REVIEW ESSAYS

Jews, Slavery, and the Slave Trade: A Historiographical Essay


Sometimes a book's greatest contribution to our understanding of the past is the controversy and resultant feedback it generates among scholars. Stanley Elkin's publication of *Slavery* in 1959, for example, with its controversial "concentration camp" analogy, set off a veritable firestorm of criticism and led to a host of new, insightful scholarship aimed at refuting Elkins's portrayal of slavery. The same might be said for the Nation of Islam's *The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews*. Published in 1991 by the NOI's Historical Research Department, it argues that Jews financed and dominated the slave trade and that they owned slaves greatly out of proportion to their percentage of the population. Until the publication of *The Secret Relationship*, Jewish participation in the slave trade had not been a serious issue among scholars, and until recently Bertram Wallace Korn's 1961 essay, "Jews and Negro Slavery in the Old South, 1789–1865," remained the most definitive study. But an attempt by scholars to refute the distortions and anti-Semitism endemic in the NOI's study has led to the publication of two fine new additions to the field, Eli Faber's *Jews, Slaves and the Slave Trade: Setting the Record Straight* (NYU Press, 1998) and Saul R. Friedman's *Jews and the American Slave Trade* (Transaction Publishers, 1998).

Like Korn, both Faber and Friedman found that while some Jews were involved in slavery and the slave trade, they played a relatively insignificant role and one not out of proportion to their numbers in a given population. Though similar in their conclusions, the two authors follow slightly different paths in presenting their evidence.

Faber's *Jews, Slaves and the Slave Trade* is a relatively short book—
only 146 pages of text—and focuses almost exclusively on the British Empire, but it is methodically and massively researched and contains 107 pages of appendixes and supporting data. Faber, a professor of history at City College of New York, uses some secondary works, particularly Philip Curtin’s *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969), but much of the material is based on primary sources, ranging from merchants’ records to the files of the British Naval Office and from such varied locations as Caracao, London, New York, and Jamaica.

According to Faber, Jews had been banned from Britain from 1290 until 1656, when they were allowed back in by Oliver Cromwell during the “Resettlement,” roughly the same time the English were attempting to enter and then dominate the slave trade. Jews, viewed as outsiders and having few ties to the political and economic elites, played virtually no role in the development of the British trade. Twenty years after the chartering of the Royal African Company in 1672, for example, there were no Jewish stockholders, despite frequent sales of stock and plenty of capital in the Jewish community. As late as 1714, there were only 34 Jewish investors out of 2,039 “voting shareholders,” or 1.6 percent of the total, in the British South Sea Company, despite the fact that it held the very lucrative Asiento, or contract to import slaves into the Spanish Empire. In 1758, there were no Jews among the 480 merchants who belonged to the “Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.” As late as 1787, there were only 11 known Jews among the 1,086 London members of the company, and no evidence exists that any of them actually traded with Africa. Instead, most Jewish investors showed a preference for non-slaving merchant ventures, such as the Bank of England or the East India Company, and had close commercial ties with India, Portugal, and Jamaica but not Africa.

If Jews did not participate as merchants and financiers in England, they were also conspicuously absent as shipowners and captains. By 1726, Britain’s slaving fleet had grown to at least 171 ships, capable of carrying more than 49,000 slaves, but all of the vessels were owned by non-Jews. Liverpool, which by 1790 dominated the English slave trade, had only nineteen recognizable Jews that year, and none of them owned or captained any of the 141 slavers registered in that port.

*The Secret Relationship* makes much of Jewish slaving activities in the British colonies, especially on Barbados and Jamaica, where the NOI claimed they dominated both the sugar industry and slavery,
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owning large plantations and reaping huge profits as factors and mer-
chants in the slave trade. If evidence did exist for Jewish complicity in
the slave trade it would be on these islands; Barbados alone accounted
for more than half of the English slave imports in the seventeenth
century. But again, a close examination of the evidence leads to just
the opposite conclusion, that Jews actually owned relatively few slaves
on Barbados. In 1680, Jews owned only 300 of the 37,495 slaves on the
island, a mere .8 percent of the total. The reasons were simple. While
Jews held varied occupations, most were small merchants, artisans,
and tradesmen, and almost all lived in towns. Those who did own
slaves usually kept only a few household slaves or helpers in their
businesses. Very few Jews were even farmers, let alone plantation
owners, the largest class of slave owners and slave users on the island.
Prejudice and legal restrictions also contributed. Between 1688 and
1706, the island's legislature mandated that Jews could not own more
than one slave each. Similar conditions existed on Jamaica, and Faber
concludes that Jews probably held less than 1 percent of the slaves on
that island as well.

There were, of course, a few Jews who were prominent in the slave
trade. Alexandre Lindo was one of the largest factors on Jamaica,
accounting for nearly 23 percent of the slaves sold there between 1779
and 1788. In colonial Rhode Island, Aaron Lopez and his father-in-
law, Jacob Rivera, were both wealthy merchants involved in the slave
trade. But as Faber argues, they were the exceptions to the rule, a few
interlopers in a field dominated by non-Jews. In fact, with all of their
extensive trading and ethnoreligious connections, Faber concludes
that the real question should be why Jews were not actually more
extensively involved in the slave trade than they were.

In contrast to Faber's focus on the British colonial slave trade, Saul
Friedman in Jews and the American Slave Trade takes a much more
sweeping—and polemic—look at the issue. Like Faber and Korn,
Friedman, a professor of Jewish and Middle Eastern history at
Youngstown State University, uses his 252 pages of text to argue that
Jews played a relatively insignificant role in the institution of slavery.
Friedman relies much more heavily than does Faber on secondary
rather than primary sources, quoting everyone from Eugene Genovese
and Philip Curtin to U. B. Phillips. In proving his case, he also develops
several interlocking themes. Like Faber, he examines the role of Jews
in British slavery and the slave trade, but he broadens his study to
include slaving activity among the Dutch, Portuguese, French, and Spanish as well as a chapter on slavery in antiquity. He also discusses the plight and history of Jews in Europe and America during the era of slavery, an era marked by hostility, persecution, expulsion, and sometimes extermination by their Christian oppressors. If Jews were such a "pariah people," Friedman asks, how could such a victimized group ever exert the type of economic and political influence needed to dominate something as lucrative as the slave trade? He also contrasts his findings, and those of other reputable scholars, to those of the Nation of Islam's, The Secret Relationship between Blacks and Jews.

Friedman's first chapter, in fact, is a ringing denouncement of The Secret Relationship. He refers to it as a "Handbook of Hate" and claims that "Instead of attempting a thoughtful study of Black-Jewish relations, the editors have indulged in a). distortion, b). exaggeration, c). emendation, d). use of Trovato (made-up tales), e). prevarication, f). misquoting sources, g). citing shaky sources, and h). citing no sources" (3). He offers numerous examples, such as the NOI authors using Jacob Marcus as a source documenting Jewish domination of the sugar industry, when in fact Marcus stated just the opposite. Or wrongly claiming that no Jewish congregation in America ever denounced slavery, despite the efforts of, among others, Rabbi David Einhorn in antebellum Baltimore. The NOI also incorrectly claims that Christopher Columbus, Lord Amherst, John C. Fremont, and the pirate Jean Lafitte, among other prominent Christians, were actually Jewish!

Much of the book is devoted to describing the plight of Jews in Europe and America during the era of slavery, and this description is one of the great strengths of the book. European Jews faced a precarious existence at best: pogroms in the East, the Spanish Inquisition in Iberia, and second-class citizenship in "tolerant" countries like England and Holland. All of this was occurring during the formative years of the slave trade, meaning that Jews were usually far more interested in mere survival and were not positioned to dominate a major new industry. In Spain, for example, Jews were at first forcibly converted or, for those who refused, expelled in March 1492. The converts or "Marranos" who did remain were always suspected of being "crypto-Jews" and faced the Inquisition, in which some thirty thousand individuals would be burned at the stake or garroted. It is no wonder that none of the earliest holders of the Spanish Asiento were Jewish.
The same conditions existed in much of the New World. In New Spain, Jews and Marranos still faced death and persecution from the Inquisition. In New Holland, they were originally barred from owning land, serving in the militia, voting, holding public office, or trading with the Indians. These restrictions remained even after the British seized the colony and renamed it New York. At roughly the same time, Jews (and Quakers) were being "warned out" by the Puritans in Massachusetts. New England rum distilleries and port towns would play a major role in the slave trade, but as late as 1790 there were probably no more than 150 Jews in the six New England states, and most were living in Rhode Island.

