

*Melilah*  
MANCHESTER JOURNAL  
OF JEWISH STUDIES

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Daniel R. Langton and Renate Smithuis

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# *Melilah*

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Volume 7 (2010)

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## THE 'ROMAN CATHOLIC QUESTION' IN THE ANGLO-JEWISH PRESS, 1890-1925

Simon Mayers\*

*Abstract: Anglo-Jewish reactions to late 19th and early 20th century Catholic discourses about Jews have received little attention. This article partially fills this gap through an examination of Anglo-Jewish newspapers from 1890 to 1925, a timeframe which includes the Dreyfus Affair, the Hilsner blood libel and the ratification of the British Mandate in Palestine. Three different newspaper editorships have been examined, the Jewish Chronicle edited by Asher Myers, the Jewish Chronicle and Jewish World under the control of Leopold Greenberg, and the Jewish Guardian as the paper of the League of British Jews. It is this article's contention that a more aggressive reaction to Catholic hostility is notable in the Jewish Chronicle and Jewish World when they were controlled by Leopold Greenberg, a political Zionist, than the Jewish Chronicle under Asher Myers or the Jewish Guardian. The Jewish Guardian was unconcerned about Catholic hostility to Zionism though it was occasionally alarmed by generalised anti-Jewish threads that were woven into it. It was also critical of English Catholic writers who argued that Jews could never be proper Englishmen, but whereas Greenberg relished the opportunity to 'hit back' on his own, the Jewish Guardian preferred if possible to allow Christians to defend Jews.*

Jewish-Catholic relations have not received a great deal of attention within existing examinations of modern Anglo-Jewish history.<sup>1</sup> With some exceptions, such as the *Jewish Chronicle's* occasional fracas with the famous pairing that George Bernard Shaw nicknamed the 'Chesterbelloc',<sup>2</sup> very little has been written about Anglo-Jewish reactions to late 19th and early 20th century Catholic discourses about Jews (whether hostile or amicable).<sup>3</sup> What follows is an attempt to fill this gap, albeit partially, through an examination of Anglo-Jewish newspapers from 1890 to 1925. This timeframe includes important events such as the Dreyfus Affair, the Hilsner blood libel, the Balfour Declaration and the ratification of the British Mandate. It is impossible to provide a comprehensive analysis of the entire spectrum of Jewish newspapers published in England or to present every nuance and detail from over

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<sup>1</sup> A recent study by Ulrike Carmen Ehret, investigating English and German Catholic attitudes towards Jews from 1918 to 1939, goes a long way to rectifying this gap. See Ulrike Carmen Ehret, 'Catholics and Antisemitism in Germany and England, 1918-1939', Ph.D thesis, *University of London* (2006).

<sup>2</sup> George Bernard Shaw, 'Belloc and Chesterton', *The New Age*, 15 February 1908, 309-11.

<sup>3</sup> For example, see Dean Rapp, 'The Jewish Response to G.K. Chesterton's Antisemitism, 1911-33', *Patterns of Prejudice* 24: 2-4 (1990), 75-86.

thirty years worth of issues. This presentation is therefore by necessity an admittedly selective consideration of issues from three of the main English language Jewish weeklies: the *Jewish Chronicle*, the *Jewish World* and the *Jewish Guardian*.

The *Jewish Chronicle* has been a popular and opinion forming weekly newspaper for Anglo-Jewry for a long time. It came into existence in 1841 and soon became the communal newspaper of choice for English Jews with readers from a diversity of Jewish backgrounds. It provided a comprehensive picture of Jewish life in England, reported international events of interest to the community and printed the minutes of important Jewish institutions such as the Board of Deputies and the Anglo-Jewish Association. It not only reported but influenced communal opinion. To quote David Cesarani, the principle expert on The *Jewish Chronicle*, the paper has been 'part of the ritual and rhythm of Anglo-Jewish communal life.'<sup>4</sup> I have thus used this newspaper as one significant though partial indicator of Anglo-Jewish thought and discourse. The *Jewish Chronicle* has been examined here as it appeared under two very different editor-ownership pairings. It was owned by Israel Davis from 1878 until December 1906 and edited by Asher Myers until his death in May 1902. Under Davis and Myers the paper was largely representative of the anti-Zionist Anglo-Jewish 'establishment'. The first section of this article examines the *Jewish Chronicle* under Davis and Myers for the period 1890 to 1902.<sup>5</sup> In December 1906, during the papacy of Pius X, Leopold Greenberg, a staunch 'political' Zionist and admirer and friend of Herzl, took over as the principal share owner and editor.<sup>6</sup> Greenberg closely controlled the paper until his death in 1931. The change of ownership was significant as Greenberg set a notably more combative tone for the *Jewish Chronicle* which can be seen in some of its reporting of Catholic attitudes towards Jews. Greenberg also acquired the *Jewish World* in 1913. This provided him with what some within the Anglo-Jewish community, especially those ill-disposed towards Zionism, considered

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<sup>4</sup> David Cesarani, 'The Importance of Being Editor: The Jewish Chronicle, 1841-1991', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England*, XXXII (1993), 276.

<sup>5</sup> The newspaper under the temporary working editorship of Morris Duparc, from the death of Myers in May 1902 until the change in ownership in 1906, has not been examined in this article.

<sup>6</sup> Broadly speaking there were two main varieties of English Zionism. 'Political Zionists' adopted a top-down approach, campaigning for political and legal guarantees for a Jewish Nation State from the main superpowers, believing that the value of colonisation efforts without a solid underlying legal charter was minimal. 'Practical Zionists' adopted a bottom-up approach, supporting and advocating a gradual increase of Jewish colonies in Palestine through Aliyah, accepting that the formal national question could be deferred until there were more Jews living in Palestine.

a troublesome hegemony. His willingness, perhaps even eagerness, to criticise communal leaders did little to alleviate such concerns. The second section of this article examines the newspapers under Greenberg, with the primary focus being the *Jewish Chronicle*, but supplemented with some examples from the *Jewish World*.

The *Jewish Guardian* did not have the same success as the *Jewish Chronicle* in establishing itself as part of the fabric of the Anglo-Jewish community. Whilst for a time it was the *Jewish Chronicle's* most important and vehement rival, it had a comparatively short lifespan, springing into existence in 1919 and passing away in August 1931. It was produced by the League of British Jews as its principle forum for articulating a Jewish anti-Zionist message specifically to rival that articulated in the newspapers of Leopold Greenberg.<sup>7</sup> Its editor, Laurie Magnus, was a prominent anti-Zionist and member of the League. It was probably coincidental that the paper was wrapped up during the final few months of Greenberg's life, when according to Cesarani a number of medical complaints 'virtually removed him from the affairs of the paper',<sup>8</sup> but certainly the paper's original *raison d'être* was coming to a natural end. One of the primary financial supporters and contributors to the *Jewish Guardian* was Claude Montefiore, a co-founder of English Liberal Judaism.<sup>9</sup> Unlike the *Jewish World*,<sup>10</sup> the *Jewish Guardian* explicitly avoided making a judgement on the relative authenticity of orthodox, liberal and reform Jewish identities. What concerned the owners of the *Jewish Guardian* were not religious identity distinctions but the idea

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<sup>7</sup> According to the minutes of a League of British Jews meeting, Lucien Wolf persuaded the executive of the League to establish the *Jewish Guardian* as a rival to Leopold Greenberg's pro-Zionist Anglo-Jewish newspapers, the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World*. Minutes of meeting of the literary subcommittee of the League, 18 March 1918, DEPS, League of British Jews, E3/208(1), cited by Stuart A. Cohen, *English Zionists and British Jews: The Communal Politics of Anglo-Jewry, 1895-1920* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 308-9.

<sup>8</sup> David Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle and Anglo-Jewry, 1841-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 140.

<sup>9</sup> Daniel R. Langton, *Claude Montefiore: His Life and Thought* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2002), 14,103.

<sup>10</sup> Greenberg viewed "Liberal" Judaism' with antipathy and according to Cecil Roth, invariably placed the "Liberal" between inverted commas as a sarcastic snipe. Cecil Roth, *The Jewish Chronicle 1841-1941* (London: The Jewish Chronicle, 1949), 130. In the *Jewish World* he argued that "Liberal" Judaism' was too far removed from religious Orthodoxy and national and racial affinity for adherence to it to provide a legitimate 'religious' basis for determining Jewish identity. He suggested in fact that Liberal Judaism demonstrated an opting out of the rigorous commitment required by Judaism. 'Are "Liberal" Jews, Jews?', *The Jewish World*, 7 January 1920, 3-4; 14 January 1920, 3-4; 21 January 1920, 4.



that Jewish nationalism could serve as the basis for Jewish identity.<sup>11</sup> The third section of this article examines the *Jewish Guardian* from 1919 to 1925.

A correlation between the anti- or pro-Zionism of the Jewish newspapers and their attitudes towards Catholic discourse is revealed by this study. A more aggressive reaction to Catholic hostility is notable in the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* when they were controlled by Leopold Greenberg than the *Jewish Chronicle* under Myers or the *Jewish Guardian*, though conversely a more friendly tone was detected when it was thought that Vatican support for Zionism could be elicited. The *Jewish Guardian* was relatively unconcerned about Catholic hostility to Zionism though it was occasionally alarmed by generalised anti-Jewish threads that were woven into it. It was however very critical of those English Catholic writers who argued that Jews could never be proper Englishmen.

### **The Jewish Chronicle under Israel Davis and Asher Myers**

During the 1890s the *Jewish Chronicle* under Davis and Myers reported a number of incidents of Catholics demonstrating a friendly attitude towards Jews. Many of these depictions of Catholic amiability were of a minor nature compared with the occasional incidents of Catholic hostility reported by the paper. One of the main vehicles for these amiable reports was the section entitled the 'Colonial and Foreign News'. This usually consisted of terse news fragments. The Austria-Hungary section of the foreign news was particularly notable for its reporting of minor incidents of Catholic amiability. The following are some examples:

A counterblast to anti-Semitism has appeared in Vienna in the form of a pamphlet written by a learned Roman Catholic. The pamphlet discusses two questions: 'Dare a true Catholic be an anti-Semite?' and 'Is not hatred of the Jews a grievous sin?'<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* stated that 'we do not distinguish in this sense between orthodox, liberal, or Reform Jews. Zionism without Judaism, we assert, makes no appeal to believing Jews.' 'What is a Jew?', *The Jewish Guardian*, 29 October 1920, 10. It later argued that 'to the Jewish Guardian, all Judaism is Jewish' and suggested that the 'exponents of Liberal tenets', such as Claude Montefiore, should be accepted by their 'Orthodox brethren'. 'Mr. Montefiore in the "Hibbert"', *The Jewish Guardian*, 26 May 1922, 1.

<sup>12</sup> 'Foreign and Colonial News: Austria-Hungary', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 26 December 1890, 11.

A Catholic priest, the Rev. Kornel Fabian, has performed a kindly act at Fülekpüspüki (Hungary). The son of a poor Jew died there, and when the good priest was made acquainted with the poverty of the family, he paid the funeral expenses out of his own pocket. He also visited the house of mourning, where he addressed words of solace to the bereaved father. Another priest at Kunetitz has for several years past supported a destitute aged Jew.<sup>13</sup>

A Catholic priest has given 200 crowns towards the building expenses of a synagogue at Janoschida.<sup>14</sup>

Dr. Luigi de Pavissia, Catholic priest at Goritz,<sup>15</sup> has written a memoir, which he has published as a pamphlet, of the late Dr. Angelo Levi, who died there recently, and was highly esteemed for his humanitarianism and philanthropy. The author declares that he, as a Catholic priest, has done no wrong in thus honouring a Jew, who prayed to the same God as he.<sup>16</sup>

These examples of Catholic amiability are representative of a number of reports for the 1890s found in the Austria-Hungary section of the 'Colonial and Foreign News'. The paper also reported Vatican support of the Christian Social Party in Austria, a political movement with hostile anti-Jewish inclinations led by Karl Lueger, a Catholic politician who became mayor of Vienna in 1897.<sup>17</sup> This however did little to diminish its reporting of Catholic amiability in the Austria-Hungary section of the foreign news during the final years of the 19th century. It is possible that the *Jewish Chronicle* was operating under the premise that anti-Jewish hostility, particularly that

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<sup>13</sup> 'Colonial and Foreign News: Austria-Hungary', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 10 April 1896, 15.

<sup>14</sup> 'Colonial and Foreign News: Austria-Hungary', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 November 1898, 26.

<sup>15</sup> I am grateful to one of the anonymous readers for pointing out that 'Goritz' must refer to Gorizia, a town which was part of Austria-Hungary. This is supported by a note in an earlier issue of the *Jewish Chronicle* which stated that Dr. Angelo Levi died two years previously in Gorizia. Israel Abrahams, 'Books and Bookmen', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1899, 20.

<sup>16</sup> 'Colonial and Foreign News: Austria-Hungary', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 21 July 1899, 20.

<sup>17</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* concluded that the Vatican supported Lueger's campaign against what it described as a Jewish-Masonic 'tyranny' in order to undermine Liberal reforms in Hungary and to weaken the Triple Alliance. 'The Vatican and the Anti-Semites', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 3 July 1896, 14. For more on Lueger and the Christian Social Party, see Robert S. Wistrich, 'Karl Lueger and the Ambiguities of Viennese Antisemitism', *Jewish Social Studies* 45:3/4 (1983), 251-262.

of the Christian social party, could be mollified by emphasising a friendly relationship between Jews and Catholics.<sup>18</sup>

A drama unfolded in France in the 1890s which provides another piece of the picture of the *Jewish Chronicle*'s reactions to Catholic hostility. After initially declaring itself suspicious about the guilty verdict against Captain Dreyfus in 1894,<sup>19</sup> the paper fell conspicuously silent until November 1897, when fresh rumours of fabricated evidence started to circulate. Following the publication of Zola's *J'Accuse* on 13 January 1898, the drama heated up significantly. A wave of violent anti-Jewish agitations subsequently swept across France.<sup>20</sup> The *Congregation of the Augustans of the Assumption* and their newspaper *La Croix* played a significant role in stirring hostility towards Jews.<sup>21</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* did devote considerable space to regularly reporting the affair from this point onwards. It also became more critical about Catholic agitators in France. However, whilst the paper started reporting the events of the Dreyfus Affair in great detail, and argued repeatedly that Dreyfus was innocent, it seemed to engage with the drama with at least some reluctance. As Cesarani observed, the paper reported the demands for a retrial but not 'without misgivings.'<sup>22</sup> It was, the paper concluded, better to avoid a specifically Jewish engagement with the agitation and to leave protests to the 'magnificent stand of Gentiles'.<sup>23</sup>

Whilst the paper frequently criticised the role of Catholics in the Affair, it also often found a way to soften its reporting of Catholic participation, either by demonstrating

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<sup>18</sup> This would seem to dovetail with David Kertzer's conclusion, based on his examination of documents from the *Archivio Segreto Vaticano*, that the Church was worried that Jews were trying to undermine the Christian Social Party by demonstrating that its anti-Jewish hostility went contrary to Church teachings. David I. Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews: The Vatican's Role in the Rise of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Vintage, 2002), 186-204.

<sup>19</sup> For the paper's initial response to the affair from 28 December 1894 to 18 January 1895, see Gideon Kouts, *The Hebrew and Jewish Press in Europe: Select Problems in its History* (Paris: Les Éditions Suger, 2006), 216-220.

<sup>20</sup> George R. Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair: A Chronological History* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 155-157.

<sup>21</sup> By the time of the Dreyfus Affair, *La Croix* was the most popular French Catholic newspaper. According to George Whyte, it had a daily circulation of roughly 170,000-180,000 copies. Whyte, *The Dreyfus Affair*, 19, 212. For examples of *La Croix*'s polemics against Jews and Freemasons before and during the Dreyfus Affair, see Norman James Clary, 'French Antisemitism During the Years of Drumont and Dreyfus 1886-1906', Ph.D thesis, *Ohio State University* (1970). Some citations from *La Croix* for late January 1898 can be found in James Carroll, *Constantine's Sword: The Church and the Jews* (New York: Mariner Books, 2002), 459-460.

<sup>22</sup> Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 84.

<sup>23</sup> 'The French Jews Vindicated', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 September 1898, 15-16; For more on the paper's reluctance to protest as Jews, see Cesarani, *The Jewish Chronicle*, 84-85.

exceptions or by suggesting that specific sections were chiefly responsible rather than the Church as a whole. For example, in February 1899, the *Jewish Chronicle* welcomed 'the return to sanity of certain members of the dominant faith,' praising the founding in France of a Catholic committee,<sup>24</sup> which did not side against Dreyfus.<sup>25</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* suggested that Jesuits rather than Catholics *per se* were largely responsible for the agitations.<sup>26</sup> The paper also depicted British Catholics as a consistent exception to Catholic hostility towards Jews. For example, the paper stated that Catholic hostility in France 'finds no parallel in England'<sup>27</sup> and reproduced extracts from letters by the Archbishop of Glasgow and several Bishops of England to demonstrate that British Catholics opposed the persecution of Jews.<sup>28</sup> However, whilst these Church officials agreed that hostility towards Jews was 'foreign to the Catholic Church,' none of the cited extracts actually contained an acknowledgement that hostility towards Jews in France had any Catholic component. There was also a tone of equivocation in some of the extracts which the *Jewish Chronicle* did not highlight. For example, the Archbishop of Glasgow stated that the Jews of England have 'nothing to fear', as long as they remain the 'well-behaved body we know', and the Bishop of Middlesbrough suggested that 'in Italy and France, the Jews have made themselves unpleasantly prominent in the attacks on the Catholic Church and the Sovereign Pontiff.'<sup>29</sup> On 22 September 1899 the paper also expressed gratitude towards Cardinal Vaughan, the head of the Catholic hierarchy in England from 1892 until 1903 and the owner of *The Tablet*, specifically for his supposed repudiation of anti-Jewish hostility by the clerical party in France. However, the extracts cited by the *Jewish Chronicle* only demonstrated that Cardinal Vaughan disagreed with the guilty verdict and not that he acknowledged, let alone repudiated, the existence of any Catholic anti-Jewish sentiment in France.<sup>30</sup> The paper not only over-interpreted

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<sup>24</sup> The 'comite catholique pour la defense du droit'.

<sup>25</sup> 'France and the Dreyfus Case: Partial Return of Sanity', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 24 February 1899, 12.

<sup>26</sup> For example, the paper stated that 'the Catholics of France, or rather the Jesuits (my emphasis), turned on to the Jewish quarter the stream of religious prejudice. ... The Jesuits threw all the weight of a strong organisation on the side of injustice and darkness' 'The Position in France', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 21 July 1899, 15. The paper also argued that 'in all the intrigues and machinations that have marked the course of this mystery we find, *flagrante delicto*, the Jesuits.' 'Tactics of the Jesuits', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 6 January 1899, 16. In 1903, the paper suggested that in the details of Church administration, including its 'Jew-baiting propaganda', the pope is in the hands of subordinates such as the Jesuits. 'The Papacy and Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 31 July 1903, 18.

<sup>27</sup> 'The Jesuits and the Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 3 March 1899, 20.

<sup>28</sup> 'English Catholics on Persecution of the Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 18 February 1898, 15.

<sup>29</sup> 'English Catholics on Persecution of the Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 18 February 1898, 15

<sup>30</sup> 'A General Amnesty', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 22 September 1899, 17.

Cardinal Vaughan's comments, it seemed to forget the equivocal and indeed often hostile edge of *The Tablet* during the drama.<sup>31</sup> And only a week after Vaughan's comments, *The Tablet* expressed an equivocal response to the resolution of the Dreyfus affair with more sympathy for *La Croix* than for Dreyfus and the 'foreign Jews.'<sup>32</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle* also shone a positive light on *The Tablet* on several other occasions despite its ambivalent attitude towards Jews. For example, in December 1899, referring to the Hilsner Affair,<sup>33</sup> a ritual murder accusation levelled against Leopold Hilsner in Polná, Bohemia, in April 1899, the paper reported that *The Tablet* repudiated the blood libel. Referring to an article in *The Tablet*, the *Jewish Chronicle* stated that the

well timed utterances of the English Catholic Press encourage the hope that, in these days of enlightenment, the Vatican, true to its ancient traditions and precedents, will certainly not be less just than it was in the Middle Ages, and that history may again record a Papal pronouncement, *urbi et orbi*, acquitting our people of the odious crime imputed to them.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> For example, in February 1898, *The Tablet* reported that 'we shall not, we trust, be accused of palliating or condoning the excesses of anti-Semitism, by pointing out that the Jews, in France, Italy, and Austria, the three principal Catholic nations of the continent, exercise a political influence entirely disproportioned to their numbers, and that this influence is always exercised against the religion of the country. In close alliance with the Freemasons ... they form the backbone of the party of aggressive liberalism, with war to the knife against the Church as the sum and aim of its policy.' 'Captain Dreyfus and His Champions', *The Tablet*, 12 February 1898, 238.

<sup>32</sup> *The Tablet* stated that 'some words of *La Croix* which are less unreasonable than the quotations which have been going the round of the English press may be quoted, not as condoning its faults but in the spirit of giving it its due. Occupying itself with General de Galliffet's Report and the decree of pardon, the *Croix* says: "The motives which have determined the signature of the decree of pardon are at last known to us. They affirm the guilt of Dreyfus. They at the same time show the President's desire to suppress the internal strife which is ravaging France.... The Dreyfus affair was a source of division and suffering. Let it be closed and let silence follow the vicious agitation which has been aroused amongst us by our worst enemies, the Freemasons and foreign Jews.'" *The Tablet* suggested that these words of *La Croix* 'may serve as a set-off to the delirious and savage utterance which have appeared in *The Times* and elsewhere.' 'La Croix and the Pardon of Dreyfus', *The Tablet*, 30 September 1899, 535.

<sup>33</sup> For more about this blood libel, see František Červinka, 'The Hilsner Affair', in Alan Dundes, ed., *The Blood Libel Legend* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991).

<sup>34</sup> 'English Catholics and the Blood Libel', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 December 1899, 16-17; also see 'The English Catholic Press and the Blood Accusation', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 December 1899, 12; a few months later the paper reported that *The Tablet* contained another note demonstrating the rejection of the blood libel by several popes. 'The Popes and the "Blood Accusation"', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 9 March 1900, 17.

Despite certain popes proclaiming Jews innocent of the blood libel, it seems anachronistic to look back to the Middle Ages to locate a timeframe in which, according to the *Jewish Chronicle*, 'the Holy See vindicated its claim to be regarded as the representative of Right and Justice'.<sup>35</sup> However, more notable than this lapse into anachronism was the *Jewish Chronicle*'s willingness to overlook the darker elements found within the article in *The Tablet*. The article in *The Tablet* did lament what it called the 'unchristian hatred' of the blood libels. Nevertheless, whilst ostensibly defending Jews from the accusation, the same article had no problem with what it called 'a political or economic conflict, which in particular countries or districts may be justifiable enough'. It clarified that no one can complain if

in this or that country Jewish attempts to squeeze Christians out of a particular industry are met by organized resistance, or if strenuous opposition is offered to an attempt in whatever country, to obtain exclusive control of the Press or the money market. If in parts of France or Austria or Russia the Jews so conduct themselves as to invite economical or political reprisals they have only themselves to blame.<sup>36</sup>

*The Tablet* thus rejected a particularly unsavoury form of medieval hostility, the blood libel, whilst endorsing social, political and economic conspiracy themes. The article also argued that a refutation of the ritual murder charge in most cases is not inconsistent with 'the admission that in a few individual cases Christian children may have been murdered by Jews, and even murdered in *odium fidei*, i.e., because they were Christians'. The article in *The Tablet* suggested that the occasional murder of Christian children may even have involved 'crucifixion, bleeding to death or what not'.<sup>37</sup> Likewise the refutation of ritual murder claims by Herbert Thurston, made a year earlier in the English Jesuit periodical, *The Month*, was marred by the suggestion that on the whole Jews did not ritually murder Christians but that ritual murders had occasionally occurred as 'isolated and unauthorised outbreaks of fanaticism, reprobated with horror by the higher and better feeling of educated Israelites'.<sup>38</sup> In

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<sup>35</sup> 'English Catholics and the Blood Libel', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 1 December 1899, 16-17.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Jews and Ritual Murders', *The Tablet*, 25 November 1899, 841.

<sup>37</sup> 'The Jews and Ritual Murders', *The Tablet*, 25 November 1899, 841.

<sup>38</sup> Herbert Thurston, 'Anti-Semitism and the Charge of Ritual Murder', *The Month*, XCI (1898), 567; Thurston clarified and elaborated this theme in his book, *Saint Hugh of Lincoln*, published shortly after

what seems like another attempt to minimise the equivocation in Catholic refutations of the blood libel charge, the *Jewish Chronicle* responded by praising the author of the article for his 'enlightened efforts to nail the abominable falsehoods that pass current among anti-Jews to the counter'.<sup>39</sup>

Related to the strategy of highlighting positive incidents and mitigating or omitting darker attitudes expressed by Catholics was a willingness to accept on behalf of Jews some responsibility for causing hostility. For example, after the conclusion of the Dreyfus retrial, the *Jewish Chronicle* expressed hope that if this sort of religious strife reoccurs, 'French Jews then, will, we hope, not repeat the error of countenancing, in even a remote way, an anti-clerical agitation in France.'<sup>40</sup> The suggestion that Jews were in some way responsible for stirring up the hostility is disturbingly reminiscent of accusations found in Catholic newspapers such as *The Tablet* and *The Month*.<sup>41</sup>

### **The Jewish Chronicle under Leopold Greenberg**

Under Greenberg the *Jewish Chronicle* responded, often in a confrontational way, to a range of incidents that were interpreted as Catholic hostility. One reoccurring theme was the abduction of Jewish children to Catholic monasteries. Such abductions were, as the paper observed, nothing new. As the paper reminded its readers in 1908, fifty years previously the infamous Mortara Affair had seen a young Jewish boy secretly baptised and forcibly removed from his parents by the Church in Rome.<sup>42</sup> However,

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the article. He stated that 'Judaism as a system can certainly not be held responsible for these outrages. None the less, it is very difficult to waive away the evidence of some Jewish complicity in such murders by declaring them all to be the fabrication of popular prejudice.' Thurston went on to suggest that a belief in sorcery was common in the Middle Ages and 'was practised amongst the Jews' even more than among Christians. He concluded that some Jewish sorcerers may have 'combined this very evil magic with their religious beliefs' leading in some isolated cases to human blood being taken from innocent victims. Herbert Thurston, *The Life of Saint Hugh of Lincoln* (London: Burns and Oates, 1898), 286-7.

<sup>39</sup> 'A Catholic Protest against Anti-Semitism', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 17 June 1898, 17-18.

<sup>40</sup> 'Nemesis', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 20 October 1899, 17-18.

<sup>41</sup> For example, as part of his refutation of Jesuit involvement in antisemitism, the editor of *The Month* argued that the agitations in France during the Dreyfus Affair were targeting Jews for social and financial rather than religious reasons. He suggested that the very phrase, 'falling into the hands of the Jews,' testified to significant Jewish involvement in 'nefarious practices'. He suggested that Englishmen cannot understand the extent to which in France 'the Jewish usurer has sucked out of the small proprietor his slender means.' Sydney F. Smith, 'The Jesuits and the Dreyfus Case', *The Month*, XCIII (1899), 121. *The Tablet* condemned the blood libel whilst blaming Jews for creating the hostility by squeezing Christians out of the money markets and the press. 'The Jews and Ritual Murders', *The Tablet*, 25 November 1899, 841.

