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# Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal

# BRANDEIS JUDAIC STUDIES JOURNAL

*VOLUME I*
*SPRING 2019*

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**BRANDEIS JUDAIC STUDIES JOURNAL**

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# CONTENTS

Dear reader,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to introduce the inaugural issue of the *Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal* – Brandeis' first entirely student-led publication devoted to academic writing on Jewish studies.

In 1948, Brandeis was established as the only non-sectarian university founded by the American Jewish community – a unique founding that, in the words of founding Brandeis Present Abram Sachar, uniquely positioned Brandeis a "center of Jewish learning." This promise was made a reality in 1953, when the university established its Department of Near-Eastern and Judaic Studies, or NEJS.

Brandeis faculty members have long been recognized for their leading work in Jewish studies and related fields. With the establishment of the *Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal,* we have an exciting opportunity to see and explore the many ways in which Brandeis students contribute to the rigorous study of these issues and ideas.

Like their professors, both in NEJS and beyond, Brandeis students have an enduring commitment to learning and producing excellent scholarship. The *Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal* not only reflects these inspiring commitments, but also highlights Brandeis students' impressive engagement with some of the pressing Jewish topics of our day.

Warmly,

Ron Liebowitz
President

To the reader,

In 1924, Rav Avraham Yitzhak HaKohen Kook journeyed to America from the Land of Israel and met with many American officials and dignitaries on a fundraising mission. One of the most creative and confusing minds of the 20th century, Rav Kook remains an elusive figure to this day. Among other leading American Jews, Rav Kook was introduced to Louis D. Brandeis, Associate Supreme Court Justice and the namesake of our University. Sensing the incredible soul he had met with, Rav Kook later described Brandeis as "a very great man who can't bear injustice being done to anyone, anywhere… His soul is hewn of the purest marble."[1] One can imagine the two discussing the great currents of Jewish history, each bringing their own unique passion for justice and welfare of their people: Rav Kook as a figure steeped in the traditions of Judaism yet with a wholesome understanding of modernity, and Brandeis as a legal reformer, advocate, and progressive agitator. Both representing two competing yet synonymous experiences of Judaism, as secular and sacred, traditional and rebellious.

It is with this in mind that we open our first edition of the *Brandeis Judaic Studies Journal*. As a Judaic publication, it is our goal to encompass the varied aspects of what it means to study Judaism and Jewish experience from the academic perspective: history, sociology, theology, language, and culture are all part of the wider tradition of Jewish thought. The field of Judaic studies transcends the strict boundaries between academic disciplines. In this volume, we have attempted to represent this diversity, and the diversity within Judaism as a whole.

This publication began in October 2018, when President Liebowitz spoke to Brandeis in his speech "A Framework for our Future." President Liebowitz described the balance between the

[1] MIRSKY, YEHUDAH. *RAV KOOK: Mystic in a Time of Revolution*, 187. S.l.: YALE UNIV PRESS, 2019.

values of Brandeis as a nonsectarian academic institution and its strong Jewish values. He elaborated further, describing his goal to reorient and further define the Jewish values of the University. Benji Schwartz, the Journal's treasurer, and I were struck with an idea of how we could take part in the mission of the University and add to its academic reputation. We decided to compile a selection of some of Brandeis's best student-written papers and articles in Judaic Studies. We formed an executive board with Eliana Padwa, our managing editor, and spent many hours in late night meetings, editing sessions, and debriefs. Throughout the process we have had the pleasure of acquainting ourselves with some of Brandeis's best students and faculty and have been incredibly grateful for that. We have also been faced with difficult decisions and challenges. We are incredibly proud to present to you the following journal.

Sincerely,

Jonathan D. Mohr
Editor in Chief

When we embarked on this journal together, it was not so clear it would become a reality. Through the sage advice, counsel, and financial backing of many individuals and institutions, we have turned an idea into what you are holding in your hands now. We are incredibly grateful to our sponsors and supporters, who have guided us throughout this process, and who have offered both concrete and creative contributions.

We would like first and foremost to thank our advisor, Sylvia Fuks Fried, executive director of the Tauber Institute and editorial director of the Brandeis University Press, without whom this could not have become a reality. She has proven an invaluable advisor, partner, and friend, and has always provided us with wisdom, warmth, and kindness.

University Librarian Matthew Sheehy, and the staff of the Brandeis Library have also provided key support in making our journal a reality. Mr. Sheehy and his team were very enthusiastic about our project and deftly managed a much-needed logistical fix. We are ever grateful for their direction.

Much of the impetus for this project came from President Ron Liebowitz's "Framework for our Future" speech in October of 2018. His vision for this academic institution has served to motivate us to edit and produce this journal. We are indebted to President Liebowitz for his encouragement and support.

We would also like to offer our thanks to the many University departments and institutions who have offered guidance and support: the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, Brandeis Hillel, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies, the Brandeis Law Journal, the Office of Budget and Financial Planning, and the Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections Department.

These acknowledgments would not be complete without a mention of our committed and hard working staff, who spent much time reviewing, formatting and editing the content right alongside us. Thank you to Avraham Penso, Madeleine Cahn, Violet Fearon, Eliana Koehler, Gavi Kutliroff, and Gabriel Freiman. We could not have produced this volume without you. Thank you as well to Natalia Wiater for designing our cover.

We also owe a great debt to our authors; each of them spent hours with us producing, workshopping, and editing the articles presented within. Additionally, we are appreciative of their respective professors who inspired and helped our authors craft their initial works.

Last but not least, we are grateful to our many sponsors, without whom we could not have produced the journal: the Tauber Institute for the Study of European Jewry, Combined Jewish Philanthropies IACT Campus Initiative, the Jack, Joseph, and Morton Mandel Center for Studies in Jewish Education, the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute, the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies, the Office of the President, and the Brandeis Humanities Fellowship.

Enjoy the journal,

Jonathan D. Mohr, *Editor in Chief*
Eliana Padwa, *Managing Editor*
Benji Schwartz, *Founder and Treasurer*

# SECTION I

***Alex Friedman***

# *A HISTORY OF SEPARATIONS:* MISHKAN ISRAEL

*A Jew is shipwrecked on a desert island. Many years later, he is finally seen by a passing ship, which comes to rescue him. When the captain comes ashore, the Jew thanks him profusely and offers to give him a tour. He shows off the tools he made to hunt, the fire pit where he would cook his food, the hammock where he slept. His biggest achievement is a beautiful synagogue made of vines and branches, woven into intricate patterns with a high ceiling. On their way back to the ship, however, the captain notices a second synagogue, just as immaculate as the first. "I don't get it" the captain said, "why did you build two synagogues?" "Oh," says the Jew, "that's the synagogue I don't go to."*

The above, while amusing and a classic of Jewish humor, is truthful. Synagogue identity is a deeply important part of Jewish communal life in America. As Jews first came to America, their identification as Jews and participants in the Jewish community was no longer coerced. Jews from Germanic countries were, from 1815, taxed heavily, restricted in their movement, and suffered quotas on marriages and population. German Jewish emigrants came from a place where their taxes were paid to their community, their lives were dominated by their people, and their membership in the Jewish community was coerced by the government.[1] In America, their lives were radically different. They could choose whether they identified with one community or another, for better or worse. If a group felt unhappy with their synagogue, and they were able to overcome the barrier to exit, they could simply move to another one or start their own. Synagogue identity became part of the reason for joining or leaving a synagogue, because one

[1] Beth S. Wenger, *Congregation and Community : The Evolution of Jewish Life at Congregation Mishkan Israel, 1840-1990* (New Haven, 1990), 9.

identified with the practices of the synagogue or the values it stood for. The identification with or away from particular synagogues, now a choice, became part of a Jew's identity.

The practices and movements of synagogues all around the United States, including at Connecticut's oldest synagogue, Mishkan Israel in New Haven, highlight this new freedom. The story of New Haven's Mishkan Israel is one of religious reform over time. Subject to progress in fits and starts, with pauses and calm between stretches of change, Mishkan Israel demonstrates the tension between sameness and difference, a community that wishes to be both a part of America and apart from it. That tension leads to three different splits over the course of the synagogue's four building moves. In this paper, we will explore those splits, their causes and consequences, to paint a wider picture of Jewish religious life in America.

Mishkan Israel was officially established on May 26th, 1843, but Jewish life in New Haven began long before that date.[2] In 1772, a Jewish family settled in New Haven,[3] but synagogue life was organized quietly in various homes for many years and did not become openly organized until the 1840s, when about 15 to 20 Jewish families were living there.[4] Until 1843, Jews living in New Haven were not allowed to establish a Jewish house of worship under Connecticut state law.[5] The change came after a petition from the Jews of Hartford and New Haven was introduced to Connecticut's Judiciary Committee, stating that "the state constitution has made ample provision for all to worship God. … The law is not broad enough to protect us in the [ownership] of church property or burial grounds as is the case with all Christian denominations." As Mary Donohue puts it, "The judicial committee declined to recommend a constitutional amendment but

[2] Werner Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860," *Jews in New Haven* 6 (1993): 1–33.

[3] Not counting the infamous Pinto brothers, who had disavowed their religion. They, having no affiliation with Mishkan Israel, are outside the scope of this paper.

[4] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 9; Ezra Stiles and Franklin Bowditch Dexter, *The Literary Diary of Ezra Stiles. Edited under the Authority of the Corporation of Yale University by Franklin Bowditch Dexter* (New York C. Scribner's Sons, 1901), 283, http://archive.org/details/diaryezrastiles01stiluoft.

[5] Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860," 2.

did recommend a special act, which was adopted in June 1843 by the Connecticut General Assembly. The act stated 'that Jews who may desire to unite and form religious societies shall have the same rights, powers and privileges which are given to Christians of every denomination.'"[6]

Mishkan Israel, largely populated by Bavarian Jews, housed itself above the store of Heller and Mandelbaum, at No.5 Grand Street.[7] It stayed there until the summer of 1846, when a majority of the German membership seceded and rented out a space in Brewster's Building, which was then a new building on the corner of State and Chapel streets.[8] The few members who stayed behind in what was, at least nominally, Mishkan Israel, continued what has imperfectly been called 'Orthodox' practices, and those who formed the short-lived Mishkan Sholom in Brewster's Building pursued similarly mistitled 'Reform' practice.[9]

While the minutes of Mishkan Israel from 1840 to 1849 were destroyed in a fire, making the exact details of the split difficult to discern, there are still signs that the split, while not amicable, was not entirely due to a Reform-Orthodox disagreement.[10] Although the synagogue was largely populated by Bavarian Jews, there was still a sizable minority of Jews from other various central European areas. The differences between *Minhag Polin* and *Minhag Ashkenaz* (Polish and German custom), meant differences in tunes, prayers, and decorum. According to Wenger and Sarna, this likely had far more to do with the split than some nascent German reformer Judaism.[11] Additionally, as Hirsch points out, the more affluent and assimilated German population saw the Polish Jews, with their different customs and uncultured Yiddish language, as

[6] Mary M. Donohue, "Site Lines: Gaining Religious Equality," *Connecticut Explored* 14, no. 2 (Spring 2016): 44.

[7] Martin Laskin, *An Ethnographic Study of an American Conservative Synagogue*, Jewish Studies (Lewiston, N.Y.) v. 24 (Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); Rabbi David Levy, "New Haven Jewish History (1903)," *Jews in New Haven* 2 (1979): 15–17.

[8] Rollin Osterweis, "Mishkan Israel 1840-1960: Its Places of Worship," *Jews in New Haven* 2 (1979): 105.

[9] Osterweis, 105.

[10] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 9.

[11] Wenger, 11; Jonathan D. Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel," *Jews in New Haven* 3 (1979): 101–9.

being of a separate, lower class.[12] The synagogue identities of the congregants were wrapped up in the memories of how their practice ought to look and where it ought to be going. The strain of having another group holding back what would be understood by the German members as proper practice created enough tension that they decided to simply break off and pursue their own *Ashkenazi* practice.

In 1849, just three years after the split, the smaller Mishkan Israel rejoined with Mishkan Sholom and Mishkan Israel was whole once again.[13] A combination of factors likely led to this reunification. The most prominent of these factors was that Mishkan Israel only had ten men, exactly what it needed for a *minyan*, the quorum of ten Jewish adults required for most prayers and reading from the Torah. This meant that if any one of them was absent, the synagogue could not function.[14] Another factor was the similar and traditional practices of the two synagogues. When the two synagogues joined up again, the newly merged group still employed a *shochet* (ritual butcher), discussed building a *mikvah* (ritual bath), employed a regular Torah reader, had separate seating, and enforced the observance of *kashrut* (dietary laws) and the Sabbath through fines and fees. Thus, it is reasonable to say that Mishkan Israel split due culture and class, not law. Such a split can be healed, it seems, when faced with powerful pressures that affect practice and law. For those who observed *Minhag Polin*, a cost-benefit measure of remaining separate was not favorable toward maintaining a split, as it was destructive to practice and thus created a barrier against its continued separate existence.

The newly reunified Mishkan Israel did not immediately undergo radical reformation, instead simply changing rules about decorum.[15] Members were told not to sing loudly, ahead of the cantor, or out of tune; children were separated from their parents to ensure a quiet and distraction-free environment; all of this was

[12] Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860."
[13] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 11.
[14] Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860."
[15] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*.

enforced by fines.[16] The lack of more radical reforms may have been a result of the newly re-entered non-Bavarian Jewish sect holding back the reformers of the synagogue, as Wenger stipulates, or was simply what the wider German synagogue community wanted at that time. That, in the three years of the split, the *Ashkenazi* Mishkan Sholom had not enacted radical reforms on its own suggests that the second option is more likely. However, this would change soon in the future.

Around the same time that Mishkan Israel was being reunited, a building committee was formed to find a plot of land upon which the community could build a synagogue. While it is not clear if this committee was formed by Mishkan Sholom or Mishkan Israel, as Hirsch's account is unreliable on the distinction between the two synagogues during this brief period, it continued its work after the merge took place. In March of 1852, Israel Bretzfelder and Lewis Rothschild purchased a plot of land for this very purpose.[17] The plan was to build a synagogue with a *mikveh*, living quarters for a teacher and minister, and a classroom. In May 1852, *The Occident*, reported, "We see it stated in the papers, that the Israelites of [New Haven] are about building a Synagogue, to cost about ten thousand dollars."[18] This plan went nowhere. The congregants were split on whether the purchase was a good idea, likely due to the financial troubles that were already plaguing the synagogue.[19] When the board went around to raise money, they were only able to raise a few hundred dollars, not the several thousand they would need. Some even suggested that the lot should be sold, and the committee was disbanded in 1853.[20] The financial aid of the congregants proved itself to be both crucial and unable to support the project.

Despite the difficulty of building a new structure, Mishkan Israel purchased an existing building with the help of a $5,000

[16] Wenger, 12.
[17] Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860," 7,13.
[18] Jonathan D. Sarna, "New Haven in Early American Jewish Newspapers," *Jews in New Haven* 1 (1978): 125–32.
[19] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 12.
[20] Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860," 15.

bequest from the late New Orleans philanthropist Judah Touro.[21] This new synagogue building, on Court Street, cost $12,000.[22] This moment, as the synagogue board sought to invest in a permanent structure, must have made its Polish membership and those in the community who were unhappy with the synagogue rethink their commitment to and identification with it. Perhaps they had been fine paying the old membership dues for a service run in the Ashkenazi style, but they were less satisfied with the new $30 building fee tacked on top of them, along with all the stress and changes that come with moving locations. Remember, this is the congregation that had just found itself unable to afford the construction of a building outright. For that price and aggravation, it seems that the Polish membership of Mishkan Israel would have preferred to stay in the Brewster Building and have a service that they preferred, with a community that was more traditional, and a culture that did not look down on them. In June of 1855, in the middle of Mishkan Israel's move to Court street, B'nai Sholom was formed. The reasons for its formation were largely the same as Mishkan Sholom before it, as described in *The Jewish Messenger*:

> Our co-religionists of the Elm City number, probably, one hundred and thirty families, forming two Congregations, Mishkan Israel and B'nai Sholom, the former worshipping according to the *German*, and the latter according to the *Polish minhag*. (emphasis added)[23]

This change of building and change in communities appears to have sparked Mishkan Israel's first reformer period. With the unhappy traditionalist minority out of the way, the newly moved Mishkan Israel felt freer to pursue its new reformer agenda, at least for a little while. At first, this only meant a vernacular sermon, a choir, and a change in dress for the clergy, but eventually it came

[21] Isaac Leeser, "Death of Judah Touro," *The Occident*, March 1854.

[22] *The Israelite (1854-1874); Cincinnati, Ohio*, August 11, 1854; Hirsch, "The First Minute Book of Congregation Mishkan Israel 1849-860."

