The Old and New Media Issue

SPRING 2018

FORUM:

Old Media, New Media: Librarians and Archivists Reflect

AJS PERSPECTIVES

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In memory of

Jonathan M. Hess

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Co-editor of *AJS Perspectives*, Fall 2015–Spring 2018

יהי זכרון ברוך

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Please direct correspondence to:
Association for Jewish Studies
Center for Jewish History
15 West 16th Street
New York, NY 10011

Voice: (917) 606-8249
Fax: (917) 606-8222
E-Mail: ajs@associationforjewishstudies.org
Web Site: www.associationforjewishstudies.org

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Jonathan M. Hess

Laura S. Lieber

Christine Hayes

Warren Hoffman

David Stern

Gabriel Levy

Jodi Eichler-Levine

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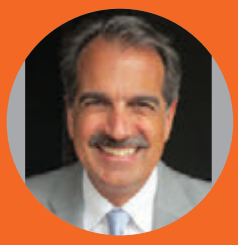
Ben Schachter


Gary A. Rendsburg

Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky

Moshe Yagur

Oded Zinger

Elana Levine

Michael Z. Newman

Laura Arnold Leibman

Ira Wagman

Rebecca L. Stein

Ty Alhadeff

Rachel Ariel

Zachary M. Baker

Sarah Bunin Benor

Eitan Kensky

Sean Martin

From the Editors

Dear Colleagues,

While our age may not be more saturated with media than any other, it may be more self-aware of its media saturation, and more self-absorbed by it. We consume online news, at times obsessively, even as we wonder if we are being manipulated—or monitored—by sinister online organizations. Many of us use social media, and some of us "manage" or even "curate" our social media "presence." We interact with scholarly materials online—from digitized manuscripts to electronic offprints—as well as with other scholars. We guest lecture in classes using FaceTime and endure the awkwardness of Skype interviews. Even if we don't tweet, we can't ignore Twitter; and we increasingly try, with varying levels of success and enthusiasm, to "go paperless," either for the sake of the earth or the bottom line. We no longer wonder whether "Google" ought to be a verb.

And yet, for all the omnipresence of the digital world, our excitement at receiving an email generally pales beside the rare wonder of receiving a genuine letter. Kindle books cannot (yet!) replace the tactile, at times even olfactory, experience of interacting with a printed volume. And, turning our attention to the Jewish world, we know of no synagogue (yet!) where the Torah is read from a screen. Jewish people, so happy to embrace their identity as "People of the Book" (a title given to Jews, as well as to Christians and Sabians, in the Qur'an), continue to embrace one of the oldest media technologies in the synagogue: the parchment scroll. But those who wish to stream the Torah reading over the Internet are increasingly able to do so. (So far as we are aware, one cannot—yet!—constitute a minyan on Facebook or in Second Life.)

In this issue of *AJS Perspectives*, we turn our attention directly to the complexities of the media landscapes in which Judaism is lived and by which Judaism and Jewish life are mediated. In part 1, David Stern, Gabriel Levy, Jodi Eichler-Levine, Jeffrey Shandler, and Ben Schachter all address the issue of developments in, and complications of, changes in Jewish media, whether the issue is text or textile, archives or artistry. In part 2, Gary Rendsburg, Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky, and Moshe Yagur and Oded Zinger highlight how scholars who work in antiquity are among those at the forefront of a digital revolution, one in which ancient texts are read anew, and in vastly new ways—although sometimes the innovations are not as radical as they at first may seem. In part 3, Elana Levine and Michael Newman, Laura Arnold Leibman, Ira Wagman, and Rebecca Stein and Adi Kuntsman remind us that new media are not an unalloyed boon. Antisemitism, bias, bigotry, and hate speech—all old sins given new reach, vividness, and durability—color much of the digital mediascape. In these instances, Jews and Judaism are as likely to be an object as a subject.

Recognizing that the relationships among media creators, media creations, and media consumers do not occur in a vacuum, we chose to complement the articles in this issue with a forum that gives a voice to librarians and archivists—those who engage in a range of practical and sophisticated ways with the media, often behind the scenes, with a skill that precisely because of its success goes unnoticed. Digital media has proven so seductive in many ways because it has proven so effortless to use, but a great deal of human ingenuity and experience sustains that user experience.

And so, we invite you to enjoy these reflections on past and present, and in some cases, even the near future. Whether you read this in hard copy or via the online platform, we anticipate that you will find something worth liking (or "liking") and sharing (or "sharing")!

Jonathan M. Hess
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Laura S. Lieber
Duke University

From the President

Dear Colleagues,

The infusion of new technologies and social media into the world of Jewish Studies has utterly and irreversibly revolutionized the way we approach our scholarly and professional responsibilities. In classrooms and private studies, in libraries and archives, in museums and Jewish communal institutions, new technologies and media do not merely accompany or even facilitate the work that we do; they *transform* the work that we do.

In my own field of talmudic studies, digital resources make it possible for researchers to check a textual variant at the click of a button, assemble line-by-line synopses of manuscript readings, gain immediate access to Geniza fragments, run word searches through the entire corpus of rabbinic literature, and consult dictionaries, commentaries, and classic works of scholarship without ever needing to check a book out of the library. Certainly, these technologies and media make *old* tasks faster and easier; but more important, they make entirely *new* tasks possible. The very fact that large amounts of data can be quickly and accurately gathered, filtered, and sorted according to criteria set by the researcher *changes* our research questions and as a consequence the very character of our research. (I leave aside for the moment how the ability of students to instantly fact-check every statement in the classroom changes the very character of our teaching!)

The contributors to this issue of *AJS Perspectives* underscore the promise and possibilities of new technologies and media for Jewish Studies academics, students, artists, professionals, and institutions. Their thoughtful reflections have deepened my appreciation of the riches that stand ready to serve us. At the same time, some of our contributors sound a note of caution, perhaps none so expansively as Ira Wagman in "The Facebook of Life." Ira's essay resonated with my own concerns about these new and all-pervasive technologies, especially social media. Simply put, the Internet and the social media platforms it enables are both a blessing and a curse. The blessing of the Internet is its astonishing ability to reach the hearts and minds of millions at the click of a button. The curse of the Internet is its astonishing ability to reach the hearts and minds of millions at the click of a button!

Humans have a less than stellar track record when it comes to partnering intelligence with morality. From atomic fission to surrogate pregnancy, the development and eager embrace of a new technology often occurs before we have had time to consider its ethical implications, let alone develop policies and practices that ensure its deployment for constructive rather than destructive purposes. The Internet and social media are only the latest new technologies to be plagued by ethical dilemmas, including cyberbullying; the viral spread of propaganda, disinformation, and hate; and the disruption of democratic institutions and processes. The abuse of these technologies and their potential negative impact on human relationships as well as social and political institutions has led to the rise of an entirely new field of philosophical inquiry known as cyberethics.

A cyberethicist, I am not. However, one of my first tasks as incoming president of the Association for Jewish Studies was to work with our executive director and board in formulating a set of core values. These core values are intended to guide our interactions internally with one another, and externally with the larger community, as well as other organizations and agencies. Included in these core values are the principles of ethical conduct and good faith (or *bona fides*), which is the general presumption that members will deal with each other honestly, fairly, openly, and constructively, with mutual respect and a shared dedication to the common good. I believe that extending these values to our use of new technologies and social media in matters pertaining to the AJS will ensure that we maximize the potential of these technologies and media to strengthen our organization: we can utilize them to stimulate constructive dialogue, to share valuable resources, to provide broad access to useful information, to generate new ideas; in short, to *build community* as we labor together to fulfill our mission as a learned society.

Christine Hayes
Yale University

From the Executive Director

The AJS (Now Available in 8-Track and Stereophonic Sound!)

Stuffed in my sister's attic are boxes of VHS tapes of Broadway shows and audio cassettes of demo albums that I've collected over the years. As a theater and cast album collector, I can't seem to part with these materials, many of which have never been commercially released or digitized. What can I say? I'm an old soul who is sitting on some 2,000 paper Playbills I've collected from all the shows I've seen over the years (don't worry, I'm not a hoarder!), and I still buy CDs because I like the program booklets. Yet despite this devotion to the old, to material objects, and to outdated media formats, I have not become a Luddite, especially as far as the AJS is concerned.

While you won't see me whipping out the latest iPhone, I am fascinated by technology and the ways that it can connect us and, at times, make our lives easier. (I barely remember how I got work done before the invention of email. Did we use carrier pigeons or two tin cans and a string? It all seems a blur now.)

Here at the AJS there are a number of new technological changes we've been implementing over the last few months:

- In the past year we launched a fully redesigned website that not only looks more contemporary, it makes finding information about the organization easier and more streamlined.

- This spring we are launching a brand-new interface on MyAJS that's more user-friendly and Facebook-like, and will also enable you to connect with your fellow AJS members in new and exciting ways. (Keep your eyes out for the Groups function.)

- At the conference this past December, over 330 people used our new app to navigate the event. We'll be bringing the app back next year with even more functionality.

- Last fall, I was invited to Hamburg, Germany, as part of a team, to learn about a number of projects and initiatives in the world of Jewish Digital Humanities. From new scholarly projects online to databases of previously unavailable archival materials, this consortium of projects and institutions, including the AJS, will be working to create a shared database of Jewish Digital Humanities projects across the world in the coming months.

- This spring we launched a new partnership with Clio (theclio.com), an educational website and mobile application that guides the public to thousands of historical and cultural sites throughout the United States. A team of sixteen AJS members have already signed up to start contributing content. If you'd like to participate, please contact me at whoffman@associationforjewishstudies.org.

All this isn't to say that we're ditching paper. As you hold this issue of *Perspectives* in your hands (or read it online), you'll see that in addition to the fact that this is our second issue in full color, we have a new cover design that features the AJS's new logo and branding, which will permeate all of our publications and collateral. We hope you like this new look, which will help further professionalize the organization as we approach our fiftieth anniversary.

Have an idea for a new technology for the AJS to employ? Send me a note!

However you decide to engage with the AJS, from snail mail to tweeting, we look forwarding to hearing from you.

In the meantime, I'm going to read a book. I love my Kindle, but at the end of the day, I prefer a good hardback.

Warren Hoffman
Association for Jewish Studies

ASSOCIATION FOR **JEWISH STUDIES**

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Jonathan Sarna and Judith Baskin, co-chairs

In time for our 50th anniversary, the AJS is excited to announce the new AJS Legacy Society, a planned giving initiative, and we invite members and supporters to include a gift to the AJS in their estate plans. For more info on the society and how to join, please visit associationforjewishstudies.org/plannedgiving.

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THE **OLD** AND **NEW** MEDIA ISSUE

Old Media, and Older Media

David Stern

Despite being known as the "People of the Book," Jews have been strangely oblivious to the book—that is, to the *material* book, the actual book, the physical object and artifact that Jews have literally held in their hands. Yes, the literary and religious documents of Jewish tradition have been studied by Jews since antiquity, but almost always as texts alone, with an almost utter disregard on the part of their readers as to how these texts were transcribed or what the physical books conveying these texts looked like. Indeed, that very obliviousness to material form may be the single lengthiest line of continuity in the history of Jewish reading. It's an unexamined assumption that has allowed generations of students and readers to connect, almost viscerally, with readers and students who lived and studied the same texts centuries earlier (albeit usually in a different material form). And precisely this obliviousness has enabled Jewish sages and students from the second century to the twenty-first to forge and participate in that great proverbial "conversation" of texts that Jews have conducted since Moses received the Torah at Sinai.

But why look at the materiality of books? Why study the physical forms that Jewish books have taken? Recent scholarship has alerted us to the obvious but profound insight that we do not read "texts." A text is a constellation of verbal meaning, an abstraction that exists only in a reader's head. What we actually read are texts that have been inscribed upon some type of writing platform—a clay or wax tablet, a scroll, a codex (what we normally call a book), or that other kind of tablet made by Microsoft and Apple—in a particular fashion. These concrete specificities of a book's shape—I'm using the term "book" to include all these different types of writing platforms—profoundly affect and shape the way we read a text—whether the text is hand written or printed;

Fig. 1. Page from a Spanish bible written circa 1300. 4.51470003, fol. 90r. Courtesy of the National Library of Israel.

illustrated with pictures or decorated with designs; or accompanied by commentaries on the page; or presented in its naked solitary splendor, to speak only of the most general cases. Each of these modalities of a text's material transmission has an impact on how we understand its meaning. By "understand," I mean not just interpret its words, but also comprehend the place that the text as a whole inhabits in the world—its larger cultural, social, literary, and religious significance. And these larger contexts, in turn, profoundly shape the ways in which we read and understand even the smallest textual details. Furthermore, the book as a material object often comes to possess a symbolic or strategic meaning in its own right—religious, political, social—that goes far beyond the meaning of the text it conveys.

In a recent book, *The Jewish Bible: A Material History*, I explore the various consequences of these insights in respect to the Hebrew Bible (and its various translations) and the changes it has undergone in its material shape from the time of its origins in the ancient Near East down to the contemporary age of the digital book. Within the narrow space of this miniessay I can't elaborate in detail on any of these changes; but let me offer a few quick examples to demonstrate how different these material forms of the same text—the Hebrew Bible—have been, and the kinds of impact and effects the changes have made.

We can begin with the earliest form of the Hebrew Bible—a scroll made from animal skins. These early scrolls were not, however, the monumental *sefer Torah* we know today. They were much smaller scrolls, with each scroll typically containing one biblical book—for example, the Torah, the Pentateuch, consisted of five separate scrolls that may have been kept together in a single container—and scribes appear to have written these scrolls not much differently than scribes throughout the ancient Near East and Mediterranean basin wrote other texts. Because of their relatively small size, these scrolls were not difficult to read; a student could easily hold one in his or her lap. In short, they were "ordinary" books.

When the rabbis turned these five scrolls into a *sefer Torah*, they did more than change the size of the scroll; they radically altered its very identity and character. The *sefer Torah* is not an ordinary scroll. It is not easily used for reading or study. It is really only fit to be chanted aloud sequentially within the liturgical service in the synagogue. In turn, the rabbis selected from the panoply of scribal conventions with which earlier scrolls had been written, reified them in the form of Halakhah—indeed, they characterized their authority as *halakhah le-Moshe mi-Sinai*, that is, as laws given orally to Moses on Sinai—and thus brought what they called the Written Torah, the Hebrew Bible, under the mantle of the Oral Torah, namely, the corpus of their own traditions. Through such halakhic stipulations, the rabbis transformed the *sefer Torah* from a book into a ritual artifact. Over time, the artifactuality of

the *sefer Torah* was itself developed further. By creating dedicated spaces for the *sefer Torah* within the synagogue's architecture, by casing and costuming the monumental scroll in differently shaped containers and dresses, and by creating rituals for reading the *sefer Torah* and for taking it out and returning it to the ark in processions through the synagogue, the rabbis turned the *sefer Torah* into a kind of icon of the divine presence in the synagogue. (Even if it's a slippery iconicity: nobody in a synagogue has ever believed they are actually hearing God speak when a *ba'al kore* chants from a *sefer Torah*, or thinks they see God when the Torah is carried around; what they hear and see is the word of God and its writing platform in the form of the scroll.)

In the eighth or ninth century, when Jews finally adapted the codex book form, the Hebrew Bible underwent another major change in its materiality. The codex was not merely a new writing platform. Because it was not subject to the same halakhic strictures as a *sefer Torah*, the Bible codex represented a new kind of literary space within Jewish tradition. Vocalization and cantillation marks could be written on its pages, as well as additional texts that could never be inscribed in a *sefer Torah,* like the masorah, a vast corpus of annotations and enumerations of every unusual feature of the biblical text. Most important, the codex was a more economical writing medium than the scroll (if only because scribes could write on both sides of a leaf in a codex, something rarely done in scrolls). The number of Bible codices (and other texts) multiplied exponentially throughout the Jewish world, indeed wherever Jews lived in all their varied diasporic centers.

With the spread of codex production, one of the most prominent features of Jewish book culture also emerged. Jewish books always reflect the materiality of the books produced by the gentile host culture in which the Jews producing their books live. Put simply, this means that a Hebrew Bible produced in an Islamic land in the tenth century will look like an Islamic book of that period, a Qur'an in particular; while a Bible produced in, say, Germany in the thirteenth century will look like a Gothic Latin Vulgate; and so on. At the same time, this very tendency of Jewish books to mirror the books of their host cultures also required Jewish scribes to differentiate their books so as to mark their Jewishness. In the case of the Bible—perhaps the most contested book in all Western culture, with Jews and Christians (and, to a lesser extent, Muslims) fighting fiercely over its "ownership"—the need for Jews to "Judaize" their Bible's materiality (and distinguish it from its Christian counterpart) is one of the keys to understanding the symbolic, extratextual meaning that these books carried.

A few brief examples will illustrate what I mean.

Figure 1 is a page from a Spanish Bible (Jerusalem, National Library of Israel 4° 5147 fol. 90r), written around the year 1300. The biblical text itself—Deuteronomy 25:20–26:17, which includes Moses's farewell song—is laid out in three columns reminiscent of Torah scroll columns (though here they have both vocalization and cantillation marks), while on the top and bottom of the page the masorah magna is written in micrography, miniature writing, which is inscribed in geometric band-like designs. The two designs of interlocking circles beneath them are also composed of micrographic masorah. As in other Bibles composed in lands which once had been part of the Islamic realm, the designs in Sephardic books tend to be either geometric or architectural or floral, and reflect the Islamic aversion to representational figures. Nor is this the only Islamicizing feature of the page. Between the two columns on the right side and beneath the interlocking-circle design is a *parashah* (lection) marker painted in gold leaf that resembles an *ansa*, the ornamental chapter markers used in Qur'ans.