There were some islands of tolerance in this sea of religious bigotry, notably Rhode Island, South Carolina, and Dutch Surinam. All played prominent roles in slavery and the slave trade and afforded Jews some access to the institution. There was a heavy Jewish presence in Surinam from the earliest days. By 1791, the 1,300 Jews in settlements such as "Joode Savaane" (Jewish Meadow) constituted nearly a third of the colony's white inhabitants and were definitely involved in all aspects of the institution. In 1694, for example, 104 Jewish families, containing 570 individuals, owned forty estates and held 9,000 slaves (not the 80,000 claimed in The Secret Relationship, Friedman asserts). If existing records from 1707 are an accurate indicator, Jewish factors bought about a quarter of all the slaves sold in the colony by the Dutch West India Company.

But even this temporary affluence in the industry did not last. By the late seventeenth century, local Dutch authorities were already beginning to restrict the rights of non-Christians in Surinam and eventually drove most out of the sugar industry and the slave trade.

Friedman does a good job of examining slavery in the Chesapeake and in the antebellum South, the two centers of American slavery. As was the case in the European slave trade, in the Caribbean, and in Latin America, he finds little evidence of Jewish involvement, let alone domination. In the Chesapeake, where the institution began in America, more than 900 vessels transported more than 69,000 slaves to Virginia and Maryland between 1699 and 1775. Jewish traders accounted for no more than 1,361, or 2 percent of the total. And all but 4 were imported by just one merchant, Sammuel Jacobs, repeating the pattern seen in Rhode Island, where Lopez and Rivera accounted for 21 of the 25 known Jewish slaving ventures from that colony.
Friedman documents the pattern of Jews owning only a fraction of the slaves and accounting for a minuscule amount of the trading wherever he looked in colonial South Carolina or in French Louisiana. By the time he reaches chapter 14, on the “Cotton Kingdom,” he could write: “A state by state analysis yields what by now is a monotonous conclusion: Some Jews who lived in the cotton belt owned slaves or profited from the slave system. At no time did they dominate the cotton trade or slavery” (187-88).

Friedman’s excellent study is marred by a few minor problems. For instance, he argues persuasively that because of their persecution throughout history Jews who did own slaves were often kinder masters than their non-Jewish contemporaries, but in some areas, however, his evidence for this argument is rather thin. Citing Rabbi Bertram Wallace Korn’s musing that Judah Touro might have purchased his fifteen slaves for the “sole purpose of liberating them” (183) is little more than speculation, for example. Also, there are numerous typos, misspellings, and minor mistakes that detract from the book and give the reader the impression that it might have been rushed into print. These problems are minor, however, when compared to the ambitious nature of the work. Separately, both Faber and Friedman offer a thoughtful and well-argued look into Jewish participation in the slave trade and institution of slavery. Collectively, they should constitute the definitive studies on the topic for years to come.

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The Celebrant and the Critic


"A shilling life will give you all the facts," wrote W. H. Auden, as though depreciating the merely conscientious empiricism that the art of biography entails. Yet these two studies do more than provide overviews of two important American Jewish intellectuals and academicians. Sanford Lakoff and Edward Alexander also encourage their readers to meditate on the viability of the secularism of the offspring of Eastern European immigrants and also on the allure of the liberal and socialist sympathies that animated so many Jews in the course of the twentieth century.

Max Lerner and Irving Howe were both intensely political animals who were willing to bite off giant chunks of culture and society as objects of scrutiny as well. Born in Minsk in 1902, Lerner was brought to the United States soon after the Kishinev pogrom. His father was a tailor and a melamed. Max showed enough academic promise to enroll in Yale College at the age of sixteen, in 1919, a year before Irving Howe was born in the East Bronx. Lerner died in 1992; Howe outlived him by only a year. Except for the eight years they served together on the faculty of Brandeis University (1953–61), where they earned reputations as gifted and inspiring teachers, their lives did not intertwine. Lerner was the archetypal "lib-lab," ardently backing the New Deal (but a bit from its left). According to Time magazine in 1960, he had "a crush on America." A prolific social scientist who helped edit the Nation and who churned out seven thousand newspaper columns, Lerner was also the author of seventeen books, though amazon.com lists almost none still in print—not even America as a Civilization, which upon its publication in 1957 had reviewers putting him in the ring with Tocqueville. Howe was instead a lifelong socialist who usually disdained moderate reformism, and he kept a wary, critical distance from America. A sensitive and poised literary critic who cofounded and coedited Dissent, he also edited and helped translate Yiddish anthologies and wrote or cowrote sixteen books plus so many articles,
reviews, and polemics that he was dubbed (by journalist Philip Nobile) "the iron man, the Lou Gehrig of the Old Left." Eight of Howe's books are still in print, including the best-selling *World of Our Fathers* (1976), which remains the finest achievement in American Jewish historiography.

An admiring student of Lerner at Brandeis, Lakoff became a political scientist at the University of California at San Diego and received the cooperation of Lerner's family in conducting the research for this affectionate—and close to definitive—biography. Lerner's papers are primarily at Yale; and both the research and the life itself appear to have gone very smoothly.

The crush on the New World to which Lerner's family had taken him was reciprocated, making the explanation Lakoff offers at the end of this book incontestible. His subject was "a warm and passionate human being, a reflective commentator, a keen-eyed observer, an encyclopedic synthesizer, a gifted and prolific writer, and a captivating teacher—surely among the most inspiring of his time" (289). Few if any American intellectuals could address such varied audiences, from law journals and the Modern Library to the tabloids. It is hard now to recapture the excitement that greeted publication of Lerner’s magnum opus, which represented probably the last time a single intelligence has tried to elucidate in a single book the whole structure and meaning of the national experience. Because he had served as managing editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* three decades earlier, he could draw upon the knowledge and could distill the judgment of several dream teams enlisted from the nation’s intelligentsia; and scholars here and abroad were dazzled. "The industry, grasp and range of the author stagger me" (182), raved the English historian A. J. P. Taylor, no slouch himself. An elaborate and erudite valentine to *America as a Civilization*, it sold in six figures, was widely assigned in classrooms, and appeared in foreign translations.

But its unabashedly celebratory tone could not be distinguished from complacency, which the 1960s would discredit and leave in ruins at least for the remainder of the century. Neither those who would be stirred by the revelation of enormous racial injustice, nor those angered by the record of mendacity and abuse of power in Washington, nor neoconservative intellectuals who would blame the degeneration of both public and private life upon the radical rupture of the sixties have cared much for the liberalism that Lerner champi-
on. His opinions lacked bite; his columns tended to soothe rather than to unsettle; and Lakoff's biography lacks examples of any authentic independence of mind, any serious intellectual growth. That helps explain why Lerner's posthumous reputation has fared so badly: he had depleted his stock of interesting ideas decades before the flow of columns and books ceased.

Nor does Lakoff mention any gesture of resistance to those in authority or against the unexamined premises of Lerner's liberal readers. Slow to oppose the disastrous intervention in Vietnam (and then tepid in his call for withdrawal), he became a Reaganite in the 1980s, believing that tax cuts for the wealthy would eventually benefit the poor, that the Strategic Defense Initiative (or Star Wars) was essential to national security, and that burning Old Glory should be constitutionally banned. But Lerner shrank from a coherently conservative ideology; a likely explanation—to put not too subtle a point on it—was sex. Twice married and the father of six children, this compulsive womanizer could not settle for randiness but had to elevate it into a philosophy of emancipation. The Playboy Mansion, where he served as a scholar-in-residence and instructed Hugh Hefner in the finer points of making latkes, was not an ideal platform, however, from which to launch a GOP-style defense of family values.

Despite laudatory essays on more radical intellectuals like Thorstein Veblen and Randolph Bourne, Lerner lacked their capacity to adopt an adversarial stance toward their own society; and indeed his career suggests the difficulty of maintaining a sharp distinction between the marginality of the outsider and the assurance of the insider. Versatility of mind and radiance of personality overcame whatever barriers anti-Semitism erected against others, but Lerner's success both in academia and in the press was not accelerated by "passing." A distant cousin of Shimon Peres, Lerner offered unwavering support to Israel; but his secularism blocked any commitment to help perpetuate a vibrant Judaism in the United States. (Neither of his wives was Jewish.) "I care about the Jews as a historical community, an old and creative civilization with a wonderful past," he once asserted, "though I am not myself religious in the sense of being a synagogue-goer." But then Lerner added: "I am deeply Jewish in the sense of identifying with the whole of Jewish history"; and he especially professed to cherish his people's "love of learning and law, its striving for achievement and betterment, its tenacious stress on the ties of kinship.
and community" (16-17). Those values did not seem to have activated any significant tension with American society itself, however, and therefore they deprived his liberalism of the benefits of intensity and depth.

