

# THE JEWISH JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY

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Religion, Feminism, and Professionalism:  
The Case of Rabbinical Advocates

RONEN SHAMIR, MICHAL SHITRAI, and NELLY ELIAS

The Jewish Community of Liverpool

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Book Reviews

Chronicle

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# RELIGION, FEMINISM, AND PROFESSIONALISM: THE CASE OF RABBINICAL ADVOCATES

Ronen Shamir, Michal Shitrai, and Nelly Elias

## *Introduction*

THE aim of this article is to report on a novel profession for women; that of Rabbinical Advocates (R.A.s). The profession so far had been exclusively male. In 1955, the rights and duties of Rabbinical Advocates were stipulated in a State Law. Rabbinical Advocates (males only) had to graduate from a four-year study programme in a yeshiva, and to be examined and licensed before they could represent parties before Rabbinical Courts, which are empowered to rule on the basis of the Halakha, Jewish religious law.

Rabbinical Courts enjoy a unique position within Israel's system of justice: they have exclusive jurisdiction over matters of marriage and divorce, since civil marriages are not permissible in Israel. These courts also have some jurisdiction which is shared with Civil District Courts, over personal status matters — such as alimony, property issues, custody, etc. There is conflict between the two courts when, for example, one of the parties to a dispute initiates proceedings in one of the two systems of justice (and thereby gives exclusive jurisdiction to that chosen system in that legal argument) before the other party to the dispute has put his or her case to the other court. Thus, there is said to be a 'race', a 'jurisdictional race', in such cases. The result of the dispute will usually depend on which of the two courts, the Rabbinical or the Civil, will give a ruling. Civil District Courts are reputed to be far more generous in protecting the rights of women litigants. Usually, therefore, men will try to plead before the Rabbinical Courts whereas women will institute proceedings in the Civil District Courts, in issues relating to personal status. However, as stated above, the Rabbinical Courts have exclusive jurisdiction in issues directly involving questions of marriage and divorce. In 1991, the State Law of 1955 was amended: it stipulated that graduation from any institution of higher learning which was recognized by the High Rabbinical Court, would enable the graduate (*male or female*) to be examined and qualified as a Rabbinical Advocate. There is a limited

number of institutions which now offer to Orthodox women a course of study to qualify them as R.A.s.

We carried a field study of the first women practising R.A.s during the second half of 1995. Our initial interest was aroused by the report of a 1994 petition to the High Court of Justice of Israel by female Rabbinical Advocates. We made detailed enquiries about the petitioners and examined available legal records, then approached the director of the institute which had trained the female R.A.s; she was the chief petitioner in the appeal to the High Court of Justice. She gave us assistance and co-operated to arrange for us to interview 24 female R.A.s; we had in-depth interviews, lasting for two to three hours each, with 19 R.A.s. The director gave us access to documents identifying various classes of R.A.s, both before and after graduation, and this enabled us to gather data on the socio-economic background, formal education, personal status, age, place of residence, and former occupation of 58 R.A.s who were at varying stages of their professional career. This basic population of 58 R.A.s was divided according to their class and time of graduation ('cohort', 5 classes of study to date), and the women we interviewed in depth were randomly selected from each such class.

All interviews were recorded and transcribed, they took place either in the homes or the offices of the respondents, they were open-ended, and the women were encouraged to articulate their experiences and views in their own terms. The following Table gives a summary of our data on the 19 R.A.s we interviewed.

Our basic argument is that the experience of the women R.A.s in this new professional field differs significantly from the experience of Orthodox women who practise other career-oriented professions. A Rabbinical Advocate's work requires direct and explicit involvement with the bodies of knowledge around which the Orthodox community is organized (Jewish Law) and, second, routine representation of clients who belong to the Orthodox community (R.A.s may also represent non-Orthodox clients; as we shall see, however, most of their clients are in fact Orthodox). Only schoolteaching — a widespread occupation of Orthodox women — has some of these structural features. However, whereas teaching would be considered an unthreatening expansion of the traditional role of a woman educating her own children — a sort of extended-home activity — involvement with matters of the Halakha, of the body of Jewish religious laws, requires special and systematic training, and this new professional role for Orthodox women signifies an entry into a public sphere from which women had been strictly excluded in the past.<sup>1</sup>

We wished to establish whether this type of legal practice could potentially shape some aspects relating to the identity and social standing of women within the Orthodox community. Further, we wished to establish whether this type of legal practice could potentially shape some



## RABBINICAL ADVOCATES

TABLE 1\*

	<i>Class</i>	<i>Former Educ.</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Person. status</i>	<i>Parent origin</i>	<i>Locality</i>	<i>Former occupation</i>	<i>Work place</i>
A.	1st	B.A.	30	M	Europe	Tel Aviv Area	—	Home
B.	3rd	B.A.	32	M+3	Europe	West Bank	Teacher	—
C.	Instit. Teach.	LL.B.	50	M+4	U.S.	Jerusalem Area	Lawyer	Office
D.	4th	B.A.	42	M+7	U.S.	West Bank	Teacher	—
E.	4th	M.A.	60	M+3	Europe	Tel Aviv Area	Teacher	—
F.	2nd	Cert. Teach.	36	M+5	Europe	West Bank	Teacher	Office
G.	1st	Cert. Teach.	52	M+4	Yemen	Tel Aviv Area	Teacher	Office
H.	3rd	B.A.	30	M+4	Europe	Tel Aviv Area	Teacher	—
I.	5th	LL.B.	38	M	U.S.	West Bank	—	—
J.	2nd	B.A.	—	M+4	U.S.	Jerusalem Area	Social Worker	Home
K.	2nd	B.A.	30	M+5	Europe	Jerusalem Area	—	Office
L.	3rd	B.A.	50	M+4	Yemen	Tel Aviv Area	Teacher	Home
M.	3rd	B.A.	46	M+9	N. Afri.	Tel Aviv Area	Civil Service	—
N.	4th	M.A.	45	M+5	U.S.	West Bank	Lecturer	Home
O.	2nd	M.A.	34	M+4	Europe	West Bank	Psych.	Home
P.	5th	M.A.	25	S.	Yemen	Jerusalem Area	Teacher	—
Q.	2nd	Cert. Teach.	30	M+3	Europe	Jerusalem Area	Teacher	Home
R.	1st	—	35	M+4	U.S.	Jerusalem Area	—	Home
S.	Instit. Teach.	M.A.	50	M+4	Europe	Jerusalem Area	Teacher	Office

\*'Class' refers to the stage of study in the institute; 'Instit. Teach.' refers to teachers in the institute; 'Cert. Teach.' is Certified Teacher; 'Personal Status' refers to whether married or single, and the number after the + refers to the number of children; 'Parent. Origin' refers to parents or parent country of origin, according to the respondent's own classification. Some of the data is 'subjective', in the sense that we asked our respondents to classify themselves, for example, in terms of their degree of Orthodoxy and in terms of their parental/ethnic origin.

aspects of the Halakha and whether, since it has been asserted that 'Judaism unfolds from the text and has no existence without it',<sup>2</sup> this provides an opening for a greater involvement of women in the community's power structure.

Generally, the participation of women in the study of religious texts and their application to daily life marks a potential involvement in struggles over resources of social power, over authoritative moral positions, and over the standing of women as legitimate agents of social representation. The term 'social representation' here encompasses three distinct analytical dimensions. First representation of knowledge, that is,

taking part in the interpretative negotiation about the meaning of religious law; this is particularly crucial when a body of knowledge is an authoritative source for the total representation of the guiding principles for living — as is the case in the Orthodox Jewish community, which orchestrates its identity and anchors its power structure around sacred texts and their interpretation.<sup>3</sup> Second, the representation of clients, the legitimate authority to speak on their behalf and, by so doing, to introduce private stories into the public sphere of law; this is particularly important in a society in which women have been traditionally discouraged very strongly from speaking publicly about the experiences that unfold behind the ‘domestic’ veil of marriage. Saul Berman noted: ‘Beginning with her total silence at the marriage ceremony, Jewish law transforms the Jewish woman into a passive and impotent being’.<sup>4</sup> And third, self-representation — that is, potential use of knowledge and authority in order to construct the social identity of the R.A. herself in relation to the community within which she acts, potentially changing or reshaping her typically assigned social identity as a mother, wife, and back-up supporter who is detached from the power structure of the community.

*All* these dimensions of social representation should be considered from a perspective that focuses on the Orthodox woman’s construction of social identity. To speak ‘about’, to speak ‘on behalf’, and to speak ‘for oneself’ are interrelated elements of a framework within which social identities are constructed. The construction of social identity, from this perspective, marks a chaotic process that lacks any determinate origin or direction. As this study will strive to show, social identity is neither grounded in a (voluntary) agent, nor in a (determinate) structure, but in relations among actors who hold various contingent positions of proximity and distance within given interactions.<sup>5</sup> Social identity, therefore, is forever a space of action and consciousness which is neither entirely flexible nor entirely rigid, one which is constantly constructed and reconstructed in ways that in fact allow one to draw upon multiple available identities. Nevertheless, social relations are not totally chaotic and indistinct. They typically take shape within given fields of forces, that is, fields that are marked by typical repertoires of influences, pressures, and expectations which are reciprocally shaped by the intersubjective cognitive schemes and practical actions of the actors in those fields.<sup>6</sup> The purpose of this paper, accordingly, is to focus on the experience of Rabbinical Advocates in the context of two interrelated fields: professionalism — embedded in the liberal-secular experiences of competition, demands for quality, and ideologies of equality; and the Orthodox community’s gender relations — embedded in a religious tradition of separation, division of labour, and obedience. As this study will show, women R.A.s draw on both fields, transfer resources from one set of experiences to another, and eventually they construct identities

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which challenge the imaginary lines that sociologists like to draw between the modern and the traditional, the secular and the religious, and the 'we' and the 'them'.

### *The Professional Field*

The members of a profession will usually aim to have their specialized services recognized by the state, on the grounds that they are in possession of learned knowledge and can carry out tasks competently because they possess that knowledge. They will particularly strive to obtain exclusive rights to carry out their chosen work, and in the case of lawyers, they will want to have exclusive rights of access to the courts. Andrew Abbott has observed, however, that the more diverse a jurisdiction is, the more vulnerable it is to specialization from within and to disintegration into the common culture without.<sup>7</sup> When there is a diverse jurisdiction, other professions will strive to insinuate themselves and encroach on the margins.

In the case of Rabbinical Advocates, about a hundred male R.A.s have a statutory right to represent clients, alongside lawyers, in rabbinical courts. But lawyers may move freely between the rabbinical and civil district courts, while the R.A.s are confined strictly to the former. Consequently, when a Rabbinical Advocate needs to deal with issues which are not within the field of a rabbinical tribunal, the R.A. has to call upon the services of a lawyer to plead in a district court. This professional liability makes R.A.s less attractive to clients and directly affects their ability to charge high fees. Moreover, non-Orthodox Israeli Jews prefer to steer clear of Rabbinical Advocates — indeed, most of them are not even aware of the existence of such a profession. Those secular clients who do use the services of R.A.s, as well as many Orthodox Jews, tend to be low-income litigants who have been directed to the R.A.s by state and public legal aid services. To the extent that a profession's social status, wealth, and power depend on the resources of its typical clients,<sup>8</sup> R.A.s are pulled by their low-income and mostly Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox clientele to a low-status professional position. Moreover, the formal rules of the Israeli Bar provide evidence that R.A.s are deemed to be inferior to lawyers — who are discouraged from co-operating with R.A.s and indeed are explicitly forbidden to share office space with them.

The relative professional weakness of R.A.s has other structural features as well. In the 'ordinary' legal profession, there is a clear link between lawyers and judges: Israeli judges are almost exclusively recruited from the pool of available practising lawyers. But rabbinical judges, *dayanim*, are not clearly connected to Rabbinical Advocates through a shared system of training and specialist training; *dayanim* have a higher status and are reputed to have greater expertise in matters of the Halakha, of Jewish law. Generally, although male R.A.s must be yeshiva

graduates, the internal hierarchy of prestige in the yeshiva — structured around the expert authority to interpret and apply sacred texts — places them at the bottom *vis-à-vis* *dayanim*, ordained rabbis, and heads of yeshivot. In sum, the professional opportunities open to R.A.s are inferior both in relation to lawyers and in relation to other knowledge-centred religious occupations. They are restricted to the representation of low-income and mostly low-status clients, they are confined to representation in rabbinical courts, and their professional knowledge is not highly valued. Consequently, male R.A.s are reputed to be less talented and intellectually inferior compared to other knowledge-based power holders in the community.

All these factors must be borne in mind when we come to consider the significance of the ability of women to enter the profession of Rabbinical Advocacy. These women have radically altered the profile of their recently chosen profession. For example, among the first 52 graduates of one of the institutions for training female R.A.s, 32 had a former academic education: one had a Ph.D., five had M.A.s, and 26 had a Bachelor's degree; 24 were from Israeli universities and the remaining eight had attended American universities. Moreover, most of them had already practised a profession: 29 had been certificated schoolteachers; two were psychologists, another two were lawyers, two were criminologists, and a further two were social workers. Thus, the female R.A.s had the benefit of both a religious and a secular — which they often term 'modern' — education: 'They know the world and come from the university', as one R.A. puts it. At the same time, the women R.A.s are respectable members of the Orthodox community, many were born into rabbinical families or are married to rabbis or to members of rabbinical families, most of them are between the ages of thirty and sixty, and most of them have three or more children. Consequently, they openly describe themselves as a unique 'quality group' (*'kvutsat ichul'*).

Male and Female R.A.s thus differ not only by gender but on the basis of radically different occupational and educational qualifications. A senior lecturer in an institute which trains women R.A.s expresses no doubts about the threatening potential of these differences: 'When an ultra-Orthodox party controlled the state's Ministry of Religion I knew that I would not get any state funding for our school. We, as modern female-advocates and even as so-called feminists who want to specialize in halakhic knowledge, something out of line until now, we, academic women, would not get support'. Women R.A.s claim that their background, qualifications, and familiarity with the 'outside' secular-modern world, will enhance the general status of the profession and will revitalize its social appearance. Yet what may seem as an advantage to some, is perceived by many of the male R.A.s as a direct threat to their standing and livelihood. Consequently, they respond with various tactics of exclusion that will be described in some detail in the next section.

## RABBINICAL ADVOCATES

### *The Professional Challenge 1: Whose Qualities?*

A male R.A. who launched his own private crusade against women R.A.s, asserted:

A woman works with her emotions . . . you see a woman-driver on the road, I fear women drivers because they drive emotionally . . . A Jewish woman should be modest and engage in suitable occupations. Teaching is fine, because there is no dirt. In the court you experience an atmosphere of sexual tension. And an Orthodox woman who spends time there is unfit. Blue movies, and talks, how he sleeps with her and how he performs in bed and how she performs in bed. I would not allow my wife to become a Rabbinical Advocate.

Such a tirade must be seen in context: the first class of women who graduated in their R.A. course of studies had scored well above average in the licensing examinations. At first, these graduates were granted only temporary recognition by the High Rabbinical Court when they were examined. But after their shining success, the rabbinical establishment began to place hurdles for more women students who wanted to follow into their footsteps. The formal requests of the female institution to be granted permanent recognition as a place of higher learning for female R.A.s were ignored, as well as other requests about the date of future examinations and the general syllabus. And when eventually a second class of females sat for the examination, most of them were failed. After more than 20 years during which the formal standards of entry had not altered, the rabbinical authorities announced that they were making drastic changes. They required the students to study more texts and sources and the examinations were scheduled in such a way that an examinee would have to undergo an extended period of tests, for roughly two years after graduation. These requirements applied also to males, but mainly affected the institutions for women; the programme had to be extended from two years to three years of study, with longer hours, a fact that placed harder obstacles for the typical working mothers who studied to become R.A.s. And to cap it all, the new rules and criteria for recognizing educational institutions for R.A.s were established with the result that the Jerusalem Institution could not obtain formal permanent recognition. Some of the R.A.s, with the help of that Jerusalem Institution, appealed to the Civil High Court of Justice of Israel and the court ruled largely in favour of the appellants; it condemned the exclusionary and discriminatory tactics employed by the rabbinical authorities in establishing quotas for new recruits and arbitrarily raising entry-level standards.<sup>9</sup>

These tactics of exclusion are explained by male R.A.s, and by various rabbinical authorities, in terms of strict professional considerations. The central argument is that the 1991 statutory reform opened the gates to persons who did not graduate from a yeshiva, where an intensive

four-year study programme of Halakhic texts ensured a pool of high quality advocates:

[We] fear a deterioration in the quality of representation in Rabbinical Courts, and this is the reason for adding more materials in the qualifying examinations, in order to raise the level of representation . . . in particular, there are now difficulties in evaluating the personal standards of students, their breadth of halakhic education, and their fitness to a representational role.

Another Rabbinical Advocate expressed a similar position:

A qualified Rabbinical Advocate cannot be examined without having at least fifteen years of study in a yeshiva. Women do not have it . . . this is a grave opening that allows the entry of persons with no spiritual-yeshiva background. Rabbinical Advocates are singular in their knowledge and their attitude to the halakha . . . this is something women do not have and cannot reach. Therefore I think that it is a grave disrespect [to allow women to practice], it hurts our position, our background, and all we stand for. We gravely fear it.

The logic and tone of the above arguments are common among professions which wish to restrict and control the number and identity of those who become members.<sup>10</sup> Women R.A.s, on their part, employ the very same logic in order to produce counter-arguments. Not only do they emphasize their higher educational background as proof of their learning skills, but they also suggest that yeshiva studies do not automatically attest to the male R.A.'s professional quality and seriousness. Women R.A.s systematically portray male R.A.s as having, in general, low standards of knowledge and practice:

Until now, the Rabbinical Advocate was lower in the hierarchy compared to other knowledge-based professions. It has not been a highly esteemed profession. Take their language, for example: they do not know how to articulate an argument, how to phrase properly legal documents, to shape an agreement. Their style is simply shocking . . . and the entry of educated women raises the standards, elevates the whole profession, but it certainly threatens the men.

