Polish and Lithuanian Consciousness in America, 1860–1910* (Madison: Wisconsin State Historical Society, 1975).

28. Committee of Jewish Delegates, *The Pogroms in the Ukraine Under the Ukrainian Government, 1917–1920* (London: John Bale, Sons & Danielson, 1927); N. Gergel, “The Pogroms in the Ukraine in 1918–1921,” *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Sciences* 6 (1951): 237–52; Peter Kenez, “Pogroms and White Ideology in the Russian Civil War,” *Pogroms*, ed. John Klier and Shlomo Lambroza, 293–313; Richard Pipes, *Russia Under the Bolshevik Regime* (New York: Knopf, 1993), 99–114.

29. *New York Times* (May 22, 1919): 1, 5; (November 25, 1919): 6. Lesin wrote in the *Forverts* (May 21, 1919): 1; (May 22, 1919): 1, 3, 6. See also his comments about Poles in *Tsukunft* (March 1919): 131–32; *Ha-toren* [The Mast] (May 23, 1919): 2; *Yidische folk* [Jewish People] (May 30, 1919): 4–5; *Tog* [Day] (November 25, 1919): 1. Glanz (who was among the founders of the *Inzikh*—In Oneself—literary group and known by his pen-name Leyles) wrote in *Tog* (May 30, 1919): 6. See also Ribak, *Gentile New York*, 165–70.

30. The *Sun* is cited in Rudolf Glanz, *Jew and Irish: Historical Group Relations and Immigration* (New York: Self-published, 1966), 102–03; Heywood Broun and George Britt, *Christians Only: A Study in Prejudice* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1931), 69–70. See also Harry Golden, *The Right Time: An Autobiography* (New York: Putnam’s, 1969), 41, 102–03.

31. *Yidische gazetn* (May 16, 1902): 4; (August 9, 1895): 1. The other magazine was N. Behar’s *American Monthly Jewish Review* (January 1911): 70–71. Hermalin’s first quote is in *Ha-magid* (February 10, 1887): 44; his second quote appeared in *Varhayt* (March 22, 1911): 4.

32. Seltzer, tape I–132 (Tamiment); Hollander, “Di italyenishe arbiter,” 5. *Naye post* [New Post] (November 13, 1914): 3. See also the the interviews with Ida Shapiro and Bella Cohen in Elizabeth Ewen, *Immigrant Women in the Land of Dollars: Life and Culture on the Lower East Side, 1890–1925* (New York: Monthly Review, 1985), 250–51. Historians have seen 1913 as a turning point, when Italians became part and parcel of the union structure: Pozzetta, “The Italians of New York City, 1890–1914,” 357–59; Fenton, *Immigrants and Unions*, 518–20. On the formation of ACWA, see *Documentary History of the*

Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (1914–1916), 4–11, 33–34, 43–44, 75–108; Steven Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), 86–97; Charles Elbert Zaretsky, *The Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America* (New York: Ancon, 1934), 95–104.

33. *Yidische folk* (February 18, 1916): 4; *Yidisher kongres [Jewish Congress]* (February 18, 1916): 3–4. See also Cherikover's article in *Tog* (March 29, 1916): 4; and in *Tsukunft* (August 1916): 659–60. Entin wrote in *Varhayt* (January 18, 1915): 4. On the Federation of Ukrainians in America established in October 1915, see Myron B. Kuropas, *The Ukrainian Americans: Roots and Aspirations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 131–37. On the Irish convention in New York and its results, see Kevin Kenny, "American-Irish Nationalism," in *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (ed. J. J. Lee and Marion R. Casey; New York: New York University Press, 2006), 294–95.

34. *Varhayt* (February 23, 1911): 8. Ewa Morawska, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-Town Jews in Industrial America, 1890–1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 15–17, 24–25, 40–44, 243–44. See also Ewa Morawska, "A Replica of the 'Old-Country' Relationship in the Ethnic Niche: East European Jews and Gentiles in Small-Town Western Pennsylvania, 1880s–1930s," *American Jewish History* 77 (1987): 27–86.

35. Schiff is quoted in Marc Dollinger, *Quest for Inclusion: Jews and Liberalism in Modern America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 19. On Stuyvesant Pledge, see Beth S. Wenger, *New York Jews and the Great Depression: Uncertain Promise* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 138–42; and Eli Faber, *A Time for Planting: The First Migration, 1654–1820* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University press, 1992), 29–31.

36. Bogen wrote in *Jewish Charities* (November 1910): 4; and (July 1911): 2, reprinted in his book—Boris D. Bogen, *Jewish Philanthropy: An Exposition of Principles and Methods of Jewish Social Service in the United States* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 81, 269.

37. "Report of an Interview with Mr. Herman Robinson" (May 28, 1931), *University Settlement Society of New York Papers* (Wisconsin State Historical Society), series #1, reel #2. Gershin's account is in *Amerikaner yidische geshikhte be'al-pei*, box #2: 51. Paley wrote in *YT* (July 16, 1902): 4. See also, Gil Ribak, "'The Jew Usually Left Those Crimes to Esau': The Jewish Responses to Accusations about Jewish Criminality in New York, 1908–1913," *AJS Review* 38 (April 2014): 1–28.

38. See the report (Dec. 1897) by the headworker of the university settlement house, James B. Reynolds, *University Settlement Society of New York Papers* (Wisconsin State Historical Society), series #2. On "Stealing Jewish Children" see *American Hebrew* (October 16, 1903): 705–06; (December 27, 1912): 270; *Hebrew Standard* (December 11, 1906): 8; Bogen, *Jewish Philanthropy*, 80–81, 269. See also, Yaakov Ariel, *Evangelizing the Jewish People: Missions to the Jews in America, 1880–2000* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2000), 55–62; and Jeffrey S. Gurock, *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken: Ktav, 1996), 153–54.

Empty Hearts and Full Wallets: Poverty and Wealth in American Jewish Films, 1921–1932

Lawrence Baron

INTRODUCTION

The mass immigration of Jews from eastern and southeastern Europe to the United States decreased substantially during World War I and after the passage of restrictive immigration quotas in 1921 and 1924.¹ By the 1920s many of the Jewish newcomers who came to the United States between 1880 and 1910 and their American-educated children could afford to move out of the impoverished and overcrowded urban ethnic enclaves, like New York's Lower East Side, where they originally resided. While antisemitism and nativism remained widespread, the slowing of immigration to a trickle made the prior generation of immigrants less demographically threatening to the American public. As they improved their financial standing and their children obtained commercial or professional skills, they confidently believed that they shortly would be, or already were, recognized as equal citizens in their adopted country.²

The most conspicuous exemplars of the rags-to-riches saga of recent Jewish immigrants to the United States were the Jewish movie moguls. They either had emigrated from central or eastern Europe in the nineteenth century or had been born in the United States to first-generation immigrant families. Hailing from humble origins, they began as retailers of various products and entered the film business as distributors for short silent films screened to predominantly immigrant audiences in penny arcades and nickelodeons. They successfully challenged the monopoly that Thomas Edison's Motion Picture Patents Company attempted to exercise over the exhibition and production of American films since 1908.³ Relocating the center of filmmaking away from the so-called "Edison Trust" companies based in New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Chicago to California where labor was cheaper, the climate more temperate, and the topography for exterior shots more diverse, they presided over the transformation of motion pictures from a cheap form of working-class entertainment presented in plain storefronts to a mass medium consisting of feature-length films shown in ornate theatres that appealed to middle-class and upper-class audiences as well. World War I enabled American studios to dominate the domestic and foreign film market because the conflict

substantially decreased the production of French and Italian companies, which previously enjoyed that distinction. By the next decade, most of the major Hollywood studios and many of the country's movie theaters were owned by these Jewish magnates.⁴ As Thomas Cripps, an eminent authority on the era of the silent films, observes, "the Jewish case proved the most striking example of immigrant penetration of the movie medium serving as a living allegory for the American dream of success."⁵

The movie industry not only enriched the Jewish movie moguls, it also enabled them to shape public attitudes about the humanity and industriousness of European immigrants in general and Jewish ones in particular. The films of the 1920s illustrated that the poverty of the immigrants who arrived in the decades before and after the turn of the century was a temporary condition that would be overcome by them and their offspring as they Americanized and worked hard to improve their socioeconomic status. Patricia Erens succinctly categorizes the characters and plotlines of this genre of "ghetto" films. The newcomers initially settle in the tenement slums of the Lower East Side where they toil in sweatshops or sell food from pushcarts. The fathers in these families remain pious and rarely manage to earn enough to support their families. The mothers run the households, raise their children, and hold down extra jobs to make ends meet. The daughters acculturate, work to augment the family income, and marry Jewish men whose professions and wealth lift their families out of poverty. The sons pursue profitable careers and often marry wealthier Gentile or Jewish women as a token of their upward mobility. In the process the daughters and sons come into conflict with one of their parents, usually the father, over their choice of a spouse or vocation.⁶

In his standard history of the Jewish movie moguls, Neal Gabler overgeneralizes about the assimilationist agenda promoted by Hollywood movies when he interprets their plotlines as projections of their producers' ascent from destitute immigrants to fabulously wealthy entrepreneurs. To gain acceptance as Americans, he avers, they camouflaged their Jewishness and married trophy *shiksa* [non-Jewish] wives.⁷ Gabler views *The Jazz Singer* (1927) as the epitome of the narrative templates these Hollywood films employed.⁸ Jakie Rabinowitz, a boy raised in the United States, becomes a pop singer to escape his father's old world piety and parochialism. His mother acknowledges his ambition and talent. He changes his name to Jack Robin and establishes his reputation on the West Coast, where he transgresses against Jewish law by dining on ham and eggs and falling in love with the beautiful Gentile dancer Mary Dale. Though he eventually sacrifices his Broadway debut to chant the

Kol Nidre [central prayer on Yom Kippur] in place of his deceased father, he quickly returns to the stage with his *kvelling* [exceedingly proud] mother in the audience and his Gentile girlfriend waiting in the wings.⁹ Like many Jewish-themed films of this period, *The Jazz Singer* ostensibly glorifies assimilation, individual freedom, and the pursuit of fame and fortune at the expense of community, faith, and family.¹⁰

While these motion pictures undoubtedly focused on the generational divisions in immigrant families arising from the Americanization of their children and their ensuing divergence from the paths their parents expected them to follow, their happy endings usually restored communal and familial harmony by condemning abuses of social status and wealth. The reasons for imposing restraints on such success stories varied. The Jewish films of the Twenties adhered to middle-class mores to affirm the values of the average American moviegoer. They discredited negative Jewish stereotypes like that of the coniving and greedy merchant, which frequently appeared in prewar silent films, particularly those made by Gentile studios like Edison's.¹¹ The postwar films portrayed Jewish characters more sympathetically to counteract contemporary antisemites like Henry Ford, who castigated Jewish filmmakers for corrupting the Christian morality of mainstream Americans.¹² Hollywood represented Jewish immigrants as decent people who shared the same ambitions, family concerns, and ethical principles as their Gentile neighbors even though their religious beliefs and rituals differed.¹³ The ghetto films simultaneously promoted the integration of Jews into American society while celebrating their solidarity and success as a minority group.¹⁴

Since the literary sources of these films were stories and novels by authors who either grew up in the Lower East Side or were keen observers of it, the plotlines derived from their writings vividly recalled what eking out an existence as greenhorns on the Lower East Side had been like. As the ordeal of immigrant adjustment and penury receded into the past, however, ghetto films also evoked nostalgia for the ethnic cohesiveness and vitality of the Lower East Side, both of which seemed sorely lacking in the affluent but culturally sterile uptown neighborhoods where upwardly mobile immigrant families were moving.¹⁵ Even though directors, producers, and screenwriters softened the harsh realities of the ghetto experience and neatly resolved the conflicts that had pitted immigrant parents against their children, their films explicitly or implicitly criticized the corrosive aspects of assimilation, capitalism, or materialism on the immigrants and their Americanized offspring. According to Hasia Diner, the memory of the Lower East Side functioned as "the metaphoric middle

ground where Jews dwelled among themselves while waiting for permission to enter the real America.”¹⁶

This article analyzes this ambivalence towards poverty and wealth in three popular ghetto films: *Hungry Hearts* (1922), *His People* (1925), and *Symphony of Six Million* (1932). To be sure, each traced how the second generation of Eastern European Jewish immigrants extricated themselves from the meager circumstances of the Lower East Side and the religious customs of their parents to prosper as modern American citizens. Nevertheless, these films also censured the transitory economic exploitation immigrants endured, the erosion of the communalism that pervaded the romanticized recollections of ghetto culture, and the shallowness of status measured in terms of possessions and wealth.

