HASSIDIM CONFRONTING MODERNITY

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In the late 1960s, I knew virtually nothing about hassidic Jews when I began researching their lifestyle and community organization. But I still vividly recall how I was struck then by their distinctive presence along the Park Avenue area in the Mile End district of Montreal. Many of my peers mockingly referred to them as the 'Park Avenue White Sox' (after the famous Chicago White Sox baseball team) because some of the men in the community wore breeches tied below the knee, so that their white-stockinged calves were visible below their long black coats and slipper-like shoes. Those hassidim not only appeared out of place but, to my surprise, seemed untouched by the secular influences of the wider society.[1]

At around this time, in November 1969, I noted in my set of field notes:

> I spent a good part of the morning walking the streets around Park Avenue to get a feel for where the hassidim live in this part of the city. I was there around mid-morning. Hassidic men are walking briskly as though they are on a mission. No one strolls leisurely. My casual strolls, at various times of the day, allowed me to also observe scores of women pushing baby carriages and young boys, with lengthy earlocks, playing outside their homes. I wonder if this community has experienced any major changes that have impacted on their chosen way of life? I imagine this will become one underlying theme of my research. How can it not be? Based on a few conversations that I've had with persons that seem knowledgeable about hassidim — mainly non-hassidic Jews I should point out — they have managed the impossible. Their treasured lifestyle appears to remain intact despite living in a densely urban area surrounded by goyim.

The hassidim are, indeed, a success story, if success is measured by the ability to retain a distinctive way of life which includes not only '. . . a belief in the absolute authority of religious law, in the covenant between Israelites and God, and in the certainty of messianic redemption'[2], but an abiding commitment to the norms and sanctions that characterize the hassidic sect with which the individual identifies. To be sure,

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total uniformity is hardly possible and, as any observer of hassidic life will attest, the variability in lifestyle within the hassidic community is best seen as falling along a continuum. That said, however, identification with, and commitment to, a hassidic way of life in line with the culture and ideology of any particular sect, remains impressive.

Nevertheless, change (in some manner or other) is inherent in human activity and the hassidim are not an exception to that general rule. All communities seeking to insulate themselves must contend with outside influences; in order to do so, they organize a series of boundary-maintaining mechanisms which are intended to influence, shape, and regulate the behaviour of their members. Social scientists who have carried out field research and who have studied the phenomenon among such societies (not only hassidim but also the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish) have described the ways in which social control issues operate.[3]

However, although the leaders of hassidic communities may initially succeed in regulating the pace of inevitable change, it now seems increasingly unlikely that they will be able to maintain the physical and social boundaries which they have hitherto succeeded in imposing. The boundaries have become more porous and the impact of social change is already apparent to a determined social researcher — but, admittedly, not to total outsiders. Heilman has perspicaciously observed that while hassidic communities are often portrayed as a picturesque reminder of yesteryear caught in a time warp, '... today's Hasidim are very much part of the modern world, struggling in a variety of ways against powerful social forces that threaten either to sweep them away or else transform them into something radically different from what their founders conceived or their leaders perceive'.[4]

The resurgence of hassidic communities, following their near destruction during the Holocaust, has been analyzed elsewhere.[5] In what could not be imagined only a few decades earlier, today's hassidic communities enjoy burgeoning numbers and a plethora of institutions to meet their needs, and they rank extremely high on any scale of 'institutional completeness'.[6] Among North American Jewry, hassidim enjoy the highest birth rate at a time when demographic analyses show the overall Jewish birthrate to be declining.[7] Significantly, this sizeable population increment is not matched by a defection stream warranting serious concern for the time being. Moreover, there is little evidence to indicate that the younger generation's commitment to the traditional hassidic lifestyle is diminished; in fact, the reverse may actually be the case. As evidenced by an explosive birthrate, the ability to attract financial resources to sustain a widely diverse institutional infrastructure, matched by a heightened awareness of the economic and political clout which their numbers can exert in political circles, the commitment of the younger generation has not faltered.

The present paper, which concentrates on a geographic segment of Montreal hassidim, examines social change at both the macro and micro levels. I divide the analysis into two segments which may seem unrelated but which in fact reflect different dimensions of change impacting on the community. In the first, I draw upon two extensive surveys which were commissioned by the Coalition of Outremont Hassidic Organizations (COHO). COHO was established in 1996 by some hassidic entrepreneurs in order to identify the economic and social needs of the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox populations of Greater Montreal.[8] In another section, I examine social change more closely and focus on a number of specific problems which my informants identified in the course of my intensive fieldwork. They are problems which they considered to have altered the tenor of their everyday life in their particular hassidic community.

It is necessary, first, to make a selective review of the relevant literature and then to specify background information and data sources.

Review

The social scientific study of hassidic life is, in practice, the study of how social change is negotiated, managed, and controlled. There is the mistaken impression on the part of lay people that the lifestyle of hassidim makes them impervious to foreign influences. In fact, a review of selective studies of the subject demonstrates that social change has been an essential focus for the scholars who undertake the task of analyzing hassidic beliefs and social behaviour.

Solomon Poll's *The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg*, published in 1962, is one of the earliest sociological studies of Brooklyn's hassidim.[9] His central interest was the community's social, religious, and economic structures and therefore he did not explicitly focus on social change, although that theme inevitably emerges. In the chapter on assimilation, Poll notes that when hassidim came to settle in the United States, their leaders stressed that it was imperative not to follow the irreligious practices of the majority of American Jewish citizens:[10]

> The Hasidic leadership recognized that the greatest enemy of Hasidism is change. If members should engage in even the most minute secular behavior... this would be a deviation from the norms of the group and might lead to more extensive deviant behavior endangering group cohesion.

Even at that early stage in the community's evolution, Poll rightly predicted that active participation in the labour force could have adverse consequences by restricting the community's ability to retain tight control over its members. Overall, however, Poll offers an idyllic portrait of hassidic life. For example, marriages were for life. Until 1959, there had been 'only two divorces of which the community

had any knowledge and the individuals involved were not considered true Hasidim by the community'.[11]

In 1974 (12 years later) Israel Rubin published *Satmar: An Island in the City*, in which he noted that the Satmar sect, despite its highly successful insulating mechanisms, '... remains exposed to internal and external forces beyond its control'.[12] In particular, Rubin identifies several areas of potential conflict. The first is the secular education of females; even in the early 1970s, the programme in the school for girls was far more advanced and elaborate than that in the school for boys. Rubin comments that the situation had an impact on preserving insularity but also gave women an increased influence in family decision-making. Referring to economic pressures, Rubin identifies several related aspects. First, '... a clash between motivation for high spending ... and limitations on earning',[13] which, at the time of his research, was in an incipient stage; second, and related, the trend towards working wives stemming from the necessity to make ends meet; third, and resulting from the second, the changing balance of power within the family. With regard to the place of women in the community, Rubin observes: '... power may be gradually slipping into the hands of those who are penetrating the barrier that is designed to keep Satmar culturally insulated'.[14] Finally, he detects the beginning of a change in the secular education of boys, particularly in giving the pupils a better knowledge of English to equip them for finding gainful employment. There were two other major problems, unrelated to the economic situation: the succession problem of the religious leader[15] and the substantial population increase. There was no heir apparent to succeed the present Satmar rebbe since he had no surviving children while the system of social control exercised by the community was greatly dependent on close personal ties — which might be weakened by a large population increase.

By 1992, when Jerome Mintz's *Hasidic People* was published, there were many more consequences of social change among hassidic Jewry and much of the volume's content reflects the minor and major conflicts which had rocked hassidic life.[16] Apart from the problem of succession among the Satmar, Mintz examines politics and race in Crown Heights and hassidic litigation before the United States Supreme Court. The chapter on 'Family Problems' sheds some light on the consequences of change at the micro level and, as in the case of other studies, focuses mainly on the changing status of women.

Mintz notes that an increasing number of hassidic women had secured employment outside the community as teachers, secretaries, or clerks. More generally, there was a greater number by far of gainfully-employed women, at least until the birth of their first child. He comments that in the process, they established contacts which '... allow the women to hear voices that are discordant from those in

their own society'.[17] He adds: 'In these explorations into the secular world, community mores and standards are stretched and sometimes broken . . .'[18] and concludes: 'The Hasidim are well aware that women today are more sophisticated than they were a generation ago and that a new balance has to be struck between the couples'.[19] Divorces are no longer rare and 'The major share for the blame for the increase in divorces . . . most often falls on the assimilation of new ideas from outside the community. Blame is placed at the door of social change'.[20]

In *New World Hasidim*, a 1995 collection edited by Janet Belcove-Shalin, the theme of change is considered in the volume's introduction.[21] The hassidim's story is still one of overall success, but there are critical challenges and serious problems have arisen. Belcove-Shalin states that some hassidic communities have been rocked by scandal and controversy, including acts of child and drug abuse, racism, violence, and kidnapping.[22] She comments that reports about these and other problems have been featured by the media, and have cast a pall on the idyllic hassidic lifestyle.

Two other volumes, both published in 2005, reflect on the theme of change, one to a greater extent than the other. Jacques Gutwirth has attempted to account for the unexpected rebirth of Hassidism, from 1945 to the present day, but he does not set out to document the varied changes which hassidic communities have encountered over the last several decades.[23] However, the reader of this optimistic volume discovers that, willy-nilly, accommodation to the surrounding environment (be it in the United States, Israel, Antwerp, or France, for example) has necessitated entering into practices and arrangements which were formerly unnecessary and even considered undesirable. I will cite here only two examples. First, Gutwirth notes that because of financial difficulties, greater numbers of women are compelled to find work outside the home, even if only part-time, but that this development is also, in part, the result of the indirect influences of prevailing feminism.[24] As already noted above, such new-found employment opportunities, based either on economic necessity or a desire to explore creative talents more fully, or a combination of the two, have an impact on the organization of the household. Second, arrangements entered into with local governments, in return for economic or social assistance, may impose demands which restrict the degree of hassidic insulation from the surrounding culture.

Viewed from a distance, hassidic life may appear largely unaltered and some believe that the modifications required by legal, social, or economic circumstances have largely failed to dent seriously the passion with which adherents live their religious life. But Hella Winston finds serious flaws in this serene portrayal of hassidic life: in *Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels* (published in 2005), she

recounts the experiences of several hassidic Jews from Satmar and other sects who, unhappy about the severe restrictions of their group's lifestyle, struggled to move out of their community.[25] The actual number of such defectors may be small, but their rebellion has attracted much attention and comment.[26] That may be because over the years, the focus has been on the attraction of sects and cults rather than on the disillusion and rebellion of those born and bred in intensely religious communities.[27]

Background and Data Sources

This Journal published in 1997 an article on changes which I documented among the Tasher hassidim in the Quebec community of Boisbriand. I had first written about that group in 1987 and wanted to discover whether there had been any changes. I focused in particular on several demographic and institutional changes as well as on the Tasher's use of the media to enhance their agenda.[28] However, the bulk of Montreal's hassidic Jewry is situated just west of the city's Mile End district, north-east of Mont Royal and Park Avenue streets, notably on Esplanade and Jeanne Mance. Another block of hassidim live in the Eastern part of Outremont, an area abutting the city of Montreal, particularly on and around the streets of Hutchison, Durocher, and Querbes. Owing to their sheer numbers, this is the area where hassidim attain their maximum visibility. Since my introduction to hassidic Jewry had been in that very area of Montreal, it now seemed reasonable to return to it. However, it was not nostalgia alone which determined my decision to do so.

An increasing number of unrelated incidents had brought the theme of change in clearer relief. Although each incident, by itself, might be seen as not entirely unusual, taken together they seemed to suggest that the community was in the throes of change even if, to use Gladwell's phrase, the tipping point had not been met.[29] First, I was beginning to hear about people who had divorced and I had to revise my opinion that these people would not consider divorce, even if they had to deal with marital difficulties of a serious nature. Second, I was surprised at the extent of the activities in which they now engaged — activities which in earlier years would have been quite inadmissible to them but which they now claimed not to be that unusual or reprehensible — most notably, visits to local bars and to sporting events. In 2004, a hassid had asked me to meet him at a fast-food restaurant and in the course of our conversation there, he mentioned in a matter-of-fact, casual manner that he attended sporting events on occasion and had visited the local casino, while conveying the impression that he remained as firmly committed to the Satmar lifestyle as any of his deeply-religious peers.

It had also become increasingly clear that, despite rabbinic prohibition, numbers of hassidim whom I met were spending considerable time surfing the Internet just for purposes of pure enjoyment. Moreover, many of them assured me that they were far from unique, that many of their peers did the same. Meanwhile, there had been a major tax scandal involving some individuals and institutions affiliated with the Boisbriand Tasher and by then Bob Dylan's 'The times they are a changin' came to mind.

My method of choice in the study of hassidic Jews is ethnography with the help of participant observation and informal interviews.[30] It is an appropriate method for two reasons, mainly: first, it enables the researcher to fully understand how hassidim organize and make sense of their everyday lives and second, since hassidim strictly cloister their communities, only ethnographical methods are likely to succeed — certainly not formal interviews or replies to questionnaires.[31]

In the circumstances of hassidic leaders ensuring as far as possible that their communities retain their insularity, it is fortunate that a somewhat unexpected turn of events may help to reveal aspects of lifestyle which have been traditionally hidden from outsiders. That is the case when hassidim have approached government agencies for various kinds of assistance and have been required to comply with demands for relevant information. It is then that we discover that hassidim are not immune from such problems as care for the elderly, poverty, learning and development problems, and bleak employment prospects. In the process, stereotypes about hassidim begin to unravel: not all of them are content with their lifestyle; a proportion of the community has to live well below the poverty line; and both as a group and as individuals, their insulation from the mainstream does not succeed in making them unaware of the social, economic, and political climates obtaining outside their gates.[32]

Occasionally, carefully-crafted strategies for gaining access to secretive communities may not be needed: comparative success may be achieved as a result of fortuitous circumstances. Some of the data presented in this paper is a case in point. Hassidim residing in the Mile End and Outremont areas of Montreal had to provide concrete evidence to support their entitlement to assistance and a hassid was appointed to spearhead a drive to conduct a needs survey of the target population. In the event two surveys were conducted: in 1997 and in 2005.[33] In addition to the survey material, I had a series of unstructured interviews (in reality, conversations) with hassidim residing in that area. Apart from such numerous conversations, I also completed eight informal interviews, three of those with women. The conversations were unplanned and typically occurred as I walked along the streets of the area and wandered into hassidic-owned businesses to survey the goods. An additional source was the publications

advertising hassidic businesses and services; I relied upon the 2005–06 *Montreal Community Directory* prepared by the Beth Jacob Teachers Seminary which encompasses both the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox non-hassidic residents of Montreal (including the Tasher in Boisbriand, Quebec) as well as a weekly publication, *Quality Shopping*, which features (but is not limited to) advertisements of hassidic commercial enterprises.

Macro Elements of Change

The 2005 Report on 'The Hassidim and Ultra-Orthodox of Greater Montreal' is sub-titled 'A Needs Assessment and Population Projection of the Hassidic and Ultra-Orthodox Communities of Greater Montreal'. It was funded by a grant to COHO from Canadian Heritage and Charles Shahar, a demographer, served as Research Co-ordinator.[34] The report is presented in two parts: the first includes a comprehensive needs assessment of the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox populations of Greater Montreal;[35] it examines perceived needs as these relate to immigration problems, language training, dealing with elderly parents, housing problems, managing the stress of home and work, and childcare needs. The second part features in-depth population projections of the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox communities in Greater Montreal. While these communities, but especially the hassidic one, have been growing at a sizable rate, the report offers the first statistical projections, based upon the current trends, to arrive at population estimates for the years 2010, 2020, and 2030. This is not insignificant in terms of future needs of Montreal Jewry: while the size of the total Montreal Jewish community has been diminishing over the past three decades, the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox populations have shown definite growth.[36]

A word about the survey's methodology is in order. The initial pool of potential respondents was derived from the Bays Yaakov Directory, listing the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of the hassidic and ultra-Orthodox populations in Greater Montreal.[37] Following the extraction of a random list of households from the directory, telephone interviews were conducted between October 2004 and February 2005. A total of 469 respondents were interviewed, representing approximately 18 per cent of 2,608 hassidic and ultra-Orthodox households located in Greater Montreal.[38] The sample was stratified by geographic area, thereby making it possible to distinguish between various hassidic and ultra-Orthodox communities. Table 1 of the survey report offers a summary of postal code regions, the communities involved, and their relative frequencies in the study.

We see in Table 1 that the largest representation is from the H2V region located in the Outremont and Park Avenue areas. The

Table 1.
Frequency distribution by postal code region, geographic area and Hassidic/Ultra-Orthodox community

Postal code region	Area	Community	No.	%
H2V	Outremont & Park Avenue	Satmar, Belz, Skver	163	34.7
H3S	Eastern Cote des Neiges	Yeshiva	119	25.4
H3W/H3X	Snowdon/Hampstead/Western Cote des Neiges	Lubavitch	128	27.3
J7E	Boisbriand	Tosh	59	12.6
Total	—	—	469	100.0

Satmar, Belz, and Skver hassidic sects predominate in that location.[39] There are 163 such households represented here, or 34.7 per cent of the entire sample.[40] The survey offers basic demographic data concerning household size. This is particularly relevant as these numbers impact upon the abilities of families to meet their overall needs and the perceived difficulties in managing daily affairs. Figure 1 is a summary breakdown of mean household size across hassidic and ultra-Orthodox communities, while Figure 2 examines the mean number of children across hassidic and ultra-Orthodox communities.

Figure 1.
Mean household size across Ultra-Orthodox and Hassidic communities

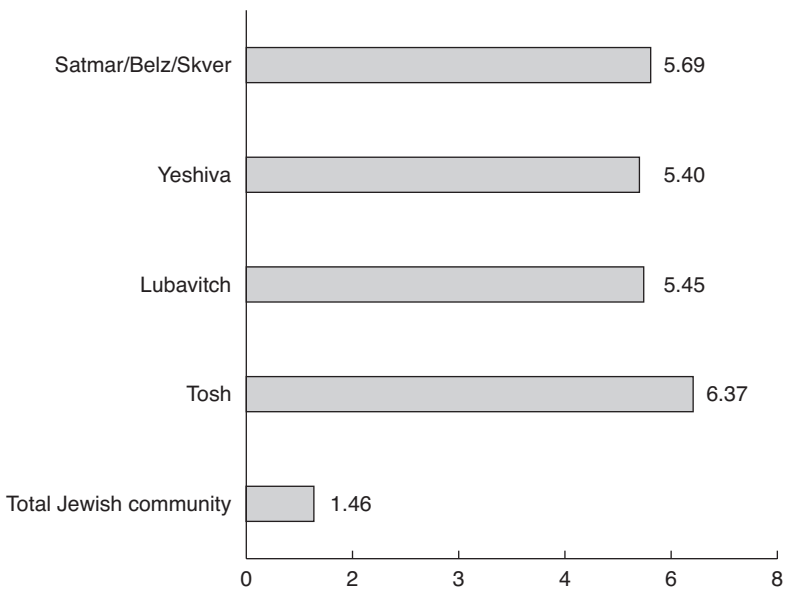
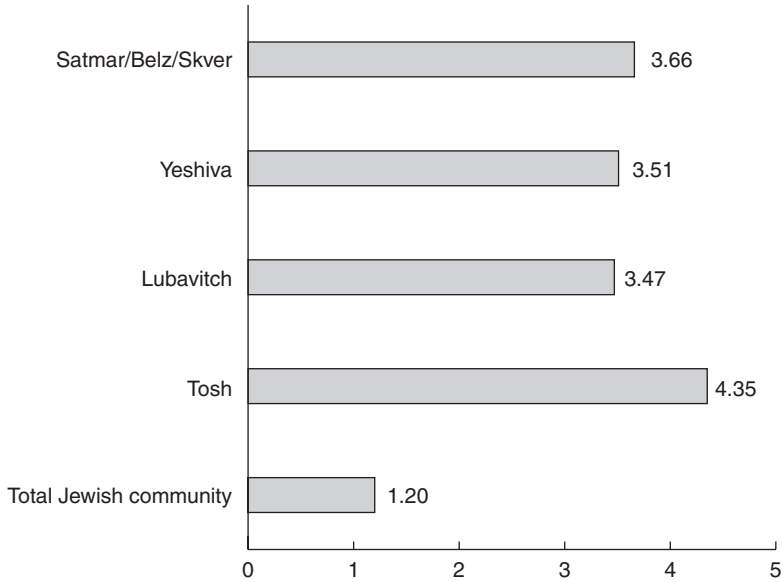


Figure 2.
Mean number of children per household across Ultra-Orthodox and Hassidic communities

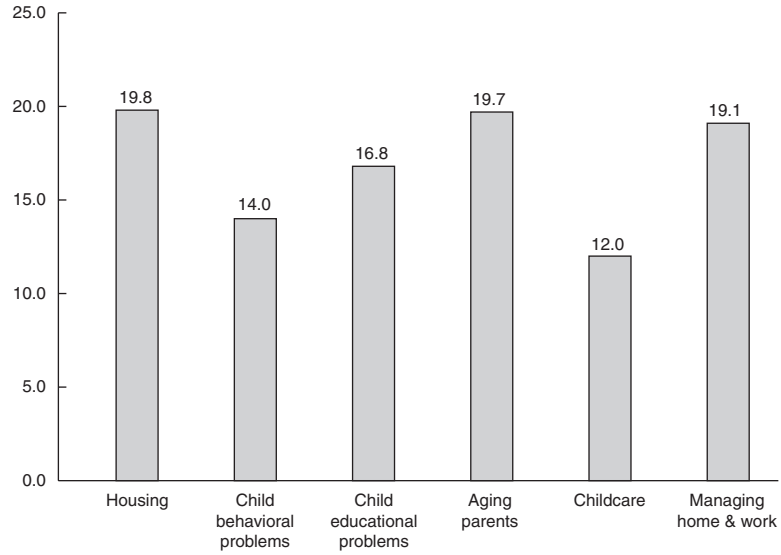


As both figures reveal, the mean household size and number of children are considerably lower in the overall Jewish population.

Zeroing in on a profile of concerns and difficulties of hassidic households, Figure 3 provides a summary of the responses when individuals were asked to identify which of a number of situations are of concern.

The three categories with the largest response rates include housing, aging parents, and managing home and work. As we will see, housing becomes problematic owing to the finite number of houses in the area that are affordable but also sufficiently close to the neighbourhood such that it can be reached by foot on the Sabbath and Jewish holy days. Almost one fifth (19.1 per cent) of respondents claimed they experienced 'some' or 'major' concerns in managing the responsibilities of home and work. What kind of help did respondents require? In order of priority, there was '... cleaning/domestic help, followed by financial assistance, childcare help, and advice/counselling'.[41] The percentage of respondents in this category is understandable in light of the large families involved and the challenges of sustaining adequate income to support the latter. In the matter of care-giving to aging parents, the most identifiable needs related to extra help for light and heavy housecleaning tasks, transportation needs, followed by bathing/washing and taking medication. According to the survey: 'Almost half of the respondents had elderly parents living in Montreal and almost half had "some" or "major"

Figure 3.
Percentage of respondents having major or some concerns regarding specific situations



concerns about their rôle as caregivers'.[42] It is not coincidental that hassidic Jews identify the same kinds of mundane matters which preoccupy the larger Jewish and non-Jewish populations. Indeed, as government-sponsored or supported programmes have become available to cope with them, hassidim have chosen to identify themselves as worthy.

Part 2 of the survey focuses on population projections. In light of the significant rates of growth of the communities under examination, the analysis seeks to determine growth patterns by 2010, 2020, and 2030.[43] Table 2 details the number of households derived from the Bays Yaakov Directory for alternate years, between 1996 and 2004, by postal zone areas. The postal zone area of interest in this paper (H2V) comprises Outremont and the nearby Park Avenue neighbourhood. Table 2 also indicates the number of individuals represented by the households in question.[44] We see that in 1996, there were 676 hassidic and ultra-Orthodox households in the H2V area, representing 3,725 individuals. By 2004, that number rose to 4,981, an increase of 33.7 per cent. By using the average percentage growth rates from 1996 to 2004, Shahar calculated projected rates, estimating that the H2V population will increase from 4,981 individuals in 2004 to 6,188 in 2010, an increase of 24.2 per cent. Ten years later (2020), the population is projected to increase to 8,882 individuals, and to 12,750 by 2030. Table 3 provides projections for the hassidim and ultra-Orthodox in Greater Montreal (1996–2030).

Table 2.
Projections for Hassidim and Ultra-Orthodox population living in Greater Montreal

		1996	1998	2000	2002	2004	(2010)	(2020)	(2030)
J7E, Boisbriand	Individuals*	959	1,295	1,555	1,653	1,902	3,092	6,930	15,537
	Households	166	224	269	286	329	535	1,199	2,688
H3W/H3X, Snowdon, Hampstead, Western Cote des Neiges	Individuals*	2,493	2,776	3,551	3,546	3,933	5,402	9,152	15,518
	Households	450	501	641	640	710	975	1,652	2,801
H3S, Eastern Cote des Neiges	Individuals*	2,997	3,120	3,259	3,315	3,418	3,768	4,431	5,202
	Households	583	607	634	645	665	733	862	1,012
H2V, Outremont Park Ave.	Individuals*	3,725	3,989	4,358	4,634	4,981	6,188	8,882	12,750
	Households	676	724	791	841	904	1,123	1,612	2,314

* Based on average household size: H2V = 5.51; H3S = 5.14; H3W and H3X = 5.54; J7E = 5.78.

The above figures starkly indicate that the hassidic community in Outremont and the surrounding area in Montreal have experienced change if only by virtue of a dramatic increase between 1996 and 2004. However, the explosive population rate has also been consequential in terms of the community's ability to provide for its own in times of need. Moreover, the hassidic population has been compelled to respond to ongoing allegations of municipal improprieties which have been brought to the attention of legal authorities.[45] For the outside observer, the most tangible reflection of change lies in the increased numbers of hassidic-owned businesses which are sprinkled through the neighbourhood, including supermarkets, bakeries, and stores selling prepared foods, photographic equipment, furniture, and clothing. By contrast, in the past, most commercial ventures were located in peoples' homes.[46] The organization responsible for this transformation is

Table 3.
Projections for Hassidim and Ultra-Orthodox population living in Greater Montreal (1996–2030)

	H2V	H3S	H3W/H3X	J7E	Total
1996	3,725	2,997	2,493	959	10,174
1998	3,989	3,120	2,776	1,295	11,180
2000	4,358	3,259	3,551	1,555	12,723
2002	4,634	3,315	3,546	1,653	13,148
2004	4,981	3,418	3,933	1,902	14,234
(2010)	6,188	3,768	5,402	3,092	18,450
(2020)	8,882	4,431	9,152	6,930	29,395
(2030)	12,750	5,202	15,518	15,537	49,007

COHO (the Coalition of Outremont Hassidic Organizations) which has professionalized the process by which hassidic-owned business ventures are initiated and co-ordinated.

