THE JEWISH COMMUNITY OF BRYNMAWR, WALES

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At one time or another, there have been about 30 Jewish communities in Wales, most of them in South Wales. Broadly, they were located in two geographical lines: those along the coast, from Newport in the east to Llanelli in the west; and those from Brynmawr in the east to Ystalyfera in the west. Brynmawr (in what was then the county of Breconshire) was the most northerly of the southern communities as well as the highest town in Wales (its name in Welsh means 'big hill'). There were three separate Jewish communities very near Brynmawr: at Ebbw Vale, Tredegar, and Abertillery; they were to have close relationships with that of Brynmawr. In other nearby places, there were small numbers of Jews — in Blaina and Beaufort, for example — which did not constitute formal congregations but who were associated with Brynmawr's Jewish activities.

Brynmawr's early development was dependent on local ironworks, at Nantyglo — about a mile south of Brynmawr — and Clydach and Beaufort.[1] They provided employment for its residents and there was local iron-ore, limestone, and bituminous coal-mining to supply the ironworks, with coal being sold also to local residents. Brynmawr was an expanding and prosperous district until the Clydach and Beaufort ironworks closed in 1861 and Nantyglo in the 1870s. As Minchinton put it: 'Brecknock [sc. Breconshire], while it had a charcoal-iron age and a coke-iron age did not have a steel age'.[2] Instead of acting as a magnet for newcomers, for the time being there was an emigration of population. However, in the later nineteenth century the local coal industry expanded, partly following the extension of the railway to Brynmawr in the 1860s, while some iron-making continued at Nantyglo and Blaina along with tinplate manufacture. Even so, it was a small town; in 1901 the population of Brynmawr Urban District was just under 7,000. However, Brynmawr was affected by the inter-war economic depression of the coal industry, which particularly hit South Wales.

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The migration of Jews to the town was part of the total immigration to South Wales from other parts of Wales and the British Isles as well as from abroad.[3] The migrants were attracted by the opportunities of work and business which were a consequence of the industrialisation of the area. Developments on the Continent and adverse experiences by Jews were among the causes of their emigration.[4] Some Jews had settled in Swansea in the eighteenth century and in Cardiff in the earlier part of the nineteenth, and Jewish communities were established during that century in such valley settlements as Merthyr Tydfil and Pontypridd, but the overwhelming numbers arrived from the 1880s. For various reasons — which included pressure of population and the resulting poor economic livelihood, and also antisemitism (both popular and government-inspired) in Russia where the great majority of European Jewry lived — very large numbers emigrated. Most aimed to go to North America but thousands came to Britain, many using the country as a staging-post, temporarily resting on their way to the New World. Others remained in the United Kingdom. In the latter part of the century a few thousand settled in various places in South Wales, one such settlement being Brynmawr.

However, why did Jews go to live in Brynmawr (and for that matter in neighbouring towns)? They were out-of-the-way places, and were certainly unlikely to be known to people living in far-away Russia. One suggestion for their settlement is that of Hilda Jennings. Brynmawr's location at the head of the valleys and also, according to her, 'the fact that it possessed what was said to be the best hotel in the district... brought to it both private and commercial travellers'. She added, that since the decade of 1870—1880, Brynmawr had been a centre for travelling drapers (she was writing in the 1930s) 'most of whom do a credit trade stretching some distances' into the valleys of Monmouthshire. The first credit draper was a 'Scotch-man'(sic) who employed others to expand his business. 'A little later than the Scotch credit drapers came a number of Jewish travelling drapers, who utilised the central position and good road and rail communications to establish a cash trade on similar lines'.[5] Some became permanent shopkeepers. Jennings stated: 'between 1891 and 1911, it is estimated locally that about fifty Jewish families settled there'.[6] But she does not say if that figure includes transient families or single men, often the travelling drapers.[7]

It is sometimes said that immigrant Jews tried several places before settling in small, provincial towns. Did this apply to Brynmawr? Table I is based on the Census returns (1871–1901) as well as on the entries in the General Register Office's Births Index. It uses the place and date of birth of children as indications of settlement.

The Table shows that in the Censuses for 1871–1901, 13 of these 14 families had children who were born in Brynmawr. Eight had their first

Table I.
Birthplaces of Children

Father	Date of Birth	Last Child Born Abroad	Earliest Children Born in UK
Barnett Isaacs	1836	1864	Brynmawr 1868
Coleman Follick	1838	n.a.	Pontypool 1866
Charles	1841	n.a.	Cardiff 1871
Nathan Abrahams	1851	1875	Brynmawr 1890
[Solomon Westerman	1856	1890	In Brynmawr 1891]
Samuel Aronovitz	1861	1886	Abertillery 1893 Nantyglo 1894 Brynmawr 1898
Isaac Goldfoot*	1861	n.a.	Ireland 1890 Brynmawr 1892
Isaac Brest	1863	1885	Brynmawr 1887
Sandal Isaacs	1864	none	Brynmawr 1893
Barnett Simons	1865	none	Brynmawr 1895
Bertha Norvick Married Brynmawr**	1870	n.a.	Rogerstone 1895 Rhondda 1896 In Brynmawr 1901
Getzel Bloch	1871	1899	Brynmawr 1900
Barnett Jenkins	1872	1897	Brynmawr 1901
Abraham Brest Married Cardiff	1872	n.a.	Brynmawr 1893

NOTES

Dates of birth of fathers and the last child born abroad are approximate.

I have listed only the first child born in Brynmawr.

*Wife was born in Liverpool. I have been unable to locate an entry in the Marriage Index for England and Wales.

**Living in Aberystruth when married.

child in Brynmawr and five (including one married in Brynmawr) had children in various places in the UK before they fathered children in Brynmawr. The last child born abroad of one family (Westerman), was recorded as being one year old in the 1891 Brynmawr census and so the family probably went straight to the town on immigration. This sample is small and merely suggests that only some immigrants 'tried' various places.

Who were the Jews who lived in Brynmawr? Only two lists of members have survived (one of 1949 and another for 1952) in the last, declining, years of the community.[8] However, one can aim to build a database of residents from other sources. Of particular importance is the weekly *Jewish Chronicle* (henceforth *JC*), which printed reports of various events including meetings of the congregation (and of subsidiary organisations) at which named people were elected to office. Names of Jewish residents can be found in details of their contribution to the numerous funds established for various good causes, and there are notices of births, marriages, deaths and *bar-mitzvahs* affecting people in Brynmawr. For the years up to 1901, when

the most recent Census reports are available for inspection, these names can be used to learn about other members of the households. The entries give addresses, names of the household, beginning with the Head (usually the husband), followed by others and their relation to the Head (Wife, Son, Daughter, Lodger, Visitor, Servant, etc.) Their age, occupation, and place of birth are given. Such details have been used extensively in this article.

Moreover, other (otherwise unknown) Jews can be located in the Census reports. They include those who were temporarily resident between Censuses, when they had moved to another town but the birth of a child in Brynmawr would be recorded in a later Census in the new location; the registration district for Brynmawr was Crickhowell. In general one can be on fairly safe ground in identifying who were Jews, using three criteria: 1) they were born abroad — in the case of Brynmawr especially in Russia and Poland; 2) they had: 'Jewish' names and 3) typically immigrant Jewish occupations.[9]

For the years after 1901, in addition to the *JC*, there are such documentary sources as marriages under the auspices of the Brynmawr synagogue (1907–1941), of burials from 1920 at the Brynmawr Jewish cemetery and, before 1920, interments of Brynmawr Jews in Merthyr Tydfil Jewish cemetery.[10] Several of the foreign-born men applied successfully for naturalisation and these records are available at the National Archives. There are also the names mentioned in H.H. Roskin's brief article on the community.[11] These can be supplemented by names in the minute book of the congregation, which is in the possession of Judge Anthony J. Morris.

One important consideration is the definition of the Jewish 'community' of Brynmawr. As noted on the first page of the present article, a number of Jews lived in nearby places which did not have organised communities but took part in Brynmawr's activities; I consider these later when I look at the growth of the Jewish population.

Finally, selecting people on the basis, in the first instance, of their name may have caused Jews who had 'ordinary' names and were born in the UK and did not have 'Jewish' occupations, to have been missed. So that any statistics presented here are no more than approximations.

I
DEVELOPMENT OF THE BRYNMAWR COMMUNITY UNTIL 1901

Since so much reliance is placed on the information in the decennial Censuses (notably those of 1871–1901), this history may be divided into two parts: before and after 1901. Conveniently, that year saw the opening of the synagogue. A report of 1889 in the *Jewish Chronicle*

stated that a congregation had been established in Brynmawr in the previous year but had difficulty in finding a suitable location for divine worship. In the meantime a resident, Barnett Isaacs, had placed one of his houses at their disposal and had met the cost of adapting it for use as a synagogue.[12] (This marginally corrects the usual statement that the congregation originated in 1889.) It was reported that at the first religious service on the eve of the Day of Atonement (*Kol Nidrei*) a large number of Christians stood outside the temporary synagogue 'listening in respectful silence'. At its conclusion 'a sympathetic cheer was raised by the non-Jewish listeners'.[13] It was conducted by Rev. A.D. Resovski(sic) — Aaron David Rosowski who was the *shoḥet* at Tredegar and who was known as Roskin.[14]

Earlier that year another Jewish event in Brynmawr attracted great interest in the town. It was the holding of a Jewish wedding, of Russian-born Michael Ash to Tredegar-born Isabella Harris (it was not unusual for foreign-born Jewish men to choose British-born brides). The 21-year old, Portsea-born Rev. Jacob Phillips of Tredegar officiated, along with Rev. M. Weinstock.[15] In the 1891 Census the 23-year old Jacob Phillips is recorded as a lodger in Tredegar in the household of a non-Jewish widow.

A few Jews had lived in Brynmawr before the congregation was formed in 1888. Indeed, the first useful Census, of 1841, gives the details of three possible Jewish households. Two of them were almost certainly Jewish. One was headed by Jacob Cohen, a furniture broker, with Julia (presumably his wife), and two children (Leopold and Mina) who were both born in Brynmawr, the first Jewish children to be born in the town. The second household consisted of Solomon Jacob, a hawker, born abroad, and a foreign-born Rachel Jacob, no doubt his wife. The third household is less clear: it consisted of three men but the names of two of them are very difficult to read. One was a fifty-year old hawker, and the other was Michael, possibly Marks, who was born abroad; the third was named Isaac Levine.[16] They were apparently transients. The Cohen family, headed by Julia after her husband Jacob committed suicide in 1850, is to be found living in Chelsea in subsequent Censuses, but the others cannot be located. The 1851 Census recorded a visitor, Joseph Linovick, born in Poland, his occupation being 'Pole refugee' (but this appears to have been crossed out). He may have been a Jew. At least three Jewish families were in Brynmawr in the 1860s, as is evidenced by the birth of children there. Sarah Bloom was born in 1860 just before her family, headed by her grandfather (Solomon Bloom, a pawnbroker) went to live in Pontypool. Two other families stayed longer: that of Coleman Follick (another pawnbroker) living there from at least 1868 when a daughter, Esther, was born and

another child soon after; and Barnett Isaac(s), a painter and glazier, two of whose children were born in the town in the 1860s. Barnett remained in Brynmawr until he died there, aged 82, in 1918. He had provided in about 1888 the first temporary synagogue, and was for many years its president, as well as occupying other official positions. Coleman Follick was the father of Montefiore Follick who, as Dr Mont Follick, was a Labour M.P. after the Second World War. He was a well-known linguist and advocate of simplified English. There is a Mont Follick Professorship in Comparative Philology at the University of Manchester. Although he was *bar-mitzvah* he did not regard himself as Jewish.[17]

In addition to the households of Follick and Isaac(s) in Brynmawr in the 1871 Census there were two other Jewish ones. Whereas both Coleman Follick and Barnett Isaac(s) had been born in Poland, Nathan Samuel (a clothier) and his brother (Moses, a pedlar), were English-born, in Liverpool. Barnet Woboff, another hawker, was born in Holland. The Samuels then moved to Rhyl in North Wales and became jewellers. Woboff cannot be traced further.[18]

Since the congregation was formed in 1888 the decade of the 1880s must mark a turning point in its history, but there were few resident Jews in the town. In the 1881 Census there were only three Jewish households (those of Coleman Follick and Barnett Isaac(s) being joined by that of German-born Charles Michaelson). He was a painter and glazier with a British-born wife, Sophia, and soon moved to Cardiff where his wife died in 1888. At the 1901 consecration of the new Brynmawr synagogue, it was reported that about 16 years earlier (sc. 1885) there were only two Jewish families in the town; they would have been those of Follick and Isaacs. But at the 1891 Census, in the early years of the formal congregation, there were at least six households together with six lodgers. There was undoubtedly another family in Brynmawr, that of Isaac Brest, as two sons were born there in the late 1880s, but there is no sign of the household in the 1891 Census although the family became long-term residents. There was a resident minister at the 1891 Census, Russian-born Tobias Spivack, aged 24, married with 3 children — probably poorly paid but somehow managing to employ a domestic servant.[19]

As mentioned above, there were Jews living not far from Brynmawr. Captain H.H. Roskin stated in 1958: 'In the year 1893, when I was 9 years old, I came to Beaufort with my parents from Tredegar [where he had been born]. Being only a mile away from Brynmawr we joined the Brynmawr Community'.[20] Others were mentioned in the *Jewish Chronicle*, such as Goodman Weiner of Nantyglo, Hermann Harris and Moses Samson of Blaina.[21] The obituary in 1928 of Marks Fine, of Abergavenny, referred to his having been one of the oldest and most esteemed members. For more than 20 years he had

acted as *Baal Korah* (reader of the *Torah*) as well, as supernumerary *ḥazan* (cantor) at Brynmawr synagogue.[22] Jacob Robinson (in the neighbouring town of Blaenavon) was born in Germany; he was a pawnbroker and jeweller, and his son had his *bar-mitzvah* in the Brynmawr synagogue in 1910. Members of the Robinson family continued to live in Blaenavon and to be associated with the Brynmawr community. Derek Robinson contributed to a Brynmawr-organised collection to a charitable fund in 1938; and another Robinson's *bar-mitzvah* was held in the Brynmawr synagogue in 1940. When a burial ground was proposed for Brynmawr, Abel Myers of Abersychan paid for the land. He (and other members of his family) were in that town in 1891 and 1901 and are legitimately included in the Brynmawr congregation.[23]

In summary, there were in Blaina in 1891 three families and three single men and in 1901 four families and two single men. One family, that of Moses Solomon, an outfitter (recorded in the 1891 and 1901 Censuses), was peripatetic, the children being born in three separate places — Blaenavon, Brynmawr, and Blaina. The significance of these extra-Brynmawr residents is that while at the 1891 Census there were 49 Jews living in Brynmawr, there were 40 in Beaufort and Blaina. To these can be added two Jewish households in Abergavenny, totalling 15, a family of seven in Blaenavon, and a family of four in Abersychan; the 'extra' 66 making a total of 115. In 1901 the Jews of Blaina and Beaufort amounted to 38, there was one Jewish household in Abergavenny of nine people, one in Blaenavon of 10, and one in Abersychan of three, a total of 60. When added to the Brynmawr figure of 72, we get a total of 132. (Since I am concerned with the congregation of Brynmawr — which began in the late 1880s — I do not include the few Jews who lived in these other places before the Census of 1891. They include Emanuel Jacobs and his wife in Blaenavon in 1871 and Eleano(sic) Levy, born Russia, in Blaina in 1871.)

The inclusion of these extra-Brynmawr Jews means that the annual population figures, published in the *Jewish Year Book* from 1896, must be regarded with scepticism. For one thing, for many years in the twentieth century, its figures for Brynmawr remained the same, as 30 families and the number of seatholders in the synagogue, as 50. Moreover, they were usually taken as being the Jewish population of the town and sometimes questionable conclusions were based on them. Thus Geoffrey Alderman stated that in 1911 the 135 Jews of 'Brynmawr' represented just over two per cent of that town's population.[24] Those 135 undoubtedly included Jews who lived elsewhere; and it is noticeable that the figure of 135 was also given in the *Jewish Year Book* 20 years later, in the 1930s.

In the 1890s the Jewish population had grown sufficiently to be included in the Chief Rabbi's pastoral tour to South Wales. In June

Table II.
Jewish Population of Brynmawr and District

Census Year	Jewish Population
1841	9(?)
1851	1(?)
1861	Nil
1871	16
1881	20
1891	49*
Extras	66
Total	115*
1901	72
Extras	60
Total	132

NOTES

1. The question marks for 1841 and 1851 reflect the uncertainty of the Jewishness of perhaps one man in each of the Censuses of 1841 and 1851.

2. 'Extras' means Jews living in small, neighbouring places who belonged to the Brynmawr congregation.

3. *These figures might well be increased by five for the family of Isaac Brest. Two sons were born in Brynmawr in the late 1880s, and the next child in 1892. But there is no sign anywhere of the family in the 1891 Census. A check on the relevant sheet of the Census suggests that the Enumerator omitted to include the family's house.

1894, the *JC* editorially reported: 'He visited for the first time the small communities scattered in the townlets and villages perched on the bleak hills of South Wales. The congregations of Aberdare, Tredegar, Brynmawr, Pontypridd, Penycraig, and Tony Pandy(sic), consist almost exclusively of Russian immigrants'.[25] At Brynmawr he had been conducted to the Synagogue Chambers where he examined the children. (There was clearly some form of Hebrew and religious education in place, thus predating slightly the statement in the issues of the *Jewish Year Book* [which began publication in 1896] that the Brynmawr Hebrew Classes dated from 1895.) In Brynmawr at the evening service the Chief Rabbi addressed 'a large number' of Jews from Brynmawr, Blaina, Abertillery, Ebbw Vale, and Blaenavon.[26]

According to H.H. Roskin, when his family joined the Brynmawr congregation in 1893, services were held at Heathcote House. He noted: 'I am informed that, prior to this, they were held in the house next door to Isaac Isaacs'.[27] Heathcote House was where Solomon Wolman and Bertha Schulman were married on 29 March 1895. In

the marriage certificate the place was spelled 'Heath Cock House', the normal pronunciation.

A string of transients ministered to the needs of the congregation. In 1891 there was Tobias Spivack who was followed in 1892 by Rev. Sunlight as *ḥazan* and *shoḥet* but who quickly left for a post at Coventry.[28] Z. Schulman had been *shoḥet* but in 1895 he had become ill and a fund was instituted to set him up in business. He was succeeded by Rev. Wolman (variously spelled) who was Schulman's son-in-law.[29] After he left and in the run up to the opening of the new synagogue, the community advertised in 1898 for a man for the combined post of *ḥazan*, *shoḥet*, *mohel*, and Hebrew teacher. Rev. Getzel Bloch was appointed but as he was a new immigrant and his knowledge of English was poor (or perhaps non-existent), in his first years a temporary teacher was appointed for the Hebrew Classes. This was the teenager, Herman Hyman Roskin who taught until Bloch had learnt sufficient English.

The novelty of a Jewish presence in this Welsh mining town was exemplified by a repetition of the great interest aroused by a Jewish wedding, this time in 1896. The bride was May Isaacs, niece of Mr and Mrs Isaac Isaacs of Brynmawr ('much respected residents') and Ben Cohen of Southampton. (During the First World War Ben Cohen came to live in Brynmawr and became president of the congregation.) The service was conducted by Rev. J. Abelson of Cardiff assisted by the local minister, Rev. Wolman. The *chupah*, of chenille, was specially made and was presented to the Tredegar synagogue. The banquet was attended by 150 guests. In the chair was Dr G.H. Browne JP, and the vice-chairmen were Mr M.J.S. Lyons and Major Will Putts (like Browne, a non-Jew). At the ball which followed there were 400 guests. The food left over was distributed to the poor on the following day at the Market Hall.[30]

The Chief Rabbi, in the course of another pastoral visit, urged the community to provide a more suitable place for divine worship.[31] At the opening of the new synagogue in June 1901 it was reported that at the last 'Solemn Festivals' (New Year and Day of Atonement) more than 100 worshippers attended the services at the Old Town Hall. The need for improved accommodation was urgent. Events moved rapidly. The *JC* in June 1901 reported:[32]

> A Committee, consisting of Messrs. B. Isaacs, A.D. Roskin, I. Isaacs, and H.H. Roskin, was immediately formed with a view to carrying out this recommendation into effect. It was chiefly owing to the unflagging zeal, the indefatigable labour of Mr. A.D. Roskin that the success of the movement was assured. In all stages of the work he has been the guiding spirit; it was he who approached Mr. W. Weeks in the first instance, and induced that broad-minded gentleman to offer a piece of land in Bailey Street for the site of the proposed synagogue.

Weeks, a cattle-dealer, enters the story for it was next to his premises in Bailey Street that the synagogue was erected. This was signified in a sketch map on an indenture of 23 January 1900 between the Duke of Beaufort (the 'lessor') and four Jews (the 'lessees'), who were the trustees of the synagogue. They were Barnett Isaacs, pawnbroker; Isaac Isaacs, pawnbroker; Isaac Brest, house furnisher; and Isaac Goldfoot, draper. The lease was for 99 years from 29 September 1899. The rent was to be £1 per annum.[33]

A first list of contributions to a building fund was printed in the *JC* of 13 July 1900 (the largest amount, of £110.10s. being from 'A Polish Jew' in London). Two weeks later it was announced that a plot of land for the synagogue had been granted 'by a Christian friend' to whom a nominal rent of £1 p.a. was to be paid. Building operations had already begun and it was hoped they would be completed in the next five months. Of the total of £700, so far £400 had been raised.[34]

It was in fact a year later that the synagogue was completed and on 20 June 1901 it was formally consecrated by the Chief Rabbi and opened by Mr O.E. D'Avigdor-Goldsmid, a member of one of the grand families of Anglo-Jewry. The synagogue was built of local stone with accommodation for 86. There was a ladies' gallery on the west wall beneath which, and opening out of the synagogue, was the classroom.[35] The total cost was £800, and there remained a deficit of £200. The architect was Mr W.S. Williams who had designed the Tredegar synagogue. The contractor was the local firm of Messrs Jenkins & Son, Brynmawr. A visiting minister had been appointed, the Rev. B.N. Michaelson.[36] He had been born in Middlesbrough and was then minister at Newport. It was not unusual for small provincial communities to have visiting ministers.

II
STATISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY UP TO 1901

As noted above, the coincidental opening of the synagogue in 1901 and the Census of that year mark a break in the history of the community. Here we can pause to examine what the Censuses have to tell us. I repeat that in addition to those who were undoubtedly Jews, being taken from Jewish sources, the names extracted from the Census as 'Jewish' are those selected on the basis of names, birthplaces, and occupations. They are thus only approximate figures and moreover give only snapshots at particular dates and do not include any transient inter-censal residents.

Table II showed the growth of population while Table III explores age distribution. The community was a young group, as befits an immigrant generation. The slightly older age-groups were those of

Table III.
Age Distribution in 1871–1901 Censuses

CENSUS	1–14	15–35	36–50	51+	TOTALS
1871	8	7	1	–	16
1881	12	4	4	–	20
1891	12	24	11	2	49
Extras	*28*	*27*	*11*	–	*66*
1891 Total	40	51	22	2	115
1901	31	28	11	2	72
Extras	*21*	*26*	*13*	–	*60*
1901 Total	52	54	24	2	132

NOTE

The figures before 1871 are too small for useful analysis.

immigrants: the majority of those aged 14 and under were born in the United Kingdom. Table IV shows birthplaces. Most of those born abroad were adults, but in three cases at least one parent was born in the United Kingdom. Isaac Isaacs, a long-term resident, was born in Canterbury, and his wife in Poland, an inversion of the usual case of immigrant males marrying British-born brides, as Polish-born Lewis Cohen had done: his wife was born in London. Abraham Lyons, of Abergavenny, was born in Cardiff and his wife in Tredegar. Another long-term member of the Brynmawr congregation — not yet a parent — was Gershon Joel Ballin, who was born in Somerset, son of a Swedish Jew. He married, in 1905, a Russian-born widow.

Birthplaces recorded in the Census are notoriously unreliable. Sometimes the place in one Census is differently stated in the next. One example in Brynmawr is that of Joseph, second son of Barnett Isaac(s). In 1871 Joseph was said to have been born in Poland, where his parents and an older brother were born. In 1881 he is recorded as being born in Brynmawr, where his younger siblings were born. In his case, since no record of a birth in Brynmawr can be found, we can take it that Poland was his country of birth. With this caveat in mind, Table IV gives the birthplaces of Brynmawr residents and also of the 'Extras', in other places.

As expected, Jews were mainly in the distributive trades — the particular immigrant Jewish occupations being well represented — clothing; jewellery and watchmaking; pawnbroking (although much fewer than in other South Wales Jewish settlements); hawking; and painting and glazing. The teacher and the chemist's apprentice were the only ones to indicate a slight degree of acculturation.