HUNGRY HEARTS

Based on several stories from Anzia Yeziarska's collection *Hungry Hearts*, E. Mason Hopper's film of the same title follows the Levin family fleeing from persecution in Czarist Russia, struggling to survive in the tenement slums and ultimately triumphing financially and legally in the United States.¹⁷ The stories and film reflect the hardships Yeziarska experienced as the daughter of poor Russian Jewish immigrants. She had worked at menial and factory jobs as a teenager, but independently obtained a degree from Columbia Teachers College by 1905 and taught elementary school from 1908 until 1913. After two failed marriages, she audited John Dewey's classes at Columbia University. The two became romantically involved with Dewey serving as her intellectual mentor and Yeziarska his portal to immigrant life. With the publication of *Hungry Hearts* in 1920, she garnered acclaim as the voice of Jewish immigrants. Tapping into her own family experiences, Yeziarska's female characters typically rebelled against their fathers' suffocating orthodoxy and misogyny, which encouraged marriage rather than higher education for daughters. Her life and writings demonstrated that achieving the American dream was possible for immigrants, but that blending into the American melting pot entailed an attenuation of their ethnic identities and sense of social responsibility.¹⁸

Samuel Goldwyn purchased the film rights for *Hungry Hearts* and brought Yeziarska to Los Angeles as part of his studio's Eminent Authors program, which attempted to upgrade the stature of feature films by hiring famous writers to adapt their literary works into movies.¹⁹ She received \$10,000 for the screen rights and \$200 per week to write the script. Dubbed the "Sweatshop Cinderella" by a Goldwyn Studios publicist, she felt uncomfortable with

the opulence Hollywood showered upon her. She was even more discomfited with the liberties the studio took with the film's plot to enhance its commercial appeal and narrative continuity. Another one of her novels, *Salome of the Tenants*, was transformed into a film in 1925 without her having much input in its production. As with many other prominent authors hired by the studios, the coupling of Hollywood and Yeziarska turned into a match made in hell.²⁰

Since Yeziarska initially collaborated closely with the screenwriter Julien Josephson, the original synopsis for the film preserved much of the ambivalence toward American capitalism and Americanization she had expressed in her short story collection. After the Czar forbids Abraham Levin from teaching Hebrew to pupils in his home, he and his family are inspired by the tale of success they read about in a letter from a friend who immigrated to the United States. They decide to go to America "where life is rich and full of opportunity." Instead, they encounter the "dirty streets of the East Side, the obvious poverty, the small mean rooms, looking out on a narrow airshaft." Despite their disappointment, they hope for a better future. Mother Hanneh and daughter Sara work because Abraham is absorbed in studying Jewish law. Sara falls in love with a medical student named David, whose uncle, Mr. Rosenblatt, is the Levins' landlord. The uncle scoffs at David's intention to marry into "a family of beggars, a girl of ignorance, a home of poverty." Hanneh paints her kitchen white to try to impress Rosenblatt. When he vindictively doubles the rent and orders the eviction of the Levins, Hanneh challenges him and loses in court. With "her dream of free America shattered," she destroys the walls of her kitchen before the family moves out of their flat and into a shelter for the homeless. In desperation, Sara asks her boss for a raise and receives it. David gets promoted at the hospital and proposes to her. Now that she is engaged to a physician, "the past is forgiven, and the future is indeed theirs in America."²¹

The film's editor Paul Bern worried that the story was not upbeat enough and suggested that the judge rule in Hanneh's favor. In his opinion, "This would be a great punch and wonderful Americanization stuff. From that moment starts the rebirth of their faith in America, building from there to the end, where their happiness is consummated."²² Indeed, after Yeziarska returned to New York, the first cut of the movie was reedited by Bern. Frank Godsol, the new president of Goldwyn Company, hired Montague Glass to rewrite many of the intertitles and add some humor to them. Bern objected to employing Glass because his *Potash and Perlmutter* series relied heavily on stereotyped Jewish immigrant characters who spoke in comical Yiddish dialects. The final cut of *Hungry Hearts* portrayed David as a law student who



David (Bryant Washburn) meets Sara (Helen Ferguson) for the first time and barely notices her because she is still dressed like a greenhorn. *Hungry Hearts* (1922). Courtesy The National Center for Jewish Film.

defends Hanneh in court against his uncle. The judge sides with her and asks Rosenblatt, “How could you raise this poor woman’s rent? You who were once a poor immigrant yourself?” After being exonerated, Hanneh exclaims, “There is justice in America!” By their second summer in the United States, Sara and David have wed and moved to an idyllic suburban house with her parents and their other children.²³

These deviations from Yeziarska’s short stories undercut her disdain for the deleterious effects of the American economic system and consumer culture. In “The Lost Beautifulness,” Hanneh scrimps to buy the paint for her kitchen so it will look bright and new like that of the rich woman whose laundry she washes. She redecorates the kitchen to welcome her son back from World War I. When the judge rules against her, she refuses to pay the rent hike, and, Rosenblatt serves the Levin family with an eviction notice. This triggers her demolition of the kitchen before the family vacates the premises. The Levins end up huddling with their possessions on the sidewalk in front of the apartment building. Her son bedecked with medals is appalled to find “his

own mother—and all their worldly belongings dumped there in the rain.”²⁴ Similarly, the marriage of David and Sara and their rapid ascent into the middle class reverses the conclusion of the story “Where Lovers Dream.” Therein David heeds his uncle’s advice rather than losing his financial support and abandons Sara, who marries the first suitor who proposes to her even though she still pines for David.²⁵ “The Fat of the Land” commences with Hanneh’s remembrances of the deprivation her family experienced when it arrived in New York, but abruptly progresses to twenty years later when she resides in a brownstone, but reminisces about “the grand times” she had dwelling on the Lower East Side. On a pilgrimage to the old neighborhood, she realizes “she had outgrown her past by the habits of years of physical comforts, and these material comforts that she could no longer do without choked and crushed the life within her.”²⁶

Notwithstanding the tidy resolution of all the conflicts in the film, Yeziarska’s critique of American capitalism and the commodity consumption it fostered remains discernible in the movie.²⁷ The myth of the land of opportunity is shattered by the dilapidated apartment their friend Gedalyah leases for the Levins, occasioning Hanneh to sigh, “*Gottiniu*—like in a grave so dark.” He quickly reminds her, “Nobody’s a somebody before he can earn money in America.” The film subtly mocks the naive faith immigrants held that they could instantly morph into Americans by discarding their Old World garb and replacing it with American clothes.²⁸ David barely notices Sara the first time he glimpses her while collecting rent for his uncle, but finds her alluring after she has donned a new dress and shoes. Rosenblatt wields his proprietorship like an axe to exact more revenue from the Levins for upgrading the kitchen and demonstrate to David the precariousness of their financial situation. Yeziarska despised the “allrightniks” who had become rich in the United States and dissociated themselves from their impoverished and unassimilated religious brethren.²⁹

The most powerful episode of *Hungry Hearts* is the lengthy scene of Hanneh wildly slashing the kitchen walls with a cleaver. It alternates between close-ups of her enraged facial expressions and the extensive damage she wreaks. When she is arrested, she calls the policemen “Cossacks,” likening them to the Czarist agents who ransacked her home. Although David emerges as Hanneh’s legal savior and the Levins’ financial benefactor, the audience learns from a passing remark that he derives his income from charging “fat fees” to get murderers acquitted. Discerning the film’s palpable disparagement of the American dream, one critic charged it with “rank heresy” for

insinuating “that some of the immigrants are just as badly off in America as they were at home.”³⁰

In one interview she gave when the film was released, Yeziarska seemed satisfied with how it turned out: “It has been wonderfully done, but I think that is because the members of the cast really lived the story.”³¹ In another she vehemently denounced the hatchet job that sanitized her immigrant saga: “Little bits of human heart-pictures that took me weeks and months to portray truthfully—*were cut out*. A happy ending was appended. *A happy ending!* To my story. What a ghastly anti-climax.”³² According to Lisa Botshon, Yeziarska’s positive remarks about the film should be considered part of its publicity campaign.³³ Her condemnation of how the film distorted the essence of her stories manifests her real assessment of it. Kevin Brownlow maintains that Yeziarska “realized she could no nothing to prevent the desecration of her idea and felt as if she had been raped.”³⁴

HIS PEOPLE

His People (1925), directed by Edward Sloman, deals with how the unbri-dled pursuit of status and wealth by the elder son of an immigrant family causes him to disavow his parents.³⁵ Isadore Bernstein based his three page story, titled “The Jew,” on incidents he witnessed as a newspaper reporter and boy’s school superintendent on the Lower East Side, as well as loosely on the career of the Jewish boxing champion Benny Leonard. A prolific screenwriter, Bernstein had penned the script of an earlier Jewish silent film *The Faith of Her Fathers* (1915) and in 1926 cofounded Temple Israel in Los Angeles; his “sense of obligation to other Jews” is apparent in *His People*.³⁶ Born and raised on London’s East End, Edward Sloman immigrated first to Canada and then to the United States. He already had acted in and directed *Vengeance of the Oppressed* (1916), dramatizing the persecution of Jews in Czarist Russia. Kevin Brownlow marvels at the social consciousness displayed in many of Sloman’s pictures and surmises this partly stemmed from the director’s lower-class Jewish origins and Zionist sympathies. Sloman hired screenwriter Alfred Cohn, who subsequently authored scripts for the *Cohens and the Kellys* franchise and *The Jazz Singer*, to expand Bernstein’s short piece into a feature length film.³⁷ Together they created what one reviewer praised as “a compellingly realistic picture of the huddled quarters where instead of flaming liberty and the horn of plenty, these ‘Chosen People’ are harassed by customs they do not understand and their spirits broken by privation and want.”³⁸

His People portrays two generations of the Cominsky family residing on the Lower East Side. The past and present come together in the opening exterior shots of the “ghetto” where predominantly Jewish immigrants from “four corners of Europe” haggle with street vendors, their American-looking children play and eat ice cream, and cars, horse-drawn wagons, and elevated trains criss-cross the street and skyline. The parents David and Rose Cominsky emigrated from Russia, where David had been a religious scholar, but typically “found no market for his knowledge in the land of opportunity.” Reading scripture while tending his pushcart, he sells clothes that his wife sews in their apartment and gets outsmarted by a customer who deceives him about how much she can afford to pay for an item. His younger son Sammy hawks newspapers, whereas older brother Morris intently reads a book while carrying a stack of others. When Izzy Rosenblatt bullies Morris, Sammy leaps to his defense, wins the fight, and receives a dollar prize from the owner of the local gym. In the aftermath of the altercation, the behavior of the two brothers foreshadows Sammy’s commitment to family and Morris’s pettiness. Sammy spends the money to buy extra groceries for Shabbat dinner; whereas Morris rattles about Sammy engaging in fisticuffs to David, who fears Sammy is destined to be hanged as a murderer or become a “box fighter,” the latter of which is equally ignoble in his eyes. The onset of Shabbat and Rose’s insistence that the family sit down for dinner spares Sammy from a whipping.