As noted above, COHO was founded in 1996; it is situated in the heart of an upscale area of Outremont and occupies three rooms on the second floor of an office building. These rooms are decorated with various photographs of COHO officials meeting influential leaders of government up to the ranks of provincial premier and Prime Minister as well as provincial and federal cabinet members — a testimony to the political links which have been successfully cultivated over the years. There are also on the walls various plaques identifying the businesses which COHO has helped to establish and which had been singled out for various municipal and provincial awards. The organization is managed by a Board of Directors but remains spearheaded by an individual, a hassidic entrepreneur and businessperson who saw the need to establish a centre of this nature that would help to meet the economic needs of a growing community. A COHO brochure reads: 'Community leaders of the Hassidic and Ultra-Orthodox communities of Outremont and surrounding areas have established a unique initiative to offer employment and business assistance services in partnership with the Federal government'. (There is also a French-language brochure.) Such partnerships extend beyond the federal level of government to include grants from provincial and municipal government agencies. There is a staff of three persons working full-time. Two women focus on matching clients' employment interests and skills to the needs of employers, while the third (a male) concentrates on the creation of new start-up businesses — offering advice on the availability of loans, assistance in the completion of required documentation, as well as noting practical details on the feasibility of the proposed undertaking and the range of daily problems which might occur. The brochure specifies: 'The COHO initiative has been designed to assist members of the community to make career choices and find suitable gainful employment; enable entrepreneurs with both new and existing businesses to access services to help them compete and thrive in the global economy; provide information regarding government programs geared to toward expansion and export'.

COHO estimates that since its inception it has helped to establish approximately 150 businesses, enjoying a success rate of between 60 and 70 per cent. The businesses vary in scope and include stores selling photo supplies, shoes, picture framing, groceries, baked goods, jewelry, travel, and wedding supplies. A person closely connected with the organization commented that COHO offers business advice and, in reference to a particular business it helped to establish, added:

> First of all, we gave him advice. The guy didn't know one end of a stick from the other. We got him a grant of $5,000 . . . . We got him loans, we taught him how to go to the bank, how to operate a business . . . You know something? When you get married and soon have 3–4 kids, you don't have time to fool around. You have to make money. Whenever somebody comes in with an idea, we, COHO, help them develop it. We send them to this organization, this foundation that would give them some money. We direct them because they would never know what to do.

In this regard, COHO's business development services include accessing government services and support for small businesses, providing information on business start-ups for entrepreneurs, and offering assistance in applying for business loans. On the employment side, the organization helps individuals to complete résumés, and offers career counselling and job placements. 'About half of the clients are in their early 20s for business start-ups . . . . If they are ready to work hard, and why shouldn't they be, and with our advice, they can't go wrong', commented one of the counsellors.[47]

The surveys which COHO has commissioned reflect changes in the hassidic population and identify members' perceptions of their needs and changing circumstances. Indications of change are also observed by noting the range of business ventures which hassidic Jews have undertaken in recent years, as reflected by stores whose merchandize either caters to hassidic Jews (for instance, those carrying religious articles) or offering services meant to appeal to a hassidic clientele (for example, certain styles of clothing). However, these are outward manifestations of social change that, in and of itself, might lead to the conclusion that the hassidic community is enjoying success attending to the challenges of urban life. From a distance, at least, the self-imposed insulation appears intact. As in the past, then, hassidim cling tenaciously to a way of life whose foundational values and traditions also served the earlier generations of hassidim. However, such a snapshot fails to fully appreciate the dynamic tensions experienced on the day-to-day level in the hassidic community: the social and cultural boundaries in place to combat unwelcome foreign influences are not as strong as they appear to be.

I now turn to a consideration of a select number of such influences and activities which, according to my informants, are not isolated incidents experienced by only a handful of individuals who may be easily dismissed as deviants but reflect, instead, a widening inability by leaders to successfully channel and control individuals' activities and decision-making. In particular, I draw attention to seemingly disparate features of everyday life which, in their totality, reflect the impact and consequences of on-going change. More specifically, I focus on the intrusion of the Internet, the increase in divorces, and a movement by some disaffected hassidim to sever ties with the community and its stringent way of life.

Social Change

I have suggested elsewhere that regardless of their ideological stripe, hassidic communities attach supreme importance to preventing assimilation by insulating their members from unfavourable secular influences of the host culture, and have noted that this theme is commonly addressed in ethnographic studies of hassidic sects.[48] The notion of boundaries and how they are maintained serves as an appropriate metaphor as hassidim strive to close the circle around their chosen lifestyle by imposing strict measures of social control. Kanter has observed that boundaries do more than define the group by setting it off in its environment but, in giving it a sharp focus, also facilitate commitment to its norms and expectations.[49] The persistence of boundaries requires not only criteria and signals for identification but, as importantly if not more so, a structuring of interaction that allows for the perpetuation of differences, be these cultural, social, or political, or more likely combinations thereof.[50] It has been noted that insulation from the surrounding culture is the strategy most commonly used by the hassidim in order to cultivate and maintain a distinctive identity.[51]

I suggest that these efforts at boundary maintenance are meeting with increased resistance. The issue is not whether hassidic communities fail to establish viable institutions to effectively control permissible contacts with outsiders but, rather, the degree to which the playing field has tilted over the past decade or so. For example, hassidic sects continue to maintain separate schools for boys and girls, as in the past, and as before, the secular curricular content remains closely supervised and even censored. The dramatic shift, rather, lies in the relative ease with which younger persons can access, and interact with, the outside world.[52] While such contacts were not unknown in the past, they were required to be practised surreptitiously in order to avoid detection. Avoiding detection, today, has been eased dramatically by the presence of a comparatively new and expanding technology: the Internet.

The Internet

'The Internet is a real danger', remarked a hassidic woman whom I met. 'It's the high tech stuff that's a real danger to our kids, and it's so difficult to control' she added. Such underlying concern about the media, vary generally, and advances in modern technology were reflected in my conversations with hassidic respondents.[53] To locate this concern in an appropriate context, hassidic leaders (and haredi ones more generally) have typically issued religious decrees (*psak din*) against media as a threat to Torah and family values. In a recent

publication, Yoel Cohen recently noted: 'From the appearance of newspapers in the nineteenth century, through the development of radio and television, and latterly video, computers and internet and cell phones, haredi rabbis have enacted such decrees against media'.[54] Focusing on the religion-news media nexus in Israel, Cohen observes that to the degree that new technologies could be controlled or viewed as harnessed toward the pursuit of Torah studies, they were permitted. With regard to the Internet, however, he writes:[55]

> . . . haredi rabbis . . . issued a ban on its use. These rabbis regarded Internet as a far worse moral threat than television: whereas television was supervised, the Internet offered access to pornographic sites.

Cohen adds that the ban on computers and Internet has not been entirely successful, since an estimated 40 per cent of haredi houses in Israel have personal computers and the rapid speed at which technology evolves has compelled haredi entrepreneurs to market computer-filtering programs. Moreover:

> In 2002 haredi rabbis forbade talmudical college students from using mobile phones, seeing them as threatening the appropriate atmosphere for the yeshiva study hall. But as the mobile phone's capabilities widened, notably providing internet access, haredi rabbis see the mobile phone as a moral threat to the entire community and established a rabbinical committee for communication affairs which began negotiating with mobile companies to provide only telephone facilities.[56]

While some media have been amenable to hassidim's control, Lapidus reviews some recent controversy within the haredi community, concluding that '. . . it seems that the internet is far too threatening and unmanageable to be tamed sufficiently, and hence there are increasing calls for its total ban from haredi communities'.[57] In 2003, the Vishnitzer rebbe instructed his hassidim to avoid the Internet, identifying it as a *sakoness nefoshess* — a threat to life. In a *pashkevil* (a poster with religious and social information in the form of a public statement) 11 Montreal hassidic leaders discouraged use of the Internet stating: 'It's already well-known to most people how dangerous a computer is, how many have fallen victim to it, may we be spared. And how many kosher people from decent homes have fallen due to the Internet? While it may have begun unwittingly, to their regret, they were corrupted and entire families have been destroyed'.[58]

On 20 January 2006, the following headline appeared in the hassidic weekly, *Der Yid*: 'Principals from educational institutions in Monsey agree to a prohibition on computers and internet connections in homes'. Referring to a recent meeting in suburban Monsey, New York, a village largely inhabited by haredi Jews, the article reported on a growing ban of the Internet. Paraphrasing the article, Lapidus writes: '. . . it is reported that if a parent requires internet access for

their livelihood, not only must they acquire permission from a select group of rabbis, they must install safeguards and locks, such as passwords, screensavers that lock, and even locking access to the computer'.[59] The article maintained that the signatories to the prohibition also claimed that a pupil from a house with an Internet connection could easily infect others — the other students, the immediate environment — with whom he or she comes into contact. So concerned were hassidic and ultra-Orthodox leaders about the Internet's danger that, in the year 2,000, haredi leaders in Israel signed a proclamation identifying '. . . the Internet the greatest menace ever to face Jewish culture' and a 'danger thousands of times more serious than television'.[60]

In a conversation I had with a hassid, he said: 'There are many things going on in the world today, cell phones, let alone computers' and added: 'You know about the kosher cell phones? Kosher means it's just a phone. Kosher means they cannot get the Internet. It's a phone, and that's it. Today telephones can do everything.'[61] Reflecting on this general theme, a hassidic mother and grandmother considered the enormous threat posed by recent technological innovation:

> We have the same problems right now that all parents, all over the world, are having, and that's the high-tech stuff. The Internet's a threat to kids, the Internet's a threat to our kids too. You know the kids don't have access to computers. They have phones. Phones today are enabled to access email . . . . The biggest problem . . . and it's not pornography, gambling is one and chat lines is the other where people are looking on the Internet for relationships. That's the problem. We never had that . . . . All of a sudden, there's a whole big wide world out there and you don't have control . . . . Like once upon a time, when our kids wanted to go to the movies, it was like the biggest deal if you wanted to sneak into the movies . . . . Today you walk into Blockbuster.

Most threatening for this speaker is the personal freedom offered via accessing the Internet and that this is easily accomplished with cell phones offering this option. Lapidus has commented: '. . . the challenge of the internet is a microcosm of the challenge of modernity — the exposure to uncontrolled options'.[62] The community's ability to exercise control is now lessened; indeed, access to the Internet is even more insidious in that it enables contact with outsiders from the privacy of one's home, or from a computer, without requiring the inquisitive hassid to come into actual physical contact with outsiders. A hassid stressed the significance of this point: 'Before, if you wanted to do something that wasn't allowed, like a movie, you had to go to the theatre, or if you wanted to read something that questioned what the rabbis said, you went to the library. No more. Today, with the Internet, I know many people that do these things on their computer'. The Internet, then, has magnified the opportunities for deviance, and deviant-related activities can be pursued anonymously. Of course, it

is not the Internet *per se*, but the unsupervised access to it that offers a range of activities and social worlds which were previously beyond the ken of the majority of hassidim, particularly the younger, unmarried members.[63] A hassid said to me: 'The biggest thing is opportunity. You know what we say? The mouse is not a thief, the hole in the wall is a thief.... Which means if there's no girls around, or nothing to steal, or whatever, you're not going to do it. If there's opportunity...'. It is not surprising that opponents of the Internet emphasize its anonymity, underscoring the freedom it offered to express views and feelings which would otherwise be kept to oneself.

A woman from Satmar said: 'Our Sages tell us that it's impossible that a person should not be influenced by his environment.... Everybody absorbs their environment and a little bit of the goyish culture. And what's going on in the street today...'. Her voice trails off. It is not difficult for her, and for the others with whom I spoke, to identify problems which confront the hassidic community and whose impact cannot be avoided. In the next two sub-sections I address two such problems — divorce and defection — whose magnitude is not so easily judged. What is relevant in this context, is not that these are novel conditions which were unheard of in the past, but rather that the numbers appear to have much increased and that their visibility has been enhanced. The risk is that they may now be considered suitable options for others.

Divorce

In its simplicity, divorce among hassidim has risen owing to their greater numbers today. However, one can argue that hassidic-arranged marriages remain more durable than marriages in the non-religious world; and, more to the point, that divorce remains rare. Mintz observed: 'While it is easier for couples to separate today than in past times, divorce is still seen as a drastic option'.[64] Nevertheless, while small in absolute numbers, he claims that by hassidic standards there has been a divorce explosion. Nearly two decades before Mintz's 1992 *Hasidic People*, Rubin acknowledged in 1974 that while divorce was rare, he could identify a change which he believed was worth noting: 'A divorcee, once a stigmatized person, seems to have lost her stigma and has no apparent difficulty remarrying'.[65] I suggest that divorce is more frequent owing not solely to an increased hassidic population but also to changing expectations concerning quality of life, particularly as this pertains to hassidic females.[66]

Divorce struck a chord with respondents not only because its consequences are generally unpleasant but because it generally had occurred close to home. For the majority, it was not an abstract topic about which one might speculate theoretically, but a situation which had

been experienced in one's family. A few illustrations from the data follow. On one occasion, I was sitting with a woman from Belz who was outspoken on issues involving the hassidic community, and sensitive about understanding that changing mores in the wider culture had affected the hassidim. When I enquired whether divorce was more prevalent today than 20 years earlier, she replied:

> Now you've hit home because my son just got divorced. I would say, let's go back 20 years, divorce was horrible, horrible. You really had to be something to get divorced. Now my friend's daughter lived with her husband three months. She decided he wasn't quite as smart as she thought he was, and she just left. And this is happening. Divorces, I would say, I would hear about one a week.

Another female, already divorced, and raising four children, echoed this view: 'It's certainly a lot more than before. It's a real problem in the community because it never happened like this before' and added: 'Don't misunderstand me, the vast majority of marriages last but the option [of divorce] is no longer impossible'. A third woman, a mother of five children, aged seven to 14 years commented:

> The big difference is that people your age are getting divorced. I mean you hear about it in New York but it's also happening here. When it happens to someone you know, a friend, it's natural to begin comparing. You also see that people survive the experience even though it's usually very painful. I just hope the problem doesn't get worse.

One explanation for this developing phenomenon centres on the particular needs of the individuals concerned. From this perspective, the individual considers his or her needs to be supreme even if the ensuing behaviour — marital separation and divorce — violates the mores of the insular community. An example from the data shows how a hassidic woman reflected upon a divorce in her immediate family:

> Because of the 'Me' generation and the entitlement that has filtered down to our kids. When we got married, I knew I'm getting married, and if I had a problem I had to work it out. Today they get married, if there's a problem, I'm out of here.... The trouble is that nobody is willing to tolerate anything.... My daughter-in-law was with my son for two years. She didn't have any kids. She said: 'You know what? I have a plan of the way I want to live my life, and it's not working out, so I'm out of there'.

On the other hand, in the opinions of several informants, an explanation that is individual-centred, masks attention to gender considerations whose impact figure importantly in the divorce outcome. The next informant skillfully drew the connections between gender, secular education, and decision-making:

> ... I would say 90 per cent it's the girls that are leaving. I blame, I shouldn't say I blame, but I could write a thesis that's because of the way the kids are

> educated. The girls get much more secular education. They are capable of going out and getting jobs as secretaries or whatever. The boy sits with the Gemorah. So until the night of his wedding he's told that girls are something you don't think about, you don't look at, la la la la la. All of a sudden he's got this female. She's been out there for a year or two. She starts working right about 17 or 18, gets married at about 19 or 20. He's coming straight from the Gemorah, right . . . .? You take these girls, they have social skills.

Several informants indicated that this differential exposure of males and females to the outside world — whether in actual practice owing to employment, or to secular studies within the confines of the school — contributes to perceptions of marital incompatibility which, in more cases than in the past, culminates in the dissolution of the marriage. Of course, divorces did occur in earlier years but (as noted above) they were uncommon. More recent exposures to secular influences have resulted in unexpected repercussions. However, divorce is not the main repercussion of estrangement or discontent. Discontent and disillusion may result in a hassid becoming increasingly unhappy and isolated until the decision is made to leave the hassidic community and its distinctive lifestyle.

Abandoning the Hassidic Lifestyle

To preserve anonymity, I use pseudonyms here.

Ricky was given my address by someone in Montreal who was familiar with my interests in hassidism. She introduced herself in an e-mail, stating that she had left her hassidic husband but was still residing in a hassidic neighbourhood and raising her six children. She gave me her telephone number and when I used it to speak to her, she suggested that we meet when I next came to Montreal. (She knew that I taught at McMaster University in Hamilton, some 400 miles from Montreal.) She said that she thought I would find her experiences 'very interesting'. Some three weeks later, we met for coffee in a restaurant in her neighbourhood. She was modestly dressed but her hair was not covered. We spoke generally about the hassidic lifestyle and she recounted some of the hardships she had endured before her final decision to obtain a divorce. On a later occasion, I was invited to her house — in the heart of the hassidic area I was studying — and she showed me her wedding album and commented on members of the wedding party. She said that she had been vilified for securing a divorce and that some hassidic women telephoned her or even came to her door and added: 'One woman yelled that I'll burn in hell because of what I've done' and that there was great pressure from hassidim in the neighbourhood who know her 'to raise the children hassidic'.

She resented particularly male privileges among hassidim and their occasional hypocrisy. She claimed that one of her ex-husband's friends had propositioned her, while she was still married, and had said to her that no one would need to know. She had completely dissociated herself from her native community, though she remained in contact with her mother and siblings. She commented that she used to cover her hair but clearly no longer did so and added: 'And I'll wear short sleeves if I want to'. Her friends and her children's friends now did not include hassidim. Despite having lost contact with her hassidic peers, she occasionally heard of their activities: 'Some of them I know are probably very content. They have a hassidic family, there's a good chemistry between the husband and wife, and all's well. But I know of others... that were stuck in a relationship and what could they do? Where could they turn? You never hear about these women', she claimed. As it happens, one does hear about them increasingly.

Mrs K, a hassidic mother and grandmother who is not only involved in the community's affairs but is also unusually familiar with events in the wider society, acknowledges that the hassidic community has experienced unexpected change which is too painful to ignore: to her dismay, it has recently become the focus of film-makers and academics who, in her estimation, have failed to do it justice. In the midst of our conversation about social changes, she suddenly said: 'And that's another thing that infuriates me. The hassidim, we're considered a very exotic species that's being put under the microscope more and more these days. [There's] an explosion of things written about hassidim. And about what's written, all of it... is sensationalized. Nobody can do a sociological study without having a sexual component in it...'. From her perspective, as soon as someone leaves Satmar, or one of the more well known sects, a book is written about them. She is horrified by blogs appearing on the Internet where hassidim share their concerns and misgivings about hassidic life in such a public forum. She is particularly angry about a book published in 2005, *The Unchosen*,[67] which details the experiential trajectories of individuals who sought to leave the hassidic fold: 'You get the impression that there are so many that have left, but it isn't true... I'm not saying it doesn't happen, but you get the impression there's an exodus'.

While the actual number of hassidim who have chosen to leave and to sever ties with their religious upbringing has probably risen over the past two decades, the numbers are likely to be more limited than is claimed in print or on film.[68] However, any low count of formerly hassidic Jews masks a more insidious development which appears to be causing considerable concern: those who have become marginalized while pretending to remain connected to the hassidic lifestyle. Two hassidim chose to emphasize that concern. One woman said:

> I'm not worried about the ones that are checking out, but those that stay, [that are] like a worm in a rotten apple. There's a guy on the net who's a hassid and a heretic.... I'm worried about the ones that are staying in the community and leading a double life.

Another, a man, commented:

> It's hard to know who's being influenced in which way and what they're thinking inside. When you see someone in shul wearing a shtreimel, what are you supposed to think? He's kosher, right? But people who are giving into doubts and experimenting are not so easy to detect and they are the ones that can spread poison.

Those leading 'double lives' carry a stigma that, in Goffman's terms, is discreditable.[69] They must learn to craft a self-presentation that turns on deception — successfully convincing others to believe that they abide by the norms of the community despite strong inner doubts as to their relevance and even legitimacy. Those embarking upon such a line of questioning initially contain their doubts from becoming public through skilful maneuvering.[70] In what is described as an intimate journey among hassidic girls, Stephanie Weller Levine introduces the reader to 'the infamous 888 Montgomery Street apartment [in Crown Heights, Brooklyn] where young Lubavitch questioners converged';[71] she says it was like a club, affectionately dubbed '888' which included a 'cozy living room — strewn with open copies of the Talmud and ashtrays heaped with remnants from pot and cigarettes...'.[72] The gatherers '... were anomalies... among their peers whose main concerns were finishing seminary, finding suitable spouses, and getting on with the next stage of their Hasidic lives. For many of the 888 regulars, Hasidic life was about to end; they lacked faith and shared a boundless curiosity about the non-Lubavitch universe'.[73] A chapter in the book is devoted to Rochel, about whom we read:[74]

> Rochel straddled two worlds. Every night, she made the trek from her parents' house in a relatively safe, affluent pocket of Crown Heights to join her friends at 888 Montgomery Street, on the outskirts of the Lubavitch neighborhood. She spent her days at the seminary; she is the only young woman from the 888 crowd to complete the two-year seminary program. Rochel handled both universes with seeming ease. Her school friends adored her. If she threw a party, nearly the whole class would come.... Her teachers marveled at her sharp mind. But just beneath this surface aplomb, she smouldered with confusion and pain.

When Weller Levine comes to 888, she finds Rochel sprawled on the living room's deep couch. Her appearance was striking: 'She wore cut-off shorts, a T-shirt, and a bright red bandana tied around her forehead'[75] but she says: 'I will not walk out of the house like this. I will put the skirt back on'.[76] However, appearances may serve as a convincing prop to disguise a radical internal transformation as

exemplified by Dovid, another of the 888 regulars; everyone revered him as a genius because he enjoyed the rare ability to memorize the late Lubavitcher rebbe's extemporaneous Sabbath talks and recorded them verbatim at the holiday's conclusion. However, 'His yarmulke and beard were a bit deceiving, for he had completely lost faith in the tenets of Orthodox Judaism'.[77] Such deception, to avoid being outed as a heretic, involves meticulous planning — one aspect of which is frequenting physical settings where one's hassidic identity is unknown, if not irrelevant. For example, even though she was brought up in Williamsburg, and is married to a hassid,[78]

> When Dini enters the bar, she is dressed modestly: long dark skirt, long-sleeved sweater, ash-blond wig covering her hair. She bids me hello but doesn't stop to sit down, heading straight to the bathroom instead. When she emerges several minutes later — in tight jeans and a tank top, her real hair jet black, curly, and flying — all eyes are trained in her direction. No one would ever guess she was a hassidic Jew.

Of course, such published revelations do not find favour amongst observant hassidim. When the subject arose about changes in their lifestyle, one of them exclaimed:

> 'Did you read *The Unchosen*? So much garbage . . . Not because she's lying, but because she's trying to insinuate this is a cross section, but it ain't . . . . About those she writes about, she didn't make up'.

New York City's hassidim encounter problems similar to those described here for Montreal but since New York has a much greater population and is geographically much larger, those living there find more fertile ground for experimenting with the secular society. To start with, it is easier there than in Montreal to conceal one's deviant behaviour. And apart from the fact of facilitating such anonymity, New York City can provide institutional support from a Manhattan-based non-profit group, Footsteps, which helps drop-outs from the hassidic world in their transition to secular society. An article in *The Jerusalem Post* in 2005[79] about Footsteps noted:

> Particularly for a young person, whose departure can be hasty and unplanned, the road out of the Brooklyn neighborhoods of Williamsburg and Crown Heights is fraught with confusion and loneliness — and sometimes drug abuse.

Here I must stress that in my experience with Montreal hassidim over the decades since I started my fieldwork research, and more recently, I found such serious problems of defection not to be frequent. To the best of my knowledge, the actual numbers are minuscule: I have heard of only four cases.[80] However, there are many tales in Montreal about those who have left the fold and it is clear that there is now a growing concern about the matter. During a conversation I had with

a hassidic woman, she told me:

> I just got off the phone with my son in New York. His doorbell rang, he opened the door, and there standing was his close friend who had cut off his *payess* [earlocks]. My son was in shock.

Another hassidic woman, living in Montreal, commented on the changes which had occurred during the last three decades. She bemoaned the present disappearance of what she called 'intact families' and insisted that such families had been common in the past:

> I hate to tell you, mister, but there is almost no family out there today that is totally intact. [And there were such families earlier?] Yes, there were. Nowadays you can have a family of ten kids and you're going to find nine kids, eight kids perfectly following the path and you're going to find one or two that are totally out.... I cannot think of a family, and I'm talking about an extended family now,... everybody's got someone. It didn't used to be that way.

A hassid made similar comments and then added:

> You hear about people, younger people, almost always, that drop out. It's happening more and more today, and it's very sad. But it's not a major problem. If it was on a graph, it wouldn't show up. But it's happening more in New York and so we hope it won't spread here.

Conclusion

A few years ago, in 2002, I took my son (who is a serious basketball fan) to the Tasher hassidic enclave to celebrate the Hannukah candle-lighting in the *Bays Medresh*. There were some 300 men gathered there, of various ages and when he jokingly asked me, 'Do they follow basketball?' I offered to wager 100 dollars that he would be unable to find seven hassidim among those present who would be familiar with arguably the most famous basketball player ever: Michael Jordan. He did not wish to enter into the wager, but I believe I would have won, if he had. Nowadays, however, I doubt whether the odds would remain in my favour.

The boundaries which traditionally separated the hassidim from mainstream culture are more porous now, as is evident from the cases cited in this paper. However, I still find it hard to take lightly the changes which are occurring and when I said so to a hassid whom I had come to know and who casually remarked that some of his hassidic acquaintances frequented local bars to watch sporting events, he retorted: 'What do you think? We're not human? You'd be amazed at what some hassidic Jews are ready to try these days'.