Friction is one way to characterize the spirit of Alexander's book, which is an account of Howe's public life. Exposing its personal side was made impossible when Howe's wives and children refused to cooperate with the author, an English professor at the University of Washington; and Howe's literary executor, his son Nicholas, prohibited Alexander from quoting from any letters his subject wrote. This biography therefore cannot be definitive; indeed, another, by Gerald Sorin, is already under way. Alexander's tone is strikingly different from Lakoff's and has the odd effect of doing a disservice to Howe (despite a friendship that spanned two decades). To be sure, the major books and essays that constitute Howe's legacy are diligently and usefully analyzed; and Alexander tailgates him on assorted controversies, from the anti-Semitic bias within modernism to the moral urgencies of black writing to the errors of literary theory. But in pursuing Howe on politics, Alexander is overtaken by something akin to road rage.

Trotskyism, for example, is unforgivable. As late as page 194, 52 pages short of the end of the text, Alexander still cannot help scorning Howe's rationalization of the Bolshevik suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion of 1921. Howe's remarks, the biographer does not bother to remind the reader, occurred at the age of eighteen. Howe repudiated Trotskyism in his twenties but remained anti-Stalinist and a socialist. As for democratic socialism, Alexander insists that it "is an oxymoron" (135). Howe's modification of his own socialism with the adjective "democratic" leads Alexander to ask: "Did this not suggest that socialism was inherently undemocratic?" (33). No. Socialism has come in several national variants and represents the only way for historians to classify the Scandinavian "third way," as well as the kibbutzim and Histadrut in Israel. When the neoconservative Michael Novak wrote an entire book advocating "democratic capitalism," did he imply that capitalism was inherently undemocratic? Of course not—even though "free enterprise" proved itself compatible with authoritarianism in Singapore and with far more brutal tyrannies in the age of (European) dictators, too.

Alexander mentions Lerner only twice—in passing. The first brief notice merits quotation, however, because it reveals what lessens the value of Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew. "The turning point for the
Stalinists came in August 1939 with the publication of an open letter, with Lerner among its signatories, denouncing what they called "the fantastic falsehood that the USSR and totalitarian states are basically alike." Immediately, Alexander writes, "the Hitler-Stalin pact was announced. Rarely have bad judgment and bad timing been so perfectly combined and suitably rewarded" (9). The bad judgment is also Alexander's. If the pact proved that the Soviet Union and the Third Reich were "basically alike," then why didn't the war that erupted between them in June 1941 prove that the two states were basically different? Or why didn't "the grand alliance" against the Axis then show that Russia resembled Britain and the United States, too? The quotation also allows the inference that Lerner was a "Stalinist," which he was not, though he was too sympathetic to the Soviet experiment.

From Howe's political writings his biographer seems to have learned nothing and can extract very little of value. Of course no reader needs an uncritical portrait of Howe or would expect Alexander to come out foursquare in praise of folly. But he often crosses the line that divides detachment from a snide hectoring, as Howe is invariably shown as politically fallible (even as a teenager!), not quite up to the standards of political wisdom that the author has managed to uphold. Never pretending to be other than a socialist, Howe is nevertheless berated frequently for—in effect—fulfilling the terms of the contract he chose to sign. Some empathy, some imaginative appreciation, if not generosity (or humility), would have improved this biography. (Emile Durkheim hardly subscribed to Marxism either but did convey the "thirst for a more perfect justice," the "pity for the wretchedness of the working class," the indignant "passion" which that ideology could mobilize.) Howe served in uniform in World War II, and his hostility to its "imperialist" character had no consequences whatsoever. But Alexander cannot forgive him for having been wrong about World War II and blames his indifference to the Holocaust upon his radicalism (though such silence was common among American Jewry).

Part of what made Howe so admirable was his capacity for growth. While remaining true to his own sense of vocation, he kept getting better. Submitting his last review on the tragic heroism of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, he demonstrated a brilliance that did not diminish in the course of four decades of mature writing. Having grown up in a working-class home devoid of a single book, Howe commanded a
prose style of exceptional elegance and clarity. A crisp attentiveness to Howe’s liberality and catholicity of taste—though not, alas, his procedures as a literary critic—constitutes the most valuable feature of Irving Howe: Socialist, Critic, Jew, since the 1982 memoir, A Margin of Hope, so largely ignored what Howe taught (and in fact did best). What should still stir wonder is how adroitly the literary critic could separate himself from the political critic. Howe’s studies of (mostly) nineteenth- and twentieth-century European and American writers can be read without any awareness whatsoever of his devotion to socialism, and vice versa. Nor could the fertile contributions to Dissent be traced (at least in any emphatic way) to the ethnic consciousness of a free-thinking Jew—the sort T. S. Eliot (whose poetry Howe praised) believed had to be excluded in large numbers from an ideally Christian society.

The secularism that animated Howe has become a problematic aspect of Jewish identity, and his realization that the Jews were likely to endure only through Judaism or through Zionism was poignant. He came late to an appreciation of Israeli political quandaries (and literary achievements), and it is unsurprising that he would align himself with movements like Peace Now. That meant, his biographer writes, that Howe exhibited “a far stronger commitment to a PLO state than...to a Jewish one” (214), which gives some idea of Alexander’s fair-mindedness in representing a position that he opposes. He is nevertheless correct to note the wistfulness with which Howe fathomed the oblivion that the world of his parents suffered; the tradition of the Old Country would be inapplicable to the amazing fluidity and the absorbent power of the New World. He was located close to the end of the actuarial line of the New York intellectuals, whom he had famously historicized and whose fusion of political, cultural, and moral energies he had so exquisitely diagnosed. The dying words that Max Lerner heard from his own father, “Zay rufen fun Tzion” (“They are calling from Zion”), would not be widely uttered by later generations, so completely at home in America. In the difficulty of retrieving such a sentiment or perpetuating such a language can be measured the dynamic elan of thinkers like Lerner and Howe—and also of the American civilization their writings illumined.

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Jewish Immigrant Women and Their World


Kathie Friedman-Kasaba, professor of sociology and women’s studies at the University of Washington, and Bonnie Morris, visiting professor of history and women’s studies at George Washington University, bring us two unique contributions to modern studies of American Jewish experience. Written in language accessible to a wide audience of educated readers, these studies are particularly well suited for college- and graduate-level work. Both authors use gender as a primary category of analysis and explore the ways in which gender identity interacts with ethnicity and class to shape the experiences of American Jewish women. Furthermore, each offers a new and valuable approach to understanding the complexity of historical agency.

*Memories of Migration* provides a detailed analysis of the experiences of Russian Jewish and Italian women migrating to the United States before the National Origins Act closed the door to most wishing to enter the country. The author makes use of women’s personal narratives in addition to census and immigration records in order to evaluate the circumstances under which women immigrating to the United States experienced changes in their social status.

Professor Friedman-Kasaba critiques what she perceives as the two dominant models of analysis influencing immigration studies, the “world system” or historical-structural theory and the “push/pull modernization” approach. While proponents of the former model have focused primarily on the broad structural factors driving migration, those advancing the latter place individual choice above and beyond structural mediating factors. These two conceptualizations fall short in analyzing immigrant experiences, because they tend to focus strictly on one set of factors at the exclusion of others.
Friedman-Kasaba urges scholars to abandon such dichotomous thinking in favor of a "both/and" approach that enables us to perceive the complexity of individual lives within the context of a dynamic world system. Therefore, this study helps us understand how immigrant women's lives and the outcomes of their migration were influenced by countless factors, ranging from personal roles in their families' power structure to the political environments of their native countries at the time of migration. Although she notes that migration offered slightly better chances for "social empowerment" to unmarried women, Friedman-Kasaba argues that "women experienced migration as neither uniformly emancipating nor uniformly disempowering" (178).

Friedman-Kasaba's study draws from a wealth of recent works on immigrant women's experiences. Particularly rich are those that analyze the lives of Jewish women in transition from the ways of their alter heims to those of the United States. Elizabeth Ewen, Susan Glenn, Donna Gabaccia, Paula Hyman, and Maxine Seller are some of the scholars who have made the lives of immigrant women more visible during the past two decades.