Yet even though this Bible was produced in Spain long after the Christians had conquered it, its material form still reflects that of the Islamic book. This fact would seem to contradict the general rule outlined above that Jewish books tend to reflect the books of their host culture, which in this case was Christian Spain. But this Bible looks nothing like a Christian Bible of the period. In fact, as I and other scholars

Fig. 2. MS or fol. 1212 [Erfurt 2], fol. 1v. Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

Fig. 3. MS or fol. 1212 [Erfurt 2], fol. 146v. Courtesy of Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin.

have suggested, the Islamicizing features of the page may indicate an intentional effort on the part of its Jewish scribe and patron to identify themselves with the other minority culture in Christian Spain—the Muslims—in order to resist the hegemony of the dominant Christian culture. *Not* looking like the host culture's books may have been exactly the point of this Bible's material features.

In contrast, figure 2 (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms or. Fol. 1212 [Erfurt 2], fol. 1v), taken from a giant Bible written in Germany in the late thirteenth century, pictures the beginning of Genesis, which is written in giant Gothic-like Ashkenazic square letters, inside a panel populated with various grotesques—dragons, griffins, and camel-like hybrids—all "drawn" in masoretic micrography. Still more mythical beasts inhabit the roundels at the bottom of the page, again in masoretic micrography. My personal favorite of all these images is figure 3, taken from the same Bible (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin: Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Ms or. Fol. 1212 [Erfurt 2], fol. 146v), which shows two rather bewildered hybrids, one of them either spewing or swallowing a long-tailed bird of masorah, the other looking dazed over his shoulder. Both look like aliens who have just landed on a Hebrew Bible page from outer space.

These grotesques mirror the marginal drawings found in many contemporary Latin Gothic books, but here they have been "Judaized" by, once again, being composed out of masorah. As such they appear to represent what Ivan Marcus has called "inward acculturation," the process by which Jews absorbed and Judaized practices and beliefs from the surrounding Christian culture and thereby made them their own. In the case of both the Sephardic and Ashkenazic Bibles, the masorah written on the page may have been difficult or even impossible to read, but it was not on the page to be read but to serve the purpose of "Judaizing" the book. In the two cultures, the strategies of Judaizing—in one case, identifying with the book culture of the Muslim minority in order to reject that of the Christian majority; in the other, appropriating the imagery of the majority book culture but Judaizing it—may have differed, but it is significant that both used the masorah, the traditional mark of the *Jewish* Bible, to accomplish their strategies.

A final example, from an early printed Bible, the *editio princeps* of the entire Bible published by Joshua Solomon Soncino in Soncino, Italy, in 1488, will illustrate still another conception of the Bible. Figure 4 (Oxford, Bodleian Libraries, Holkham c.1, fol. [107r]), pictures the elaborate opening page of the book of Joshua. The text is set out in a single wide column surrounded not by the traditional masorah, but by an elaborate wood-cut frame that depicts, against an elaborate floral background, a flock of *putti*, little naked cupid-like creatures cavorting in the margins with spears and bows and arrows in their little hands. This frame is a masterpiece of early book art; as we know, Soncino bought it from another Italian printer, Francesco del Tuppo, who had commissioned it for a deluxe edition of Aesop's *Fables* (Naples, 1485). Soncino doubtless reasoned, somewhat talmudically, that if Aesop deserved a frame of this ornate beauty, then all the more so did a Jewish Bible. Despite its apparent incongruity, the frame breathes all the ornate worldliness of Renaissance Italian culture onto the pages of the book, casting the Bible virtually as a work of art within its frame.

The texts in these separate Bibles are more or less identical, but by studying the changing material shapes of these books, one can discern the different meanings that the Bible—as an object, not just as a text—assumed in Jewish culture in its various centers and historical periods, and the separate roles that the Bible, as an iconic object of Jewish identity, occupied in the Jewish mentality.

The observations I've made in this short essay are all drawn from the field now known as the history of the book. This is not a truly new area of scholarship, but it has gained a new prominence and profile within the past several decades, no doubt because we have now entered a new period in book technology, the digital age. The awareness and anxiety attending this recognition has led scholars to turn to the past in order to study earlier transitions in the technologies of reading and writing, doubtless with the hope that understanding the past will help navigate the present, if not the future. What will happen to the Jewish Bible in the digital age? I've gotten some flak for an assertion, in the epilogue to my book, that the digital age will not radically transform the Jewish Bible, not at least as much as it will change (and already has) other Jewish texts like the Talmud, the prayer book, and the Passover Haggadah. I'm willing to defend my assertion, but the truth is that, if there will be a radical change, it is unimaginable now. Still, if the only thing the digital age accomplishes is leading us to look back at the rich and neglected history of the material Jewish book, *dayyenu*.

David Stern is Harry Starr Professor of Classical and Modern Hebrew and Jewish Literature in the Departments of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations and Comparative Literature at Harvard University, and director of Harvard's Center for Jewish Studies. His most recent book is The Jewish Bible: A Material History *(University of Washington Press, 2017).*

Fig. 4. Opening page of the book of Joshua from Soncino Bible, 1488. Holkham c.1, fol. 107r. Courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

אחרי מות משה עבד יהוה ויאמר יהוה אל יהושע בן נון משרת משה
לאמר: משה עבדי מת ועתה קום עבר את הירדן הזה אתה וכל העם
הזה אל הארץ אשר אנכי נתן להם לבני ישראל: כל מקום אשר תדרך
כף רגלכם בו לכם נתתיו כאשר דברתי אל משה: מהמדבר והלבנון
הזה ועד הנהר הגדול נהר פרת כל ארץ החתים ועד הים הגדול מבוא
השמש יהיה גבולכם: לא יתיצב איש לפניך כל ימי חייך כאשר הייתי עם
משה אהיה עמך לא ארפך ולא אעזבך: חזק ואמץ כי אתה תנחיל את
העם הזה את הארץ אשר נשבעתי לאבותם לתת להם: רק חזק ואמץ
מאד לשמור לעשות ככל התורה אשר צוך משה עבדי אל תסור ממנו
ימין ושמאל למען תשכיל בכל אשר תלך: לא ימוש ספר התורה הזה
מפיך והגית בו יומם ולילה למען תשמור לעשות ככל הכתוב בו כי אז
תצליח את דרכך ואז תשכיל: הלא צויתיך חזק ואמץ אל תערץ ואל
תחת כי עמך יהוה אלהיך בכל אשר תלך:

ויצו יהושע
את שוטרי העם לאמר: עברו בקרב המחנה וצוו את העם לאמר הכינו
לכם צדה כי בעוד שלשת ימים אתם עוברים את הירדן הזה לבא לרשת את

Let There Be Light: The Word of God in the Jewish Tradition, Past, Present, and Future

Gabriel Levy

There is an old rabbinic tradition that prophecy stopped after the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in the sixth century BCE. After that point in time, if one wanted to know what YHWH was saying, what Torah was, one had to either read and interpret the Written Torah or find it in the communal discussions of the Oral Torah, first in the Great Assembly, and then more accurately in rabbinic deliberation that came to its pinnacle (and was eventually written down) in the Babylonian Talmud. Such methods of deliberation were taught and passed down. Thus the Talmud, responding to a ruling in the Mishnah and quoting from a baraita (a tannaitic–pre–210 CE–rabbinic tradition not preserved in the Mishnah), declares that in order for a community to be suitable for a devout rabbinic Jew it must have, among another ten things like a court and an outhouse, a "teacher of children" (מלמד תינוקות) (B. Sanhedrin 17b).

This transition from prophecy to Talmud is an important one. In the Hebrew Bible prophecy is understood as the word or "Spirit" of God (דבר ה' or רוח אלהים) coming upon the prophet in such a way that the prophet has no choice but to voice the word of God. It is no small thing for the prophet to hear such words. These are words of a creator God, words that were used to form the very universe itself, world-shaping words, cosmic words. The Torah was written down by God before creation, thus when God spoke to create the world he was actually *reading aloud* (Bereshit Rabbah 1:1). God taught the Jews to read his divine language, giving both the Oral and Written Torah at Sinai, according to the rabbis.

Historically speaking, the emergence of the written word in the Anthropocene meant a whole new medium, a whole new materiality for information. Words took on a physicality that they did not have before written texts. They no longer come to us through our ears but through our eyes. The talmudic method that developed brought the cosmic words back to ears, but not in the same way as prophecy, because to hear the words one must take part in communal back-and-forth, discussion, and argumentation.

For the rabbinic tradition, the Torah reshapes as time moves forward. Like a river it flows into new forms of media. Learned Jews thus need to be particularly adept at following that living fountain as it pours over new terrain. You could say that this is why the Jewish tradition is sometimes rather fixated on language and its new media. I would argue that different media present different terrains, have different ecologies, present different spaces in which information flows and communication takes place.

Jenny Odell, *The Pile*, 2015. Digital print, 36 x 48 in. Courtesy of the artist.

Really Old Media

There is a natural history to the flow of communication systems; indeed, you probably could not have *biological life* without at the same time having some sort of communication system. Even the most primitive organisms must be able to take in information from their environment and react to it in some way. In this way, processing information, cognition, and life are ways of doing the same thing. Indeed, we can say life evolved into written texts. Though, like Torah, there is an ambiguity because DNA is itself, as Robert Pollack notes in *Signs of Life: The Language and Meanings of DNA,* "a work of literature, a great historical text," that is, the biological code that underwrites living things already is some sort of written text.

Communication systems change over time; different species may have vastly different forms, and some systems can be more adaptive in certain environments. Human animals, for example, have language, which shares many features with other animals, but seems to be particularly good at conveying complex information in the form of clear, repeatable propositions. The idea that some communication systems may be more adaptive is one possible explanation for the disappearance of *Homo neanderthalensis* and the expansion of *Homo sapiens sapiens* (anatomically modern humans) somewhere around 35–40,000 BP, or rather, one "technological adaptive system" which must have included robust linguistic ability, probably overwhelmed the one that did not.

In *The Symbolic Species*, Terrance Deacon argues that ancient human beings didn't evolve to get language, rather *language evolved to get us*. You can think of language as something like a virus that adapted to us, rather than the other way around. If religions are like languages, perhaps we can say something similar about them. They adapt to us in time and space. Judaism, or what Jacob Neusner called "Judaic Systems," appear adept at adapting to new media ecologies—because that's where they find the word of YHWH, the language of life and creation.

It wasn't until the age of agriculture at the end of the last ice age that the first writing systems (that we know of) began to emerge in human societies. It is just after this time that we find societies with specific classes of individuals who specialize in transacting with the written word: educators, rabbis, professors, and so on. Judaism is a particular form of such dedication.

We are now in the midst of the next great communicative transformation in the form of computer-mediated technologies.

Really New Media

The word of God may have flowed into books, radio, television, and film in the modern age, but in recent years it has really flowed into computer-mediated technologies. If you read Torah on a screen, the materiality is no longer ink and parchment or leather: at the most basic level it is zeros and ones in computer memory, which today is most often encoded as charged or uncharged electrons on an SSD. In his beautiful book, *The Talmud and the Internet*, Jonathan Rosen makes the case that the Talmud is a prefiguration of the Internet. Anyone who has used both technologies is likely to agree, especially in the way it is possible to go down infinite rabbit holes, meandering wormholes. The Talmud is hypertextually linked to the entire Jewish tradition, a mix of Oral and Written Torah.

The materiality of the Talmud provides the space in which we interact with that technology. In other words, unless it is a digitized version you are reading, you must actually pick up a book, flip some pages, search the letters with your eyes, to trace your path through the tradition. It is not only semantic information that is exchanged. We also must not forget about other economies: a full set of the Babylonian Talmud will set you back a few thousand dollars.

After the digital revolution, our media ecology has differentiated like no other time. We've learned a lot more about the wormholes. We've learned they can rigidify and sediment—so we get something like red and blue feeds on Facebook—we get our own personal streams curated by corporations and their AIs. I would argue that each platform can be differentiated with regard to its space and terrain. For example, compare the three most popular platforms of Twitter, Facebook, and Google. They have each carved a rather monolithic niche in Internet space. Importantly, they are all about the Word, about communication, but in quite different ways. Imagine how the Spirit of YHWH, which once came directly to the prophet, can inhabit these media spaces.

Monetization also works differently with the new media. It's all free on the front end. Google, for example, lets you Google for free. You can search for anything you want with a few search terms. A secret algorithm controls what you see, where you go next. Google owns that information. Google knows a lot about how we search for things, what rabbinic Judaism calls *derash*. Google gets its power by controlling the way most people start on the Internet. It can afford to be open in this respect. By contrast Facebook has walls; Google search doesn't access Facebook. There is an inside and an outside to your Facebook profile. Facebook controls your feed, guiding you mostly within its own platform, directing your attention. Because of the personal nature of the platform, Facebook is able to learn much more about you than just your search habits. Facebook owns this information. Twitter seems to still be trying to figure out the best way to monetize your behavior on its platform. Though they are experimenting with longer tweets, Twitter is driven much more by short messages. It is much more clearly professing the Word. The "leader of the free world" speaks to us relatively directly through Twitter.

As Yuri Slezkine writes in his book *The Jewish Century*, modernization is about "everyone becoming urban, mobile, literate, articulate, intellectually intricate, physically fastidious, and occupationally flexible. Thus modernization is about everyone becoming Jewish. . . . but no one is better at being Jewish than the Jews." Judaic systems are flowing into these media. What will they look like in a thousand more years?

Gabriel Levy is professor of Religious Studies at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, Norway, and chairperson of the board for the Interdisciplinary PhD Research School, Authoritative Texts and Their Reception at the University of Oslo. He is the author of Judaic Technologies of the Word: A Cognitive Analysis of Jewish Cultural Formation *(Routledge, 2014). See www.gabriellevy.com.*

Mediating Moses and Matzah

Jodi Eichler-Levine

During an otherwise glorious spring week in Los Angeles, in the middle days of Passover 2017, I was haunted by the ghost of Charlton Heston. I was visiting the City of Angels to conduct interviews for my book project on Jews, craft, and material culture. Late one night, I flipped the channels on the hotel room television and stumbled onto a screening of *The Ten Commandments* in all its Technicolor glory. It was uncanny, watching De Mille from a space adjacent to the dream factory itself, *erev* Easter. I had forgotten how much livestock is used during the departure from Egypt scene. There were a lot of sheep. And I thought about yarn, and freedom, and the small objects being made daily by Jewish women for their families and friends in this city where big blockbusters are produced for the masses.

Two days later, Heston—still clad in his Moses garb—was staring up at me from the colorful quilted folds of a matzah cover. How did this come to pass?

A matzah cover mediates on multiple levels. Its basic function is to hold three (or more) pieces of unleavened bread. It has no ritual specifications—a napkin would do. It may contain lettering, images, phrases, colors, textures. It mediates as a ritual object, one that shelters one of the holiday's core symbolic foodstuffs until the appropriate moment in the Passover seder. It may also convey information about a family, standing in for history if it is an heirloom, about wealth if it is made of sumptuous fabrics, or about Passovers past if it is spotted with red wine stains.

Or, it may mediate in even more intentional ways. It may narrate or tell a story about its creator's vantage point on

the universe. Such was the case with the cover on which I spied Charlton Heston. I found it in a large pile of quilted objects at the home of Cathy Perlmutter, then-president of the Pomegranate Guild of Judaic Needlework and an avid craft blogger. Among dozens of other objects, Cathy showed me a plethora of matzah covers. There was a Pokémon-themed matzah cover from the year one of her children was engrossed in that world. Another featured a carefully, ornately illustrated leaf of lettuce. Others featured trompe l'oeil fabric that resembled the beige grains of a sheet of matzah itself.

Then there was a matzah cover she calls "Old Plagues on Them, New Plagues on Us." The old plagues were predictable, drawn from the book of Exodus narrative: blood, locusts, etc. But the new plagues—they were something else. According to Cathy, they were what she considered to be modern plagues in 2001, when she made the piece, including, but not limited to: "handguns, pollution, narcissism, steroids . . . endangered species (they themselves aren't plagues, but the whole endangerment thing I courageously oppose), despotism, bigotry (under a kingly figure who foreshadows 2016 political candidates?), soda, and, um, cell phones? I can't recall what I had against cell phones, which were new at the time." I learned some of this from Cathy herself in person. However, I found this precise quote not in my interview transcript, but rather, by going to her blog, Gefilte Quilt. You can, too. Fabric objects mediate, and our knowledge of them is transmitted on multiple levels.

Charlton Heston is still haunting me, many months later—this time, on the glass screen of my office computer. Bearded, clad in his flowing red and brown robes, he towers against a background of red and white stripes, juxtaposed with bright cartoon characters holding guns, as well as a bison ("endangered species") and the enormous head of a cartoon king from a deck of cards ("despotism"). He holds one tablet of the law high above his head. A badge reading "NRA" has been carefully stitched across the center of his chest. On the tablet itself, Cathy sewed a tag with another sentence: "Thou shalt not kill." In this collage of fabric and language, she

Cathy Perlmutter, *Old Plagues on Them, New Plagues on Us*, 2001. Cloth (cotton), 12 x 12 in. Photo credit: Jodi Eichler-Levine

performs a midrash on multiple levels. The imperative of the commandment is reinscribed upon a reduplicated celluloid image, this time in cloth. Rendered in the spring of 2001, it calls to me here in 2018.