The phenomenon of deviance and social control has been studied among haredi adolescent males in Montreal by Jonathan Levy who

divides exposure to outside influences into two categories: influences confronted outside the home which are largely unavoidable such as billboards, store signs, and people walking in the street; and new technologies which enable outside influences to be imported into the home, such as computers and internet access. He notes:

> While it is possible to control what enters one's home, it is virtually impossible to limit what children see outside.... Park Avenue contains numerous bars, clubs, movie shops, a strip bar, pool halls, libraries with internet access, restaurants, and theatres. St. Laurent Boulevard — with its bars, clubs, and nightlife — is only a short walk away from the majority of Hasidic homes. In addition, it is an extremely popular area with people of different cultures, backgrounds, each with their own ideas of what constitutes appropriate dress and activity.

Levy's haredi adolescents included non-hassidic youth. He states in his dissertation that his informants were in effect almost unanimous that not only were more Jewish young men now engaging in deviant behaviour, but that the seriousness of such behaviour was also increasing.[81] His overall conclusion is significant: he describes the comparative ease with which transgressors of hassidic values and prohibitions can engage in deviant or suspect behaviour secretly, and with impunity, while preserving their status within their community. In the circumstances, the techniques traditionally employed by the hassidim to resist secularization are becoming increasingly less effective.

At times imperceptibly, but more visibly on other occasions, hassidim are responding to social change which is driven both by internal community needs and by external social influences which can no longer be contained effectively. They will no doubt attempt to continue doing what they have done for decades: devise, co-ordinate, and negotiate tactics and strategies to preserve a cherished lifestyle. In order to succeed, they will have to display even more ingenuity and creativity[82] and researchers will need to be even more persistent and ingenious to discover whether hassidic leaders have been resourceful and vigilant in their battle for the hearts and minds of their young members.

NOTES

[1] William Shaffir, 'Some Reflections on Approaches to Fieldwork in Hassidic Communities', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. xxvii, no. 2, 1995, pp. 19–35.

[2] Jerome R. Mintz, *Hasidic People: A Place in the New World*, Cambridge, Mass., 1992.

[3] This paper includes references to studies of hassidic communities. Those interested in other, non-Jewish, 'closed' communities might read, for example,

John Hostetler, *Amish Society*, Baltimore, 1963; Karl A. Peter, *The Dynamics of Hutterite Society: An Analytical Approach*, Edmonton, 1987; and Calvin Redekop, *Mennonite Society*, Baltimore, 1989.

[4] Samuel Heilman, 'Forward', in Janet Belcove-Shalin, ed, *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies Of Hasidic Jews In America*, Albany N.Y., 1995, p. xii.

[5] Jacques Gutwirth's recently published *The Rebirth of Hasidism: 1945 to the Present*, London, 2005, examines this renaissance in detail. The reader is well-advised to read Samuel Heilman's *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, New York, 1992, for a fascinating portrayal of haredi — ultra-Orthodox — Jewry which explores their origins but, most importantly, their remarkable resilience after their near destruction during the Second World War. Heilman's account, more than any other, reveals how the ultra-Orthodox are responsive to modernity despite rejecting much of it.

[6] Raymond Breton, 'Institutional Completeness of Ethnic Communities and the Personal Relations of Immigrants', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 70, September 1964, pp. 193–205.

[7] See Charles Shahar, 'A Comprehensive Study of The Frum Community of Greater Montreal'. Unpublished document, October 2003.

[8] I discuss COHO in the paper. The two surveys are: Survey of the Hassidic & Ultra-Orthodox Communities in Outremont & Surrounding Areas, 1997; The Hassidim and Ultra-Orthodox of Greater Montreal: A Needs Assessment and Populations Projections of The Hassidic and Ultra-Orthodox Communities of Greater Montreal, 2005.

[9] Solomon Poll, *The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg*, New York, 1962.

[10] Ibid., p. 39.

[11] Ibid., p. 55.

[12] Israel Rubin, *Satmar: An Island in the City*, Chicago, 1974, p. 196.

[13] Ibid., p. 197.

[14] Ibid., p. 198.

[15] It is interesting to note that the politicking, name-calling, and legal wrangling and divisiveness surrounding this problem were intensified hugely following the death of Moishe Teitlebaum — who was the successor to Yoel Teitlebaum, the Rav during Rubin's research.

[16] Jerome Mintz, op. cit. in Note 2 above.

[17] Ibid., p. 126.

[18] Ibid., p. 183. Mintz maintains: '. . . these lapses do not appear to call into question religious faith and acceptance of the Hasidic worldview' (p. 183). My observation, based on data collected some 16 years later, indicates that increased contact with outside influences enables women (and men, for that matter) to begin re-assessing the saliency of observing as punctiliously as before aspects of the hassidic lifestyle — and even eventually calling into question selective components of the faith. At its extreme, the data which reflect on this problem connect to those choosing to distance themselves and even to leave the hassidic community and its chosen way of life.

[19] Ibid., p. 185.

[20] Ibid., p. 235.

[21] Janet Belcove Shalin, ed. *New World Hasidim: Ethnographic Studies Of Hasidic Jews In America*, Albany, N.Y., 1995.

[22] One can add embezzlement to this list.

[23] Jacques Gutwirth, op. cit. in Note 5 above.

[24] Ibid., p. 144.

[25] Hella Winston, *The Unchosen: The Hidden Lives of Hasidic Rebels*, Boston, 2005. While Winston's is the first published volume on leavers from the hassidic fold, the reader may be interested in my research on the topic published several years earlier. See, for example, an article published in this journal in 1987 which, while examining the process of disengagement of ultra-Orthodox Jews from hassidic society, focused in particular on three stages: the motivation for leaving; the process of departure; and the difficulties of being transplanted into secular society. In a later article, I compared and contrasted the respective experiences of newcomers to Orthodox Judaism (*baalei tshuvah*) and *hozrim beshe'elah* (literally, 'returning to question') of formerly observant Jews. See William Shaffir and Robert Rockaway, 'Leaving the Ultra-Orthodox Fold: Haredi Jews Who Defected', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 2, December 1987, pp. 97–114; and William Shaffir, 'Conversion Experiences: Newcomers to and Defectors from Orthodox Judaism (*hozrim betshuvah* and *hozrim beshe'elah*, in Z. Sobel and B. Beit Hallahmi, eds, *Tradition, Innovation, Conflict: Jewishness and Judaism in Contemporary Israel*, Albany, N.Y., 1991, pp. 173–202.

[26] See, for example, a story which appeared in the *Jerusalem Post*, on 29 December 2005, titled 'New York group helps ex-haredim adjust to secular life'.

[27] W. Shaffir, op. cit. in Note 25 above.

[28] See William Shaffir, 'Separation From the Mainstream in Canada: The Hassidic Community of Tash', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 29, no. 1, June 1987, pp. 19–35; and 'Still Separated from the Mainstream: A Hassidic Community Revisited', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 39, nos. 1 & 2, 1997, pp. 46–62.

[29] See Malcolm Gladwell, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*, Boston, 2000.

[30] William Shaffir, op. cit. in Note 1 above.

[31] See, for example, Howard S. Becker and Blanche Geer, ' Participant Observation and Interviewing: A Comparison', *Human Organization*, vol. 16, 1957, pp. 28–32) and Dorothy Pawluch, William Shaffir, and Charlene Miall, eds, *Doing Ethnography: Studying Everyday Life*, Toronto, 2005.

[32] Ethnographies of hassidic communities generally address this point. Relatedly, there are occasions, and it would seem increasingly, when government institutions decide to investigate selective aspects of hassidic organization and, in the process, reveal dynamics which were heretofore concealed. An excellent recent example concerns hassidic schools in Montreal where a Quebec government committee was established to study the integration and reasonable accommodation of children from minority groups within the province's school system, after an article appeared in a French-language daily about how selective hassidic schools circumvent provincial laws concerning education.

[33] Despite being sanctioned by rabbis of the various hassidic sects in the area, the survey's results should not be taken at face value, cautions one resident of the area whose encounters with the hassidim have received

considerable attention in the media. She and I communicate fairly regularly by e-mail, as unfolding events in the neighbourhood, and even beyond it, warrant observation. In a recent message, commenting on my suggestion that the numbers of hassidim in Mile End and Outremont have increased, and will continue doing so in the near future, she stated: 'I know that the leaders of the sect [hassidim] have a stake in creating the impression that their numbers are rising rapidly'. Her general point is that the numbers may be intentionally inflated since the hassidim seek government grants to support the needy population.

[34] The 1997 report was titled 'Survey Of The Hassidic & Ultra-Orthodox Communities in Outremont & Surrounding Areas'. It was also co-ordinated by C. Shahar but included input from two sociologists at McGill University: Morton Weinfeld and Randal Schnoor. It includes a special acknowledgment to The Honorary Martin Cauchon, Member of Parliament for Outremont and Secretary of State for the Federal Office of Regional Development (Quebec) for his assistance in the initiation of COHO. In contrast to the 2005 survey, it includes excerpts from conversations with key informants that add to, and serve to counterbalance, the tables of statistical data. Thus, for instance, with respect to matters of physical and mental health, a respondent is reported as saying: 'People are afraid to go to mental health professionals, and we have only a handful within our community. People will not even consider discussing their problems with someone who is not Orthodox'. Or, with respect to childcare: 'Big problem! Not uncommon to have 10–12 kids (informant has ten). Not uncommon for women of 24 to have 4–5 kids already', followed by 'People are begging for post-natal care; somewhere to go after the baby is born, for 5–10 days; because the hospital stay is so short. Mothers and newborn come home to houses with 6–8 children...', regrettably such qualitative data are not included in the 2005 survey.

[35] As will become clear, the survey data do not focus exclusively on the hassidic population in the designated Mile End area and Outremont, but also include hassidic and non-hassidic Jews elsewhere in Greater Montreal. However, the responses of hassidim in the area in which I focus in this paper can be identified separately from the larger survey population.

[36] Statistics provided in the 1977 survey, published by COHO, maintain that 50.4% of this population was under the age of 15 in 1997. According to the survey data in that report, the population was doubling every 15 years owing to the high fertility rate.

[37] According to the survey, p. 9, that directory 'is updated yearly to take into account the arrival of new immigrant families, those that leave Montreal, and members lost through natural attrition', p. 9.

[38] This is considered a sufficiently large sample to meet the requirements of statistical significance. Census Canada, we are informed by the author, samples one in five households (20%).

[39] Vishnitz and Bobov hassidic families are also present though their numbers are considerably smaller.

[40] The next largest group resides in the region comprising Snowdon, Hampstead, and Western Cote des Neiges. This is where Lubavitch is located. There are 128 Lubavitch households in the sample, or 29.3% of the total respondents. The Yeshiva community is located in Eastern Cote des

Neiges, and constitutes 25.4% of the sample (119 households). Finally, the 59 households of Tasher hassidim in Boisbriand, account for 12.6% of the sample pool.

[41] Shahar, op. cit. in Note 7 above, p. 26.

[42] Ibid., p. 31.

[43] These projections are based on the Bays Yaakov Directory, mentioned earlier. Shahar states regarding the methodology, 'The statistical projections assume that the same conditions (in migration, fertility rates) that applied in the past will extend for the next twenty five years', p. 35.

[44] A 2003 study by Shahar (op. cit. in Note 7 above) indicates a mean household size of 5.55 individuals from the ultra-Orthodox living in the H2V area. It should be noted that the population in this postal code is almost exclusively hassidic.

[45] See William Shaffir, 'Outremont's Hassidim and their Neighbours', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, nos. 1 & 2, pp. 56–71.

[46] This form of commercial enterprise endures to this day as evidenced by advertisements appearing in weekly shopping circulars distributed in the hassidic community.

[47] An interesting study could examine the kinds of business ventures which hassidim establish. The entrepreneurial initiative is bound by limitations imposed by religion — for example, hours of operation so that the Sabbath and holy days may be observed. I think it would be more interesting to pursue a line of thinking suggested by one of COHO's cousellors: 'The businesses, many of them, provide a service.... There are no expenses because they are the workers.... It is the responsibility of hassidic Jews to buy from these stores'. How are these obligations perceived by hassidim, and are there particular tactics employed by the owners to attract a hassidic clientele? Of course, since the services may appeal equally to a non-Jewish clientele, one would examine hassidic business practices in this wider scope. And, in the absence of any meaningful secular education in the case of men, or high-school studies in the case of some women, how do hassidim learn to organize and conduct these business ventures?

[48] William Shaffir, 'Boundaries and Self-Presentation among Hasidim: A Study in Identity Maintenance', in Belcove Shalin, ed., op. cit. in Note 21 above, pp. 31–68.

[49] Rosabeth Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspectives*, Cambridge, Mass., 1972.

[50] See Frederik Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Boston, 1969.

[51] Jerome Mintz emphasizes this point in *Legends of the Hasidim*, Chicago, 1968, p. 138.

[52] See Levy's unpublished doctoral dissertation, 'Deviance And Social Control Among Haredi Adolescent Males', McGill University, 2004.

[53] Levy's study confirms this concern. He states: 'The introduction of cell phones with the capability of taking pictures, sending and receiving e-mail, and surfing the internet has broadened the range of deviant behavior capable with these devices' (p. 131). Referring specifically to the Internet, he claims: '... this invention represents the largest worry for the haredi community... as it allows any user uncensored access to virtually anything, without even looking for it' (p. 134).

[54] See Yoel Cohen, 'The Religion-News Media Nexus in Israel', *Sociological Papers*, vol. 11, no. 2, April 2006, p. 9.

[55] Ibid., p. 11.

[56] Ibid.

[57] Steven Lapidus, 'Logging Off: Haredim React to the Threat of the Internet'. Unpublished paper.

[58] Quoted in the poster.

[59] Lapidus, op. cit. in Note 57 above.

[60] Ibid.

[61] Such kasher phones limit access to text-messaging, video applications and internet access. A list of cell phone models that are considered kasher (appropriate) circulates within the community.

[62] Lapidus, op. cit. in Note 57 above, p. 17.

[63] Levy points to yet another possible use of the Internet which is troubling community leaders: '... the internet is a simple confidential way to communicate with other deviants and even to express one's own view on ultra-Orthodox Jewry. One such individual, writing anonymously under the pen name "Hasidic Rebel" posts his own observations, as well as criticisms of the community.... It is the unintended consequences of using the internet that have the community so concerned and struggling to find a response' (pp. 136, 137).

[64] Mintz, op. cit. in Note 2 above, p. 186.

[65] Rubin, op. cit. in Note 12 above, p. 132.

[66] I caution the reader that my analysis here is somewhat tentative, not because of so-called 'soft' data I gathered, based on informal interviews, but because of the comparatively few number of divorced persons I had time to meet. Moreover, this is typically a sensitive topic requiring the respondent to reveal personal details which may compromise not only oneself but also others.

[67] Op. cit. in Note 25 above.

[68] As far as I know, any such reliable figures are unavailable. Indirect measures, however, could be reflected in statistics which are collected by an organization such as Hillel in Israel which may record any contacts — such as numbers attending its programmes, or other services it provides. As for New York and Montreal, more specifically, impressions about numbers of defectors are based largely on hearsay.

[69] Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1969.

[70] William Shaffir, 'Disaffiliation: The Experience of Haredi Jews', in M. Bar Lev and W. Shaffir, eds, *Leaving Religion and Religious Life*, Greenwich, Conn., 1997, pp. 205–228.

[71] Stephanie Weller Levine, *Mystics, Mavericks, and Merrymakers: An Intimate Journey Among Hasidic Girls*, New York, 2003, p. 88.

[72] Ibid., p. 89.

[73] Ibid., pp. 89–90.

[74] Ibid., p. 95.

[75] Ibid., p. 90.

[76] Ibid.

[77] Ibid., p. 89.

[78] Winston, op. cit. in Note 25 above, p. 19.

[79] *The Jerusalem Post*, 29 December 2005.

[80] Leaving can be variously defined. One important distinction, for example, is between those who are Orthodox from birth or hassidic (as in this case) and those who, having become *baalei tshuvah*, decide to revert to their non-observant lifestyle, or remain observant but outside the context of the hassidic framework.

[81] Levy, op. cit. in Note 52 above, p. 115 and p. 119.

[82] An excellent example concerns a current controversy involving the Satmar in Montreal. The following excerpt from *The Hamilton Spectator*, 8 November 2006, p. A4, tells the story:

> Some members of a Montreal YMCA and leaders of a neighboring synagogue are involved in a spat over windows and the state of dress, or rather undress, of gym users. The congregation was upset that young boys and teens studying at the synagogue could look across into the windows of the "Y", and see sweaty bodies, stretching and bouncing about. So members of the Hasidic Jewish community raised money to have the windows frosted. Now some people who use the gym are upset because they've lost the view and the daylight and have begun circulating a petition to restore the original transparent windows.

SURVEYING THE HAREDIM AS INSIDERS: IDENTITY, OBJECTIVITY AND RESEARCH ETHICS

David A. Rier, Avraham Schwartzbaum and Chaya Heller

In conducting social science research on religion, the religious identity of investigators (or lack of such identity) may pose various challenges to objectivity.[1] This paper is based on our experiences, as *haredi* ('ultra-Orthodox' Jewish) sociologists, in conducting a women's health survey amongst our own community. It discusses two particular incidents, occurring before and after data-collection, in which our status as insiders became an issue. We discuss how these incidents shaped our evolving views regarding the interplay between identity, objectivity, and research ethics.

Researchers as Insiders

There is a growing body of research, some of which has appeared in the pages of this journal, on how the identities of researchers influence their studies of *haredim*. In her article on insider-outsider tensions in fieldwork among *haredim*, Kaul-Seidman,[2] following Heilman[3] and Kugelmass,[4] noted that the corpus of anthropological and sociological work on Jews 'is fairly unique in that it has been and remains predominantly ''native'' '.[5] She concluded therefore that 'most ethnographers of ultra-orthodox Jewry are identifiable, *to varying degrees*, as ''native'' or ''insiders'' in that they share a broad identification and affiliation with the Jewish tradition or with Jewish people-hood'.[6]

However, running through ethnographies of the *haredi* community, there are often discussions of the methodological and epistemological implications of the status of ethnographers as *outsiders*. They have detailed their struggles to master the language, dress, and customs which were needed to gain entrée to the community and gradually achieve at least partial, contingent acceptance as insiders. Frequently, these ethnographers describe tensions arising from their having led

informants to believe (or done little to discourage the latter's hopeful assumption) that they had some interest in joining the Orthodox or ultra-Orthodox community.[7] Often, these researchers are secular Jews.[8] Occasionally, they may even be Gentiles, rendering them total outsiders, such as Kaul-Seidman herself. But even when they are modern (that is, non-*haredi*) Orthodox Jews — thus sharing with their subjects important basics of belief and practice — they face substantial challenges arising from their comparative outsider status vis-à-vis the highly insular ultra-Orthodox world.[9] This may be even more so in the Israeli context, given its marked sociocultural polarization.[10]

In our own work, we faced the insider-outsider issue from a standpoint, and with a research method, which the literature seldom discusses in this context. The present authors — the core research team of an Israeli national survey of women's health amongst *haredim* — are themselves members of the Israeli *haredi* community. While researchers of *haredim* have included modern Orthodox Jews and those formerly associated with the *haredi* community and/or its institutions, we are perhaps the first sociologists to study this community — and face insider/outsider issues — as *current* active members. The key difference between us and previous researchers is that our close identification gives us a particularly direct, personal stake in the target population and its welfare.[11] Moreover, unlike other researchers of the *haredi* community who discussed insider/outsider tensions, we confronted these issues in relation not to ethnography, where these issues are more commonly discussed,[12] but to survey research.[13] There were two events (one occurring prior to, and one subsequent to, data collection) which led us to consider how our insider status related to our objectivity, how we managed these issues, and how our views evolved during the research.

Identity and Bias I: The Insider's Defence

We first confronted the implications of our insider status fairly early. One peer reviewer of our grant proposal questioned whether we could study our own community with proper scientific objectivity. We believed this criticism to be unfair, particularly since ours was not an ethnographic study with wide latitude for investigators to define the research questions and methods, and to interpret the data. Rather, it was a replicatory survey based on an existing instrument, modified somewhat for *haredi* women. Presumably, only frankly unethical conduct, such as falsifying data to prevent disclosure of results somehow unflattering to the *haredim* would allow any of our putative biases to distort our work. Nevertheless, the comment did lead us to consider our position more carefully.

We began by noting that we shared the reviewer's concern about the ethical implications of biases. In fact, we mentioned that scientific ethics was a major research field of one of the researchers, who had recently written a paper which included the following sentence, 'As historian Gaetano Salvemini remarked, ''Impartiality is a dream and honesty a duty. We cannot be impartial, but we can be intellectually honest'' . . . .'[14] We continued that there are both controllable and uncontrollable biases. For the former, it is the duty of researchers to recognize their biases, and to ensure that they will neither distort the work nor deter from an honest rendering of the objective reality depicted by the data. We remarked that, on this score, we were at a loss how to demonstrate our scientific integrity to the reviewer. Should we submit a list of colleagues prepared to attest to it? Since we doubted that the reviewer would claim that professionally-trained *haredi* researchers were by definition less honest than their non-*haredi* colleagues, we added that we hoped that our religious orientation would not influence the reviewer's confidence in our scientific integrity.

But what of *un*controllable biases — what the reviewer called 'inevitable major biases and preconceptions'? Perhaps there comes a point when even researchers deeply committed to the truth are incapable of recognizing their biases. Here, integrity is insufficient. Researchers may simply be unable to see things differently from how their training, background, and interests incline them[15]: the fish doesn't see the water . . . .

However, surely this applies across the board. Since many Israelis, we noted, seem to hold fairly strong opinions about *haredim*,[16] it is unlikely that only *haredi* researchers inevitably suffer from preconceptions. Perhaps actual members of the community would suffer from fewer such preconceptions and stereotypes, since their day-to-day, long-term immersion in the community gives them a more realistic, nuanced grasp. Why automatically assume that non-*haredi* researchers are neutral or capable of controlling their biases, and *haredi* researchers are not? In any case, we concluded, it has long been considered an advantage, to the best of our knowledge of the US research scene, for African-American and female researchers to bring to bear their deeper local knowledge on research about their respective communities. Need they bring white or male researchers aboard to keep them in line? The same presumably applies to the many Israeli kibbutz researchers who are themselves kibbutz members or products. While Robert K. Merton[17] has made an eloquent case that researchers need not be members of the community they study, he hardly meant that they *cannot*.

If even honest researchers can remain affected by their background and commitment (despite seeking in good faith to control for their biases), then at least we can capitalize on this limitation. For, if our

haredi background will lead to biases in our manner of conducting the research, these biases would tend to *complement* the biases of previous, non-*haredi* researchers of the *haredi* community. Assuming that scientific integrity is evenly distributed across in- and out-group researchers (and across *haredi* and non-*haredi* researchers), and that all researchers are subject to some non-controllable biases, it would seem that the vantage point of those with deep personal knowledge of the community provides valuable insights which help offset whatever 'in-group' biases inevitably creep in, and counter-balance complementary biases of others.

While on the subject of identity, perspective, and bias, we noted that both co-principal investigators were raised in non-Orthodox households. Each received a full secular education, and each entered the *haredi* world only after he was married and had a child. Between them, their backgrounds included periods spent within secular, traditional, modern Orthodox, and *haredi* communities. Also, each of the three *haredi* members of the core research staff were immigrants from North America. Differences between the North American and Israeli *haredi* communities are substantial enough that, *even as members*, we remain to a degree marginal to the Israeli community, hence able to benefit at least in part from the outsider's perspective.[18] In conducting this study, therefore, we would have potential recourse to multiple insider/outsider perspectives (thus exemplifying their above-noted fluidity). In the end, perhaps our response seemed convincing, since we did receive the grant.

Identity and Bias II: Hidden Selectivity

During data analysis, however, another situation arose which made these issues more concrete, and led our position to evolve further. We were contacted by a newspaper reporter who wished to discuss our findings with us. She was primarily interested in the most sensitive part of the study, domestic abuse, though that was in fact only a small portion of the entire study and our data on this matter are difficult to interpret. That required us to confront the degree to which our reactions were influenced by our membership in the population under study. Over the years, Israeli newspapers (similar to the daily for which the reporter worked) have generally maintained a negative stance towards *haredim*.[19] The research staff took no pleasure in the prospect of airing our community's dirty laundry in such a forum.[20] In fact, before data collection had even begun, we had briefly discussed our fears of having precisely such sensitive findings sensationalized by a newspaper. These concerns had a religious element: we feared that publicizing such problems might contribute to a *ḥillul Hashem* [desecration of the Lord's Name], which in Judaism constitutes the gravest of sins.[21] However,

even if we had been studying a community quite removed from our own, we might have hesitated to discuss domestic abuse with the reporter, for a variety of reasons: a sense of duty to avoid harming our research population, a wish to preserve our credibility with this community, and our personal distaste for controversy.

Of course those data were, after all, collected in order to assess, insofar as possible, the extent to which the *haredi* community required interventions in the field of domestic abuse. Indeed, rather than suppressing such data as our preliminary analyses had already generated on this topic, one of us had already presented them at a local conference of Orthodox mental health professionals. This was indeed the first time that any data from the study were presented publicly. As we saw it, we had collected the abuse data in order to transmit them to professionals able to address the problem, not to have the details featured in newspapers.

On the other hand, we understood that the study was conducted mainly with public funds, giving the public a stake in its findings. We also recognized that contact with the press was a legitimate part of our rôle as sociologists and that making ourselves fully available to the reporter would give us the opportunity carefully to explain the data, including both their limitations and wider significance — thus reducing the chance of distorted media coverage. Moreover, it would allow us to maintain our professional credibility, and avoid creating the impression that we (or our community) had something to hide. Finally, we recognized that it was no longer a secret that the *haredi* community also endured its share of psycho-social pathologies. Secular dailies in Israel had already revealed the existence of a shelter for *haredi* women victimized by domestic abuse,[22] and fund-raising efforts for that shelter had also been advertised in the *haredi* press. We therefore agreed to meet that reporter and to go over all our data as soon as we had completed data analysis.

This experience changed our outlook on bias. Unlike the case of earlier, non-*haredi* researchers, our current membership in that community created an especially direct identification with our research subjects: what reflected poorly on them also reflected poorly on us. Moreover, unflattering publicity could cause us personal fallout within our community. This is something rarely mentioned by any of those ethnographers referred to (in relative terms) as 'insiders' in the literature cited above. In this sense, compared with those researchers of *haredim* whose insider status rests on what Kaul-Seidman[23] called their 'broad identification and affiliation with the Jewish tradition or with Jewish people-hood', we are 'inner' insiders.