On the other hand, female R.A.s are astute enough not to provoke openly the male-dominated establishment. In all their numerous letters to the Chief Rabbis of Israel, to the High Rabbinical Court, and to various power-brokers in the Orthodox establishment, they are at pains to emphasize their deep commitment to the Orthodox way of life and to refrain from stressing their superior 'modern' education. They assert that they are God-fearing, that they are dutiful wives and mothers, and that by training as R.A.s, they intend to deepen their commitment to the Orthodox community, the Halakha, and the rabbinical system of justice. In other words, they assert their position as 'insiders' by invoking resources which are considered legitimate and respectable in the Orthodox community.

## RABBINICAL ADVOCATES

Further, they also dissociate themselves emphatically from the feminist movement and from a feminist attitude. One said: 'Feminism is a revolt, and I am not a rebel. I am aware of my value as a woman and my unique female role in Judaism, which is directed, first and foremost to educating my children'. R.A.s therefore firmly refused the offer of an influential liberal and secular organization of Israeli women to provide legal assistance in appeals to the High Court of Justice; they would not accept such help because they feared that it would brand them as rebels. However, it is important to stress here that such an attitude must not be interpreted merely as a clever strategy. Women R.A.s genuinely find themselves in a complex position which interlocks a 'secular-modern' experience into the Orthodox life-style.

### *The Professional Challenge 2: Speaking for the Mute*

Many R.A.s claim that one of their chief objectives is to empower their female clients to voice their special needs and their grievances, to articulate them, since these clients cannot confide intimate details to male professionals. The following is an excerpt of a letter an R.A. sent to her former teacher:

I wanted to tell you a little about my work in the last few months. In almost every case I find the uniqueness of the fact that I, an Orthodox woman, handle it. I wish to give a few examples . . . A 43-year-old woman came to me, she is the daughter of an ultra-Orthodox person who emigrated to the United States after losing all his family in the Holocaust. Her husband has carelessly spent all the money that her father gave him on their marriage and then ran away from home in fear of his creditors. She was granted alimony by a Rabbinical Court, but now the husband has petitioned the court to lower the amount. She asked me to represent her. Somehow, I sensed that she had not told me the whole story. I gave her something to eat and to drink and asked her whether anything else had occurred. She then told me that she had never confided in anyone else about the matter, but she could say it to me because I am a woman like her. She said that when she was pregnant with her sixth child, the one who was born mentally impaired, her husband had raped her . . .

A woman came to me on the eve of the Passover, and told me that she wished to obtain a divorce. I asked her when was her recent visit to the Mikveh [a ritual bath in which a woman purifies herself at the end of menstruation] because I wanted to make sure that she would not be accused of being a rebellious wife who refused to cohabit. And then she said, 'Listen, I can only tell it to you, but I have no reason to visit the Mikveh because my husband would not come to me at all' . . . I asked her whether she told all that to her marriage consultant and she admitted not to have told him a thing because he was a man with whom she could not share such intimacies . . . These are only a few impressions. You know that I studied for the R.A. in order to save my sanity in the household with all my duties caring for the children. Now I can say that I see my work as a vocation.

This R.A. thus admits that it was in order to escape the heavy burden of domesticity and child care that she had embarked on a course of studies which would allow her to practise as an R.A., but then states that in doing so she has discovered that she had a vocation: to speak for the mute and to voice their grievances and attempt to redress them. Women R.A.s in general express the same desire to defend the inarticulate and they pride themselves on their ability to empathize with them. They are aware that this is a breach of the general professional ethos which insists that a professional must remain distant from one's clients. An R.A. commented: 'I know it is very unprofessional to say this, but a woman may represent women better because of her deeper understanding. I know it is unprofessional to say it'.

The ability of women to represent other women is presented by R.A.s as a unique advantage that justifies the entry of women to the professional field. It is noteworthy that Orthodox women, in this respect, are exempt from the hesitations and difficulties which secular female professionals have in voicing a similar position. In the strictly secular, liberal, and professional context, which emphasizes individualism, equality of opportunities for both sexes, and impartial expertise, an orientation of representation of women by women risks the stigma of being unprofessional and of being a separatist. It is precisely in the context of an Orthodox community, which has a tradition of gender-difference and gender-based division of labour, that a transformation of professional values becomes possible. Tradition, used in this particular way, allows the R.A.s — who are grounded in the community as God-fearing wives and mothers — to 'naturally' construct their professional identity around a commitment to the female voice. However, not without costs. The distinct ability of a woman to represent another woman may mark a vocation for women R.A.s, may open new options for women clients, but clearly presents itself as an acute threat to male R.A.s and to other power brokers in the community. The next section, however, goes beyond the strict professional threat to which the discussion has so far been largely restricted, and explores the more direct challenge to the knowledge gatekeepers of the community.

#### *To Work with Texts*

It is not only in order to preserve their sanity by escaping from domestic and maternal chores that some female R.A.s have embarked on their new profession. All those we interviewed asserted that they were eager to acquire more detailed knowledge of the tenets of Judaism and of the various interpretations of religious texts. They tend to treat the Halakha as a dynamic body of knowledge which is susceptible to novel interpretations and reinterpretations. One of our respondents said:



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Now that I have studied, I can say what I never would have said earlier. I now see that many religious practices originated in social conditions. Halakha often reflects specific interests in consolidating a social norm, and not divine revelation. When you study you see that Maimonides — he whom you worship and heard so much about — suddenly you see what he wrote about women. What do you do? So I felt that I did not reach a stage of heresy, saying 'This is not my way', but it tells me something about Halakha: . . . it is relevant only in respect to a given historical context. I do not have many problems with the Halakha, only in respect to the status of women, which is very very difficult for me . . . Much of my new readings came from the secular circles I met when I went to the university. I think that now, looking back on it, I decided to study to become an R.A. in order to balance my art studies . . . It was a completely different world . . . I felt I needed some Jewish studies as well. And my dream is that women will interpret the Halakha differently because they are different. I am certain that the Halakha looks like it does because men shaped it, and this is most obvious in women issues.

Another R.A. took a similar view:

I really think that we should look at various sayings in a wider context. Things were said when the status of women was low, and we should remember that. When I come to interpret it today, I should keep in mind social developments which merit novel interpretations. So I disagree with many contemporary interpretations of the Halakha . . . I try to take the texts and to place them in time and reality . . . it is at the university that you really see that texts develop historically . . . their meaning changes in the context of the contemporary environment . . . and this is important because knowledge is power, and the fact that women were denied the study of texts which are central to the community has meant that they were denied access to power . . . And now they begin to enter. And gradually . . . their status and power in society will be enhanced with the knowledge they will have acquired.

The idea that power is knowledge is an important expression of the rediscovery of the Halakha as a body of knowledge which is grounded in the historical power relations within the community. The status of this body of knowledge as a set of divine imperatives that are transmitted by licensed experts, is re-evaluated and scrutinized. The belief that the rules of the Halakha in general and specific aspects of it had been shaped by men and would be interpreted otherwise by women, that belief challenges Orthodox men and the traditions and roles they have upheld. Indeed, these men are alarmed that the female R.A.s are paving the way for further attainments by Orthodox women — who might want to become practising Rabbis, or rabbinical judges, or achieve a similar exalted status heretofore reserved for males. Thus, like the monk who vigorously defends the scriptures of the monastery's library in *The Name of the Rose*,<sup>11</sup> and who prefers to swallow and burn them rather than expose them to a foreign eye, we should consider the concerns of the community's knowledge gate-keepers about women who enter a domain which brings them closer to actively taking part in shaping Halakhic knowledge.

Michel Foucault distinguished between discourse formations which are based upon a 'commentary' principle and others which are based on a 'disciplinary' principle. Commentary is based on the organization of knowledge around central texts which remain sacrosanct ('commentary's only role is to say finally, what has silently been articulated deep down . . . it gives us the opportunity to say something other than the text itself, but on condition that it is the text itself which is uttered, and in some ways, finalised'), while in disciplinary discourse 'there must be the possibility of formulating — and of doing so ad infinitum — fresh propositions'.<sup>12</sup>

A central aspect of knowledge in present modern society is the deconstruction of sacred texts. However, in the Orthodox Jewish community, sacred texts cannot be decomposed: to do so would involve the secularization and eventual dissolution of such a community. By evoking Foucault's commentary/discipline opposites, the modest purpose here is only to emphasize a process of a potential and partial change in the organization of the Orthodox discourse and to focus on its epistemological foundations. Women R.A.s are introducing a 'quasi-disciplinary' discourse without rejecting the 'authenticity' of the original text; they only note that there is the possibility of a variety of interpretations and that one must have sensitivity to the prevailing social conditions underlying the texts. This is where we can discern the interlocking of secular-modern epistemology into the Orthodox experience of women R.A.s. Their 'disciplinary' insight is based on their appreciation of the secular society but that does not necessarily lead to withdrawal from the Orthodox community. However, it does provide grounds for ambivalent attitudes which are expressed in the attitudes of the R.A.s to feminism, to their roles within the community, and to their identity as strict professionals. This is the subject of the next section.

### *Equality and Responsibility*

Female R.A.s claim that the basic difference between them and male R.A.s is that women have intuitive abilities and are easily able to be good and caring listeners. They steer clear of a feminist stance, as noted above, but they stress that women are better observers than men, that they are aware of subtle factors underlying given situations, that they can identify with other women, and that they can therefore combine intellectual and intuitive-emotional sensibilities. In the words of many of them, they can base their judgements and activities on spiritual insights (*Binah*) rather than on mere wisdom (*Hokhmah*).

One possible implication of this repeated emphasis of intuition, empathy, and sensitivity is that there should be a clear division of labour between men and women. Indeed, that has been the prevailing pattern for centuries: women remain in the private sphere, where such traits

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belong. But for many female R.A.s, *the different abilities and different natures of males and females do not imply that women and men should do different things, but rather that women can, and should do similar things in a different manner.* It is on the basis of this position, grounded in difference, that R.A.s voice their claims to equality of opportunities and to the general advancement of the standing of women in the community.

It is not only for strategic reasons that female R.A.s distance themselves from feminism. Feminism is perceived by the R.A.s as representing a radical and provocative orientation which assumes absolute sameness between women and men. Moreover feminism is looked upon as an element of a 'foreign', un-Jewish, culture. One of our respondents noted:

I think that feminism is part of a Christian tradition in human history, that has something to do with original sin at birth. Christians saw the woman as a tool of the devil and her beauty could be Satanic beauty. I do not think that Judaism encourages these anti-feminine attitudes. True, a woman can seduce and I believe in such powers, but to transform a woman into someone who contaminates the purity of men is certainly un-Jewish. Consequently, although I know that women were discriminated against over the centuries, I reject radical feminism which asserts that women are like men.

Thus, the differences between women and men are emphasized by the R.A.s as a Jewish response to secular feminism. We find that this position has the advantage of facilitating the efforts of R.A.s to situate their practices within their commitment to the Orthodox community; asserting their Jewish, feminine, and professional identity and yet rejecting a feminist one. The women R.A.s are eager to show that there is no basic discriminatory set of rules against women in Judaism, that what has occurred in the centuries up to the present was the result of social and historical circumstances, which may and should be reversed. Thus, women R.A.s assert that they are not active in social protest and they are not the agents of rebellion: they simply want to help other women by providing professional help and emotional support. The implication is that Orthodox women have traditionally had such a supportive role, and female R.A.s simply extend that role in their new profession. In short, R.A.s who invoke this cultural model are thus able to appease suspicions and accusations of their taking a subversive stand. The emphasis on the differences between women and men, and the emphasis on the fact that they are simply extending the traditional 'caring' roles of women in the community, provides the R.A.s with a way to settle their religiosity with their actual practices of defiance.

In fact, however, although female R.A.s assert that they have no allegiance to feminism, they have developed a set of practices which are based on what has been termed a 'cultural-feminist' position.<sup>13</sup> Cultural feminism articulates gender differences in terms of the distinction between an ethos of care and responsibility on the part of females and an ethos of rights and competition or rivalry on the part of males. As female

R.A.s insist, the stress is on doing the same things in different styles. Cultural feminism sees the female role as that of taking responsibility for others and showing solidarity — and that view is one that can easily be espoused by Orthodox women who practise as R.A.s. Education, knowledge, expertise, and representational abilities become a fruitful source for the transformation of female stereotypical attributes like sentimentality, light-mindedness, and intuition, into powerful qualities such as the ability to listen, the attainment of a wide perceptive horizon, and strong insight. As stated above, such female qualities are best understood as *binah* and female R.A.s apparently consider it to be superior to the quality of *hokhmah*, of intellectual wisdom, which is more characteristic of males. Female R.A.s elaborate the points by showing evidence that they have attributes which can compete with the dominant professional male models based on objectivity, impartiality, and distance from one's clients. And these female attributes can be claimed to be valuable in the defence of their clients, simply in a way that is different from the mode of male R.A.s.

In sum, the communal experience of Orthodox women facilitates the development of feminist practices which are legitimized in terms that do not contradict prevailing norms and ideas. Ordinary and legitimate conventions are thereby transformed and reappear as a source of power and as a legitimate justification for novel practices which, in the final instance, remodify *both* communal and professional traditions.

### *Conclusion*

We have analysed a dialectic process in the course of which the growing involvement of R.A.s with Halakhic knowledge is based on their experience in the secular society around them. At the same time, the proximity of these women to the secular experience is mediated and controlled by positions and social relations which prevent them from being pushed outside the Orthodox community. The result is that the secular cultural capital which R.A.s acquire is not mechanically and passively absorbed: this capital is adapted and interlocked into the cultural capital which they acquire through their experience in the Orthodox community. This interlocking experience is the primary principle that governs the process of identity construction we describe; identity understood as not more than a *space of action* in which actors may alternately move among various sets of relations and experiences, transporting cultural resources from one arena to the other, often inverting their meaning in their practical application.

Further, it is this principle of conversion and transgression that facilitates the application and articulation of a variety of feminist practices; that is, practices which challenge the gendered power-relations

structure of the community. Of course, we are dealing here with an open-ended process: it may lead to secularization, it may end up reproducing the very structure it challenges, and it may signify the entry of women into positions of influence and leadership within the community. In this respect, this study only offers a preliminary glimpse, necessarily partial and dilemma-ridden. In the current political context in Israel, however, emphasis on the changing status of women in the Orthodox community may facilitate a movement away from the liberal-left's treatment of this community in terms of a 'dis-enlightened' reactionary force.

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### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Menachem Friedman, 'The Haredic Woman' in Yael Azmon, ed., *A View into the Lives of Women in Jewish Societies* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 273-90; Tamar Elor, *Maskilot U'Burot* (Hebrew), (Tel Aviv, 1992) and Joel Wolowelsky, 'Modern Orthodoxy and Women's Changing Self-Perception', *Tradition*, vol. 22, no. 1 (1989), pp. 65-81.

<sup>2</sup> Tamar Rapoport, Yoni Garb, and Anat Penso, 'Religious Socialization and Female Subjectivity: Religious-Zionist Adolescent Girls in Israel', *Sociology of Education*, vol. 68 (1995), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> See Yael Azmon, 'Judaism and the Exclusion of Women from the Public Sphere', in Yael Azmon, ed., *A View into the Lives of Women in Jewish Societies* (Hebrew), (Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 13-43.

<sup>4</sup> Saul Berman, 'The Status of Women in Halakhic Judaism', in E. Koltun, ed., *The Jewish Woman* (New York, 1976), p. 116.

<sup>5</sup> See Georg Simmel, 'The Field of Sociology', in K. Wolff, ed., *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York, 1950), pp. 3-23.

<sup>6</sup> For elaborate sociological discussions of this theoretical position see unpublished paper by Seyla Benhabib, 'Sources of the Self in Contemporary Feminist Theory', 1995; and Dorothy Holland and Naomi Quinn, *Cultural Models in Language and Thought* (Cambridge, 1987).

<sup>7</sup> See Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions* (Chicago, 1988), p. 88.

<sup>8</sup> See John Heinz and Edward Laumann, *Chicago Lawyers: The Social Structure of the Bar* (Chicago, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> HCJ 6300/93 *Institute for the Training of Rabbinical Advocates vs. Minister of Religion et. al.*, August 1994 (unpublished). The Court found the practices of the rabbinical authorities to be flagrantly discriminatory. The success in court, however, had only been partial and mainly affected the first two classes of students. Formal and informal entry barriers remain. Male Rabbinical Advocates, for example, refuse to employ women and to guide

them in their preliminary steps, some Rabbinical Judges refuse to hear female advocates, and some of the female Rabbinical Advocates report a general sense of hostility and suspicion towards them.

<sup>10</sup> See Jerold Auerbach, *Unequal Justice* (New York, 1976) and Richard Abel, 'Toward a Political Economy of Lawyers', *Wisconsin Law Review*, vol. 5 (1981), pp. 1117-87.

<sup>11</sup> Umberto Eco, *The Name of the Rose* (New York, 1980), p. 480.

<sup>12</sup> Michel Foucault, 'The Discourse on Language', in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (New York, 1972), p. 223.

<sup>13</sup> Robin West, 'Jurisprudence and Gender', in Patricia Smith, ed., *Feminist Jurisprudence* (New York, 1993), pp. 493-530.

# THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF LIVERPOOL

Mervyn Goodman

**T**HERE have been Jews in Liverpool since 1755,<sup>1</sup> and their existence was referred to in the diary, for that year, of John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist Church; few details are available but it is thought that they were Sephardim (of Spanish and Portuguese origin) who subsequently moved to Dublin<sup>2</sup> or to the West Indies. Benas dates the origins of the present community to 1780 when a house, with adjacent ground for a cemetery, was purchased for a synagogue. The first sermon to be delivered in English in a synagogue took place in Liverpool in 1806.<sup>3</sup> In 1839 the first provincial representative to the Board of Deputies of British Jews was elected by the Seel Street Synagogue and in 1841 the first Hebrew day school (now the King David Primary School) outside London was founded in order to teach English to the Jewish immigrants from Europe. Lipman<sup>4</sup> records that by 1850 Liverpool had the largest provincial Jewish community — some 2,500. In 1896 a Zionist society was formed there, a year before the First Zionist Congress in Basle.

The pogroms of the 1880s in Russia and the Tsarist May Laws of 1882 led to a massive Jewish emigration from Eastern Europe and Liverpool became the major transmigration centre for those who wished to settle in North America. Between 27 April and 12 July 1882, a total of 6,274 adults and children left Liverpool in steamships for Canada and North America<sup>5</sup> while some others remained behind and settled in the city. About five decades later, in the late 1930s, refugees mainly from Nazi Germany arrived, but they were forced to leave at the outbreak of the Second World War, when Liverpool became a restricted area and they were officially designated 'enemy aliens', since they were German nationals.

Some distinguished Jews were natives of Liverpool or spent their formative years in the city. Others were prominent in civic activities, became leaders of their professional bodies, or held important university positions.<sup>6</sup> As the city's Jews prospered they moved out of their terraced houses without gardens, in the centre of the city, to settle into the suburbs,

in detached and semi-detached homes with gardens. The inevitable result was that the Jewish community became more dispersed, living in an eight-square mile area, some of which is park land. The present older generation, whose children have left home, have moved into privately-owned or rented flats while others live in subsidized housing, and so they have come nearer to the present centre of the Jewish community.

### *Demography*

In the last 30 years, the size of Liverpool Jewry has declined drastically from more than 7,500 in 1965 to a little over 3,000 today.<sup>7</sup> These are approximate figures since the British Census does not ask for religious affiliation. The best that can be done is to use membership lists of as many Jewish organizations and synagogues as possible. Even then there are difficulties nowadays since addresses are omitted and the Data Protection Act has imposed further restrictions.

In 1993, together with the late Dr Myer Goldman (who died in 1994), using the updated communal list compiled from the membership lists, I undertook a census of the Merseyside Jewish Community (Liverpool, Crosby, the Wirral, and Chester). We approached 1,400 households by post to reply to a basic questionnaire asking for the dates of birth and marital status of members of the household together with information about their children who had left home. There was a 60 per cent response. Unfortunately, lack of financial resources meant that non-respondents could not be contacted but a group of senior members of the community studied the list of these cases, identifying many of those who were living alone and estimating their approximate age group.

I also used, as an additional source, the records of burials of Orthodox Jews in Liverpool which I have gathered since 1966. In 1966 there had been 104 burials while in 1993 these were 48. In the quinquennium 1991-95 the average annual number of Orthodox burials was 61. In the period 1989-93, 82 per cent of deaths were of Jews aged 70 or older, compared to 54 per cent in the years 1966-70. This, together with the estimates from the census, has led to the assumption that about half the members of the community are aged 60 or over 60; many of them are widowed or unmarried.

I then estimated the average household size with additional data about the number of Liverpool Jewish children attending the King David schools (these we know to account for about 90 per cent of all Jewish children of school age) and the number of children who attend the Merseyside Amalgamated Talmud Torah (MATT), and I reached the conclusion that the average household size was two persons. It must be stressed here that all those whom we identified as Jews do not necessarily participate actively in communal activities; only 65 per cent of those mailed were members of synagogues (a figure comparable with British



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Jewry as a whole).<sup>8</sup> It cannot be asserted that they are all halakhically Jewish, some being children of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother. Neither can it be claimed that we have identified every Jew in Liverpool; some Jews in England, as elsewhere, remain outside the Jewish community and it is only when they die and a Jewish burial is requested for them that their Jewish identity becomes known.

Most provincial Jewish communities in the United Kingdom have declined in number as a result of low birth rates and of migration to London or other cities and abroad; in Liverpool there is the added factor of discontent with the civic authorities and an economic recession which has badly affected the city. In 1991, Liverpool's unemployment rate was 21.6 per cent compared with 10.6 per cent in 1971. Because municipal taxes are very high in Liverpool, and are based on the area of residence and the size of the house, many of those employed in professional or managerial occupations now live in the dormitory suburbs of North Merseyside or the Wirral. (However, observant Jews continue to live in the city itself because of the proximity of the synagogues.) The *general* population of Liverpool has consequently fallen from 610,000 in 1971 to 474,000 in 1991.<sup>9</sup>

The King David schools have provided education since 1966 to 90 per cent or more of Jewish children from the age of five to eighteen, and a kindergarten has recently been established. The effect of this has been that after leaving school, members of the younger generation seek social activities in other communities where they can meet new faces. Moreover, since the 1960s it has become fashionable for students to enrol at universities and colleges away from home.<sup>10</sup> Once having left home, many choose not to return — remaining where they studied; others have moved to London or Manchester — where there are larger Jewish communities — or they emigrated to Israel. A very important additional factor for this state of affairs is the lack of employment opportunities in many sectors of Liverpool's economy.

### *Communal Structure*

The King David Foundation has a kindergarten, a primary school, and a secondary school which is placed in the top five State comprehensive secondary schools in the country. The Jewish Youth and Community Centre is in the same complex. Elsewhere there is the Jewish Welfare Council, which is associated with — but is not part of — the Jewish Housing Association<sup>11</sup> and the Stapely residential and nursing home for the elderly. There are four major, and one small, Orthodox synagogues and there is also a Progressive congregation. MATT, which was referred to above and which was established in 1975, caters for pre-*bar mitzva* and *bath mitzva* children, the majority of whom attend secular schools, while for the older children there is the *Yeshiva* (Talmudical College) for 22 boys

and a *Midrasha* (girls' college) with 13 pupils. Liverpool Jewry is one of the few provincial communities with a *kasher* restaurant, and accommodation for out-of-town students is available in two Hillel Houses.

Liverpool, in common with other provincial Jewish communities in Great Britain, has a Representative Council which was established in 1944. It was originally a consultative body but it has accepted responsibility for a variety of activities which were never envisaged by the Council's founding fathers. All the Jewish organizations of Liverpool, as well as those in the adjacent areas of the Wirral, Chester, and Crosby are represented on the Council which provided the stimulus, in 1947, for the foundation of a home for the aged (opened two years later). The Council also established the Adult Jewish Education Committee in 1966 and the Liverpool Jewish Resource Centre (whose activities include the provision of talks to non-Jewish groups, some of whom are taken round synagogues, and the supply of material to schools for the National Education Curriculum). It revitalized the Council of Orthodox Synagogue Wardens and it acquired land in 1969 for a communal cemetery when the one owned by the now defunct Burial Society became full.<sup>12</sup>

The Jewish Representative Council is the recognized official voice of Liverpool Jewry and it has direct lines of communication with the civic authorities and the local press, radio, and television. For more than three decades, the Council has organized the celebrations marking Israel's Independence Day and, latterly, Jerusalem Day as well as the commemoration of Holocaust Day and Israel's Memorial Day. In 1987 the Israel Subcommittee was formed to replace the Liverpool Zionist Central Council so that the Jewish Representative Council is now responsible for co-ordinating all Zionist activity in Liverpool with the exception of fundraising. In 1988, that Council embarked on a campaign to attract business and professional Jews to settle in Liverpool; a video was produced and circulated widely in the country, but this 'Come to Liverpool' campaign was not successful because, amongst other factors, Liverpool has the highest municipal tax in Britain; for example in the financial year 1995-96 Band D, which covers most middle-class houses, was £1,006 in the city compared with a national annual average of £647. In July 1996, a major container shipping company moved out of Liverpool because of a prolonged strike by dockers and in the same month a large international accountancy firm closed its Liverpool branch.

There have been initiatives by the Representative Council to attract Jews in the age cohort 18 to 40 years who had no involvement in community activities. In 1990 a young graduate of Brandeis University was appointed on a two-year contract to provide stimulus for those Jews by organizing social activities. Following his departure, there was no one to replace him until 1995 when a community development worker was appointed for an initial three-year period. Not only has he continued the work of his predecessor but he has widened his horizons to encompass

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similar groups elsewhere in the north of England and arrange interfunctions. He involves himself with the Jewish students from their arrival in the city and tries to persuade those from other areas to settle in Liverpool after graduation, identifying job opportunities for them as well as for local non-graduates.

The Council meets quarterly in plenary session and its executive committee meets monthly between these sessions. Honorary officers are elected annually and there is a consecutive three-year limit for the office of President of the Council. Representation on the Council is proportional to the size of the organization, with a maximum of four individuals appointed, falling into two groups. One of the groups consists of the senior officers of an organization while the second group consists of those who have been representatives for many years and who remain in their position because it is found embarrassing to replace them. The members of that second group have no authority to take decisions on behalf of their association, nor are the senior officers of the major institutions necessarily elected to the executive committee of the Representative Council. In an attempt to remedy matters, co-options to the executive committee were increased in 1967 to include the presidents, or chairmen, of some of the major organizations not already represented on it. Like the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Council represents organizations rather than individuals, and while it can be justifiably argued that the work of the Council is principally concerned with the interests of those who do identify with communal activities, it is not unknown for representatives to put the parochial interests of their organizations before those of the community as a whole.

Younger Liverpool Jews have complained that the Council members tend to belong to the older age group and do not always sympathize with their problems. After prolonged deliberation the Council's constitution was amended in 1994 to extend membership of the Council to individual members of the community on payment of an annual fee of £12.50 and the size of the executive committee was halved from 20 members to 10. Up to 1996, only 12 people have taken advantage of this opportunity to join the Council and participate in its activities. This change in the style of membership could, in the long term, alter the composition of the Council, making it more a community council than a representative one.

The failure to attract individual members to the Council is symptomatic of a malaise which is prevalent across the whole spectrum of Liverpool Jewry. Fifty years ago accusations of oligarchy were levelled at many bodies and so reluctant were some office-bearers to relinquish office that most organizations introduced a time limit to holding office. That was when one leader could, and did, hold office simultaneously in many communal organizations — Zionist, welfare, synagogal, and educational. But the pendulum has swung and today only one of the two positions of vice-presidents of the Council has been filled and neither the

present treasurer nor the honorary secretary wishes to accept this post and progress to the presidency. A number of communal organizations have co-chairpersons, indicative of the reluctance, or inability, of one person to accept sole responsibility in the post. There is also a general unwillingness to attend meetings — which is the case apparently also in non-Jewish organizations. The emphasis on performance and production, both in the professions and in commerce and industry, allows little time for voluntary work during the day and leads to stress and fatigue in the evenings. With two breadwinners in many young households, domestic responsibilities are shared by both partners, again affecting participation in communal activities. This is only part of the problem: a recently-formed forum for ‘young retirees’ — meeting monthly for lunch and a talk — has failed to achieve the expected support from those with more time at their disposal. Almost in parallel with the difficulty in recruiting unpaid volunteers has been the rise in the number of trained professional workers. Consequently the community will require more financial resources to pay for their services.

Nearly all communal activities take place in Harold House, the Youth and Community Centre which is the focal point of Liverpool Jewry. It was originally sited down-town in what was then the city’s Jewish district. The Centre is named after Harold Cohen — the founder of Lewis’s Stores — who, with members of his family, was a benefactor of that Centre and of many other Jewish and non-Jewish institutions. As Liverpool University expanded it acquired the site. The proceeds of the sale enabled a new building to be erected in a complex which already contained the Childwall Synagogue and the two King David schools. Originally Harold House was only a youth centre but it has now expanded to provide facilities for most of the adult and all the youth activities during the day and in the evening. This is despite the existence of three synagogue halls which are now used for the diminishing number of *simḥot* — mainly weddings and *bar mitzvah* receptions — and very large public meetings. The Harold House building also houses the Zionist offices, the King David kindergarten, a Jewish bookshop, a resource centre, a *kasher* restaurant and, just recently, a health and fitness club. The many activities provided include sports groups, a pottery class, and clubs for senior citizens and for mothers and toddlers. The director of the Centre, the Israeli *shaliah*, and the community development worker all have their offices in Harold House.

The administrative centre of the community is in the offices of the Welfare Council. Since the last century the management of the then Liverpool Hebrews’ Educational Institution and Endowed Schools, now the King David Foundation, has been undertaken in the offices of the Welfare Council as has the clerical work for the Representative Council. Recently part of the financial work of the Youth and Community Centre has been transferred there.

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### *Religious Trends*

In 1945 there were ten Orthodox and one Liberal synagogue in Liverpool; most had paid clergy while some employed a minister, an assistant minister and a *hazan*, as well as a full-time beadle. There was then a Communal Rabbi but since the retirement of Rabbi Plitnick in 1971, this office has remained unfilled. Many of the synagogue officials performed other functions such as secretarial duties, teaching Hebrew and religious studies, *shehita*, and circumcision. In 1996, none of the four main Orthodox synagogues has more than one full-time officiant. A major change during the past half-century has been a substantial increase in the salaries of synagogue personnel, although only one rabbi has any formal teaching responsibilities.

In 1960 a committee was appointed by the Representative Council to enquire into the price of *kasher* meat when there were two wholesale and 15 *kasher* retail butchers and poulterers in Liverpool. Today there is only one retail *kasher* butcher. At that time there was a flourishing Shehita Board, animals being slaughtered for food not only for Merseyside but also for London and elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The profits of the Board were used to assist religious and educational bodies in the area. The Board no longer exists. This situation reflects not only the drop in the size of the community and the introduction of frozen and packaged *kasher* meat, but also a lower level of religious observance in the depleted Jewish population.

The religious affiliation of Liverpool Jews is to the *Minhag Anglia* so well described by Chief Rabbi Sacks.<sup>13</sup> Liverpool has not had a Sephardi congregation since the short-lived one in the eighteenth century but it did have a small Hassidic congregation until 1985. A Lubavitch rabbi settled in the city in 1994 and he organizes activities mainly centred round his house. The only Progressive Synagogue, established in 1928, caters for a small active minority within the community. The pattern of Jewish belief, as well as identity, in Liverpool has been documented and analysed by Nikolas Kokosalakis.<sup>14</sup> The proximity of Manchester, with its strong Orthodox element, has led a not insignificant number of more religious families to move there, commuting daily to work in Liverpool via the two direct motorways.

The four large Orthodox synagogues are now merely buildings in which religious services are held. Only two have regular weekday *minyanim*, and they frequently have difficulty in recruiting ten men morning and evening. Apart from a weekly *shiuur*, which attracts only a small number, there are no regular cultural or social synagogal activities. Indeed, on a normal *shabbat* the totality of worshippers could be accommodated in any one of the four Orthodox synagogues. Even during the *Yomim Noraim* (the High Holy Days) there is room for all the members, and their children, to be comfortably seated in the main body of the synagogues and at least two have vacant seats at that time — a far

cry from the overflow services or additional seats which were common in the years immediately following the Second World War. Whereas some do go away, usually to Israel, for Passover or for *Succoth* this is rarely the case for *Rosh Hashana*, *Yom Kippur*, or *Shavuot*. Each synagogue has a minister, at least one part-time clerical officer, and a caretaker. The financial implication of this surfeit, involving maintenance of the buildings and staff salaries, is a burden which could lead to bankruptcy of more than one congregation. The Council of Orthodox Synagogue Wardens is of course aware that there is a superfluity of synagogues.

The visiting student chaplain, the arrival of a Lubavitch rabbi, and the recent appointment of a community development worker, all dealing with the younger age group, have put a further financial burden on community resources. The many housebound and disabled people are rarely visited by the ministers and the latter are hardly — if ever — seen meeting their members in the Youth and Community Centre. They are also conspicuously absent at communal events, such as Holocaust Day or Israel Independence Day — unless they are invited to officiate. Nor are they seen in the audience at cultural meetings such as those of the Jewish Historical Society or of the Council of Christians and Jews. It seems that in Britain most rabbis are nowadays given a purely academic rabbinic training without a pastoral component, while only a few have attended a university and benefited from a wider knowledge of the secular world.

#### *Education and Youth*

In 1968 the number of Jewish children attending the King David Schools, 688, was at its zenith. In 1964, the King David Primary School had moved from its original site, in the centre of the city, to the Childwall complex in the heart of the community. Three years later comprehensive secondary education was introduced in Liverpool, with the conglomerate secondary schools operating on split sites. This made the bilateral King David high school attractive to Jewish parents. The pupils from the primary school were guaranteed a place in the high school. In 1968 almost all the pupils in the two-form entry primary school were Jewish but today there are only 187 Jewish pupils with an average annual fresh intake of 25. In the high school, with a three-form entry, the corresponding figures for Jewish pupils are 200 today compared to 295 in 1968. The Jewish pupils are now in the minority and the intercalation of Hebrew and Jewish studies into the daily curriculum is becoming a significant problem. It has been suggested that these subjects could be studied in after-school hours, but that might remove entirely the Jewish ethos of the high school. Were it not for the outstanding academic standard achieved in that school, the numbers of Jewish pupils would be far lower. Because of the difficulty of attracting suitable Jewish candidates, the head teachers of both the primary and high schools are non-Jewish but both are

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committed to maintaining that ethos. The high school is a voluntary-aided school and in such cases the local education authority appoints to each school three governors who may be Jewish or non-Jewish. It is possible that in the not-too-distant future these, together with the head teacher and two teacher governors and the two parent governors, might constitute a non-Jewish majority on the governing body of the school. In the primary school, which has recently become grant-maintained, the position is slightly different but the same scenario could develop there.