Media are instruments by which we transmit affect, memory, traditions, experiences: they are the way we make the world knowable. That knowability accrues different emotions in varied contexts. The many meanings of Charlton Heston depend on their medium. The biblical epic I watched in my hotel room was intended to provoke a very different sensation from the image of the same man, in the same costume, appliqued onto Cathy's matzah cover. Both wore the same clothing. One was supposed to inspire fear and trembling and a kind of celluloid awe; the other was meant to frighten us through his association with the NRA and a means of killing—a chilling resonance that, for me personally, has only grown over the years, and which stands out like a wound here in the weeks after the massacre at Marjory Stoneman Douglas high school. Those guns accompanied by blood red stitching, that man with his NRA badge: these modern plagues have come for the first born in an endless repetition of shootings that perhaps not Cathy, not any of us, could have imagined when she stitched the piece seventeen years ago. One production, the film, attempts to command with its grandiose vision; the other, the fabric piece, inserts a critique from a place of intimate smallness. The Heston/Moses of *The Ten Commandments* is a visual and auditory production; the Heston of the matzah cover is both visual and tactile. What would it mean to get matzah crumbs and wine on Charlton Heston? What would De Mille think? The larger-than-life celluloid presence has been quite literally shrunk down to a tiny scale and subjected to the ordering logic of the seder meal.

I linger here, in a space formed by pixels and cloth, material and ritual technologies, because it places us so precisely at the intersections of old and new media and reveals their continuity. There are antique media here—stone tablets, modern mass media—film, and contemporary digital media—blogs. There are cloth media—which are simultaneously as old as primeval needles and as new as electrical sewing machines. All of these intricate mediations are gathered together in the long-standing Passover tradition of ethical critique and calls for justice. I am particularly struck by how the solid, rough stone tablet is rendered in soft, malleable cloth: a juxtaposition that I want to read playfully as a transformation, a transubstantiation, even a sort of alchemy. As scholars of Jewish Studies, we must listen, look, and *feel* carefully for processes of mediation on multiple levels, and the work that mediation does in the world. For my contemporary interlocutors, crafting Judaism is a means of mediating the world around them, riffing on traditions in irreverent and poignant ways.

Jodi Eichler-Levine is the Philip and Muriel Berman Professor of Jewish Civilization and associate professor of Religion Studies at Lehigh University. She is the author of Suffer the Little Children: Uses of the Past in Jewish and African American Children's Literature *(NYU Press, 2013). Her current book-length research project is tentatively titled* Crafting Judaism: Gender, Creativity, and Jewish Americans.

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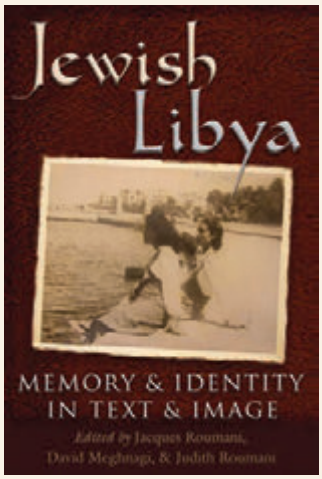

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What Becomes of Old Media?

Jeffrey Shandler

There's an old Remington Yiddish typewriter in our living room. My partner, Stuart, rescued it from a dumpster decades ago, when the *Jewish Daily Forward* was getting rid of outdated office equipment. I remember using similar typewriters at the YIVO Institute when I worked there in the 1980s. Stuart and I have never written anything with our Remington (I now use my laptop to type Yiddish, of course); instead, it serves as something between a curio and a heritage object. We've found it amusing when friends visit our apartment with little children, as they're inevitably drawn to this strange object, having no idea what it is. Chances are, they've never seen a typewriter of any kind, and the keys, labeled with the letters of the *alef-beys*, don't resemble the QWERTY keyboards of computers with which our young visitors are familiar. Having outlived its original purpose, our Remington has new ones: not only providing our curious young guests with a point of entry to learning about historical forms of communication, but also reminding us of the moment in our lives when we were drawn to Yiddish—and to each other.

All old means of communicating were once "new media." In their novelty, they could inspire both great excitement and high anxiety about their implications for literacy, authority, authenticity, or memory (recall Socrates, in the *Phaedrus*, on the perils of writing). With time, the outsized expectations that sometimes accompany the advent of new media—whether verging on an Edenic transformation of the social fabric or predicting its apocalyptic unraveling—give way to their familiarity and to significant social and cultural consequences that are often unanticipated. For example, the advent of digital media, like the invention of print centuries earlier, has not only expanded access to canonical sacred texts in Jewish life but also altered how they are engaged: Orthodox women can download podcasts of *Gemara shi'urim* they would be forbidden to attend, would-be kabbalists run computer searches for

Photos courtesy of the author.

hidden "Bible codes," rabbis debate the *Halakhah* on the proper handling of a damaged CD-ROM of the Talmud.

At some point, all innovative technologies yield to newer ones. Their arrival alters the use as well as the perception of the earlier media, which come to be regarded as outmoded. Sometimes, this change articulates a generational divide; think of the cohort that has been termed "digital natives" versus those of us who, apparently, bear the retronym "analog natives." For an earlier instance, consider a feature that appeared in the *Jewish Daily Forward* in 1924 on whether Jewish families should buy a phonograph or a radio. The article notes that inclinations were split between immigrants—who prefer the phonograph, which enabled them to "listen to their heart's content to Jewish tunes"—and their American-born children, whose "faculties are young and pulsating" and therefore inclined toward the radio, enabling them to "get in touch with any broadcasting station and open the floodgates of noise and merriment." (It is also telling of an intergenerational rift in communications media that this piece appeared in the paper's then-new English section, rather than in Yiddish.)

The previous two centuries witnessed an increasingly rapid cascade of new media: after the invention of the typewriter (in 1829), there are chromolithography, photography, and telegraphy (1830s); modern postal systems and the facsimile (later, fax) machine (1840s); the telephone and phonograph (1870s); hot metal typesetting, the mimeograph, and the magnetic wire recorder (1880s); silent motion pictures and wireless telegraphy (1890s); photo-offset printing and the photostat (1900s); commercial radio broadcasting, "talking" motion pictures, television, and the magnetic tape recorder (1920s); mass-market paperback books and photocopying (1930s); the transistor, the long-playing record, and the instant camera (1940s); videotape and the microchip (1950s); communications satellites, the audio cassette, holography, and the laser printer (1960s); the portable electronic book, handheld mobile phones, and the personal computer (1970s); the CD-ROM, the video camcorder, the Internet, 3-D printing, the personal digital assistant, and digital video (1980s); digital printing, the smartphone, and digital audio files (1990s). The result is an ongoing technological shift, as what was once cutting-edge becomes obsolescent—or, in the case of typewriters made by Remington, which recently went bankrupt, obsolete. What, then, becomes of all these media when they are left behind?

I thought about this when studying the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive, the subject of my book *Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media Practices* (Stanford University Press, 2017). The archive, which houses the world's largest collection of video interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust, was initiated at the end of the last century, on the cusp of the digital turn. The archive's tens of thousands of interviews were recorded on analog Betacam SP format videotapes, the broadcast industry standard in the mid-1990s. These tapes were subsequently digitized as part of

the process of preserving, indexing, and disseminating this vast collection, which is now accessed online (a use of the Internet not yet possible when the project was initiated). This technological watershed coincides with the aging and eventual passing of Holocaust survivors. At the convergence of these two threshold moments, the newest of media is conjoined with the oldest—face-to-face conversation—each transmuting the other.

Old forms of media don't simply disappear, even when they are put out with the trash. They can be embedded in newer technologies (the Shoah Foundation is now creating interactive holograms of Holocaust survivors with whom people can "converse") or become vestigial, if nominally (we still "cc"—short for "carbon copy"—our emails). Or old media can leave behind the frustrating conundrum of their impenetrability, whether a clay tablet incised with Linear A or the floppy disc on which I backed up my master's thesis in the 1980s, using a computer, long since vanished, with an antediluvian operating system.

Like our Yiddish typewriter, old media can acquire new value by dint of age. Their form becomes venerable; consider the aura of eighteenth-century documents written with a flowing hand on parchment or nineteenth-century portraits in sepia-toned *cartes de visite*. In the case of the *sefer Torah*, an antique medium can even be regarded as sacred. Old media provide added information, not simply dating works but also contextualizing the social practices of communication in which they were produced. Old Yiddish books, for example, reveal what people read some five hundred years ago as well as how they read and how new literacy practices transformed Ashkenazic life. And when we examine a digital scan of a vintage copy of a long-lost medieval manuscript, or download an MP3 of a cassette transfer of a folk song originally recorded on a wax cylinder, or scrutinize laser printouts from scratchy microfilms of newspapers, the originals of which have crumbled into brittle fragments, we are immersed in the flow of media, all once new, superseded by other technologies that will themselves soon show their age—each testifying to our ongoing efforts to record and share human creativity and insight.

Jeffrey Shandler is professor of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. His most recent book is Holocaust Memory in the Digital Age: Survivors' Stories and New Media Practices *(Stanford University Press, 2017). He served as president of the Association for Jewish Studies from 2011 to 2013.*

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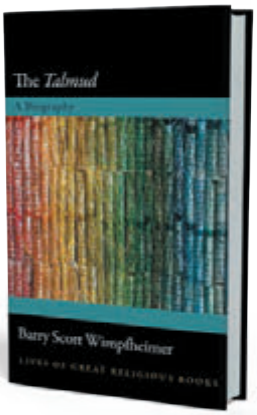

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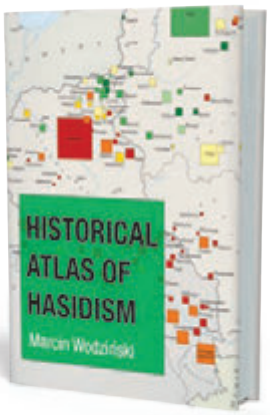

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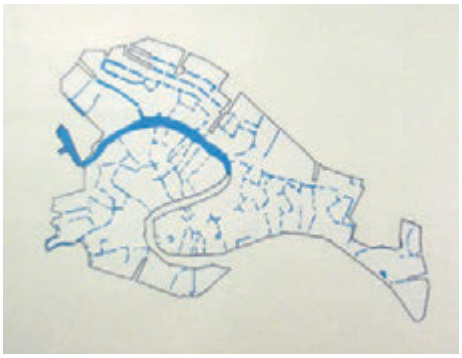
New Media in Old Bottles, or Is It the Other Way Around?

Ben Schachter

A man wraps caution tape around his arm; another man walks a slack rope on the edge of town. A woman makes a dress out of dirt, hair, and paper; yet another woman unravels fabric one thread at a time. What are these artists doing? They bring together Jewish subject matter and avant-garde artistic strategies. In other words, they make contemporary Jewish art. Arik Weiss wraps his arm with white and black tape emblazoned with parts of the Shema prayer as experimental *tefillin*; Ken Goldman walks on a slack rope *eruv* balanced between the sacred and the profane; Andi Arnovitz makes a dress out of paper and hair to clothe the *sotah*, the woman accused of adultery; and Doni Silver Simons counts the *omer* by unraveling the same number of threads as days counted, metaphorically unraveling herself in self-reflection.

Contemporary Jewish art unifies two disparate things, Jewish subject matter and avant-garde artistic process. The artistic processes used by these artists originated in the 1960s. At that time minimal art, conceptual art, and postmodern dance expanded what materials and techniques artists could use. Over the intervening years, artistic process and materials have expanded further. Artists can use nearly whichever material they choose. Similarly, in the past, Jewish art included a specific array of subject matter that tended to be limited to biblical stories and characters, the Holocaust, or personal experience. (Think of Marc Chagall's whimsical recollections of childhood scenes, or George Segal's sculptural figures that make up his Holocaust group.) As the twentieth century progressed, abstraction and the spiritual character of painting were added to the mix. Even as Jewish subject matter expanded, the question of style or the definition of Jewish art continued to be asked. Harold Rosenberg asked it in an article titled "Is there a Jewish Art?" in 1966. Jewish artists still use these subjects but some look elsewhere for Jewish references and they use a source that is at the heart of Judaism but rarely opened to artistic inquiry, until now—Talmud.

Ben Schachter, *Architectural Follie 2A*, 2014. Acrylic, ink, and acetate on paper. Permission of the artist.



Ben Schachter, *Venice Eruv*, 2007. Acrylic and thread on paper. Permission of the artist.

The impulse to turn to Talmud seems quite natural to me. Let me explain. I received my MFA from Pratt Institute. At that time, I studied the conceptual artists and postmodern dancers from the 1960s. They challenged and expanded what materials and processes artists could apply. Some artists, reacting against the individualistic expressionism from the previous decade, tried to remove the personality from their work. To do this, some artists, such as Sol Lewitt, set up strict rules for themselves. For example, a drawing might be made with only straight parallel lines. To make the drawing, the artist simply had to execute the action.

I found art made by rules very interesting but at the same time thought that as artists developed their own working methods, those methods remained just as individualistic as the abstract expressionists. A boxy sculpture might seem cold and emotionless whereas a splatter painting might be full of energy and force. Nevertheless, both works followed an artist's spoken or tacit consideration, "How am I going to make an artwork?" For me, pulling my own artistic rules out of thin air, be they expressive or analytic, isn't enough. Instead, I wanted to find guidance from a source outside of art making. It took me several years to find it.

While in graduate school, I spent a summer in Venice, Italy. I was enthralled by the city. Who isn't? Of course, the canals and boats, sunlight and colors, were all captivating, but so were the streets, some only as wide as a linebacker's shoulder pads. To find my way through the maze, I would follow local Venetians. I came to understand how they traveled over bridges, along alleyways, and into passages that ducked under buildings. Theirs was a three-dimensional map.

Years later I stumbled upon a map of the Venice *eruv*. An *eruv* is a legal notion that blends individual properties into one collective home. This allows Orthodox and traditional Jews who keep the Sabbath (*shomer shabbat*) to carry some things from place to place within the boundary, an activity ordinarily prohibited. When I saw the Venice *eruv* map, I was suddenly transported back to the city but with a new understanding. The pathways I travelled were not only routes connecting the Piazza San Marco to the Accademia Bridge, but they might also be boundaries that define inside and out. In America, many *eruv*

"Eruvin: Recent Work by Ben Schachter," 2014, Youngstown Area Jewish Federation Art Gallery, Youngstown, OH. Permission of the artist.

boundaries have sections made out of wire. Often, some of that wire is already in the urban landscape. Electrical and telephone utility wires can be integrated into the *eruv* perimeter, or at least an additional wire is often hidden among them and maintained by the utility company. Utility wires' original purpose is to transport information or energy from one place to another. In this way, a utility wire and a street are alike—they both have direction. The *eruv* adds another layer of meaning to each of these paths; they become part of a perimeter, a silhouette, the boundary of a neighborhood. I very much like the idea that a line can have direction and define the edge of a shape simultaneously.

My *eruv* paintings are based on *eruv* maps and are made out of acrylic and thread on paper. I embroider an *eruv* perimeter with blue thread through the paper. The interior of the shape I paint white so that the delicate line holds the viewer's attention. Some maps are more complicated than others and as I consider each one, I wonder about the rabbi/architect who is responsible for making each decision along the route. Venice Eruv 2007 was my first painting. It was followed up by others, including: Teaneck Eruv, Johannesburg Eruvin, and more.

I am one of a small but growing number of artists interested in referring to talmudic ideas and rabbinic discussions. Some of us accept the tradition to read a page of text every day, a tradition called *daf yomi*. British Artist Jacqueline Nicholls studied Talmud earlier in her education but now wonders what else is in the corpus. As a way to understand the text, as well as to draw out her own interpretations, Nicholls is in the middle of an enormous series of drawings called "Draw Yomi." Yes, a new drawing every day relates to the page she reads. Israeli Andi Arnovitz also refers to talmudic texts in her work and makes biting commentary regarding how rabbinic authority in Israel treats women in divorce and reproductive traditions. And back here in the United States, painter Archie Rand's monumental series of all 613 commandments, as itemized by Maimonides, was on view at the Contemporary Jewish Museum in San Francisco. I also use Talmud as a source for subject matter, but my interest in the text tends toward descriptions of how things are made. Each artist uses talmudic texts and rabbinic discussions differently. Those differences might be idiosyncratic, yet the choice to look at the Talmud is shared among the artists. The Talmud is an ancient text, but as more artists explore how it can be used as subject matter for contemporary art, we put that old text into new bottles, or better, new media.

Ben Schachter is professor of Fine Arts at Saint Vincent College in Latrobe, Pennsylvania. His book Image, Action, and Idea in Contemporary Jewish Art *has just been published by the Pennsylvania State University Press.*

Scroll Down: Classical Jewish Texts on the Internet

Gary A. Rendsburg

Fig. 1. Kaufmann MS M. Sanhedrin 4:5. Permission of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

A revolution has occurred, but most people, it seems, have not noticed. I refer to the worldwide effort to digitalize the great medieval Jewish manuscript tradition, with full credit to individuals such as Albert Friedberg, George Blumenthal, and Leonard Polansky for making this work possible through their generous benefactions. The result is a brave new world, in which these precious treasures of the Jewish past are now available to scholars, students, and the public at large. As far as I can tell, this major enterprise has not received the attention it deserves, while the use of these manuscripts has not yet been fully integrated into the teaching of Jewish Studies. I, for one, have become an evangelist for the cause, as reflected by the fact that during the past decade, more and more of my teaching, research, and lecturing has been devoted to these manuscripts.

Thus, for example, I have delivered a public lecture entitled "Scroll Down: Classical Jewish Texts, from Parchment to the Internet" (with its intentionally catchy, clever title) at Oxford, Birmingham, UCLA, Catholic University, and Rutgers; twice I have taught a course for Jewish Studies undergraduate majors and graduate students on the subject; and I have segued from my own core research in the areas of Bible and Hebrew language to several recent publications on specific issues in medieval manuscripts.

