Jewish Blood

Reality and metaphor in history, religion, and culture

Edited by
Mitchell B. Hart

Routledge Jewish Studies Series

Jewish Blood

This book deals with the Jewish engagement with blood: animal and human, real and metaphorical. Concentrating on the meaning or significance of blood in Judaism, the book moves this highly controversial subject away from its traditional focus, exploring how Jews themselves engage with blood and its role in Jewish identity, ritual, and culture.

With contributions from leading scholars in the field, the book brings together a wide range of perspectives and covers communities in ancient Israel, Europe, and America, as well as all major eras of Jewish history: biblical, talmudic, medieval, and modern. Providing historical, religious, and cultural examples ranging from the "Blood Libel" through to the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg, this volume explores the deep continuities in thought and practice related to blood. Moreover, it examines the continuities and discontinuities between Jewish and Christian ideas and practices related to blood, many of which extend into the modern, contemporary period. The chapters look at not only the Jewish and Christian interaction, but the interaction between Jews and the individual national communities to which they belong, including the complex appropriation and rejection of European ideas and images undertaken by some Zionists, and then by the State of Israel.

This broad-ranging and multidisciplinary work will be of interest to students of Jewish Studies, History and Religion.

Mitchell B. Hart is an associate professor of Jewish history at the University of Florida in Gainesville. He is the author of *The Healthy Jew: The Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (2007) and *Social Science and the Politics of Modern Jewish Identity* (2000). He is currently at work on a reader about Jews and race.

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M. B. H.
February 2009

1 "Jewish blood"

An introduction

Mitchell B. Hart

The very notion must strike most of us as ridiculous. Surely, "Jewish blood" is a fiction, akin to the idea of "Negro blood," "Oriental blood," or "Aryan blood" – fabrications of the anti-Semitic or racist imagination. Biologists and geneticists now tell us that "race" does not actually exist; they concur that it is a social construct rather than a valid descriptor of genuine physical difference. How, then, can we speak of "Jewish blood," as if collective identity is carried and transmitted in or through this substance, or one's group identity gives shape to or infuses the blood?[1] (Since it is now the gene rather than the blood that is the focus of research into the transmission of traits and conditions,[2] we are more likely to hear about "Jewish DNA" than Jewish blood).[3]

Perhaps we are dealing here only with a linguistic confusion. When Shakespeare has Portia warn Shylock to beware of spilling one drop of "Christian blood" in the cutting of Antonio, did he understand this as the equivalent of "the blood of a Christian"? Or did it refer to something more, to a wider belief in the essential quality or nature of the blood itself, the very essence of the difference between the Christian and Jew? The power of such notions resided, and resides, in part in the ambiguities inherent in the phrases "Christian blood" and "Jewish blood."[4]

"Jewish blood" surely recalls a past in which many Jews and non-Jews alike believed the Jews to be a race, or a collective with distinct physical and mental traits. The phrase "Jewish blood" serves as a vivid metonym, encompassing both the visceral thing itself and the abstract notion of "Jewishness" – for qualities, both physical and mental, purportedly shared by Jews and passed on over generations, and constituting a concomitant collective identity.

The common assumption seems to be that, like racial science itself, any serious consideration about something called "Jewish blood" all but vanished during the 1940s and 1950s, as racial thinking came to be irredeemably linked in the popular imagination with Nazism and then the Holocaust. The phrase "Jewish blood" now seemed implicated in the crimes against the Jewish people, and therefore both scientifically invalid and politically dangerous.

And yet, the notion of Jewish blood retains a force in the imaginations of Jews and non-Jews alike. As David Biale writes in his essay here

> In what sense, if any, can one speak of a community of Jewish blood? Such questions, seemingly laid to rest by the Holocaust, have recurred with new intensity in the wake of the creation of Israel and the ingathering of the 'exiles' from far-flung lands.

More generally, Susan Glenn has argued that it would be a mistake to think that "blood narratives have lost their relevance to discussions of modern Jewish identity." Jews continue to think with blood about Jewish belonging; what Glenn calls "blood logic" still seems to be at work. "Throughout all of the de-racializing stages of twentieth-century social thought, Jews have continued to invoke blood logic as a way of defining and maintaining group identity."[5] In this, Jews are no different than the population at large. While science already at the outset of the twentieth century, if not before, had begun the process of separating blood from genes, and locating hereditary traits and conditions in the latter, popular ideas and images continue to see blood as a medium for the transmission of identity – or, at least everyday language suggests as much.

Thus, we understand that we cannot or should not speak about Jewish blood biologically; that is, we cannot speak about Jewish blood with the imprimatur of science. Still, uncertainties and ambiguities remain regarding the significance of blood in Jewish history, religion, and culture. Recently, the publication of Ariel Toaff's book, *Pasque di Sangue*, on Jews and the medieval blood libel, produced an international furor. Toaff, an Italian Jewish historian, asserted that he had found evidence that some Jews had, indeed, murdered Christian children in order to obtain their blood for ritual and medicinal purposes. This contradicted the long-standing assertion on the part of Jews, and many non-Jews, that this was one of the most sinister canards of anti-Semitism. Toaff's book has been roundly criticized as bad history as well as bad politics. But the discussion and debate it produced illustrates the continuing fascination not only with anti-Semitism but also with blood, and the relation of blood to Judaism and Jewish culture. The fact that Toaff's argument elicited such an immediate and visceral reaction was due at least in part to its engagement with blood, and the power of blood as both material reality and metaphor. This points to a significant interest in the subject of Jews, Judaism, and blood, and the need for scholarly works that address the issue.

Yet, Toaff's book also points to the limitations of the existing scholarship on Jews, Judaism, and blood. The vast majority of works devoted to this topic are concerned with some aspect of the blood libel, or the role of blood in anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic discourse (though even this theme is relatively untreated and under-analyzed). With the exception of David Biale's recently published *Blood and Belief*, those monographs that do explore the normative role of blood within Judaism focus on one particular time period or text (e.g., the biblical period, or blood and the purity laws in Rabbinic Judaism).[6] For the most part, when scholars of the European past – say, the Christian Middle Ages – focus on blood, Jews and Judaism appear only as objects of suspicion and hostility, in the context of discussions of the blood libel or host desecration. While Christians are represented as having a complex and multifaceted relationship with blood as substance and

symbol, the Jewish engagement with blood is reduced to the Jew as passive victim of Christian belief and practice.[7] (If the Jews possess agency in the host desecration and ritual murder tales, this is an imaginary agency, at least from the perspective of the modern historian, and we can assume most readers. The ritual murder narrative imagines the Jews as actively engaged in nefarious deeds, but the historian's narrative of course rejects this as a projection of Christian desires and fears. Thus, the scholarship on blood in Europe tends to reproduce the more general European and Anglo-American historiographic tradition when it comes to the Jews and Judaism: Europe is Christian Europe, and when the Jews appear in the narrative it is almost always in order to illuminate something about the Church, Christianity, Christian society and culture – or a later, "secularized" version of these.[8]

Jewish Blood: Reality and Metaphor in Jewish History, Religion, and Culture brings together essays that insist on Jewish agency in relation to blood. Contributors to this volume concern themselves with the Jews and blood, and Judaism and blood; with the Jewish engagement with blood, animal and human, "real" (i.e., the physical substance) and metaphorical. The focus is on how blood functions for Jews and Judaism – its meaning or significance for Jewish rituals, identity, imagination, health, politics, and culture. Such an approach allows for a truly comparative perspective to develop, both diachronically and synchronically. And it helps to move the developing discussion about Jews and blood away from its traditional focus, insisting that we explore not only the function of blood for anti-Semitic discourse, but how Jews themselves engaged with blood, its role in making and re-making Jewish identity, ritual, and culture. In bringing together material in this way, this volume offers readers a way to see the deep continuities in thought and practice related to blood. Moreover, it brings out in a forceful way the continuities and discontinuities between Jewish and Christian ideas and practices related to blood. Such continuities and discontinuities extend into the modern, contemporary period, so that we need to speak about not only a Jewish and Christian interaction, but also an interaction between Jews and the individual national communities to which they belong, including the complex appropriation and rejection of European ideas and images undertaken by some Zionists, and then by the State of Israel.

Blood as metaphor and reality

When, Rahel Wasserfall has asked, does menstrual blood become Jewish blood?[9] We might ask more generally, at what point does blood become Jewish blood? A racial or quasi-racial or biological notion of Jewishness would suggest that the blood flowing in the veins of a Jew is already Jewish blood, carrying with it, as was commonly believed, the physical and mental traits characteristic of Jews. For us, Jewish blood must be rather a social or cultural construction, an idea whose "reality" and power lie precisely both in blood's concreteness and its abstractness; blood as immediate, visceral substance, contained in and issuing out of individual bodies, and as symbol and metaphor.

Jewish Blood is concerned equally with blood as both real substance and symbol. As Gil Anidjar notes in his essay for this volume, "when it comes to blood, the use of the word 'metaphor' is quite frequent, with little clarification as to the non-figurative term to which it allegedly relates." Moreover, Anidjar reminds us that we must, as Spinoza said, see blood from both within and without. "Jewish blood," of course, had its own internalist history, discursively and in practice. At the same time, "external" factors continually helped shape and determine this history. As so many of the essays here demonstrate, the history of Jewish blood is also the history of the continuous interaction of the Jewish and Christian, Jewish and scientific, Jewish and European imaginations. The discourses and practices produced around blood help us see, again, the fluidity of boundaries, the constant movement back and forth between what is "Jewish" and "non-Jewish."

In much the same way, there is no absolute distinction or boundary between the reality of blood as a thing and as a word, and hence its transformation into metaphor or symbol.[10] Already in the Hebrew Bible, as in other ancient cultures, blood was, at one and the same time, both material reality and metaphor, thing and word. Within the Jewish interpretive framework, blood began, we might be tempted to say, in a most literal way: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" [Leviticus 17:11]. The metaphorical move is implicit here, but this seems on the face of it to be a literal statement about the nature of blood itself,[11] since the declaration in Leviticus is intended to explain the prohibition against the eating of blood. As William Gilders has persuasively argued in his analysis of this and related verses, the biblical writers did not qualify their equation of blood with life, nor did they explain this understanding when it came to prohibiting the consumption of blood beyond the idea that "the blood is the life, and you shall not consume the life with the flesh" [Deuteronomy 12:23].[12] Humans are forbidden by Yahweh from eating blood not because blood symbolizes life. These biblical texts do not contain this sort of representational move; later commentators or readers, to use Gilders' notion, would have to engage in "conceptual gap-filling" in order to move blood from the literal and operational to the figurative. In Leviticus, blood does not stand for life, it *is* the life; there appears to be nothing metaphorical there.[13]

But there are, of course, numerous statements in the Hebrew Bible about blood, and the symbolic role of blood is already fully present in the ancient Israelite religion and culture, as Elizabeth Goldstein shows in her contribution. At the same time, blood, as an "essential and quotidian substance" – to use Michael Swartz's phrase – continued to play a fundamental role in Jewish ritual long after the destruction of the Temple. In Swartz's words, blood remained "more than a metaphor or symbol for Jews living after the destruction of the sacrificial system." Indeed, it was never wholly transformed in ritual terms into solely a metaphor or symbol. As Ira Robinson's essay on *metzitzah ba'al peh* reminds us, in some Jewish communities today, blood, as a material substance, continues to function ritually as well as politically and socially.

As metaphor or symbol, just as an actual substance, blood was and is extremely fluid. It is what the literary critic Philip Wheelwright called a "tensive symbol" – inexact, not totally fixed or delineated in its associations and significance. Mathematical symbols such as pi, in contrast, are not tensive symbols; their meaning and association are stable or fixed throughout a problem or argument. They posses a "public exactitude." Not so a symbol such as blood. Its meanings are multiple and varied, given variations in context. A tensive symbol "will allow some degree (preferably not too much) both of obscurity and of variation in the responses of awareness that it calls forth." Symbols that have hardened or petrified into something not overly familiar but without that multiplicity of meanings can be revitalized through recontextualization.[14]

Evidence of this sort of revitalization through recontextualization is provided by most of the essays offered here. Neta Stahl, for instance, in her essay on the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, vividly demonstrates that blood meant very different things to Greenberg at different points in his life and career. Greenberg employed blood repeatedly as symbol and metaphor. Early on he understood it, in its physical materiality, as a necessary and positive component in the Jewish nationalist struggle. Greenberg celebrated blood as the thing that "will decide" who rules in Palestine. As Stahl writes, Greenberg spoke metaphorically, but not only metaphorically. It is

> the act of shedding blood that the poet strives for.… Blood is still a metaphor in these poems, but this metaphor is used in order to call for the real, concrete political action of shedding blood: the blood of the Palestinian Arabs and the British occupiers who threaten to thwart the Jewish reclamation of the Land of Israel.

Yet, this positive idea of blood and bloodletting disappeared in Greenberg's work after the Holocaust, in which he lost his family. Now blood comes to represent the Gentiles and its valence is almost wholly negative. Yet, as Udi Lebel makes clear in his essay, the positive valence of blood (and the notion of Jewish blood) linked to the necessary sacrifices of nation-building were taken up by the nascent State of Israel. In a fascinating discussion of the politics of blood, Lebel describes the role "Jewish blood" played in the effort of David Ben-Gurion and others in the Mapai party to delegitimize their political opponents by differentiating between Jews who fought and died in the struggle for statehood. Whose blood counted, whose spilled blood was worthy of commemoration, was a highly contentious matter.

Seeing blood

Invoking notions of real and metaphoric blood does not mean that we are claiming that we have access through some sources to blood unmediated by representation, either textual or iconographic. As palpable and immediate as the blood is in the texts offered as evidence in this collection, we are still left with the gap between

representation and reality. Nonetheless, they invite readers to *see* Jewish blood in a more immediate, even visceral way. In the first place, seeing blood acknowledges that this substance, as word and thing, has played a far greater role in the constitution of Jewish history, religion, and culture than the historiography has usually granted. Some aspects of this history are indeed well known: the use of blood in the Exodus narrative of the Passover; the importance of blood in rabbinic thought and legislation concerning women and notions of purity; medieval and modern blood libels. Others are less so. Thus, Ephraim Shoham-Steiner traces an extended interpretive history of "Pharaoh's bloodbath," showing us the extent to which Jewish commentators well into the Middle Ages not only shared the Galenic theory of humors but also appeared to accept the notion that bathing in blood constituted a genuine therapy or cure for certain diseases, particularly leprosy. As Shoham-Steiner makes clear, this idea of the bloodbath was not something that Christians projected onto Jews, accusing them of some nefarious medical practice linked with ritual murder; this was a product of Jewish hermeneutics, in which the blood used came not from slain Christian children but murdered Jewish infants. To be sure, there is no suggestion here that Jews ever actually practiced such blood-bathing. It is Pharaoh, suffering from leprosy, who seeks to heal himself through such a ritual. But Shoham-Steiner does show us, *inter alia*, that Jewish commentators accepted the idea of human blood as a curative, and that such a notion did then make its way into more popular sources such as illuminated haggadot.

We gain a better sense of the varied and complex history of Jews, Judaism, and blood when we move away from the more familiar, albeit important, topics and explore the less well-trodden themes, underscoring the fact that blood was not always and in every context a substance with a negative connotation for Jews (i.e., linked with anti-Semitic narratives about their diseased or dangerous natures, or with women and notions of impurity).

Seeing blood also asks readers to engage with the question of what did and does it mean *to see blood*. The sight of blood, its meaning, always depends on the context. We all know, viscerally and intellectually, that there are times and places in which the sight of blood, especially one's own blood, is most unwelcome, and others when it is a good or at least a necessary thing. How and why has the meaning of blood changed and developed for Jews? Jeremy Cohen offers us evidence of a moment, in the sixteenth century, when blood (or at least the blood libel) in fact ceased to be of major concern for at least one major Jewish thinker, the Spanish exile Solomon ibn Verga. Blood still mattered (certainly to the Christians, but also of course to Jews who were the objects of the ritual murder and blood libel accusations). However, as Cohen argues, at certain times and places it mattered more as metaphor than reality. At the same time, as Hilit Surowitz shows, blood – and especially seeing blood – assumed an enormous importance for those *conversos* in Amsterdam a century later who sought to make their Jewishness visible again. And centuries later, as Hagai Dagan argues in his essay about the German Jewish philosopher Franz Rosenzweig, blood could still assume a central role in the imagining of a Jewish collective identity.

Certainly, we "know" or understand that blood, like water and other essential fluids, is a substance that exists "without meaning"; that is, whatever significance it possess for us beyond its elemental presence in or out of our bodies (and this, of course, is of the utmost significance), has to be articulated or constructed. As Anidjar writes,

> the history of blood (the history of the word, as it were) is the history of beliefs and conceptions, usages and practices, that have surrounded blood, the history of interpretations – in the widest possible sense of the term "interpretation" – of blood.

As interesting and important as the theme of blood as metaphor or symbol is, it seems to me nonetheless that, as the essays in this volume attest, it is the movement back and forth between blood as metaphor and blood as reality – as thing or material substance – that proves most illuminating. And in part this is so because often in discussions of Jews, Judaism, and blood the impulse has been to move as quickly as possible to the metaphorical or symbolic (if not to deny that there is anything important to discuss at all). Of course, there were very good reasons for this intellectual strategy. The history of Jewish life in Christian Europe is replete with accusations, trials, persecutions of Jews and Jewish communities, in which blood figured as a key component: the blood libels; charges of host desecration, in which the host is tortured and bled; the notion that Jewish males menstruated; Jews as bloodsuckers, parasites, vampires, as threats to the purity of the blood of the nation or race. And behind all of this in one way or another, the Crucifixion of Christ, and the curse found in the Gospel of Matthew (and only in Matthew): "His blood be upon us and on our children" (27:25).

It is little wonder, then, that Jewish scholars and apologists (together with not a few Christians) have sought to stress the symbolic over the real when it comes to Jews and blood, to point out whenever possible that it is, after all, Christianity that takes blood most seriously.[15] Christianity insists that in drinking the wine of the sacrament believers are drinking the blood of Christ (either literally or symbolically). By the late medieval period, as Caroline Bynum has recently shown, Northern European literary and iconographic representations were "awash in blood." The Christian devotion to an increasingly bloody Christ produced a cult of blood, "a frenzy for blood."[16] It was in Christian Europe, as the Protestant German scholar Hermann Strack showed over a century ago, that blood – both animal and human – was utilized so pervasively, and not by Jews but by Christians. It was Christians, including the nobles and the monarchs, who prized the blood of infants and virgins for its curative powers; who attended executions with bowls and pots, anxious to catch the dripping blood of the just-executed criminal. And of course it was Christians who, in a complex social and psychological process, projected, in turn, this complicated faith in the power of blood onto the Jews.[17] In his 1939 work *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, Joshua Trachtenberg called attention to the ubiquity and power of blood in European culture, and its connection with the Jews.

> One of the most pervasive beliefs was in the great utility for medicinal and magical purposes of the elements of the human body. Medieval magic is full of recipes for putting to occult use human fat, human blood, entrails, hands, fingers; medieval medicine utilized as one of its chief medicaments the blood of man, preferably blood that had been freshly drawn, or menstrual blood. The ritual murder accusation was the result of these beliefs.

Trachtenberg mentions one of the earliest instances of an accusation against the Jews in which blood figured as a means of magical healing: in the early thirteenth-century Thomas of Cantimpré

> attributed the [Jewish] need for Christian blood to the widespread affliction of hemorrhages (some later accounts changed the malady to hemorrhoids), which could be cured only by the application of this blood. The Jews of Fulda (Hesse-Nassau), accused in 1235 of murdering five children, are said to have confessed that they did so in order to procure their blood for purposes of healing.

At the outset of the fifteenth century, as Trachtenberg goes on to tell us,

> the city council of Freiburg (in Breisgau) wrote to Duke Leopold requesting the total expulsion of the Jews from their city, the foremost count against them being that they periodically slaughtered a Christian child, for "all Jews require Christian blood for the prolongation of their lives."[18]

Here, then, already in the early 1400s, is the vampiric theme associated with the Jews – the Jews as bloodsuckers, as parasites, requiring the blood of Christians (or Europeans) in order to live on unnaturally. This image of the Jews as a vampire nation will have a long and unfortunately fruitful life in the European imagination, as Jews are seen as literal vampires (an image that some have seen as culminating in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula*), and as blood and bloodsucking are transformed into metaphors of all sorts of political and social disorders and diseases.[19]

Blood, then, has certainly been a prominent source and symbol of Jewish/Christian division and hostility. Yet, as many of the essays collected here demonstrate, blood could also be something that "moved" between Jews and Christians, that facilitated intellectual and cultural exchange or influence. As Catherine Gallaghar and Stephen Greenblatt have written elsewhere, "The boundary line between Jews and Christians was crucial – it could be, and frequently was, a matter of life and death – but it was porous and unstable, subject to holes and wounds."[20] Israel Yuval shows us, in his chapter in this collection and elsewhere, that the Jewish engagement with blood in the Middle Ages, for instance, must be understood as a complex interaction with Christian beliefs: not merely a rejection but also an appropriation and reworking of core Christian images and ideas.[21]

Blood, then, is one more "thing" that allows us to comprehend more fully the differences between Jews and Christians at certain times and places in the past.[22] Yet, just as significantly perhaps, blood also helps us gain a greater sense of just how different were both Jews and Christians in the past from "us" in the present. In his forward to Piero Camporesi's cultural history of blood in Europe, *Juice of Life*, Umberto Eco called attention to this gap or distance, even as he suggested that the gap is not as absolute as we might imagine:

> In other centuries blood was a daily reality; people knew its aroma, its viscosity. Are we really strangers to blood? Are we really so far removed from those centuries of which Camporesi tells? … Camporesi reconstructs feelings, terrors, and loves that have seemed ancient to us, and invites us to *look within ourselves*. To grasp the obscure rapport between rites and myths of the past and our impulses today.[23]

Thus, when we look at the quite different ways in which Jews and Christians thought about and used blood – were comfortable in particular ways with blood as substance and symbol – it seems that Jews and Christians in the centuries past had more in common with one another in this regard than either would have with us today (without, of course, ignoring or denying the theological as well as other differences both in the past and now, or denying that our culture is indeed comfortable with blood. It is, rather, that we are comfortable with blood in very different ways).

For example, medieval and early modern Jewish works that capture what modern scholars call folklore or folk beliefs, works such as the *Sefer Hasidim*, relate numerous versions of the "blood-test" or blood ordeal. Here is the version found in the *Sefer Hasidim*, from the thirteenth century:

> There was a man who went on a journey, taking with him his servant and great wealth, and leaving his pregnant wife at home. It so happened that the master died and left considerable property, which the slave appropriated without further ceremony, passing himself off as the dead man's son and heir. When the son grew up (to whom the widow had given birth), he heard of his father's death and sought out the slave in order to claim his property, which was forcibly withheld from him. Finding him so highly connected with the foremost people of the day, the son was afraid to press his claim, lest he lose his life in the bargain for his pains, and repaired, instead, to Rabbi Sa'aydah ben Joseph, the Gaon. Food was placed before him, but he left it untasted until the entire story had been told. The Gaon advised him to seek redress from the king, which he accordingly did. The king sent for Sa'aydah and asked him to render judgment. He [Sa'aydah] ordered both son and slave to be bled and the blood of each to be let into separate basins. Then he caused some of the bones of the dead merchant to be disinterred and dipped them first into the blood of the slave, but the blood was not absorbed; then into the blood of the son, and lo! The bone forthwith absorbed it, for the two

were one flesh. And Sa'aydah restored the dead merchant's property to the rightful heir.[24]

Versions of this tale appear in numerous Jewish sources. But this Jewish faith in bones and blood at the least parallels or intersects with contemporary Christian culture, if it does not derive from it. Indeed, Sa'aydah has the blood-test performed in the king's presence, so we know that we are dealing here with a legal practice and a belief in blood that was shared by both Christians and Jews.

Undoubtedly, Jews and Christians (as well as many others, of course) retain a belief in blood and bones to reveal the truth, though of course technologies and epistemologies have changed significantly. Consider the emphasis placed on DNA testing and forensic evidence in criminal cases, and the role these also now play in popular culture (chiefly, though not solely, in the United States). Thus, at the level of "faith" (in blood and bones, magic, science) and practice the continuities between Jews and Christians of the thirteenth century or the twenty-first century can be just as vital and important as the discontinuities.

The Jewish relationship with blood, as is well known, has been quite fraught; blood has been dangerous for Jews, even as it also has been, from biblical times forward, an essential component of Jewish religious and cultural belief and practice. Without downplaying, let alone denying, the critical role blood has played in anti-Jewish rhetoric and action, the essays in this volume highlight the significance of this substance for Jews themselves, for Judaism, and for Jewish history and culture. Blood, as David Biale reminds us, is about belief. And throughout their history, Jews continued (and continue) to believe in blood – often in explicit or obvious relation or reaction to Christian notions, but also often in less obvious, perhaps even independent, and in many cases quite surprising ways.

Notes

1 On the concurrence among biologists that race does not exist as anything other than a social construct, see among many others James C. King, *The Biology of Race* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981) and Alain F. Corcos, *The Myth of the Jewish Race: A Biologist's Point of View* (Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh University Press, 2005). There are, of course, blood diseases, or diseases produced by viruses transmitted in or through the blood – e.g., malaria, hepatitis, and AIDS. See the discussion in Claudia Eberhard-Metzger, "Blood-Transmitted Diseases," in *Blood: Art, Power, Politics and Pathology*, ed. James Bradburne (New York: Prestel, 2002), 194ff. But historically these have not been racialized or linked to any particular ethnic or religious group. On the other hand, sickle-cell anemia, until recently identified as a blood disorder, was and remains linked to blacks or African Americans, and was referred to as a disease of "Negro blood." In fact, when whites exhibited sickle-cell, physicians and researchers insisted that they must have "Negro blood" in them. On this see Keith Wailoo, "Inventing the Heterozygote: Molecular Biology, Racial Identity, and the Narratives of Sickle-Cell Disease, Tay-Sachs, and Cystic Fibrosis," in *Race, Nature, and the Politics of Difference*, ed. Donald S. Moore, Jake Kosek, and Anand Pandian (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 235–253 at pp. 236, 251. Tay-Sachs and cystic fibrosis, while not blood disorders, were also "racialized" diseases, the former associated chiefly with Jews of Eastern European descent and the latter with whites or Caucasians. According to

Wailoo (p. 249), sickle-cell is now identified as a genetic disorder. Researchers do, it should be noted, continue to explore the relationship between blood, race, and particular diseases; science has by no means dismissed this as a legitimate area of inquiry. For example, see Earl S. Ford and Barbara A. Bowman, "Serum and Red Blood Cell Folate Concentrations, Race, and Education: Findings from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey," *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 69, 3 (March 1999), 476–481. The authors write that while "little is known" about the connection between race, education, and levels of serum and red blood folate, they report on the significant differences in levels between whites, African Americans, and Mexican Americans (conflating race and nationality, while distinguishing by gender). See also the American Chemical Society's report "Blood Levels of Suspected Carcinogen Vary by Race, Ethnicity," which finds that "Whites have three times higher blood serum levels of perfluorochemicals (PRCs) than Hispanics and two times higher levels than blacks." Available online at portal.acs.org:80/portal/acs/corg/content?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=PP_ARTICLEMAIN&node_id=222&content_id=CTP_003317&use_sec=true&sec_url_var=region1&__uuid=46f0fe65-9472-4ca5-841d-6b4417b1493f (accessed February 27, 2008).

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> Since the rediscovery of Gregor Mendel's work, the cell, genes, chromosomes, and ultimately DNA, have been proven to be responsible for determining everything from the color of our skin and eyes, to our predisposition to hypertension or to developing certain cancers.
>
> (Joachim Pietzsch, "The World's Legacy in Our Blood: A Look at the First Century of Genetic Research," in *Blood: Art, Power, Politics and Pathology*, 231)

For a summary of this faith in genetics and hereditarian thinking, and a skeptical view of this faith, see Jonathan Marks, "Blood Will Tell (Won't It?): A Century of Molecular Discourse in Anthropological Systematics," *American Journal of Physical Anthropology* 94 (1994), 59–79.