Ten years transpire. Another Shabbat dinner heightens the contrast between the priorities of the two brothers. After Rose has kindled a candle for each family member, David enters the apartment and kisses the mezuzah. Morris returns home next wearing a dark business suit, fedora, white shirt, and tie. He shuffles through his legal papers in a portfolio and impatiently checks his wristwatch. David beams with pride because Morris graduated law school with honors and works as an attorney, but Rose reminds him that Sammy’s earnings paid for his brother’s education. When asked where Sammy is, Morris snidely replies, “How should I know? Do I associate with newspaper boys and cheap prize fighters?” Then Sammy walks in sporting a flat cap, sweater, and tweed sports jacket. He affectionately hugs his mother and greets his father as “pop.” During dinner, Sammy’s attention turns to Mamie Shannon, who beckons to him through the window facing his parents’ flat. Although she and her mother regard themselves as “foreigners” in the Jewish neighborhood, Mrs. Shannon has a close relationship with Rose, and Mamie is described as “so sweet you’d never think she was an Irisher.” Sammy leaves dinner early under the pretense that he is attending night school, but actually to escort Molly to

the gymnasium where he trains. He boxes under the pseudonym the “Battling Rooney” to prevent his father from knowing how he earned the money for his brother’s tuition. When a neighbor subsequently tips David off about Sammy’s secret, David banishes his son from the apartment. Despite that, Sammy slips Rose his winnings. Morris also excuses himself from Shabbat dinner to conduct business uptown. What this actually entails is spending the evening with his elegantly dressed girlfriend Ruth Stein, the daughter of a former judge who heads the firm where Morris works. To conceal his humble background from his potential future father-in-law, Morris claims he is an orphan who put himself through law school.

Comparing the deep focus *mise-en-scène* of the Cominskys’ tenement apartment with the Steins’ mansion on Fifth Avenue provides a visualization of the socioeconomic chasm dividing the two families. On the one hand, the Cominsky flat contains a sparsely furnished central room that jointly serves as the kitchen, dining room, and living room. There is no privacy, as Mamie’s ability to flirt with Sammy through her kitchen window indicates. Indeed, the pair rendezvous on the fire escape landing in the airshaft that separates their dwellings. Mamie worries Sammy might fall down the shaft if he leans too far over.

On the other hand, Morris and Ruth converse with each other on a balcony with balustrades. In the room adjoining the balcony, Mr. Stein settles into a plush velvet sofa where he puffs on a cigar and reads a newspaper illuminated by a fringed Victorian lamp. A crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling that is so tall it cannot be seen from the balcony. Subsequent scenes disclose a spacious foyer with an ornate high-back bench and a large dining room that accommodates a banquet for twenty guests. The Steins emblemize rich assimilated German Jews who came to the United States earlier in the nineteenth century and view lower-class eastern European Jews with condescension. Parenthetically, many of the eastern European Jews working in Hollywood rankled over the social snobbery they encountered from the German-Jewish establishment in Los Angeles.³⁹ These contrasting images of where each family resides highlight the material trappings Sammy seeks by courting Ruth and his parents’ embarrassing paucity of such possessions.⁴⁰

Enthralled by the prospect of marrying Ruth and being promoted to a partner in his future father-in-law’s practice, Morris treats his own family unscrupulously. He begs his father for money to buy a new suit, claiming it is essential for his professional advancement. His ulterior motive is to impress Ruth and Mr. Stein. David ventures into a blizzard to pawn the warm winter coat he brought from Russia, but the pawnbroker persuades him to exchange

the coat for a used suit hanging on the racks. David then trudges back coatless in the snow to give Morris the outfit. Morris wants cash and cavalierly tosses the suit into a garbage can as soon as he leaves his parents' apartment. As a result of his wintry trek, David contracts pneumonia. In critical condition, he has Rose telegram Morris to return home immediately so he can give him his last blessing. Since Ruth wonders what could be so urgent that Morris suddenly would have to leave her that evening, he decides not to go to the bedside of his ailing father because he can't reveal that he has a father. Paralleling the story of Jacob and Esau except that the brawny son trumps the brainy one, Sammy feigns he is Morris to honor his father's request. When David recovers, he believes it was Morris' devotion that endowed him with the strength to survive. Consequently, he is shocked to read in a newspaper announcement about Morris's engagement to Ruth that Morris is reportedly an orphan.

Unlike his brother, Sammy earns the birthright his father had erroneously conferred upon him. David's doctor feels he is so debilitated that he must move to a warmer climate to avoid a relapse. This spurs Sammy to volunteer to fight the champion in his weight class for a thousand dollar prize. By cinematic coincidence, the boxer scheduled to challenge the champ has withdrawn due to a hand injury, and the owner of the gym slates Sammy for the bout despite concern that he'll be outmatched. Trying to correct what he believes was an error in the engagement notice, David marches to the Stein mansion to confront Morris. In the most emotionally wrenching scene of the film, David demands Morris recognize him as his father, and Morris cravenly denies it. Blaming the mistake on his poor eyesight, David wanders the streets crestfallen. After unexpectedly rallying to win his match, Sammy, flanked by the jubilant Mamie and Rose, finds his father collapsed on the front steps to the family's apartment. Outraged over Morris's shameful disavowal of his father, Sammy grabs a taxi to go to the Steins. He dares his brother to deny him too, drags him away from the banquet, and hauls him before David, where Morris confesses, "I've been a selfish cur." David forgives his elder son and admits, "I looked for success for my children in the only thing I knew—learning. But success in this country can even mean a box fighter."

The movie imparts a mixed message about the Americanization of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe and their children's climb up the socioeconomic ladder. The movie never makes a contentious issue of Sammy dating Mamie and his predictable marriage to her. In the late nineteenth century, the relationship between Irish and Jewish immigrants generally had been antagonistic in New York neighborhoods where both resided. Neverthe-



David Cominsky (Rudolph Schildkraut) requests to speak with his son Morris at the banquet being held in the mansion where the family of his fiancé Ruth lives. *His People* (1925). Courtesy The National Center for Jewish Film.

less, the Irish surmounted the prejudice directed at them by white Protestant elites to become culturally, economically, and politically influential in the city. For many Jewish immigrants, the transformation of the Irish from outsiders to insiders represented a model for Jewish Americanization.⁴¹ Contemporary vaudeville skits, plays, and silent films depicted a harmonious relationship developing between the erstwhile hostile groups to symbolize how ethnic otherness could be homogenized through friendship and intermarriage.

Reaching this level of mutual acceptance usually entailed overcoming the opposition of the first generation of immigrants to their child marrying someone of a different ethnicity and faith as exemplified in *Abie's Irish Rose*, the long-running Broadway play that premiered in 1924 and the movie adapted from it in 1928.⁴² The Cominskys have more in common with the Shannons than the Steins. The compatibility of immigrant cultures in the American Melting Pot is evidenced in Mamie's Jewish sounding name, Sammy's Irish boxing moniker, and Mrs. Cominsky and Mrs. Shannon swapping recipes for corned beef and cabbage and gefilte fish.⁴³ The mutual respect of Mamie and Sammy for their parents casts Morris's disavowal of his parents in a negative light.

In an otherwise astute analysis of *His People*, Lester Friedman concludes that “the film . . . basically equates American success with financial accomplishment. Love, happiness, and health rest upon a firm foundation of money.”⁴⁴ Yes, Sammy must win the fight and prize money to pay for his parents move to a warmer climate. The movie, however, juxtaposes two contradictory models for upward mobility. Morris unscrupulously seeks social status and wealth for its own sake. To marry an upper-class Jewish girl and become a partner in her father’s firm, he conceals that he is descended from an immigrant family with parents who remain lower-class and a brother whose career he deems disreputable. On the other hand, while Sammy also epitomizes the American dream with his boxing victory, he earns money to help his family by selling newspapers, funding his brother’s education, and risking bodily harm to fight a more accomplished opponent. His victory and reconciliation with his father, as Ted Merwin observes, affirm his parent’s values and his connection to the Lower East Side.⁴⁵

SYMPHONY OF SIX MILLION

If Judge Stein had had a daughter who rebelled against her life of privilege, she could have been like Fannie Hurst. A scion of American-born German-Jewish parents, she grew up in St. Louis where her family’s circumstances waxed and waned from comfortably bourgeois most of her childhood to boarding house tenants during downturns in her father’s business ventures.⁴⁶ She detested her parents’ contempt for Eastern European Jews, whom they called “kikes.”⁴⁷ She moved to New York in 1910 to escape her family and immerse herself in literary circles. There she gravitated to Ellis Island and the Lower East Side to collect subject material for her short stories and novels.⁴⁸ She endorsed feminist and socialist causes, but initially minimized her own Jewish identity in favor of a more cosmopolitan one. When she was commissioned to write the story that served as the basis for the film *Symphony of Six Million* (1932),⁴⁹ she preferred that it be “a story of human beings rather than a story of Jewish human beings.”⁵⁰

According to Susan Koppelman, Hurst typically dramatized the generational conflict within immigrant families “exacerbated by the lure of assimilation for some and the impossibility of assimilation for others.” Furthermore, she exposed “the hypocrisy of social conventions and pretensions, especially those which elevate some people above others on the basis of class, ethnicity, and gender.”⁵¹ *Symphony for Six Million* combined plot elements and themes that had appeared in two earlier ghetto films based on Hurst’s stories. Frank Borzage’s *Humoresque* (1920) depicted how an immigrant Jewish mother’s belief in her

son's musical talent launches his career as a virtuoso violinist. Before enlisting in World War I, the son foregoes his high fee to play a "concert for his own people of the ghetto." Seated in separate sections, assimilated younger Jews wear formal attire, and traditional older Jews recruited from the Lower East Side dress in plain or religious clothing. *Humoresque* bridges the gap in the lifestyles of the two groups by emphasizing their mutual appreciation of music.⁵²

Based on Hurst's story "The Gold in Fish" and her play *It Is to Laugh*, Frank Capra's *The Younger Generation* (1929) examines the incongruity of the values of the parvenu son with those of his immigrant parents. The successful lead character transcends his lower-class origins by changing his Jewish-sounding surname from Goldfish to Fish—incidentally, Gelbfisz was Samuel Goldwyn's original name—and moving to a posh neighborhood with his parents. Echoing *His People*, the son pretends that his parents are servants to avoid social embarrassment when entertaining upper-class guests and bars his sister from his home for marrying a Jewish composer who bears the stigma of having served jail time for petty robbery. Yearning for the sense of community and companionship on the Lower East Side, the father returns to live there. After he dies, his wife moves in with the daughter and her husband in the old neighborhood, which the film romanticizes as a *haimish* [warm] site of class and ethnic authenticity. The son is left bereft of family in his stately abode.⁵³ *Symphony of Six Million* reprises *Humoresque*'s formula of a mother and father cultivating their son Felix's dream of becoming a doctor, but then his mother and her other son Magnus push him to abandon his East Side clinic to treat wealthy clients, thereby prompting him to lose touch with his roots like the son in *The Younger Generation*.