Table IV.
Birthplaces in 1871–1901 Censuses

Birthplace	1871	1881	1891	Extras	1901	Extras
ABROAD						
East Europe	6	3	28	21	24	17
Austria	–	–	6	–	10	–
Germany	–	1	4	8	6	2
Holland	1	–	–	–	–	–
TOTAL ABROAD	7	4	38	29	40	19
WALES						
Aberdare				2		
Abergavenny				1		
Abersychan				1		
Abertillery					1	
Blaenavon				6		9
Blaina				6	1	9
Brynmawr	4	12	4	1	23	2
Cardiff		1		1		1
Maesteg				1		
Merthyr			3	2		
Pontypool	1	1				
Rogerstone					1	
Rhondda					1	
Tredegar				8		16
TOTAL WALES	5	14	7	29	27	37
REST OF UK						
Birmingham				1		
Bristol	2	1				
Canterbury			1		1	
Cheltenham						1
Liverpool	2				1	
London			2	5	1	2
Manchester			1		1	
North Shields		1				
Somerset				1		1
Staffs Burslem				1		
Ireland					1	
TOTAL REST OF UK	4	2	4	8	5	4
TOTAL	16	20	49	66	72	60

III
AFTER 1901

No Censuses after 1901 are available for study and one cannot therefore use such sources to get any idea of populations. Estimates about the growth and decline of the community must be speculative and subjective. Thus H.H. Roskin stated that in the period 1907–1910,

Table V.
Occupations in 1841, 1871–1901 Censuses

Occupation	1841	1871	1881	1891	Extras	1901	Extras
CLOTHING							
Clothier		1				2	2
Clothier's Assistant				1			
Clothier and Draper						1	
Clothier and Pawnbroker				1			
Outfitter			1		4		4
Draper						1	
Dressmaker					1		
TOTAL CLOTHING		1	1	2	5	4	6
FURNITURE							
Furniture Broker	1						
Furniture Dealer				1	1		
House Furnisher						2	
Furniture Shop Assistant				1			
TOTAL FURNITURE	1			2	1	2	
JEWELLERY etc							
Jeweller				5		1	
Watchmaker and Jeweller				1			2
Watchmaker					1		
TOTAL JEWELLERY etc				6	1	1	2
PAWNBROKING							
Pawnbroker		1	1	1	4	3	
Pawnbroker and Jeweller							1
Pawnbroker and General Dealer							2
Pawnbroker and Outfitter							1
Assistant Pawnbroker			1	1			
Pawnbroker Manager					1		
TOTAL PAWNBROKING*		1	2	2	5	3	4
PAINTERS ETC.							
Painter and Glazier		1	1				
Glazier				2	2		1
Picture Frame Maker						1	
TOTAL PAINTERS etc		1	1	2	2	1	1
HAWKERS							
Hawker/traveller/pedlar	2**	2		6	2		1
Hawker Jewellery				2		1	
Hawker Drapery						1	2
TOTAL HAWKERS	2**	2		8	2	2	3
MISCELLANEOUS							
Minister				1		1	
Baker Confectioner						1	
Domestic Servant						1***	
Shop Assistant					3		
Teacher/Instructor					1		1
Chemist's Apprentice							1
GRAND TOTALS	3	5	4	23	20	16	18

NOTES

*Excluding the Clothier and Pawnbroker mentioned earlier in the Table.
**This includes the almost illegible Thomas Dempster(?), Hawker.
***This was Bessie Rambach/Ranbach who married Jacob Morris in 1905.

because of 'oppression abroad', there was an influx of 11 named men 'and many others'.[37] Yet one of them, D. Chill, was in fact in Brynmawr in the 1901 Census and contributed earlier (in 1900) to the synagogue building fund.

However, the congregation consolidated and while earning a living must have been a priority for the members, other aspects of life came to be accommodated by the creation of a number of organisations. Unfortunately the *Jewish Chronicle* – the main source of information — carried only occasional reports. Even before the new synagogue opened, there were the Hebrew classes for the growing number of children and a branch of the English Zionist Federation was formed, with 30 members enrolled at the first meeting in February 1900. In 1902 the branch boasted 100 members, was said to meet fortnightly and in April held its first annual Zionist ball, at the Drill Hall. The following year it had become the Brynmawr and Abertillery Zionist Society.[38] In the meantime in 1901 there were two reports of the social meetings of the Brynmawr Chovevei Zion Association (*JC* 10 May 1901, p. 29; and 19 July 1901, p. 25). There is a report of a weekly meeting of the Literary and Social Society (*JC* 23 January 1903, p. 30). In the same year there was a report of the annual meeting of the West Monmouthshire and Breconshire Jewish Orphan Aid Society, which raised funds for the Jews' Hospital and Orphan Asylum, at Norwood, south London. The Society was praised for its success in fund-raising for such a small population, coming fifth among local societies in the UK. There was also a report of the existence of a Brecon & Monmouthshire Ahm(sic) Israel Branch of ITO. ITO was the Jewish Territorial Organisation which broke away from the Zionist organisation's objective of Jewish settlement in Palestine and, in view of the urgency of dealing with the oppression of Jews, mainly in eastern Europe, advocated Jewish settlement in any available countries.[39]

A longer-lasting body was created to administer the new burial ground at Brynmawr, which opened in 1920. A piece of land, to the north of the town, was purchased from the Brynmawr Urban District Council and conveyed by a document of 23 October 1919 to five men: Abel Myers, pawnbroker, of Abersychan; Jacob Morris, jeweller, of Brynmawr; Isaac Brest, furniture dealer, of Brynmawr; Joel Ballin, draper, of Brynmawr; and Jacob Myers, clothier, of Nantyglo. The land measured 2 acres, 3 roods, and 3 perches, and the cost was £206.[40] The following month a conference of the Brynmawr, Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, and Newbridge and District Congregations was held at the Synagogue Schoolrooms, Ebbw Vale. It was decided to form a Joint Burial Board Committee and a Building Committee to formulate rules and plans for the cemetery. Thanks were accorded to Mr Abel Myers of Abersychan for his gift of the plot, valued at £250.[41] This

clearly suggests that the £206 paid for the plot came personally from Abel Myers.

'Consolidation' in the early years of the twentieth century is one possible description. But there were also dissensions within the community: its members did not fulfil the hope expressed by Rev. B.N. Michaelson, at the opening of the synagogue in 1901, where he referred to 'the unity of purpose which had distinguished them: that same unity and goodwill would surely not be wanting now that there was the greater need for them'.[42] However, there are no reliable data about the details of the dissensions. Neither the many letters in the *Jewish Chronicle* nor the minutes of the congregation (intermittent, from 1905) are explicit about the difficulties.

Perhaps the first intimation of a problem was an advertisement, repeated in successive issues of the *JC* in November 1904, for the post of *shoḥet* and *ḥazan*, which was occupied by Bloch. But very quickly afterwards, in December, a letter headed 'Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation' stated: 'At the request of myself and several of the principal members of the above Congregation, the Rev. G. Bloch remains at Brynmawr. Barnett Isaacs, President'.[43] The first congregational minute, of 22 February 1905, refers to a decision by Rev. S. Fyne of Swansea on a dispute which clearly had to do with Rev. Bloch. The decision turned on the application by Mr Bloch to be re-elected as *ḥazan*, *shoḥet* and teacher. He was duly re-elected at the meeting whereupon the Treasurer, A.D. Roskin, tendered his resignation.

The work of the congregation continued. The minutes routinely reported the annual election of officers (which were sometimes also reported in the *JC*), along with details of various duties, such as the collection of arrears of subscriptions and the fixing of the rates of contribution. A Mrs Cohen was to be given six shillings every fortnight for cleaning 'everything necessary to the Shool'. A ball was held in 1907 to help liquidate the congregation's debt and Barnett and Isaac Isaacs were thanked for their initial contribution of £10 each towards the debt fund.[44] In the following year it was agreed that tablets be erected in recognition of the services of these two men, and a formal occasion was held on 16 March 1908, the invitation thanking them for their services in the formation of the synagogue. There was no mention of the earlier reported efforts of A.D. Roskin.

Then suddenly, on 13 June 1909, a committee meeting was held 'to take steps for the peace of the congregation'. Four matters were itemised: 1) there was a complaint from Mrs Cohen about her son. It was agreed that Rev. Bloch should express his regrets for what had occurred; 2) there was a complaint relating to the President, B. Isaacs and the Treasurer, Isaac Brest, but no action was taken; 3) there was reference to threats made by Mr Solomon to Rev. Bloch and the former was instructed to apologise to Rev. Bloch. The fourth

complaint was by A.D. Roskin who said that a servant of Rev. Bloch had taken a fowl to the butcher to be stamped; that was done but Bloch had not examined it to make sure the bird was kosher and a letter was to be sent to Bloch.

A general meeting of the congregation, at the end of the month, referred to Rev. Bloch being approached for definite answers to the (unspecified) charges against him. The minutes (30 June 1909) recorded: 'Owing to the opposition of the Members it was impossible to carry out the meeting and it was therefore deemed advisable to lay the matter before the Chief Rabbi Dr Adler and also the Rev. A.A. Green'. Three weeks later (21 July 1909) Rev. Green's arbitration was received, which was to be sent to Rev. Bloch — unfortunately with no details. Whatever the decision, Bloch was still there in November 1909 when he is referred to in the minutes. But early in 1910 matters came to a head, and a special meeting was held on 2 February 1910, to 'consider the financial and moral position of the Congregation and to take such steps for the Welfare and dignity of the Officers and any other business necessary'. The chairman gave an explanation of the 'disturbances on Shabbos Jan 29th'. It was resolved 'That a Summons be issued against Mr A.D. Roskin for disturbing the service during the Reading of the Law and also for using insulting language towards the President Mr B. Isaacs and the Reader the Rev. G. Bloch'. The Treasurer stated that owing to the dissension there was a deficiency of 17s 6d a week. It was resolved: 'That all those Members who had ceased paying and by joining an opposition Minyan and therefore depriving the Shool of its support be suspended as members and therefore also deprived of their privileges as Members of the Brynmawr Hebrew Congregation'. Letters were to be sent to the dissentient members that they would be charged one shilling per child for Hebrew and religious instruction, three pence per fowl, and one halfpenny per lb for porging meat 'as recommended by the Rules of the Congregation'.

It seems that the problems had been resolved when, at a special meeting of 27 February (presumably 1910) a letter had been received from the Chief Rabbi and it was agreed to adopt his (unspecified) recommendation. Perhaps it was made clear when the President of the Board of Deputies [D.L. Alexander] announced that he was going to Brynmawr to 'settle some communal differences that have arisen there'.[45]

The award by the President of the Board of Deputies on 20 July 1910 was that the services of Rev. G. Bloch should be dispensed with. This led to a rapid exchange of lengthy letters in the *Jewish Chronicle* from members of the congregation. It also led to great tumult in the community, with brawls in the street, and people saying that they were afraid to walk in case they were abused. The brawls led to summonses being issued and the threat of court cases.

The correspondence began in the *JC* of 5 August 1910 with a letter from Goodman Weiner, of Nantyglo. He argued that the President of the Board of Deputies [a barrister and King's Counsel] was an unsuitable person to settle disputes in provincial communities; the matter should go to the Beth Din, the religious court. The President's record was not encouraging; he had dealt with a problem in Great Yarmouth but the congregation there had dissolved. In a number of such cases the award had been to remove the paid official and in Brynmawr the *ḥazan* had been made the scapegoat:[46]

> In our own case, a breach of the peace in a public thoroughfare occurred on the very morning of Mr. Alexander's award becoming known, in which a number of our co-religionists were implicated; a batch of police-court summonses is already issued, the direct outcome of the award.

This was answered a week later by Isaac Isaacs, who had lived in Brynmawr since at least 1891 and was to live there all his life. He noted that while Weiner had said that Alexander was not suitable, in fact Weiner was one of the party which had appealed to the Board of Deputies for assistance. The other party (presumably that of Isaacs) had submitted their case to the Chief Rabbi who had advised them to accept the assistance of the Board. This was not a religious dispute but a secular one, and he denied that it was the award which had led to brawls between congregants. Another letter in the same issue from 'NEMO' referred to Bloch as 'conscientious and painstaking'; '. . . the congregation has not had such an efficient official as teacher and shochet since its formation. He has been in service for twelve years, and no word of complaint has been uttered as regards the performance of his duties'.[47]

Weiner replied exasperatedly to Isaac Isaacs. Three points had been submitted to Alexander: the refusal of the ex-treasurer to hand over funds to his successor; the fact that the friends of Mr Isaacs had broken the locks of the synagogue, thus causing a brawl; and the refusal of Mr Isaacs and friends to contribute to the synagogue's funds for which they were threatened with exclusion. He continued: it baffled 'the comprehension of one who does not possess the legal mind' that Alexander somehow adjudicated on the relations between minister and congregation. He also said that there was no doubt that the disturbances between congregants had been caused directly by the award. He called in evidence the local weekly *The Merthyr Express*, which had prefaced their report: 'Brynmawr Jews fall out. Words lead to blows. Sequel to arbitration proceedings'.[48]

Another letter in the *JC*, from 'MATWAS', gave more details of the outcome of the dispute.[49]

> Many a time I have been present when the President — the oldest member of the congregation and a respected citizen of Brynmawr — has been openly insulted and threatened while in the performance of his duties. Even now it

> is impossible to walk from one end of the road to the other without being assailed with insults and mocking abuse from an adherent of the 'opposition party' ... Is it not still more scandalous that an official who has served the congregation faithfully for so many years, who has taught our children so ably and so efficiently that they have been a credit to the whole of Wales, should be treated as a mere puppet to be discarded at leisure. No-one can deny his efficiency and competency as a Shochet and teacher, especially his latter capacity, yet the reward for all his services is that he and his family are to be sacrificed as martyrs to the jealousy of a discontented section of the community.

This appeared to be the end of the public reporting of the matter except for a long, satirical, article in the *JC* in August 1910, entitled 'Brynmawring'. Inter alia, the writer introduced a new term: 'To Brynmawr' which 'will mean a state of affairs in a Jewish place of worship where the members indulge in free fights during the service, where the most bitter hatred is nursed by member against member, where wrangles are carried out in the public courts of justice, where the House of God is turned into a cockpit'.[50]

The affair ended early in the next year — although with some difficulty. A general meeting of the congregation was held on 4 January 1911 at which 'The Chairman made appropriate remarks on the hopes of the assimilation of the late conflicting parties and the dawn of a united and peaceful congregation'. This was exemplified by the election of A.D. Roskin as President and Barnett Isaacs as Honorary Life President. Another such meeting on 15 January agreed to mortgage the synagogue for £50; but ominously, a letter was to be sent to Rev. Bloch about his refusal to attend the general meeting.

A summary was given in the *JC* in February. It commented that Alexander's award did not settle things and bring peace: proceedings were instituted in the Chancery Division of the High Court and there were further acts leading to proceedings in the local Police Court. Subsequently the whole matter was referred to the Chief Rabbi who directed that certain named persons:[51]

> consent to the withdrawal of a Police Court summons ... finds the plaintiffs were justified in taking proceedings in the Chancery Division to enforce the award of Mr. Alexander and directs that all proceedings in the action shall cease ... He further orders that no proceedings of any kind shall be commenced or prosecuted by any of the persons named in the schedules to the award against any other or others of the persons in respect of any matter or thing relating to the affairs of the congregation or its synagogue or in respect of any disturbances which took place in the synagogue up to the date of the award, except for the purpose of enforcing the award.

Peace appears to have been declared and on 1 March a ball was held in the Drill hall, Brynmawr, under the patronage of D.L. Alexander. Nearly 200 people, resident in the district, attended; another ball,

again under Alexander's patronage, was held a year later, on 7 February 1912.[52] In the same month the congregation advertised for a 'teacher-reader and shochet' who was under the jurisdiction of the Chief Rabbi and who 'must be able to translate'.[53]

This probably meant that Bloch had left the congregation or was in the process of leaving. Although his application for naturalisation of September 1913 gives a Brynmawr address,[54] a letter of 17 October 5678 [sc. 1917] about Rev. Getzel Bloch, from the Chief Rabbi, was addressed to the President of the Ebbw Vale Hebrew Congregation. It stated that Bloch had 'satisfactorily passed the renewed Examination as *shoḥet* [in Hebrew]'. He was thus authorised 'to perform, for the members of your Congregation, the duties connected with such office'.[55] Obviously he was connected with that congregation. He may have been succeeded in Brynmawr by Rev. Aaron Solomon who left the town in 1915 for an appointment in Leicester to be followed by Rev. H.R. Goldwater who stayed for several years.[56] It is noticeable that a Rev. G. Bloch of Ebbw Vale was appointed *shoḥet* and teacher at Brynmawr in 1923 and the 1941 obituary of Rev. Getzel Bloch mentioned that he had officiated in both Brynmawr and Ebbw Vale.[57] Yet in 1924 when he left Brynmawr for the USA, he was thanked for his services to Brynmawr for 25 years.[58] It may be supposed that if he was in Ebbw Vale between 1911 and 1923 he had also been associated with Brynmawr.

Whether or not the Brynmawr Jews were affected by the great industrial unrest in South Wales in the years before the Great War, notably in coal-mining and the railways, there was something nearer to home to upset them. These were the anti-Jewish disturbances which began in the autumn of 1911, centring on Tredegar, but spreading to other towns. They have been studied at length,[59] but they hardly touched Brynmawr, despite its nearness to Tredegar. In August 1911 the *JC* reported, of Brynmawr, that on Tuesday 22nd a window in Cohen's jewellery shop was broken but that there were plenty of police and soldiers about.[60] Later, Hermann H. Roskin, of Beaufort, stated: 'In Beaufort, Brynmawr, and Abertillery it was the citizens themselves who prevented the looters from doing any damage'.[61] More precisely, it was said that the Jewish residents had suffered little and that they attributed that to the actions of Police-sergeant Price who organised a strong body of special constables. A number of Jewish tradesmen presented him with a purse of gold and permission had been granted by the Breconshire Watch Committee for him to accept the gift.[62]

IV
THE COMMUNITY'S LAST YEARS

The title of Hilda Jennings's 1934 work, *Brynmawr, A Study of a Distressed Area*, sums up the economic history of the town between the

Table VI.
Occupations of Brynmawr residents after 1901

Year	Name	Occupation	Source
1905	Herman Erder	Puddler	Birth of daughter
1905–1919	Abraham Leckerman	Pedlar Drapery	Naturalisation 1919 (i)
1907	Charles Weiner	Draper	Marriage of daughter
1907	Jacob Norvick	Confectioner	Marriage
1907	Marks Shane	Draper	Marriage of daughter
	[Isaac Norvick (deceased)	Farmer	Marriage of son]
1907	Samuel Samuels	Draper	Marriage of daughter
1908	Switzer Solomon	Hawker (Drapery)	Birth of son
1909	Moses Harris	Draper	Death cert. of wife
1911	Jacob Morris	Jeweller	Naturalisation
[1911	Solomon Cammerman Abertillery]	Glazier [see 1916 and 1921]	Birth cert. of son
1913	[Eli Goldstein (deceased)	Draper	Marriage of daughter]
1913	[Lewis Cohen (deceased)	Draper	Marriage of daughter]
1915	Maurice Lionel Stone	Commercial Traveller	Marriage
	[Joseph Stone	General Dealer	Marriage of son]
1915	[Simon Doctorovitch	Glazier	Marriage of daughter]
1916	Simon Cammerman	Coal miner [see 1960]	Marriage
	[Solomon Cammerman (deceased 1911)	Painter [see 1911 and 1921]	Marriage of son]
1916	[Barnett Simons (deceased)	Draper	Marriage of daughter]
1916	Lewis Berenblum	Traveller Drapery	Marriage
	[Abraham Berenblum	Traveller Drapery	Marriage of son]
1916	[Abraham Goldwater	Boot Dealer	Marriage of daughter]
1916	Elias Gibbor	Travelling Draper	Marriage
	[Isiah Gibbor	Butcher	Marriage of son]
1918	Frederick Katz	Tobacconist Fancy Dealer	Marriage
	[Joel Jacob Katz (deceased)	General Dealer	Marriage of son]
1918	Isaac Goldfoot	Draper	Marriage of daughter
1919	Jacob Morris	Jeweller	Burial Ground Conveyance
1919	(Gershon) Joel Ballin	Draper	Burial Ground Conveyance
1920	Simon Cammerman	Coal Hewer [see 1960]	Birth cert. of son
1920	Abraham Gutentag	Travelling Draper	Marriage
	[Israel Isaac Gutentag	General Dealer	Marriage of son]
1920	[Simon Gutentag (deceased)	Travelling Draper	Marriage of daughter]
1920	Bernard Erlich	Draper	Birth of son
1921	[Solomon Cammerman (deceased 1911)	General Dealer	Marriage of daughter]
1924	[Eli Marks	Travelling Draper	Marriage of daughter]
1926	Isaac Brest	House Furnisher	Kelly's Directory
1926	Leah Cammerman	Fruiterer	Kelly's Directory
1926	Gershon Ballin	Draper	Kelly's Directory

Table VI.
Continued

Year	Name	Occupation	Source
1928	Simon Cammerman	Coal Hewer [see 1960]	Birth cert. of son
1928	Berhard(sic) Erlich	Travelling Draper	Birth cert. of son
1931	Switzer Solomon	Draper	Marriage of son
1934	Abraham Brest	Jeweller	Burial Ground Deed 1934
1934	Jacob Morris	Jeweller	Burial Ground Deed 1934
1935	Myer David Cohen	Electrical Engineer	Marriage
	[David Myer Cohen	General Dealer	Marriage of son]
1935	Gershon Joel Ballin (deceased)	General dealer	Marriage of daughter
1936	Jacob Cammerman	Fruiterer	Birth cert. of son
1936	Michael Isador Jacobs	Boot & Shoe Salesman	Marriage
	[Angel Jacobs	Costumier	Marriage of son]
1939	[Hyman Stone (deceased)	Master Builder	Marriage of daughter]
?1941	Morris Bharier	Manager of cycle stores	Death cert. (ii)
?1944	Benjamin Goldenberg	Warehouseman	Death cert. (iii)
1955	Abraham Brest	Furnisher	Marriage cert. of son
1960	Simon Cammerman	Greengrocer	Death cert.
1968	Abraham Brest	Manag. Director Furniture Co.	Death cert.

NOTES

General: Details of most fathers of grooms/brides are in parentheses if it is not known if they lived in Brynmawr.
(i) Naturalisation papers give a date in 1905 of arrival in Brynmawr and state he had been pedlar in drapery.
(ii) Died Brynmawr. Address given as Middlesbrough.
(iii) Died Brynmawr. Address given as London N5.

two World Wars. Brynmawr was sharing the experience of all the coal-mining and heavy industry districts in Britain, especially in the coal-exporting areas such as South Wales. One remedial effort was by the Society of Friends (Quakers): it created the Coalfields Distress Committee. Part of this was the Brynmawr Experiment, under which the Brynmawr Furniture Makers Ltd was formed but it was on a small scale and came to an end with the Second World War; another was the creation of a boot-making enterprise.

The effects of the depression on the Brynmawr Jewish community are not easy to establish. One would expect that, as shopkeepers, they would face falling trade. Neil Evans commented: 'Contrary to popular belief the pawnshop trade in which they were concentrated [in South Wales] was devastated by the depression and the valley communities never recovered' but this may not have applied to Brynmawr.[63] There were few Jewish pawnbrokers in the town and there were some long-term residents; a number had been there before 1914, and remained in Brynmawr until they died. There is evidence

Table VII.
Professional offspring of Brynmawr residents and their residences

Barnett Abrahams. JC 12.8.1910. 1st class Hons in French. UC Cardiff. (Roskin, MA, in New York)
Mendel Bloch JC 12.4.1935. Inducted Minister & Reader, Borough Syn., London. Attended UC Cardiff
Simon Brest. JC 16.1.1905. Student at UC Cardiff. (Roskin, doctor in London)
Bernard Chill Solicitor, Southampton. (Roskin)
Jack M. Isaacs. JC 21.7.1916 Lawyer, Manitoba
Dr H.D. Isaaes. JC 16.10.1925. Demonstrator in University of Manitoba medical school
Emanuel Marks. Solicitor in Brynmawr & Abertillery. (Roskin)
David Morris. Solicitor in Newport. (Roskin and various references in JC)
Reuben Robinson. Chemist in Cardiff. (Roskin)
J. Solomon. Cardiff UC. Schoolteacher in Middlesbrough then St. Albans. (Roskin)
Abraham Solomon. Cardiff UC. Schoolteacher at Norwood Orphanage. (Roskin)
A. Weiner. 1st Jewish graduate of University of Wales. Taught French at King's College, London. (Roskin)
H.H. Roskin, lawyer in Cardiff

NOTE

'Roskin' refers to Capt. H. H. Roskin, 'The Jewish Communities of South Wales II – The Brynmawr Community', *CAJEX*, vol. 8, no. 3, September 1958, pp. 61–63.

of some newcomers to the congregation: in newspaper reports of congregational meetings there are new names as there were also among the couples who were married under Brynmawr auspices.

Apart from the puddler (presumably in the iron works), the coal miner, who became a greengrocer, the master builder (if in Brynmawr), and the electrical engineer, it is noticeable that the trades of those remaining in Brynmawr were the characteristic 'Jewish' immigrant ones, one being a travelling draper as late as 1928. They were immigrants or the sons of immigrants, who were born early in the immigration period. But other (male) children went to university and usually moved away from the area.

There were others who moved from Brynmawr. Asher Cohen, who was born in Brynmawr in 1893, died in Kensington (London) in 1939. Occasional examples like this can be supplemented by the trend of marriages. Ruth Brest (the only daughter of Abraham Brest) married Dr Cecil Sandler in London in 1943. Dr Sandler is listed in 1949 and in the list of 1952 as a member of Brynmawr congregation but his residence is given as Hounslow in London. However, only a few of their subsequent addresses have been found and certainly some of the families settled in Brynmawr. Yudle Sidle of the village of Cwm married Edith Cammerman in Brynmawr in 1921 and their names are in the 1949 and 1952 membership lists as E. Siddle in 1949 and Y. Siddle in 1952.[64] Abraham Brest of Brynmawr married Henrietta Woolf in Hammersmith in 1922 but lived in Brynmawr for

the rest of his life. In 1933 Leslie Dayan of Bootle married Minnie Abrahams of Ebbw Vale (where the wedding took place but under Brynmawr auspices. In fact Leslie Dayan had been born in 1906 in Monmouthshire). A child, Anthony, was born in 1935 in Liverpool, yet a 'Mrs C. Dayan, Brynmawr' contributed to a fund in 1936 and 'Mrs Dayan' to another in 1938[65] and in the 1949 list of members a C. Dayan is included.