3 According to Corcos (*The Myth of the Jewish Race*, 76), "Some contemporary writers, in an attempt to be more scientifically literate, refer to 'Jewish genes' instead of 'Jewish blood,' but there is no such thing. If Jewish genes existed, they would code for Jewish traits, but there are none." Nonetheless, belief in such a gene appears to survive. An advertisement for the DNA Ancestry Project (dnaancestryproject.com) that appears intermittently on the *New York Times* website invites readers of Jewish-related articles to "discover your Jewish ancestry" through genetic genealogy. "Find the race of your ancestors by discovering your haplogroup.… Do you belong to the famous Jewish Cohanim line?"

4 On the role of blood in *The Merchant of Venice* see Janet Adelman, *Blood Relations: Christian and Jew in* The Merchant of Venice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), particularly chapter 3.

5 Susan Glenn, "In the Blood? Consent, Descent, and the Ironies of Jewish Identity," *Jewish Social Studies* 8, 2–3 (2002), 139–152. Quotes on pp. 139–140.

6 William Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000).

7 See, for example, Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2006); Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988).

8 On this point about European historiography in general see the essays by Gavin Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), particularly in part 1.

9 Rahel Wasserfall, "Introduction: Menstrual Blood into Jewish Blood," in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*, ed. Rahel Wasserfall (Hanover, NH, and London: University Press of New England, 1999), 1–18.
10 On metaphor as already thing and not just word see the discussion in George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), especially part 1.
11 Gil Anidjar makes this point in his essay for this volume.
12 Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, especially chapter 1. On the importance of blood in the Hebrew Bible see also M. Vervenne, " 'The Blood is the Life and the Life is the Blood': Blood as Symbol of Life and Death in Biblical Tradition," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur (Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 451–470; Dennis J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88, 2 (1969), 166–176; ibid., "Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92, 2 (1973), 205–210.
13 For an overview of this conceptual gap-filling see Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, chapter 7.
14 Philip Wheelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), 95–96. On the metaphors of blood in general see also Melissa L. Meyer, *Thicker Than Water: The Origins of Blood as Symbol and Ritual* (New York: Routledge, 2005).
15 By Christianity, the majority of recent works published on blood seem to mean pre-Reformation Catholicism. Two recent exceptions are Craig Atwood's *Community of the Cross: Moravian Piety in Colonial Bethlehem* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2004) and James Clifton's brief but fascinating discussion of "reformed blood" in "A Fountain Filled with Blood: Representations of Christ's Blood from the Middle Ages to the Eighteenth Century," in *Blood: Art, Power, Politics and Pathology*, 65–87. See, too, the valuable discussion in Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*, esp. pp. 136ff. Thanks to Kyle Todd for clarifying for me the symbolic role of blood in the various strains of Protestantism.
16 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 1, 4. In addition to his discussion in this volume on the significance of blood for the constituting of Christian identity, see Gil Anidjar, "Lines of Blood: *Limpieza de Sangre* as Political Theology," in *Blood in History and Blood Histories*, ed. Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio, Micrologus' Library 13 (Florence: Sismel, 2005), 119–136; Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder*; David Warren Sabean, *Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).
17 Hermann Strack, *Der Blutaberglaube in der Menschheit, Blutmorde und Blutritus* (Munich: C. H. Beck'she Verlagsbuchandlung, 1891), translated as *The Jew and Human Sacrifice: Human Blood and Jewish Ritual. An Historical and Sociological Inquiry* (London: Cope and Fenwick, 1909). On the general importance of blood for European culture see also Piero Camporesi, *The Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood* (London: Continuum, 1996); Uli Linke, *Blood and Nation: The European Aesthetics of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).
18 Joshua Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition: A Study in Folk Religion* (New York: Atheneum, 1939), 7–8. On the history of the notion that Jews require Christian blood for medicinal reasons, see also Irven Resnick, "On the Roots of the Myth of Jewish Male Menses in Jacques de Vitry's *History of Jerusalem*," Bar Ilan University, International Rennert Guest Lecture Series, #3, 1998.
19 The image of Jews as bloodsuckers was not limited to German-speaking lands. Ariel Toaff offers numerous examples from Italy in the last half of the fifteenth century of friars preaching against the Jews as bloodsuckers, aligned with witches and the Devil. See his *Love, Work, and Death: Jewish Life in Medieval Umbria*, trans. Judith Landry (London: Littman Library, 1998), 118–121. The theme of "bloodsucking" also linked Jews to prostitutes in late medieval and Renaissance Italy, as prostitutes were also understood and represented as an unproductive social group that drained the healthy resources of the community. On this link of Jews and prostitutes through "bloodsucking" see Diane

Owen Hughes, "Distinguishing Signs: Ear-Rings, Jews and Franciscan Rhetoric in the Italian Renaissance City," *Past and Present* 112 (1986), 28ff. And David Kertzer has made the explicit connection between the blood libel charge, still circulating in Italy and elsewhere in the nineteenth century, and the stories of "Dracula-like vampires," querying the possible relations between the two myths. See Kertzer, *The Kidnapping of Edgardo Mortara* (New York: Vintage Books, 1998), 138. On Stoker's *Dracula* as an anti-Semitic novel see Judith Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's Dracula," *Victorian Studies* 36 (1993), 333–352.

20 Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, "The Wound in the Wall," in *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 107.

21 In addition to Yuval's essay here, see his monograph *Two Nations in Your Womb*.

22 I invoke Jews and Christians here and elsewhere because blood has been so crucial at times to the mutual images and relations held by each of the other. I am not aware that blood has been as important for Jewish and Muslim interactions historically (although contemporary anti-Semitism in the Arab world draws heavily on the blood images found in European Christian anti-Semitism); moreover, the conference upon which this volume is based unfortunately did not attract any papers devoted to blood in the context of Jewish–Muslim relations.

23 Quoted in Atwood, *Community of the Cross*, 95, emphasis in original. See also Christian Holtorf ("My Blood for Thee," in *Blood: Art, Power, Politics and Pathology*, 28) who writes: "Blood has lost a great deal of its mythical and religious significance this century: it was relegated to its organic function, dissected down to the last detail, and finally industrialized."

24 In George Alexander Kohut, "Blood Test as Proof of Kinship in Jewish Folklore," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 24 (1903), 129–144, citation on pp. 133–134.

2 Blood and belief

An introduction to a Jewish symbol*

David Biale

When, in the 1970s, the Ethiopian Jews – the Beta Israel – first began to arrive in Israel, their very presence posed a dramatic challenge to conventional ideas of who is a Jew.[1] What does an Ethiopian, who observes religious laws based mainly on the Bible but not on the Talmud, have in common with a Russian Jew who follows neither? Absent a common religion, is there an ethnic or biological marker that links them? In what sense, if any, can one speak of a community of Jewish blood? Such questions, seemingly laid to rest by the Holocaust, have recurred with new intensity in the wake of the creation of Israel and the ingathering of the "exiles" from far-flung lands.

While the Beta Israel saw themselves as lighter-skinned than their Christian neighbors in Ethiopia, a racialized phenotype was not central to their identity. When they arrived in Israel, they were suddenly subjected to racial typing according to skin color: they "became," as it were, black. Moreover, this new black identity was one that distinguished them not from non-Jews, but from other Jews. Although the explicit language of blood was rarely invoked in Israel – no surprise less than half a century after the Holocaust – the black physiognomy of the Beta Israel nevertheless aroused powerful prejudices about the Jews as a putative race.

The identity of the Beta Israel in Ethiopia itself was not based on racial characteristics, but, as the Israeli folklorist Hagar Salamon has shown, it was most definitely based on blood: not the blood inside their veins, but rather their blood manipulations and rituals.[2] Indeed, blood in this sense played a central role in differentiating this minority group from the majority Christians in Ethiopia. The Jews believed that their Christian neighbors were polluted for three reasons: because they did not observe the laws of menstrual purity, because they failed to slaughter meat with a sharp knife, and because they ate blood with their meat. Pollution with menstrual blood was considered so severe that the Jews made it a practice not to have any physical contact with their Christian neighbors, even in celebrations to which the latter might be invited. The use of what seemed to the Jews dull knives bespoke Christian cruelty toward animals, symbolic of their cruelty generally. Finally, the Christian custom of eating meat with the blood still in it merged in Jewish eyes with what they knew of the Christian belief in the consumption of the blood of Christ.

The Christians for their part also thought that the Jews practiced strange and magical blood rites. When the Jews slaughtered a lamb for Passover and, according to local practice, hung the carcass on a tree to drain it of its blood, the Christians believed that they were re-enacting the Crucifixion of Christ, a crime of which they believed the Jews still to be guilty. They also believed that this Jewish bloodthirstiness continues to the present day. The Christians labeled the Jews a "hyena people" who looked human during the day, but turned into blood-sucking hyenas (*buda*) at night. Here, the vampire myth from Northern Europe found its African equivalent and also a parallel to other African vampire stories from the colonial era. Even though Jews and Christians had very different blood practices and beliefs, they were deeply bound up in what the other practiced and even more in what they *believed* the other practiced. The identity of each found definition through the other.

This fascinating evidence from an exotic Jewish community, whose identity remains the subject of both myth and controversy, captures many of the themes that characterize the role of blood in Jewish culture and in the relationship between Jews and Christians. More than 15 years ago, Israel Yuval published his path-breaking article in *Zion*, elaborated later in a book recently available in English, that revolutionized how we think of the relations between medieval Jews and Christians.[3] Yuval proposed that acts of Jewish martyrdom in the First and Second Crusades were based on a messianic theology of blood vengeance, which was itself a response to Christian ideas. Christians knew of the way Jews killed their children and reasoned that they might be even more inclined to kill Christian children for similar theological reasons. The blood libel – that Jews need Christian blood for ritual purposes – may owe part of its origins to actual Jewish deeds and their misinterpretation by Christians. Yuval's argument continues to be debated,[4] but it is fair to say that it set the discourse for how we think about blood as a symbol that "circulates" between Jews and Christians. A fundamental principle that Yuval articulated and that others, especially Jeremy Cohen and Ivan Marcus, have elaborated is that the Jews of medieval Christian Europe were not hermetically sealed off from their environment, but rather, Jewish culture developed in a complex dialectic of adoption of and resistance to Christian motifs.[5]

Blood was perhaps the most central of these motifs, for it was one of the primary symbols that Jews and Christians inherited from their common scripture and that continued to resonate powerfully within their postbiblical formations. In the Bible itself, life was thought to inhere in either the breath (*ruah*) or blood. But it was blood, as the mediator between the corporeal and the spiritual, that echoed most meaningfully for Jews and Christians alike.

In an article published in the early 1990s, Stephen Geller pointed out the critical importance of blood in the priestly documents of the Bible.[6] The priests, he argues, authored what might be considered the first mystery religion, in which blood serves as the powerful physical substance that restores the sacrificial shrine and, indeed, the cosmos as a whole, to its original state of purity. Through blood, human beings can commune with God. Against the transcendent theology of the Deuteronomic author, the priestly documents argue for God's immanence,

a presence which can be effected through the agency of blood. In protest, as it were, against D's transformation of biblical religion into an abstract religion of words, the Bible's priestly religion was physical and immanent. Ultimately, says Geller, the rabbis were to adopt D's verbal religion, while Christianity adapted the priestly religion of blood, making Christ's blood a substance of redemption.

Whether Geller's dichotomous divisions between the priestly and Deuteronomic sources or between Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are convincing, he certainly suggested something crucial about priestly religion. Scholars of ancient Near Eastern religion have pointed out how unusual the blood rituals of the Bible were compared to those of the surrounding cultures.[7] While there are some instances in ancient Near Eastern religion of the blood of animal sacrifices serving the culinary needs of the gods or as a ritual detergent, these were on the whole marginal, while for ancient Israel they were central. It is rather Greek religion that provides us with the best comparative material, for the Greek blood manipulations look much more similar to those of Israel than do the Mesopotamian or Egyptian.[8]

No brief essay can encompass all the issues pertaining to blood in the Bible. Two observations will have to suffice. The first comes from the excellent work of William K. Gilders who has pointed out how blood serves to index – in the sense of pointing to – the power of priests.[9] In other words, because of the centrality of blood in the Israelite cult, those who controlled its manipulations were automatically anointed with power (I use the word "anointed" deliberately here). The importance of this observation is that it helps solve one of the conundrums in biblical scholarship: what exactly did blood mean for the Bible? If it meant "life," as the priestly documents say in a number of places, what exactly did this mean beyond the banal observation that someone who bleeds enough tends to expire? If, however, blood's function was primarily as an indexing medium, then it is a hollow symbol, a sign without an obvious signified. The blood, according to this argument, carries no meaning in itself, but, like a pointing finger, establishes a connection between the priests and their prerogatives. By monopolizing the manipulation of blood, the priests guaranteed their hegemony. To borrow a phrase from David Sabean, power was in the blood.

The second observation takes us back to the question of blood and Jewish identity. The Bible itself provides a complex picture of the origins of the Jews, one that does not support either the view that the Jews are a race or that they are not a race. On the one hand, all Israelites are said to descend from the patriarch Jacob and his 12 sons. But, as in most tribal, patriarchal societies, these sons could – and did – bring foreign women into their clans, thus mixing their own "blood" (or genes) with those of their neighbors. And, when the Israelites left Egypt, we are told that they did so as a "mixed multitude" (*erev rav* – Exodus 12:38), suggesting that whatever tribal unity might have existed in patriarchal times was now irretrievably lost. The attempt by Ezra the Scribe in the fifth century BCE to impose genetic uniformity on the "holy seed" never took hold, despite occasional attempts by later Jewish thinkers, such as the twelfth-century philosopher Judah Halevi, to revive it.[10]

The Bible, though, has a different idea of blood community as articulated in the strange ritual in Exodus 24 where Moses presides over the sacrifice of bulls,

pours half of the blood onto the altar and then throws the other half on the people, proclaiming "Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made (*karat*) with you concerning all these words." This is the only place in the Bible where Moses functions as a priest and it is significantly a text that critics do not attribute to a priestly source. It is also the only sacrificial ritual where some of the blood is thrown on the people; in all others, it is disposed of only on altars.[11] Clearly, this blood is meant to effect an initiation, an anointing of the people who are entering into covenant with God. The Israelites are a blood community here not because of the blood that flows in their veins, but because of the blood that is *on* their bodies.

This strange text continued to resonate for both rabbis and Church fathers and can serve as a useful vehicle for demonstrating both their similarities and their differences over blood. What might substitute for animal sacrifice after the ultimate sacrifice of Christ for Christians, and the destruction of the Temple for Jews? In what ways could blood still serve as a medium for initiation or conversion? Guy G. Stroumsa has suggested that late antique Judaism and Christianity were both "sacrificial religions without blood sacrifices."[12] Each "spiritualized" sacrifice in distinctive ways, but also developed physical practices that substituted for sacrifice. And, although the pagan world of pre-Christian Rome was, of course, a world of blood sacrifice, Greco-Roman philosophers leveled their own critiques of sacrifice, some even seeing in Judaism a worthy model of a religion without a temple.[13] The "end of sacrifice" in Western religion was therefore a complex and dialectical process rather than an abrupt caesura.

Geller's radical distinction between the Deuteronomic textual religion that leads to the rabbis versus the priestly blood cult that leads to the Church fathers cannot therefore be sustained. The fathers of the early Church often turned the sacrifice of Jesus into a textual memorial, rather than an event to be literally repeated. And, conversely, the rabbis never abandoned the actual sacrifices, even as they sought alternatives to them. As Lawrence Hoffman demonstrated, the blood of circumcision became increasingly important for Jews, quite possibly as a carnal response to the Christians' own symbolic blood rituals.[14] And for both Christians and Jews, a new form of covenantal blood might be found in the blood spilled by their respective martyrs.[15]

By following the career of the Exodus 24 text, we can see how both Jews and Christians displaced the blood of the covenant from its original biblical setting and gave it entirely new meanings, at times, especially with respect to martyrdom, as a baptism not in water, but in blood. I would like to offer one speculative suggestion for the origin of this surprising idea. The late antique reinterpretations of Exodus 24 as rituals of initiation may well have been a response to the *taurobolium*, the cult of Attis and the Great Mother, Cybele, that swept through Rome between the second and fourth centuries CE.[16] As in Exodus 24, the sacrificed animal in the *taurobolium* was a bull and its blood either was caught in a basin or drenched its adepts in a pit beneath the bull. The biblical rite, and its later Christian interpretations, shared disturbing similarities about blood with the cult of the Great Mother. Indeed, since the cult originated in Anatolia, perhaps it had

ancient connections to the mysterious biblical sacrifice. We know of the *taurobolium* partly from Christian sources, but might the rabbis have known and reacted to the *taurobolium* as well?

That biblical Judaism contained a kind of *taurobolium* of its own in Exodus 24:3–8 may have stirred a certain ambivalence in both the rabbis and the fathers of the Church. Although emerging Rabbinic Judaism and Christianity fought mightily against paganism and its blood sacrifices, they inherited a sacred text and sacrificial practices in which the power of the physical substance of blood played a central role. Each for its own reasons had to at once preserve and neutralize these blood traditions, turning them into memorials of past sacrifices and promises of future ones. At the same time, late antique Judaism and Christianity found in martyrdom a new blood ritual with its own redemptive potential. In the struggle for power between Jews and Christians, which was only resolved with the Christianization of the Roman Empire, each used their own interpretations of blood as a way of asserting their chosenness by God. Yet, in doing so, both traditions transformed the blood of the covenant into something very different from what it meant in the Bible.

In the Middle Ages, ideas about God's anatomy, and specifically God's blood, came to be a common language over which Jews and Christians debated their differences.[17] Believing that human beings shared blood with God, Jews countered the Christian worship of God's blood and body with their own divine hematology, expressed especially in the Kabbalah.[18] The blood of circumcision was now projected onto the divine *anthropos*, while disturbances in the divine realm caused by human sin might provoke the female aspect of God, the *shekhinah*, to menstruate. The blood of menstruation now came also to symbolize the radical difference between Jews and Christians: while the latter, in their failure to observe menstrual purity, caused the supernal Mother to menstruate, the former, in strictly following the menstrual laws, purified her of this pollution.[19] Women thus had their own blood of the covenant to match men's blood of circumcision. In Jewish polemics against Christianity, the binary of male blood and female blood was mapped onto the binary of the blood of Israel and the blood of the nations.[20] Christians "feminized" Jewish men by claiming that they menstruated, a myth that owed its origins to a congruence of medical and theological ideas in the thirteenth century. The Jews responded that *they* represented true masculinity, while male and female Christians, in failing to observe the menstrual laws, were all polluted by female blood. In this binary, "male" is positive, "female" negative and the noun attached to each depended on who was doing the attaching.

I want to quote one very provocative text from the eighteenth century, which, though late, captures many of these themes. It is by Isaac Magrisso, who completed the eighteenth-century Ladino commentary on Exodus of the compilation entitled *Me-am Loez*, on the same verse from Exodus about the blood of the covenant. Magrisso argues that the blood stains on the clothing of the Israelites were both a sign of covenant and magical protection.[21] The blood signified that the Israelites were pure, but it was also as a sign to sinners that they would be killed if they transgressed. He continues:

> Moses separated the blood of the sacrifices into two parts, throwing one part on the altar and the other on the people, and hinted with this that they were united with God in heart and in soul. They committed themselves not to separate from [God] and not to do anything that is not commanded, even if it should require them to undergo martyrdom. And for this reason, the Israelite nation is called by the name "Adam," as it is written: "You are Adam" (Ezekiel 34). You are called Adam and there is no other nation in the world called Adam, because they did not receive a covenant that was contracted with blood (*nikrat be-dam*). But because Israel took upon themselves a covenant that was contracted in blood, they are called Adam. Of this, Scripture says: "Live in your blood" (Ezekiel 16), since the two parts of blood gave life to Israel and they became sons of God (*banim la-makom*).

The covenant of blood unites Israel with God: they become, as it were, part of God's body ("united with God in heart and in soul"). Here, the association of blood (*dam*) with the name Adam signifies the covenant contracted in blood. Even more extraordinary is that because Israel was the only nation, according to Magrisso, to contract a covenant in blood, only Israel is called Adam. The rest of the nations of the world – and Magrisso must have had in mind particularly Christians – occupy a lower rung in his religious anthropology.

This eighteenth-century text is admittedly very late. It is nevertheless quite possible that Magrisso may have given expression to Sephardic collective memory going back to the Iberian peninsula in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It was there, the place from which both the author and his audience originated, that the fifteenth-century doctrine of the "purity of the blood" (*limpieza de sangre*) took hold.[22] As if to counter the claims of Old Christians to the purity of *their* blood, then, Magrisso seems to propose that the covenant of blood at Mt Sinai created the pure nation of Israel, whom he calls the "sons of God," a not-so-veiled appropriation of a classic Christian *topos*. Indeed, Sephardic Jews at times borrowed the proto-racial ideas of Christian Iberia and saw themselves as possessing superior blood. And, this sense of superiority was even at times directed at other Jews: when they established a community in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, the Portuguese Jews discriminated against their Ashkenazi coreligionists by, for example, imposing sanctions on or even forbidding marriage with them.[23]

This ideology of something like racial superiority may have also been linked to the sufferings of the Iberian Jewish *conversos* at the hands of the Inquisition. In an allusion to this suffering, Magrisso holds that the blood covenant obliged the Jews to adhere to their faith even at the risk of martyrdom. By arguing this, Magrisso was contradicting what he knew full well: that many Sephardic Jews had, in fact, betrayed their faith by converting, willingly or not, to Christianity. But by grounding their identity in an indelible stain of blood, Magrisso suggested that such conversion was an illusion, a dissembling that could not erase their covenant of blood.

No discussion of the Middle Ages can ignore the blood libel or ritual murder accusation. While no doubt owing its power to folkloric beliefs about witches

and vampires, the idea that Jews used Christian blood cannot be separated from medieval theology: the new dogma of the Real Presence gave symbolic literalism to the sacrament of wine and wafer. The Jews were pressed into service to give such literalism additional physicality by ostensibly consuming Christian blood and causing the host to bleed. But I want to emphasize that the blood libel needs to be situated in the broader context of what medieval Jews and Christians thought about blood. The medicinal uses of blood, including human blood, provided the backdrop for ascribing evil designs to the Jews. These medical beliefs made it plausible that the Jews sought blood for their own purposes.

Here, for example, is a prescription for consumption of blood by the fifteenth-century physician and philosopher, Marsilio Ficino:

> It is an ancient and common opinion that certain crones, called witches, suck the blood of infants in order to rejuvenate themselves as best they can. Then why might not our elderly, finding themselves all but without hope of survival, suck the blood of a lad? Of a lad, I say, of stalwart forces – healthy, cheerful, well-tempered, having excellent blood that might by happy chance be excessive. Let them suck, then, like a leech – that is, a bloodsucker – from a slightly opened vein in the skinny part of the arm, an ounce or two, then immediately take the same amount of syrup or wine. This should be done precisely when they are hungry and thirsty, and at the waxing of the moon.[24]

Ficino might be seen as an early pioneer of blood transfusion as a weapon against aging, as opposed to the more common resort to bleeding (phlebotomy) in premodern medicine.[25] Perhaps the Jews, like witches, were on to something, after all, in their lust for the blood of Christian children – only they took it too far!

Let us shift our attention now to the modern period. The modern renewal of the blood libel largely abandoned the theological overtones and came to stand for the Jews' rapacious greed: just as they sucked the blood out of Christian children, so they sucked the financial blood out of Christian society. Put differently, just as money in capitalism and blood in modern medicine both circulate, so the Jews are responsible for wresting both money and blood out of their proper places. The blood libel stood as well for the Jews' bloodthirstiness: the alleged cruelty with which they slaughtered animals was the same cruelty with which they were believed to kill Christians.[26]

But side by side with this renewed and secularized medieval accusation was a new one: rather than sucking the blood *out* of Christians, the Jews sought to inject it *into* their bodies through miscegenation. The new European racial anti-Semitism may well have had its roots in the Spanish *limpieza de sangre*, since its social context was like that of Spain: large numbers of Jews who sought to enter Christian society either as converts or, in the modern case, as acculturated Europeans. As European nationalisms defined their nations as blood communities, those seen as not belonging to the racial stock had to be drummed out of the *Volk*. These ideas, widespread though they were in Europe, found their most virulent expression in German-speaking lands and, ultimately, with the Nazis.[27]

The Jews were not immune from these ideas. While combating the modern resurgence of the blood libel, some also turned to ideas of blood community. As religion lost its sway, biology took its place as the primary marker of identity. Moses Hess was one of the first to advance this argument, but it was also adopted by various scientists, as John Efron has shown.[28] Sigmund Freud articulated his own version of the racial character of the Jews in his argument in *Moses and Monotheism* that the "memory traces" of the murder of Moses were passed on as a genetic inheritance and served to create Jewish intellectuality.[29] But writing just as the Nazi storm was gathering, Freud wanted to inoculate the Jews against the kind of blood pollution that was the staple of Nazi propaganda. He wrote: "Admixture of blood made little difference since what kept them together was something ideal – the possession they had in common of certain intellectual and emotional values."[30] For Freud, the Jews were not a blood community, but a *Geistesgemeinschaft*.

That Zionism, itself a product of European nationalism, sometimes embraced the language of blood cannot be a surprise.[31] Some of this language actually returned to the Bible to construct a blood community. A particularly rich source is the material collected from the short-lived Hashomer Hatzair community of Bitanya Elite from 1920. In one rumination, Eliahu Rapoport declares: "This is what today's generation demands of me: liberate me from the burden of morality; redeem me from the curse of barrenness, redeem me toward the distant image of a blood community (*edat ha-dam*)."[32] Rapoport, already married and the father of children, was expressing a collective rather than a personal problem: perhaps because there were so few women in the commune (as well as in Palestine generally), the fear of infertility was an issue that plagued many of these utopian settlers.[33] For Rapoport, and others as well, bourgeois sexual morality prevented the development of an authentic blood community. Instead, he invokes those biblical figures, like Tamar from the Book of Genesis, who were prepared to transgress the law in order to insure the continuation of the nation.

Unable to extend their radical ideas to gender equality, they celebrated the maternal role of women as the key to recovering the blood community. In a novel by Nathan Bistritsky, based on Bitanya, the main protagonist declares in one speech that, in messianic times, matriarchy will return. In a bizarre, incestuous image, Abraham will alternate with his son Isaac in suckling from the breasts of Sarah! He continues:

> She – the mother – stands outside of our circle, the circle of history, and a strip of blood stands red behind her like a holy, terrifying shadow. She wallows in the blood, her holy blood, the blood of virginity, the blood of her first sacrifice, the blood of childbirth. Humanity washes in the blood of its heroes, but the dove of the holy spirit descends only on the fountain of blood that flows from the woman.[34]

Bistritsky's language clearly conjures up the biblical passage in Ezekiel 16 in which God finds the young woman Israel "wallowing in her blood." There, the

blood of childbirth and virginity is the blood in which the nation lives. Here the emphasis is not on the impurity imputed to this blood by the legal tradition, but rather on its vital force. In this striking reversal of the menstrual taboo, Bistritsky holds that a woman's flow of blood contains the holy spirit. Indeed, this is the most holy blood, presumably because only this blood guarantees the fertility of the blood community. Women – and their bleeding – are the very vital fount of the nation.

Bistritsky notes that "humanity washes in the blood of its heroes," but the procreative blood of women is implicitly a higher form. Yet, like most nationalisms, Zionism quickly came to celebrate blood spilled in battle as the liquid glue that bound the nation to its land. This development already started in Eastern Europe, where the wave of pogroms, starting in 1881, renewed the medieval language of martyrdom. It was in this atmosphere that a young Hebrew poet, Yaakov Cahan (1881–1960), at the turn of the twentieth century, wrote some lines that would echo for decades in Zionist culture. The poem is called *Ha-Biryonim*, a talmudic term meaning "terrorists" or "hooligans" that refers historically to some of the first-century Jewish rebels against the Romans. In the most famous stanza of the poem, Cahan calls for the resurrection of the *biryonim*:

> We arose, returned, we the *biryonim*
> We came to redeem our oppressed land
> With a strong hand, we demand our right!
> In blood and fire, Judah fell
> In blood and fire, Judah shall rise again.