In reflecting on this experience, we identified our potential vulnerability to a subtle pitfall: nothing so egregious as falsifying or otherwise tampering with data which could reflect poorly on our community, but

simply *ignoring* them. For, in a study with as many variables as ours, and given the heavy time pressures on the core research staff, nothing could be easier than just 'never getting around' to analyzing (not to mention publishing) the domestic abuse data. Investigators typically ration scarce time and energy amongst competing responsibilities of teaching, research, and administration. Let us say our study could yield a possible six or seven papers, but our other commitments realistically permit development of only four. Why, we might readily ask ourselves (or maybe *not* even consciously ask ourselves), make one of those four something unpleasant or embarrassing? Strictly speaking, this is not clear suppression of data. And busy researchers will often strategically select, of all projects competing for their time, those calculated to be most useful for advancing their careers, which projects are not necessarily those making the greatest long-term contribution to science.

And yet . . . The current Code of Ethics of the American Sociological Association[24] contains some passages whose spirit (if not letter) bears at least indirectly on the propriety of such practice:

> 9.01 Adherence to Professional Standards
> Irrespective of their personal . . . interests . . . sociologists adhere to professional and scientific standards in (1) the collection, analysis, or interpretation of data; (2) the reporting of research; (3) . . . professional presentation, or public dissemination of sociological knowledge. . . .
>
> 13.04 Reporting on Research
> (a) Sociologists disseminate their research findings except where unanticipated circumstances (e.g., the health of the researcher) or proprietary agreements with employers, contractors, or clients preclude such dissemination. . . .
> (c) In presenting their work, sociologists report their findings fully and do not omit relevant data.

The influence of non-scientific factors (such as personal or political biases) on selections of which data to develop for publication may constitute tension (if not a direct clash) between, in the Code's terms, 'personal interests' and 'professional and scientific standards' in 'the reporting of research'. Writing about 'indigenous anthropology', Moslih Kanaaneh explicitly rejects the claim that objectivity requires researchers to be neutral or indifferent towards their subjects. Rather, researchers require integrity: Kanaaneh holds that — despite their engagement — they must be 'able to tell the truth and the whole truth' about what they know.[25]

But do researchers always tell the whole truth about what they know? Hidden selectivity regarding which data to pursue is hardly limited to research on religion, or even to social science. For example, David Rier[26] has reported something similar among public health scientists. One investigator explained the fate of preliminary data which

suggested health risks from induced abortion, a practice personally endorsed by the researchers:

> So all we could possibly do was write a paper with a bunch of limitations, that was on the side that none of us, in the whole team, were [*sic*] on the side of. And we just let it sit.... I'm not lying to you [laughs]... we didn't have the right data, but it was also true that *we chose; had we been on the other side of the induced abortion issue, we might have chosen to write the paper* [emphasis added].

It is impossible to tell how often the personal commitments of researchers produce such selectivity, amounting to silent self-censorship. It might influence the writing-up of results, pursuit of research leads, or even the initial definition of research questions. Such decisions typically occur 'backstage'. The ones a researcher lets get away — the papers which somehow never get written, the data never properly developed, the questions never asked — leave little trace, but bear ethical implications. In our own case, we anyway might have decided to submit the data (if warranted on technical scientific grounds) for academic peer-review. Wholly apart from intellectual honesty, such publication could be an important element in our case for resources with which to address the problem. Clearly, however, this experience demonstrated for us why those with a personal (or communal) stake in the findings must be particularly attentive to such self-censorship possibilities throughout the research process. Rabbi Dr. Moshe Bernstein,[27] an Orthodox rabbi engaged in academic Judaic studies, has discussed the clash for scholars between religious faith and their academic research: 'In practice... we all have issues which we have tacitly agreed not to touch. As a result, we must always be aware of our ''compromised'' status'.

Our specific experience with the journalist seems something of an ethical grey area. True, such behaviour seldom features in important works on scientific misconduct.[28] Yet it does suggest that those with a personal (or communal) stake in the findings must be particularly attentive to possible self-censorship, throughout the research process. To that extent, then, the initial reviewer who questioned our objectivity was perhaps not so unfair after all.

Conclusion

This paper reports our experiences while conducting a survey amongst our own community. At two separate stages of the work, we had to confront implications of our insider status. Our perceptions of how this affected our scientific objectivity led us to evolve beyond our initial stance of defensiveness. While we did not actually come to reject the arguments offered in our rebuttal to the reviewer of our grant proposal,

our contact with the journalist led us to a more nuanced position, with a deeper awareness of the implications of our stake in the findings.

The literature on objectivity, bias, and ethical responsibilities in science is vast and rich,[29] and a proper treatment of this subject lies beyond the scope of the present brief paper. However, the experiences we have discussed here yield three lessons. First, even survey researchers, and not just ethnographers, may need to consider how insider/outsider issues can affect their work. Second, although this applies also to outsiders (as even Wolfe[30] — while criticizing insider bias in the sociology of religion — noted, all students of religion 'position themselves' relative to their subject), the direct identification of insiders with their subjects seems to necessitate especial alertness. Third, any researchers with a personal, religious, or ideological stake in the findings are potentially susceptible to a subtle form of selectivity bias — a bias which may infiltrate any stage of the research process, and in almost any scientific discipline.

In conclusion, we suggest that it behoves all researchers — wherever situated on the insider/outsider continuum, and in whichever methodological traditions they work — to be sensitive to the sometimes hidden ways in which non-scientific considerations may shape their research and its dissemination.

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NOTES

[1] Alan Wolfe, 'The Territory of Belief', *Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 52, no. 47, 2006, p. B11.

[2] Lisa R. Kaul-Seidman, 'Fieldwork among the "Ultra-Orthodox": The "Insider-Outsider" Paradigm Revisited', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, nos. 1 and 2, 2002 (pp. 30–55), p. 31.

[3] Samuel C. Heilman, 'Jewish Sociologist: Native-as-Stranger', *American Sociologist*, vol. 15, no. 2, 1980, pp. 100–108.

[4] Jack Kugelmass, 'Introduction' in J. Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds: Ethnographic Essays on American Jewry*, Ithaca, 1988, pp. 1–29.

[5] Kaul-Seidman, op. cit. in note 2 above (p. 50, n. 13), appropriately cites the caution of Kirin Narayan (see 'How Native is a "Native" Anthropologist?', *American Anthropologist* [New Series], vol. 95, no. 3, 1993, pp. 671–686) that the concepts of 'native' and 'non-native' fail to capture important elements of the relations between researchers and the researched. Similarly, Nancy A. Naples ('A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider

Debate. The ''Outsider Phenomenon'' in Rural Iowa', in *Reflexivity and Voice* [ed. by R. Hertz], London, 1997, pp. 70–94) and Bahira Sherif ('The Ambiguity of Boundaries in the Fieldwork Experience: Establishing Rapport and Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status', *Narrative Inquiry* vol. 7, no. 4, 2001, pp. 436–447) remind us that the terms 'insider' and 'outsider' refer to fluid, shifting, *relative* statuses which are constantly under negotiation. However, the present discussion follows Heilman, op. cit. in note 3 above (p. 103, n. 2) in retaining the 'insider-outsider' terminology because, as did Heilman, we focus specifically on our own identities as members of the community we studied.

[6] Kaul-Seidman, op. cit. in note 2 above, also noted that discussion of insider-outsider identities is a characteristic of research carried out since the 1970s. For an example of the older, non-reflexive type of study, see Israel Rubin, *Satmar: An Island in the City*, Chicago, 1972. Rubin collected his data for this ethnography of Satmar *hassidim* mainly in the early 1960s. Solomon Poll's earlier *The Hasidic Community of Williamsburg: A Study in the Sociology of Religion* (New York, [1962] 1969), an ethnography of a similar population, did discuss insider/outsider issues, but only from the non-reflexive methodological perspective of gaining access to the field. William B. Helmreich's *The World of the Yeshiva: An Intimate Portrait of Orthodox Jewry* (New Haven, 1982) constitutes a more recent example: the ethnographic portion of its data were gathered in 1974–75.

[7] At least one researcher of *haredim* and their institutions has discussed how his research drew him nearer to the religious practices of his subjects. See Samuel Heilman's works, *The Gate Behind the Wall: A Pilgrimage to Jerusalem* [2nd ed.], Jerusalem, [1984] 1995, and *The People of the Book: Drama, Fellowship, and Religion*, Chicago, 1987, pp. xi–xii. In *The Gate Behind the Wall*, p. 198, Heilman even claimed that, to an extent, he went native. Daniel Boyarin ('Waiting for a Jew: Marginal Redemption at the Eighth Street Shul', in Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds*, op. cit. in note 4 above, pp. 52–76 [pp. 72–74] and in a personal communication, 1 July 2005) has described how, as part of a dialectical process of researching Jews and fashioning his own Jewish identity, his participation in a marginal Orthodox *minyan* (prayer group) was a bridge to a stronger orientation towards *halakha* (Jewish law) in his own personal religious practice.

[8] See Jack Kugelmass, 'Between Two Worlds: Notes on the Celebration of Purim among New York Jews, March 1985', in Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds*, op. cit. in note 4 above, pp. 33–51; Janet Belcove-Shalin, 'Becoming More of an Eskimo: Fieldwork among the Hasidim of Boro Park', in Kugelmass, ed., *Between Two Worlds*, op. cit. in note 4 above, pp. 77–102; William Shaffir, 'Some Reflections on Approaches to Fieldwork in Hassidic Communities', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* vol. 27, no. 2, 1985, pp. 115–134; William Shaffir, 'Fieldwork among Hassidic Jews: Moral Challenges and Missed Opportunities', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology* vol. 43, nos. 1 and 2, 2001, pp. 53–69; Tamar El-Or, 'Do You Really Know How They Make Love? The Limits on Intimacy with Ethnographic Informants' In *Reflexivity and Voice* [ed. by R. Hertz], London, 1997, pp. 169–189; and Tamar El-Or, *Educated and Ignorant: Ultraorthodox Jewish Women and Their World* (tr. by H. Watzman), London, 1994.

[9] See, for example, Samuel Heilman, *Defenders of the Faith: Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry*, New York, 1992.

[10] Noah J. Efron, *Real Jews: Secular vs. Ultra-Orthodox and the Struggle for Jewish Identity in Israel*, New York, 2003 and Tamar El-Or, 'Do You Really Know How They Make Love?', op. cit. in note 8 above.

[11] Samuel Heilman is one of the few other examples of a Jewish sociologist describing insider/outsider issues in his studying the religious world with which he fully identified, and whose practices he currently followed in his personal life. See his accounts of his participant observation research in the American modern Orthodox community: *Synagogue Life: A Study in Symbolic Interaction* [2nd edn.], New Brunswick, 1998, and 'Jewish Sociologist: Native-as-Stranger', op. cit. in note 3 above.

[12] See, for example, Bahira Sherif, op. cit. in note 5 above.

[13] Andrew M. Greeley (1987), practising as both Roman Catholic priest and sociologist, is a prominent case of a non-Jewish survey researcher who faced insider/outsider issues. He has recounted the personal fallout he experienced from his surveys on U.S. Catholics and the Church. See *Confessions of a Parish Priest: An Autobiography*, New York, 1987.

[14] That manuscript's source for this quotation was Jacques Barzun and Henry G. Graff, *The Modern Researcher* (4th edn.), New York, 1985, p. 200.

[15] See Mats Alvesson and Kaj Skoldberg, *Reflexive Methodology: New Vistas for Qualitative Research*, London, 2000, p. 6.

[16] See Efron, op. cit. in note 10 above.

[17] See Robert K. Merton, 'Insiders and Outsiders: A Chapter in the Sociology of Knowledge', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 78, no. 1, 1972, pp. 9–47.

[18] See Georg Simmel, *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (ed. and tr. by K. H. Wolff), New York, [1908] 1964; and Robert E. Park, 'Human Migration and the Marginal Man', *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 33, no. 6, 1928, pp. 881–893.

[19] See Efron, op. cit. in note 10 above.

[20] See Heilman, op. cit. in note 3 above, p. 107.

[21] Leviticus 22:32; Babylonian Talmud, tractate *Yoma* 86a; and Maimonides' *Code of Jewish Law*, sect. *Yesodei haTorah* 5:1.

[22] See Hilary L. Krieger, 'Domestic Help', *Jerusalem Post*, 10 May 2005; Tamar Rotem, 'Haredi Society Discovers Family Violence, but Slowly', *Haaretz*, 19 January 2004.

[23] Kaul-Seidman, op. cit. note 2 above, p. 31.

[24] See 'Code of Ethics', American Sociological Association, 1999.

[25] See Moslih Kanaaneh, 'The "Anthropologicality" of Indigenous Anthropology', *Dialectical Anthropology*, vol. 22, 1997, pp. 1–21, p. 6.

[26] See David A. Rier, 'Publication Visibility of Sensitive Public Health Data: When Scientists Bury Their Results', *Science and Engineering Ethics*, vol. 10, no. 4, 2004 (pp. 597–613) p. 606.

[27] Moshe J. Bernstein, 'The Orthodox Jewish Scholar and Jewish Scholarship: Duties and Dilemmas', *Torah u-Madda Journal*, vol. 3. 1991/1992 (pp. 8–36) p. 17.

[28] See, for example, William Broad and Nicholas Wade, *Betrayers of the Truth: Fraud and Deceit in the Halls of Science*, New York, 1982 and Horace F. Judson, *The Great Betrayal: Fraud in Science*, New York, 2004.

[29] See, for example, Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, eds.), New York, [1918] 1958, pp. 129–156; George A. Lundberg, 'The Logic of Sociology and Social Research', in *Trends in American Sociology* (G. A. Lundberg, R. Bain, and N. Anderson, eds.), New York, 1929, pp. 389–425; Robert N. Proctor, *Value-Free Science? Purity and Power in Modern Knowledge*, Cambridge, MA, 1991; Evelyn F. Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science*, New Haven, 1985; and Steve Wing, 'Social Responsibility and Research Ethics in Community-driven Studies of Industrialized Hog Production', *Environmental Health Perspectives*, vol. 110, no. 5, 2002, pp. 437–441.

[30] Wolfe, op. cit. in note 1 above.

THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF NORTH SHIELDS

Harold Pollins

THERE was a time when the Jewish communities of north-east England, in what were the counties of Northumberland and Durham, were numerous and vibrant. There have been large ones in Newcastle upon Tyne, Sunderland, Gateshead, and South Shields and smaller ones at Whitley Bay, Darlington, and Durham; most of them have declined or disappeared. I have chosen to research the history of North Shields, one of the smaller communities, partly because its size makes research manageable, but also because a study may suggest some notions of the development and decay of such congregations.

One preliminary point is the fact that the two Jewish communities of North and South Shields were intertwined for many years. This was exemplified by a report in the *Jewish Chronicle (JC)* in 1874, headed 'North and South Shields', which stated: 'It has been settled that North Shields and South Shields shall henceforth form one united congregation'.[1] This was despite the fact that the two towns were in different counties — Northumberland (North Shields) and Durham (South Shields) — and, moreover, were physically separated by the river Tyne. However, after a few decades the communities more or less went their own ways and South Shields was to become the larger and longer-lasting of the two. It is possible therefore to study North Shields separately, while being aware of its close association with South Shields. I have used the names of the towns and the counties as they were before the reorganisation of local government in 1974 and 1986.

North Shields was historically also called 'Tynemouth' and is located on the north-east coast, on the estuary of the river Tyne. It is a medium-sized town and in the early twentieth century its population was less than 50,000. The name 'Shields' derives from 'shieldings' or 'shiels' which meant 'fishermen's huts', which words provide a clue as to a main occupation. At North Shields fishing can be traced to the thirteenth century and the town can be said to have come into existence because of it. The industry expanded and remained a major activity

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until recent times; the port was one of the locations for the traditional landing of herrings, as the herring fleets travelled southwards along the east coast of Great Britain, followed by Scottish fisher lasses who, at each landing-point, would prepare the herrings. However, North Shields was essentially a white-fish port.

The fishing industry gave rise to associated activities. As well as becoming 'an important fishing station' it developed as a 'supply base for stores, ice and coal for both the merchant and the fishing fleet tied up alongside, or anchored off, an extensive series of small quays'. A number of roperies were developed for the pre-steam fishing boats and off-shoots of that main industry was the canning of fish and the preparation of fish products including fish liver oil. Among other associated occupations were ships' chandling, ship-broking, and insurance.[2]

North Shields is a port in a district which was a major coal-mining area. It had two docks: Northumberland (opened 1857) and Albert Edward Dock (opened 1884). These were for general cargoes but in particular it imported pit props for the coal industry, much from the Baltic. The north-east coal trade was to a large extent the coast-wise trade to London although coal exports also went overseas. Coal was loaded at Howdon, to the east of North Shields.[3] The town is on the river Tyne, which has been a major centre of shipbuilding, but this has been located mainly up-river, notably at Newcastle upon Tyne, some eight miles west of North Shields. There have been some small shipbuilding concerns in North Shields but its main activity in that field has been ship-repairing, the main yard being Smith's Dock, later Appledore.[4]

The history of Jewish communities can be approached in at least two ways; through an examination of their structural and organisational history or as a study of the make-up of the population. Both ways are used in this paper. A major difficulty in researching North Shields Jewry is the paucity of primary sources. When the synagogue closed after the Second World War, a report on its condition was made at a meeting of the Newcastle Jewish Representative Council. At that meeting Lewis Olsover (the future historian of the Jewish communities of north-east England) asked that the records be preserved. He was assured that they would be.[5] But that promise was not fulfilled. The Tyne & Wear Archives Service — the obvious depository — has very little data, but the Burial Register of Preston Cemetery, North Shields (which is in its possession) has proved useful. The North Shields library has a file of material, which has kindly been supplied to me; but I have also used other sources. Thus the organisational history can be readily seen, mainly in reports in the Jewish newspapers; indeed, most of the sources used in this article are from the *Jewish Chronicle*. However, the study of the community's population presents some problems, starting with the important question of identifying

the town's Jewish residents since there are no lists of members of the congregation and one therefore has to create a database. As noted above, there are the names of people buried in the Jewish Section of Preston Cemetery (these have been extracted from the general burial registers by the Tyne & Wear Archives Service). The entries in the register give the name and occupation of the father and the name of the person conducting the ceremony, if there was one. Another source of names is Lewis Olsover's pioneering *The Jewish Communities of North-East England* (1981) which includes many. A major source is the weekly *Jewish Chronicle*, notably the names of community officers who were elected periodically. There are also notices of births, marriages, and deaths in that newspaper; but we must allow for the fact that the *JC* printed whatever inserts were paid for, and thus a non-Jewish spouse might be included.

Two other major sources are the decennial Censuses of England & Wales and the Indexes of Births, Marriages, and Deaths of England & Wales. Access to both is obtainable on the Internet and if one knows a name, from one of the above sources, one can find members of the household, where they lived and where they were born.

When I had to identify those entries which might be Jews, I based my choice of criteria on some of the categories used by Harvey L. Kaplan in his *The Gorbals Jewish Community in 1901* (Scottish Jewish Archives, 2006), pp. 5–6:

> 1. Typical Jewish surnames, such as Cohen or Goldberg. However, there were members of the North Shields Jewry who had 'English' names, such as Jackson and Fisher while Jacob Foster (who died in March 1912) was president of the North Shields congregation.[6]
> 2. Typical Jewish first names. These might be biblical — Samuel, Moses, Leah, Rachel — but they were also commonly the names of non-Jews and have to be considered carefully, preferably in conjunction with other factors. There were also more specifically Jewish forenames such as Hyman, Yetta, or Golda.
> 3. Typical Jewish immigrant occupations. Hawker (sometimes called 'traveller') of various commodities was one — selling drapery or jewellery, for example. Others like pawnbroker, picture-frame maker, jeweller, and glazier were common ones.
> 4. Born in Russia, Poland, Germany, Austria, and Holland. While non-Jews also came from these countries they would have non-Jewish names, and sometimes fathers and sons would have the same forename which would not be usual among Ashkenazim (although this was not necessarily strictly adhered to).

However, one of Kaplan's criteria does not apply to North Shields. He notes that in Glasgow there were Jewish areas in which streets had large numbers of Jewish residents. The Jewish population of North Shields was too small for such concentrations.

In summary, if one comes across a person with a name such as Wineberg, who was born in Russia, and whose head of household was a glazier, then one could reasonably conclude that the family was Jewish. However, there are at least two caveats. First, the Census information had been supplied by the informant and communicated to the enumerator who wrote it down and this can lead to numerous errors and anomalies. The same person, in subsequent Censuses, might have different spellings of his or her name but, more importantly, the year and place of birth might be different, while occupation was self-ascribed and may not have been precise.

Second, the possession of a Jewish name is not always conclusive. Take the case of Daniel Levy, born in Germany about 1800, who was described as a jeweller in the 1841 Census. In the 1851 and 1871 Censuses the place of birth of his eldest son Jacob Daniel Levy was given as North Shields, although in other Censuses it is given as Carmarthenshire in Wales. The wife of Daniel Levy was Mary Ann Reynolds and the couple were married in Spitalfields Christ Church, Stepney. Clearly, although the father had several characteristics which would mark him as probably Jewish, the members of that household are unlikely to have considered themselves to be Jews or to have identified themselves with the Jewish community. The son, possibly born in North Shields, is therefore not included in the database.

Another, more general, caution is that even though particular persons had all the characteristics of being Jewish, and are therefore in the database, we have no certainty that they considered themselves to be Jewish or that they were known as members of the local community. However, a curious example is that of Adolph Slapoffski, a musician, who lived in Oxford in the late nineteenth century. He was born in Courland (Latvia) and after he was widowed he married his wife's sister; the women's surname was Hunter. His son was married in an Oxford church. Yet when Adolph emigrated to Australia and died there, a Jewish minister officiated at his burial.[7] Noah Samuel Lotinga of North Shields was the son of Samuel Moses Lotinga, who will appear in this narrative as an active member of the Jewish community. But Noah was married to (presumably) a non-Jewish woman in the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, Cardiff, on 17 October 1847. She died in 1872 and a Christian clergyman officiated at her burial. That family has been excluded from the statistics.

To summarise: the statistics I use, based on identifying Jews from various sources, cannot claim to be exact. In addition to not knowing if those who had Jewish names considered themselves to be part of the congregation, there may have been others who had 'English' names and so have not been picked up. In these circumstances the figures are very approximate.

Early North Shields

The minister of the Sunderland Jewish community, Rabbi Dr. Salis Daiches, published an article in 1911 which provided a general survey of the communities of north-east England. He noted that there was 'scarcely a *minyan* left in North Shields', which he described as 'the oldest congregation in the North'.[8] The first detailed information about Jews resident in North Shields dates from the Census of 1841 but there are some scattered references to the existence of a community at an earlier date. When the ground was being dug in 1924 on the site of a new housing estate near North Shields, in a place called Balkwell Farm, two tombstones were discovered: those of a husband and wife: Hart Samuel, aged 77, was buried in 1806 and his wife Rachael, who died aged 74. There were also 15 skeletons of unknown people, including those of several children. This has been shown to be undoubtedly a Jewish cemetery dating at least from the first decade of the nineteenth century.[9]

In 1907, the Rev. Michelson of Newcastle had stated to the Board of Deputies of British Jews that 'his attention had been called to a disused Jewish cemetery near North Shields which he stated had a most forlorn look, and the wall of which was broken'.[10] Although the Board agreed to investigate, nothing appears to have been done. As well as a cemetery, this early community apparently also had a synagogue. There are references to both of them in early nineteenth-century publications: in 1811 ('The Jews have a synagogue in this place'); in 1822 ('and the Jews also have a synagogue'); in 1825 ('The Jews have a *Synagogue* on the declivity of the bank upon which Tyne Street is built'); in 1827 (that last sentence is repeated with the additional comment: 'and their cemetery is situated at the north end of Chirton village'); in 1828 (re: Chirton Village: 'At the north end of the village is a small enclosed burial ground, which belongs to the Jews'); and as late as 1834 ('and a Jews' synagogue').[11]

It is possible, of course, that the later of these publications were merely copying earlier ones; did they bother to check all their facts? But taking them at their face value, that is about all we know of this early Jewish community except that it probably began in the late eighteenth century — assuming that some of the burials in the cemetery took place before 1806, the date on one of the gravestones. There is no way of knowing the validity of the statement made in 1924 — at the time of the discovery of the old cemetery — which compared the contemporary, declining, North Shields community with the one 'which flourished over a century ago'.[12] The only other information we have about it are some details about one Jewish family resident in the town in the 1820s, headed by Trytle Joel who was described as a silversmith, in Tyne Street, North Shields, in *Pigot & Co's National*

Commercial Directory for 1828–9 (p. 622). He had lived in the town since at least 1821 when the first of his five children was born in the town.

The apparent existence of a synagogue in North Shields in the 1830s does not mean that it was still in use or that a community even existed at the time. *Pigot & Co's* 1828–9 Directory does not list any Jewish names apart from Trytle Joel's. The 1851 Census is the first to give details about town of birth and the first birth after the Joels left around 1830 was in about 1837 and between that year and 1841 four Jewish children were born in the town. In the 1841 Census there were some 30 Jews in North Shields, consisting of five households and several single people. One household was that of another Joel family (who may or may not have been related to Trytle Joel's). Their head was Abraham, a jeweller. There was Isaac Jacob, also a jeweller, along with Hyman Jacob, presumably his son. Isaac Jacob moved to South Shields by 1851 and when he died in that town in 1857 the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that he had founded the North Shields congregation. A third family was headed by Abraham Jackson, a glazier and a fourth by Jonas Jacobs, a painter, whose daughter Hannah was a dressmaker. Joseph Marks headed a family of tailors. Almost all these residents had been born overseas but Abraham Jackson had a son Joseph, aged one, who was born in Northumberland as were two boys in the Marks family.

In the 1841 Census four Jews who were born abroad were resident in a household headed by a non-Jew, Elizabeth Ash. Three of them, named Levy, were all jewellers, and were probably brothers. The fourth was Sam Goldborough (*sic*). This was undoubtedly a misprint for Goldberg: a Samuel Goldberg is in the 1851 Census, still in a household headed by Elizabeth Ash. He was born in Hanover, and in both years his occupation, although an unusual one for a Jewish immigrant, was given as letter-carrier. A Jewish minister officiated at his burial in 1857 in Preston Cemetery. At least one other Jewish household was temporarily in the town in the 1840s as evidenced from two children born there; it was headed by Louis Abraham who soon moved to Newcastle where he was recorded in the 1851 Census.