Until 1966 each of the four major Orthodox synagogues had its own religious classes. The success of the King David schools, with Hebrew and religious studies being an integral part of the curriculum, led parents to believe that their children need not attend a *heder*. The amalgamation of these classes, later to include the independent former *Talmud Torah*, into the Merseyside Amalgamated Talmud Torah (MATT) was an inevitable development which was not easy to establish because of the parochialism of the congregations. Even so, in 1968, a total of 320 children were receiving supplementary Jewish Education. Today there are only some 50 children attending MATT. At the time it was hoped to construct an integrated curriculum between the day schools and MATT so that pupils attending both would not have to endure the teaching of the same texts yet a satisfactory education could be provided for those secular day schools; but this was not to be. The *Yeshiva* which, before 1945, boasted some 25 *Kol Hayom* (day) students (and a host of distinguished alumni as well as part-time students) is now a shadow of its former glory; in fact, together with a *Midrasha* for girls, it is more a post-*bar mitzvah* annex to the MATT. A consequence of the removal of Jewish education from the responsibility of their synagogues has been a weakening of the ties between them and the children of their members. The youth section of Harold House provides a wide variety of activities: as well as a Junior Club there is a drama group, a Bnei Akiva, Habonim-Dror, a very active Jewish Lads and Girls Brigade, and sports facilities.

Until 1967, the adult modern Hebrew classes were held in Zion House in the Toxteth area of Liverpool. As in the case of Manchester, the local education authority was approached and agreed to finance these classes, which were transferred to the King David high school as part of the Childwall Evening Institute. The authority also agreed to extend the classes to include Jewish history, Biblical texts, Jewish religion, and Jewish cookery. There was then an enrolment of 231 and an average weekly attendance of 160. Since then there has been a dramatic decline in the number of classes and the number of those attending them; there are now only three classes, of which one is modern Hebrew. The only other regular educational activities, apart from the *shivrim* in the synagogues are the SEED programme conducted by rabbis and lay Jewish scholars, some coming from Manchester,<sup>15</sup> and monthly meetings of the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Historical Society. There is also the

Jewish Theatre and Cultural Group whose programme has only a small Jewish content.

*Welfare Organization*

The relief of the Jewish poor was originally vested in the principal synagogues, hence the term *parnass* — the person responsible for welfare — was given to the senior officer of the congregation. There had been non-synagogal welfare bodies in Liverpool since the early part of the nineteenth century, the oldest of which was the Hebrew Philanthropic Society founded in 1811. With the political unrest in Central and Western Europe from 1830 onwards and the frequent pogroms in Eastern Europe there was a constant, often small in numbers, influx into Liverpool. Each of these immigrant groups established its own place of worship but their welfare needs became the responsibility of the whole Jewish community. This has been termed the 'Liverpool Experiment'<sup>16</sup> and its success was recognized as far afield as the United States.<sup>17</sup>

Small societies such as the *Bikur Holim*, *Somech Noflim*, Children's Country Holiday Fund, Bread and Flour Society, Women's Personal Service Society, and at least five others were established but the largest by far was the Board of Guardians for the Relief of the Jewish Poor of Liverpool which was founded in 1875. In 1964 it was renamed the Merseyside Jewish Welfare Council. It has accepted responsibility for those smaller societies, mentioned above, which still have funds. Today it has a wide spectrum of activities including financial help, counselling, visiting the sick, and providing *kasher* meals through meals-on-wheels and luncheon clubs. For many years it placed the needy in houses converted into flats. In 1962 the Housing Committee became the Liverpool Jewish Housing Association, independent of the Welfare Council, and in the following year an appeal was launched to raise funds for the erection of purpose-built flats. National and local authority grants provided the bulk of the necessary finance and today a significant number of the elderly live in this complex together with their non-Jewish neighbours. The Welfare Council also organizes the burials in the communal cemetery, on behalf of the Representative Council, and is responsible for arranging the *taharah* (preparation for burial) for the whole community.

An ageing population results in many persons suffering from degenerative diseases with associated physical disabilities, while advances in medicine have led to the survival of many younger disabled people. In order to enable the latter to play as large a part as possible in the life of the community, the Welfare Council has actively promoted access for the disabled to many buildings and the provision of such aids as magnifying glasses and large-print books. As far back as 1947, the Council of Liverpool and District Jews, the original name of the Representative Council, appreciated the needs of the ill and disabled and took the first



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steps in founding what is now the Stapely Residential and Nursing Home. In 1996, 30 of the 36 rooms in the residential section have been occupied while in the nursing home section all 39 rooms were occupied.

### *Zionism*

Liverpool has a proud tradition of Zionism; the *Hovavei Zion* (Lovers of Zion) society was founded in 1891. Today, the Zionist organizations are primarily concerned with fund-raising with hardly any cultural activity. Many Liverpool expatriates played a vital part in the *Yishuv* and, later, in the establishment and strengthening of the State of Israel. The city still is second to none in fund-raising for a variety of Israeli causes. There are women's groups affiliated to WIZO but there are no corresponding groups for men. The establishment of the State of Israel with many people going there on holiday and the lack of interest in public meetings are the principal causes of the demise of specific cultural Zionist societies. Since the early 1960s the community has benefited from the services of an Israeli *shaliah* or *sheliha* (emissary), who works primarily with the younger generation and who organizes the promotion of all activities connected with Israel, especially those functions related to Israeli national days. They have also helped in teaching Hebrew in both the day schools and adult classes.

### *Funding*

The methods used to finance the Jewish organizations of Liverpool are similar to those in other British communities. Synagogues levy seat rentals, encouraging payment by charitable covenant, and most invite contributions from those called up to the Reading of the Law. While this offers an opportunity to contribute on the occasion of a *simha* or a *jahrzeit*, it constitutes an additional financial burden for the few regular synagogue attenders. The synagogues have also had to launch appeals for further monies to fund exceptional needs, usually for the fabric of the buildings.

The four major institutions, Harold House, the King David Foundation, the Stapely Nursing and Residential Home, and the Welfare Council, rely mainly on major appeals held every seven years (to conform to the earlier requirement of seven-year charitable covenants)<sup>18</sup> and the timing of these is controlled by the Representative Council. Only 30 per cent of the community respond to these appeals and most of these donors choose to contribute to all the appeals. The organizations concerned benefit from government and local authority grants but, in the case of the latter, these are constantly in jeopardy because of the parlous state of Liverpool's finances and their continuation in the future cannot be guaranteed, particularly at the present levels.

The King David Foundation, which levies fees for Hebrew tuition, was supported by the Zionist Federation Education Trust, now renamed the Scopus Jewish Education Trust. In recent years the grant was severely reduced and now it has ceased. The Youth and Community Centre makes charges for membership to both individuals and organizations using its rooms for meetings and it holds an annual fund-raising dinner. The Welfare Council sends out an appeal each Passover and Jewish New Year and the Stapely Home solicits donations on the occasion of a *jahrzeit*. Liverpool also has a Hebrew Associated Charities Fund which raises monies from donations on the occasion of *simhot*; at burials and tombstone consecrations; and from the *Kol Nidrei* appeal in synagogues on the eve of *Yom Kippur*. The sums raised are modest and are distributed to local Jewish charities.

Fund-raising for Israel follows the same pattern as elsewhere. The joint Israel Appeal, with a separate Women's Division, is held annually while the Jewish National Fund organizes collections for specific causes. As many as six women's groups within a WIZO Council both raise funds and have cultural programmes. Mainly because of a shortage of volunteers, there are no fund-raisers for other Israeli causes, apart from one person collecting for *Magen David Adom*. In 1974 each of the central committees involved in collecting for the academic institutions (such as the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) was asked if they would agree to a single body being set up in Liverpool to collect for all of them and divide the income between them; the proposal was unanimously rejected to the detriment of all. One change in the manner of fund-raising in recent years has been the virtual disappearance of Jewish charitable dances and dinners. The cost of *kasher* catering has meant that most of the profit made at the few functions which are held comes from the advertisements in the accompanying brochures. The influence of the more religious elements which eschew mixed dancing does not appear to be a major factor in Liverpool.

The original constitution of the Representative Council specifically excluded fund-raising from its activities and relied solely on an affiliation fee from constituent bodies together with a voluntary levy on synagogue members. Because this levy, like those for the Board of Deputies and the Chief Rabbinate Fund, is separately itemized in their accounts, some members choose not to pay it. Additional resources are necessary to fulfil all the responsibilities which the Council has accepted in recent years, including the organization of constant security in synagogues and other Jewish buildings — which requires the use of sophisticated and expensive technology. The salary of the *shaliah* had been previously paid by the Jewish Agency with the local community being responsible for his or her expenses, but that arrangement has ceased. However, the presence of a regular annual intake of Israeli law students at the University of Liverpool has enabled the last two *shelihot* to be appointed from amongst their

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wives. This removes the need to find accommodation for them. Half the cost of the community development worker is paid by Jewish Continuity<sup>19</sup> and the other half by the Jewish community. Financial support is required for the Resource Centre and other minor projects. The Council was taking on responsibilities without secure funding. Some generous donors helped specific projects but the overall position was unsatisfactory. The first fund-raising enterprise was the production in 1986 of an annual year book which provided substantial revenue from advertisements. Part of the profit of the Jewish bookshop, run under the auspices of the Representative Council, is given to educational projects of the Council, while the remainder is given to other Jewish educational and religious projects. It was only in 1995 that the Council achieved charitable status,<sup>20</sup> allowing it to benefit from tax concessions. The Council also collects money from the Orthodox synagogues for the community's share towards the salary of the regional students' chaplain.

A proposal to raise money from the production of a communal newspaper, which would be distributed free to the whole community, was rejected by the Representative Council. Such a newspaper could have been a means of providing general information and communication for Liverpool Jews. The cost to the organizations for advertising in the publication would have constituted a saving in both postage and secretarial expenses and there could have been an income from commercial advertising. Small appeals, usually made by post, come from a variety of local and national organizations while women's associations hold coffee mornings, 'good as new' sales and other fund-raising functions.

### *The Future*

The progressive decline in the size of Liverpool Jewry, with an increasing proportion of the elderly on fixed incomes, is a situation characteristic of most Jewish communities in Britain. In Liverpool this has been apparent from the time of the first demographic study and projection of these figures, provided the trend continues, leads to an estimated size of under 1,800 Jews by the year 2010. This is based on the prediction that in the next 15 years there will be more than 1,000 deaths, not more than 350 births, and a continuing emigration of both the younger generation and those who have retired. The Representative Council has organized three symposia since 1977 at which financial reports and future projections have been presented to the officers of the synagogues and institutions, but their response to forward planning has been less than enthusiastic. With this in mind, in 1990 the late Dr Myer Goldman, then president of the Representative Council, suggested the formation of a community fund. The only tangible outcome of this was

the commissioning in 1995 of an independent report on the four major institutions. That report is now being considered by the relevant bodies.

Clearly communal expenditure will have to be reduced and the decreasing income optimized. Both educational and welfare services must be maintained at the highest standards while proposals for capital developments must be evaluated most carefully. The Representative Council could consider establishing a central community fund akin to the funds which are collected by community federations in the United States.<sup>21</sup> Apart from financial advantages, such a federation could lead to a greater degree of co-operation between various local Jewish bodies. There is a plethora of communal kitchens and the consolidation of present resources is long overdue. The kitchens of the Welfare Council, the Stapely Home, and the Youth and Community Centre have all been refurbished within the last few years, with the help of public funds. There is also a kitchen in the King David schools. It should have been possible to establish a single centre for all such communal catering. The future of the community, as always, will largely depend on Jewish education. A single body responsible for Jewish education in the day schools, MATT, and the Yeshiva would rationalize the employment and deployment of qualified teachers in all these institutions.

Any change usually has disadvantages and, in the case of a central communal fund, these are:

- i. The underlying fear that the total amount collected under a federated system might be smaller than the sum at present collected separately — but the experience in America, and elsewhere, has shown that this fear is not justified.
- ii. Problems over the distribution of funds — but the allocation could be decided by the benefiting organizations, an independent committee elected by donors to the fund, or a combination of both.
- iii. Those people who have their favourite charities — but they could be allowed to assign all or part of their donation to particular organizations.
- iv. Such a fund would place excessive power in the hands of a few people — but the latter could be monitored by a committee specifically appointed to be accountable to them at an annual meeting of all donors or their elected representatives.

In this proposal, fund-raising for Israel has been excluded. This matter is becoming increasingly important and has already been debated in America.<sup>22</sup> There is the growing belief that as Israel's economy continues to grow, its dependence on funding from the Diaspora is decreasing. The withdrawal by the Jewish Agency of financial assistance for *shelihim* and Israeli teachers in the Jewish day schools has placed an added burden on local communities. Jewish Continuity is considering linking with the Joint Israel Appeal to sponsor such projects but that would mean that the

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decisions would be made centrally in London, rather than peripherally where there is a better appreciation of local needs. In America there is already a change in emphasis in the distribution of funds with a greater proportion going to local causes. With a finite amount of money available in the community, the synagogues cannot be omitted from future planning. Any savings can only benefit the congregation in particular and the community in general. The superfluity of congregations and the cost of maintenance and staffing has already been mentioned.

This paper has attempted to portray the present situation of a provincial Jewish community and it has argued for the introduction of communal funding. Liverpool, with its impressive façade of communal organizations, has some exceptional difficulties. It must ensure that the infrastructure is secure. Time is not on its side and in this context the words of Isaiah are apt: 'I asked: "Lord, how Long?" And He answered "Until the cities fall in ruins and are deserted, until houses are left without occupants"'.<sup>23</sup> Must Liverpool Jewry wait until then?

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> J. Willme, *Sepherah Shelosh. Three letters, sent to some dispersed, but well-advised Jews, now resident at Liverpool* (London, 1756). (These are deposited in the Mocatta Library, University College London.) In July 1996 a document came to light confirming that there was a Jewish community in Liverpool in 1742; *Jewish Chronicle*, 2 August 1996.

<sup>2</sup> Louis Hyman, *The Jews of Ireland* (Jewish Historical Society of England and Israel University Press, London and Jerusalem, 1972), p. 51.

<sup>3</sup> B. L. Benas, *Records of the Jews in Liverpool*, Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire (Liverpool, 1901), vol. 51, pp. 45-84.

<sup>4</sup> V. D. Lipman, *Social History of the Jews in England 1850-1950* (London, 1954), p. 171.

<sup>5</sup> Mansion House Fund, Liverpool Commission, *Memoir of Proceedings* (Liverpool, 1882).

<sup>6</sup> Mervyn Goodman, *Liverpool Jewry in the Dispersion* (WZO) (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 52-67.

<sup>7</sup> Mervyn Goodman, Annual Demographic Reports to Merseyside Jewish Representative Council 1965-95.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen Miller, Marlana Schmool, and Antony Lerman, *Social and Political Attitudes of British Jews; some key findings of the JPR Survey*, Institute for Policy Research (London, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> *Key Statistics to Liverpool Wards 1971/81/91*, Liverpool City Council, Central Policy Unit.

<sup>10</sup> More recently financial strictures have led students to choose institutions of higher learning in their own towns; they can live at home without the worry of paying rent and other outgoings. However in Liverpool, of the 13 Jewish pupils of the King David high school accepting places in universities and colleges in 1995, only one enrolled in Liverpool. This contrasts with 10 non-Jewish pupils, out of 22 at that same school who took up places in Liverpool.

<sup>11</sup> Local housing associations are non-profit-making bodies, run by voluntary committees, providing homes for people of limited means. They are supervised by the national Housing Corporation which was established by Act of Parliament in 1964.

<sup>12</sup> The four main Orthodox synagogues, and the Progressive synagogue, have their own burial grounds. The smaller congregations never had their own cemeteries and to cater for their needs, two independent burial societies came into being but their cemeteries have since become full. The communal cemetery is now used by families of non-synagogue members, out-of-town Jews, and those who expressed a wish to be buried there as it is nearer than some of the synagogue cemeteries to the centre of the community.

<sup>13</sup> Jonathan Sacks, *Community of Faith* (London, 1995).

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Kokosalakis, *Ethnic Identity and Religion: Tradition and Change in Liverpool Jewry* (University Press of America, Washington, 1982).

<sup>15</sup> The Project SEED Europe is a network which provides Jewish adult education on a one-to-one basis.

<sup>16</sup> Albert M. Hyamson, *A History of the Jews in England* (London, 1928), p. 383.

<sup>17</sup> R. Morris and M. Freund, *Trends and Issues in Jewish Social Welfare Services in the United States, 1899-1958* (Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1966), p. 147.

<sup>18</sup> A person who pays income tax can enter into a deed of covenant with a charitable organization, recognized by the Charity Commissioners. This must now be for a period of four years; previously it was seven years. The charity can reclaim from the Inland Revenue, the tax that the donor would have paid. For example, a person who pays 25 per cent income tax and donates £75 a year would enable the charity to reclaim £25 back from the Inland Revenue.

<sup>19</sup> Jewish Continuity was conceived by Chief Rabbi Sacks (*From Jewish Continuity to Jewish Continuity. Studies in Renewal* 5 (London, 1993). It 'disburses funds to finance projects which enliven and enrich Jewish life and which recover Jews at the very margin of the community'.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Bernstein, *To Dwell in Unity* (Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1983).

<sup>21</sup> Daniel J. Elazar, *Community & Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> Seymour M. Lipset and Earl Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp. 129-37.

<sup>23</sup> Isaiah, 6, v.5.

# HASSIDISM AND URBAN LIFE

Jacques Gutwirth

THIS paper springs from reflections triggered off by a television serial which had been produced for Austrian television; it was entitled *Hiob* (Job) and was based on the accomplished 1930 novel of the same title by Joseph Roth.<sup>1</sup> The novel is set at the turn of the century and one of its heroes is Jonas, one of the sons of the *melamed* Mendel Singer — an ultra-Orthodox schoolteacher living in a rural, agricultural environment in the (fictitious) area of Zuchnov in Eastern Galicia. However, the Jewish inhabitants of that village were not agriculturists but shopkeepers, artisans, and market traders. But Jonas was passionately devoted to horse-riding and had friendly relations with the local Gentile peasants; finally, he enlisted in the Tsarist army.