The two post-Second World War lists, mentioned above, provide solid evidence of the size of the congregation. In that of 1949 there were 33 names of which 17 were from Brynmawr. The remaining 16 were as follows: six, Ebbw Vale; four, Blaenavon; four, Abertillery; and two, Blaina. Three years later in 1952, the total number had gone down to 18. The decline of the Brynmawr community mirrored that of other South Wales Jewish communities and not just of numbers. In July 1949 at a meeting of representatives of small South Wales communities complaints were made that they were interested only in electing as minister a qualified *shoḥet* and were not interested in his ability as teacher or preacher. Mr I. Morris of Brynmawr 'spoke bitterly of the neglected children in his small community, and said they eagerly awaited a scheme that would provide a Hebrew education'.[66] An article in the *Jewish Chronicle* in 1962, entitled 'Fewer Jews in Wales', reported that 'there are still in each of the ghost communities, such as Bridgend, Brynmawr, Aberdare, Port Talbot, Pontypridd and Porthcawl, small groups who are trying to keep alive traditional Judaism'.[67] It did not last long in Brynmawr. On 21 November 1963, Abraham Brest, the elderly honorary secretary of the community — who had been born in Brynmawr in 1889 and died there in 1968 aged 78 — wrote to the clerk to the Board of Deputies, enclosing the annual subscription of three guineas, and adding: 'I regret to say that in view of the fact that our membership has depleted to just a few we have ceased to exist'[68] and the congregation amalgamated with that of Newport.[69]

One thing had to be settled, the disposition of the marriage register and there was correspondence between David Morris (of Newport, the Brynmawr congregation's Secretary for Marriages) and the General Register Office about it. The GRO wanted to end his position and for him to surrender the register. Morris explained that although the last wedding had taken place in 1941, he wished to retain his position as Marriage Secretary because there were still families living in the district and the absence of Marriage Secretary would mean that there could be no local weddings. Moreover, the cost of celebrations at Newport or Cardiff would be considerably higher.[70] A year later the Clerk to the Board of Deputies concluded the matter. He strongly recommended that the Registrar-General's request be acceded to, and added: 'Your former objection that marriages, if any, would

have to be held in Newport or Cardiff can also be overcome because Merthyr has a Secretary (for Marriages)'. Morris agreed and surrendered the register.[71]

V
CONCLUSION

The history of the Jewish community of Brynmawr was typical of many provincial settlements which came into existence mainly as a result of the East European immigration of the late nineteenth century. Among the features were the arguments leading to the establishment of an opposition congregation; and the payment of low salaries to ministers which led to their lasting only for short periods. This was because the communities were small and at the start tended to be composed of people with low incomes. Nevertheless, Brynmawr was able to build a new synagogue although not from its own resources: most of the money came from outside. Two particular features are worth mentioning. Despite the fact that in South Wales pawnbroking was a major Jewish activity, this was not the case in Brynmawr. And, as mentioned, despite the nearness of the town to Tredegar, the centre of the 1911 riots, Brynmawr was more or less untouched.

What about relationships between Jews and non-Jews? On the one hand, there is the story told by David Morris, and quoted by Ursula Henriques that 'the *cheder* (religious school) had a fighting team led by a stout lad called Lennie Myers which used to fight with a well-known Christian gang called the J.C.Gs'.[72] Anthony Morris, a son of David Morris, said: 'Father also used to talk of the regular cheder outing to Cardiff to beat up the Cardiff boys. They were a belligerent lot from what I was told'.[73] On the other hand, an indication of relationships with non-Jews can be gauged from the fact that when David Morris (born 1908) was at the cheder — presumably during and just after the First World War — there were 11 boys there who formed cricket and football teams which played the local chapels (but not on Saturdays).[74] And, more generally, the views of a number of people associated with the town, as residents or their children, said that relationships were cordial. Bailey Street, the location of both Heachcote House and the synagogue, was popularly called 'Jew Street' — because of the number of Jewish businesses there — but in a non-pejorative sense.

The good relationships may have been one of the reasons why Brynmawr was not affected by the 1911 riots, notably the reported preventative deeds of the local citizens. Another were the actions of the authorities. I mentioned above the role of the local Police-sergeant. And the second-hand account by Anthony Morris suggests that his activities reflected those at the top. Anthony Morris wrote:[75]

> My Father told me that he remembered the incident. He was 3 at the time and he recalled all the Jewish owned shops being boarded up and the children being sent to stay with the maids in their houses. The soldiers filled the Market Square and the Chief Constable of Breconshire stood under the Bridge on the boundary between Monmouthshire and Breconshire and as the rioters came up the valley he said to them that so long as they were on the Monmouthshire side of the bridge he could not touch them but as they crossed over the boundary he would hit each of them back into Monmouthshire.

Acknowledgements

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NOTES

[1] For the industrial history of Brynmawr, see Hilda Jennings, *Brynmawr, A Study of a Distressed Area*, 1934 and W.E. Minchinton, 'The place of Brecknock in the industrialization of South Wales', *Brycheiniog*, Vol. VII, 1961, pp. 1–70.

[2] Minchinton in Note 1, p. 29.

[3] See, inter alia, Neil Evans, 'Immigrants and Minorities in Wales, 1840–1990: a comparative perspective', *Llafur*, Vol. 5, no. 4, 1991, pp. 5–26; Owen Roberts, 'Bibliographical Review: Migrating Into the Mainstream of Welsh History; The Irish and Others in Modern Wales', *Llafur*, Vol. 9, no. 1, 2004, pp. 107–115.

[4] Anthony Glaser and Ursula R.Q. Henriques, 'The valleys communities', in Ursula R.Q. Henriques, *The Jews of South Wales. Historical Studies*, 1993, pp. 45–67.

[5] Jennings, in Note 1 above, pp. 102–3.

[6] Ibid., pp. 51–2.

[7] Strangely, Gerry R. Rubin, 'From packmen, tallymen and ''perambulating Scotchmen'' to credit drapers' associations, *c.* 1840–1914', *Business History*, Vol. 28, no. 2, April 1986, pp. 206–25, despite noting the numerous terms used to describe such people, does not include 'travelling drapers'.

[8] London Metropolitan Archives (henceforth LMA), ACC/33121/10/02/018, 25 May 1949, 18 May 1952.

[9] For a more detailed discussion of these matters see my article, 'The Jewish Community of North Shields', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*', Vol. 49, nos. 1 and 2, 2007, pp. 49–50.

[10] They can be traced in www.jewishgen.org/jcr-uk/wales.htm. (Accessed 25 September 2007.) See also *Monumental Inscriptions. Jewish Cemetery, Cefn Coed Y Cymmer, Merthyr Tydfil, Glamorgan*, Glamorgan Family History Society, 2004.

[11] Capt. H.H. Roskin, 'The Jewish Communities of South Wales II — The Brynmawr Community', *CAJEX*, Vol. 8, no. 3, September 1958, pp. 61–3.

[12] *JC*, 4 October 1889, p. 14.

[13] Ibid., 11 October 1889, p. 11.

[14] The National Archives, Naturalisation Certificate, HO 144/1452/310799; *London Gazette*, 1 December 1916, p. 11,752. In small communities the sole religious functionary was one who often combined the roles of *shoḥet*, *ḥazan*, *mohel*, and teacher, and would be called 'Reverend'.

[15] *JC*, 6 September 1889, p. 13.

[16] See 'The 1841 Census of Brynmawr Breconshire, Wales. A Transcription and Commentary by Jeffrey L. Thomas in www.thomasgenweb.com/Brynmawr_1841.html (Accessed 26 September 2007).

[17] *JC*, 12 December 1958 page 36, obituary of Mont Follick.

[18] The 1871 Census of Brynmawr has been transcribed by the Powys Family History Society (Cymdeithas Hanes Teuluoedd). The most useful section for our purposes is *1871 Census Brecknock, Enumeration District of CRICKHOWELL Sub-District of LLANELLY Parish of BRYNMAWR [RG10:5588] Part Two SURNAME INDEX*, 2003. In this Census the name Follick was spelled Follock.

[19] For the 1881 Census see M.E. MacSorley, *Brynmawr. A Transcription, Surname Index and Strays Index to the 1881 Census*, 1995. However, this transcription is limited to RG11/5464 and 5466, and does not include 5465. For that of 1901 see *1901 Census of Brecknock: Town and Parish of BRYNMAWR, RG 13:5174*, Powys Family History Society (Cymdeithas Hanes Teuluoedd), CD-Rom, 2002. Despite some misreadings these transcriptions are useful, as they include surname indexes and are easy to manipulate. However, they have been supplemented by recourse to a sight of the facsimiles of the original Censuses.

[20] Roskin, in Note 11 above, p. 61.

[21] *JC*, 18 December 1903, p. 30.

[22] Ibid., 23 March 1928, p.12.

[23] Robinson (1910), *JC*, 23 September 1910, p. 1; Robinson (1938), ibid., 22 July 1938, p. 14; Robinson (1940), ibid., 2 May 1940, p. 20; Myers, ibid., 13 August 1920, p. 20.

[24] G. Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911 in South Wales, *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 6, December 1972, p. 191. The similarity of my total of 132 in 1901 to the *Jewish Year Book's* 135 in 1911 is coincidental. The *JYB* figure is that of the supposed population of Brynmawr; mine includes members of the Brynmawr community who lived outside the borough.

[25] *JC*, 1 June 1894, p. 5.

[26] Ibid., 8 May 1894, p. 16.

[27] Roskin, in Note 11 above, p. 61.

[28] *JC*, 25 March 1892, p. 18, election of Sunlight; ibid., 31 March 1893, p. 19, Sunlight candidate for Coventry.

[29] Schulman, *JC*, 15 February 1895, p. 2; ibid., 13 March 1895, p. 22, Wolman officiated at a wedding in Brynmawr.

[30] *JC*, 13 March 1896, p. 22. Jennings, in Note 1 above, p. 52, referred to the interest aroused in a wedding in 1894, possibly an error for 1896.

[31] Ibid., 12 May 1899, p. 23.

[32] Ibid., 21 June 1901, p. 19, opening of synagogue. In the obituary of Aaron David Roskin it was stated that he had founded the synagogues in Tredegar, Ebbw Vale, and Brynmawr. He was said to be indefatigable in his activities within the local Jewish communities. He was incidentally a relation of the writer Mendele Mocher Seforim: *JC*, 19 August 1927, p. 8.

[33] Hartley Library, University of Southampton, MS 177/AJ277.

[34] *JC*, 27 July 1900, p. 2.

[35] The contemporary description does not refer to *mikveh* but the congregation's minutes, 22 February 1905, refer to its being repaired. I understand from Judge Anthony Morris that his father told him that it was in a shed attached to the synagogue.

[36] *JC*, 21 June, 1901, p. 19; ibid., 28 June 1901, p. 23; Hartley Library, MS 177/AJ277 A12, *Order of Service at the Consecration of the Brynmawr Synagogue on Thursday, June 20th 5661–1901*.

[37] Roskin, in Note 11 above, p. 61.

[38] Formation: *JC*, 2 March 1900, p. 19; 100 members, meeting fortnightly, ibid., 3 January 1902, p. 34; Zionist ball, ibid., 4 April 1902, p. 27; wider Zionist Society, ibid., 18 September 1903, p. 34.

[39] Orphan Aid: *JC*, 6 November 1903, p. 31; ITO, ibid., 3 July 1908, p. 35.

[40] Hartley Library, AJ/277/13/1. Roods and perches are traditional measures of land. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines rood as 'A superficial measure of land, properly containing 40 square poles or perches, but varying locally'. Perch is defined as 'Standard Measure = $5\frac{1}{2}$ yards, but varying locally'. This last agrees with another *OED* definition of perch as being 1/160th of an acre.

[41] *JC*, 14 November 1919, p. 32.

[42] Ibid., 28 June 1901, p. 23.

[43] Advertisement, *JC*, 11, 18 November 1904, p. 2 in each case; Isaacs letter, ibid., 9 December 1904, p. 2.

[44] Mrs Cohen, Minutes 14 August 1907; thanks to Isaacs, ibid., 15 December 1907.

[45] *JC*, 4 March 1910, page 14.

[46] Ibid., 5 August 1910, p. 15.
[47] Ibid., 12 August 1910, p. 13.
[48] Ibid., 19 August 1910, p. 20.
[49] Ibid., 19 August 1910, p. 20.
[50] Ibid., 26 August 1910, p. 7.
[51] Ibid., 17 February 1911, p. 13.
[52] 1911 ball, *JC*, 10 March 1911, p. 14; 1912 ball, ibid., 16 February 1912, p. 31.
[53] *JC*, 10 March 1911, p. 2.
[54] National Archives HO144/8581.
[55] Hartley Library AJ/277/C/6. I am grateful to the United Synagogue for permission to quote from this document.
[56] Appointment of Solomon: *JC*, 15 January 1915, p. 27; appointment of Goldwater: ibid., 21 May 1915, p. 19.
[57] Appointment of Bloch: ibid., 28 September 1923, p. 25; 1941 obituary: ibid., 25 July 1941, p. 21.
[58] *JC*, 13 June 1924, p. 26.
[59] Alderman, in Note 24; idem., 'The Settlement and Reception of Jews in South Wales before 1914', *Trans. Jewish Hist. Soc. of England*, Vol. 26, 1974, pp. 62–70; idem, 'Into the Vortex: South Wales Jewry before 1914', in Aubrey Newman, compiler, *Provincial Jewry in Victorian England*, Jewish Historical Society of England, 1975; A.M. Weiner, 'Tredegar Riots', *CAJEX*, Vol. 26, no. 1, 1976, pp. 15–26; Neil Evans, 'The South Wales riots of 1911', *Llafur*, Vol. 3, 1980, pp. 5–29; Cohn Holmes, 'The Tredegar riots of 1911', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 11, December 1982, pp. 214–55; Anthony Glaser, 'The Tredegar Riots of August 1911', in Henriques, in Note 4 above, pp. 151–176; William D. Rubinstein, 'The anti-Jewish riots of 1911 in South Wales: a re-examination', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 18, December 1997; Geoffrey Alderman, 'The anti-Jewish riots of August 1911 in South Wales: a response', *Welsh History Review*, Vol. 20, June 2001.
[60] *JC*, 25 August 1911, p. 10.
[61] Ibid., 8 September 1911, p. 13.
[62] Ibid., 20 October 1911, p. 15.
[63] Evans in Note 3 above, p. 15.
[64] LMA, in Note 8, 25 May 1949 and 26 May 1952.
[65] *JC*, 4 September 1936, p. 18; 22 July 1938, p. 14.
[66] *JC*, 29 July 1949, p. 12.
[67] Ibid., 24 August 1962, p. 11.
[68] LMA, in Note 8, 21 November 1963.
[69] *JC*, 14 January 1966, p. 17.
[70] LMA, in Note 8, 26 February 1964.
[71] LMA, in Note 8, 18 February 1965; 19 February 1965.
[72] Henriques, in Note 4 above, p. 7.
[73] Anthony Morris to H. Pollins, 28 January 2008.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Ibid.

HASSIDIM AND THE 'REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION' DEBATE IN QUEBEC

William Shaffir

In February 2007, Quebec's Premier made an announcement about a question which he said went 'to the heart of Quebec's future as a nation' and about which a special commission had been created to study the 'reasonable accommodation' issue which had gripped the Canadian province for months.[1] (The formal name of the Commission was the 'Commission for Consultation on Accommodation in the Practices Regarding Cultural Differences.)

That issue had emerged when, in January 2007, a municipal council in the Mauricie town of Hérouxville had adopted a code of conduct for immigrants. The task of the Commission would be to report on the direction and escalation of the public debate about how to respond to religious minorities whose practices were clashing with fundamental rights and values. In the view of the Premier (and that of many local Quebecers) the essence of reasonable accommodation has been misrepresented in at least one specific instance: hassidic Jews had called for the installation of frosted windows in a YMCA in Montreal's Mile End district, so that hassidic boys in a neighbouring synagogue would not be able to see women in exercise clothes. The objection to such a request was that it ran counter to a secular-based society which did not consider the religious demands of distinctive minorities to be privileged.

This paper examines the concerns of the hassidim over the unfavourable publicity which had been generated by the debate on 'reasonable accommodation'. The data used include informal interviews and media reports as well as an account of some incidents involving hassidim and their claims on the host society. Hassidim believe that they have been more sinned against than sinning and the media have grossly exaggerated their claims and wrongly accused them of being strident.

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Background

The term 'unreasonable accommodation' is a legal concept which is derived from labour law in the United States of America. It was introduced to make employers cater to the special needs of their personnel — for example, the physically disabled. In Quebec, the term was evolved into the concept of taking measures which would permit religious minorities to retain their traditions in public life. For example, the Supreme Court of Canada has approved legislation to allow Sikh officers in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to wear turbans when they are on duty while Muslim girls are allowed to cover their hair during school hours.

However, some of the conflicts which have arisen recently are not as easily resolved since no legislation had been enacted to settle the issue. There is a critical distinction between an arrangement which enjoys the backing of the law and a *modus vivendi* reached by parties to a dispute. In the latter case, the concept of 'reasonable accommodation' may be interpreted in sharply conflicting ways and may lead to acrimonious accusations. The Hérouxville dispute is a case in point. In January 2007 the town's local council adopted a declaration of 'norms' to define its way of life and to specify these norms for the benefit of prospective immigrants. For example: men and women have equal rights; children cannot carry weapons in school; boys and girls are allowed to swim together — and so on and on.

The story was picked up from New Zealand to Bahrein — typically leading (as the Reuter item did) to such a report:[2]

> Immigrants wishing to live in the small Canadian town of Hérouxville, Quebec, must not stone women to death in public, burn them alive or throw acid on them, according to an extraordinary set of rules released by the local council.

According to the Quebec daily, *The Gazette*, at least five neighbouring municipalities were considering adopting similar codes. Quebec's Premier maintained that the ruling of the Hérouxville council did not represent the majority reaction in the Province and the mayors of adjoining towns conceded that the Hérouxville code perhaps had gone too far — but they also agreed that 'there are things that must change'.[3]

The Gazette publishes a weekly column by the satirist Josh Freed. He commented on 3 February 2007:[4]

> In truth, Hérouxville is a lightning rod for the anxiety and confusion many feel since Sept. 11, 2001. In an increasingly multicultural society, we want new immigrants to feel welcome in our country, but we don't want our country to turn into theirs.

Michel Venne (a former columnist in another publication) is the founder of the Institut du Nouveau Monde, a Montreal think tank

holding a province-wide series of forums on the future of Quebec culture. He commented on the reactions to the Hérouxville controversy:[5]

> In the 1960s we decided as a society that we would be secular — in a way, we privatized religion. But now, a certain number of groups, mostly stemming from immigration, want their religion to be seen in open society. They want their symbols to be allowed in public. And that's a shock for Quebecers, and they're starting to find ways to negotiate an understanding. Thus two generations since rejecting the Roman Catholic Church, French Quebecers were circling the wagons of a hard-won lay society.

In February 2007, there was media coverage of several successful instances of 'reasonable accommodation' of devout religious minorities which had occurred in 2006: on 2 March 2006, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that a Montreal Sikh could wear his ceremonial dagger at school; on 22 March 2006, the Quebec Human Rights Commission told l'École de technologie supérieure that it should accommodate Muslim students who wanted to have a prayer room — but it would not be obliged to provide a separate space for them. On September of the same year, 2006, *La Presse* reported that many area hospitals were experiencing difficulties with Muslim women, who did not want to be seen by male doctors.

In deference to their Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim clientele, clinics provided prenatal classes for women only. When he heard that, the following November, Mario Dumont (the ADQ leader) voiced his disapproval — complaining that although Sikhs could wear kirpans when attending school, the majority of citizens of the country were not sure that they would be allowed to mention the word 'Christmas' during school hours.

On 18 November, *La Presse* reported that an angry father had been in touch with the newspaper to complain that he had escorted his daughter to a communal clinic and they had to wait for five hours, because an Orthodox Jew with a deep cut in his hand was treated first, so that he could be home before the start of the Sabbath.

Some have claimed that resentment against devout religious minorities is especially noticeable in the case of devout Muslims and ultra-observant hassidim.[6]

Hassidim in the News: Initial Examples

In November 2006, a headline in the *Canadian Jewish News* stated: 'Letting male officers deal with Chassidim just a suggestion, say Montreal police'.[7] The controversy had occurred after an article appeared in the October issue of an internal police department newsletter. That department's inter-cultural division had been running a series on the city's

various ethnic and religious communities to sensitize the force to cultural differences. According to the article, if a female officer had difficulty in communicating with a hassidic male, or if he refused to make eye contact, that should not be interpreted as disrespect or resistance: it could be only a reflection of beliefs about appropriate interactions between men and women. Inspector Johanne Paquin defended the recommendation as realistic — stressing the need for officers to understand the people they serve. Inspector Paul Chabbo, head of media relations, told the Jewish weekly that it was a 'suggestion' only — comparable to a case of the police agreeing to the request by a victim of a sexual assault to speak to a female officer. It has certainly not been a directive nor was it meant to be an insult to female officers. He explained:[8]

> It was simply a tool to better understand Jewish customs. It's telling them, 'Don't be surprised if he doesn't look at you'. All it's suggesting is that, in certain cases, it may be better to let a male colleague intervene.

The president of the Police Brotherhood understood the matter differently. In his view, the police hierarchy had issued a recommendation — more than a suggestion — and he said that he was surprised by it: 'It's completely absurd that our policewomen do not have the right to the same respect as men. We are in Canada, after all'.[9] In the end, the police department claimed that it had all been a misunderstanding.

The initials CLSC stand for Centre Local de Services Communautaires. The *Journal de Montreal* reported on 15 December that the CLSC in Thérèse de Blainville was offering 'special privileges' to the hassidim of Boisbriand — such as treatment at home on the Sabbath (when Orthodox Jews do not use means of transport); ensuring that female nurses wear long sleeves and long skirts to accommodate the community's concern over modesty; providing that only male nurses treat male patients, etc. On that same day, the CLSC held a news conference to announce that it was 'at ease' with these practices and that the home visits for religious reasons were very rare — perhaps about 35 out of the total of 27,000 made in the past year.

The YMCA Controversy

Allegations involving the hassidim appeared in the media on several occasions in 2006 and in November of that year a dispute with the local YMCA at the edge of Outremont achieved great prominence. There were headlines stating:[10]

> Faith, fitness, clash in Mile End

and:[11]

> Gym, Jews don't see eye to eye
> Window kerfuffle just the latest conflict

HASSIDIM AND THE 'REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION'

Readers of *The Gazette* and *Globe and Mail* across Canada discovered that one hassidic community had become involved in a controversy and confrontation pitting members of the local YMCA against the Yetev Lev Satmar synagogue.

The YMCA building had been renovated about a dozen years earlier and four large windows had been installed on the second floor rear wall, in an exercise room used by women. That room faced the back of the Satmar synagogue and school, separated by an alley. The hassidim maintained that the sight of women exercising, while wearing tights, was corrupting young boys studying Torah and they wished the view to be blocked. After about a year, the Y had agreed to have the windows covered with shaded blinds — paid for by a hassid.

But by March 2006, these blinds were in disrepair and the man who had provided them was now reluctant to pay for new blinds. The *Globe and Mail* explained that the hassidim did not wish their teenage boys to become 'distracted by the exposed flesh of women doing their Pilates, aerobics, and other activities'.[12] The synagogue had installed tinted windows in its own building, but that could not prevent the students from opening the windows or from going outside during breaks.

In February 2007, the Y installed frosted glass in their own windows, which cost the hassidim about 1500 Canadian dollars. The Y's manager stated that some of the users of the exercise room had been consulted and he was quoted as saying that 'some wanted to keep the blinds for the privacy they afforded' but in the end the Y opted for frosted windows because '... this kind of window lets in light, and is also safe and more durable than blinds'.[13]

This 2006 confrontation had been described at the time as a clash between skin and scripture.[14] At the YMCA, Renée Lavaillante was a sun-loving Pilates practitioner and she had resented the attitude of the synagogue's members. *The Gazette* described the conflict as '... made in Mile-End tempest in a teapot, boiling over in the street'[15] and it had reported that Renée Lavaillante had told Abraham Perlmutter, a Satmar hassid: 'To you, I represent evil, and I should hide myself'. She had compared the frosted windows to wearing a veil and commented:[16]

> I don't think that in Montreal we should have to hide ourselves to work out.

An Outremont resident was equally resentful:[17]

> We can't let ourselves be imposed upon by extremist religious groups. What's next? Separate gyms for women and men? Wearing long pants and long sleeves to exercise?

Mr Perlmutter was quoted by *The Gazette* as responding, in English:[18]

> For me, when women are half-naked, that causes problems. We are neighbours. We respect you. We just ask you to respect us.

But in the end, he decided that there was little hope of mutual understanding and declared:[19]

> There's more to this petition than what you say, . . . You are not looking for the sun. You are looking for trouble.

Faced with a petition of some 100 names, the manager of the YMCA felt compelled to re-open the discussion with his consultative committee and the users of the second floor classroom. In March, the Y announced that it was removing the frosting in accordance with the wishes expressed by a majority of its members. The poll was conducted from 17 to 28 February among 302 members or about a tenth of the branch's adult membership.[20]

The Y's Local Advisory Committee — composed of members and non-members, including area residents and representatives of partner organizations — made a similar recommendation. The manager said: 'We discussed the situation with representatives of the Chassidic Jewish community. We feel confident that our decision is the best one possible under the present circumstances'.[21] The Y would make the modification at its own expense.