Most importantly for the present essay, these manuscripts have informed my teaching, not only with such obvious courses as "Introduction to the Bible" and "The Dead Sea Scrolls," but most significantly with "Jewish History I: Ancient and Medieval." This latter course, which serves as the Jewish history survey course (part 1) here at Rutgers, includes the Middle Ages (per the title), concluding with the year 1492. Through images of medieval manuscripts, I make the life of late antique and medieval Jewry come alive.

The Mishnah is no longer just the earliest rabbinic text, but we also marvel at its later manuscript tradition, especially by examining the Kaufmann manuscript (Budapest) at http://kaufmann.mtak.hu/. The Talmud of the Land of Israel (Leiden manuscript) is inspected here: http://yerushalmionline.org/manuscripts/; while the Babylonian Talmud (Munich manuscript) is examined here: http://daten.digitale-sammlungen.de/~db/bsb00003409/images/. Even if the students cannot read Hebrew, they are able to appreciate these texts, the size of each compilation, and the history of their transmissions. They no longer are abstract compositions, which appear in book form, usually as a series of printed books on a bookshelf (which immediately removes them from their historical setting). Rather, these classical rabbinic texts now are understood as words written in ink by a scribe on vellum or parchment (even if in these cases the original compositions were transmitted orally for generations). Whether my students are Jewish or non-Jewish, knowledgeable in Hebrew or not, they are all able to recognize the expert scribal hand responsible for the Kaufmann Mishnah manuscript.

There is, moreover, an important history lesson that can be learned by reading the Mishnah manuscripts (Kaufmann and others). I direct the students' attention to the statement in M. Sanhedrin 4:5 (fig. 1). The printed editions from the sixteenth century onward read, "One who destroys a life within Israel, he brings upon himself the saying, 'It is as if he has destroyed an entire world.'

Fig. 2. Judah ha-Levi. ENA I.5 (L41). Courtesy of The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary.

And one who raises up a life within Israel, he brings upon himself the saying, 'It is as if he raised up an entire world.'" When one looks at the manuscripts, however, one realizes that the phrase מישראל ("within Israel") is lacking. These documents testify to the real world view of the rabbis: every single human life—Jewish or non-Jewish—is to be valued.

How does one explain the addition of מישראל ("within Israel") in the printed editions (which persists to this day; see, for example, both in the widely used Albeck edition and at Sefaria [www.sefaria.org])?

Fig. 3. Maimonides, draft of the *Guide for the Perplexed*. T-S 10.Ka.4.1, fols. 1r, 1v, 2r, 2v. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University.

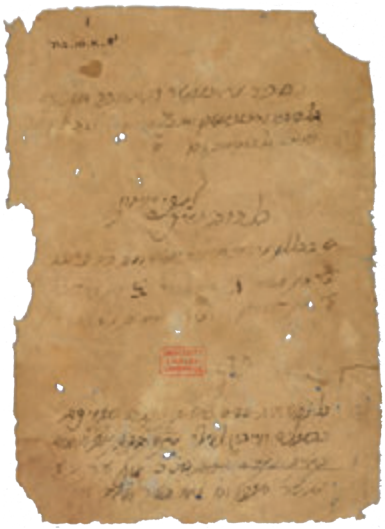


Fig. 4. Maimonides, draft of the *Mishneh Torah*. T-S 10.K.8.1, fol. 1r. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University.

Fig. 5. Maimonides, treatise on sexual intercourse. T-S Ar.44.79, fols. 1r, 1v. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University.

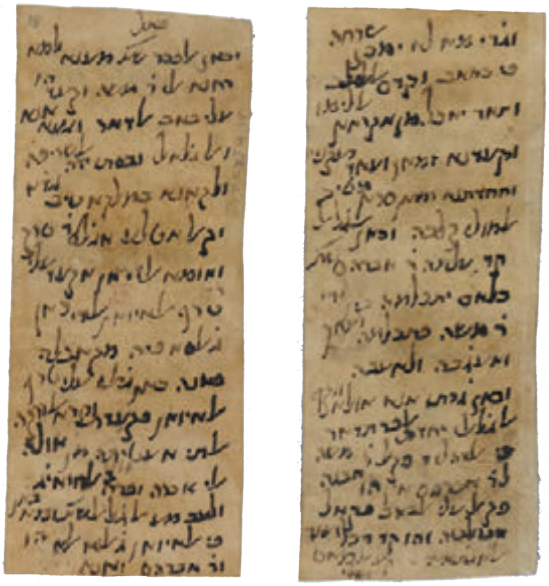


Fig. 6. Maimonides, report of a visitor to his house. T-S 8.J.14.18, fols. 1r, 1v. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University.

Fig 8. Karaite-Rabbanite ketubba. Bodleian MS Heb a.3.42. Courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

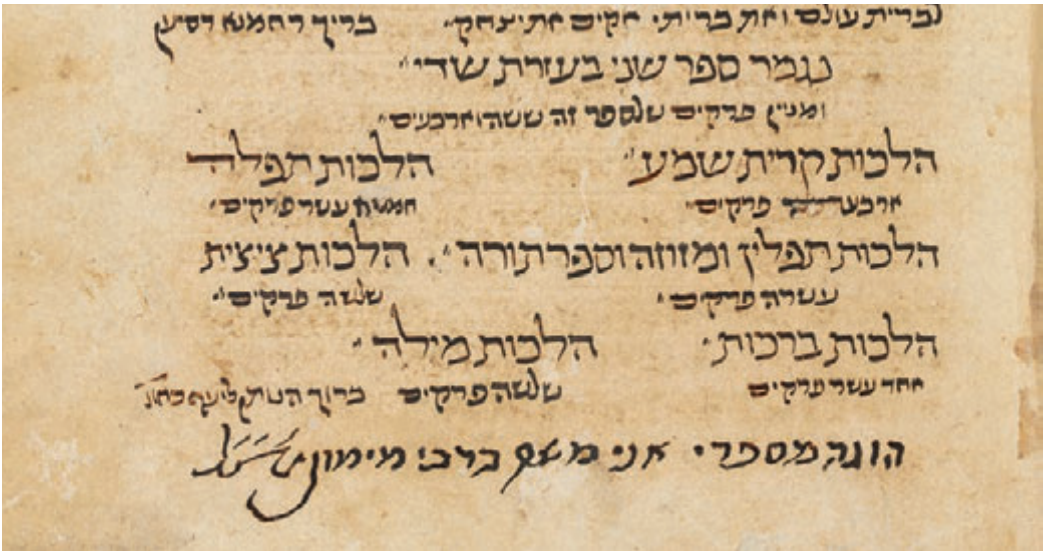


Fig. 7. Maimonides *Mishneh Torah* signature. MS Huntington 80, fol. 165r. Courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

My proposal is that centuries of medieval antisemitism, especially within Christian Europe, led the Jewish community to have a less sanguine attitude toward the value of the lives of non-Jews. Blood libels, accusations of host desecrations, rampant killings, inquisitions, expulsions, and more had taken their toll. The Jewish community turned inward, away from the universalist outlook expressed by the classical rabbis. The great ecumenical ideal enunciated in the Mishnah was transformed into a parochial statement by later Jews: what a teachable moment.

As indicated, the manuscripts for the Mishnah, the Talmudim, and other rabbinic compilations are dated centuries after the composition and final editing of these texts. When we reach the Middle Ages in our course, accordingly, the characters whom we study truly come alive through our inspection of the manuscripts. Judah ha-Levi is not just the author of the great philosophical work *ha-Kuzari*, who left his native Spain to travel to ʼEreẓ Yisraʼel, but he is the one who personally penned the Cairo Geniza document J.T.S. ENA I.5 (L41), a letter addressed to a colleague, in which the author mentions both the book and his travel plans (fig. 2). This document, along with all the Geniza documents noted below, are available at https://fjms.genizah.org/, from which I capture the images for educational purposes.

The greatest of all the medieval sages, Moses Maimonides, is, of course, even better represented among the Cairo Geniza documents. I show my students: (a) a draft of the philosopher's Judeo-Arabic original of the *Guide for the Perplexed* (C.U.L. T-S 10.Ka.4.1) (fig. 3); (b) a draft of the legal scholar's *Mishneh Torah* (C.U.L. T-S 10.K.8.1) (fig. 4); (c) the physician's Judeo-Arabic treatise on sexual intercourse (C.U.L. T-S Ar.44.79), addressed to Sultan al-Muzaffar Umar ibn Nur Al-Din (nephew of Saladin) (fig. 5); and (d) an insight into the community leader's personal life, to wit, the report of a visitor to his house (C.U.L. T-S 8.J.14.18) (fig. 6).

Beyond the Cairo Geniza documents is one of the most precious of all the medieval manuscripts, namely, the

Bodleian *Mishneh Torah* manuscript (Huntington 80), with its own dedicated website: http://maimonides.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/. A professional scribe wrote the beautiful manuscript, but in the white space at the bottom of folio 165r, at the end of book 2, the great sage himself wrote, in his own hand, הוגה מספרי אני משה ברבי מימון "checked against my copy [lit. book], I, Moshe son of Rabbi Maimon." An entire backstory is created thereby: Maimonides drafted the work in his rather quick and cursive hand (recall the Cairo Geniza documents); he gave it to a professional scribe in order to produce the definitive edition; and he then checked and proofread the entire work, with approval, as indicated by his personal imprimatur at the bottom of folio 165r (fig. 7).

But to return to the aforementioned report of the visitor to Maimonides's home, C.U.L. T-S 8.J.14.18, I tell my students: "Right, so Maimonides wrote the *Guide for the Perplexed*, and he wrote the *Mishneh Torah*, and he served as physician to the sultan, and he served as head of the Jewish community in Cairo—but I want to know what he served his guests!" And thus we read in the afore-cited document, which provides a unique window into Maimonides's own home, "I kissed his eminent hand, and he received us very warmly. . . . Then such things happened that are impossible to describe in a letter. Baskets arrived and he began to eat lemon cakes" (translation adapted from http://www.lib.cam.ac.uk/Taylor-Schechter/maimonides-exhibition-texts.html#T-S_8J14.18).

Fig. 9. Johannes of Oppido = Obadiah the Proselyte. Kaufmann 134, fol. 1r (the beginning of the memoir). Permission of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences.

And so we proceed. It is not just a matter of discussing Rabbanite-Karaite relations in the Middle Ages: I show the students examples of *ketubbot* indicating marriage between the two groups, including Bodleian MS Heb a.3.42, recording the marriage of Yahya ben Avraham (a Rabbanite physician) and Rayyisa bat Saadia (a wealthy Karaite woman) (fig. 8). Similarly, it is not just a matter of discussing conversion between Judaism and Islam (in both directions) and between Judaism and Christianity (ditto): I show the students the memoir and musical compositions of Johannes of Oppido = Obadiah the Proselyte, that is, Budapest 134 1r (the beginning of the memoir) (fig. 9) and C.U.L. T-S K5.41r (with the prayer ברוך הגבר set to Gregorian chant) (fig. 10). Again, whether or not the students can read Hebrew is not the point; rather, each of them is able to enter the world of the Middle Ages by viewing these documents firsthand.

As we end the course with the expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, in an effort to give the students a sense of how wealthy and prominent the community was, I end the semester with images of the Kennicott Bible, written in La Coruña in 1476, now housed in the Bodleian Library: https://digital.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/. Everything about this work is simply exquisite: the biblical text, the accompanying masorah, the inclusion of David Kimḥi's *Mikhlol*, the penmanship of the scribe, the illuminations of the artist, and the colophons that preserve the names of both individuals, along with other valuable information (date, place, name of benefactor, etc.) (fig. 11). Once more, an entire world, that of northern Iberian Jewry, unfolds in the most vibrant of colors by studying this unsurpassed masterpiece. The Kennicott Bible marks the pinnacle of the Jewish manuscript tradition, the culmination of centuries of codex production, on the cusp of a sea change in Jewish history, and on the cusp of the beginning of Hebrew printing. And with that, the students are ready for "Jewish History II: Early Modern and Modern."

Fig. 10. Johannes of Oppido = Obadiah the Proselyte, the prayer ברוך הגבר set to Gregorian chant. T-S K5.41, fol. 1r. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University.

Fig. 11. Kennicott Bible colophon. MS Kenn 1, fol. 438r. Courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Gary Rendsburg serves as the Blanche and Irving Laurie Professor of Jewish History in the Department of Jewish Studies at Rutgers University. His teaching and research focus on ancient Israel, early Judaism, and medieval Hebrew manuscripts. He has worked with Cairo Geniza and other documents in Oxford, Cambridge, Leiden, Washington, New York, Princeton, and elsewhere.

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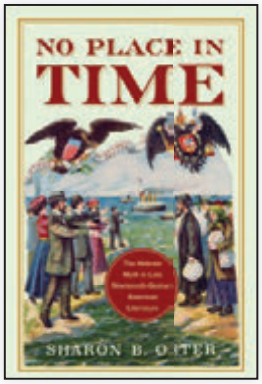

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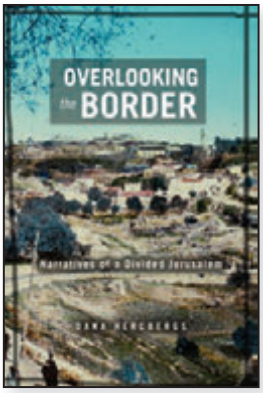

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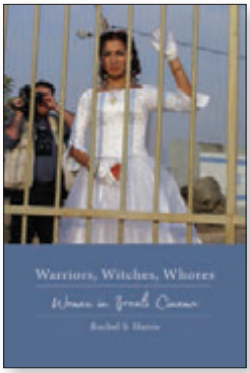

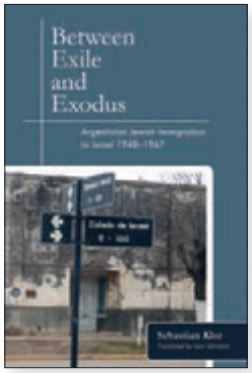

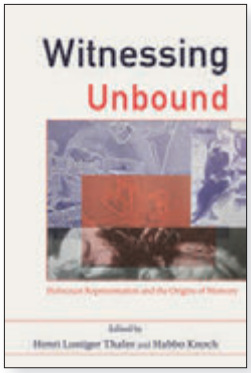

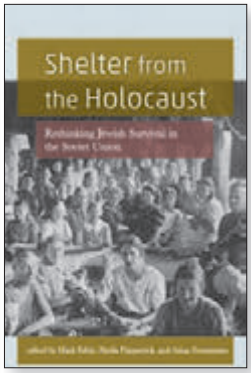

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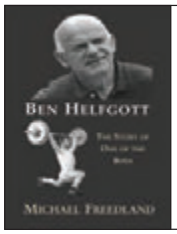

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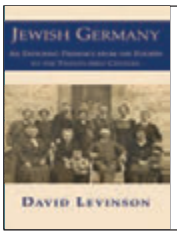

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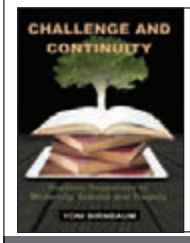

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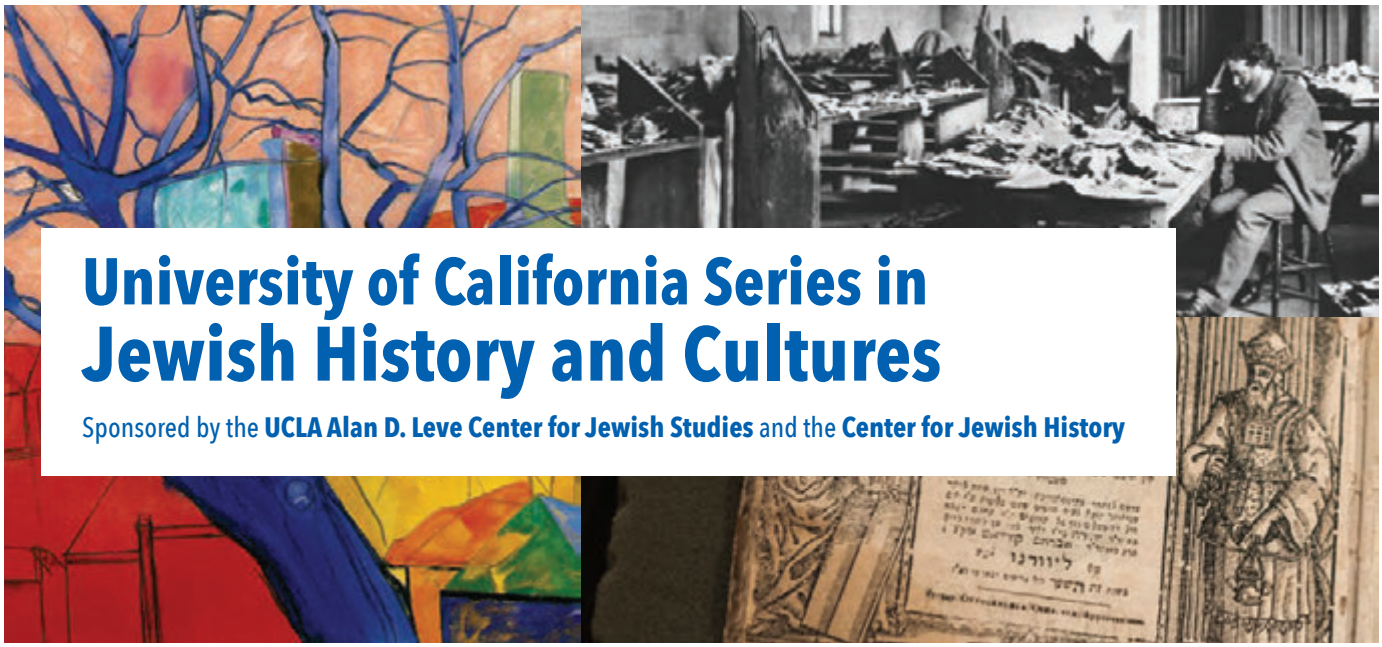

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Freedom on the Tablets: Annotation as Media, from Talmudic Scholarship to the Digital Age

Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky

"Engraved on the tablets" (Exodus 32:16); do not read "engraved" (*ḥarut*) but rather "freedom" (*ḥerut*). Mishnah Avot 6:2

In his introduction to his enigmatic and category-defying treatise, *Sefer ha-Yashar*, Rabbenu Tam (France, twelfth century) vehemently attacks proofreaders of the Talmud who alter sayings of Tannaim (sages of the mishnahic period, pre–210 CE) and Amoraim (rabbinic sages who lived ca. third to fifth centuries CE) and correct them; in doing so, he warns, they blur the boundaries between interpretation—however brilliant—and the original version of the text, which must remain as it was. After all, as every philologist knows, the more difficult version is often the key to a correct interpretation (*lectio difficilor*), and therefore should not be altered.