Another early inhabitant makes a fleeting appearance in this history. In November 1842 Isaac Solomon, a native of Posen, was baptised at a Methodist chapel in North Shields. He was 16 years old when he arrived in England in the late 1820s and lived in Bristol. He moved to Edinburgh, where he met Joseph Buchan (also a converted Jew) and took on the name of Isaac Thomas.[13]

At the time of the 1851 Census the Jewish population had almost doubled, numbering 54 individuals: 12 families and three single men, two named Wolf — probably brothers — in lodgings, and Samuel Goldberg, mentioned above. Between the 1841 and the 1851 Censuses a total of 18 Jewish children were born in the town (three of them

dying before reaching the age of two years). They were the issue of some seven families, most of them in households recorded in the town in the 1851 Census. The Jewish population was clearly growing, in sufficient numbers (together with South Shields Jewry) to create an organised community and it is possible to date its emergence during the second half of the decade. The Chief Rabbi had initiated a survey of Anglo-Jewry in 1845 and in the subsequent report there is no mention of North Shields, nor is there in a 1847 report by the Board of Deputies,[14] although one historian states, 'The Tynemouth or North Shields congregation... had used the synagogue since 1846'.[15] However, on 1 March 1849, according to an entry in the Registry of Jewish Marriages at the offices of the Chief Rabbinate, Samuel Lotinga of 6 Toll Square, North Shields, was described as Secretary and Registrar.[16] (The Lotingas were to be an important and widespread family in the north-east of England.) Soon after, in 1854, Rev. Isaac Bernstein arrived from Russian Poland to be the first paid official, as shoḥet.

More precise evidence of the existence of a congregation is recorded in the 1851 Religious Census, made in connection with the decennial Population Census. It asked congregations to report attendances at various services in March 1851 as well as figures for average attendances. Tynemouth (that is, North Shields) is listed as returning figures of between 15 and 20 attendances — which probably included South Shields residents.

The United Congregation of North and South Shields

At some point a synagogue was established at 57 Church Way. The first reference I have found to it is in a return of the Board of Deputies, which gave vital statistics of the various Jewish congregations for the period January 1853 to January 1854.[17] It included the address of the North Shields synagogue as Church Way, the president being S. M. Lotinga, of North Shields. However, its officers came from both towns. In 1857 Henry Jackson of Mill Dam, South Shields, was elected president.[18] In 1856, according to a report of the Board of Deputies, there were 14 seatholders in the North Shields congregation (presumably adult males, who paid for their seats in the synagogue).[19] That number was plausible as more Jewish families were arriving in both towns during the 1850s. It appears that the South Shields Jews made the journey for religious services to North Shields on the ferry and since they were undoubtedly Orthodox Jews they would not have paid for the ferry journey on the Sabbath or other holy days: apparently they paid in advance.[20]

In July 1857 it was decided to purchase a site for a burial ground and an appeal for funds was launched. This was despite the fact that in the previous year the congregation had told the Board of Deputies that it

regretted it was unable to pay its share ('not quite £3.10s.') towards the expenses of the Board.[21] The advertisement announcing the appeal listed the first donations. The sole Jewish donor was the Chief Rabbi; the others were the Duke of Northumberland; two MPs; and three other non-Jews. Isaac Bernstein had officiated at two burials in 1856 (Sarah Isaacs in July and Therese Marks in November) and at the burial of Samuel Goldberg in November 1857. In 1862 there was provision for a school, apparently through the good offices of the Chief Rabbi who had obtained from Baron Lionel de Rothschild the promise of an annual donation of £30.[22]

The first religious functionary was Isaac Bernstein, and his learned letters on theological matters are to be found in the *Jewish Chronicle* in the late 1850s and early 1860s. In July 1861 it was announced that after seven years as 'reader, &c.', he was to retire from office, although there continue to be references to him until 1863 with an address in North Shields. An advertisement in March 1863 merely requested applications for the post of hazan and shoḥet with no mention of salary. This was remedied a few months later when it was set at £52 per annum.[23] It seems that another religious official was appointed but a rather sad newspaper notice announced that North Shields recommended the Rev. Mr Lewis 'to a larger Congregation with a better salary than we can afford'.[24]

The existing synagogue in Church Way, North Shields, had been advertised on p. 3 of the *Shields Daily News* of 16 March 1868 which gave notice of an auction of a freehold dwelling-house at number 57, the sale to include 'the Freehold DWELLINGHOUSE, behind and adjoining, containing two large Rooms, occupied as a Synagogue, &c.'. It had been decided earlier to have a purpose-built synagogue in North Shields to be for the use of both towns and in July 1865 a public appeal was started for funds. The advertisement stated: 'The Brethren, although not at present numerous in these two towns, are daily increasing, but are, for the most part, in poor circumstances . . .'.[25] The poverty of some of the members was exemplified in an announcement, the following year, about two poor co-religionists (Selig Hyman and Joseph Joel) married to two sisters, living in the same house in North Shields. Both wives had died of cholera within a few days. Hyman's wife left eight children, and Joel's left three. A subscription for the families was to be raised.[26] In the following year Joseph Joel and his children emigrated to the United States while Selig Hyman's household moved to South Shields.

Probably the first secular organisation to be created was the 'Hebrew Brotherly Love Society, North Shields' whose first anniversary was held in April 1866. The three officers were Henry Jackson of South Shields and Joseph Wolf and Henry Wineberge of North Shields (*Shields Daily News*, 16 April 1866, p. 2). However, nothing more is known or heard of it.

In the meantime progress on the new synagogue was slow. Although it was announced in April 1873 that a site had been obtained for a synagogue and a school,[27] a year later there was criticism in the *Jewish Chronicle* about the lack of religious instruction in the two towns. Some boys of 13 (the age of bar mitzvah) were said to be unable to read Hebrew.[28] In 1875 a site was acquired at 29 Linskill St., North Shields.[29] An appeal for funds was instituted, the synagogue was consecrated on 22 March 1876 and a report of the ceremony described the building as small, holding 70 people, with two small rooms knocked into one (obviously it was not purpose-built). There was no gallery but a small area at the rear was for women. The ground floor was a school for 12 children and the congregation consisted of 12 families.[30]

In fact the 1871 Census recorded 15 Jewish households in North Shields and seven in South Shields, as well as two single men and an unmarried minister, Rev. Philip Philippstein, aged 26, a lodger in a non-Jewish household. He was just one of a number of transient ministers. The next minister had his name — Mizrachi — mis-spelled as 'Mizeachy' in the 1881 Census, and was described as a married 25-year-old 'Jewish Rabbi' born in Palastine (*sic*). He was not accompanied by his wife but was a 'boarder' in a non-Jewish household, headed by a Scottish-born mariner, the whole household living at 29 Linskill Road — the address of the synagogue which was noted in the Census as 'Jewish S'. Although not described as such, perhaps the sailor and his wife were the caretakers? For once there is the precise date on which a Jewish minister (Mizrachy) took up his post: on 15 November 1880.[31] He left after three years; an announcement in September 1883 — referring to his rôle as minister and teacher 'to the United Congregations of North and South Shields' — stated that he had left to go abroad for medical treatment.[32] The next minister was Rev. Noah Blaser, who had lived in the town since at least 1888 when a daughter of his was born there. He went to Southport in 1893 and Rev. Abraham Isaac Scheff was recorded as 'of North Shields' in 1895[33] — the 'Mr. Shiff Jewish Priest' who conducted a burial service in April 1898 at Preston Cemetery. He was followed in 1900 by Rev. Harris Ehrenberg as ḥazan, shoḥet, and teacher[34] and he also left North Shields after three years, going to Newcastle.

The Dissolution of the United Congregation

The fact that nineteenth-century provincial Jewish communities in particular were given to internal dissension was frequently noted and deplored within Anglo-Jewry and in the Jewish press. Even while the united congregation was in the process of raising funds for the eventual

synagogue inaugurated in 1876, a report of a meeting of the Board of Deputies in 1870 included this notice:[35]

> NORTH SHIELDS CONGREGATION
>
> A communication from Mr. Lotinga was read, stating that dissensions existed in the congregation, and appealing for assistance towards the erection of a synagogue, for which purpose £100 had been collected. The writer remarked that divine services had been conducted in his house during the past six months. The Board regretted that it possessed no funds.

This was no doubt the Samuel Moses Lotinga who had been President of the congregation and while the details of the 'dissensions' are not recorded, it looks as though the services in his house were held in opposition to wherever the 'regular' services were held — assuming the synagogue in Church Way had been sold. However, a notice in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 28 September 1877 (a mere year after the opening of the synagogue in Linskill Road) that the 'Temporary Synagogue in South Shields' had been well attended with between 50 and 60 worshippers, may have referred to the fact that during the High Holy days of the New Year and the Day of Atonement they were probably overflow services to accommodate the unusually large numbers, in addition to the services in Linskill Road.[36] But the separation became clearer a few years later when it was reported, of 'The Recent Festivals', that 'At South Shields the hall which was hired for religious festivals during the holydays (*sic*) has been secured as a permanent place for Divine Service'.[37] This separation appeared to be confirmed by the appointment in 1885 of a secretary for marriages for South Shields, the first marriage being conducted in 1892.

One factor in these new arrangements was clearly that the Jewish community of South Shields had grown extensively while that of North Shields was declining. The peak (83 souls) in North Shields was in 1861, but within two decades (in 1881) only 37 remained. In that year South Shields had boomed to 102. For the rest of the century the Jewish population of North Shields did not greatly vary while that of South Shields grew even larger. On the death in 1899 of Myer Barczynski (who had been the president of the North Shields congregation for many years) it was recorded: 'It was solely due to his efforts that this small and *dwindling* congregation did not cease to exist many years ago'.[38] In 1905 the Jews of South Shields were stated to number 250 and those of North Shields only 32.[39]

An important stage in the separation of the Jewish communities of North and South Shields was in June 1890 when, at a meeting in South Shields, 'It was unanimously agreed to form a congregation in South Shields as soon as there is a possible income of 25/- per head'.[40] It took some years for that intention to be realised. In 1895

the *Jewish Chronicle* reported: 'After having been in temporary premises for five years, the members of the South Shields congregation have purchased a building at 38 Charlotte Street, for the purpose of a permanent synagogue which will be ready for the High Festivals'.[41] That promise was kept and the synagogue was consecrated on 15 June 1895.[42]

In February 1896 an advertisement appeared which stated (erroneously) that the South Shields congregation had been established seven years earlier and that the members had done their best to provide a place of worship, Hebrew classes, and to appoint an official qualified for the rôles of ḥazan, shoḥet, and religious teacher. The congregation had grown to 50 families and the present building was wholly inadequate. Premises had been found for a new synagogue and school, the building to cost £400. Moreover, railings were needed for the Jewish portion of the burial ground which had been set aside for them, the cost of which had to be met by the congregation. An appeal for funds was made.[43] In 1899 a burial ground for South Shields at Harton cemetery was consecrated;[44] until then the South Shields dead had been buried in the North Shields cemetery.

It was nevertheless a fluctuating relationship between the two towns. A number of members of the South Shields congregation seceded from the North & South Shields Chovevei Zion and constituted themselves into a separate branch with a membership of 21. The secretary was Rev. Lipkin, the minister for the southern town.[45] However, a meeting of Jewish ladies of North and South Shields was held to inaugurate a Hebrew Ladies' Benevolent Society; more than 30 ladies attended and signed on as members and others were expected to join. The list of elected officers showed that most came from South Shields.[46] At the annual meeting of the North Shields Hebrew Congregation, held towards the end of 1900, the honorary officers who were re-elected came from both towns. The President (C. D. Merkel) and Treasurer (Meyer Cohen) were residents of North Shields, as was N. Dresner, a member of the synagogue's committee. But the majority of the committee (Tobias Weinberg, Jacob Foster, M. Kossick, and D. Josephs), along with the Hon. Sec., Asher Cohen, were from South Shields.[47] South Shields Jews had indeed continued to use the North Shields synagogue. For example, in 1900 the bar mitzvah ceremony of Reuben Charles (fourth son of Mr. and Mrs. D. Josephs, of 49 Charlotte St., South Shields) was held at the synagogue in Linskill St., North Shields.[48] Moreover, Jacob Foster of South Shields who (as mentioned earlier) had been the president of the North Shields congregation, was buried in 1912 in the North Shields cemetery — despite the fact that South Shields had by then its own cemetery.[49]

My main sources have been the Censuses of England & Wales from 1841 to 1901 and the Indexes of Births, Marriages, and Deaths. It should be noted that I was unable to match for some people the birthplace statement in the Census with an entry in the Births Index; and in a few cases a person's birthplace in one Census was reported differently in the next. This would be the case when there was a foreign country of birth but also sometimes when the person was born in the UK. When the year of birth of a person varied from Census to Census the correct one could often be confirmed in the Births Index; but in a number of cases I could not find an entry in the Index.

Table I shows that the North Shields Jewish population was at its height in 1861 (84) and 1871 (78) but had declined dramatically by 1881 to 37. Although there had been 15 newcomers between 1871 and 1881, as many as 61 had moved away. Three large families who left were those of David Marks, a German-born tailor, who had nine children; Henry Isaacs, a German-born jeweller, who had five, and Michael Moses (also a German-born jeweller) who had eight. The newcomers included only two households of any size: one of five members and the other of six.

Table I indicates that there was a high proportion of children.

A second point about the population is that for much of the nineteenth century most of the adults were born abroad. Only three heads of household had been born in the UK and that was in North Shields. In Table II it can be seen that in total Germany supplied most immigrants, followed by 'Russia' (I do not differentiate between various countries of eastern Europe), and then Holland. The 1841 Census did not specify country of birth.

Table I.
North Shields Population in the Decennial Census 1841–1901

	Total no. of Jews	Age distribution			
		0–14	15–30	31–50	51+
1841*	30				
1851	54	22	16	5	11
1861	84**	36	29	15	4
1871	78	39	16	18	5
1881	37	10	10	13	4
1891	53	29	4	19	1
1901	40	11	17	10	2

* The ages in the 1841 Census were rounded and are therefore not amenable to analysis.
** Excluding three servants although, to judge by their names, they may have been Jews.

Table II.
Birthplace of Jews in North Shields

Country/town of birth	Census Years											
	1851	Adults	1861	Adults	1871	Adults	1881	Adults	1891	Adults	1901	Adults
Overseas												
Germany	11	9	30	19	15	13	10	10	10	7	3	3
Russia	14	14	9	3	10	7	6	6	6	6	10	9
Holland	12	8	15	8	9	6	3	3	2	2		
Palestine							1	1				
Total Overseas	37	31	54	30	34	26	20	20	18	15	13	12
Percentage	*64*		*60*		*42*		*55*		*34*		*33*	
United Kingdom												
Co. Durham												
South Shields	1	0	3	1	1							
Sunderland	1	1			2		2	1	2		1	1
Northumberland												
Belford									2		2	
Newcastle			2		7		5	4	5	2		
North Shields	15	0	23		20	2	9		25	6	19	10
Lancashire												
Blackpool											1	1
Manchester					4	1						
London & Middlesex					9	2					1	1
Staffordshire												
Staffordshire							1	1				
Burslem											1	1
Wolverhampton					1	1			1	1	1	1
Bristol											1	1
Scotland			1									
Total UK born	17	1	29	1	44	6	17	6	35	9	27	16
Percent UK born	*32*		*35*		*56*		*46*		*66*		*68*	
TOTALS	**54**	32	**84**	31	**78**	32	**37**	26	**53**	24	**40**	28

Notes
1. 'Adults' means Heads of Households and spouses and also other adults — visitors, in-laws, lodgers — aged over 14.
2. Where possible the birthplace of those born in the UK have been checked against the Index of Births.

It is not possible to be certain when the immigrants arrived in Britain but one way of suggesting possible dates is through the ages of their children. Some families already had children in their home country and the age of the last child born there (accepting as reliable the age given in the Census) indicates when they immigrated. Table III lists fathers and data information about their children's births and shows

Table III.
Birthplace of Children

Father	Year of birth	Country of birth	Year of birth of last child abroad	Year of birth of children in Britain	
				Before North Shields	First in North Shields
Abraham Jackson	1821	Germany	–	–	1838
Wolf Abraham	1801	'Foreign'	1833	–	1843
Henry Jackson	1821	Germany	–	–	1845
Isaac Hush	1822	Prussia	–	–	1846
Isaac Henry	1827	Germany	–	–	1848
Mark Moses	1823	Russia	–	–	1850
Morris Core	1822	Poland	–	–	1850
Calmer M. Lotinga	1808	Holland	1846	South Shields 1849	1850
Moses Mark	1824	Germany	1824	–	1851
Abraham Joseph	1821	Germany	–	–	1852
Jacob Cohen	1824	Prussia	–	–	1854
Isaac Bernstein	1819	Russ. Poland	1853	–	1856
Michael Moses	1832	Prussia	1853	–	1856
Izak Myer Cohen	1807	Holland	1852	–	–
Solomon Isaac	1833	Prussia	–	Newcastle 1857–9	–
David Blaustein	1832	Poland	1858	–	–
Henry Wineburgh	1836	Russia	–	–	1860
Lewis Lazarus	1832	Prussia	1861	–	1863
Jacob Michael	1835	Prussia	–	Scotland 1860	–
David Marks	1831	Germany	–	London 1854–64	1865
Joseph L. Markus	1819	Germany	–	Manchester 1850 Wolverhampton 1854 Newcastle 1861 Sunderland 1864–7	–
Hyman Silverman	1842	Poland	1866	–	–
Jacob Jackson	1845	UK	–	–	1868
Henry Isaacs	1831	Prussia	–	South Shields 1859 Manchester 1862–5	1870
Isaac Hush	1846	Prussia	–	–	1870
Elias Marks	1838	Russia	–	Newcastle 1860–70	1871
Herman Barczynsky	1830	Poland	–	London 1868–70	1871
Joseph Moses	1847	Russia	–	–	1872
Hyman Hyman	1849	Germany	–	–	1878
Elias Dresner	1855	Austria	–	Newcastle 1880–84	–
Meyer J. Cohen	1854	UK	–	–	1880
Charles D. Merkel	1852	Russia	–	Belford 1879–80	1882
Adolph Freudenberg	1856	Germany	–	–	1882
Harris Ehrenberg	1873	Germany	–	Blackpool 1899	1901
Moses J. Fisher	1872	UK	–	–	1900

Notes

1. Years of birth of father are approximate, taken from the Census.
2. Years of birth of children in UK are from the Census and, in most cases, checked against the Births Index.
3. The three fathers born in the UK were all born in North Shields.
4. In the 1891 Census the birthplace of the two children of Charles D. Merkel are given as 'Belfast, Ireland'. In the 1881 Census the family was recorded at Belford, Northumberland (the father being 'David' Merkel) and the children's birthplace is Belford, as it is also in the 1901 Census. The birthplace of Belford as the registration district is confirmed in the Index of Births.

inter alia the young age of most of the parents — based on a father's year of birth and the year of birth of his children. It also indicates whether the parents/families apparently went straight to North Shields after immigration or had gone to another British town first. Only three families arrived in North Shields who were older and did not have children in Britain: in 1851 Levy and Rachel Joel, both aged 60; Samuel Moses Lotinga, in 1881, aged 70 and his wife Alida, aged 73; and David Morris Fisher, first recorded in North Shields, as aged 40, married, but living in a non-Jewish household. Fisher's wife Mary had joined him at the time of the 1891 Census — no children were recorded — and she died on 22 June 1899 aged 59.[50]

The next two Tables are about economic activities. Most of the adults who were not gainfully occupied were wives and adult daughters.

The Jews of North Shields were mainly active in the consumer industries; only a few were associated with the main industries of the town (shipping and fishing), in ship-broking or as ship-chandlers. Moreover, hardly any were engaged in what were to be the main Jewish occupations by the end of the nineteenth century — tailoring and cabinet-making. There were few pawnbrokers, a great contrast with the Jews of South Wales: 'The pawnbroking trade in South Wales during the latter half of the nineteenth century was a Jewish domain'.[51]

Otherwise, the North Shields Jews followed the traditional pattern. Jewellery, watchmaking, and glazing, for example, were familiar nineteenth-century Jewish occupations. However, North Shields had few in the typical immigrant trade of peddling. Among the oddities was a botanist, a letter-carrier, and a telegraphist. A solicitor's clerk and a medical student indicated a slight upward mobility into the middle class.[52]

Table IV.
Economically active Jews in North Shields 1841–1901

Census year	Jewish population		Economically active	Retired
	Total	Aged 15+		
1841	30		17	
1851	54	31	17	
1861	84*	47	24	
1871	78	38	20	1
1881	40	27	16	
1891	53	24	16	
1901	40	29	19	1

* Excludes 3 servants who may have been Jews.

Table V.
Occupations of Jews in North Shields 1841–1901

Occupation	1841	1851	1861	1871	1881	1891	1901
Employees/Workers							
Letter carrier	1	1					
Painter & Glazier Apprentice		1					
Painter							1
Shoemaker						1	
Watchmaker							1
Journeyman tailor							2
Clothier's shopman					1		
Jeweller							1
Picture dealer							2
Tobacconist's Assistant							1
Pawnbroker's manager						1	1
Shipbroker's clerk			1				
Solicitor's clerk							1
Telegraphist				1			
Companion							1
Employers/Self-employed							
Jeweller/Jewellery dealer	8	1	10	4	2	1	
Jeweller & Pawnbroker							1
Jeweller & Tobacconist					1		
Jeweller & Furniture dealer					1		
Tobacconist & Confectioner						1	
Hawker/traveller	2	2	1	1	3		
Commercial traveller					1		1
Clothier		1		1			
Tailor	3		1	1	1		
Dressmaker	1			2	1	1	1
Outfitter & draper			1				
Draper			1				
Outfitter & ship owner			1				
General dealer						1	
General dealer & picture framer						1	
Pawnbroker				1	1	4	
Glazier	1	8	4	2	1	1	
Painter	1						
Painter & Glazier		1					
Portmanteau maker				1			
Wardrobe dealer							1
Watchmaker				1	1		
Picture dealer/art dealer							2
Ladies' hairdresser						1	1
Minister/rabbi			1	1	1	1	1
Ship's chandler			2	3			
Botanist				1	1		
Medical student						1	
Ship's broker		2	1				
Music teacher						1	
Totals	17	17	24	20	16	16	19

Note
Statuses (Worker, Self-employed, etc) were recorded only in the 1891 and 1901 Censuses. Those I have described as employee/worker in earlier Censuses are inferred from the job titles in those Censuses.

North Shields in the Twentieth Century

The history of the Jewish community after 1901 might be summarised briefly as one of decay and decline. While it is not possible to provide total population statistics based on Census reports, it is clear from such figures as there are — for example, in the *Jewish Year Book* — that the number of Jews in the town remained at best static and certainly declined. Soon after the end of the Second World War the congregation came to an end. Only a handful of Jews remained in the town thereafter. Some of the older residents died or moved away and a few others took their place. One newcomer in the early twentieth century was Michael Shechtman whose son, Solomon (usually called 'Sol', and later changed to Sheckman), married Esther Cohen of Newcastle who was to play an important part in the community. Another newcomer was B. Van der Velde, an honorary officer. While there was an undoubted movement from North to South Shields, at least one family (that of Saltman) moved the other way. A daughter, Florrie, told in 1913 (in the children's section of the *JC*) about her family's move from South Shields to North Shields[53] but by the late 1920s they had moved back to South Shields.[54]

In *Kelly's Directory of Northumberland 1914* one can find these names: Jacob Levy, seamen's outfitter; Harris Saltman, travelling draper; John Myers, tailor; Sam Brodie, a furniture broker and dealer (J. Myers and S. Brodie of North Shields are mentioned in the *JC*),[55] Casreal D. Merkel, pawnbroker; Charles D. Merkel, clothier (but these two were the same man), and Isaac Merkel, jeweller. Before the First World War there were some births and some weddings in the town. The last references I have been able to find of a minister are in 1909, when a service was conducted in the new synagogue in Durham City by Rev. D. Lyons, described as 'of North Shields', and in 1910, referring to Rev. Samuel Pearson of Tynemouth.[56] However, there was an ambiguous New Year greeting in 1917 from Mr. Isaac H. Cannon, *Reader*, of 3 Waterville Place, North Shields.[57] This might mean he was acting as the ḥazan.

The smallness of the congregation was exemplified by two announcements. One of them in 1916 stated: 'The Synagogue, Linskill Street, North Shields, had received £10 from the Chief Rabbi towards the cost of repairing the structure'.[58] The second, a year later, reported: 'The Synagogue has received from the Chief Rabbi prayer-books and grammar books for the Hebrew Classes'.[59] At least that supplies evidence that there were some Jewish children in the town, and that they were receiving a Jewish education.

In 1920 the *JC* published a letter under the heading 'North Shields: Linskill Street Synagogue: An Appeal'. It was from Mr. H. Saltman, President, and Miss (*sic*) Esther Sheckman, Hon. Secretary. [She was in fact a married woman.][60]

> 'SIR, — This synagogue is possibly the oldest in the North of England. At present there are only twelve Jewish families living in the town. On the synagogue building there is an old mortgage of £130, and we are now trying to clear this off. The few members have subscribed about £45, and we now appeal to anyone, who, in years gone by, had any association with this synagogue, or anyone who can assist us. We shall be most grateful for any donation, however small, and later a list will be published in the JEWISH CHRONICLE.'

A year later there was a further notice, stating that the fund was still open.[61] The smallness of the membership, and presumably therefore the difficulty of holding regular religious services, was undoubtedly the reason for a decision at a meeting in November 1922 that a service would be held in the synagogue 'on every Rosh Hodesh' [the Sabbath of the new moon]. On the other hand, perhaps in order to preserve the cohesion of the congregation, the 'lady members' of the synagogue 'held a social evening' in December of that year; the list of those who attended included the names of Brodie, Marco, Sheckman, and Weiner, most of whom were fairly recent newcomers.[62]

However, at the time of the discovery of the old cemetery, in 1924, there was a report that the North Shields community, 'is almost extinct, with the exception of six families. Within the last few years, most of the Jews of the town have joined the South Shields Congregation'.[63] However, at that time, there was a court case involving Solomon Shechtman. He was then proprietor of the Hippodrome cinema (and also of five other cinemas in the district) and he and his manager, Stanley Dunn, were charged with five offences under the Finance (New Duties) Act 1916, whereby tax was charged on admission tickets. In this case there were no stamps on any tickets. Dunn was fined £5 for each offence, totalling £25, and Sheckman £10. They also had to pay costs of £8.10s.[64] Sheckman eventually prospered, developing what was to become one of the leading chains in the country — Essoldo cinemas, which were to be found in most towns. In 1936 the Essoldo Theatre (Newcastle) Ltd. was registered as a private company with a nominal capital of £10,000; in 1949 Essoldo Associated Theatres Ltd. was registered as a private company with a capital of £1 million and Sol Sheckman was appointed chairman and managing director.