[23] "Local Items," *The Jewish Messenger (1857-1902); New York, NY*, August 9, 1861: Mishkan Sholom eventually moved to Williams street, and then to Olive before folding in the 1930s, but its life is not within the scope of this paper

to mean much more than that.[24] Mishkan Israel, which had gone to the trouble of commissioning an expensive women's balcony only a few years prior, starting mixed family seating in 1864 and installed an organ in 1863, making music a set part of the service.[25]

Mishkan Israel was, for the first part of its existence, almost completely without rabbinic leadership or authority. During its first sixteen years, every aspect of the community was lay-led. While Mishkan Israel hired three different clergy from 1856 to 1873, none of them were ordained Rabbis;[26] Mishkan Israel lacked a guiding ideological leader. While this may have created a community that was more active in the creation of its own Jewish practices, this also indicated a lack of supreme communal religious authority. As Wenger puts it "lacking both a strong spiritual leader and a firm allegiance to the Reform movement, Mishkan Israel relied upon the tastes and desires of congregants to determine standards for ritual and reform."[27]

In 1873, Mishkan Israel hired Rabbi Judah Wechsler, an ardent and powerful advocate for reform, as its first ordained Rabbi. Rabbi Wechsler had been ordained in Europe under the prominent Orthodox Rabbi Seligman Baer Bamberger, but had become a powerful supporter of Reform Judaism.[28] For a community which had not previously had a formal rabbi, hiring one was a mixed blessing. The community could unite under rabbinic authority, but wanted to be guided in the direction it already wanted to go and to feel empowered in its movement. "While the rabbi's passion for the Reform movement undoubtedly hastened the pace of change at Mishkan Israel, it was the congregants who accepted, supported, and encouraged reforms."[29] Disagreements over which direction the minyan should be going, be it *Ashkenazi* or *Polin*, reform or orthodox, had already split the congregation twice. With a Rabbi at

[24] Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel"; Wenger, *Congregation and Community*.
[25] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 16; Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel."
[26] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 17.
[27] Wenger, 17.
[28] Wenger, 17.
[29] Wenger, 18.

the wheel, the congregation could be guided towards their goals more effectively, but they never forgot about their ability to stop the synagogue in its tracks if they were unhappy with its direction.

Under the direction of Rabbi Wechsler, Mishkan Israel adopted *Minhag America* as its prayer book of choice, stopped observing the second days of two-day holidays, allowed female torah readers, began holding late Friday night services to accommodate workers, and included non-Jews in its choir.[30] Rabbi Wechsler felt the community uniting behind him, as evidenced by his account of a speech he gave in Hartford in 1876: "The Congregation of Hartford is not united, I am sorry to say, as it should be. There is a diversity of sentiment, by which the cause of genuine Judaism becomes undermined; many of its members cling with tenacity to outward forms, claiming that what has been good enough for the father must be good enough for the son."[31] The Rabbi would not be publicly chastising the Hartford congregation for its lack of unity unless he believed his congregation to be a model of the quality. As Wenger puts it "the Rabbi possessed a sometimes difficult combination of enormous self-confidence, little patience for any remnants of traditionalism, and unshakable dedication to the principles of Reform Judaism. He claimed without reservation that 'my life has been devoted to the cause of reform and progress within the pale of Judaism.'"[32]

The delicate balance in which Rabbi Wechsler steered with the consent of the congregation could not endure when the rabbi pushed the congregation in a direction they were unwilling to go. The rabbi saw himself, as previously described, as a bold reformer with the wind at his back, but this was not so. In his accounting of reform and change in the life of Mishkan Israel, Jonathan Sarna describes that it went through cycles of revolution and stability.[33] Rabbi Wechsler failed to see the writing on the wall as the congregation began to feel the need for stability, pushing for more

[30] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*; Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel."
[31] J. Wechsler, *The American Israelite (1874-2000); Cincinnati, Ohio*, March 3, 1876.
[32] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 20.
[33] Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel."

reforms while the congregants were still trying to, as Sarna described it, "catch their breaths."[34] In 1878, Rabbi Wechsler resigned his position and was succeeded by Rabbi Leopold Kleeberg, a more moderate reformer.[35] Rabbi Kleeberg served the community from 1879 to 1893, the end of his tenure less-than-coincidentally coinciding with the congregation's rising willingness to begin new rounds of reforms and a conversation about Sunday services.[36]

Rabbi Kleeberg was succeeded in 1893 by Rabbi David Levy, who had many of the same successes and failures of the Wechsler tenure. Like Rabbi Wechsler, Rabbi Levy quickly rid the congregation of German, in his case ridding the synagogue completely of the language, introduced a new prayerbook of his own composing, and instituted Sunday services for those in his congregation who had to work on Saturdays.

Rabbi Levy prompted Mishkan Israel to move. Thus far, every change of location for Mishkan Israel has revealed underlying divisions in the community, exacerbated by the financial and communal stresses endemic to a change of location. In the first instance, the move itself was propelled by these divisions. In the second, the move aggravated those tensions. Mishkan Israel also had a long history of financial trouble that plagued it from its move to the Court Street Synagogue, and had just finished making a controversial decision on the aforementioned Sunday services, potentially making these problems even worse. However, Rabbi Levy rode the wave of favorable congregational opinion that had carried him to the pulpit when executing his plan of having Mishkan Israel, which had entered into its fiftieth year and grown considerably, build "a new home commensurate with the position of dignity it occupied." He used his pulpit to extol the virtues of the new synagogue building and, in the end, the congregation "unanimously voted that the present building in Court street must

[34] Sarna, 105.
[35] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*; Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel."
[36] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 23.

be sold and that a new edifice be erected."[37] This is not to say that Rabbi Levy was entirely responsible for the building of Mishkan Israel's new synagogue on Orange Street. This decision was made by the entirety of the community at a moment that was ripe for change. Had there been an incongruity between the rabbi and the congregation, then the congregants would have either seen their synagogue identities as under an attack and rid themselves of their rabbi or, depending on the progress of the project, split from the synagogue entirely. Rabbi Levy's leadership, combined with the congregation's desire for change, made the project possible.

The balance between Rabbi Levy and the community did not last. Similarly to what had happened with Rabbi Wechsler, Rabbi Levy's tenure ended when the congregation's taste for change had waned and his had not. For Rabbi Levy, it came in 1913 with a proposed intermarriage. Rabbi Levy wanted to perform the ceremony, the congregation was not so sure. They consulted outside rabbis, which they would not have done if they still had confidence in his leadership, and Rabbi Levy left shortly afterwards under the guise of a "voluntary retirement."[38] Documentation from the time makes it abundantly clear that this was the doing of the board.[39]

Despite his eventual leaving, Rabbi Levy's success in building a synagogue shows significant unity — which was long over by 1955, when the community tried to move again. After years of explosive baby boomer growth in its religious school, there was a general recognition that Mishkan Israel would need to move. The board purchased a plot of land on Ridge Road in Hamden and plans were drawn up to first create a larger religious school and only later to build a new sanctuary. Unfortunately, this is where the project began to go wrong. Instead of building according to the plan, a few members of the board decided to change the plan and build the sanctuary first, along with the classrooms, ballooning the expense of the project and its complexity. Not only were the costs higher, but because moving from one synagogue building to

[37] Wenger, 26.
[38] Wenger, 29.
[39] Sarna, "Innovation and Consolidation: Phases in the History of Mishkan Israel," 104–105.

another takes time, and Mishkan Israel was not adequately prepared, the new sanctuary and the old were both owned by the synagogue simultaneously, increasing the costs even more. The synagogue fell into dire financial straits.

The congregants, who had accepted the original plan, felt that their leadership had steered them too far astray. There was a discrepancy between where the congregation wanted to go and where they were taken, so they stopped the building cold. The board held a fundraising campaign to help pay down the debt, but it was unsuccessful. They put on a grand dedication ceremony for the new building, perhaps to stoke pride in the new building, but it did not appease the upset congregation or fix their financial problems. The board even went so far as to consider holding BINGO games in the Orange street synagogue to raise money, but thought better of it.[40] Finally, the board decided to raise membership dues. Now those congregants who had felt ownership of their synagogue, who identified with its mission and goals, felt betrayed. The plan they had agreed to had been abandoned and now they were being forced to pay the price for it. Their synagogue identities were upset by this sudden disconnect between the synagogue they thought they belonged to, and the one they suddenly found themselves in. Those congregants looked at these developments and, as was seen one hundred years before when synagogue leadership made a decision unsupported by its membership about buildings, they split off to form Temple Emanuel in the mid-1960s.[41]

Reading the website of the present-day Temple Emanuel, signs of the original grievances can still be seen, as it says: "Temple Emanuel began with a group of Reform Jews who were seeking *a better quality of Jewish education* for their children, as well as an experience different from what they found in *typical Reform congregations.* … Some members wanted less Hebrew; some wanted *less politics*; others wanted a smaller, *more congenial*

[40] Wenger, *Congregation and Community*, 67.
[41] Wenger, 53.

group." (emphasis added).[42] The mention of better education harkens back to the religious school building that started the split in the first place. Additionally, it must be asked, "less politics" than what? "More congenial" than whom? While this written history is not explicitly about the unhappy origins of the synagogue,[43] in light of the Temple's origins, it is rather clear that the animosity lives on even now. The loss of synagogue connection was burned into the new synagogue identity of those former members of Mishkan Israel.

The history of Mishkan Israel demonstrates one theory of how synagogues and their membership relate to one another. Synagogues provide congregations with a part of their identity, one that is malleable due to the freedoms of movement and association Jews experience in the United States. When that identity is threatened by a lack of cohesion in the congregation or a misalignment between the will of the leadership and the will of the congregation, congregants react either to remove the offending part of their community from their congregation or, failing that, remove themselves from the congregation. But this comes with a price. Note that there often was no separation, even when there was disagreement within the community about Sunday services or intermarriage, because either the communal identity was stronger than the disagreement, or the barrier to exit was too high. That barrier is less effective whenever a congregation moves its building, as the price for staying rises and formerly assured priorities are put to the test, laying bear the underlying weaknesses in the congregation. Congregational leaders ought to be weary of these moments of transition, because when the cost-benefit for their congregants is not in their favor and their synagogue-identities are endangered, they may have a split on their hands.

[42] "Our History – Temple Emanuel of Greater New Haven," accessed November 23, 2017, http://tegnh.org/history/.

[43] It leaves out Mishkan Israel's attempt to bar Temple Emanuel from entry into the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, so some water seems to have been allowed under the bridge.

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***Adina Weinberger***

*COMPARATIVE VIEWS ON DEATH, MEMORIAL, AND IMMORTALITY*

# ECCLESIASTES

In Ecclesiastes, a book in the Writings section of the Hebrew Bible, the mysterious speaker's views on death inform a musing on how one should live life.[1] The non-eschatological book is not concerned with an afterlife; rather, Ecclesiastes's conclusion that life is futile is colored by his views on the finality of death. Life and death are inextricably linked for Ecclesiastes, and because death is meaningless, life is meaningless and futile as well. The book mirrors and offers a stark contrast to contemporary texts from the region.

The carpe diem philosophy of Ecclesiastes resembles that in works such as the Harper's Song from the tomb of Roma-Roy at Thebes, Egypt, and an early version of the Mesopotamian poem The Epic of Gilgamesh. Ecclesiastes also mirrors and contradicts texts such as the Phoenician inscription of Mesha, a Moabite memorial inscription. In such inscriptions, kings were promised bountiful afterlives, and even after the death of a king his legacy was to be continued by his son as an extension of himself. In these cultures, kings could achieve semi-immortality through their inheritors and the continuation of the dynastic line. In Ecclesiastes, however, the speaker rejects the idea that his inheritor would be an extension of himself. He views dynastic succession as vanity and redundancy, and criticizes the concept of passing on one's rewards and accomplishments to someone who did not work for them. For Ecclesiastes, death robs a person of fulfillment because all are equal in death. "For the same fate is in store for all: for the righteous, and for the wicked."[2] The wise is equal to the foolish; the king is equal to the citizen. Ecclesiastes draws on similar

[1] Ecclesiastes, the name of both the book and its persona, is a translation of the Hebrew Kohelet.
[2] Eccl 9:21 (JPS 1985).

themes as other Ancient Near Eastern texts in order to play off of expectations and directly contradict them, offering an enlightening view about how death and the afterlife shaped royal attitudes towards life.

Ecclesiastes begins, like many Northwest Semitic memorial inscriptions, by establishing the kingly voice: "The words of Koheleth, son of David, king in Jerusalem."[3] This beginning of the book is almost identical to the opening lines of the inscription of Mesha. The inscription begins with the lines

> I am Mesha son of Chemoshmelek, king of Moab, the Daibonite. My father reigned over Moab for 30 years and I reigned after my father.[4]

As in Ecclesiastes, the speaker opens by asserting his kingly voice. However, while the Mesha inscription uses the kingly voice to celebrate kingship, the speaker in Ecclesiastes uses the kingly voice to undermine the entire institution of kingship. The declaration "Utter futility!... All is futile!"[5] immediately follows the assertion of Ecclesiastes's name and challenges the value of a kingly status and kingship itself.

Although it has been postulated that King Solomon, the son of King David in the biblical canon, is the author of the book of Ecclesiastes, anonymous authorship with writing attributed to well known figures was fairly standard in the ancient world. Likewise, it is unlikely that King Mesha wrote his own memorial inscription, even though the writing declares "I am Mesha…"[6] An example of this is the ancient Egyptian text "Instructions of Kagemni," which is dated to have been written between 1929-1895 BCE, while Kagemni the person lived in the 27th century BCE. Given this literary device, it is possible that the speaker in Ecclesiastes did not intend the reader to believe the text was written by King Solomon.

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[3] Eccl 1:1 (JPS 1985).

[4] AP 5066 lines 1-2, in Robert Francis Harper, "The Moabite Stone," *The Biblical World* 7, no. 1, (January 1896): 63, www.jstor.org/stable/3140007.

[5] Eccl. 1:2 (JPS 1985).

[6] AP 5066 line 1, In Harper, "The Moabite Stone," 63. www.jstor.org/stable/3140007.

Instead the speaker takes on the persona of Solomon, who per II Kings is gifted with wisdom and the capacity to discern good and bad, in order to establish the kingly voice and assert himself as someone wise with important things to say. Ecclesiastes uses the assumed-validity of the kingly voice in order to punctuate his point. If even the king, the purported wisest in the land, and if even Solomon, the wisest of the kings, has nothing of importance to say, then there is nothing important to be said. From its beginning, the text's themes are in stark contrast to the memorial inscriptions it resembles.

The speaker in the Mesha inscription goes on to use this kingly voice to celebrate his accomplishments and list his successes in battle and in expanding his kingdom.

> He had let me see my pleasure on all them that hated me….
> …
> ...Israel perished with an everlasting destruction …
> …
> ... and I built Ba'al-Meon, …
> I built the king's palace....
> ...And there was no cistern in the midst of the city, in QRHH. And
> I said to the people, Make
> you every man a cistern in his house.[7]

The speaker boasts of military victories, of building cities and palaces, and of providing water for his people; in short, he lists all the ways in which he was a successful king during his lifetime and the ways in which he was a better king than his predecessors. The speaker in the book of Ecclesiastes lists his successes as well, using similar language to the Mesha inscription.

[7] AP 5066 lines 4, 7, 9, 23-25, in Harper, "The Moabite Stone," 63, www.jstor.org/stable/3140007.

> I multiplied my possessions. I built myself houses and I planted vineyards.
>
> I laid out gardens and groves, in which I planted every kind of fruit tree.
>
> I constructed pools of water, enough to irrigate a forest shooting up with trees.
>
> …
>
> Thus, I gained more wealth than anyone before me in Jerusalem."[8]

Ecclesiastes, like King Mesha, describes his material possessions and how he fulfilled his kingly duties by providing water for his kingdom and claims to be more successful than his predecessors. But instead of celebrating this success, Ecclesiastes disparages his prosperity on the basis that he will be robbed of his accomplishments in death, and his successor will inherit his wealth without having personally earned it.

> Then my thoughts turned to all the fortune my hands had built up,
>
> to the wealth I had acquired and won—and oh, it was all futile
>
> and pursuit of wind; there was no real value under the sun!
>
> For what will the man be like who will succeed the one who is ruling over what was built up long ago?[9]

Ecclesiastes once again uses the same language as ancient Northwest Semitic memorial inscriptions but contradicts the values of kingly immortality that are inherent in the inscriptions. King Mesha states his name and kingly status and then his father's name and kingly status; he is adding himself to the linear dynastic succession as an extension of his predecessors. He inherits his father's accomplishments as well as adds to them for his own sons to inherit. Ecclesiastes follows the same template, stating that he is the son of David, but he challenges this notion of inheritors as an extension of himself and questions the value of inheritance.