This position causes something of a family complication: Rashi, the grandfather of both Rabbenu Tam and the Rashbam (Rabbi Shmuel), is known for supposedly proofreading many talmudic sugyot (units). Rabbi Shmuel continued on the same path as his grandfather, as Rabbenu Tam notes: "for every one [sugya] proofread by Rabbenu Shlomo (=Rashi) he (=Rabbi Shumel) has proofread twenty, and not only that, but he has erased [original versions in] the books." While Rabbenu Tam defends Rashi—asserting that his grandfather almost always included the proofreading in his commentary and left the original unchanged—he cannot do the same for his brother, the Rashbam. By contrast, later evidence indicates that when Rabbenu Tam proofread texts, he used special graphic marks to distinguish his corrections from the text he received, although those marked-up works have not survived.

This controversy between the eminent medieval commentators of the Talmud is not just an intellectual family drama. It also reveals a range of possible

positions on the relation between the text in its original form and its later interpretive cloak: from maintaining a safe distance between the source and its interpretation, through intervening only when necessary, to an intensive editing of the text. It also reminds us that an annotation is a medium by which the commentators not only clarify the text, but converse with one another. Looked at from this point of view, their discussion touches on the limits of the medium of interpretation and its historic role.

Undoubtedly, this argument is not unique to the rabbinic learning tradition. It is characteristic of most intellectual processes, cultures, and disciplines. However, interestingly enough, when we transfer it to our digital age, and to the language of the movement (or discipline) known as Digital Humanities, it seems that the usual hierarchy between the source and the keys to its understanding undergoes a transformation that should not be underestimated. Translating Rabbenu Tam's position into contemporary terms, we might say he insists on the importance of differentiating between data and metadata; if the talmudic text is data, then all its commentaries, including the textual alterations and proofreadings, are metadata. The first must remain original, and preserve its position in the clear hierarchy of knowledge, while the other must accept its secondary status.

But now, the wall of defense put up by this approach, and what had seemed the simple, natural, and proper differentiation between the various layers of knowledge, is beginning to fall apart. Anyone who has learned to value the original untouched source, who respects the idiosyncratic nature of certain cultural phenomena, who lives peacefully with unsolved riddles, who understands the hermeneutic process as a chain of shifting responses to the object of interpretation—is about to discover that one of the first tasks in almost any attempt to integrate an object within the digital sphere involves subjecting the object to some kind of framework, or connecting the object to other objects. Data, more than ever before, cannot remain in its raw state.

From the computer's point of view—if you may pardon the simplistic personification—the content we process through it has no meaning. In order for it to know what to do with such content, the computer requires keys. Thus, if it is a text, it must know where the text begins and where it ends, what a title is, and what a quote is—and this is before we get to any of the less formal, and more interpretation-dependent aspects of the text. For that we supply the computer with information about data, or, to put it crudely, metadata. We aim for classification; and, as digital humanists like to say, we give structure to unstructured material by diverse means: cataloging it in the correct location in the

database, inserting it into the rigid splint of datasheets, identifying it by designated tags, annotating it using a complex system of symbols, noting its location within time and space, and so on. If we don't do all this, the text will remain unusable.

The computer remains indifferent to all this. As far as the computer is concerned, we have linked one thing to another, but neither has any meaning—in the deep sense of the word—for the computer itself. Meaning is only for us, the human beings: our colleagues and we can now work with the material; data attached to metadata represent a whole to which we can now relate, something that we can read and analyze. And, even better, we and our colleagues can now work on it together and collaborate: read it afresh, connect the material with other "wholes," share it, pass it on, and so on.

The dependence of data on metadata has grown in the digital age, therefore, in comparison with the predigital age. And, perforce, the dependence of data on other sources, which the metadata serves to connect it to, has grown as well. The key word here is standardization: metadata functions efficiently only when it is accurate, consistent, relevant to more than one source, and agreed on by all. In the absence of these conditions, the data loses its value.

We must be thankful for the enormous effort invested in standardization; it enables us not only to calmly switch computers and technologies, but also to send each other files, to find the right book in the library (or, the right paper in the online database), to compare objects, and to relate to every item of knowledge, in the same way exactly.

But there is another side to the coin, to which Rashi's interesting case bears witness. In contrast to the medieval talmudic scholars known as the Tosafists, of whom Rabbenu Tam was the outstanding representative, Rashi refrained in his talmudic commentary from too broad a standardization, one that would become inevitably a kind of abstraction. His interpretive enterprise for each sugya (unit) confines itself to the limits of that sugya, or at the most, the limits of the chapter or the tractate—he almost never compares his own understandings in other contexts. His commentary, therefore, could be considered as a local annotation, rather than consistent metadata (which may be somewhat identified with the Tosafists' work), and, as such, he does not tend to impose on a source insights that may have been formed by reference to another source.

However, as learners of the Talmud know, and as Rabbenu Tam writes, when proofreading, boundaries become obscured. Although Rashi included his corrections in his commentary, usually advancing them with the expression *hakhi garsinan* (so goes our version), other students who followed him included the corrections in the text itself, and today it is often almost impossible to reconstruct the version Rashi had. This development reflects something of the fixed dynamic between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. Sometimes, as we see, the Oral Torah that should have accompanied the written one, and supplied the keys for its understanding, has become fossilized; the commentary has replaced the source. As it turns out, metadata, even if local and inconsistent, can also become canonized, appearing as part of the original text, as if it had always been there.

This is forgivable when the interpretation is trivial and obvious. When the primary source is more intractable, however, it can become more problematic. Many studies are already realizing the enormous potential in "distant reading," shedding brilliant light on "the great-unread" and uncovering what goes on beyond the borders of the familiar canon. Without the adequate tools, however, such studies are sometimes given to "clustering," "grouping," and "smoothing," that is, everyday computational practices aimed at obscuring differences and minimizing the effect that very exceptional cases can have on patterns. To move ahead, new tools—new concepts—need to be found, not only to cope with those statistical patterns already inscribed on the tablets, as it were, but also to handle those cases that require a greater degree of exegetical freedom.

Itay Marienberg-Milikowsky is currently a postdoctoral fellow in the Interdisciplinary Center for Narratology, Universität Hamburg. He completed his PhD in the Department of Hebrew Literature at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in 2015. His various studies—among them his first book, We Know Not What Has Become of Him: Literature and Meaning in Talmudic Aggada *(Bar-Ilan University Press, 2016 [Hebrew])—are dedicated to literary theory, rabbinic literature, and Digital Humanities.*

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The Cairo Geniza and Facebook

Moshe Yagur and Oded Zinger

What does a millennium-old odiferous storage room for discarded texts have in common with the digital age? Quite a lot in fact! The past decade has witnessed a veritable revolution in the study of the Cairo Geniza, a treasure trove of Jewish documents spanning the millennium from the ninth to nineteenth centuries CE. A primary engine of this transformation has been the development of several cutting-edge digital tools, foremost among them the Friedberg Geniza Project (FGP, http://fjms.genizah.org). These tools have not merely facilitated research. They have changed the way research is conducted. To give but one example, a generation ago scholars often transcribed a document from a microfilm image and then pursued its study from their transcription. Today, with FGP having made almost half a million high-quality digital images of Geniza documents available online, scholars constantly consult the image of the document, which is often more accessible than its published version. This availability of images is a key factor in the growing interest in the material and visual aspects of the Geniza fragments, the physical layout of text on the page, and the juxtaposition of different texts on the same Geniza fragment.

Alongside the flourishing of the field in the more traditional manifestations (publications, conferences, awards, etc.), a lively Geniza scene has developed on Facebook. This scene is cultivated by a new generation of young scholars who tend to spend an unfortunate amount of time on social media. If both social media and the Geniza are part of our lives, why not bring the two together?

"Doing" Geniza on Facebook for us is both a tool of work and a form of outreach. When studying Geniza fragments we often encounter things we do not understand. While we could consult venerable tomes in the library, or bombard our teachers and colleagues with inquiring emails, a quick question on Facebook usually provides a more rapid result. On other occasions, we have come across a fragment that is not relevant to

Fig. 1. **(top)** 'The Geniza Shrek,' T-S NS 130.101. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University. (**bottom left**) Babylonian incantation bowl (MS 1927-39). Photo credit: Matthew Morgenstern / Schøyen Collection. (**bottom right**) Drawing by Naama Vilozny reproduced from Naama Vilozny, *Lilith's Hair and Ashmedai's Horns: Figure and Image in Magic and Popular Art Between Babylonia and Palestine in Late Antiquity* (Heb.) (Ben Zvi Institute: Jerusalem, 2017), p. 280. Courtesy of the artist.

our current research but may be of interest to someone else. A quick post with an image will usually bring the fragment to the attention of someone pertinent. Often the result is an unexpected discovery.

For example, Oded Zinger came across a fragment with a rather cute Shrek-like image. Following a post on Facebook, a fellow scholar was quick to point out a remarkably similar image of a demon appearing in a Babylonian incantation bowl—allowing for a better understanding of both images and for a link between these two genres (fig. 1). In another case, Zinger uploaded an image of what he thought was a 1645 legal document made in Gibraltar. Through a common Facebook friend, Professor Joseph Chetrit from the University of Haifa saw the image and corrected the reading of the date to 1825. The document involves the writer and poet Solomon b. Samuel Tov Elem of Tétouan, whom Chetrit has been studying for years. Thus, he gained access to a document he did not know about, and Geniza scholars have one less document to identify (one down, 300,000 to go!). As long as one is not too proud to publicly admit mistakes and lacunae in one's knowledge there is a great joy in learning about things beyond one's narrow specialization and connecting with scholars generous with their knowledge and expertise.

Facebook also allows us to take the Geniza out of the academic arena and introduce it to broader audiences. With such an outreach goal in mind, Moshe Yagur created the popular page the Cairo Geniza —A History of Everyday Life (גניזת קהיר - היסטוריה של היום-יום). This page features a wide assortment of Geniza documents with translations and short explanations (fig. 2). The posts range from an eleventh-century "Yiddishe Mame" from northern Syria writing to her son in Egypt ("I'm sick of writing to you without getting a response. . . Don't you know that my heart desires news from you? Don't kill me before my time!"), to a young man describing a pirate attack on his ship ("They threw fire on the ships. . . I cannot describe what happened. . . I threw the fire out to the sea!").

Zinger has taken to posting images of Geniza fragments he has joined together on Facebook (fig. 3). These images hold a special charm as they share with the public the joy of discovery (and help convince your friends that your work resembles that of Indiana Jones). The enthusiastic response to torn fragments from the distant past initially took us by surprise, yet it is exactly this mixture of familiarity and strangeness that makes up the magic of the Geniza.

Part of the special appeal of writing on the Geniza on Facebook is the ability to approach the material in a humorous key, inappropriate in the more traditional academic media. After all, in what peer-reviewed article will you be able to muse on the cow-shaped signature of Ḥayim b.

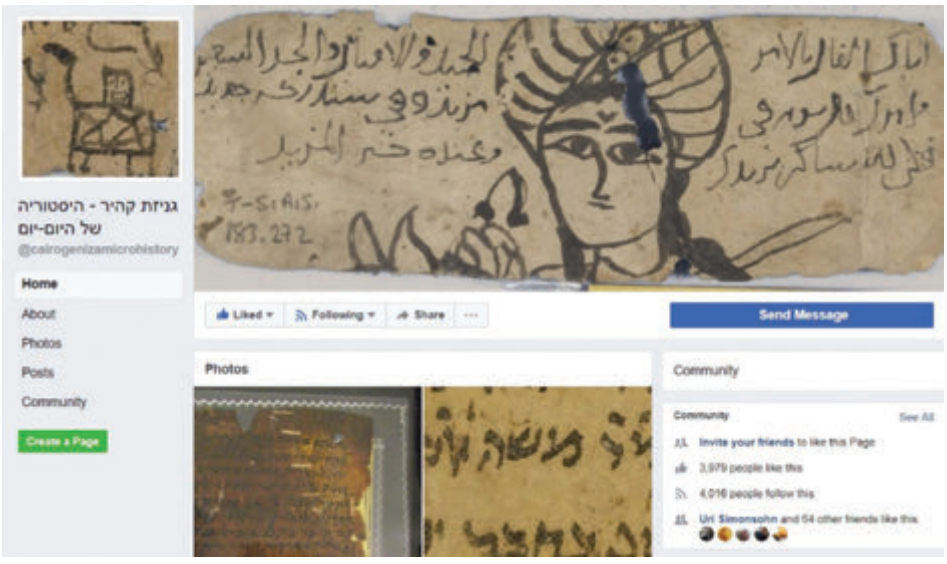

Fig. 2. "Cairo Geniza – History of Everyday life" Facebook page managed by Moshe Yagur.

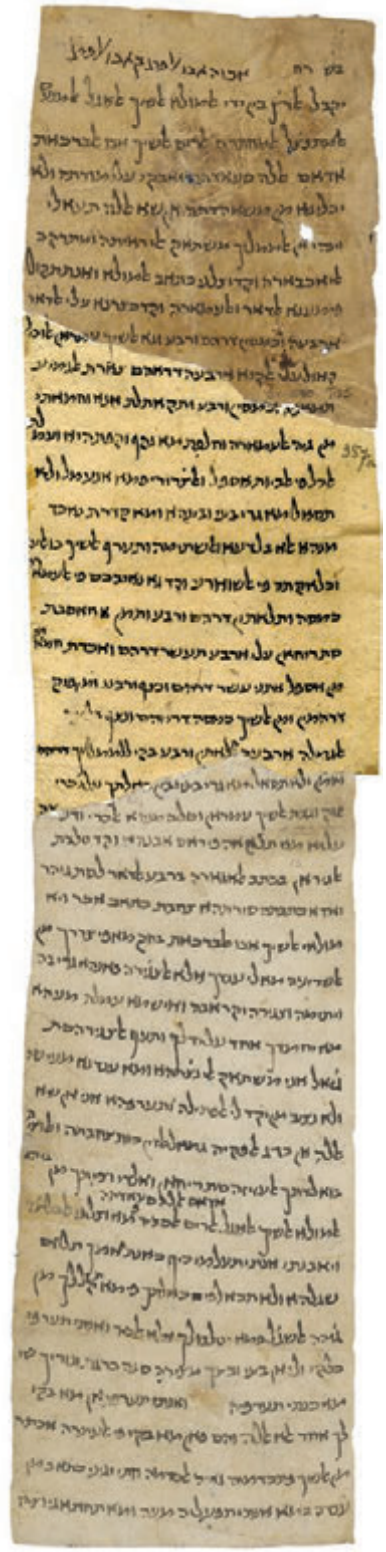

Fig. 3. An early-thirteenth-century letter reconstructed from three Geniza fragments from three libraries through the "Join Suggestion" feature of the Friedberg Genizah Project. (**top fragment**) Cambridge University Library, Oriental Collection 1080 J125. Used by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University. (**middle fragment**) Kaufmann 357. Permission of the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences. (**bottom fragment**) MS Heb c 28.64. Courtesy of The Bodleian Library, University of Oxford.

Fig. 4. The bovine signature of Hayyim b. Ya'akov Simḥon. ENA 2738.17. Courtesy of The Library of The Jewish Theological Seminary. *Thank you to Dotan Arad for helping with the image.*

Ya'akov Simḥon? (fig. 4). This humorous approach also allows us to relate to current events through a perspective provided by the distant past, thereby casting light on both the old and the new. Such was the case, for example, when on the occasion of the Jerusalem Gay Pride Parade, Yagur uploaded a Geniza letter describing the scandal that erupted in eleventh-century Ramla when two men publicly expressed their desire to one another in the synagogue, in the middle of the Yom Kippur prayers. The writer reports the uproar in the congregation, the involvement of the police, but concludes, "this is how people act on a daily basis."

Indeed, the new social media is attractive for bringing together these goals of outreach and research. Relatives, colleagues, forgotten friends, and strangers intermingle in the comments sections of our posts. Occasionally we need to interject and explain that this commentator knows what she or he is writing about, or that the dismissive comment was actually made jokingly by an old friend. But these misunderstandings are well worth the gems that such interactions provide. For example, Yagur once uploaded an image of a legal query to a Muslim mufti in Arabic characters about a Jewish woman whose husband converted to Islam and traveled to India. The post received many comments. Some found parallels between the woman's plight and that of Jewish women seeking divorce in rabbinical courts in modern-day Israel. But the most interesting comment came from an Egyptian scholar, Gahlan Ismail, an expert on the modern history of Egyptian Jews, who offered a better reading and translation of several parts of the document. And so, through a post in the social media on an ancient text, we have been able to connect with a scholar living in the city where the document originated, despite modern political and cultural borders.