This tale struck me as uncharacteristic of the Hassidic life-style after the end of the Second World War, according to the historians of Hassidism and to my own fieldwork experience among Hassidim over a period of more than thirty years. Hassidim nowadays are essentially urbanized and rarely live cheek by jowl with rural Gentile inhabitants. They are both physically and intellectually quite remote from peasant culture, from pastures or fields or farms; most of them live in the heart of cities — be it in Montreal, Antwerp, Jerusalem, or Brooklyn (one of the five boroughs of New York). In their case, more so than in the case of other Diaspora Jews, nature and culture are at opposite ends of their spectrum.

## *The Jews as Town Dwellers*

Max Weber commented in 1923 that Western Jewry's culture was an urban culture and that post-exilic urban Pharisees looked down on 'ignorant' people as *Am Ha-aretz*, literally people of the land, and he pointed out that a town or city is not defined primarily in geographical spatial terms but in economic terms — mainly as a seat of commerce, industry, and artisanship.<sup>2</sup> He rightly stressed that the determining parameters of Jewish life in Europe since feudal times, if not since the early Middle Ages, were commerce and artisanship, urban residence, and of course membership of a community which was ruled by Jewish

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law and religion and by religious observances. The historian Irving Agus based his analysis of *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe* on *Responsa* literature and went even further than Max Weber: he asserted that Western civilization is an urban civilization and that in Catholic Europe Jewish communities were without doubt the first settlements of urban type, with a structure which prefigured the French *communes*, the town council, etc.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since the Crusades, when Jews in French and German towns were subjected to persecution, the kings of Poland and of Lithuania welcomed them within their borders and granted them a measure of autonomy, in particular in their 'private towns', in order to encourage Jews to develop a merchant economy.

### *On the Edges of Urbanism: The Advent of Hassidism*

Hassidism was established in the eighteenth century and grew strongly during the nineteenth, while on the other hand the official Jewish community (the *kahal*) was becoming weaker and weaker under the influence of various factors — especially the ideology of the *Haskala*, the Enlightenment; the ideals of the French Revolution of 1789; and the growing urbanization of many Jews who were joining the ranks of the proletariat and were being influenced by socialist theories.

Raphael Mahler noted that at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were three Galician towns where commerce and trade were predominantly Jewish activities: Lemberg (Lublin), Tarnopol, and Brody. This last city had a population of 19,000 in 1820; 88 per cent of its inhabitants were Jewish and were largely under the influence of the Enlightenment movement, which fiercely opposed Hassidism. Admittedly, during that period the Hassidim lived either in rural areas or in small towns, but their gainful occupations there were mainly as innkeepers, petty traders, and sometimes bailiffs for the nobility; but many Hassidim were poor and indeed some of them were even beggars.<sup>4</sup> The streets of these villages and of some small towns at that period were often muddy and the inhabitants had to wear boots; some ultra-Orthodox Hassidim attempted later to preserve that tradition and advocated the wearing of boots even nowadays in modern cities with paved or asphalted roads. (I am told that some London Hassidim wear boots even now in the 1990s.)

Rachel Ertel noted in 1986 that one *shtetl* which she describes merged at its periphery with the area of the rural Gentile community in Poland in the twentieth century, while in the more central streets and in the market-place the interactions and dealings with the Gentile peasants were numerous and long-lasting: they were linked with the trade in wood from the surrounding forests, leather tanning, wool spinning, etc.<sup>5</sup>

By the latter part of the nineteenth century, Hassidism had gained a foothold among the population of medium-sized towns of Eastern



Galicia, including those mentioned by Mahler: Lemberg, Tarnopol, and Brody. Until the eve of the Second World War, the Hassidim and their rebbes, their charismatic leaders, remained mostly in urban areas but rarely lived in large cities. The rebbes of Belz, of Wischnitz (Vijnita), of Ger, and of Satmar (Satu Mare), for example, did not live in large cities and indeed until the Second World War none of the renowned hassidic leaders were inhabitants of such cities as Prague, Budapest, or Warsaw — nor did they even live in larger towns such as Cracow or Bratislava. Hassidim would not have been at ease in such urban centres which had Jewish citizens who were generally non-observant or even anti-religious and who generally followed the life-style of their Gentile neighbours. Moreover, until a little after the Second World War, the millions of Jews in the United States — whether they were themselves migrants or the second- and third-generation descendants of immigrants — were somewhat hostile to the hassidic movement, and this was the case even in districts with a very dense Jewish population such as the Lower East Side in Manhattan or the Maxwell district of Chicago.

Most Jews in the United States until the late 1960s wished to follow the 'American way of life' and before the Second World War the Eastern European rebbes discouraged their adherents from emigrating to the United States, which they feared would be particularly harmful for those who were to follow a hassidic life-style. Thus, except for one case, there were no hassidic settlements anywhere in Western Europe: none in Paris, in Brussels, in Amsterdam, or in London, for example. The one exception was Antwerp, in Belgium, where several hassidic groups were established in the 1920s and the 1930s; there, the diamond manufacture and trade were predominantly in the Jewish domain<sup>6</sup> and those Jews in these occupations were mainly pious or at least observant Jews — which meant that Hassidism found in Antwerp a favourable milieu. Moreover, the manufacturing techniques of Antwerp were still rooted in artisanal crafts while trading practices were based largely on old-style bargaining and honest dealing where one's word was one's bond — practices which were therefore similar to the commercial usages of the small towns of Eastern Europe. After the Second World War, Hassidim became active in the diamond industry not only in Antwerp but also in Manhattan in New York City as well as in Ramat-Gan in Israel.

#### *The Fifth Phase of Hassidism*

Simon Dubnow distinguished in 1931 four phases in the history of Hassidism;<sup>7</sup> the fourth according to him started in about 1870 and was a period of decadence: the movement had by then lost its creativity, its prestige, and a substantial number of its followers. In Poland, harsh economic conditions had driven the Jews to the larger cities, where they joined the proletarian masses and, as noted above, came under the

influence of socialist and irreligious ideologies. America was in economic terms a 'promised land' to which millions of Eastern European Jews were flocking but American cities were not areas where a hassidic life-style could prosper — as was shown in the television serial based on Joseph Roth's novel.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, the Hassidim of Byelorussia and the Ukraine were not free to lead openly a hassidic observant mode of living under Communism, while the hassidic groups who were still thriving in Eastern Europe were slaughtered during the Nazi genocide of the Second World War; hassidic dynasties, rebbes and their adherents were massacred. By the end of the war in 1945, there were only pitiful remnants: survivors living in Rumania and Hungary and Polish Hassidim who had been deported by the Soviet authorities to Siberia and to Soviet Asia, as well as some survivors of concentration camps. Most of these Jews came together later in camps for Displaced Persons and eventually they emigrated — mainly to the United States, to Canada, to Belgium, and to the new State of Israel.

In my study of the Belzer Hassidim of Antwerp, I noted that this group consisted in 1963 of some 74 households who were exhibiting a remarkable demographic dynamism: there was an average of 3.90 children per married couple;<sup>8</sup> and in later years I saw that average rising even higher. Such a demographic pattern is also evident among Hassidim of other sects, with other charismatic leaders: in Brooklyn, in Montreal, in Jerusalem, and in B'nai Berak. However, it was not only this demographic factor which had a major role in the renaissance of hassidic communities; there were also favourable economic conditions in New York, Antwerp, Montreal, and to a lesser degree in Israel. Moreover, in the United States the early 1970s brought to an end the prevalence of the ideal of the American way of life, of Americanization. The model of the melting pot was no longer the recommended aim, and ethnic and religious modes of differentiation were now not only accepted but even sometimes encouraged. On the other hand, the Lubavitch rebbe (Menachem Mendel Schneerson) who was established in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, led his followers to adopt a somewhat original and innovative hassidic movement: Habad (often spelt Chabad). Habad's aim was to persuade Jews to return to a more pious Judaism and hopefully to persuade them to join the ranks of the Hassidim. The Lubavitch missionaries set about this campaign with an intense zeal and they had some success in the 1970s in reclaiming those souls which had strayed to the counter-culture, in persuading secular Jews to return to the faith of their fathers. Those Jews who were in this way brought back to traditional Judaism were (and are) called *baalei tshuvah* (repenters, or returners to the faith).

The Lubavitch movement extended its activities to other countries — such as France, North Africa, and Canada. As for Israel, B'nai Berak

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with 116,000 inhabitants is a remarkable bastion of ultra-Orthodox Judaism and the Hassidim play an important role in that town. Admittedly, this renaissance of Hassidism has not affected the majority of Diaspora or of Israeli Jewry; but it is, nevertheless, a renaissance and although only a proportion of the Jewish inhabitants of Brooklyn, Montreal, and Antwerp are following a hassidic way of life and are devoted followers of their own charismatic leaders, that proportion exhibits a remarkable dynamism and tenacity in its chosen style of observing Jewish precepts and of earning a living in a secular society.

As the present paper was about to be sent to the printers, *Lubavitch Direct* was published by 'Lubavitch UK 5757-1996', on the eve of the Jewish New Year. The Preface states:

The services which Chabad-Lubavitch renders to the whole Jewish community are renowned.

It is now almost fifty years since Chabad-Lubavitch started in the UK and it has grown apace. It continues to grow today. Apart from its schools, seminary and Yeshivot which cover the whole spectrum of formal Jewish education, Chabad-Lubavitch has major centres in London and the Provinces, providing adult education and outreach activities for youth, students, senior citizens, Jews on the fringe — in fact, everyone! . . .

Our efforts to assist Jews to experience the joys of being Jewish and find out more about their heritage have helped bring about a general change of consciousness in this country.

*Lubavitch Direct* has on the flyleaf a photograph of the late Rabbi Schneerson and states that the activities listed in the publication 'express the inspiration given by Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson'.

### *Urban Hassidim*

There is again nowadays a contrast between the areas of settlement of the majority of Jews on the one hand, and the regions favoured by the Hassidim on the other hand. Since the late 1950s, sociologists have been commenting on the most recent trend in the population movement of American Jewry: an exodus from the city centres to the suburbs and outlying districts. That is the case not only of the movement away from New York City but even more so of such cities as Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Chicago, and Cincinnati. But the Hassidim, with few exceptions, have remained in the urban areas, especially in large cities, or in enclaves of large cities. In New York, they are settled mainly in Brooklyn, in the districts of Williamsburg, Boro Park, and Crown Heights.<sup>9</sup> It is in these areas that each hassidic sect has its rebbe, with the rebbe's court, as well as the majority of the yeshivot, and the *kolelim* (plural of *kolel*) where young men continue their religious studies after being married. In Israel, most Hassidim live in central Jerusalem or in

B'nai Berak, while in Antwerp and in Montreal they are settled in the centre of the city.

The exceptions are the following: the principal base of the Satmar is in the centre of Williamsburg but they have a branch in Monroe, a small town north of New York City which in 1990 had only 6,672 residents; the Squerer Hassidim moved from New York City to Rockland County, where they established a small self-contained community in New Square — which has since 1986 become an independent municipality with 2,605 residents in 1990.<sup>10</sup> In Israel, the Lubavitch have developed since 1949 a hassidic 'village', Kfar Habad, on the ruins of an Arab village called Safarya. As for the Belzer Hassidim, they are finding that their settlement (in central Jerusalem, in Rehov Agripas near the well-known market of Mahane Yehuda) is overcrowded; they are now in the process of developing another area outside the city, called Kiryat Belz and they have built an impressively vast yeshiva there.<sup>11</sup>

However, it is important to stress that these Hassidim who have moved out of town have most certainly done so *not* in order to be 'closer to nature', to the soil, or in order to till or farm the land. Far from it. An early attempt to engage in agriculture was not very successful in 1949, when the revered Lubavitch rebbe Schneerson had advised his followers in Israel to establish a *moshav*; but by 1970, only 7.5 per cent of the 'villagers' of Kfar Habad were engaged in agriculture: merely 13 of the 170 households. The others followed the traditional gainful occupations of Hassidim: as teachers of religion, shop assistants, or owners of commercial establishments in Tel Aviv (which is accessible to Kfar Habad residents).

In 1969, another Lubavitch 'village', Nahlat Har Habad, was established near Kfar Habad, but by 1980, when the settlement had some 400 households, most of the adults had reverted to the traditional gainful occupations of the Hassidim, as well as work in the diamond industry — they had by then built a diamond-cutting factory.<sup>12</sup> As for the New Square Hassidim, the pattern is very similar to that in Nahlat Har Habad: the residents are also teachers of religion, religious officials, and small tradesmen while about a third of the wage-earning inhabitants work in Manhattan's diamond industry. Indeed, when I visited New Square, I saw that far from being a village it was in fact a suburban development. There is a regular bus service to New York, used by both men and women — of course seated in different areas of the bus, females together and males together with a curtain separating them.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, the Hassidim of the second part of the twentieth century lead a life which is markedly different from that led by Hassidim in the *shtetl* before the Second World War. They are nowadays much more remote from rural life than they had been in Eastern Europe. They are also much more immersed in intensive Talmudic studies; religious tuition starts at the age of four for boys in a religious kindergarten and continues

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in primary school; later there are classes in a yeshiva, and then after they marry, in a *kolel*. Females receive a much less intensive Jewish education. David Landau has commented about hassidic young men that 'Yeshiva students sit in their study-hall year after year cocooned in comfortable, cloistered unreality . . .'.<sup>14</sup>

For many decades, New York City Jews have been leaving the stifling heat of the metropolis and going to the Catskill hills in the summer. Hassidic households also seek the cleaner air and the green pastures of the Catskills; they have their own area of holiday accommodation and each hassidic household lives close to the followers of the same rebbe. The women look after their young children and carry out the usual domestic tasks and have social intercourse with their female hassidic neighbours. The men come mainly for long weekends. Each hassidic group has a bungalow which it uses as a *shtibl* (a place for prayer and for religious study for males) while the young boys continue to have lessons even during the summer months. Some young Hassidim participate in a few sporting activities — this is especially the case among the Lubavitch who have many 'modernist' trends; but others, like the Satmar, rarely engage in leisure pursuits. Except for those who go for a walk after meals in the Catskills, one cannot say that the Hassidim who spend their summers there get closer to nature than.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, nowadays Hassidim combine a life-style reminiscent of the existence they had led in the *shtetl* (intensive religious tuition and meticulous observance of Jewish precepts and traditions as interpreted by their respective rebbes and distance from the surrounding non-Jewish society) but they have been settled for decades in urban locations, usually in the heart of modern cities. Their religious activities and their general culture differ markedly from the life-style of the other citizens of these towns. Moreover, their social relations within the hassidic milieu have far greater importance for them than their relations with outsiders. That situation is in marked contrast to the position of most American Jews who are increasingly dispersed in distant suburbs of cities. Some New York City Jews have migrated to Long Island, for example, while those who used to live in other large cities, as in Los Angeles, have moved even further away from their urban residences.

The Los Angeles Jews have migrated mainly to such districts as Sherman Oaks and Encino in the San Fernando Valley; but there, however, they have not created Jewish enclaves. There is some concentration of Jewish households in various districts, but those Jewish inhabitants also frequent non-Jewish neighbours, they go to the same shopping malls, and they work side by side with non-Jews in the same high-tech or audiovisual industries. One of the most obvious results of this intermingling is the very high rate of out-marriage; in the Los Angeles conurbation, 49 per cent of couples in the age cohort 18–29 years have a non-Jewish spouse,<sup>16</sup> and it is likely that this percentage is even higher in the whole

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San Fernando Valley, an area which has no Orthodox or hassidic synagogue. In Los Angeles, the only hassidic outpost is that of the Lubavitch who have a branch near the University of California at Los Angeles (U.C.L.A.) while the main centre of the Lubavitch is in the heart of a district of Los Angeles with a markedly older Jewish population; that area, like the locality around the Rue des Rosiers in Paris, has become for the half million Jewish residents of the cities a sort of symbolic *shtetl*.<sup>17</sup> A similar situation exists in other parts of the world, although perhaps not quite so marked as in Los Angeles. The Hassidim live close to one another, while the other Jewish citizens of the region — whether it be Antwerp or Montreal — are settled some distance away.

### *Conclusion*

Nowadays, the large cities continue to be financial world centres as well as centres of culture and of science, where usually the residents can enjoy personal freedom and where cosmopolitan life-styles are frequent — at least in the Western world. One may argue that urban Hassidim do not fit that pattern; they do not seek relations with those outside their own tight-knit community, or personal freedom, or cosmopolitan life-styles, but on the contrary they try to keep themselves to themselves. That may seem to be a paradoxical situation — until one adopts a historical perspective.

For centuries, Jews living in ghettos or in Jewish enclaves of towns were familiar to some extent with the ways of the Gentile world through trade and travel, which were their means of livelihood. Today's Hassidim wish to insulate themselves in order to preserve their own religious beliefs and practices but their economic activities — for instance in the international diamond industry — and their travels to various countries in the course of business or in order to visit their relatives or the place of residence of their charismatic leader, their rebbe (in New York, Montreal, or Jerusalem) they often acquire, willy-nilly, a degree of sophistication characteristic of the urban and cosmopolitan world, be it Gentile or Jewish.

### *Acknowledgements*

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Roth, *Hiob. Roman eines einfachen Man* (Cologne, 1982; first edition, Berlin, 1930). An English translation was published by Heinemann (London, 1932): *Job. The Story of a Simple Man*.

<sup>2</sup> Max Weber, *General Economic History* (Glencoe, Ill., 1950), p. 317.

<sup>3</sup> Irving A. Agus, *Urban Civilization in Pre-Crusade Europe* (New York, 1965), pp. 9-11.

<sup>4</sup> Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment* (Philadelphia, 1985), pp. 8-10, 31-32; see also Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland. A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1973), p. 282.