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[8] Eccl. 2:4-6, 2:9 (JPS 1985).
[9] Eccl. 2:11-12 (JPS 1985).

> So, too, I loathed all the wealth that I was gaining under the sun.
> For I shall leave it to the man who will succeed me —
> and who knows whether he will be wise or foolish? — and he will
> control all the wealth that I gained by toil and wisdom under the
> sun.[10]

Ecclesiastes criticizes dynastic succession and declares it to be a vanity, utter worthlessness. Ecclesiastes uses the language of memorial inscriptions but uses it to serve a different purpose. Whereas memorial inscriptions use linear dynastic succession to collapse the past into a static history, Ecclesiastes speaks about himself in the present, distancing himself from his ancestors and inheritors.

Ecclesiastes advises that one should not concern oneself with legacy or inheritance. Rather they should enjoy their possessions in their lifetime, for there is no value to one's accomplishments after they die. "Even if a man should beget a hundred children and live many years — no matter how many the days of his years may come to, if his gullet is not sated through his wealth, I say: The stillbirth, though it was not even accorded a burial, is more fortunate than he."[11] Ecclesiastes uses the futility of inheritance and legacy to justify an attitude of carpe diem, enjoying oneself in the moment. The carpe diem philosophy of Ecclesiastes is a continuous theme throughout the book. "I saw that there is nothing better for man than to enjoy his possessions, since that is his portion. For who can enable him to see what will happen afterward?"[12] For Ecclesiastes, the notion of an afterlife is ambiguous, so people should enjoy their possessions in their lifetimes and live in the moment.

Other Near Eastern texts, including the Harper's Song from the tomb of Roma-Roy at Thebes, Egypt, also follow the carpe diem philosophy. The Harper's Song is an inscription carved into the tomb of Roma-Roy next to the carving of a seated harper. The

[10] Eccl. 2:18-19 (JPS 1985).
[11] Eccl. 6:3 (JPS 1985).
[12] Eccl. 3:22 (JPS 1985).

song is fragmented, and the little that is legible today addresses skepticism of an afterlife and urges the skeptic to celebrate life because there is nothing after death:

> (1)[Thus says the singer who is in the tomb of] Osiris, the divine father
> …
> Act according to your desire, o (3) lord (?), until the day of mooring
> arrives (?) (or similar)]
> None that have gone have come back.
> None that have been buried in (4) [a coffin have come forth by day (?) (or
> similar)]…
> Make holiday!
> Do not vex (5) [thy heart while thou existest].[13]

In death, the speaker urges the living to live a full life and to follow their desires. The speaker adopts an attitude of skepticism and, like Ecclesiastes, views human efforts as futile and the fate of the dead as ambiguous.

Other Egyptian memorial inscriptions challenge this attitude, such as the Harper's Song in the tomb of Djehutimes. The tomb of Djehutimes is decorated with carvings of Djehutimes and his wife seated side by side on seperate chairs, looking toward the song of a girl on an opposite wall holding a lute in her hands. The text begin with praise of the gods and with a prayer for the wellbeing of Djehutimes in the afterlife.

> Let your ka be with you so that you can see [...]
> the good.
> …
> I pray for you, for your health,
> (4)[for the soundness of your limbs][14]

[13] Inv. Nr. 57 lines 1-5, in Mansour El-Noubi, "A Harper's Song from the Tomb of Roma-Roy at Thebes (TT 283)," *Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur*, 25, (1998): 253, www.jstor.org/stable/25152763. Numbers indicate column breaks; bracketed words are conjectured; and words in parentheses are translators' notes.

The text goes on to criticize skeptical memorial inscription texts like that in the tomb of Roma-Roy.

> [I have heard] those songs
> which are in ancient tombs,
> (12) what they say in extolling [the earthly,
> in belittling the land of the gods.
> W]hy is the like done to the land of eternity (13) [and straightfor-]wardness,
> which is without [terror?].
> Its abomination is uproar,
> ...
> There is no [lingering in the land of Egy]pt,
> …
> As for the time spent on earth,
> it is (just) a matter of (16) [a drea]m....
> your name shall not be forgotten,
> steward of Amun, Djehutimes.[15]

The inscription in the tomb of Djehutimes asserts its belief in the afterlife and criticizes the non-eschatological attitude of inscription in the tomb of Roma-Roy and other critical inscriptions. For the speaker of this text, the afterlife is eternal and its existence renders the world of the living, the "time spent on the earth," just a "matter of a dream." The wording mirrors the repeated refrain of Ecclesiastes that all is futile. The inscription comes to the same conclusion as Ecclesiastes regarding the futility of the physical world and the work of the living, although it comes to this conclusion through an entirely different point of view. Whereas Ecclesiastes and the Harper's Song from the tomb of Roma-Roy

[14] AP 5066 lines 1-4, in Harper. "The Moabite Stone," 63, www.jstor.org/stable/3140007.

[15] Harper's Song lines 11-28, László Kákosy and Zoltán Imre Fábián, "Harper's Song in the Tomb of Djehutimes (TT 32)," *Studien Zur Altägyptischen Kultur* 22, (1995): 219–221, www.jstor.org/stable/25152717.

view the world of the living as futile because death is final, the Harper's Song from the tomb of Djehutimes views the world of the living as futile specifically because of the existence of the afterlife.

An early version of the Mesopotamian The Epic of Gilgamesh also demonstrates a carpe diem philosophy, although later versions of the epic show fewer similarities to Ecclesiastes. In early versions of the epic, the carpe diem philosophy is conveyed to Gilgamesh in the form of advice given to him by a tavern keeper.

> When the gods created mankind,
> for mankind they established death,
> life they kept for themselves.
> You, Gilgamesh, let your belly be full,
> keep enjoying yourself, day and night!
> Every day make merry,
> Dance and play day and night!
> Let your clothes be clean,
> let your head be washed, may you be bathed in water!
> Let a wife enjoy your repeated embrace![16]

In chapter nine of Ecclesiastes, the narrator elaborates on his carpe diem philosophy with almost identical advice:

> Go, eat your bread in gladness, and drink your wine in joy; for
> your action was long ago approved by God.
> Let your clothes always be freshly washed, and your head never
> lack ointment.
> Enjoy happiness with a woman you love all the fleeting days of life
> that have been granted to you under the sun—all your fleeting
> days. For that alone is what you can get out of life and out of the
> means you acquire under the sun.
> Whatever it is in your power to do, do with all your might. For

[16] OB Gilgamesh, III, Lines 3-13, Matthew J. Suriano, "Kingship and *Carpe Diem*, Between Gilgamesh and Qoheleth," *Vetus Testamentum* 67, (2017): 289.

> there is no action, no reasoning, no learning, no wisdom in Sheol, where you are going.[17]

The tavern keeper's advice to Gilgamesh in the Old Babylonian version of the epic is nearly identical to the advice that Ecclesiastes imparts and seemingly for the same reason; all mortals will eventually die and death is final, so they may as well enjoy themselves as they are living. However, the tavern keeper's advice is redacted from later versions of the epic, seemingly to fit with the changing of themes in later editions; the Old Babylonian versions of the epic focused on Gilgamesh as man and mortal, and the carpe diem advice fit with this theme. In later versions, the focus shifted to Gilgamesh as king, then to Gilgamesh as a semi-divine being. This later shift is evident in the change of the incipit from "Surpassing all other kings" to "He who saw the deep." The tavern keeper's advice to embrace life is human and universal in nature, therefore it does not fit with the Ancient Mesopotamian concept of a king. To the ancient Mesopotamians, kings were meant to exist on a separate plane from the rest of humanity and not share in the same mortality as the rest of mankind. A king is granted near-immortality through his accomplishments, his memory, and his inheritors. Because Ecclesiastes rejects this notion of kingship, his carpe diem advice coexists with and is punctuated by his kingly voice. Ecclesiastes embraces the paradox apparent in the carpe diem advice as a way of rejecting the immortality granted to kings through legacy and inheritance. Ecclesiastes dismantles the monumental claim of kings through his advice to embrace life, once again using his kingly voice to establish his views of kingship.

Death is the ultimate driving force of the book of Ecclesiastes. Death delegitimizes one's accomplishments, and inheritance negates the value of one's success. For Ecclesiastes, death is final, and life does not continue after death: not through memory, offspring, or an afterlife.

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[17] Eccl. 9:7-10 (JPS 1985).

> Who knows if a man's lifebreath does rise upward and if a beast's breath does sink down into the earth?
> I saw that there is nothing better for man than to enjoy his possessions, since that is his portion. For who can enable him to see what will happen afterward?"[18]

Although the themes of kingship and carpe diem appear in other Ancient Near Eastern texts, Ecclesiastes is unique in how it embraces the paradoxes that these texts reject. Ecclesiastes uses the kingly voice that is typical of Ancient Near Eastern memorial inscriptions in order to undermine the values inherent in the same inscriptions, values of immortality through linear descent and inheritance. Ecclesiastes reaches the same conclusion as the Harper's Song of the tomb of Djehutimes regarding the futility of the physical world, but Ecclesiastes is led to this conclusion by a skepticism of the afterlife, whereas the Harper's song of Djehutimes reaches this conclusion based on the belief in the existence of an afterlife. The philosophy of carpe diem throughout the book of Ecclesiastes is nearly identical to the tavern keeper's advice in the Old Babylonian version of The Epic of Gilgamesh. However, the advice was redacted from later versions of the epic in order to support the concept of kingly immortality achieved through memory and inheritance. Ecclesiastes uses this advice of carpe diem in order to challenge this notion of immortality and to assert the mortality of all peoples. The book of Ecclesiastes uses the language of these other Ancient Near Eastern texts in order to directly contradict their notions of immortality and to establish a viewpoint of life in the present, as colored by the finality of death.

[18] Eccl. 3:21-22 (JPS 1985).

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***Jillian Fisch***

*SEPARATE, ABSTRACT, AND REDEMPTIVE:*

# YAD VASHEM'S HOLOCAUST HISTORY MUSEUM AND THE U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM:

Both Yad Vashem and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) memorialize the Holocaust in unique ways. Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum offers a redemptive experience, as architect, Moshe Safdie, focuses on the sacred aspect of the landscape. He incorporates themes of Zionist rebirth found in the surrounding memorial and monumental landscape of Yad Vashem. James Ingo Freed's USHMM employs many abstract architectural elements to create a feeling of irresolution for the visitor and to separate the narratives of Holocaust commemoration from the values on the Washington Mall. His museum serves as the United States' foundational memorial for the Holocaust, and has been the driving force in shaping America's Holocaust commemorative practices. Safdie and Freed established Yad Vashem and the USHMM as paramount examples of Holocaust commemoration. They were challenged with building museums into existing landscapes. They both chose to establish their structures as separate and distinct from their surroundings. Freed's use of abstract architecture hints of the pluralistic values which construct the American Holocaust memory, while Safdie's Holocaust History Museum creates a redemptive narrative with Zionism, as the remedy to the visitor's journey through Yad Vashem.

The USHMM and Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum differ in the architects' ability to draw upon preexisting narratives as opposed to creating new ones. Safdie called upon Zionist themes and symbols present within his landscape; the developing narratives within Israel regarding Holocaust memory provided him with a readily available understanding of how Holocaust memory

was to be crafted. Freed had to construct and design his monument without any preexisting Holocaust monumental landscape. Not only did he have no point of reference, but America had yet to develop a distinct reaction to the Holocaust. Freed's "necessity to represent the Holocaust according to the nation's ideals [and] its pluralist tenants,"[1] proved difficult given the "memorial's location in Washington, in the heart of America's monumental civic culture; in the architectonic form of the edifice itself, its place in relation to nearby buildings, to architectural trends and fashions; and in the exhibition narrative housed by the museum."[2] Through this tension, Freed crafted the fundamental American narrative of Holocaust commemoration as within its civic culture. However, when Yad Vashem was established, its founders believed that it "serve[d] as the world's official commemorative institution for the Holocaust. Implicit here is the assumption that Israel is the sole political entity able to appropriate the Holocaust as 'part of its own self-determination and legitimation.'"[3] Consequently, Yad Vashem had consistently held the 'monopoly' on Holocaust memorialization and commemorative practices, yet balanced "a tension between the displacement and exile of the Diaspora on the one hand and Zionist return on the other,".[4] This conjured evolving narratives of Yad Vashem's landscape that "both share[d] and buttress[ed] the state's ideals and self-definition."[5] This tension, emphasized in different capacities at different times, provided Safdie with preexisting Israeli commemorative practices throughout its history as the arbiter of Holocaust memory. Hence, he was able to work with an existing narrative, while Freed established the American narrative through the construction of the USHMM.

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[1] James E. Young, "Memory and the Politics of Identity: Boston and Washington D.C.," in *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1993), 336.

[2] Ibid, 337.

[3] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich,"Architectures of Redemption and Experience: Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," in *Holocaust Memory Reframed: Museums and Challenges of Representation*, (New Brunswick & London: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 64.

[4] Ibid.

[5] James E. Young, "Yad Vashem: Israel's Memorial Authority," 243.

The architecture of USHMM transports the visitor from their surroundings into a new environment completely different from the outside world, using abstract elements to maintain the subjective experience. Freed transports his visitor through a combination of architectural vocabularies; "the architecture of the 'Empire of Reason' that shapes official Washington, from the roots of Enlightenment to the glazed space frame of the 20th century…[and] an unwritten history… the history of the ghettos and death camps."[6] The limestone façade on the exterior ensures consistency with the classical architecture of DC's constructions and "enshrine[s] … American ideals as they counterpoint the Holocaust."[7] However, Freed ensures "the use of official masks of high ideals" does not "veil [the] inner horrors"[8] of the Holocaust. Freed "pa[ys] attention to the tectonics of the camps, the way buildings were put together."[9] He integrates his study of the architectural structures in Nazi Germany into the use of brick walls and towers, banded steel railings, exposed steel beams, boarded windows, and other industrial elements in the Hall of Witness. Freed utilizes these raw materials to reference a commemorative space uninhibited by time and location.

In order to ensure a subjective experience for the visitor, Freed employs abstract elements and concepts in his architectural design. "Freed want[s] his raw materials to create appropriate space in which to negotiate the museum,"[10] yet, "abstraction also plays a role in a second principle underlying Freed's design: the principle of irresolution. Freed strongly believes ... the ideas and feelings — and even vicarious memories — that the architecture evokes in the visitors should never be resolved."[11] The USHMM's architectural structure is separate from the themes of the Mall and envelops the

[6] Herbert Muschamp, "How Buildings Remember," *The New Republic*, August 28, 1989, http://resources.library.brandeis.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.resources.library.brandeis.edu/docview/212830730?accountid=9703.

[7] James E. Young, "Memory and the Politics of Identity: Boston and Washington D.C.," 337.

[8] Herbert Muschamp, "How Buildings Remember."

[9] Edward T. Linenthal, "The Site of Holocaust Memory," in *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum*, (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 88.

[10] Ibid, 91.

[11] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, "Architectures of Redemption and Experience: Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," 78.

visitor in materials which mimic Nazi-era structures. Brick, steel and glass elements are utilized as strategies to give the visitor a specific experience. While "the skylight cutting across diagonally, held in a warped, twisted metal truss,"[12] embellishes the representational elements, "how people view the Hall of Witness very much depends on the evocative play of light in the museum."[13] Freed's goal is to take the visitor out of Washington, DC, and he does so through the use of raw materials such as the metal truss. However, it is clear that the light affects the appearance of the industrial elements in the Hall of Witness. Successfully using the Hall of Witness as a bridge into a representational Holocaust memory, Freed creates abstraction to allow for open-ended feelings and perceptions and not dictate meaning.

Freed's combination of architectural vocabularies allows the Hall of Witness to convey a representational understanding of the Holocaust uninhibited by geographical location. The Hall of Witness also employs abstract elements to acknowledge the presence of unresolved emotions and perceptions throughout the experience. Freed contrasts the immersive experience of the Hall of Witness with the Hall of Remembrance, a smooth hexagonal structure where the visitor can contemplate their journey through the permanent exhibition before returning to the National Mall and the accompanying American narrative. The Hall of Remembrance "houses the eternal flame of remembrance and is where visitors may light a memorial candle in a niche beneath one of the engraved names of concentration and death camps."[14] Further employing traditional memorial strategies, the empty space and hexagonal shape reminds the visitor of the loss of the six million, yet "this space is [also] tamed and domesticated through its geometrically balanced shape, soothing light colors, and natural light."[15] Just as Freed complements the Hall of Witness' harsh

[12] Edward T. Linenthal, "The Site of Holocaust Memory," 94.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, "Architectures of Redemption and Experience: Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," 83.
[15] Ibid.

representational architectural elements with abstraction and subjective perception, here too the traditional memorialization of loss is foiled with light and balance.