<sup>42</sup> 'The Mortara Affair', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 26 June 1908, 13; for more on the Mortara Affair, see David I. Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (London: Picador, 1997).

as the paper reported, similar events still occurred in the early twentieth century. In 1908, a series of reports referred to two cases in which Jewish parents had been unable to recover abducted children from a Roman Catholic Monastery in Warsaw, Poland.<sup>43</sup> The following year the paper reported that 'another Jewish girl, aged fifteen, has been abducted by a Catholic priest at Warsaw' and 'all efforts to recover the victim from his hands have so far proved fruitless'.<sup>44</sup> In 1913, the paper reported that in Grodno, 'two hundred Jewish girls under age have been abducted to a Catholic monastery.'<sup>45</sup> Another reoccurring narrative that Greenberg responded to was the alleged anti-Church conspiracy of Jews and Freemasons. For example, in February 1910 the paper reported that

the weight of the Roman Catholic Church is thrown in the balance against us. Speaking to his devoted flock, that most liberal and enlightened Christian, the Curé of the Parish of St. Louis de France in St. Louis Ward, enjoined all faithful sons of the church to vote against Jews and Freemasons. 'The dangers of this election are Judaism and Freemasonry, all true sons of the church must oppose such pernicious influences,' said the reverend father.<sup>46</sup>

In 1913 the paper reported that the Vatican newspaper, *Osservatore Romano*, described the mayor of Rome as a 'ridiculous parody of a citizen magistrate and an exotic amalgamation of Judaism and Freemasonry'.<sup>47</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* also observed that this conspiracy narrative could even be found in the English Catholic press, which it claimed, only last year 'attributed all political agitation against constituted authority in Europe, firstly, to the power of the Jews on the Press, and, secondly, the influence of the Freemasons.' It concluded that to 'combine the two, and accuse the Jews in their capacity of Freemasons of complicity in the recent massacres that have attended the new regime in Turkey is, I dare say, regarded as a fine idea and a forward step in anti-Semitic propaganda.'<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> 'Abduction of a Jewish Girl', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 7 February 1908, 9; 'Russia', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 14 February 1908, 9; 'Russia', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 20 March 1908, 11.

<sup>44</sup> 'Abduction of a Jewish Girl', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 29 January 1909, 12.

<sup>45</sup> 'News from all quarters', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 July 1913, 20.

<sup>46</sup> 'The Colonies: Canada: Montreal', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 18 February 1910, 10.

<sup>47</sup> 'News from many Quarters', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 26 September 1913, 19; Ernesto Nathan, the mayor of Rome, was in fact Jewish and a member of the Freemasons.

<sup>48</sup> 'Jews and the Craft', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 August 1911, 15.



Pius X passed away in August 1914. His successor, Benedict XV, was less hostile towards Jews than his predecessor and David Kertzer has argued that for a few years hostility towards Jews in papal encyclicals and Catholic newspapers decreased.<sup>49</sup> Certainly within the *Jewish Chronicle* this is reflected by correspondingly fewer negative references to Catholics and a number of positive references from the beginning of Benedict XV's papacy through to the Balfour Declaration.<sup>50</sup> The *Jewish Chronicle* had even reported that the Catholic community had expressed support for Zionism.<sup>51</sup> However, Vatican admiration for Zionism had been largely imagined, and the 'support', such as it was, evaporated after the Balfour declaration. Cardinal Gasparri, the secretary of state at the Vatican, stated that:

The bells of the Vatican do not chime over the conquest of Jerusalem. It is difficult to take back a part of our heart that we have given to the Turks, in order to hand it over to the Zionists.<sup>52</sup>

Cardinal Bourne, who was the head of the Catholic Hierarchy in England from 1903 until 1935, outlined the Church's hostility towards Zionism in a letter intended for the British prime minister's attention. He stated that claims that Zionists had obtained the approval of the pope were false and suggested that to sympathise with Jewish interests was to sympathise with German finance.<sup>53</sup> Benedict XV delivered an important speech in March 1919 which referred to Jews as infidels and attacked the colonisation of Palestine by foreigners.<sup>54</sup> These and similar statements found their way into

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<sup>49</sup> Kertzer, *The Popes Against the Jews*, 240-1.

<sup>50</sup> See for example 'The Pope and the Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 13 August 1915, 5; 'The Pope and the Jews', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 14 April 1916, 9.

<sup>51</sup> 'The Zionist Plan', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 25 May 1917, 6; 'The Thanksgiving Meeting', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 7 December 1917, 5.

<sup>52</sup> Sergio Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism: Conflict in the Holy Land 1895-1925* (trans. Arnold Schwarz; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 117.

<sup>53</sup> Bourne's letter stated that the Zionists claimed 'that they had obtained the approval of the Holy City and thereby gained the support of some Catholic bishops in the United States and in England. There is no foundation for this claim. The whole movement appears to be quite contrary to Christian sentiment and tradition. Let Jews live here by all means if they like and enjoy the same liberties as other people; but that they should ever again dominate and rule the country would be an outrage to Christianity and its Divine Founder. It would mean, moreover, most certainly, the controlling influence of Jewish, which is German, finance'. 'Letter from Cardinal Bourne', 25 January 1919, cited in Doreen Ingrams, *Palestine Papers, 1917-1922: Seeds of Conflict* (London: John Murray, 1972), 59-61.

<sup>54</sup> The text of this consistorial allocution can be found in Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism*, 131.

Catholic newspapers and in response to these incidents the *Jewish Chronicle* began to re-adopt a combative attitude towards Catholicism.

In August 1918 the paper addressed the anti-Jewish agitations of G.K. Chesterton. The paper bitterly criticised Chesterton for his suggestion that the Anglo-Jewish community could not be loyal citizens of England.<sup>55</sup> Whilst Chesterton was still technically an Anglo-Catholic until he entered the Roman communion in July 1922, his sympathies and worldview leaned sufficiently towards Rome for Leopold Greenberg to already consider and address him, with at least some justification,<sup>56</sup> as a Roman Catholic. Responding to Chesterton's criticism that Jews could not be loyal citizens of England, Greenberg concluded that these

attacks upon our people have, almost without exception, emanated from one section of the population – the section that holds allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. The foremost anti-Semites in this country, as in many another land, are those who religiously look to Rome.<sup>57</sup>

In 1920, still two years before his formal conversion, the *Jewish World* argued that Bourne's suggestion that Zionism was 'tainted with Bolshevism' is the 'sort of thing he can leave with advantage to the more disreputable anti-Semites among his communion – men like the Chestertons and the Bellocs.'<sup>58</sup> This was, it may be noted, neither the first nor the last time that Greenberg employed the *Jewish Chronicle* and the *Jewish World* to respond to and criticise Chesterton.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Leopold Greenberg, 'In the Communal Armchair: Hit Back! Hit Back! Hit Back!', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 11 October 1918, 7.

<sup>56</sup> Chesterton frequently used Catholics as literary paragons for good Christians. Father Brown was his most popular protagonist appearing in at least fifty short stories from 1910 onwards. One of the two protagonists in *The Ball and the Cross* (1910) was a staunch Catholic and it is clear throughout the novel that he was the narrator's favoured champion. In November 1911, Chesterton gave a talk to 'The Heretics', a student society at Cambridge University, in reply to a lecture by George Bernard Shaw on 'The Future of Religion'. Chesterton stated that 'he was more than ever inclined to think, though he had not yet admit it, that possibly the claims of the Greek and Anglican Churches were less near the truth than the Roman Catholic Church.' *The Cambridge Daily News*, 18 November 1911, 4. When he nearly died in 1915 it was Father John O'Connor, a Roman Catholic priest who he summoned to his deathbed and according to O'Connor, Chesterton had told him during the spring of 1912 that 'he had made up his mind to be received into the Church and was only waiting for Frances to come with him.' John O'Connor, *Father Brown on Chesterton* (London: Frederick Muller, 1937), 85, 94-5.

<sup>57</sup> Greenberg, 'Hit Back! Hit Back! Hit Back!', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 11 October 1918, 7.

<sup>58</sup> 'Around the World: Unworthy', *The Jewish World*, 4 August 1920, 2.

<sup>59</sup> As Dean Rapp observed, Leopold Greenberg frequently used the *Jewish Chronicle* to criticise Chesterton, 'especially between 1915 and 1921 when his disparaging remarks about Jews provoked thirty-five editorials, new reports and letters to the editor.' Rapp, 'The Jewish Response to G.K.

From 1918 onwards until the end of Benedict XV's papacy, the *Jewish Chronicle* reported worrying developments in the Vatican's intentions towards Palestine. It increasingly seemed to the paper that the Vatican saw Palestine as a potential sphere for the redevelopment of its own lost temporal power. In February 1919, the *Jewish Chronicle* observed that Cardinal Bourne was endorsing a plan to populate Palestine with Maltese unemployed. The paper described this plan as looking like a 'definite attempt ... to people the country with a considerable Catholic element'.<sup>60</sup> In August 1919 the *Jewish Chronicle* reported that 'the Vatican is considering a project for the creation of a Biblical School at Jerusalem' as a prelude to Vatican activity in Palestine<sup>61</sup> and in October of the same year it reported that 'Catholic papers in Italy are carrying on propaganda for an Italian Protectorate for Palestine.'<sup>62</sup> The paper continued to report these developments in the years that followed. For example, in 1925 the paper reported that 'All the Italian Catholic newspapers are publishing articles demanding that Italy should be made guardian over the Holy Places, with the Franciscans in charge of them.'<sup>63</sup> The papers under Greenberg reached the conclusion that most of the opposition towards Zionism originates from the Vatican. The *Jewish World* for example reported that:

The anxiety of the Vatican in case Jews are allowed to establish for themselves a National Home in Palestine is significant. It is probably accountable for most of the opposition outside Jewry which Zionism has encountered. The fears of Rome are naturally based upon anti-Jewish prejudice of the religious sort, but the pleas that are made by the Papacy that it is anxious to prevent persecution by Jews has its comical aspect when we come to think of its own accord.<sup>64</sup>

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Chesterton's Antisemitism', 76. The *Jewish World* also frequently criticised G.K. Chesterton. A long running series of articles from 23 June 1920 through to 22 September 1920 criticised Chesterton for suggesting that the Anglo-Jewish newspapers published the honour rolls of German-Jewish soldiers killed in the war, with the added twist being that Chesterton regarded this as by no means unreasonable of Anglo-Jews considering that Jewry constituted a single separate nation.

<sup>60</sup> 'Palestine for the Maltese', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 28 February 1919, 7.

<sup>61</sup> 'Roman Catholics and Jerusalem', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 22 August 1919, 16.

<sup>62</sup> 'Italy and Palestine', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 31 October 1919, 29.

<sup>63</sup> 'Anti-Zionist Agitation in Italy', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 13 February 1925, 16.

<sup>64</sup> 'Sir Herbert and the Pope', *The Jewish World*, 30 June 1920, 3.

In 1920 and 1921, the paper reported that Cardinal Bourne had again attacked Zionism and the idea of the Holy Places being controlled by Jews rather than Christians.<sup>65</sup> Following comments in an Italian newspaper, *Il Secolo*, attributed to an unnamed senior cardinal in the Vatican, the *Jewish Chronicle* angrily concluded that 'the outburst against Zionism by Cardinal Bourne to which we alluded last week, was clearly not any personal opinion but was an exposition of policy dictated from a higher quarter.' It stated that it was now placing

on record this evidence of the attitude of Roman Catholicism towards Judaism, so that Jews may know the extent to which these traditional enemies of our people remain hostile to us. Truly Roman Catholicism is a very Bourbon institution – it forgets nothing and it learns nothing.<sup>66</sup>

The *Jewish World* also noted Bourne's hostility towards Zionism and concluded that the real reason for his hostility towards 'Jewish nationalism' is that 'the Movement means the salvation of Judaism, a securing of its maintenance and a strengthening of its hold upon the Jewish people.'<sup>67</sup>

In February 1922, following the death of Benedict XV, Monsignor Ratti succeeded to the papacy, taking Pius XI as his papal name. The *Jewish Chronicle* initially praised Pius XI as a 'profound scholar' and 'skilful diplomatist' and concluded that his initiatory benediction was a blessing upon the whole world. The paper suggested that it 'was an invocation for Peace' in which Jews 'may recognise the act of a good friend.'<sup>68</sup> For a while the paper interpreted a number of developments positively. Chaim Weizmann met twice with Cardinal Gasparri at the Vatican in April 1922 and reported that the general tone of the meetings was friendly though somewhat ambivalent.<sup>69</sup> Despite being unsuccessful in securing a meeting with the pope, the

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<sup>65</sup> 'Catholics and Palestine: Cardinal Bourne's Outburst', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 6 August 1920, 20-1; 'Cardinal Bourne on the Balfour Declaration: A Bitterly Hostile Speech', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 30 September 1921, 42.

<sup>66</sup> 'Rome and Zionism', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 7 October 1921, 8; the house of Bourbon was a line of French and Spanish kings. The Bourbons became a metaphor for arrogance and ignorance, with the expression, 'The Bourbons have learned nothing and forgotten nothing' attributed to Charles de Talleyrand-Périgord, a French Statesman in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>67</sup> 'Around the World: The True Dislike', *The Jewish World*, 4 August 1920, 2.

<sup>68</sup> 'Pius XI', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 10 February 1922, 9.

<sup>69</sup> Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism*, 170.

Rome correspondent for the *Jewish Chronicle* concluded on 28 April that Weizmann's interview demonstrated that 'amicable relations were established between the Vatican and the Zionist leaders.'<sup>70</sup> On 12 May 1922, with the ratification of the British Mandate imminent, the paper reported that 'the sentiments of the Vatican towards Zionism are now much more friendly'.<sup>71</sup> The Mandate however failed to pass through the League of Nations and Leopold Greenberg blamed the Vatican. The tone of the *Jewish Chronicle* now turned bitterly hostile. One editorial stated that

no surer testimony could be give to the fact that the Zionist policy in Palestine upon which the Powers are agreed, is a policy that is likely to be of great value to Jews, to raise their world-status and to shield them, at least to some extent, from the bitterness of religious bigotry and the thralldom of religious prejudice in many parts of the world. Roman Catholicism has always been, if not the oppressor, then the depressor of Judaism; and the attitude of Roman Catholics in regard to Jews in relation to Palestine adopted ever since the Balfour Declaration, goes to show that that body has learnt nothing of religious tolerance and forgotten nothing of religious obscurantism.<sup>72</sup>

The paper's correspondent at Geneva concluded that:

It is to the Vatican and the influence of the Romish Church that we have really to attribute the opposition that has arisen. It is noticeable that France, Spain, Brazil, Belgium, and Italy are the countries blocking the way – all countries where the Roman Catholic influence is strongest. ... And there can be no doubt that the Church of Rome is in this matter pursuing the same old policy born of hatred of the Jews, narrow-minded prejudice against them, and a desire to thwart them in every way as 'anti-Christ.'<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> 'Dr. Weizmann and the Vatican', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 28 April 1922, 27.

<sup>71</sup> 'Italian and Vatican Attitude', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 12 May 1922, 21.

<sup>72</sup> 'The Palestine Mandate', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 19 May 1922, 7.

<sup>73</sup> 'The Mandate Postponed', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 19 May 1922, 25.

Invoking the Augustinian idea of an eternal witness people to explain the Vatican's hostility, the *Jewish Chronicle* suggested a religious explanation, that the Catholic Church must still believe that

Jews must be kept, still the wandering and despised of Humanity, the rejected of men, a people torn into segments and prevented from becoming a national entity, so that the doctrine of the Catholic Church shall be proved in the everlasting curse to be marked in the Jew for his alleged doing to death of Jesus and the actual rejection by Jews of his doctrines.<sup>74</sup>

When the Mandate finally passed in July 1922 with an accompanying White Paper which allowed for only a small Jewish community and restrictive immigration, Greenberg was, to say the least, unimpressed. He considered the White Paper a betrayal by the British Government and blamed the Vatican for its interference and its 'bitter and historic dislike of Jews' and grieved that the day had not yet been reached when the world would cease to sympathise with the Church's 'dark recidivism' and 'its suspicion and its ill will towards our people.'<sup>75</sup>

### **The Jewish Guardian**

The *Jewish Guardian* regularly reported incidents of antisemitism at home and abroad. However, the *Jewish Guardian*'s response to incidents of Catholic hostility towards Jews was notably infrequent and mild compared to the *Jewish Chronicle*. Considering the *Jewish Guardian*'s own hostility towards Zionism, it is not entirely surprising that it did not respond with the same zeal to what the *Jewish Chronicle* perceived as 'Vatican interference' in Palestine. When the *Jewish Guardian* did find reason to criticise Catholics, it was conspicuously focused on individuals such as Hilaire Belloc and G.K. Chesterton who attacked the idea that Jews could be Englishmen.

Chesterton's *The New Jerusalem*, published in 1920, argued that Jews could never be Englishmen. Chesterton suggested that Zionism was a good idea and that Jews who choose to remain in England rather than travel to Palestine should be legally obliged

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<sup>74</sup> 'The Papacy and Zionism', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 16 June 1922, 7.

<sup>75</sup> 'The Mandate Confirmed', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 28 July 1922, 7.

to go about swathed in the robes of an Arab.<sup>76</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* responded by stating that Chesterton had 'contrived for once to write a really stupid book.' The paper suggested that Chesterton would probably 'account it a sign of inherited financial preoccupation if one poor Jewish bookman remarks that 12s. 6d is a high price to exact for 300 empty pages'.<sup>77</sup> Neither the *Jewish World* nor the *Jewish Chronicle* deigned to take *The New Jerusalem* sufficiently seriously to bother examining it, which Rapp interpreted as evidence that Greenberg was unimpressed by his supposed support for Zionism.<sup>78</sup> On 11 November 1921, the *Jewish Guardian* reported a lecture by Chesterton to a Jewish organisation called the 'Ghetto Circle'. The paper reported that Chesterton proposed to discuss 'national traditions in Europe' whilst the Ghetto Circle no doubt 'would discuss whether he was an anti-Semite'; the *Jewish Guardian* concluded that Chesterton's suggestion 'seemed a very fair division of labour.'<sup>79</sup>

The paper was more troubled by Belloc's even more hostile discourse which cast Jews in the role of a foreign irritant which could never be assimilated. Unlike Chesterton, Belloc also argued against Zionism, believing that the 'voluntary' segregation of Jews in the nations in which they currently exist was the only mutually beneficial solution to the 'Jewish problem'. In March 1921, just prior to the publication of his book entitled *The Jews*,<sup>80</sup> the *Jewish Guardian* agreed with Israel Zangwill that whilst there is a Jewish problem, it 'does not concern Mr. Belloc' who should 'mind his own business.'<sup>81</sup> After he published *The Jews*, the paper addressed itself to his book on numerous occasions. Rather than criticise directly, the *Jewish Guardian* preferred to criticise indirectly by reproducing extracts from other periodicals. These quoted responses were for the most part by gentiles.<sup>82</sup> For example, on 12 April 1922, the paper reproduced a lengthy review of Belloc's book taken from a periodical called *The Referee*. This argued that Jews become good Englishmen even

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<sup>76</sup> Gilbert Keith Chesterton, *The New Jerusalem* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1920), 227.

<sup>77</sup> "'G.K.C.'" in Jerusalem', *The Jewish Guardian*, 3 December 1920, 7.

<sup>78</sup> Rapp, 'The Jewish Response to G.K. Chesterton's Antisemitism', 84, 86.

<sup>79</sup> 'Mr. G.K. Chesterton at the Ghetto Circle', *The Jewish Guardian*, 11 November 1921, 4.

<sup>80</sup> Hilaire Belloc, *The Jews* (London: Constable, 1922).

<sup>81</sup> 'Mr. Zangwill and Zionism', *The Jewish Guardian*, 4 March 1921, 1, citing a letter from Zangwill originally published in *The Times*.

<sup>82</sup> There were exceptions. On 19 May 1922 the paper reported the speech of Israel Cohen, an Anglo-Jewish Zionist, to the Anglo-Palestinian club attacking Belloc's book. 'Mr. Belloc on 'The Jews': Spirited Reply by Mr. Israel Cohen.' *The Jewish Guardian*, 19 May 1922, 3.

when born in foreign countries and that they often become better English citizens than Frenchmen like Belloc.<sup>83</sup> In May 1922 the *Jewish Guardian* reproduced two further articles by Christians attacking Belloc. One of these was by Maude Petre, a Roman Catholic nun who fell into disfavour with Church authorities because of her affiliation with the 'Modernist' movement.<sup>84</sup> The other, published in the *Jewish Guardian* on 5 May, was by Anglican polemicist, Dean Inge. This was originally printed in the *Evening Standard* on 27 April and reproduced in the *Jewish Guardian*. The article discussed how it was English tradition to 'forget a man's racial origin when he lives among us as a good Englishman', and concluded that English Jews, unlike Roman Catholics, have demonstrated their loyalty to England and have never plotted to assassinate an English Sovereign.<sup>85</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* and the Board of Deputies concluded that Dean Inge's article would provide the most appropriate basis for a booklet refuting Belloc's book. A file can be found on this endeavour within the archives of the Board of Deputies.<sup>86</sup>

The *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World*, like the *Jewish Guardian*, also quoted liberally from Dean Inge's refutation.<sup>87</sup> However, Greenberg viewed the use of Inge's article as the basis of an organised Jewish response with passionate antipathy. He believed that Jews should learn to defend themselves rather hiding behind the shields of gentiles. The *Jewish Chronicle* asked why 'must Jews always rush to shelter themselves behind any amiable words that happen to be said of them by a non-Jew?' Furthermore, the paper reasoned that 'if the Committee came to the conclusion that it was advisable – even thus belatedly – to counter in the manner they determined Mr. Belloc's book, they could have found some Jew who could have written an effectual pamphlet for the purpose.'<sup>88</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* conversely argued that it was

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<sup>83</sup> 'The Referee' on Mr. Belloc', *The Jewish Guardian*, 12 April 1922, 7.

<sup>84</sup> Maude Petre, 'Peace be to Israel: A Review of Mr. Hilaire Belloc's "The Jew"', *The Jewish Guardian*, 26 May 1922, 7-8.

<sup>85</sup> 'Dean Inge & The Jews', *The Jewish Guardian*, 5 May 1922, 6.

<sup>86</sup> 'Reverend Inge Dean: article on the Jews published by the Board and critique of Hilaire Belloc's "The Jews"', *London Metropolitan Archives*, ACC/321/B/04/I/009. The file shows that the Board of Deputies, with Dean Inge's approval, created and distributed the booklet to WH Smith and Sons. It was notably unsuccessful and out of 9000 copies, 6632 were returned unsold.

<sup>87</sup> 'Dean Inge on 'The Jews': Mr Belloc's Book: A Scathing Criticism' *The Jewish Chronicle*, 5 May 1922, 21; 'About the Chief Topics of the Day – Dean Inge's Word', *The Jewish World*, 4 May 1922, 5.

<sup>88</sup> 'The Deputies', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 23 June 1922, 7; this was not the first time that Greenberg lamented the need to hide behind the shields of gentiles. For example, in 1913 he argued that Christians (in this case Roman Catholics from Germany) 'cannot always be expected to guard Jewish interests. The time must inevitably come, as it did long ago in the English House of Commons, when they will



precisely because Dean Inge was not a Jew that his article would be accepted as unbiased. It hinted at the possibility that the 'Jewish-Nationalist newspapers' – i.e. the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World* – were merely jealous because the pamphlet created by the Board of Deputies was 'made from the standing type of *The Jewish Guardian*'.<sup>89</sup>

If one excludes these responses to Chesterton and Belloc, there were only a handful of articles in the *Jewish Guardian* that directly referred to Catholics, and many of these were not hostile. For example, one article argued that if 'the anti-Jewish party had its way, English Roman Catholics and English Jews would be deprived of civil rights'.<sup>90</sup> On 6 February 1925, Claude Montefiore, one of the main financial backers of the *Jewish Guardian*, wrote a warm eulogy in the paper to his Catholic friend, Baron von Hügel, in which he wondered how far Judaism could rival Catholicism in its combination of social ethics and institutional and personal religion. He concluded that Judaism must also combine these three elements from Catholicism 'if it is to survive as a great religion.'<sup>91</sup>

On the run up to the ratification of the British Mandate, as the Vatican and Catholic newspapers became more aggressive in their opposition to Zionism, the *Jewish Guardian* did adopt a slightly more critical posture. The anti-Zionism was not the cause of its concern so much as the anti-Jewish hostility which was woven into much of it. In April 1922, Monsignor Barlassina, the 'Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem',<sup>92</sup> claimed in a lecture delivered in Rome that the Zionist immigrants had flooded the Holy City with 'five hundred prostitutes.' Even worse, the Latin Patriarch suggested, was the fact that 'several of the new colonies live by the principles of pure communism.' He also accused Herbert Samuel of handing over all 'the interests of

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ask why Jews do not look after their own concerns. And if the question has to be asked too often, we shall not be listened to when we do pluck up courage to speak, for we shall be regarded merely as a body of poltroons, of whom no serious notice need be taken.' 'Dumb Dogs', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 11 July 1913, 11-12.

<sup>89</sup> 'Dean Inge's Reprint', *The Jewish Guardian*, 30 June 1922, 3.

<sup>90</sup> 'Anti-Jewish Conspiracy', *The Jewish Guardian*, 19 March 1920, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Claude Montefiore, 'The Late Baron V. Hügel', *The Jewish Guardian*, 6 February 1925, 9.

<sup>92</sup> The 'Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins' is the Roman Catholic Bishop of Jerusalem. The position was re-established by Pope Pius IX in 1847. The title 'Patriarch of Jerusalem' is also used by the Greek Orthodox Church.

Palestine exclusively to the Zionist Commission.<sup>93</sup> The *Jewish Guardian*'s response was notably restrained, especially in comparison to the *Jewish Chronicle*. The *Jewish Chronicle* reported that the Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem 'urged that the entire Roman Catholic world should make a stand against the desecration of the country by the Zionists and declare a Holy War against them'<sup>94</sup> and later concluded that he was 'an emissary of the Vatican bent on an endeavour by any means – by reckless misstatement, venomous misrepresentation, and all the miserable arts and wiles of a fanatic priest – to stir up ill-feeling in England against the Jews.'<sup>95</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* conversely declared that it did 'not care to reproduce' the alleged statements by Barlassina whilst expressing hope that a denial 'may be forthcoming, in the real interests of the Church of Rome.'<sup>96</sup> The *Jewish Guardian* encouraged the heads of the Catholic Church to 'formulate clearly their objections, if any, to the Palestine mandate', observing that the 'Arabs are working in the open against the policy of the British Government, and the Church of Rome should do the same.' The article then referred to Maude Petre's critique of Belloc's *The Jews* to illustrate how Jews and Catholics can in fact 'understand and sympathise with each other's point of view.'<sup>97</sup> Ultimately the paper blamed the current hostility of Roman Catholics on agitations created by Zionists. It concluded that 'political Zionists must be aware that they have alienated many old friends, without conciliating new ones. They have against them the Arabs, the Romans Catholics, and a large body of British taxpayers' and suggested that what was now needed to calm the situation was a 'more conciliatory attitude on the part of the extreme section of Jewish "nationalists."<sup>98</sup>

## Conclusion

The predominant narratives involving Catholics in the Anglo-Jewish press did not represent a deep engagement on a cultural or religious level but were rather reactions to Catholic attitudes and actions towards Jews. This paper has examined these reactions by looking at three different newspaper-editorship combinations: the *Jewish Chronicle* under the anti-Zionist management of Davis and Myers, the *Jewish*

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<sup>93</sup> Excerpts from this lecture delivered by Barlassina and printed in *Osservatore Romano*, 13 May 1922, can be found in Minerbi, *The Vatican and Zionism*, 173-4.

<sup>94</sup> 'The Roman Catholic Patriarch of Jerusalem: Lecture in Rome: Bitter Attack on Zionists', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 19 May 1922, 28.

<sup>95</sup> 'A Wicked Libel', *The Jewish Chronicle*, 2 June 1922, 8.