He was then also chairman and managing director of Twentieth Century Cinemas Ltd.[65] By the 1950s the Essoldo chain amounted to some 200 cinemas. (Its name was said to have been formed from the first two letters of his wife's name, Esther, followed by his name, Sol, then the first two letters of his only daughter, Dorothy.) After Sol Sheckman died in 1963 the chairmanship passed to his brother, Captain Mark Sheckman. Later, as cinema audiences declined many of the Essoldo cinemas were transformed into other activities, such

as bingo halls. The name Essoldo survived as the Refson-Essoldo Charitable Trust. There were family connections: Dorothy Sheckman of North Shields had married Myer Refson of Sunderland in the 1930s.

Nathan Science (who was born in Hull in 1902) married Florrie Saltman in 1924 and they settled in North Shields until 1934, when they left for Newcastle. Olsover, who knew him, tells us that Science was a warden while at North Shields and that 'services were held on Rosh Hashana [New Year] and Yom Kippur [Day of Atonement] only'.[66] Nevertheless, despite such pessimistic statements and the limited size of the community, efforts were made to ensure its survival. In 1931 they advertised as follows:[67]

NORTH SHIELDS CONGREGATION

WANTED. Teacher and Reader; single man; salary £150 p.a. Apply Mrs. Sheckman, Hon. Sec. 6 Percy-gardens, Tynemouth.

In the 1930s there was a small influx of refugees from Nazism in North Shields. Lewis Olsover commented on their life in the north-east:[68]

> [They] arrived with an expertise in the techniques of modern light industries and with some fair amount of capital. In an attempt to mitigate the effects of unemployment in the heavy industries of coal, steel and shipbuilding upon which the North East had built its prosperity but which was now suffering a deep depression for lack of orders, the government of the day welcomed these new arrivals and encouraged them with subsidies and advice to settle in the area. They made a valuable contribution to the economy of the North East.

One small accretion of population was the establishment of a hostel for 30 refugee girls on the initiative of David Summerfield. They were evacuated to Windermere during the war and later he helped to place them in gainful employment.[69]

A few weeks after the start of the Second World War the *Jewish Chronicle* published a pathetic letter from Mrs. Esther Sheckman[70] — which echoed her 1920 appeal mentioned above.

A NORTH SHIELDS SYNAGOGUE'S NEEDS

The little Synagogue in Linskill Street, North Shields (one of the oldest in the North of England) is now being supported by five resident families. This year it is absolutely necessary to put a completely new roof on the building and to do some interior repairs and decorating. The few members are doing their utmost to carry on the work of repaying a debt of £100. I am hoping that this letter will meet the eyes of many people living now in various parts of the country who at some time in their lives worshipped in this Synagogue and who will help us with donations, either large or small. — MRS. ESTHER L. SHECKMAN (Hon. Secretary), The Elms, Preston Park, North Shields, Northumberland.

The End of the Community

A report to the July 1949 meeting of the Representative Council for Newcastle Jewry (which encompassed a number of other communities in the area) stated that 'the few Jews now living in North Shields, perhaps the oldest congregation in the district, are members of either the Whitley Bay or South Shields Synagogues'.[71] Four years later, in June 1953, at a monthly meeting of the same Council, a letter from the Whitley Bay community was read, expressing concern about the Sifrei Torah (Scrolls of the Law) which were 'at present in North Shields, where the congregation is now defunct' and it announced that arrangements were being made for them to be lent to other synagogues.[72] What appears to have been the last statement about the congregation in the *Jewish Chronicle* was published a month later.[73]

DISUSED SYNAGOGUE AT NORTH SHIELDS
Preserving the Records

> A report on the condition of the North Shields Synagogue, Linskill Street, which is no longer in use, and the North Shields Jewish cemetery, was given at the monthly meeting of the Newcastle Jewish Representative Council.

The synagogue was, it was reported, looked after by a resident caretaker. The railings separating the Jewish part of the cemetery had been taken down but there was a coping-stone marking the division. The Sifrei Torah were now at the Newcastle Synagogue, Leazes Park Road.

The congregation had gone but individual Jews remained. The 1974 *Jewish Year Book* (to take a later year at random) stated that there were 16 Jews in the town, that no services had been held there for some years, and that the families were members of nearby congregations. A very brief history was given:

> 'Congregation est. before 1851; syn. opened 1876, demolished 1968.'

Conclusion

North Shields was just one of a large number of provincial communities which came into existence in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and some of which, in the earlier period, did not last very long. In the late nineteenth century, Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe established a number of congregations. North Shields in a sense formed a bridge between the two centuries as having a community of some sort in the early nineteenth and perhaps dating from the late eighteenth century. The longer-lasting congregation was established in the 1840s and 1850s and most of the members came from central Europe, from Germany as well as Holland. It was closely associated with the neighbouring Jews of South Shields who later came to overshadow them.

Several possibilities can be suggested for the decline and fall of North Shields. It was a small community and those Jews who wished to have the advantages of a rounded Jewish existence — with an array of Jewish organizations, and not least Jewish food shops — moved to larger communities, to nearby Newcastle upon Tyne, or Sunderland, or South Shields. A more recent example of such emigration was that of the small community of Doncaster, Yorkshire, founded in 1913. In the 1960s it was said that a reason for its decline was the movement of members to the nearby city of Leeds 'in order to seek Jewish activities'.[74] Or, as happened to the Jewish community of Stroud, in Gloucestershire (which was dissolved in 1908 after a mere 30 years of existence), people who moved away for whatever reason were not replaced by newcomers.[75] One of the disadvantages of a small community was the unavailability of suitable Jewish marriage partners. A few marriages did take place between residents of the town: Joseph Joel married Rebecca Juda there in 1850 and they were still in the town until 1866 when she died; but Moses Fredman and Rachel Joseph, who married in North Shields in 1867, moved soon after to Sunderland. From the earliest years of the community it was quite common for North Shields residents to marry partners from other towns. The first may have been the marriage on 8 December 1852 of David Cohen of North Shields to Leah Cohen of Sunderland, where the ceremony took place. In 1864, Rosette Calmer Lotinga of North Shields married Hermann Jacobsohn of Manchester, in North Shields. In 1884, Abraham Prinski/Prenski married Anna Danziger of Manchester, in Manchester. In 1899, Moses Fisher married in Glasgow, Annie Jacobs who lived in that city. Miriam Freudenberg of North Shields married Joseph Cohn of Newcastle in 1922. A few of the couples settled in North Shields but most of the others moved away from there and went to live in the native town of their spouse.

If the first reasons for decline were these specifically Jewish ones, there were also economic ones. In 1893, in an editorial about the problem of disused Jewish cemeteries — of communities which had declined or closed — the *Jewish Chronicle* argued: 'It is the tendency of those who become prosperous in the smaller towns to migrate to larger cities, and indeed there is equally a disposition on the part of those who do not become successful in small centres of industry to leave and seek their fortunes elsewhere'.[76] In the period between the two world wars, there was the economic depression which hit particularly the local industry of coal-mining; Jewish traders in the consumer industries would inevitably be affected by the decline in incomes which resulted. The Jewish community of the cotton town of Burnley, in Lancashire, had a similar experience: it was greatly affected by the depression in the cotton industry. A correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* wrote about Burnley Jewry in 1935:[77]

> After a long uphill toil through narrow streets I found the address of the hon. Secretary. He no longer lived there, and a typical Lancashire lass, who answered my inquiry replied, "Oh, he's flit!" (to Leeds, she thought). That really summed up Burnley Jewry — they have "flit", through bad trade.

When the Second World War ended there was an increased escalation in the move from North Shields to larger Jewish provincial communities, but by the end of the century and in the early years of the twenty-first, these also declined or collapsed. A report on South Shields in 1986 stated that only eight members remained but that although the synagogue was about to close they were not thinking of winding up the community.[78] However, some years later, in 1994, a newspaper item on the town was headed: 'Shul to be bulldozed'.[79] In fact, this did not happen: the building was saved and transformed into an art centre. Its official title (in 2007) is 'South Tyneside Arts Studio, the Old Synagogue'.

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Marilyn Hyman, a descendant of Abraham Jackson (who lived in North Shields from the 1840s) provided useful information, including a copy of a photograph of her forebear and his wife. I am grateful to the Tyne & Wear Archives Service for providing data from their collection. The North Tyneside Libraries were most helpful in providing much information about the town, including references to local newspapers and to early nineteenth-century directories. I am also in the debt of Celia Male who gave valuable help in deciphering entries in the Census reports.

NOTES

[1] *Jewish Chronicle* (henceforth *JC*) 18 September 1874, p. 397.

[2] Richard Simpson, *North Shields and Tynemouth: A pictorial history*, 1988, n.p.

[3] Roger Finch, *Coals from Newcastle. The story of the North East coal trade in the days of sail*, 1973.

[4] Simpson, in Note 2 above; also N. McCord and D. J. Rowe, *Northumberland and Durham. Industry in the Nineteenth Century*, 1971.

[5] *JC*, 24 July 1953, p. 14.

[6] *JC*, 22 March 1912, p. 32.

[7] Harold Pollins and Keira Quinn Lockyer, 'The Slapoffski families of Oxford and Australia', *Shemot*, Vol. 13, no. 4, December 2005, pp. 12–17.

[8] *JC*, 22 December 1911, p. 33.

[9] The fullest account is B. Kyanski, 'An Old Jewish Cemetery', *JC*, 15 August 1924, p.14; see also *Shields Daily News*, 12 May 1924, p. 1; ibid., 13 May 1924, p. 1; *JC*, 19 May 1924, p. 24.

[10] *JC*, 29 March 1907, p. 16.
[11] E. MacKenzie, *Historical and Descriptive View of the County of Northumberland*, 1811 ed., Vol. 11, p. 540; *Pigot's Directory for Northumberland*, 1822, p. 615; E. MacKenzie, *Historical and Descriptive View of the County of Northumberland*, 1825 edn., Vol. II, p. 449; William Parsons and William White, *History, Directory & Gazetteer of the Counties of Durham & Northumberland*, 1827, Vol. I, p. 464; William Parson and William White, op. cit., 1828, Vol. II, p. 441; *Pigot's Directory for Northumberland*, 1834, p. 624.
[12] *JC*, 19 May 1924, p. 24.
[13] *Tyne Pilot*, 25 November 1842.
[14] *JC*, 23 July 1847, p. 201: 'Statistical Summary of the Hebrew Congregations in the British Empire'.
[15] V. D. Lipman, 'A survey of Anglo-Jewry in 1851', *Trans. Jewish Hist. Soc. of England*, Vol. 17, 1953, p. 185.
[16] Lewis Olsover, *The Jewish Communities of North-east England*, 1981, p. 252.
[17] *JC*, 26 May 1854, p. 291.
[18] *JC*, 4 December 1857, p. 1237.
[19] *JC*, 1 February 1856, p. 466.
[20] Olsover, op. cit. in Note 16 above, p. 252.
[21] *JC*, 18 July 1856, p. 658. The notice about the burial ground was in *JC*, 10 July 1857, p. 1065.
[22] *JC*, 23 May 1862, p. 5; 29 May 1863, p. 6.
[23] *JC*, 1 November 1864, p. l.
[24] *JC*, 20 March 1863, p. 1 and 14 August 1863, p. 1.
[25] *JC*, 7 July 1865, p. 2.
[26] *JC*, 2 November 1866, p. 8.
[27] *JC*, 11 April 1873, p. 28.
[28] *JC*, 22 May 1874, p. 124.
[29] *JC*, 16 July 1875, p. 253.
[30] *JC*, 24 March 1876, p. 835 and *Shields Daily News*, 23 March 1876, p. 4.
[31] *JC*, 4 November 1881, p. 11.
[32] *JC*, 21 September 1883, p. 10.
[33] *JC*, 24 May 1895, p. 11.
[34] *JC*, 31 August 1900, p. 20.
[35] *JC*, 28 January 1870, p. 8.
[36] *JC*, 28 September 1877, p. 11.
[37] *JC*, 10 October 1884, p. 6. The *JC* reported on 20 September 1895 (p. 18) in connection with the South Shields community: that 'More than fourteen years ago a movement was made in the direction of obtaining a place of their own'.
[38] *JC*, 3 March 1899, p. 30. My italics.
[39] *JC*, 25 February 1905, p. 25.
[40] 'Agreement to form a congregation in South Shields', Tyne & Wear Archives Service, C/SS35/1.
[41] *JC*, 30 August 1895, p. 14.
[42] *JC*, 20 September 1895, p. 18.
[43] *JC*, 28 February 1896, p. 2.
[44] *JC*, 3 March 1899, p. 30.
[45] *JC*, 30 November 1894, p. 16.
[46] *JC*, 4 November 1898, p. 27.

[47] *JC*, 2 November 1900, p. 29.
[48] *JC*, 1 June 1900, p. 1.
[49] *JC*, 22 March 1912, p. 32, for death announcement; ibid., 7 March 1913, p. 2, for his tombstone consecration at Preston Cemetery, North Shields.
[50] *JC*, 30 June 1899, p. 1.
[51] Ursula R. Q. Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales: Historical Studies*, 1993, p. 52. See also pp. 19–22, 52–55.
[52] Compare the occupations in such publications as 'Provincial Jewry in Victorian Britain', Papers for a conference at University College London convened by the Jewish Historical Society of England prepared by Dr. Aubrey Newman, 6 July 1975; Bill Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry: 1740–1875*, 1976; Birmingham Jewish Research Group, *Birmingham Jewry*, 1980; Harold Pollins, *Economic History of the Jews in England*, 1982; Zoë Josephs, ed., *Birmingham Jewry, More Aspects*, 1984; Daphne and Leon Gerlis, *The Story of the Grimsby Jewish Community*, 1986; David M. Lewis, *The Jews of Oxford*, 1991; Bernard Susser, *The Jews of South-West England*, 1993; Harold Pollins, 'The Jewish Community of Stroud', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 38, no. 1, 1996, pp. 27–41 and Lloyd Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England, 1870–1914*, 3rd edn., 2001.
[53] *JC*, 29 August 1913, 'Young Israel', p. 3.
[54] *JC*, 12 April 1929, p. 4 which refers to H. Saltman of South Shields having collected money for an appeal.
[55] 2 March 1917, p. 3.
[56] *JC*, 11 June 1909, p. 14; 23 December 1910, p. 14.
[57] *JC*, 14 September 1917, p. xiii.
[58] *JC*, 10 November 1916, p. 17.
[59] *JC*, 22 June 1917, p. 24.
[60] *JC*, 29 October 1920, p. 24.
[61] *JC*, 21 October 1921, p. 27.
[62] *JC*, 17 November 1922, p. 41; ibid., 8 December 1922, p. 27.
[63] *JC*, 19 May 1924, p. 24.
[64] *JC*, 27 June 1924, p. 32.
[65] *The Times*, 15 January 1936, p. 19; ibid., 21 May 1949, p. 8.
[66] Olsover, op. cit. in Note 16 above, p. 354. For details of Science's life, see various references in Olsover and also the obituary of his death aged 99 in 2001: *JC*, 18 May 1991, p. 25.
[67] *JC*, 26 June 1931, p. 2.
[68] Olsover, op. cit. in Note 16 above, pp. 254–5.
[69] *JC*, 5 May 1950, p. 6. Obituary of David Summerfield.
[70] *JC*, 13 October 1939, p. 25.
[71] *JC*, 22 July 1949, p. 14.
[72] *JC*, 26 June 1953, p. 17.
[73] *JC*, 24 July 1953, p. 14.
[74] *JC*, 24 November 1967, page 27: 'Doncaster explains ''adoption'' '.
[75] Pollins, op. cit. in Note 52 above.
[76] *JC*, 28 April 1893, p. 6.
[77] *JC*, 28 June1935, *Supplement*, p. iii.
[78] *JC*, 25 July 1986, p. 7.
[79] *JC*, 10 June 1994, p. 14.

A TRIBUTE TO LOUIS JACOBS (1920–2006)

Norman Solomon

WITH the death of Louis Jacobs on 1st July 2006, just 16 days before his 86th birthday, Anglo-Jewry lost one of its finest scholars and thinkers, a courageous proponent of the truth as he saw it, and a compassionate pastor and human being.

As a young man with traditional background and yeshiva training, he decided to equip himself with a broader education; he quickly discovered some of the challenges this posed to what he had previously been taught. Would it be possible to remain an Orthodox Jew, committed to belief in a divinely-dictated scripture and law, in the light of historical criticism and the findings of modern science? He became convinced that it *was* possible to reach an accommodation between the two worlds, but only at the price of formulating a fresh interpretation of some of the fundamental principles of Judaism.

Just as Philo interpreted Judaism to harmonize it with Hellenistic culture and Maimonides interpreted it in harmony with mediaeval philosophy, Jacobs sought to make Judaism at home in contemporary western culture. Part of this undertaking was philosophical: how could traditional views on God, morals, and the created world be reconciled with modern ideas? Part of it was social: to what extent were the norms of *halakha* relevant and appropriate in modern society?

By way of tribute to his memory I shall comment on both aspects of his work; he would, I know, have much preferred an ongoing conversation to uncritical praise.

We Have Reason to Believe

It is just 50 years since *We Have Reason to Believe* was first published; it has been revised and reprinted several times, and retains much of its freshness. The ideas he put forward in the book and which the right-wing Orthodox, flexing newfound communal muscle, used as a pretext to undermine his position in the community, remained the core of his thinking and were further elaborated in works such as *Principles of the Jewish Faith* (New York: Basic Books, 1964), *A Jewish*

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Theology (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1973), *Beyond Reasonable Doubt* (London: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1999) and most recently *God, Torah, Israel: traditionalism without fundamentalism* (London: Masorti Publications, 1999).

He called his philosophy 'liberal supernaturalism', and a brief appraisal of *We Have Reason to Believe* will illustrate some strengths and weaknesses of this standpoint. The first few chapters of the book are about belief in God. Jacobs notes the contrast between the human terms ('anthropomorphisms') which the Bible and the Talmud freely use about God, and the abstract approach of the mediaeval Jewish philosophers, who regarded anthropomorphism as a metaphor for that which cannot be said, helpful indeed to the ignorant, but to be cast aside by the wise and learned. Jacobs thinks that if God is de-personalized in the way the philosophers want, He is no longer the sort of Being one can approach with prayers and petitions. He was equally unhappy with the ideas of Reconstructionist Jewish thinkers such as Mordecai M. Kaplan and Ira Eisenstein who reduce God to an impersonal 'Power that makes for salvation'; nor, evidently, was he prepared to go as far as Abraham Heschel and, more recently, David Blumenthal, in restoring the *personality* of God. In contrast with all of these, he aimed to achieve a balance between the two poles of anthropomorphism and depersonalization.

But is there a God about Whom to speculate in this way? Jacobs contrasts ancient scepticism, which he maintains was about God's providence rather than His existence, with modern atheism and agnosticism, which are about whether or not there is a God. When the Psalmist castigates 'the fool who says in his heart, there is no God' (Psalms 14:1 and 53:2, and cf. Psalm 10:4) it is likely, as Jacobs says, that the target is the person who denies that God cares, rather than who denies that He exists. But there certainly were ancient philosophers such as Epicurus and Sextus Empiricus who denied the existence of a person-like Being who created and remained in control of the world; also, many eastern religious traditions deny the existence of a personal god. The question of whether God (in the biblical sense) really exists is an ancient one.

Mediaeval Jewish, Christian, and Muslim philosophers energetically sought rational proof of God's existence. Jacobs accepts that the cosmological, ontological and teleological arguments they produced were undermined in the eighteenth century by Hume and Kant, so he supports his own belief in God by an appeal to moral and religious experience, drawing on a range of Jewish thinkers from Judah Halevi to Rav Kook; like both of them, he emphasises that personal experience is enhanced by collective historical experience ('my God' requires the support of 'God of my fathers' — p. 32). In this way, he argues that belief in God is reasonable; this is the basis of his 'supernaturalism'.

Now no-one doubts that people have profound experiences and that many of them express these experiences in religious language. But are they simply deluded? Jacobs treats this as a psychoanalytic question. He discusses Freud's view of religion as the collective and ultimately illusory search for a father substitute, and observes that the fact that people *want* to believe there is a God doesn't prove that there isn't one any more than the fact that some people are hungry proves that food doesn't exist; whether people want something is simply irrelevant to the question of whether it exists. This is correct, but the admission that our senses *may* delude us weakens any argument based on experience, including religious experience; if Freud was wrong to claim that the possibility of delusion proved there was no God, it is equally wrong to claim that the possibility of not being deluded proves that there *is* a God.

Neither here nor elsewhere, so far as I can discover, does Jacobs appear to come to grips with what is probably the most acute problem facing contemporary philosophers of religion. The issue is not so much whether God exists as whether God-language makes any sense at all — does it make any sense *even to ask* whether God exists? Anyone who has tried talking about God to a child brought up in a secular household will have experienced the problem. You find yourself talking about some infinitely wise and powerful, disembodied person who is everywhere yet nowhere, and you are likely to confuse both the child and yourself; the child is going to need a lot more experience of life before you can point to what you think he or she might recognize as a distinctively religious experience. The experimental psychologist Olivera Petrovich has done extensive research in a variety of cultures to assess whether children have an innate sense of God and she thinks they do, but not everyone is convinced by the research; the problem in evaluating this research is to know what if anything children have in mind when they choose 'God' as an explanation rather than some more meaningful but less immediately plausible alternative.

A philosopher of religion, like for instance Richard Swinburne, asks whether the idea of God is coherent.[1] Even if it is coherent does it *explain* anything? Is it not absurdly anthropomorphic to imagine a Great Architect in the Sky (to borrow a rabbinic metaphor) designing and then forming earth with a set of animals and plants, issuing laws, and overseeing the way that humankind conducts affairs? If, as Jacobs agrees, we are not to take 'Great Architect' literally, what *does* the metaphor stand for? At what point do we start taking things more literally, so that we can speak — as Louis Jacobs certainly does — of laws that are supernaturally revealed, though not literally 'dictated by God'?

The problem of suffering has been around ever since Cain slaughtered a quarter of the world's population. Why didn't God stop him?

Why do (some) righteous suffer and (some) wicked prosper? Pain has been explained as punishment, as warning, as a necessary consequence and worthwhile price to pay for free will, as a means of ennoblement and in other ways; Jacobs discusses these explanations and adds the valid point that the pain suffered by any individual in the Holocaust cannot be added to that suffered by others to make a still greater pain. Natural disaster poses a special problem to the belief in a just, compassionate, and all-powerful God; a tsunami, for instance, is not the consequence of some human failing or abuse of free will. Traditionally, natural disasters have been thought of as punishments brought about by God's special intervention, but how does that square with scientific theory which explains the events as occurrences that take place through the operation of forces unrelated to human behaviour?

Jacobs likes the idea taken up by the kabbalists (though not invented by them) that evil is God 'withdrawing', or concealing Himself from the world, but this simply puts the problem back a stage; *why* did God 'conceal' Himself at the Shoah, contrary to all the promises from the Bible onwards that He protects His people? Surely, the God who runs away and hides like a spoilt child or who turns a deaf ear to pleas like a corrupt official is no God, certainly not the God of Judaism. If Jacobs is unable to give entirely satisfactory answers to these questions (and who can?), his courage and honesty in facing them is a healthy antidote to the fundamentalist insistence on blind faith in the face of contrary evidence. We must remember also that when he was writing in 1957, Holocaust theology was scarcely on the horizon; Ignaz Maybaum's *The Face of God after Auschwitz* appeared only in 1965, and influential Holocaust theologians such as Emil Fackenheim and Richard Rubenstein did not publish until the 1970s and 1980s.

Nowhere is the readiness of Louis Jacobs to face uncomfortable questions more evident than in his discussion of historical criticism, and here 'liberal' qualifies 'supernaturalism'. Historical criticism of the Bible leads him to reject the fundamentalist doctrine of verbal inspiration in favour of a more dynamic model. God did not dictate the Torah word by word to Moses, but the Bible is nevertheless an authentic if imperfect record of Israel's encounter with God. This encounter is expressed through Oral Torah and continues to the present day as we gain an ever more perfect understanding of the way God wants us to conduct our lives.

There are several reasons to reject fundamentalism. Manuscript evidence, archaeological, historical and scientific evidence, all undermine the belief that the Torah as we now have it was literally dictated together with its interpretation (the Oral Torah) to Moses at Sinai. Jacobs was especially sensitive to the moral problems which arise from fundamentalist belief; would a perfect Torah emanating from

the Creator Himself condone slavery, approve patriarchal deceit, or order the extermination of nations? It was his statement that he could not accept as 'Torah from Heaven' passages such as those calling for extermination of the Canaanites that provoked the Orthodox objections to his appointment as Principal of Jews' College and then to his reappointment as a United Synagogue rabbi.

He spared no effort to find justification in traditional sources for his acceptance of historical criticism. The Talmud[2] accepts that the last few verses of the Torah may not have been written by Moses; Ibn Ezra hints that other verses may be later interpolations; Ḥayyim Hirschenson (1857–1935), for many years rabbi of the Orthodox communities of Hoboken, New Jersey, argued that research as to the correct received text was permitted by halakha provided there was no denial of the divine origin of the authentic text; and there were other examples. But though these traditional figures questioned a verse or reading here and there, they never made proposals as radical as those of modern historical criticism. Jacobs is forced to admit that ultimately historical criticism is inconsistent with traditional formulations of Jewish belief. Maimonides and the Documentary Hypothesis are irreconcilable, he concludes, but perhaps there is some truth within each.

Can miracles prove the truth of Bible and tradition? Many biblical miracles can be explained naturally — they are signs, not suspensions of natural law — but not all. Jacobs understands miracle as the 'natural' result of closer human contact with the spiritual world; surely God *can* suspend His own laws of nature, though He cannot perform logical impossibilities. This may be true, but once again the wrong problem is addressed. The problem is not whether miracles are *possible*, but whether there is convincing evidence that they *happened*. Jacobs does not offer an adequate response to the criticism leveled by Hume (and already in antiquity by Cicero and others) against belief in miracles, viz. that the degree of evidence needed to substantiate them must outweigh the evidence that supports the natural law they appear to break. The faith of Judaism appears to be founded on a supernatural event, the revelation of Torah at Sinai; how can we be certain that this really took place?