The Hall of Remembrance, while not imbued with the Zionism of Safdie's Holocaust History Museum, still employs a redemptive narrative. "The contemporary outside world, visible through slim openings at the corners of the walls,"[16] enshrines the American values of pluralism, tolerance, and freedom as the remedy to the harshness of the Hall of Witness and the permanent exhibition. Freed originally did not want the external "American space … [to] contaminat[e] memorial space,"[17] and his original intention was to reflect this through closed, blind windows. However, the slight view of the Mall from within the Hall of Remembrance hints at the possibility of American ideals as the response to the Holocaust. The windows only reveal the Mall through a slight opening, allowing for another subjective feeling or perception to persuade or dissuade the visitor from fully resonating with this answer. The combination of retaining loss and looking for a remedy to prejudice and genocide is characterized by these unresolvable elements.

Moshe Safdie transports his visitor from the outside world and introduces his redemptive themes at the *Wall in Tribute to the Survivors* (2005), a wall of large, white concrete pillars placed at the entrance to Yad Vashem. While it "invokes a minimal aesthetic … the columns are unabashedly there … [and] the biblical inscription … emphasizes healing and renewal: 'I will put my breath into you and you shall live again, and I will set upon you your own soul.'"[18] Through Ezekiel's language of rebirth, Safdie synthesizes the existing homecoming Zionist narrative at Yad Vashem with the evolving incorporation of victimization in the Diaspora and the survivor experience. Previously, the monumental and memorial landscape of Yad Vashem embraced the heroic

[16] Ibid.
[17] Edward T. Linenthal, "The Site of Holocaust Memory," 102.
[18] Natasha Goldman, "Israeli Holocaust Memorial Strategies at Yad Vashem: From Silence to Recognition," *Art Journal* 65, no. 2 (2006): 121-122, https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.2006.10791207.

ghetto fighters, linking narratives of Jewish resistance in the Diaspora to the new-Jew Zionism embedded in the state's political rhetoric. Through the installation of the *Pillar of Heroism* (1970), the *Wall of Remembrance* (1976), and the *Monument to Soldiers, Ghetto Fighters, and Partisans* (1985) at Yad Vashem, "heroic narratives from the Holocaust were assimilated into the official narrative of Israel."[19] As minimal acknowledgement of the survivor experience grew toward integration into Israeli commemorative practices and national ethos, the minimalist *Wall in Tribute to the Survivors* becomes, "a demarcation line that separates the site of Yad Vashem from the surrounding city,"[20] and shows that survivors are here. Placing this memorial at the entrance to Yad Vashem, Safdie enshrines the Holocaust History Museum as a space beyond the outside world. "If earlier memorials did not address survivors, a monument dedicated to them now enables the physical and mental transition to the site."[21] The *Wall in Tribute to the Survivors* embraces both the renewal found through Zionism and the suffering of Jewish victimization enshrined throughout the rest of the museum.

The sacredness of Yad Vashem is furthered at the Mevoah (pavilion), a structure reminiscent of a sukkah, which "frames Yad Vashem and its goal of Holocaust memorialization within a narrative of exile and homecoming that continues throughout the Holocaust History Museum."[22] Biblically, a sukkah was as a temporary housing structure used by the Israelites as they journeyed through the desert. Once they were redeemed and entered the Land of Israel, they celebrated Sukkot with a pilgrimage to Jerusalem and temporarily built structures similar to those that existed in exile. This representation of the sukkah at Yad Vashem not only presents the space as redemptive, but also plays off of the sacred journey of Sukkot, making it a modern site of

[19] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, "Architectures of Redemption and Experience: Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum," 65.
[20] Ibid, 67.
[21] Natasha Goldman, "Israeli Holocaust Memorial Strategies at Yad Vashem: From Silence to Recognition," 122.
[22] Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, "Architectures of Redemption and Experience: Yad Vashem and the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,"68.

pilgrimage. Playing off the already existing Zionist narratives, Safdie attempts to embolden them by rooting his designs in a hallowed tradition of Jerusalem.

Safdie constructs the Holocaust History Museum underground, with the entrance and exit emerging and bursting from the earth. "A subtle cut across the hilltop, … a reflective knife edge across the landscape that would disclose the museum's presence,"[23] is revealed through the sprouting geometric doorways. Safdie understands the scar of the Holocaust and his construction of the museum underground to shield it from society "suggests viscerally the tremendous effort needed to confront the Holocaust."[24] As a visitor goes through the museum, they acquire that resolve, and a dramatic exit above ground facing the Jerusalem hills illuminates "the healing properties of the surrounding landscape."[25] However, this unique architectural design is set adjacent to Israel's military cemetery in which the Theodore Herzl, known as the Father of Zionism, is buried. The encompassing landscape acts as a healing power, but its juxtaposition with Mount Herzl suggests redemption and healing of the Holocaust fixed in Zionism. While Safdie does not explicitly focus upon Zionist partisans or ghetto fighters, he takes the preexisting landscape of Mount Herzl as well as the ideas rooted at Yad Vashem and expresses them in an architectural setting, showing the visitor that the scar of the Holocaust can be reconciled with Zionist redemption.

Like Freed, Safdie uses concrete to create a separation. Although Safdie does not employ architectural methods that are representative of the Nazi era structures, the use of concrete "creates the visual impressions of something alien and foreign in contrasts to the warm facades of other Jerusalem tourist sites and thereby evokes a sense of displacement and exile."[26] Safdie uses concrete as a force to separate the museum from the outside world, makes a clear distinction between the museum and other nearby sites. While exit into the Jerusalem Hills and renewal in Zionism is

[23] Ibid, 69.
[24] Ibid.
[25] Ibid.
[26] Ibid, 70-71.

the antidote to the catastrophe of the Holocaust, when the visitor is in the museum, they are divorced from that redemptive narrative. The concrete is used consistently throughout the entire structure, creating a solemn and cold space to absorb and contain the exhibition.

While the grayness of the concrete offers emotional weight, the narrow triangular structure of the slanted walls and inability to walk directly through the middle of the museum creates an additional isolation. "The tunnel itself is nearly six hundred feet in length and acts on visitors viscerally, constricting to its narrowest spaces and pitching slightly downward during the part of the Holocaust narrative that describes the Auschwitz exterminations."[27] These architectural choices create a similar representational experience that Freed employs in the USHMM, yet Safdie does not embellish those elements to thrust the visitor into a Nazi era-like structure. The triangular structure offers an emanating light at the end of the tunnel, and it is inconceivable to get there without walking through each exhibition chamber adjacent to the main corridor. While the visitor knows that the light will inevitably be reached, Safdie does not allow that conclusive experience of redemption until there is immersion in the surrounding grayness. Redemption and renewal comes with confronting the dark history of the Holocaust. While Freed's representational immersions still allow for subjective, unresolved feelings, Safdie pushes the visitor to take the time to explore the structure and reach the renewal of his Zionist homecoming.

*The Hall of Names*, Safdie's most famous architectural contribution to Yad Vashem, lies at the end of the museum, just before one exits into the renewed aura of Zionist ideals. This structure incorporates imagery of the destruction of European Jewry and the victimization of Jews in the Diaspora, a narrative that did not penetrate into the Israeli national ethos during the period of the early state. The Hall of Names, consisting of two cone-like structures, acts as an archive as well as a memorial, collecting pages of testimony and memorializing those who

[27] Ibid, 72.

perished during the Holocaust. One of the cone-like structures penetrates downward through the concrete of the museum floor into the natural elements of the earth, with the bottom filled with water. The other cone extends up toward a skylight, and the inside of the cone is finished with hundreds of photographs of those who perished during the Holocaust. While the Hall functions as an archive and memorial,

> the cone reaching upward toward the light that filters in through a skylight suggests transcendence through homecoming… to Israel through Zionism. The second cone, descending through Jerusalem stone and ending in water, suggests autochthony and makes explicit the connection between redemption through Zionism and the land of Israel itself.[28]

Similar to the feelings of irresolution invoked through Freed's abstract elements, the cone's message of homecoming and Zionist redemption are not obvious to the visitor, as they are drawn to the photographs and functionality of the Hall of Names as an archive. Intentional or not, Safdie's subtle message through this cone-like structure implies redemption for these victims through Zionism. This upward journey toward the light creates a transcendent and celestial narrative of homecoming while an explicit, indigenous presence in the land is evident through the break in the Jerusalem stone to the land's most natural elements.

The visitor ends the journey through the Holocaust History Museum with an expansive view into Jerusalem's hills. As discussed above, this view of light at the end of a dark, constricting tunnel epitomizes Safdie's goal for the structures of Yad Vashem. While Safdie effectively memorializes and integrates the victims of the Holocaust into the surrounding landscape, the museum's place in Jerusalem offers the visitor a feeling of Zionist renewal and homecoming, magnified by the healing power of the landscape. Implicit here is the feeling that the victims have transcended into

[28] Ibid, 73.

Jerusalem's sacral authority, and the visitor stands as a living affirmation of the Zionist dream.

Both Moshe Safdie and James Ingo Freed successfully mold Holocaust memorial practices through their architecture. They both take into account the surrounding landscapes; Freed establishing foundational American commemorative practices for Holocaust memory as separate from the Washington Mall, and Safdie merging and enriching the preexisting commemorative landscapes of Jerusalem and Yad Vashem. Both Freed and Safdie encourage the visitor to immerse themself into the necessity for Holocaust commemoration, whether as distinct or integrated into the surrounding narratives. Freed creates a distinct pluralist narrative and feelings of irresolution through abstract elements while Safdie constructs a Zionist redemptive narrative through his design.

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***Isaac Margolin Graber***

*LAYING THE FOUNDATION:*

# THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY

There is a unique Jewish community in the southern United States: the Jewish community in Memphis, Tennessee. Made up of only 9,000 Jews, Memphis has an extremely high affiliation rate and amenities like a thriving Jewish Community Center, two Jewish elementary schools, a Jewish high school, and over half a dozen synagogues.[1] This community was built in part by three prominent families: the Margolins, the Belzes, and the Coopers, all of whom were involved in real estate. The commitment to community exemplified by these three Memphis families stands in stark contrast to contemporary real estate activities in other cities, such as Levittown, New York.[2] While Levittown was extremely profitable, it was founded on discriminatory bylaws that ultimately tarnished the name of the Levitt family. The Margolin, Belz, and Cooper families in Memphis, while also prosperous, built their businesses on values of community growth and social justice. These families' commitments both to their city and to the Jewish community was a factor in the Memphis community's ability to thrive, and contributed to the community's uniqueness.

## THE MEMPHIS FAMILIES

Goldie Margolin and her sons Ben, Joe, and Sam, moved to Memphis from Birmingham, Alabama in 1921, shortly after Goldie's husband, Raphael, passed away.[3] Initially, each son pursued his own endeavor: Ben ran a grocery store; Joe was the circulation manager for *The Press Scimitar*, a newspaper in Memphis; and Sam was a lawyer who founded and ran Southern

[1] Mark, 2016
[2] Galyean, 2015.
[3] Lewis, S. (n.d.).

Law University, a night law school in Memphis. At the end of World War II in 1945, Ben and Joe decided to leave their businesses and start building homes. The key that made the home-building so lucrative after World War II was the GI Bill, which guaranteed loans to veterans who wished to purchase a home.[4] Sam helped them when he was not working, and in 1945 he quit practicing law to help with the real estate business full-time. The Margolins operated their whole business in-house. They had their own supply company, and they even offered mortgages to homebuyers. In 1951 the Margolin brothers abandoned the homebuilding business and focused exclusively on their home-mortgage business, named National Mortgage Company, which had turned out more lucrative than homebuilding. The company became one of the top five largest privately-owned mortgage banking companies in the United States.[5] In January 1995, the St. Louis-based Boatman's Bancshares Inc. bought the company. By that point, National Mortgage had amassed a $13.1 billion loan servicing portfolio, had 10 offices, and employed 300 people, many of whom were from the Memphis Jewish community.[6]

The Belz family was also prominent in building the Memphis community. Mary Belz and her son Philip moved to Memphis from Poland in 1910 to join Mary's husband, Moses, who had already begun peddling in Memphis on Beale Street and in the Raleigh Springs area. After settling down, Moses and Mary opened up a grocery store in North Memphis, and Philip helped at the store. In the early 1940s, Philip eyed a piece of land across the street from the family store, believing that "if he could ever acquire that piece of ground his future would be assured."[7] Philip eventually bought the land and coordinated the construction of an industrial building that was operated by Frye Roofing company. Together with his father and cousin, Sam Belz, Philip continued to buy and develop property, opening a furniture factory in downtown Memphis. His son, Jack Belz, joined his father in the property

[4] History.com Editors, 2015
[5] Sam S. Margolin obituary, 1995.
[6] Graber, 2018
[7] Memphis Jewish Historical Society

business in the late 1940s. The family continued developing commercial and industrial real estate, and officially established themselves as Belz Enterprises.[8] Today, the company owns more than 20 million square feet of developed property across the United States[9], including the iconic Peabody Hotel in the heart of downtown Memphis.

Irby Cooper, leader of the third foundational family, was born in Memphis in 1929. After graduating from Washington University in St. Louis, Irby returned to Memphis and served as a sportswriter for the *Commercial Appeal*, a local newspaper. He left the position in 1954 and began his career, forming Cooper Realty Co. and focusing on building affordable homes in Memphis.[10] Irby and his father entered the hotel business in 1961, and developed the Holiday Inn Resort in Gatlinburg, TN that year. Holiday Inn founder Kemmons Wilson cautioned the partners from entering the resort business, as Holiday Inns were traditionally roadside business hotels. However, the Holiday Inn Resort in Gatlinburg was a success. Today, the resort has 402 rooms and is Cooper Companies' largest hotel. Overall, Cooper Companies owns seventeen hotels in five states.[11]

## GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

These three families are unique from other successful Jewish families in the property business because of their dedication to building up their local community. To this day, each family has a strong presence in Memphis. As Jack Belz eloquently put it: "We are commanded to pray for the welfare of the place in which you live. To not only pray for it, but to work for it. And I think it's been a basic tenant."[12] Each of these three families has put this mindset into action and has worked to build up the Memphis Jewish Community.

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[8] Phillip Belz obituary, 2000
[9] About Belz
[10] Irby Cooper obituary, 2000
[11] Hotel Portfolio
[12] Memphis Jewish Historical Society

The Margolin family placed a high value on Jewish education in Memphis. Even before National Mortgage Company began, the Margolin brothers founded the Memphis Hebrew Academy in 1949. Sam Margolin believed the Memphis Hebrew Academy was essential to Jewish Memphis:

> From where will come from the future leaders of our people... if not from our children who have been properly trained in the ideals of Judaism and Americanism. Jewish mothers and Jewish laymen must come to know the beauty and sincerity of traditional Judaism through actual practice and knowledge. Only in such an institution as the Memphis Hebrew Academy can such training be attained.[13]

On December 1, 1992, the Memphis Hebrew Academy was renamed the Margolin Hebrew Academy in honor of the Margolin family. The Margolin brothers had been resigned to the fact that there would not be continuity of their family name because they had no male heirs, but in 1992, Sam rejoiced, as "the Margolin name is associated with an institution of greatness in our community."[14]

The National Mortgage Company's impact is another aspect of the Margolins' essentialism to the Jewish community. Per an interview with Joe Margolin's daughter, my grandmother Evelyn Graber, "there wasn't a Jewish person who needed a job who did not get one at National Mortgage company."[15] Not only did the company have hundreds of employees, but the company treated them all well. Reflecting on their time at National Mortgage, former employees used to say that "it was the best place they could ever work."[16] A prominent Jewish family owning such a well-regarded company contributed to a positive perception of the Jewish community in Memphis. Additionally, National Mortgage Company acted as a philanthropic force in the Jewish community. The company donated to the Memphis Hebrew Academy, the

[13] Lewis, 1993
[14] Lewis, 1993
[15] Graber, 2018
[16] Graber, 2018

Jewish Community Center, and the Memphis Jewish Federation, as well as to missions from Memphis to Israel.[17] National Mortgage Company is a case study in combining good business decisions with a desire to help the local Jewish community; the Margolins consistently prioritized contributing to the Memphis Jewish community.