Yagur's posts feature in the blog of the National Library of Israel (http://blog.nli.org.il/author/geniza). You are welcome to like the original page here (www.facebook.com/cairogenizamicrohistory/), or friend us on Facebook. For another interesting Geniza Digital Humanities project see www.zooniverse.org/projects/judaicadh/scribes-of-the-cairo-geniza.

Moshe Yagur is a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Haifa, and a member of the Center for the Study of Conversion and Inter-Religious Encounters. In his dissertation he analyzed issues of religious conversion and boundary maintenance in the Jewish communities of medieval Egypt and its surroundings, based on Cairo Geniza documents and other materials.

Oded Zinger is a postdoctoral fellow in the Martin Buber Society of Fellows at the Hebrew University. His research focuses on issues of gender and law in medieval Egypt based on documents from the Cairo Geniza. He is currently working on a book tentatively titled Law, Gender, and Community: Marital Strife and Legal Institutions in the Jewish Communities of Medieval Egypt.

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Information about the 2019–2020 AJS Dissertation Completion Fellowship competition will be available on the AJS website in fall 2018.

Jewish Media Power: Myth and Reality

Elana Levine and Michael Z. Newman

Ideas about Jewish prominence in American media—whether Hollywood or the news—have circulated for more than a century. This can be a source of pride but can also be a weapon deployed in antisemitic rabble-rousing. The presence of many Jews in both the business and creative sides of media industries is a sign at once of power and vulnerability, a contradiction central to Jewish American identity caught between inside and outside. The media culture produced in this context has been similarly conflicted, sometimes embracing Jewishness but frequently downplaying it or relegating it to subtext.

There is no disputing that "Jewish control of media" is the stuff of racist conspiracy theories. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* represented Jewish control of the press as a means toward broader domination. While some American newspapers such as the *New York Times* have had Jewish owners, outlandish concerns about Jewish influence have been prompted more by Hollywood and broadcasting becoming major institutions of modern life. The new movie studios and networks were run largely by Jewish immigrant moguls or their offspring: the Warner brothers, Adolph Zukor (Paramount), David Sarnoff (RCA/NBC), and William S. Paley (CBS), among others. Both news and entertainment remain fields hospitable to Jewish artists and businesspeople, from CEOs like Bob Iger (Disney) and producers and company presidents like Jeff Zucker (CNN, NBC) to writers and directors like Nora Ephron and Steven Spielberg. Jewish journalists have led the most influential news organizations in the United States,

Seinfeld cast with their Screen Actor Guild awards, 1997. Photo credit: Featureflash Photo Agency / Shutterstock.com.

including the *Times* and *Washington Post*. Jews are heavily represented in creative and media workplaces and occupy many positions of prestige and authority.

In a society in which Jewish identity exists in tension with gentile whiteness, Jewish power over media has been a source of as much anxiety as celebration. At certain moments, notions of Jewish power operating behind the scenes have surfaced, revealing currents of antisemitism in the American mainstream. The postwar House Un-American Activities Committee hearings resulted in the blacklisting of Jewish writers, including six of the Hollywood Ten accused of communism, which was a veiled antisemitic condemnation. In response to such moments, media powers have sought to downplay their Jewishness, as when the Hollywood moguls hired Will Hays, an Indiana Protestant from President Harding's cabinet, to lead their trade group and be their public face during a period of scandal and censorship in the 1920s.

The canard of Jewish media manipulation is often linked with conservative suspicion that advancing left politics is an unacknowledged agenda of journalism and popular culture. Ed Asner, the star of *Lou Grant*, president of the Screen Actors Guild, and political activist, raised money for victims of El Salvador's US-backed junta in the early 1980s. Not only did CBS cancel his show, but Asner was called a communist swine, reviving associations between Jews and the Old Left and echoing the chilling politics of McCarthyism.

Similar associations often arise when politicians scapegoat the media. While gearing up for his 1996 presidential run, Bob Dole gave a speech calling out the entertainment industry for its promotion of violence in rap music and action movies. The Jewish columnist Frank Rich shot back at Dole for singling out Time Warner—then run by a Jewish CEO, Gerald Levin—while overlooking similar products of Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Rich quoted coreligionist Billy Crystal: "Every time they say the phrase 'Hollywood elite' you can hear the unspoken word 'Jew.'"

More baldly Jew-hating rhetoric has only become easier to observe with the rise of online platforms. A Reddit user who posted a video of Donald Trump beating a man with a CNN logo head, which Trump tweeted in July 2017, had earlier posted an image of portraits of CNN's Jewish employees with blue Stars of David superimposed on each, under the caption "Something strange about CNN . . . can't quite put my finger on it."

The Jewishness of media creatives historically has been tamped down in their work, often ignored and occasionally coded in terms invisible to the non-Jewish world, just as their names were often Americanized. Jewish artists are responsible for some of the entertainment industry's most iconic symbols of "universal" Christian culture, like Irving Berlin's nostalgic "White Christmas" and Johnny Marks's "Rudolph, The Red-Nosed Reindeer." While obscuring their cultural identity, Jewish artists created a fantasy of wholesome Americanness.

In the 1970s, Jewish creatives were responsible for television's biggest hits, including the new wave of "quality" comedies that brought left-leaning perspectives on social issues to the typically politics-averse small screen. Central to this moment was Norman Lear, well known as both a liberal and a Jew. His hit series *All in the Family* was based on both a British predecessor and Lear's own family. Archie Bunker, a bigoted, working-class white man, was a de-ethnicized version of Lear's father, just as the liberal, feminist protagonist of spin-off series, *Maude*, was modeled on Lear's wife, Frances. Lear pioneered a new style of socially engaged, hot-button storytelling in American TV, but some characters were whitewashed.

Jewish characters created by Jewish writers would appear occasionally in the 1970s and '80s. Ed Zwick and Marshall Herskovitz identified *thirtysomething* hero Michael Steadman as a nonobservant, intermarried Jew. In the season 4 premiere, "Prelude to a Bris," Michael grapples with his heritage in light of his newborn son's arrival. Across most of *thirtysomething*, however, Michael's Jewishness is subsumed within his identity as a liberal yuppie, emphasizing commonality with gentile friends, Elliot and Gary, who share Michael's angsty sensibility. While this character was a closer match to its authors' identities than were Lear's creations, Michael's Jewishness was usually peripheral to the story.

Over time, Jewishness has occupied a more prominent place on American screens, albeit still a conflicted one. Most notably, on *Seinfeld*, Jerry was marked as Jewish but none of the other members of his friendship quad were. Jerry, Elaine, George, and Kramer may have exhibited stereotypical markers of Jewishness in their neuroses or their penchants for intricate interpretations of everyday life, but the most obvious characterizations of comedic Jewishness were embodied by George and his overbearing parents, Frank and Estelle Costanza, explicitly represented as Italian Americans. The refusal to name these (exaggerated and stereotypical) characters as Jewish may have been as much a winking in-joke as an evasion. Years later, Jerry Stiller (Frank) ribbed that the Costanzas were a Jewish family in a witness protection program, suggesting that their coded ethnicity was a comedic jab at a long history of invisibility. For decades, Jews have defensively minimized attention to off-screen Jewish artistic vision and economic power, taking pleasure in their success while also taking care not to alienate the American mainstream.

While the position of Jews in the media has changed little in the twenty-first century, the fragmentation of the digital mediasphere has the potential to multiply Jewish representations, to engage with Jewishness in ways less feasible under a more mass-targeted system. Jill Soloway's Amazon series *Transparent* has offered a more culturally specific encounter with Jewish identity than has ever been seen in American television. Shielded by its presence on a narrowly targeted streaming platform, as well as its more public and visible engagement with transgender experience, *Transparent* signals the potential of creative voices to engage with Jewishness in deeply revealing ways. That it comes along a century after the moguls "invented" Hollywood and its fantasy version of white America is a testament to an abiding ambivalence about media Jewishness.

Elana Levine is professor and Michael Z. Newman is associate professor and chair in the Department of Journalism, Advertising, and Media Studies at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. Separately and together, they study American television and other media.

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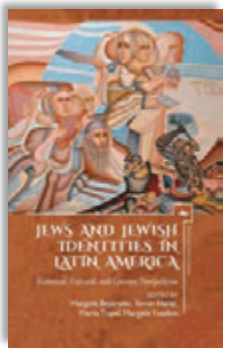

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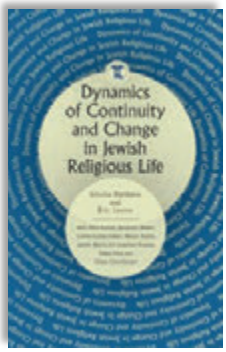

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This book presents a group of distinguished scholars who examine key themes in Jewish religious life. Their essays revolve around the dynamics of religious continuity and change. The contributors investigate the interplay of social and ideological forces, the impact of organizations, and the potential for individuals and groups to shape their religious environments.

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The Story of Krystyna Bierzynska, 1928-1945

BETH HOLMGREN

Jews of Poland

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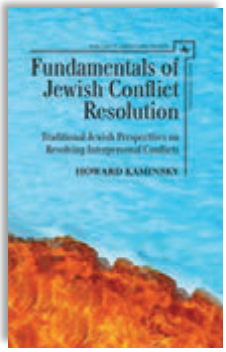
This story of Krystyna Bierzyńska, an acculturated Polish Jew, explores how she survived the Holocaust thanks to the efforts of her Jewish and surrogate Christian families and served in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising. Bierzyńska's is a Warsaw story that demonstrates how, in urban interwar Poland, acculturated Jews at last dared to believe that they qualified as Polish patriots.



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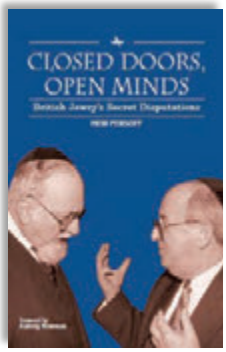

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MEIR PERSOFF

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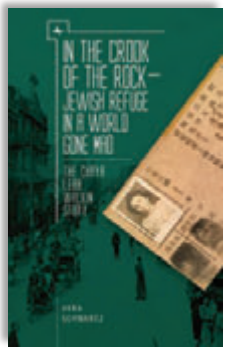

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VERA SCHWARCZ

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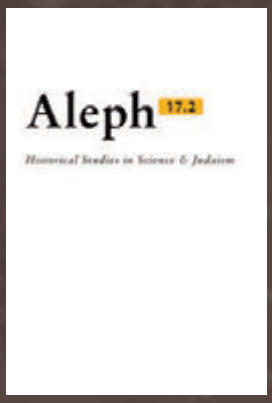

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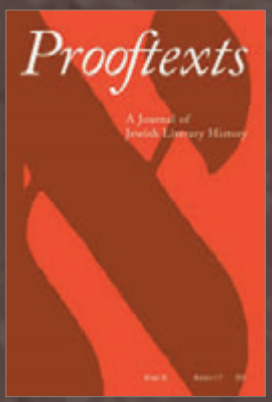

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Mira Beth Wasserman, ***Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals: The Talmud After the Humanities***, **University of Pennsylvania Press**

Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals offers an innovative reading of B. T. ‘Avodah Zarah as a cohesive literary work organized about a single overarching theme — the qualities that distinguish Jews from other human beings and the qualities that Jews and other humans share in common. Through an erudite close reading of ‘Avodah Zarah’s five chapters, informed by thorough familiarity with current Talmudic scholarship and with multiple theoretical lenses employed in the contemporary humanities, Wasserman identifies a broad range of literary devices at work throughout the text. This analysis enables her to build a powerful case that interventions by the anonymous editors of the Babylonian Talmud shaped not only individual tales and sugyot but entire tractates as well. Simultaneously Wasserman reflects upon the implications of her findings for humanistic and “post-humanistic” scholarship more broadly. Noteworthy for its impressive integration of multiple intellectual perspectives, for its intellectual maturity, and for the lucidity of its exposition, *Jews, Gentiles, and Other Animals* speaks to a community that extends to all fields of Jewish studies and beyond.

The American Academy for Jewish Research (www.aajr.org) is the oldest professional organization of Judaica scholars in North America. Its membership represents the most senior figures in the field.

The Baron Prize honors the memory of the distinguished historian Salo W. Baron, a long-time president of the AAJR, who taught at Columbia University for many decades. It is, according to Professor Gershon Hundert, current president of the AAJR, one of the signal honors that can be bestowed on a young scholar in Jewish studies and a sign of the excellence, vitality, and creativity in the field.

Jewish Selfie-Fashioning: Gender and Religion in the Digital Age

Laura Arnold Leibman

At the De ARCA Statue Museum in Java, you can take a selfie with Jackie Chan, Mother Teresa, or Spiderman. Yet one celeb has caused a backlash: Adolf Hitler. Even after international outrage forced his removal, thousands of selfies with the dictator remain immortalized online (see http://bit.ly/hitler-selfie). The uproar echoes previous complaints about new media's immorality. Selfies and narcissism are close companions, psychologists warn us, and many people have denounced millennials' thoughtlessness amidst Jewish suffering (fig. 1). Even Internet-phobic ultra-Orthodox Jews have been criticized for using technology unethically. In 2015, news agencies zeroed in on how a Haredi newspaper digitally erased women leaders from a Paris solidarity rally. The incident was hardly isolated. When historical photos of highly respected rabbis' wives and daughters conflict with current ideals regarding modest dress, at least one reputable authority recommends publishing houses either "'doctor' the photos beforehand, thereby ensuring that harmful parts of the pictures are not reproduced" or omit women altogether, a practice scholar Marc B. Shapiro denounces in *Changing the Immutable: How Orthodox Judaism Rewrites Its History*. Using digital technology to erase women can destabilize the historical record, populating it with false memories.

New media, however, can also just as easily critique moral failures as create them. Berlin-based Israeli writer Shahak Shapira, for example, uses Photoshop to satirize "thoughtless" selfies taken at Holocaust sites. Shapira contrasts the original selfies with photoshopped versions posing the "social-media obsessed youngsters" in archival images of death camps. Like Shapira, Jewish women have found that new media can provide a creative, ethical space. I am particularly interested by how ultra-Orthodox Jewish women use new media, in large part because most previous discussions have focused on how Haredi men use digital tools to efface women. Through new media, women refashion self and communities.

When blogging, ultra-Orthodox women create identities for themselves and share those identities with others. As Brian Alleyne notes in *Narrative Networks: Storied Approaches in a Digital Age*, the social part of new media is crucial. Like social media, blogs allow us to "bridge the gap among our personal sense of self, our desire to be seen in certain ways by others, and our sense of how others see us." The "others" who see ultra-Orthodox women varies: while some blogs are aimed at ultra-Orthodox women themselves (kollelbudget.com), others are designed either explicitly for outreach (jwrp.org), or merely promote an Orthodox Jewish women's lifestyle as a fulfilling choice (joyofkosher.com).

While ultra-Orthodox publications often erase women's bodies, vlogs (video blogs) emphasize women's physical presence. Blogs can use avatars to circumvent taboos surrounding seeing women, but vlogs typically rely on an actual person's presence. As Amy Schmittauer notes in *Vlog Like a Boss: How to Kill It Online with Video Blogging*, ideally vloggers should look "into the eyes of your viewers when you talk to the camera" because eye contact emphasizes that "You understand them. You help them. You relate to them. That is all vlogging is. It's being human on camera." Orthodox women seem to agree. Lori Palatnik, the founding director of the Jewish Women's Renaissance Project, uses videos on her YouTube channel *Lori Almost Live* to inspire Jewish women "with the beauty and wisdom of their heritage." Yet her videos also showcase her role as a public speaker, a job that relies on body language. Jewish Women International named Palatnik one of the ten "Women to Watch," an honor implying Palatnik can actually be *seen*, unlike the women photoshopped from print media.

Vlogs underscore that women can be virtuous in both domestic *and* public spaces. This dual role runs counter to Rabbi Pesach Falk's popular tome on *ẓni'ut* (modesty), whose ideology seems to prohibit "a woman from standing out—and from being outstanding." These prohibitions go beyond dress: even women's attendance of parents' night at school has been denounced as "immodest" in some Haredi publications, as Shapiro notes. Vlogs allow Haredi women to redefine acceptable female roles. In *Out of the Orthodox Box*, Ruchi Koval explains she is a wife and mother, but also a Sunday school director, "a certified parenting coach, motivational speaker, musician, and author." Indeed, Koval's podcasts and YouTube channel play a role in her social mobility, as they promote book sales and paid speaking engagements.

Ultra-Orthodox women use vlogs in outreach, but also to provide tips on *sheitl* care, head-scarf wrapping, and cooking—all professions highlighting their status as women of valor. Vlogs like *Wrapunzel* do more than "inspire happiness with the art of hair wrapping": they also suggest ways for women to navigate the professional world while maintaining an Orthodox lifestyle. These same vlogs rejuvenate Jewish practice. *Wrapunzel*'s Andrea Grinberg incorporates new styles and ethnic fabrics into Jewish practice. *Wrapunzel*'s companion store offers an innovative way to make money while simultaneously striving to increase women's positive self-image. Grinberg's physically and ethnically diverse models challenge Orthodox communities' focus on whiteness and thinness as an ideal (fig. 2).