Jacobs emphasises the centrality of Torah study in Judaism, and has developed this theme in his extensive writings on Jewish values. The study of Torah is a creative enterprise, not mere transmission of rules; it gives rise to a distinctive personality, that of the *talmid hakham*. He believes this personality is enhanced by combining the old (yeshiva) and new (academic) forms of learning, for historical studies enable us to appreciate the vital, dynamic nature of halakha and thus enhance our commitment. I agree with him entirely on the intrinsic value of historical studies, but cannot go along with the idea that they necessarily

enhance commitment to traditional Judaism; an appreciation of the dynamics of history is at best a far less strong motivating force than a fundamentalist belief that God literally issued laws and commanded me to obey them, and at worst serves to undermine confidence in tradition.

Judaism has often been contrasted favourably with Christianity because it focuses on our duties in this world rather than on other-worldly matters. Jacobs rightly rejects this stereotype; rabbinic teaching emphasises the hereafter and its spiritual quality, though it does not allow belief in the hereafter to divert attention from the need to address current social ills (Christians would say as much for traditional Christianity). Unfortunately, his further claim that one hears no preaching of Hell-fire in the Jewish pulpit is no longer correct; I cannot be the only one to have heard it. Jacobs accepts the traditional belief in life after death; like several traditional authorities he understands this as referring to the soul rather than the body, and he approves a mystical interpretation of life after death as a state of the soul beyond time, rather than endless duration. He is aware of a trend among neurophysiologists and some philosophers to identify the mind, or soul, with the brain, but rejects this; in line with most theologians he assumes the mind is a distinct entity, and suggests that even if it is totally dependent on the brain, perhaps that is only so long as it is joined to the brain.

Towards the end of *We Have Reason to Believe* he engages in a defence of Jewish particularism. Like many Jews, he finds it embarrassing to be singled out as one of the 'chosen people'; the very notion of chosenness flies in the face of the modern doctrine of the essential equality of all human beings. He argues that Jewish particularism is not exclusivist, and that Israel's 'election' necessitates universalism; chosenness demands service rather than confers privilege. There is of course a long tradition of Jewish apologetic behind this notion, which was elegantly expressed by Rav Kook among others. However, Jacobs goes slightly further and, like some Reform thinkers, reduces chosenness to a historical doctrine about a mission essentially accomplished: viz., the promulgation of ethical monotheism. I am not as sure as Jacobs that the mission *has* been 'essentially accomplished'; there are after all plenty of people in the world who are neither ethical nor monotheist or who contrive to be one but not the other. If the mission has not yet been accomplished, should we perhaps be thinking about how to accomplish it in partnership with others (Sikh, Muslim, Christian and so on) who define their mission in similar terms, and if so, how should we understand 'chosenness'? My own view is that 'chosenness' should be seen as a paradigm rather than as an exclusive doctrine: just as every person may legitimately think his own mother the best of all mothers, every nation or religious community may by all means

regard itself as possessing a special mission and even a special relationship with God. If I tell a story about my mother it does not contradict someone else's story about his; only when the narrative is allowed to harden into doctrine does a clash occur. But it would be disingenuous to claim that this is a traditional interpretation.

A Tree of Life

Right to the end of his life and notwithstanding his involvement with Conservative Judaism, Louis considered himself a modern Orthodox Jew.[3] He was fully aware, though, that his relatively liberal theological views called into question the authority accorded by tradition to the halakha as God's law. If the Pentateuch had not been dictated by God to Moses together with the interpretation incorporated in the Oral Torah and committed to writing by the rabbis, why should people be obliged to follow the halakha?

His answer was that halakha was binding because it had developed as the response of the Jewish people as a whole to their encounter with God, primarily at Sinai, but throughout the course of their subsequent history. Because it had evolved over time rather than descended fully-formed 'from the sky', it was not possible to determine correct halakha by analysing the words of Torah and Talmud in isolation; the texts had to be understood, as Zacharias Frankel (1801–75), founder of 'positive historical Judaism',[4] had insisted, in the light of their social and historical contexts. His most sustained attempt to show how halakha had developed, and should develop in response to changing human situations, was *A Tree of Life: Diversity, Flexibility, and Creativity in Jewish Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for Littman Library, 1984). Chapters 9 and 10 of that work contain numerous instances of the way that halakha has responded to changed conditions and social needs, from Hillel's *prosbul* to the sale of *hametz* and to the acceptance of circumstantial evidence in certain cases to alleviate the plight of the *aguna*.

It has to be said that most of the examples cited are relatively trivial concessions to what had already become widespread Jewish practice; in no sense do they prepare us to address major contemporary preoccupations such as changing attitudes to women and to sexual orientation. This is more or less conceded by Jacobs himself in an Appendix in which he reviews the halakhic possibilities for ameliorating the status of the *mamzer*, but concludes that it is unlikely that any of them would be adopted by the Orthodox.

Is a more dynamic and responsive halakha possible for Conservative (Masorti) Jews? He cites leading members of the Conservative movement 'the avowed aim of which is to preserve and foster the Halakhic process as essential to Judaism but with full awareness of the need for

a more dynamic approach than is provided by Orthodoxy', and sums up his own position in these words (p. 242):

> What is called for is not an abandonment of the concept of revelation but its reinterpretation (in reality, a return to the claims the Bible makes about itself). On this view, it can no longer be denied that there is a human element in the Bible, that the whole record is coloured by the human beings who put it down in writing, that it contains error as well as eternal truth, but that it is in this book or collection of books that God was first revealed to mankind and that here, and in the subsequent rabbinic commentary, including and especially through the Halakhah, He speaks to us today. Revelation is now seen as the record of a series of meetings or encounters between God and man. The Bible is seen as the record of these encounters, as is the Torah throughout Israel's generations.

But is this an adequate basis for halakha? Shortly after *Tree of Life* was published the matter was effectively put to the test. In the 1970s the Conservative Rabbinical Assembly had agreed to count women to a *minyan* (prayer quorum), but when a majority voted in 1985 that women might be ordained as rabbis, several leading Conservative rabbis maintained that it was impossible to stretch halakha to this extent and eventually broke away, forming the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism (renamed the Union for Traditional Judaism). The shared theological basis in the event proved inadequate to anchor a system of halakha, and the movement split, leaving us wondering just why the defectors were able to stretch halakha to count women to a *minyan* but not the extra distance to ordain them as rabbis.[5]

It is probably wrong to view the question of halakha, as both Conservatives and Orthodox tend to, as primarily theological or intellectual. Rather, it is political and sociological. The question is: which body of men and/or women, if any, will Jews accept as possessing the authority to tell them what to do? In a modern liberal democracy the answer appears to be that nobody will be accepted by Jews collectively as possessing such authority, though fragments of the Jewish community may voluntarily accept a particular Beth Din to determine certain aspects of their lives. In the days of the Talmud, the rabbis of 'Babylonia' could set themselves up as an effective authority with imperial backing, and in mediaeval Europe rabbis could define the law within autonomous Jewish communities, but that situation no longer obtains. Even in Israel, rabbinic determination of personal status hangs precariously on the endorsement of a secular government and legislative system, while beyond the realm of personal status the rabbinical courts have no mandatory jurisdiction. In the unlikely event that at some time in the future Jews collectively accept the authority of a religious court, that court will define halakha and will have little difficulty in marshalling traditional texts in its support

— however far its decisions may be from those of today's Batei Din, whether Orthodox, Conservative, or Reform.

The great achievement of Louis Jacobs was to place the issue of modernity firmly on the agenda of Anglo-Jewry, refusing to accept the fundamentalist denial of the problems, the fudges and evasions of traditional Anglo-Orthodoxy, or the easy way of radical Reform. He accomplished this with deep sympathy, human understanding, and outstanding scholarship, not least his numerous studies of Talmudic logic and Hassidism which have not been touched on here. If he had the misfortune in the short run to become an anti-hero in some sections of the community, his reputation and influence will certainly outlast their ignorant and carping criticisms.

NOTES

[1] R. Swinburne, *The Coherence of God* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977).

[2] *Bava Batra* 15a, in the name of Rabbi Judah (bar Ilai) or Rabbi Nehemiah.

[3] He makes this claim on pp. 241–242 of his autobiography, *Helping with Inquiries* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1989).

[4] Jacobs had at one time intended to write his PhD thesis on Frankel.

[5] The debate is covered in Simon Greenberg (ed.), *The Ordination of Women as Rabbis: Studies and Responsa* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1988). Haviva Ben-David, *Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Towards Traditional Rabbinic Ordination* (Needham, Mass.: JFL Books, 2000), has put the case from an Orthodox point of view.

ORTHODOX JUDAISM AND CHIEF RABBIS IN BRITAIN

Geoffrey Alderman

(*Review Article*)

MIRI J. FREUD-KANDEL, *Orthodox Judaism in Britain Since 1913: An Ideology Forsaken*, xvi + 240 pp., Vallentine Mitchell, London and Portland, OR, 2006, £19.95 (hardback, £45.50).

DEREK TAYLOR, *British Chief Rabbis 1664–2006*, xiv + 457 pp., Vallentine Mitchell, London and Portland, OR, 2007, £19.95 (hardback, £45.00).

ANY study of 'orthodox Judaism' treads several minefields. Until well into the nineteenth century there was no such thing: the adjective 'orthodox' was adopted and applied to distinguish the Judaism practised (or at least professed) by the majority of European Jews from that professed (or at least practised) by adherents of various ideologies now often referred to as 'Progressive' Judaism. Many did not understand the underlying theological meaning of 'orthodox'. Although we may agree that in this context 'orthodox' means 'traditional', we need at the same time to acknowledge that there is not, and never has been, a universally accepted body of dogma and deeds which might for the sake of convenience be called 'orthodox' Judaism: in truth, that Judaism is a very broad church.

I make these points not simply because they need to be made, but because neither of the authors whose works are here considered has in fact seen fit to make them — or indeed seen fit to provide us with a discrete holistic definition of the 'orthodoxy' with which they deal. However, Dr. Freud-Kandel has at least attempted to do so, although her *Orthodox Judaism in Britain since 1913* is not in fact a study of orthodox Judaism in Britain, but rather of the theological trials and tribulations of three Chief Rabbis: Joseph Hertz, Israel Brodie, and Immanuel Jakobovits.

Her examination is undertaken in the context of a particular thesis, namely (to quote from the author's back-cover summary) that Hertz

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sought to nurture a 'strong and confident orthodoxy' which championed 'interaction in the host society', but that under Brodie this approach was crucially abandoned, and that under Jakobovits the clock was turned back. This in turn aided and abetted the religious polarisation of the Jewish communities in Great Britain, and facilitated the adoption of 'a theology which seemed to call on Anglo-Jewry to forsake its ideology of meaningful interaction' in order to secure 'its religious identity'.

Dr. Freud-Kandel is at her best in delineating for us the precise nature of Hertz's 'progressive conservatism', which bravely sought a reconciliation between the need to engage with the modern world and the imperative to disengage — at least to some extent — from it. This imperative, a hallmark of the orthodoxy practised in eastern Europe as opposed to that practised in the west, was underpinned in 1935 through the appointment to the United Synagogue's *Beth Din* of the Russian refugee and Talmudic genius, Rabbi Yehezkel Abramsky.

I have argued elsewhere[1] that Abramsky's appointment was insisted upon by Hertz, who feared the mischief he might otherwise do were he not to be incorporated, somehow, into the body politic of the United Synagogue. Dr. Freud-Kandel, basing herself in part on the recollections of Rabbi Abramsky's son (Professor Chimen Abramsky) offers an intriguingly different perspective: that it was Robert Waley Cohen, Vice-President of the United Synagogue, who pushed Abramsky's candidature for the *Beth Din*, hoping thereby to introduce a counterweight to the influence of Dr. Hertz.

If this was indeed Waley Cohen's plan, it completely misfired (as Dr. Freud-Kandel admits). Joseph Hertz and Yehezkel Abramsky became good friends. Hertz's daughter, Judith, married Rabbi Dr. Solomon Schonfeld, son of Dr. Victor Schonfeld, the first rabbi (appointed 1909) of the North London *Beth Hamedrash*, forerunner of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations. This did not mean that Hertz himself had been 'captured' (so to speak) by the ultra-orthodox camp, though it is clear that as his life neared its end (he died in 1946) he inclined more closely towards its world-outlook. But of course that outlook was in turn stained indelibly by the reality of the Holocaust.

The near-destruction of the Jewries of the European mainland had a profound effect on the way in which Jewish orthodoxy viewed the modern world. Dr. Freud-Kandel's analysis of this effect is the best I have ever read. Before (say) 1933, modernity had something to offer the Jew: equality before the law; the opportunity to benefit from a secular education and to advance into the professions; and freedom of worship. After 1945, for many of the Jewish survivors, modernity had little if any attraction. Emancipation had promised much, but had instead delivered destruction and death on a massive scale.

Only a Chief Rabbi of great wisdom and learning could have sought a new accommodation between the multiple orthodoxies which the Jewish

world now presented. Israel Brodie was neither. An intellectual lightweight with no claim whatever to Talmudic scholarship, Brodie owed his appointment to his Oxford education and his thoroughly English manners. That is not to imply that he was not sincere in his wish to rebuild the bridges between the various forms of orthodoxy over which he now reigned (but did not rule). He was. But he was simply not up to the job. And in his comprehensive mishandling of the 'Jacobs Affair' he poured fat onto the fire rather than oil on troubled waters.

The man who did have the intellect, and the claim to Talmudic scholarship, was Brodie's successor, Immanuel Jakobovits. His tenure of the office of Chief Rabbi (1967–1991) is dealt with in an 'Epilogue' which sits uneasily at the end of Dr. Freud-Kandel's work, following its 'Conclusion'. A definitive account of the life and times of Immanuel Jakobovits, the first Chief Rabbi to be raised to the peerage, remains to be written. In default, the best account we have is still that penned by the late Chaim Bermant and published in 1990 — a work all the more remarkable because it was an 'authorised' biography. Nonetheless, Mr. Bermant did not pull his punches: 'His [Jakobovits's] failures as a bridge-builder . . . arise not so much from his abhorrence of progressive doctrines as his conviction that the Orthodox have everything to teach and nothing to learn. Dr. Freud-Kandel has been unable to improve upon this analysis.

I turn now to Mr. Derek Taylor's book. We are told that Mr. Taylor has a Bachelor's degree in history from Cambridge University, and has written a number of histories of hotels. He has now written a collection of biographical accounts of the 22 men who have served as *Ḥakhamim* of the Spanish and Portuguese Synagogue of London and as Chief Rabbis of the United Synagogue of London and its predecessors.

Such a compendium might have a limited use, either as a coffee-table volume or as a work of reference. But his *British Chief Rabbis* can serve neither purpose. To begin with, the referencing is quite inadequate. Scholarly references are few and far between, and where they do exist they fail to meet a minimum acceptable standard, lacking for the most part any page numbers. For example, he gives (at pages 309–310) 'Eugene C. Black, *Social Politics ofAnglo-Jewry, 1880–1920*, Basil Blackwell, 1988', but he does not give any page number; on page 331 there is also no page number to his reference to the *Religious Review of Reviews*, Vol. 2, No. 8, 1891; while at page 164 he cites only '*Jewish Chronicle*, 1874'. What 1874 issue? The *Jewish Chronicle* was (and is) a weekly publication and presumably there were 52 issues in 1874. Are interested readers expected to go through all of them to discover on which page that particular reference is to be found? These are not isolated cases, perhaps resulting from faulty proofreading; a list of such incomplete references in this book could alone fill several pages.

Even more inadequate are the historical errors. The Damascus Affair of 1840 is wrongly located in Smyrna (p. 196). On p. 235 we are told that in 1970 the Board of Deputies of British Jews changed its constitution which, until then, mandated that 'in spiritual matters, the diktat of the Chief Rabbi should always apply'. I can assure Mr. Taylor that no such 'diktat' has ever appeared in the Board's constitution and that if it had, the Sephardim would have immediately left the Board.

Elsewhere there are also other errors — some minor but others seriously misleading. A minor error, for example, is the statement on p. 424 that Chief Rabbi Dr. Sacks obtained 'a PhD at Oxford', Dr. Sacks has no such Oxford degree, and if he did have an Oxford doctorate it would have been a DPhil, not a PhD. A serious error occurs in Mr. Taylor's examination of Dr. Sacks's decision in 1996 not to attend the funeral of the Progressive (Reform) Rabbi Hugo Gryn, an Auschwitz survivor and media personality. Mr. Taylor does not mention the fact that Dr. Sacks later did agree to address a memorial meeting, at which he spoke eloquently of Rabbi Gryn and his work. The fury of the ultra-orthodox knew no bounds. There had been much criticism (in both the Jewish and non-Jewish press) of the decision by Dr. Sacks not to attend Hugo Gryn's funeral. Rabbi Gryn had many admirers in mainstream British society and often appeared on radio and television, charming his audiences with his wit and wisdom. However, the ultra-orthodox clergy, steadfast in their determination to denigrate Progressive Judaism, could not be appeased. Mr. Taylor comments (on p. 429) that in order to attempt an appeasement Dr. Sacks had 'unwisely... responded in writing to one of their eminent rabbis [the late Dayan Chenoch Padwa], assuring him that he equally recognized the danger the Progressive movement posed to Orthodoxy'.

In fact, in his letter (an expurgated version of which was published in the *Jewish Chronicle* of 14 March 1997) Dr. Sacks attacked Rabbi Gryn, in the most censorious and categorical terms. I have translated and published the most important passages of the letter which were omitted by the *Jewish Chronicle*, but Mr. Taylor was probably unaware of my analysis of that episode.[2]

British Chief Rabbis will disappoint readers who expected that they would be enlightened by a work of historical scholarship. On the other hand, Dr. Freud-Kandel offers us a readable, interesting, and well-researched analysis, while her handling of the material is impressive and the conclusions she draws are thought-provoking.

NOTES

[1] G. Alderman, *Modern British Jewry* (2nd edn., Oxford, 1998), pp. 356–357.

[2] G. Alderman, 'That Letter: Rabbinical Politics and Jewish Management', *Judaism Today*, Winter 1997–98, pp. 40–43.

HASKALAH AND HASSIDISM IN POLAND

Jacques Gutwirth

(*Review Article*)

MARCIN WODZINSKI, *Haskalah and Hasidism in the Kingdom of Poland. A History of Conflict* (translated by Sarah Cozens with the assistance of Agnieszka Mirowska), xiv + 335 pp., The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford and Portland, OR, 2005, £39.50.

THIS learned volume, competently translated here, was first published in Polish in 2003. The subject had been researched by Raphael Mahler, who published his pioneering study first in Hebrew in 1961; in 1985 the book appeared in English in a slightly modified version as *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*. A comparison of the two volumes would not be easy because the authors approached the conflict (or confrontation) between the Haskalah (the specifically Jewish movement of the eighteenth-century 'Enlightenment') and hassidism from different perspectives. Mahler saw it from a Marxist socio-economic standpoint and interpreted the historical data accordingly. He considered the peculiarities of hassidic behaviour and beliefs — such as the cult of the *rebbe* or charismatic leader; the position of the *tsadik*; and the various aspects of hassidic practices. Wodzinski, however, is mainly concerned with the various opponents of hassidism and reports (with many valuable details) on the history of that opposition, on the principal personalities involved, the publications, and the methods of dealing with the Polish authorities. Thus, the reader will gain an understanding of the reality of Polish hassidism through the prism of the various (and often prejudiced) standpoints of the opponents of the movement.

Wodzinski stresses that his study is concerned mainly with central Poland: the Duchy of Warsaw, which became 'the Kingdom of Poland' and is more usually known as 'Congress Poland'; he describes

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it as a semi-autonomous entity while others have considered it to have been a puppet state. It was established in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna (after Napoleon's defeat at Waterloo) and would remain as Congress Poland until 1915.

In his Introduction, the author states (p. 5) that the nature of the Haskalah in Central Poland and its evolution differed from the path of the Haskalah in Galicia and Russia. He stresses (p. 10) that the status of the Jews became

> . . . one of the most important topics of public debate . . . both for ideological (though not necessarily antisemitic) and for more general demographic, economic, and social reasons. The major concern lay in the fact that the ideologues of the Polish Enlightenment opposed organization of the state along religious lines, while the Jews were the only estate, or quasi estate, distinguished solely by religion.

It was a major concern because the Jewish population had increased to a total of about 750,000 by 1764, which was the year of the first census. Wodzinski adds that the demographic expansion was especially visible in the towns of the south-eastern territories. The year 1764 also saw the end of the Council of Four Lands (the parliament of Polish Jewry) and with it the end of the system of officially-recognized Jewish communities (*kahalim*). That situation stimulated the growth of the hassidic movement, amid the breakdown of traditional Jewish institutions.

However, hassidism was opposed from the outset. The *mitnagedim* — the 'classically' Orthodox Jews — condemned the hassidim for many of their practices, including their neglect of the study of talmudic texts, their establishment of prayer halls (*shtiblekh*), their different method of ritual slaughter of animals for food (*sheḥita*), and their fraudulent miracles.

The author devotes some pages to Salomon Maimon (1754–1800) the philosopher who was one of the initiators of the Haskalah but who was not familiar with specific aspects of Polish hassidism. He then considers Mendel Lefin (1749–1826) who was a protégé of Prince Adam Kazimierz Czartoryski. That prince probably encouraged Lefin to propose a project of reform for the bulk of the Jewish population when the Jewish Question was debated in 1791 by the legislative Polish Assembly which was active from 1788 to 1792. In his report (written in French) Lefin said that he wished to clarify matters for the politicians who '. . . for all the unquestionable nobility of their purpose and goodwill, were nevertheless incompetent when it came to matters concerning Jewish society' (p. 23). Lefin condemned kabbakistic visionaries and new zealots and according to Wodzinski, 'there is no doubt that Lefin had the hasidim in mind' when he referred to these zealots) and asserted that their aim was to drive reason out completely (p. 24). However, Lefin's memorandum seems to have had little effect during the Assembly's debates.

Another Jewish reformer (who also wrote in the French language) was Jacques Calmanson (1722–1911). His treatise, *Essai sur l'état actuel des Juifs de Pologne*, was published in 1796 and dealt with the project to reform Polish Jews. It was addressed to the Prussian minister who governed the new territories annexed from Poland. Calmanson's recommendations are reputed to have influenced the promulgation of the *Judenreglement*, the 1797 Prussian statute concerning the Jews. Calmanson was a strong defender of the Haskalah and believed hassidim to be dangerous fanatics; but for him (as for Lefin) the arch-enemy was the *kahal*.

Wodzinski shows that the leading *maskilim* were civil servants in various Polish government institutions, especially in the departments dealing with Jewish matters — such as elementary schools, the censorship of Jewish publications, the Warsaw rabbinical school, etc. He states (p.70):

> The Polish governent pushed for the popularization of a national language and the maskilim willingly succumbed to these pressures, because their aim was fundamentally in agreement with the Haskalah idea of rapprochment with the Christians... The intense interest in the 'Jewish question' from the Polish public... influenced the popularity of the Polish language. At the same time, however, the Polish maskilim nurtured the Hebrew language and emphasized its importance to Jewish identity, and the number of Hebrew publications that appeared at the time is proof that the maskilim's stance on the Polish language was neither straightforward nor unconditional.

In 1818, the State Council of the Kingdom of Poland allowed the establishment of a modern rabbinic school and Abraham Jakub Stern (1762–1842) was requested to submit a project for that institution. He was a mathematician and an esteemed inventor of various machines. In that year, the local police of the town of Plock had closed down a prayer hall on Stern's recommendation. He was consulted again in 1824 and again gave the same advice — which was implemented at first. Eventually, however, the hassidic prayer halls (*shtiblekh*) were tolerated. Other members of the Jewish Polish Enlightenment were not as radical as Stern in their opposition: they considered hassidism to be a marginal movement. Moreover, the *tsadikim*, the major hassidic leaders in Poland — especially those of Plock and of Ger (the Polish Gora Kalwaria) — were deemed to be more rational and more acceptable than the 'charlatans' of Galicia. The hassidim, according to various local studies reported by Wodzinski, constituted only a small minority in Congress Poland, varying from three to 10 per cent of the Jewish population. (However, in some cities the proportion was greater.) The author comments (p. 98):

> One of the most interesting sources with reference to the religious tendencies of the Jews in the Congress Kingdom, including the development of

> hasidism, are the reports of the London Society for Promoting Christianity amongst the Jews. The British missionaries . . . left a relatively large number of reports on the subject.

Those reports reveal that the number of hassidim in Congress Poland was more limited than was the case in, for example, the Russian Pale of Settlement.

The position changed after the collapse of the November uprising of 1830–1831 against Russia's rule in Poland. The numbers of hassidim had greatly increased and the conflict between them and the members of the Enlightenment intensified. Wodzinski states (p. 132):

> The followers of hasidism, even if they did not constitute a majority in a given community, managed to dominate the community with their exceptional involvement and better social organization, and also because of the aggressiveness and ruthlessness of their enterprises. It partly explains why, in the 1830s and 1840s, when they still could not claim a real majority, they started to play a dominant rôle in the community life of Polish Jews.

Local conflicts were exacerbated. In Lodz in 1848, the Enlightened Jewish men who shaved their faces or enrolled their children in Russian schools complained that they were mocked, insulted, and attacked by the hassidim. On the other hand, more than two decades earlier, in 1824, Jakub Tugendhold (1794–1871), an influential member of the Jewish community of Warsaw and a vigorous defender of the Haskalah, had been consulted by the Government Commission for Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment and he had defended the hassidim. That was a courageous stand and Tugendhold was severely criticized. Wodzinski comments (p. 146):

> Tugendhold contrasted the hasidim, who were pious, noble and obedient to the government, with the intolerant, insolent, and arrogant 'zealous talmudists', i.e. the mitnagedim . . . Furthermore, according to Tugendhold, the real threat to the reform of the Jews in Poland was not the hasidim but the mitnagedim . . . .

In the long term, that led to a change of attitude by the modernizing Polish Jews: they could now consider the hassidim to be strategic allies against traditional Jewish orthodoxy.

In the fifth chapter of the volume, the author considers the modernizing camp during the 1850s and 1860s. Three main groups were distinguishable (p. 155):

> . . . a relatively weak group comprising both the traditional maskilim, who wrote only in Hebrew, and some members . . . from the wealthy middle classes and the Warsaw bourgeoisie with their pragmatic pro-German sympathies; a group of radical assimilationists often accused, justifiably, of religious indifference and of renouncing Judaism; and a moderate group, aiming at hegemony, who promoted pro-Polish acculturation while wishing to preserve the status of Judaism and religious traditions.

The assimilationists wished to ignore hassidism, but they were embarrassed by the persistence of what they considered to be 'medieval fanaticism'. The maskilim were ambivalent: they were critical of the hassidim's limited observance of Jewish traditional practices — for example, their abbreviated laying on of phylacteries — and their belief that the use of the ritual bath was generally sufficient evidence of Jewish identity. On the other hand, according to *Hatsefirah* (the Haskalah's weekly publication), the hassidim were more meritorious than the Orthodox Jews because they were more united and more generous.