In the end, the Y's administrator and the hassidim agreed that the matter of the blinds and windows had always been one between friends and had been blown out of proportion by the media.[22] But as the Y management tried closing the curtain on the controversy, the debate on accommodating religious minorities in the province continued on other fronts involving other minorities.[23]

In September 2007, *The Gazette* reported on the 'reasonable accommodation' travelling commission's visit to St. Jérôme under the caption, 'Laurentian residents vent anger with Hasidim'.[24] The following are some of the concerns which these residents voiced:

> 'We're playing the game of . . . the great rabbis with their archaic values,' Val Morin resident Jean-Pierre Bouvrette told a packed hall of 175 people in downtown St. Jérôme . . .
> 'There are a lot of arguments, and we get along less and less,' said Val Morin resident Roger Cuevrier, complaining about the 'ever-growing number' of Hasidic Jews in his village — and their unreasonable demands. 'The last shot they directed at us, was they set themselves up next to the baseball field and asked us to shut off the lights when they pray on Saturday evenings,' he said.
> 'It's really a mentality that's separate' St. Hippolyte resident Lise Casavant said of the Hasidim. . . .
> John Saywell, of Argenteuil, said when he hears a Hasidic Jewish leader speaking only in English on the TV news, he thinks it's wrong. The community should make the effort to speak French.

I now turn to a consideration of how the hassidim made sense of the unfolding events and their replies to their critics — which ranged from mild concerns to intense disapproval and opposition.

As Viewed Through the Hassidic Lens

The controversies concerning the rights of religious minorities to preserve their culture may be conceptualized as a series of claims and counterclaims made by the various involved parties. While there is hardly consensus over what constitutes either reasonable accommodation or its absence, the controversies are fuelled by stereotypes which characterize the minorities whose activities have been resented. The stereotypes, or 'pictures in our heads,' are constructed by selecting and putting together some of the more conspicuous traits which are supposed to categorize a group of people. These stereotypes are typically gross over-simplifications, but they are not necessarily wholly inaccurate. In short, it is difficult to prove that the belief is totally unfounded and it is relevant here to note Katz and Braly's seminal conceptualization of stereotypes as rigid impressions — conforming very little to the facts and arising from our defining first and observing second.[25] The famous theorem that 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'[26] is a reminder that reality is socially constructed and that people respond as much, or more, to the meaning a situation has for them than to the objective features of that situation.

Members of these minorities are often considered by their critics to be overly demanding and therefore to harbour unreasonable expectations — while these minority members believe that they know the true cause of the attention which has come their way. The hassidim are no exception and in what follows, I identify their perception of both why and how they achieved such unwarranted prominence in the media. I consider their claims about inappropriate generalizations characterizing their alleged unfriendliness; their proposed solution to the inevitable problem of strained interaction with outsiders; and their assessment of the underlying motive of critics who single them out as both unfriendly neighbours and as a minority which is prone to violate the law to suit its own interests.[27]

Inappropriate Generalizations

Recently, a friend who lives in the heart of Montreal's hassidic neighbourhood casually said to me: 'Billy, you know the hassidim. Why are they so unfriendly? Why don't you tell them to hire a P.R. person so that they can be a bit more friendly? I'm not asking for a lot, just a simple hello. Would it kill them to be a little more friendly?'

As a rule, hassidim take strong exception to the charge that they are unfriendly and object to such generalization. They argue that the *Ethics of Our Fathers* emphasizes the religious imperative to be a good neighbour. Indeed, a hassidic woman in talking about that subject, commented:

> In *Ethics of Our Fathers* it says you should greet all your neighbours. I know all the neighbours on the block, even the biggest antisemite, because that's the kind of person I am.

Contrary to some speculations by their critics, hassidim have not made a group decision about how cordial they must be in their relations with non-hassidic neighbours. That is left to individual predilection. Another hassidic woman said to me, when I introduced the subject, that she has a hassidic neighbour who is distant and consistently unfriendly:

> Tell your friend that hassidim are people. Forget about what they look like. Some are friendly and some are not. And to generalize because one person doesn't say hello!

A Tasher hassid was of the same opinion:

> It's such an individual thing. I say hello because that's my nature. If somebody says hello to me, I'll always answer. I'm not interested in getting involved in a conversation . . . but I'd certainly be friendly to say hello.

Another Tasher claimed that he took special care to be friendly and courteous, that his community showed great sensitivity in its relations with outsiders, to ensure that they were cast favourably:

> When I drive in the street, there's not a single car that I pass at a stop sign, that I don't give the right of way. And they notice it because there aren't many people that look like me. So, if you care, you make an effort.

He then referred to the Tasher ambulance service, which is freely offered to outsiders in some situations or public events. Festivities for Quebec National Holiday take place in June and Saint Jean Baptiste is one of the patron saints of Quebec. Tasher paramedics volunteer their services in case of any accident. He said: '. . . Saint Jean Baptiste, we're always there every year. You're not going to tell me it goes unnoticed . . .'.

Another hassid stressed the differing attitudes of members of his community:

> I am sure that a lot of people in Outremont make an effort to be nice to their neighbours, but unfortunately there are a lot of people that don't give a damn.

In August 2007 Allan Nadler described the Outremont hassidim in *The Gazette* and commented:[28]

> . . . sadly, there is a dearth of positive interaction between them and their francophone neighbours. . . . The argument most frequently leveled against the insular Hasidim . . . was that the Hasidim were just downright unfriendly and, thus, made for bad neighbors.

Nadler did not claim to have conducted a controlled sociological study, but he greeted passersby sometimes in hassidic garb and at other times in shorts and a T-shirt. He stated that when he was dressed as a *goy* (a Gentile) and said 'Bonjour' to hassidim they reacted pleasantly:[29]

> While a few of the Hasidim, caught off guard, did a silent double-take, almost all made a point of smiling and returning my French greetings.

(He contrasted that with their lack of response when he was dressed as a hassid and addressed the francophones in the area with 'Bonjour'.)

Nadler concluded:

> So, when a Hasid fails to take the initiative in saying 'good morning', it is less likely a reflection of any personal hostility than one of studied indifference to his material surroundings.

This leads me to the next point.

The 'Nip it in the Bud' Perspective

Nadler's conclusion, that hassidim are unfairly characterized in matters of greeting and acknowledging their non-hassidic neighbours, is well grounded. However, the explanation (that their reactions are a reflection of their cultural make-up) is not applicable to their reluctance, indeed even refusal, to become better acquainted with their non-hassidic neighbours — whether they are Jewish or not. They reason that the best approach is to maintain a carefully-measured distance, to engage in studied avoidance, and to apply this principle without exception.

Concerns over matters of insularity, and the likely consequences of interaction across carefully-constructed boundaries, frequently slip into my conversations with hassidim. However, while gathering material for the present paper, I deliberately focused discussions on the topic of hassidim and their neighbours. One Tasher woman explained:

> We don't want to be influenced by the outside . . . We are concerned about outside influences. We're trying to shelter our kids. And it's not that you're not good. I wouldn't let my kid play with an ultra-religious Christian neighbour because Christianity and Judaism have different views on things.

A Satmar woman was of the same opinion and commented on an article in the *National Post* in which the Jewish author stated:[30]

> Hasidim have zero interest in any social interaction with the outside world . . . What neighborhoods get with Hasidim are voluntary ghettos in their midst . . . and absolutely no social interaction.

The Satmar woman told me that this was a true conclusion:

> We are not friendly as a group. So I would say to [this Jewish author] 'You're right. You integrated very nicely. When you go to the concert,

> nobody knows if you're Jewish or not'. I'll bet you if she has three children, one of them is intermarried. We stayed this way to stay the way we are.

For hassidim, protection and preservation require erecting fences or enclosures and there must be full implementation at the street level. There must be strict rules of behaviour and rigorous standards of modesty — arguably more stringently enforced today than was evident among hassidim in America in the past. The sexes are now separated at a very early age and it is considered highly inappropriate for a man and a woman to interact in public, or even for a married couple to show signs of affection (such as holding hands) while walking in the street. Since contact can easily have unwanted consequences, a practical precaution is to avoid strictly any integration altogether. One hassid said to me that outsiders 'don't understand the whole woman thing. . . . The general thing is that you don't talk to a woman, and they don't understand it'. Another hassid went into more detail:

> If you don't start a conversation, you have less problems. If you start a conversation, then you have to explain to them where the boundaries end. Let's say you have a neighbour. You start with the Bonjour. It's hard to say to a neighbour, 'We are neighbours, we are going to say Bonjour, and this is where it ends. So if you don't start, you don't have a problem. Somehow you have to make a boundary. . . . If you're in desperate need of an egg, I'll give it to you, but don't give it back to me because I don't want to start to interact with you. . . . If you can find a magical way for everyone to understand this is Bonjour and this is all you're getting, or help with your tyre when you have a flat tyre, . . . not because of hostility . . . It's very difficult.

Another strategy is to respond non-verbally. I was told:

> I know someone in Montreal . . . he never says hello. It's a nod with the head, and that's enough.

Many hassidim claim that face-to-face interaction or, more accurately, the lack of it, is certainly not the root of the problem: that there is something more sinister at play among their more vociferous critics — a general dislike of Jews and an intense disapproval of hassidim in particular.

'*Why are Hassidim All Over the News?*'

The preponderance of stories featuring hassidim in the media greatly concerned a hassidic woman whom I met, as well as some hassidic spokespersons, but it must be stressed here that these stories seemed in 2007 to be of little concern to most hassidim. However, it is certainly true that there had been in the past twenty years clashes between

Outremont's hassidim and their non-Jewish neighbours. In 1988, the Outremont City Council, by a vote of six to three, denied an application by the local hassidim of the Vishnitz sect to amend the municipality's zoning law in order to allow for the construction of a synagogue on a vacant lot for residential use. The media referred to this decision as 'the Outremont affair'. In June 2001, Quebec Superior Court ruled in favour of hassidim in Outremont who wished to establish a permanent *eruv*: the case is reported in an earlier issue of this Journal.[31]

The woman who had asked, rhetorically, why hassidim were all over the news, had refused to accept the possibility (as suggested by some of her friends) that she suffered from some paranoia about the issue. Indeed, both French and English publications have recently featured a great many reports about hassidim — mainly critical. Moreover, the hosts in radio talk shows have invited opinions from listeners on incidents involving hassidim. In June 2007, there was a front-page headline in *La Presse* about a meeting between prominent Jews and Mario Dumont, the leader of the Action Démocratique du Québec (ADQ).[32] Dumont had gone to the home of a retired Jewish senator for the meeting, in a prosperous area. Several editorial cartoons appeared in Quebec newspapers, lampooning Dumont and using stereotypes evoking memories of antisemitic propaganda.[33] The caricatures parodied Dumont's efforts to reach out to the province's Jewish establishment when he became leader of the Official Opposition in the last provincial election. *La Presse* featured him '. . . grinning toothily, sporting earlocks and an oversized black fur hat'. The Vice-President of B'Nai Brith Canada denounced as 'hateful' the insinuation that Mr Dumont's meeting with community leaders had transformed him into a 'Hassidic Jew of swarthy complexion, with a convulsive laugh and a deranged mind'.[34]

In July 2007, reports were published about the purchase by Satmar hassidim (for three and a half million Canadian dollars) of a property at St. Adolphe's Miramont Sur Le Lac suitable for vacations. An official of the small town, Michel Binette, stated in an interview with Radio-Canada that he was worried about whether the Satmar vacationers would integrate into the new surroundings: he did not want to see the Miramont (on Lac de la Montagne, in the outskirts of town) become 'ghettoized'. He added that he hoped that St. Adolphe would be spared situations like those of its neighbours; he was referring to the municipality of Val Morin, a neighbouring town, which had spent 100,000 in legal costs when it accused a group of Belz hassidim of contravening zoning laws by converting two residences into a religious school and a synagogue.[35]

The mayor of St. Adolphe eventually apologized for Binette's remarks, saying that the opinions he had expressed in the Radio-Canada interview

were not shared by the council. He regretted Binette's choice of words:[36]

> Whatever their religious allegiance, the council wishes to welcome the new citizens with a spirit of openness.

However, a few days later, *The Gazette* reported that the new owners of the resort area had constructed a fence without a permit, contravening local bylaws. The town had no choice but to fine them a thousand dollars: the fence was both too high and too close to Lac de la Montagne, which the estate overlooks. The president of the Coalition of Outremont Hasidic Organizations (COHO) commented: 'They don't want them here, plain and simple'. He was quoted as stating:[37]

> You know what they say, if it walks like a duck, it talks like a duck, it must be a duck. The message is, these guys bring trouble wherever they go. If you can get more anti-Semitic than that, I want to know how.

He added:[38]

> We are ready to integrate but not to assimilate. We're going to keep our beliefs and our customs and our kosher butcher and what have you. The French Canadians have given up on their religion but we haven't and we don't intend to.

Radio talk shows in the city featured the situation surrounding the arrival of the hassidim in Saint-Adolphe, especially stressing their ghettoized existence and their attitude to neighbourliness.

This question of neighbourliness was again raised in an article in *Le Journal de Montréal* by Richard Martineau. He refuted the B'nai Brith claim that the cartoonist had shown antisemitism by his portrayal of Mario Dumont in hassidic garb and physical appearance. Martineau denied that he himself was in the slightest way racist. He had lived in Outremont for several years. He had hassidic neighbours to the right of his home, and to the left, and in front. In spite of all his smiles and many attempts at neighbourliness, they never spoke a word to him, because he was not Jewish. And their children always refused to play with his children because they were not Jewish. He added that he had a confession to make. A few weeks earlier he had looked at some houses in Outremont. One of them caught his fancy, but he did not buy it: 'Vous savez pourquoi? Il y avait trop de juifs hassidiques dans la rue'.[39]

But the hassidim were especially angered by the columnist Barbara Kay. Under the headline 'Not in my backyard either', she referred to the front-page story in the previous day's *National Post* ('Town Uneasy About Jews' Resort Purchase') which stated that a senior official of the town had told a reporter that people were anxious about a group 'that might not integrate into the Saint-Adolphe

community with the result that the property would be ghettoized'.[40] She commented on the allegation that this could be an antisemitic code for 'We don't want Jews here': she dismisseed that interpretation, insisting that the words Hasidim and Jews were 'not sociologically interchangeable'.[41] She maintained that non-hassidic Jews had successfully integrated into the cultural life of various Laurentian towns and, in her words, 'give value added to their communities'. By contrast:[42]

> What neighborhoods get with Hasidim are voluntary ghettoes in their midst, from which they derive modest economic benefit, and absolutely no social interaction. Hasidim may live as they choose, but they must understand that their cult-like presence is not, sociologically speaking, value added to a small and struggling community [Saint-Adolphe].

She concluded by claiming that she also would worry if hassidim moved en bloc to her neighbourhood and asked whether such a reaction would make her, a mainstream Jew, an antisemite?

That article produced a raft of responses and, not surprisingly, some letter-writers identified her as a self-hating Jewish individual. Hassidim whom I met were irritated by what they believed to be her inability to understand that antisemitic hassidic-bashers (for this is what they are in the eyes of most hassidim) do not generally draw the nuanced distinction which she had done, differentiating between mainstream and hassidic Jews.

However, what angered the hassidim particularly was the attitude of journalists and commentators who focused their attention on hassidic activities, when other minority groups — engaged in very distinctive behaviour — did not receive much media attention. They believed that hassidim were deliberately vilified and that any minor infringement was magnified. The reports about Saint-Adolphe were seen as a good example of such malice and a hassidic woman was particularly indignant. She complained:

> Where's all this hatred against the hassidim coming from? I have a cottage in Val Morin and there is a wonderful ashram [the reference is to Ashram Sivananda Yogi Camp] and the yogi has a fantastic spread there. And large numbers of people come there on Sundays and clog all the roads, and nobody says a thing. It's their enclave. They're there. Ever read an article about the ashram? Why are you reading this?

Another hassidic woman (who also has a summer cottage in Val Morin and was angered at the media attention to the acquisition of the Saint-Adolphe property) also referred to the tolerance shown to the yogi:

> If Meharesh Yogi would have bought this place [the hotel property], what would anyone have said? They don't interact either, they're busy meditating. So who brought all this attention to the media?

Another person asked:

> Do you really think the same would happen if the Jehovah's Witnesses moved in? . . . We're getting it in the neck. It's safe to target the Jews.[43]

The hassidim were particularly sensitive to the attention which their acquisition of the Saint-Adolphe property had provoked because a little earlier there had been a series of suspicious fires in Val David, just up the road from Saint-Adolphe, where some 50 hassidic families from Montreal and New York have cottages. These fires were also reported by the press.[44]

In sum, the hassidim believe that they have been singled out for attention, for prejudiced attention. According to most of them, whether complaints about them centre on alleged zoning violations, their school buses blocking traffic during the early morning rush, parking illegally on city streets which the police conveniently ignore, or providing schools which fail to meet minimal standards and requirements — these all reflect the resentment of a handful of people who are motivated by their alarm at the increasing presence of hassidim in their neighbourhood. That resentment has been caused by both xenophobia and antisemitism, they believe.

Conclusion

It is ironic that hassidim — a religious minority which has placed insulation from mainstream society as its highest priority — should be featured of late so persistently by the media. While it is not entirely clear how or why this has come to be, their straddling two worlds (attempting to preserve an ancient tradition but simultaneously embracing elements of modernity) seems to have heightened their visibility, making them a newsworthy subject.

It is not easy to predict the outcome of the 'reasonable accommodation' debate in Quebec. It may intensify before becoming ignored as a matter of immediate attention. But in the short run, it is likely to remain an issue since Quebec is increasingly reliant on immigration and since numbers of migrants arrive with sets of religious beliefs and practices differing from the mainstream. Add to this mix an ideology of multiculturalism, interpreted as encouraging newcomers to preserve their identity, and the stage is set for disagreement — and even conflict.

Though always visible owing to their distinctive garb and overall appearance, hassidim were traditionally silent in matters of public life. Their general strategy was to deflect attention from their community and, by way of quiet diplomacy, to secure arrangements with public officials. Their demands were minimal: as guests of the government, they were grateful for any religious freedoms granted to them. But times are changing and the hassidim are changing with them.

They are both more strident and more likely to insist on what they believe to be rightfully theirs. As citizens, landed immigrants, and taxpayers, they expect protection under the same constitution which safeguards the welfare of all citizens, entitling them to the same services received by others.

According to a 2005 demographic survey, there has been a dramatic increase in Montreal's hassidic population from 1996 to 2004 and an even greater growth is predicted for the years ahead.[45] With increasing numbers, even greater political advantages may be claimed. Add to the situation a younger generation less prepared than their elders had been to remain silent in the face of perceived discrimination, along with a neighbouring non-hassidic population which feels threatened by the pace at which hassidim are purchasing properties locally, and the likelihood is that this easily identifiable Jewish group will continue to be featured in the media.

NOTES

[1] Formally called the Commission for Consultation on Accommodation in the Practices regarding Cultural Differences, the body is co-chaired by a historian and sociologist of the Université du Québec and a retired McGill University professor. The commission was expected to get underway in March 2007 and to submit its report within a year. Its threefold mandate includes: to draw up an accurate portrayal of how accommodations are being made; to conduct a wide-scale inquiry in all regions of the province to find out what Quebecers are really thinking 'beyond polls and spontaneous reactions'; and to arrive at recommendations on how accommodations are being made which are 'respectful of the common values of Quebecers'.

[2] *The Gazette*, 2 February 2007, p. 1.

[3] *The Gazette*, 3 February 2007, p. A8. The reference, here, was to the relevation of special treatment for some religious minorities (Jews and Muslims, mostly), by government-funded institutions:

> Hospitals, CLSC's [Centre Local de Services Communautaires], the police, schools, sports and recreation facilities, and driver-licensing centers — all are on the hook for arrangments they've made with minorities to get them to use their services.

Among the better-known examples: providing male examiners for hassidic men when they take their driving test, offering unisex pre-natal classes for conservative Muslim, Sikh and Hindu women who don't want men present; and giving extra paid holidays to Jewish and Muslim daycare workers in public schools.

[4] *The Gazette*, 3 February 2007, p. 2.

[5] Ibid., p. A8.

[6] In February 2007, *The Gazette* offered a one-year chronology of the province's 'reasonable accommodation' controversy.

[7] *Canadian Jewish News*, 23 November 2006, p. 34.

[8] The newsletter also offered a hypothetical situation of a police duo arriving at a bakery at the corner of Hutchison and St. Viateur streets, the heart of the hassidic area, to investigate a reported robbery. The Jewish clerk is questioned by the female officer, but directs his answers to her male colleague and never looks at her. The article explains that this is normal because 'according to the Torah, the holy book of the Jews, men should not fraternize with women'. Sometimes, says the author, there is no choice but to let the male officer take over.

[9] As gender equality was a fundamental value of our society, 'female officers should not have to defer to their male colleagues to accommodate the religious beliefs of hassidim', said Jacques Dupuis, Public Security Minister in the national assembly, after the matter was raised by the opposition Parti Québécois. Featured in the media in a manner that seemed to foster an unreasonable expectation on their part, hassidic spokespersons maintained that they never made any request for special treatment by the police. Alex Werzberger, president of the Coalition of Outremont Hasidic Organizations (COHO), commended the police department for its efforts to sensitize officers, and claimed he had never heard a word about the matter despite his close relations with the police.

[10] *The Gazette*, 8 November 2006, p. A7.

[11] *Globe and Mail*, 6 November 2006, p. 1.

[12] Ibid., p. 1.

[13] *Canadian Jewish News*, 29 March 2007, p. 36.

[14] *Globe and Mail*, 8 November 2006, p. 1.

[15] *The Gazette*, 8 November 2006, p. A7.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid.

[19] Ibid.

[20] *Canadian Jewish News*, 29 March 2007, p. 36.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Referring to the dispute over the frosted windows at the YMCA, an editorial in *The Gazette*, on 9 November 2006, p. A22 expresses it well:

> The best outcome would be for the parties to try again to find a more generally acceptable compromise. Perhaps frosting half the window would do it, or installing blinds or even strategically placed plants. What makes this seemingly trivial dispute important is that it's a precursor of far more serious issues we'll have to negotiate as our society grows even more diverse. If we don't find a way to live together in something like harmony, we run the danger of disintegrating into a patchwork of mutually hostile communities. And that would be unbearable.

[23] For example, the tabloid *Journal de Montréal* dedicated a front page to an exposé of a pair of sugar shacks south of Montreal which made efforts to allow Muslims to enjoy the annual spring maple tradition known as sugaring off. While the fatty feast of bacon, pea soup, pancakes and massive doses of maple syrup usually includes pounds of pork (meat forbidden from the diet of devout Muslims), one sugar shack removed the pork from some food.

[24] *The Gazette*, 25 September 2007, p. 1.

[25] David Katz and K.W. Braly, 'Racial Prejudice and Racial Stereotypes', *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, vol. 25, 1935, pp. 175–193.

[26] William I. Thomas and Dorothy S. Thomas, *The Child in America*, New York, p. 572.

[27] According to an article in *The Gazette* of 31 March 2007, when the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the right of a Montreal orthodox Sikh boy to wear his ceremonial dagger (a kirpan) to school, Jashir Kaur (a Sikh herself) and her community felt a backlash immediately: 'People don't like the part of the world we come from — they think we're troublemakers' she said. She added: 'And there's the kirpan, which people here think is a weapon to kill somebody with, when it's not. . . . You can explain as much as you like. They just don't understand'.

[28] *The Gazette*, 12 August 2007, p. A15.

[29] Ibid.

[30] *National Post*, 10 July 2007, p. A13.

[31] As it happens, this wasn't the first time the cultures clashed in the neighbourhood over seemingly trivial matters which masked underlying tensions and issues of religious tolerance. Relations between Outremont's hassidim and their non-Jewish neighbours were occasionally strained over the past 20 years. In 1988, a benchmark year, the Outremont City Council —(in a vote of six to three) — denied an application by local hassidim of the Vishnitz sect to amend the municipality's zoning laws to allow for the construction of a hassidic synagogue on a vacant lot zoned for residential use. The request to re-zone from residential to commercial-institutional usage was tagged 'l'affaire Outremont' by the media.

In June 2001, a Quebec Superior Court ruled that the hassidic Jews in the City of Outremont were entitled to establish an *eruv* and mark if off with thin wiring even if the connecting wires crossed public property. In a ruling that the presence of such wiring was no different from churches which ring their bells on Sunday to summon worshippers, Judge A. Hilton upheld the constitutional right of Orthodox Jews to permanent *eruvim*. In the particular matter, Outremont had the duty to accommodate the hassidic Jews, as had other municipalities on the island of Montreal. He dismissed the argument of Mouvement Laique du Québec, that the *eruv*'s presence forced non-Orthodox Jews to live in a religious ghetto and, therefore, infringed their rights. He ordered the city not to dismantle the *eruv* again. Outremont, he ruled, had a constitutional duty to provide accommodation for religious practices that did not impose 'undue hardship' on its residents. See my article 'Outremont's Hassidim and their Neighbours: An Eruv and its Repercussions', in *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 44, 2002, pp. 56–71.

[32] *Canadian Jewish News*, 21 June 2007, p. 30.

[33] Eliciting the most concern was a cartoon in Sherbrooke's *La Tribune* by Hervé Philippe showing Mr. Dumont with dollar signs in his eyes greeting a pair of apparently Jewish businessmen with large noses, curled hair locks and kippas. 'Welcome my friend$' read the caption bubble, all the S's changed to $.

[34] See *National Post*, 19 June 2007, p. A8.

[35] The Quebec Superior Court ruled in favour of the municipality, which said the hassidim were contravening zoning laws. The hassidim have appealed.

[36] *Canadian Jewish News*, 12 July 2007, p. 5.