<sup>96</sup> 'Rome in Palestine', *The Jewish Guardian*, 19 May 1922, 1.

<sup>97</sup> 'Rome in Palestine', *The Jewish Guardian*, 26 May 1922, 1.

<sup>98</sup> 'Palestine Mandate', *The Jewish Guardian*, 26 May 1922, 1.

*Chronicle* (and *Jewish World*) under the Zionist control of Leopold Greenberg, and the *Jewish Guardian* under the League of British Jews. A correlation between the anti- or pro-Zionism of the editors and the tone of each paper's discourse about Catholics is notable. Under the anti-Zionist management of Davis and Myers, the *Jewish Chronicle* was more concerned about maintaining the image of English Jews as loyal well assimilated Englishmen who do not rock the boat. With some notable exceptions, the paper thus tended to discourage collective Jewish engagement with antisemitism. It often advised Jews to lay low and avoid confrontation, to leave protests to gentiles, and it sometimes blamed Jews for being the cause of anti-Jewish hostility. It did report major incidents of Catholic hostility such as occurred during the Dreyfus Affair but often with some reluctance. While it did report Catholic agitations against Jews, it often attributed them to the intrigues of Jesuits. Perhaps in order to maintain an amicable relationship with English Catholics the paper also tended to over interpret the support of English Catholic newspapers during these agitations.

From December 1906 onwards the paper became much more confrontational. This was not so much a reflection of changing attitudes within Anglo-Jewry but rather the personality and ideological inclinations of the new man at the helm of the paper. Greenberg was neither worried about rocking the boat nor overly motivated by a desire to shape Jews into an Anglican mould. He seemed to relish the idea of a fight and often employed a biting and sarcastic tone against those he was confronting. He introduced a much more confrontational approach towards Catholic hostility than the previous management of the paper. At times the paper could present a friendly attitude towards Catholics and the Vatican, especially when it was believed that the Church might support Zionism. However, the paper's aggression towards the Catholic Church turned acerbic after the failed attempts to ratify an acceptable British Mandate in Palestine. Greenberg considered the terms of the Mandate a betrayal by the British Government and blamed the Vatican for creating much of the anti-Zionist hostility. The *Jewish Guardian* conversely did not share Leopold Greenberg's anxieties about Catholic anti-Zionism. Whilst it was unconcerned about anti-Zionism *per se*, and largely blamed what it labelled 'extreme Zionism' for creating much of the existing anti-Jewish hostility, it could not ignore the antisemitic caricatures that were often woven tightly into some of the Catholic criticisms of Zionism. Furthermore, like the *Jewish Chronicle* and *Jewish World*, the *Jewish Guardian* could be very critical of

English Catholic writers who argued that Jews could not be proper Englishmen. However, whereas Greenberg relished the opportunity to hit back on his own, the *Jewish Guardian* preferred where possible to give coverage to Christians who defended Jews.

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## THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ULTRA-ORTHODOXY IN MANCHESTER

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*Abstract: This paper examines the social, political and cultural milieu in which the Machzikei Hadass (Upholders of the Faith), the principal ultra-orthodox community in Greater Manchester was founded in the mid 1920s. Like its counterparts in late nineteenth century Eastern Europe, MH (as it is always known) was a reaction to a perceived slide from strict, 'Torah true' orthodoxy. In this case what they saw as a hybrid of modern orthodoxy and worse; genteel Anglo-Jewish compromise. The hard core of MH founders were hassidim of the Rebbes of Belz, Galicia and mostly related both by geographic origin and by kinship. This tightly knit group of (to quote Prime Minister Harold Wilson) 'politically motivated men,' waged a thirty years war against the Manchester Jewish establishment and emerged triumphant. Their descendents now represent over one quarter of all the Jews in Greater Manchester and will form a majority by the middle of the present century.*

### Introduction

In late Victorian Manchester, the Jewish communities of the early and mid-nineteenth century were gradually sliding into middle class respectability. In adopting London's Bayswater Synagogue liturgy, the South Manchester Synagogue had set the predominant style of suburban orthodoxy in a 'gentle reform' of ritual, acceptable equally to the chief rabbi and to a self-conscious middle-class. It was a style which later recommended itself, in various forms, to the other suburban groups in north as well as south Manchester, which wished to express the degree of their acculturation to English middle class norms without entertaining the extreme of Reform. In its origin, it made the point that a 'suburban synagogue' was not one simply which met the needs of well-to-do Jewish families which had colonised a new district; the crucial matter was sense of corporate class identity which was expressed not only in topographic terms.<sup>1</sup>

There were however small groups of hassidim and other strictly observant Jews who came together in the summer of 1925 to found a resistance movement to this slide towards acculturation and, in their view, assimilation. This struggle to start a new

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<sup>1</sup> B. Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), 325.

ultra-orthodox organisation in the mid 1920s was not without precedents. There had been small minorities of orthodox Jews in Manchester who had resisted the lure of acculturation and acceptance. One of the first indications of such individuals living in Manchester is a letter from the famous hassidic rebbe, Zadok HaKohein of Lublin to a friend, a 'Reb Osher' who was practising as a physician in Manchester in 1864. Reb Zadok urges his friend to leave the city 'so bereft of Judaism' and move to the Land of Israel.<sup>2</sup> The earliest local evidence of new, more orthodox forces was probably in the movement that began in 1875 for the creation of a study centre, the Manchester Beth Hamedrash 'where the Holy Law can be studied and expounded and where the rising generation may obtain a thorough knowledge of Hebrew.' The movement was promoted by influential, but observant immigrants such as the optician William Aronsberg who viewed: 'with alarm and horror the ungodly way in which [young men] are allowed to grow up, deficient in religious feeling and indulging in immoral employment; and who, to remedy this awful state of things, are endeavouring to provide an antidote to the billiard rooms and card tables on which the young men spent their leisure moments, Sabbaths and Festivals.'<sup>3</sup> The movement failed, perhaps because the immigrant middle class then lacked political experience, but it was the beginning of a process of immigrant self-assertion.

Later a brief attempt was made to establish a local halakhic authority acceptable to the immigrants with the appointment in 1893 of Rabbi Abba Reiness (or Abba Reiness-Cohen as he is called in later Manchester Shechita Board (MSB) minutes) of Kovno (Kanaus, Lithuania) as Moreh Haro'oh (Communal Judge or Dayan) to the Polish and Russian Jews of Hightown and Strangeways. 'A letter was read from [Chief Rabbi] Dr Adler dated 7 September [1893] addressed to the Broder Synagogue stating that the Rev Abba Reiness was competent to be appointed to pasken shaalos [answer questions in rabbinic law] and to act as a preacher.'<sup>4</sup> Herman Adler, for once showing some foresight and empathy, had thus endorsed the appointment. However, Reiness was also rabbi of the Strangeways Synagogue, and the other hevra leaders, jealous of their independence and fearing an Adlerian plot, ensured the experiment was short-

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<sup>2</sup> L. Reich, 'Chassidim in Manchester', notes prepared for the chapter 'Manchester' in H. Rabinowitz, *A World Apart: The Story of the Chasidim in Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997). Permission granted.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, 332.

<sup>4</sup> Manchester Shechita Board (MSB) minutes, 10 December 1893, in the possession of the author.

lived.<sup>5</sup> Reiness later joined the newly developing Shechita Board as one of its part-time 'reverend supervisors,' the rabbis involved with the board not receiving the more appropriate title of 'dayan' until well into the 20th century.

There had been individuals and small hevros who had tried, almost always unsuccessfully, to maintain the religious standards of 'der alter heim' – their towns and villages of origin in eastern and central Europe. One of the earliest in Manchester was the Hevras (later Beis HaKnesses) Anshei Krakow or Cracow Hebrew Society founded in January 1868 with the objectives of 'holding divine service on the Sabbaths and festivals, relief of members during the week of mourning, providing a minyan at a house of mourning &c.'<sup>6</sup> Most of these families and groups remained heimish, traditionally observant, only during the lifetime of the original immigrants. Many of them and their children, born into piety and poverty in the grimy, malodorous surroundings of Red Bank, Strangeways and Lower Broughton were soon anglicised by a Manchester Jewish establishment and its institutions eager to slough off the community's label of 'alien' and become socially acceptable to middle class, gentile society. According to Williams the Jewish rich also saw themselves duty bound to improve the lives of their co-religionists just as the liberal gentiles improved the life of the city's gentile poor. The upper and middle classes bore a moral responsibility for their workers and for the unemployed.<sup>7</sup>

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century many of the original orthodox hevros had evolved into fully-fledged Manchester synagogues under the influence and patronage of the chief rabbinate and the BoD. The Lubavitch shteibl (small synagogue), founded in 1896, was almost the only harēdi synagogue that had survived with its hassidus intact for more than the first immigrant generation. Unlike east London where Sir Samuel Montague, MP had successfully organised the local hevros into the Federation of Synagogues, the Manchester immigrants had no wealthy, modern orthodox, politically astute patron who could meet and occasionally defeat the establishment on its own turf. Indeed Montague had visited Manchester in the mid

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<sup>5</sup> L. Gartner, *The Jewish Immigrant in England 1870-1914* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1960), 215.

<sup>6</sup> Manchester entry in A. Myers, *The Jewish Directory for 1874* (London: Philip Valentine, 1874), 76.

<sup>7</sup> See Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, 89. Of course this also complies with the important Biblical mitzvos of charity and love of one's neighbour.



1890s and mooted such a project but without success.<sup>8</sup> As the second generation, the Manchester born children who moved up Cheetham Hill Road from the slums of Red Bank matured, nearly all saw undiluted orthodoxy only as an impediment to their progress and acceptance into middle class 'polite' society.

This rapid acculturation of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Manchester Jews was far from unique. The same phenomenon could be observed in London, Leeds, Liverpool, Glasgow, New York, Chicago, Buenos Aires and even Jaffa-Tel Aviv. In the cities of Germany and Austro-Hungary this decline in undiluted orthodoxy had started two generations earlier and by the Great War was complete. Only the few and relatively small austritt gemeinde communities in cities such as Leipzig and Frankfurt-am-Main could one find the remains of a once flourishing German strict orthodoxy. Nevertheless, a few of these remnants from Germany would combine with the Brody hassidim to create a new major institution within the increasingly fractious orthodoxy of Manchester Jewry.

There were still small vestiges of their original immigrant hassidus in several of the early 20th century Manchester synagogues. By the time the Broder Synagogue (later renamed the North Manchester and anglicised) was founded in the late 1890s there were enough members from hassidic families to influence the liturgy so that Hallel was said after Maariv on the first night of Pesakh and L'Dovid Mizmor at Maariv on Rosh Hashona.<sup>9</sup> The Oestricher (Austrian) Synagogue adopted the full nusakh Sephard (hassidic liturgy) on its foundation as eventually did the Polish Synagogue. The Romanian Synagogue founded in Strangeways in 1889 for Jews from South East Europe included a number of hassidic families from Vizhnitz and it also adopted nusakh Sephard. In 1896 the first Lubavitch shteibl was founded near Victoria Station above a provender's shop and became famous as the 'Hayshop Shul'. Lubavitch use a slightly different liturgy to other hassidim, edited by the Baal HaTanya, author of the core hassidic text Tanya, Shneur Zalman of Liadi, from the writings of the Safed kabbalist Yitzhok Luria and known in his honour as 'nusakh Ari.'<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Private conversation with the historian Bill Williams.

<sup>9</sup> These are not said in standard Ashkenazi liturgy synagogues.

<sup>10</sup> The full name of the oldest surviving Lubavitch synagogue in Manchester is Adass Yisroel Nusakh Ari.

Whilst most of the members of these synagogues may have come from hassidic backgrounds, in practice many of them confined their difference from other Manchester Jews to the synagogue service and a few customs in the home. By the early twentieth century few Manchester Jews had full beards,<sup>11</sup> almost none wore hassidic garb other than perhaps a gartel, the long cord belt worn during prayer to separate the lower 'animal' half of the body from the upper 'spiritual' part. The first local hassid to act as a full rebbe and wear full hassidic garb publicly was Zusya Golditch (father of Dayan Isaac Golditch, minister of the Austrian shul and a member of the Manchester Beth Din) who arrived in Manchester about 1919 having previously lived in Antwerp and Leeds. A commanding and imposing figure, he originally lived off Camp Street, Higher Broughton but later was one of the first harēdim to move north into the more affluent suburb of Broughton Park.<sup>12</sup> Zusya Golditch operated as a classic hassidic rebbe, running a minyan in his home and giving regular Talmud classes and hassidic gatherings for storytelling and refreshment. Golditch's activities over several decades are briefly recorded in the appointment diaries of one of his 'hassidim,' Yosef Chaim (Joseph Charles) Sufrin who later became one of the leaders of the second generation, Manchester born, harēdim.<sup>13</sup>

The 1905 Aliens Act, the first legislation solely aimed at restricting immigration to Britain, was principally directed at regulating the flow of Russian and Polish Jews into England. Whilst the law was honoured more in breach than in observance, its message was not lost on the aspiring social climbers of Jewish Manchester. In addition, the six-day working week was an almost insuperable test that tore many Manchester born children from the strict orthodoxy of their parents and indeed sometimes tore the parents themselves. Observance of the Sabbath is one of the cardinal laws and principles of Judaism. In addition to its direct Biblical status as one of the ten Statements of Judaism – the Decalogue,<sup>14</sup> Sabbath observance has always

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<sup>11</sup> Ironically one of the few was the father of MSB president Reuben Barrow-Sicree, the principal preWW2 opponent of MH.

<sup>12</sup> Tapes of an interview with Dayan I Golditch, Oral Archive at Manchester Jewish Museum, May/June 1978.

<sup>13</sup> J.C. Sufrin, *Appointment Diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufrin of Manchester (1902-1985) for the years 1914-1985*, private collection in the possession of his children.

<sup>14</sup> Usually mistranslated as the 'Ten Commandments.' There are, in fact, 613 Biblical commandments.

been a test of an individual's belief in and loyalty to the Creator G-d and his Torah. To perform creative labour on the Sabbath by working in textiles, leather or cigarettes on Saturdays is to perform a serious desecration of the divinely given world order. Thus those who attended the Manchester 'market' or 'workers' minyans,' early morning Shabbos services held to enable immigrants to both pray and get to work on time, appeared to signify to their children that economic survival for the poor and economic success for the better off was preferable to strict Jewish belief and practice. Inevitably a decline in Sabbath observance often preceded a general decline in orthodox lifestyle and commitment especially in the second generation.

However, there was a small minority of English born children who followed the example of their migrant parents and followed a strictly orthodox lifestyle whatever the restrictions it might place on their economic advancement. Several of these were the sons of Isadore (Yitzhok) Sufirin of Jassy (Iasi, Romania) who had migrated to Manchester in 1899. The eldest, Yosef Chaim (Joseph Charles), born in Manchester in 1902, kept an appointment diary from the age of twelve in which he records his daily schedule including the synagogues in which he prayed; the daily shiurim (Torah classes) he attended and the orthodox youth and political groups of which he was a leading member.

Sufirin worked for his father in the family linen drapers business in Higher Broughton before qualifying as an optician and later running a soap manufacturing business. Yosef Chaim and his brother Leonti (Aryeh Leib) became leaders of the Aguda's Sinai youth movement in their early teens and progressed to the adult organisation in their early twenties.<sup>15</sup> Yosef Chaim was elected Chairman of the Manchester branch of the Aguda at a meeting in the Polish Synagogue in January 1930 at the relatively young age of twenty-seven indicating the importance the local movement placed on encouraging English born 'second generation' men to take up communal and political

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<sup>15</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 8 August 1919, 19.

activities.<sup>16</sup> His brother Leonti worked as a manufacturer's agent before becoming the paid administrator of the Manchester Yeshiva.<sup>17</sup>

Despite these individual exceptions, Manchester in the mid 1920s, when MH was founded, was still difficult territory for immigrant Jews wishing to remain strictly observant. Until the founding of the MH Society, the orthodox Jews of Manchester formed, in effect, an *einheitsgemeinde*, a single religiously unified, community. The only real theological opposition to the ruling class that ran institutions such as the communal council, the shechita board and the Jewish charities was the Reform Synagogue and its adherents. There was little organised or effective opposition from the 'right' of the religious spectrum. However, it will be noted throughout this history that, as within any complex religious community, there are continual disputes and rivalries between individual synagogues and their professional and lay leaders.

Such theological opposition from the 'right' might have been expected to come from the Manchester Yeshiva, which was the only institute of higher Jewish learning in the city. Alternatively from the immigrant run Talmud Torah and Central Board for Hebrew Education, founded in Winter Street, Red Bank in 1880 and which concentrated on running the part-time synagogue based *khedarim* that supplemented the meagre religious education provided at the establishment run Jews' School on Derby Street, Strangeways.<sup>18</sup> The Talmud Torah had moved to Bent Street, Cheetham in 1889 and over the next half century until World War II, the building was continuously renovated, improved and extended until it became, 'the largest of its kind, not only in Great Britain, but in the Empire.'<sup>19</sup>

However, under the control of the Doctors Slotki (Israel and his son Judah) as directors of education from 1911 until 1977, the Talmud Torah gently accommodated the politics of Anglicisation. It ran a curriculum based partly on traditional orthodox

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<sup>16</sup> It might also indicate the limited number of UK born younger men willing to become politically active in the orthodox cause.

<sup>17</sup> Sufrin, *Appointment Diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufrin*. Permission granted to quote from the copies in Manchester. Several are overseas and thus unavailable but the Manchester based editions seem very representative according to Rabbi S Z Sufrin, the oldest child.

<sup>18</sup> A comprehensive if heavily sanitised early history of the Talmud Torah can be found in I.W. Slotki, *Seventy Years of Hebrew Education* (Manchester: Manchester Central Board for Hebrew Education, 1950).

<sup>19</sup> Slotki, *Seventy Years of Hebrew Education*, 15.

subjects such as Humash Rashi (the Pentateuch with Rashi's commentary) and Siddur (prayer book) with more Wissenschaft subjects such as the Prophets, Hebrew grammar, Jewish history and linguistics. The completely non-observant Samuel Alexander, OM, retired professor of philosophy at Manchester University chaired an official testimonial dinner for Israel Slotki on his receipt of a university doctorate in September 1932. The list of speakers including the directors of education for the cities of Manchester and Salford also gives a clear indication of the direction the institution was heading.<sup>20</sup>

### **The founding of the Manchester Yeshiva**<sup>21</sup>

The Manchester Yeshiva was founded on Shabbos arben (Saturday night) 25 Shevat 5671 (27 February 1911) when a small group of orthodox rabbis and laymen met and formed the first va'ad hayeshiva (executive committee). The founders were led by Rabbis Yehoshua Dovid Silverstone; Yisroel Yoffey and Menakhem Dagutski, rabbi of the Holy Law and a reverend-supervisor of the Beth Din, and the shokhet and secretary of the Manchester Naturalisation Society (that assisted immigrants in becoming UK citizens), Rev. Hershel Levin. The meeting elected the businessmen Hershel Levinson president, Morris Mason Vice-President and Joseph Cohen treasurer.<sup>22</sup> The ordinary committee members consisted of rabbis and strictly orthodox immigrant businessmen including the relatives by marriage Elkhonen (Chuna) Heilpern, who by 1917 had become a Vice-President, and Elozor Reich, Hon. Treasurer in 1917, whose inter-related families would become the key force in the development of MH.<sup>23</sup> Within a few weeks of the initial meeting they had advertised for a rosh yeshiva, held a public meeting in the Talmud Torah hall and had appointed Zvi Hirsh Ferber<sup>24</sup> as its first principal at a not overgenerous salary of £2 per week.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Slotki, *Seventy Years of Hebrew Education*, 25. The Talmud Torah's activities declined with the rise of the day school movement after WW2. It finally closed in March 2006.

<sup>21</sup> During the course of my doctoral research I discovered the first Yiddish yeshiva minute books. Those extracts appear to be the first translation into English and the first citation in any work of scholarship.

<sup>22</sup> Manchester Yeshiva (MY) minutes, 27 February 1911, in the possession of Rev. Brodie. Translation from the original Yiddish into English by the writer

<sup>23</sup> MY nomination list for 1917.

<sup>24</sup> See his memoirs – T. Ferber, *Zikaron L'Dor Akhron [A Memoir of the Last Generation]* (London, 1953).

<sup>25</sup> MY ec 4 March 1911, 18 March 1911, 30 March 1911, and 6 April 1911.

The yeshiva held its first lectures on Sunday 23 April 1911.<sup>26</sup> The influence of the harēdi immigrants is clear from the use of the heavily ornate, East European dialect of Yiddish<sup>27</sup> used to record the executive committee minutes, a practice retained until the relatively late date of December 1921.<sup>28</sup> Ferber resigned in 1913 to become minister of a west London synagogue (and later became a dayan of the United Synagogue) and was replaced by the senior maggid shiur (lecturer) at east London's Eitz Hayim yeshiva, Moshe Yitzhok Segal.<sup>29</sup>

However, whilst the teachers in the yeshiva were themselves strictly orthodox, their ability to influence the standards of religious observance amongst the general population was severely limited. Apart from their natural concern with developing their own institution and its students, they were heavily dependent financially on their small band of active supporters and other wealthy patrons whose voluntary donations were their principal sources of finance. Many of these patrons whilst often acculturated themselves and whilst nostalgic for the simple immigrant orthodoxy of their childhoods (some were what would now be called 'modern orthodox' others barely observant) were certainly far from hassidic or even strictly observant in the German austritt gemeinde or Lithuanian yeshiva traditions. They seemed to combine a very English laissez faire attitude to other people's Judaism – 'it's a free country' – with what could be viewed as a rather defeatist belief that somehow the yeshiva was merely holding back a few drops from a tidal wave of assimilation that seemed inevitable.<sup>30</sup>

As the laymen controlled the purse strings they also controlled the rabbis. For example Rabbi Yisroel Yoffey, as chairman of the yeshiva's vaad hahinukh (education committee) published the following anguished cry as part of one of his regular contributions to the *Jewish Chronicle*. He is writing at a time when the

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<sup>26</sup> MY ec April 1911.

<sup>27</sup> Often a few English words were incorporated in Hebrew characters or even given Yiddish verb forms.

<sup>28</sup> MY ec 1911-1921.

<sup>29</sup> MY ec 20 September 1913 discussed Segal's appointment and ec 12 October 1913 decided to issue a contract of employment again at £2 per week.

<sup>30</sup> Notes of an interview with Rev G Brodie, Hon. Secretary and Archivist of MY, 15 August 2001, in possession of the author.

yeshiva had no more than 35 full-time students (some of them from other towns) and 40 part-time, in a city with well over 30,000 Jews:

The environment here is distinctly unfavourable to Jewish learning. There are so many other attractions and distractions for our Jewish youth that every single pupil who attends the yeshiva should be to us a source of rejoicing. With the fire of assimilation raging furiously every such pupil may justly be regarded as an *od mazal m'esh* – a brand plucked out of the fire...<sup>31</sup>

The lay leaders' deafest attitude is in stark contrast to the Talmudic dictum 'kol Yisroel arveivim zeh l'zeh' (all Jews are co-guarantors, i.e. responsible, for one another), which the sages derived from the laws of debts and surety.<sup>32</sup> The Talmudic exegesis is that a fully observant Jew is still lacking something important in his religious duty if he does not take steps to assist, encourage and teach his less observant neighbours to be more scrupulous. It was this type of philosophic principle, on a community level if not an individual level, the MH activists were to use in their forty years war (1925-1965) to improve the standards of Jewish observance in Manchester: a combination of enlightened self-interest and a genuine concern for the survival of Talmudic Judaism.

At taste of what was to lie in store for the other lay leaders of Manchester orthodoxy was the dispute in the yeshiva over the Wallenstein affair. In 1932, Rev. Meir Wallenstein, MA, of London was one of the two candidates for the position of third teacher in addition to Rabbis Segal and Behrmann. Both Chief Rabbi Joseph Hertz and the Rosh Beth Din of London, Shmuel Yitzhok Hillman, endorsed his application. However committee member Hershel Heilpern, by then also the president of MH, alleged he had information that made Wallenstein unsuitable to teach in a yeshiva, in other words, that impugned his standard of orthodoxy. Rather than disclose the source of this information to his fellow committee members, Heilpern apparently incited two of his sons then studying in the yeshiva, Chaim and Aaron Heilpern, to write to the rosh yeshiva, Moshe Yitzhok Segal, stating that should Wallenstein be appointed,

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<sup>31</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 July 1926, 32.

<sup>32</sup> Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Babba Bathra 176a-b and codes.

they would refuse to attend his classes.<sup>33</sup> The executive naturally took affront at this early attempt to impose student power and veto its right of appointment and asked Segal to suspend the boys pending an apology. During their suspension from classes they wrote a second letter repeating the allegation and refusing to withdraw from their opposition. The executive then asked Yoffey as head of the vaad hahinnukh to investigate. On his report the following ensued during an executive meeting:

[There was] a great deal of very heated discussion, at the end... after unsuccessfully appealing to Messrs Ch[una] and H[ershel] Heilpern to conform with the wish of the committee and end all strife, ... formally moved that in view of the disturbances and quarrels which had done and were doing incalculable harm to the yeshiva and were caused by Messrs Ch and H Heilpern, that they be suspended from the committee of the yeshiva.<sup>34</sup>

The Heilperns pere and fils withdrew and did not attend any further committee meetings and, instead, devoted their energies to lobbying the shechita board of behalf of MH, the issue that will dominate the rest of their story. Rabbis Segal and Yoffey later persuaded the yeshiva executive to relent to the extent of allowing the Heilpern youths back into class.<sup>35</sup> Hon. Treasurer Mr L.A. Franks strongly dissenting as he said, 'this was not the first instance in which the Heilperns had defied the committee. A [older] brother of these two [known as Godol from his Hebrew name Gad], having years ago removed from the office wall a picture of the present chief rabbi.'<sup>36</sup> However, Wallenstein lost his chance of a position in the yeshiva and his rival applicant Mr Myers, the candidate favoured by the Heilperns and Rabbi Segal, received the appointment. Wallenstein went on to become a lecturer in Semitic studies

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<sup>33</sup> Chaim Heilpern declined to comment on this event during my interviews with him seventy years later. Understandably he was very reluctant to discuss any event in which he or his relatives might be subject to written criticism or even direct questioning about their motives.

<sup>34</sup> MY ec 08 June 1932.

<sup>35</sup> MY ec 27 July 1932.

<sup>36</sup> MY ec 17 July 1932. Mr Franks was also upset that the Heilpern boys had found employment as part-time assistant synagogue readers without seeking permission from the committee. Franks resigned as treasurer in September but remained on the committee.



at Manchester University, his Hebrew academic qualifications perhaps one of the reasons for the suspicions of the Heilperns.<sup>37</sup>

The Manchester Yeshiva was founded to recreate the curriculum of the Lithuanian yeshivos – Talmud and legal codes being the principal texts and the language of instruction being Yiddish. As the enlightenment and later the Zionist movement gathered momentum in Eastern Europe there was a reaction in the yeshivos to minimise the importance of subjects favoured by the maskilim: Hebrew linguistics, the books of the Prophets and the academic study of Jewish history. Temptation first came to the yeshiva in February 1924. The executive received a letter from the Jewish War Memorial Manchester Area Committee<sup>38</sup> to the effect that it had decided to make the yeshiva a grant of £50 subject to conditions. It stated, 'That an additional teacher be engaged who shall teach Hebrew grammar, Tenakh (Bible) and in particular Neviim Akhronim (the later Prophets), Jewish history and that further, that the instruction in these subjects be given in English.'<sup>39</sup> Despite the yeshiva's precarious finances, Mr Harris Halpern (one of the English born MH members and owner of a large woollens business in Derby Street, Cheetham) moved a motion to reject the grant because of the conditions attached. The secretary was instructed to reply that the yeshiva could not accommodate the committee's conditions and that it had its own education committee to look after such things.