What ironically imbued *Symphony of Six Million* with more *yidishkayt* [Jewishness] than Hurst intended was the influence of producer David O. Selznick. Like many of Hollywood's movie moguls, Selznick usually effaced his Jewish origins, but considered *Symphony of Six Million* a tribute to his dying father Lewis, who had emigrated from Lithuania and became a movie producer.⁵⁴ Selznick encouraged the actor Gregory Ratoff, who played the father Meyer Klauber, to invest his character with the Jewish mannerisms he had mastered performing in the Yiddish theatre. Moreover, he commissioned composer Max Steiner to score the film with Jewish melodies like "Ofyn Pripetchik," "Mazel Tov," "Ha-Tikvah," and "Kol Nidre" even when the latter two had little relevance to the onscreen action.⁵⁵

Like *His People*, Gregory La Cava's *Symphony for Six Million* opens with footage of the teeming urban life on the Lower East Side. Father

Meyer is a tailor and Hanna a doting mother. The older son Magnus dreams of escaping the ghetto by striking it rich in business. His precocious brother Felix evinces an interest in medicine. When Meyer suffers from severe heartburn, Felix consults a home remedy book and advises his father to take bicarbonate of soda. Meyer waits until the doctor arrives and comically prescribes the same cure. Hanna and Meyer save to buy their son a microscope. A segue to the future shows Felix as a physician repaying the community where he grew up by treating its poor residents in a free clinic on Cherry Street.

Magnus urges his brother to open a more profitable practice in a wealthy neighborhood and pressures his mother to convince Felix to take his advice to raise the family's standard of living: "You want Felix to grow up like papa. After all these years, he's cutting out suits and pants. He's got nothing to show for all his work, and Felix is going to end up just like him, nowhere." He adds that moving to a better neighborhood would improve the quality of sister Birdie's marital prospects: "What kind of people can she meet down here: pushcart peddlers and pants pressers? She ought to meet nice young fellows, with money, with class. How is she going to unless Felix moves uptown, where he belongs, and becomes a smart doctor?"

Felix reluctantly heeds his mother's advice and opens a practice on the West Side. Though it prospers, Felix fears he has lost his sense of purpose and wants to return to the clinic on Cherry Street. He confides in Magnus about his plan: "I've come a long way from the ghetto. I've moved uptown, and I've made a lot of money. . . . This isn't medicine. Meeting and seeing a lot of neurotic women who think they're sick." Hence, he resolves: "I'm going to give up this office, and I'm going back to the ghetto and devote myself to the work I started to do." Beset by his business troubles, Magnus calls Felix's decision *meshuggah* [crazy] and reminds him that he is responsible for the welfare of his parents and Birdie. He urges his brother to open a more lucrative practice on Fifth Avenue by arguing that "medicine is a business like any other business." Felix acquiesces for the sake of the family.

Felix feels even more unfulfilled treating his snooty patients on Fifth Avenue, but gains both fame and fortune for his skills as a surgeon. Though his "million dollar hands" are celebrated in a *Vanity Fair* article, his childhood girlfriend Jessica chides him for forgetting his promise to operate on a pupil from her school for the blind and informs him that the boy died: "You've changed Felix. You've given up the clinic. You've forgotten the ghetto. . . . You've sold your birthright for a mess of potage."

Felix's loss of a sense of purpose is juxtaposed with the ability of his parents and Birdie to remain attached to Jewish tradition. Hanna and Meyer visit the old neighborhood to socialize with friends and neighbors from the past. Birdie meets and weds a Wall Street stockbroker. When she has a baby, the family observes the ritual of the *pidyon haben* in which the firstborn son is relinquished to God, but redeemed by a payment that will be donated to charity. Felix symbolically arrives late and misses most of the ceremony, but he is present when his father faints from a brain tumor after expressing his gratitude for being blessed with such good children. Felix's colleagues and mother beseech him to perform the delicate surgery that is his father's only chance for survival. Meyer assures Felix that God will guide his fingers and recites the *Sh'ma* before the procedure. When Meyer dies on the operating table, Felix blames himself for his father's death and wanders aimlessly through the night. Birdie, Hanna, and Magnus plead with him to resume his career, but he recognizes that Jessica was right by confessing, "We wanted fame and money. We left the ghetto and came to Park Avenue. We found success. Here I stand, the great Dr. Klauber. Look at him. What Am I? I have sold my heritage for a mess of potage. I'll never touch another instrument as long as I live."

His repudiation of his calling is soon put to the test. Visiting the old clinic, he feels like a stranger, and young patients seem scared of him. His mentor Dr. Schifflin informs him that Jessica needs critical spinal surgery to regain the ability to walk. Felix goes to her bedside, kneels down, and cries. During a visit from Birdie, Hanna, and Magnus, Magnus accuses Jessica of misleading Felix by counseling him to return to the clinic. Jessica retorts, "When Felix lost the ghetto, he lost himself: his ideals, his love, his love of life, of work, of real work. He lost his love of people, tender human people, who paid him back with more than money. He lost his soul." Though prepared to operate on Jessica, Schifflin tries to convince Felix to perform the surgery because he believes Felix is a gifted surgeon. Felix shows up to the operating room at the last minute and dazzles the attending nurses and doctors with his dexterity. With his confidence restored, Felix rededicates himself to healing the people of his old neighborhood.

Symphony of Six Million undoubtedly serves as a cautionary tale about succumbing to the temptations of status and wealth. Patricia Erens opines that the film "reflects a nostalgia for the old days and ways and a belief that as the Jewish immigrants climb the ladder of success, they are changed into unfeeling, money-hungry beings who lose their ability to relate to one another." Yet the movie also posits a more salutary route to Americanization in the choices

of Birdie and her husband who, according to Erens, demonstrate “that it is possible to leave the ghetto without leaving behind the sense of family and community and the traditions which have sustained the Jews for centuries.”⁵⁶ Lawrence Epstein contends that these two themes reinforce each other by enabling audiences to “acknowledge their guilt at wanting success, but then see real success in social mobility.”⁵⁷ By the Thirties most Jews who immigrated to the United States between 1880 and 1914 were a generation or more removed from the poverty in the Lower East Side. Their children, if not themselves, already had abandoned the old neighborhood. Idealizing the past was easier from the perspective of an economically secure present.

CONCLUSION

From 1920 to 1932, Hollywood movies about the Jewish immigrant experience did not consistently privilege assimilation, intermarriage, and upward mobility. The paradigmatic *The Jazz Singer* clearly culminates with Jack’s Broadway premiere and his mother and future *shiksa* bride proudly enjoying his performance. Nonetheless, it is obvious that this ending was clumsily tacked on to the denouement of the short story and play on which the film was based.⁵⁸ In those earlier iterations Jack assumed his deceased father’s place to sing *Kol Nidre* with no indication that he would ever go back to show business. Even the “final” script for the film concluded with an apparition of a smiling Cantor Rabinowitz materializing behind Jack as he chants the *Kol Nidre* and raising his hands to bless his son.⁵⁹ Jack Warner added the extra scene of Jack singing two numbers in blackface to showcase Jolson’s signature performing style and entice audiences to buy tickets to see and hear the “first talkie.” During the last half of the film, Jack is plagued by his divided loyalties between career and family. While touring in Chicago, he attends a concert by the famous Cantor Yossele Rosenblatt and envisions his father singing the same Jewish songs. Entertaining his mother, Jack promises her that he’ll use his wealth to move her to an uptown neighborhood where other Jews reside. He risks his Broadway career to honor his father’s dying request before the appended ending permits him return to the Broadway review without any consequences for canceling on opening night.⁶⁰

Although *Hungry Hearts*, *His People*, and *Symphony of Six Million* represent notable exceptions to the rule with their overt condemnations of sacrificing ethnic, familial, and religious fidelity on the altar of the American Golden Calf, they amplify a sense of deracination that haunts many Jewish film and literary characters from this period who forsake their immigrant origins to

achieve the American dream. Most Hollywood films including these three resolve this feeling of estrangement with facile happy endings that render it moot. Scholars of American Jewish films, however, fixate on the sanguine outcomes imposed by directors and producers and downplay the traces of anxieties about the communal, personal, and religious costs of acquiring acceptance, fame, and fortune that pervaded their literary sources. The films discussed in this chapter dramatize the disorientation immigrant parents underwent and the tensions it generated between them and their children who adapted to life in the United States more quickly and thoroughly. By accentuating both the virtues and vices of Americanization, they participated in the shaping of what Beth Wenger terms the “reinvention of the Lower East Side” in the 1920s and 1930s, transforming “poverty, crime, and poor living conditions into a narrative of Jewish struggle, perseverance, and self-congratulation.”⁶¹

NOTES

1. “Jewish and General Immigration into the United States from 1899 to 1944,” in *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History* (ed. Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz; 3rd ed.; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 883.
2. Ted Merwin, *In Their Own Image: New York Jews in Jazz Age Popular Culture* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 131.
3. Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1988), 57–64; Robert Sklar, *Movie-Made America: A Cultural History of American Movies* (rev. ed.; New York: Vintage Books, 1994), 33–47.
4. David S. Desser, “‘Consumerist Realism’: American Jewish Life and the Classical Hollywood Cinema,” *Film History* 8:3 (1996): 261–71; Andrew R. Heinze, *Adapting to Abundance: Jewish Immigrants, Mass Consumption, and the Search for American Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990), 203–18.
5. Thomas Cripps, “The Movie Jew as an Image of Assimilationism, 1903–1927,” *Journal of Popular Film* 4:3 (1975): 198. Also see David Weinberg, “The ‘Socially Acceptable’ Immigrant Minority Group: The Image of the Jew in American Popular Film,” *North Dakota Quarterly* 40:4 (1972): 60–68.
6. Patricia Erens, *The Jew in American Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 77–89. Also see Lester D. Friedman, *The Jewish Image in American Film: 70 Years of Hollywood’s Vision of Jewish Characters and Themes* (Secaucus: Citadel Press, 1987), 96–113.
7. Gabler, *An Empire*, 1–7.
8. *The Jazz Singer*, directed by Alan Crosland (Warner Brothers, 1927).
9. Gabler, *An Empire*, 140–46.