He concludes with a series of alliterations on blood (*dam*) and soil (*adamah*):

> The sun will stand still [*ki-dom*]
> As in the days of Joshua – like red blood [*ka-dam aduma*]
> In a sea of blood,
> Drowning heaven and soil,
> The soil of Zion is washed
> In the redness [*be-odem*] of dawn redemption sparkles.[35]

Using the etymological associations between blood, redness, and soil, Cahan thus constructs a Hebrew version of *Blut und Boden*, but one that is thoroughly drenched in the blood of battle.

The slogan of "blood and fire" proved to be Cahan's most enduring legacy. The first armed group of Jewish watchmen (*shomrim*) in Palestine adopted it a few years later and it was subsequently to become the battle cry for militant Zionism. When, in 1920, the settler-soldier, Joseph Trumpeldor, was killed with some of his companions by Arabs in the northern Galilee, the statue of a lion erected in their memory at Tel Hai bore Cahan's verse.[36] The new Hebrew martyr was not to be a passive victim of his Gentile oppressors, as these writers assumed, sometimes wrongly, was the case for their medieval predecessors.

This glorification of blood spilled in battle found expression in a remarkable booklet published in 1911 to commemorate the watchmen who had died the previous year in skirmishes with Arab marauders. Although these Arabs were probably less nationalist opponents than armed bandits, the contributors to the pamphlet, entitled *Yizkor* ("Remember!" – an allusion to the *piyyutim* in memory of the medieval martyrs), treated these conflicts as if they were full-fledged battles over Jewish national rights. The editors characterize the blood of the fallen as "the blood of the covenant between us and our beloved land."[37] What for the Bible in Exodus 24:8 was the blood of animal sacrifices and for the rabbis the blood of circumcision, for the editors of *Yikzor* became the blood of the armed defenders of the land.

The most important essay in the collection is by the poet and educator Kadish Leib Silman (1880–1937). In ecstatic, mystical prose, he connects the blood spilled in violence with the *völkisch* idea of a blood community:

> We spill our blood and live here. Our life is the continuation of the past and the spilling of our blood is also a continuation with the past. There is no nation that does not build its life on the foundations of the past and blood joins blood.[38]

Then, in an even more feverish passage, he links blood (*dam*) with soil (*adamah*), thus forging a Hebrew version of *Blut und Boden*:

> Blood, blood. Its color is beautiful and the earth into which it soaks becomes valuable and dear to us through it. Because just as blood is necessary for the body as well as for the nation as a whole, so it is necessary for the earth (*adamah*). A stone on which blood has boiled becomes through it a memory in a book, but even more so is the earth. Its memory remains with us from generation to generation. And if the blood was not spilled on it, life itself would not fructify thought. If you take away the memory of our blood, you take away much of the glorious past of the world and even of our past. And if we did not irrigate the land with our blood, we would not stand on it today.[39]

The life of the nation and the fruitfulness of its land requires irrigation with blood. And the collective memory necessary for national life also rests on blood. In a final flourish, Silman appropriates the biblical phrase "the blood is the life" (Leviticus 17:11) and turns the death of the national martyrs into a source of life: "The blood is the life. And he who spills his blood for *kidush ha-shem* and for the conquest of life, the life of his soul remains within him, eternal life and memory. *Selah*."[40] The last word – *Selah* – is the traditional ending of a prayer (like "Amen") and, in this way, Silman turns religious *dicta* into secular, nationalist ideals.

Perhaps the most extreme expression of this point of view can be found in the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg. Blood is the most central metaphor in Greenberg's poetry and it is not only that the blood spilled in battle will avenge the blood spilled by the enemies of the Jews, but Greenberg at times also uses racial ideas

of blood. Against Darwin, but like the medieval Kabbalists, he writes in *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, his epic apocalypse from the Holocaust, that only the Jews are descendents of Adam and not of a monkey:

> We are from the blood of Adam whom God created in His image…
> and they [the nations] are from the blood of an animal;
> they come from the forest and the field…
> All of them have drunk from our blood with the thirst of an animal.[41]

As with the anti-Christian polemics of the Middle Ages, it is these essentially different types of blood that separate the Jews from the Gentiles. And the consequence is that the Gentiles thirst for the blood of the Jews. Their culture, which Greenberg holds to be far inferior to the much older culture of the Jews, is founded on the blood of their Jewish victims.[42] In this fashion, Greenberg turns the ancient blood accusation against the Jews' accusers: it is the Christians, and not the Jews, who need the blood of their age-old enemies.

If extreme nationalists like Greenberg turned to blood as the most powerful symbol of their ideology, they were not the only ones to do so. In his reaction against the Jewish form of "blood and soil," Franz Rosenzweig adopted his own version of a *Blutgemeinschaft*.[43] Far from eschewing the language of blood, Rosenzweig embraced it, but gave it his own peculiar meaning: blood was the essence of Judaism, but it was an essence devoid of specific racial content and, moreover, it was blood detached from soil. While it is true that Rosenzweig's blood community is not the same as the German idea of a *Volksgemeinschaft*, it still remains a *physical* community. It is the *bodies* of the Jews that pass on Judaism. Whether one wants to use the word "racial" or "ethnic," Rosenzweig clearly held, like Moses Hess, that the blood passed on from one generation to the next is what defines Judaism. On the other hand, this blood has no specific content: it does not contain some mystical characteristics of the nation, as German racists tried to ascribe to the so-called Aryans. In this sense, Rosenzweig's racial concept of Judaism, if that is what it is, departs quite dramatically from other racial ideologies of the time. In making these arguments, Rosenzweig was at once proposing an alternative to the Zionist linkage of blood with soil and responding to the rise of blood language in German anti-Semitism. His claim that procreation is the core value of Judaism was also a response to the demographic crisis of the German Jews: what appears as a description of Judaism in Rosenzweig is really a prescription for demographic renewal.[44]

Although the Holocaust has rendered such blood language polluted in our eyes, these questions remain very much with us today. I began this discussion with the Ethiopian Jews, but they are but the most dramatic challenge to whether there is such a thing as Jewish blood. In recent years, the field of genetics has resurrected this question. Yet, as with the larger question of race in human genetics, the genetic "purity" of the Jews remains elusive. Applying the same kind of research to the Jews has yielded contradictory results.[45] Some studies suggest that the Jews have conserved their genetic make-up since antiquity. For instance,

a recent study of Ashkenazi women has shown that there were just four founders, who probably came from the Middle East.[46] This study seems to contradict a theory that the male founders of the Ashkenazim took local wives when they migrated to Northern Europe and converted them. Instead, it would appear that these founders established their new communities in small family groups whose origins go back to the Roman Empire, if not earlier.

Studies of the Y chromosome of those from the priestly lineage (*kohanim*) also seem to show a high degree of genetic "purity," that is, that very few non-priests have entered this line.[47] Some of these studies yielded the surprising result that a tribe from Southern Africa, the Lemba, may have descended in part from the *kohanim*.[48] Since similar haplotypes have been found in Yemen, some have speculated that groups of priests, whom we know were in Yemen, migrated to Africa, ending up eventually in Southern Africa where they became part of the Lemba. This people exhibits some behaviors, such as circumcision and not eating pork, which may come from Jewish origins.

On the other hand, a study of Ashkenazi Jews who carry the family tradition that they are Levites shows the opposite of a homogeneous ethnic group that migrated from the Middle East.[49] The tentative – and surprising – conclusion was that the Ashkenazi Levites show little resemblance to Sephardi Levites or other Jews, for that matter, regardless of their status. Instead, they appear to resemble most closely several non-Jewish Eastern European populations. The authors of this study postulate that, despite the fact that the identity of Levites – like *kohanim* – derives from the father, a non-Jewish man converted to Judaism, probably to marry a daughter of a Levite, and took on the status of his in-laws. Through the luck of the genetic draw, he became the founder of all subsequent Ashkenazi Levites. Yet, most Ashkenazi Jews who are not Levites appear to descend from Roman Jews, a community whose origins go back to the Roman Empire.

The Jews' far-flung communities have genetic ties to each other, with their origins clearly in the Middle East.[50] Sephardic Jews are virtually indistinguishable from Iraqi Jews and share a lesser, but still great, degree of genetic similarity with Ashkenazi Jews. But the Jews also resemble to a greater or lesser degree the non-Jewish populations among whom they have lived, and especially the Palestinian Arabs who inhabit the region from which they originally came.[51] In short, genetics points in two opposite, but not surprising directions: Jews have maintained a high degree of genetic uniformity, but have also incorporated other populations into their gene pool.

As Raphael Falk has argued, the question of Jewish genetics is not solely a scientific one, since the way one interprets the science, the uses one puts it to and the very way in which one poses the questions are cultural and political, rather than only scientific.[52] Those, like Arthur Koestler, with an ideological interest in disproving the genetic purity of the Jews, could certainly find ample evidence in the science to do so.[53] On the other side of the coin, those who want to reinforce popular belief about the genetic unity of the Jewish people can also invoke scientific studies that seem to support their case. One could even imagine that those who favor a bi-national – as opposed to a Jewish – state in what is

now Israel might point to the genetic similarity between Jews and Palestinians, an argument for common kinship that some early Zionists already made 100 years ago, before the Jewish–Arab conflict began in earnest.

The shifting meanings of blood throughout Jewish history demonstrate that race or blood community is only one of these meanings. The very historicity of the concept undermines those who would insist that it is essential. Race, as many students of culture have rightly insisted, is a contingent, social invention more than a biological fact. In the final analysis, identity is a question of belief rather than of blood. Jewish history supports such a conclusion as much, if not more, than it supports biological ethnicity. Instead of race, the Bible offers a different definition of blood community: not for blood within the body, but rather blood outside of it: the biblical covenant of blood thrown by Moses on the people of Israel. This covenant takes effect when Moses throws half the blood of a bull sacrifice on the altar and half on the people. Blood rituals, those that are real, those that are symbolic, and those that are *both* real and symbolic, enact and re-enact this covenant. It was the permutations of this covenant that accompanied the Jews through the centuries and especially formed their interactions with Christians, who also inherited this biblical text, giving it their own meanings. And even when most of these rituals are shrouded in the distant past, like the sacrifices that have not been performed for 2,000 years, their memory can be conjured up in the written tradition that beats in the heart of this community of blood.

Notes

* Parts of this chapter were published originally in David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

1 See Hagar Salamon, "Ethiopian Jewry and New Self-Concepts," *A Life of Judaism*, ed. Harvey Goldberg (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), 227–240 and ibid., "Racial Consciousness in Transition: From Ethiopia to the Promised Land" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 19–20 (1998), 125–146.

2 Hagar Salamon, "Blood between the Beta Israel and Their Christian Neighbors in Ethiopia – Key Symbols in an Inter-Group Context" [Hebrew], *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 15 (1993), 117–134 and *The Hyena People: Ethiopian Jews in Christian Ethiopia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999). Salamon has summarized the latter book in her "Religious Interplay on an African Stage," in *Cultures of the Jews: A New History*, ed. David Biale (New York: Shocken, 2002), 977–1008.

3 See Israel Jacob Yuval, "Vengeance and Damnation, Blood and Defamation: From Jewish Martyrdom to Blood Libel Accusations" [Hebrew], *Zion* 55, 1 (1993), 33–90. Yuval has expanded this pathbreaking and controversial article in his *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

4 See the special double issue of *Zion* 59, 2–3 (1994), especially the critiques of Ezra Fleischer, Mordecai Breuer, and Avraham Grossman, as well as Yuval's reply; also Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb.*

5 See Ivan G. Marcus, "A Jewish–Christian Symbiosis: The Culture of Early Ashkenaz," in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, 449–518. See also his *Rituals of Childhood: Jewish Acculturation in Medieval Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University

Press, 1996). In addition, see Jeremy Cohen, "The 'Persecutions of 1096' – From Martyrdom to Martyrology: The Sociocultural Context of the Hebrew Crusade Chronicles," *Zion* 59, 2–3 (1994), 169–208. Cohen shows how the story of the massacre of the Jews of Xanten starts with a Sabbath meal that bears strong resemblances to the Christian mass and the Last Supper and how the story of Rachel and her four children uses the motifs of the "mother Church," the Virgin Mary as *mater dolorosa*, and the female image of *Synagoga* in Christian iconography. See further his *Sanctifying the Name of God: Jewish Martyrs and Jewish Memories in the First Crusade* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

6 Stephen Geller, "Blood Cult: Toward a Literary Theology of the Priestly Work of the Pentateuch," *Prooftexts* 12, 2 (May 1992), 97–124.

7 The literature is vast. See Dennis J. McCarthy, "The Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 88 (1969), 166–176 and "Further Notes on the Symbolism of Blood and Sacrifice," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 92 (1973), 205–211; M. Vervenne, "The Blood is the Life and the Life is the Blood," in *Ritual and Sacrifice in the Ancient Near East*, ed. J. Quaegebeur (Leuven, 1993), 451–470; Jacob Milgrom, *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 1–16* (New York: Doubleday, 1991) and *The Anchor Bible: Leviticus 17–22* (New York: Doubleday, 2000); and, most recently, William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004).

8 See, for example, W. K. C. Guthrie, *The Greeks and Their Gods* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1956), P. Stengel, *Die Oferbrauche der Griechen* (Berlin: Teubner, 1910) and Stanley K. Stowers, "On the Comparison of Blood in Greek and Israelite Ritual," in *Hesed ve-Emet: Studies in Honor of Ernest S. Frerichs* ed. Jodi Magness and Seymour Gitin (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1998), 179–196.

9 Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible*.

10 See Christine Hayes, *Gentile Impurities and Jewish Identities: Intermarriage and Conversion from the Bible to the Talmud* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), especially chapter 2.

11 See the very useful analysis of Ronald S. Hendel, "Sacrifice as a Cultural System: The Ritual Symbolism of Exodus 24, 3–8," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101, 3 (1989), 366–390. See the notes on pp. 370–371 for bibliography (up to 1989) on the possible meanings of "throwing the blood on the people." For a more recent treatment, see Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 37–43.

12 Guy G. Stroumsa, *La Fin du sacrifice: Les mutations réligieuses de l'Antiquité tardive* (Paris: Odilie Jacob, 2005), 137 and, more generally, all of chapter 3. I thank Alison Frazier for bringing Stroumsa's important book to my attention.

13 See ibid., 108–119.

14 Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996). Shaye J. D. Cohen takes issue with Hoffman and argues that before the *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, the blood of circumcision played little role in rabbinic texts. See his *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 28–29. I am not persuaded by Cohen's position and, even if Hoffman has exaggerated his argument, he still brings significant textual proof for the importance of the blood of circumcision in texts of the Tannaitic and Amoraic periods. Nevertheless, both Hoffman and Cohen agree that the *Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer* gives the most definitive statement along these lines.

15 For two different recent readings of martyrdom in late antiquity, see G. W. Bowersock, *Martyrdom and Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Daniel Boyarin, *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999). The most comprehensive recent study of the Jewish sources is by Ra'anan Boustan, *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).

16 See Robert Duthoy, *The Taurobolium: Its Evolution and Terminology* (Leiden: Brill, 1969). Neil McLynn has cast doubt on the major poetic source for this late stage, seeing it as too suspiciously like a Christian polemic. See his "The Fourth-Century Taurobolium," *Phoenix* 50, 3–4 (1996), 312–321.

17 For the Christian side, see Caroline Walker Bynum, *Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Germany and Beyond* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006) and Danielle Alexandre-Bidonm, "La Dévotion au sang du Christ chez les femmes médiévales: des mystiques aux laîques (XIIIe–XVIe siècle)," in *Le Sang au Moyen-Age* (Montpellier: Association CRISMA, Université Paul-Valéry, 1999), 405–413.

18 See Daniel Abrams, *Ha-Guf ha-Elohi ha-Nashi ba-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2004).

19 See Sharon Koren, "The Woman from Whom God Wanders: The Menstruant in Medieval Jewish Mysticism," PhD dissertation (Yale University, 1999) and ibid., "Mystical Rationales for the Laws of *Niddah*," in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law*, ed. Rahel R. Wasserfall (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 101–121.

20 See Elliot R. Wolfson, "Re/membering the Covenant: Memory, Forgetfulness, and the Construction of History in the Zohar," in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach *et al.* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998).

21 Isaac Magrisso, *Me-am Lo'ez*, on Exodus 24:8, Hebrew trans. Shmuel Yerushalmi (Jerusalem, 1969), 2:918. Magrisso took over the project from Jacob Hulli and completed the Exodus commentary in 1746. On *Me-am Lo'ez*, see Aron Rodrigue, "The Ottoman Diaspora: The Rise and Fall of Ladino Literary Culture," in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, 870–872.

22 Jerome Friedman, "Jewish Conversion, the Spanish Pure Blood Laws and Reformation: A Revisionist View of Racial and Religious Antisemitism," *The Sixteenth-Century Journal* 18, 1 (Spring, 1987), 3–30. See further Henry Kamen, *The Spanish Inquisition* (New York: New American Library, 1968) and, more recently, his "Limpieza and the Ghost of Américo Castro: Racism as a Tool of Literary Analysis," *Hispanic Review* 64, 1 (1996), 19–29; Baltasar Cuart Moner, *Colegiales mayores y limpieza de sangre durante la edad moderna* (Salamanca: Ediciones Universidad de Salamanca, 1991) and Juan Hernández Franco, *Cultura y limpieza de sangre en la España moderna* (Murcia: Universidad de Murcia, 1997). I thank my colleague Katie Harris for suggesting some of this bibliography.

23 On Sephardi racial thinking, including the sense of superiority over Ashkenazi Jews, see Gordon M. Weiner, "Sephardic Philo- and Anti-Semitism in the Early Modern Era: The Jewish Adoption of Christian Attitudes," in *Jewish Christians and Christian Jews from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, ed. Richard Popkin and Gordon Weiner (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1994), 189–214; Yosef Kaplan, "The Attitude of the Spanish and Portugese Jews to the Ashkenazi Jews in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam" [Hebrew], in *Transition and Change in Modern Jewish History: Essays Presented in Honor of Shmuel Ettinger*, ed. Shmuel Almog *et al.* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Zalman Shazar, 1987), 389–412; and Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Assimilation and Racial Anti-Semitism: The Iberian and the German Models," The Leo Baeck Memorial Lecture No. 26, Leo Baeck Institute, New York, 1982. Kaplan demonstrates how the Sephardic *Nacion* also discriminated against mulatto and black slaves who converted to Judaism.

24 Marsilio Ficino, *Della Religione Christiane* (Florence, 1568), 59, translated in Piero Camporesi, *The Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 1995), 36–37.

25 On the history of blood transfusion see Douglas Starr, *Blood: An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998) and Thomas

Laqueur's review of Starr, "Pint for Pint," *London Review of Books* 21, 20 (October 14, 1999).

26 See Robin Judd, *Cutting Identities: Jewish Rituals and German Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007) and Sander Gilman, *Franz Kafka: The Jewish Patient* (New York: Routlege, 1995).

27 For the role of blood in Nazi anti-Semitism, see, in particular, Uli Linke, *Blood and Nation: The European Aesthetics of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999).

28 John Efron, *Defenders of the Race: Jewish Doctors and Race Science in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994).

29 For interpretations of Freud that emphasize this aspect of his Jewish identity, see Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Freud's Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991) and Sander L. Gilman, *Freud, Race, and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993). I am also endebted to Eliza Slavet for sharing with me her forthcoming book *Racial Fever: Freud and the Jewish Question* (Fordham University Press). Freud's sense of Jewish superiority can be found in many places. For example, in a letter to Sabina Spielrein, he wrote of Jesus: "The Lord … had him born from the superior Jewish race." See Aldo Carotenuto, *A Secret Symmetry: Sabina Spielrein between Jung and Freud*, trans. Arno Pomerans *et al.* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), 116–117 (letter of August 20, 1912).

30 Sigmund Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, trans. Katherine Jones (New York: Knopf, 1947), 158.

31 On Zionist ideas on a Jewish race, see Efron, *Defenders of the Race* and Raphael Falk, "Zionism and the Biology of the Jews," *Science in Context* 11, 3–4 (Autumn–Winter, 1998), 587–608.

32 See Nathan Bistritsky (ed.), *Kehilyatenu* (Jerusalem, 1988, based on the 1922 edition), 40. On this remarkable text, see Aviva Opaz, "The Symbolic World of the Collection 'Kehilyateinu' " [Hebrew], *Kathedra* 59 (March, 1991), 126–141.

33 See my *Eros and the Jews* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), chapter 7.

34 Nathan Bistritsky, *Yamim ve-Laylot* (Jerusalem: Hotsa'at "ha-madpis", 1926), 197.

35 The poem was originally published as "Biryonim mi-yemei ha-pulmusim shel Titus ve-Shimon Ben-Kokhav," *Hashiloah* 12 (July–December 1903), 565. It is reprinted in *Kitve Yaakov Cahan – Shirim* vol. 1 (Tel Aviv: Va'ad ha-Yovel, 1960), 86–87.

36 See Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Identity* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

37 A. Z. Rabinowitz (ed.), *Yizkor. Matzevat Zikaron le-Halalei ha-Po'alim ha-ivrim be-EY* (Jaffa: A. Atin, 1912), 5. On this book, see Jonathan Frankel, "The Yizkor Book of 1911 – A Note on the National Myths in the Second Aliya," in *Religion, Ideology and Nationalism in Europe and America*, ed. H. Ben Israel (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986), 355–384 and Anita Shapira, *Land and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 73–74.

38 K. L. Silman, "Me-Hirhurei Liba' " in *Yizkor*, 50.

39 Ibid.

40 Ibid., 51.

41 Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Rehovot ha-Nahar* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Shoken, 1978), 171.

42 Ibid., 169–173.

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50 See Michael F. Hammer *et al.*, "Jewish and Middle Eastern non-Jewish Populations Share a Common Pool of Y-Chromosome Biallelic Haplotypes," *Proceedings of the National Association of Science* 97, 12 (June 6, 2000), 6769–6774.

51 Ibid. and Almut Nebel *et al.*, "High Resolution Y-Chromosome Haplotypes of Israeli and Palestinian Arabs Reveal Geographic Substructure and Substantial Overlap with Haplotypes of Jews," *Human Genetics* 107, 6 (December, 2000), 630–641.

52 Raphael Falk, "Zionism and the Biology of the Jews." See also Susan Martha Kahn, "Are Genes Jewish? Conceptual Ambiguities in the New Genetic Age," David W. Belin Lecture in American Jewish Affairs, 12 (Ann Arbor, 2005) and ibid., *Reproducing Jews: A Cultural Account of Assisted Conception in Israel* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

53 Arthur Koestler, *The Thirteenth Tribe* (New York: Random House, 1975). Koestler argued that the Ashkenazi Jews were descendents of the Crimean Khazars rather than a Middle Eastern people. Koestler might have taken partial solace in the study of the Eastern Europe origins of Ashkenazi Levites. See also Raphael Patai and Jennifer Patai Wing, *The Myth of the Jewish Race*, rev. edn (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989). Although this book predates the explosion in population genetics research noted above, its conclusions would probably remain largely the same if written now. Koestler relied on the first edition of the Patais' book (1975) for some of the scientific arguments to support his reading of the historical record.

3 We have never been Jewish

An essay in asymmetric hematology

Gil Anidjar

> Provided that he treats these expressions merely as labels sanctioned by modern usage for something which he has still to define, the historian may use them without compunction. In this he is like the physicist who, in disregard of Greek, persists in calling an "atom" something which he spends his time in dividing.
>
> Marc Bloch

> When metaphor becomes incarnate as social practice, who would be able to distinguish the real from the figurative in this matter? Supposing of course that between the one and the other, the border was not always more virtual than effective.
>
> Nicole Loraux

A worm with a view

"Let us imagine," writes Benedict de Spinoza – who knew a thing or two about the notion of "Jewish blood" – in a letter to Oldenburg,

> let us imagine, with your permission, a little worm living in the blood [*vermiculum in sanguine vivere*], able to distinguish by sight the particles of blood, lymph, &c.… That little worm would live in the blood, in the same way as we live in a part of the universe, and would consider each particle of blood, not as a part, but as whole.[1]

With this striking image, Spinoza puts blood at the center of our reflections on the place of bodies in the universe. Blood would be a medium and a comparative term whereby, here at least, Spinoza "altogether relativized the distinction between bodies natural and artificial; the state and its institutions, much as any physical compound," all of which "are nothing but a balance of forces."[2] Blood, to be sure, is a "physical compound," one among many, but as such it is a body verging on the distinction between natural and artificial, individual and collective, medical and political. Spinoza's worm, the sight and perspective it offers, puts us at the center of a flow that irrigates the distinctions constituting our universe, part and whole. It will lead us, at disparate velocities, to the matter of Jewish blood.

Spinoza seems at once to take William Harvey's lead and to depart from it, in order to offer his own version of the motion and circulation of the blood.[3]

Spinoza is also pursuing his reflections on bodies and "the association of parts" in nature and lays the ground for a kind of grand unified theory of the universe as a social whole, minimally, a theory of bodily ensembles and collectives. In this universe,

> each body, insofar as it exists as modified in a particular manner, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, as agreeing with the whole, and associated with the remaining parts [*ut partem totius universi, considerari debere, cum suo toto convenire, & cum reliquis cohaerere*].[4]

Elaborating on the relation between individual and collective – the relevance and irrelevance of blood – Spinoza takes us on a somehow vertiginous ride in and around the bloodstream, simultaneously adopting and rejecting the discriminating perspective, literally the "sight [*visu*]," of a worm who lives in the blood "in the same way as we live in a part of the universe [*ut nos in hac parte universi*]." Is blood a part or a whole? This is one question that Spinoza proposes to explore, although by underscoring the difficulties involved in doing so, he raises a different issue altogether, namely, how did blood become the figure for a collective, a part for the (social) whole?[5] It is an enduring truism that "all those who descend from one and the same stock … are, consequently, of the same blood,"[6] that kin, class, and nation emerge as communities of blood (literal or metaphoric, imagined or not), and that Jewishness runs in the blood.[7] "There is only one community," writes Franz Rosenzweig, articulating a historical commonplace rather than a doctrinal particularity, "a community of blood [*eine Gemeinschaft des Bluts*]." This, which "holds true in general of peoples as the union of blood-families, as opposed to all the communities of spirit, holds true as well, and particularly, of ours."[8] At once unifying and distinguishing, blood is the figure of the community. But before there could be a different and specific blood, a blood which, rather than serve as an attribute of all living creatures,[9] would distinguish a family, a class, or a community (for example, and hardly a random one, "Jewish blood"), a nation or later a race, blood had to be seen as a particular kind of part or particle [*particula*], one that stands in a privileged – or merely plausible – relation to *any* whole, any collective whole, *whether kin or community, nation or race*.[10] It is the motion whereby this striking figure (in technical terms, a synecdoche) *circulated* and *coagulated* that I want to explore in this chapter as the necessary condition of, the enabling presupposition for, any discussion of Jewish (or other) blood.