### **The first leaders of independent orthodoxy and their environment**

Thus the founding of a Manchester Machzikei Hadass Society in the summer of 1925 would not come about in a vacuum either of time or of space. From their arrival in the 1890s and early 1900s, all the founding families had been involved with the leading institutions of mainstream Manchester orthodoxy. Three generations of Reichs and Heilperns had become leaders of the Polish Synagogue in Strangeways and Hershel Heilpern had served as a delegate of that institution on the council of the Manchester

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<sup>37</sup> He published several papers on Biblical topics in the bulletin of the John Rylands Library in the 1950s and 1960s. He is mentioned in the fiftieth anniversary article in *Journal of Semitic Studies* 1, 1 (Spring 2005). The JSS was founded and managed by the academic staff of Manchester University.

<sup>38</sup> The Jewish War Memorial Committee was based in London under the chairmanship of the industrialist Sir Robert Waley Cohen later President of the United Synagogue.

<sup>39</sup> MY ec 24 February 1924.

Shechita Board. The future MH president and activist Wolf Dresdner had become spiritual leader of the Austrian Synagogue in Waterloo Road, Hightown. Several Heilperns, Reichs and other MH members served on the committee of the Manchester Yeshiva from its inception and throughout the 1920s and 1930s, Elozor Reich serving as Treasurer from 1917 to the early 1920s and his grandson Hershel Reich acting as Treasurer from 1931 to 1934.<sup>40</sup> The Sufrins were leaders of the Romanian Synagogue and active in the local Agudas Yisroel association. MH supporters Wolf Jaffe and his non-related neighbour Mottle (Mordechai, Maurice) Jaffe of Halliwell Street, Cheetham were prominent leaders of and financial powers in the Lubavitch hassidic community.<sup>41</sup> Isaac Galansky in whose home the MH weekday minyan met from 1933-34 until it acquired its own building in 1938 was a former warden of the Holy Law Synagogue:

Although he [MH's Rabbi Feldmann] prayed mostly at the Polish Synagogue (now defunct) the community now [in the mid 1930s] had adherents at the Austrian, Rumanian, Central, Kehal Chassidim, New and Holy Law synagogues amongst others.<sup>42</sup>

This association with other local orthodox institutions continued even after MH acquired its own professional leaders and its own permanent buildings. Soon after his arrival in Manchester in December 1934, MH's founding rabbi Dovid Feldmann became intimately involved with the yeshiva although he was never an official member of the teaching staff. By February 1936 he was a speaker at the biennial prize giving ceremony, which in the 1930s was usually chaired by Reuben Barrow-Sicree as president of the Shechita Board, and at the AGM of 1937 Feldmann was deputising for the chairman of the education committee. At that meeting he declared: 'the yeshiva was Manchester's most essential institution and one which deserved its [the community's] utmost support.'<sup>43</sup> Feldmann used to feher (test) yeshiva students on their studies as an external examiner, and occasionally lectured at the yeshiva.<sup>44</sup> The

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<sup>40</sup> Entries in MY ec minute books. A copy of the nomination list for the yeshiva committee elections of 2 September 1917 is in the possession of the author.

<sup>41</sup> Papers relating to Wolfe Jaffe held by his grandson Abraham, minister of the New Kehal Chassidim Synagogue, Salford. Details of Mottle Jaffe held by his grandson Frank Beigal, Chairman of the Jewish Historical Society of England, Manchester branch.

<sup>42</sup> Speech notes of J.J. Reich for the dinner marking the official opening of the new MH synagogue, 16 September 1962. Permission granted.

<sup>43</sup> MY ec, 2 February 1936 and 18 April 1937.

<sup>44</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 4 June 1937, 32.

leading MH families continued to send their sons to study in the yeshiva both as part-time students after grammar school<sup>45</sup> and as full-time students before they went into business or trained for a profession. They were also instrumental in helping the yeshiva to resist the blandishments of 'modern orthodoxy' and the Wissenschaft des Judentums school of 'historic Judaism.'

The local Jewish leadership had been working hard for over forty years at the acculturation of such 'foreign Jews' into lower middle class, gentile society. Community leaders such as communal council president, the wealthy cotton merchant, Nathan Laski, youth work leader Colonel Edward C.Q. Henriques and the Shechita Board president, the suave Sephardi solicitor Reuben Barrow-Sicree were neither strictly observant themselves nor in favour of any institution that encouraged too much east European style orthodoxy.<sup>46</sup> Although some like Barrow-Sicree and Mark Bloom, the affluent raincoat manufacturer who was the major financial supporter of the yeshiva were pleased by the status conferred on them by chairing orthodox institutions and bodies that their own children would never attend as students nor become members of. 'Their lives consisted, in fact, of striking a balance between a total commitment to Judaism and full participation in the life of the urban bourgeoisie.'<sup>47</sup>

Consequently the Beth Din and Shechita Board were grossly under-funded, their religious authorities undermined and ignored and their customers sometimes duped by a small minority of unscrupulous butchers, bakers and other retailers.<sup>48</sup> Yiddish was banned at the Manchester Jews' School as learning the English language was an important first step towards anglicisation.<sup>49</sup> Many of the brightest children won scholarships and went on to secondary education in elite English schools like Manchester Grammar, Salford Grammar and Manchester High School for Girls. After

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<sup>45</sup> Several are listed amongst the alumni of Manchester Grammar School in the school archives.

<sup>46</sup> Nathan Laski was what would now be called 'traditional,' Henriques was a member of the Reform synagogue and Barrow-Sicree was a lukewarm member of the Manchester Sephardi community. All enjoyed being big fish in the small pond of the Manchester Jewish establishment.

<sup>47</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry 1740-1875*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> Interview with the late Rabbi R. Margulies of Manchester Yeshiva, brother of Rev. Sigmund Margulies who was Clerk of the Manchester Beth Din and Shechita Board after WW2 and MSB minutes, June 2001, in the possession of the author.

<sup>49</sup> R. Livshin, 'Acculturation of Immigrant Jewish Children 1890-1930' in D. Cesarani, ed., *The Making of Modern Anglo-Jewry* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).

school they might participate in the Jewish Lads' Brigade or the Manchester Jewish Girls' Club, formed to complete their acculturation to the British ideals of 'playing the game' and being a 'jolly good sport.' As they grew up they could join the Manchester Jewish Cricket Club, the Jewish Literary and Social Union or one of Jewish run Masonic lodges. One of the most famous children of this system was Louis Golding, born in Manchester to immigrant parents, a scholarship boy at Manchester Grammar School and Queen's College, Oxford who immortalised his childhood in his 1932 novel *Magnolia Street*. Another Louis, the controversial minister, scholar and academic Dr Louis Jacobs, CBE, born in Manchester in 1920, recalls some of his early experiences in his 1989 autobiography: 'The Jews' School in Manchester, like its counterpart, the Jews' Free School in London, was established in the last century with aim of helping the children of Jewish immigrants become fully integrated into English society. All the teachers were staunch English patriots.'<sup>50</sup>

During the childhood of Jacobs' parents there had been at least twenty hevros in Manchester, varying in the precise form of their religious life, but dedicated as a whole to the strictest religious standards of the east European ghetto.<sup>51</sup> Although vulnerable to the overwhelming forces of socialisation, directed towards them in part by the Jews' School and the Manchester Jewish Board of Guardians, the hevros were sustained by a flow of migration that kept up until the First World War. And by a line of the most uncompromising Polish and Lithuanian rabbis, of whom the prototype was Sussman Cohen of the Hevra Walkawishk (later renamed the Central Synagogue), who became a part-time 'reverend supervisor' of the Shechita Board.<sup>52</sup> Looked on with growing disdain by the more acculturated leaders of Manchester Jewry, the hevros served in many ways to underpin the whole religious structure of the community by providing a constant source of fresh inspiration from the fount of Jewish orthodoxy.<sup>53</sup> One of their prominent leaders, Yisroel Yoffey, was an elegant preacher in Yiddish as his collection of Manchester sermons *Knesses Yisroel*, published in Manchester in 1910, testifies. He went on to do sterling work under extremely difficult circumstances at the Manchester Beth Din and later became president of both the Manchester Agudas Yisroel and the Manchester Mizrachi

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<sup>50</sup> L. Jacobs, *Helping with inquiries* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1989), 8.

<sup>51</sup> The MSB annual reports always list its affiliated synagogues, M448 MCL.

<sup>52</sup> He later became a member of the London Beth Din – court of the chief rabbi.

<sup>53</sup> Williams, *The Making of Manchester Jewry*, 325.

Federation.<sup>54</sup> By the time Louis Jacobs was born these 'founts of orthodoxy' were rapidly drying up and the acculturation of the younger generations giving grave cause for concern to the more orthodox stalwarts.<sup>55</sup>

At the turn of the 20th century, differences between native and immigrant Jews in both London and Manchester were still profound. To the former, the newcomers seemed uncivilised, to the latter some of their co-religionists seemed scarcely Jews at all. Even sociologists and economists quickly realised the chasm in ideology that existed between those fervently attempting to cling to strict orthodoxy and those desperate to climb over the ghetto walls and into the Elysian fields of middle class security and Christian acceptance (*italics mine*):

There appears to be almost a *stronger line of severance between the English and foreign Jew than between the English Jew and gentile*. In habits, ideas and religion they are fundamentally distinct; and when they come too much into contact there is even mutual hostility and contempt... the *bitterest enemies of the foreign immigrant that I have come across have been English Jews*; while the foreigners are commonly shocked and scandalised at the laxity in faith, and the shamelessly 'non-observant' lives of their English co-religionists. The English Jew, moreover, is often an ardent patriot; *he is proud of being an Englishman, and seems generally to regard his foreign co-religionists from the English rather than the Jewish standpoint*.<sup>56</sup>

The sociologists, Russell and Lewis, go on to explain that English Jews have a higher social standing and it is the parvenu of the East End who most despises the Yiddish-speaking sector of the community. Part of the effect produced by this schism in the community was to emphasise the association of 'extreme orthodoxy' with the speech, habits and general social inferiority of foreigners. That is to say, in a majority of the community, and especially in the rising generation, it will serve to hasten the process of alienation from 'strict orthodoxy.' In many quarters orthodoxy had already fallen

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<sup>54</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 16 March 1923, 13, 27.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Isadore Yoffey, youngest son of Yisroel Yoffey, 26 March 2006, in the possession of the author.

<sup>56</sup> C. Russell and H.S. Lewis, *The Jew in London: A study of racial character and present-day conditions* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1900), 186-191.

into contempt through being associated with foreigners of the lowest social grade. They even quote an English Jew who assured them, 'with a grave countenance,' that orthodoxy and dirt always went together; and that the former was invariably found to vanish under the influence of soap and water. They also found that the contempt, which the 'Englishman' of the Jewish community entertains for the 'foreigner' is heartily reciprocated.<sup>57</sup>

### **Communal politics and the social network of the MH leadership**

Soon after the founding of the international harēdi political organisation the Agudas Yisroel in 1912, a small branch was established in Manchester together with a chapter of the Agudist youth movement Sinai.<sup>58</sup> The local Aguda had no regular venue and met in various synagogues including the Polish, the Austrian and the Kehal Hassidim (Lubavitch).<sup>59</sup> There were 'Aguda shiurim' given by strictly orthodox rabbis and lay leaders such as Gedalia Rabinowitz and special events such as public meetings to welcome visiting European notables collecting donations on behalf of their impoverished yeshivos. One of the most publicised was a meeting held at the Broughton Assembly Rooms on 9 March 1930 to welcome Yitzhok Isaac Sher, Rosh Yeshiva of Slabodka who was supported by Isaac Herzog, chief rabbi of Ireland and Yisroel Yoffey.<sup>60</sup> Manchester's MH with greater determination and a separatist ideology was to build its own organisation and revive the local branch of the Agudas Yisroel on the foundations laid down by these previous generations of immigrants and their 'foreign rabbis' in both London and the provinces.

As already noted, MH activists took part in the affairs of several leading institutions within Manchester's wider orthodox community, principally the yeshiva and the local shechita board, from the early 1900s until the final break with what had become modern orthodoxy and religious-Zionism in the mid 1960s. Following their parents and grandparents onto the yeshiva executive were several MH males who were also former students. In the manner of younger sons of the aristocracy sitting as English members of parliament for 'rotten boroughs' before the 1832 Reform Act, MH

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<sup>57</sup> Russell and Lewis, *The Jew in London*.

<sup>58</sup> *Jewish Chronicle*, 1 November 1912, 30.

<sup>59</sup> Sufirin, *Appointment Diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufirin*.

<sup>60</sup> Sufirin, *Appointment Diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufirin*.

activists often represented other, less political, orthodox organisations rather than MH itself. This allowed them to intervene in local and national Jewish politics whilst presenting an image of the MH organisation itself as above the tawdry business of communal infighting. For example MH President Hershel Heilpern's son Chaim Heilpern, its part-time minister, represented the almost defunct Warsaw Synagogue of Hightown and later the Initiation Society – the society of mohelim (circumcisers) – on the BoD for over 50 years. He also represented the modern orthodox United Synagogue, Manchester, with which he had been associated since his days as a yeshiva student, on the local communal council and later represented the Initiation Society well into his 90s.<sup>61</sup> This 'rotten boroughs' phenomenon would become more noticeable after 1965 when MH regarded itself as an *austritt* *gemeinde* and when official organisational membership of general community institutions would have been blatantly incongruous.

In contrast to these somewhat covert activities, the Yesode Hatorah synagogue later the Machzikei Hadass synagogue, would be fully represented, unashamedly under its own name, on the council of the MSB. The MSB was the principal Jewish citadel that demanded to be stormed and, if at possible, to be captured for undiluted orthodoxy. It was the forum that controlled the community's *kashrus*, its Beth Din and its mikvos. Constitutionally it was solely orthodox whereas both the local communal council and the national BoD were both 'tainted' in MH eyes by Reform, Liberal and secular memberships. *Ipsa facto* it was also the wealthiest orthodox institution, one that had won for strict orthodoxy or at least made to submit in regard to allowing a separate and, if necessary, an independent *shehita*. Thus it was at MSB meetings that the most combative of the young MH leaders won their debating spurs, often returning to Northumberland Street verbally bruised but undeterred, soon ready to plan their next political campaign for the 'strengthening of orthodoxy', i.e. for the expansion of MH.

In addition to the formal meetings of the various communal institutions both in Manchester and London, were the informal contacts that various MH leaders maintained to facilitate 'backstairs' intrigue and information. MH's Dovid Feldmann

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<sup>61</sup> He stopped attending meetings in the 1990s unless there was an issue that excited his disapproval or concern.

would naturally have close friendships with his few fellow strictly orthodox rabbis – Yeheskiel Abramsky and his fellow members of the London Beth Din; Naftoli Shakovitsky, the first Gateshead Rov; Moshe Yitzhok Segal, the Manchester Rosh Yeshiva, and Dr Solomon Schonfeld, leader of London's Adath Yisroel communities among them.<sup>62</sup> Former MH President Lazar Dovid Brunner asserts that even Chief Rabbi Israel Brodie had one policy for MH in public and another for private communication: 'Rabbi Brodie helped us as much as he could, under the table, especially towards the end [of his career].'<sup>63</sup>

### **Social networks and émigré ideology**

The MH lay leaders maintained their own social networks, greatly assisted by the fact that many of them were related by birth or by marriage. For example the younger Reichs, Heilperns and Halperns in addition to being first cousins themselves, all had brothers-in-law and mekhutonim (a child's parents-in-law) in Gateshead and in London.<sup>64</sup> Later these family contacts would extend to community leaders in Antwerp, New York, Jerusalem and Bnei Brak. The wife of Lazer Dovid Brunner, a member of the MH executive from 1944 and from 1965 the president of the MH synagogue and community is a first cousin of the late Dr Bernard Homa, London County Councillor; chairman of the BoD shechita committee, a leader of the Federation of Synagogues and president of the London Machzikei Hadath.<sup>65</sup> This 'cousinhood' was in reality a harēdi version of the 'cousinhood' of wealthy brokers and bankers that ruled Anglo-Jewry in the 19th century; a term coined by Chaim Bermant and others.<sup>66</sup> Often, close friendships (and occasionally lasting enmities), were formed by activists who, as yeshiva students, had studied together in Gateshead, Manchester, London or elsewhere. This phenomenon, generally unexplored by the academy in regard to orthodox Jews, is a classic case for analysis in social network theory. 'The logical

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<sup>62</sup> Information on rabbinical contact networks provided by Rabbi Bezalel Rakow, 1927-2004, the late Gateshead Rov (Shakovitsky's successor). Abramsky's correspondence is in the London Beth Din Archives. A brief biography of Schonfeld has recently been published. See D. Kranzler, *Holocaust hero: the untold story and vignettes of Solomon Schonfeld, an extraordinary British orthodox rabbi who rescued 4,000 during the Holocaust* (Jerusalem: KTAV Publishing House, Inc., 2003).

Much of the correspondence of the chief rabbis from Nathan Adler to Jonathan Sacks is in the London Metropolitan Archives: ACC/2805 Office of the Chief Rabbi.

<sup>63</sup> Interview with Mr L D Brunner, 25 September 2003. Perhaps in return for the MH support the chief rabbi had received over the Jacobs affair?

<sup>64</sup> Based on the Reich family tree produced by Mr L. Reich.

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Mr L.D. Brunner, 25 September 2003, in the possession of the author.

<sup>66</sup> C. Bermant, *Troubled Eden: an anatomy of British Jewry* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1970).



complications of kin relationships can be quite complex and formal network mathematics can help to specify the implications of such matters as bilateral cross-cousin marriages in which one's wife is also both mother's brother's and father's sister's daughter.<sup>67</sup>

In other words, orthodox Jews, like other groups, have informal social networks that are invisible to outsiders but critical to the efficient operation of both their social institutions and their daily lives. Accordingly even where the tribe (e.g. the MH families) has an explicit 'official' kinship system it does not follow that one knows the norms applied to actual behaviour of individuals, much less the extent to which behaviour conforms to the norms. A mass of data on perceived norms, local horde membership, descent groups, kinship terms used for one another by at least a large fraction of tribe members, together with extensive records of marriages containing all such information for both spouses is necessary. This will establish a system to which various aspects of kinship behaviour in a tribe may conform in fact or in principle. Nothing like this quantity of data is presented in existing accounts of an orthodox Jewish community's kinship behaviour. To date, no anthropologist has gathered the volume of systematic data required for full analyses of kinship systems of orthodox Jewish communities. But it was just these informal kinship networks that helped the independently minded families of Manchester, London and Gateshead eventually outmanoeuvre the Anglo-Jewish leadership and establish their own independent orthodox communities.

The other factor was the continuing ability to transmit what Shapiro and other American scholars call 'an émigré rather than immigrant' ideology to their descendents. Unlike most other newly arrived Jews from eastern Europe, the MH families came through force of economic circumstance bringing their belief system intact and transplanting it to a western society.<sup>68</sup> They were not 'immigrants' looking for a better life and therefore willing to adapt to a superior culture; they were 'émigrés' who brought their culture with them and, referring back to their history and

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<sup>67</sup> C. Kadushin, *A Short Introduction to Social Networks: A Non-Technical Elementary Primer* (New York: Cohen Centre for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University and Graduate Centre City University of New York, 2000).

<sup>68</sup> For the economic conditions then prevailing in the Brody region see T. Gasowski, 'Jewish communities in autonomous Galicia' in A. Paluch, ed., *The Jews in Poland* (Cracow: Jagiellonian University, 1992), 205-221.

their leaders in Poland, found them generally superior to that of the indigenous gentile and generally acculturated Jewish population in Manchester.<sup>69</sup>

### **The religious politics of the Jewish community**

Manchester was an early centre of religious Zionism in England. An international organisation called Mizrachi (from the Hebrew Merkaz Ruhani - 'Spiritual Centre') was founded in Europe in Adar II 5662 (March 1902) by rabbis who considered it a sacred duty to ensure the building of Eretz Yisroel as the national home of the Jewish people on the basis of Talmudic Judaism. The party was founded at a conference of religious Zionists convened in Vilna (Vinius) by Isaac Jacob Reines (1839-1915), who served as the organisation's first president.<sup>70</sup> A controversial and enterprising figure, in 1905 Reines established the first 'modern orthodox' yeshiva in Eastern Europe, in Lida, Lithuania.<sup>71</sup> Here the traditional Talmudic curriculum was combined with practical secular subjects. Reines argued that orthodoxy would be at a disadvantage as long as religious Jews could not achieve economic independence. The ideology of the Mizrachi movement regarded Jewish nationalism as an instrument for realising religious objectives, especially of enhancing the opportunities for the observance of the Torah by a Jewish nation dwelling on its own soil.<sup>72</sup> Reines spent three months in Manchester in 1884 where he had been offered a position in one of the leading synagogues and where a daughter was married to Rabbi Sussman Cohen. However 'the state of Judaism in England dismayed him' and he returned to Russia.<sup>73</sup>

Although several attempts had been made in London to start Mizrachi groups, the movement only really prospered in England following the first national conference of Mizrachi held in Manchester in December 1918, which led to the opening of the Mizrachi Bureau in London.<sup>74</sup> The conference was organised, almost single-handedly, by Yisroel Yoffey, who had furthered the cause of religious Zionism since his

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<sup>69</sup> E. Shapiro, 'Modern Orthodoxy in Crisis: A Test Case', *Judaism* 51:3 (Summer 2002), 347-362.

<sup>70</sup> H. Z. Reines, 'Isaac Jacob Reines' in L. Jung, ed., *Jewish Leaders 1750-1940* (Jerusalem: Boys Town Jerusalem Publishers, 1964), 275-293.

<sup>71</sup> An earlier attempt in Shwenzian, Lithuania had failed financially in 1883.

<sup>72</sup> Z.Y. Wise, *The sacred and the profane: conflicting views of nation, nationality and governance in the State of Israel*, unpublished MA thesis (University of Salford, 2000), Chap. 1.

<sup>73</sup> Reines, *Isaac Jacob Reines*.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with Isadore Yoffey, 26 March 2006. Mr Yoffey has a copy of the minutes of the conference.

appointment at the Central Synagogue in 1897.<sup>75</sup> Yoffey preached Zionism from the pulpit (mainly in Yiddish) in spite of some local criticism, targeted the more orthodox with success, and was an effective fund-raiser. He was highly active in promoting religious education among the young in Manchester, hence his chairmanship of the yeshiva's education committee, and was also influential in establishing Mizrachi societies in Glasgow, Sunderland and Sheffield.<sup>76</sup> Chaim Weizmann, by then in London, sent a message of support to the 1918 Manchester conference, but feared and opposed the Mizrachi. He regarded it as the enemy within because he felt that it fostered the sort of nationalism that would eventually lead to 'religious dogmatism'.<sup>77</sup>

Manchester was also an early centre for Socialist Zionism. The Zionist Workers or Poale Zion was formed in Austria following the sixth Zionist congress of 1903. Despite the fact that at the turn of the century most British Jews were Liberal Party supporters, branches of Poale Zion were soon established in London, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds and Glasgow. The first British conference of the Poale Zion was held in Manchester in April 1906.<sup>78</sup> However the Manchester branch was neither a large nor a well-organised society.<sup>79</sup> In the early 1930s, at a meeting with only twelve people present, four of whom were speakers, the debate raged: 'Would Herzl have put on tephillin if he'd known their importance?' In contrast to his attitude to the religious Zionists, Weizmann always regarded the national Poale Zion movement with respect and with a measure of envy due to its popularity amongst the working class.<sup>80</sup>

In contrast to the Zionists, both religious and secular, the non-Zionist orthodox of the Agudas Yisroel were relatively inactive from their late start in 1912 until after the Great War.<sup>81</sup> Their main bases of operation, the Pale of Settlement and Germany, had

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<sup>75</sup> Information from Mr Isadore Yoffey. See also Yoffey Papers, M648, Archives, MCL.

<sup>76</sup> Additional information on the Mizrachi in Manchester from the Yoffey Papers, Archives, M648, MCL.

<sup>77</sup> In other words that any independent state might be 'too Jewish.' See M. Weisgal ed., *The Letters and Papers of Chaim Weitzmann* Vol. 3 Series A (London, 1972).

<sup>78</sup> P. Goodman, *Zionism in England 1899-1949* (London: Zionist Federation of Great Britain, 1949), 45.

<sup>79</sup> For a brilliant analysis of the divisions and personality clashes involved in the UK see E. Black, 'A typological study of English Zionists' in *Jewish Social Studies* 9.3 (Indiana, 2003), 20-55.

<sup>80</sup> J. Meltzer, *Chaim Weizmann: The Manchester period, prelude to the Balfour declaration* (London, 1973), 11.

<sup>81</sup> Aguda members fought on both sides of the conflict as did other Jews. A 1917 open letter from the Vienna office asked Jews not to buy *yahrzeit* (remembrance) candles but instead donate the money to the Austrian war effort. It is reproduced on [www.virtualjudaica.com](http://www.virtualjudaica.com).

been engulfed in that conflict and the Russian revolution from 1914 to 1918. In 1919 the leaders of the Aguda met in neutral Zurich to discuss how to repair the immense damage the war, on the eastern front between the Kaiser and the Tsar, had wrought to the Jewish communities of Lithuania, Poland, Belarus and the Western Ukraine. In addition to death and disruption of family life and the razing of entire villages, most of the yeshivos and hassidic courts had also been uprooted and dispersed.<sup>82</sup>

The Aguda leaders adopted the temporary name of Weltkonferenz der Juedisch-orthodox verbände (World conference of orthodox Jewish organisations) as Agudas Israel was believed to be identified as a German based organisation and therefore possibly unappealing to the victorious allies.<sup>83</sup> Because of the desperate poverty now common across eastern Europe the Aguda leaders agreed to send emissaries to western Europe, Britain and North America to raise funds and to spread the Aguda message to the more traditionally minded migrants of the western world.<sup>84</sup> Individual orthodox leaders also backed the campaign:

In the immediate post-war years the poverty amongst the Jews of Poland was such that most of the people were literally hungry for bread. Reb Avrohom Mordechai [Alter, the third Rebbe of Ger, 1866-1948] therefore despatched learned rabbonim to central Europe and to Britain in order to raise funds.<sup>85</sup>

Several of these rabbinical emissaries came to Manchester and during their visits provided up-to-date information on the political situation in der alter heim. By 1920 the Aguda's Manchester branch was claiming a membership of two hundred adult males who were meeting regularly under the presidency of Yisroel Yoffey.<sup>86</sup> In that generation there was no problem in a leader belonging to both the Mizrachi and the Aguda, at least outside Eretz Yisroel and Yoffey continued to hold the presidency of the Manchester Mizrachi. The antagonism between the two religious-political movements developed later as the reality of a polity in the form of a Jewish state came

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<sup>82</sup> A. Mittleman, *Agudat Israel: The Politics of Torah: The Jewish Political Tradition and the Founding of Agudat Israel* (Albany: State University of New York, 1996), 133.

<sup>83</sup> Footnote 102 to Chapter 3 in Mittleman, *The Politics of Torah*.

<sup>84</sup> G. Bacon, *The Politics of Tradition: Agudat Yisrael in Poland, 1916-1939* (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University Magnes Press Ltd., 1996).

<sup>85</sup> A. Bromberg, *Der Rebbes of Ger* (Jerusalem, 1952), 157.