10. For example, even a perceptive scholar of popular culture like Stephen J. Whitfield asserts that “the religion of the Hollywood Jews was not so much Reform as hedonism, and it was their worship of the golden calf that they encouraged a God-fearing nation to adopt.” Stephen J. Whitfield, “Movies in America as Paradigms of Accommodation,” in *The Americanization of the Jews*, (ed. Robert M. Seltzer and Norman J. Cohen; New York: New York University Press, 1995), 82.
11. Erens, *The Jew*, 29–73.
12. Steven A. Carr, *Hollywood and Anti-Semitism: A Cultural History up to World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 1–93.
13. Friedman, *The Jewish Image*, 32–33.
14. Merwin, *In Their Own Image*, 133–34, 157–59.
15. Beth S. Wenger, “Memory as Identity: The Invention of the Lower East Side,” *American Jewish History* 85:1 (1997): 3–10.
16. Hasia S. Diner, *Lower East Side Memories: A Jewish Place in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 20.
17. Anzia Yezierska, *Hungry Hearts* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1920); *Hungry Hearts*, directed by E. Mason Hopper (Goldwyn, 1922).
18. Bertina Berch, *From Hester Street to Hollywood: The Life and Work of Anzia Yezierska* (New York: Sefer International, 2009); Louise Levitas Henriksen, *Anzia Yezierska: A Writer’s Life* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988); Carol B. Schoen, *Anzia Yezierska* (Boston: Twayne, 1982); Anzia Yezierska, *Red Ribbon on a White Horse: My Story* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1950). For more on Yezierska’s relationship with John Dewey, see her fictionalized version of it in Anzia Yezierska, *All I Could Never Be* (New York: Brewer, Warren, and Putnam, 1932), and Mary V. Dearborn, *Love in the Promised Land: The Story of Anzia Yezierska and John Dewey* (New York: Free Press, 1988).
19. A. Scott Berg, *Goldwyn: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1989), 91–96; Tom Stempel, *Framework: A History of Screenwriting in the American Film* (3rd ed.; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 52–54. Adolf Zucker began this upgrading of the status of films by importing distinguished foreign films for distribution in the United States and hiring famous state actors and actresses before World War I. See Gabler, *An Empire*, 28–34.
20. Lisa Botshon, “Anzia Yezierska and the Marketing of the Jewish Immigrant in 1920s Hollywood,” *Journal of Narrative Theory* 30:3 (2000): 289–96; Kevin Brownlow, *Behind the Mask of Innocence: Sex, Violence, Prejudice, Crime in the Silent Era* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 393, 404–05; Hendriksen, *Anzia Yezierska*, 161–64. A recent documentary examines the hype around Yezierska’s rise to fame and her disillusionment with it: *Sweatshop Cinderella*, directed by Suzanne Wasserman (Gotham Center for New York City History: 2010).
21. “Hungry Hearts Synopsis,” File 1451B: 145, Turner MGM Scripts, Margaret Herrick Library: Academy for Motion Picture Arts and Sciences, Beverly Hills, CA (hereafter MHL: AMPAS).

22. Paul Bern, "Suggestion," File 1451, Turner MGM Scripts, MHL: AMPAS.
23. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 399–403. "Hungry Hearts: Silent Cutting Continuity," February 23, 1922: File 1412, Turner MGM Scripts: MHL: AMPAS.
24. Yeziarska, "The Lost Beautifulness," *Hungry Hearts*, 65–96.
25. Yeziarska, "Where Lovers Dream," *Hungry Hearts*, 142–62.
26. Yeziarska, "The Fat of the Land," *Hungry Hearts*, 178–223.
27. Delia Caparoso-Konzett, "From Hollywood to Hester Street: Ghetto Film, Melodrama, and the Image of the Assimilated Jew in *Hungry Hearts*," *Journal of Film and Video* 50:4 (1998–1999): 18–34.
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29. Yeziarska, "My Own People," *Hungry Hearts*, 224–49.
30. Review of *Hungry Hearts* (undated with no citation), Audrey Chamberlin Scrapbooks, vol. 45, 98–99, Manuscript Collection 123, MHL-AMPAS.
31. Review of *Hungry Hearts*, *New York Tribune* (November 9, 1922), sec. 5:2.
32. Anzia Yeziarska, "A Message of Faith," transcribed by Faith Service, *Motion Picture Classic* (November 1922), 86.
33. Botshon, "Anzia Yeziarska," 304–06.
34. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 403.
35. *His People*, directed by Edward Sloman (Universal: 1925).
36. Gabler, *An Empire*, 306–07; Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 409–10; Erens, *The Jew*, 55–56. Lester D. Friedman, "A Forgotten Masterpiece: Edward Sloman's *His People*," in *Hollywood's Chosen People: The Jewish Experience in American Cinema*, (ed. Daniel Bernardi et al.; Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2013), 25.
37. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 406–11; Friedman, "A Forgotten Masterpiece," 23–26.
38. MG, "Review of *His People*" (undated with no citation), *Audrey Chamberlin Scrapbooks*, vol. 20, 18–19, Manuscript Collection 123, MHL-AMPAS.
39. Vincent Brook, *Land of Smoke and Mirrors: A Cultural History of Los Angeles* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2013), 67–70.
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44. Friedman, "A Forgotten Masterpiece," 32–34.
45. Merwin, *In Their Own Image*, 227–28; Weber, *Haunted*, 52–55.
46. Brooke Kroeger, *The Talent and Success of Writer Fannie Hurst* (New York: Times Books, 1999), 273–91.
47. Fannie Hurst, *Anatomy of Me: A Wonderer in Search of Himself* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1958), 90.
48. Kroeger, *Fannie*, 14–36.
49. *Symphony of Six Million*, directed by Gregory La Cava (Radio Pictures, 1932).
50. Kroeger, *Fannie*, 184.
51. Susan Koppelman, Introduction, *The Stories of Fannie Hurst* (New York: Feminist Press, 2004), xi, xxi.
52. *Humoresque*, directed by Frank Borzage (Cosmopolitan, 1920); Fannie Hurst, "Humoresque," *Cosmopolitan* 64:4 (1919): 32–29, 94–100. Brownlow, *Behind the Mask*, 385–92; Kroeger, *Fannie*, 57–60; Merwin, *In Their Own Image*, 123–26; Sharon Pucker Rivo, "Projected Images: Portraits of Jewish Women in Early American Film," in *Talking Back: Images of Jewish Women in American Popular Culture* (ed. Joyce Antler; Hanover: Brandeis University Press, 1998), 36–37.
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55. *Ibid.*, 122–28.
56. Erens, *The Jew*, 141–42.
57. Lawrence J. Epstein, *American Jewish Films: The Search for Identity* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2013), 28–29.

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59. Alfred A. Cohn, "The Jazz Singer," in Carringer, *The Jazz Singer*, 133.
60. Michael Alexander, *Jazz Age Jews* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 167–79; Merwin, *In Their Own Image*, 121–23.
61. Wenger, "Memory as Identity," 26.

Crossing Over: Class, Race, and Ethnicity in the Baltimore Films of Barry Levinson

Leonard M. Helfgott

Viewers and critics tend to view Barry Levinson's Baltimore films as Jewish ethnographies exhibiting nostalgic yearning for the magical era of the nineteen fifties and sixties, as prototypical buddy films, or as testimonials to his hometown. Indeed, all of these elements are embedded in each of the four Baltimore films Levinson wrote and directed, *Diner*, *Tin Men*, *Avalon*, and *Liberty Heights*, and in an earlier film that he cowrote, *And Justice for All*.¹ He documents a particular form of the Jewish experience, even when Jewishness is not explicitly demonstrated, in a highly segregated city, which culturally and socially separated Jews from blacks and from white gentiles. He situates these films in a period when conformity is gradually giving way to rapid cultural and social change, when children and grandchildren of immigrant Jews begin to peek out of the ghetto, yet are still constrained by its limitations.

Seen as a body of work, these five films comprise a unique accomplishment in American urban studies, perhaps comparable to William Kennedy's Albany novels. They capture a subculture shaped by social boundaries, and, more specifically and virtually ignored by the critics, a subculture shaped by class in a city divided on racial, class, and ethnic lines. These divisions existed not only between Jews and gentiles, whites and blacks, rich and poor, but they also existed within Baltimore's large Jewish community. Levinson's Jews are class bound not only in the context of the totality of the Baltimore's economy but also within the Jewish community as well.

The Jewish presence in Baltimore goes back to the mid-nineteenth century. German Jews established themselves as merchants and bankers, and at the end of the century as founders and owners of the city's large garment industry. The mass immigration from Eastern Europe before World War I provided the labor force for the German Jewish-owned garment factories. At one point the factories employed over twenty-five thousand workers, the majority of whom were Jews.² In addition, piece work done in the home complemented organized textile production. Again, many piece workers were Jews, and textile production at a highly reduced rate persisted through the Depression and even into the 1950s. Eastern European Jews also found work in Baltimore's steel, electricity, chemical, and other large industries, as shopkeepers and skilled

craftspeople such as printers and carpenters, and in a myriad of marginal occupations across Baltimore's economy.

On the cusp of World War II, Baltimore's Jewish population exceeded eighty thousand people, who formed a loosely connected social community with networks of Hebrew schools, summer camps, synagogues, old-age homes, community centers, charitable organizations, and even a system of high school sororities and fraternities. The wealthy German Jews tended to live in the stately mansions on and around Eutaw Place, while poorer Jews remained in the inner city, with large numbers concentrated in East Baltimore.³ By the end of the war, Jews began to relocate into the suburban northwest corridor, on and around three major thoroughfares: Park Heights Avenue, Reisterstown Road, and Liberty Heights Avenue.

The wealthier one was, the further towards the suburbs one lived. Social stratification mimicked economic and geographic stratification. Wealthier, largely German Jews controlled the network of Jewish charities, frequented the Suburban Country Club located between upper Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road, attended the reformed Baltimore Hebrew Congregation, held German-Jewish debutante balls until 1941, sent their children to an almost exclusively Jewish private school, and approved of their children joining the more exclusive Jewish fraternities and sororities. The less wealthy lived in and around lower Park Heights Avenue and Reisterstown Road, between Park Circle and the Pimlico Race Track, or Park Circle and the Hilltop Diner, the prototype for the film *Diner*. The Forest Park section off Liberty Road housed mostly middle-class Jews, including Barry Levinson's family. Working- and middle-class Jews attended orthodox synagogues, sent their children to public high schools and orthodox Hebrew schools, and many teens joined either synagogue-centered clubs or the less exclusive fraternities and sororities.

Segregation defined not only place of residence (the largest construction company in Baltimore owned and managed by Jews would not sell homes they constructed in posh gentile neighborhoods to their fellow Jews) but also education and recreational activities.⁴ Rich Jews founded their own country clubs because they could not gain admittance to gentile clubs, built sumptuous homes in the county because they could not move into the prestigious gentile neighborhoods, and created their own private school because their children could not attend the private schools catering to the gentile elite that served as feeders to the Ivy League.

Levinson's films are set in this segregated Baltimore. They form part of a larger body of work focusing on marginality. Biographies of the gangsters

Bugsy Seigal, John Giotti (Levinson withdrew from the project), an ongoing project on the life of Whitey Bulgar, a made for TV film about Jack Kerouac, and films like *Rain Man*, *Good Morning Vietnam*, and *The Natural* feature characters who function outside of the mainstream of American life. In the Baltimore films, economic marginality complements and reinforces the outsider status of Jews in modern urban life. Their place in the economy is a bit obscure in *Diner*, but crystal clear in the remaining three films. Levinson's Jews are removed from either the wealthy owning class of Jews or from the regularly employed Jewish working class. They form part of a marginalized sector that survives largely by hustle and guile, a subclass that Marx called the *lumpenproletariat*.