The Belz and Cooper families also made significant impacts on Jewish Memphis and helped create a positive image for the Jewish community through their businesses. The Belzes contributed significantly to Baron Hirsch Synagogue and the Feinstone Yeshiva of the South. Philip Belz served as the president of Baron Hirsch, and the Belz family donated the Belz Beit Midrash in the Yeshiva and the Belz Sanctuary in Baron Hirsch. The Coopers contributed significantly to the boys' high school at the Margolin Hebrew Academy – a division of the Feinstone Yeshiva of the South – which is now named the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys.[18] Irby Cooper served as the president of both the Margolin Hebrew Academy and Baron Hirsch.[19]

The Belz's business stands out for its positive impact on race relations in Memphis in a time when the city was greatly segregated. In 1936, Philip Belz developed Belz Court, which housed African Americans who worked in the Belz-developed industrial district in North Memphis. The housing plan required Philip Belz to complete a zoning variance application. The application that Philip Belz and his business partner Nathan Thomas completed describes their request for a permit for "twelve brick veneer duplexes for negro tenants on the private road or court."[20] Though this housing development was specifically for African Americans and not an integrated neighborhood, the fact that a development was dedicated to African Americans was a step in addressing the racial segregation in the city. At a time when African Americans were treated as second-class, the Belz family made an effort to provide convenient housing.

[17] Graber, 2018
[18] "Our Story". Margolin Hebrew Academy. https://www.mhafyos.org/our-story.
[19] Irby Cooper obituary, 2000
[20] Whitehead, 2014

## A CONTRAST: LEVITTOWN

Both the Belz effort to incorporate African-Americans into their building plans and the work by the Margolins, Belzes, and Coopers to create a positive name for the Memphis Jewish community through their businesses starkly contrast with the most expansive housing development in the United States following World War II: Levittown. Following World War II, there was a housing shortage. People were so desperate that in Omaha, Nebraska, someone even created an advertisement which read: "Big Ice Box, 7 x 17 feet, could be fixed to live in."[21] The Levitts, a Jewish family from Brooklyn, NY, had experience in the homebuilding industry; they had built a successful community in Rockville Centre, Long Island in the middle of the Great Depression.[22] As the war was coming to an end, the Levitts realized a tremendous opportunity, one very similar to the opportunity the Margolins were seeing in Memphis: During the war, homebuilding had come to a halt. Bill Levitt sent a frantic telegram to his brother, Alfred, and his father, Abe: "Buy all the land you possibly can… Beg, borrow, or steal the money, and then build and build."[23] This telegram demonstrates that the Levitts valued financial profits over other virtues — unlike the Memphis families. This mindset eventually led the Levitts into serious trouble.

Levittown, the Levitts' mass-produced home-building project, began as a huge success. The Levitts amassed over 3500 acres of potato fields in Island Trees, Long Island and broke ground in 1946.[24] When the Levitts announced they would build two thousand homes for veterans and rent them for $60/month, half of the homes were rented in just two days, and 4,495 applicants put down deposits to get in on this housing development. From all appearances, the housing development was flourishing.[25]

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[21] Kushner, 2009, p. xii
[22] Kushner, 2009, p. 5
[23] Kushner, 2009, p. 37
[24] Kushner, 2009, p. 37
[25] Kushner, 2009, p. 40

Meanwhile, the Levitts ran into issues regarding the bylaws of the communities they built. The most controversial bylaw read: "THE TENANT AGREES NOT TO PERMIT THE PREMISES TO BE USED OR OCCUPIED BY ANY PERSON OTHER THAN MEMBERS OF THE CAUCASIAN RACE." The Supreme Court ruled in 1948 that a law like this was "unenforceable as law and contrary to public policy," and Bill Levitt removed this language from the Levitts' lease. However, he had no intention of changing the policies surrounding Levittown.[26] By 1953, there were 70,000 people living in Levittown, making it the largest community in the United States with no Black residents.[27]

Bill Levitt justified his exclusion of African Americans by arguing that his discriminatory policies in Levittown were "not a matter of prejudice, but one of business." Levitt relayed, "I have come to know that if we sell one house to a negro family, then ninety to ninety-five percent of our white customers will not buy into this community."[28] However, this thinking tarnished the Levitt name.

By prioritizing prosperity over humanity, Levittown entered into a civil rights battle that forever tarnished the name of the community. On August 13, 1957, Bill and Daisy Myers and their children moved into Levittown.[29] They were the first Black family in Levittown and bought their house with the help of the Wechslers, who were a Jewish communist family in Levittown. Because of this, the Myers and Wechslers faced extreme violence; there were constant riots, stones thrown at the Myers' home, and graffiti with "KKK" symbols drawn on the Wechsler's home. Despite this, the Myerses and Wechslers remained in Levittown, outlasting the rioters.[30]

The Myers' presence in Levittown made a significant impact on civil rights in America. On February 9, 1960, the US Supreme Court ruled unanimously that African Americans were permitted to

[26] Kushner, 2009, p. 43
[27] Cohen, 2003
[28] Kushner, 2009, p. 66
[29] Kushner, 2009, p. 86
[30] Galyean, 2015

buy homes in Levittown.[31] On an even greater scale, President John F. Kennedy signed Executive Order 11063 on November 20, 1962, which banned racial discrimination in homes built, purchased, or financed with federal assistance.[32] Meanwhile, Bill Levitt fought back on each of these measures. Levitt's appeal to the U.S. Supreme court ruling was rejected,[33] and even after John F. Kennedy's executive order, Levitt still refused to sell homes to Blacks in his new community in Bowie, Maryland.[34]

The racism of Levittown contrasts with the policies of the the Margolin, Belz, and Cooper families. The Levitts had a different mindset than these three Memphis families. The Levitts were interested in turning a profit, and were less concerned about how they made their money or whom they affected. Even as Jews themselves, the Levitts barred Jews from entering their communities, beginning with their first development, Strathmore-at-Manhasset.[35] In contrast, the Margolins, Belzes and Coopers cared and continue to care deeply about where their profits came from and what they did with the money they earned. For example, even though National Mortgage Company did not need to hire individuals from the Memphis Jewish community, it did anyway. The Margolins, Belzes, and Coopers focused on values through their work.

The contrast between the Levitts and these three Memphis families is even more sharp because their businesses developed in similar ways. The Margolins' original homebuilding business stemmed from the same idea as Levittown: Veterans returning home from war needed homes, and builders could thrive by building communities filled with cookie-cutter style houses. The Levitts accomplished what the Margolins did, but on a much larger scale.

The families' disparate goals for their communities are illustrated by how each family carried on its name. Originally

[31] Kushner, 2009, p. 191
[32] Kushner, 2009, p. 193
[33] Kushner, 2009, p. 190
[34] Kushner, 2009, p. 193
[35] Kushner, 2009, p. 11

Levittown was named Island Trees. However, Bill Levitt was so insistent on naming the new community after himself that he even bought the local newspaper company and elected himself publisher after the newspaper objected to the new name. Bill explained, "I wanted the new name as a kind of monument to my family, and, by gosh, I wasn't going to brook any interference."[36] In contrast, the Margolin family did not impose their name onto anything. The Margolins founded the Memphis Hebrew Academy in 1945, and its name did not become the Margolin Hebrew Academy until 1992.[37] Even then, the name change came as an honor to the Margolins, who had not requested it. The Margolins were more concerned with helping the Jewish community in Memphis than they were with getting honored for their contributions.

## CONCLUSION

The Jewish families in Memphis who involved themselves with property-based businesses in the mid-20th century contributed significantly to the infrastructure and overall success of the Memphis Jewish community. The Margolins, Belzes, and Coopers began buying and developing property at an opportune time and used their prosperity for constructive purposes. Meanwhile, the Levitts prioritized prosperity above values, as exemplified by their fight to maintain exclusively white neighborhoods. The Margolins, Belzes, and Coopers are examples of influential families who prioritized philanthropy and who positively impacted their city through charitable gifts and acts of social justice.

[36] Kushner, 2009, p.41
[37] Lewis, 1993

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***Madeleine Cahn***

# *SQUARING FAITH AND SCIENCE:* MAIMONIDES

Many Jewish thinkers living in multicultural society have wrestled with the conflicting ideas and obligations of scientific thought and religious faith. In his philosophical magnum opus, "The Guide of The Perplexed," Maimonides, a medieval rabbi and polymath who lived across the Islamic world, presents a nuanced, inconsistent view of the relationships among faith, belief, science, and logic. This view, or collection of views, reflected his intellectual and religious predecessors and contemporaries, including both Islamic scholars such as Alfarabi and Jewish scholars such as Bahya Ibn Paquda and Saadia Gaon.

In the twelfth-century Islamic world in which Maimonides lived, science was the means of obtaining empirical knowledge through logic, as opposed to inheriting it from traditional authorities.[1] This early science was based on assumptions about the universe that many thinkers, including Maimonides, tried to prove. These assumptions were grounded in the Aristotelian idea of the universe, filtered through translators' philosophical movements. According to Aristotle, the universe consisted of a set of concentric spheres centered around the earth moving in circular orbits under the power of a First Cause, which Maimonides and other monotheistic Aristotelian thinkers considered to be God; universal truths existed; people gained knowledge through reason. Each thinker combined this model with concepts from the thinker's own tradition as well as those of other traditions. Oftentimes, these ideas corresponded to the philosophical model to which the Islamic sect in power at the time adhered. In conceptualizing his

[1] Throughout this paper, I will make use of the word 'science' to refer to the kinds of observation- and deduction-based fields Maimonides and his contemporaries studied. This definition is completely disconnected from our modern understanding of the word as controlled experimentation according to the scientific method.

postulates, Maimonides combined his Aristotelian outlook with rabbinic Jewish tradition and various schools of Islamic thought.

An educated Jew, Maimonides felt obligated to justify pursuing truth from non-religious sources throughout his lifetime. According to Charles H. Manekin, a professor of philosophy at the University of Maryland, "One might say that Maimonides transforms the quest for episteme (i.e. scientific knowledge) known to us from Aristotle into the quest for 'ilm yaqīnī (i.e. certain knowledge), so as not to break the bond between the human and the divine."[2] In his writings, Maimonides blurred the borders between the certainty of faith and the certainty of science, which had been separate in earlier Jewish thinkers' work.

In this synthesis of the two concepts, Maimonides appropriated and reinterpreted the work of Arab Aristotelian philosophers, such as the ninth-century Baghdadi thinker Alfarabi, one of the founders of Islamic philosophy. In Alfarabi's treatise "The Conditions of Certainty," Alfarabi dictated that the conditions he set out would constitute certainty only if the "[epistemic/psychological state]" of belief must be "arrived at not accidentally but essentially."[3] This stipulation has two implications. First, truth realized by chance is not certain. Whether or not the belief is correct, it must be reached through logic or verified with logic to make it certain. This qualification for certainty makes Divine revelation, a source not clearly logical, difficult to justify as a source of truth. Second, a certain belief must be true by its nature — not simply maintained because it is consistent with other certain beliefs and useful for arriving at new beliefs or proving old beliefs — a difficult requirement for a thinker reconciling philosophy with a thousand years of knowledge, each piece of which was accepted because it agreed with, elaborated on, and enabled the consistency of accepted beliefs.

Alexander of Aphrodisias, a Greek Aristotelian on whose commentaries Maimonides relied for his interpretations of

[2] Charles H. Manekin, "Maimonides and the Arabic Aristotelian Tradition of Epistemology," in *Beyond Religious Borders: Interaction and Intellectual Exchange in the Medieval Islamic World,* ed. David M. Friedenrich and Miriam Goldstein, 82.
[3] Ibid. 82.

Aristotle, upheld Alfarabi's definition of certainty. In his book "On the Principles of All," Alexander directed scholars addressing doubts about their certain beliefs that, "before examining the doubts that have been raised about … [certain knowledge] and solving them, [they should] examine the matter itself and try to discern its truth."[4] Such an argument leads its followers to preserve their certainty rather than to investigate its boundaries, though were their belief as perfect as the medieval thinkers considered it, the belief itself should have been able to explain difficulties and dispel doubts. Alexander did not praise the perfection of his beliefs in dissolving doubt; he advocated reassuring oneself of the truth of belief by scrutinizing the belief itself, instead of evaluating the belief in context. This approach conformed to Alfarabi's "essentiality" condition and left room for religious beliefs to be considered certain, providing a solution to the clash of worldviews Maimonides faced.

Maimonides also grappled with Alfarabi's principle that once a man[5] has proved the truth of an idea, he cannot lose the certainty of the knowledge as long as his mind remains intact.[6] This principle rested on two axioms of the time: logic is almost infallible, and absolute truth exists. Maimonides did not consider the possibility of a lack of absolute truth. He recognized the fallibility of logic in certain extreme cases,[7] but relied on its consistency and dependability most of the time. Maimonides's thought conflicted with Alfarabi's credence in the permanence of knowledge. Maimonides described metaphysical knowledge, the kind he considered most important, coming to philosophers like lightning: "Sometimes truth flashes out to us so that we think it is day, and then matter and habit in their various forms conceal it so that we find ourselves again in an obscure night, almost as we were at first."[8] One can realize something true and certain and then return to intellectual darkness, not because of insanity or death, but

[4] Ibid. 92.
[5] Maimonides and his contemporaries did not consider women capable of philosophical thought.
[6] Ibid. 84.
[7] See below.
[8] Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed,* trans. Shlomo Pines, 7.

simply because "matter and habit in their various forms conceal"[9] knowledge from its mortal seeker. Even the prophet Moses, in Maimonides's conception the most knowledgeable person who has existed or will exist, obtained his knowledge in flashes. For Moses, unlike lesser prophets and scholars, "The lightning flashe[d] time and time again, so that he … [was] always, as it were, in unceasing light."[10] Although Moses had knowledge all the time, even his knowledge was transient by nature.

Despite rejecting the gain of personal knowledge as the purpose of proof-based certainty, Maimonides required proof to be part of the certain faith of the educated and intellectually capable. According to Maimonides, the true love of God — the ultimate aim of faith and humanity — "can only be engaged in after apprehension has been achieved."[11] This "apprehension" comes after philosophers "direct all the acts of their intellect toward an examination of the beings with a view to drawing from them proof with regard to Him."[12] Humans should strive for their ultimate purpose instead of indulging their "appetite for eating drinking, and sexual intercourse,"[13] actions which cause "the longing for speculation [to be] abolished,"[14] a longing Maimonides considered vital.

In Maimonides's thought and intellectual environment, two types of proofs existed: Explanation of causes and demonstration without explanation. Faith in anything explainable requires proof as explanatory as possible with the scientific knowledge available. For Aristotle, as Maimonides and his contemporaries understood him, scientific knowledge required this type of proof.[15] From Maimonides's religious philosopher perspective, faith in anything that could be proven scientifically meant scientific knowledge supported by tradition.

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[9] Ibid. 7.
[10] Ibid. 7.
[11] Ibid. 621.
[12] Ibid. 620.
[13] Ibid. 532.
[14] Ibid. 532.
[15] Manekin, "Maimonides," 84.

According to Maimonides, some things, especially many aspects of Divine science, could not be explained for various reasons. God could not be explained because, by definition, God has no cause. Although every aspect of the universe except God has a cause, some aspects of the universe are, according to Maimonides, beyond the human intellect; they have causes and explanations, but humans' imperfect minds cannot understand or explain them and should not try. Nevertheless, belief in God and certain basic principles of the nature of the universe was necessary, so faith in things with nonexistent or unintelligible causes could require only demonstrative, but not explanatory, proof. Maimonides wrote, "There is, moreover, no way to apprehend Him except it be through the things He has made; for they are indicative of His existence."[16] To understand anything about God, humans must derive proof — but not explanation — of God's existence from the created world.

Until proof was possible, Maimonides allowed uncertain faith to sustain the Jewish and Aristotelian belief systems. For cases in which doubt is inevitable, Maimonides wrote, "For Alexander [of Aphrodisias] has explained that … the two contrary opinions with regard to the matter in question should be posited as hypotheses, and … the one to which fewer doubts attach should be believed."[17] If many doubts accompanied all possible beliefs, the opinion "less disgraceful"[18] in resulting inconsistencies was best. In the event of doubt attached to every opinion, the beliefs Maimonides thought had less-disgraceful consequences tended to agree with traditional Jewish beliefs.

The philosophical issue of the creation of the world *ex nihilo* in time[19] illustrates other implications of Maimonides's disgraceful-consequences standard. Maimonides objected to the works on this topic of the *mutakallimun*, various schools of Islamic theology

[16] Maimonides, *Guide,* 74.
[17] Ibid. 320.
[18] Ibid. 471.
[19] Ibid. 320. For the Jewish creation myth, see Genesis chapter 1. Based on the Genesis's traditional Jewish interpretation, Maimonides presupposed that the universe began at a certain time from nothing. Other schools of thought believed that the universe had always existed or was formed from a preexisting material.

aiming to defend Islam from skeptics, a mission parallel to Maimonides's own. According to Maimonides, the *mutakallimun* proof of the unity of God starting from the axiom of creation of the universe in time "implies the abolition of the stable nature of existence."[20] Maimonides considered this a disgraceful consequence. He needed to believe that existence was stable for faith in unchanging entities such as God to be reasonable and have at least the possibility of being correct. If such belief was correct, science should confirm it, although Aristotle's model could not prove it fully. For Maimonides, the purpose of scientific study was to bring the searcher closer to God by means of certainty about God and the universe. If faith did not match scientific observations, neither had served its purpose.