Professor Morris contributes to this trend by exploring and analyzing the activist lives of Lubavitcher women since World War II. Her sources include her own personal experience of having spent two years conducting research within the Lubavitcher community, at the LeviYitchok Library in Crown Heights. In her effort to draw out some of the more complex angles of Lubavitcher women's identity, the author offers a close reading of articles published in Di Yiddishe Heim, a quarterly women's magazine first published in 1958, as well as records and publications of the Lubavitcher Women's Organization. These sources provide useful insight into the women's activities at yearly conventions as well as copies of the rebbe's annual speech to those women in attendance.

This close inspection of the activist discourse produced by and about Lubavitcher women not only heightens our understanding of previously inaccessible life experiences but also helps expand modern definitions of women's political and social power. Using their moral authority as missionaries for the rebbe, Lubavitcher women since the Second World War have forged an activist identity based on converting Jews to Orthodoxy as a means of replenishing the numbers lost during the Holocaust. Acting as mothers and as nurturers of Jewish
souls, Lubavitcher women have entered a public and often non-Jewish realm, once reserved strictly for men. Despite the importance to the community of these women's activities, male leadership continues to limit their authority strictly to their capacities as missionaries and educators.

However, the author contends that it is misleadingly simplistic to dismiss as antifeminist the behaviors and values of all women whose lives reinforce rather than challenge traditional gender roles. She suggests that we consider Lubavitcher women's politics as "counterfeminist" and acknowledge the ways in which they have found alternative avenues to feminine empowerment that exist within a culture of male-dictated authority. Far from being "passive particles in Hasidic dynamism who merely acquiesce to their prescribed roles," the women of Professor Morris's study are passionately involved in their missions as emissaries of spiritual enhancement (28).

At the time she began work on this project in the early 1980s, Professor Morris found very little literature on Orthodox women in America. Most studies that addressed Orthodox Jewish life focused almost exclusively on men, or they placed the culture within a male-centered framework. However, the current decade has seen an impressive array of scholarly efforts to portray Orthodox women's lives, including the work of such authors as Jenna Weissman Joselit, Debra Kaufman, Tamar El-Or, Liz Harris, Lynn Davidman, Tamar Frankiel, and Ellen Koskoff.

While these new studies contribute much to the field of women's studies, Professor Morris urges scholars to engage in further exploration of the activism and experiences of right-wing women. Instead of portraying such women simply as "brainwashed" by men, Morris suggests that we expand feminist analysis to address the complex questions posed by "women's... involvement in the dissemination of conservative rhetoric" (2). Her study helps explain why women have chosen to become or remain involved in a community in which their gender allows them access only to very limited and traditionally female forms of political power.

It is this attention to the intricacy and detail of women's individual lives that makes these studies so important to modern scholarly inquiry. Both authors succeed in portraying the complexity of women's life choices by discussing the ambiguity of what constitutes women's "empowerment." Lubavitcher women do not consider them-
selves oppressed or even politically limited by their culture’s male-dictated code of authority: rather, they derive personal power and gratification from their designation as their community’s educators and missionaries. Likewise, the Italian and Russian women of Friedman-Kasaba’s study did not uniformly experience empowerment upon their migration to the United States. While their move led them from the “periphery” to the “core” in terms of the economic world system, their success was mediated by individually experienced factors such as marital status, age, ethnicity, and position in the household hierarchy. Both authors succeed in illustrating how all “choices” are made within the context of structural restraints and supports. They successfully demonstrate the historical actors’ agency without forgetting to acknowledge and investigate the factors by which their actions have been influenced over time.

Each of these studies offers a well-detailed glimpse into the complexity of their subjects’ lives and the means by which their actions have been enabled or restricted over time. In particular, they offer persuasive examples of the depth of analysis that can be accomplished when we acknowledge the impossibility of expecting individual lives to conform to the rigid guidelines traditionally used to analyze them.

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Writing the History of an Institution of Jewish Higher Learning


This is a massive work of scholarship (thirty-six articles and almost 1,700 pages of text and endnotes) on the Jewish Theological Seminary. Few institutions of higher education or religious seminaries have been the subject of such a thorough study. We are in debt to Jack Wertheimer, the director of the Ratner Center for the Study of Conservative Judaism at JTS, who organized and edited the study and to JTS itself, which published it. Many of the articles are required reading for anyone with scholarly interests in American Judaism, in higher Jewish education, or even in the topic of religious seminaries. While the JTS focus is never lost it is always within the context of developments within Jewish life and American culture. For example, the closing section of the second volume includes articles such as: "A Respectful Rivalry: The Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion and JTS" by Karla Goldman, "Just a Little Different: JTS and Other Forms of American Ministerial Preparation" by Glenn Miller, "Religious Educators at JTS and the Wider Educational World" by Virginia Leison Brereton, and "JTS in American Higher Education" by Harold Wechsler.

Obviously there is some overlap in a book of this nature. The editor might have reduced the overlap but only at the expense of making some article less intelligible. The assumption must have been that each article would stand on its own as an independent work of scholarship; that readers are not going to plow their way through the two volumes from beginning to end but are more likely to pick and choose articles on topics that are of special interest to them. Given that assumption, overlap is unavoidable.

Some articles strike one as superior to others, but I did not find a single article that did not merit at least a cursory reading. Among the many outstanding articles, I was most impressed by Jonathan Sarna's essay, to which I will return later, and Alan Mintz's "The Divided Fate
of Hebrew and Hebrew Culture at the Seminary.” Mintz illuminates his topic and, along with a couple of other articles, also provides fascinating insights into the JTS Teachers Institute.

The opening articles are arranged chronologically. The first deals with the founding of JTS and its history until its reorganization in 1902 and the arrival of Solomon Schechter. The next four articles deal with the history of JTS under its four subsequent chancellors: Solomon Schechter, Cyrus Adler, Louis Finkelstein, and finally Gerson Cohen. This brings the story of JTS up to the 1980s and the chancellorship of Ismar Schorsch. The remaining articles in volume one and almost all the articles in volume two deal with topics rather than periods. For example, the Teachers Institute, Camp Ramah, the Eternal Light radio programs, the Jewish Museum, and JTS and Zionism form the subjects of separate articles. Beth Wenger’s article on the controversy over women’s ordination is especially interesting. The issue is so recent and so emotionally charged that it would be very surprising if all those close to the controversy were entirely satisfied with Wenger’s treatment. My personal judgment is that the author is as fair as can be anticipated from someone sympathetic to one side rather than to another, and I cannot imagine any respectable scholar who would not be sympathetic to one side or another. I suspect that an author who harbored stronger reservations about the merits of women’s ordination would have defined the battle lines in somewhat different terms, probably placing greater stress than Wenger does not only on the issue of how JTS was to position itself with regard to Jewish law but where it should stand with respect to contemporary cultural and political norms in general and Orthodox and Reform Judaism in particular. The result would have been an article with a slightly different slant. It would have been a fascinating historiographical exercise, and it certainly would have been fun if the reader had been presented with two different perspectives on the issue. On the other hand, neither historiographical exercises or amusement are what the two volumes are about. Having made what I consider to be a wise decision to devote a special article to the issue of women’s ordination, it would have been belittling to a scholar of Wenger’s stature to ask for a “second opinion.” I assume that before submitting the article she invited comments from one or more scholars who were parties to the controversy and who opposed women’s ordination. If that assumption is correct, it would have been judicious of her to have mentioned it.
The range of the articles is so broad that the reviewer must necessarily be selective. Outsiders, like myself, always thought that one of the major criticisms leveled at JTS, especially by its rabbinical graduates, was that it placed great emphasis on fostering Jewish scholarship while remaining indifferent to strengthening American Jewish life in general and the Conservative movement in particular. If this indeed was the criticism, then it oversimplified the issue. First, as Jonathan Sarna points out in his brilliant essay "Two Traditions of Seminary Scholarship," the issue that JTS confronted was not whether or not to pursue an agenda of scholarship but what kind of scholarship should be promoted: textual or synthetic. In other words, to whom was JTS's scholarship to be addressed? Second, every JTS leader, regardless of how he might define the institution's primary goal, sought to strengthen the link between JTS and the Conservative movement. The critical question was not whether scholarship or service to the Conservative movement was to receive priority but how JTS understood the essence or purpose of American Judaism in general and the Conservative movement in particular. There are no easy answers to these questions. Different answers are suggested in different periods; different leaders at JTS answered these questions in different ways; and most complicated and confusing of all, sometimes the same leader, particularly Chancellor Louis Finkelstein, seemed to offer contradictory answers. Finkelstein led JTS from the late 1930s when he served first as the trusted assistant to the ailing President Cyrus Adler and then as president and chancellor until his retirement in 1971. He was the single most important figure in determining the nature of JTS, and it is appropriate that Tradition Renewed devotes far more space to him and to his years as the leader of JTS than to anyone else. JTS is today a far different institution than it was under Finkelstein's leadership, but even the changes that were introduced in the last three decades can only be understood as a reaction to what Finkelstein had made of JTS.