Jewish marginality is expressed not only in economic terms. In *And Justice for All* the idealistic Jewish lawyer (Al Pacino) represents the downtrodden (a black transvestite and a young working class man) against a corrupt legal system that inevitably seals his clients' doom. Social class is reflected in the juxtaposition of the poor clients with the ruling class judge, a rich WASP (John Forsythe) who embodies the racism and antisemitism of the city's gentile elite. The judge is also a sadistic rapist and is pitted against Pacino's Jewish Don Quixote. The struggle between the Jewish outsider and the WASP insider forms the central theme of the film. Nobody really wins, as the lawyer brings down the judge, but in doing so ruins his own career. Distance between Jew and gentile persists, as the Jew remains on the outside of a corrupt system he is unwilling to join or unable to change.

The film *Diner* centers on the character Boogie, patterned after the life of Leonard "Boogie" Weinglass. The youngest of three sons (Jack, Eggy, and Boogie) of a garment worker, the real Boogie struggled though high school but eventually created a billion-dollar clothing empire called Merry-Go-Round, whose hundreds of mall shops catered to wannabe hipster youth. Merry-Go-Round eventually went bankrupt, but Weinglass, cashing in on the notoriety from *Diner*, salvaged enough cash to open Boogies Diner in Aspen, Colorado and become a fixture in that resort community as well as a mythic presence among Baltimore's Jews.

In the film, Boogie (Mickey Rourke) works as a hairdresser by day and attends University of Baltimore Law School at night. The University's law school served as a magnet for young people who either flunked out, could not get into, or could not afford the University of Maryland. It remained unaccredited until 1972. Its most famous graduate was Spiro Agnew. Boogie is spinning wheels. He attends law school only because it helps in picking up

girls. He is in deep debt to a bookie and near the film's end is rescued by Bagel (Michael Tucker), who pays off the debt and in exchange offers Boogie a job selling aluminum siding.

Bagel is at least a decade older than Boogie and his friends. His team of aluminum siding salesmen (Tin Men) also hang out at the diner and will be the subject of Levinson's second Baltimore film. Although the so-called home improvement industry operates on the very edge of legality, Bagel looks at Boogie and his friends and cynically laments, "nobody's interested in making an honest buck anymore."

Boogie is part of a group of six young men in their early twenties who meet at the diner late at night. Shrevie (Daniel Stern) sells television sets and is befuddled by married life. Eddie (Steve Guttenberg) also goes to University of Baltimore Law School, is obsessed with the Baltimore Colts, and is on the verge of getting married. We are never told what wise guy Model (Paul Reiser) does. Fenwick (Kevin Bacon) lives on a small trust fund, hates his middle-class older brother, and is on the verge of alcoholism. Billy (Tim Daly), who returns home for Eddie's wedding, is working on a MBA and is the only one who seems ready to enter the stable middle class, but is unable to cope with the incipient feminism of his pregnant girlfriend who refuses to marry him.

Their constant patter, their reliving old high school adventures, and their participation in the life of the diner (a huge man eats through one half of the menu items, a hustler sells stolen pants from the trunk of his car, the diner owner speaks Greek in an establishment whose clientele is almost all Jewish) express a desperate effort to figure out what will happen to the rest of their lives. They live on the cusp of an unappealing middle-class respectability, but never actually achieve any sort of economic or emotional stability.

Diner captures the difficulties these children and grandchildren of Jewish immigrants face in integrating into a rapidly changing world, but one still shaped by tradition. These six young men reproduce the strains felt by their immigrant ancestors. The older generation needed to adjust to a new culture and a new language, while securing a livelihood: most entered the working class. The uncertainties of immigrant life carry over to the postwar generation, who confront modernity in a world in which traditional barriers are eroding. Their places in the world and their relationship to community and to the world outside of the ghetto are in flux. Entering the working class is no longer an option, but middle-class life holds little attraction. They live on the edge of the economy, the Jewish community, and of an America poised for the incredibly rapid economic and cultural changes of the sixties.

In *Tin Men* Levinson moves the economic and material from the background to the center of his narrative. What his characters do and own defines what and who they are. The central figures of the film are aluminum siding salesmen who prey on Baltimore's largely gentile working class. The film is set in the early sixties during the postwar housing boom. Aluminum siding supposedly beautified free-standing houses similar to the way formstone, which the Baltimore film maker John Waters referred to as "the polyester of brick," was thought to enhance the appearance of Baltimore's many brick-faced row houses.⁵ The Tin Man seeks to convince the house owner that his or her house needs beautification. To do this he uses every possible subterfuge. A city investigative commission is in process of examining the industry's use of dubious sales tactics, threatening the already precarious position of the tin men.

Although the salesmen all drive new Cadillacs, they own little else and have virtually no job security. When Moe (John Mahoney), the greatest salesman of all the Tin Men, has a minor heart attack, he has no insurance, very little money saved, and few prospects for any sort of security for his wife and son. He reluctantly takes a job selling shoes, which provides a steady income and benefits. Tilley (Danny DeVito) is saddled with a wife, a house, and all of the accompanying material possessions, none of which he wants. His life revolves around selling aluminum siding, his Cadillac, the racetrack, and the poolroom. He rejects all aspects of respectable life, and by the end of the film, the IRS seizes his car and house for nonpayment of taxes, the commission revokes his license, and his wife moves in with another Tin Man, his rival BB (Richard Dreyfus).

BB and Tilley meet when Tilley crashes his car into BB's spanking new Cadillac. They argue. BB realizes revenge by sleeping with Tilley's wife. The tide turns when Tilley rejoices at release from marriage and BB falls in love with Tilley's wife. A successful Tin Man, BB realizes the futility of his trade and happily surrenders his license to the investigative commission. Throughout the film he is haunted by images of a small German car while driving his new Cadillac. His future and that of his new friend Tilley will be in selling Volkswagons.

Levinson's Tin Men operate on the edges of normative economic life. They survive by hoodwinking gullible, working-class homeowners into contracting for superfluous home improvements. Perhaps one of them should break out singing "If I Only Had a Heart." Although he is not specific as to ethnicity, Levinson's Tin Men view the world through Jewish lenses. He captures a particular sector of Jewish men, who in a specific time and space

in American economic life are either unable or unwilling to accommodate to regular jobs or regular family life. They are more at home in the poolroom than in the living room.

They reproduce the marginality of their unassimilated immigrant parents or grandparents in an America they think they fully understand. Their patter invariably criticizes fantasized elements of American popular culture. They relish the freedom their job provides and seem oblivious to its unethical practices. Their ability to operate as Tin Men is made possible by the expanding, prosperous capitalism of the 1950s and 1960s, which will fade during the next few decades as Baltimore's steel mills and the rest of its industrial base either close down or move overseas. Indeed, by the end of the film the central characters have left the "home improvement industry" and seek to adapt to a new set of economic realities.

Avalon is Levinson's most reviewed and criticized film, especially among Jewish critics. I will skirt the issue that seems to obsess the critics, that is, whether the film is or is not Jewish enough, and simply assert that the film expands on its author's reminiscences about his Jewish family. The story centers on the Krushinskys, a Jewish working-class Baltimore family. Sam Krushinsky (Armin Mueller-Stahl) arrives in Baltimore on Independence Day, 1914, and joins his three older brothers in the wallpaper hanging trade. We are not told much about wallpaper hanging except that it provides a decent living.

In the mid-fifties Sam leaves his trade and opens a jazz club on Pennsylvania Avenue in the black section of town. The club is similar to or a copy of the "Red Fox," a jazz club located in a commercial center of the African American neighborhood near Pennsylvania Avenue and Fulton Street, which featured Baltimore's famous black jazz singer, Ethel Ennis. The Red Fox catered to both whites and blacks. According to Ethel Ennis:

The Red Fox was a tiny place; maybe you could squeeze a hundred people in there. There was an island bar in the middle and a small stage in the corner; the wallpaper had cartoon animals prancing between cocktail glasses. But it was one of the few places in Baltimore where blacks and whites could come together comfortably. A lot of Hopkins students came, and so did a lot of gays. The music we did wasn't low-down-and-dirty blues—it was jazz and pop tunes done in a jazz style.⁶

Love of jazz briefly transcended Baltimore racism that segregated public spaces like schools, parks, golf courses, and tennis courts, and privately owned spaces like swimming pools, restaurants, taverns, and movie houses.

The Red Fox also served as a haven for Baltimore's young avant-garde. It provided space where one could "cross over" from the confines of the Jewish or black ghetto and mingle with youth banned by custom or law from social interaction. In this rare and isolated space black and white, rich and poor, Jew and gentile, straight and gay could interact through the medium of jazz.

During the pre-civil rights era the Red Fox prefigured the dramatic changes of the 1960s. *Avalon's* one scene set at Sam's bar faithfully reproduces the multiracial clientele of the Red Fox. This is also the scene in which Sam's son and his nephew inform him that they are married and are modifying their identities by shortening Krushinsky to Kaye and Kirk. Levinson's inclusion of the interracial bar scene foreshadows his next Baltimore film, *Liberty Heights*, where he cautiously weaves Jewish efforts to break out of the ghetto with the lives of the much more oppressed African American community.

Sam's son and nephew grew up together in the mythical Avalon neighborhood that housed the extended Krushinsky family. As they reach maturity the son, now Jules Kaye (Aidan Quinn), and the nephew, now Izzy Kirk (Kevin Pollack), leave their jobs as salesmen and form a partnership in the appliance business. Momentary success leads to moving their families to the suburbs, which splits the extended family. They open a new gigantic discount appliance store, an enterprise similar to East Baltimore's discount furniture and appliance store Levenson and Klein. Much of Baltimore's working class was in debt to L and K after buying a houseful of furniture on extended credit. African American poet Affa M. Weaver recounts his parents' shopping trips to L and K:

When I was a child my parents bought furniture for our home and clothes for us on layaway plans. It was also the border between black and white. My parents dressed up to go to Union Savings Bank or Levenson and Klein furniture store.⁷

Indeed, during my annual summer training, the gentile working class non-commissioned officers of my Army Reserve unit invariably chose enlistees Levinson and Klein for every dirty chore, especially the digging and cleaning of outdoor latrines, even though neither of them had any connection to the store that bore their names. Yet the sergeants blasted the names Levinson and Klein on the PA system, calling the unfortunate soldiers to duty. After an enormously successful grand opening on July 4, Jules and Izzy's store burns to the ground. Their overextended resources had forced them to move money from fire insurance to television advertising, so they are left with nothing. Jules returns to selling while Izzy is left dreaming about opening another store.

Avalon features two generations of Krushinskys trying to succeed in the American capitalist economy. The four immigrant brothers are wallpaper hangers, although Sam tries briefly to break away from the trade by opening the nightclub. Private enterprise fails for him, and he returns to wallpaper hanging. The next generation is much more ambitious. Jules and Izzy experience brief success as storekeepers, but Levinson taints that success with the destruction of family unity. Moving the family away from the idyllic downtown Avalon neighborhood to the suburbs creates a rift among the brothers that is never mended. Eventually the realities of the new mass-market, television-centered economy also fell Jules and Izzy who again move to the margins of the economy and become salesmen.