According to Spinoza, then, we live – we are – like every other body or body part in the universe. And we too may be "agreeing with the whole." It is remarkable, however, that out of this particular and strange instance – a worm in the blood – Spinoza figures that general agreement as a swirling and chaotic scene. He deploys, indeed, almost upholds as ideal and exemplary, something that can only be described as the turbulent surge of an unruly stream. For this, the newly discovered, circulatory bloodstream, is where the worm must be able "to reflect on the manner in which each particle [*particula*] on meeting with another particle, either is repulsed, or communicates a portion of its own motion." And everything

is as if the motion of the blood was also, as the ancients had it, an oscillation – ebbing and flowing – between constant flux and a kind of hardening of the fluid into parts and wholes, a multiplicity of bloody waterways. In the midst of such intense traffic and circulation, it is understood that the view is an uncertain one. This flow which is not one translates, therefore, the impossibility of a stable perspective on parts and wholes, motion and motionlessness. On the one hand, the worm is "able to distinguish by sight" the different "particles," which suggests that he discriminates and sees them as precisely that: parts that collide and interrupt or communicate their motion (depending on the future of the worm, we might already be speaking of a "butterfly effect"). But on the other hand, and somehow surprisingly, Spinoza insists that the worm fails to see these parts as anything but a whole. So it is that the worm looks at "each particle of blood, not as a part, but as a whole [*ut totum, non vero ut partem*]." He is therefore "unable to determine how all the parts are modified by the general nature of blood [*quomodo partes omnes ab universali natura sanguis moderantur*]." Seeing only wholes and not parts, and, paradoxically, the particular as opposed to the general, the worm fails to perceive change, and not only change but fixity as well. He is unable to determine how the parts "are compelled by it [i.e., by the general nature of blood] to adapt themselves, so as to stand in a fixed relation to one another." Parts and whole, motion and stasis – these bloody parts are treacherous to navigate. And were we to adopt, like the worm, an internal perspective, dismissing those "causes external to the blood, which could communicate fresh movement to it"; were we to imagine no bodies other than these particles of blood that "could communicate their motion," then "it is certain that the blood would always remain in the same state, and its particles would undergo no modifications." What is less clear, however, is whether the flow of motion is ultimately affected by the imagination or lack thereof ("for if we imagine that there are no causes external to the blood … it is certain that the blood would always remain in the same state," the sentence reads), or whether the hypothetical cause for the interruption of the blood flow is to be searched for elsewhere. What is indubitable is that the failure to imagine blood in its relation to an outside is related – by lack of relation – to a kind of interruption of the flow, an immobility that further determines the relation between part and whole. "The blood," in the perspective of such impoverished imagination, "would then always have to be considered as a whole, not as a part [*ut totum non vero ut partem consideraret*]." And that would assuredly be a mistake. Indeed, it seems obvious that the proper perspective is rather for the blood "to be regarded as a part, not as whole [*hoc modo sanguis rationem partis, non vero totius habet*]."

We could rest here and interrupt the stream of our own considerations, bring our blood tests and analyses to an end. It would be easier to do so had Spinoza not demonstrated that the partial perspective we have reached enables and even forces us to properly perceive – perhaps with the worm to partake of – the motion of blood, unavoidably taking us back on the worm's dizzying ride, where particles glide and collide, and onward toward other motions and flows. There will be no rest, therefore, no pause or interruption. And it does turn out, as a

matter of fact, that to perceive the blood as a part, not as whole, means that the oscillation continues. We must perceive blood at once from within *and* from without, that is to say, as *both part and whole*. Spinoza explains:

> But as there exist, as a matter of fact, very many causes which modify, in a given manner, the nature of the blood, and are, in turn, modified thereby, it follows that other motions and other relations arise in the blood, springing not from the mutual relations of its parts only, but from the mutual relations between the blood as a whole and external causes [*quae consequuntur non a sola ratione motus ejus partium ad invicem, sed a ratione motus, sanguinis, & causarum externarum simul ad invicem*].

It is at this point – anything but a fixed point, obviously – that Spinoza, who has just underscored both the parts of the whole as well as a whole that exceeds its internal parts, concludes that the whole is and must be regarded as a part. "Thus the blood comes to be regarded as a part, not as whole. So much for the whole and the part [*hoc modo sanguis rationem partis, non vero totius habet. De toto, & parte modo dixi*]." Indeed.

Blood is merely an example, of course, and it still functions as such, if perhaps differently, as merely a part for the whole – another synecdoche of unknown measure. This means that we will not be able to escape the question, the oscillating and surging perspective, of part and whole.[11] As I have already suggested, it is mainly this rhetorical and political issue that links Spinoza to the question of "Jewish blood" – the phrase itself serving as an abbreviation for the relation between two objects. "Jews" and "blood," two apparently distinct parts (or perhaps wholes?) that can and must be distinguished (by sight and otherwise), while reflecting on the manner in which they have collided and met, communicated and moved together or apart. Whether it does so in a particular or general way, blood raises the question of its rapport to a body that is always already collective. It is part for the whole. Yet, seen from within and perhaps from without – if one can still call this a view – blood, the collective of particles, indeed, the community as such, also appears *falsely* as a whole (which would not even be the sum of its parts). There is, then, in Spinoza, a perspective that is not one, but whereby one can acknowledge that there are parts in the whole, and in this manner arrest a motion that makes *both* the whole *and* its parts. Flow no longer occurs, motion fails to be imagined, unless one considers "the mutual relations between the blood *as a whole* and external causes," unless one considers that there is and there is not a whole ("thus the blood comes to be regarded as a part, not as whole"). Like the Jews, like any collective entity, blood may be at once more and less than the sum of its parts, which includes its own being-a part, being-apart. Blood comes to be regarded as that which distinguishes and discriminates between parts and wholes, that which moves parts and wholes, and as one of the key signifiers for a collective so conceived. How could it have been otherwise for Spinoza? Unlike his worm, he was able "to determine how all the parts are modified by the general nature of blood, and are compelled by it to

adapt themselves, so as to stand in a fixed relation to one another." He thus testifies to an obvious *moment* in the history of blood, a moment whereby blood becomes part for the whole, and comes to dominate the whole, as a privileged example, a generalized synecdoche. This is the turbulent and raging moment – an extended one, but still only a moment – whereby a collective (family or tribe, clan or nation) can be isolated, separated and singled out, taken as a part and taken apart, by way of blood.[12] Spinoza testifies to a people apart of a particular kind. He testifies to the community of blood. He illustrates, if implicitly, how one has come to speak of "Jewish blood."

But can one speak of Jewish blood? It is precisely to the extent that one indisputably has,[13] that I want to consider what made this possible. Perhaps one will then be able to argue against Jewish blood, or at least to interrogate the meaning and endurance of a notion of blood as the figure of this and other collectives. Such an endeavor will have to be conducted against the grain and against the tide – like a worm fighting the flow of the bloodstream, as it were – which has naturalized the figurative relation between part and whole, between blood and collective, making blood the ground and figure of family and genealogy, community and ethnicity. By way of the impossible position of Spinoza's worm – by blood, in other words – I want to argue that we have never been Jewish.

Blood and society

> By blood then. But what is meant by blood? Is it the word or the thing?[14]

Let us change register, take a different perspective on parts and wholes, indeed, on words and things. Since the term "invention" has replaced the term "construction," everything appears as if we have learned our historical lesson. And it has been a magisterial and impressive lesson, having to do with agency in history as much as with the novelty of words – and of things. Where would we be, for example, had we not learned that the word "homosexual" was invented before the word "heterosexual" and that both of them date from the end of the nineteenth century? What if Raymond Williams (and Norbert Elias before him) had not explained to us how "culture" recently came to occupy such a prominent place in our vocabulary?[15] Even more recently, what if Leo Marx had not alerted us to the emergence of that "hazardous concept" that is "technology"?[16] New words for old things, but also for new things ("I must also draw attention to a number of other words which are either new, or acquired new meanings," writes Williams), artifacts and products, signs no longer taken for wonder but performed and made – there are by now too many inventions to count, and too many constructions to even need to make the argument anew.[17] And the argument is essentially related to notions of agency and making, to construction and to self-fashioning. At its basis, the argument is that the new has occurred, that we have made it happen (that we could, therefore, *undo* it along with everything that precedes it), that we have been – that we are, in fact – modern. This is one of the reasons why an entire era could be renamed "The Early Modern period" (during which blood came to

signify something like "race").[18] And that is why for every modern "invention," a number of historians or historically minded medievalists and late antiquity scholars fight acrimoniously in arguing that they've seen it all before, that the new had occurred earlier, and that the invention, if it was one, was already theirs. Bruno Latour did try to explain that the argument is futile, insisting instead that "we have never been modern."[19] By this, Latour meant that the distinction between the given and the made was never operative. But in doing so, he may have underestimated the constant and necessary possibility of undoing (precisely) the "seamless fabric of nature–culture," the possibility for "our fabric" to be "no longer seamless," to come asunder across time and space, across history.[20] Nowhere is this more visible than in the habit – at once historical and anti-historical – of marking the distinction between fact and fiction, between the historical (the modern, the new) and the unhistorical. Hence, we continue to distinguish between Vico's famous principle, according to which "men make their own history" (that is to say that what they make is historical), and its inevitable corollary: that what they have not made has no history.[21] Again, Latour's lesson (although I am by no means suggesting that his is the only one) would require that we recognize the fabric that seamlessly connects the historical with the non-historical, discourse with reality, or if you will, nature with culture. The provision for this continuous fabric, according to Latour, is that everything in it must be recognized as an agent (*actant*). The generalization of action and of agency goes well beyond "the new, *ergetic* ideal of knowing" by expanding it.[22] It is historical through and through in that everything – not only knowing – becomes a doing or a making.[23] Everything *works* and *labors* and better yet, *produces*. History is truly the history of the conditions and modes of production. And of reproduction. Take blood, for example.

Blood is hardly a modern invention, of course. And indeed, what would it mean to say that blood has a history? As a natural "object," blood (the thing, I suppose) has always been around, and we have neither made nor invented it. But blood *does* have a history, and there is no particular cause for amazement at that idea. Blood even has histories. A few of them have been recently published; some of the most impressive among them consist of chapters in a longer and wider history of blood.[24] That is because blood too is constructed and made. And the history of blood (the history of the word, as it were) is the history of beliefs and conceptions, usages and practices, that have surrounded blood, the history of interpretations – in the widest possible sense of the term "interpretation" – of blood.[25] Although it is a fact and a given that *precedes* interpretation (even history as making has its limits), blood was always seized within the fabric, of which Latour speaks. At no point, that is, was blood "not simultaneously real, social and narrated."[26] To be perfectly Latourean then, it is not simply the case that we "make" blood (in the sense that we "construct" and interpret it). It is also that blood "makes" us as well. And what could be more natural (if also cultural) than to acknowledge that blood makes us who we are?

We? But who are "we"?

If one ignores, but for a moment, Latour's advice, if one grants that "our fabric" (for it is *our* fabric that Latour describes) is "no longer seamless," then

the distinction between the real and the social will be seen as having already expanded, opened, and overflowed (that expansion was operating already in the sharp distinction between "blood" and its "interpretations," the thing and the word – but I simplify). This may well be necessary and inevitable. Still, and if only because we are continuing to consider – like a worm, part of and apart from the collective – the question of "Jewish blood," we will need to linger on the coming apart, precisely, of the social, something that will also bleed into the narrative dimension that Latour describes. It will concern, more specifically, the kind of narratives we have been telling ourselves, as if for all eternity (historical thinking at its limits, again). For what, finally, is the relation between blood and the social? Between blood as a part and the collective as the whole?

Again, nothing seems to be more obvious. Collective identity, beginning with family and kinship, has always been a matter of blood (Spinoza told us nothing new, the historians will say). In Frederick Engels' words, and precisely as a recognition that "systems of consanguinity" have changed throughout history, "the whole subsequent development of the family presupposes the existence of the consanguine family as a necessary preparatory stage." And the family (that is "the descendants of a single pair") is grounded in blood. It is the fact of blood ties and of "blood relatives."[27] By extension, communities ("ethnic" communities, but within and around them "classes" as well) have always gathered around blood, found their unity in blood. Everything is as if consanguinity *as such* (as opposed to "systems of consanguinity") had no history. Which is to say that once again, historical thinking reaches here its limits.

Blood, then – but is it the word or the thing?

One astute anthropologist, who has done extensive work to help us rethink the distinction between nature and culture, explains (or at least illustrates) the matter quite clearly. "The idiom of kinship, the content of kinship, the web of kinship, the kin-based society all depend in large part on the idea of kinship itself."[28] Kinship, in other words, is "an idea." Like the community, it is imagined – constructed or invented.[29] It is an interpretation of blood, a series of conceptions and practices that build upon, or derive from, blood: the fact of blood. To put the matter succinctly, "the *ideas* about kinship are distinct from the *facts* of blood relationship … The facts of blood relationships are that they constitute bonds, feelings of kindred, instinctive affection."[30] Blood here appears to be a thing, the given upon which a word is based. But that word is not "blood." Rather, it is "kinship." That is to say that if blood is the thing, then kinship is the word.[31] Blood makes kinship. Or alternatively, kinship derives from blood. It is made out of blood – and this time, blood is the thing.

But of course it is not. And we know that very well. Blood too is a word. It is merely a name here, a figure, a metonymy. It is only the name we give to something else, and for some other thing. What is that thing, then? Let me abbreviate and rush toward a provisional conclusion. That which blood (the word, then) names, after having been named by kinship as its origin, is what we call today "biology" (but "biology" too is a modern "invention"! Minimally, it is a particular mode of knowing, found in ancient times – as a thing, if not as a word – that

adopted a series of peculiar dispositions of a highly historical nature, dispositions that include but also exceed the physiological.)[32] Did our ancestors not understand the physiological connections that linked parent to child? Clearly, the question presupposes the kind of isolation of bodies (and peculiar bodies at that) that Spinoza warns us against, even as he showed us its inevitability. Blood is here isolated, as are bodies of knowledge. Indeed, as Claude Meillassoux has brilliantly demonstrated, it does appear that "the biological knowledge of the mode of human reproduction is not general," which is to say that it is not universal, neither cross-culturally nor, more obviously, trans-historically. Moreover, "even when this knowledge is present, *it does not necessarily give rise to an ideology of consanguinity*."[33] It is not just that, being "cultural" (i.e., "made"), kinship transcends the "fact" of (so-called) natural "blood" bonds. It is also that in many instances, those bonds, which have nothing to do with blood in the first place, are not even named "blood."[34] That which kinship is and names as its presupposition – assuming, of course, that it does – is thus not always blood (nor is it always physiology, much less biology – but that too is another story, and Meillassoux tells it well). And why should it? Blood is only one name among many in an economy of terms and symbols – "natural" or not – which have appealed to the collective imagination. "The official and explicit myth of conception in rabbinic texts" illustrates this quite clearly in the case of reproduction. What there is there is

> a partnership of three in that the father supplies the white parts of the body: bones, teeth, the white of the eye, brain matter; the mother the red parts: blood, muscle, hair, the pupil of the eye; and God supplies the intelligence, the spirit, the soul, eyesight, motion of the limbs, and the radiance of the face.[35]

But note that the Talmud, "the invention of the rabbinic science of blood,"[36] is partly inheriting – and indeed, reconstructing – a biblical conception that never once invoked the phrase "flesh and blood," and in which kinship was void of blood, functioning instead as the unity (or unification) of "flesh and bones."[37]

There is, however, one question left (well, at least one). For if we know that blood is merely the *name* that was sometimes given, the name we still give today, to the "idea" of kinship; if we so obviously know that kinship is not blood (because it is not "really" blood; because it is not "natural;" because the physiology of reproduction and the practices of kinship far exceed the matter of blood; but also because all this was not always understood as, much less called, "consanguinity" or "blood"), then how is it – why is it – that we persist in referring to kinship and family relations as "blood"? How is it that anthropologists do this, and historians too, sometimes going so far as projecting it (as if translating) onto other cultures and other times?[38] Granted, this may not be the most interesting question. Minimally, it could be improved by way of a sharper formulation. Let me try the following: If we know that blood does not *make* collective identity, what is it that has made collective identity go by *the name of blood*? What is it that endures in allowing us to think still that some collectives have (as if it were in some distant past,

biblical or racial) grounded their identity in blood? What is it that has "made," and continues to make, kinship and nationality a matter of blood (imagined, yes, always imagined – but again, then, what is it that has made our collective imagination so bloody)? What is it that has made the fabric which seamlessly relates the real and the social, blood and community? And why do we narrate it by invoking the same central, if fluid and evasive, "character"? For aside from the notion of consanguinity, blood has long supported a quite *particular* conception of the social, of the community. When did the community (familial, political or cultural) become a "community of blood" then?

Let me make clear that I do not particularly seek to identify agency here, nor to assert that the community of blood was, or was not, a modern (or ancient) invention. We have more than ample evidence that shows how both kinship and class have been predicated on (remember now: the word) blood before modern anthropology and before "race science" – assuming there is a difference.[39] But it is equally clear that the relation between blood and community far exceeds the modern question of "race" even though the former may have enabled the latter. Blood far exceeds the domain of nature and of biology – and there is a difference there.[40] Hence, what is important for me to show has to do with the edges of a fabric (in which race and biology are ultimately of limited significance by comparison) that covers kinship and politics, theology and anthropology, along with its seamless expansion – a *generalized hematology*.[41] For what remains the case is that the conjunction of blood with the social (be it kin, community or race) has become seamless, that it has survived the discredit of race science and the various undoings of the nature–culture binary. At the same time, blood – that "hazardous concept" – has served to establish (or simply, to name) an enduring distinction *between* collectives (family, communities, nations). The significance of these questions and issues with regards to "Jewish blood" can hardly be overstated. What I seek to understand, then, is the fabric of blood, blood as fabric (textile or text). It is the fabric that supports and enables the very question that occupies us in this volume. Blood must be read, in other words; it has become a question and a figure for a collective (it has become an object, as historians of science and philosophers might say) because it is at once word and thing – the fabric of our lives. Blood is always already hematology.

A brief history of political hematology (in the name of blood)

I will say this quickly. The link between blood and community, that is, the notion that blood is the site and marker of collective identity, is a contingent one. And that link must be de-sedimented, better yet, un-coagulated. We have seen that neither the Bible nor the rabbis ever thought of genealogy and kinship as being a matter of blood,[42] that the phrase "flesh and blood" as a signifier of genealogical continuity is either absent or at the very least reductive (for much more than blood is involved in transmission). There is nothing here to diminish the multiple and heavy symbolic charges carried by blood, or even its multi-layered role in collective practices of whatever kind – pure, dangerous, or otherwise.[43] There is, however, reason to

doubt that even the ancient Greeks, often invoked in this context, ever held a model that would be consistent with what we learn (or think we learn) from the tragedies of Aeschylus and Sophocles (which provide powerful imagery and vocabulary for the notion that kinship is blood). There, the blood that is said to run in the veins of relatives (as if one could generalize from Oedipus!) hardly provides evidence of the kind of medico-legal and political conception that came later to be held, to the effect that kinship (and beyond kinship, collective identity) is blood. True, "Laius' *haima*, his blood, runs in Oedipus' veins." But that blood cannot simply be identified as the sign – much less, the fact – of filiation. Indeed, "it is Oedipus' blood, as well as the blood Oedipus spills, and it is this blood that needs to be avenged in order to lift the plague ruining the city of Thebes."[44] This makes clear that here blood as kinship and filiation cannot be isolated from blood as murder, something that undercuts any evidence for the claim that kinship is in fact (called) blood. Indeed, to assert that the different tragic characters are related by blood would be precisely like saying that siblings are "related by murder," since clearly murder is the primary content of the relation of those other paradigmatic brothers, Cain and Abel.[45] And the argument can be generalized to other tragedies and ancient sources,[46] especially when taking into consideration the medical tradition, and the divergence of opinions having to do with the number of seeds involved in procreation (Aristotle vs. Galen), the place of blood among the humors or apart from them, pangenesis versus hematogenesis ("according to Hippocratic theories of generation, the embryo is indeed formed by the intermingling of the male and female spermatic humors"), and so forth.[47] Recall, for example, that if Aristotle did hold the view that male ejaculation is derivative of blood, he would have laughed at the claim that what the father (indeed, *the* genitor) passes on is blood. "The ejaculate, he makes absolutely explicit, was but the vehicle for the efficient cause, for the sperma, which worked its magic like an invisible streak of lightning."[48] And what about the mother's blood? It turns out that

> the female, the material, contribution to generation is only slightly more material and thus recognizable by the physical properties of menstrual blood. Aristotle is at pains to point out that catamenia, the menstrual residue itself, is not to be equated with the actual blood that one sees: "the greater part of the menstrual flow is useless, being fluid."[49]

My argument, to repeat it, is not that blood (the thing, whatever it is) was never really there, but rather to document the ways in which blood appears (as word or thing) and the ways it does not.[50] Like Spinoza's worm, I seek to consider the flow of blood, the continuity of its streams, and its relation to part and whole, to collectives of shifting natures and sizes. I also want to lie in wait for its interruptions and absences.

How then were blood ties created? How did blood come to surge and flow within them? Or more precisely perhaps, how did family ties come to be called by the name of blood? In a groundbreaking study that brings us to a later period, Gianna Pomata has pointed out that

> historians have not asked which ideas about blood shaped the legal notion of consanguinity. What was meant by blood in the legal usage of *consanguinitas*? How were blood ties created, according to the law? And whose blood are we talking about? [51]

Pomata clarifies that the matter is not – was never – primarily physiological, obviously, since we have seen that medical discourse, although intervening, was not exclusively adjudicating on the matter and was, besides, hardly pushing for a universalization of blood. *Consanguinitas* was a juridical matter, and a political one. And blood, the word (but how would the thing be so different? How isolated? And by what measurement?), has never been so remote from that which allegedly runs in the veins. Indeed, to the extent that in Roman law blood intervenes in the making of kinship, it does so by way of a radical asymmetry not *between* families and communities, but *within* them. Blood is the peculiar site of sexual difference in that it belongs exclusively to the father. "The notion of *consanguinitas* tells us that the tie between father and children is twofold: part of it derives from the father's power and part of it derives from the father's blood." In other words, "the natural relationship between a father and his children creates *consanguinitas*, that between a mother and her children does not."[52]

We may have a better sense of time – and of contingency – when it comes to blood as the name of kinship (and more precisely, as the medical name for that which relates father to child). For what has been called "the hematogenic theory of semen," the notion that semen is the father's blood,

> [only] became dominant, after the fourth century BC, in both philosophical and medical discourse, superseding other ancient theories – still current, for example, in the Hippocratic texts – where semen was seen as derived from the brain (via the spinal marrow) or from all the parts of the body … [T]he hematogenic view was established as the unchallenged theory of semen in European culture long after antiquity: in fact, surprising at it might seem, the theory persisted into the eighteenth century.[53]

But recall that, as Pomata demonstrates, blood is the site of a division – not a constitution – of the community, and that along gender lines.[54] In Roman law, blood (that is, *consanguinitas*) was a notion that defined primarily the matter of property, "matters of inheritance and succession," and thereby favored a segment of the male progeny.[55] Another essential moment, then, will have to take place. This can be found in Tertullian, for whom "the blood of Christians is seed [*semen est sanguis Christianorum*]," an assertion that must be understood simultaneously as medical, political, and theological, the three "domains" within which it radically intervenes.[56] Fundamentally, then, the recognizable configuration that unites medicine and law, family and politics, cannot be understood as merely theological or "religious." It is however definitely *Christian* – dividing and linking each of these domains. Indeed, after Tertullian and Isidore of Seville, it is only with canon law, finally, that the notion of blood is expanded, translated, into the realm of marriage.

From then, that is, from the Christian Middle Ages, on (and recall that "the first liturgical rituals of marriage appeared in northern France around 1100"),[57] the notion that the child receives the blood of *both* father and mother becomes accepted, at first *against or around reigning medical conceptions*, in order to determine kinship, in order, that is, for the Church to authorize or forbid alliances.[58] The very notion of the Church as the "mystical body of Christ" also changes radically around this time, no longer signifying the invisible body of Christ mysteriously found in the sacrament and distinct from other, material bodies, but rather embodied in the visible members of the community (flesh and blood).[59] It is within this transformative framework – a generalized hematology that weaves a fabric at once medical and social, theological and political – that the nobility could be invented as a "social category" grounded in blood as genealogy or lineage, along with others.[60] Consanguinity, in other words, has a history. Which means that we can more or less date the dissemination of the notion, at once legal, medical, and political, of the community – or at least of kinship – as articulating a relation of blood. *Not* the thing, of course, since no such self-identical "thing" had ever become the privileged object of a specialized knowledge (or even an exclusive dimension of kinship which always included adoption and other modes of relation and community building), but certainly, the word, which did *make* the thing into what it became.[61]

For the love of blood

What happens then is – literally – a *wonderful* story, which brings us closer to the Jews and to Jewish blood. More precisely, this is the history of "wonderful blood." I will be even briefer in my summary, for in the following formulation, we are brought back to Spinoza on parts and wholes. Writing of medieval Christianity, Carolyn Walker Bynum concludes her study by stating that

> rather than interpreting blood as merely one among many objects in a struggle for control or one among many themes in an extravagantly emotional religiosity, we should see in blood the central symbol and central cult object of late medieval devotion – and perhaps the central problem as well.[62]

This is to say that blood is not merely a part of medieval Christianity. It is rather its fabric. Granted, Bynum does isolate a part from the whole. She writes of blood in "theology and practice in late medieval northern Germany and beyond." She describes a blood cult and a blood devotion and adds to the growing scholarly understanding of blood in this specific period.[63] But she also makes clear that she is writing about something larger, a longer period, as it were, and a larger issue. Bynum says that she is writing about "religion":

> if we are to understand why themes such as bleeding become prominent at a particular moment in the history of a religion, we must (the point is an obvious one!) look at the whole of that religion: pious prayers and practices,

> local shrines, artistic commissions, theological debates, accounts of visions and miracles, ecclesiastical politics, and the context of all this in regional and national strife.[64]

And although it is not the place to debate with Bynum's understanding of the term "religion" (is it the word or the thing?), or to wonder about the viability of the category in that particular historical context, I merely wish to underscore that blood as fabric – hematology – covers, in her own descriptions, a much wider domain than "religion" (as she defines it). The evidence extends further and suggests, for example, "that blood relics were politically, financially, and religiously desirable" (p. 58). Ultimately, "it was blood to which kings, clergy, and common people voyaged, blood that filled the hearts of penitents and the coffers of merchants, blood over which theologians fought, blood that inspired imitation and competition from churches and monasteries" (p. 32). Blood is thus everywhere. It flows and flows, and it covers theological, cultic, and devotional matters, as we saw, but also – and in a novel way – politics and economy, kinship and community. "The behavior of blood is described in these texts as people believed blood was wont to behave. Dividing, it remained forever whole; and its distribution created filiation and community" (p. 72). Parts and wholes, blood flows and expands to include and determine a much wider conception of the collective, of the community: The community of blood. For what Bynum shows is that medieval debates and practices in Western Christendom did not take place merely

> over proper Eucharistic piety or the authenticity and veneration of relics. Rather, it was, on the one hand, a matter of the relation of the body and blood of Christ to each other and to his person, and on the other hand, a question of how Christians gain access to the *sanguis Christi* that saves.
>
> (p. 110)

As Spinoza knew, the distinct particles, parts, and bodies found in the fabric of blood would be meeting with others. They would collide or be repulsed, and communicate with each other. Which body, which blood? Parts and wholes ("Aquinas, basing himself on Albertus Magnus, held that blood is the seat of life, and, indeed, of the whole body *in potentia*" [p. 162]). In the final analysis, the issue turned out to be at once "physiological, philosophical, theological, and finally what we might even call sociological" (p. 121). As well,

> the blood is more than sexual and social or marital status; it is more even than the bearer of ethical status, that is purity or impurity. It is as if the body is only a mold into which blood as animating force or soul or self is poured.
>
> (p. 163)

And medieval theologians could thereby explain the nature of the collective change Western Christendom was undergoing, for "we eat God not so that he changes into us but so that we change into him."[65] Indeed, what "theologians

were really debating when they debated the possibility of blood relics and miracle hosts was the nature of identity" (p. 145). And

> in all this, what is stressed is the immediacy and physicality of *sanguis Christi*. Warm and alive itself, it warms and liquefies the blood of sinners who have grown cold, hard, dried, and dead in selfishness and alienation. It restores life to the *imago Dei* within the self, as liquid warmth softens hard wax. But it goes further. It fuses with – becomes – the blood of the self.
>
> (p. 170)

It is not hard to see that Christians, and not only in the north of Europe, and not only in the fifteenth century – parts and wholes – are becoming a community of blood. They "equated their own blood with Christ's" (p. 244). Not the thing, but the word, which "made" the thing, the word that made blood into the fabric it became (for what else is transubstantiation?). "In this sort of piety … the blood *is* Christ" (p. 180).