By foregrounding Orthodox women as authorities, blogs potentially destabilize male prerogative. On the one hand, when Allison Josephs, the founder, director, and main spokeswoman of the Orthodox women's blog *Jew in the City,* has a tricky

Fig. 1. Tourist taking selfie photo at Holocaust Memorial in Berlin, 2017. Photo credit: SAHACHATZ / Shutterstock.com.

Fig. 2. Scarves and tichels modeled on Wrapunzel's online store. Top row photos, photo credit: Yehudis Taffel. Bottom row photos, photo credit: Jerome Bethea with LTD Studios (Living The Dream). Courtesy of Wrapunzel.com.

question, she turns to *Jew in the City*'s male educational correspondent, Rabbi Jack Abramowitz. Her approach models how Orthodox women are typically encouraged to get answers about Jewish law. Rabbi Abramowitz not only edits *OU Torah* but also has authored six books, including a book on *ẓni'ut*. Moreover, Rabbi Abramowitz explicitly reinforces rabbinical authority in his post on "transgender issues." He cautions "gender issues in halacha are already far more intricate than many would assume" and suggests we "leave the halachic issues for those at that pay grade. All you and I can do—all we should do—is just be a mentsch."

Yet the blog's structure subtly undercuts rabbinically trained men as the main religious authority on women's issues. Visitors to the *Jew in the City* come primarily to hear an Orthodox *woman's* perspective, not a rabbi's. Moreover, the blog's layout emphasizes the primacy of women's voices. The byline for Rabbi Abramowitz in his article "An Orthodox Rabbi Discusses Transgender Issues in Jewish Texts," is small, particularly compared to the large photos of Allison Josephs. In the blog's context, female authority licenses Abramowitz to speak: if we listen to him, it is because Allison Josephs suggests we should (fig. 3).

Blogs rely on a different formula for gaining their readers' trust. Unlike Haredi editors, Google is more interested in a page's number of links and "ranking

signals" than what yeshiva the author attended or rabbinical letters of approbation. The Internet democratizes publication. Google searches place *Jew in the City*'s discussion of "transgender issues" alongside *SOJOURN's* post highlighting halakhic opinions respectful of people post-transition. Equally important, the same search might also return *The Second Transition*, in which Abby Stein presents her *own* experience of being transgender in an ultra-Orthodox community (fig. 4). As a woman ordained by a Hasidic yeshiva, Stein reminds us that traditional credentials don't always come in male forms. Like a postmodern Talmud, Internet searches provide a ring of conflicting voices circling any idea in Jewish life. Yet unlike the Talmud, the nature of the voices has changed.

New media allows women to refashion their identities for themselves and others. As Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt noted in a recent *Forward* article, men's "terrible discomfort with women stepping into the public light" via social media underlies why they "slut-shame" ultra-Orthodox women for wearing "immodest" *sheitls*. For Chizhik-Goldschmidt, the Internet provides "an uncensored, unmoored territory," a place where women can "express themselves in totality—their spiritual selves, their silly selves, their vain selves." Self-fashioning and self-presentation is not just for narcissists. New media allow ultra-Orthodox women to publicize themselves as outstanding—and even ordinary—women.

Laura Arnold Leibman is professor of English and Humanities at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. She is the author of Indian Converts *(University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), the coeditor of* Jews in the Americas, 1776–1826 *(Routledge, 2017), and the author of* Messianism, Secrecy and Mysticism: A New Interpretation of Early American Jewish Life *(Vallentine Mitchell, 2012). She served as the academic director for the award-winning multimedia public television series* American Passages: A Literary Survey *(2003). She is currently writing about a multiracial family that began their lives as slaves in the Caribbean and became some of the wealthiest Jews in New York.*

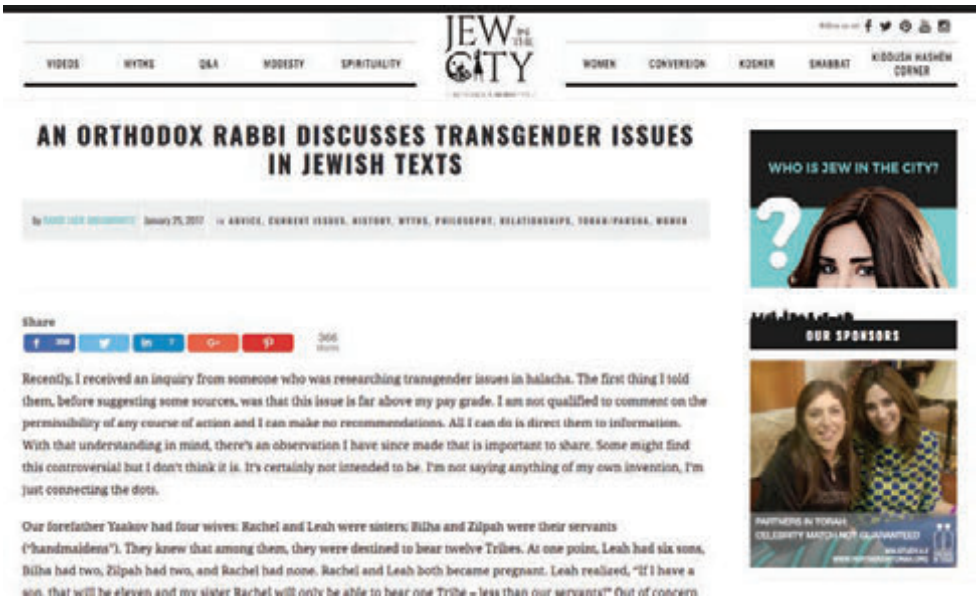

Fig. 3. Screenshot of Rabbi Abramowitz, "An Orthodox Rabbi Discusses Transgender Issues in Jewish Texts" (Jew in the City, 2017). Courtesy of JewInTheCity.com.

Fig. 4. Melody Melamed, *Abby Stein*, 2016. Courtesy of the artist.

The Facebook of Life

Ira Wagman

CEBImagery, *The Secret*, 2011. Photo via Flickr Commons.

As part of every High Holiday celebration Jews pray that they should be "inscribed into the Book of Life." According to the talmudic tractate of Rosh Hashanah, three books are opened every Rosh Hashanah. The first recognizes people who are good and sets them up for life. The second recognizes the wicked and sentences them to destruction. Those in the third book are in a state of limbo, their future determined by an evaluation of their worthiness at the end of Yom Kippur, with worthiness measured in terms of *mitzvot*, and prospects improved through the process of atonement. Through atonement, an individual's slate is wiped clean, enabling each person to start the new year from a better place.

We might say that digital devices, connected to each other through the Internet, are analogous to that that third book of life. These devices contain knowledge about us and bind us together into a kind of community, but they leave the question of our future status largely unclear. One challenge of living in the contemporary moment, then, involves confronting the consequences of our online media presence. We are each given the power to behave as media companies, as the producers and editors of content. In short, we are subjects, objects, and consumers. Thinking about our digital lives means reflecting on the challenges of living together in a world where media play a pervasive role in our moral orientation.

The history of media technologies is a history of humans developing tools in an attempt to play God. These technologies and devices allow us to manipulate time and space, by generating representations that inspire behavior and retaining memories for future reflection and evaluation; and they allow us to disseminate knowledge across space, and, in turn, to see across distances. Perhaps this is why religious organizations have so often been enthusiastic adopters of new communications technologies, from the codex to radio to Twitter. With devices that offer high-quality photographs, easy-to-use editing software, and simple ways to "get the word out," our modern-day media now provide us with the capabilities once reserved for large media companies. Two of the more prominent activities of digital culture—following and searching—serve as reminders that media technologies contribute to our sense of transcendence alongside a sense of immanence. Our biggest worries about the misuse of power enabled by these devices and technologies—whether by peddlers of propaganda, by snooping eyes at the NSA, or by cyberbullies—serve as powerful reminders of the way these tools can easily be used for "ungodly" purposes.

Our digital platforms promise connection, promotion, and dissemination, but they grant these in exchange for extensive surveillance, invasive advertising, and a loss of privacy. We might regard this trade-off as the consummation of two dreams that were long in the making. In exchange for us to finally have our own television station, directing our own news network, or programming our own film festival, companies like Facebook, Twitter, and Netflix are able to finally reach the dream of "knowing their audience" by collecting more information about us in more ways than ever before. This union was sealed through what can be seen in retrospect as a remarkable leap of faith on our part as individuals: a belief that with access to and possession of our collected and shared pasts these companies would act responsibly. That confidence is hardly based on fact, as many of us remain largely out of touch with the ways our data is being used. Despite the repeated stories of sensitive material leaking out from "secure" storage, we retain a belief that somehow our information is being handled responsibly. Millions of users continue to share even more personal information with Silicon Valley as they simultaneously complain about its misuses, a symbol of the conflicted relationship we have with platforms that provide us with unprecedented publicity packaged with unprecedented invasions of privacy as part of a culture of "sharing."

Our online behavior also raises serious ethical questions. The expansion of communicative capabilities did not come with an equally expansive set, or sense, of responsibilities and rights. As we transformed into our own media companies, questions of individual or social responsibility for our digital behaviors have been left largely for the market to sort out. However, in perusing penitential prayers from the High Holy Days liturgy, like Al Ḥeyt and Avinu Malkenu, one can easily appreciate the communicative acts that sit at the root of our digital sins: rushing to judgment, spreading false information, hateful speech, boastfulness, spreading gossip, "foolish talk," and lying and deception. We once used these terms to critique major media corporations for selling salaciousness and spectacle in return for advertising revenues. Now those same behaviors are part of the pitch we use to deliver those selfsame advertisers to our social networks in return for "likes," shares, and retweets.

Atoning in the Internet age differs from atonement in earlier eras not because of the actions but because of the afterlife of digital transgression. A slip of the tongue that once circulated locally now goes globally viral. An embarrassing photograph that once made the rounds at someone's school or place of work can now find a place in the Internet's darker corners or in a Google image search, forever. Facebook's "Year in Review" function reminds users of things from their past with the help of algorithms that may or may not do an accurate job of historical reconstruction. Everyone from politicians to prospective job candidates knows that the Internet "never forgets," placing them in state of limbo, unsure as to when a previous tweet or inappropriate gesture may come back to haunt them, with no real way of knowing when and how the need for atonement will be required.

Our collective naiveté may come at a cost. In his recent book *World without Mind*, Franklin Foer predicts that we are on the verge of experiencing "the big one," a hack of such magnitude that would reveal our personal habits and predilections in ways that could significantly alter human relations. The European Union recently recognized a "right to be forgotten" that allows its citizens the power to request that material deemed "inadequate, irrelevant, or out-of-date" be delisted from search engine results. Among the reasons for implementing this policy was a desire to reproduce a sense of what exists in the offline world to online spaces. Another was to preempt unnecessary suffering due to past behavior, particularly for young people. These efforts are a more sober way of dealing with the realities of digital communication, at a distance from Foer's dystopian predictions; and they also mark a productive start to reining in powerful digital platforms, to bringing these higher powers back into a regulatory orbit by devising technical solutions that are grounded—however imprecisely—on principles of human rights. Left for us to determine, however, are the bigger questions of how to live with each other at a time when our abilities to be everywhere, to pass judgment on others, and for our pasts to be shared and circulated are a part of who we are. We must attend to the questions of how to behave against a backdrop of permanent inscription in what we might call the Facebook of Life. Perhaps we might consider things that we can do without media technologies. That would include things like loving, listening, and forgiving those people who are closest to us as part of our everyday life.

Ira Wagman is an associate professor of Communication and Media Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. He is also affiliated with the Max and Tessie Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies at Carleton. He researches and writes in the areas of media history, communication theory, and digital ethics.

Two Israeli soldiers taking picture with a selfie stick in military training zone, Israel, 2014. Photo credit: Alex Lerner / shutterstock.com.

The Rise of the Militarized Selfie: Notes from Israel

Rebecca L. Stein (with Adi Kuntsman)

November 2012 marked the first Israeli military operation in which large numbers of soldiers went into service with smartphones in their uniform pockets, updating their social media accounts from army installations as they waited to be deployed for a ground invasion into the Gaza Strip. During these days of waiting, they uploaded a series of selfies to their personal Instagram accounts. In most respects, it was a standard catalogue of smartphone portraiture, with an emphasis on beautified snapshots of everyday life in the military, featuring uniformed men and women riding on a bus, posing for an elevator self-portrait, relaxing in the sun, embracing near a tank. Framed and filtered through conventional retro filters, with their familiar aesthetics

"IDF Women," 2013. Photo by Flickr user Danielle, via Flickr Commons.

of the out-of-time and -place, these mobile portraits produced an exquisite and highly sanitized visual archive of soldiering. As such, they offered a digital twist on the long history of Israeli nationalist iconography, in which war is simultaneously heroized and aestheticized while disassociated from resultant violence. On Instagram, this iconography was mobilized to serve the needs of self-branding, with war employed as a tool of personal self-promotion. These were images of militarism but not of battle, beautified bodies free of dirt or blood, at a considerable remove from the carnage of the concurrent military operation. The accompanying hashtag strings gestured towards the violence that the images had cleansed—"#kill#sexy#nevergiveup#sleep #m16#instalove#happy"—generating an unsettling conjunction of patriotism and intimacy, lethal violence and play.

At work was an instance of what we have termed "selfie militarism." In selfie militarism, violence often takes surprising forms, emerging in and through the

banal and beautified terms of mobile self-portraiture. The militarized selfie is a hybrid genre that links commonplace selfie conventions with militarized political sensibilities. What results, we have argued, is the normalization of violent, racist, and/or militant nationalist projects by means of very standard social media conventions.

Over the course of the last five years, we've watched the militarized selfie gradually grow and spread in Israel as a networked political form. Early instances of the phenomenon emerged in 2010, before the massive global proliferation of the selfie, and included Facebook photographs of soldiers posing in Palestinian homes during routine raids, or in front of blindfolded and cuffed detainees at checkpoints. In these early years, such viral images were framed in Israeli popular discourse as social aberrations, exceptions to Israel's "moral army" and the national ethos of "purity of arms." The phenomena would grow and spread in subsequent years, a measure of both the growing right-wing tendencies of the Israeli public and the increasing proliferation of mobile technologies and social media literacy in Israel. Today, selfie militarism no longer surprises Israeli publics. This coupling of militarism and the everyday tools of social media expression has become normalized.

Such processes of normalization are part of a broader phenomenon that we call "digital militarism." Our book of the same name explores the ways that social media tools, technologies, and practices are increasingly employed in the service of militant projects by state and civilian Internet users. While this is undoubtedly a global phenomenon—a phenomenon we have come to know quite intimately in Trump's America—our study focuses on its emergence in the context of Israel's occupation, with an emphasis on ways that fervent and often militant nationalism is taking shape through mundane networking practices and modes of online engagement. Digital militarism in the Israeli context is not what we typically associate with Israel's repressive rule in the Palestinian territories. This kind of militarism takes shape through everyday Facebook status updates, through "likes" and shares, and in the hues of the Instagram retro-filter.

When we began researching this book in 2009, "digital militarism" was in its infancy, in both Israeli and broader global contexts. But over the course of our research, we watched it grow and spread. Today, it need hardly be remarked, the phenomenon is no less than commonplace in political theaters across the globe. We are no longer surprised to learn about the integration of social networking into military arsenals; about the presence of smartphones on battlefields; about social networking from scenes of atrocity, by both victims and perpetrators; or the ways that popular platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube both function as wartime archives and constitute critical tools for human rights and activist documentation projects—even as they might, many hope, eventually aid in bringing perpetrators to justice. The reach of contemporary warfare and armed conflicts into digital arenas has both enlarged theatres of military operation and changed our understanding of the political function and ends of digital technologies.

What does this mean for the Israeli case? Return, again, to selfie militarism. Our focus on this hybrid form—which couples the conventional genres and norms governing mobile self-portraiture with military contexts and sensibilities—is an attempt to study the ways that Israelis are living intimately with their military occupation in the course of their everyday digital lives. Selfie militarism is one way to highlight the very mundane and banal ways in which Israelis live with, and perpetuate, the occupation through standard networking practices. Today, we argue, social media functions as a crucial domain of everyday complicity with military rule—complicity evident not only in the actions of the Israeli soldier deployed in the West Bank, armed with both weapon and networked smartphone, but also in the networking practices of the Israeli resident of cosmopolitan Tel Aviv, for whom the occupation might seem to exist at something of a distance from her comfortable life. Liking and sharing from the relative comfort of Tel Aviv can also, we propose, constitute a form of digital complicity.