The film is ostensibly about the atomization of the Jewish immigrant family in Baltimore. However, the American experience actually recreated family unity because Jewish communal life had been ripped apart by economic and political conditions in Russia during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. In both Russia and America economic forces redefined Jewish activity, displacing and marginalizing Jews as Russia moved from feudalism to capitalism and creating space for Jews on the edges of economic life as salesmen and potential businessmen in postwar America. Ironically, economic dynamism again results in the breakup of family unity. In both cases economic marginalization reinforced social, cultural, and racial separation. In Russia Jews left; in America they continued through the 1960s to strive to cross the lines that barred them from fully integrating into American life.

Liberty Heights is set in 1955, the year following *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court decision that mandated integrating public schools. Levinson places African Americans in Forest Park High School's senior class, although in fact that did not occur until several years later. One arc of the film depicts the relationship between Ben (Ben Foster), the younger son of Nate Kurzman (Joe Mantegna), the kingpin of Baltimore's numbers racket and also the owner of *The Gayety*, the premier strip club on *The Block* (the city's concentration of bars, porn shops, and nightclubs), and Sylvia (Rebekah Johnson), the black daughter of a prominent and wealthy physician. Here Levinson stands class on its head, as the white Jewish boy is clearly the social inferior to his African American classmate.

While his older brother seeks entry into the gentile elite, Ben's awareness of being a Jew is prevalent throughout the film. On Halloween he cynically dresses as Hitler, and his parents refuse to allow him to leave home. Ben and his two friends look wistfully at the Meadowbrook swim club, which boasts a sign

warning: “No Jews, dogs or colored allowed.”⁸ Although Levinson asserts that this sign really existed, I could find no evidence of this exact wording. Rather, the Meadowbrook Swim Club certainly did display a sign reading “Privileges of the Swimming Pool are Extended Only to Approved Gentiles.” Eventually Ben and his two friends tear down the sign, enter the swimming area, disrobe, and display the letters “J” “E” “W” painted on their chests. (After litigation in the mid-sixties, Meadowbrook is now open to Jews and African Americans and is Michael Phelps’s home pool and training center.)

Ben’s older brother, Sylvan (Adrien Brody)—“Van” to his gentile friends—is a student at the University of Baltimore. Here, he befriends Trey (Justin Chambers), a troubled upper-class WASP who is privy to the party life that occurs across Falls Road in the restricted gentile section of town. Sylvan and his two Jewish friends “crossover” Falls Road to attend one of these parties, where he meets and falls for Dubbie (Carolyn Murphy), the blond goddess of his dreams. This arc reproduces a similar plot line from *Diner*, where Boogie, during a ride into the valley, meets the beautiful wealthy gentile Jane Chisholm (Claudia Cron) while she is riding her horse. Boogie “crosses over” the fence to meet her, and they discuss riding styles. Near the end of *Diner* as Boogie’s date at Eddie’s wedding, Jane sheepishly asks for another knish.

Nate Kurzman is a model husband and father whose wife and sons adore him. He provides a solid middle-class life for them in the Forest Park section



Meadowbrook Swim Club sign. *Leon Sachs Papers*. Courtesy of the Jewish Museum of Maryland, #1995.201.1.

of Baltimore. He attends synagogue, although he ritualistically leaves during Rosh Hashanah services to examine the brand new Cadillacs. We actually see him in yalmulke and tallis, davening. He is also a criminal. In addition to owning and operating Baltimore's most famous strip club, he controls the numbers racket, an illegal lottery.

Nate is a Jewish tough guy who as a young man ventured into the core of the gentile working class neighborhood, Patterson Park, and dismantled seven young toughs. The numbers racket goes afoul when Little Melvin (Orlando Jones), a black drug dealer, hits the number and Nate is forced to pay out a huge sum, which he doesn't have. In exchange for the large payoff, Little Melvin becomes Nate's partner, an offense deemed more serious than running the lottery to Baltimore's racist police. The movie ends with Nate going to jail.

Class, race, and ethnicity intersect throughout *Liberty Heights*. Trey and Dubbie drive European sport cars, their parents are rich and well placed, they travel to Europe, and live lives out of reach to Sylvan and his friends. Little Melvin is a jive talking petty criminal, while Sylvia's father is a respected Baltimore physician. Sylvan is the son of a Jewish criminal who lives on the edge of middle class respectability, while his gentile friends belong to Baltimore's elite. Sylvan crosses not only ethnic and religious lines, but class lines as well. Likewise, his younger brother crosses both racial and class lines in his friendship with his black classmate. In both cases, crossing over is an upwardly mobile act.

Levinson's situates both Ben's attraction for Sylvia and Sylvan's fixation on Dubbie as sexual adventures, which mask their mutual rejection of the forced insularity of ghetto life and a striving to experience worlds foreign to them. His characters have matured. While Boogie seems oblivious to any sort of social change and is driven by sex (Jane Chisolm = Chisolm Trail or jism), Ben and Sylvan want more. Unlike Boogie, Sylvan fails in his effort to win the girl, but the chase exposes him to life outside the ghetto. At high school graduation Ben and Sylvia astonish both sets of parents by kissing, but it is a goodbye kiss. Sylvia, the strongest female character in the four Baltimore films, prepares for Spellman College and Ben for the University of Maryland. However, the brothers' socioeconomic status remains unchanged. Their father is in jail, and his numbers racket, like the aluminum siding business, is no longer viable, soon to be displaced by the state's public lottery.

Liberty Heights assiduously avoids interaction between the central characters and Baltimore's white working class. In one scene that he cut from the film, Levinson provides a brief glimpse of that other Baltimore world. Sylvan

and his two friends have crossed over again, but this time to a street of brick row houses and white marble steps, the dominant features of Polish, Italian, Lithuanian, German, Hungarian, Greek, Romani, and Appalachian working-class neighborhoods. They confront a group of tough youths playing street football who resent them as upper-class intruders and perhaps as Jews. The confrontation is brief and violent and ends with the boys' escape.

This excursion into working-class Baltimore is rare for Levinson. He explains this scene as a redundancy because he has already included another crossing over scene. However, crossing down is quite different than crossing up and opens up new dramatic possibilities he either does not consider or avoids. Indeed, even Avalon, the presuburban inner-city haven of the Krushinsky clan, is a tree laden street lined with spacious homes with large porches, homes far removed from the realities of the Baltimore slum-like conditions most Jewish immigrants experienced during the first half of the twentieth century. Levinson seems content to leave the white working class to that other Baltimore cinematic genius, John Waters.

In all of his films Levinson's Jews have transcended their working class origins but fail to enter the solid middle class, either by choice or by circumstances. They are petty hucksters, criminals, salesmen, or recalcitrant students. Nothing solid holds them to community, class, or ethnicity. The lawyer Arthur (Al Pacino) can no longer practice the profession he loves; all six of the major characters in *Diner* face uncertain futures; the Tin Men lose their jobs; Jules and Izzy lose their store; Nate goes to jail. The characters in *Diner* and *Tin Men* seem mired in the isolated atmosphere of the Diner. Indeed, the Diner or the poolroom or the racetrack serves as their only escape.

This rather dark view changes in *Liberty Heights*, the last of his Baltimore films. Here Levinson suggests new possibilities. As the fleeting images of a Volkswagen prefigured change in life style and patterns of consumption in *Tin Men*, Sylvia, a strong black woman, prefigures the transformations of racial relations and gender roles in postsixties America. The two Kurzman brothers face new challenges posed by upcoming efforts to redefine ideas of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. Their awkward efforts to transcend racial and ethnic and class lines, to look outside the Jewish ghetto, foreshadow the massive social changes that will occur in the next two decades.

NOTES

1. Films: *And Justice for All*, 1979, director: Norman Jewison; writers: Valerie Curtin, Barry Levinson; *Diner*, 1982, director: Barry Levinson; writer: Barry Levinson; *Tin Men*,

1987, director: Barry Levinson; writer: Barry Levinson; *Avalon*, 1990, director: Barry Levinson; writer: Barry Levinson; *Liberty Heights*, 1999, director: Barry Levinson; writer: Barry Levinson.

2. Jo Anne E. Argersinger, *Making The Amalgamated: Gender, Ethnicity, and Class in the Baltimore Clothing Industry, 1899–1939* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 108.

3. Gilbert Sandler, *Jewish Baltimore: A Family Album* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press in Association with the Jewish Museum of Maryland, 2000), 44–45.

4. Antero Pietila, *Not in My Neighborhood: How Bigotry Shaped a Great American City* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2010), 136–37.

5. P. K. Williams, “The Story of Formstone,” *Welcome To Baltimore, Hon*, Sept. 23, 2009, <http://welcometobaltimorehon.com/the-story-behind-formstone>, accessed Nov. 7, 2012.

6. G. Himes, “Room to Bloom: Determination Powers Ethel Ennis’ Drive To Do What She Wants No Matter What,” *Baltimore City Paper*, Aug. 24, 2005.

7. Afaa M. Weaver, “Central Booking,” *East Baltimore Muse*, <http://eastbaltimoremuse.blogspot.com>, accessed Feb. 11, 2011.

8. *Leon Sachs Papers*, Archives of the Maryland Jewish Historical Society.

The Cost of Living Jewishly: A Matter of Money or Values?

Rela Mintz Geffen

PROLOGUE

Last year a member of a synagogue in Philadelphia complained to me about a synagogue policy. She wanted to go to the upscale reception for VIP donors before the 25th anniversary celebration for the rabbi. The donation required was \$2,500. An elderly widow, she requested a single rate of half that amount.¹ “No,” she was told, “that is the price.” “Ordinary” members could attend the beautiful event without the VIP reception for \$180—still a hefty sum for many people. Annual synagogue memberships for single seniors may be as high as \$1,500–\$2,000. Of course just about every synagogue or its representatives will hear your “case,” and you can become a member or sometimes an associate member (usually without high holiday tickets) for whatever amount you choose, but most people are embarrassed or ashamed to even ask.²

If one is defined as low income or very high income, the system more or less works. If you are a dual career family and fall in the middle, you are usually told a version of “If you are considering any private school or summer camp, please consider a Jewish one.” Judaism is a “groupy” religion. Whether it is a Passover Seder, sitting Shiva, or singing at the Shabbat table, one would be hard pressed to go it alone. This essay considers the costs of becoming part of the group in America today.

WHAT GOES INTO THE COST OF LIVING JEWISHLY?

Costs of living Jewishly will include money, time, energy, and commitment. Some are annual, and others must be paid for at special moments in the life cycle. Annual costs might include synagogue dues; a lulav and etrog (now exceeding \$50 in most places); kosher rather than unkosher meat, which is regularly more expensive and often marked up even more before the fall holidays and Passover; Jewish Community Center (JCC) memberships; supplementary Jewish schools; and adult education classes. Then there are life cycle celebrations: setting up house with two sets of dishes, pots, and silverware—plus Passover; trips to Israel, and for the grandparents among us, helping our children shoulder more long-term costs. And, of course, aside from synagogue

dues and special appeals, most of us feel an obligation to give tzedaka to Jewish and general communal and world causes—and all of this without borrowing from our 401K plans, which Suzie Orman and Jim Cramer say is a terrible thing to do!³ Did I mention book and magazine and newspaper subscriptions, plays and movies, making Sabbath meals and holiday celebrations?