<sup>86</sup> Manchester entry in *Jewish Yearbook* (London, 1920 edition).

ever closer.<sup>87</sup> In December 1921 a Broughton branch of the Aguda's children's organisation Sinai was launched to encourage younger boys and girls to socialise together in a suitably orthodox environment.<sup>88</sup>

In Ellul 5683 (August 1923) the first major Aguda international conference since the end of the war was held in Vienna where the central office had transferred from Zurich. Known as the Knessia Gedola, it was attended by hundreds of rabbinic and lay leaders from all over the world including eastern and western Europe, North America, mandate Palestine and Britain. There was a small British delegation led by Zvi Hirsh Ferber, the former Manchester Rosh Yeshiva then a Dayan of the London Beth Din, and Julius Jung of London's Federation of Synagogues, and one of the designated chairmen of the three European branch offices – London, Vienna and Warsaw.<sup>89</sup> The 1923 conference seems to have initiated a new wave of orthodox activism throughout Europe not least in the United Kingdom. Three out of five members of the international political executive committee came from London including Ferber and Harry Goodman, JP, who was to become the principal lay leader and spokesman of the UK Aguda throughout the period of the British mandate over Palestine.<sup>90</sup>

Within six years of their return from Vienna the leaders of the relatively small harēdi communities of England had founded new organisations that were to have a profound effect on the development of British orthodoxy. Belzer hassidim in Manchester initiated a Machzikei Hadass Society (1925); Victor Schonfeld of London's German Adath Israel Synagogue launched the Union of Orthodox Hebrew Congregations (1926) and the Lithuanians of Gateshead officially founded their Yeshiva Gedola, which would become the largest east European style yeshiva in western Europe (1929). They believed that the time was ripe to begin a new era in the history of Anglo-Jewry.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> G. Bacon, 'Imitation and Rejection: Agudat Yisroel and the Zionist Movement 1912-1939,' in S. Eisenstadt and M. Lissak, eds., *Zionism and the Return to History: A Reappraisal* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi Press, 1999).

<sup>88</sup> Sufrin, *The Appointment Diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufrin*.

<sup>89</sup> For a brief report of the conference in German see P. Kohn, *Geschäftsbericht erstet der ersten kenessio gedaulo von dem geschäftsführenden ausschuss der Agudas Jisroel* (Wien, August 1923). Copy held in the Jewish National Library, Jerusalem.

<sup>90</sup> *Jewish Chronicle* 24 August 1923; 14 and 31 August 1923, 15.

<sup>91</sup> New orthodox organisations were also founded elsewhere such as the Swiss IRG of Basel, 1927.

### **The founding of Manchester's Machzikei Hadass**

According to the late Rev. Chaim Heilpern, an elder statesman of the independent orthodox community until his death several years ago, Manchester's Machzikei Hadass organisation had its origins in a meeting in 'the summer of 1925.' There is no surviving record of the exact date but there is circumstantial evidence indicating it could have been sometime in August.<sup>92</sup> All but one of the founders who met in the house of Hershel Heilpern, were Brody immigrants and Belzer hassidim who had come to Manchester about 1900.<sup>93</sup> Like Hershel Reich, Hershel Heilpern had married a daughter of Eliezer Adler, the leader of the strictly orthodox Gateshead community in 1908. His son Chaim Yaakov was born in Gateshead in 1914 and was present, 'under the table,' during the 1925 meeting.<sup>94</sup> Later the young boy and his brothers would go door to door, collecting the subscriptions that would fund the new organisation. Hershel Heilpern lived at 93 Camp Street, Higher Broughton, then a chosen area of residence for successful Jewish tailors and other small businessmen.<sup>95</sup> Almost all the founder members at the initial meeting prayed at the Polish or the Austrian Synagogues nearby.<sup>96</sup> In addition to the Heilperns, Elkhonen (known as Chuna) and Hershel, amongst those present at the initial meeting were Alter Grosskopf, Wolf Dresdner, Uren (Aaron) Reich, his son Hershel Reich and Aryeh Leib (Leonti) Sufrin of the Romanishe shul.<sup>97</sup> All except Sufrin were Belzer hassidim from Brody and had grown up within the MH movement of Galicia. The Sufrins, immigrants from Jassy, Romania, were to become a well-known orthodox family, and several were later associated with the development of Lubavitch hassidus in both London and Manchester.<sup>98</sup> The head of the Sufrin family, Aryeh Leib's father Isadore

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<sup>92</sup> The appointment diaries of Yosef Chaim Sufrin surprisingly omit the event but he was on holiday in Blackpool in August 1925. The months I consider most likely for the meeting are June, July and August i.e. between Shavuot and Rosh Hashona. Mr Heilpern concurred with this hypothesis.

<sup>93</sup> Lipman claims that there was a large influx of Galician Jews to the UK between 1890 and 1902. See V. Lipman, *Social history of the Jews in England 1850-1950* (London: Watts and Co., 1954), 88-89. This fits with the establishment of several Galician shteibls in Manchester – including the Polish, Austrian and Broder.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Chaim Heilpern, 21 October 2001, in the possession of the author.

<sup>95</sup> The author's great grandfather Chaim Yehiel Wise-Cohen, a master tailor, lived at 6 Upper Camp Street, Higher Broughton until 1934 and would have been a customer of the fent dealers.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Chaim Heilpern, 21 October 2001, in the possession of the author.

<sup>97</sup> Synagogue membership did and does not prevent individuals from attending events at other nearby venues even on a regular basis. Members from other synagogues regularly attend shiurim (lectures) at all the strictly orthodox venues. Virtually all orthodox adult activities operate an 'open door' policy.

<sup>98</sup> Information from the late Rev Aron Dov Sufrin, Educational Director of London's Lubavitch Foundation and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Sufrin of Manchester, grandsons of Isadore Sufrin.

(Yitzhok), was a linen draper with premises at 243 Bury New Road, Higher Broughton, then a northern suburb of choice for the lower middle class. Other prominent Lubavitch leaders such as the Jaffes provided, at a local level, a link to the MH campaign of Lithuania and Russia in the first years of the 20th century.

All the Belzer hassidim from Brody at the first meeting were fent dealers. Of the approximately one hundred and fifty fent dealers and merchants in Manchester in 1925, one hundred and twenty were Jewish.<sup>99</sup> Fent dealers (the word is old English for vent meaning a slit) bought up complete bolts and small rolls of cloth usually between five and twenty metres from textile manufacturers and larger wholesalers who had been left with 'ends' of a run of cloth and discontinued lines. These were perfect stocks which had been printed or dyed but were either too small for general sale to major customers or no longer in current production.<sup>100</sup> The orthodox Jewish fent dealers brokered these oddments to small workshops, dressmakers and tailors, many of them also Jewish, to use in small-scale production of men's suits or ladies' costumes and so forth. The MH families involved in the fent trade included the Dresdners, the Grosskopfs, the Heilperns, the Vogels, the Rosenstraughs and the Reichs. All had combined office-warehouses in Manchester city centre in the small streets off Princess Street.<sup>101</sup>

Most of the initial MH members originally lived about two miles north west of the city centre in the generally respectable working class district of Lower Broughton near the Polish Synagogue. By contrast, the anglicised leaders of the general orthodox community in 1925 such as Nathan Laski were merchants and manufacturers on a much grander scale. They lived in substantial villas in middle class suburbs such as Cheetham, Higher Broughton and Didsbury. It was partly this class difference in addition to conflicting philosophies regarding the decree of acculturation required to live successfully in England that would prove to be the elite's Achilles heel. They would find it difficult to accept what they considered to be a motley group of petit bourgeois, parvenu immigrants as worthy opponents in serious negotiations over the administration of a major Jewish community.

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<sup>99</sup> *Kelly's Directory of Manchester & Salford* (Salford Central Library, 1925).

<sup>100</sup> Information from the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry, textile division.

<sup>101</sup> MH members had offices in Bloom St., Major St., Minshull St., Faulkner St., Turner St, Sackville St. and York St., *Kelly's Directory of Manchester & Salford*.

At the initial 1925 meeting the small group of hassidim decided to follow the Galician and Lithuanian models and oppose what they perceived as the steep decline in orthodox Jewish standards. They resolved to set up a local Machzikei Hadass Society and decided that the initial *raison d'être* of their new organisation was to improve what its members considered to be the very poor standards of Jewish food supervision in Manchester at the time. The first letterhead includes the motto 'to strengthen Judaism and to improve kashruth'[sic].

An undated early draft constitution for the organisation includes clauses to establish separate facilities for ritual baths, marriages, burials and commercial food supervision. This wish list indicates the influence of the Heilpern family (especially Hershel and later his sons Godol and Chaim) but should not be taken as an agreed plan for an inevitable *austritt* *gemeinde*. Apart from kashrus, the list contains facilities that could and were operated by fully integrated constituent synagogues of the Shechita Board. The Reichs and many other MH leaders were never totally convinced that absolute *austritt* was necessary and much preferred to reach agreement with the Shechita Board and other mainstream orthodox institutions over kashrus. According to the draft constitution, membership is to be restricted to those who are 'shomrei Shabbos and mitzvos' (i.e. fully observant). Another clause states the organisation 'shall not affiliate to any body not conforming to the principles of the community,' presumably aimed as a warning shot across the bows of the Jewish Communal Council of Manchester & Salford and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.<sup>102</sup> In other words, the new organisation would not include people it regarded as tainted with reformist tendencies or orthodox but liable to make 'unnecessary' compromises with British society and modernity. In fact, the founders appear to have agreed to follow the philosophy of Yaakov Dovid Wilowsky, the Slutzker Rov, who had famously declared on a visit to New York in 1900 that virtually all western Jews were sinners for abandoning authentic orthodoxy. The Slutzker Rov, speaking 'in the regulation rabbinical style,' took the occasion to announce publicly that 'anyone who emigrated to America was a sinner, since, in America, the Oral Law is trodden under foot. It was not only home that the Jews left behind in Europe, he said, it was their Torah, their

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<sup>102</sup> Typescript of the draft in the possession of the author.



Talmud, their yeshivot — in a word, their Yiddishkeit, their entire Jewish way of life.'<sup>103</sup>

The inaugural MH executive committee, as the founders resolved themselves to be, agreed to fund the organisation's activities by collecting subscriptions of 6d or 1s a week from its small but slowly increasing membership.<sup>104</sup> The 'questionable procedures and personnel' of mainstream orthodoxy were unacceptable to the original MH members, several of whom had qualified as religious slaughterers in eastern Europe although nearly all now worked in the local cotton textile industry. An important story is that of Mordekhai Zev (Marcus Wolf) Dresdner, a Belzer hassid born in 1882 in Brody. Although he was a qualified slaughterer he had some difficulty making an adequate living. He and his wife left Brody travelled via Hamburg and Hull to Manchester in 1910.<sup>105</sup> Apparently they came to Manchester because Mrs Dresdner had relatives in the city, the Grosskopfs, who were cotton textile agents. Wolf Dresdner initially went into textiles with the Grosskopfs and lived in Choir Street, Lower Broughton then in Wellington Street East, Higher Broughton.<sup>106</sup>

The Polish shul became the first correspondence address for the new MH organisation.<sup>107</sup> Within a few weeks the new group received support from other orthodox immigrants including several additional hassidic members of the (New) Romanian Synagogue and the Lubavitcher hassidim Wolf Jaffe and Mottle Jaffe, both successful businessmen and stalwarts of the Lubavitch shteibl, the 'Hayshop Shul' and later of the second Lubavitch synagogue, New Kehal Hassidim of Waterloo Road, Hightown.<sup>108</sup> From the start the organisation intended to be taken seriously. It had large quantities of letterheads printed. Manchester's MH now uses a logo of the two tablets of the Decalogue within a Torah scroll, surmounted by a crown (of Torah),

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<sup>103</sup> M. Davis, *The Emergence of Conservative Judaism: The Historical School in 19th Century America* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1963), 316.

<sup>104</sup> Chaim Heilpern interview with Bill Williams, 15 November 2002, Bill Williams Jewish Studies Library, Centre for Jewish Studies, University of Manchester.

<sup>105</sup> The late Rabbi Dr Harry Rabinowitz incorrectly dates the Dresdnerns entry to the UK as 1939 in his book *A World Apart: The story of the Chasidim in Britain* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 1997).

<sup>106</sup> Interview with the late Sholem Dresdner, younger son of Wolf Dresdner, 24 September 2000, in the possession of the author.

<sup>107</sup> Copies of the letterhead in possession of the author.

<sup>108</sup> Wolf Jaffe's sons would all become orthodox community activists even though two of them were also busy doctors. His eldest son Zalman would become President of the MSB and lay leader of the Lubavitch community. Interview with his grandson Rabbi Abraham Jaffe, 15 August 2001, in the possession of the author.

with seven branched candelabra, representing the two Temples to the left and right. Underneath in Hebrew letters is the word 'Manchester' followed by the acronym for 'may G-d protect and preserve it.' The original 1925 letterhead had a logo incorporating a six-pointed star of David rather than a crown but this has since disappeared presumably because of its later Zionist and State of Israel connotations. The founding of an MH Society can now be seen as a major milestone in the gradual fragmentation of orthodoxy in Manchester. The harēdim would come to identify only with Agudas Yisroel and the non-Zionist movement whilst nearly all of the English (modern) orthodox congregations would sympathise with the Mizrahi – the religious-Zionist organisation.<sup>109</sup>

The Brody hassidim had to confront an entirely different set of challenges and opponents after they arrived in Manchester. Rather than the well known anti-Semitism, envy and intolerance of the gentile Polish peasantry and their aristocratic overlords, the MH founders would have to grapple with the politics of Jewish identity in their new homeland. Here their main challenge would not come from the generally indifferent, gentile working class amongst whom they would live but from people who regarded them as social and religious inferiors: the acculturated, wealthy patricians of Manchester orthodoxy. Here the main battles would not be between reform and orthodox, nor between Haskalah and rabbinics, nor even between Zionism, socialism and Talmudic tradition (although all these surfaced from time to time) but between the upper middle class merchants and lawyers who controlled the MSB and those whom they regarded as fanatical upstarts. The battle would be for control of the institutions of orthodoxy and the extent to which orthodox Judaism in Manchester should accommodate the demands of the broader British political establishment.

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<sup>109</sup> See B. Williams, *Sir Sidney Hamburger & Manchester Jewry: Religion, City & Community* (Manchester: Vallentine Mitchell, 1999). Many modern orthodox leaders such as Hamburger also held senior positions in the Manchester branches of the various Zionist organisations.

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## CHANGING LANDSCAPES: JEWISH-CHRISTIAN-MUSLIM RELATIONS TODAY

Edward Kessler \*

*Abstract: This paper considers some of the similarities and differences in the contemporary encounter between Jews, Christians and Muslims. Despite the potential symbiosis, there are barriers to a dialogue with the three monotheistic religions and the author reflects on the impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the sometimes harmful influence of collective memories: for example, Jews think of Christianity in terms of suffering and persecution; while Muslims have not forgotten the Crusades, and see in Western aspirations an old crusader mentality in a new guise. Commemorations of past events help preserve a sense of historical continuity and identity but a preoccupation (some might call obsession) with the past may be damaging if it results in a negative identity and self-understanding, especially if it becomes the only or primary lens through which reality and the changing world is viewed. One way to disarm an obsession with the past is to adopt a critical approach to it in order not to become victims of an ideological 'vindication' of the past that is nostalgic, dogmatic, and sometimes irrational. If the past is approached critically, it can reveal new interpretations and understandings of the world that can be liberating and constructive.*

In their contemporary encounter with Muslims, Jews and Christians have much to discuss. Theologically, it is commonly argued that Islam is more similar to Judaism than Christianity since both have problems with Christian Trinitarian theology, stress religious law and the centrality of monotheism, and have no priesthood. The 2008 Muslim Letter to the Jewish Community, *Call to Dialogue*,<sup>1</sup> initiated by Muslim scholars at the Centre for the Study of Muslim-Jewish Relations in Cambridge, is an example of a contemporary attempt to demonstrate the commonality between these two faiths. However, the rise of modern political Zionism, the creation of the state of Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have become major sources of tension between Jews and Muslims, not just in the Middle East but throughout the world.

There are also important similarities between Islam and Christianity since both have a strong sense of mission to people of other religions and Jesus is revered by Muslims as a prophet. The 2007 letter from Muslim scholars to the Christian world, *A*

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<sup>1</sup> 'An Open Letter : A Call to Peace, Dialogue and Understanding between Muslims and Jews' (25 February 2008), at <http://www.woolf.cam.ac.uk/cmjr/assets/pdf/letter.pdf>.

*Common Word*,<sup>2</sup> outlines the similarities between the two faiths. Tensions also exist, demonstrated by outbursts of violence between Muslims and Christians in Africa (e.g. Nigeria's *sharia* riots in 2006 and again in 2008 in which hundreds of Muslims and Christians died) and the fall-out from Pope Benedict XVI's controversial Regensburg address (2006),<sup>3</sup> in which he was accused of fermenting anti-Muslim feeling. Anti-Christian violence followed in parts of the Muslim world.

Similarities and dissimilarities could provide the substance for fruitful and respectful debates. There are problems with this scenario however, partly because the three faiths, particularly Islam, have difficulty with their fundamentalists. For example, Islam's Wahabi sect, which has a following among many Muslims, including among Diaspora communities in the West, seeks to return to an idealised form of certain early Islamic values, and strongly condemns many other forms of Islam, as well as other religions.

Christian and Jewish fundamentalism also exists and is growing (alongside similar movements in Hinduism and other world religions). Jewish fundamentalists generally focus on issues related to the Land and State of Israel and many take hardline political positions. In recent years they have emerged as a significant political and religious force within Israel as well as in the Diaspora. *Haredi* fundamentalists not only affirm the literal truth of the Bible, but seek to impose many biblical and Talmudic laws and ordinances upon the State of Israel. Some, both within and outside Israel, have joined with Christian fundamentalists in calling for the building of a third Temple in Jerusalem. While largely secluded from mainstream society, following a tightly regulated lifestyle, ultra-orthodox beliefs and moral understanding of the world have similarities to those of some evangelical communities. Christian allies of Jewish fundamentalists believe the creation of the Jewish state in 1948 and the yet-to-be-built

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<sup>2</sup> 'An Open Letter and Call from Muslim Religious Leaders to His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI' (13 October 2007), at <http://www.acommonword.com/lib/downloads/CW-Total-Final-v-12g-Eng-9-10-07.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> 'Faith, Reason and the University: Memories and Reflections', Pope Benedict XVI's Address to the University of Regensburg (12 September 2006), at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/benedict\\_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf\\_ben-xvi\\_spe\\_20060912\\_university-regensburg\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg_en.html).

Third Temple are theological prerequisites for the Second Coming of Jesus. Some of these same fundamentalists also actively seek the conversion of Jews to Christianity.

Both Jewish and Christian fundamentalists reject modern scriptural criticism, particularly the documentary theory of biblical scholarship, the Darwinian concept of human evolution and are profoundly opposed to abortion and euthanasia. Christian and Jewish fundamentalist leaders have sometimes worked together, advocating a broad public policy agenda that opposes the strict separation of church and state and 'secular humanism', a pejorative term used to describe opponents of fundamentalism. Often, fundamentalists have a special loathing of co-religionists whose views do not fit their own: for example, the al-Qaeda movement(s) has been quite as prepared to kill other Muslims as it has Jews and Christians, Americans and British, and other perceived enemies.

Zionism and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 has been a cause of controversy not only between Jews and Christians but also with Muslims. For Jews, the establishment of the state of Israel in the wake of *Shoah* was considered a miracle. However, for the Arab Palestinians, the vast majority of whom are Muslim, this marks the beginning of their *Naqba*, 'the catastrophe' in which approximately two-thirds of their population became refugees and lost control and ownership over the majority of the land they inhabited prior to the war of independence. In addition to the political conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, Israel occupies the third holiest Muslim site, the al-Aqsa Mosque, located on the Haram al-Sharif, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, in the Old City of Jerusalem. These holy places are at the centre of both religious ideology and rhetoric as well as the focus of much global attention (and contention). Their symbolic value to Christians, Muslims and Jews worldwide cannot be over-estimated. I will return to the subject of Israel later in this talk.

The positive developments in Jewish-Christian relations, in the last 50 years in particular, are viewed with distrust by some Muslims who view it as an attempt to marginalise and disempower them. The recent creation of inter-faith structures, which includes Muslims alongside Jews and Christians (such as the Three Faiths Forum and International Council of Christians and Jews) may help to change this negative point of view. At the same time, more positive contemporary Muslim relations with Jews



and Christians are also dependent upon intra-Islamic discussions that would admit more internal diversity, and articulate and apply more generous attitudes towards other religions than the noisiest ones that emanate from some parts of Islam.

For Christians, intra-faith conversation and relations (ecumenism) is also a recent movement, beginning in the early 20th century but which really gained momentum after 1948, the year the World Council of Churches (WCC) was founded. Originally the ecumenical Christian movement paid significant attention to Jews only as the objects of mission, but two factors caused a profound change of heart. First, the Swiss theologian Karl Barth (1886–1968) insisted that Jews were *verus Israel*, the true Israel, and that it was appropriate to speak of 'the Church *and* Israel'.<sup>4</sup> Then in 1965 *Nostra Aetate* affirmed 'the sacred spiritual bond linking the people of the new covenant with Abraham's stock'.<sup>5</sup> The Faith and Order Commission of the WCC expressed its conviction in the same year that the Jewish people still have theological significance of their own for the Church and in 1982 *Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue* was published. It argued that the Jewish people were full partners in dialogue: 'The spirit of dialogue is to be fully present to one another in full openness and human vulnerability.'<sup>6</sup> Yet mission to the Jewish people was not repudiated, which reflected the many different views held by WCC member churches.

For Jews, intra-Jewish conversations about Christianity have been much more limited and Claude Montefiore's call for a Jewish theology of Christianity in 1923 has yet to be fully realised. Even *Dabru Emet* ('Speak truth'), the cross-denominational Jewish statement on Christians and Christianity published in 2000, begins the process of reflecting on the place of Christianity in contemporary Jewish thought. *Dabru Emet* stresses that it is time for Jews to reflect on what Judaism may now say about Christianity and asserts eight points: Jews and Christians worship the same God; Jews

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<sup>4</sup> See Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics* II. 2, ed. and trans. G. W. Bromiley and Thomas F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957).

<sup>5</sup> 'Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions', Second Vatican Council (28 October 1965), at [http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist\\_councils/ii\\_vatican\\_council/documents/vat-ii\\_decl\\_19651028\\_nostra-aetate\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_decl_19651028_nostra-aetate_en.html).

<sup>6</sup> 'Ecumenical Considerations on Jewish-Christian Dialogue', World Council of Churches (February, 1982), at <http://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/interreligious-dialogue-and-cooperation/interreligious-trust-and-respect/ecumenical-considerations-on-jewish-christian-dialogue.html>.

and Christians seek authority from the same book (the Bible); Christians can respect the claim of the Jewish people upon the land of Israel; Jews and Christians accept the moral principles of Torah; Nazism was not a Christian phenomenon; the humanly irreconcilable differences between Jews and Christians will not be settled until God redeems the world; a new relationship between Jews and Christians will not weaken Jewish practice; and Jews and Christians must work together for justice and peace.<sup>7</sup>

Contemporary Muslim communities are also grappling with the place of Judaism and Christianity in Islamic thought. In one sense, Islam's relationship can be dealt with under the familiar theme of supersessionism, since Muslims believe that Islam was the final religion revealed by God through the Prophet Muhammad (c.570–632). Islam sees itself as perfecting the two monotheistic religions and the Qur'an calls both Jews and Christians *ahl al-Kitab* (People of the Book). One consequence of Islamic supersessionism on Jewish-Christian relations is that it provides Christians with an insight into the difficulties raised by traditional Christian supersessionism of Judaism and what is sometimes called replacement theology.

More Muslims are playing an important role in the wider interfaith community, building on the pioneering work of leading figures such as Prince Hassan of Jordan and the American-based Pakistani academic, Akbar Ahmed, both of whom have devoted their lives to the inter-faith endeavour. There are signs that they are no longer alone, as demonstrated by the action of King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of the Two Holy Places, who opened a World Conference on Dialogue in 2008 and called for dialogue between Muslims and non-Muslims, in the face of criticism from some senior clerics in Saudi Arabia. Yet, it is too early to predict what results these events will have.

Despite the challenge to search for a common language and potential symbiosis, there are major doctrinal and psychological barriers to a triologue with the three monotheistic religions and collective memories prevent uninhibited dialogue: for example, Jews think of Christianity in terms of suffering and persecution; while Muslims have not forgotten the Crusades, and see in Western aspirations for world

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<sup>7</sup> 'Dabru Emet: A Jewish Statement on Christians and Christianity', National Jewish Scholars Project (10 September 2000), at <http://www.icjs.org/programs/ongoing/njsp/dabruemet.php>.

hegemony the old crusader mentality in a new guise. All three religions have wide experience in polemics and apologetics, but interfaith dialogue remains limited to a minority.

### **Abraham**

Abraham is often regarded as a symbol of hope in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim encounter and acclaimed as a spiritual mentor and guide. For example, Karl-Josef Kuschel calls for 'an Abrahamic ecumenism', in which Jews, Christians and Muslims work together in mutual respect and for the common good.<sup>8</sup> The first decade of the twentieth-first century has witnessed a number of interfaith initiatives adopting the term 'Abrahamic' in their title. Since Judaism, Christianity and Islam all trace their spiritual ancestry to Abraham, viewing him as a paradigm of the human–divine relationship, there is an attempt to depict him as a figure who can help reconcile three related but divided religions, (the 'Abrahamic Faiths').

Whilst Abraham is certainly an important figure to the three faiths, it is just as possible that his significance to each can be interpreted as undermining his importance to the others because they have not interpreted him appropriately. For example, for Jews the Bible's descriptions of Abraham's encounters with God are viewed most commonly in terms of God's promises concerning continuity of family and inheritance of the land of Israel. Jewish claims to be the inheritors of the land of Israel through the promises of Abraham have been and remain a source of controversy between Jews, Christians and Muslims.

The New Testament reveals both continuities and discontinuities with the patriarch. Jesus descends from the seed of Abraham but ancestry from Abraham is not sufficient to avoid divine wrath. Narratives of the early church reinforce the division between those who believe in the Christ and are spiritual, and Jews who adhere to the Torah. The Qur'an describes Abraham as the *hanif*, the God-seeker *par excellence*. Muslims revere Abraham as a holy figure, and trace their lineage back to his son Ishmael.

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<sup>8</sup> Karl-Josef Kuschel, 'Children of Abraham: On the Necessity of an Abrahamic Ecumene between Jews, Christians, and Muslims', *Convergence* 10 (April, 1999), 34-40.

Muslim traditions elaborate the biblical narratives, understanding for example, the object of Abraham's sacrifice narrated in Genesis 22 to be Ishmael rather than Isaac. For Jews and Christians, the child of the promise is Isaac: it is through Isaac that Abraham becomes the father of the people of Israel and of the nations.

The Qur'an designates Islam as 'the religious community of Abraham' (*millat Ibrahim*) and portrays Muhammad as a follower of the monotheistic faith of Abraham (16.123). But who does Abraham belong to? According to a common translation, the Qur'an affirms that:

Abraham was not a Jew nor yet a Christian; but he was true in Faith, and bowed his will to Allah's (Which is Islam), and he joined not gods with Allah. Without doubt, among men, the nearest of kin to Abraham, are those who follow him, as are also this Messenger and those who believe: And Allah is the Protector of those who have faith. (Q3.67f.)<sup>9</sup>

The translator's interpretative gloss, 'which is Islam', shows how Abraham has become a Muslim possession, the father of those who truly submit in faith to God, and do not associate other gods with him; namely, Muslims. Note the difference with a more recent translation of the Qur'an published by Oxford University Press:

Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was upright and devoted to God, never an idolator, and the people who are closest to him are those who truly follow his ways, this Prophet and [true] believers – God is close to [true] believers.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, some Jews, Christians and Muslims seek reconciliation of these differences by appealing to the fact that each tradition hearkens back to the biblical Abraham. The resolution of their theological and communal differences will depend upon how carefully they negotiate the virtues of Abraham that belong to all three

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<sup>9</sup> 'Surah 3. The Family Of 'Imran, The House Of 'Imran', at <http://www.islamicity.com/Mosque/QURAN/3.htm>.