But perhaps I have been misquoting. Using and abusing the words of the historians, I have taken some parts, at my convenience, and made them stand for the whole. After all, not all Christians have thought along the lines I have drawn. And besides, blood does not only gather and unify. It also separates and discriminates. Bynum dedicates an entire chapter, in fact, to precisely this, to "Blood as Separated and Shed," to "blood as separation" (p. 173). Why unify then where there is division? Why take the parts for the whole? Surprisingly enough, Bynum herself seems to answer this important question when she deploys the beginnings of an explanation for "why blood?", why the prominence of blood at this particular (broad but limited) historical juncture? "Natural blood" is part of the explanation. And the explanation is natural enough. "Natural blood is the ultimate synecdoche: the human part that *is* the human and the social whole" (p. 187). (Later, Bynum will insist that "blood was, moreover, a particularly apt image for retribution and satisfaction" – for economy, that is – "for arousal, and for the synecdoche implied in incorporation" [p. 209].)

> This late medieval habit of understanding part to be whole, instance to be *in* exemplar, made it possible to think not only of humans subsumed in the *humanitas* of Christ but also of relatives, neighbors, even heretics as subsumed into one's own suffering in a union that was more participation than substitution.
>
> (p. 203)

Parts for the whole, sociology (along with history, anthropology, and biology to boot) has become, *naturally*, Christology. Or vice-versa. Christology is hematology, and it is the fabric of our lives. It raises "new questions about family, society, and politics" (p. 256). For it is a fact that "not all religions give meaning by such stark, simultaneous assertion of life and death as does medieval Christianity" (p. 255). Indeed, not all religions – but what is "religion"? And are there

many really? – give meaning, whether theological, political, anthropological and familial, legal and economical – even *natural* – by blood. To the extent that Judaism is a religion (something that is not to be taken for granted), it certainly does not elevate, or simply diffuse blood in any comparable way. Moreover, for Jews, belonging – if it can be figured – has nothing to do with blood. By blood, then, we have never been Jewish.

Jewish blood

If it seems as if I have been eluding the subject of Jewish blood, as if the theme of this volume has remained marginal to my considerations, it may be because I have. Then again, such an evaluation would have to ignore the underlying, and richly *textured*, association between Jews and blood in the Western Christian imagination, to this day. The matter – from blood guilt to blood libel, from blood merchants to bloodthirsty vampires – is well documented and recent work, beginning with Bynum herself, and continuing with Miri Rubin, Claudine Fabre-Vassas, and Israel Yuval (dare I include Ariel Toaff?),[66] has truly expanded our knowledge and overturned many a conception – immaculate and otherwise. What I have been arguing, building on the knowledge and insights of these scholars, is that the very notion that kinship is blood and that the community is a community of blood is essentially Christian, which can only be generalized once the link between parts and whole, between blood and collective, is established and sedimented – once it is *coagulated*. What lingers, in our modern minds (have we ever been modern?), is that anthropology and with it race science are somehow divorced from Christianity and its peculiar hematology, exceptions notwithstanding. After all, could we not think of the relation between parts and whole, between blood and collective identity, outside of a Christian frame? It is a fact that no explanation has been given for the prominence of blood – even if only as a name – in kinship theories or indeed, in the history of that peculiar idea that is the community of blood (family, class, nation, and race). Historians assure us that "the dreams of racism actually have their origin in ideologies of class, rather than in those of nation: above all in claims to divinity among rulers and to 'blue' or 'white' blood and 'breeding' among aristocracies."[67] Everything is as if racism – the notion of the community of blood, reduced to a biological matter – is to be distinguished from conceptions of kinship, a modern invention that results from a rupture with Christianity rather than in continuity with it, constitutive of Christianity's transformations. Michel Foucault taught us as much when he suggested that "the bourgeoisie's 'blood' was its sex,"[68] thus marking the passage – epistemic and more – "from a symbolics of blood to an analytics of sexuality," the beginning of an era of bio-power.[69] Was there such a passage? Between parts and whole, mobility and fixity, flow and interruption, Foucault hesitates.

> While it is true that the analytics of sexuality and the symbolics of blood were grounded at first in two very distinct regimes of power, in actual fact

> the passage from one to the other did not come about (any more than did these powers themselves) without overlappings, interactions, and echoes. In different ways, the preoccupation with blood and the law has for nearly two centuries haunted the administration of sexuality.
>
> (p. 149)[70]

But Foucault forges forward, hesitating no more when he takes us in one great stride to the Nazis, and doing so by distinguishing between the modernity of disciplinary power and the archaic, "the oneiric exaltation of a superior blood" (p. 150). As he himself entertains, if perhaps disingenuously, as a possibility, Foucault appears to be "dealing in a historicism which is more careless than radical" (ibid.). And historical difference, which does indeed function here, is only the displaced figure of a more radical distinction, the interruption of a flow between "the analytics of sexuality" and "the symbolics of blood." These may meet and collide, communicate and bond but they are not modified by a common element. They are not part of the same stream, much less the same fabric.

Purity of blood

There might be a missing link, something that would account not only for the endurance of blood, which Foucault acknowledges across the structural break he otherwise inscribes, but also for the visible and invisible expansion of its fabric across a certain periodization and to an increasing number of domains, some of which we have seen (most importantly, kinship and community), and others that were touched upon by Carolyn Bynum and others. Toward my conclusion, I want to argue that the missing link is the notion of blood purity, and more precisely, the "statutes on the purity of blood." These will bring us back, if indirectly, to Spinoza. More significantly, they should enable us to recognize the flow of blood and its interruptions. Like Spinoza's worm, we have been navigating the flow of blood. But which blood? It is becoming hard to tell. To the extent that there is a community of blood, I have been arguing, it is a Christian community. It can *only* be a Christian community, the only community having gone to the lengths we have seen in conceiving of blood not only as the seat of the soul, but indeed, as the matter of kinship and the essence of the community (theologically, ritually, but also socially, scientifically, and so forth). As Jean-Paul Roux succinctly puts it: "every Christian century has lived, with more or less intensity, the Passion of the Christ and has drunk with more or less avidity of his blood."[71] On the other hand, it should be clear that none of the reflections I have engaged in could have been conducted in isolation from the flow of Jewish blood, or more precisely, from the association – beginning with Jesus himself (if mostly, the Jesus that was "invented" in the Middle Ages, along with the Eucharist) – between Jews and blood. In fact, an essential moment of this association is the very separation, the distinction between Christian and Jewish blood (a distinction and a separation made perhaps most famous by Shakespeare's Shylock).[72] Paradoxically, the claim is then retrospectively attributed in such a

fashion that it is Jews, "carnal Jews" (or better yet, "Semites") who would have held a blood-based notion of community since biblical times (and we have seen that such was never the case). Blood, then, but is it the word or the thing? Does blood flow between the two, between word and thing? Parts and wholes. Consider the importance and revealing aspects – the blood borders, if you will – of the following argument:

> When examining the wide variety of associations with blood in late medieval devotional culture, it is crucial to maintain an awareness of the vast regional differences in devotional styles and representational habits. In late thirteenth-century Franconia, accusations of host desecration against Jews led to regional massacres and miraculous events, which were commemorated in such chapels as those at Iphofen and Lauda. As a consequence, some Franconian towns, such as Röthingen, Würzburg, and Nuremberg, came to be known among the Jews as "blood cities." In Bavaria and Austria, cults of Holy Blood shrines abounded. In Spain blood came to be the carrier of identity, an indelible attribute of religious and ethnic adherence, which was supported by the concept of limpid, pure blood (*limpieza de sangre*). This tendency in some parts of Europe to associate blood with identity, and to see in spilt blood the genesis of life, is also evident in representations of the Fountain of Life.[73]

The statutes on the purity of blood are part of a generalized hematology, the fabric of which appears disconnected, interrupted. Let me immediately underscore that Miri Rubin's inclusion of the issue of "*limpieza de sangre*," of the purity of blood, as being related to the history of the medieval Christian blood cult and blood piety is, to my knowledge, the first and only occurrence of such linkage.[74] There is, therefore, reason to rejoice at the opportunity of connecting Jews and Christians, blood and collective identity. But it is imperative to recognize that geographical difference (together with historical difference) functions here in such a manner that it precisely interrupts the flow of blood.[75] It is as if national boundaries were also epistemological ones, as if one were "unable to determine how all the parts are modified by the general nature of blood, and are compelled by it to adapt themselves, so as to stand in a fixed relation to one another."[76] What is the problem? The problem is that the general nature of blood *does* unify the different regions of Western Christendom. Not so much in the way it relates to "outsiders" (if that is what Jews were), but rather in the way it testifies to a new self-conception. Indeed, with the rise of the blood cult and blood piety (and beginning with the ingestion of blood in the ritual of the Eucharist), Christians came to conceive of themselves as a community of blood (I have argued elsewhere that blood did make "new Christians [*cristianos nuevos*]," and these were *not* the converted Jews nor the converted Muslims).[77] In other words, the notion that a community could be a community of blood had already been accepted – in the Iberian peninsula and everywhere else in Western Christendom – with different but related and coherent effects. That notion is, at

any rate, necessarily (which is to say, structurally) *prior* to the assertion that a *particular* community is or is not of pure blood, is or is not a community of *different* blood. This includes and goes beyond "the purity of blood," then, which *sealed* the identification between community and blood, but was hardly the exception. In fact, the "statutes on the purity of blood" (which do not constitute the exceptional origin of modern racism, but rather articulate its belonging to a larger hematological rule) only make explicit that Christians had begun to see themselves as a community of distinct blood – the pure blood of Jesus Christ – and to generalize that perception to include medicine and ritual, kinship and lineage, which enabled further differentiations and distinctions (class distinctions, and so forth). In order for blood and community to be related as part and whole, the fabric of blood had to spread. And God knows it did. Everywhere Christians showed their investment in blood (in embryology and genealogy, law, politics, and theology) along with their concern for Christ's blood and other bloods. Nobles and kings eagerly joined, and peasants too, soon to be ennobled as *cristianos viejos*. They were all concerned about keeping blood safe and pure, ultimately reaching the conclusion that their own blood, Christ's blood and Christian blood (later kings' blood and "blue blood") was itself pure. Purity is merely derivative of a growing distinction made *between* bloods, where blood is understood as the prior site of difference and distinction. Historically, it matters little what the precise moment is whereby individuals (whose ancestors may or may not have converted) were deemed "impure." What matters is that the fabric of blood – hematology – made the relation of blood and community seamless. In the process, and simultaneously, it tore and rent the fabric that ran *between* communities; it also interrupted the flow of blood *between* them. Ultimately, the claim that some communities were of impure blood was the last step in the *generalization of hematology*. Henceforth, to each family, class or community, there would be a blood of its own. Incidentally, this might explain why the critique of race science, the critique of "the community of blood" has achieved so little, and why inequalities continue to have such a reach (grounded in law and medicine, anthropology and economics).[78] It obviously leaves intact the connection between blood and kin ("blood ties"), between blood and community (the nation and the race – whether based in *jus solis* or in *jus sanguinis* – as an *imagined* community of blood).[79] As I have said, though, there is no reason to single out blood: to consider that, of all things, blood has anything to do with production or reproduction, with kinship or with politics. There is no reason to consider that it stands in any kind of relation to any of these elements as if they, along with blood, were parts of a whole. As Spinoza rightly argues, "it follows that each body, insofar as it exists as modified in a particular manner, must be considered as a part of the whole universe, as agreeing with the whole and associated with the remaining parts."[80] For the parts and the whole to be "agreeing" with each other, to be "associated" with each other, the universe of which Spinoza speaks must be presupposed, and it must be presupposed as infinite and all-encompassing. Spinoza is again fabulously limpid on this matter: "As the nature of the universe is not limited, *like the nature of blood*, but is absolutely infinite, its parts are by this nature of infinite power

infinitely modified, and compelled to undergo infinite variations."[81] Like the universe, blood is infinite. In fact, much as we have seen that "Christ is blood," so too the universe. It is blood: a fabric of blood. A world of blood, in which blood is generalized at the very moment it becomes the site of an absolute distinction (later it will become the site of medical and indeed racial knowledge). "This simple infinity," wrote Hegel, who knew a thing or two about modernity in the wake of what we have explored,

> or the absolute Notion, may be called the simple essence of life, the soul of the world, the universal blood, whose omnipresence is neither disturbed nor interrupted by any difference, but rather is itself every difference, as also their supersession; it pulsates within itself, but does not move, inwardly vibrates, yet is at rest. It is self-*identical*, for the differences are tautological; they are differences that are none.[82]

Have we ever been modern? Seized by the arresting flow of this blood, Spinoza's worm knew it as well, "this little worm" who, going nowhere fast, sees nothing but blood; who lives in the blood in the same way as we live in the universe. We live in Christian blood. And we have never been Jewish.

Notes

1 Benedict de Spinoza, "Correspondence" in *On the Improvement of the Understanding. The Ethics. Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 291; Letter XV (XXXII), dated November 20, 1665; *Spinoza Opere*, ed. Carl Gebhard (Heidelberg: Carl Winters Universitätsbuchhandlung, 1924), vol. 4, 171–174. All citations are from this letter. I am grateful to Teresa Vilaros for having directed me toward "Spinoza's worm."

2 Amos Funkenstein, *Theology and the Scientific Imagination from the Middle Ages to the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1986), 281.

3 See William Harvey, *The Works of William Harvey*, trans. Robert Willis (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989). Spinoza opens his letter with a reference to Robert Boyle, whose connection to Harvey was and remains well known (see e.g., Robert G. Frank Jr, *Harvey and the Oxford Physiologists: Scientific Ideas and Social Interaction* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980]).

4 Spinoza, "Correspondence," 292.

5 Following Spinoza, I underscore the figure of synecdoche (*pars pro toto*), but the rhetorical layers extend to other figures as well. When it comes to blood, the use of the word "metaphor" is quite frequent, with little clarification as to the non-figurative term to which it allegedly relates. I return to this issue in my discussion of "word and thing" below.

6 "Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise" (1694) quoted in Kristin Elizabeth Gager, *Blood Ties and Fictive Ties: Adoption and Family Life in Early Modern France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 17.

7 In contemporary Israel, among other places, testifying to the endurance of conceptions of blood as community belonging,

> it is not surprising … to find some Israeli Karaite leaders arguing for their community's legitimacy and for the personal status of individual Karaites by advocating the use of "blood tests" to "prove" their ethnic purity, as if to say, "Our blood

> has been clean for thousands of years.… No foreign blood entered us.… We did not mix with the *goyim* [gentiles]."
>
> (Ruth Tsoffar, *The Stains of Culture: An Ethno-Reading of Karaite Jewish Women* [Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2006], 56)

For a benign rendering of the relation between nationalism, racism, blood, and "imagined communities," see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991), 141–154; for a more extended discussion, see Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London: Verso, 1992).

8 Franz Rosenzweig, *Der Stern der Erlösung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1988), 331–332. Rosenzweig was not a racist, for the simple reason that blood as a figure for the community precedes and exceeds "race thinking" – and it is no less troubling for that. Beginning with the equation of blood and procreation, as I will argue, it may in fact be more pervasive (see Haggai Dagan, "The Motif of Blood and Procreation in Franz Rosenzweig," *AJS Review* 26, 2 [2002], 241–249).

9 "Blood is characterized as that which animates the flesh," explains William Gilders, which is why the Hebrew, "*benafsho damo* [flesh with its life, its blood]" of Genesis 9:4 should not be translated as "*with* its lifeblood," which suggests "that a specific type of blood is at issue." Rather, blood and life are equated, one and the same. In other words, "blood really *is* life," and *not* a symbol of it. Whatever the explanation for this statement, it shows blood to be equalizing, not a principle of differentiation or distinction (W. K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* [Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004], 17–18). Following Gilders, I have less investment in the general import of this equation than in its significance as an instance, which supports a non-differentiating conception of blood.

10 Each of the terms invoked here, beginning with "family," could be (and, in fact, has often been) problematized, historically and otherwise. In my discussion, the designation of the group (and even its contours) is however less important than the place and function of blood in its description and/or constitution.

11 And compare:

> The blood, while circulating in the vessels, appears to the eye to be a homogeneous mass; but when it is passing in vessels so small as almost to separate its visible parts, and is viewed in a microscope, there is no appearance but that of globules moving in the vessels.
>
> (John Hunter, A Treatise on the Blood, Inflammation, and Gun-Shot Wounds)

The prefix of this book is a short account of the author's life, by his brother-in-law, Everard Home [London, 1794], 15. Based on information from English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. Gale Group. http://galenet.galegroup.com.arugula.cc.columbia.edu:2048/servlet/ECCO). Hunter goes on to make the original claim that blood is itself a living organ, a whole of sorts.

12 I am not suggesting that group distinctions only come about on the basis of blood, only that this particular and pervasive figure has a specific conceptual and historical reach which must be recognized, reflected upon, and thereby evaluated, on its own terms – as a whole, as it were.

13 One example among too many of the unhistorical complacency ruling the field of inquiry: "It is well known that the books of Ezra and Nehemiah are concerned, among other things, with mixed marriages and *the purity of blood of the Jewish community*" (John Rogerson, "Structural Anthropology and the Old Testament," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 33, 3 [1970], 497; emphasis added). Neither blood-based distinctions nor the idea of blood purity would be anything new, or so we are led to believe.

14 This phrase and much of what follows is inspired by the work of Claude Meillassoux,

Mythes et limites de l'anthropologies: Le sang et les mots (Lausanne: Editions Page Deux, 2001). There is a measure of irony in seemingly re-instituting a strict distinction between word and thing, although I would not want to claim that it is my own doing. Still, I assume the responsibility, for the sake of argument and to highlight, if not resolve, a number of problems with blood – not merely a *thing*, of course, and even less *one* thing.

15 Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society. 1780–1950* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

16 Leo Marx, "Technology: The Emergence of a Hazardous Concept," *Social Research* 64, 3 (Fall 1997), 965–988.

17 Williams, *Culture and Society*, xvii.

18 For one pertinent example among many, see Janet Adelman, "Her Father's Blood: Race, Conversion, and Nation in *The Merchant of Venice*," *Representations* 81 (Winter 2003), 4–30.

19 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

20 Ibid., 7; translation slightly modified.

21 Funkenstein, *Theology*, esp. 277–289; as I indicated above, Funkenstein also discusses Spinoza in this context.

22 Ibid., 298.

23 On the pervasiveness of a rhetoric of labor, production, and action, see Michel Foucault, *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique* (Paris: Gallimard, 1972), esp. part III, chapters 2 and 3; and see Werner Hamacher, "Afformative, Strike: Benjamin's 'Critique of Violence.'" trans. Dana Hollander in *Walter Benjamin's Philosophy: Destruction and Experience*, ed. Andrew Benjamin and Peter Osborne (London and New York: Routledge, 1994), 110–138; and see Avital Ronell, *Stupidity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002).

24 Among many examples, see Jean-Paul Roux, *Le sang. Mythes, symboles et réalités* (Paris: Fayard, 1988); Piero Camporesi, *Juice of Life: The Symbolic and Magic Significance of Blood*, trans. Robert R. Barr (New York: Continuum, 1995); Douglas Starr, *Blood: An Epic History of Medicine and Commerce* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002); Uli Linke, *Blood and Nation: The European Aesthetics of Race* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999); Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). More directly about the Jews, see Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Charlotte Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity: Rabbinic and Christian Reconstructions of Biblical Gender* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000); Claudine Fabre-Vassas, *The Singular Beast: Jews, Christians, and the Pig*, trans. Carol Volk (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Israel Jacob Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006).

25 For a forceful and pertinent formulation of the operation of the fact/interpretation distinction within historical discourse, see Marc Nichanian, *La perversion historiographique. Une perspective arménienne* (Paris: Lignes, 2005); a more contained reinscription of the fact/fiction distinction in the case of blood is succinctly described by Marc Shell:

> The commonplace Western view is that kinship by consanguinity is primary or real kinship. Anthropologists and sociologists usually have lumped together all other kinds as pseudo-kinship (or kinship by extension), which they then divide into subcategories such as figurative, fictive, artificial, and ritual.

There is, Shell continues, "a still unresolved debate about whether kinship is essentially a matter of biology … or sociology" (M. Shell, *The End of Kinship: 'Measure for Measure,' Incest and the Ideal of Universal Siblinghood* [Baltimore, MD: Johns

Hopkins University Press, 1988], 4). My question remains: what is it that made blood the *figure* of the non-fictive?

26 Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 7.

27 Frederick Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan*, edited with an introduction by Eleanor Burke Leacock (New York: International Publishers, 1972), 102–103; and see how Françoise Héritier, historical anthropologist, opens her important study by stating that "the study of kinship is that of the relations that unite human beings by way of ties grounded in consanguinity and affinity" (F. Héritiér, *L'exercice de la parenté* [Paris: Seuil, 1981], 13).

28 David M. Schneider, *A Critique of the Study of Kinship* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 53. Elsewhere Schneider summarizes the common view: "Kinship is the blood relationship, the fact of shared biogenetic substance" (*American Kinship: A Cultural Account* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980], 107).

29 For the classic formulation, see Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

30 Schneider, *A Critique*, 167.

31 It is remarkable (or not) to consider that Emile Benveniste, who reviewed the vocabulary of kinship among many Indo-European institutions, never attends to blood as a term to be explored or analyzed.

32 Marshall Sahlins makes a parallel argument, strangely exonerating anthropologists ("when sociobiologists use the term 'kinship' and mean by that 'blood' connections…") and offering birth as an alternative that must also be reconsidered: "in cultural practice it is birth [and not blood] that serves as the metaphor of kinship, not kinship as the expression of birth" (M. Sahlins, *The Use and Abuse of Biology: An Anthropological Critique of Sociobiology* [Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1976], 58).

33 Meillassoux, *Mythes et limites*, 49 (italics in original).

34 The problem goes further, as Latour recognizes: it is that the very distinction and distribution between nature and culture, the biological and the social, are not universal; minimally, they follow different mappings.

35 Daniel Boyarin, "The Bartered Word: Midrash and Symbolic Economy," in *Commentaries – Kommentare*, ed. Glenn W. Most (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 44, commenting on the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Nidda* 30a. For a discussion of an equally Galenic and quite similar description by the tenth-century 'Ali ibn al-'Abbas al-Majusi, see Danielle Jacquart and Claude Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine in the Middle Ages*, trans. Matthew Adamson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), 71–72.

36 Fonrobert, *Menstrual Purity*, 109.

37 L. Morris, "The Biblical Use of the Term 'Blood,'" *Journal of Theological Studies* 3, 2 (October 1952), 216–226. Morris points out that the phrase "flesh and blood" only appears in the New Testament (p. 223). Moreover, although the link between blood and life is well established, there is no ground to claim that either genealogy or reproduction is governed by blood. In fact, precisely because blood is equated with the life of creatures, blood should be thought of as the great equalizer – like death – rather than as a site or mark of distinction and separation. For more on biblical anthropology and its failures, see Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and see also *Sangue et antropologia biblica* (Rome: Centro Studi Sanguis Christi, 1980).

38 As Elizabeth Povinelli describes the effect of the work of lawyers and anthropologists (among others) on Australian aborigines,

> the spiritual and material relationship that Aboriginal men and women had to land, to the dead, and to the unborn was reduced *in the last instance* to the heterosexual reproduction of blood, *symbolically* narrowed and demarcated by the patrilineal totem.
>
> (E. A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition: Indigenous Alterities and the Making of Australian Multiculturalism* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002], 209; italics in the original)

Addressing conceptions of kinship (and the different realms it covers when "translated"), the anthropologist acknowledges that this is "what we summarize as blood" (p. 248). One can therefore ask who speaks when the historian writes about medieval times that

> if a man married a woman of higher station, the blood of his lineage could be irrigated by that of kings, princes, and counts. This periodic infusion of good blood not only rejuvenated the family's nobility but ensured the cohesion of the dominant class
>
> (Dominique Barthélemy, "Kinship," trans. Arthur Goldhammer in *A History of Private Life: Revelations of the Medieval World*, ed. Georges Duby [Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1988], 120).

39 If I may be allowed at this point to reveal (or at least announce) a few of my unimportant cards, I will say this: race science, or the medical grounds for the establishment of what Michel Foucault has called the "biopolitical," is quite a latecomer among the conditions that rendered biopower possible – and real.

40 Even an astute historian of race might thus reduce blood to biology rather than recognize biology as a limited moment in a much larger hematology (see Arlette Jouanna, *Ordre social. Mythes et hierarchies dans la France du XVIe siècle* [Paris: Hachette, 1977], e.g., 42).

41 As M. Schrenk points out, "hematology is the scientific teachings [*Lehre*] on blood," it is a tradition that consists in the study of blood – blood as "empirical fact," as it were ("Blultkulte und Blutsymbolik," in *Einführung in die Geschichte der Hämatologie*, ed. K. G. von Boroviczény *et al.* [Stuttgart: Georg Thieme Verlag, 1974], 1). I take the term in a wider sense, which would include the history of hematology, everything that would account for the "genesis and development" of blood as a fact – empirical, scientific, and more (see Ludwig Fleck, *Genesis and Development of a Scientific Fact*, trans. Fred Bradley and Thaddeus J. Trenn [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979]). Fleck's book is an essential moment in the history of blood, of course, most particularly of "syphilitic blood." It describes the simultaneous generalization and specialization that increasingly frames the concept of blood as the operation of "socio-cogitative forces" (p. 23), and enables us to understand hematology as the fabric of which Latour speaks, of the historical development of blood as one among a number of "somewhat hazy proto-ideas" about which Fleck writes that they "existed long before any scientific proofs were available and were supported in different ways throughout the intervening period until they received a modern expression" (p. 24). I thank Mario Biagioli for pointing me to Fleck's work.

42 The blood of circumcision does make a covenant, and by extension it produces community, and it is predicated on a distinction between male and female, but it is not blood that thereby distinguishes between the community and its others. Besides, in this case, blood is a *substitute* for the "natural" connection between mother and child (see Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism*, 162–194; and Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood*).

43 I am referring to Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London and New York: Ark Paperbacks, 1984).

44 Petar Ramadanovic, "Antigone's Kind: The Way of Blood in Psychoanalysis," *Umbr(a): A Journal of the Unconscious* (2004), 173; and see also Nicole Loraux, "La guerre dans la famille," in *CLIO, Histoire, Femmes et Sociétés* 5 (1997), esp. 30–33.

45 Obviously, I do not mean to suggest that murder has not shown itself to be an essential element of fraternity, only that fraternity cannot be reduced to it, much as kinship cannot be reduced to blood, not even as origin or ground. Incidentally, Genesis has God refer twice to Abel's blood when castigating Cain. Each time, Abel's blood is referred to as "your brother's blood." There is not the slightest suggestion that this could be the same blood as Cain's, that the brothers would be "sharing" blood in any way.

46 Nicole Loraux seems to oscillate when she describes the blood of kinship along with the blood of murder with one Greek phrase: "with *haima homaimon* (the murder of a consanguine relative; literally, blood of the same blood)" (Loraux, "La guerre dans la famille," 26). A few lines later, Loraux explains that "*haima* is the name of spilled blood" (p. 27), which testifies to a specific "kind" of kinship, *emphylion haima* (*phylon*, "a semantic specter that goes from 'race' to 'tribe' via lineage and all the forms of the group insofar as it thinks its closure as a natural given") (ibid.). She then makes explicit the impossibility of disentangling blood from murder in the Greek texts (pp. 30–32). Ultimately, however, Loraux translates *syngeneia* – the result of a common *genos* – as *consanguinitas*, "kinship by blood, in other words, the most natural of all relations, which need not be codified in order to be lived in the immediacy of daily existence" (p. 49, and see p. 54 n. 108 and 61). Blood is fully naturalized, it is *made* natural, against all evidence – and *not* by the Greeks.