Maimonides believed that only exceptional people possessed the capacity to comprehend demonstrative proof. Therefore, there are two possible interpretations of Maimonides's beliefs about the nature of faith. One is that faith consists only of demonstrated beliefs. Maimonides suggested this interpretation when he stated that a person who discusses a perception of God based on "a mere imagining or following a belief adopted because of … reliance on the authority of somebody else, he is to [Maimonides's] mind outside the habitation and far away from it and does not in true reality mention or think about God."[21] If this interpretation is correct, Maimonides must have believed that some Jews could never have faith, a view that conforms to Maimonides's justification of philosophy as a pursuit, but conflicts with his duty as a leader of the Jewish people to accept and explain their "chosen-ness." If all Jews must have faith, then the definition of faith depends on the believer's intellectual capacity. According to Ruth Birnbaum, professor emeritus of Judaic and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in her article "The Role of Reason in Bahya and Maimonides," Maimonides wrote that everyone capable must "verify [belief] both

[20] Manekin, "Maimonides," 93.
[21] Maimonides, *Guide,* 620.

logically and by tradition"[22] in order to achieve Alfarabi's certainty, but that many people could not "sustain cognitive truths."[23] Even more limiting, only those "firmly established in their religious beliefs"[24] should even attempt to study divine science; trust in traditional authority was a prerequisite for the acceptance of ideas through proof. The question is whether trust in traditional authority was a type of faith itself.

Approximately a century before Maimonides, Andalusian Jewish philosopher Bahya Ibn Paquda wrote "The Duties of the Heart" about correct Jewish devotion. Bahya's version of devotion involved faith affirmed and expressed, primarily by practice, but supported by demonstrative proof obligatory for all Jews. According to Birnbaum, Bahya added scientific inquiry to Jewish obligations and "scientific probity"[25] to the truths of Jewish tradition. For Bahya, science and tradition were separate ways of obtaining truth. Maimonides approached their relationship differently. For Maimonides, "biblical truth is a scientific truth."[26] In the Guide, he interpreted the Bible in a way that manifested the scientific ideas in it. He explained, "The many sciences devoted to establishing the truth regarding these matters [philosophy and metaphysics] that have existed in our religious community have perished because of the length of the time that has passed"[27] since the Torah was written. From this view of the nature of the Bible, Maimonides derived his opinion that "perfect faith is the corollary to the perfection of the intellect,"[28] but humanity's ultimate goal was "contemplation of the First Intellect,"[29] not faith itself. Contemplation was supposed to lead to the highest degree of understanding possible about an unknowable God, and belief was an important, but not central, result. Only philosophers were capable of achieving perfect faith — which was not even their

[22] Birnbaum, "The Role of Reason in Bahya and Maimonides," In *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*. Vol. 19, No. 2. 77.
[23] Ibid. 79.
[24] Ibid. 78.
[25] Ibid. 86.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Maimonides, *Guide,* 175.
[28] Birnbaum, 81.
[29] Ibid.

ultimate goal — but this view of belief did not necessarily exclude non-philosophers from holding imperfect faith.

According to Birnbaum, Maimonides felt that capable scholars must use scientific study and demonstration to generate proof, while laypeople may believe without it. Maimonides offered proof for those who needed it and were capable of understanding it to help them out of perplexity and bring them closer to God. For Bahya, on the other hand, "Reason is both the handmaiden of faith and its instructional guide towards a more intense devotion."[30] Therefore, everyone must use reason to deepen faith. According to Birnbaum, for Maimonides, belief itself could not require proof, which came only through scientific study, so trust in traditional authority was a sufficient condition for faith.

Saadia Gaon, a Jewish philosopher in tenth century Babylonia, also addressed the relationship between faith and science in his "Book of Doctrines and Beliefs." Diana Lobel, an associate professor of religion at Boston University, discusses Saadia's opinion on the subject in her essay "Bahya as a Biblical Exegete," in which she compares Saadia's biblical exegesis to Bahya Ibn Paquda's. According to Lobel, Saadia considered revelation a way to reach quickly truths that could be more slowly reached through reason. As Lobel interprets Saadia's views, "Scripture is a democratizing factor."[31] Maimonides's elitism hearkened back to Saadia's belief in people's different levels of logical capacity, which justified the existence of the revealed law. Saadia provided a neat solution to Maimonides's conflicting obligations as a philosopher and a religious leader.

In part of the Guide, Maimonides seemed to agree with Saadia's position on faith, reason and the Bible. The extent of preliminary studies Maimonides required for learning Divine science made understanding anything about philosophy without the revelation cheat sheet almost impossible. As Maimonides explained the purpose of Scripture was to make correct belief possible until reason could confirm it and make it certain:

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[30] Ibid. 86.

[31] Diana Lobel, "Speaking about God: Bahya as a Biblical Exegete," In *Philosophers and the Jewish Bible*, ed. Charles H. Manekin and Robert Eisen, 14.

> If we never in any way acquired an opinion through following traditional authority [of the written and oral Torah], … and were not correctly conducted toward something by means of parables [which, according to Maimonides's exegesis make up most of the Bible], … but were obliged to achieve a perfect representation by means of essential definitions [and demonstrative proof, almost everyone would die] … without having known whether there is a deity for the world, … much less whether a proposition should be affirmed with regard to Him or a defect denied.[32]

Saadia's clever solution conflicted with Aristotle's prohibition, as cited by Alfarabi, against "the unanimous testimony of others"[33] as an acceptable means to arrive at certain belief. This disagreement posed a problem for Maimonides, who needed to justify a religion based on revealed truth, whose practitioners accept it from the "unanimous testimony" of history. As a philosopher, Maimonides held the masses who did not study metaphysics in contempt and seemed to bar them from holding any kind of faith.

In his exposition of the book of Job, Maimonides's parable describing the six levels of understanding or closeness to God as closeness to a king in a palace revealed various pieces of Maimonides's understanding of faith. The levels included "nonbelievers," "misguided" practitioners without understanding, jurists, and three levels of philosophers. The "nonbelievers" were outside the city, the misguided inside it with their backs to the palace, the practitioners without understanding facing the palace but not finding it, the jurists walking around it looking for a door, and the philosophers inside.[34]

In this parable, Maimonides ranked practitioners of revealed law above both nonbelievers and misguided believers, seeming to follow Bahya in considering practice and traditional authority part of faith. The practitioners needed to have partially correct faith, for

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[32] Maimonides, *Guide,* 75.
[33] Manekin, "Maimonides," 83.
[34] Maimonides, *Guide,* 618-620.

they were separated from and raised above the "misguided," even if their faith was not complete. It is not clear whether Maimonides referred to the Jewish revealed law or to all monotheistic religions' revealed laws, but either interpretation upholds this argument. The position of the jurists indicates that understanding traditional authority also had value as a type of faith, although not as much value as understanding metaphysics.

This analysis rests on the assumption that Maimonides ascribed to the hierarchy he posited and was not simply using it to encourage behavior he considered conducive to a well-run society. Such a use would not have matched the stated purpose of the Guide, in which this parable appears: to help students of philosophy out of the perplexity caused by philosophy's seeming contradictions of the Bible.[35] The Guide was not meant to define correct behavior for the majority but to help explain some of Divine science to those worthy of understanding it.

In "The Guide of the Perplexed," Maimonides expressed various, conflicting views about the relationship between science and faith, although he always maintained that biblical truth matched scientific truth. Sometimes, like Alfarabi, he argued that certainty from proof was the basis of all faith. Sometimes, like Saadia Gaon, he permitted temporary faith from Scripture to be proved in time. In other places, he agreed with Bahya Ibn Paquda, giving the practice of the law a place in the definition of faith. Maimonides would argue, however, that his views are not inconsistent. Readers not sufficiently educated in the various areas he considered necessary prerequisites for philosophy and uncertain in their religious beliefs simply do not understand them.

[35] Maimonides, *Guide,* 4.

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# SECTION II

***Liat Fischer***

*TRANSLATION:*

# RAV KOOK'S LETTER TO THE RIDVAZ, C.1913

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, was a writer, Kabbalist and Halachist, with an overwhelming sense of Jewish national pride. In 1913, in his position as Chief Rabbi, he was strongly involved in the controversy within the Jerusalem Rabbinate regarding *shemittah*, the Sabbatical year.[1]

The Biblical and Rabbinic laws regarding *shemittah* state that every seventh year in the Land of Israel, all individuals must leave their fields fallow. One may not plow, plant, or harvest throughout the year. The *shemittah* system had been defunct for two thousand years of exile, but during the year 1909-1910, the Rabbinate in Jerusalem was intent on reinstating *shemittah*, with all of its laws, among all of the Jews living in Israel. This decision would cut off all sources of income for the many agricultural communities of the Second Aliyah. Rav Kook vehemently disagreed with the Rabbinate of Jerusalem, and specifically Rabbi Yaakov David Wilkovsky, who lived in Safed in the late 1800s and early 1900s, who became known as the Ridvaz. Rav Kook outlined in his book "Shabbat Ha'Aretz" the reasons why it was important to permit *heter mechirah*, a halachic workaround whereby the land of a Jew is temporarily sold to a non-Jew, allowing for it to be worked during the shemittah year. Rav Kook advocated for this leniency so that the individuals of the Second Aliyah could continue to work their land and earn their livelihood.

In his letters to the Ridvaz, Rav Kook outlined why specifically in the 1910s it was so important to allow for a *heter mechirah*. He

[1] Vikuach Im HaRidvaz, Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaCohen Kook http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/shmita/tshuvot/vikuah.htm

further explained the broader effect it would have on the generation.

When Rav Kook came to Palestine in the early 1900s, he encountered for the first time Jews who had little or no religious identity, and yet had a distinct national identity. Unlike the majority of Orthodox Rabbis living in Palestine at the time, Rav Kook regarded these individuals as having a Messianic purpose. In his theological scheme, he cast them as the generation before the Messiah, a rebellious generation, in which "brazenness will be rampant."[2] Due to the nature Rav Kook attributed to this generation, he firmly believed in making Judaism and Halacha accessible to them, and allowing them to continue living off the land during the *shemittah* year.

Rav Kook believed that his role in Jewish history was to perform the *kiruv* of these individuals, that is, to "bring them close" to the truth of God and Judaism. He drew especially on the Lurianic Kabbalah to create his own doctrine of *kiruv*. Rabbi Isaac Luria (1534-1572) of Safed taught the concept of *tzimtzum,* which can be loosely explained as follows: God contracts Himself and creates an empty space in the world, and within this space emerge the *sefirot*, entities full of divine light, which are held by vessels. These vessels cannot bear this divine light, and therefore they shatter (*shevirat ha'kelim)* and the divine light is scattered throughout the world in the form of *nitztotzot*, fragments or sparks. The task of the Jewish people is to collect these *nitzotzot*. The task is made more difficult because the fragments are surrounded by evil in the form of *kelipot* (literally shells or peels). The only way to collect the *nitzotzot* is to completely eradicate the evil surrounding them. Once the *nitzotzot* are collected, it will lead to the rectification (*tikun*) of the world, and the radiance of divine light over humanity.

Rav Kook developed Luria's ideas of *tzimtzum* and gathering of the *nitzotzot*, explaining that this process occurs throughout history. This explanation of evil provides mystical significance to any action considered to be gathering the fragments of divine light.

[2] Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 49b

Rav Kook applied these ideas to his notion of *kiruv* explaining that the ingathering of the irreligious is part of the gathering the *nitzotzot* and the eradication of evil.

The combination of Rav Kook's Messianic and Kabbalistic views provides a more complete understanding of the concepts laid out in his letter to the Ridvaz. Rav Kook's overall argument for the permission of *heter mechirah* is twofold. First, and most importantly, he believed that being lenient in this case will bring closer the generation of the Second Aliyah. It was clear to him that if there are leniencies in place, the generation of the Second Aliyah will observe the law instead of disregarding due to its stringencies. Second, he believed that there was both Messianic and Kabbalistic significance to bringing the generation of the Second Aliyah closer to Judaism and Halakhic observance. Rav Kook saw this generation as the "brazen ones that come right before the Messiah comes", making it imperative to teach them the importance of the connection of religion to the land; only once they understood that connection could the Messiah come. Additionally, Rav Kook expressed the Kabbalistic significance in bringing these individuals "closer." Their ostensibly evil behavior is a kelipah, around the fragments of divine light within. To bring them closer is to remove the kelipah and release the hidden divine light.

It is because of this vision of significance placed on the generation of the Second Aliyah that Rav Kook pushes the Ridvaz and the Rabbinate of Jerusalem to try to understand his goal. Rav Kook was not attempting to create a loophole in the legal system; rather, he saw the importance of forming a system which would allow the *kiruv* of the generation of the Second Aliyah, which he believed would lead to the coming of the Messiah.

Translating this letter was a tricky task, as it required an understanding of both the Messianic and Kabbalistic ideas discussed above. In his writings, Rav Kook, like many other Rabbinic figures, used many references and very specific words and phrases. It is crucial to understand the significance and history behind many of his original words to understand the complete piece.

## קירוב פושעי ישראל
## BRINGING CLOSER THE SINNERS OF ISRAEL

ומה שכתב מר לתמוה עלי במה שאני מקרב את הכל, גם את פושעי-ישראל, כדי להחזירם בתשובה -
וכתבתי לו ברמז כוונתי, שכל מי שהוא מוכשר לעסוק בפנימיות רזי-תורה הוא מתמלא יותר מאור-החסד של תורת חסד, ועליו החובה לעסוק בתיקון נפולים ובקירוב רחוקים, (שבלשון חכמי-הסוד נקרא זה גם כן בכלל ליקוט ניצוצות-הקדושה מתוך הקליפות), ומצא בזה סתירה לברכת-המינים שאנו מתפללים לעקרם ולשברם, - ישים נא כבוד גאונו לבו לדברי, ואבאר לו לא בלשון של סתרי-תורה, שחושב מר להיות כבר יודע שאינו יודע בהם, אלא בדברים פשוטים, באמת אלו ואלו דברי א-לוהים חיים.

Concerning what my master [the Ridvaz] wondered about me and the fact that I bring close [*mekarev*] all of the people, including the sinners of Israel, in order that they repent:
I wrote to him with the hints of my intentions, that everyone who is qualified to delve into the depths of the secrets of the Torah is filled with the light of grace from the Torah of grace, and has the obligation to delve into the rectification of those who have fallen and in bringing close of those who are far (in the words of the Kabbalah, this is also called "collecting of holy shards [*nitzotzot*] from within the *kelipot* [lit. peels]"). Within this [the idea of the *kiruv* of sinners] we find a contradiction with the blessing of the heretics[3] where we pray to uproot and break them. The heart of the heart of the honorable genius should heed my words, and I will explain to him not in a Kabbalistic way, which [the Ridvaz] thinks he already knows he does not know, but rather with simple words,[4]

[3] Blessing of the Heretics, Daily Amidah Prayer.
This is the first of many quotes from the Bible, Talmud, and Rabbinic literature throughout this selection of the letter. Rav Kook inserts these for several reasons. First, this is the typical Rabbinic way of writing such a letter. Second, it seems as though Rav Kook utilized quotes to give his work Rabbinic authority and integrity; he wanted to show the Ridvaz that his *halachic* decision had as much legitimacy as the Ridvaz's, and that he (Rav Kook) is just as learned.

[4] This comment of Rav Kook's in a way belittles the Ridvaz's integrity, by saying that he won't teach him using the words of Kabbalah, but that he will teach him in a simple way, and by saying that the Ridvaz does not really know Kabbalah.

[because] in truth, "These and these are [both] the words of the living God."[5]

ידע הדר"ג, ששני דברים עיקריים ישנם שהם יחד בונים קדושת-ישראל וההתקשרות האלהית עמהם.
הא' הוא סגולה, כלומר טבע הקדושה שבנשמת ישראל מירושת אבות, כאמור: לא בצדקתך וגו' רק באבותיך חשק ד' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם אחריהם, והייתם לי סגולה מכל העמים; והסגולה הוא כוח קדוש פנימי מונח בטבע-הנפש ברצון ד', כמו טבע כל דבר מהמציאות, שאי-אפשר לו להשתנות כלל, כי הוא אמר ויהי, ויעמידם לעד לעולם.