[37] *National Post*, 19 July 2007, p. A6.

[38] Ibid.

[39] *Le Journal de Montréal*, 19 June 2007. http://www.canoe.com/infos/chroniques/richardmartineau/archives/

[40] *National Post*, 10 July 2007, p. A13.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] According to Jack Jedwab, executive director of the Montreal-based Association for Canadian Studies: 'The people who were very involved about five, six years ago about language, looking at the size of lettering on signs, and complaining about too much English being spoken, have moved in on this issue' — referring in particular to the editorial cartoons in Quebec newspapers lampooning Mario Dumont. In his view, what he terms the 'accommodation police' have been out in force as the hand-wringing over what's reasonable has intensified.

[44] *Canadian Jewish News*, 28 June 2007, p. 31.

[45] See my recent publication 'Hassidim Confronting Modernity', *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, vol. 49, 2007, pp. 5–35.

BETWEEN FEMINISM AND ORTHODOXY IN ISRAEL

Yael Israel-Cohen

THE research on which this article is based was carried out in Israel among Orthodox women who are strongly advocating a feminist agenda in the religious public sphere. They are actively engaged in attempting to achieve increased participation of Orthodox women in synagogue ritual and in the hierarchy of religious authority — possibly reaching the ultimate objective of the rabbinical Orthodox ordination of women, eventually.

Other Jewish religious denominations have largely succeeded in reaching these goals. The Orthodox women interviewed for this study represent a wide range of attitudes about the strategies to be employed. They are acutely aware that there has been a movement in Israel recently towards religious fundamentalism, often referred to as haredization. They, on the other hand, are trying to lead in the opposite direction: towards the liberalization of Orthodoxy.[1]

That movement of Orthodox women with a feminist agenda is well-known in the United States but it has not received a great deal of attention about its activities in Israel. In fact, many very significant changes have been occurring in the position of Orthodox women within Israeli society.[2]

Background

Much has been published about the problems of integrating feminism within Jewish Orthodoxy.[3] The structural barrier has been erected by the restraints of Jewish law: *halakha*. Any changes in religious life must be in line with that law. An additional problem is that the rabbis who interpret the halakha rarely do so in a manner which favours what can be considered a feminist agenda. Susannah Heschel has commented:[4]

> . . . even when halakhic solutions are found to permit greater religious involvement of women, excuses are found to derail or ignore those solutions.

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Women who seek change within the halakhic framework must rely on the good will and moral sensibilities of rabbinic authorities.[5] Many Orthodox feminist scholars have criticized the lack of willingness on the part of rabbis 'to legitimate new modes of thought, new outlooks, and new attitudes'[6] and have called for change in matters of feminist concern.[7]

This call for change by Orthodox feminists, in its early years during the 1970s, paralleled the climate of the times and the changes which were occurring within the Reform and Conservative movements to give women increased participation in public roles. However, there was then little cause for optimism that Jewish Orthodoxy would be likely to follow that trend. Ellen Umansky went so far as to say:[8]

> . . . perhaps the work for creating values that reflect a commitment to both Judaism and feminism . . . needs to be left to those who are not bound by the authority of Jewish law.

However, significant changes were beginning to be made, especially in the late 1980s and onwards, within Orthodoxy. First and foremost, women began to acquire more knowledge of religious traditions and in Israel they enrolled in classes provided at such institutions for women students as Midreshet Lindenbaum, Matan, and Nishmat.[9] Chana Safrai has stressed the importance of that development, the challenge of women who would no longer accept rabbinical rulings forbidding women to study Jewish religious texts:[10]

> In a society in which learning is the central defining component of identity, the exclusion of women from the obligation to study Torah constitutes not only denial of information, power, and leadership, but an outright dismissal of their Jewish social identity. . . . By keeping women away from this primary resource, they are left lacking the skills needed for essential Jewish experiences leaving them rootless, culturally meager, and at the mercy of male commentators.

The Orthodox discourse is a halakhic one. Profound familiarity with the religious texts and with the process by which they are applied and implemented is essential for gaining access to (and influence on) this discourse. Only in the last 20 years did some women acquire that knowledge; it has been a very significant advance in their position vis-à-vis Orthodoxy's religious hierarchy.

In the synagogue, Orthodox women are not participants. They sit behind a partition (*mechitza*) or in a balcony. They have no public role in ritual practices and their presence is not required in services. Such a status is in distinct contrast with the position of many Orthodox women who are public figures, hold leadership positions, and excel in highly-demanding careers. David Hartman commented on that paradox:[11]

Halakhah trusts a woman to perform cardiac surgery but not to act as a witness for a divorce.

The more women acquire expert knowledge of their religious traditions, the more they will be able to plead convincingly for profound changes in Orthodox life-style and for more feminine inclusion in ritual practices. In recent years, a solid beginning has occurred with a body of literature which shows increased feminist sensibilities among Orthodox women in areas of Jewish life. Such changes have been well documented in the United States.[12] In Israel, Shilo and Cohen have provided descriptive overviews of some of the changes which are occurring,[13] while Tamar El Or has looked at the significance of religious learning in the lives of young Orthodox women.[14] Irit Koren reports that some Orthodox women have incorporated changes into the Jewish marriage ceremony, as a corrective to the traditionally very passive role of brides during their wedding.[15] Rachel Gordin considers two areas in which progress has been achieved by women who have obtained public roles in religious life: they have become active in synagogue ritual and they have acquired a recognized competence as rabbinical advocates — a profession which requires profound study of Jewish texts and of their application in the rabbinical courts of Israel.[16] That has allowed Orthodox women to have a position in the religious power structure of Orthodoxy.

Another profession which requires similar intense study is that of *yoatzot halakha* (female advisers on Jewish law); it is a recent development, providing advice for women by women in matters concerned with family purity laws.

Research on such developments within Orthodoxy in Israel is important because it focuses on change at both the personal and the institutional levels. Feminist progress is no longer limited to liberal, progressive Judaism. The women interviewed (for the research reported in the present article) have been challenging the status quo in Orthodoxy by struggling against their exclusion from synagogue ritual and from the hierarchy of religious authority.

Method and Data

In depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted (in Hebrew or in English) with 28 Orthodox women who are engaged in the discourse promoting the status of women within Orthodox life in Israel.[17] Their ages ranged from 36 to 78 years, with the majority in their forties and fifties. The leadership roles which they have acquired (either professionally or in their own communities) have made them agents of change for some segments of the Orthodox community. They all attended Ashkenazi synagogues.

Ten of the women had migrated from the United States as young adults. Most of the interviewees had married when in their early twenties and each has a number of children. Two-thirds (19 women) have four or more children. Large families are the norm within Orthodox society, but pursuing a highly-demanding career simultaneously is less usual. Even some of those who are raising (or have already raised) six or seven children were pursuing such careers. They clearly had strong will power and an extraordinary ability to balance home and work. However, although the interviewees were unique in many ways, they nevertheless followed the path traditional in mainstream Orthodox society: early marriage and several children. Moreover, the fathers and husbands of a number of them are well-known and respected figures within Orthodox communities.

The women's areas of involvement are as follows. Nine are leading activists in an organization called *Kolech* ('Your voice'), the Religious Women's Forum, which was founded by Hana Kehat in 1998 with the aim of advancing the status of Orthodox women in both the public and the private spheres of religious life. Seven are either active members of congregations which have already made significant advances for an increased presence or participation of women within synagogue life, or have actively promoted such changes within their own congregations. Three are employed as rabbinical court advocates and two others as halakhic consultants in matters of Jewish family purity laws. (One of these two is also training other women to acquire competence in that field.) Three were once heads of *midrashot* (women's colleges for the study of rabbinic texts) while the remaining four are engaged in academic research on feminism and Judaism.

Not surprisingly, the level of formal education of the interviewees is very high: all but two have graduate degrees, the majority in Jewish studies. It is only over the past 20 years that *midrashot* have sprouted, providing opportunities for women to specialise in the field of Jewish studies. For the older generations, it was the universities which could allow them to acquire advanced Jewish learning. One of our interviewees explained:

> If I were a man, I would strive to be the head of a yeshiva. But that path of learning was closed to me. So I took the academic route — the female's equivalent to gaining the knowledge in a yeshiva.

Moreover, it is in academic settings that individuals are challenged to question existing assumptions and that they are exposed to liberal thought. It may well be that some of the women interviewed, who had an academic university background, were spurred on to take a more active role in religious practices by having experienced the latitude of university education.

It is important here to stress that the overwhelming majority of Orthodox women in Israel do not engage in advanced religious

studies — nor do they seem to be concerned about their status within the religious public sphere. Thus, the women interviewed constituted an elite minority within Orthodox society. Nevertheless, despite their small numbers, the issues which they raise have aroused much attention within Israeli society and it is important to point out that this attention has been caused more by the condemnation of prominent Orthodox religious authorities, who stridently rejected the feminist liberalizing efforts, than by the women's arguments. But there was at least one rabbi who advised his colleagues to show restraint, stating that relegating these 'excited voices to a minority does not mean that we can safely, or ought morally and religiously, simply ignore them. Minorities of one generation have a strange way of becoming the majorities of the next'.[18]

In the present article, the names of most of the interviewees have been changed, as well as specific details in the quotations which may compromise their anonymity. In the few cases in which the interviews have relayed similar information in public forums or in writing, the real names are provided.

Becoming part of synagogue life

In an Orthodox synagogue, prayer services begin after a quorum of ten men (*minyan*) have gathered. The presence of women is irrelevant to public prayer, but within the parameters of Orthodoxy, many of the interviewees have been voicing egalitarian concerns. For some, that has meant being part of newly-formed congregations with explicitly feminist agendas and ritual practices which are more inclusive of women. For others, it has meant working within their existing congregations and strongly advocating change — in some cases, including the establishment of women's prayer groups. A central preoccupation of nearly all the interviewees was the exclusion of women from synagogue life: they earnestly wanted to be more involved in ritual life and wished that the synagogue could be more 'woman-friendly'. One of them said:

> . . . personally, the set-up of the synagogue doesn't bother me so much, I am used to it and see other areas in which to focus my attention; but I will fight for any woman for whom being more involved in synagogue services is a central part of her self realization as a religious woman.

The frustration experienced by some Orthodox women about their place in the synagogue was first expressed in the United States in the 1970s; but in Israel such a resentment has been voiced mainly over the past decade, by Orthodox women. Moreover, some of the most radical changes which have occurred in synagogues came from within Israeli society. Here, we first look at changes advocated in respect of three areas concerned with the place of women in synagogue

life, which were recurrent themes in the interviews: the *mechitza*; women's prayer groups; and women's Torah reading.

When the interviewees were asked about how comfortable they felt in their synagogue and what changes they wished to see incorporated, their answers varied substantially; but there was one issue which can be considered to have been the common denominator of frustration for them: the *mechitza*.[19] One woman, Leah, was vehemently indignant:

> We stand there like a bunch of cows cramped together in a cowshed. There isn't anything more disgusting.

Rivka Lubitch, a rabbinical advocate and feminist activist, produced an exhibition of photographs taken from the women's section of synagogues in Israel. The photos vividly illustrated the situation which is being resented: women are not seen, nor can they see what is going on in the services. For many of them, that position of being treated as second-class participants has led them to refuse to go to the synagogue. Such a withdrawal does not occur only about the placement of the partition, but also about the politics of the synagogue. Sigal stated:

> I simply stopped going to the synagogue for services. We are members of an Orthodox synagogue in the neighbourhood and the rabbi got on my nerves when he was first hired. Before him, for example, the women were allowed at one time to dance with the Torah scroll on *Simchat Torah* [the Festival of Rejoicing of the Law] and, even though that wasn't really my thing, it really got me angry that he didn't allow the women who wanted to celebrate and dance with the Torah scroll to do so. I mean, he actually took away their right… Since then I don't like the rabbi… I live in a suburb of Jerusalem, so I don't have all the options available to me [to go to more egalitarian synagogues] like those who live in the city centre… In my *shul*, I go very little and I don't enjoy it, so I spend Shabbat morning reading and walking with my kids instead of being in *shul*.

Sigal's frustration with her congregational rabbi and his policies was in no way exceptional among the interviewees. Leah described her experience when having to deal with the decisions of her rabbi after a tragic accident. The synagogue for which she had invested time and money in order to have it built, that synagogue burnt to the ground as the result of an electrical fault. The high holy days were approaching and the congregation quickly found an alternative location for the services. When she came and made her way to the women's section, she was confronted with a dark, opaque cloth which served as the new *mechitza*. She recalled that she became greatly angered and told the treasurer of the synagogue that she wanted a cloth which one could see through, it was not comfortable to sit behind such a partition 'and not even see what is going on'. She was told to buy a new cloth, put it up, and bring the receipt. She did so, had a seamstress do the necessary stitching, and had the new partition

positioned. But the new partition was not found suitable and it was ordered to be removed and replaced. That incident occurred on the eve of Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year. She commented that at that moment she knew there was no way that she would return to the synagogue. For the remaining part of the services the following day, Leah and some of her friends from the congregation created their own *minyan* in the home of a friend:

> We were about 25 men and women present and I can honestly say that I never had a more pure praying experience in my life than during that *tefilla* [prayer].

The feelings of frustration, anger, and sadness (which were the factors in Leah's decision to leave her synagogue) were experienced also in similar circumstances by other interviewees. For Tova Hartman, a university lecturer on gender and psychological development, it was the position behind the *mechitza* which provided the impetus for her to join a group of like-minded individuals and establish in 2001 Shira Hadasha, a congregation which granted women an expanded role in synagogue life.[20]

It is important to note in this context that none of the interviewees objected to the separation between men and women during services. Their frustration is caused mainly by the positioning of the partitions by having to sit behind it, and therefore being excluded from the activities of the services. For them, the ideal arrangement would be to have the partition run evenly between the men and the women — which is the standard set-up in a selected few congregations in the Jerusalem area, including that of Shira Hadasha.

Some of the respondents commented that although they resent the positioning of the partition, they could tolerate it — but on special occasions such as the festival of *Simchat Torah* they experienced anger about being excluded from the singing and dancing in circles in honour of the Torah. In Orthodox synagogues, the entire celebration and rejoicing take place only in the men's section of the synagogue and Tamar Ross has described her own experience on *Simchat Torah* when she recalled that the only active participation expected of women was 'to push and squirm in order to get a view'.[21]

Several women had decided that they would have to act to make that celebration of the Torah significant for them in the synagogue or, failing that, simply to stay at home on that occasion. Dinah explained:

> Every year until a few years ago during *Simchat Torah*, I would ask for a Torah scroll to be brought into the women's section [for women's *hakafot*: prayer circuits, carrying Torah scrolls]. In the beginning it caused a fuss, but people got used to it. For the first few years, I organized a circle of women who would dance with the Torah, but I saw that not many women wanted to participate. So, I said I can't be the only one who

> wants change in the *shul* and for the last few years I simply don't go on the evening of *Simchat Torah*. It causes me deep sorrow . . . I noticed that my daughters do come and dance, and a number of young women as well . . . Look, in general, the physical conditions of the *shul* are not good for women and there are definitely things that I am not pleased about in the synagogue.

Shira was similarly saddened by the situation of women in the synagogue. She recalled that one day, a friend encouraged her to participate in a women's prayer-group which had just been established. At first, she was very hesitant: it was something too different, even frightening. But she soon became very involved and is now not only very active herself but strongly encourages other women to take part in prayer-groups:

> I found that this was the most sweet, spiritual, and meaningful experience that I have in my life. I feel guilty that I can't share it with my husband, it is the most honest, creative, intelligent, soft place. [The women's prayer-group] changed my feeling towards prayer. I like being a cantor, I know what this experience means now. I think that as more women are exposed to this experience, these positive feelings will develop. But now, they are not exposed and don't know how wonderful it could be.

Some of the women created their own prayer-groups (who meet either every other week or monthly) within their congregations. That is quite an achievement since such groups are supported by only a handful of rabbis: the reaction of most rabbis to such innovations 'has ranged from suspicion to virulent opposition'.[22]

A practice which has been adopted by a very small number of Orthodox congregations (and which is more controversial than women's prayer-groups) is that of women reading from the Torah in mixed male and female services. That practice attracted much attention when congregation Shira Hadasha in Jerusalem began to call women up to the *bima* for public Torah reading or prayer: (*aliyah*). Barbara had been part of that congregation since it had been established some seven years earlier. In the interview, she recalled her feelings when she had moved from the mainstream Orthodox synagogue (to which she had belonged for more than 20 years) to Shira Hadasha. She described what it meant for her to be part of public prayer:

> I stood there on the *bima* [podium] with my husband and my children on both sides of the *mechitza* [which in Shira Hadasha divides the room straight down the middle] holding a *talit* [ritual prayer shawl] over me,[23] and the congregation throwing candies and serenading me. I felt a moment of tremendous peace with who I am and that is something I have never experienced before. I am active in the *shul*. I get an *aliyah* sometimes and I am not so terrified of doing it any more . . . [As a woman] I was so unused to any of the ritual parts of Judaism. I feel not

> only more comfortable with them now, but I feel challenged to know more about them. And also, the participation on the women's side is very different at Shira Hadasha. It is not that I sit there passively like in any other synagogue. For me, it now goes without question that a woman needs to sing, to say amen, to be fully involved in what is happening in the synagogue. It absolutely demands a higher level of consciousness, and I am all for consciousness raising. After all, that is the atmosphere I grew up in the 1960s [laughs]. So, I feel good about it.

Those interviewees who struggled within their established congregations to implement changes allowing women to become more involved, have made some progress — but in doing so they were very much affected emotionally by the hostility which they encountered. That is why women like Barbara decided not to attempt to change the mainstream Orthodox congregation which she used to attend, but rather to help to create a new, more egalitarian Orthodox congregation.

On the other hand, many interviewees had decided not to leave their congregations even when hardly any changes were made in order to increase women's participation. Some explained that they lived in neighbourhoods where a more egalitarian alternative was not available — such as in the case of Sigal, described above.

But others whose attempts at innovations had totally failed, also did not leave their congregations — even when the alternative of joining a more egalitarian establishment was available. I asked a number of these why they had taken that decision to remain and the explanation that one gave me, Sarai, was very revealing:

> After 25 years with an incredible community of people who support each other and care for each other... How could I leave on ideology? When my daughter was very sick, you can't even imagine the support we got from people in the community. After that kind of experience, am I going to go somewhere else on some ideology? Ideology isn't everything you know, ideology is the way the world should be, but we have to live in the world as well and we have all kinds of needs from all kinds of direction.

To summarize: the women interviewed actively sought to implement changes to ritual in the religious public sphere, which would improve the status of Orthodox women. Each had taken action either in her own community or by joining other congregations with explicitly feminist agendas. In doing so, they have been agents of change at the forefront of feminism's challenge to Orthodoxy. They have taken the feminist agenda to the heart of religious practice — that is, ritual life — and in this fashion some of them have been able to play an important part in the transformation of their religious communities. A few, like Shira and Barbara, are also in the process of developing their own religious identities anew, through becoming active participants in public prayer.

Orthodox Women Rabbis? 'It is only a matter of time . . .'

Traditionally, the primary role of a rabbi is as a Torah scholar and teacher of Jewish texts. Rabbinical students study for many years in order to gain in-depth knowledge of Jewish sources in preparation for ordination. Usually, this takes place within the setting of the yeshiva. Thus, when the question arises whether a woman can receive rabbinical ordination, or achieve the higher status of *posek* (legal decisor), that question must first revolve around her range of knowledge and competence in the matter of religious texts. Moreover, there is no Orthodox institution, so far, which trains women for ordination.

The discussion about ordaining Orthodox women as rabbis has persisted since the Progressive movements in Judaism began ordaining women in the early 1970s. But the topic has become a more vibrant issue of debate over the past decade, as Orthodox women began to attain high levels of competence in the field of religious texts. In Israel, particularly, women have demonstrated considerable skills in applying this knowledge in different frameworks in the religious courts (as rabbinical court advocates) and in advising other women in matters concerning family purity laws (as in the case of *yoatzot halaka*).

The interviewees were asked to give their views about the ordination of women in Orthodoxy and about the possibility of women as *poskot halakha* (female decisors of law). All of them had seriously considered the matter in the past and they now replied that they were quite in favour of such changes. However, one of their basic reactions in the matter was to stress that such changes in Orthodoxy would have to be reached as a result of an 'evolutionary, not revolutionary' process: the ordination of women should not be imposed by a minority challenge, but should rather make gradual progress into the Orthodox world — thereby avoiding internal conflicts. But there were still a few interviewees who believed that there should be no more delays to the feminist challenge to Orthodoxy's male hierarchy. Sarai was a case in point. She declared:

> My biggest issue with Orthodoxy is that women can't be rabbis. That really bothers me. There is no reason in the world why women should not be rabbis. Women know how to learn, they can be as learned as men. They certainly have as much good judgment. As a matter of fact, and this is the place where you could say my feminism impinges on my orthodoxy, I feel that I could never support a rabbi in a *shul* (and I don't have a personal rabbi) as long as women can't be rabbis. I don't think that it is right that half of the community can *posek* [make legal decisions] for everyone. That is ridiculous.

Liora was of the same opinion:

> Having women as rabbis ties into my feminist belief of equal representation, which would apply also within Orthodox society. Women need to be

> represented at every level. This is something that I struggle with in Orthodoxy, but I made the decision not to run away but to try and make changes.

Norit also had the same attitude to the question of female Orthodox rabbis but she is aware that the Orthodox world currently is not ready for women to fill such a role. However, she is convinced that 'it is only a matter of time'. She believes that eventually women will be allowed to take on the role of a female *dayan* (judge in the rabbinical courts). Meanwhile she has already chosen for herself a female rabbinical figure: a friend who teaches Talmud in a *midrasha* in Jerusalem. She declared:

> When I have a halakhic question, I get my advice from a friend. I consult with her all the time.

Indeed, it is not uncommon nowadays for Orthodox women to turn to other women for advice. As already noted, the profession of *yoatzot halaka* is based on such a system. Moreover, in the *midrashot*, students often ask their female teachers for religious and halakhic guidance. The teacher whom Norit mentioned is a central figure in the female discourse on halakha. While she envisions that women will eventually be able to serve as *poskot*, she is also aware that not many women have attained a sufficient mastery of religious texts:

> My dream is to start an institution that teaches and develops women to be what I call 'halakhic speakers', just like you have English speakers or French speakers. In other words, a person who understands and speaks the halakhic language very well . . . This will be a place where women will learn how the halakha is built on a deep level . . . In the second stage, I think that women will be in dialogue with the rabbis, a sort of partnership. After many years, it will be acknowledged that women have the ability to give *psak halakha* [decide on points of Jewish law] and they will turn into interpreters of the halakha.

Tamar Ross, who has strongly challenged Orthodoxy's dismissal of feminism, also believes that the first step should be for women to take greater interest in the halakhic discourse:[24]

> Women, learned women, must be centrally included in the actual process of halakhic deliberation. And if there are not enough learned women around, then the community of traditional Judaism must cultivate and encourage their emergence. Without this step halakhic development is destined to forfeit important nuances of feminist experience, leading to continued discrimination and moral failure . . . The contemporary halakhic world cannot afford to dispense with the potential contribution of women's unique insights and methods of approach, if it hopes to retain its credibility and authority in the long run.

The majority of the interviewees would probably agree with Tamar Ross's analysis that the ordination of women would be just as — if not

more — beneficial for Orthodoxy as it would be for women's status within Orthodoxy. However, one of the strongest objections made by some of them concerned the matter of timing: they thought that Orthodox society was not yet ready for such a great sociological change in the status of women, commenting that there needs to be a process whereby women gradually 'evolve' into positions of halakhic authority. They are ready to compromise on the title of women rabbis. Ora said:

> So don't call them rabbis, give them another title — that is not the issue. The point is that women should be in more public leadership positions [in religious life].

Some referred to the example of *yoatzot halakha* as a positive model for the advancement of women in the halakhic discourse and as a first step towards women as *poskot*. Moriah, who was a halakhic consultant, noted that a number of rabbis now rely on the advice provided by the *yoatzot halakha* and considered it to be as a halakhic ruling. But it is important to stress in this context that Nishmat, the organization which trains the *yoatzot halakha*, absolutely rejects the suggestion that it is part of a wider endeavour aiming at the ordination of women as rabbis and of women as *poskot*.[25] Indeed, at least part of this rhetoric is used to maintain their legitimacy in mainstream Orthodox society.

However, some of the interviewees — those who have a thorough knowledge of religious texts — commented that if the option of rabbinic ordination were available to them, they would certainly have considered applying for it. But for some others, that is still an unlikely dream; one of them said:

> I once had a fantasy that I would study all of the material that needs to be learned for rabbinical ordination and I would do it using a male alias name.

Haviva Ner-David went a step further and applied to rabbinical school at Yeshiva University in New York. Her application received significant media coverage but it was ignored by the acceptance committee for ordination.[26] However, she was later privately ordained after studying privately with an Orthodox rabbi in Jerusalem[27] but the reaction by the Orthodox establishment to that ordination has been highly critical.

In the early 1980s, few dared to mention the possibility of women's ordination in Orthodoxy. Blu Greenberg, who is often seen as the mother of Orthodox feminism, was one of the first to tackle the issue. She stated:[28]

> Orthodox women should be ordained because it would constitute a recognition of their intellectual accomplishments and spiritual attainments; because it would encourage great Torah study; because it offers wider female models of religious life; because women's input into *p'sak* [decisions

> on a point of Jewish law] absent for 2000 years, is sorely needed; because it will speed the process of reevaluating traditional definitions that support hierarchy; because some Jews might find it easier to ask halakhic questions concerning family and sexuality to a woman rabbi; and because of the justice of it all.