47 Giulia Sissa, "Subtle Bodies," trans. Genevieve Lloyd, in *Fragments for a History of the Human Body*, ed. Michel Feher (New York: Zone Books, 1989), vol. 3, 140; in the same volume, Françoise Héritier-Augé elaborates on "Semen and Blood: Some Ancient Theories Concerning Their Genesis and Relationship," trans. Tina Jolas,159–175; finally, for a discussion of the debate about, and the late (medieval) qualified acceptance of, hematogenic views, see Jacquart and Thomasset, *Sexuality and Medicine*. Gianna Pomata also alludes to that long debate in "Blood Ties and Semen Ties: Consanguinity and Agnation in Roman Law," in *Gender, Kinship, Power: A Comparative and Interdisciplinary History*, ed. Mary Jo Maynes *et al.* (New York and London: Routledge, 1996), 43–64.

48 Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex: Body and Gender from the Greeks to Freud* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990), 41.

49 Ibid., 42, quoting Aristotle's *Generation of Animals*. Laqueur is relying on Sissa's impressive reading of Aristotle in her "Subtle Bodies." Sissa explains that, for Aristotle, the semen has nothing to do with blood or with any other matter. To the extent that it affects matter, semen does so by dissolving and evaporating. Like "fig juice that sets and curdles milk … it does not remain as a part of the bulk that is set and curdles" (Sissa, "Subtle Bodies," 140; quoting Aristotle). Semen, as opposed to blood, is neither part nor whole.

50 It is the paucity of a critical reflection that distinguishes between blood and kinship, blood and community (familial or ethnic), that makes me skeptical of the otherwise massive description of Greek kinship as "blood-based" even in the work of those who are overturning so many of our assumptions about ethnicity, race, and religion (e.g., Nicole Loraux; Denise Kimber Buell, *Why This New Race? Ethnic Reasoning in Early Christianity* [New York: Columbia University Press, 2005], 37–38).

51 Pomata, "Blood Ties," 44–45.

52 Ibid., 51.

53 Ibid., 52.

54 In her *Wonderful Blood*, Carolyn Walker Bynum describes the endurance and shifts of the gendered dimension of blood, of "blood as engendering and gendered" (*Wonderful Blood: Theology and Practice in Late Medieval Northern Germany and Beyond* [Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007], 159). Hence "the fact that blood as kinship or descent is relatively rare in [medieval] texts is significant and lends support to recent arguments that older scholarship overemphasized lineage in the later Middle Ages" (p. 157). More than significant, however, and indeed "crucial" is the fact that "the blood from which the individual is constituted is gendered female; the body *is* the mother's blood" (p. 158).

55 Pomata, "Blood Ties," 59.

56 Blake Leyerle, "Blood is Seed," *Journal of Religion* 81, 1 (January 2001), 26–48; Leyerle mentions how Tertullian draws on and argues with "Jewish rites and thought," embryology, theology and soteriology, genealogy and kinship, indeed, "Christian

kinship" (although by this, indeed, by blood, Tertullian "understands a spiritual rather than physical filiation" [p. 41]).

57 Barthélemy, "Kinship," 124. Barthélemy and others have taken issue with the periodization of medieval practices of kinship and lineage that was proposed by historians such as Marc Bloch, Georges Duby and others. It should be obvious that I am not arguing that there was a revolution or a renaissance, only that blood spread across numerous "domains" and collectives in Western Christendom.

58 Pomata, "Blood Ties," 59–60; and see also E. Champeaux, "*Jus Sanguinis.* Trois façons de calculer la parenté au Moyen Âge," *Revue historique de droit français et étranger*, quatrième série, douzième année (1933), 241–290. On Isidore in this context, see also Laqueur, *Making Sex*, 55–56.

59 Before Ernst Kantorowicz, Henri de Lubac meticulously documented this transformation in his magisterial *Corpus Mysticum. L'eucharistie et l'Église au Moyen Age* (Paris: Aubier, 1949). (Incidentally, the very phrase "mystical body [*corpus mysticum*]" only dates from the fourteenth century.) For a summary of Lubac on this particular point, see Ernst Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies: A Study in Medieval Political Theology* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 196. The transformation is linked to the practices and debates surrounding the Eucharist (see Rubin, *Corpus Christi*).

60 The notion of "royal blood" also emerges at this time, along with the very notion of a blood nobility; see Kantorowicz, *The King's Two Bodies*, 330ff. and see also Joseph Morsel, "Inventing a Social Category: The Sociogenesis of the Nobility at the End of the Middle Ages," trans. Pamela Selwyn in *Ordering Medieval Society: Perspectives on Intellectual and Practical Modes of Shaping Social Relations*, ed. Bernhard Jussen (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001), 200–240; André Devyver, *Le sang épuré: Les préjugés de race chez les gentilshommes français de l'Ancien Régime (1560–1720)* (Brussels: Editions de l'université de Bruxelles, 1973).

61 For some relevant discussions of adoption, see Bernhard Jussen, *Spiritual Kinship as Social Practice: Godparenthood and Adoption in the Early Middle Ages*, trans. Pamela Selwyn (Newark: University of Delaware Press; London and Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 2000) and Kristin Elizabeth Gager, *Blood Ties and Fictive Ties: Adoption and Family Life in Early Modern France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996).

62 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, 258. I take Bynum to be exemplary not only because of the thoroughness and erudition of her work, but also because, as the most recent, her work embraces a wide range of novel approaches to the question of blood in general, and of blood in Christianity in particular.

63 Bynum's earlier work did much to contribute to that growth, as did Miri Rubin and others.

64 Bynum, *Wonderful Blood*, xvii. Bynum later explains that "I have not in my book attempted to consider secular literature" (271 n. 114).

65 Ibid., 139; quoting Adelheid Langmann.

66 On these and additional works related to Jews and blood, see note 24.

67 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 149. Ann L. Stoler reiterates the notion that there occurred a "conversion of the idea of race from an aristocratic political weapon into its more pervasive bourgeois form" (*Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's* History of Sexuality *and the Colonial Order of Things* [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995], 58). But what was it that made the equation between class and blood?

68 Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1: *An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 124.

69 Ibid., 148.

70 Foucault will express similar reservations on the linearity and abruptness of another transformation or "rupture," the advent of "the age of punitive sobriety," which is also the slow disappearance of blood ("body and blood leave the scene") (M. Foucault,

Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison [Paris: Gallimard, 1975], 20, 22). There, too, there are delays and reversals, different temporalities.

71 Jean-Paul Roux, *Le sang: Mythes, symboles et réalités* (Paris: Fayard, 1988), 301.

72 I elaborate this argument in my "Christians and Money (the Economic Enemy)," *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network* 12, 4 (2005), 497–520.

73 Miri Rubin, "Blood: Sacrifice and Redemption in Christian Iconography," in *Blood: Art, Power, Politics and Pathology*, ed. James M. Bradburne (Munich and London: Prestel, 2001), 97–98.

74 Consider that Carolyn Walker Bynum focuses on the fifteenth century (the "statutes on the purity of blood" were first formulated in 1449) and on Christ's pure and redeeming blood, but never once mentions the issue of "the purity of blood." I have explored these issues in my "Lines of Blood: *Limpieza de Sangre* as Political Theology" in *Blood in History and Blood Histories*, ed. Mariacarla Gadebusch Bondio, Micrologus' Library 13 (Florence: Sismel – Edizioni del Galluzzo, 2005), 119–136.

75 That is why it is by no means sufficient (if nonetheless important and innovative) to link "religion and the invention of racism" if "religion" is only – not to mention, strangely – seen as operating in the Iberian peninsula alone (e.g., George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002], 17–47; and see also the important remarks made by Henry Goldschmidt in his "Introduction" to *Race, Nation, and Religion in the Americas*, ed. Henry Goldschmidt and Elizabeth McAlister [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004], 3–31).

76 Spinoza, "Correspondence," 291.

77 See my "Lines of Blood," 123.

78 In his history of the idea of race, Ivan Hannaford leaves intact the idea that "kith and kin" are constituted as a "blood relationship" (going so far as to project it onto the ancient Greeks and Romans). But the "idea" of kinship as blood erases the history of blood as the (contingent, but Christian) figure and ground of the idea of community, and by extension, of nation and race. Incidentally, it is important to recall with Pomata that the legal notion of *jus sanguinis* which determines belonging, along with its alternative, *jus solis*, have little in common with their deployment in Roman law (Pomata, "Blood Ties"). Modern notions of citizenship find their sources in Christian conceptions of community, not in Greek medicine or Roman law, and certainly not in the biblical imagination.

79 Nowhere, perhaps, is the shift I have been trying to describe more visible than in the difference found in translations of the biblical text, in the distance that separates the Vulgate from Luther, and filiation from blood. Indeed, whereas Jerome's Latin for Acts 17:26 has "fecitque ex uno omne genus hominum inhabitare super universam faciem terrae," Luther's German offers: "Und er hat gemacht, daß von einem Blut aller Menschen Geschlechter auf dem ganzen Erdboden wohnen." The difference between old and new (between Latin and German) is precisely reversed in the notes of the NRSV ("From one ancestor he made all nations to inhabit the whole earth"), which attribute to "ancient authorities" the more recent variant "from one blood" (and see the King James version: "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth").

80 Spinoza, "Correspondence," 292.

81 Ibid. (italics added).

82 G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 100 (italics in the original).

4 "By the blood that you shed you are guilty"

Perspectives on female blood in Leviticus and Ezekiel

Elizabeth W. Goldstein

Introduction

The priestly[1] texts of Leviticus and the prophetic writings of Ezekiel are clear: female blood pollutes. However, both the rationale for the pollution and its ramifications differ in the two sources. In this chapter I argue that while Ezekiel's depiction of female blood may be rooted in priestly ideas, his metaphor of Jerusalem as a menstruant is a significant step beyond the priestly concerns of Leviticus. Specifically, I show how Ezekiel manipulates the "blood language" of the priestly writer in order to isolate one aspect of the priestly purity system, the impurity of female uterine blood. In so doing, the prophetic writer systematically transforms this single link in a long chain of established purity laws into a symbol for the greatest of all biblical evils: apostasy and the betrayal of Yahweh's covenant.

Although considerable debate remains concerning the date of the portions of the Pentateuch ascribed to the priestly writer, there is growing consensus that the biblical Hebrew found therein predates the Hebrew of Ezekiel, a book we can firmly place in the exilic period (between 586/7 and 539 BCE).[2] Unsurprisingly, given his priestly lineage, Ezekiel draws from priestly ideas and language (Ezekiel 1:3). In her 2002 work, Risa Levitt Kohn offers 97 terms that appear in priestly writing, both P and H,[3] and in Ezekiel, and analyzes their relationship to one another.[4] Levitt Kohn shows that Ezekiel is not just dependent upon knowledge of priestly material but actually adopts phraseology from his predecessors. To prove this linear development, she demonstrates several literary mechanisms Ezekiel employs when he quotes P and H. One of these mechanisms Levitt Kohn calls "reversals," in which Ezekiel uses the same expression found in P but in exactly the opposite way.[5] For example, the priestly writer utilizes the phrase קְהַל עַמִּים (assembly of nations; Genesis 28:3; 35:9; 48:4) to convey the great blessing of fertility God bestowed on the Patriarchs. However, in Ezekiel 23:24 and 32:3, the very same phrase is used by the prophet to describe enemy nations seeking to eradicate Israel.[6] Levitt Kohn says, "it is virtually impossible to imagine that the Priestly writer would have composed Israelite history by transforming images of Israel's apostasy and subsequent downfall from Ezekiel into images conveying exceptional covenant and unique relationship between Israel and Yahweh."[7] Rather, Levitt Kohn suggests, it is more likely that Ezekiel

"twisted, poeticized, disarticulated and reconstituted" P "to suit his personal agenda and the current circumstances of his audience."[8] I will now argue that Ezekiel's depiction of female blood is yet another example of the prophet engaging in this kind of linguistic and ideological manipulation.

The Priestly Writer, part I

First, let us examine the notion of female blood in the context of the priestly system. Female blood is mentioned in four different places in Leviticus: Leviticus 12: the case of the parturient, the woman who bleeds after giving birth; Leviticus 15: normal situations of menstruation and situations of abnormal blood flow; and Leviticus 18 and 20: laws specifically against sex with a menstruating woman. According to Leviticus 12, a parturient must bring two offerings, a חַטָּאת (sin or purification offering) and an עֹלָה (burnt offering) at the cessation of her uncleanness (12:6). One might think that a woman who has just given birth is accountable for her impurity because she is required to offer a חַטָּאת sacrifice, usually translated as "sin-offering." The function of the חַטָּאת has ignited much debate, particularly over whether it is expiatory or purificatory. If bringing a חַטָּאת only serves to purify the impure person, the Priestly writer would not hold him or her accountable. If, on the other hand, the function of the חַטָּאת is expiatory, then we must assume that P confers guilt upon the person because of his or her defilement. To summarize much scholarship on the issue, many now agree that, based on linguistic and contextual evidence, the function of a חַטָּאת is more often purificatory, although in certain situations the function is also expiatory.[9] The case of the parturient is one of the classical examples of the חַטָּאת serving only to purify the individual. Thus, while the blood of birth pollutes the sanctuary and the parturient herself we must conclude that P does not impute any guilt to the woman on account of her blood.[10]

Since Leviticus 15 requires that the menstruant also offer a חַטָּאת we can assume P's attitude toward the menstruant is the same as that of the parturient. Many have noticed that Leviticus 15, which discusses the bodily impurities of both men and women, has a chiastic structure.[11] This literary structure suggests that women are purposefully not singled out for their impure blood. In one of the more egalitarian statements in the Torah, Leviticus 15 (vv. 32–33) concludes as follows:

זֹאת תּוֹרַת הַזָּב וַאֲשֶׁר תֵּצֵא מִמֶּנּוּ שִׁכְבַת־זֶרַע
לְטָמְאָה־בָהּ: וְהַדָּוָה בְנִדָּתָהּ וְהַזָּב אֶת־זוֹבוֹ לַזָּכָר
וְלַנְּקֵבָה וּלְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב עִם־טְמֵאָה:

> This is the teaching for the man who has an unhealthy issue and for the man who has a seminal emission (and) has become impure through them. And for the one who has become sick in her menstruation and, whether male or female, (this is the law for) the one who has an unhealthy issue, and for any man who lies with a woman bearing these impurities.

The priestly writer, part II

The Holiness legislation (Leviticus 17–26), on the other hand, contains more foreboding language. For many generations scholars have noticed that the overall tone with regard to purity laws in P is quite different than in the Holiness Code (H). While the purity laws in P primarily affect the relationship between people and the sanctuary, H expands the laws so that breaking some ethical and covenantal statutes renders the entire Land of Israel impure.[12] H was likely written to update both the contents of the earlier priestly laws as well as to add rationales to the laws in certain circumstances.[13] With regard to the violation of sexual intercourse during menstruation, both Leviticus 18 (vv. 19, 29) and 20:18 promise כרת, a cutting off from the people of Israel for both the negligent man and his female partner. Debate exists about what it means to be "cut off," but it most likely refers to premature death and/or the annihilation of one's lineage.[14]

To summarize the priestly view on these matters: In Leviticus 12 and 15, both menstrual blood and the blood of the parturient contaminate the woman herself as well as anyone who comes into contact with her. The reason for this contamination is not stated directly, although many have tried to offer anthropological interpretations.[15] Whatever the rationale, the issue of sin is not at stake according to P. An individual woman is responsible for ridding herself of menstrual and lochial contamination through cleansing rituals, one of which is offering the same sacrifices as a man who is temporarily contaminated. In the latter part of Leviticus the repercussions for having menstrual sex are severe: כרת according to 18:29 and being spewed out by the land according to 20:22. Leviticus 18:29 also refers to menstrual sex as a תּוֹעֵבָה, an abomination. However, it is important to note that while the act of sex with a menstruant is called an abomination, no condemnation of the woman or her blood is expressed implicitly or explicitly within these laws.

Ezekiel and the move to metaphor

In contrast to the priestly authors' attitude that female blood merely pollutes, the author of Ezekiel explicitly equates female blood with immorality. There are three mechanisms that Ezekiel uses to connect female blood with corruption. First, he plays on the word דָּמִים, the plural of the Hebrew word for blood. Building on priestly terminology for female blood, Ezekiel combines several different meanings of the word דָּמִים to create both good poetry and degrading images of female blood. Second, he blurs the distinction between different types of female blood. While the writers of Leviticus are careful to distinguish the blood of the parturient, the blood of the menstruant, the abnormal blood flow, and the act of sex with a menstruant, the prophetic writer goes out of his way to blur these distinctions by creating a monolithic picture of a woman and her impure blood; then, he equates that picture with the sin of covenant betrayal. The third way Ezekiel connects female blood with immorality is by superimposing the images of the bleeding woman and the bloody city of Jerusalem onto each other.

I will elaborate on each of these three points. First, analysis of the Hebrew plural, דָּמִים, demonstrates that it never refers to the mere substance of blood, but rather to excessive amounts of blood such as spilt blood of the slain or female uterine blood. דָּמִים also has the meaning "bloodguilt," a status conferred on the living relative of one who was unlawfully killed; this relative must shed the blood of the murderer lest the land uncover the crime and Yahweh himself avenge the death (Genesis 4:10–11; Numbers 35:33; Isaiah 26:21). In his prophecies concerning the city of Jerusalem, Ezekiel cleverly combines three meanings of דָּמִים: the shedding of female uterine blood, the spilt blood of the slain, and bloodguilt. In expressing the metaphor of sinful Jerusalem, often depicted as a bleeding woman, the prophet employs the phrase "עִיר הַדָּמִים," bloody city, three times (22:2; 24:6, 9).[16] Chapter 22:2–4a states:

2 וְאַתָּה בֶן־אָדָם הֲתִשְׁפֹּט הֲתִשְׁפֹּט אֶת־עִיר הַדָּמִים וְהוֹדַעְתָּהּ אֵת
כָּל־תּוֹעֲבוֹתֶיהָ: 3 וְאָמַרְתָּ כֹּה אָמַר אֲדֹנָי יְהוִה עִיר שֹׁפֶכֶת דָּם בְּתוֹכָהּ לָבוֹא עִתָּהּ וְעָשְׂתָה
גִלּוּלִים עָלֶיהָ לְטָמְאָה: 4 בְּדָמֵךְ אֲשֶׁר־שָׁפַכְתְּ אָשַׁמְתְּ וּבְגִלּוּלַיִךְ אֲשֶׁר־עָשִׂית טָמֵאת וַתַּקְרִיבִי
יָמַיִךְ וַתָּבוֹא עַד־שְׁנוֹתָיִךְ עַל־כֵּן נְתַתִּיךְ חֶרְפָּה לַגּוֹיִם וְקָלְסָה לְכָל־הָאֲרָצוֹת: 5 הַקְּרֹבוֹת
וְהָרְחֹקוֹת מִמֵּךְ יִתְקַלְּסוּ־בָךְ טְמֵאַת הַשֵּׁם רַבַּת הַמְּהוּמָה: 6 הִנֵּה נְשִׂיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ לִזְרֹעוֹ
הָיוּ בָךְ לְמַעַן שְׁפָךְ־דָּם:

> And now son of man, will you judge the bloodguilty city and make known to her all of her abominations? And you shall say, thus says the Lord Yahweh, a city who sheds blood in her midst has come into her time, and makes idols upon herself to defile herself. For the blood that you shed, you are guilty, and for the idols that you made, you are defiled.

The phrase "דָּמִים" expresses several things about the city. I translate דָּמִים here as "bloodguilty" since it is clear that the tone is accusatory. But the city is also personified as a woman who bleeds.[17] In order to comprehend the full impact of the imagery we must be familiar with the other meanings of דָּמִים. Notice the threefold meaning of דָּמִים employed by the prophetic writer: the woman/city menstruates; the city has within it murderers who have spilt blood, thus causing the city to contain excessive amounts of blood; and lastly, the city has incurred bloodguilt for the crime. By linking menstrual blood with bloodguilt, the prophet is explicit in his condemnation of female blood. In subsequent verses he also condemns the woman/city for permitting the following immoral behaviors: oppression of the widow (22:7), partaking of food at unofficial sanctuaries (22:9), incest (22:10–11), taking a menstruating woman for sexual intercourse (22:10),[18] spreading vicious gossip (22:9), treating holy items disdainfully, usury (22:12), and profaning the Sabbath (22:8). The bleeding woman is the symbol for everything that is wrong with Israel!

"עִיר הַדָּמִים" occurs twice more in the sign prophecies of chapter 24. Here God commands Ezekiel to create a bloody mixture of animal flesh and bones, with a layer of חֶלְאָה, rust or pot scum, to represent the blood of the city. "Woe to the bloody city, to the pot whose filth is in her, whose filth has not gone out of her;

bring it out piece by piece; let no lot fall upon it" (Ezekiel 24:6). חֶלְאָה is an extremely uncommon root which means diseased in 2 Chronicles 16:12. Some suggest the meaning rust in Ezekiel 24 because of the context of boiling meat, but clearly it is something of a foul sort. Again, the city is addressed in the feminine, and she is held accountable for the blood that is shed within her. The sign of the meat is powerful since choice meat is usually chosen for temple sacrifice, but here its pieces are described as putrid. Our focus is on the pot scum and not the choice meat; the image of female blood helps draw attention to the very opposite of holy service. Again, Ezekiel says, "Woe to the city of bloodguilt," and this time he is instructed to set the empty pot upon the fire so that just the bottom filth is burned. Ezekiel proclaims, "In your impurity is wickedness; because I have cleansed you and you were not cleansed from your impurity, you will not be cleansed any further until I have set my anger upon you" (24:13). The impurities of Israel, their cultic sins and their betrayal of Yahweh are equated here with menstrual blood which is further degraded by calling it חֶלְאָה, filth.

The second mechanism Ezekiel employs to connect female blood with sin is to blur the different kinds of female blood. We see this most clearly in the story of the foundling in chapter 16, in which Ezekiel first establishes the equation between female blood and covenant betrayal. The young baby girl is a symbol of young Jerusalem, and Yahweh finds her wallowing in the blood of her mother. Born in Canaan, the female child is the daughter of a Hittite mother and an Amorite father, parents depicted as Israel's early mythic rivals (v. 3).[19] These parents neglected their duty to clean the child of the blood of birth and even to sever the umbilical cord (v. 4). Yahweh finds the child dying alone in a field and in such a horrid state that not even a passerby would be enticed to help (v. 5). The text states (v. 6):

וָאֶעֱבֹר עָלַיִךְ וָאֶרְאֵךְ מִתְבּוֹסֶסֶת בְּדָמַיִךְ וָאֹמַר לָךְ
בְּדָמַיִךְ חֲיִי וָאֹמַר לָךְ בְּדָמַיִךְ חֲיִי׃

> And I passed by you wallowing in your blood, and I said to you, "in spite of your blood live," and I said to you, "in spite of your blood live."[20]

Though the overall sense of the verse is positive in that the father/husband, Yahweh, rescues a foundling, it is essential to understand that the blood on the child is impure and that she is rescued in spite of being covered in blood. For centuries, Jews have interpreted this verse in a powerful way. The ancient rabbis included Ezekiel 16:6 in the *brit milah* ceremony, transforming the words, "in your blood live," into a powerful message about Jewish men and the centrality of the covenantal rite of circumcision. We must be careful, however, to read this verse accurately in its original, biblical context. The blood upon the child is the lochial blood of her mother and it is impure. Interestingly, there is no biblical law which states that babies themselves become ritually defiled when they are born. The language of neglect (concerning the unwashed blood, v. 4) and loathing (בְּגֹעַל, v. 5) that describes the state of the child suggests something morally

offensive about this blood.[21] As we will see, Ezekiel employs the language of טֻמְאָה, impurity, in significantly more cases of moral condemnation than in reference to physical defilement.[22] Although Ezekiel is familiar with Leviticus 12, he needs the blood to bear the quality of moral impurity in order to proceed successfully with the development of his metaphor.

Interestingly, Yahweh does not wash the blood from the girl until verse 9, when the child is no longer a baby but a young woman described explicitly as having fully formed breasts and pubic hair. The nature of the blood in verse 9 is ambiguous. Since the girl is older now, menstrual blood is a strong possibility. Moshe Greenberg suggests leftover lochial blood, while others claim it is blood from the hymen after the girl's first intercourse (described in the previous verse).[23] I suggest that the exact nature of the blood is not important to the prophetic writer. The power of the metaphor is created simply by the fact that it is female blood and that it pollutes. Deborah Klee finds that the image of Yahweh touching this blood in an act of cleansing is a very positive depiction of female blood on the part of the prophetic author.[24] I would disagree. The prophetic author, though familiar with levitical law, is not concerned with demonstrating that formal priestly policies are being fulfilled. In the process of proclaiming the guilt of the people of Israel, Ezekiel is making a powerful statement about the impurity of female blood. We cannot be sure whether Yahweh, the husband, is washing off lochial blood, menstrual blood, or blood of the hymen (cf. Ezekiel 16:22). Blood from the hymen is not even ritually impure according to the Pentateuch. By blurring the distinctions between the different kinds of female blood, Ezekiel groups together all female blood as impure and equates all female blood with violation of the covenant.

When the child shows signs of sexual maturity, Yahweh takes her in marriage and then bestows material adornments upon her. Soon after, she begins to sexually pursue other lovers to the horror of her metaphorical husband. As the woman pays more and more attention to foreign men and foreign worship, her husband attempts to dominate the situation through harsh language focused on the woman's body and sexuality. Ultimately, the woman is to be judged and stoned, and her houses burnt (vv. 40–42). In verses 36–37, Ezekiel says,

> Thus says Yahweh, because your copper was poured out and your nakedness exposed through harlotry with your lovers and with all of your idols of abomination and because of your children's blood that you gave to them, (37) I will gather all of your lovers whom you have taken pleasure in, whom you have loved and whom you have hated and I will gather them around you and reveal your nakedness to them and they will see all of your nakedness.

One of the reasons that the metaphor of the woman/city works in such a striking way is that the sexual activity of women in ancient Israel was primarily dictated by men. It is not surprising, then, when in one instance the prophetic writer crosses the boundaries of metaphor into stark reality. Ezekiel 23 is the parable of the two adulterous sisters, Oholah (Israel) and Ohalibah (Judah). After the judgment

against the two sisters, the prophet proclaims, "I will cause wickedness to cease from the land and all women will be instructed thus, so that they will not do according to your wickedness" (Ezekiel 23:48). The wickedness refers to both harlotry and adultery. Here the prophet emerges from his carefully constructed metaphorical cosmos and announces that real women are at fault. The sexuality of the women of Israel is no longer "just" a vehicle for a metaphor about sinful Israel. Ezekiel attributes the downfall of the people of Israel to women in some specific way which is not fully articulated. Andrew Mein suggests that this warning against promiscuity is, in reality, a warning against marrying foreign men. He admits his interpretation does not correspond to any explicit warning against marriage with outsiders in Ezekiel. Mein proposes, nevertheless, that intermarriage undermines the sharp boundary between Israel and the outside world as does the uncleanness and uncontrollability of menstrual blood.[25] It is true that Ezekiel's prophecies are directed to men and it is the women's fathers who would be marrying them to outsiders. Perhaps, the depiction of unruly women who meet a violent end would propel fathers to rein in and redirect the sexuality of their daughters. Once the prophet moves away from metaphor and demonstrates how he wishes his parable to be understood, we can be certain he is not merely utilizing figurative language to better the behavior of men. Ezekiel is pronouncing on the matter of women.

The third way that Ezekiel connects sin with female blood is by superimposing the image of female blood upon images of the war-torn city. In the expression: "שֹׁפֶךְ דָּם" the shedding of blood, it is unclear whether Ezekiel is referring to female blood or the act of shedding blood (16:38; 23:45).[26] In 16:38 he says "I will judge you as women who commit adultery and who shed blood." Is he speaking about the murderers in the city or about women who menstruate? The prophet does not say, "I will judge you as those who serve idols and shed blood." He purposefully confuses the metaphor with the reality, creating a clear picture of a menstruating woman. In 23:45, the combination of images is even more explicit: "And righteous men, they will judge them; judgment for adulterous women and females who shed blood because they are adulteresses and blood is on their hands." By combining the image of the menstruating woman with the city of Jerusalem, the reader or listener cannot know with certainty to which the prophet is referring. Female blood is the symbol through which the nation falls out of relationship with Yahweh. We find another example of superimposed images in 24:7–8; the female city is critiqued for leaving blood exposed and not covering it.