This text is adapted from the introduction to Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age *(Stanford University Press, 2015).*

Rebecca L. Stein is the Nicholas J. & Theresa M. Leonardy Associate Professor of Cultural Anthropology at Duke University. She is the author, with Adi Kuntsman, of Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age *(Stanford University Press, 2015);* Itineraries in Conflict: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Political Lives of Tourism *(Duke University Press, 2008); the coeditor of* Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture *(Duke University Press, 2005) with Ted Swedenburg, and* The Struggle for Sovereignty: Palestine and Israel, 1993–2005 *with Joel Beinin (Stanford University Press, 2006).*

Adi Kuntsman's work explores digital cultures in various geographical and sociopolitical contexts. Recent publications include Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion: Feeling, Affect and Technological Change *(Palgrave, 2012) coedited with Athina Karatzogianni;* Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age *(Stanford University Press, 2015) coauthored with Rebecca L. Stein; and* Selfie Citizenship *(Palgrave, 2017).*

"Guarding Israel," 2014. Photo by Flickr user Danielle, via Flickr Commons

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David Myers, Center for Jewish History, *Scholars Working Group Program*

Naomi Brenner, Ohio State University; Matthew Handelman, Michigan State University; Shachar Pinsker, University of Michigan, *"Below the Line"? The Feuilleton and Modern Jewish Cultures*

Ira Robinson, Concordia University, *Furthering Cooperation in Jewish Studies Among Faculty and Students in Universities in Montreal and Surrounding Areas*

Francesca Bregoli, CUNY-Queens College and the Graduate Center; Elisheva Carlebach, Columbia University; Flora Cassen, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill; Debra Glasberg Gail, University of Pennsylvania; Joshua Teplitsky, SUNY-Stony Brook; Magda Teter, Fordham University; Ruth von Berth, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, *The Early Modern Workshop "Sense and Perception"*

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Jacob Flaws, University of Colorado – Boulder, *Witnessing Treblinka: Spatial Perceptions of a Death Camp*

Catherine Greer, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, *Memorializing Theresienstadt: Music, Memory, and Representation*

Julie Rebecca Keresztes, Boston University, *'For It Has Conquered Worlds:' The Camera in Nazi Germany, 1933-1945*

Geoffrey Phillip Levin, New York University, *Another Nation: Israel, American Jews, and Palestinian Rights, 1948-1977*

C. Tova Markenson, Northwestern University, *Entrance Forbidden to the Yiddish Theatres: Performance, Protest, and Prostitution in Latin America (1900-1939)*

Tamar Menashe, Columbia University, *Jews in Cross-Confessional Legal Cultures in Reformation Germany*

Molly Theodora Oringer, University of California, Los Angeles, *Spatial Relations: Post-War Rehabilitation and the Afterlives of Jewish Terrains in Lebanon*

Meghan Elizabeth Rose Riley, Indiana University, *American Aid Organizations in French Concentration and Internment Camps, 1939-1945*

Yonatan Shemesh, University of Chicago, Divinity School, *Moses Narboni's Commentary on Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed*

Anastasiia Strakhova, Emory University, *Imagining Emigration: Crossing the Borders of Russian Jewry during the Era of Mass Migration, 1881-1917*

Ori Werdiger, The University of Chicago, Jacob Gordin Archives

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Forum

Old Media, New Media: Librarians and Archivists Reflect

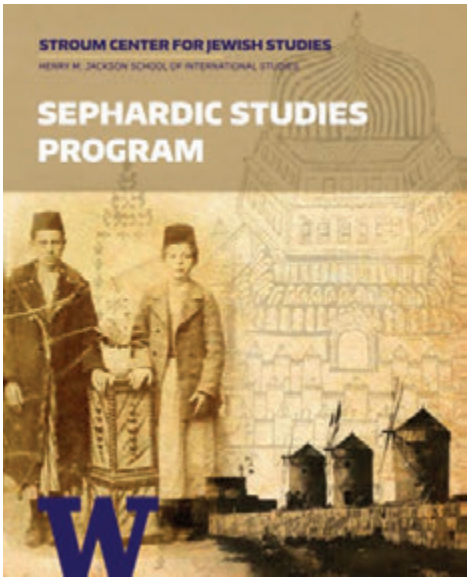
For the Forum section of *AJS Perspectives* we asked librarians and archivists working in the field of Jewish Studies to reflect on how their work has been transformed by new media in the last decade and what they have found to be the most challenging and/or most exciting recent developments in this regard.

Ty Alhadeff

University of Washington

In 2016, I received an email from a woman named Linda in South Africa with Sephardic Jewish roots on the island of Rhodes. "I speak a very broken Ladino and would love to learn more," she wrote. She began to explore our online learning tools, such as Sephardic Hebrew cursive (*soletreo*) tutorial videos. We benefitted just as much: she shared with us the only surviving copy of a Ladino translation of High Holiday prayers composed by the last chief rabbi of Rhodes and published, unexpectedly, in Romania. To bring this new discovery to a broader audience, I composed a digital essay highlighting the book and its miraculous trajectory over the past century—from Romania to Rhodes, evading the Holocaust, to South Africa, and digitally, to Seattle. Through Facebook and Twitter, this article quickly garnered readers from our "followers" in forty-five countries. The transnational journey of the text concluded with global online open access.

Since its inception four years ago, the Sephardic Studies Program at the University of Washington's Stroum Center for Jewish Studies has leveraged its website and social media to curate the history and language of a set of communities long operating in analog and largely overlooked by the broader field of Jewish Studies. New media have empowered us to showcase the Sephardic experience through texts, music, and videos before a global audience. Sephardic Jews were once one of the least accessible world cultures online. Our efforts have contributed to exposing the historical, cultural, and literary worlds of the Sephardic Jews to the attention of students, scholars, and community members worldwide.



Brochure cover of the Sephardic Studies Program at the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of Washington.

With more than 1,200 Ladino-language artifacts—books, newspapers, manuscripts, and personal correspondence—acquired through local and international crowdsourcing, our program has digitized more than 133,000 pages of material, a selection of which is already online. Recognizing that the languages and historical contexts of our artifacts are not well known, we strategically curate "Sephardic treasures" in digital essays to make them approachable for our audiences. Rather than wait for them to be discovered, we actively pursue social media campaigns to draw attention to them. As a result, some of our "treasures" have been integrated into Jewish Studies syllabi and dissertation research, translated into five languages, highlighted in documentary films and museum exhibitions, and reproduced in award-winning books.

If a goal of new media is to reduce distance between people and increase access in a global age, the Sephardic experience—which spans Europe, the Middle East, the Americas, Africa, and beyond—is primed for a digital revolution. Through our curation and dissemination of previously difficult-to-access materials, our Sephardic Studies Program seeks to give voice to a slice of the Jewish experience that until now was just a whisper.

Ty Alhadeff is the research coordinator, archivist, librarian, blogger, and social media strategist for the Sephardic Studies Program at the Stroum Center for Jewish Studies, University of Washington. Ty received his BA degree from the University of Washington and a master's degree in Jewish Studies from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

Rachel Ariel

Duke University

The most significant change in the library and in the librarian's work in the past ten years has been the huge expansion of digital media. While a decade ago we already had online catalogs, databases, and websites and used personal computers for our daily work, much of the librarian's work was still done in a traditional way. Book publishers sent their print catalogs in the mail, and librarians ordered books title by title. Dozens of print newspapers and journals were displayed on shelves in a central area of the library, a place popular among readers. The reference desk was busy with students asking for advice and assistance as they were searching for sources. Students and

faculty alike still used the reference collection of encyclopedias, dictionaries, lexicons, all in printed book format.

Today, in addition to every student carrying his own laptop, most professors and all students walk around with a smartphone that grants them immediate access to every online source, as well as many other forms of Internet communication. Yet this ability to search and find material on one's own, anywhere, creates difficulties in finding and selecting the right material within the seemingly infinite quantity and diversity of online information.

Our library still receives some printed academic journals that are not available electronically, yet the shelves that house them have moved from the main floor to the basement and use has very much declined. In all disciplines, in science, social studies, and humanities, digital representation of journal articles has replaced the paper format. Scholars and students have direct access to discovery tools, but the number of journals and articles available online has become enormous, with multiple ways of access. One of the most important roles of the librarian nowadays is to support and teach our patrons what the discovery tools are and how to use them. The abundance and variety of options is overwhelming, and learning to find and select the best resources is the challenge facing scholars and students.

The digital revolution has also brought e-books to the library. Gloomy expectations predicting the imminent disappearance of the printed book have not materialized. Digital publications have not replaced printed ones, and our readers want and use both formats. Librarians still maintain and manage collections that are now composed of both physical and digital material.

The advancement of the Internet and the World Wide Web enabled the development of one of the more exciting concepts in today's scholarly world: open access. Providing unrestricted access, without financial or legal barriers, via the Internet, to peer-reviewed scholarly research allows anyone who is interested to benefit from new scholarly work. Academic libraries serve as open access repositories for scholarly works created by faculty and students and thus support the dissemination of knowledge beyond the academic world.

The expansion of digital media has transformed the work of scholars and librarians alike. The old tasks have not gone away—subject knowledge is still prized as are librarians' skills in finding and evaluating information. But the digital world has opened up new possibilities and challenged us to learn new skills.

Originally from Israel, Rachel Ariel studied History, Political Science, and Education at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and Jewish Studies at the Hebrew College in Boston. Upon coming to North Carolina in 1994, Rachel became one of the two founding teachers of the new Jewish Community Day School of Durham-Chapel Hill. Rachel was the director of Jewish Studies at the Lerner School. Since 2006 Rachel serves as the librarian for Judaica and Hebraica at Duke University Libraries.

Zachary M. Baker

Stanford University

In my first professional library position I worked as a cataloger. Apart from typing up catalog cards, this entailed assigning the appropriate subject headings and classification numbers, and consulting a gamut of reference works for information on the books' authors and contributors. The basic principles of cataloging remain the same today, even as methodologies and technical jargon have changed significantly. Yesterday's catalogers have been transformed into today's "metadata specialists."

I still have a folder containing the handouts from the Judaica bibliography course that I audited at the Jewish Theological Seminary in the late 1970s. Each week we discussed the foundational reference works that underpinned the subdisciplines of Jewish Studies: bibliographies, dictionaries, encyclopedias, lexicons, concordances, etc. These were all print publications—nary a database or full-text resource among them. They were the backbone of the first syllabus for the Research Methods seminar that I led at Stanford over fifteen years ago. However, experience soon taught me that students—even advanced graduate students—regarded the likes of Shlomo Shunami's *Bibliography of Jewish Bibliographies* as irrelevant to their research. To me, this is a loss, but one that is largely compensated for by the democratization of the research process in the online environment.

Indeed, many of the reference works that I once consulted as a cataloger are themselves now accessible online. As a researcher in the field of Yiddish Studies I am grateful for the profusion of indexes and journal databases, as well as for the availability of digitized books, journals, and newspapers, not to mention audio and video resources. Recently, a researcher in Texas sent me an email inquiry in which he commented, "My resources here in Houston are limited." My response: "You are not as far away as you may think."

Last year, the editors of the online journal *In geveb* invited me to compile a multipart research guide, Resources in Yiddish Studies. The guide's medium is entirely electronic and its listings are hybrid in nature—grouping together by topic, in an integrated manner, print-only, digitized, and born-digital resources. In the process of compiling the research guide, I was able to immerse myself in the continually expanding universe of online resources, and to share this knowledge through a journal that is universally (and freely!) accessible.

Zachary M. Baker, recently retired, was the Reinhard Family Curator of Judaica and Hebraica Collections in the Stanford University Libraries (1999–2017), and also had administrative oversight of collection development at Stanford University Libraries (2010–2017). Previously, he served as head librarian of the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (1987–1999).

Sarah Bunin Benor

Hebrew Union College, Los Angeles

Crowdsourcing has yielded valuable resources like Wikipedia and Urban Dictionary, as well as many other endeavors, as Clay Shirkey analyzes in *Here Comes Everybody*. This new media development also sparked two Jewish Studies projects that have occupied much of my time and thinking over the past decade: a survey of American

Jewish language and identity and online dictionaries of distinctive words used by Jews in multiple languages.

In 2008, Steven M. Cohen and I sent a survey invitation to about six hundred friends and colleagues and asked them to forward it to Jews and non-Jews. The survey went viral and eventually yielded over 50,000 responses. This large response enabled us to gain a better understanding of how Americans of various backgrounds understand and use various Yiddish and Hebrew words and other distinctive features, like New York pronunciations and overlapping discourse (see results http://bit.do/2008results and http://bit.do/benor).

The second crowdsourced project is a series of online dictionaries on www.jewish-languages.org: Jewish English Lexicon, *Léxico Judío Latinoamericano* (Latin American Spanish, with Evelyn Dean-Olmsted), *Lexikon över Judisk Svenska* (Swedish, with Patric Joshua Klagsbrun Lebenswerd), and *Glossaire du français juif* (French, with Cyril Aslanov). A Russian version is in the works, and others are planned for the future. The idea behind these websites is that Jews around the world use their local language with a repertoire of distinctive features, including words from Hebrew, Yiddish, Ladino, Judeo-Arabic, and other languages. In the case of Jewish English, dictionaries have recorded many of these words. But hundreds of words were not documented, especially those used by specific subgroups. That's where crowdsourcing came in. The websites allow visitors to edit entries and add new ones. Collectively, the lexicons, along with the Jewish Language Research Website that hosts them, have been accessed by over a million unique visitors from dozens of countries. Often people find the Jewish English Lexicon after searching for a word, such as *bubbale*, *heimish*, and *refuah shlemah*. *Shana tova* and *g'mar chatima tova* were popular in September, and *moadim lesimcha* in April. For definitions and information on who uses these and over one thousand other words, visit www.jewish-languages.org/jewish-english-lexicon.

Both the survey and the lexicons were featured in multiple media outlets and linked to by many blogs and websites. They have both led to exciting developments in our understanding of Jewish language and our ability to share that knowledge with people around the world. This was all due to the Internet and the various technologies that enabled crowdsourcing.

Sarah Bunin Benor, professor at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles, received her PhD from Stanford University in Linguistics. She writes and lectures widely about American Jewish language and culture. Her books include Becoming Frum: How Newcomers Learn the Language and Culture of Orthodox Judaism (*Rutgers University Press, 2012*).

Eitan Kensky

Yiddish Book Center

On a good day I'm surrounded by cartons of reel-to-reels, cassettes, DAT tapes, DVCAMs, and MiniDVs. Last year we rescued our broken and mistreated CDs, sorted everything, gave each one a unique identifier, and moved the disks into Tyvek sleeves.

These boxes of loved and unloved formats are here for a simple reason: digitize or transfer. At the Yiddish Book Center, as at most digital libraries, content matters more than the container. Our goal is to transform these "tapes" into a digital collection, to present scattered media as a usable record of the center's mission—the lectures on Yiddish culture it sponsored, the concerts it held, the recordings of native speakers it captured. Soon we will add them to the center's holdings of digital stuff.

Digitization is the correct choice. It improves access to materials. It preserves the original recordings (temporarily). It enables a small memory institution in a midsized state to have a global impact. But more than a decade into the era of digital libraries, it's past time to admit that digital objects are boring.

What we've gained in access, we've lost in tactility. The books at the Yiddish Book Center bear inscriptions, stamps, signatures, library records, doodles. There could be ten to fifteen copies of a single volume by Sholem Asch on the shelves, each slightly different, each potentially appealing to a different reader, each with a unique texture. Because scanning is practical, only one copy of a book is digitized. Beautiful, variable, sensorial artifacts become flat JPEGs.

The media scholar Florian Cramer has written about postdigital movements in arts and design. Although the term is multivalent, one notion is to choose the technology most suited to the job rather than default to the bleeding edge. If access is the goal, new media will always be the most suitable. Yet access is only one part of the mission of cultural heritage institutions. Consider member engagement. Every summer the Book Center sponsors a music festival, Yidstock. How would members respond to receiving a "best of" cassette? Would they appreciate its bootleg feel? Physical media also serves a pedagogical purpose: as objects marked in time, they illuminate a disappearing world.

Memory institutions like ours should embrace the challenge of making new media more meaningful. We need to adopt postdigital logic, accept that the experience of old media was more engaging, and inject our cool digital spaces with a sense of play.

Eitan Kensky is director of the Collections Initiatives at the Yiddish Book Center. Before coming to the Book Center, he was the preceptor in Yiddish at Harvard. He is a cofounder of In geveb: A Journal of Yiddish Studies. *He received his PhD from Harvard in Jewish Studies.*

Sean Martin

Western Reserve Historical Society

I work at the Western Reserve Historical Society (WRHS), a nonprofit historical society in Cleveland, Ohio, that collects materials related to local Jewish history. The most exciting development in my own professional life has been the digitization of these materials in all formats, including, but not limited to, photographs, manuscript collections, film, audio recordings, newspapers, and books, to make them available to the public. Digitization makes it much easier to pursue scholarly work, but it has also posed tough challenges in my work as an archivist.

The vast holdings of WRHS include audiovisual materials, such as recordings of the sermons of Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver, oral history interviews with local Holocaust survivors, performances of singers and

musicians at local congregations, and Jewish radio programs that featured guests like Molly Picon. Some of these materials can be found in our digital repository, notably eighty interviews in the recently completed Soviet Jewish Oral History Collection. But a daunting challenge remains—processing hundreds of items to inform the public that these Jewish history sources exist and, eventually, to digitize them for the purposes of our researchers, who include students at all levels, local community groups preparing for programs, and genealogy and academic researchers worldwide. Our historical society has been collecting for 150 years. Our audiovisual materials come in many formats, including 8mm film, 16mm film, 8-track, U-Matic, Beta, VHS, and laser disc, among others. Digitizing these materials to make them widely available will eventually enable us to hear Rabbi Silver's famous oratory or relive a 1920s Camp Wise picnic. These recordings will allow us to visualize moments both celebratory and everyday and help transform our image of the Jewish past in America.

Yet another pressing challenge awaits. We serve as the repository for the records of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland and nearly all the area's Jewish congregations and social service agencies. Approximately 350 collections from local donors document our community's Jewish past. The donations keep coming in, and, increasingly, more contemporary materials will be born digital. We at the WRHS are working to develop policies that will facilitate the accessioning and processing of these materials and enable us to release them to the public. This requires additional training, staff, money, and, not least, commitment. It's the commitment that will allow us to reach our goal of helping researchers tell the stories of local Jewish history.

Sean Martin is associate curator for Jewish History at Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland, Ohio. He is the author of Jewish Life in Cracow, 1918–1939 *(Vallentine Mitchell, 2004)*; A Stitch in Time: The Cleveland Garment Industry (*Western Reserve Historical Society, 2015*); *and* For the Good of the Nation: Institutions for Jewish Children in Interwar Poland (*Academic Studies Press, 2017*).

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