Today, that message resonates with an increasing number of women in the United States and in Israel — although, as yet, still at the grassroots level. However, we are now seeing, from within Israeli Orthodoxy, the aspirations of religious women who yearn for a more active role and more authority in public religious practice.

Conclusion

The research on which this article is based has shown that there is in Israel's Orthodox community a desire among its feminine and feminist members for more gender equality and, in turn, for a more liberal orientation. The women who were interviewed said that they had, first, sought greater participation in synagogue proceedings and, second, considered the possibility that eventually Orthodox women might succeed in obtaining ordination with the agreement of the Orthodox hierarchy in the country. Both aims are deeply imbued with symbolic meaning since they involve the status of women in the religious public sphere.[29]

Mark Chaves has observed that the ordination of women in particular serves as a symbolic display to the outside world and points either to or away from 'a broader liberal agenda that is associated with modernity and religious accommodation to the spirit of the age'.[30] In this article, the statements of the interviewees about women's ordination point to a process whereby a liberal agenda is cutting across the liberal/Orthodox denominational boundaries and affecting the lives of Orthodox women. Moreover, it just may be that women who present such challenges may hold views which are more 'radical' than those which they tend to express in public forums. They are acutely aware that the changes which they wish to incorporate are controversial and highly charged with symbolic value. Therefore, by being cautious, they are able to maintain their position in the Orthodox mainstream while they negotiate gender roles.

During the interviews, some of the women were asked whether they exercised any self-restraint when speaking publicly about their aims. Most of them hinted that indeed they did so, that they wished to see changes which were more drastic than those which they were advocating. One woman confessed that on such occasions she felt that she was walking on eggshells. Orthodox women are treading very carefully while challenging religious boundaries in order to pave the way for obtaining more egalitarian practices.

A growing section of Israel's Orthodoxy has been promoting increased fundamentalism and using slogans condemning modernity while the wider society is secular and liberal. In such a situation, those Orthodox women — who are convinced that they have a right to obtain more recognition from the male religious hierarchy — must use a strategy which balances subversiveness with compliance. They have an agenda which aims to counteract the growing fundamentalism and anti-modernity slogans promoted by an increasing section of Orthodox society in Israel.

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NOTES

[1] See by S.B. Fishman, *A Breath of Life: Feminism in the American Jewish Community*, New York, 1993 and *Changing Minds: Feminism in Contemporary Orthodox Jewish Life*, New York, 2000; see also Rachel Gordin, *The Entrance of Women as Partners Into the Field of Halakhic Discourse*, doctoral thesis, Bar-Ilan University, 2005 (in Hebrew).

[2] The changes include the growth of the *midrasha* movement in Israel, institutions for women to acquire religious knowledge up to an advanced level; and the development of women as rabbinical advocates and as advisers in matters concerning family purity laws.

[3] See, for example, Tamar Ross, *Expanding the Place of Torah: Orthodoxy and Feminism*, Waltham, 2004; Chana Safrai, 'Judaism and the Feminist Challenge' in *Judaism and the Challenges of Modern Life*, edited by M. Halbertal and D. Hartman, Jerusalem, 2005; Blu Greenberg, *On Women and Judaism: A View from Tradition*, Philadelphia, 1981; and Susannah Heschel, ed., *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, New York, 1995.

[4] See Heschei, op. cit. in Note 3, p. xiv. See also Ross, op. cit. in Note 3.

[5] See Ross, ibid.

[6] See Charles Liebman, 'Modern Orthodoxy' in *Judaism*, Fall 1988.

[7] See references in Note 3.

[8] Ellen Umansky, 'Feminism and the Reevaluation of Women's Roles Within American Jewish Life' in *Women, Religion, and Social Change*, edited by Y. Haddad and E. Findly, New York, 1985, p. 592.

[9] See Tamar El Or, *Next Year I Will Know More: Literacy and Identity Among Young Orthodox Women in Israel*, Detroit, 2002 for a discussion of *midrashot* in Israel.

[10] Safrai, op. cit. in Note 3, p. 101.

[11] David Hartman in *Orthodoxy Confronts Modernity*, edited by J. Sacks, London, 1991, p. 21. Owing to issues of halakha, women in Orthodox Judaism cannot act as witnesses. The presence of witnesses is necessary for a religious divorce, among other things.

[12] See, for example, Fishman, op. cit. in Note 1; Christel Manning, *God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholics, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism*, New Jersey, 1999; and Lynn Davidman, *Tradition in a Rootless World: Women Turn to Orthodox Judaism*, Berkeley, 1991.

[13] Margalit Shilo, 'A Religious Orthodox Women's Revolution: The Case of Kolech 1998–2005' in *Israel Studies Forum*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2006 and Tova Cohen, 'Female Religious Leadership: Modern Orthodoxy in Israel as a Case Study' in *Democratic Culture*, 10, 2006 (Hebrew).

[14] El Or, op. cit. in Note 9.

[15] Irit Koren, 'The Bride's Voice: Religious Women Challenge the Wedding Ritual' in *Nashim*, 2005.

[16] Gordin, op. cit. in Note 1. See also, Ronen Shamir *et al*., 'Religion, Feminism, and Professionalism: The Case of Rabbinical Advocates' in *The Jewish Journal of Sociology*, 1996.

[17] This study is part of a larger research project which investigates the changing role of Orthodox women in religious life and includes an analysis of the organizations and congregations advocating increased female participation.

[18] Saul Berman, 'The Status of Women in Halakhic Judaism' in *The Jewish Women: New Perspectives*, edited by E. Koltun New York, 1976.

[19] For such viewpoints, see the Journal of the Jewish Orthodox Feminine Alliance, *JOFA*, Summer 2004.

[20] Tova Hartman describes her motivation and some of her experiences in establishing Shira Hadasha in *Feminism Encounters Traditional Judaism*, Brandeis University Press, Waltham, 2007.

[21] Ross, op. cit. in Note 3, p. x.

[22] Ibid. p. 74.

[23] In Shira Hadasha, the *mechitza* divides the room straight down the middle, leaving equal seating space and access to the podium for both men and women.

[24] Ross, op. cit. in Note 3, p. 230.

[25] Chana Henkin, 'Yoatzot Halakhah: Fortifying Tradition Through Innovation' in *Jewish Action*, Winter 1999.

[26] Haviva Ner-David, *Life on the Fringes: A Feminist Journey Towards Traditional Rabbinic Ordination*, Needham, 2000.

[27] Haviva Ner-David was privately ordained by Rabbi Aryeh Strikovsky, but she was not the first woman to receive private ordination from an Orthodox rabbi. In 1994, Mimi Feigelson (who was a student of Rabbi Shiomo Carlebach) was ordained by a panel of three rabbis. In 2000, Eveline Goodman-Thau was ordained by Rabbi Jonathan Chipman. See Peggy Cidor, 'For the Sake of Righteous Women' in *Jerusalem Post*, 4 May 2006. However, mainstream Orthodox society does not recognize any of these women to be rabbis.

[28] See Greenberg, op. cit. in Note 3 and by Blu Greenberg 'Will there be Orthodox Women Rabbis?' in *Judaism*, Winter 1984 and 'Is Now the Time for Orthodox Women Rabbis'?' in *Moment*, December 1992, pp. 50–53.

[29] See Susan Sered, 'Women and Religious Change in Israel: Rebellion or Revolution?' in *Sociology of Religion*, vol. 58, no. 1, 1997.

[30] Mark Chaves, *Ordaining Women: Culture and Conflict in Religious Organizations*, Cambridge, Mass., 1997, p. 192.

THE RITUAL OF *KAPPAROT*

Simcha Fishbane

THIS paper explores the history and development of the Jewish ritual of *kapparot;* it has traditionally been performed during the high holy days (between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur: between the Jewish New Year and the Day of Atonement) and traditionally on the eve of Yom Kippur. A 1997 prayer-book described the procedure as follows:[1]

> Take the chicken [or money] in the right hand (some say a life for a life as they do so), and recite the following paragraph. Then — while reciting the appropriate paragraph on the next page — revolve the chicken or money around the head (some do this three times). Follow this procedure three times. [Alternatively, recite the following paragraph three times.] Then — while revolving the chicken or money around the head — recite the appropriate paragraph on the next page three times.

The editor of the prayer book then makes the following comment:

> There is an ancient custom to take a white rooster for males and a white hen for females on the day before Yom Kippur and perform the kapparot [atonement] ritual. Money may be substituted for the fowl, and the ritual may be performed before Erev Yom Kippur if necessary. It is most important to realize, however, that atonement results from giving the bird (or its value) to the poor. Only that, as part of repentance, gives meaning to the ceremony. Some use a different chicken for each person, while others use a single rooster for many men and a single hen for many women. A pregnant woman customarily takes both a hen and a rooster, a hen for herself and a rooster in case she is carrying a male. Those who use a separate bird for each person take three birds for pregnant women two hens, one for herself and one in case she is carrying a female, and a rooster in case she is carrying a male.

On the following page there is a further instruction to recite a paragraph appropriate to the specific individual situation, while circling the bird (or money) around one's head. Variations on some ten situations are then described. If it is the case that two or more women are offering *kapparot* on their own behalf, they will declare:

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> This is our exchange, this is our substitute, this is our atonement. This hen will go to its death (this money will go to charity) while we will enter and go to a good long life, and to peace.

The *kapparot* ritual has evolved over centuries. Its similarities to pagan practices have been noted: to placate the powers that be by offering a scapegoat in order to preserve the life of a cherished individual (or of oneself).

I understand from a Sephardi reviewer of this paper (following its submission to this *Journal*) that she used to go regularly to the homes of impoverished Jews in Cairo every eve of Yom Kippur carrying chickens which had just been slaughtered by a *shoḥet*. The benefactor was her aunt, who wished to offer scapegoats for her four children – who refused to carry the dead chickens themselves. Each chicken was duly swirled around the head of the recipient, who then asked that grateful thanks be conveyed to the donor.

Shlomo Deshen has commented on the changes in religious symbolism which occur in modern societies in the process of secularization.[2] Traditional rituals acquire merit even if the origin of the practice is no longer remembered or evaluated. Indeed, once the ritual has endured for centuries and even when its origins have been shown to be not only pagan but also to contravene religious principles, religious leaders and legislators have been reluctant to order that it must be abolished. They may decide that they have to live 'in the real world' and propose new interpretations of the ritual's origins — interpretations which can be said to have religious merit. Jacob Katz has commented on such developments: he has noted that the practice of *kapparot* is ancient, dating back to Talmudic times, and since its meaning is said to be linked to Jerusalem Temple ceremonials, the ritual must certainly be preserved.

Moreover, since the days between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are known as 'Days of Awe', when the Almighty rules that some individuals will be spared while others will not survive, it is literally vital to show repentance for one's sins. One way of pleading for absolution is by the traditional method of offering a sacrifice and giving charity. The ritual of *kapparot* fulfils these two aims: fowls are sacrificed and then offered to the poor, usually on the eve of Yom Kippur.

Durkheim has stated that the individual requires a ritual ceremony to deal with evil or fear: any misfortune, any likely evil omen, anything which arouses sorrow or fear necessitates a rite or ceremony to give some appeasement. Durkheim calls it a 'piacular'.[3] Observant Jews believe that prayers to the Almighty and fasting (by abstaining totally from all food and liquid) may result in a favourable divine decree which will enable them to survive another year. They will not be easily convinced that the *kapparot* ritual is only a pagan practice which must be discarded.

Rabbinical commentaries[4] justify the ritual of *kapparot* by referring to Leviticus 16 (7–8; 21–22):

> Then he shall take the two goats, and set them before the Lord at the door of the tent of meeting. And Aaron shall cast lots upon the two goats, one lot for the Lord and the other lot for *azazel* [the realm of demons and evil spirits] . . . and Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the people of Israel and all their transgressions, and all their sins; and he shall put them upon the head of the goat, and send him away to the wilderness, by the hand of a man who is in readiness. The goat shall bear all their iniquities upon him to a solitary land; and he shall let the goat go into the wilderness.

The Mishnah[5] tells us in chapter 4 (paragraphs 1–3) and chapter 6 that the *kapparot* ritual was performed in the Temple. The sins were placed upon the he-goat, a red ribbon was tied to the animal, which was then despatched to *azazel* in a special ceremonial procedure. There was then great anxiety while those present waited for the red ribbon to turn white as a sign that their sins had been forgiven. Rabbi Moses ben Nachman (1194–1270) has commented that the *kapparot* ritual was performed in order to influence Satan, who was not an independent deity, but subject to the Almighty.

The Talmud is believed to have been compiled in the sixth century of the Common Era. It neither mentions nor makes any reference to the *kapparot* procedure. Jacob Lauterbach,[6] in two excellent essays, describes that ritual in detail and also provides analytical comments. Much of the material in the present paper is based on Lauterbach's research; my contribution has been to provide a social anthropological framework. Lauterbach has argued that the Talmud has totally avoided any mention of *kapparot* because there was a fear that the ritual might imply that Satan had some divine status. Such an implication would not be countenanced by rabbis — although the belief in Satan certainly did exist in the age of the Talmud. On the other hand, rabbis were aware that they were unlikely to convince traditional Jews to alter their beliefs and customary practices. They chose instead to provide interpretations which were compatible with Talmudic Judaism.

The Talmud objected to the *kapparot* practice presumably because it represented a desecration of the sacred. Durkheim divided the world into two domains, the sacred and the profane, which are profoundly differentiated or radically opposed to one another. Physical boundaries are established to separate them and to divide them into an ideal and a transcendental universe. To allow the sacred to cross these boundaries and enter the world of the profane would result in the adulteration of the sacred. The Jerusalem Temple, with its rites and rituals, represents the Jewish manifestations of the sacred. After its destruction, the Jews

have passionately identified with it, and yearned for it and what it symbolized; but no ritual or related rite which had been performed in it may now be reproduced. Precautions to keep the profane apart from the sacred are essential because although the two worlds are in opposition, their boundaries are blurred. The rabbis of the Talmud objected to the *kapparot* ritual because they saw it as a contamination of the sacred. They were not concerned about the belief in Satan, because they could control such a belief.

The concern about *kapparot* first appears in the form of a question posed to an early Gaon — Rabbi Sheshna Gaon who lived in Sura in the seventh century. He was asked about the significance of the practice of slaughtering roosters on the eve of the Day of Atonement and is said to have replied that the purpose of this ceremony was not known but that if its purpose was to offer a substitution, why use especially a rooster and not any other animal? Lauterbach, who translated this responsum of Rabbi Sheshna, believes that the rabbi objected to the ceremony and avoided answering the question, in effect.

Lauterbach rightly argues that this ritual was embedded within the minds and culture of the populace, and was most probably connected to bribing Satan or at least placing the sins upon the animal or bird employed in the ritual. While the rabbis hesitated to admit openly that the ceremony was directly related to Satan, within a pagan culture there certainly existed a belief in (and concern over) the powers of Satan. Aware of the futility of their objections and of their inability to compel the Jews to discard their treasured beliefs, the Rabbis were compelled to tolerate this superstition. Close examination of the response, however, shows that Rabbi Sheshna is not concerned with the issue of Satan. The literary style of responsa literature suggests a primary interest in a halakhic issue rather than the exegesis of the halakha (although within the halakhic discussion, non-halakhic concerns may be cited). Rabbi Sheshna Gaon is being asked one question, not two. He is concerned first with how one performs an old custom, that of *kapparot* – what to use — and, second, how to perform the ritual. Implicitly, he conveys his primary concern: he is apprehensive about using an animal or bird appropriate for a Temple sacrifice. Since this is halakhically forbidden (*shechtei chutz*), he encourages the use of a rooster, a bird that does not resemble the sacrifices in any way. He does not prohibit the use of an animal that cannot be sacrificed on the altar, but rather encourages and backs the use of a rooster offering.

The rabbi first attributes the use of the bird to the socio-economic reality of his era; birds are more readily available, and less expensive than quadrupeds, thus reducing the financial burden of fulfilling a religious obligation. Secondly, he attributes the use of the rooster to 'former teachers', most probably from the Talmudic era. In religion,

what is old is hallowed: if a rooster was used in earlier periods, then this is how it should be done. Thirdly, Rabbi Sheshna Gaon turns to rabbinic logic: '. . . because the latter [rooster] is called *Geber*, and since its name is *Geber* which also means "man", it alone can be a proper substitute for man, and the ceremony performed with it will be better and more effective'.[7] It demonstrates the effective use of a substitute surrogate to carry the burden of one's sins.

Using the same halakhic considerations, in his commentary to Tractate Shabbat (81b) Rabbi Shlomo Yitchaki (Rashi, 1040–1105; France) tells us of an additional practice during the Gaonic period in performing the *kapparot* ritual. He states: 'About two or three weeks before Rosh Hashanah they make from leaves of the palm tree and fill them with earth and manure. For every young boy or girl in the house they make such a basket into which they sow Egyptian beans, or other kinds of beans or peas. They call it propitio. On the day before New Year's each person takes his or her basket, turns it around his or her head seven times saying: "This is for this, this is to be in exchange for me, this is to be my substitute" and then he or she throws the basket into the river'. There seems to be an overlapping of rituals in this ceremony. The turning of the object around the head and the substitution resembles *kapparot*, while timing it before *Rosh Hashanah* and throwing the growth into the river reminds one of the ceremony of *Tashlich*. If we accept Lauterbach's suggestions that both these rituals are primarily designed to suborn or propitiate Satan, the importance of both holy days — days of judgment — is clear. A Jew will seek to prepare himself in every possible way before the date when the heavenly tribunal will sit in judgment.

A third Gaonic source, attributed to Rabbi Natronai Gaon, quotes that rabbi as opening his responsum with words which are significant: 'Scholars and all the people of Babylonia do as follows . . .' and towards the end of the responsum he repeats that scholars follow the *kapparot* practice and adds that laymen also do so. He is emphasizing that the practice had become an institutionalized ritual, accepted and performed at all levels — even by scholars who, in theory, should not be swayed by outside influences or by folklore.

Towards the end of the responsum, Rabbi Natronai Gaon implicitly introduces a new rationalization for the ritual of *kapparot*. He states that after ritually slaughtering the chicken, reciting a prepared text and the required verses from the Psalms (as Rabbi Sheshna also records), one should distribute the bird to the poor and orphans. He concludes his responsum by stating that there are some (very rich persons) who seek out sheep or deer. In terms of charity, the reward should be even greater for an animal which can feed a greater number of needy individuals. The implication here is that true redemption comes not from waving a rooster around one's head and reciting verses

(suggesting that one's sins would be placed upon the head of the fowl) but rather from executing the commandment to give charity. One of the last Gaonim, Rabbi Hai ben Sherira Gaon (939–1038) is said to have briefly referred to the ritual of *kapparot*.

The words used during the performance of the *kapparot* ritual have varied in the course of history, but as basic format they have endured as recitations and proclamations rather than as a literary prayer. Verses were taken from Psalm 107 and from Job 33, followed by a declaration that the bird will serve as a substitute for the persons concerned, so that they shall live and the rooster shall die. (It is worth noting here that the Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 54b, uses the Psalm 107 verses to teach one when to recite the Blessing of Thanksgiving, *birkhat hagomel*). Rabbi Simcha ben Shmuel, from Vitri, who had been a student of Rashi, advises in his *Machzor Vitri* the reciting of the following:

> May it be thy will O Living God that you remember us and bestow upon us a good long life. And may this rooster be the substitute of this person [*me*] and his exchange. And may this rooster go out to death so that this person may enter into life. May he be an atonement and ransom for the soul of this man who will be saved from pain and hardship and worry and anxiety. And may this man find rest, joy, and happiness. Amen, amen, selah, — always.

Rabbi Simcha reiterates the injunction of Rabbi Natronai Gaon to distribute the slaughtered bird to the poor, but adds: 'Let his redemption be as the redemption of the he-goat designated for *azazel* that redeemed all of Israel'. It seems that the author of *Machzor Vitri* did not have the reservations of earlier generations. By the eleventh and twelfth centuries enough time had elapsed so that the concern about duplicating the Temple sacrifice was not an issue for the Rabbis. For the author of the *Machzor Vitri* there was no apprehension regarding sacrifices, nor was there any anxiety concerning the association with Satan. This was an ancient symbolic ritual (performed in connection with Yom Kippur) in which one could express a desire to the Lord just as in Temple times, and therefore the ritual required adherence since it was a custom of the forefathers (although there were doubtless some individuals who actually believed that their sins were being transferred to the bird being slaughtered).

Nor can it be forgotten that the Middle Ages were a period of history replete with ignorance, illiteracy, fundamental and fanatical religious belief, intense anti-Jewish feelings, and deep-rooted fear of witchcraft and sorcery which could summon the devil and evil spirits. The Christians believed that the Jew had a special allegiance to Satan.[8] The prevailing cultural atmosphere of the whole society, and of superstitious beliefs in particular, also affected the Jewish community. The conviction that *kapparot* was directly related to Satan once again

became a reality, and reservations not clearly voiced in the Gaonic period now became a concern. The Rabbis attempted to contest these beliefs, and whenever possible extirpate them from Jewish life.

Rabbi Mordechai ben Hillel Ashkenazi (the Mordechai: 1240–1298; Germany), in his Talmudic commentary on Babylonian Talmud Tractate Yoma notes:

> We take and slaughter chickens on the eve of Yom Kippur according to the number of individuals in the household... We do this with good intention.

He concludes that the birds, after being ritually slaughtered, are distributed to the poor and stresses that what was being done was not sorcery, but acts befitting good Jewish intent. The Mordechai believed that there was no need to object to, and eliminate, an ancient Jewish ceremonial since in all probability it was a form of charity, an important good deed to be performed on the eve of the Day of Atonement.

Rabbinical authorities throughout the Middle Ages were concerned lest the *kapparot* ritual be seen as a form of sorcery, because it incorporated similarities to other beliefs and superstitions connected with the fear of Satan. Unlike German Jewry, the rabbinical leaders of Spain strenuously condemned the *kapparot* ritual. But it is worth noting that there is no record of such condemnation in the writings of Rabbi Moshe ben Naḥman (Naḥmanides, 1194–1270). However, in fourteenth-century France Rabbi Aharon Hakohen of Lunel stated in his book *Orkhot* Hayim, when commenting on the practice:

> ...and Nachmanides, may his memory be blessed, prohibits this custom because of *darchei haemori* (the ways of the gentiles).

The term *darchei haemori* is used specifically to signify the way of idol-worshippers — so that implies that in Judaism the ritual of *kapparot* is as abhorrent as the ways of idolaters.

Although rabbis reluctantly tolerated the institutionalized practice of *kapparot*, stressing the fact that the slaughtered fowls were distributed to the poor and that charity to fellow-Jews kindles the Lord's mercy, they remained basically hostile to the ritual. Rabbi Yosef Caro (1488–1575), the Spanish author of the great classic *Code of Jewish Law* (the *Shulḥan Arukh*) condemns the practice in section 606 of that *Code*. Rabbi Mordechai Yafe (1535–1612; Poland) commented on the *Code* and dealt in detail with the matter of *kapparot* and the various ways the ritual was performed as well as the various rulings and explanations of earlier Gaonim and rabbis, and concluded that it is the charitable act of giving the fowl (or other animal) to the poor which constitutes redemption — not the ritual practice.

For centuries, the choice of a white rooster as the preferred fowl to be slaughtered for the *kapparot* ritual occupied the interest of various

rabbinical authorities. White represented purity, while red or scarlet was seen as the colour of sin. The Maharil (Rabbi Yaakov Moellin, 1365–1427; Germany) cited Isaiah 1:18:

> though they [your sins] are red like crimson, they shall become [white] like wool.

Later rabbis argued that the Maharil did not imply that it was essential to have a white fowl, that one must obtain it whatever the cost, for that would be the practice of idolaters. If it happened that one was offered a white fowl at the same cost as a red bird, then one could certainly use it for a *kappara*, but under no circumstances should one strive to obtain only a white rooster. Rabbi Avraham Danzig (1748–1820; Vilna) also condemned the insistence on seeking white *kapparot* since that was the practice of gentiles and idol worshippers.

On the other hand the founder of the Lubavitch movement, Shneur Zalman of Lyady (1745–1812; Russia) approved of the ritual slaughtering of a white rooster, as did some twentieth-century rabbis of Sephardi congregations, like Rabbi Shemtov Gaguine of England (see his book *Keter Shem Tov* (which was written in 1935) in the 1954 edition, at page 223).

A later concern of the rabbinical authorities was the strain on the ritual slaughterer, the *shoḥet*. Jews who follow the practice of *kapparot* generally insist on doing so on the eve of the Day of Atonement; some of them take as many birds as there are members of their household, and the *shoḥetim* may work very late into the night and become exhausted. As a result the integrity of the slaughter may be put at risk, for the knife used must be meticulously examined to ascertain that there are absolutely no nicks or indentations upon the blade. Both Ashkenazi and Sephardi rabbis cast doubts upon the certainty that the necessary precautions could be taken when slaughtering at speed.

One of the preferred solutions to the problems surrounding *kapparot* has been to advocate the gift of money to poor Jews instead of fowls. That practice has become popular among modern Orthodox Jews. Religious Jews will do whatever rabbinical leaders advise in order to obtain forgiveness from the Almighty on the eve of Yom Kippur; those who follow the *kapparot* ritual do not see it as a voodoo or pagan ritual but as a primordially Jewish act.

NOTES

[1] *The Complete Art Scroll Machzor, Rosh Hashanah*, New York, 1997.

[2] I am grateful to Professor Nissan Rubin for bringing this source to my attention.

[3] See Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (London, 1982), p. 389.