Finkelstein was an exceedingly complex person. Despite the many pages devoted to him and to the activity of JTS during the years he led the institution, he remains an enigma. He seemed to pursue values or visions at odds with one another. His three primary values were: one, strengthening the ties of American Jews to Judaism; two, encouraging the scientific analysis of classical, especially talmudic and rabbinical, texts; and three, the effort to bring together the leading philosophical,
religious, and scientific minds to confront the ethical and moral dilemmas of the age in the conviction that in this process Judaism would provide a beacon of light for the whole world. From a historical, sociological, or even an institutional perspective these values appear contradictory. Strengthening ties to Judaism, which in Finkelstein's mind included halakhic observance, demands a degree of segregation and separation, an emphasis on the boundaries distinguishing Jews from Gentiles. The scientific analysis of rabbinical text—the work, for example of a Saul Lieberman that Finkelstein is said to have called the achievement that made the existence of the Jewish Theological Seminary worthwhile—has very little to do with either strengthening ties to Judaism or confronting the great ethical and moral issues of the world. In the modern period, those Jews most concerned with and most deeply involved with ethical and moral issues came from the ranks of the most assimilated—those who cared the least about either the loyalties of other Jews or Jewish scholarship. Those involved in Jewish wissenschaft were unconcerned with the identity struggles of the masses of Jews. These contradictions can be formulated in the dichotomies of universalism-particularism and elitism-populism.

Finkelstein simply transcended these categories, although his own relationship to others tended to be elitist. In his own vision the totality of Judaism, its halakhic as well as its theological imperatives, was so clearly ethical in its essence, and the effect of ideas on behavior was so clear in his mind, that the dichotomies I have mentioned posed no problem to him. Finkelstein was a visionary. I believe he was formed in the mold of the prophets. It is interesting that, according to JTS folklore, his Christian colleagues compared him, privately, to Jesus. Even his appearance contributed to the comparison. His effort can be understood only in terms of his vision—one that I suspect was shared by his own teacher Solomon Schechter—which rendered some of our own basic dichotomies such as universal-particular irrelevant. JTS, in Finkelstein's mind, embodied all the values he espoused. In his vision these values were not contradictory. Oddly enough he may have been more successful in convincing his own board of directors of this idea than his own faculty, student body, or rabbinical alumni. He envisioned the Conservative movement as an instrument for the realization of his vision; at worst it was a necessary evil that by clever manipulation might be prevented from undermining the values of tradition and halakhah in particular that Finkelstein upheld. Finkelstein had no
choice but to look for assistance from individuals with talents and interests peculiar to each of the values he sought to enhance. But he did find at least two associates, Moshe Davis and Simon Greenberg, who shared his total vision. Few others did. I suppose one might say that the lack of realism in the Finkelstein vision exacted its price. By the end of his tenure, JTS was having difficulties. And anyone interested in understanding Finkelstein, at least in his later years as chancellor, would be curious to analyze his own choice of successor, a choice that was denied. This is the only serious issue that Tradition Renewed avoids—a remarkable lacuna inasmuch as the articles confront every other controversial issue. What the reader is not told is that Finkelstein did whatever he could to deny the successorship to Gerson Cohen. His candidate was Bernard Mandelbaum. Measured in terms of Finkelstein’s vision, Mandelbaum excelled in only one area: his deep commitment to the mandates of Jewish tradition and his resolve to preserve halakhic standards within JTS. However, once Cohen was elected, Finkelstein proved himself a loyal subject (as he promised Cohen on the day of his installation). He never even expressed public disapproval of women’s ordination, although in private he bemoaned the fact that, in his words, it was the first time JTS was deviating from halakhah.

Gerson Cohen was determined to remake JTS as a great academic institution (he compared his effort to that of Solomon Schechter in this regard) and to strengthen relationships between JTS and the Conservative movement. It is not clear to me if Cohen appreciated the contradiction between these values. He was certainly a visionary in his own right. But having resolved to strengthen the ties between JTS and the Conservative movement, to listen carefully to what Conservative Jews had to say, and to find ways in which JTS might better serve them, the course of the institution and many of the subsequent changes in policies and curriculum, not the least of which was the ordination of women, were inevitable.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Howard Markel, *Quarantine! East European Jewish Immigrants and the New York City Epidemics of 1892* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 262 pp., illus.

That historians often write only for other historians has become part of the conventional wisdom. In reality the situation is even more extreme as historians are often writing only to other historians within their own specialties. It is, therefore, a joy to find a book that transcends such barriers. Howard Markel adds an entirely new dimension to American Jewish history through his interdisciplinary study of Jewish immigrants and the 1892 typhoid and cholera epidemics in New York City.

By placing his study at the crossroads of the history of medicine, anti-Semitism, immigration, and popular culture, Markel adds to our knowledge of each. The specific information on each issue—medical responses, nativism, tenement life, and so forth—might be known to specialists in these diverse fields. Markel, however, demonstrates the interrelationship between medical knowledge, popular culture (in this case anti-Semitism), and the institutional responses to epidemic disease. The result is one of the most fascinating, and best written, books to appear in the last few years. Furthermore, it is a book that is scholarly yet can be read by a nonacademic audience as well.

Markel begins by discussing the idea and practice of quarantine from biblical times until the modern age. Going back to the biblical definition reminds us that quarantine often has undertones of moral condemnation. In effect, getting sick is often seen as a moral failing. Even with the medical advances in place by 1892, the system of quarantine used in the United States was based on popular prejudices as well as on scientific knowledge about isolating diseases.

One of the things that distinguishes Markel’s study is that in addition to examining the origins and extent of the epidemics, he paints sympathetic portraits of the victims as well. He accomplishes this task by first taking the reader to Eastern Europe, charting the history of a specific group of Russian Jews as they are expelled from the Pale of Settlement and travel to Constantinople, where diseases such as typhoid are endemic, and thence to Ellis Island, and eventually the tenements of Manhattan’s Lower East Side.
Alan Kraut has ably documented that each immigrant group to the United States was associated with a specific disease, or diseases, and the relationship between these beliefs and nativism and anti-immigrant prejudice. Thus the association of Russian Jews with typhoid in 1892 was not surprising. What Markel does, however, is take the story to its next level to document what impact these beliefs had on the individuals who were unfortunate enough to get caught in the epidemics. For example, although the authorities might be quick to isolate Russian Jewish immigrants, and be equally reluctant to refuse to release the bodies of victims for burial according to Jewish law, they were less willing to quarantine Irish immigrants with the same symptoms. Thus combating the epidemic was in part controlled by nonmedical factors such as social, economic, and ethnic status within the city.

Another interesting facet is Markel's discussion of the New York City Health Police. It is common today to hear cries about the arbitrary power of government, especially in nonelected bureaucrats. Concomitant with these cries is a nostalgia for the nineteenth century and its "freedoms." Yet in 1892 the New York City Health Police could act in a manner that some would characterize as totalitarian. The health police had the right to quarantine without charges or trial merely on the suspicion of infection. They could condemn buildings, residential and commercial, and put people out of business and homes without having to justify themselves to anyone but the city health commissioner.

Once in quarantine the victims continued to suffer. Quarantine hospital facilities were inadequate to the "crisis," and healthy people were bedded with the sick, spreading the contagion even further. Markel's discussion of the history of preventive medicine and the treatment of infection is not only fascinating but is comprehensible to someone with little training in or prior knowledge of the subject.

After charting the epidemics and their impact upon individuals and New York City, Markel then turns to the larger issues of national response. On one level the federal government attempted to coordinate responses to epidemics, while there were attempts by individual congressmen to curtail severely immigration as a means of preventing further epidemics. This part of the story reminds us that politics does not change much, despite a century of medical advances.

Quarantine! makes a welcome addition to the literature on the
American Jewish experience. It can be read by specialists and non-specialists and is highly recommended to a wide audience.

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NOTES

With the publication of Dianne Ashton's biography of Rebecca Gratz, scholars and general readers have the first real opportunity to learn about one of nineteenth-century America's legendary women, a woman widely recognized among many circles during her time yet who is little known today. A prominent activist within the tradition of female antebellum reform, Gratz dedicated her adult life to the promotion of Jewish women's activism, the care of the needy, and the education of Jewish children. Through the creation of numerous charitable institutions and organizations in antebellum Philadelphia, Gratz established a pattern of activism and public engagement that would serve to guide Jewish women for years to come. Yet she was also a woman whose life represents the conflict and complexity of Jewish women's experience during the first half of the nineteenth century.