The genius[6] knows that there are two central things that, when united, build up the holiness of Israel and their Godly connection. The first is merit,[7] that is to say the natural holiness that is in the souls of Israel through the inheritance of the patriarchy, as it says: "Not through your righteousness or the richness of your heart"[8]; "It was to your fathers that God was drawn in His love for them, so He chose you and their descendants after them"[9]; "And you will be My treasured possession from all the nations."[10]And this merit is the power of the inner holiness which lies in the nature of the soul through the will of God, like the nature of everything from creation, which is impossible for Him to change at all, "for He said it will be,"[11] "and He made them endure forever."[12]

והב' הוא ענין-בחירה, זה תלוי במעשה הטוב ובתלמוד-תורה.

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[5] Babylonian Talmud, Eruvin 13b

[6] This Hebrew acronym stands for "הדרת גאונו", "the beauty of his genius," which is referring to the Ridvaz.

[7] The word סגולה can be translated as merit, virtue, or treasure. I chose to translate it for the most part as merit, because Rav Kook uses it to refer to the merit the Jewish people inherently have from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[8] Deuteronomy 9:5. The verse continues to say that the only reason that the Jews will inherit the land will be because of God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[9] Deuteronomy 10:15

[10] Exodus 19:5. Note the usage of the word סגולה here, which is better translated as treasure in this case.

[11] Psalms 33:9

[12] Psalms 148:6. This chapter discusses how God created the nature of all of the aspects in the natural world, which cannot be changed.

And the second is the matter of choice, which depends on good actions and learning Torah.

החלק של הסגולה הוא הרבה, באין ערוך כלל, יותר גדול וקדוש מהחלק התלוי בבחירה, אלא שברית כרותה היא, שהסגולה הפנימית לא תתגלה בזמן הזה כי אם לפי אותה המדה שהבחירה מסייעה את גילויה, על כן הכל תלוי לפי רוב המעשה וקדושה האמונה ותלמוד-תורה.

The part of merit is greater, and is invaluable, larger and holier than the part which depends on choice, but it is an established covenant, where the inner merit is only revealed in our time through the attribute of choice, which helps reveal it; therefore, everything is dependent on action, holiness, belief, and learning Torah.

והשי"ת, הנוהג בחסדו בכל דור, מסדר הוא את סדרי הנשמות הצריכות להופיע בעולם: לפעמים כוח-הבחירה מתגבר וכוח-הסגולה עומד במצב ההעלם ואינו ניכר, ולפעמים כוח-הסגולה מתגבר וכוח הבחירה עומד במצב הנעלם. וכל עיקרה של ברית - אבות, שאיננו פוסק אפילו כשתמה כבר זכות-אבות, הוא בא מצד כוח-הסגולה, ובעקבא-דמשיחא מתגבר ביותר כוח-הסגולה, שהוא תוכן זוכר חסדי אבות ומביא גואל לבני בניהם למען שמו באהבה, כלומר לא מצד הבחירה שהיא באה מצד המעשים הטובים שבבנים ומצד התשובה, אלא למען שמו, המתגלה ע"י זכירת חסדי אבות.

And God Almighty, who works in His mercy in each generation, organizes the structure of the souls[13] which must appear in the world: Sometimes the power of choice overpowers, and the power of merit stands hidden and unrecognizable; sometimes the power of merit overpowers and the power of choice is hidden. All of the essential pieces of the Covenant of the Patriarchs, which will never stop even if the merit of our forefathers expires, come from the side of the power of merit, and in the times leading up to the

[13] Note Rav Kook's usage of the word נשמות, which is the highest level of the soul according to Kabbalah. The word נפש, which is also used throughout this letter, is considered the lowest level of the soul. The נשמה is seemingly the soul when it is complete. It is used here because Rav Kook seems to be discussing all souls, many of which are complete souls, ones that have both the powers of merit and choice under control.

Messiah the power of merit will overpower, as is the substance of [the line] "remembers the good deeds of the fathers, and brings redemption to their children, in the sake of His name with love,"[14] meaning not from the side of choice, which comes from the side of good actions of sons and from the side of repentance, but rather for "the sake of His name," which is revealed through the remembrance of the good of the Patriarchs.

אמנם לפעמים מתגבר חושך כזה שמפסיק את הופעת הסגולה גם כן. אבל זה אי-אפשר כי אם במי שבא למדה זו להיות חס וחלילה שונא את ישראל, ודורש רעה להם בפועל ובצפיית-הלב, כמו המינים שמפרש הרמב"ם בה' תפלה שהיו מצירים לישראל, וגם זה היה קשה לחכמים מאד לתקן, על כן הכריז רבן גמליאל: כלום יש אדם שיודע לתקן ברכת המינים, והוצרך לתקנה דווקא שמואל הקטן, שהיה נקי מכל מידה של שנאה כמו שהיה מרגלא בפומיה: בנפול אויבך אל תשמח, כדי שיכוין ביסוד הברכה דווקא על אותם שכבר אבדו את הסגולה כולה. ובדורנו נתרבו נשמות רבות שאע"פ שהן שפלות מאד בענין-הבחירה, ועל כן הם נגועים במעשים רעים רבים ובדעות רעות מאד ד' ישמרנו, מכל מקום אור-הסגולה מאיר בהם, ועל כן הם מחבבים מאד את כללות ישראל וחושקים בארץ ישראל, ובכמה דברים טובים ויקרים מהמדות שהם באים מסגולת ישראל בטבע-נפשם הם מצוינים בהם.

However, sometimes a darkness overpowers and stops the appearance of the merit. But this attribute of darkness only comes to someone who God Forbid hates Israel, and seeks evil for them in reality and in the heart, like the heretics discussed by Maimonides in *Hilchot Tefilot* who vexed the Israelites,[15] and this is also very hard for wise people to fix, therefore Rabban Gamliel declared: "Is there no one that can fix the blessing of the heretics?"[16]And Shmuel HaKatan was the person who needed to fix them, because he was clean from any attribute of hatred, as he was used to saying:[17] "When your enemy falls, do not exult,"[18] so that the fundamental part of the blessing can be directed to those

[14] Blessing of the Patriarchs, Daily Amidah Prayer
[15] Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Prayer and the Priestly Blessing 2:1
[16] Talmud Bavli, Brachot 28b
[17] The phrase מרגלא בפומיה means, "was regularly in his mouth," meaning that this saying was natural for this person to say.
[18] Proverbs 24:17

who completely lost their merit. In our generation many souls[19] are multiplying, even though they are very lowly when it comes to choice, and therefore they are infected with many evil actions and evil thoughts, God save us. Nevertheless, the light of merit enlightens them, and therefore they love the collective of Israel and desire the Land of Israel, and the good and precious parts of their attributes come from the merit of Israel which is the nature of their souls — they are excellent in those [good attributes].

ונשמות כאלו, אם יזדקק לקרב אותם מי שאין בו דעה עמוקה של טביעת-עין לדעת לחלק בין הצד הסגולי הפנימי הקדוש, שבהם, ובין הצד הבחירי המקולקל שבהם, שהוא מקיף את נפשם כחוחים וקוצים הסובבים שושנה, הוא יוכל להתקלקל הרבה חס וחלילה, וללמוד ממעשיהם, ולהדבק בצד הרע שבהם והוא מחויב להתרחק מהם, והשי"ת נותן בלבבו רצון זה ומחשבה זו ובל שנאה ושל התרחקות, כדי שלא יבולע לו. אבל מי שהוא תמיד שקוע ברעיונו בהסתכלות פנימית, באור תורה וקדושה ויראה עילאה, מצד רוממות רבון כל העולמים חיי החיים ב"ה, ולא חס וחלילה ביראה תתאה לבדה מצד עונשי עוה"ז או עונשי עולם הבא, - שהיא יראה חיצונית, שאסור לתלמידי חכמים העוסקים ברזי-תורה בהבנה פנימית להרבות בה, רק לקחת ממנה מעט, כדי ליסר את הגוף ונטיותיו הגסות, במדות רעות ותכונות מגונות חס וחלילה, אבל העיקר צריך להיות הלב מלא אהבה קדושה, ויראה עליונה, מסוד קדושים, כיראת מלאכי-מעלה גבורי-כח עושי דברו - תלמידי חכמים כאלה הנם מכירים בטבעם את טבע הסגולה הפנימית, ויודעים להפריד ממנה בדבקות-מחשבתם את הקליפה הבחירית, והם חייבים ומוזהרים על זה לקרב פושעים כאלה שסגולה פנימית יש להם, כדי לעורר יותר ויותר את כח הטוב הצפון בהם, עד שיתגבר לגמרי על הרע הבחירי ויכניע אותו.

These souls, if they are brought closer by someone who does not have a deep knowledge or perception to differentiate between the merit in their inner, holy side and between their spoiled side of choice — which surrounds their "selves"[20] like thistles and thorns that surround roses — then he has the ability to cause more spoil, God Forbid, and to learn from their actions, and to stick to the evil side that is within him. He is obligated to go far from them, and God Almighty will give him this desire and thought, not of hatred

[19] Note the usage of נשמה here. Rav Kook is discussing how although the souls may seem incomplete, they do in fact have both attributes of merit and choice.

[20] Note the usage of the word נפש (translated as self) while discussing the soul of the evil-doers.

but of distance, so that he will not become swallowed by it. But one who is always immersed in his thoughts,looking inward, in the light of Torah and holiness and enlightened fear, from the side of the majesty of the Creator of all the worlds the Giver of life, blessed be He; and not, God Forbid, in lowly fear of this world or the next world — which is an outward fear, forbidden to Torah scholars that deal with the secrets of the Torah with profound understanding to have much of, only may they take a little from it [lowly fear of punishment], in order to afflict the body and its vulgar intentions, from evil attributes and gross characteristics, God Forbid. But the main point is that the heart needs to be full of holy love, and enlightened fear, the secret of holy ones, like the fear of heavenly angels, warriors of power who carry out His will — Torah scholars like this recognize within[the sinner's] nature the natural inner merit, and know how to separate from it the clinging of their thoughts to the *kelipah* [peel] of choice, and they are obligated and commanded about this, to bring close sinners like this that have an inner merit, in order to awaken more and more the power of good stored in them, until it completely overcomes the evil choice and subjugates it.

ופעולת חכמים לוקחי נפשות כאלה אינה חוזרת ריקם בשום פעם; לפעמים פעולותיהם נראות בגלוי, ע"י מה שהמקורבים מהם מטיבים את מעשיהם, ומישרים את דעותיהם יותר בפועל ולפעמים נכנס רק גרעין פנימי בהם, וכבר בטוחים הם שלא יפטרו מן העולם בלא תשובה, ואפילו אם חלילה יהיה המושפע כל כך גרוע עד שהוא בעצמו לא יזכה לשוב בתשובה, יפעול כח הגרעין הזה על טבע-נפשו ונפיק מיניה זרעא מעליא, שישוב בתשובה, ויתקן גם כן את נפש אביו, כדין ברא מזכא אבא.

And the actions of the wise ones who take selves[21] like these never come back empty-handed;sometimes their actions are revealed through the improved actions of those who are brought closer, and straighten their thoughts actively. And sometimes, [the wise ones] insert just a single grain into them, and they are quite sure that they

[21] Here, it seems as though Rav Kook uses the term נפש, the lower level of the soul, since he is talking about evildoers, who do not have complete souls, as they have dissonance between the merit side of their soul and the choice side of their soul.

will not die without repenting; even if the sinner, God Forbid, is so bad that he himself will not have the merit[22] to repent, the power of this grain will act on the nature of his "self," and he will become better,[23] and repent, and the self of his father will also be fixed, according to the rule of, "a son brings merit for his father."[24]

והשי"ת יודע, שלא את כל הפושעים אני מקרב, כי אם אותם שאני מרגיש, שכח סגולי גדול מונח בפנימיותם.

And God Almighty knows, that I am not bringing close all of the sinners, only those that I feel that the power of the merit is great within them.

ודרכים רבים ישנם לידיעה זו, וספרים גדולים צריכים לכתוב בזה כדי לבאר גם רק שמץ מהדבר הגדול הזה.

And there are many paths to this idea, and large books need to be written about this to explain even just a morsel of this.

ועל אותם שכבר אבדו גם את הסגולה הפנימית שלהם לגמרי, אמר דוד הע"ה: הלא משנאיך ד' אשנא, ובדרך כללות מסרו לנו חז"ל סימנין על-זה. והמינים והכופרים על פי רוב איבדו גם את הסגולה הפנימית, ומידה זו נוהגת ברוב הדורות, אבל דור של עקבא-דמשיחא הם יוצאים מכלל זה, שהם כדברי תיקוני זוהר טוב מלגאו וביש מלבר. והם חמורו של משיח שנאמר עליו עני ורוכב על חמור, והכוונה: כמו חמור, שמבחוץ יש בו שני סימני-טומאה, א"כ הטומאה בולטת בו יותר מבחזיר וגמל וכיו"ב, שיש בהם סימן-טהרה אחד על כל פנים, ומכל מקום יש בו בפנימיותו עניין-קדושה גם כן, שהרי הוא קדוש בבכורה, ועניין מה שהתורה אמרה על זה שם קדש לי הוא גדול מאד מאד. וכן הן הנשמות של אותם שהסגולה הישראלית לבדה מתגלה בהם בעקבא-דמשיחא, ולהם יש תרופה, אע"פ שיש בהם סרחון גדול, וחושך רב וכבד מאוד. אמר על זה רב יוסף: ייתי ואזכי דאיתיב בטולא דכופיתא דחמריה, ורב יוסף היה דרכו להביט על הפנימיות, ותלה גדולתו בגדולת ההוא יומא דקא גרים, ואמר על אמו: איקום מקמי שכינתא דאתיא,

[22] Merit here is translated from the word זכות, personal merit, rather than סגולה, a natural merit from the Patriarchs.

[23] This phrase in Aramaic literally means "a seed of loftiness will go up from him," here used to mean that they will become better.

[24] Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 104a

אע"פ שמצד החיצוניות נראה הדבר ואמר על עצמו: לא תיתני ענוה דאיכא אנא, לגאוה חלילה, אבל בעל סגולה נפשית שכמותו ע"ה אמר זה בכל מילוי הקדושה והענוה האמיתית, מעין ענותנותו של אדון הנביאים ע"ה, ותלמידיו הם הולכים בדרכיו.

And of those who have already destroyed their inner merit completely, King David says, "I shall hate those who hate You,"[25] and in a general way the Sages gave us signs about this. The heretics and infidels for the most part lost this inner merit, and this is what happens in most generations, but the generation leading up the Messiah is an exception, because they are, in the words of *Tikkunei Zohar*, "good on the inside and bad on the outside." And they are the "donkey of the Messiah," about which it says, "he [the Messiah] will be poor and riding on a donkey,"[26] which means: like a donkey, which on the outside has signs of impurity, the impurity is even more prominent than that of a pig and camel and other animals like them, which at least have one sign of purity, and nevertheless it [the donkey] has an inner holiness, because the firstborn is holy; the matter in the Torah concerning "consecrate to Me [every firstborn],"[27] is very significant. So too the souls in whom the merit of Israel is only revealed in the time leading up to Messiah — they have a cure, even though they have a great stench, and a heavy and great darkness. Concerning this, Rav Yosef said, "Messiah will come, and I should merit[28] to sit in the dung of its donkey!"[29] For Rav Yosef's way was to look at the internal, and he explained his greatness as "caused by that day [i.e. the day of the giving of the Torah],"[30] and he said about his mother, "I will stand before the Divine Presence," and he said about himself, "There is still humility, for I am here." Even though externally, this is seen as pride, in fact an owner of merit in his self like him said this full

[25] Psalms 139:21
[26] Zechariah 9:9
[27] Exodus 13:2, discussing giving God the firstborn of every animal and man.
[28] This again is referring to personal merit (זכות), rather than natural inner merit (סגולה).
[29] Talmud Bavli, Sanhedrin 98b
[30] Rav Kook is referencing Pesachim 68b, in a discussion where Rav Yosef states that if not for the Torah, he would be like any other person.

of holiness and true humility, like the humility of the leader of prophets,[31] and his students follow in his path.

ומפני-כך היתה מדתו של משרע"ה לקרב רחוקים, עד שקרב אפילו את הערב רב, ואע"פ שזה גרם אריכות-הגלות, מכל מקום סוף-כל-סוף יתעלו גם הם, כי בודאי יתקיים ביה יתן לך כלבבך וכל עצתך ימלא, והשי"ת מקים דבר עבדו ועצת מלאכיו ישלים. ואמרו בזוהר, שחסדיו של משה היו גדולים משל אברהם, ובאברהם אבינו, אע"פ שמדת- חסדו היתה גדולה מאד, ולא היה כנח שלא בקש רחמים על רשעים בני-דורו, מכל מקום לא בקש רק בתנאי: אולי ימצאון שם עשרה, אבל משרע"ה בקש בלא שום תנאים: אם תשא חטאתם, ואם אין - מחני נא, מספרך אשר כתבת, שהיא מסירת-נפש אפילו מעולם- הבא, כי הספר של הקב"ה. הוא עולם הבא עצמו.