<sup>10</sup> M.A.S Abdel Haleem, *The Qur'an* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

traditions and appreciate the particular claims made by each of them. Clearly, Abraham can be a model of faith for the three but the point at issue is whether each one of these religions can allow him to be a model for members of the other two (or, conceivably, for members of one of them but not the other). Even if Abraham is not as promising a figure as many assume or press him to be, the long history of suspicion and bloodshed between Jews, Christians and Muslims surely motivates them to search for common ground.

### **Memory and Identity**

Unlike national identities, religious identities are sacred to those who hold them and their key events have usually occurred much further in the past than most national events. For example, Muslims find contemporary meaning in the *hijra*, the emigration from Mecca to Medina of Muhammad and his followers in 622 CE. Likewise, Jews view the exodus from Egypt as of contemporary significance, as Christians view the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Let's take Passover as an example. For Jews, Passover is connected to the historical commemoration of the exodus from Egypt and the Torah commands the Israelites to recall this event (Deuteronomy 16:2, 6–7). Deuteronomy 16:3 refers to unleavened bread as 'the bread of affliction', remembering the Egyptian oppression. Christians for their part associate the festival with the death of Jesus. The eucharistic liturgy during the Easter season includes the words: 'Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast.' These words derive from Paul's first letter to the Corinthians (5:7–8), where he compares clearing out the bad elements of their lives with getting rid of the old yeast or leaven.

For Jews, Christians and Muslims, the inheritance of the past is important to their religious identity and their encounter, but so too is the continuing relevance of this past. Learning from the past does not require us to live there but there are some believers who wish to restore the past, by force if necessary and others who wish to forget:

Thus says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea, a path in the mighty waters, who brings forth chariot and horse, army and warrior; they lie down, they cannot rise, they are extinguished, quenched like a wick: 'Remember not the former things, nor consider the things of old. Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?' (Isaiah 43: 16-18)

So spoke Isaiah, prophet of the Exile to his people, encouraging the Israelites to believe that there was the hope that they would return to the Land of Israel. Strikingly, the prophet speaks in terms of forgetting the past, for the sake of the future. To what extent we should forget the past clearly has an impact on memory and on identity.

There are those religious believers who are not prepared to forget about the past, just as there are those who prefer to forget. For the latter, the baggage of the past makes no sense. They hold, for example, that the search for simple certainties is mistaken and unethical and that theological and ideological questions, such as seeking truth, serve to (at best) confuse and (at worst) abuse memory and identity. Of course, it may well be that their view is correct, but it does not necessarily follow that passing over the past is a constructive way to form memory and identity.

Commemorations of past events help preserve a sense of historical continuity, identity and even social integration. Collective memory contains a strong conservative force furnishing a community with a sense of historical continuity. However, a preoccupation (some might call obsession), with the past may be harmful. The memory of a founding event that is recollected and re-enacted may become a danger if it results in a negative identity and self-understanding, especially if becomes the only or primary lens through which reality and the changing world is viewed.

For example, the legacy of being a victim has left an enduring mark on the Jewish psyche and impacts on the Jewish encounter with Christians and Muslims. A history of being surrounded by oppressive nations has become a feature of Jewish memory and identity, leading to a sense of victimisation. Taking to heart the Bible's command to the Children of Israel to remember (*zachor*), because 'you were slaves in the land of Egypt', Jews are reminded to remember the suffering of Israel in Egypt; the Torah

also reminds them to remember the violence committed against the Israelites by the surrounding nations.

A modern example of a focus upon victimisation is the 614<sup>th</sup> commandment proposed by Emil Fackenheim, in his reflection on the Holocaust.<sup>11</sup> One dangerous consequence of demanding Jewish continuity so as not to give Hitler a posthumous victory, is that Jewish identity can easily become *Shoah*-centred, as can relations between Jews and Christians. The Holocaust reinforced a mentality in the Jewish world that Jews are a small minority and that the Jewish people, even Jews in Israel, are surrounded by hostile non-Jews. Consequently, a young Jew will easily construct a negative Jewish identity which, without the positive side of Judaism, will not be of value to be handed down over the generations. A young Christian will come away with an exclusive picture of the Jew as victim, without an awareness of the positive aspects of Jewish culture. If the Jew disappears from the historical horizons from the death of Jesus in 33CE and only reappears again when Hitler came to power in 1933, not only will a negative identity be formed but Jewish-Christian relations will also be based on a victim-perpetrator relationship.

Like Jews, Muslims also tend to view the outside world as a threat, which may lead to a pre-occupation with a memory of suffering. Akbar Ahmed's recent studies of the views of Muslims in the twenty-first century<sup>12</sup> lists numerous examples of Muslims feeling 'under attack by the West and modernity', which are viewed as a 'Judeo-Christian' creation. Whilst carrying out research, Ahmed asked Muslims across the Muslim world: 'What do you think is the number one problem in the world today?' He expected the answer: 'Israel, Iraq and Afghanistan.' However, to Muslims in Damascus, in Karachi, and London the number one problem was the perception that Islam was deliberately being distorted in the West; that Islam was under attack.

Attitudes within the Muslim community in the UK had begun to harden in the late 1980s when the controversy around Salman Rushdie's novel *The Satanic Verses*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Emil Fackenheim, *To Mend the World: Foundations of Post-Holocaust Jewish Thought*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), xix.

<sup>12</sup> Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into Islam* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2007); Akbar Ahmed, *Journey into America* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (London: Viking Penguin, 1988).

erupted and Muslims saw themselves depicted as little more than an angry community of book-burners. Often the target of racism and discrimination they resented the negative depiction of Islam in the media. The 1990s marked the coming of age of a new generation which was marginalized and alienated from mainstream society not only in the UK but also in the rest of Europe. Many Muslims were convinced that however integrated and Westernized they were, their Muslimness would still exclude them from being accepted as part of Western society.

### **Memoria Futuri - memory for the future**

One way to disarm an obsession with the past is to adopt a critical approach to it in order not to become victims of an ideological 'vindication' of the past that is nostalgic, dogmatic, and sometimes irrational. If the past is approached critically, it can reveal new interpretations and understandings of the world that can be liberating and constructive.

For example, although reflection on and reaction to the *Shoah* are essential for an understanding of Jewish-Christian relations, positive relations cannot be built solely on responses to antisemitism and Christian feelings of guilt. Certainly, the past must be remembered and memories have to find a way to be reconciled so that horrors are not forgotten otherwise, since, as George Santayana coined, 'Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.'<sup>14</sup> However, no healthy and enduring relationship between people is built on guilt. If recent Christian soul-searching in the aftermath of the destruction of European Jewry leads to a new approach and a revision of traditional anti-Jewish teaching, so much the better. However, the future relationship cannot be built on the foundations of guilt. The sense of guilt is transient and does not pass to the next generation; moreover, it is unstable, inherently prone to sudden and drastic reversal. So, it is necessary for Jews and Christians to negotiate a better stance towards a compromised past in order to look forward to a more hopeful future. Indeed, redeeming a compromised past offers grounds for hope in Jewish-Christian relations but also in relations with Muslims and other faith communities.

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<sup>14</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, 1 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), 284.



Walter Kasper, previous President of the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews has called for a renewed *memoria futuri* and for Jews and Christians to reflect on the more positive aspects of memory. Religious remembrance, he argued, is not an act of nostalgia, but empowers in the present. For example, in their liturgy, Jews and Christians remember not only what God has done for them in the past, but remember that God's people continue have a role today.

Christianity has recognized that past practices about and traditional views of Jews are wholly unacceptable and have worked to create a new relationship. The tackling of Christian triumphalism and the *Adversus Iudaeos* tradition illustrates a shift from what was, for the most part, an inherent need to condemn Judaism to one of a condemnation of Christian anti-Judaism. It has also led to a closer relationship with 'the elder brother' and not, as some feared, to the undermining of Christian teaching. The rediscovery of a positive relationship with Judaism facilitates a positive formation of Christian identity and memory.

For Jews, *memoria futuri* may help Jews view Diaspora life not primarily in negative terms (as an anti-Jewish environment and exemplifying a continuous history of oppression) but in positive terms (as a fruitful environment facilitating vigorous Jewish existence and dynamic development). Traditionally, Diaspora was equated with '*golah*', 'exile', implying that life outside of Israel is a life of exile (an undesirable situation). However, Diaspora is a Greek word meaning 'dispersion', (a voluntary situation desirable to the individual), which can be a positive experience for the Jewish people living among the nations of the world, leading to constructive interaction.

As a minority, Jews have thrived, having lived in a Diaspora community since at least the fall of the First Temple in the sixth century BCE. After 70 CE, Jews had to create a sense of religious identity without the possession of Jerusalem or the Temple and arguably, Rabbinic Judaism survived and flourished precisely because it had not been so attached to the rites of the Temple as the Sadducees.

Thriving in a diaspora means that communities are affected by change in wider society. This leads to a change in an individual's identity or the now more common notion of

hybrid identity, when one's identity is constituted by a multiplicity of different identities—cultural, religious, ethnic, linguistic, national—that were once considered distinct identities.

This is a relatively new development in Europe but has a longer history and is more common in the USA. An example of hybrid identity is an American-born citizen of Israeli origins. With the increased communication and ease of travel today, many American citizens of Israeli origin can participate in the cultural and religious world of Israel while simultaneously participating in the cultural and linguistic world of the US. If asked about one's identity, this person would most probably reply with a hyphenated response such as: American-Israeli. Pushed further, one might find out even deeper layers of identity such as American-Israeli-Sefardi.

A consequence of hybrid identities is that people regularly cross boundaries that divide insider from outsider, thus blurring identity boundaries that were previously more clearly defined. In the process change occurs and because people have to readjust and redefine who they are, their identities can become fragile. It is no easy task to redefine one's identity, the fragility of which can lead to prejudice as a defensive mechanism. The reaction against rapidly shifting boundaries of identity, especially when one or more identity is 'perceived' to be under threat inevitably leads to an over-rootedness in one's identity and a subsequent decrease in a desire to engage in dialogue with the 'Others.'

One example of the changing historical situation can be seen in changes in immigrant areas. For example, in East London, a highly populated immigrant area, the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid (mosque) presently serves local Bangladeshi Muslims. It was originally built in 1743 as a French Protestant Church, made into a Methodist Chapel in 1819, converted into the Spitalfields Great Synagogue in 1898, and finally became the Brick Lane Jamme Masjid in 1976. When the Jewish community decided to sell the building, they wanted it to continue being a house of worship. Therefore, they sold the building to the Bengali Muslim community for a low price, thus ensuring that the synagogue would become a mosque. As a relict of the inter-faith and communal past, there remains a sign in Hebrew commemorating some of its former Jewish community members.

Another change effecting relations can be seen in the growth of secularism, a challenge which can bring Jews, Christians and Muslims together. The secular challenge has led some to call for a 'common mission' and for religious leaders to see each other as allies opposing religious indifference, which is understood as a greater threat than religious differences. This may lessen the sense of rivalry that characterised past relations and pave the way for joint approaches on issues of common interest, both at national leadership level and in local areas, demonstrated by Jewish, Christian and other faith communities demonstrating together in the jubilee year (2000) against poverty and for the relief of third world debt. This led to further joint interfaith action such as the 200,000 people who travelled to Edinburgh during a meeting of the G8 leaders in 2005 to support the 'Make Poverty History' campaign.

On the other hand, practitioners of inter-faith dialogue are apt to overlook the fact that some of their colleagues in this enterprise are attached to their religion not because of faith in God but for community reasons, or because they like its artistic and aesthetic values. For example, a number of Christians go to church because of its liturgical and musical excellence or for cultural or other reasons. Likewise, many Jews are secular but retain their identity as Jews in terms of culture. Secular Jews may have a rather tenuous connection with Judaism but are as likely to be involved inter-religious conversation as observant Jews. Indeed, proponents of dialogue may be convinced of its ability to bring together and reconcile members of antagonistic religious faiths, but lack any great degree of personal faith themselves. The assumption that a strong, personal faith is at the heart of religion is often a Protestant Christian emphasis. Equally, however, outsiders often assume that Christians possess or at least declare such a faith when many, in fact, do not.

### **Israel**

Nowhere is the subject of peace and understanding, or perhaps more realistically, violence and misunderstanding, more evident than in the Middle East, and more discussed than in the tea rooms and coffee parlours of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv as well as Ramallah and Bethlehem.

The 2008/09 war in Gaza is a reminder of what seems to be an intractable conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. A story is told about an Israeli and a Palestinian leader meeting with God and asking whether there will ever be peace in the Middle East in their lifetime. 'Of course there will be peace,' God told them. They looked relieved. 'However,' God continued, 'not in my lifetime'. 120 years after the beginning of modern Zionism, a peaceful solution seems some distance away.

For Jews, the centrality of the land of the Bible, as well as the survival of over a third of world Jewry, is at stake. The creation of the State of Israel is an ancient promise fulfilled - the ingathering of exiles and the creation of a vibrant nation-state, guaranteeing physical and spiritual security. Christians, for their part, not only disagree as to the place of Israel in Christian theology, but many understandably feel particular concern for Arab Christians who live in Israel and in the future state of Palestine. For many Muslims, the permanent existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East is a religious and political anomaly. It is not an uncommon view that Islamic rule must be returned to the Land of Israel

Israel is controversial because it cannot be viewed simply as a geographical and political entity whose emergence is like the establishment of any new state. Political, social, cultural and religious concerns all affect its place in the Jewish-Christian-Muslim relationship. Dialogue between Jews, Christians and Muslims is sometimes mistakenly transformed into an Israeli-Palestinian or Israeli-Arab conversation, with national identity emphasised far more than religious difference.

For Jews, the will to survive in the Diaspora generated messianic hopes of redemption, which occasionally led to a high level of anticipation and the extraordinary claims of self-appointed messiahs such as Bar Kokhba and Shabbetai Zvi. One of the common features of these times of messianic fervour was that the Promised Land became a symbol of redress for all the wrongs which Jews had suffered. Thus, modern Zionism became in part the fusion of messianic fervour and the longing for Zion. Jews took their destiny into their own hands and stopped waiting for a divine solution to their predicament. This was a dramatic break from the Diaspora strategy of survival, which advocated endurance of the status quo as part of the covenant with God. For many Jews, the Jewish state offered the best hope not only for survival in response to the

breakdown in Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries but also for religious and cultural fulfilment.

Martin Buber explained the Jewish historical attachment to the Land of Israel in a letter to Mahatma Gandhi, written in response to Gandhi's November 1938 declaration, which was critical of Zionist aspirations. Gandhi had recommended that Jews remain in Germany and pursue *satyagraha* ('holding onto truth' which was the basis for his non-violent resistance to British rule) even unto death. Buber forcefully rejected this argument and explained the connection between the Jewish people and the land as follows:

You say, Mahatma Gandhi, that a sanction is 'sought in the Bible' to support the cry for a national home, which 'does not make much appeal to you'. No, this is not so. We do not open the Bible and seek sanction there. The opposite is true: the promises of return, of reestablishment, which have nourished the yearning hope of hundreds of generations, give those of today an elementary stimulus, recognised by few in its full meaning but effective also in the lives of many who do not believe in the message of the Bible.<sup>15</sup>

Jews may view the creation of the state of Israel as an act of national liberation following nearly 2,000 years of powerlessness and homelessness. Yet many Muslims term the same events 'The Disaster', a time when an Islamic society was uprooted and became a minority in a land that was once *dar al-Islam*. Most Jews do not separate Zionism from its deep religious roots within Judaism. However, many Muslims make a distinction between Zionism and Judaism, failing to recognize that Zionism is an integral component of Judaism and not a 'racist' ideology. Relations between Muslims and Jews are overshadowed by the failure of both communities to address the impact of the Middle East conflict on our own communities. Because Jewish-Muslim dialogue lies so far behind Jewish-Christian dialogue, it is essential to be prepared for conflicting views. An authentic encounter must allow for sharp differences, especially since the modern dialogue is young and vulnerable.

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<sup>15</sup> N.N. Glatzer and P. Mendes-Flohr, eds., *The Letters of Martin Buber* (New York: Schocken, 1991), 479-480.

How ironic that both Muslims and Jews feel vulnerable and under attack. They share the experience of being minority communities in Europe and the USA and we have parallel experiences and needs. Xenophobia and prejudice know no boundaries.

If the challenges faced by Muslim-Jewish dialogue seem daunting, consider the significant advances in Christian-Jewish relations in the last 100 years. Surely one of the few pieces of good news in today's encounter between religions, Christian-Jewish dialogue arose despite profound theological differences and many centuries of alienation and distrust. The fact that Jews and Christians have built mutual respect and understanding does not, of course, mean that this model can be wholly applied to Islamic-Jewish relations with the same positive results. Jews and Muslims today carry far different memories and issues than the historical baggage brought to encounters with Christians.

For Christians, perhaps because land is not central to Christian theology, although they have generally acknowledged that Jews feel tied to a particular territory, they have found it harder to accommodate the consequences. One eminent American theologian, Walter Brueggemann argues that the subject of land should move to the centre of Christian theology, and suggests that Christians cannot engage in serious dialogue with Jews unless they acknowledge land to be the central agenda.<sup>16</sup>

Roman Catholicism's attitude towards Zionism changed greatly in the course of the 20th century. In 1904, Pope Pius X (1903-14) rejected Herzl's plea for support unequivocally stating that 'The Jews have not recognised our Lord, therefore we cannot recognise the Jewish people.'<sup>17</sup> However, Vatican II and the 1965 document *Nostra Aetate*, while not explicitly mentioning Israel, began the process which eventually led to the Vatican's signing of the Fundamental Agreement with the State of Israel on 30 December 1993 and then exchanging ambassadors .in May 1994. Increasing awareness among Roman Catholics of the place of Israel became much more noticeable during the papacy of John Paul II, demonstrated by the Pontiff's pilgrimage to Israel in 2000, and the everlasting image of his visit to the Western Wall.

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<sup>16</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *The Land*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2002).

<sup>17</sup> Marvin Lowenthal, ed., *The Diaries of Theodor Herzl* (New York: Dial Press, 1956), 429-430.

Following Jewish tradition, the Pope placed a written prayer in a crevice of the Western Wall. The short typed prayer with an official seal read:

God of our fathers, you chose Abraham and his descendants to bring your Name to the Nations. We are deeply saddened by the behaviour of those who in the course of history have caused these children of yours to suffer, and asking Your forgiveness we wish to commit ourselves to genuine brotherhood with the people of the Covenant.<sup>18</sup>

Nevertheless, even though there have been great changes in Christian teaching on Judaism, a resurgence of anti-Israeli attitudes, particularly in Europe, has taken place in the last few years and the feeling remains that whilst the Church has for many years been grappling with issues related to Christian antisemitism, attitudes towards the Land and State of Israel continue, from the theological perspective, to be more difficult to tackle. Simply put, it has been easier for Christians to condemn antisemitism as a misunderstanding of Christian teaching than to come to terms with the re-establishment of the Jewish State. As a result, the subject of Israel has probably caused as much disagreement and division within the Church as any other topic in Jewish-Christian dialogue. Alice Eckardt is one of a number of scholars who points out the contrast between Christian willingness to tackle antisemitism and the Shoah with Christian reticence on the subject of Israel.<sup>19</sup>

There are also dangers when those who, in the name of dialogue, move from a position of commitment for the well-being of Israel to one of almost Israel can do no wrong. This is not conducive to dialogue for it is not an honest and sober conversation firmly related to present realities. For example, although Evangelical Christian Zionists strongly support Israel and especially the Settler Movement, their agenda is dominated by an eschatological timetable. Their hope, as they freely admit, is that the Jewish return to Zion will be followed by a second-coming and the acceptance of Jesus by the entire Jewish people. David Flusser, the eminent Israeli

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<sup>18</sup> 'Prayer of the Holy Father at the Western Wall', John Paul II's Pilgrimage to the Holy Land (26 March 2000), at [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/travels/documents/hf\\_jp-ii\\_spe\\_20000326\\_jerusalem-prayer\\_en.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/travels/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20000326_jerusalem-prayer_en.html).

<sup>19</sup> Alice L. Eckardt, 'The Place of the Jewish State in Christian-Jewish Relations', *European Judaism* 25:1 (Spring, 1992), 4.

scholar of first century Judaism, once told the following story, based on his encounter with a group of evangelical Christians visiting Israel:

‘Why should we quarrel?’ I asked, ‘You believe in the coming of the Messiah - so do we. So let us both work for it and pray for it. Only, when he arrives, allow me to ask him one question first, “Excuse me sir, but is this your first visit to Jerusalem?”’<sup>20</sup>

There is another danger to mention: What happened a hundred years ago to the Jews outside of Israel is considered by some as historically remote compared to biblical events, which are viewed as almost contemporary. The present becomes transformed into biblical language and geography, which leads to the danger of giving metaphysical meaning to geographical places. The fundamentalist Jew in Israel interprets the ownership of the Land of Israel in terms of a divine gift. This creates a great danger of bestowing divine importance to Israel and the vocation of the Jew becomes a dedication to the existence and the restoration of the cosmic state. Thus, the return to the Land is a fulfilment of the divine promise and reflects a return to the original fullness. However, the biblical promises do not define the same borders and by choosing the widest ones the fundamentalist abuses the idea of the promise, which is related to the Land.

So where do we go from here? Much of Israel’s history has been about winning wars in the face of great hostility. Israeli Jews are aware, however, that a successful future may depend on an even harder task: winning the peace.

Israel has won great military victories, none greater than the Six Day War in 1967, when the state appeared to be in a hopeless situation. The Israeli army heroically defended their country against apparently overwhelming odds. However, the qualities that win wars are not necessarily the same qualities that win the peace. For one thing, winning wars often results in a tendency to glorify military prowess, leading to an unhealthy self-reliance and self-belief, bordering on arrogance. For another, war inevitably engenders enmity and hatred, neither of which provides a foundation upon

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<sup>20</sup> E. Kessler, *Jewish-Christian Relations: The Next Generation* (Cambridge: CJC Press, 1999), 5.



which peace can be built. Palestinians living in the West Bank since 1967 have, for the most part, only experienced Israeli occupation and power. It is surely of little wonder that the attitudes of many are so negative towards Israel.

Israelis are surely right to recognise that their country must remain armed whilst there is the danger of renewed aggression from neighbours or regional superpowers. Iran's threat to 'remove Israel from the map of the world' serves to reinforce this outlook. Israelis are possibly right to hold onto territorial gains until wide-ranging peace is agreed; but in the end there will be no security for Israel until mutual grievance is replaced by mutual trust. To win the peace, Israel needs not only to make territorial concessions, as it did by returning Sinai to Egypt (1979) and by leaving Gaza (2005). It must also strive to build bridges of understanding and friendship, between ordinary Israelis and Palestinians in particular and Arabs in general.

For over half a century Israel has passed one military test after another. Until fairly recently, Arab states did not want peace with Israel. They rejected the partition plan of 1947 and for many years denied the right of a Jewish state to exist at all. Some still do, and the rhetoric and actions of Hamas are sober reminders of those days. However, the historic visit of Sadat to Israel in 1977 and the warm welcome he received from the Israeli public made it clear that peace is a realistic possibility. Since then, there have been sporadic outbursts of peace evidenced by the signing of peace treaties with Jordan and the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

There is no doubt that there are Arabs, whatever may have been their past record, who genuinely desire peace. There are others, of course, who still seek the destruction of the Jewish state. Yet in the face of this ongoing hostility, Israelis need to remember the courage of leaders like Anwar Sadat, who, like Yitzhak Rabin, lost his life at the hands of a fellow countryman because of his desire for peace.

If there is a desire for peace on both sides, the first condition of its attainment has been achieved. There is, however, a second condition, which has been severely tested in recent decades. Winning the peace requires compromise and concessions on all sides. This is not a call for pacifism. As William Ralph Inge said, 'It is useless for

the sheep to pass resolutions in favour of vegetarianism while the wolf remains of a different opinion.'<sup>21</sup>

At the root of the problem is a clash between two peoples laying claim to the same land. This is neatly illustrated by the following apocryphal story told to me in the Arab market in Jerusalem some years ago:

There were two brothers. Each owned half a field, but each wanted the half he did not have and neither would give up his half. They called in a rabbi known for his wisdom. He lay down with his ear to the ground under a tree in the field and appeared to fall asleep. After a time the brothers grew impatient, complaining that the rabbi was wasting their time. But he told them that he had been listening to the ground. It had told him that neither of them owned the ground. It owned them. And one day, he said, they would be inside it.

The conflict will not be resolved in the long term by military means, but only by political compromise and territorial concession. To an outsider it seems obvious what ought to happen – limited autonomy must evolve into independence and eventually into a federation of states, initially consisting of Israel, Palestine and Jordan, leading perhaps to an economic community of Middle Eastern States.

At some points in the future, morality and expediency will coincide and Israelis and Palestinians will have the opportunity to bring peace to the region. It is in Israel's self-interest to make peace as the vast majority of Jews recognise. The state of Israel survived and flourished because it was able to withstand decades of attacks. It won the military battles. Its future survival now also depends on winning the peace.

The debate about the place of Israel will continue in the future for God-knows how long. Unless we intend to carry on talking at each other during and beyond our lifetimes as in the story I told earlier, we need to change our course - listening to each other's views with generosity would be a good place to start.

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<sup>21</sup> William Ralph Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, First Series (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1919).

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## SOME PROBLEMS IN THE RABBINIC USE OF THE QAL VA-CHOMER ARGUMENT

Hyam Maccoby\*

*Abstract: The qal va-chomer (a fortiori) argument is a logic of analogy, not of classes or sets (the subject-matter of Aristotelian logic), and this makes it suitable for legal, rather than scientific, argument. What makes it an exact reasoning is a special rule (unknown to Greek rhetorical use of a fortiori), namely the rule of dayyo, which lays down that the conclusion must not contain anything that was not present in the premises. For example: If a moderately good child deserves one sweet, a very good child all the more so deserves one sweet (correct); deserves two sweets (incorrect). Nevertheless, a qal va-chomer argument is not as unchallengeable as a syllogism, and the rabbis recognised various grounds of challengeability. Especially interesting in this respect is the disagreement between the Sages and Rabbi Tarfon in Mishnah Bava Qamma 2:5. Is the qal va-chomer argument entirely logical, or does it contain an aspect of intuition? Can an argument be challengeable, yet rational? Is challengeability indeed a positive advantage in the search for rationality? This paper takes into account the view of the dayyo principle expressed in the Talmudic (Amoraic) discussion of b. Bava Qamma 25a, which makes it appear an arbitrary rule, rather than a principle of reasoning. This view is characterized as a falling-away from the more rational standpoint of the Mishnah. Also discussed is the relatively relaxed application of the rule of dayyo in aggadic discourse. An apparently flagrant breach of the rule in Mishnah Makkot 3:15, going far beyond the leniency of even aggadic discourse, is argued to be due to a mistranslation.*

A prominent form of rabbinic reasoning is the *qal va-chomer*, or a *fortiori* argument, which in rabbinic hands reached a theoretical complexity and exactness that it never achieved in Greek thought. Yet this kind of reasoning too had a provisional, open-ended quality, for which it has been hailed by Susan Handelman (though perhaps not with complete justification) as a forerunner of the approach of deconstruction.<sup>1</sup>

The *qal va-chomer* is a reasoning appropriate to legal enquiry, rather than to natural science, but this does not mean that it is unscientific. It is a logic of analogy, not of classes or sets (the subject-matter of Aristotelian logic). It controls the rabbinic basic

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\* Hyam Maccoby (1924-2004), was at the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Leeds when he gave this lecture in 2001 to the Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Manchester. Much of it can be found in modified form in Hyam Maccoby, *The Philosophy of the Talmud* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

<sup>1</sup> Susan Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses: The Emergence of Rabbinic Interpretation in Modern Literary Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 52-57.

legal enquiry, which is to consider different human situations and decide how alike or unlike they are, and thus how far legal conclusions can be transferred from one situation to another. The key phrase in *qal va-chomer* arguments is usually 'all the more so', introducing a conclusion. If a conclusion is true in a weak situation, it is true 'all the more so' in a strong situation.