[4] For a detailed discussion of the rabbinical understanding of *kapparot* see J.D. Epstein, *A Digest of Jewish Laws and Customs* (New York, 1917), pp. 183–184; G. Zinner, *Nitei Gavreil* (2001), pp. 94–97; Tuvya Fruend, *Moadim LeSimcha*, volume 1 (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2002), pp. 235–281; Gedalia Oberlander, *Minhag Avotenu Beyadenu Amudim* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 110–141; and Bunam Yoel Tousig, *Minhage Kihilot Yior* (Hebrew; Jerusalem, 2005), pp. 85–88.

[5] Mishnah is the first rabbinical document we have, redacted about two thousand years ago.

[6] Z.J. Lauterbach, 'The Ritual for the Kapparot Ceremony' in *Jewish Studies in Memory of George A. Kout* (New York, 1935).

[7] The translation is from Z.J. Lauterbach, *Rabbinic Essays* (*Tashlik*) (New York, 1973), p. 370.

[8] See Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (New York, 1939), p. 2.

BOOK REVIEWS

DAPHNE BARAK-EREZ, *Outlawed Pigs. Law, Religion, and Culture in Israel*, x + 188 pp., University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, 2007, $45.00 (hardback).

The pig is one of the many creatures whose flesh the observant Jew is enjoined not to eat (Leviticus, 11:7–8; Deuteronomy, 14:8). Amongst quadruped mammals the pig manifests the outward signs of a kasher animal: it has a cloven hoof, with the cleft running the entire length of the hoof, but it does not — unlike the cow, the sheep or even the giraffe — chew the cud. So its consumption (save in the direst of emergencies) is forbidden.

But so is the consumption of a great many other animals. Why, then, do observant (and also a great many non-observant) Jews view the pig with such abhorrence? Perhaps because its consumption was forced upon the Jews by numerous persecutors down the ages. Perhaps because, in many societies, the pig has come to be associated with less desirable human traits: 'pig ignorant' and 'the manners of a pig' are but two of the many pejorative images offered in the English language, and such imagery has been widely evoked in other tongues. The pig is associated with gluttony, carnality, diseases of the flesh. Even the renegade rabbi Jesus was constrained to warn against casting pearls before swine (Matthew, 7:6).

Perhaps this unfortunate imagery (for the pig is in fact a clean and intelligent creature) accounts for the fact that although only the consumption (and touching) of pork are forbidden to Jews, even the possession and rearing of pigs has come to be viewed with abhorrence. Secularist though he was, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, agreed that for the sake of the cultural identity of the re-established Jewish State, the rearing and keeping of pigs, and the sale of pork products, would have to be restricted. Accordingly, in 1956 the Knesset legislated to empower local authorities in Israel to prohibit these activities. And when it became clear that this law was being abused, further legislation was passed, near the very end of Ben-Gurion's premiership, absolutely prohibiting the raising, keeping, and slaughtering of pigs anywhere in the state of Israel, save in nine specifically exempted areas.

Why were these laws passed? After all, if the consumption of pork was so abhorrent to Jews, there would be no need for a law at all. As

Professor Barak-Erez (who teaches law at Tel Aviv University) herself points out, there is no law in Israel prohibiting the driving of motor vehicles on Yom Kippur; yet, except for emergency vehicles, very few Israelis indeed are to be seen driving their cars and trucks at all on this day. Even amongst those Israeli Jews who do not attend synagogue on this solemn Day of Atonement, or who even do not bother to fast, motor vehicles are not driven, even non-kasher restaurants are closed, discos and night-clubs are shut. And all without legislation. So why legislate for the pig?

The bulk of Professor Barak-Erez's study is devoted to answering this question. In so doing she provides us with a fascinating insight into the complex relationship between law, culture, and national identity in the Jewish State.

The original Knesset ban — via local authorities — on the rearing of pigs and the sale of pork products was deliberately designed as a fudge: religious sensitivities were (it was argued) accommodated; reassurance was given to Israel's minority Christian pork-eating populations; but the essentially secular and democratic nature of the state was preserved: each local authority could decide for itself whether or not to invoke the ban, whilst the state itself took no position on the matter.

But of course the state did take a position. Pork was never served at official government functions — even as an alternative on the menu. Secularists though they were, the eastern-European socialist-Zionists who shaped the state in its developmental phase believed in that nebulous concept called 'Yiddishkeit', and they knew that this precluded any rapprochement with the pig. When it became clear that some kibbutzim were engaging in (and expanding) their pork production — albeit on strictly commercial grounds — the Knesset acted again (1962) to tighten the law. But pig rearing and pork production were never banned outright as they are in some Islamic theocracies. Following the fall of the Soviet empire a million and more Russians (not all of whom were Jewish according to orthodox criteria) migrated to Israel. They brought with them a vibrant pork-eating tradition. Then there is the tourist industry to consider. A growing number of Israeli restaurants and hotels (none rabbinically supervised, for obvious reasons), offer 'white meat': the euphemism by which pork is designated. A true democracy cannot be a genuine theocracy.

The erosion of the historic compromise over the pig may also be extending to other of the interfaces between religion and the state in modern Israel. The orthodox-Jewish monopoly jurisdiction in relation to marriage and divorce is already under attack. Professor Barak-Erez sees this as a sign that the prioritization of personal liberties over national symbols is fast eroding 'the ideal of a single Jewish nation' (p. 120). But we already have a situation in which conversions to Judaism authorised by the rabbinical authorities in Israel are not

recognized by rabbinical authorities in Britain, and in which conversions authorised in the USA are not recognised in Israel.

Professor Barak-Erez has packed a great deal of material into a slim, scholarly but readable and thought-provoking volume. Perhaps she can be persuaded to turn her attention to the wider issue that she poses at the very end of this book: can Israel ever be both 'Jewish' and 'democratic' at the same time?

GEOFFREY ALDERMAN

MICHAEL BERKOWITZ, *The Crime of My Very Existence: Nazis and the Myth of Jewish Criminality*, xxi + 322 pp., University of California Press, Berkeley, 2007.

Is there anything new to be said about the Nazi Holocaust of the Jews? The amount of documentary and photographic evidence now available relating to this subject is almost overwhelming. Doubtless, more material will come to light. But I do not use the word 'new' in this sense. I refer, rather, to fresh and challenging interpretations of an endeavour so audacious — to wipe the Jews from the face of the earth — and which casts such a shadow over the history of humankind, that its very uniqueness seems to invite inadequate, mundane responses. The chronology is well known. The statistics, if open to interpretation and refinement, cannot be seriously challenged. In a grim sense, it really does not matter whether the number of Jews murdered by (and at the instigation of) Nazi Germany totalled six millions, or merely five-point-seven-five millions. In 1933 a regime came — democratically — to power in Germany with the avowed intention of ridding the world, in stages, of all its Jewish inhabitants. And, at least on the mainland of Europe, its efforts met with a staggering degree of success.

How, exactly, was this success achieved? This question is hardly original. But the answer provided by Professor Berkowitz is. In order to convince the public of Weimar Germany, and later of Austria and of Nazi-occupied Europe, that the extermination of the Jews was imperative, the Nazi propaganda machine perpetrated and perfected a myth: that all Jews were genetically disposed to criminal behaviour. Note that this was not what Nazis themselves believed. In terms of their own world outlook, some 'races' and racial types were inimical to the survival of Aryan humanity and their extermination was therefore necessary to ensure that humanity's survival. But in an increasingly cosmopolitan Europe this concept was likely to fall on stony ground. So another myth was invented: 'criminality' was endemic amongst Jews and people of Jewish origin. If civil society was to endure, the Jews had to go.

There was nothing new about this argument. Professor Berkowitz traces it from the eighteenth century, but in fact we can see it being deployed in many earlier centuries. The medieval Blood Libels were, essentially, attempts to brand Jews as congenital perverts and murderers. The *Northern Star* — mouthpiece of the early nineteenth-century Chartist movement in England — condemned Jews as 'jobbers, oppressors and murderers' (13 November 1847, p. 8). It was a constant refrain of 'anti-alienists' in Great Britain 150 years ago that when Jews moved into an area, crime rates soared.

These refrains could also be heard in Bismarck's Germany. But they were aimed against *Ostjuden* (primarily poor Jews from Poland and Galicia) — who were claimed to be over-represented amongst the thieving classes. The Nazis took the images thrown up by such arguments and refined them to grotesque proportions. The black market which thrived in Germany during the First World War was (so the Nazis said) the work of the Jews. The 'November Criminals' — those who had overthrown the Kaiser and who had caused Germany to lay down its arms and accept the Versailles peace — were largely Jewish. The Weimar Republic was a Jewish criminal conspiracy (as was Bolshevism, of course). In time, as the Nazi propaganda machine swung into high gear, all Jews were portrayed as criminals and practically all criminals (such as the Italian Catholic bootlegger of Chicago, Al Capone!) were declared to be Jews.

Why were these fantasies believed? Part of the answer (and it is the part that forms the centrepiece of Professor Berkowitz's analysis) is that the Nazis turned the myth into reality. They did this by depriving German Jews of their German citizenship, and then by passing arcane, convoluted laws which it was virtually impossible for any otherwise law-abiding Jew to obey. Regulations governing Jewish behaviour — extending even to those parts of a pavement or gutter on and in which Jews were permitted to walk — poured out of the Nazi state on a daily basis. 'Staying ahead of rapidly changing laws,' Professor Berkowitz writes (p. 30), 'was virtually impossible, because some of the crucial statutes were not released publicly, supplied only to ministry officials'. On 14 June 1938 all forms of 'Jewish business' were declared illegal. But what was a 'business'? The answer was, any activity which the government defined as such. By stages, therefore, existing as a Jew became, in itself, a criminal activity.

In the ghettoes established by the Nazis and their puppets in eastern Europe, this Orwellian scenario reached its most lunatic extreme. In the Kovno ghetto Jews were forbidden to walk on the pavements; where they walked in the roads, they had to do so on the right side only, and in single file. They were prohibited from walking on the banks of the Vilija river, or to walk anywhere in the streets with their hands in their pockets. It became virtually impossible for any Jew to

live, to eat, and to keep warm in any of the ghettoes without infringing some regulation or other. And having infringed a regulation, they could be 'legitimately' branded as criminals. So the ghettoes themselves could thus be advertised merely as large camps for the incarceration of the criminal classes. And their 'execution' (that is, murder) could be explained merely as the law taking its lawful course. This malevolent rationale was readily accepted by those who collaborated in the Holocaust, but its very acceptance could sometimes lead to confrontation. Professor Berkowitz describes a case in which the Estonian Security Police attempted — apparently sincerely — to find a crime with which a particular Jewish woman might be legitimately charged. They could find none. Exasperated, the Gestapo ordered her summary execution.

In the closing stages of the war, as it became clear that Hitler's attempted conquest of Europe had failed, the minds of some Nazis turned to the difficulty of having to explain to the post-war world why the Holocaust had taken place. Zionism — which some Nazis had earlier supported as a means of bloodlessly ridding Germany of its Jews — was now refashioned as the climactic Jewish conspiracy: *the* super-crime, designed to bring about a world war, the restoration of the Jewish state, and (echoes of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* here) Jewish domination of the world.

Nazism was indeed defeated, but this particular myth lives on, propagated daily by Arab and Islamic media in the twenty-first century. Article 20 of the Charter of Hamas, the Palestinian terrorist movement currently in control of Gaza, accuses Jews [not Israelis] of making 'war against people's livelihoods, plundering their moneys and threatening their honour'. These accusations, of arch-criminality, come straight from the Nazi creed.

Professor Berkowitz has indeed taught us something new about Nazism. He is the master of his material (written, oral, and photographic), which he presents in a scholarly but uncluttered way. He has, in short, written a seminal work on a subject of supreme importance for the understanding of Nazism and the legacy it has bequeathed.

GEOFFREY ALDERMAN

DAVID J. HALPERIN, *Sabbatai Zevi. Testimonies to a Fallen Messiah*, 256 pp., Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, Oxford, 2007, £35.00 (hardback).

Since the publication in 1957 of the original Hebrew version of Gershom Scholem's masterly study of Sabbatai (English translation, *Sabbatai Sevi: the mystical messiah, 1626–1676*, Routledge & Kegan Paul,

1973, subsequently included in the Littman Library) much has been learned about the false messiah and reactions to his extraordinary career, and David Halperin's biographical opening chapter and helpful bibliography amply reflect this research.

The core of the book consists of translations, with explanatory notes, of five contemporary accounts of Sabbatai. The first and longest is the *Memorial* of Baruch of Arezzo, a devoted disciple. This is followed by two letters written by Joseph Halevi of Livorno to Jacob Sasportas, one of few rabbis to oppose Sabbatai openly; Halevi's vigorous denunciations of Sabbatai as impostor and charlatan formed part of Sasportas' *Tzitzat Novel Tzvi*, the classic anti-Sabbatean source. Part of Jacob Najara's *Chronicle* follows, with a vivid account of how Sabbatai, by then outwardly at least a Muslim convert, circumcized his three-year old son with great pomp and ceremony. From Jacob Emden's *Torat ha-Q'naot*, another anti-Sabbatean classic, there is part of the mendacious biography compiled by a Sabbatean, Abraham Cuenque, in 1692. Finally, Halperin has included a brief extract from the *Reminiscences* of Abraham Cardozo, who regarded himself as the Messiah son of Joseph complementing Sabbatai's role as Messiah son of David.

Why was most of the Ashkenazi Jewish world taken in by this crazy man, or rather by his self-proclaimed prophet, Nathan of Gaza? Scholem thought the way had been prepared by the Lurianic Kabbala; Idel (noting that in the mid-seventeenth century Kabbala was the preserve of exclusive circles) has argued that, to the contrary, it was the Sabbatean movement which stimulated the popularization of Kabbala. Other scholars have emphasized the suffering and fragmentation of Jewish society. In my view, anyone who has attended a major pop concert or football final will realize that mass hysteria is far too common a social phenomenon to require a sophisticated historical explanation.

The translation is throughout felicitous, and the author's style engaging, with frequent touches of irony.

NORMAN SOLOMON

LARISSA REMENNICK, ed., 'Immigrant Scholars Write about Identity and Integration', *Sociological Papers*, volume 12, 127 pp., Sociological Institute for Community Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 2007, n.p.

The articles in this issue of *Sociological Papers* — in English but with abstracts in Russian and Hebrew — are not, despite the title, autobiographical accounts of immigrant experience. They are academic essays

about Russian-Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union, written by 'immigrant scholars' (for the most part occupying academic posts in Israel) almost all of whom participated in that emigration. As it happens, all but one of the authors are women.

The seven articles exhibit the variety of experiences of the migrants from the Former Soviet Union (FSU) in the different countries in which they have settled. In general the differences reflected the conditions in those countries (how they were received) as well as the immigrants' demographic formations and their expectations.

The editor, who is at Bar-Ilan University, sets the tone in the first essay, 'Former Soviet Jews in Israel and in the West: Integration, Exclusion and Transnationalism'. She uses the notion of transnationalism, a concept adapted to migration issues from international economics. She notes that some authors view transnationalism as a new name for an old idea — 'that most big immigration waves of the past were typified by ethno-cultural retention and contacts with co-ethnics abroad' (p. 3). The difference now is that new means of communication and transport enable more intense contacts to be made.

The author examines the different groups of Russian-Jewish immigrants who went to Israel, Berlin, the USA, and Canada, and the consequential effects on their integration. The demographic characteristics of those going to these countries were various; thus those in Israel tended to include older family members, who have a greater tendency to retain ethnic contacts. Younger and better-educated people went to Germany and North America where they were more able to adjust to local conditions. The tests for integration which she uses, are: whether they are employed in the mainstream or in ethnic economies; whether they include the 'natives' in their social networks; and the attitude of the majority to the immigrants. There are clear differences between those in Israel, who arrived in great numbers and form a large minority of the population, and the smaller numbers in the other countries although they have become a good proportion in the individual towns and cities in which they settled. There is a useful table (p. 20) which tabulates the eight main characteristics of the immigration in the four countries, including 'Official framing of Jewish immigration', 'Access to skilled occupations', and 'Host expectations towards immigrants'.

The American dimension is taken up by Sam Kliger of the American Jewish Committee. Russian Jews in that country tend to have high educational levels which continue with the second generation with a move into the professions. They have relatives in several countries and are strongly committed to Israel. On the other hand, they have experienced problems with established American Jewry owing to the different backgrounds of the two communities. The Americans expected the Russians to revitalise the American Jewish community

but found that the Russians were indifferent to Jewish communal life. The Russians were helped by the American Jews for a short time but were then expected to find their own way. The author uses the term 'detached affiliation' to describe the Russians' attitude to religion — that is, maintaining a distance from organised religious groups such as synagogues but taking part in certain practices, saying yizkor on Yom Kippur, and marking stages in life — brit milah, bar/bat mitzvah, for example. As to integration into American society, the author concludes: 'It is fair to say that many Russian Jews, especially those working, are integrating well' (p. 32). But there is less integration with American Jewry. Russian Jews would rather establish their own organisations and preserve their own Russian identity. He argues that American Jews need to reach out to the Russians in order to assist American-Jewish life to thrive.

Tsypylma Darieva of Berlin's Humboldt University writes on Russian Jews in that city in ' "Wie mächtig sind die Russen in Berlin?" Inside and Outside the post-Soviet Russianness in Germany'. She considers not just the 220,000 FSU Jews who went to Germany but also the 2.7 million ethnic Germans who immigrated. Each population was welcomed in Germany, the Russian Jews 'to redeem the Nazi crimes during World War II and to ensure future existence and growth of the small and aging(sic) community of German Jews' (p. 36). Both groups had privileged access to German citizenship — the Germans soon after arrival and the Jews after several years of residence. This compares with its being seldom granted to others, for example, to Turks and other 'guest workers'.

Nevertheless, there have been problems of integration. Because many Russian Jews had intermarried and did not participate in Jewish life they were not acceptable to the communal organisations (*Jüdisches Gemeinde*). The German orthodox communities would only accept halakhic Jews and half of the 'Russian Jews' included halakhic non-Jews. Similarly, the German immigrants from FSU had to undergo checks to confirm that they were German. As a result many in both groups were labelled as not being German or Jewish enough, but as 'Russians' (even though they came from different parts of the FSU).

The author then appears to concentrate on those who have not become part of the *Gemeinde*. She notes the change in Germany from the wartime view of Russians as soldiers — a 'ruthless enemy, a savage and(sic) occupier of Berlin' (p. 38) — to one of nouveau riche vulgarians, an opinion summarised in the German phrase in the essay title: 'How powerful are these new Russians in Berlin?', taken from a popular magazine. '[T]he worlds of Russianness and German-ness are perceived by many immigrants as opposing and incompatible' (p. 40). Indeed, as the columns in the newspapers in the Russian language demonstrate, many immigrants maintain transnational contacts; they continue to be

interested in Russia and have no problem with dual loyalty. Many keep their citizenship of both countries. This is not understood by the native Germans.

An essay by Nelly Elias and Natalia Khvorostianova, of Ben-Gurion University, concerns the capital of the Negev: 'Russian cultural institutions in Beer-Sheba: Building a community'. Nearly 60,000 Russians, about one-third of the population, live in the city and this essay is concerned with their cultural interests and institutions, concentrating on artistic events, libraries, and bookshops. The first consist of concerts, the second of a number of libraries run by volunteers, and the third, a number of commercial undertakings The contents of all three are in the Russian language and there is hardly any reference to integration to Israeli life — that word is noticeably not in the title. None of these cultural bodies has any connection with official Israeli organisations. The authors conclude that the city has a rich and varied Russian-language cultural life and one which is not confined to an intellectual elite. They perform two needs: preservation of their original identity, and maintaining intra-communal relations.

Broadly, there are differences according to age. Classical music performances by old-time stars are followed by those aged 60 and over, whereas those of current artistes are popular among the middle-aged. Libraries also are patronised by the older sections while bookstores by the younger. This may reflect their different economic conditions, library usage being fairly cheap while books need to be bought; the price of concerts by current artistes is greater than for the other kind. Notably, the researchers found that there was an absence of patronage of any of these facilities by people under the age of 30, although they did find two nightclubs and an informal youth organisation.

A different angle is tackled by Larisa Fialkova of Haifa University and Maria Yelenevskaya of the Haifa Technion in 'Encounters with Law: Russian-speaking Israelis in Court'. They note that they are dealing with immigrants/minorities who tend to distrust the law and inevitably have little power. In this study, 'our task is to show mental structures linked to the notions of ''law'', ''justice'' and ''court'' and analyze their relation to integration processes. Do immigrants perceive the law as protection by the state or alienation from it?' (p. 68). Immigrants from the FSU bring with them the characteristics of their former countries. There, in order to cope with the law, they relied on informal networks of mutual support and favours, and often resorted to bribes.

The bulk of the essay consists of verbatim accounts of the encounters of a number of people (as it happens, all are women; is that significant?) with the law. A minor peccadillo is on page 70 where a footnote states, 'Hebrew insertions in the interviewees' speech are given in italics' but the interviews are completely printed in italics. Moreover, one of the parts of the legal system in Israel is called the 'execution office' (in

Hebrew, *hotsa'a le-fo'al*) and its occupants 'the executioners'.[1] Their conclusions are predictable: they do not trust the legal system and its rules and customs. Moreover, in Israel the immigrants suspect that legal decision-making may be influenced by personal connections and thus their negative opinions on law persist.

Most of the essays concern Ashkenazi immigrants but one article by Nadia Dahan, a high-school teacher, and Smadar Donitsa-Schmidt of the Kibbutzim College of Education, is on 'The Acculturation Process of Bukharian Community Members in Israel'. The second author is unlike the others in being born in Israel in a family of immigrants from Poland and Tunisia. In one sense the authors use the community as a case study, to test a model of acculturation. They argue that originally, as Eisenstadt posited,[2] Israel was regarded as a melting-pot, in which immigrants would adapt to the prevailing Israeli language and culture and lose their native ones. The multi-dimensional model they use is one proposed by Berry[3] and the diagram they produce (p. 97) consists, in the vertical axis, of four 'acculturations modes' — assimilation, integration, segregation/separation, and de-culturation. The horizontal axis describes negative or positive attitudes towards the original culture and the 'target' culture. Thus assimilation is negative towards the original culture but positive towards the target one. This was the melting-pot ideal. Integration means positive attitudes towards both cultures, that is, immigrants retaining their original culture but also taking up the new one. The third mode, separation, is clear enough — the immigrants prefer to retain their original culture and ignore the new one; and those in the fourth one, de-culturation, reject both cultures, and become drop-outs.

The authors conducted surveys of different age-groups of a sample of Bukharian Jews and found that they fitted the second mode, that of integration. They conclude that the immigrants wish 'to adapt to the new culture and acquire the new second language, while at the same time maintaining their linguistic and cultural heritage' (p. 94). However, the group of students in the sample tended to identify rather more with Israeli culture. Thus the authors suggest that in the long run there is 'assimilation in disguise'.

Despite its title the final essay, by Nonna Kushnirovich of the Ruppin Academic Center, Israel, on 'Immigrant Women's Entrepreneurship', does not concentrate only on women. While the purpose is to test the proposition that immigrant women entrepreneurs suffer a double disadvantage — of being women and immigrants — the method has been to compare them with immigrant men, and also Israeli men and women. Because immigrants often find it difficult to enter the labour market, many become self-employed and, globally, in recent years, 'the growth rate of female entrepreneurs has outpaced that of males' (p. 103). Following a brief survey of recent literature on the

subject, she sets out the research methods of her study, focussing on such questions as, 'What are the barriers encountered by immigrant women entrepreneurs in ongoing business operations and are these barriers ethnicity- and gender-specific?' and 'Are the client networks of immigrant women entrepreneurs ethnically or gender oriented?' The article concludes, briefly, that while there are differences between the four groups, for immigrant women entrepreneurs it is not gender that disadvantages them but rather it is factors relating to immigration and integration.

In general, these essays are useful and interesting and are well up-to-date. They exemplify the statement of the editor, in a brief Introduction, that the researchers, studying members of their own group, need to distance themselves to preserve an impartial stance. By and large this was accomplished. One minor cavil. There are a few infelicitous language usages, which may be due to poor proof-reading, or perhaps to the fact that English is a second or third, or later, language. A few examples are, '*reason d'etre*' (an example from French, p. 6); 'an exiting ... opportunity' (p. 41); 'artists' for 'artistes' (p. 59). But in general the style of writing is clear and unambiguous.

NOTES

[1] 'Execution office' refers to the office which executes the court's orders, especially when an order has been ignored; thus 'execution' is formally correct, but 'executioners' (for the officials) is a little unusual. In England and Wales the execution of the order of a magistrate's court may be undertaken by the bailiff, that of a county court by the sheriff.

[2] Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, *The Absorption of Immigrants: a Comparative Study based mainly on the Jewish community of Palestine and the State of Israel*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954.

[3] J.W. Berry, 'Acculturation as varieties of adaptation' in A.M. Padilla (ed.), *Acculturation: Theory, Models, and Some New Findings*, Boulder, CO. Westview, 1980, pp. 9–25; ibid., 'Immigration, acculturation and adaptation', *Applied Psychology: an International Review*, vol. 46, no. 1, 1997, pp. 5–68.

HAROLD POLLINS

CHRONICLE

In December 2007, the Community Policy Research Group (CPRG) — at the Board of Deputies of British Jews — issued a Report compiled by David Graham and Daniel Vulkan on *Britain's Jewish Statistics 2006*. The Introduction states that the data are collected on an annual basis and can therefore show changes over time. However, we are warned that although the data represent the most up-to-date portrayal of the Jewish community in Britain, and are indicative of actual demographic trends,

> they only represent those Jews who have chosen, or whose families have chosen, to associate themselves with the Jewish community through a formal Jewish act, i.e. circumcision, marriage in a synagogue, dissolution of marriage by a *Beth Din*, Jewish burial or cremation. Consequently, Jews who have not chosen to identify in these ways do not appear in this report.