And because of this, the attribute of Moses was to bring close those who are far, until he even brought close the mixed multitude,[32] and even though they caused the lengthening of exile, nevertheless he ultimately also brought them up, because through them, "may He grant you your desire and fulfill all of your plans,"[33] was certainly fulfilled. And God Almighty "will fulfill the words of His servant and the plans of His angels will be completed."[34] And it says in the *Zohar* that the followers[35] of Moses were greater than those of Abraham. Abraham himself, even though his attribute of mercy was very great, and he was not like Noah who did not ask for mercy for the wicked people in his generation, nevertheless he [Abraham] only asked on condition, "What if ten [righteous Jews] shall be found there?"[36] But Moses asked without any conditions, "now, if You forgive their sin [well and good], and if not, erase me from the book You have written,"[37] which is self-sacrifice, [and gives up] even the world to come, because it is the book of God, which is the world to come of itself.

[31] I.e. Moses, whom he discusses in the following paragraph.
[32] In Rabbinic tradition, the group of insincere Egyptian converts that followed the Jews into the desert after the exodus.
[33] Psalms 20:5
[34] Isaiah 44:26
[35] literally translated as "the pious ones"
[36] Genesis 18:32
[37] Exodus 32:32

***Gavi Kutliroff***

*FROM THE ARCHIVES:*

# CHRISTIAN TOLERANCE IN THE LEO FRANK CASE

On August 16th, 1915, Leo Frank was kidnapped from his prison in Atlanta, Georgia and brought to the nearby town of Marietta, where he was lynched the next morning. Frank, a wealthy northerner, a Jew, and the superintendent of a pencil factory, had been condemned to death two years earlier for the rape and murder of 13-year-old Mary Phagan, a white Christian and an employee in his factory. Marietta was her hometown. The lynching expressed the mass outrage at the governor's commutation of Frank's sentence, from death penalty to life imprisonment, two months earlier. Modern research has all but verified the conclusion offered by the governor himself that year — Frank had been framed by the real murderer, Jim Conley, a black janitor at the factory.

The complex dynamics latent in this religious southern community, in whose midst Civil War tensions still seethed, exploded in the Frank case. It remains today one of the most poignant and polarizing instances of anti-Semitism in American history. This case defined not only the position of the Jew in the South and in America at large, but also the concurrent rise of the KKK in towns near Atlanta. The repercussions of the Frank case for the American Jew and for American race relations more broadly are still felt today.

Brandeis University has special access to the case's details as they unfolded on the ground. Frank's widow, Lucille, joined the Brandeis University National Women's Committee later in life, and donated all her correspondence related to the case to Brandeis. These letters currently reside in the archives.

The Leo Frank collection paints a convoluted web of personalities and allegiances, but I will focus here on one

particular letter that adds an illuminating and disturbing dimension to the case. On April 23rd, 1915, a day after the legal proceedings discussing the possible commutation of Frank's sentence began, Methodist Pastor O. Bell Close sent a letter to Frank's mother Rachel. Close opens the letter by stating his own relevance to the case — at the time of the murder, he was pastor of a church located "in a Hebrew section and not far from the residence of your son." He writes of his familiarity with Frank and his "high esteem in that community."

He goes on to describe his strong interest in the case; he had closely observed the trial and read all of the reports related to the proceedings. Here Close begins equivocating in a style that pervades the rest of his letter. He remarks, "Without passing upon the guilt or innocence of your son, I was convinced at the time that a fair trial under the circumstances prevailing was impossible; and this statement is not to be construed as impugning either the integrity or the efficiency of the either the Judge or Jury." There is a clear tension here between Close's two contradictory loyalties, to the religious integrity of justice and to the social integrity of his community (as well as his own personal standing, which appears to be quite good). Hedging his bets, Close places the blame for his perceived perversion of the facts not on any member of his community but on "prevailing circumstances." In doing so he seems to be intimately aware of the case's precarious racial dynamics.

At this juncture, Close's internal tensions reach their peak. He offers Rachel Frank his story and declares that he "shall be willing to go before the Commissioners or the Governor or both and make a plea for a pardon or for commutation of sentence." He specifies that he expects no reward. The apparent heroism of this commitment, though, is heavily mitigated by Close's exhaustive qualifications: He will offer the testimony "if you consider it valuable, and if you are sure you would need it," saying, "I very much prefer to have no part whatever in the matter, since a large number of excellent people in Georgia, many of whom are my personal friends, have opinions on the matter very different from mine." He notes that his story "after all may not be of any value"

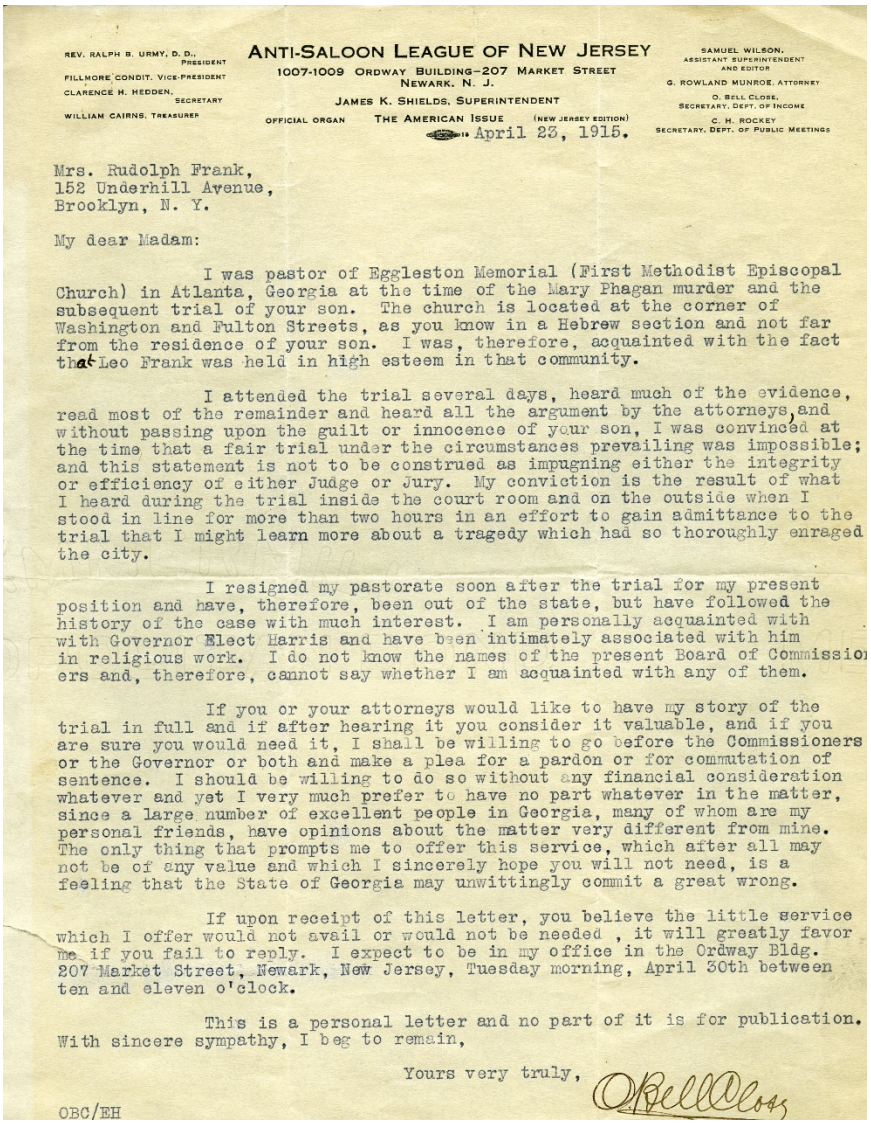
and that he "sincerely hope[s] [Frank] will not need" it. The most explicit expression of his reluctance is in the last paragraph of the letter, where he writes, "If upon receipt of this letter, you believe the little service which I offer would not avail or would not be needed, it would greatly favor me if you fail to reply." He then offers exactly one hour of availability at his current office the following week. His office, he writes, is in Newark, New Jersey, 850 miles from Atlanta.

The message here is complicated. Close seems to feel a personal obligation in the Frank case, and perhaps he would not be able to forgive himself if he refrained from informing Rachel Frank of his certainty of her son's innocence. This point is strengthened by Close's statement of his motivation for writing at all: "A feeling that the State of Georgia may unwittingly commit a great wrong." But as a public figure, the pastor seems to be all too aware of the radical nature of his offer in such an explosive environment, and begs his recipient not to reply. The private Close tries to save Frank, but the public Close condemns him.

In a story cast typically in colors of hatred, extremism, and desperation, Close's letter provides a shade of humanity and nuance; it is unclear how many other local Christians harbored similar views and kept them to themselves. But Close's beseeching of Rachel Frank not to use his testimony also betrays a disturbing tolerance of wrongdoing on the part of this powerful Atlanta Christian, even as he was certain of the case's injustice. We will never know the effect Close's testimony may have had — if it would have inspired others with the same beliefs to speak out and turn the tide of public opinion, or if it would have only invited more violence. The horrific elements of the case could not have occurred without leaders like Close in the Christian community turning away. In Brandeis' collection, there is no response from Rachel Frank.

While there is a broader moral here about the tolerance of injustice and the responsibility of the bystander, the case should also not be removed from its particular features. In the American South of the early 20th century, the Jew was not the primary antagonist of the white churchgoer; his role in the cultural conflict

was not nearly as central as that of the black man. There is a reason much of the anti-Semitism exhibited in the case was covert and implied, whereas racism in the region did not need to be hidden in its expression. The argument constructed by Frank's own lawyers relied on an explicitly racist portrayal of Jim Conley, deliberately intended to play on the biases of the jury. But the Jews' position at the margins of culture allowed for the unique kind of bigotry lurking in the background of Close's letter, the kind that excuses murder while assuring the onlooker of his security. Close seems to feel safe as long as it is not his hand tying the noose around Frank's neck, and Close's motive in sending the letter is clearly his own personal absolution rather than Frank's. While we should certainly learn from this aspect of the Frank case a general lesson about the human response to witnessing wrongdoing, we should also read this letter as testifying to a dark episode in Jewish history, and note what kind of evils have come from the historical placement of the Jew at the margins of the historical narrative.



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April 23, 1915.

Mrs. Rudolph Frank,
152 Underhill Avenue,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

My dear Madam:

I was pastor of Eggleston Memorial (First Methodist Episcopal Church) in Atlanta, Georgia at the time of the Mary Phagan murder and the subsequent trial of your son. The church is located at the corner of Washington and Fulton Streets, as you know in a Hebrew section and not far from the residence of your son. I was, therefore, acquainted with the fact that Leo Frank was held in high esteem in that community.

I attended the trial several days, heard much of the evidence, read most of the remainder and heard all the argument by the attorneys, and without passing upon the guilt or innocence of your son, I was convinced at the time that a fair trial under the circumstances prevailing was impossible; and this statement is not to be construed as impugning either the integrity or efficiency of either Judge or Jury. My conviction is the result of what I heard during the trial inside the court room and on the outside when I stood in line for more than two hours in an effort to gain admittance to the trial that I might learn more about a tragedy which had so thoroughly enraged the city.

I resigned my pastorate soon after the trial for my present position and have, therefore, been out of the state, but have followed the history of the case with much interest. I am personally acquainted with with Governor Elect Harris and have been intimately associated with him in religious work. I do not know the names of the present Board of Commissioners and, therefore, cannot say whether I am acquainted with any of them.

If you or your attorneys would like to have my story of the trial in full and if after hearing it you consider it valuable, and if you are sure you would need it, I shall be willing to go before the Commissioners or the Governor or both and make a plea for a pardon or for commutation of sentence. I should be willing to do so without any financial consideration whatever and yet I very much prefer to have no part whatever in the matter, since a large number of excellent people in Georgia, many of whom are my personal friends, have opinions about the matter very different from mine. The only thing that prompts me to offer this service, which after all may not be of any value and which I sincerely hope you will not need, is a feeling that the State of Georgia may unwittingly commit a great wrong.

If upon receipt of this letter, you believe the little service which I offer would not avail or would not be needed , it will greatly favor me if you fail to reply. I expect to be in my office in the Ordway Bldg. 207 Market Street, Newark, New Jersey, Tuesday morning, April 30th between ten and eleven o'clock.

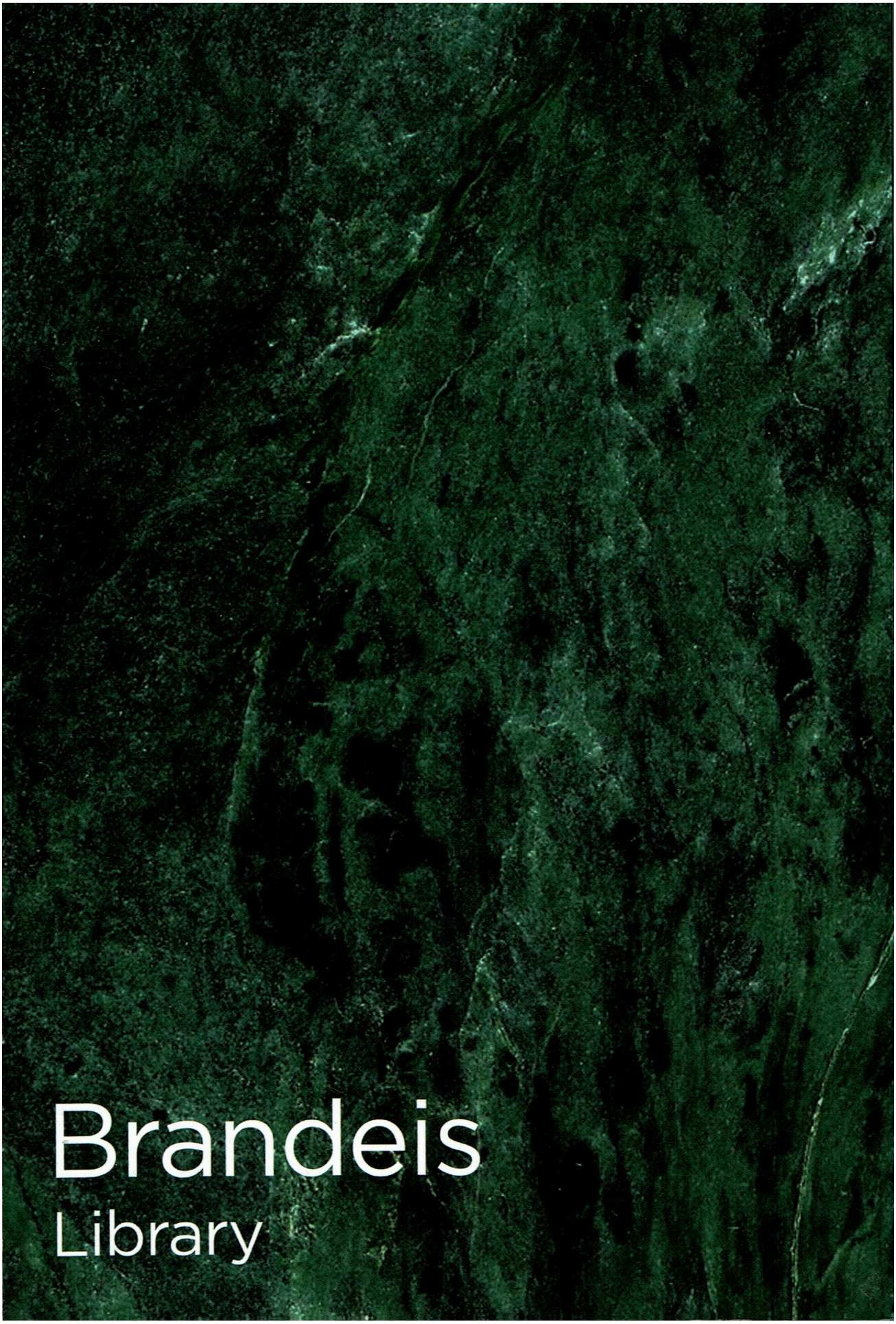
This is a personal letter and no part of it is for publication.
With sincere sympathy, I beg to remain,

Yours very truly,

O. Bell Close

OBC/EH

Image courtesy of the Robert D. Farber University Archives & Special Collections Department, Brandeis University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