> Because her blood was in her midst; she set it on the exposed face of the rock, she did not pour it out on the ground in order to cover it with dust. To cause the anger of vengeance to go forth, I have set her blood on the exposed face of the rock to remain uncovered.

Literally, deaths were not properly avenged and bloodguilt ensues. This theme of exposed blood is reminiscent of God's harsh words to Cain, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood calls to me from the ground." However,

the exposing of female blood also comes to mind; the priestly writer states explicitly in Leviticus 20:18,

> And if a man has sex with a menstruating woman and he reveals her nakedness, he causes her source to be uncovered and she reveals the source of her blood, then the two of them will be cut off from their people.

Because the city is depicted as female and the uncovered blood "belongs" to her, the image of menstrual blood is superimposed on the spilt blood shed in the city. While Leviticus 20:18, the priestly text, only discusses the blood in the context of the overall sin of menstrual sex, Ezekiel subtly changes the focus from the sin of menstrual sex to shedding menstrual blood.

Ezekiel also superimposes the image of the bloody woman and the bloody city by intentionally confusing moral impurity with ritual impurity.[27] Clearly, Ezekiel writes more about moral purity: Of the 39 times the word טָמֵא (impurity) is used in the Book of Ezekiel, only five of them refer to physical impurities as put forth by Leviticus 1–17. The remaining occurrences pertain largely to idolatry and a few to other infractions such as the desecration of Yahweh's name. In one instance Ezekiel specifically equates the defilement of idolatry, which is a moral infraction, with menstrual blood, a ritual one. Ezekiel 36:17 states:

בֶּן־אָדָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל יֹשְׁבִים עַל־אַדְמָתָם וַיְטַמְּאוּ
אוֹתָהּ בְּדַרְכָּם וּבַעֲלִילוֹתָם כְּטֻמְאַת הַנִּדָּה הָיְתָה דַרְכָּם
לְפָנָי׃

> Son of man, when the house of Israel lived on their land and defiled it with their behavior and through their actions, their ways were before me like the pollution of a menstruant.

The impurity described in this passage is two-fold: "and defiled it with their behavior" falls under the category of moral impurity evidenced in the Holiness Code (Leviticus 17–26), while "like the impurity of a menstruant" is drawn from the violation of a ritual law. By equating the pollution of menstrual blood, a ritual violation that can easily be rectified, with moral infractions which carry much greater repercussions, the writer initiates a new trend in conceptions of female impurity which will extend well beyond his lifetime.[28]

With logic and ease, Ezekiel could have created figurative language by drawing images from the sin of sex with a menstruant. In this way, he would link two moral infractions. Instead, he chose a small, ritual violation, menstrual bleeding, to expose the sin of Israel, a sin so great it caused the people to be thrown out of their land. This is another example of Ezekiel's relying on the work of the priestly writers but using the laws loosely in order to create his own interpretation of events. In doing so, however, Ezekiel is far more misogynistic in his depiction of women and their blood than were the priestly writers in an earlier generation. Not only are his views more radical than Leviticus, but they

are more vilifying than other prophets such as Hosea (2), Isaiah (1) and Jeremiah (2–3), who also employ the metaphor of the unfaithful wife to speak about the disintegrating relationship between Jerusalem and Yahweh.[29] Referring to the story of the foundling in Ezekiel 16, Julie Galambush comments,

> Ezekiel exploits fully the unique ability of the female body to exhibit not only the defilement of adultery but also every type of blood pollution, from menstruation to childbirth to murder … At birth she is left in the unclean blood of her mother's womb [16:6]. Upon reaching puberty, she apparently remains in the impurity of her unwashed menstrual blood, until washed by her husband [16:9]. Finally, she incurs bloodguilt through the murder of her own children … [16:36]. None of the images of the bloody woman has direct precedent in earlier prophetic texts; the insistent focus on the bloody pollution of Jerusalem's body is distinctive to Ezekiel.[30]

Ezekiel has blurred the lines between bleeding vaginally, which according to Leviticus is not a sin, and menstrual sex, which is indeed a sin (cf. Leviticus 18:19; 20:18).[31]

The last instance of superimposing images pertains particularly to the pairing of idolatry and menstrual blood. In 16:38 the prophet says, "I will judge you with judgments that suit adulterous women and those who shed blood." In fact, this pairing can be found explicitly at least eight times.[32] What exactly did an audience hear when the prophet would say to the woman/city, for example, "because you menstruated and you committed adultery"? The obvious answer is that blood conveys Ezekiel's disgust with the lack of attention to purity issues, while the adultery conveys Ezekiel's critique of the covenant violation. Or, we could say that the combination of bloodshed, symbolized as menstrual blood, and idolatry, symbolized as adultery, represents the violations of ritual law and moral law, both of which Ezekiel is criticizing. However, other images could easily be substituted to represent the difference between ritual law and moral law, or purity issues and covenant violation.

The purpose of this chapter has not been to offer reasons for Ezekiel's metaphor of female blood but rather to fully explore the metaphor by comparing it to its legal predecessor, Leviticus. That said, I would like to offer a possible explanation for the pairing of menstrual blood and adultery.[33] In her introduction to *Women and Water*, Rahel Wasserfall reminds us that menstruation as a phenomenon was less frequent in the ancient world than in our post-industrialist society; women were often pregnant or between pregnancies.[34] Menstruation could have indicated the inability to conceive or perhaps an early miscarriage. Therefore, for Ezekiel, menstruation may have recalled a sexual union that could produce no offspring. The pairing of menstruation with adultery expresses two aspects of a relationship: one that cannot bear fruit and one gone sadly awry. Indeed, as long as the city menstruates, legally, Yahweh cannot be intimate with her. The metaphor of menstrual blood powerfully symbolizes a failing sexual union; because the people of Israel are corrupt their covenant with Yahweh dissolves like wasted life.

In conclusion, according to Leviticus, menstrual blood pollutes but this pollution has no implication of guilt. Bringing prescribed sacrifices ends the state of pollution, thus allowing the woman to restore her status as ritually pure. According to Ezekiel, however, menstrual blood pollutes because of guilt. "You are guilty by the blood that you shed." No sacrifice but that of the woman, or the city, herself can restore the relationship between Yahweh and the people of Israel.[35]

Notes

1 I use lowercase "priestly" to refer to all types of priestly writing, wherever it may be found. This includes the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. It also includes the Holiness Code which comprises most of Leviticus 17–27. Holiness writing is a genre of priestly writing. However, when I want to distinguish between the priestly writer (Leviticus 1–16 and other priestly writing outside the book of Leviticus) and the Holiness writer (H), I will then use the capital "P" to refer to the priestly "writer".

2 For studies that demonstrate the literary priority of Leviticus over Ezekiel see Avi Hurvitz, "The Evidence of Language in Dating the Priestly Code," *Revue Biblique* 81 (1974), 24–56; Richard Elliot Friedman, *Exile and Biblical Narrative: the Formation of the Deuteronomistic and Priestly Works* (Chico, CA: Scholar's Press, 1981), 61–64, 75. William H. C. Propp, "The Priestly Source Discovered Intact," *Vetus Testamentum* 46, 4 (1996), 458–478; Risa Levitt Kohn, *A New Heart and New Soul: Ezekiel, Exile and the Torah* (New York: Sheffield, 2002). Baruch Schwartz, "Ezekiel, P, and Other Pentateuchal Sources," paper given at the Society of Biblical Literature, November 19, 2006 in Washington DC.

3 Priestly writing is commonly divided into two main sources. In its most basic division, Leviticus 1–16 is known as P while Leviticus 17–26 is referred to as H or the Holiness Code. H is composed either by a different author, or, at the very least, reflects a different theological perspective. Scholars are divided about the nature of the relationship between P and H, their literary priority, and even whether they are, in fact, incompatible as a unified work. I accept the work of Jacob Milgrom and Israel Knohl who argue that P precedes H. Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 13–35; Israel Knohl, *The Sanctuary of Silence: The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1995). For a summary of scholarship on the literary priority of H to other priestly writing and redactional activity, see Henry T. Sun, "Holiness Code," in *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, III (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 254–256. Some disagree that H is in an independent literary corpus due to a perceived lack of structure. This argument was advanced by B. D. Eerdmans, *Alttestamnentliche Studien 4: Das Buch Leviticus* (Geisen: A. Topelmann, 1912). Others see several criteria for an independent corpus; see p. 256 of Sun for arguments for and against H as an independent literary unit.

4 Levitt Kohn (*A New Heart*, 112–113) calls into question Wellhausen's assumption that P is later than Ezekiel by showing that Ezekiel cleverly employed priestly phrases to give voice to the frustration of a people in exile.

5 Ibid., 76.

6 Ibid., 76.

7 Ibid., 77–78. Note that Levitt Kohn uses capital "P" to indicate all priestly writing.

8 Ibid., 84–85.

9 Scholars disagree about how and why the חַטָּאת serves two different functions but no one suggests that a menstruant or a parturient is guilty because she is commanded to offer a חַטָּאת. Baruch Levine attempts to explain the problem by showing that two types of חַטָּאת exist in priestly literature: the first operates to remove impurities from priests, thereby

upholding the sacred status of the sanctuary. The second type of חַטָּאת is expiatory and functions more as a popular rite for both individuals and the larger community. As proof, Levine shows that the animal is different for the two types of sacrifices. Levine admits that a purification element occurs in the popular type of חַטָּאת but to a lesser degree than in the priestly חַטָּאת. Levine surmises that originally two separate sacrifices coalesced into the one חַטָּאת presented in the Bible: *In the Presence of the Lord*: *A Study of Cult and Some Cultic Terms in Ancient Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), 101–108. Jacob Milgrom critiques Levine's analysis on several grounds including the fact that the Israelite people, and not the priests, bring the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), a situation that by its very nature is expiatory: *Studies in Cultic Theology and Terminology* (Leiden: Brill, 1983), 72. See also *Leviticus 1–16*, Anchor Bible 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 253–354. Noam Zohar agrees with Milgrom that the function of the חַטָּאת is mainly purificatory but suggests a new translation for חַטָּאת based on its usage in non-cultic contexts such as in Genesis 31:46. Zohar translates חטא as "displacement or substitution," which would account for situations involving both contamination and guilt: "Repentance and Purification: The Significance and Semantics of חַטָּאת in the Pentateuch," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 107 (1988), 616–617. Also important are the discussions in the following works: Philip Peter Jensen, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement 106 (Sheffield: Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Press, 1992); Roy Gane, *Cult and Character: Purification Offerings, Day of Atonement, and Theodicy* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005).

10 Mary Douglas agrees that there is no evidence the Priestly writer considers ritual impurity sinful; *Leviticus as Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 182. See also Hyam Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality: The Ritual Purity System and its Place in Judaism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 36–37.

11 Many have noticed a chiastic structure in this chapter but disagree as to its divisions: Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, 904–905; Deborah Ellens, "Menstrual Impurity and Innovation in Leviticus 15," in *Wholly Woman, Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, ed. K. de Troyer, J. A. Herbert, J. A. Johnson, and A. Korte (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press, 2003), 33–42 (Ellens has a good review of previous scholarship on the chiastic structure of Leviticus 15); Tarja S. Philip, *Menstruation and Childbirth in the Bible: Fertility and Impurity*, Studies in Biblical Literature 88 (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 44–57.

12 Israel Knohl differentiates between the moral impurity in the holiness legislation (Leviticus 18, 20) and the cultic impurity of Leviticus 15 (*The Sanctuary of Silence*: *The Priestly Torah and the Holiness School* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995], 159–184). Jonathan Klawans also concretely shows that two different kinds of impurity exist in the Hebrew Bible, moral impurity and ritual impurity. Klawans has made a good case that a person who violates a law of moral impurity can still approach the sanctuary. See his work *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21–42. Philip (*Menstruation and Childbirth*, 64) calls the two kinds of impurity "real" and "abstract" impurity.

13 For example, Knohl (*The Sanctuary of Silence*, 185) thinks Leviticus 15:31 is not the original punishment and rationale for becoming impure through contact with polluting bodily fluids. Rather, the H editor amended it.

14 For a summary of scholarship on the question, see William H. C. Propp's discussion on Exodus 12:15 in *Exodus 1–18*, Anchor Bible 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 403–404. Another good summary is in Jay Sklar's *Sin, Impurity, Sacrifice, Atonement: The Priestly Conceptions* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005), 15–20.

15 Howard Eilberg-Schwartz, *The Savage in Judaism: An Anthropology of Israelite Religion and Ancient Judaism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 177–194; Maccoby, *Ritual and Morality*, 30–32, 108–109; Philip, *Menstruation and Childbirth*, 69.

16 We see this expression only one other time, in Nahum 3:1, and there it refers to Nineveh.
17 Although Moshe Greenberg's translation of לָבוֹא עִתָּהּ as "whose time has come" is not incorrect, to translate the phrase "who has come into her time" conveys the dual sense of menstruation and the ensuing judgment. Greenberg cites biblical parallels for his translations but these are not exact (Jeremiah 27:7; Ecclesiastes 9:12. He traces it back to Ezekiel 7:7, 12); *Ezekiel 21–37*, Anchor Bible 22A (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 450, 452. An exact parallel would be Isaiah 13:22, but Isaiah has וּקְרוֹב לָבוֹא עִתָּהּ, adding the sense of "approaching" time.
18 Given that the city is itself imagined as a menstruating woman, it could be seen as redundant that sex with a menstruating woman (violations cited in Leviticus 15, 18, 20) is listed among these sins. However, far from being redundant, the prophet understands this as two distinct sins: the violation of the prohibition against sex with a menstruant and that of menstrual blood itself. See more on this point below. With regard to understanding the nature of the sexual act in this verse, some read it as a forced sexual encounter. Philip (*Menstruation and Childbirth*) disagrees that עִנִּי means "by force" or through rape in this context. See her discussion on pp. 63–64.
19 Cf. Ezekiel 16:45. By Amorite and Hittite, Ezekiel means Canaanite. He is not referring to the earlier kingdoms of the late Bronze Age.
20 This reading of בְּדָמַיִךְ is supported by J. Bergman and B. Kedar Kopfstein, "dām" in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, trans. John T. Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974–2001), 3:234–249. The preposition בְּ cannot be translated directly as "in spite of," and yet "with" does not fully convey the plain meaning of the verse. Moshe Greenberg translates, "in your blood" (*Ezekiel 1–20*, Anchor Bible 22 [New York: Doubleday, 1983], 270). W. Zimmerli translates, "as you lay in your blood, live" (*Ezekiel 1: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Ezekiel, Chapters 1–24*, trans. Ronald E. Clements; ed. F. M. Cross, K. Baltzer, and L. J. Greenspoon [Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1979], 323). Walther Eichrodt has "in your blood" (*Ezekiel: A Commentary* [Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1970], 196).
21 See later in 16:44–45 when the prophet rebukes the girl for being like her mother; her polluted corruption is hereditary.
22 The issue of moral vs. ritual impurity was discussed above in connection with the different emphases in the purity laws in P and H.
23 Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20*, 278. Menstrual blood is suggested by Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 1: A* Commentary, 340. Deborah Klee, "Menstruation in the Hebrew Bible" (unpublished dissertation, Boston University, 1998), 103. W. H. Brownlee (*Ezekiel 1–19* [Waco, TX: Word Books, 1986], 225) thinks the blood must originate from the hymen.
24 Klee, "Menstruation in the Hebrew Bible," 103–104.
25 Andrew Mein, *Ezekiel and the Ethics of Exile* (Oxford: Oxford University, 2001), 174.
26 See also 22:3.
27 Both ritual and moral impurity are real impurities and cause real contamination. See Klawans, *Impurity and Sin*, 32–36. Both kinds of impurities can also serve as vehicles in the construction of metaphor such as will be described in the following example. For an excellent discussion on the use of metaphor in the Bible see Andrea L. Weiss, *Figurative Language in Biblical Prose Narrative: Metaphor in the Book of Samuel* (Leiden: Brill, 2006).
28 See the author's forthcoming dissertation tentatively titled, "Impurity and Gender in the Hebrew Bible."
29 For a good discussion on the history of the marriage metaphor in the ancient Near East and in other Old Testament writings see Julie Galambush, *Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel: The City as Yahweh's Wife* (Atlanta, CA: Scholar's Press, 1992), 25–59.
30 Ibid., 102–103.
31 See also Philip (*Menstruation and Childbirth*, 64) who points to the jump from the sin of menstrual sex in the Holiness Code to Ezekiel's identification of menstruation itself as sinful.

32 Ezekiel 16:22, 36, 38; 22:2, 3, 4; 23:45; 36:18.
33 David Biale also offers an explanation for the symbolic pairing of menstruation and sin in *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). I address his discussion in my dissertation.
34 Rahel Wasserfall, "Introduction: Menstrual Blood into Jewish Blood," in *Women and Water: Menstruation in Jewish Life and Law* ed. Rahel Wasserfall (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1999), 11. Wasserfall relies on the anthropological work of Barbara Harrell, "Lactation and Menstruation in Cultural Perspective," *American Anthropologist* 83 (1981), 797–821.
35 Galambush shows that although the city is still referred to in the feminine in the restoration chapters of 40–48, the city personified as a woman is gone; she must be destroyed in order for the community to heal (*Jerusalem in the Book of Ezekiel*, 151). Dalit Rom-Shiloni shows that two strands exist in the Book of Ezekiel: one which is directed at those who will return and will be redeemed and one which is directed at those who were left behind and who bear the sin for which Yahweh destroyed the city. See her article, "Ezekiel as the Voice of the Exiles and Constructor of Exilic Ideology" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 76 (2005), 1–45. Those who were left behind, represented by the woman/city, must be destroyed in order for the future returnees to re-establish both the Temple and the covenant.

5 The topography of blood in Mishnah *Yoma*

Michael D. Swartz

Blood is essential to the sacrificial system in ancient Judaism. This is not always true for sacrificial systems. For example, the ancient Vedic goat sacrifice, the *Paśubandh*, requires the bloodless death of the animal.[1] But in biblical ritual, the shedding of blood is the means of killing in animal sacrifices. At the same time, the eating of blood is prohibited on the grounds that "the life of the flesh is in the blood" (Leviticus 17:11). More than this, blood is used as a purification agent, especially when sprinkled on the altar.[2] Nowhere is this more evident than the sacrifice of expiation and atonement at Yom Kippur as described in Leviticus chapter 16.

When the Temple was destroyed in 70 CE, the memory of the sacrificial system was kept alive in the literature of early Rabbinic Judaism. Fully one third of the Mishnah, the earliest rabbinic law code, is devoted to the description of the laws and procedures of the lost sacrificial system – this despite the fact that it was compiled in the beginning of the third century CE. This remarkable fact deserves to be accounted for: What precisely is the function of such a detailed exposition of the laws and procedures of the vanished cult? A step toward answering this question can be taken by examining how sacrificial blood forms an essential part of the discourse of the Mishnah tractate *Yoma*. This tractate describes, in a detailed narrative, the sacrifice of expiation at Yom Kippur prescribed in Leviticus 16, as practiced in the Second Temple.

Discourses of sacrifice

Discourse on ritual arises in several forms and in particular social circumstances in religious civilizations. People often feel the need to explain or interpret their rituals when challenged by an outside community to explain them, when they are no longer understood, especially because of cultural changes over time, or when the original context of a ritual no longer applies.[3] Discourse on ritual can also take the form of redescribing an older ritual in such a way that it is meaningful to a community that needs to make sense of it. In this case, the "theorizing" inheres not in the explicit formulation of abstract principles. Rather, the authors' use of symbolism, emphasis and connotation, and narrative flow tells us how the ritual has been conceived and reinterpreted. Ritual discourse can also

constitute a form of ritual itself. That is, the act of speaking about ritual, in the form of philosophical or legal study, recitation of ritual prescriptions, or the creation of artistic works portraying existing rituals, can itself become a ritualized activity and thus enter a liturgical system.

The latter two functions can help us understand how the style and the substance of Mishnah *Yoma* form crucial evidence for how Rabbinic Judaism perceived the role of blood in sacrifice. Because a major element of the sacrifice is purification of the Temple and its altars through blood, the disposition of blood forms a central theme of the tractate. The following account of how blood is portrayed in Mishnah *Yoma* will begin with brief observations on the phenomenology of the biblical Yom Kippur ritual. It will then proceed to a description of how the style of the tractate lends itself to ritual discourse. The particular role of blood in the tractate will then be analyzed.

Leviticus

The purpose of the complex Temple ritual of Yom Kippur was the elimination of ritual impurity from the sanctuary; purification was not aimed simply at the maintenance of the Temple as a ritually suitable site for sacrifices. Rather, its purpose was to create a proper environment for the appearance of the presence of God Himself. Thus, the purification of the shrine allowed for the descent of what Baruch A. Levine calls the Potent Presence of God, a volatile, localized manifestation of the deity who tolerates no impurity in His habitation.[4] To accomplish this, the ritual involved two interrelated so-called "rites of riddance":[5] One, in which the blood of a goat and the blood of a bull were used to purify the altar and the inner shrine; and another, in which the sins of the people were transferred to another goat, which was then sent out to the wilderness. Much of the discourse on the Yom Kippur ritual in Western culture has concentrated on the ritual of the scapegoat.[6] There may be several reasons for this, including the prevalence of the symbol of the scapegoat in Western discourse, as well as the predisposition in Christian culture to the motif of a living being who takes on the sins of the people and goes out to die for them.[7] Yet from the standpoint of the text and the ritual system, the process of purification by sacrificial blood is in fact more instrumental and an indispensable element in attracting the divine presence.

In this ritual, the High Priest, represented in Leviticus by Aaron, brings a bull representing himself and the priesthood, which is known as "his bull," to the altar and slaughters it (Leviticus 16:11). He then takes two handfuls of burning incense and places it inside the curtain, fumigating the shrine with the smoke (vv. 12–13). There he also sprinkles some of the blood on the *kaporet*, the cover of the Ark (v. 14). A goat is then slaughtered to represent the people and the blood of this goat is then sprinkled on the altar as well (v. 15.). The priest then does this to the altar outside the inner sanctum. The blood of the bull and the goat thus act to purify the altar and the shrine so that the priest can enter the inner sanctum and approach the divine presence. Various explanations have been offered for the role of blood in this process, from Jacob Milgrom's argument that

blood represents a life force that absorbs impurity, which represents death,[8] to Levine's argument that the blood acts as an offering to demonic forces threatening the purity of the earthly habitation of the Potent Presence.[9] However, the biblical text does not explain why the blood serves this function, only that by means of this process the priest is to "purge the shrine of impurity and transgression of the Israelites" (v. 16).

Mishnah *Yoma*

The case of Yom Kippur illustrates the complexity of rabbinic culture's response to the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE. For according to the phenomenology of Leviticus as described above, the annihilation of the cult not only meant the loss of the political and symbolic center of the Jewish nation, but a profound theological crisis as well: the absence of the Presence of God from earth. This means that when the community describes the moment of purification of the sanctuary in the wake of its destruction, it is telling us about its conception of God's immediate reality.

There are several ways in which the Mishnah conducts discourse about the nature of sacred space and the Temple's embodiment of it. One is the sheer volume of material dedicated to the cult. Two of the six divisions of the Mishnah, *Qodashim* and *Toharot*, are dedicated either to components of the sacrificial system or to purity rituals that depend on it for their significance. Jacob Neusner argues that the significance of *Qodashim* is to be found in the fact of the division's matter-of-fact description of the cult in a context in which the actual Temple had been destroyed and practical hopes for its restoration had been dashed, thus depicting a fictive world in which life goes on after catastrophe.[10] Lawrence Schiffman sees in the Mishnah's description of the Temple evidence of a restorative messianic program.[11] Whatever the original intent of the inclusion of these tractates, they have the effect of presenting sacrifice as an integral part of the Torah's legal system. Another major way that the Mishnah describes the sacrificial system is through the unusual styles and forms of some of the tractates dealing with the Temple and its rituals. One such form consists of topographical descriptions of the Temple and its rituals. The most striking example of a topographical tractate is Mishnah *Middot*, which measures, in precise dimensions, the Temple complex, its chambers, and its furnishings.

A second form, which includes *Yoma*, is found in a number of tractates that describe Temple procedures in narrative form. It has long been recognized that *Yoma* belongs to a category of Mishnah tractates distinguished by their unusual style.[12] Rather than present legal principles and rulings in a prescriptive fashion, *Yoma* is structured as a narrative, describing the Yom Kippur ritual from the previous week of preparation to the evening at the close of the holiday when the High Priest rejoins his family. *Yoma* shares this narrative style with a few other tractates such as *Tamid*, *Parah*, and much of *Pesaḥim* and *Sanhedrin*. What these have in common besides this narrative style is that they all describe pivotal institutions of the Temple system. Some scholars, especially David Hoffman and

Louis Ginzberg, saw in this distinctive style and subject matter evidence that such tractates as *Tamid* were older than other tractates of the Mishnah. However, Jacob Neusner has called this argument into serious question.[13]

For our purposes, the style of these narrative tractates is relevant not because we are concerned with their antiquity; rather, these distinctive literary characteristics are important because they bear on their function in the living community of sages who memorized and recited them. Martin S. Jaffee was one of the first to recognize this value of the varieties of literary styles in the Mishnah in his definitive study of the idea of the oral Torah and its background in ancient orality and textuality.[14] Jaffee detected in M. *Tamid* 3:7 a fragment of a poetic passage that interrupts the style of the narrative but adds to its effect.[15] Likewise, in his analysis of chapter 3 of M. *Parah*, which demonstrates interesting stylistic and substantive affinities with *Yoma*, Jaffee traces the strands of narrative in Mishnah and Tosefta and concludes that both texts drew on similar but not identical oral-performative narratives in their composition.[16] In each case Jaffee argues for a particular type of compositional unit that lay before the Mishnah; but his purpose is not to prove the antiquity or lateness of a particular tractate but to consider the form of each unit and how it functioned in its original oral setting.

In the case of Mishnah *Yoma*, its narrative style bears directly on its status as a text to be recited. From early in the Rabbinic period it has played a role in the synagogue liturgy for Yom Kippur. In fact, the tractate itself contains much that is conducive to liturgy. For example, in the Mishnah text as we have it, the High Priest recites confessions three times over the sacrificial animals.[17] J. N. Epstein has argued that two of those confessions entered the tractate from the liturgy and not the other way around.[18] Eventually, by the fourth century CE, this liturgical recitation of the tractate had developed into a full-fledged poetic genre known as the *Seder Avodah*, a service recited in the synagogue on the day of Yom Kippur recounting the sacrifice for that day in the Temple. In the Avodah, Mishnah *Yoma* is recast into elaborate compositions (*piyyutim*) in which each detail of the tractate's narrative was recounted in ornate poetic language.[19] These special characteristics call for a consideration of how the tractate functioned not only as a subject of study, but a text for recitation. As Martin Jaffee and others have shown, the Mishnah's status as "oral Torah" means not only that it is said to have its origins in an unwritten tradition dating back to Moses, but that its memorization and performance constitute an essential sacrament for Rabbinic Judaism.[20] Thus any consideration of the Mishnah's discourse on ritual should take account of how it functions as ritual.

In the following brief description of some of the motifs and concerns in Mishnah *Yoma* it will be argued that the tractate constructs a kind of topography of blood, in which the central process of expiation becomes a verbal map of the lost sanctuary. The purpose of this argument is to look at the tractate as a form of dramatic narrative, memorized and recited and thus attuned not only to the lawmaker, but to the listener. This description will concentrate primarily on chapters 3–5 in the Mishnah, which contain the core of the description of the sacrifices themselves.

Topography and procedure

The Yom Kippur ritual as depicted by the tractate is a complex dialectic of person, place, object, and substance. The category of the person is represented not only by the High Priest himself, but by the sages who instruct and admonish him, a category absent from the biblical text entirely. As he moves through the realm of place – the topography of the Temple – he manipulates substances – blood and incense – with the aid of objects, such as the fire-pan for the incense, the bowl for the blood, and the urn for the lots that designate the scapegoat and sacrificial goat.