The authors add that the data are collected regardless of institutional denomination and therefore 'include some individuals who would not be recognised as Jewish by all sections of the Community'.

'Key findings' for 2006 are listed for births, marriages, divorces, and mortality (burials and cremations).

BIRTHS

In Britain, data on religion are not collected by any authority at the time of birth and the CPRG therefore 'uses data on circumcisions as a proxy for calculating the size of the Jewish birth cohort'. Only those male babies whose parents chose to use the services of a *mohel* (whether or not that *mohel* was a member of a professional association) figure in the data. The authors add that they were unable to obtain data from 18 known *mohelim* and that some male babies (who would normally be considered Jewish by religious authorities) are not included in the statistics if they were circumcised by doctors in the hospitals where they were born, without a religious ceremony.

For female births in 2006,

> the total number of circumcisions is factored up using the sex ratio of all births in the national population in the nearest available period. This of course assumes that the Jewish sex ratio at birth is similar to that of the general population.

The inferred Jewish births for 2006, on the basis of these calculations, was 3,314. In 1997, the inferred total of Jewish births was 2,742; by 2004, it had grown to more than 3,000: 3,076; in 2005, 3,339; so that over the

decade to 2006, 'the number of circumcisions recorded provisionally increased by 21%'.

MARRIAGES

As in the case of births, no official national statistics record the religion of each spouse. The Research Group therefore collects data on the number of marriage ceremonies carried out under Jewish religious auspices. Jewish partners (that is, when each spouse is Jewish) who marry only under civil law, are not included in the data; neither are cases where 'only one partner professes to be currently Jewish (which under civil law cannot take place under Jewish auspices)'. The total number of marriages under Jewish auspices in 2006 was 894, a very slight decrease since the previous year's total of 1,000.

The Central Orthodox group (which includes the United Synagogue, the Federation of Synagogues, and other synagogues recognising the authority of the Chief Rabbi) carried out 460 marriage ceremonies in 2006; the strictly Orthodox, 231; the Sephardi, 33; the Masorti, 43; the Reform, 94; and the Liberal, 33. The authors note that there has been a steady growth in the numbers of strictly-Orthodox marriages: they 'represented less than 10% of all marriages in the early 1980s but today are 26%'. On the other hand, there was a marked decrease in the numbers of Reform and Liberal marriages: in 2005, 162 Reform marriages but in 2006, 94 while the Liberal group recorded 48 marriages in 2005 but 33 in 2006.

The Policy Research Group has also obtained data on remarriage. In both 2005 and 2006, most marriages were first marriages for both spouses; in 10 per cent of cases, one of the parties was remarrying following a divorce (and this was so also in 2005).

In 2005, five per cent of marriages were remarriages for both parties but in 2006 that percentage had almost doubled: nine per cent were remarriages for both spouses. In 2006, two per cent of marriages accounted for a union when 'one or other party had been widowed (and neither had been divorced)'.... we estimate that in 188 marriages in 2006 (21%), at least one partner was remarrying.

Age at marriage. For the first time in 2006, the CPRG were able

> to collect data on age at marriage for 643 of the 663 marriages *not* taking place amongst the strictly-Orthodox community. These show average ages at marriage of 34 years for men and 32 years for women. For first marriages (for both partners) only, the average ages are 31 years and 29 years respectively.
>
> Among the population of England and Wales as a whole, for marriages taking place in 2004 (the most recent year for which data are available), the average ages were 31 and 28 respectively.

DIVORCES (*GITTIN*)

Since there are no official statistics on the religion of divorcing couples, the CPRG collect data on religiously sanctioned divorces: *gittin* (plural of *get*). However, many couples who had married under Jewish religious auspices

obtain a divorce only through the civil courts. The data on *gittin* do not therefore reflect the total number of Jews who have officially divorced: they report only 'on couples whose divorce has been ratified by a *beth din* (Jewish religious court)'. There were 248 *gittin* in 2006 and the authors note that 'the number of *gittin* have continued to remain static at an average of 259 per year' over the 1997 to 2006 period.

BURIALS and CREMATIONS

There are no official statistics recording an individual's religion at the time of death. The CPRG collects data on persons who have chosen (or whose families have chosen for them) to be buried or cremated under Jewish auspices.

> Consequently a decline or a 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.

Cremation is not permitted within Orthodox Judaism, but both the Reform and the Liberal movements in the United Kingdom do allow it. In 2006, there were 782 funerals carried out under Reform or Liberal auspices. Data for 768 of the 782 funerals 'reveal that there were 312 cremations, amounting to 40% of the total. By comparison, around 72% of all deaths in the UK in 2006 were followed by cremation'.

The total number of recorded Jewish deaths in 2006 was 3,107 'which represents a continuation of the decline recorded in recent years'.

The denominational breakdown for 2006 is as follows: Central Orthodox: 2,088; Strictly Orthodox: 157; Sephardi: 68; Masorti: 12; Reform: 541; and Liberal: 241. The total of 3,107 represents a decline of four per cent on the 2005 total of 2005 (3,221).

*

The Jewish Lads' and Girls' Brigade in a 2007 Newsletter claims to be the United Kingdom's oldest Jewish youth organisation, founded in 1895. In 2006, the Brigade 'found a way to commemorate the 350th anniversary of the resettlement of Jews in Britain in style':

> And do it in style they did, as permission was granted by the Lord Chamberlain's Office for the roads to be closed so that the JLGB could march from Wellington Barracks, past Buckingham Palace, down the Mall and onto Trafalgar Square... to join the 350th Anniversary celebrations on Trafalgar Square.

*

The Institute for Jewish Policy Research, in London, published in April 2008 a 'policy debate' entitled 'Is Europe Good for the Jews? Jews and the Pluralist Tradition in Historical Perspective' by Steven Beller. The back cover of the 11 page publication states:

> The Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR) is an independent think tank working for an inclusive Europe, where difference is cherished and common values prevail.

The front page declares:

> The growing trend in the Jewish community to raise the alarm about Europe and the 'new anti-semitism' is alarmist and misplaced. The main threat to Jews in Europe lies in the reassertion of atavistic nationalist ideologies and the rise in the persecution of minorities, not in the growth of the transnational institutions of the European Union. . . .
>
> . . . Under the Hapsburg monarchy Jews, the archetypal different ethnicity, could *potentially* exist and co-exist within a complex, plural system of other ethnicities, religious communities and nationalities.
>
> This *potential* for Jews to be regarded both as Jews and as full members of the wider community has now been largely realized in today's Europe. Jews can be Jews *and* Europeans *and*, for example, British (even English) without any conceptual or logical discomfort. In that sense Europe is definitely good for the Jews.
>
> Jews can only uphold their time-honoured religious and secular tradition by opposing injustice in all its forms, and by unmasking false, one might say idolatrous, partial universals when they see them. This goes for the aggrandizing and absolutizing claims of ethnonationalism of all kinds, even when that nationalism happens to be Jewish. It is European Jews' diasporic, critical-pluralist tradition that chimes with the best, inclusive elements in both Jewish and European history, and is by far the best way forward for Jews, Europe and indeed humanity as a whole.

*

The July–September 2007 issue of the *Archives de sciences sociales des religions* (no. 139) includes an article by Madalina Vartejanu-Joubert entitled 'Pourquoi les prophètes ne rient-ils pas?' (Why do prophets not laugh?). The English-language abstract at the end of the article (p. 26) states:

> The article analyses the passage, in ancient Judaism, from joke suspicion to joke praise as a way of achieving truth. One began by stating the fact — of common sense — that the biblical prophets reject almost completely the ludicrous and one tried to explain this phenomenon by using concepts and methods of cultural anthropology. . . . Then one showed how Judaism passes from a conception of 'univocal truth' to a conception of 'plural truth'. To the first corresponds the biblical and qumranic seriousness, to the second the rabbinic joke. The prophet legitimates his word post factum, through the advent of what have been announced, the rabbi through the proofs he is able to provide. Those figures are evocative of their respective societies' way of understanding itself: on one side a community of world view, on the other, a community of game rules.
>
> Key words: Judaism, laughter, truth, prophet, rabbi.

The next article in the same issue of the *Archives* is by Julia David; it is entitled 'De la tradition juive à la critique sociale'. The English-language abstract at the end of the article (p. 44) states:

> The rediscovery of Judaism such as it was experienced in the face of modernity at the end of the Eighteenth Century turned out to be

paradoxical: following the Emancipation and the cracks it had caused, it constituted an act of reinvestment as far as identity and culture were concerned, and yet, ever since, it has revealed the uncertainties of a problematic transmission and an altered bond. The phenomenon of return and re-adhesion to Jewish tradition . . . are phenomena which constantly nag at memory and disturb legacy. From the specific demand, dictated by their minority status, that the Jews resist the temptation of assimilation, to the deeply unsettling events of the century, which so often pushed the Jews to the brink of the abyss, there are scores of reasons to perceive those backward-going processes as particularly difficult.

We are faced with a double impossibility: of ignoring Jewish history on the one hand, and of restoring it on the other, and this very double impossibility led so many Jewish intellectuals to criticize modernity. . . . in the philosophy of return, two trends coexist, both separate and complementary and always interrelated: an attempt at re-legitimizing Jewish traditions, and a certain wariness of the promises of the Aufklärung [the Enlightenment] and of the philosophies of Progress.

Key words: philosophy of return, Jewish tradition, social criticism, crisis of modernity, Jewish thinkers.

*

The January–March 2007 issue of the *Archives* (no. 137) included an article by Martine Gross, 'Les rabbins français et l'homoparentalité. Discours et attitudes' (pp. 65–84). The author notes that rabbis in France, whether orthodox or liberal, are very seriously concerned about the fact that Judaism condemns homosexuality but that since it is being increasingly believed that homosexuality is not an illness (but a permanent sexual inclination which cannot be eradicated by any form of treatment) a rabbi must show compassion but cannot openly welcome homosexuals, practising homosexuals, in his congregation. The serious problem for Jewish homosexuals who bring up children in their households is about explaining to their children how they are related to their gay father or lesbian mother (adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate mother) and then to bring them up as practising Jews if Jewish rabbis do not welcome the parents of such children.

In 1977, a group of homosexuals in France founded an association which they called *Beit Haverim* ('house of friends' in Hebrew). The author gives the results of research carried out among members of that association and among rabbis in France of traditional and liberal Judaism. The author states that the members of *Beit Haverim* practise their Judaism in a traditional fashion, in their homes, with members of their families, with friends, or with fellow-members of their association. Since they are uncertain about a welcome in a synagogue, they choose a small group where they are assured of a warm welcome but they have not rejected the Jewish community of the country.

As for the religious authorities, the ultra-Orthodox as well as the Orthodox 'condemn without the possibility of an appeal' homosexual practices while French liberal Judaism will ordain rabbis whose homosexuality is publicly recognized and will bless same-sex unions. Between these two extremes, Conservative Judaism tries to find a middle way. Some of their rabbis will

'accept' the civil unions of same-sex couples but will not allow religious marriage ceremonies for such couples: the situation in France in these cases is in marked contrast with that of Jewish homosexuals in England and in the United States, according to the author.

*

In August 2007, a rabbi who is the outreach director of Liberal Judaism in England, said in an interview that there was a sharp rise in requests to give blessings to mixed-faith marriages. The movement introduced a policy a few years ago to allow rabbis to perform ceremonies for mixed-faith couples, even in synagogues; but these are quite distinct from a Jewish wedding ceremony. He was quoted as stating:

> We introduced mixed-faith blessings as a rabbinic initiative. We were very much aware that people want ritual in their lives, especially to mark significant life-events... we provide a first experience of Judaism for many non-Jewish partners, while the Jewish partner is pleasantly surprised that they are not turned away at the door.

A condition of such a blessing ceremony is 'a commitment to be part of the community and raise Jewish children'. Another Liberal rabbi, whose congregation is in Hertfordshire, commented that in the last few months he had officiated at 'an equal number of Jewish marriages and mixed-faith blessings' and added:

> Mixed-faith marriage is a reality of the Jewish community and Liberal Judaism tries to recognise that. Many Jewish partners, and often non-Jewish ones, are enthusiastic for their children to be brought up in a Jewish environment. Without that commitment, I wouldn't do a blessing.

In one of the newest Liberal congregations, in Manchester, they started an 'access to Judaism' course which includes some non-Jewish partners who attend either for conversion or to improve their knowledge of Judaism.

*

An article in *The Times* (of London) of 28 July 2007 (p. 42) states:

> Across Poland, long-buried Jewish roots are poking above the surface ... a small, dedicated group of rabbis is trying to rekindle Judaism in a country that many Jews worldwide see as cursed terrain.

Poland's Chief Rabbi explained that after the Holocaust, many Poles left Poland or left Judaism, while most of the remaining Jews (nervous about antisemitism) went under cover. Some have now come out. *The Times* reporter, Roger Boyes, writes from Wisla:

> More than a hundred Polish Jews have been gathering in a summer camp in Wisla, a mountain resort close to the Czech border, to compare notes about their hidden lives.

They were given instruction about Judaism, instruction which the journalist reports to be 'both practical and learned', describing the beginning of a lesson about ritual cleansing. In 1968, some discovered that they were Jews only

when they were thrown out of the country in a communist antisemitic purge. Those who had remained and witnessed the fall of communism eventually told their children that they were Jews. Maciej Pawlak said:

> My mother told me I was Jewish when I was 14. Until then all I knew was that I shouldn't attend Christian religion classes at school.

In 2007, he was 30 and had become the first Polish-born rabbi for 40 years and one of the leaders of the Jewish revival. The rabbis who had come to modern post-war Poland were Americans and Israelis. In the 1930s there had been about three and a half million Jews in Poland, a country which had been for about half a millenium Europe's most important Jewish sanctuary. That did spark friction with the non-Jewish majority, especially in rural areas — allegedly sometimes fuelled by Catholic priests.

The Germans established their death camps throughout Poland, not just in Auschwitz. There are believed to be only a few thousand Jews in the country nowadays, most of them in their seventies and eighties in Wroclaw. The rabbi of Wroclaw is quoted as stating:

> The bulk of people attending my synagogue will, sadly, be dead in 15 years' time . . . Wherever there is a Jew, there is an obligation of another Jew to help him.

Indeed, Jewish benefactors from the United States and Europe have established Jewish schools in Poland and across Central Europe, as well as summer and winter camps, workshops, youth clubs, and scholarships.

The reporter of *The Times* comments that Poland's ultra-nationalist movement does still make provocative statements and 'snipes at Jewish ''profiteering'' ' but that antisemitism now

> is not remotely comparable to its prewar or immediate postwar levels. It is a backdrop to extreme right-wing politics . . . The mayor of Lodz — site of one of the biggest Nazi-run ghettos — recently invited a group of teenagers from northern Israel to shield them from the bombing of Hezbollah — unthinkable a decade ago. Local councils, once an engine of vitriolic anti-Semitism as they fought off Jewish restitution claims, are becoming open and engaged. . . .
>
> Civic courage is on the rise and that, more than anything, makes life safe again for the new generation of Jews.

The Wroclaw rabbi is quoted as saying, as he held up his baby daughter, 'And here is the youngest Jew in Wroclaw'.

*

In April 2008, the Prince of Wales opened a new Jewish community centre in Krakow. He had been on a visit to Poland in 2002 and had met some of the town's elderly Jews and had enquired about what he could do to help them. On his return to England, he was put in touch with the English-based charity, World Jewish Relief and the scheme to build a Jewish community centre was launched. He is said to have made 'an unprecedented personal contribution to the cost' and to have closely followed the progress of establishing the new centre. During the opening ceremony, Prince Charles

praised World Jewish Relief and the donors and said: '... without them and their response to my "interference" we would not have a centre like this'. He declared:

> For me it's very moving indeed to be able to join the Jewish community here in Krakow, who I know have suffered so much in the past, and to be able to join you today on the steps of this new community centre to which so many people have contributed through their remarkable generosity. For both my wife and myself, going around it and seeing some of the uses to which it's being put has warmed our hearts.

*

Scopus is the magazine of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Its 2008 number states that the university has four campuses, three in Jerusalem and one in Rehovot. It has 22,600 full-time students; these include 11,700 undergraduates; 6,600 masters students; and 2,500 doctoral candidates. There are also 1,800 overseas and pre-academic students. As for research, there are '3,400 projects in progress in University departments and in 100 subject-related and interdisciplinary research centres'. On page 14, *Scopus* states that the university

> has been actively exploring — and setting into motion — innovative approaches to teaching and research... The new Institute for Medical Research is not just about buildings. The existing facilities were built in 1966, when the concept of research was very different and distinct disciplines worked separately... Tackling any scientific problem today necessitates a multidisciplinary approach.... We cannot make strides without a combination of expertise.

The Hebrew University's Faculty of Humanities is also

> undergoing a revolution of its own.... New projects being planned include an international graduate school, a prestigious fellowship program and a new constellation for undergraduate and graduate teaching programs.

For several years, neuroscience at the Hebrew University has been characterized by 'intensive interdisciplinary and cross-Faculty co-operation' and now

> this discipline is poised to take a giant leap forward by means of an influx of new talent and additional state-of-the-art research facilities. Building on its advances such as deep brain stimulation as a treatment for Parkinson's disease and increased understanding of artificial limb movement, it is expected that the Hebrew University will be rated one of the top centers for neuroscience worldwide.

The Vice-President for External Relations is quoted as commenting that none of these advances would be possible without the support of the Friends of the Hebrew University, who are strengthening these important initiatives and he stressed:

> There can be no more important legacy for Jerusalem, or for Israel. Support of these projects not only contributes towards a positive impact on Israeli

> society, but also on the world.... The brain drain is a major threat to Israel's future — we have lost too many of our best and brightest in recent years. By providing jobs and first-rate research infrastructures, we can provide a viable alternative in Israel to universities abroad for Israel's most talented young minds.

On pages 18–19, *Scopus* highlights the case of a leading scientist returning to Israel and establishing a centre which harnesses biotechnology 'to develop affordable healthcare and help the underserved'. That leading scientist is Professor Boris Rubinsky. He came to Israel from Romania at the age of 13,

> served in the army for five years and received his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology before going to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for his doctorate. He was appointed to the faculty of the University of California at Berkeley in 1980.

Professor Rubinsky is the 'inventor of a revolutionary tumor therapy' which is non-invasive; it is called 'irreversible electroporation (IRE), and says that it

> kills tumors within microseconds by using electrical pulses and without damaging eurrounding tissue.... All that is required is to insert probe-like needles into the tumor, apply a brief electrical field and the tumor dies. The technique is so simple that it could be performed by nurses who generally give flu shots, thus enabling its use in clinics in remote areas and in the developing world.

Professor Rubinsky is quoted as stating that

> IRE is regarded as a highly promising treatment for cancers in the brain, liver and, possibly the pancreas — in all these cases, avoiding damage to surrounding areas is essential.

He established the Research Center for Biomedical Engineering in the Service of Humanity and Society in the University of Jerusalem in 2006 and moved back to Israel in 2007. The graduate programme, which he is directing, is thriving with

> six doctoral and three master's students already enrolled. Without even advertising, applications have been coming in from all over Israel. The program brings all the University's areas of expertise into one focused application, making it a highly attractive option for serious students of biomedical engineering.

Professor Rubinsky claims that in all the projects of the Centre,

> ... we are not only developing affordable and easy-to-use detection and imaging, but also easy-to-implement treatments. In doing so, we seek to live up to our philosophy that the best medicine is also that which is most available.

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The Middle East Journal is a quarterly published by the Middle East Institute of Washington D.C. Its Autumn 2007 issue includes the following articles:

'Israeli Policy Towards the Occupied Palestinian Territories: The Economic Dimension, 1967–2007' by Arie Arnon; 'Between Reality and Secrecy: Israel's Freedom of Navigation through the Straits of Tiran, 1956–1967' by Eitan Barak; and a review article by Gabriel (Gabi) Sheffer, 'Civil-Military Relations in Israel'. That review article considers four books: *Defense and Diplomacy in Israel's National Security Experience: Tactics, Partnership and Motives* by David Rodman, published in 2005; *The Israeli Military and the Origins of the 1967 War: Government, Armed Forces and Defense Policy 1963–1967* by Ami Gluska, published in 2007; *1967: Israel, The War, and the Year that Transformed The Middle East* by Tom Segev, 2007; and *Generals in the Cabinet Room: How the Military Shapes Israeli Policy* by Yoram Pen, 2006. Professor Sheffer (Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) states in the concluding paragraph of his review article (p. 717):

> Finally, it is interesting to note that in varying degrees the four books conclude that Israeli democracy, though somewhat flawed, has been maintained and is functioning reasonably well despite the IDF's [Israeli Defense Force's] and other security organizations' deep involvement in Israel's social and political affairs. In view of what is really happening now in Israel, ... their similar conclusions are both inaccurate and problematic.

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The Spring 2008 issue of *The Middle East Journal* includes reviews of the following books: *The Arab-Israeli Conflict: A History* by David W. Lesch, published in 2007; *The Politics of the Palestinian Authority: From Oslo to al-Aqsa* by Nigel Parsons, 2005; *Barriers to Democracy: The Other Side of Social Capital in Palestine and the Arab World* by A.A. Jamal, 2007; *American Policy Toward Israel: The Power and the Limits of Beliefs* by Michael Thomas, 2007; and *The Zionist Masquerade: The Birth of the Anglo-Zionist Alliance, 1914–1918* by James Reston, 2007.

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Sociological Papers is a publication of the Sociological Institute for Community Studies of Bar-Ilan University. Its volume 11, 2005–06 (received in London in 2007) includes the following articles: 'Jewish Identity: Opinions of Secular Jews in Israel' by Edith Elchanani; 'The Religious News Media Nexus in Israel' by Yoel Cohen; 'An Ethnic-Controlled Economy in Transition: Jewish Employment From European Semi-Colonialism in Ottoman Macedonia to Greek Nation-State' by Orly C. Meron; and 'New Insights about Romanian Anti-Semitic Legislation Between the Two World Wars' by Lucian Butaru.

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La Rassegna Mensile di Israel is a publication of the Jewish Community of Italy. Its September–December 2006 number (received in London in May 2008) includes several articles, in Italian, on Jewish communities in Europe. There are brief 'summaries' in English on pages iii–viii. The first article is by Patrick Cabanel and considers the decision of French Jews in the nineteenth century

to change their names from 'juifs' to 'israélites'. The English summary refers to 'this "idealistic dream"' and adds:

> We can say that it was in fact a dialectic, a tension at work in every Jew, between the "paria" and the "parvenu", the ancient religion and the new secular society. A historical moment, now obsolete, but important for the history of our societies.

Another article, by Jacques Ehrenfreund, is about 'German Israelitism and the Management of the Past during the 19th Century'. Israelitism is 'the deep and deliberate desire to integrate into the nation'. Gadi Luzzatto Voghera writes on '"Israelitism" in Italy in the last two centuries'. The English summary states:

> "Israelitism" was an attempt of mediation between the faith in the God of Israel and the new role of the Jews in the modern world. Actually, "Israelitism" failed and left most of the Jews of Italy and Europe unprepared to understand the new dangerous challenge of Anti-Semitism.

An article by Lucienne Germain considers 'Anglo-Jewry, from the Industrial Revolution to World War II: an "Israelite" British Model?'. The English summary states:

> Within the Jewish European context, Anglo-Judaism stands out chiefly because of its exceptional continuity on English soil, never experiencing any major rupture, State anti-Semitism or deportation since the "Readmission" of Jews under Cromwell (1656).

Paul Zawadzki writes on 'The Destiny of a Western Dream: The Paradigm of the Polish Israelite and its Failure'. The author contrasts French and Polish 'Israelitism' and concludes: 'In Poland, the paradigm of the Israelite was merely an impossible dream'.

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According to newly-released data in February 2008, the Haredi (Ultra-Orthodox Jews) community of Manchester has shown a greatly increased birth rate in the decade 1997–2007: from 91 to 164. This increase has been calculated on the basis of the celebratory gatherings held by a boy's parents on the first Friday night after the birth: a *shalom zachar*. There has also been an increase in the number of the city's haredi marriages. The researcher who compiled the statistics is reported as saying:

> The sizes of Charedi families have increased over the past 40 years. It is not unusual for families to have more than 10 children today.

In June 2008, a report on a study of the population of Hackney (in North-East London) stated that the borough's Haredi population numbers 15,409 and estimates that a further 4,300 live in the neighbouring borough of Haringey. The average Haredi household in Hackney has 6.3 persons, in contrast to the average of 2.3 in the borough generally. A spokeswoman of the Orthodox charity Interlink commented that the findings carry a higher credibility rating since they come from a local authority. The study was

carried out because council officials believed that there was a significant undercount in the 2001 Census. The borough is one of the poorest in the country. More than half of haredi households (58.7 per cent) received means-tested benefits, compared with 38.6 per cent on average for Hackney as a whole. However, according to the director of Agudas Israel Community Services, the high rate of benefits is for the reason that large haredi families are living in private accommodation: 'A three- or four-bedroom house costs £400 a week, whereas a four-bedroom council house is £150 a week'. About half of the Hackney haredim are under 19 years of age, a much higher percentage than that of Hackney generally.

In January 2008, the United Kingdom's only care home for Jewish mothers and their babies was heavily in debt and under threat of closure. It was set up some years ago to provide for mothers with large families a place to recover after the birth of a baby. Some pay a reduced fee while others are not able to pay anything and the home, which relies heavily on sponsorship, runs at a very great loss. The manager is quoted as stating:

> In our community . . . we have much larger families, some with 18 children. Many of them live in cramped conditions and have other young children, so this gives them a chance to rest. . . . It prevents post-natal depression and family breakdown.