As the first person to establish independent Jewish women's organizations in America, Rebecca Gratz positioned herself as a forceful presence within the vibrant world of antebellum reform. Her list of achievements is impressive. In 1819, she established the Female Hebrew Benevolent Society, America's first independent Jewish women's charitable society. She later founded and led the first Jewish Sunday school (1838) and the first American Jewish foster home (1855). She was also involved in founding two other organizations serving largely non-Jewish populations. In her work she not only recognized and addressed the problems of the needy but was able at the same time to offer Jewish women their first public roles, including the teaching of religion and the development of curriculum in a Jewish school.

In her lifetime of service and benevolent activism, Gratz followed a model well established by antebellum women in cities and towns throughout the northern states. Eager to extend their energies and talents beyond the confines of their immediate home and family, middle-class women founded hundreds of benevolent societies and charitable organizations throughout this period. With the press of growing populations on inadequate urban resources, antebellum reformers identified the urban poor as both the source and the victim of many of the cities' emerging problems. Women's benevolent organizations, many with Christian evangelical support, addressed numerous social needs, providing services and support to children, the elderly, and the
"deserving poor." Beneficiaries of women's charitable work extended beyond the poor, as well. Many historians have argued that such work provided middle-class women with critical access to the public sphere as well as training in organizational management, skills necessary for the growth of a wide range of women's organizations by the late nineteenth century, culminating (though perhaps not directly) in the development of feminism and the winning of suffrage for women in 1920.

Rebecca Gratz, however, would not have liked this final turn of events. She was, at heart, an innately conservative woman. Although she was responsible for expanding the roles of Jewish women, dedicating herself to "domesticating" American Judaism in the process, she reviled the nascent women's rights movement. She was also repelled by Judaism's Reform movement, which she believed contributed to the splintering of Jews during this period, a phenomenon she hoped might be curtailed by Jewish female leadership.

Gratz embodied these seeming contradictions, leading a life of "blessed singleness," as one contemporary described the state of voluntary spinsterhood, while dedicating herself to traditional concepts of gender and family. For women of this era, spinsterhood was not an easy choice. For most women, it imposed continuing dependency upon male family members. At the very least, it required middle-class women to reinvent themselves as the fact of their spinsterhood became more established with each passing year. For Rebecca Gratz, celibacy served to extend her moral authority, a potent qualifier in the world of benevolent reform where female piety held sway.

Choosing to remain single, however, was not uncommon in the Gratz family. Among her siblings, half (five) chose not to marry; 40 percent of the next generation remained single. Yet Rebecca, it turns out, received uncommon attention for her failure to wed. During her own lifetime and well after her death, it was widely believed that Gratz served as the model for Sir Walter Scott's Rebecca of York, the Jewish heroine in Ivanhoe who chose to remain single rather than marry out of her faith. Ashton, in her final chapter, concludes that there is insufficient evidence to support this legend. The existence of this tantalizing rumor during her own lifetime, however, may have fueled Gratz's determination to remain "blessedly single."

The publication of this biography helps fill a significant void in the literature of women in the antebellum period. The study of
women and reform during this period, while extensive, is almost exclu-
sively the study of Christian women expanding upon their roles as
"true women" while performing their benevolent duties within an
evangelical framework. Clearly, not all female reformers fit this mold.
But to the extent that the mold has been defined and understood, it was
within a Christian context. In this book, Ashton helps us understand
that the model was as much informed by ideas of class and gender as
it was by Christianity. The growing emphasis on female piety and
purity, as seen in the diaries and letters of antebellum women as well
as in the proscriptive literature of the time, could be embraced by all
women who subscribed to the underlying tenets of this newly defined
culture. A member of a prominent, wealthy Philadelphia family, Gratz
devoted herself to middle-class notions of family and home as they
developed in the early nineteenth century. (Despite never marrying,
Gratz presided over the family home, which consisted of her single
brothers and the offspring of her late sister, whom she helped raise.)
Rebecca Gratz reminds us that "true women" could be religious Jews
(167). Gratz understood herself as a religious woman within this
American tradition. Her desire was to help transform American
Judaism by domesticating it.

Notwithstanding Ashton's important contribution to this litera-
ture, questions arise regarding the overall organization of the work.
Biography, to be meaningful, must locate its subject within the cultur-
al context of the time and provide, through individual experience, a
broader understanding of the complex historical issues of the period.
This is a heavy undertaking, for it requires that the subject still emerge
clear and identifiable. Although this appears to be Ashton's intent, it
is not always successful. While holding to the chronological unfold-
ing of Gratz's life, Ashton attempts to overlay themes that are often
underexamined and sometimes confusing, which may be the result of
attempting too much within the framework of biography. Her subtitle,
"Women and Judaism in Antebellum America," is surely sufficient for a
separate work in itself. Overall, however, readers should welcome this
opportunity to enlarge our understanding of the role of Jewish women
in a pivotal period in American life.

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Winter Friends: Women Growing Old in the New Republic, 1785-1835, was published
in 1990 by the University of Illinois Press.
Mark K. Bauman and Berkley Kalin, eds., *The Quiet Voices: Southern Rabbis and Black Civil Rights, 1880s to 1990s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1997), 444 pp., illus.

Mark K. Bauman, Berkley Kalin, and the University of Alabama Press should be congratulated on putting forth to the reading public, both scholarly and popular, this serious but engaging book. The "quiet voices" are those of a handful of southern rabbis who, from the end of the nineteenth century to the height of the civil rights era, struggled with how to take a public stand in favor of racial equality while at the same time recognizing how such action put local Jews in peril. *The Quiet Voices* is primarily a book of biographical essays, most of which have been nicely researched and well written, although as with most collections the end results are uneven. Each essay attempts to look at behavior in complicated ways. Some of the essays, particularly the one by Leonard Rogoff on Durham, North Carolina, divert from the biographical approach that appeals the most to scholars. Others offer straightforward renditions of the single rabbi struggling in the single city. The former tend to be more deeply researched and densely contextualized, but in none of the essays do the authors offer cardboard cut-out villains who did not do enough, nor do they portray altruistic saints who never worried about the fallout from their actions.

The rabbis who are the subjects of these essays became heroes often by accident. Few started out noble. Some resisted efforts to act boldly until the last minute. Most wanted to do as southern Jews had long done, to live quietly in the shadows, not bothering the status quo and not drawing attention to the differences between themselves and their Christian neighbors. What these rabbis shared, and what ultimately makes this book about them truly valuable, was that at some point they took risks and stepped beyond their understandably cautious instincts to remain anonymous. The authors of these essays, rather than condemning the rabbis and their congregants for their lateness and caution, or celebrating them as bigger than life heroic figures who cared nothing about security, explore the ways and reasons for their emergence from reticence and the powerful implications of their bold actions.

Each one of the stories told here offers the experience of a single rabbi in a Jewish community, spanning larger cities like New Orleans, Birmingham, Atlanta, and Memphis and smaller ones like San
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Antonio, Hattiesburg, and Corpus Christi. All of the communities lie below the Mason-Dixon line. All had rigidly segregated public services and accommodations along the color line. All experienced the crisis of the freedom struggle that morally, and sometimes physically, challenged the morality and legality of that segregation.

In all of these communities, Jews constituted a small minority in a Christian-dominated society. Most Jews made a living as merchants in these towns, which demanded that they enjoy the goodwill of the town's residents. The smaller the community, the more Jews depended upon that goodwill, from both the African American and the white communities, both of which shopped at their stores (although, of course, the white customers held the reins of communal power). In most of these communities, Jews enjoyed a quiet kind of acceptability, which they earned by their anonymity as well as through the usually good deeds that marked them as commendable citizens. Jews prided themselves on their ability not to draw attention to themselves and the cultural distinctiveness that made them noticeably different from the other white people, whom they resembled phenotypically.

The emergence of the civil rights movement disrupted the status quo, which obviously was its goal. But in the disruption of the patterns of the past, the Jews faced a quandary. How might they preserve the anonymity that served them so well when, in essence, both sides in their own ways demanded that they take a side? Certainly for the civil rights movement, doing nothing amounted to taking a side, the wrong one. How should Jews respond? In each one of these communities a rabbi emerged as a "quiet voice" that sought both to protect the Jews from the strains of social turmoil and to protest the immorality of a racially bifurcated society. The rabbis in these essays did not lead mass marches; they did not storm buildings or engage in massive resistance. Rather, they sought out quiet ways to do what they deemed right—end the immorality of segregation—at the same time that they were ever conscious of the need to protect their congregants, the Jews of these towns.