<sup>5</sup> Rachel Ertel, *Le Shtetl. La bourgade juive de Pologne. De la tradition à la modernité* (Paris, 1986), p. 107.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Gutwirth, 'Antwerp Jewry Today' in *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 10, no. 1 (1968), and Gutwirth, *Vie Juive Traditionnelle. Ethnologie d'une communauté hassidique* (Paris, 1970), pp. 44-54.

<sup>7</sup> Simon Dubnow, *Geschichte des Chassidismus* (Jerusalem, 1969), vol. 1, pp. 69f. The first edition was published in Berlin in 1931.

<sup>8</sup> Gutwirth, *Vie juive* . . . , op. cit. in Note 6 above, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> Crown Heights is a neighbourhood where the few thousand Hassidim are almost exclusively followers of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who died in June 1994. Williamsburg has many thousands of Jews, mainly hassidic and comparatively poor; Boro Park also has several thousand Jews who are largely middle-class. See George Kranzler, 'The Economic Revitalization of the Hasidic Community of Williamsburg' and Janet Belcove-Shalins, 'Home in Exile: Hasidim in the New World' in Belcove-Shalins, ed., *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies of Hasidic Jews in America* (Albany, N.Y., 1995), pp. 181-204 and 205-36.

<sup>10</sup> See Jerome Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1992), p. 202.

<sup>11</sup> See Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside of Ultra-Orthodox Jewry* (New York, 1992), pp. 52, 54, 56.

<sup>12</sup> See Morris Freilich, *Marginal Natives at Work* (Cambridge, Mass., 1977), pp. 283-88. The author has disguised the name of the group, but I know from personal contact that he describes Kfar Habad. See also Harry Rabinowicz, *Hasidim and the State of Israel* (Rutherford, 1982), pp. 217-20.

<sup>13</sup> Freilich, op. cit. in Note 12 above: here again, he disguises the name of the community.

<sup>14</sup> David Landau, *Piety and Power: The World of Jewish Fundamentalists* (New York, 1993), p. 170.

<sup>15</sup> See George Kranzler (with photographs by Irving I. Herzberg), *The Face of Faith: An American Hasidic Community* (Baltimore, 1972), pp. 105f. and Landau, op. cit. in Note 14 above, pp. 273-76.

<sup>16</sup> See Bruce Phillips, 'Los Angeles Jewry: A Demographic Profile' in *American Jewish Yearbook 1986* (New York), p. 178.

<sup>17</sup> See Jean Brody, *Rue des Rosiers: une manière d'être juif* (Paris, 1995), pp. 129-30.

# ANGLO-JEWISH HISTORY

Max Beloff

(*Review Article*)

W. D. RUBINSTEIN, *A History of the Jews in the English-Speaking World: Great Britain*, viii + 539 pp., Macmillan Press, Houndmills, Basingstoke, 1996, £60.00.

WHILE much has been written about the history of the Jews in Britain in recent years and much about the very different history of American Jewry, Professor Rubinstein's project to deal with the history of the Jews in the whole English-speaking world is a novel as well as an ambitious undertaking. The first volume dealing with Britain is of sufficient scope and originality to make one impatient for its successors which will deal with the United States and with the countries of settlement in the former British Empire — Australia, Canada, Rhodesia, New Zealand, and South Africa.

Where Australia is concerned, Professor Rubinstein has the particular advantage of having until recently been teaching there; he has now taken up a new appointment at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth. He is also of course well known for his studies of aspects of British economic and social history, particularly in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, his choice of the English-speaking world as the framework for his study does not reflect merely his own personal range of experience and expertise. He has a particular view to offer about why Jews in the English-speaking world have fared better than their co-religionists in Europe. He is primarily concerned with the period that ended with the two events which have altered everyone's perceptions of the Jews — including their own self-perception: the Holocaust and the foundation of the State of Israel. Medieval English Jewry is covered only in a brief introduction and the chapter on British Jewry since 1945 is necessarily a tentative postscript.

Stated very simply and in relation primarily to Britain itself, Professor Rubinstein's thesis is that the 'readmission' of the Jews under Cromwell and their subsequent emancipation from the original disabilities with which the 'readmission' was accompanied can only be understood in the light of the Protestant Reformation and the particular form it took in England. It left England with an Established Church but one obliged



increasingly to recognize the existence of other Protestant churches and sects entitled to toleration as to their forms of worship but with their brethren only gradually admitted to full citizenship. On the whole, the Jews in the eyes of a Bible-reading population fitted well enough into this pattern. As with Nonconformity — including Quakers and Unitarians — Judaism gradually ceased to be a bar to full participation in the political arena, as obstacles in the form of particular oaths were removed. Admission to the House of Commons was thus the culmination of a long process.

Since unlike the Christian sects the Jews were all either recent immigrants or the descendants of immigrants, there were occasional outbursts of xenophobia, of a kind familiar on the Continent but usually stemming from some local competition in the economic field. Efforts to contrive a theory which would justify some kind of discrimination were based upon translating into British terms the underpinnings of continental antisemitic campaigns — French in the early part of the twentieth century, German in the inter-war period.

As Professor Rubinstein sees it, it was this British assimilation of the local Jewish community to just another nonconformist sect which made it so plausible for the Jewish leadership to seek recognition as a community of Englishmen of the Jewish faith and even to remodel their synagogue services with some reference to the decorum of Anglicanism. It had no parallels on the Continent. Even excluding the particular circumstances of the Russian Empire where for most of the period covered most Jews lived, and confining oneself to Western and Central Europe, the differences are manifest. Where in the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries there were Jewish communities, they were either in Catholic countries where religious discrimination was inherited and normal or, as in parts of Germany, in countries with established Protestant churches also unfavourable to religious dissent. *Cujus regio, ejus religio* (whose the region, his the religion), the basis of the European states-system from the Peace of Westphalia to the French Revolution, had no prescribed room for Jews. As a result, the Jews were governed by the fiat of the individual rulers who might regard them as assets or liabilities according to their own political or financial circumstances.

When emancipation came, it was of necessity a matter concerning Jews alone. The pattern was set by the Revolutionary governments of France which, by proclaiming the equality of rights between citizens on a secular basis provided for the emancipation of Jews without recognition of their communities. What European antisemites of non-religious inspiration tended to argue was that Jews were untrustworthy citizens because their loyalty to their Jewish brethren in other countries conflicted with their loyalty to the State in which they lived — a current of thought which seemed to give plausibility to the Tsarist forgery, *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. In Britain this particular line of argument found little echo

at least until the direct clash in the immediate post-1945 period between the British authorities and the *Yishuv* (the Jewish settlement in Palestine); and there is still an occasional echo today. It was mainly the Roman Catholic community in Britain which was under suspicion of cherishing a dual allegiance. After the barriers to Jewish membership of Parliament were removed, increasing numbers of Jews were elected — Professor Rubinstein is good on the effect on their party allegiance of changes in the social structure of the Jewish community — and within less than half a century they found their way to high office. Roman Catholics, a much larger community and one that could boast a leadership from old-established noble families, played throughout the period a much less prominent role in most aspects of public life than British Jews who had to wait for their first peerage for a Rothschild.

Given these basic presuppositions, it is not surprising to find that the picture Professor Rubinstein draws of the course of events between 1656 and 1945 is one that is both traditional and optimistic. Its internal institutions, the Board of Deputies of British Jews and the various synagogue groupings, made possible the perpetuation of Jewish religious and cultural particularities without preventing individual members of the community from taking a full part in the life of the wider society. It is true that neither in specifically Jewish learning nor in cultural contributions to the common human heritage, did British Jewry in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries parallel the achievements of Jews in Germany or in Austria or perhaps even France. But against that must be set the fact that (with the rather special exception of Benjamin Disraeli) conversion to Christianity was not, as in some continental countries, a prerequisite for a career in the public service or in academe.

Professor Rubinstein is thus content to follow in the footsteps of earlier historians of Anglo-Jewry like Lucien Wolf and Cecil Roth, though without the former's anti-Zionist commitment which placed him at odds with the majority of the community which had its quota of non-Zionists but (with some notable exceptions) few anti-Zionists. On the other hand, Professor Rubinstein finds himself in dispute with some well-known Anglo-Jewish historians of the post-Cecil Roth era. Indeed, his book where they are concerned is directly polemical. In his view, historians like Professors Cesarani and Geoffrey Alderman err in two respects. They tend to exaggerate antisemitism and to look for its manifestations wherever they can, on the assumption that Britain in this respect must be seen in the context of European experience generally. They also find themselves out of sympathy with the community's established institutions and their bourgeois aspects and to claim that the Jewish proletariat (now admittedly nearly extinct) and the Yiddish-based culture that it brought to Britain have been undervalued. In accordance with their 'political correctness' typical of their general Leftish stance, they are alert for instances where the contributions of trade unionists and Jewish women

have been neglected in previous historiography. Instead of looking at the community as a single phenomenon, they tend to focus on its divisions — Orthodox against non-Orthodox, Zionist against non-Zionist, the well-established against newer immigrant strata.

Apart from a general distancing of himself from this now perhaps dominant school of historians, Professor Rubinstein takes issue with them on specific points. He thinks that while it is true that the Balfour Declaration owed more to British philo-semitism than to Anglo-Jewry, once the Mandate for Palestine was secured for Britain, Anglo-Jewry was a constant factor in pressing for that Declaration's implementation and in resisting attempts to water it down. He also argues that British Jewry was fully alive to the consequences of the rise of Nazism and did a great deal more than its critics admit to assist in the rescue of German and Austrian Jews after it was realized that they were in grave peril. Whatever criticisms can be made of the appeasement of the Arabs in regard to immigration into Palestine, it was Britain, and not the totally exclusionist United States, that rescued children from Germany at the last moment when Jews could still flee that country.

In an interesting excerpt from Malcolm Macdonald's unpublished autobiography, Professor Rubinstein gives evidence for the view that not merely broad concerns with imperial strategy dominated the British government's thinking at the time of his 'White Paper' in 1939 but a direct apprehension as to what would happen if the threatened war against Germany found British military preparations hampered by Arab hostility. He argued that the defeat of Hitler was the only hope of salvation for Europe's Jews. Subsequent years were to prove the validity of at least that claim. Once again the author finds himself at odds with those who believe that both the British government and the organs of Anglo-Jewry could have done more to avert the Holocaust and supply a haven for its victims. He thus finds himself at odds with another group of historians — notably Professor Bernard Wasserstein. Examining the various proposals put forward at the time, he points out that these made sense only if it was assumed that the German regime was engaged in a cost-benefit analysis of its intentions towards Jewry. But after 1938, Hitler and his associates had no intention of allowing Jews to escape from any part of Europe under their control, since their total annihilation was now at the very heart of their ideology. It was not a question of where the Jews could go but of whether they would be allowed to go anywhere even for the kind of bribes that were occasionally attempted.

On the whole Professor Rubinstein makes out his case, though one could argue, given the exploits of the Allied air forces in the later stages of the war, that one would need more evidence than he gives as to why it was impossible to bomb the railways to the death camps.

Before this review article is published, we shall no doubt witness some mighty debates between him and his adversaries. He has certainly given

a new and welcome impetus to the study of the recent history of Anglo-Jewry. He has more than eighty pages of notes on the sources; they will help those who wish to take part in the debate. I shall confine myself to three observations which do not relate to the central issues.

For someone stressing the positive aspects of the story, I find it odd that Professor Rubinstein does not examine the contributions to Anglo-Jewry of middle-class émigrés from the Russian Empire in the pre-1917 period and from Soviet Russia thereafter. While it did not found new ecclesiastical or political outlets, it did make contributions on the cultural side, and above all it did engage where possible in charitable work among the Jews of the former Pale of Settlement. Since one of its charitable institutions, O.R.T., has become a model for British government work in the teaching of practical skills, it is odd to find it passed over in silence.

While the author is right in stressing the absence of much antisemitism in the traditional political right, he might have been a little less confident if he had confronted the opposition in the House of Lords to the War Crimes Bill and the subsequent attempts to prevent the government from devoting resources to making prosecutions under it possible. It is true of course that opposition from Conservative peers was reinforced by those whose anti-Jewish sentiments derive from their hatred of the State of Israel to which Anglo-Jewry as a whole gives now general if by no means uncritical support.

This brings me to the third point. The younger school of historians with whom Professor Rubinstein finds himself at odds seems at times to be moving towards denying the religious definition of Jewry which has been the basis of its emancipation in Britain, and to be treating it as another 'ethnic minority' — assimilating its problems to those of other groups in British society who are the products not of emigration from Europe but from what was once the British Empire. Some of these groups do not entertain the ambition of nineteenth-century Jewry to be accepted as full citizens of the country of their abode but claim the right to pursue what might be described as an extra-territorial national existence. In the case of some Islamic groups, they have brought on to the British scene the anti-Israel policies of their countries of origin and have combined with the anti-Zionism of the British Left (much more evident today than the vestigial antisemitism of the Right) to persecute Jewish students and by extension Jews, as such. It has nevertheless been claimed by some of the new persuasion of historians that Jews should as a minority align themselves with the Muslims in seeking group recognition. The case for so doing has been advanced in *The Jewish Quarterly*. No doubt this remains a minority view, but it is worth recording when one comes to analysing the ideological sub-structure of the thinking of the 'younger historians'.

# MOSHE DAVIS

1916–1996

**P**ROFESSOR Moshe Davis, who died last April, was for nearly three decades an active member of the Advisory Board of *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*. After the World Jewish Congress decided in 1980 for financial reasons to end the sponsorship of the *JJS* (which it had founded in 1959), private funds immediately established the Maurice Freedman Research Trust, an educational charity which has as one of its main purposes the publication of the Journal. That Trust has published the Journal since 1981, and Moshe and Lottie Davis immediately offered to make generous annual contributions and showed unflinching encouragement and warm friendship to the Editor.

It is extremely rare to find scholars who are thorough in their research, firm in their beliefs, invariably kind and compassionate, and utterly loyal to their friends and colleagues — but not at the expense of academic integrity. Moshe Davis exemplified all these virtues. In the obituary published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 3 May 1996, Israel Finestein stated:

Moshe Davis was an educator of Jewish educators at university level. He was imbued with the idea that excellence and enthusiasm at that level tended over time to promote similar qualities throughout the education system . . . Generations of students and research scholars worldwide owe much to Davis for his friendship and advice. He was always accessible, with an aversion to any whiff of pomposity or self-righteousness.

Dr Geoffrey Wigoder was invited to prepare an appreciation of the contribution made by Moshe Davis to the field of Jewish Studies and has written the following pages.

Moshe Davis was a rare combination of scholar, visionary, and man of action. He was brimming over with original ideas, many of which he brought to fruition, each making a significant impact in its own sphere. He was born in 1916 in the Brownsville district of Brooklyn, New York, and was a 'boy wonder' as a cantor. He graduated as a rabbi at the Jewish Theological Seminary of New York in 1942, after he had studied at Brooklyn College and obtained an M.A. from Columbia University. (He chose later not to use the title of Rabbi.) In 1945, he was the first American to receive a doctorate from the Hebrew University of

Jerusalem; his thesis was subsequently published as *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism* and was a groundbreaking study.

Moshe Davis returned to the United States, where he joined the staff of the Jewish Theological Seminary; he was dean of the Teachers' Institute from 1946 to 1950 and provost from 1950. While at the Seminary, his fertile initiatives led to important innovations; one of these was the radio series 'The Eternal Light' (later presented on television) which was broadcast every Sunday morning and which brought over national radio insights into Jewish history and thought to millions of non-Jewish as well as Jewish homes. He also inaugurated the Ramah summer camps which heightened the Jewish identity and knowledge of Hebrew and of Judaism of tens of thousands of youngsters, while being involved in other projects devoted to the Hebrew language and to the Jewish arts.

In 1958, Moshe Davis was invited to head the department, later to become an Institute, of Contemporary Jewry of the Hebrew University. The concept of such an Institute had arisen simultaneously in the United States (among Davis and some of his friends, including Philip Klutznick) and at the Hebrew University (with the then president of the University, Benjamin Mazar, and the rector, Nathan Rotenschreich). It was Davis who coined the term and laid the groundwork for the study of Contemporary Jewry and in 1959 he moved to Jerusalem with his wife, Lottie, whom he had married in 1939 and who throughout his life remained his closest collaborator in all his projects. He insisted on an interdisciplinary approach and his Institute soon covered various disciplines, especially in the social sciences. He also introduced new concepts for those days: Oral History and a Film Archive.

The Institute of Contemporary Jewry had to be built up from scratch and had to overcome reservations among some of the veteran European scholars in Jewish Studies. Directions had to be determined, curricula formulated, textbooks assembled, and a staff had to be appointed. Some of the latter — including Holocaust scholar Shaul Esh, social psychologist Simon Herman, the statistician and demographer Roberto Bachi, and the educator Alexander Dushkin — were already teaching at the University and joined the Institute. Moshe Davis meanwhile searched for young scholars to teach in new fields; he had a wonderful eye for talent and once he had picked out his candidates, he supported them loyally as they progressed. Many of today's outstanding figures in the study of Contemporary Jewry owe their start and much of their success to him. Davis was a well-liked teacher, popular among his students for his pedagogical skills and unflinching good humour.

Moshe Davis's views were always global and one of his first activities was the organization of a series of regional conferences — in Britain, France, and Argentina — for the purpose of taking stock of what was known about the Jewish communities of these countries and of planning their future study. Out of the London Conference (which was organized

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by Davis under the auspices of the Board of Deputies of British Jews) emerged *Jewish Life in Modern Britain*, a book edited by Julius Gould and Shaul Esh. The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, under his direction, became an important component of the Hebrew University and proved to become the model for the study of Contemporary Jewry elsewhere.