To give a simple example: if a moderately good child deserves a sweet, what does a very good child deserve? Someone might answer, 'Two sweets', but this, in rabbinic thinking, would be wrong. The correct answer is, 'All the more so, a very good child deserves one sweet.' One must not go beyond the terms given in the premises, or one would be landed in uncertainty. This is the principle known as *dayyo* ('sufficient for it'),<sup>2</sup> and it is this that lifts the *qal va-chomer* from the status of rhetoric to that of science.<sup>3</sup> The *a fortiori* argument is found in Greek rhetoric (e.g. Paul's Epistles, where the argument is conducted in Greek rhetorical style, without regard for the rule of *dayyo*)<sup>4</sup> but was never isolated or identified as a fully valid mode of argument in Greek theory of logic. It was Christian scholastics who gave it its Latin name, but did not enunciate the principle of *dayyo*.

A biblical source was found both for the *qal va-chomer* argument itself and for the rule of *dayyo*. This was the incident of the punishment of Miriam by leprosy, when God argues as follows: 'If her father had but spat in her face, would she not be ashamed seven days? Let her be shut out from the camp seven days, and after that let her be received in again.' (Numbers 12:14). The argument may be paraphrased as follows: if offending a father (a relatively light thing) is punished with banishment for seven days, offending God (a relatively heavy thing) should be punished *all the more so* with banishment for seven days. The Torah here provides an impeccable *qal va-*

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<sup>2</sup> In full, *dayyo lav'o min ha-din lihyot ke-nidon* - note that here *din* means 'conclusion' while *nidon* means premise; the transliteration, often found, *nadon* is incorrect, as this is Biblical, not Mishnaic, Hebrew. See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* (New York/Berlin: Verlag Choneb, 1926).

<sup>3</sup> See Heinrich Guggenheimer, 'Logical Problems in Jewish Tradition' in Philip Longworth, ed., *Confrontations with Judaism* (London: Blond, 1967), 181-185. See also Avi Sion, *Judaic Logic*, (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 1995); Louis Jacobs, *Studies in Talmudic Logic and Methodology* (London: Valentine Mitchell, 1961).

<sup>4</sup> See Hyam Maccoby, *The Mythmaker: Paul and the Invention of Christianity* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), 64-67.

*chomer*, studiously refraining from adding any days to Miriam's punishment beyond the number yielded by the rule of *dayyo*.

An example of *qal va-chomer* argument in rabbinic literature is the following (b. Bava Metzia 95a). It is stated in Exodus 22:14 that a borrower must pay the value of the borrowed article to the owner if it is destroyed or (in the case of an animal) dies. But what if the article or animal is stolen? Scripture does not tell us explicitly, but a *qal va-chomer* argument yields the answer, by analogy with the case of a paid guardian:

1. A paid guardian is free from payment if the article is destroyed, but is liable if it is stolen (Exodus 22:10-12).
2. Therefore, *all the more so*, a borrower, who is liable if the article is destroyed, should be liable if it is stolen.

The literal meaning of *qal va-chomer* is 'light and heavy'. The argument only works if there are two terms, one of which is 'heavier' (i.e. stronger) than the other. In this case, it is established that a borrower is 'heavier' (has more responsibility) than a paid guardian. This is proved from the Torah, but it also may be a matter of common sense. If you do someone a favour by allowing him the use of your property without payment, then you expect a higher standard of obligation and of recompense, in case of a disaster, than from someone who was not receiving a favour, but was merely looking after the object as a job, without being allowed personal use of the object. On the other hand, one might argue just the opposite: a person who is being paid to look after an article should be more vigilant than a person who is not being paid. This is the kind of refuting argument that is often used in the Talmud, which is by no means inclined to accept every proposed *qal va-chomer* argument. In the present case, the refuting argument would not get very far, since the Torah itself clearly regards the borrower as more liable than the paid guardian; but in many cases, this is not so clear, so there is much room for discussion. The *qal va-chomer* reasoning is open-ended, in that it depends on a distinction between 'light' and 'heavy' that is always open to question. This aspect, however, does not invalidate this type of reasoning, but differentiates it from the mathematical or logical kind of reasoning, where intuition or grasp of human values play no part. It is this undetermined character of the *qal va-*

*chomer* argument that leads Susan Handelman to see it as in accordance with deconstructionist thinking. However, she lays no stress on the more formal and strict aspect embodied in the rule of *dayyo*.<sup>5</sup> There are also other kinds of doubt that may enter into a *qal va-chomer* reasoning. An interesting example is this disagreement between Rabbi Tarfon and his fellow-rabbis, recorded in the Mishnah:

If an ox caused damage by 'horn' in a public domain, its owner pays half-damages; but if in a private domain, Rabbi Tarfon says, 'Full damages', but the Sages say, 'Half damages'. Rabbi Tarfon said to them, 'In the case of 'foot' and 'tooth' there is leniency in the public domain (no damages imposed) and stringency in the private domain (full damages): therefore in the case of 'horn' where there is stringency in the public domain (half-damages) [this refers to the first two occasions of damage by 'horn'; on the the third occasion, the animal becomes 'confirmed' as aggressive, and its owner becomes liable to full damages, since he should have taken more care over the animal; 'foot' and 'tooth', however, are regarded as damage to be expected, and therefore the owner of the animal is fully responsible, except when the goods damaged have been carelessly left in the public domain], should not there be stringency (equal to that of 'foot' and 'horn') in the private domain?' They answered, 'It is enough if the inferred law is as strict as the law from which it is inferred: if 'horn' pays half-damages in the public domain, it should pay the same in the private domain.' He said to them, 'My inference is not from 'horn' to 'horn' but from 'foot' to 'horn'. If in the public domain there is leniency in the case of 'foot' and 'tooth' and stringency with 'horn', then if there is stringency for 'foot' and 'tooth' in the private domain, is it not logical that there should be stringency in the private domain for 'horn'?' They answered, 'It is *enough* if the inferred law is as strict as the law from which it is inferred: if 'horn' pays half-damages in the public domain, it should pay the same in the private domain.'<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses*, 52-57. For more general criticism of Handelman on the relationship between rabbinic exegesis and modern literary theory, see David Stern, 'Literary Criticism or Literary Homilies? Susan Handelman and the Contemporary Study of Midrash', *Prooftexts* 5 (1985), 96-103; David Stern, *Midrash and Theory: Ancient Jewish Exegesis and Contemporary Literary Studies* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

<sup>6</sup> Mishnah Bava Qamma 2:5.



It should be noted that this argument is not about the validity of the principle of *dayyo* in *qal va-chomer* arguments, as some scholars have mistakenly thought. Both Rabbi Tarfon and his opponents the Sages accept not only the validity of *qal va-chomer*, but also the validity of its limiting principle of *dayyo*. Where they differ, in this instance, is how to draw up the list of terms involved in the reasoning. The Sages do not want to admit 'foot/tooth' as one of the two terms in the reasoning (though they still lie in the background as providing the basis for the light/heavy dichotomy); instead they wish to confine the main steps of the reasoning to 'horn' – the two terms involved are 'horn-in-the-public-domain' and 'horn-in-the-private-domain'. Rabbi Tarfon, however, wishes to extend the basic reasoning to 'foot/tooth' (they may be regarded as one term here, since their law is identical in this context). The two terms of his reasoning are thus 'horn' and 'foot/tooth', and the distinction between public and private domain is applied to both terms. Thus Rabbi Tarfon is not admitting that he is making an unjustified leap from 'half-damages' to 'whole-damages' in the case of 'horn'. He is moving from 'whole-damages-in-the-private-domain' (in the case of 'foot/tooth') to 'whole-damages-in-the-private-domain' (in the case of 'horn'). The Sages, however, see something illegitimate about this move, since, in the process, 'horn' has been surreptitiously promoted from 'half-damages' to 'whole-damages', which appears to be a breach of the principle of *dayyo*. We see from this that in a *qal va-chomer* argument there may sometimes be an uncertainty arising from the choice of appropriate terms. This choice of terms may be a matter of intuition, rather than strict logic, and thus one person's valid *qal va-chomer* may be another's fallacy. This does not mean that this method of argument should be condemned as subjective, but only that it belongs to the area of rationality rather than strict logic. A method of reasoning can be enormously useful even if it gives rise at times to irreconcilable disagreements. 'The *how much more so* is a relation of likeness which depends on an *if*, not an *is*, and therefore conclusions are always relative and are subject to further interpretation and application. There are no categorical statements or proofs in a demonstration which preclude further discussion. The *if* always remains apparent, and subject to further revision and extension.'<sup>7</sup> There is, after all, a way to reconcile such differences among people who are not too dogmatically attached to their own opinions – by majority vote. In this instance, the vote went against Rabbi Tarfon, and

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<sup>7</sup> Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses*, 56.

he no doubt accepted the decision in practice, though there was nothing to stop him from continuing to hold his opinion in theory.

Thus rabbinic logical theory anticipates modern scientific theory in some respects (especially in the *binyan 'av*) but in other respects (especially the *qal va-chomer*) it enters a region of logic that transcends the usual parameters of Western logic. The Amoraic discussion of the Mishnah (b. Bava Qamma, 25a) must be discounted, since it shows no comprehension of the logical force of the *dayyo* principle. Instead, it imagines that the rule is an arbitrary fiat of the Torah, by which the conclusion of a *qal va-chomer* reasoning is cut in half (why by precisely a half is not explained). Thus in the case of Miriam (the proof-text, Numbers 12:14), it was really to be expected that God would banish her for 14 days (twice the number of days she would have expected from an angry human father), but the Torah cut this expected number by half. The Gemara then explains that Rabbi Tarfon, while acknowledging the rule of *dayyo*, had a variant view of it which would exclude the present case (he considered that a *qal va-chomer* that, by the application of *dayyo*, yields a result already derivable from other sources is not subject to the rule of *dayyo*). This implausible account ignores totally the plain reason which Rabbi Tarfon himself gives in the Mishnah: that he was using different terms as the basis for his reasoning from those used by the Sages. It ignores also the fact that Rabbi Tarfon's expressions in the Mishnah show that he is not arguing that this instance is exempt from the rule of *dayyo* but, on the contrary, that he is bringing it into the rule. It seems that in the Amoraic period the rationale of the *dayyo* rule, perfectly understood in earlier times, had been lost. In earlier times, too, the derivation of the rule from Scripture (if made, which is doubtful) was not intended to give it the status of an arbitrary fiat, but to give authoritative approval to a deliverance of reason. Unfortunately, medieval commentators on the Mishnah reproduce the Amoraic discussion.<sup>8</sup> Heinrich Guggenheimer gives a cogent account of the *dayyo* rule in terms of pure logic, saying that, in virtue of this rule, the *qal va-chomer* argument is 'an admirable solution (the only one known to me) of the problem of making an analogy an exact reasoning'.<sup>9</sup> Guggenheimer also gives a rendering of the *qal va-chomer* in the terminology of modern mathematical logic. He does not mention, however, the Amoraic discussion which takes the rule of *dayyo* out

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<sup>8</sup> See *Talmudic Encyclopaedia* (Hebrew), s.v. *dayyo lav'o min ha-din lihyot ke-nidon*.

<sup>9</sup> Guggenheimer, 'Logical Problems in Jewish Tradition', 181-85.

of the realm of logic, or the considerable medieval discussion based on b. Bava Qamma 25a.

### **The Parodic *Qal va-Chomer***

Perhaps because of the flexible, open-ended nature of the *qal va-chomer* argument, we find in the rabbinic sources a rather surprising phenomenon – instances of the argument which are not meant to be taken seriously, and comprise a kind of parody of the argument. An example is found in b. Sanh. 17a. Here it is said that one of the qualifications of a member of the Sanhedrin was the ability to prove that the body of a reptile (*sheretz*) was clean, i.e. did not convey ritual impurity. This would seem an impossible undertaking, since the Torah says explicitly that it is unclean. However, in response to the assertion, Rav offered to prove this impossible proposition by means of a *qal va-chomer* argument. It ran as follows: the dead body of a snake does not convey impurity. Yet a snake is the means of spreading impurity, for it causes many deaths. How much more so should a reptile (which is harmless) be regarded as not causing impurity! This same argument is attributed to Ravina in b. Eruvin 13b. The Gemara immediately refutes this argument by denying the 'heaviness' of the heavy term. Being a cause of impurity indirectly by causing death has nothing to do with causing impurity by direct contact. Otherwise, we would have to regard a thorn as a cause of impurity by contact, since it may cause death to someone who becomes impaled on it. Clearly, this *qal va-chomer* argument was meant simply as an exercise, perhaps even an exercise in how to refute a faulty *qal va-chomer*.

Sometimes, however, constructing a faulty *qal va-chomer* deliberately was regarded with distinct disfavour, not merely as an interesting exercise. It is recorded that a certain rabbi (Rabbi Jose ben Taddai of Tiberias) was actually excommunicated for presenting a frivolous *qal va-chomer* argument, since this was held to bring rabbinic methods of argument into disrepute (Derekh Eretz Rabba, 1). The condemned argument was as follows: I am forbidden to marry my daughter; yet her mother is permitted to me. All the more so, I should be forbidden to marry the daughter of someone who is forbidden to me. My neighbour's wife is forbidden to me; therefore I should be forbidden to marry her daughter. Therefore all marriages should be forbidden except to the daughters of unmarried mothers, widows or divorced women.

No formal refutation of this argument was offered: the response was to kick its perpetrator out of the academy!

Of course, it is possible to produce parodies even of syllogistic arguments – many such were produced in the Middle Ages. Perhaps we should attribute such parodies merely to high spirits, not to any flaw in the type of argument itself. But such arguments do point to features of the argument which require care when the argument is used seriously. There is, however, a certain acknowledgment of the vulnerability of the *qal va-chomer* in general in the dictum that it should never be used to impose an extra penalty not explicitly mentioned in the Torah ('*ein 'oneshin min ha-din*, b. Sanh. 54a and frequently). The *qal va-chomer* is acknowledged to be a purely human reasoning, and as such to be always open to criticism and to have limited authority.

### **Qal va-Chomer in Aggadah**

An apparently glaring infringement of the rule of *dayyo* is in Mishnah Makkot, 3:15:

Moreover R. Hananiah ben Gamaliel said: If he that commits one transgression thereby forfeits his life, how much more, if he performs one religious duty, shall his life be given to him!<sup>10</sup>

This is a very feeble argument, and it also seems inconsequential, since it does not show any connection with R. Hananiah's immediately preceding remark that those who are condemned to 'cutting off' (*karet*) can escape this punishment by undergoing flogging (*malqut*). Rashi therefore feels constrained to provide an elaborate explanation, based on the notion that reward for good deeds is much greater (at least 2000 times greater, he argues on the basis of a proof-text) than punishment for transgression. Rashi thus seems to imply that the usual rule for a *qal va-chomer* can be ignored, since there is such a gap between the two terms 'transgression' and 'performance'. This, however, might possibly be granted if the conclusion echoed the premise, but it does not. The premise speaks of forfeiting life, and the conclusion speaks of gaining life. No amount of weighting can turn a negative premise into a positive conclusion. If another method of argument were used (instead of the *qal va-*

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<sup>10</sup> Danby translates 'forfeits his soul' and 'his soul will be restored to him'. Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah* (Translated from the Hebrew with introduction and brief explanatory notes) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), 408. However, this is unwarranted, since in context *karet* is being interpreted as death by the hand of God, not as some spiritual punishment to the soul in the after-life. Moreover, *tinaten* means 'will be given', not 'will be restored'.

*chomer*) some semblance of consecutive reasoning can be achieved, e.g. If a man who commits a transgression forfeits his life, it seems reasonable that the opposite behaviour, the fulfilment of a commandment, will produce opposite results, namely the gaining of life, especially if we know that reward is always far greater than punishment. But this reasoning by opposites is not a *qal va-chomer*, and Rabbi Hananiah makes it crystal clear (by his use of *how much more*) that he is attempting a *qal va-chomer*.

Another line of exegesis (see Bertinoro on the Mishnah)<sup>11</sup> tries to provide some continuity between Rabbi Hananiah's first and second sayings, such continuity being demanded by the conjunction *ve* linking the two sayings (in the Gemara Mishnah; the conjunction may have been omitted in editions of the Mishnah under the influence of exegetes, also quoted by Bertinoro, who denied any continuity between the two sayings of R. Hananiah). This interpretation sees the one 'who fulfils the commandment' as none other than the one who transgressed a *karet* law, but later repented and accepted flogging as his punishment, thereby escaping the heavier punishment of death by the hand of God. Rabbi Hananiah's second saying thus becomes: If one who transgresses forfeits his life, how much more so shall one who accepts punishment (thereby performing a commandment) escape with his life. Here there is certainly some continuity, but the faultiness in the *qal va-chomer* argument has not been remedied. The negative in the premise has turned into a positive in the conclusion, and the argument, if valid, is an argument by opposites not by *qal va-chomer*.

I suggest a very simple solution to all these problems. The expression *notel nafsho* has been wrongly translated by all commentators as 'forfeits his life', but is much better translated as 'receives his life'. The verb *natal* can mean either 'to remove' or 'to receive'.<sup>12</sup> If the meaning here is 'remove', then the expression should be *notelin nafsho*, 'they remove (or 'one removes') his life', for the singular verb *notel* would signify that he takes or removes his own life, and no one is suggesting that we are concerned here with suicide. I am suggesting, in other words, that the expression *notel*

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<sup>11</sup> Obadiah of Bertinoro, *Mishnah: Text with Commentary of Rabbi Obadiah of Bertinoro* (Jerusalem: Bloch Publishing Company, 1947). Original 1548, Venice.

<sup>12</sup> See Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi and the Midrashic Literature* (New York/Berlin: Verlag Choneb, 1926), 899.

*nafsho* means the exact opposite of what commentators have thought it to mean. With this correction, the difficulties of continuity and logic disappear. The translation of R. Hananiah's second saying now becomes: 'If he that commits one transgression (i.e. the transgressor of a *karet* law) receives his life (i.e. has his sentence commuted from death by the hand of God to flogging), how much more so will one who performs a commandment be given his life!' This is a perfectly valid *qal va-chomer* argument, since no term in the conclusion fails to appear in the premise. Also, the continuity is also excellent, since R. Hananiah's second observation is indeed a reflection based on his first. The unconvincing idea (quoted by Bertinoro), aimed at continuity, that it is the transgressor who is the performer of a commandment is eliminated. The transgressor is indeed a transgressor, yet he preserves his life; how much more so should someone who is not a transgressor but a performer of a commandment preserve his life!

It may be objected that if the two expressions *notel nafsho* and *yinaten lo nafsho* have identical import, why is the expression varied in this way? The reason may be merely stylistic. The person who, against the odds, having been condemned to death, is reprieved, snatches at this unexpected relief and is made the subject of an active verb of receiving. The person who has deserved reward waits for his due without desperation and is content to have it bestowed on him. This variation in expression does not affect the logic of the argument.

On the other hand, it may be objected that the rules of the *qal va-chomer*, and especially the rule of *dayyo* (that the conclusion must not contain any term not contained in the premise) is not so strictly applied in aggadic as opposed to halakhic reasonings, and that therefore R. Hananiah's argument should not be subjected to such severe criticism. There is truth in this, and an example of what appears somewhat loose aggadic *qal va-chomer* reasoning is to be found, as it happens, in this very same Mishnah. R. Shimon ben Rabbi reasons: abstaining from blood, which causes revulsion, brings reward; all the more, abstaining from robbery and incest, which the soul longs for, should bring reward for all generations to come up to the end of the world. The last part of this reasoning constitutes a breach of *dayyo*, for nothing was said in the premise about all generations to come. Yet in this reasoning, faulty as it is by halakhic standards, the actual terms are not changed from premise to conclusion.

There is only an intensification of the conclusion, in an enthusiastic, homiletic style. Even in aggadic reasonings, the rules are never so flagrantly breached as in R. Hananiah's saying, in its usual interpretation. It is therefore justifiable to look for another interpretation.

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## YITZHAK OREN'S FANTASTIC SCIENCE: TWO STORIES

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*Abstract: Until recently, Israeli literary scholars have dismissed fantasy as insignificant for ideological and political reasons. Yet there has been a long tradition of fantasy in Jewish literature. Now, thanks to the Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov's precise conceptualisation of fantasy as a distinct literary genre, we are able to define works of the Fantastic with greater clarity. The Hebrew writer who most immediately comes to mind with respect to fantasy is S. Y. Agnon, whose works are replete with ghosts, magic, strange creatures and events. In this article I examine two stories by one of his younger contemporaries, the Israeli author Yitzhak Oren from the point of view of Todorov's generic classification. I ask whether defining Oren's stories according to Todorov's generic system helps us to read them. I believe that applying Todorov's categorisation to Oren's fiction certainly determines the way we read it and that this has implications with regard to other Hebrew authors, Agnon in particular, and to the work of some younger Israeli experimental writers.*

There is a strange belief that modern Hebrew literature avoids fantasy, or at least that it has done so until recently. Perhaps the genre of fantasy was not recognised because it did not suit the criteria of the arbiters of the Hebrew literary canon as it was being formed at the turn of the 20th century, perhaps because of the perceived nature of fantasy at that time. The fantastic genre is still often characterized as escapist, non-serious, and 'minor,'<sup>1</sup> exiled to the 'edges of literary culture.'<sup>2</sup> Moreover, these canonisers saw Hebrew literature from the start as committed to the development of the national consciousness, to an extent a guide for social thinking, about which it had to be explicit not obscure. Realism was, therefore, the reigning genre. Israeli literary scholars have, until recently, similarly dismissed fantasy as insignificant for ideological and political reasons. In its early years Israeli literature was recruited into the enterprise of nation building and the writers were obliged to address concerns of Israeli individual and social identity. Literary characters were rarely distinct from their national and social origins, unlike characters in fantastic fiction. In any case the

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<sup>1</sup> Carter Wheelock, 'Fantastic Symbolism in the Spanish American Short Story', *Hispanic Review* 48:4 (Autumn, 1980), 416.

<sup>2</sup> Ásdís Egilsdóttir, 'The Fantastic Reality: Hagiography, Miracles and Fantasy', <http://www.dur.ac.uk/medieval/www/sagaconf/asdis.htm>



writers of the third and fourth *aliyot* had largely, although not exclusively, been influenced by Soviet socialist realism. Barukh Kurzwell, the leading Israeli scholar of Hebrew literature, himself of Central European origin and broadly versed in European literatures, frequently berated the young Hebrew literature when it strayed into European aesthetic territory. According to Ortsiyon Bartana, who has written the only comprehensive study of Israeli literary fantasy, the creation of a specific ideal of 'normalisation' in fiction - meaning the apprehension of fiction as reflecting a normal society - strongly influenced the marginalisation of fantasy after the establishment of the state.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, those authors who, for whatever reason, did not fit into the collective framework, or those who failed to comment about the 'enterprise', including writers of fantasy, were marginalised.

In fact, there has been a long tradition of fantasy in *Jewish* literature, which is not surprising considering the prominence of mysticism in all branches of Jewish culture. Rabbi Loew's Golem was a fantastic creation long before Dr Frankenstein's and it has been proposed that even Herzl's futuristic *Altneuland* is a work of utopian fantasy. Moreover, there is an historical awareness in Hebrew literature of the miraculous, primarily realised in the allusiveness of modern texts to the biblical text. Modern fantasy in any case has its roots in myth, mysticism, folklore, fairytale and romance.

We are now able to qualify works of the fantastic, thanks to the Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov's precise conceptualisation of fantasy as a distinct literary genre.<sup>4</sup> According to Todorov, the Fantastic requires the fulfillment of three conditions. First, the text must oblige the reader to consider the world of the characters as a world of living persons and to hesitate between a natural or supernatural explanation of the events described. Second, this hesitation may also be experienced by a character as well as the reader; third, the reader must reject allegorical as well as 'poetic' interpretations.<sup>5</sup> In short, the Fantastic is characterized by a simple narrative stratagem: putting supernatural events into a realistic narrative as if they were true. Todorov distinguishes the Fantastic from other modes or sub-genres, one being the 'fantastic-

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<sup>3</sup> Ortsiyon Bartana, *Hafantasia basifrut dor hamedina* [Fantasy in the literature of the generation of the state] (Tel Aviv: Papryrus/Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1989), 40.

<sup>4</sup> Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, trans. Richard Howard and Robert Scholes (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975).

<sup>5</sup> See Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 33.

uncanny' and another, the 'fantastic-marvellous...the class of narratives that are presented as fantastic and that end with [the reader's] acceptance of the supernatural.'<sup>6</sup>

Modern fantasy has moved beyond 19th-century romantic models of the supernatural. In Hebrew literature it acquires ideological accretions that may, in intentionality, rather than modality, cause it to exceed Todorov's qualification. Bartana's definition of fantasy in Israeli literature is more inclusive than Todorov's scheme. For Bartana, fantasy is 'every story that describes a seemingly real world, that creates alternative relationships with the real world well known to the reader.'<sup>7</sup> This broad definition includes myth, allegory, fable, metaphysics and the absurd. 'Every description of the supernatural that appears in a story is sufficient for the story to be defined as fantastic... therefore I shall use the term 'fantastic' here as a catch-all for the entire system of non-realistic stories.'<sup>8</sup> In one respect Bartana's definition is crucial in its application to the relationship between Hebrew literature and Israeli culture. He refers to the 'secular myth' of Zionism:

This myth came to herald the renewal of the biblical kingdom, the actuality of redemption, independence after two thousand years of exile and above all, to give a response to the destruction, Holocaust. This was a secular myth, distinct from the symbols known as Jewish tradition.<sup>9</sup>

He includes the 'metaphysical' story in his definition of the Fantastic, as the modern realisation of a myth. The subversive implication that Zionism is somehow linked with fantasy has real political connotations in Israel, rather than relating only to a theoretical or aesthetic argument. However, this idea has not been developed in Hebrew writing that can be deemed to belong to the genre of fantasy.

On the other hand, it may be that in modern Hebrew literature, fantasy is a means of avoiding direct confrontation with difficult topics; it has been used by canonic authors to convey controversial ideas in palatable form. For example, fantasy has been used

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<sup>6</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Bartana, *Hafantasia basifrut dor hamedina*, 32.

<sup>8</sup> Bartana, *Hafantasia basifrut dor hamedina*, 32.

<sup>9</sup> Bartana, *Hafantasia basifrut dor hamedina*, 19.

more extensively from the 1980s as a new way of expressing the Holocaust experience, by 'crossing certain limits' that had hitherto been largely avoided in Israeli literature.<sup>10</sup> This renewed encounter required a departure from the prevailing cultural norms which regarded as taboo the representation of the concentration camps by those who had not experienced them.<sup>11</sup> The fantastic is a narrative strategy to counter the taboo by holding the real at arm's length while contributing to the Holocaust discourse.