Being countercultural, choosing to be different even in the very open society in which we live, has many costs, beginning with the monetary ones, which are the most obvious. But there are more subtle costs as well, for instance, a decision to stay out of work on the Jewish holidays when they fall on weekdays or the issue of the conflict of the Jewish and Gregorian calendars every Friday in the winter and for the weeks before Christmas (which have now become months of merchandising). Being different publicly has social costs even though the rhetoric of our society is that diversity is a great value. How does the teen feel who can't go to the Friday night prom or Saturday afternoon football game? Very few get the kudos that Sandy Koufax got for sitting out a World Series game on Yom Kippur!

Turning to the time aspect of cost, it is worth noting that Jews invest a tremendous amount of what economists call “human capital” into their lives and particularly into their children. Carmel Chiswick defines human capital as “anything human-made that makes a person more productive, makes tasks easier, or makes his or her use of time more efficient.”⁴ The cost of day school may be reduced for Jews who are middle to upper middle class if it saves them time. Each of their hours is worth a great deal, and if day school means more time for the family together during evenings and weekends, then it “pays.” If children in joint custody after divorce don't have to scramble on alternate weekends to get to religious school, it “pays.”

Allocation priorities of institutions are also critical to individuals and families. Should hundreds of millions of dollars be spent on supporting Israeli hospitals and universities, Jewish history and Holocaust museums all over the United States, or many synagogues repairing Holocaust Torahs and creating Holocaust memorial art—or should that money go to endowments to lower the cost of Jewish schools, day camps, and intensive adult study programs?

HOW OLD IS THIS PROBLEM?

Is the cost of living Jewishly an ancient, modern, or contemporary problem? We know that the issue certainly arose in earlier times. Even in the Talmud, the standard of burial practice was set at the level of the poor. The temptation to bury the rich with elaborate accoutrements was counteracted by the great

Rabban Gamliel II, who in fact set the example by the order he gave for his own funeral and thus introduced the custom of burying the dead in simple linen garments.⁵ In R. Papa's time, simple clothes became the rule. Formerly the face of the dead person was covered only in case of disfigurement; in the course of time, when long privation caused the poor to look disfigured and only the rich seemed to enjoy the privilege of having their faces uncovered, it became the rule to cover the faces of all. At first the bier used for the rich was more elaborate than that used for the poor; later, simplicity and equality became the rule. *Kevod Hamet* [the commandment of paying proper honor to a dead person] was defined by simplicity.

During the Middle Ages, rabbis in various European countries instituted sumptuary laws regulating spending, dress, and behavior of the guests at a celebration. The restrictions extended to the number of guests allowed to be invited to an event, the weight of the silver goblet, the number of rings a woman might wear, the type of fabric from which clothes could be sewn, and even the jewelry that men might wear.

In our own time the Gerer Rebbe introduced such restrictions among his own Chasidim, limiting the number of people who may be invited to a wedding and the size of apartments for newlyweds.⁶ Clearly these restrictions on "keeping up with the Goldsteins," as well as those rabbinic norms mandating plain coffins and simple funerals, were meant to reduce pressure on the poor by instituting minimalism as the normative way to commemorate both *simchas* [joyous occasions] and sorrows.⁷

As demonstrated above, traditional Jewish sources displayed a certain level of sensitivity to the poor. However, just as the late President Dwight D. Eisenhower told us decades ago, there was a powerful interlocking directorate that exercised authority and leadership in the community. In the United States it was the military-industrial complex that held sway. In traditional Jewish communities it was scholars and the wealthy who made the decisions.

Wealthy Jews married their daughters to impoverished brilliant scholars—and so the Jewish version of the interlocking directorate was born.⁸ And in twenty-first century America it is very difficult to climb the leadership ladder in Jewish institutional life without a large discretionary income both to contribute to the cause and to do the travel and spend the time necessary to go to meetings, and so on. The internet has made it possible for more individuals to be heard—that is true—but their influence is difficult to measure.

To return for a moment to earlier times, the main point is that many members of communities where sumptuary laws were invoked actually fol-

lowed them. The same was true to a large extent with regard to other rules included in the constitutions and bylaws of early American synagogues. The 1805 rules of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York give us more than a subtle indication of issues faced during communal prayer. Congregants are admonished against singing before, in a different tune, or louder than the hazzan; bringing a child under age three of either gender into the service; and depositing their canes, umbrellas, and coats in empty seats. They are told to retire in an orderly manner, particularly during the reading of the Torah and Haphtara (doesn't that sound familiar?). Moreover, the bylaws state "that if any person or persons shall act contrary to this law, they and each of them, shall be considered as having committed an offence, and punished accordingly."⁹

THE ECONOMICS OF RELIGION TODAY— EXCITEMENT AND ITS DISSIPATION

I will finish with a controversial contemporary theory of the economics of religion promulgated by a contemporary economist named Laurence R. Iannaccone and applied to the American Jewish community by Barry Chiswick and Carmel Chiswick of George Washington University. I have argued that there is an absolute issue of the cost of living Jewishly in America—that caring, committed Jews are in trouble in the organized Jewish community. But there are those who say that it is all a matter of values rather than absolute availability of discretionary time or income. Iannaccone, in arguing why "strict churches are strong," says that it is due to apparently gratuitous costs that invite stigma, such as burnt offerings, which destroy valued resources; distinctive dress and grooming, which bring ridicule and scorn; dietary and sexual prohibitions that limit opportunities for pleasure; restrictions on the use of modern medicine or technology, and so on.

These costly demands mitigate another issue I wish to introduce—that of "free riders." Small groups of people start institutions; they all know each other and are very committed to the enterprise. Excitement is high, and there is great energy. Others in the community hear about these experiments or "clubs," as they are termed by economists, and the energy surrounding them. Now they join the club, and everything is diluted for the original members. These free riders aren't as committed, they aren't known to the founders, they coast along on the excitement that others have generated. Pretty soon the energy starts to dissipate. According to Iannaccone, demanding sacrifice reduces the percentage of free riders. He writes: "No longer is it possible to

drop by and reap the benefits of attendance or membership. To take part, one must pay a price, bearing the stigma and sacrifice demanded of all members . . . they also increase the relative value of group activities, thereby stimulating participation among those who do join the group.”¹⁰

People with greater secular opportunities (and those who simply attach less faith or value to the supernatural) will prefer less demanding groups, even if these groups provide fewer rewards. Their behavior represents an alternative risk-reducing strategy, tantamount to investing in assets with lower but more certain rates of return. High cost groups of any religious tradition will tend to be exclusive, strict, small (at the local level), suspicious of other groups, and critical of secular society. In contrast, low-cost groups will tend to be inclusive, lenient, tolerant of secular values, and open to loosely affiliated members.

INSTITUTING SUMPTUARY LAWS TODAY

In some Orthodox communities in the United States and Israel, men who are known to have refused a *get* [Jewish divorce] to their wives pay the cost of being denied Torah honors. The United Synagogue of British Jewry demands payment of all family dues that are in arrears before they will bury a Jew in one of their cemeteries. In other words, Jewish leaders, especially rabbis but also lay leaders, have had and exercised the power to enhance or disrupt the public and private lives of other Jews in their communities. Surely some Jews left the fold or the organized communal institutions over these stringencies, but probably not a higher percentage than do so today over issues of boundary maintenance such as interfaith marriage.

Can you think of a board of a Jewish organization or synagogue that currently would try to institute sumptuary laws as a partial solution to the cost of living Jewishly? Is the “answer” to all of the many issues stirred up yet again by the recent Pew study breaking down boundaries and differentiations between who is and is not a Jew? Is demanding commitment the “right” solution to the preservation of strong Jewish identity in America? If only being Jewish was free, would all those born of Jewish parents or grandparents, converted to Judaism, or married to Jews become “born again” Jews?

Of this I am convinced—we pay a high price for the cost of living Jewishly, and the American Jewish community requires both a reprioritization of communal values and the establishment of lower financial burdens on those who wish to be committed Jews in an open society. At the same time, we must remember that there is no Jewish community or continuity without boundaries.

NOTES

1. The \$2500 was a couples rate.
2. I remember filling out a form for day school tuition aid three decades ago. They asked if my children were being given music lessons and how much they cost. I was mortified, but filled out the form anyway. We didn't get any aid, and we ended up refinancing our mortgage to pay the tuition. One of my sons and his wife paid \$54,000 in after tax money for three children in day school last year, plus \$10,000 for Camp Ramah (overnight and day camp) in the summer.
3. And I am sure that Warren Buffett would agree with them.
4. See Carmel Chiswick, *Judaism in Transition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014), 73.
5. See *Ketubbot* in the Babylonian Talmud for the full discussion of making burials like those of the poor normative.
6. "Chasunah Guidelines Become More Mainstream in Chassidische Kehillos," *matzav.com*, April 29, 2009, <http://matzav.com/chasunah-guidelines-become-more-mainstream-in-chassidische-kehillos/>. In light of the economic downturn, more chasidim are buying cubic zirconia stones in place of diamonds for engagement rings. In the Land of Israel, the Gerer Rebbe has dispatched emissaries to all Gerer kehillos throughout the country to encourage adherence to chasunah guidelines that limit the size and expenditures of wedding celebrations. The Rebbe encourages weddings to be held in local Gerer shuls instead of expensive catering halls. In addition, he encourages weddings to take place on Friday afternoon with the wedding seudah on Friday night.
Savings would be considerable since the number of guests for the meal would be limited to only those that live in the immediate area. In addition, musical accompaniment as well as photography would be restricted. The Gerer community in Ashdod has been designated as the first to impose the new guidelines.
The Belzer Rebbe has recommended guidelines for his followers in Israel as follows: after the immediate family's rejoicing of an engagement, no further formal celebration is permitted. The bride and groom will give and receive no more than a specific, limited number of gifts.
Mechutanim [in-laws] shall not give each other gifts, etc. A shadchan [matchmaker] will receive no more than \$1,000. Invitations to an aufruf [when the groom is called up for an aliyah in synagogue] will be extended only to parents, grandparents, mechutanim, married siblings of the groom, and unmarried siblings of the bride. Invitations for the Shabbos Sheva Brachos [Seven Blessings] may be extended to the married siblings of the groom and bride, but no uncles, aunts, or cousins are to be invited. No formal printed invitations are to be sent beyond immediate family (Dovid Bernstein-Matzav.com Newscenter/UPI).
7. They also served to lower the profile of Jewish wealth in public, which was thought to lessen antisemitism.

8. Many of us are now hooked on *Downton Abbey*, where yet another example of this phenomenon appears. Impoverished British gentry married their sons to the American daughters of nouveau riche upstarts in order to maintain their estates [read *yichus* or ascribed status]. In the TV series, the nouveau riche American Lady Grantham was born Cora Levenson.

9. See Daniel J. Elazar, Jonathan D. Sarna, and Rela Geffen Monson, eds., *A Double Bond—The Constitutional Documents of American Jews* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1992), for these and other early bylaws of American synagogues.

10. Laurence R. Iannaccone, "Sacrifice and Stigma: Reducing Free-Riding in Cults, Communes, and Other Collectives," *Journal of Political Economy* 100:2 (1992): 271–92.