Moshe Davis's dynamic nature never allowed him to rest on his laurels: he was always reaching out in new directions; one of these was the creation, initially under the auspices of President Shazar, of the Study Circle on World Jewry in the Home of the President of Israel. Leading scholars in their fields gathered for monthly meetings also during the terms of office of Presidents Katzir, Navon, and Herzog. Apart from the publication of 14 volumes of these proceedings, Moshe Davis organized several international conferences at the President's Home, resulting in several volumes which he edited: *World Jewry and the State of Israel*; *The Yom Kippur War*; *Israel and the Jewish People*; and *Zionism in Transition*.

Another major initiative was the American-Holy Land Project. Initially, the series was intended to deal with the study and republication of texts and sources about the various aspects of the connections between America and the Holy Land. Later, Moshe Davis decided to extend the Project to the study of the connections between the Holy Land and other countries, using archival sources to open fields of further research; that resulted in a series of publications with the generic title, *With Eyes Towards Zion*. He also initiated, under the aegis of the World Zionist Organization, Academic Seminars on Zionist Thought and he chaired for many years the W.Z.O.'s international committee. During his presidency of the W.Z.O., Arye Dulzin often sought Moshe Davis's advice and welcomed his assertion that it was essential to bring academics and intellectuals — who had been neglected by the Zionist movement for many years — into some sort of Zionist framework. As a result, groups were founded in many parts of the world with a membership of thousands of Jewish academics and intellectuals — who continue to meet.

As retirement from the University loomed, Davis (for whom the concept of retirement was inconceivable) launched another major programme: the International Center for University Teaching of Jewish Civilization. Here again, his vision and his ability to translate his ideas into reality came to the fore. The Center was a response to the explosion of Jewish Studies on campuses on the one hand, and to the lack of coordination, absence of appropriate textbooks, and the need to expand these teachings to other institutions of higher learning, on the other hand. His last published work, *Teaching Jewish Civilization*, contained a register of more than a thousand institutions of higher learning where Jewish subjects were being taught. Under the auspices of the Center, scholars from all parts of the world (including, in recent years, some from Russia and Eastern Europe) were brought together, curricula were outlined, and further publications were issued.

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That is a remarkable record, an unrivalled contribution to Jewish Studies. Davis recognized the need for popularization, but insisted that it must always be rooted in serious research. He opened many avenues and left many monuments. He himself symbolized the Israel-Diaspora symbiosis, which was at the base of all he did. Above all, he was not only respected but loved for his warm, outgoing personality, for his wisdom and broad understanding of human nature, for his unflagging enthusiasm and optimism, and for his single-minded devotion to the welfare of the Jewish people and to Zion.



## BOOK REVIEWS

SIDNEY GOLDSTEIN and ALICE GOLDSTEIN, *Jews on the Move: Implications for Jewish Identity*, xxviii + 398 pp., State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1996, \$19.95 (paperback).

EWA MORAWSKA, *Insecure Prosperity: Small-town Jews in Industrial America, 1890-1940*, xxv + 369 pp., Princeton University Press, Princeton, \$35.00.

*Jews on the Move* examines the data on the residential mobility of American Jews available in the widely-known 1990 Survey, the most sophisticated and valuable large-scale study of American Jewry; about 2,500 individuals were interviewed in depth. The findings caused considerable alarm because they revealed unexpectedly very high rates of out-marriage among the younger cohorts and also there were then some 700,000 children with a Jewish parent who were being brought up in another religion, as non-Jews. The authors accept these data without considering the criticisms of the weighting techniques employed by the survey organizers. Their book is the first of a number of detailed studies based on the 1990 Survey.

Probably the most important single demographic factor in the evolution of American Jewry after the Second World War has been their dispersion from New York City and its environs — although that region is still the largest single centre of Jewish residence. They have migrated especially to the West and to the South of the United States. That important trend has not been sufficiently noted and commented upon by sociologists or by historians, and *Jews on the Move* must therefore be welcomed as a highly original piece of research. The authors have found a close significant correlation between religious Orthodoxy and traditional religious observance (on the one hand) with stability of residence (on the other hand), and a similar clear association between lower levels of Orthodox practice and high rates of migration (pp. 175-89).

They have noted differences between migrants and non-migrants in virtually every identifiable area of Jewish life, with recent migrants almost inevitably being less heavily involved in Jewish communal affairs than those whose residence had been strikingly permanent. One of many examples they cite is the case of one community with 31 per cent of all adults who had lived in the locality for at least five years (1985 to 1990) belonging to one or more Jewish organizations while that was true of under 20 per cent of migrants. That was true also of membership of synagogues (regardless of denomination) and of Jewish philanthropic

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donations. On the other hand, there was the unexpected finding that many more interstate and international migrants than non-migrants had visited Israel at least once.

The main question which emerges from these multi-faceted associations is clearly that of causality: does migration weaken traditional Jewish ties and loyalties, or are the less Orthodox and more secular more likely to move? It has been frequently stated that, throughout modern Jewish history, and especially during the great migrations from Eastern Europe from the 1880s to 1924, it was mainly the young, secular, and non-traditional Jews who were more likely to leave their native lands to settle in other countries while the Orthodox were more likely to remain in the countries of their birth. This may still be true nowadays: today's Orthodox and traditional American Jews may be the descendants of those footloose immigrants.

In a purely statistical study such as that of the well-known and respected team of the Goldsteins, questions of motivation are scarcely dealt with. There is not a single quotation from any respondent interviewed in the 1990 study. Another unfortunate thing about statistical surveys is that there are often not enough clear demarcation lines between various groups — so that, for example, the category of 'Orthodox' includes the ultra-Orthodox such as the Hassidim and the nominally Orthodox because they might merely belong to an Orthodox synagogue but are not necessarily observant. The other categories are Conservative, Reform, and 'just Jewish'.

Another nuance can also be obscured by a statistical study. It is true, as the authors note, that American Jews migrate to other states in order to take advantage of greater economic opportunities or of higher levels of secular education, but there have also been other valid causes for migrating. For example, during the two decades from about 1955 to 1975, one of the most common reasons which led Jews to change locality was 'white flight' — bluntly, to abandon cities with astronomically high rates of crime associated with urban Blacks. During the 1960s, entire neighbourhoods were transformed within a very few years from predominantly Jewish to virtually *judenrein* — for example, the Grand Concourse area of the Bronx and north Flatbush in Brooklyn. I am of the opinion that it may well be that 'white flight' affected the pattern of American Jews more heavily than any other single factor during those two decades. Yet I could find no serious consideration of this factor in *Jews on the Move* — although any in-depth interview with a former resident of New York must have revealed the importance of ethnic and racial tension in the decision to move away and settle elsewhere to achieve greater security and have more pleasant neighbours.

Nevertheless, the central message of the book is very important for all communal planners: there seems to be a very strong trend for American Jewry to become ever more widely dispersed. But I do not believe that

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the implicitly pessimistic conclusions of the Goldsteins are fully justified. A comparison with other English-speaking democracies may temper such pessimism; in the United Kingdom, for example, it is in the provinces that the Jewish population has shrunk dramatically since 1950 while the Jews of London and the south-east of England have not experienced such a notable decline.

*Insecure Prosperity* by Ewa Morawska is a micro-study carried out chiefly with the techniques of the social anthropologist among a small Jewish community (estimated at between 1,000 and 3,000) in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The town is famous because it was almost wiped out in the catastrophic flood of 1889; it is a steel mining town with 50,000 residents in the Appalachians, with a majority population of White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPS) and with some recent Slavic immigrants who are poor and uneducated. Ewa Morawska teaches history and sociology at the University of Pennsylvania and she has used her talents to produce a fine study, combining insights from history, sociology, and social anthropology. Her research has been remarkably detailed and in a sense it is methodologically the very reverse of *Jews on the Move*. Apart from the historical and demographic material, she has interviewed residents and former residents of the town and there is an autobiographical Appendix '(Self-)Reflections of a Fieldworker'. The small Jewish community has shrunk considerably since the 1950s, as the economic base of Johnstown has declined, but the Jewish inhabitants do not live in a state of poverty but of 'insecure prosperity'. There is some antisemitism among those inhabitants of a rural background and among the Catholic Slav migrants, who are said to have little respect for the local Jewish shopkeepers and traders, and Jews told her that they often felt a sense of 'apartness' (p. 195) from the majority. But the Gentiles whom Morawska interviewed either had no views on the Jews or, when they said they did have views, they looked upon Jews as particularly pleasant people.

W. D. RUBINSTEIN

ARYEH LEVIN, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador, 1988-92*, xx + 427 pp., Frank Cass, London, 1996, £30.00 (paperback, £19.50).

Diplomatic memoirs are often unexciting reading and rarely contribute new insights into the society and politics of the countries to which the authors have been accredited. Aryeh Levin's book provides an exception. His years in Moscow — at first without full diplomatic status and later as ambassador — give one of the most illuminating pictures I have read of the transition from Gorbachev's Soviet Union to Yeltsin's Russia. After the long break in Soviet-Israeli relations following the Six-Day War of

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1967 there was a painfully slow beginning to re-establish contacts and to facilitate the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel. To embark upon such a mission demanded unusual qualities which Levin — a former senior figure in Israeli intelligence who also had held overseas assignments in Addis Ababa, Paris, Tehran, and at the United Nations in New York — clearly possessed.

He was brought up in Tehran, the offspring of Ukrainian (but Russian-speaking) Jews. Among his assets was an unusual command of Farsi, Russian, English, and French. Such abilities made it easier, when the time came, to establish relations not merely with the new Russian Republic but also with the new independent countries of the former Soviet Union — Ukraine, the states of the Caucasus and Central Asia, and the Baltic States. Since everything had to be organized from the beginning, including the most elementary needs of a foreign mission, Aryeh Levin can give a remarkably intimate picture of Soviet officialdom and the compounding of its inertia by differences of opinion among the country's leaders. These leaders fought shy of him but he was able to obtain through other personal contacts some insight into the way in which their isolation had led them to acquire and to sustain a world view which bore little relation to reality.

What Israel needed was an ending of the Soviet support for the hostile Arab countries in favour of an even-handed approach to possible peace-making. The Russians could have had in return an Israeli input into solving some of their technological and economic problems. But what they asked for was money. It seemed impossible to dispel the belief that because Israelis were Jews, they must have limitless finance at their command, as well as an ability to secure foreign, and particularly American, investment. That all investment requires some security was a lesson which perhaps even now has not been grasped.

The author is not only illuminating about the scene in Moscow; he is almost equally illuminating on the problems of Israeli politics and the obstacles that departmental and personal rivalries placed in the way of his principal assignment — the new exodus of the Jews from Russia. Yitzhak Shamir, Shimon Peres, David Levy, and more minor figures striving for their own part in the unfolding drama, are sketched in — helped by some revealing photographs — with a degree of realism as to their merits and defects which may explain why the author was not wholly *persona grata* in his own capital, let alone Moscow.

On the Jewish side, the key is the picture of the thousands upon thousands of Jews who sought the authorization to depart by flooding the Israeli Mission with letters and eventually queuing outside in all weather conditions in the hope of accelerating their departure. The matter was further complicated by the rivalry between *Nativ* (a formerly secret enterprise for facilitating emigration, now emerging into the open) and the Jewish Agency which had to seek the incorporation of the migrants

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into Israeli society. To the end of his stay, Ambassador Levin failed to persuade his government of the difficulties caused by the conflict.

A further complication was the complex nature of the emigration. For some, it was simply an escape from economic conditions which Jews had to endure like the majority of the population, but (along with the German and Armenian ethnic minorities) they were allowed to leave the country; for some, it was the consciousness of persisting antisemitism and the discrimination this inflicted upon them; while for others it was the appeal of the Zionist ideal itself. No doubt motives were never clear-cut and all must be related to the fact that most would-be migrants shared the general Soviet ignorance of the 'West' and were in particular ignorant of Israeli society and of what they might expect when they reached the Promised Land.

It would be wrong, however, to see this absorbing book as solely concerned with description and analysis. Aryeh Levin has two particular views of his own which would not command universal assent. In the first place, he is convinced that in one form or another Russia will continue to be a great power in the Middle East and that Israel needs to consider its foreign policy in the light of this fact; he also believes that both Russia and Israel face a common enemy in Islamic 'fundamentalism' and that this should bring them together. In the second place, despite the massive exodus of Jews to Israel and the West when the doors were opened, Aryeh Levin believes that there is likely to be a continuous Jewish presence in at least Russia and Ukraine. According to him, we are not yet at the end of the story.

One must hope that these fascinating memoirs will be followed by a further book in which both these views will be argued for in greater detail.

MAX BELOFF

RAYMOND RUSSELL, *Utopia in Zion. The Israeli Experience with Worker Cooperatives* (SUNY Series in Israeli Studies), x + 330 pp., State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1995, \$19.95.

'Utopia' in this context has two related meanings. The long history of the idea and practice of co-operation, especially worker co-operation, concerns the search for some alternative structure to free-market capitalism. And 'utopian' socialism was the derogatory description by Marx and Engels of all such reforming attempts as against their 'scientific' socialism. What is useful about this book is that while focused on the specific Israeli history it necessarily looks, sometimes briefly, at both discussions and the experience of worker co-operation in a number of countries over a long period. Moreover, it goes into some of the familiar topics of Industrial Sociology, in some detail in the case of organizational theory.

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Although the author examines both kibbutzim and moshavim, especially in chapter 5, 'Israel's Labor Economy between Crisis and Collapse' (but also elsewhere), his purpose is to study the very much larger number of what he calls 'the more classic' type of worker co-operatives. The Appendix (which covers 56 pages) is entitled 'Israeli Worker Cooperatives, 1924-1993' (although in fact it includes seven formed between 1910 and 1923) and lists all that are known of. It is true that most of them no longer exist and many did not last for more than a few years, and that fact is indeed the basis of much of the book's somewhat dour tone. The author quotes various writers, not least Sidney and Beatrice Webb, who concluded that worker co-operatives either were no alternative to capitalism or stopped being, as they hoped to be, democratic organizations of producers.

The book necessarily examines the reasons for the great quantity of co-operative efforts, of all kinds, in Israel. There is an attempt to establish the extent to which they arose, notably in the early days of Zionist settlement in Palestine, because of the socialist/pioneering ideology of those who followed the writings of, *inter alia*, A. D. Gordon, the 'religion of labour' advocate. The author also looks at the view that the main reason was the economic circumstances of the time and he concludes, diplomatically and convincingly, that it was a mixture of both ideology and pragmatism.

But the book goes beyond origins to study long-term history and in the second chapter written with Robert Hanneman, there is a mainly statistical examination of both formations and dissolutions of worker co-operatives between 1924 and 1993. They look at a range of variables — the effect of the size of the population of co-operatives at the beginning of the period of study as well as the social and economic environment: the rate of immigration, the change of government in 1977 which was less favourable to the labour economy, the rate of unemployment, and general economic conditions. A major factor, indeed, of growth and decline, was found to be institutional processes. By that is meant the changing role of the Histadrut, the details of which they spell out. These included great support in the early years, a turbulent history of fraught relationships between the Histadrut and the co-operatives, and a later story of less interest by the Histadrut.

The same two authors also examine one of the more 'dismal' aspects of the story of the co-operatives (which has been the case in all countries): the use of hired labour. Their Table 3.2 (p. 101) shows the number and percentage of hired workers in the periods 1960-88. Broadly, it was always above 50 per cent and by the late 1980s was over 80 per cent. Some have thought that the use of hired labour was inevitable. For example, the consequence of the doctrine of equal pay 'is that Israeli worker cooperatives are forced to employ non-members whenever they wish to pay someone either substantially more or substantially less than

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members are customarily paid'. This paradoxical result is associated with the existence of only a limited membership of skilled members while the unskilled and white-collar workers do not become members.

Chapter 4, 'Democracy and Oligarchy in Israeli Worker Cooperatives', not only looks at a familiar, central feature of Industrial Sociology — Max Weber, Robert Michels and other and more recent contributors to the discussion are here displayed — it also leads to a much less dismal part of the book. The author finds much evidence of democracy in action even in the two largest worker co-operatives (the two bus organizations Egged and Dan) and they also discuss why they have lasted so long. Apart from the relevance to the immediate discussion of Israeli experience, this chapter is a valuable contribution to the discussion in general.

The final chapter sums up the discussion and peers into the future. It is judicious and quite hopeful. While acknowledging that the 'utopian' period of Israel's history has long gone, he notes that worker co-operatives continue to be formed in Israel (and elsewhere) but 'other forms of employee ownership and workers' participation in decision making are becoming even more widespread'. The utopian types of workers' co-operation may be at an end but there will be more practical ones. Whether they will ever constitute more than a tiny part of the country's economic and social structure is another question.

HAROLD POLLINS

GIDEON SHIMONI, *The Zionist Ideology*, xvi + 506 pp., Brandeis University Press, Hanover, N.H., 1995, n.p.

Gideon Shimoni is a well-known historian at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and he has written in an illuminating way on Zionism in Britain and in South Africa. *The Zionist Ideology* is a major and impressive work; it must be read by all serious students of Zionist history. It is a clear and very detailed account of the evolution of the major, and minor, strands within the ideology of Zionism, as they emerged and developed from the mid-nineteenth century until the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

The author's central argument is that virtually all strands within Zionism reflect similar, sometimes identical, problems which centre round the existence of a Jewish *ethnie* — an ethnic group conscious of its own identity. *Ethnies* grew with the rise of nationalism in Europe and among Diaspora Jews generally with the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, as there was a breakdown of traditional religious observances and practices. It was not only antisemitism but mainly that self-perception which essentially propelled the formative thinkers of Zionism. The classical Zionist and the Zionist right were much more

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alike than many would believe, or wish to believe: their differences were often more those of nuance rather than essence. Gideon Shimoni sustains his argument well, throughout the 500 pages of his study.