In their quest to do the right thing the rabbis faced many dilemmas. For example, each rabbi had to deal with his own congregants, some of whom supported the "southern way" of life. Some Jews had benefited from segregation and saw no reason why it should not continue. Although most Jews felt the wrongness of the system, they feared the social disruption that was required to uproot it. They feared that Jews would be squeezed by the forces of disorder and that the
comfortable lives that they had made for themselves would be jeopardized. Each rabbi in *Quiet Voices* not only faced the outside world, both white and black, but struggled with congregants who did not want quiet voices. They wanted absolute silence.

The equation that the various essays set up—Jews as those southerners who stood midway between the white and African American communities in these various southern towns and cities—actually became more complicated, and again many of the essays skillfully weave in the impact of northern Jews and national Jewish institutions. Many young Jews participated in the civil rights effort, and by the early 1960s they showed up in southern towns as freedom riders, participants in voter registration drives, and activists in other dramatic efforts to force a quick and visible end to segregation. National Jewish organizations based in the North endorsed these efforts and many rabbis came to the South to join in the moral crusade. Their presence infinitely complicated the tightrope act that southern Jews and their rabbis tried to walk, as they sought not to offend the white population yet act out their own sense of rightness.

Interestingly, the picture on the cover of this book is of Rabbi Perry Nussbaum, one of the reluctant heroes, whose sanctuary, Beth Israel Synagogue in Jackson, Mississippi, sustained a devastating bombing. The rabbis understood that stepping out, even tentatively (Nussbaum acted more boldly than most), put Jews at risk of incurring the wrath of their white Christian neighbors. So, too, Jacob Rothschild in Atlanta learned that the price for doing what he believed was right came with a steep price tag, as his synagogue was also bombed. The dramatic stories of these bombings make the tension, as described in each one of the essays, between moral action and self-protection particularly salient. They help the reader explore the complex web of decision making of these rabbis, leaders who believed that they bore the responsibility for the well-being of their congregants.

The essays in *Quiet Voices* make clear that Jews were “bit players” in America’s greatest moral drama since the Civil War. The course of race relations in the South would no doubt have proceeded apace had Milton Grafman not tried to mediate between the civil rights movement and the city authorities in Birmingham, had Charles Martinband in Hattiesburg not spoken out against the Klan and preached in favor of civil rights, or if David Jacobson had not personally gone around to restaurants in San Antonio begging them to desegregate. Yet *Quiet*
Voices makes it clear that those minor players had a story much worth telling. The history of the civil rights movement has by and large been written without their voices. This book makes it clear that silence mars the presentation of history. Hopefully, now, scholars and teachers will turn to Quiet Voices to break the silence.


Diaries offer a unique perspective on the past. If written by articulate and thoughtful diarists, they allow modern readers a rare glimpse of the day-to-day concerns and inner lives of ordinary people from other times and other places. Helen Jacobus Apte was such a diarist, and by discovering and publishing her diary, her grandson Marcus Rosenbaum has given us a document that illuminates the world of southern Jewry during the first half of the twentieth century.

It should be immediately noted, however, that even good diaries are necessarily limited by the life circumstances of the writer. In fact, the more specificity a diarist brings to his or her pursuit, the more interesting and revealing the diary becomes, even though its focus may be quite narrow. So it would be more accurate to say that Helen Apte’s diary illuminates a specific southern Jewish milieu: that of the upper-crust German Jewish society to which she belonged. Thoroughly American, thoroughly southern, and thoroughly Jewish, this society shaped Helen’s view of the world and, especially, her view of womanhood—with results both predictable and surprising.

Heart of a Wife was Helen’s own name for her diary, and she could not have come up with a more appropriate title. Life for Helen revolved around hearth and home. The opening entry describes her 1909 wedding to young businessman Day Apte, while the births of her daughter and grandson provide the (seemingly only) other highlights of her life. Yet Helen’s unwavering commitment to domesticity was accompanied by profound ambivalence and self-doubt. On the one hand, she thoroughly assimilated late-nineteenth-century Victorian ideals of romantic love between husband and wife, woman’s self-sacrificial duty to her family, and bourgeois respectability. Her ecstatic paean s to marriage, written as a young wife, show that she had perfectly absorbed the literature of the day: “A woman is the center, the core of her home…. I shall strive for perfect harmony and beauty and to make this house a home for my husband… all thoughts of myself have vanished—every thought is for him, his comfort, his happiness…. This is my sphere, and I will excel in it” (6). Yet try as she might, inwardly she was unable to banish thoughts of self and completely subsume her personality into her wifely role. So in addition to
romantic descriptions of marriage, we get frank discussions of sex and birth control, feelings of jealousy, confusion, and intense boredom, and a nagging sense that something is lacking in her life.

To me, the dichotomy between Helen's inner and outer lives is the most fascinating aspect of her diary. Either because of her upbringing, social milieu, or temperament (or more likely a combination of the three), Helen never outwardly strayed from the Victorian ideal. Despite contemporary models of women who achieved outside the domestic sphere (including her own mother, a successful businesswoman), she continued to define herself solely as wife and mother until her death in 1946. She describes Jewish-related volunteer activities that offered her some fulfillment, but her mention of these activities is cursory; they seem to have played no big part in her life. Meanwhile, her mysterious illnesses and even more mysterious middle-aged flirtations with various men offer tantalizing—if incompletely explored—evidence of underlying dissatisfaction. It is fitting that Helen recorded seeing the play *A Doll's House* the night before her wedding; if this had been a novel, this bit of information would have seemed a too-obvious effort at foreshadowing.

Because of Helen's preoccupation with her role as wife and mother, other topics are covered in a somewhat haphazard fashion. Her description of the young couple's early financial worries, as well as the considerable financial troubles that plagued both her own parents and her husband's parents, provides a revealing glimpse of the insecurity that lay beneath the surface of upper-class, merchant-based Jewish life. However, these problems seem to have been resolved by the late 1910s; even the Great Depression evidently had little impact on the Aptes' wealthy life style in the latter half of their marriage. Aside from such early economic concerns, Helen shows no interest whatsoever in her husband's business. The second half of the diary is largely given over to accounts of social events and Helen's take on the momentous world events of the 1930s and 1940s; it lacks the depth of feeling found in the first half.

Readers who are looking for major revelations about southern Jewry will be disappointed, but the lack of preoccupation with this topic seems to indicate not that Helen's southern Jewish identity was weak or unimportant to her but rather that it was so integral to her personality that she took it for granted. Being a southern Jew apparently was not a source of conflict in her life, and this fact in itself could
be considered somewhat of a revelation. Accounts of Jewish social and religious activities occur naturally throughout the book, and Helen expresses pride in the leadership role her husband played in Jewish communal life in Miami and Tampa. In a brief discourse on her family history, she notes that her parents moved her family from a small Georgia town to Atlanta when she was a baby, and “although we went entirely with Gentiles and knew no difference or no prejudice, my parents remained intensely Jewish, and they wanted us raised as Jews” (90). Her reference point is clearly (genteel) southern as well, which comes through in her dislike of Yankees, her concern for hospitality, and other small ways. However, a couple glaring omissions could indicate not an absence of conflict but a refusal to deal with conflict over her Jewish identity. The diary contains only an oblique reference to the Leo Frank case, even though Helen was a cousin of Frank’s wife (to be fair, she was taking a hiatus from her diary at the time of his lynching). Surprisingly, she is completely mute on the Holocaust, while painstakingly recording other aspects of World War II.

Editor Marcus Rosenbaum makes up for some of his grandmother’s omissions with concise essays interspersed throughout the book. These essays expand on Helen’s diary entries, providing context on such diverse topics as the Atlanta race riot of 1906, childbirth in the early twentieth century, popular literature, and, of course, Jews in the South. He also includes appendixes related to various themes of the diary, including an engaging round-table discussion of Helen’s illnesses by a panel of modern-day experts. These innovative additions are both entertaining and informative. The combined efforts of Helen Apte and her grandson make Heart of a Wife a highly readable and thought-provoking volume that should appeal to general readers, historians, and anyone interested in American Jewish history.

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Part of the debate in the Reform movement in the late 1990s over a second Pittsburgh Platform focused on the question of historical discontinuities in modern Judaism's most liberal branch. While there can be no question that great changes have occurred in every area of American Reform Judaism, it is also true that there are also continuities within the Reform movement in both its institutional and its spiritual life. Nowhere is this dichotomy more evident than in the vast liturgical literature of Reform Judaism, and no one has done more than Eric L. Friedland, Harriet Sanders Professor of Judaic Studies (which serves a consortium of institutions of higher learning in Dayton, Ohio), to study and explain this vast body of prayer books, religious poetry, and meditations.