The Hebrew writer who most immediately comes to mind with respect to fantasy is Agnon, whose works are replete with ghosts, magic, strange creatures and events. However, Bartana scarcely mentions him, probably because Agnon's stories often present a moral message whose importance surpasses its means of transmission. For example, what is Agnon's 'Im kenissat hayom' (At the Outset of the Day)? An example of fantasy, an example of the surreal, a philosophical conundrum or a combination of all three which technically, according to Todorov, preclude each other? Todorov's demarcations of fantasy help us in distinguishing it from surrealism, a genre to which Agnon's stories are more likely, at first glance, to belong. Yet despite their obvious similarities, primarily their departure from realism, fantasy and surrealism differ in intent. In Agnon's story a man who has been away from home returns after suffering the privations of a war. His former acquaintances are dead or have moved away. In his arms he carries his small daughter whose clothes have been burnt off her back during the conflict. On the eve of Yom Kippur, he stands outside and gazes at, but does not enter, the synagogue in which he had once written Torah scrolls. A straightforward realistic narrative, it seems, but it does provoke a degree of hesitation. Strange characters appear on the scene; the protagonist's beloved late teacher's house is now inhabited by ghosts, the child clothes herself with her long hair and utters gnomic words of wisdom. The story could comply with Todorov's definition of the Uncanny where, he says, events appear to be rational - as products of the protagonist's dream or delusion, for example - but are 'in one way or another, incredible, extraordinary, shocking, singular, disturbing or unexpected.'<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>10</sup> Gilead Morahg, 'Israel's New Literature of the Holocaust: The Case of David Grossman's SEE UNDER: LOVE', *Modern Fiction Studies* 45:2 (1999), 462.

<sup>11</sup> Morahg, 'Israel's New Literature of the Holocaust', 462.

<sup>12</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 46.

Uncanny is distinguished from other sub-genres of the fantastic by being associated with the past (previously experienced phenomena).<sup>13</sup> In Agnon's story the familiar home has become unfamiliar and unknown, a quality of the uncanny (*unheimlich*), according to Freud, something familiar made strange by repression. The symbol of repression in Agnon's story is the *genizah* in the synagogue in which unwanted scrolls, some once written by the protagonist, have been discarded and forgotten - not least of all by the protagonist himself. Yet in this story, as in others by Agnon, the border between fantasy and morality tales is unclear. In this tale, the child represents the soul, unclothed because of the father's desertion of his home and, evidently, of his former piety. The tale is, then, an extended metaphor for loss: of home, family and faith, but technically it may qualify as Fantastic in its style and narrative content.

While the moral element predominates in Agnon's stories, however aligned to the Fantastic genre they may seem to be, this is less clear in the case of one of Agnon's younger contemporaries, the Israeli author Yitzhak Oren (1914-1997). In this article I examine two of his stories from the point of view of Todorov's generic classification. Oren's work is difficult both to place and to understand. The question I wish to address is simply whether situating it within Todorov's narrower and less culture-specific categorisation tells us how we should read it. Born in Siberia and raised in Harbin, Oren is virtually unknown in Israel. It is possible that his unusual path to Palestine, from East Asia rather than the Russian Empire, estranged him from his contemporaries. He was not a member of any of the *aliyot*, having arrived in Palestine in 1936 and was, therefore, not immediately identified with an ideological or literary group or journal. He began to publish in 1946, in *Keshet*, a journal that represented the Canaanite movement although Oren was by no means a Canaanite, while politically on the right. This might also have been a bar, at the time, to an Israeli author becoming canonic.

The reason for his obscurity is, therefore, not difficult to fathom. However, it is not because of an avoidance of the canonical subjects; quite the contrary, he commented on Jewish culture from its very beginnings and certainly saw himself as an advocate

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<sup>13</sup> Jacqueline Eyring Bixler, 'Freedom and Fantasy: A Structural Approach to the Fantastic in Carballido's *Las cartas de Mozar*', *Latin American Theatre Review* (Fall, 1980), 17.

for Jewish redemption in Israel, in fact as something of a secular prophet, using science to prefigure the messianic age. Yet his writing, filled with extraordinary erudition, that of an earlier, European, generation, is difficult, particularly in the context of the realism that dominated Hebrew letters until the last three decades of the 20th century. His stories are largely delocalised although nominally set in Israel, and populated by characters bearing Jewish names. Oren was, in Gershon Shaked's words, positioned between the generations, between the styles and the topics, a comment that reveals much about the constitution of the literature of the time.<sup>14</sup> Oren has been called a surrealist and a materialist, a realist and a magic realist, a fantasist and, at times, even an expressionist. He has been compared, with some justification, to Kafka and Borges.

A prevalent metaphor in Oren's writing is the world of physics and mathematics. Almost uniquely among Israeli writers he admires scientific and technological achievements, with scientific ideas acquiring effective symbolic colouring in his work. Avraham Huss notes Oren's fondness for ideas adopted from science - particularly modern physics.<sup>15</sup> One of his major protagonists in a sequence of stories is a physicist. Oren intersperses his narratives with passages accurately describing physical phenomena and mathematical arguments. Science for Oren is more than a trope. He believes that modern culture involves the conversion of ancient myth to modern science and that the Jews will achieve redemption through cosmic understanding.<sup>16</sup> In his overall schema, developed through his fiction, science therefore represents the negotiation of an ancient culture with the modern, technological world. The conceptual thread in many of his stories is his perception that humanity is able to alter its character through science and technology if they are used correctly. Oren believes that the 'repair of the world' can be attained through knowledge and reason, rather than myth and religion. Science, according to him, is able to correct the cosmic error and physics has defeated theology.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, his very philosophy is

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<sup>14</sup> Gershon Shaked, *Hasipporet ha'ivrit 1880-1980*, 3 (Jerusalem/Tel Aviv: Keter; Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 1988), 168-169.

<sup>15</sup> See Max Knight, ed., *The Imaginary Number: Short Stories by Yitzhak Oren*, trans. various (Berkeley, California: Benmir Books, 1986), xvii.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Yitzhak Oren: Sarah Katz, 'Yitzhak Oren, yotser poreh...' *Makor rishon* (September, 2007), 6-7. See also Leah Baratz, *Monografiyah al odot Yitzhak Oren (Nadel)* (Tel Aviv: Or Am, 2003), 69-71.

<sup>17</sup> Baratz, *Monografiyah al odot Yitzhak Oren (Nadel)*, 71.

satirical: his 'science' is a parody of scientific reason; despite his pseudo-technological language, it is either metaphorical or simply absurd, paradoxical and fantastic.

### **'The Imaginary Number'**

Most of Oren's stories are autonomous and, like all good fantasy, they are *ostensibly* realistic while defying all existential logic. One such example is 'The Imaginary Number'.<sup>18</sup> Whether the label Fantastic should be assigned to it is at first uncertain since it does not obey all Todorov's generic precepts. The imaginary (or complex) number, represented by the letter 'i', is the square root of minus one. Mathematically it has a function, with the word 'imaginary' as a recognised mathematical term, employed by scientists and mathematicians, and it is also Oren's sly reference to the incongruous impossibilities within his own text. He has taken this 'imaginary number' enigma as a metaphor for a material reality that has been denied. The story's proposition is that two men have been close companions since early childhood, they marry twin sisters, have families who are also close from birth, they have both bought identical plots of land, and yet one of the men, Benjamin, a physicist, has no recollection of the other man or of his life.<sup>19</sup> This 'other', Mickey, who has returned to Israel after some time abroad, discovers that his plot of land no longer exists. On his behalf Benjamin visits the Custodian of Enemy Property, a fictional bureaucracy and, by citing the principle of the imaginary number, proves that the non-existent property in fact exists and it is subsequently restored to its owner. Nothingness has become being, in accordance with Leibnitz's appraisal of the complex number.<sup>20</sup> The story is a dazzling tour de force, that refers, *inter alia*, to real mathematical and philosophical principles and to the word 'absurd' that was applied by mathematicians to the idea of the imaginary number, and which defines Oren's tale as well.

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<sup>18</sup> Knight, *The Imaginary Number*, 1-14.

<sup>19</sup> This story is included in Oren's *Masot Binyamin hahamishi* [The adventures of Benjamin the Fifth] whose protagonist is the physicist, Benjamin. The title alludes to the other Benjamins in Hebrew literature, the original Benjamin of Tudela, his successor the nineteenth-century Israel Joseph Benjamin who travelled through Europe and the East in search of the lost tribes, and Mendele's comic Benjamin in search of Sambatiyon.

<sup>20</sup> 'Imaginary numbers are a fine and wonderful refuge of the Holy Spirit, a sort of amphibian between and non-being.' Quoted in Edward Kassner, James Newman and James Roy Newman, *Mathematics and the Imagination* (Dover Publications Inc., 2003), 92.

It was to the complex number's essence that the wisest mathematicians applied the adjective 'absurd'. But the use of the word 'absurd' with regard to the complex number's essence did not last long... The wise men of mathematics began to call the principle by the name 'imaginary number'. In addition to recognizing this implied surrender, 'imaginary' is delicate in contrast to 'absurd.' (8)

Oren's story incorporates mathematical terms such as 'variable function' and 'differential equation' which, if I understand them correctly, on the most basic level indicate the dependence between entities or variables. The story is concerned with independence achieved as a result of dependence. It was written in 1956, at a time when survivors of the Holocaust were still pouring into Israel - a fact mentioned at one point in the text. Mickey has returned to an unfamiliar home after having escaped the catastrophe abroad. This would place the story in Todorov's category of the fantastic-uncanny. In Oren's story, as in Agnon's, the familiar home has become unfamiliar and unknown, Freud's *unheimlich*, as mentioned earlier. Or perhaps Mickey is Benjamin's double. For Freud, the *Doppelgänger* is the archetypal figure of the uncanny, embodying the return of the repressed, in this case the repressed memory of exile, suffering and genocide. Either way, Oren's fantasy encapsulates the fate of the survivor rediscovering his past. The question is whether Mickey is Benjamin's delusion, or whether Mickey's past is the unlived or unremembered past of Benjamin, whether the two men are the same man, with the variable being the fate of the one in Europe and the other in Israel. Since the story discusses the product of positive and negative numbers, perhaps the two men represent the opposite poles of a single person with differential fates.

The lawyer in the story is one Mr Necker, a reference to the Necker cube, which is an optical illusion in which a two-dimensional drawing of a cube appears simultaneously to protrude from and intrude into the page, that is, that a single form assumes two representations. The Necker cube 'splits into two timelines which are presented alternately.'<sup>21</sup> In mathematical terms '*i*, the virtual dimension in which these two time

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<sup>21</sup>Alex Comfort, *Reality and Empathy: Physics, Mind, and Science in the 21st Century* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984), 67.

lines diverge is, in fact an imaginary number in Boolean algebra...'<sup>22</sup> However incomprehensible this may seem to the non-mathematician, for Oren it was an appropriate and clearly comprehended metaphor for the possibility of the divergence of timelines in the life of a single person. It would not be too fanciful to suggest that the single person in the story is Benjamin, represented by the first-person narrator, 'I'. For Oren, therefore, the imaginary number 'i' is an *existential* proposition.

Despite these allusive games, on the face of it 'The Imaginary Number' is a realistic story: it has no ghosts, magic, vampires or demons, only a real mathematical principle. Yet curious effects in the story provoke the reader's hesitation: the eyes of Mickey, the visitor, turn from grey to blue and his face is a replica of mathematical form: '... a strand of his hair grotesquely shot out horizontally from his triangular face, giving his countenance a shape resembling the mathematical symbol for the square root  $\sqrt{\phantom{x}}$ ' (3). In addition, Benjamin's inexplicable amnesia about him, and the list of judgments given by the 'Deputy Attorney General for the State of Israel' at the story's end (a satirical element, for satire can be linked to fantasy), in addition to the fictional bureaucracy - all these shift the story from reality to fantasy. Much of the modern fiction that we call fantastic does not qualify as such because it departs from the strict standards of what is *supernatural* or *literal*, usually by being metaphorical or symbolic.<sup>23</sup> There is certainly an element of metaphor in the appearance of a mathematical principle in 'The Imaginary Number' yet it is difficult to see precisely what the metaphor entails.

The question is whether there can be fantasy without the strictly supernatural, only the *unnatural* which Todorov does not define. This would include elements of realism, the Fantastic, the imaginary and the absurd. In the story Todorov's principle of hesitation could be somewhat disrupted when Benjamin's wife, who had initially treated Mickey's history and family with disbelief (the disbelief necessary to the definition of the Fantastic), 'now, in her old age she discovered a 'sister', a twin sister at that!' (7) Oren leaves the problem of the wife's feigned belief or honest disbelief

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<sup>22</sup> Comfort, *Reality and Empathy*, 67. Boolean algebra is a system of symbolic logic devised by George Boole; used in computing.

<sup>23</sup> Wheelock, 'Fantastic Symbolism in the Spanish American Short Story', 415.



unresolved. Yet in 'The Imaginary Number' the characters themselves are mystified by the 'uncanny [*muzar*] stranger' and the reader's hesitation is therefore justified.

#### **'Anti-metamorphosis'**<sup>24</sup>

A Necker cube appears on the banner appearing in M. C. Escher's series of lithographs entitled 'Metamorphosis I'. Metamorphosis is an element of fantasy. This leads me to the second story in my discussion of Oren, his 'Anti-metamorphosis', about a man, Yitzhak Hogam, who wakes up one morning to find that he has been turned into a dog. In a short introduction the narrator (apparently a scientist) suggests that the reader first read Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' (1915).

Oren's intertextuality or, rather, hypotextuality, renders his fictional structures insecure and inchoate, 'decoherent' to use Shaked's term.<sup>25</sup> In various modified forms, inter- or hypotextuality as a literary device is one of the most significant phenomena in modern Hebrew literature. The reader of Hebrew secular texts is accustomed to polysemous reading in interpreting a work. Enlightenment poets suggested this technique as a code for the understanding of their works, directing their readers towards the concurrent reading of their poem together with the biblical passages to which they referred. Readers could not fully appreciate the new poem unless they read both sources side by side. In this peculiar duality the shadow text imparts as much 'meaning' as the new text overwritten it.<sup>26</sup>

In Israeli literature this inter- or hypotextuality expresses Israel's cultural identity. Its most significant function is to reflect the strong links between the biblical text and modern Jewish consciousness even - perhaps especially - among the secular writers. Hebrew writing has never wholly strayed from its textual ontological nature. Modern or not, its overriding framework is text. While many modern Hebrew writers constitute their identity through recourse to traditional texts, others, including Oren

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<sup>24</sup> 'Ha'antimetamorfosis' in Yitzhak Oren, *Pnei dor vakelev* [The face of a generation and a dog] (Jerusalem: Ogan, 1968), 204-225, trans. Philip Simpson, *The Jewish Quarterly* (Winter 1989-1990), 14-24.

<sup>25</sup> Shaked, *Hasipporet ha'ivrit 1880-1980*, 170.

<sup>26</sup> See Tova Cohen, 'The *maskil* as *lamdan*: the influence of Jewish education on *Haskalah* writing techniques' in Glenda Abramson and Tudor Parfitt, eds., *Jewish Education and Learning* (Reading: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1994), 61.

and, for example, his contemporary poets Natan Zach and Dan Paggis, add elements of world literature and scientific principles. Shaked, who does not assign the judgment of 'inchoate' to them, argues that Oren's text illuminates the Kafka original 'from a new point of view.'<sup>27</sup> It may not be too fanciful to suggest that this textual duality echoes Oren's motif of the double inasmuch as each of the two texts is illuminated by the other.

'Anti-metamorphosis' falls into the category of 'fantastic-marvellous' according to Todorov's formulation. A man becomes a dog in a real, recognisable world yet there can be no readerly hesitation. In fact, Oren himself reinforces Todorov's definition by writing (in the story),

It could be claimed that the initial transformation of Yitzhak Hogam into the form of a dog was in itself an unprecedented phenomenon, a kind of miraculous event in which the laws of nature played no part. Such being the case... there is no point in seeking a scientific explanation for this specific occurrence. (22)

He goes on in the story to refute this proposition with paragraphs of pseudo-science.

The story begins with a direct parody of Kafka's 'Metamorphosis': Yitzhak Hogam wakes up in the morning to find that he has become a dog. Despite his transformation, unlike Gregor Samsa, Hogam actually reaches his office where he holds the significant title of the Chief Assistant to the Controller of Universal Creativity. The grandiose title recalls Kafka and his fictional bureaucracy. Throughout his *oeuvre* Oren has parodied ludicrous bureaucracy, no doubt calling upon his own lifelong experience as a civil servant. The title of his fictional office illustrates his conviction that the creation of material and fictional worlds is indistinguishable. Through fiction various threads in human culture can be linked. Oren's writing ranges through these links, making logically impossible connections between established works of art and their creators, in the case of this story, Kafka, Bialik, Josephus, Engels and Charlie Chaplin. It seems that Oren's characters have no existence except through a mutuality

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<sup>27</sup> Shaked, *Hasipporet ha'ivrit 1880-1980*, 168.

of existence. He links literary characters to each other with the aim of creating a model of the endless unity of the fictional world, almost as if he is summoning a parallel universe of fiction living by its own laws. In Oren's quasi-kabbalistic mode of thought, each new work of the intellect, be it literary or scientific, repairs the known world.

The second section of the story is devoted to the correspondence between Hogam's wife and the Department of Pensions Allocations since there is some problem about paying a pension to a dog. Incidentally, Hogam's lawyer is called On Zafrir - which may be an allusion to Bialik's poem 'Zafririm' that celebrates strange, ephemeral creatures, undefinable in the real world. Hogam's correspondent in the Department of Pensions Allocations is Tamar Ralbag, whose acronymic name is that of Levi ben Gershom, better known as Gersonides or the Ralbag (1288-1344) a French rabbi, philosopher, mathematician and astronomer/astrologer who attempted to approach religion through reason and believed that reason and the Torah need not be in opposition. He is a fitting alter ego for Oren.

Unlike Samsa, who is mystified by his new status, Hogam is contented in his canineness. He encounters a female dog, signifying the 'other', a central theme of Todorov's *Fantastic*, representing the libido or sexuality. 'Desire as a sensual temptation finds its incarnation in several of the most common figures of the supernatural world and most especially in the form of the devil. To simplify, one might say that devil is merely another word for "libido".'<sup>28</sup> This encounter leads to Hogam's downfall. He is impounded for biting the female dog's human. Like Kafka's hunger artist, he refuses to drink the water provided for him in his prison, although he suffers 'a thirst... no amount of water could quench... The thirst was the thirst of longing that consumes the soul of all those expelled from the Garden of Eden,' that is, the sense of perfection Hogam has achieved as a dog. The devil libido has removed Hogam from the Garden of Eden. In her essay on Oren, Giulia Miller equates desire

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<sup>28</sup> Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 127.

and the Garden of Eden, so that by aspiring to one Garden of Eden, Hogam loses another.<sup>29</sup>

While in prison Hogam finds that, against his will, he is able to utter the word 'Mother'. In an inversion of the psychological norm, the dog Hogam's malady of speech signifies a regression, an anti-metamorphosis: while explaining the scientific principle of regression, the narrator confounds us by his analysis of Hogam's regression to the former state of *humanness*, as a result of trauma. Hogam's inner beast in this case is a benign creature, loyal and truthful, subject only to his senses. Just as trauma may reduce a man to the level of a beast, trauma has degraded Hogam to the level of a human. The word 'Mother' could also be taken to indicate Hogam's regression to childhood, but it is, instead, a further allusion to Kafka's Gregor Samsa who, after his transformation, appeals to his mother who is backing away from him in terror, "Mother, mother," said Gregor softly, looking up at her.<sup>30</sup>

Hogam the talking dog becomes a freak phenomenon, a performer, discoursing on politics and philosophy, and he dies onstage after a live public performance. This reminds the narrator of the last scene of Charlie Chaplin's *Limelight* and he asks: 'Is this not the one role shared by philosophy and art, to reveal and create the hidden threads that join creation to creation and creator to creator?' This indicates a perfect cosmic unity, with various threads in human culture linked through literature. In 'The Imaginary Number' Benajmin claims that the square root of -1 proves that what apparently has no existence does, in fact, exist. Oren comments, 'I claim that a human composition has an independent existence of its own, within the process of creation of the organic inanimate world... Raskolnikov is an actual, independent entity... an actual fact in the consciousness of human society in which he was created.'<sup>31</sup>

There are similarities and differences in the two accounts of metamorphosis. For example, Hogam, unlike Samsa, revels in his new-found animality which brings a heightened sensuality to his life and release from work and family pressures. Unlike

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<sup>29</sup> Giulia F. Miller, Unpublished Ph.D. thesis: *The Marvellous and the Fantastic in the Works of Yitzhak Oren*, 28. I wish to thank Dr Miller for allowing me to read her chapter on 'Anti-metamorphosis.'

<sup>30</sup> Franz Kafka, 'The Metamorphosis', 1915. *The Metamorphosis*, trans. and ed. Stanley Corngold (London/NY: WW Norton, 1996), 14.

<sup>31</sup> Katz, 'Yitzhak Oren', 2

Samsa, who enjoys music and art, Hogam realises that 'life and life only is the purpose of life.' Like a dog, life is to be lived by instinct, the appreciation of pleasure and the renunciation of deception. The dog bites when it hates and licks when it loves. For Hogam this is the ultimate freedom. In Kafka's story Gregor's parents and sister despise and eventually kill him. Hogam's wife and daughter love and pet him and eventually profit from him. Samsa is ultimately emasculated, his power being devolved to, and then assumed by, his sister Grete. Hogam, the father and breadwinner, willingly *cedes* his power to his daughter Dafna, allowing her to confine him in a dog collar and leash. The father has surrendered his power to his women although he remains responsible for their sustenance through his pension.

One of the freedoms Hogam assumes is that of marking his territory with urine, an action he performs without human self-consciousness. He obeys Kafka's injunction to 'Water the ground as much as you can.'<sup>32</sup> In fact, in the act of urination, Hogam is inscribing his new self in nature, on the earth's canvas, just as the author, Oren, inscribes him on the page. 'Hogam lives as we have described in these paragraphs.'<sup>33</sup> Unlike the young dog's shocked response to the seven dancing dogs in Kafka's 'Investigations of a Dog': 'they were standing on their hind legs, uncovering their nakedness, blatantly making a show of their nakedness... as though it were a meritorious act',<sup>34</sup> Hogam's new nakedness signifies a freedom from behavioural constraints, leaving his human self far behind. This is performed symbolically by the shedding of his tie.

The theme of performance leads the reader to other of Kafka's stories: Josephine the mouse singer, also an animal, the seven dancing dogs in 'Investigation of a Dog' (with which Oren's story has some affinities), and the hunger artist. Kafka was concerned that his German held traces of his parents' Yiddish, that he *mauschelnd*. In Oren's story is it the power of speech itself rather than the form it takes, that ends his life. Overall, 'Anti-metamorphosis' is a reading *against* the Kafka original (as directed by the narrator in his introduction) in the sense of the impossibility of

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<sup>32</sup> Franz Kafka, *The Great Wall of China and Other Pieces* (London/Edinburgh: Morrison and Gibb Ltd., 1946), 20.

<sup>33</sup> Oren, 'Ha'antimetamorfosis', 20.

<sup>34</sup> Franz Kafka, *Complete Stories*, trans. W. and E. Muir (New York: Schocken, 1971), 283-4.

perfection represented by the metamorphosed self *one way or the other*. For Samsa, life cannot continue as a bug; for Hogam, to regain *human* qualities is regressive.

What is the significance of all these diegetic pyrotechnics? Shaked deems the story to be mere entertainment and for Todorov it would be an example of the 'fantastic-marvellous.' Yet is it, after all, an allegory? Or a political comment derived from the title of the collection in which it appears, *Pnei dor vakelev* (the face of a generation and a dog), itself a reduction of the talmudic dictum that 'the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog' (*Sotah* 49b) meaning that in its expressionlessness the face of the generation will be unable to indicate shame, or that like a dog it is unable feel shame. Yet this is not relevant to 'Anti-metamorphosis' since Hogam represents nobody but himself and, rather than shame, his transformation brings him a measure of exhilaration. If it is an allegory, none of Todorov's definitions can be applied, by his own judgement that argues that allegory and fantasy are in opposition. The inherent duality of allegory cancels out the hesitation that is the defining characteristic of fantasy and destroys the 'truth' or 'literality' of the story. Yet Oren, as we have seen, likes dualities.<sup>35</sup>

Like the Hunger Artist, Hogam eventually becomes a showman or a showdog. He enjoys the fame and financial rewards. If this aspect of the story is indeed allegorical, and Hogam represents the artist, his transformation may suggest the shedding of all human accoutrements, his job, his possessions and his family in order to be recreated as an artist. He is, after all, the chief assistant to the controller of universal creativity. However, the satire implied in that title militates against the seriousness of an allegory of an artist's life. In 'Anti-metamorphosis', unlike 'The Imaginary Number' there is no reader's hesitation, since everything is abnormal and bizarre. For example, Hogam's secretary is terrified - but by the *dog*, not by her boss's transformation. Todorov has described Kafka's fiction as a 'generalized fantastic' that overcomes the worlds both of the story and the reader, a definition that can be applied to Oren's story.<sup>36</sup> In Bartana's view Kafka's stories are interpreted in every variety of

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<sup>35</sup> Common to many of his stories is a struggling and failing anti-hero who lives a double life: small and routine by day and heroic and romantic in imagination. The stories in this collection are generally not allegorical but examples of irony, black humour, fantasy and the grotesque.

<sup>36</sup> 'Themes of the Other' in Todorov, *The Fantastic*, 139.

possibility from the marvellous to the uncanny; 'what is a hesitation,' he asks, 'if not the continuous tension between the various interpretations?'<sup>37</sup> Todorov himself allows that there are authors, like Kafka who confer 'complete autonomy' on their texts. Agnon, too, falls within this judgment. Indeed, such a text never permits the reader to reach a conclusion regarding the nature of the events within the story.<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, Oren's 'Anti-metamorphosis', to use Stanislaw Lem's words, sets up 'an undecidability about its own meaning'<sup>39</sup> for there is no focal point within it able to resolve it.<sup>40</sup> According to Leah Baratz, 'The story leaves us without information about the reason for the central events. The expectation of a "message" to clarify its concealed reasons and purpose is an absurd expectation which leads to nothing.'<sup>41</sup> This vain hope is, in fact, an *element* of the fantastic not a judgment of it. Inasmuch as 'Anti-metamorphosis' adheres to Todorov's principles of the fantastic-marvellous, the application of them limits the range of questions we are permitted to ask about this, or any similar, text.

On the other hand, I believe that Oren's unpopularity may derive precisely from his ability to write stories that Todorov would define as the 'pure fantastic', about which no questions need or can be asked. My question originally was whether defining Oren's stories according to Todorov's generic system helps us to read them. In my opinion it does. Even if they are not strictly supernatural (few of them are), strange or unnatural events take place in them. The two paradigmatic stories I have discussed are not logically construed as allegories or parables, although they both utilise scientific metaphors, and if they are satires, their object - as indeed with allegory - is too opaque. 'Meaning', as we have seen, is elusive and the reader's hesitation is always required. Therefore applying Todorov's categorisation to Oren's fiction certainly determines the way we read it. I believe this has implications with regard to other Hebrew authors, Agnon in particular, whose reading has been somewhat regulated by established literary norms, and to the work of some younger Israeli experimental writers.

<sup>37</sup> Bartana, *Hafantasia basifrut dor hamedina*, 29.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, *The Marvellous and the Fantastic in the Works of Yitzhak Oren*, 28.

<sup>39</sup> Stanislaw Lem, 'Todorov's Fantastic Theory of Literature', *Science Fiction Studies* 1:4 (Fall, 1974), 227-37. <http://www.depauw.edu/SFs/backissues/4/lem4art.htm>

<sup>40</sup> See George Aichele, *Sign, Text, Scripture* (London/New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1997), 107.

<sup>41</sup> Baratz, *Monografiyah al odot Yitzhak Oren (Nadel)*, 249.

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