English-speaking readers will have seen two books dealing with the subject: Walter Laqueur's *A History of Zionism* (1972) and Shlomo Avineri's *The Making of Modern Zionism* (1981). The present volume under review is much closer to Laqueur's exposition but, unlike Laqueur, Shimoni does not deal at any length with the details of the history of the Zionist movement in the *yishuv* and the Diaspora and also does not give an account of the critics of Zionism. On the other hand, *The Zionist Ideology* is more erudite and pays particular attention to lesser-known Zionist theorists, those often on the fringes of the movement. Avineri's book is an account of 18 key Zionist theorists and pioneers, from Krochmal to Ben-Gurion, illuminating the ideas of each one of them but failing to place them in a wider ideological framework. In contrast, Shimoni is neutral and even-handed in his exposition and displays no sign of the hostility to Revisionist Zionism found in Avineri's book. *The Making of Modern Zionism* remains probably the best account of the formative thinkers of Zionism for undergraduates while Shimoni's study might be described as an updated blend of Laqueur's and Avineri's studies, intended for graduates and for academic historians.

*The Zionist Ideology* deals with various movements, such as 'Labor Zionism' and 'Revisionist Zionism', with two concluding chapters on 'Zionism as Secular Jewish Ideology' and 'The Rights to the Land'. Shimoni stresses again the similarities between all components of Zionism but also considers at length the exceptions. If this book has a flaw, it is the omission of any contextual or comparative discussion of Zionism within the larger matrix of Jewish stances and ideologies from the 1850s to the late 1940s. Is it true that Zionism was the only ideology available to Jews which emphasized the existence of a Jewish *ethnie*? Surely all popular movements in the Diaspora also did this, albeit in different ways. And how does one account for the remarkable *unpopularity*, indeed *marginality*, of Zionism among the mass of Jews until the Holocaust, an *unpopularity* notable even in interwar Poland, where the Zionist movement in all its varieties was probably the third most popular organized ideological movement, after Bund Socialism and the *Agudas Israel*? For every Jew who made *aliyah* in the period 1880–1925, there were 40 who chose to emigrate elsewhere — especially to the United States, where they and their descendants have almost all remained. The reasons for this are surely to be found in the very features which were among the most fundamental bases of Zionism — the duty to migrate to a desert land as a pioneer, to master an alien language and abandon a living culture, and without doubt to endure harsh living conditions; that was what Shimoni has rightly termed '*downward social mobility*' (p. 195). That drastic change of life-style appealed to some intellectuals but to



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surprisingly few ordinary Jews until the rise of Nazism and the Second World War caused the bulk of the Jewish Diaspora to undergo a complete reversal of its attitude to Zionism. Establishing a Jewish State in the Land of Israel now became the most permanent aim, worth all struggles and sacrifices to succeed in achieving that objective.

W. D. RUBINSTEIN

BERNARD WASSERSTEIN, *Vanishing Diaspora: The Jews in Europe Since 1945*, xx + 332 pp., Hamish Hamilton, London, 1996, £20.00.

Professor Wasserstein has many merits as a contemporary historian. He writes with extreme clarity and where statistics are of the essence, he can make use of them without departing from his line of thought or confusing the reader with irrelevant numbers. In this work he tackles the important subject of what has happened to the Jews of Europe (including the countries of the former Soviet Union) since the victorious allies first confronted the facts of the Holocaust and its pitiful survivors, the Displaced Persons of whose plight he gives a moving account.

While anyone looking at Jewish history since 1945 must place in the foreground the creation and achievements of the State of Israel, Europe must also be a subject for investigation, partly indeed because the survival and growth of Israel has been the fruit very largely of what has happened in Europe — the eradication of all but tiny remnants of the surviving Jews of Eastern and Central Europe and the opening of the gates to emigration from the Soviet Union and its successor States. The third principal strand in contemporary Jewry is of course the Jewish population of the United States — a competitor when that country has been available for the incorporation of Europe's Jews, sometimes direct, sometimes after a period in Israel.

Since it is Professor Wasserstein's thesis that the European Diaspora is vanishing before our eyes, either in Eastern Europe as the consequence of hostile pressures or as in Western Europe — notably Britain and France — as the result of assimilation into the host societies, it is odd that the author does not state whether his analysis of a vanishing Diaspora is also applicable to the United States, a country in which he has held a professorial chair until quite recently. For one cannot but be struck by the similarity of his central argument to that put forward by the Israeli scholar David Vital in his *The Future of the Jews*, published in 1990 and also the fruit of a period of teaching in the United States. Both may be right and the future may see the only Jewish entity as being that of the State of Israel. To imagine what Israel would be like with no Diaspora demands an effort which even the most knowledgeable among us might find very difficult indeed. And I do not refer only to the fact that fundraising for Israel and Israeli institutions is now the principal form that leadership in the Anglo-Jewish community takes.

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The difficulty of subscribing without cavil to Professor Wasserstein's thesis is that Jewish history, like history in general, has been so full of surprises that to extrapolate from observed tendencies in the immediate past is always dangerous. Even on the demographic side where the argument for disappearance is strongest, the book calls attention to the fecundity of the ultra-Orthodox Jews. Even on the cultural side where the argument is also strong, there are anomalies. After all, what has Professor Wasserstein returned to the United Kingdom for? To become head of the Oxford Institute for Post-Biblical Jewish Studies (and Director of the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies). If Jewish scholarship were indeed on the decline, why should such an Institute flourish? Or what does the author make of the University of Sussex's new Centre for German-Jewish Studies which held an important conference to mark the centenary of Herzl's *Der Judenstaat*?

The 'new European Disorder', as Professor Wasserstein rightly styles the current scene, makes it hard to know where Europe itself is going, particularly in the light of the movement of peoples that accompanies it. Germany provides a haven for Russian Jews while France's Jewish community is largely North African by origin. We cannot know the future but must be grateful to those who interpret the past.

MAX BELOFF

## CHRONICLE

*Tel Aviv University News* published a special issue about the 1996 meeting of the Board of Governors of the University. The Chairman of the Board is reported to have stated that with its 26,000 students, not only is the University the largest university in Israel, it is also becoming Tel Aviv's cultural centre. The Rector said that while the student body now consists of 67 per cent undergraduates, 28 per cent master's students, and five per cent doctoral students, the goal is to have 10 per cent doctoral students; that can be achieved by increasing the number of graduate fellowships, streamlining academic programmes, and establishing more graduate schools.

The Fall 1996 issue of *Tel Aviv University News* states that the university granted, in 1996, 150 doctoral degrees and that the number of female students among these was the largest ever: 62 women, compared to 45 in 1994 and 49 in 1995. The total number of Ph.D.s ranged in age from 24 to 68 years old; 13 were from the former Soviet Union and four were Arab students.

At the meeting of the Board of Governors, there was a 'ground-breaking ceremony' for the building of a new edifice for the School of Languages, donated by a benefactor from Los Angeles who was born in Poland and had survived the Holocaust, while most of the members of his family perished. The President of Tel Aviv University is quoted as saying on that occasion that historically 'Jews were polyglots, often speaking three, five, even ten languages. However, the Zionist focus on the revival of the Hebrew language in the modern state of Israel has succeeded so much that many people born and bred here speak no other language'. The university teaches 57 languages, including Sanskrit and Chinese, but there is a strong emphasis on 22 ancient and modern Semitic languages.

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The Spring 1996 issue of *Tel Aviv University News* states that two medical researchers from the university recently published the findings of a study they carried out about women in medicine in Israel. They found that 'the number of female medical students in Israeli universities has increased significantly over the past 25 years, from 24 per cent in 1969 to 47 per cent in 1989 and 48 per cent in 1995 — a trend similar to that of other Western countries. In addition, the achievements of the female students are similar to those of their male colleagues. . . . based on objective criteria such as entry and final examinations, achievements of men and women are similar. However, when it comes to professional promotion and competition for senior management positions, the distribution of women lags way behind that of men. In the majority of cases, acceptance to fields of specialization is at the sole discretion of heads of departments . . .'

It is largely because of the huge wave of immigration from the former Soviet Union that there has been such an increase in the number of women in the medical professions and in Israeli medical schools. 'The percentage of women rose from 30 per cent prior to 1989 to 56 per cent today. The study predicts that

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at this rate, women will outnumber men in the profession at a faster rate than in the U.S.’

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The same issue of *Tel Aviv University News* states that the Land of Geshur Project in the Golan Heights was started in 1987, under the direction of two professors from the University, who with their teams each summer ‘uncover additional evidence of previous civilizations. . . . The Project has brought together archaeologists and volunteers from institutions in three continents . . .’. The excavation of Tel Hadar has been carried out by the university’s Institute of Archaeology in co-operation with the New Jersey Archaeological Consortium of the United States. ‘Teams from Harvard University’s Peabody Museum, the Finnish Theological Institute and several Japanese universities are involved in the other sites.’

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According to the Ministry of Tourism of Israel, about 115,000 Russians visited Israel in 1995, making Russia the fifth largest source of visitors to the country, after the United States, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany. Many Russian tourists went to Israel to visit relatives, but ‘at least half the tourists were non-Jews’.

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The fifth edition of *Antisemitism World Report* was published in 1996 by the Institute for Jewish Policy Research of London (formerly the Institute of Jewish Affairs) and the American Jewish Committee. The Foreword states that this fifth edition ‘surveys antisemitism throughout the world, country by country, in the year 1995. It examines developments in 61 countries, draws comparisons with previous years as well as across regions and identifies regional and global trends’. The Introduction comments that a comparison with the first four *Reports* ‘leads to the conclusion that the wave of antisemitism of the late 1980s–early 1990s has peaked. There is no doubt that an upsurge took place, which was boosted by the collapse of Communism. But in the region that caused the greatest alarm — Central and Eastern Europe — the situation has stabilized and the threat of antisemitism entering and dominating the political mainstream has receded. In the other main trouble spot, Germany, where racist and antisemitic attacks appeared to be getting out of control, the authorities have determinedly regained the upper hand’ (p. xvii).

Belgium and Switzerland have enacted legislation making the denial of the Holocaust an offence. ‘. . . opinion polls conducted by the American Jewish Committee in various countries indicate very low levels of susceptibility to Holocaust denial . . . The most often-expressed fear is that Holocaust denial will influence mainstream opinion and thereby gain legitimacy. This once seemed possible in France, where Holocaust denial has been taken up by a number of academics — though not historians. But even in France this danger has receded. . . . In France and elsewhere, the illegitimacy of Holocaust denial was made even more obvious in 1995 as a result of the many events to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War and the liberation of the death

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camps. The immense amount of public attention devoted to the Holocaust and emphasis placed on the centrality of the Holocaust to the Second World War (a development of the last fifteen to twenty years only) served as a reminder of what antisemitism can lead to' (pp. xxi-xxii).

The Conclusion to the Introduction states: 'There appears to be a continuing resistance to antisemitism when packaged in undisguised, extreme forms. But when it takes on a less blatant, more respectable guise, some people may be willing to tolerate it. For example, surveys show that while voters may not choose to vote for a party *because* of its antisemitism, the antisemitism does not deter them from making such a choice' (p. xxix).

\*

The Summer 1996 issue of *East European Jewish Affairs* (vol. 26, no. 1) has an article by Robert J. Brym entitled 'Russian Attitudes Towards Jews: An Update'. He states that from the end of the 1980s to the beginning of the 1990s, 'anti-Jewish sentiment was based mainly in uninfluential social groups. . . [but] anti-Jewish feeling is no longer concentrated in any identifiable socio-demographic category of the Russian population. Nor is it tied, at least directly, to economic discontent or political party orientation. Rather, disliking Jews is directly associated with increasingly widespread anti-Reform and anti-Western sentiment. . . In its extreme form, dislike of Jews infects about a seventh of the Russian population' (pp. 62-63).

\*

The Sociological Institute for Community Studies of Bar-Ilan University in Israel publishes *Sociological Papers*. Volume 5, no. 2, June 1996, is entitled *Hierarchical Levels of Subethnicity: Near Eastern Jews in the U.S., France and Mexico* by Sergio Della Pergola *et al.* The authors state on p. 3 that in this study they 'focus on the experiences of three different Jewish immigrant groups, all sharing a Near Eastern background and relocation in large urban areas in Western countries: Jews from the Magreb (Moroccans, Tunisians, and Algerians) in Greater Paris, Syrian Jews in Mexico City, and Iranian Jews in the Los Angeles area. . . The United States and France provide two different examples of societal contexts emphasizing acculturation of immigrants while Mexico need not do the same since it is not a major country of (recent) immigration.'

Syrian Jews left their native land to settle in Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s; they were a few thousand and they were followed by others from the 1960s to the 1980s, 'some of whom arrived after a period of stay in Israel. As a consequence, the Syrian Jewish community in Mexico was becoming numerically dominated by the second and third generation of immigrants' (p. 7), and by 1991 94 per cent of Jews in Mexico who were of Syrian origin had Mexican citizenship either because they were born in Mexico or because they had become naturalized. It may well be that Sephardim who spoke Judeo-Spanish sought resettlement in Spanish-speaking countries.

Jews from Iran went to Israel after the establishment of the State in 1948 until the mid-1950s; their numbers were estimated at 28,000. After the revolution in 1978, more than half of the remaining Jewish population fled to Israel and to the United States; in America, they settled mainly in Los Angeles and in New York.

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Jews from the Middle East and from North Africa exhibited the following pattern: '... those more culturally traditional and from lower social strata emigrated to Israel, whereas the better educated, professionals and entrepreneurs emigrated to the Western countries such as France and the United States. Particularly in the case of France, ... the educational attainment of Jewish immigrants from North Africa was equal or better than the level of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe' (p. 8).

In each of the three case-studies, 'immigrant Jews of Near Eastern/North African origin came to represent a segment of a larger existing Jewish population. In Greater Paris toward the end of the 1970s, North African Jews, including their French-born children, had become the majority (54 per cent) of a total Jewish population estimated at about 270,000. ... In the Mexico City metropolitan area, the Jewish population of Syrian origin, including Mexican-born persons, represented roughly 40 per cent of a total Jewish population estimated at about 40,000 in 1991. In Los Angeles, the share of Iranian Jews in the total Jewish community was much smaller. According to estimates in 1990 their numbers approached 30,000 out of a total Jewish population of over 500,000' (pp. 9-10).

\*

*Jewish Obligation to the Non-Jew* is sub-titled 'Source Material' and is a short compilation by the Chief Rabbi of the Union of Orthodox Synagogues of South Africa, Cyril K. Harris. It is published as Tikkun Publications no. 1, 1996, and the inside front cover states:

Mission Statement for Tikkun

'As the Jewish Community, we seek to make a meaningful difference to the upliftment of disadvantaged people in South Africa'

## BOOKS RECEIVED

(Books listed here may be reviewed later)

- Baker, Nicola, ed., *Building a Relational Society: New priorities for public policy*, xviii + 288 pp., Arena, Aldershot, Hampshire, 1996, £15.00.
- Bat Ye'or, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam. From Jihad to Dhimmitude* with a Foreword by Jacques Ellul (First published in French in Paris, 1991). Translated by Miriam Kochan and David Littman, 522 pp., Associated University Presses, London, 1996, £15.00 (hardback, £34.50).
- Belich, James, *Making Peoples. A History of the New Zealanders From Polynesian Settlement to the End of the Nineteenth Century*, 497 pp., Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, London, 1996, £25.00.
- Boyarin, Jonathan, *Thinking in Jewish*, ix + 218 pp., The University of Chicago Press, London and Chicago, 1996, n.p.
- Deshen, Shlomo and Walter P. Zenner, eds., *Jews among Muslims: Communities in the Precolonial Middle East*, ix + 292 pp., Macmillan Press, Houndmills and London, 1996, £16.99.

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- Domb, Risa, ed., *New Women's Writing From Israel*, vii + 230 pp., Vallentine, Mitchell, London and Portland, Or., 1996, n.p.
- Hartman, Moshe and Harriet Hartman, *Gender Equality and American Jews*, xix + 374 pp., State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y., 1996, \$24.95.
- Maccoby, Hyam, *A Pariah People. The Anthropology of Antisemitism*, 236 pp., Constable, London, 1996, £20.00.
- Porter, Roy, *London. A Social History*, xvi + 431 pp. (First published by Hamish Hamilton in 1994), Penguin Books, London, 1996, £15.00 (paperback).
- Rapoport-Albert, Ada, ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*, xxiv + 514 pp., The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization (published in the United Kingdom by Vallentine, Mitchell), London and Portland, Or., 1996, £65.00.
- Segel, Harold B., ed., *Stranger in Our Midst: Images of the Jew in Polish Literature*, xiv + 402 pp., Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London, 1996, n.p.
- Kadish, Sharman, ed., *Building Jerusalem. Jewish Architecture in Britain*, xvi + 231 pp., Vallentine, Mitchell, London and Portland, Or., 1996, £45.00 or \$59.50 (paperback, £19.50 or \$25.00).
- Solomon, Norman, *Judaism. A Very Short Introduction*, x + 146 pp., Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1996, £4.99 (paperback).
- Spewack, Bella, *Streets. A Memoir of the Lower East Side* (with an Introduction by Ruth Limmer and an Afterword by Lois Raeder Elias), xxxviii + 173 pp., The Feminist Press at the City University of New York, New York, 1996, \$10.95 (paperback).
- Tal, Kali, *Worlds of Hurt. Reading the Literatures of Trauma*, x + 296 pp., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, £14.95 (hardback, £40.00).

## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

- BELOFF**, Professor Lord, F.B.A. Emeritus Professor of Government and Public Administration in the University of Oxford and Emeritus Fellow of All Souls College, Oxford. Chief publications: *The Foreign Policy of Soviet Russia* (two volumes, 1947 and 1949); *Imperial Sunset, 1897-1942* (two volumes, 1969 and 1989); *Wars and Welfare: Britain 1914-1945*, 1984; and was the British editor of seven volumes of *L'Europe du XIX<sup>e</sup> et XX<sup>e</sup> siècles*, published between 1959 and 1967.
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