As for the integrationists, they viewed the hassidim as a major threat to the modernization of the Jewish people, as their chief ideological rivals. Apart from these three groups, the majority of the Jews followed a non-hassidic traditionally Orthodox Jewish lifestyle — but nevertheless, according to various sources, they were attracted to hassidism, especially to the miracle-worker rôle of their rebbes. The attitude of the integrationists towards hassidism is seen in the periodical *Jutrzenka* (published from 1861 to 1863) where the words hassidim or hassidism do not even appear. Instead, there are references to 'the exultant', the 'Kabbalah Party' or the zealots. The hassidim were openly criticized (among other things) for their abuse of alcohol and tobacco; for their intolerance; their superstitions; and their 'outlandish dress'. However, the publication believed that an alliance with them was possible, since they were idealists and their chief leader (the Gerer rebbe) was worthy of deference. For moderate integrationists, hassidism was an infinitely better alternative to total religious indifference. That attitude was more prevalent among Warsaw's Jews than among the 'enlightened' provincials: the latter encountered much more hostility, daily, in their dealings with the local hassidim and they saw the conflict as a fight for survival.

Jutrzenka was closed down in 1863 by the tsarist authorities because it supported the Polish revolutionary movement. In 1866 the integrationists published the *Izraelita*, which remained in existence until 1915. The editors persevered in their preoccupation with the hassidim whom they accused of being obscurantist, lacking in basic hygiene, given to 'sick fantasy' and to the 'blinding of reason'. It was hoped to diminish the movement's influence by enrolling hassidic children compulsorily in schools which taught secular subjects. One of the most remarkable contributors to the periodical was Izrael Leon (Leib) Grosglik (1851–1904); he was a former hassid who by his own efforts had succeeded in learning the Polish language. He could describe with authority the isolation of young hassidim as a result of their inadequate education and of their limited social interactions. He advised that young members of the Enlightenment should try to befriend young hassidim — interestingly enough, advocating the strategy which Habad

hassidim employ in their missionary activities among secular Jews nowadays. But by the 1870s, the sponsors of the periodical had to admit that it was useless to try to 'enlighten' the hassidim. The new editorial policy was to publish mainly articles emphasizing the negative aspects of hassidism — publicizing scandals and findings of guilt in court cases involving hassidim. Eventually, however, that campaign diminished in intensity as 'modern antisemitism' in the 1870s showed its ugly face in writings and in social interactions in the Kingdom of Poland.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the integrationist and modernizing movement was active from two different standpoints. On the one hand, there was the approach manifested by the journalist Nahum Sokolow (1859–1936) who drew attention to the political influence of hassidim and stressed that it was necessary to fight that influence. On the other hand, there were several modern intellectuals who became seriously interested in Hassidism — notably Heinrich Graetz (whose monumental *Geschichte der Juden* was published in 11 volumes from 1853 to 1876) and later Simon Dubnow whose classical study *Toledot Haḥasidut* was published in 1931–32 (and translated into English in 1950).

There were also the folklorists, such as Benjamin Wolf Segel and Henryk Lew who looked upon the hassidic movement as a form of folk custom and a treasury of folklore. Both Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals stressed the importance of carrying out studies of the Jewish people. That was also the case in the Ukraine, particularly owing to the influence of the ethnographer Shlomo Anski. Finally, hassidism was popularized in the theatre and in literary publications, largely owing to Sholem Ash (1880–1957) whose Yiddish texts were translated into Polish (and published by *Izraelita* from 1907 onwards) and partly owing to the *Hasidic Tales* of Leib Peretz.

Raphael Mahler had viewed with disfavour Congress Poland's treatment of the Jews. However, Wodzinski believes that Polish Jews had been treated with understanding by the Congress authorities; and he has made a learned contribution to our knowledge of the history of the Jews in Eastern Europe. It is regrettable that the volume's subject index (pp. 331–335) is inadequate and it must be hoped that if the volume is reprinted, that index will be expanded for the benefit of specialist readers.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Dr Judith Freedman for translating this review article from the French.

BOOK REVIEWS

DAVID GUR, *Brothers for Resistance and Rescue: The Underground Zionist Youth Movement in Hungary during World War II* (edited by Eli Netzer and translated by Pamela Segev and Avri Fischer), enlarged and revised edition, published for The Society for the Research of the History of the Zionist Youth Movement in Hungary by Gefen Publishing House, Jerusalem and New York, 2007, n.p.

This massive volume should have come with a warning to readers who are not blessed with very powerful wrists: its weight and size could be harmful if one attempts to lift and hold it without the benefit of some strong support — such as is necessary for the perusal of ancient heavily-bound ledgers.

It was delivered to this Journal together with another, more manageable book by Rafi Benshalom, entitled *We Struggled for Life. The Hungarian Zionist Youth Resistance During the Nazi Era*, also published by Gefen for the same Society. It was written shortly after the Second World War, and the English translation appeared 'more than fifty years after the original was written and more than twenty years after it was first published in Hebrew', according to the first page of the Introduction by Moshe Alpan in 2001. The original text, the author tells us in the Epilogue (p. 111) was 'written a short while after liberation, in the form of brief notes' and he adds: '... even now, as I hand them to the public, I feel no need to correct or add much' and that meanwhile the fate of many of those who had been considered missing had been clarified. The Epilogue on p. 114 is dated 'Prague, June 1947' and is followed by the 'testimonies' of three brave fighters — including that of David Gur who is the author of the massive volume, mentioned above.

That testimony is particularly relevant to our understanding of the determination by David Gur to leave a permanent record of his comrades — who showed extreme heroism in their attempts to rescue as many Jews as was humanly possible, fully aware of the risk of capture, torture, and eventual death by being executed or sent to concentration camps. At the time of publication of *Brothers for Resistance*, early in 2007, David Gur (who studied civil engineering at the Technion in Haifa after the Second World War) 'owns an office for the management of engineering projects', lives in Ramat-Gan, and

has 10 grandchildren (p. 122). Modestly, the entry referring to him in the volume of which he is the author is no longer than that of several of his active colleagues.

However, it is in Rafi Benshalom's earlier book, *We Struggled for Life*, that we learn details of his background and motivation. In that book, his 'testimony' (pp. 135–159) starts with a brief description of his childhood in a Hungarian village. His father was a wood and grain merchant and his family was remote from Jewish tradition and 'among the village's ten assimilated Jewish families'. He completed his education in a Protestant school in a nearby town, where (p. 135):

> Jews made up a small percentage of the student body. While most of the teachers were not noted for their sympathy for Jews, there was no overt antisemitic activity.

He was born in 1926 and when he was 17, in 1943, he had a matriculation certificate but 'the institutes of higher learning were closed to all young Jews', so he began work as an apprentice to a Jewish building contractor and it was then that he experienced the antisemitism 'to a marked degree' of his fellow building workers — who presumably were non Jews. That same year he found his way 'to the underground Hashomer Hatzair movement'. At night, he studied construction draughting and that skill helped him to join the team working in the forged documents workshop. He rose to become supervisor but the group were caught on Christmas Eve 1944. That was the day that the Russian assault on Budapest began and there was some chaos in the buildings holding the Jewish prisoners; they escaped through clever stratagems (including the eating of an incriminating document by David Gur — reminiscent of one of the exploits of *The Three Musketeers*).

Professor Randolph L. Braham states in his Introduction to *Brothers for Resistance* that (p. 5) 'Zionism never struck deep roots in Hungary' and that after their emancipation in 1867,

> the majority of Hungarian Jewry ... followed the path of assimilation. Identifying themselves as 'Magyars of the Israelite faith', they firmly believed that their destiny was firmly intertwined with that of the Magyars.

Theodor Herzl had been acutely aware of the stance of Jewish leaders and in a letter to a Jewish member of the Hungarian parliament in 1903 he predicted (p. 5):

> The hand of fate shall also seize Hungarian Jewry. And the later this occurs, and the stronger this Jewry becomes, the more cruel and hard shall be the blow, which will be delivered with greater savagery. There is no escape.

That unexpected rejection and active persecution must indeed have outraged the Jewish teenagers in Hungary and engendered a reaction

of militant defensiveness and determination to survive — but only after they had helped other (more helpless) Jews to survive. In the process, many were caught and then went 'missing' until exhaustive research showed how they had perished. David Gur and most of his surviving 'brothers for resistance and rescue' have not forgotten them to this day and moreover, they do not want future generations to be unaware of their sacrifice. His book has put the record in place — however scant the data printed next to the square space reserved for a photograph. Indeed, in some cases, there is not even a photograph printed — presumably because none was available when the book was published, more than 60 years after the events.

David Gur is aware that, in the circumstances, it has been extremely difficult to verify the data published now and in his Foreword he states (p. 7):

> I think it important to mention that there might be some inaccuracies in the book and will be thankful to anyone who can enlighten me.

It so happens that I came to know at least two of the Hungarian Jews who figure in this massive book. I was their colleague for many years at London's World Jewish Congress, where I worked as a free-lance editor of *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*. I had many conversations with them, attended seminars and other meetings which they sponsored, and can state without hesitation that in these two cases the biographical details reveal startling inaccuracies. In one instance, the erudition reported is greatly exaggerated while in the latter the reverse is true. Dr. Stephen Roth (born Siegfried Stephan Roth in 1915) was one of the most active and senior leaders of the World Jewish Congress in London after the Second World War and later (in the 1960s) became the head of the Institute of Jewish Affairs in London and sponsored various publications. But the data in his brief entry on p. 206 end with 'For four years he was the president of the British Zionist organization'.

It is to be hoped that if this volume stimulates other readers to provide additional data and/or correct errors then a final edition may be printed giving extra information on these extraordinarily brave and resourceful young men and women whose idealism and sacrifices certainly deserve a place in the history of the many Zionist youth movements. The case of Simha Hunwald is especially worthy of admiration. He was caught in January 1945 carrying hundreds of forged documents and was able to smuggle out a letter stating that he was in the cellar of the police headquarters, that he had been tortured 'but did not reveal anything' and ended with 'I will try to hold on. Simha'. But he was shot dead and buried in a mass grave (p. 30).

JUDITH FREEDMAN

SANDRA LUSTIG and IAN LEVESON, eds., *Turning the Kaleidoscope: Perspectives on European Jewry*, x + 239 pp., Berghahn Books, New York and Oxford, 2006, n.p.

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, many formal and informal, as well as institutional and personal, links flourished between Jews in Western Europe and Jews in the Former Soviet Union and east European communities. They helped the 1990s become a period of assessment of 'what it meant to be a European Jew'. There were organisational and grassroots conferences and seminars; some were social, others programmatic, some academic, some involved only recognised communal leadership and others were more democratic and populist. For the most part these were personal questionings by those interested in any changes that the upheaval might imply.

From 1989 onwards I was party to many such meetings at varying levels: as organiser, as a presenter of research findings, as a developer of training and other professional programmes. For almost a decade I attended on average one gathering every fifteen months. And that does not take account of the many planning meetings and conference calls between England and Europe, England and Israel, and the United States, England and Israel. The three corners of the 'triangle', which this book briefly discusses, all participated and contributed to the discussion and to the outcomes. From the viewpoints of both Israel and the United States, 'Europe' had become suddenly a factor seriously to be considered in Jewish international debate, not simply a semi-sleeping partner. And, despite one observation in this book, I know that England and France were much at the forefront of the grassroots discussions, precisely because they were the largest communities in Europe. Their representatives were delighted to meet like-minded counterparts from all parts of world Jewry and analyse with them what European Jews from different countries had in common — if anything — and how a sense of being European could be developed.

This decade of appraisal of the character and future of European Jewry, and its links with both Israel and the United States, gave rise to articles and books of learned papers in this particular vein. *Turning the Kaleidoscope* reports on the conference 'Galut 2000 — Towards a European Jewish Identity' which was staged in December 1998 in Berlin by Gesher — Forum For Diaspora Culture. After an Introduction by the editors, the book is divided into three sections: 'Overarching questions', 'Inter-Jewish Concerns: Rebuilding and Continuity', and 'The Jewish Space in Europe'. The 11 chapters review historical, communal, sociological, philosophical and political aspects of European Jewry, each chapter written by a specialist in the field. The styles range from the journalistic narrative to academic, hard (theory-based) analysis.

As befits the venue, Germany is a focal point of the discussion and the book's central section is in essence a case-study of the changes in the German Jewish community since 1945 (the end of the Second World War) and particularly after the re-unification of Germany in 1989. Here, importantly, the contributors give a picture of Germany as the turning kaleidoscope of the title, suggesting how a period of kaleidoscopic change has superseded a previously monolithic quality of Jewish community — developments which they contend have been found everywhere. This multi-faceted change incorporates demographic process and the unavoidable generation shift (especially for the Jewish populations almost annihilated by the Shoah), the fragmentation of communal authority (so that no single, over-riding organisation may claim to be the authentic voice of Jewry), the ascendance of new forms of Jewish religious expression and, arising along with and out of this last, the higher profile and participation of women in all areas of Jewish life. These elements are seen as applying to all European Jewish communities as does the central fact of the Shoah, which is considered in (and underlies the discussions of) each chapter. This echoes my recollection of those earliest grassroots discussions: what we had in common was the Shoah and that had established the nature of European Jewry, regardless of which part of Europe we lived in.

Perhaps because it comes at the end of a period of dedicated soul-searching, this book looks forward more than some earlier volumes. Indeed, while reading it, I had the sense that this may be the last of these European identity compendia — possibly because it revises (even recycles) material from other collections. Things have moved on from the 1990s and even from the material of the later, Berlin *2001 Conference of European Female Rabbis, Cantors, Jewish Activists and Scholars* that makes up the bulk of the volume's middle section.

These discussions of social change and the way communities are moving forward and, particularly, of the place of Judaism in European society as part of multi-culturalism, are optimistic. Compared with Wasserstein's *Vanishing Diaspora* and Friedmann's *The End of the Jewish People?*[1], which at different times both predicted the demise of European Jewry, the volume is on the whole hopeful and creative, suggesting innovative patterns of Jewish accommodation to new international situations and opportunities, and recognising that the non-Jewish world sees Jews with less bias than it did for most of history until the latter half of the 20th century.

But the picture painted is not totally positive, most especially about the part Israel will have to play in Jewish identity. While Israel is recognised as salient to the issues explored in some of the papers, unquestioning support for Israel's policies is questioned in others. The bulk of the volume was written before the latest Intifada and

certainly before the Israel–Hizbollah conflict of July 2006. There is no doubt this point would have been raised more widely if the conference reported here had taken place even four years later than it did. Certainly the place of Israel and ideological and practical Zionism in Jewish consciousness and action will be major factors in where the kaleidoscope eventually settles and will no doubt be a focus of many future conferences.

NOTE

[1] B. Wasserstein, 1996. *Vanishing Diaspora. The Jews in Europe since 1945* (Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press) and G. Friedmann, 1967. *The End of the Jewish People?* (London: Hutchison).

MARLENA SCHMOOL

CORRESPONDENCE

In the 2006 volume of this Journal we published a review by Professor Geoffrey Alderman of Professor Yakov M. Rabkin's book *Au nom de la Torah. Une histoire de l'opposition juive au sionisme*. In September 2006 Professor Rabkin wrote to the editor:

On Jewish Opposition to Zionism

Professor Alderman's recent review of the French original of my book on Jewish Opposition to Zionism, abounds in sarcasm at the expense of information, sadly failing even to report the structure and the content of the book to your readers. Rather than discuss the ideas presented in the book, he engages in ridiculing its protagonists, such as adding inverted commas to the title of rabbi. Fortunately, your readers can now read an English version of my book (*A Threat from Within: a Century of Jewish Opposition to Zionism* (Zed Books/Fernwood, 2006), which has appeared alongside translations into five other languages in the last two years. While the subject of my book may irritate some, including your reviewer, a growing number of books and films, produced both in Israel and the Diaspora in the last few years, seriously question Zionism. These challenges ought to be addressed rather than dismissed.

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We invited Professor Alderman to reply but he said that he did not wish to do so. This correspondence therefore is now closed.

CHRONICLE

In February 2007 the Community Policy Research Unit of the Board of Deputies of British Jews issued a Report on 'Community Statistics 2005' by David Graham and Daniel Vulkan. The Introduction states that the Report's data 'are collected on behalf of the whole community every year' and that they represent only 'those Jews who have chosen to associate themselves with the Jewish community through some form of formal act' (p. 2).

There are sections on circumcision; on marriages; on *Gittin* (divorces); and on burials and cremations. The Research Unit has used information on circumcision 'as a proxy for Jewish birth cohort data . . . because religion data are not collected by any authority at the time of birth' (p. 4). The figures are based on the numbers of Jewish male babies whose parents chose to have the procedure carried out by a *mohel*. Most United Kingdom *mohelim* are members of either the 'Initiation Society' or of the Association of Reform and Liberal Mohelim' and the Research Unit gathers data from these two bodies. But the Report warns that there are some *mohelim* who are not registered with either organization and that others have not submitted complete sets of records. There are also no records of babies who are circumcised by doctors without a religious ceremony, in the hospitals where they were born.

The number of Jewish female births is derived by factoring up the total number of circumcisions reported by *mohelim* 'using the sex ratio of all births in the national population in the nearest available period . . . The final figure produced by this methodology is therefore only an approximation of the Jewish birth cohort for the year' (p. 4). In 2005 there were 1,640 circumcisions collated by the Research Unit and an inferred total of 3,205 Jewish births.

There are no official marriage statistics recording the religion of each spouse. The Research Unit gathers information on wedding ceremonies carried out under formal Jewish auspices — so that couples who marry outside such auspices are not included. In 2005 there were 1,000 Jewish wedding ceremonies: 275 among the Strictly Orthodox; 446 among the Central Orthodox; 39 among the Sephardim; 30 among the Masorti; 162 among the Reform; and 48 among the Liberals. That represents an increase of 45 over the previous year's total of 955. It must be noted that there may be additional cases of couples where both partners identify themselves as Jews but decide for various reasons to have only a civil marriage ceremony. In 2005 the large majority of synagogue weddings were first marriages for both partners. In the remaining cases, only one spouse, or both, had been previously divorced or widowed.

The Research Unit obtained data on 249 religiously sanctioned divorces (*gittin*) in 2005. Jewish couples who obtain only a civil divorce are therefore not included in that total.

There were 3221 burials and cremations carried out under Jewish religious auspices in 2005. These are persons 'who have chosen (or whose families have chosen) to be buried or cremated' under such auspices. The Report adds that 'a decline or rise in the figures is as much a reflection of changes in affiliation and Jewish identity as it is in the numbers of people who have passed away'. The Report does not give separate figures for cremations and burials. It would have been interesting to learn whether the proportion of cremations has increased since the Research Unit started to collect community statistics.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews has also published a study by Dr. Rona Hart (the head of its Community Research Unit) and Edward Kafka ('recently retired after 34 years in the Government Statistical Service') on 'Trends in British Synagogue Membership 1990–2005/6'. In 1990, there were 102,030 Jewish households which were members of a synagogue; by 2005/06, that total had declined to 83,860 households in 341 congregations.

Mainstream Orthodox British Jews are, in the main, members of the 'United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues, and regional orthodox synagogues under the authority of the Chief Rabbi'; they now account for 55 per cent of all membership — compared to 66 per cent in 1990. On the other hand, the membership of the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (Ultra-Orthodox Jews, or Ḥaredim) has increased by 51 per cent over the same period 'and now exceeds that of the Liberal communities'.

London and the South East account for more than three-quarters (77 per cent) of synagogue membership in the United Kingdom; the share of Greater Manchester is nine per cent.

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In May 2007 the Institute of Jewish Policy Research (JPR) published a Report: *Jews in Britain: A Snapshot from the 2001 Census*. The Census estimated that there were in that year 270,499 British Jews, two-thirds of whom (66 per cent) lived in Greater London. The question about religion was not answered by all who were enumerated. The JPR Report states that 2,594 individuals replied that they were Jewish in answer to the ethnic question but did not identify themselves as Jewish in answer to the religion question.

The large majority of Jews (83 per cent) were born in the United Kingdom; 7,066 in Israel; 5,991 in the U.S.A.; and 5,668 in South Africa.

Some 20,000 Jews are scattered in various areas where there are few Jewish residents: for example, 'Somerset, Suffolk, Cornwall, Derbyshire and Warwickshire all have around 500 Jews but no formally recognised synagogue', according to the Report.

More than half (56 per cent) of Jews in the age group 25–34 years have a degree while the national average in that group is 29 per cent. Jewish women in their early twenties are twice as likely as women in their age-group in the national population to have a degree. On the other hand, the very strictly Orthodox Jews (*ḥaredim*) who have a large number of children, 'emphasize the merits of religious education over and above secular education'. In an area of *ḥaredi* concentration, in Hackney, 43.5 per cent of Jews in the 16–24 age group had no secular educational qualifications.

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The January–March 2007 issue of the *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* includes an article by Séverine Mathieu on 'Couples mixtes et circoncision' (pp. 43–64). Some 30 couples were interviewed: one partner was Jewish and the other was not. Both Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews took part and during the formal interviews both partners were present, leading to 'animated discussions' on the question of circumcision and the reactions to a partner's wish to have their baby boy circumcised. There were also informal meetings and conversations, as well as observations by the researcher. In several cases, the Jewish father, who had been circumcised as a baby, wished his baby son to be like him. During the occupation of France by Germany in the Second World War, many Jews who had avoided being identified were later arrested and asked to undress to check whether they had been circumcised; those who had undergone the procedure were sent to concentration camps or tortured and that had led some of the survivors not to circumcise their sons. During the interviews, there were such instances of an uncircumcised Jewish partner and other cases when the baby's father did not wish his baby boy to be circumcised, but the child's mother had insisted that she would have the procedure carried out; in one such case, the father had commented that since in Judaism, Jewish identity is dependent on the religion of the child's mother, the boy was indeed Jewish, so let him be circumcised if that was the mother's firm decision. The belief that circumcision has health benefits was discussed and some parents had the procedure carried out by a surgeon, not by a *mohel*, and without a religious ceremony. Other parents had insisted on a ritual ceremony of circumcision as a visible symbol of identification with Judaism, as a deliberate affirmation of Jewish descent.

The same issue of the *Archives* has a paper on French rabbis and homosexuality by Martine Gross (pp. 65–84).

*

Scopus is the magazine of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Its 2006 issue states that the University (which was inaugurated in April 1925) now has four campuses, three in Jerusalem and one in Rehovot. There are some 24,000 full-time students: 11,900 undergraduates; 7,600 masters and 2,600 doctoral candidates; and 2,000 overseas and pre-academic students. There are also 'an additional 14,000 in continuing and extension courses'.

There are more than 3,000 'projects in progress in University departments and in 100 subject-related and interdisciplinary research centres'.

The Jewish National and University Library (JNUL) has now digitized some of its collections. *Scopus* states (p. 32):

> Digitization — converting texts, sounds or images into digital files that can be viewed or heard via the internet — is the ideal technology for libraries and archives seeking to enhance access to their materials while also preserving them. Through the JNUL one can view, for instance, pages from the earliest known printed Haggadah (Spain, 1482), listen to traditional Passover tunes from Yemen or 'leaf through' a Hebrew newspaper from the 1880s — all rare or fragile items that otherwise would be inaccessible.

The Library's deputy director for information technology is quoted as saying that in less than a year the JNUL has had 'hits from 121 countries, including Poland, Mexico, Saudi Arabia, Finland and Singapore'.

*

The Times newspaper in London published on 24 February 2007 (p. 41) an article with the headline 'After nearly a century, Israel's first kibbutz calls time on communism'. Degania was founded in 1910 when 10 men and two women rode across the River Jordan, established a camp at Umm Juni and set about constructing buildings quarried from local stone.

The kibbutz now voted 'to privatise itself and assume the trappings of capitalism'. *The Times* interviewed a member of Degania, then 82 years old. He had served in the Red Army as a tank commander at the siege of Leningrad during the Second World War and had later been turned away by the British Mandate authorities when he arrived in Palestine aboard the Jewish refugee ship *Exodus*. He was eventually able to come into the country and join Degania and he married a daughter of one of the founders of the kibbutz. He approved of the change from communism and was quoted as stating:

> It's a lot more comfortable. We get a lot more independence, both economically and generally. I have seen the other world. I was born in a different world. When I came here it was a real, pure communism. But I knew then that it couldn't survive forever because people abused it. I'm only surprised that it survived for so long. I came from the Great Mother of Communism and she only lasted 70 years. We made it to nearly a hundred.

Degania's pioneers are quoted as having declared their aims:

> We came to establish an independent settlement of Hebrew labourers, on national land, a collective settlement with neither exploiters nor exploited — a commune.

Its members paid their salaries into a communal fund and they received an allowance based on need. After complaints that some members were giving nothing but receiving more than the large contributors to the common fund, the kibbutz in 2006 quietly transferred to a trial system where members were paid according to ability and allowed to keep their earnings. In return, they paid for services and a 'progressive' income tax destined to support the elderly and less well-off.

The one-year trial was approved by 66 per cent of the members and The Change (*Shinui*) has been confirmed as permanent by 85 per cent of the voters of the kibbutz.

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In February 2007 the Centre for the Study of Muslim–Jewish Relations (CMJR) was opened in Cambridge. It was claimed at the inauguration ceremony that this Centre was the first of its kind in the world; it is an offshoot of the Centre for the Study of Jewish Christian Relations, whose founder was one of the speakers at the opening in Cambridge. One of the fields of research

for graduates and undergraduates, it was suggested, might be the shared characteristics between antisemitism and Islamophobia. It is hoped that Cambridge University will award degrees for such courses of study under the sponsorship of the new Centre.

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It was reported at the end of December 2006 that 720 British Jews had emigrated to Israel in 2006, compared to 480 in 2005. The Jewish Agency believed that the increase occurred because of Israel job fairs held in the United Kingdom and greater co-operation with the Absorption Ministry of Israel.

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The American Jewish Committee published a survey in 2006 on United States Jewry; it claimed that American Jews number 6.4 million — a much higher number than that reported by the Jewish Agency think tank, the Jewish People Policy Planning Institute. That Institute had found that Israel now was home to the largest Jewish concentration in the world. However, the American Jewish Committee claimed that many Jews do not participate in polls and that as a result the size of U.S. Jewry is usually under-estimated; it stated that the largest Jewish community in the country is in New York (with 1.6 million Jews), followed by California, Florida, and New Jersey.