Since publication in 1967 of his monumental work, The Historical and Theological Development of Non-Orthodox Jewish Prayerbooks in the United States, Friedland has produced an impressive body of monographs, articles, and notes on liberal Jewish liturgies, not only in the United States but in Great Britain and Israel as well. Friedland's scholarship is anchored in the work of Joseph Heinemann and Jakob J. Petuchowshi. Fortunately, eighteen of Friedland's essays—of various lengths and originally published in many different journals and scholarly works between 1973 and 1994—have now been gathered and republished in "Were Our Mouths Filled with Song" by the Hebrew Union College Press. Scholars and congregational rabbis alike will find this collection to be both technically sophisticated and spiritually insightful in assessing the complex world of non-Orthodox Jewish worship in modern times.

Essentially organized in chronological order, "Were Our Mouths" begins with an introductory chapter on "Jewish Worship Since the Time of Its Standardization" and proceeds with historical studies of the liturgical work of David Einhorn, Isaac Mayer Wise, Marcus Jastrow, and Leo Merzbacher. Two major themes in Friedland's anthology of articles are "Hebrew Liturgical Creativity" and High Holy Day liturgies. The latter is the subject of three articles. Thematic studies include mystical and Sephardic influences on Reform liturgies, two articles on Reform Haggadot. Of special interest is an examination of the "Gates of Prayer in Historical-Critical Perspective" (chap. 10).
Friedland not only detects and documents intra-Reform continuities but also argues that pan-denominational and global trends exist within the world of liberal Jewish liturgies. Thus, many of the articles in this work include examinations of prayer books from Great Britain and England as well as from the Reconstructionist movement. Less, but still significant, attention is paid to the prayer books of the Conservative movement. "An ecumenical trend looms large within the household of Israel," Friedland concludes about the writing of contemporary liturgies, "and... Isaac M. Wise's pious dream of a single rite serving a unified American—and, dare we hope worldwide?—Jewry may not be all that remote after all or impossible to attain ba-agala u-vi-zeman qario!" (242).

Missing from Friedland's analysis of liberal Jewish liturgies are sustained gendered studies of the texts of modern Jewish prayer books. While he does raise the issue of prayers written by women and specific spiritual needs of the homosexual community in his review of recent Reconstructionist prayer books (chap. 11), other examples, including work sponsored by the Women of Reform Judaism, might have been included. Given the growing scope of liturgical activity by women and his own finely tuned sensitivities to Jewish prayer, it is more than reasonable to expect new and insightful gendered scholarship from Professor Friedland in the near future.

This criticism, however, only points to the future and in no way is meant to denigrate Friedland's controlled, methodical approach to liturgical texts in "Were Our Mouths Filled with Song." In an age when it is easy to reject the contributions of a radical reformer like David Einhorn, Friedland reminds us of Einhorn's theism, poetry, and ideological acumen. In a time when many Reform rabbis worry about the place of Hebrew in their movement's prayer books, Friedland is able to demonstrate a century or more of "Hebrew creativity." Thus, although often technical in nature and modest in argument, "Were Our Mouths Filled with Song" is an important reminder of the religious integrity of the Reform movement since its inception. We have much to learn from our gentle teacher, Eric L. Friedland.

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Sourcebook (1993). Dr. Sussman was recently named a Research Associate of The Jacob Rader Marcus Center of the American Jewish Archives and serves on the center's Academic Advisory and Editorial Board.

This book includes twenty-three essays by scholars who were inspired by the work of Yerushalmi and especially by the publication of his *Zakhor* (1982). The various essays focus on specific events, myths, and themes relating to the Jewish past. Several essays, such as Todd Endelman's, examine how Gentiles construct Jewish history or identity. Taken together the contents, which range on topics from the ancient world to the modern era, provide fascinating reading for anyone interested in how Jews construct, or have constructed, a usable past and how Gentiles perceive Jews.


The first part of the book is a translation, with a comprehensive introduction, of the Yiddish-language articles written by Abraham Cahan in 1925, describing his trip to Palestine. Of particular interest is Cahan's description of the Europe-Palestine-U.S. nexus of Jewish immigration. Cahan, a leader of the Jewish labor movement, also engaged in a debate about the nature of Zionist aspirations with his ideological opponents, which is the substance of the second part of the book. An interesting glimpse into how Palestine, and the Zionist project, were viewed in the interwar period by different facets of the American Jewish community.


The first volume in the Studies in Jewish Culture and Society, cosponsored by Yale University Press and the Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, the book brings together the work
of ten scholars, including the two editors, each of whom addresses a specific historian and/or theme in modern Jewish historiography. The volume reflects a year-long collaboration on the subject of modern Jewish historical identity sponsored by the Center for Judaic Studies. It helps put the development of modern Jewish historical thought, especially the wissenschaft school of Jewish history, into perspective. A useful volume for graduate students and anyone interested in the development of modern Jewish historiography.


This book provides a detailed history from colonial times to the present about public attitudes, government policies and legislation, and political movements regarding immigration. The author relates changes in attitudes and policies to changing social and economic conditions. In the introduction, Reimers says he believes "the evidence indicates that immigration is a net benefit to the United States, economically as well as socially." He provides accounts of the statements and political actions of groups wanting to maintain immigration versus groups wishing to stop or greatly diminish immigration, around such issues as asylum for refugees, welfare costs, and environmental impact. However, there is very little critical evaluation of the arguments of these groups to support his assertion of immigration as a "net benefit."


Diner provides a comprehensive and balanced view of American Jewish history, for young adult readers, from the Marranos and the first Jewish settlers in New Amsterdam, through the ordination of women rabbis and current concerns about intermarriage. The author presents the achievements but does not shy away from presenting the conflicts and differing points of view. She notes, for example, the support and participation of American Jews in the civil rights movement, including Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel in Martin Luther King Jr.'s march from Selma to Montgomery and in the murders of civil rights
workers Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner. Diner also cites areas of increasing tensions between Jews and blacks, such as the Crown Heights conflict, Louis Farrakhan, and opposition by some Jews to affirmative action.

Diner consistently takes a balanced viewpoint, succinctly presenting the various sides of major issues, throughout the course of American Jewish history. The author compares the responses of the major Jewish religious branches to secularization and assimilation, but she takes no stand as to who is right. She notes that Mordecai Kaplan, founder of the Reconstructionist movement, believed that traditions of Eastern European Judaism would appeal to younger, educated, American-born Jews but differed from Reform Jews in his emphasis on the idea of Jewish peoplehood. Diner mentions that a group of Orthodox rabbis strongly opposed Kaplan’s views, burning copies of his prayer book and trying to place a ban of excommunication upon him. Rabbi Abba Hillel Silver ran into opposition with Reform congregations with his efforts to restore traditions.

Overall, Diner writes in a clear, concise manner in covering issues. She is not able to cover most issues in great depth, as she aims at including the broad range of American Jewish history; however, she does cover the main elements. A major limitation is a lack of references in the text to help the reader explore specific issues in more depth. However, Diner does provide a three-page listing for further reading at the end of the book. There is also a glossary to assist non-Jewish readers in comprehending issues. The reviewer would strongly recommend this book as a resource for synagogue libraries or for young Jews, from about age ten through adolescence.


This book focuses on the growth and changes in one metropolitan area, from the mid-nineteenth century to the present, but has much broader applicability to understanding how Jewish community leaders and citizens have responded to major demographic and social trends in many other metropolitan areas to maintain a vibrant community. The Jews of Newark began developing a flourishing community from the middle of the nineteenth century, participating in rapid economic growth in a wide range of business endeavors. The author provides
engaging vignettes of their struggles and successes.

Helmreich describes how the Jewish community and its leaders responded to population shifts and other changes, through a strong sense of commitment, a willingness to work together to overcome differences, and the broadening of the leadership base, developing an extensive range of organizations and activities to meet changing needs.

The book offers a rich description of the many aspects of Jewish communal life and social activities of Newark, from early periods to the present. Helmreich also mentions Philip Roth, Jerry Lewis, Jerome Kern, Fanny Brice, and other Jews of national prominence who had a Newark connection.

Helmreich provides a brief analysis of the conditions leading to the racial disturbances in Newark, while noting that the Jewish population had already moved to the suburbs. He tries to conclude with some optimism on the prospects for the revival of the city of Newark; however, there is little discussion of specific solutions.