At the center of both the biblical account and the tractate is the High Priest. It is clear from Leviticus' instructions that he is indispensable to the successful operation of the Yom Kippur sacrifice. In Leviticus, the High Priest seems to be the sole actor in the ritual drama. He alone is portrayed as the one who offers the sin-offering, slaughters the bulls, sends the goat to Azazel, and, above all, enters the Holy of Holies to encounter the Divine presence. The active verbs in the chapter belong to him.[21] As William Gilders observes:

> The text does not specify that the priest comes alone, nor is there any stated prohibition of his being accompanied by other priests. Still, even if we envisage the anointed priest being accompanied upon his entry to the shrine, he is *functionally* alone: he is the lone ritual actor. Accompanying priests would be ritually insignificant.[22]

Gilders argues that the reader is thus left to fill in the gaps in the ritual when reading the texts; but whether or not the reader imagines the High Priest being accompanied by other priests, those priests have no ritual significance in the text of Leviticus.

The Mishnah undermines Leviticus' focus on the High Priest as the sole ritual actor in two ways. The first way it does this is by emphasizing that the High Priest does not do his work alone but is accompanied by others who are not only helpful but play a decisive role in the proper functioning of the ritual. The other is by betraying a deep ambivalence to the moral and doctrinal integrity of the High Priest.

Chapter 1 includes classifications of actors not found in the Bible, in particular classes of elders: elders of the court appear in 1:3 and elders of the priesthood in 1:5. In addition there are sages (*talmide ḥakhamim*)[23] and young Levites or young priests (*pirḥe leviyah* or *pirḥe kehunah*, literally, "flowers of the Levites" or "flowers of the priesthood").[24] Most of the active verbs apply not to the High Priest himself but to those actors. In M. *Yoma* 1:2 the High Priest tosses the blood, offers incense, repairs the lamps, sacrifices the head and foot. However, he is the passive object of the elders' actions in most of the rest of the chapter. It is they who must sequester him and prepare a new wife for him in case he is suddenly bereft of a household to atone for,[25] walk him from one chamber to another in the Temple complex,[26] keep him awake while they lecture him,[27] and charge him to perform the ceremony properly.[28]

More than this, it is assumed that the High Priest is likely to be an ignoramus or heretic. In the Mishnah, the tension between the High Priest and the sages is cast against the background of the sectarian strife of the Second Commonwealth. The main issue concerns the way in which the incense was brought into the Holy of Holies. According to the Sadducees, the incense should be prepared before the High Priest enters the shrine. The Pharisees held that the incense should be placed on the fire inside the shrine.[29] Therefore, when the time comes to charge the High Priest with the solemnity of what he is about to do, the sages do so with this speech:

> "Sir High Priest! We are the representatives of the court, and you are our representatives and the messenger of the court. We adjure you by the One who caused his name to dwell in this House not to change a thing of anything we have told you."

Then the Mishnah adds, "He turned aside and wept, and they turned aside and wept." So too, when the time comes for the priest to read and expound on the Scripture's instructions for performing the ceremony the sages enjoin him:

> "Sir High Priest! Recite with your own mouth – or perhaps you have forgotten or did not remember!"[30]

One effect of this narrative strategy is to assert the authority of the rabbis by showing that their ancestors, the Pharisees, and not the Zadokite priests, were the true leaders of the nation. Another effect is to remind the listener that the High Priest acts as a representative of corporate Israel in the act of purging the sanctuary from sin and impurity.

Yet the structure of the ritual demands that the High Priest be the focus of the procedure. Therefore the tractate is organized around him. It follows him step by step, detailing which actions he performs, where he stands, and with whom he relates. Another important element of the Mishnah's narrative is how it follows the High Priest through the geography of the Temple as he carries out his ritual. The tractate describes with precision which direction the High Priest faces as he holds the goat, where he steps at each stage, and how he enters the Holy of Holies. A striking example of this precision is the narration of the High Priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies; according to the opinion in M. *Yoma* 5:1 there were two curtains:

> He reached the northern end, he faced the south, and walked to his left with the curtain, until he reached the ark.

Saul Lieberman has shown that this movement corresponded to common Greco-Roman practices for entering sanctuaries with proper respect.[31] This methodical description of the High Priest's steps would be recognized by the listener as a critical act of sacred choreography.

Blood

Sacrificial blood plays a central role in this choreography. The High Priest is indeed at the center of the ceremony in the Mishnah's narrative. However, his role is not simply as a representative of Israel before God. His main role, in the view of the Mishnah, is as a dispenser of blood, which is the principal agent of activity in the ritual system of *Yoma*. At the first instance of the ritual slaughter for Yom Kippur, the Mishnah is concerned immediately with how the blood is collected. For example, M. *Yoma* 4:3 describes the High Priest's actions after he confesses over his bull:

> He slaughtered it and collected its blood in a basin, and gave it to the one who would stir it on the fourth terrace of the Sanctuary so that it would not congeal.

Again, the Mishnah adds an object, the basin, and a social dimension, an assistant who is holding the bowl, not mentioned in Leviticus 16.[32] It also specifies where he and the assistant are standing, as part of the overall narrative of the High Priest's placement at every stage of the ritual. The narrative then proceeds to the disposition of the other major substance, the incense, and includes an excursus on the differences between the offerings of incense on Yom Kippur and those for other days. At Mishnah *Yoma* 5:3 the narrative (as well as the High Priest) picks up the blood where the assistant left it:

> He took the blood from the one who was stirring it, went to the place where he had entered[33] and stood at the place where he had stood, and sprinkled from [the bowl] once up and seven times down.

At this point, the Mishnah introduces a remarkable shift in tone. It inserts a litany, which counts the times the priest whips the blood onto the altar:

> And this is how he would count: "one, one and two, one and three, one and four, one and five, one and six, one and seven."

Here the sprinkling of the blood takes on a liturgical force, one that was indeed picked up in the ancient synagogue, where it was included in the Avodah service. And in fact the same language is used for the procedure for slaughtering the next two animals, the goat and the second bull, collecting their blood, and sprinkling it on the altar and then on the curtain.

When the time comes to purify the golden altar of Leviticus 16:18, the Mishnah continues at 5:5 with another repetitive sequence:

> He began purifying downward. From where did he begin? From the northeast corner, to the northwest, to the southwest, and to the southeast. From the place that he began purifying the outer altar, from there he would finish doing so on the inner altar.

The passage, with its recitation of the four corners, takes us through the process of expiation of the altars. It draws a kind of diagram of the priest's movements as he purifies both altars and in specifying each direction allows us to imagine each step. The effect of this recitation is to carry the listener through the process of the distribution and disposal of the blood, moment by moment. Indeed, at M. *Yoma* 5:6, the narrative follows the blood past its role of purification by the High Priest, after he has thrown out the residue on the western and southern bases of the outer altar:

> Both[34] mingled in the sewer and flowed out to the Kidron riverbed, where it was sold to gardeners at a profit.

The function of blood

According to the Mishnah, therefore, the purpose of the Yom Kippur sacrifice is the purification of the altar through blood. This statement might seem uncontroversial; after all, is this not the purpose of the biblical sacrifice? But there are cases where the Mishnah transforms biblical rituals into enterprises not self-evident from the biblical texts. Baruch Boxer provides such a case in his classic study *The Origins of the Seder*, in which the sacrificial nature of the biblical Passover is transformed in the hands of the Mishnah's description of the rite in *Pesaḥim*.[35]

At the same time, the Mishnah does not present an explicit theory about the function of sacrificial blood. It does not explain why animals are to be killed or sent out into the wilderness, what exactly the blood does to the altar, and whether the presence of God actually resides in the Holy of Holies. Nevertheless, *Yoma*'s narrative constitutes a subtle but meaningful discourse on the expiation ritual and its meaning. One clue can be found in an interesting paradox. The Mishnah maintains the centrality of the High Priest while expressing a deep ambivalence about him. This idea advanced so aggressively in *Yoma*, that an ignorant High Priest is still somehow suited to perform the ceremony, deserves serious consideration. To understand this concept we must assume that the requirements for performance of the sacrifice are largely material. His pedigree, his physical stature, and his appointment to the office represent his qualifications to perform the sacrifice. The effect of this emphasis is to make the priest into an impersonal agent of the process of expiation. Sacrifice on Yom Kippur, it turns out, is primarily a way of obtaining purifying blood, and the High Priest is the agent of that process.

Beyond this statement about the function of blood, the Mishnah is interested in conveying something more about the nature of the Temple. It does this through the way it describes the Yom Kippur sacrifice topographically. Unlike Mishnah *Middot*, *Yoma* does not lay out the dimensions of each chamber and wall in the Temple. However, the very form of the Mishnah, which presents legal detail not in characteristically apodictic fashion but as narrative, serves to create a dynamic mental picture in which the listener – or, indeed, the student, who is the memorizer – follows the High Priest through each stage of the ritual. Yet the Mishnah stops short of creating dramatic empathy with him, given its

ambivalence about his piety and qualifications.[36] Rather, the story in the Mishnah is that of substances through space, the most holy space of the vanished Temple.

Recently, Katherine McClymond has come to similar conclusions in her study of sacrifice in Vedic Hinduism compared with the Yom Kippur sacrifice as described by Leviticus and the Mishnah.[37] Whereas most theorists of sacrifice focus on the killing of the victim as the central, dramatic, and indispensable moment in the sacrificial procedure, McClymond argues that both Vedic and Jewish conceptions of sacrifice see it as a way of manipulating substances that represent the essence of the animal (*medha* or breath in the case of Hinduism and blood in the case of Judaism). The effect of this finding is to dislodge the idea of sacrifice from its association with violence and death and to place it into a broader framework as a ritual way of working with essential and quotidian substances.[38]

Blood and speech

It is now possible to consider how Mishnah *Yoma* addresses the problem of a post-sacrificial religion. The act of recitation of the tractate constitutes a ritual in itself, one that has bearings on the concept of sacrifice. In discussions of rabbinic attitudes to the destruction of the Temple, it is common to cite statements that the study of sacrifice is equivalent to sacrifice itself. For example, Midrash *Tanḥuma* states, "Even though the Temple was destroyed, and sacrifices are not practiced, if it were not for the children who read the order of sacrifices, the world would not endure."[39] But it is possible to go beyond treating these statements as mere exhortations to study. Michael Fishbane, in an essay on substitutes for sacrifice in rabbinic literature, draws our attention to a striking passage in the Babylonian Talmud (b. *Berakhot* 17a).[40] There Rav Sheshet offers a prayer that equates his fast to sacrifice in the most physical way:

> Master of the Universe, it is known before you that when the Temple was standing one who sinned could offer a sacrifice, and even if all that was offered of it was fat and blood, it could atone for him. Now I have sat fasting and my fat and blood have been diminished. May it be Your will that my fat and blood which have been diminished be as if they were offered on the altar, and favor me.

As Fishbane points out, this statement is remarkable because it reverses the so-called substitution theory of sacrifice, whereby the animal and its death is a stand-in for the death of the sacrificer. Instead, the human worshiper sacrifices his own flesh and blood in hopes that it will be accepted as a legitimate substitute for the animal. As we know from several sources describing study as *yegi'ah*, "weariness," and *amal*, "toil," such activity was physically and mentally demanding.[41] We may therefore ask whether the verbal acts that are said to substitute for sacrifice, such as study and prayer, may not in fact consist of this "sacrifice" of one's time and effort – and indeed, one's flesh and blood. An analogous argument has

been made by David Sansone in his book *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport*, in which he argues for Greek athletics as a "sacrifice of the athlete's expenditure of energy before the gods."[42] If Rav Sheshet's statement reflects the phenomenology of the study and recitation of sacrifice, we can understand blood as more than a metaphor or symbol for Jews living after the destruction of the sacrificial system. It may be useful to think of verbal activity as a subset of the category of sacrificial acts, the principal form of sacrifice available in the absence of the physical altar.

Mishnah *Yoma*, then, manages to accomplish several things at once: It preserves Leviticus' emphasis on the purifying power of sacrificial blood, although it does not say why the blood purifies. It takes the listener or student through the Yom Kippur sacrifice with the High Priest, mapping his actions through the innermost chamber of the sanctuary. At the same time, the Mishnah manages to diminish his authority, and by extension that of the priests as a class. In doing so it asserts that the community of Israel, whose representative the High Priest is, has a hand in the securing of its own atonement. And finally, it ensures that the act of purification will live on, not in the Temple of blood and stone, but in the way that it is redescribed by the sages.

Notes

1 On Vedic sacrifice and its history see Brian K. Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989) and J. C. Heesterman, *The Broken World of Sacrifice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); on this point in particular see Kathryn McClymond, "The Nature and Elements of Sacrificial Ritual," *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 16 (2004), 353–355 and the sources cited there; and Kathryn McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence: A Comparative Study of Sacrifice* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). See also note 37 below.

2 Leviticus 4:6, 17; Numbers 19:4; see Baruch A. Levine, *The JPS Torah Commentary: Leviticus* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 207 n. 15 to chapter 16. The most comprehensive and sophisticated treatment of the role of blood in biblical ritual is William K. Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible: Meaning and Power* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); cf. also N. Kiuchi, *The Purification Offering in the Priestly Literature: Its Meaning and Function* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1987). On Leviticus 17:11 as it is understood in rabbinic literature, see Noam Zohar, "Halakhot Qedamot be-fi Rabbi Yehudah – 'Edut li-Temurah Tefisat 'ha-Dam Hu ha-Nefesh,'" *Tarbiz* 58 (1989), 525–530.

3 On this point and ritual theory as practiced by pre-modern communities in general, see Michael D. Swartz, "Judaism and the Idea of Ancient Ritual Theory," in *Tradition, Diaspora, and Authority*, ed. Ra'anan Boustan, Oren Kosansky, and Marina Rustow (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, in press). Cf. also Francis X. Clooney, *Thinking Ritually: Rediscovering the Pūrvā Mimāṃsā of Jaimini* (Vienna: Sammlung De Nobili Institut für Indologie der Universität Wien, 1990); and Thomas P. Kasulis, "Philosophy as Metapraxis," in *Discourse and Practice*, ed. Frank Reynolds and David Tracy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), 169–195.

4 Baruch A. Levine, *In The Presence of the Lord* (Leiden: Brill, 1974); ibid., "The Presence of God in Biblical Religion," in *Religions in Antiquity: Essays in Memory of E. R. Goodenough*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 71-87; and ibid., *Leviticus*.

5 Levine, *Leviticus*, 99.

6 The most extreme example of this tendency is the work of René Girard, whose theory of culture elevates the importance of the principle of the scapegoat to a decisive and universal factor in human history; see especially René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977). On Girard's theory see Robert G. Hamerton-Kelly (ed.), *Violent Origins: Walter Burkert, René Girard, and Jonathan Z. Smith on Ritual Killing and Cultural Formation* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1987); Bruce Chilton, *The Temple of Jesus: His Sacrificial Program within a Cultural History of Sacrifice* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), 163–172; and McClymond, *Beyond Sacred Violence*. See also the following note.

7 On early Christian understandings of sacrifice see Frances M. Young, *Sacrifice and the Death of Christ* (Philadelphia, PA: Westminster, 1975). On the predisposition on the part of modern scholars to understand sacrifice in terms set by Christian theology see especially Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Judaism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

8 See especially Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1991); on Milgrom see Gilders, *Blood Ritual in the Hebrew Bible*, especially pp. 3–4, 129–139; and Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 232–290.

9 See especially Levine, *In The Presence of The Lord*.

10 Jacob Neusner, "Map without Territory: Mishnah's System of Sacrifice and Sanctuary," in *Method and Meaning in Ancient Judaism* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1979), 133–153.

11 Lawrence H. Schiffman, "The Concept of the Messiah in Second Temple and Rabbinic Literature," *Review and Expositor* 84 (1987), 235–246.

12 See J. N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot le-Sifrut ha-Tanna'im* (Jerusalem: Magnes and Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1957), 28–29. One of the first scholars to notice the special character of certain tractates was Nachman Krochmal; for a Hebrew text see Simon Rawidowicz (ed.), *Kitve Rabbi Nachman Krokhmal*, 2nd edn (London and Waltham, MA: Ararat, 1961), 224–227. David Hoffman, *Die erste Mischna und die Controversen der Tannaim: ein Beitrag zur Einleitung in der Mischn*a (Berlin: H. Itzkowski, 1882), argued for the antiquity of certain narrative portions of the Mishnah that describe second-Temple institutions. This argument was made most extensively in Louis Ginzberg, "Tamid: The Oldest Treatise of the Mishnah," *Journal of Jewish Lore and Philosophy* 1 (1919), 33–44, 197–209, 265–295.

13 See Jacob Neusner, "Dating a Mishnah-Tractate: The Case of Tamid," in *History, Religion and Spiritual Democracy: Essays in Honor of Joseph L. Blau*, ed. Maurice Wohlgelernter (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), 97–113; ibid., *A History of the Mishnaic Law of Holy Things* (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 202–207. Cf. Herman J. Blumberg, "Saul Lieberman on the Talmud of Caesarea and Louis Ginzberg on Mishnah Tamid," in *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud: Studies in the Achievements of Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical and Literary-Critical Research*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden: Brill, 1070), 107–124. For a summary of the discussion and its implications for the redaction of the Mishnah, see H. L. Strack and Gunther Stemberger, *Introduction to Talmud and Midrash* (Edinburgh: T. &. T. Clark, 1991), 145–147; cf. also Herman J. Blumberg, "Saul Lieberman on the Talmud of Caesarea and Louis Ginzberg on Mishnah Tamid," in *The Formation of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. Neusner, 107–124.

14 Martin S. Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth: Writing and Oral Tradition in Palestinian Judaism, 200 BCE–400 CE* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). See also Elizabeth Shanks Alexander, *Transmitting Mishnah: The Shaping Influence of Oral Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); on the implications of orality for Tosefta and the talmudic tradition see Yaakov Elman, *Authority and Tradition: Toseftan Baraitot in Talmudic Babylonia* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav, 1994).

15 Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*, 102–106.
16 Ibid., 111–124.
17 M. *Yoma* 3:8, 4:2, and 6:2.
18 J. N. Epstein, *Mavo' le-Nusah ha-Mishnah* 2 (Jerusalem: Magnes and Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1964), 971–972.
19 On the Avodah and its relationship to *Yoma* see Michael D. Swartz and Joseph Yahalom, *Avodah: Ancient Poems for Yom Kippur* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005); Michael D. Swartz, "Sage, Priest, and Poet: Typologies of Leadership in the Ancient Synagogue," in *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the Ancient Synagogue: Cultural Interaction During the Greco-Roman Period*, ed. Steven Fine (London: Routledge, 1999), 101–117; and Zvi Malachi, "Ha-'Avodah' le-Yom ha-Kippurim – 'Ofiyah, Toledoteha ve-Hitpaṭuta ba-Shirah ha-'Ivrit" 2 vols (PhD dissertation, Hebrew University, 1974). On the literary character of the Avodah in relation to its liturgical function see Michael D. Swartz, "Koḥah u-Teqifah shel ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit be-Shilhe ha-'Et ha-Atiqah," in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine*, ed. Lee I. Levine (Jerusalem: Ben Zvi Institute, 2004), 542–562.
20 Jaffee, *Torah in the Mouth*; see also note 14 above.
21 I owe this point to Kevin Osterloh, who pointed it out in a seminar paper.
22 Gilders, *Blood Ritual*, 113; italics in the original. The same point holds true for Ben Sira's magisterial description of the Temple service in chapter 50, whether or not Ben Sira is describing Yom Kippur or the daily Tamid. On this question see F. Ó. Fearghail, "Sir 50,5–21: Yom Kippur or Daily Whole Offering?" *Biblica* 59 (1978), 301–316; Patrick W. Skehan and Alexander A. Di Lella, *The Wisdom of Ben Sira*, The Anchor Bible 39 (New York: Doubleday, 1987), 550–551; C. T. R. Haywood, *The Jewish Temple: A Non-Biblical Sourcebook* (London and New York: Routledge, 1996), 50; and Otto Mulder, *Simon the High Priest in Sirach 50: an Exegetical Study of the Significance of Simon the High Priest as Climax to the Praise of the Fathers in Ben Sira's Concept of the History of Israel* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 123–125.
23 In MS Kaufman, a single student (*talmid ḥakham*) is charged to read before him. In MS Parma, the Leiden manuscript of the Palestinian Talmud, and Maimonides' Mishnah commentary, students (*talmide ḥakhamim*) read.
24 M. *Yoma* 1:7.
25 Ibid., 1:1; The text does not specify who separates him and prepares the substitute; the anonymous plural participle is used here.
26 Ibid., 1:3 and 1:5.
27 Ibid., 1:3–7.
28 Ibid., 1:5.
29 On this dispute and some of its implications, see Jacob Z. Lauterbach, "A Significant Controversy Between the Sadducees and the Pharisees," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 4 (1927), 173–205. Although there is no need to accept Lauterbach's distinction between the "superstitious" mindset of the Sadduceean position with the more enlightened opinion of the Pharisees, his argument, that according to ancient conceptions of the ceremony the High Priest enters the divine court for collective judgment, deserves consideration as an interpretation of this question.
30 M. *Yoma* 1:5.
31 Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1962), 164–167.
32 Although the basins are mentioned, e.g. in Exodus 38:2.
33 The Holy of Holies.
34 That is, both streams of blood from the western and southern bases.
35 Baruch M. Bokser, *The Origins of the Seder: The Passover Rite and Eearly Rabbinic Judaism* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1984).
36 In Swartz, "Judaism and the Idea of Ancient Ritual Theory," I argue that the Avodah

piyyutim do indeed create such an empathy; see also ibid., "Koḥah u-Teqifah shel ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit."

37 Katherine McClymond, "Death Be Not Proud: Reevaluating the Role of Killing in Sacrifice," *International Journal of Hindu Studies* 6 (2002), 221–242; and *Beyond Sacred Violence*.

38 Cf. also Charles Malamoud, *Cooking the World: Ritual and Thought in Ancient India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 23–53.

39 *Tanḥuma Ṣav* 14. For a useful compilation and study of rabbinic sources on attitudes to sacrifice and the Temple see Naftali Goldstein, "Avodat ha-Qorbanot be-Hagut Ḥazal she-le-Aḥar Ḥurban Bet-ha Miqdash," *Daat* 8 (1982), 29–51; for this statement see p. 31. Goldstein argues that this opinion derives from the principle articulated in b. Ked. 40a that if someone wished to perform a commandment and was prevented from doing so, it counts as having done it. See also his dissertation, "Meqarim be-Hagutam shel Ḥazal 'al ha-'Avodah be-vet ha-Miqdash ve-Haspa'atam 'al 'Iṣuvah" (PhD dissertation, Hebrew University, 1977).

40 Michael Fishbane, *The Exegetical Imagination: On Jewish Thought and Theology* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 123–219.

41 See Michael D. Swartz, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 39–40.

42 David Sansone, *Greek Athletics and the Genesis of Sport* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988). In Swartz, "Koḥah u-Teqifah shel ha-Shirah ha-'Ivrit," this argument is extended to the Avodah and related liturgical compositions, especially in light of ancient sources for the concept for praise as a cultic act.

6 God will see the blood

Sin, punishment, and atonement in the Jewish–Christian discourse

Israel J. Yuval

I

In 1892 Asher Ginzburg, better known by his literary pseudonym Ahad Ha'am, published an article in the journal *Hamelitz* that concluded with the following sentence: "A Jew and blood – could there be a more complete contradiction?" Ginzburg was alluding to the disingenuous nature of the blood libels.[1] We are not required in the present context to defend the Jews from libelous accusations, nor to put the lie to Ahad Ha'am's claim by proving the centrality of the blood motif in Jewish culture. Our interest is with far more complex questions regarding the status of blood as a fundamental symbol and motif in Jewish culture. My premise is that every culture contains essential and dormant elements, which are bound to surface under certain historical conditions. These elements are of a permanent nature, phenomena of the *longue durée*, that express an inner-held worldview. Historical circumstances may render them central or marginal, but cannot eradicate them entirely from the collective consciousness. Alongside these are phenomena absorbed from without, owing to nothing more than a mere coincidence of events, that will wither and die with the passing of the circumstances that nourished them. Naturally, drawing a clear distinction between permanent internal phenomena and ephemeral external ones is a precarious and problematic enterprise. There are many gray areas, in which the external is absorbed and assimilated. It is likewise quite difficult to define just what an external cultural phenomenon is. Are the front lines of interfaith polemics the only place where two rival religions engage each other, or does the very existence of an overt polemic bring about profound domestic acculturations, so that each side, now externally engaged, redefines internally its own identity?

It is said that when historians have nothing to say, they begin to compare. That is, in fact, what I am about to do – to compare. I seek to ascertain the presence of the blood motif in Judaism through the prism of its encounter with Christianity. The question raised by a comparative endeavor of this sort is two-fold: First, to what extent did Jewish–Christian relations influence the Jewish perspective on blood? And second, vice versa: to what extent did the Jewish perspective on blood influence the Jews' attitude to Christianity and its rituals? I do not purport to deal here with overt expressions of the status of blood in the Jewish–Christian

discourse; I likewise intend to avoid any discussion surrounding blood libels, circumcision, menstrual blood, and other such familiar matters. My interest is in more humble and obscure instances of symbols and expressions linked to the cultural memory of martyred blood. I seek to show that the construction of such memories results from a two-way traffic involving the acculturation of Christian motifs and the rejection thereof. Alongside unique phenomena that have no equal in the Christian environment, we can identify other phenomena that share a great deal with the rival Christian dialectic.

II

I will begin by presenting a famous text that, however concise, is still pregnant with meaning, one that may at first glance seem to belong to a closed internal debate among Jews. The passage is taken from the *Mekhilta*, compiled in the third century CE:

> *"And when I see the blood"* (Exod. 12:13). I see the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac. For it is said: "And Abraham called the name of that place Adonai-Jireh" (The Lord will see … Gen. 22:14). Likewise it says in another passage: "And as He was about to destroy, the Lord saw and He repented …" (1 Chr. 21:15). What did He see? He saw the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac, as it is said: "God will Himself see to the lamb …" (Gen. 22:8).[2]

The exegesis is based textually on the fact that the seeing God motif appears in three different instances in the Bible: the first is in the Binding of Isaac, where it is told that Abraham glimpses a ram and offers it up as a burnt sacrifice instead of his son, whereupon he names the place "Adonai-Jireh (the Lord will see)," in the future tense. The second time is during the Exodus: God sees the Passover blood on the doorframes of the Israelite homes, thanks to which they are delivered as the "Destroyer" smites the Egyptians. The third seeing occurs in the less familiar story of King David's purchase of the site destined for the erection of the altar and the Temple from Ornan the Jebusite. Here, too, God's seeing protects and delivers from plague.

Departing from the literal meaning of the Biblical text, the exegete claims that the blood seen by God in Egypt was not only the Passover blood, but also the blood of Abraham's offering. The exegete takes heed of the future tense used to describe God's seeing in the story of the Binding of Isaac – "God *will see* to the lamb for His burnt offering." Hence he interprets God's seeing not as a singular occurrence, but as one destined to occur again and again should the need for protection and deliverance from forthcoming destroyers and plagues arise. The Midrash thus turns a "seeing" God into a "remembering" God. Seeing the blood of the Passover offering evokes God's memory of Isaac's blood. The exegete hints here at a broad connection between the Passover offering and Abraham's offering, and indeed, according to an ancient tradition whose earliest record is in the *Book of Jubilees*, the offering of Isaac occurred on Passover.[3]

To these two events the exegete adds a third – the purchase of Ornan the Jebusite's threshing floor, as recounted in 1 Chronicles 21:15. This addition bespeaks the acute literary sensitivity of our exegete. What story does Chronicles tell? David conducts a census, a forbidden act that incites the appearance of the "Destroyer," i.e. Satan, who causes the deaths of many. To stay the hand of the destroyer, David is commanded to erect an altar to God. He turns to Ornan the Jebusite, seeking to purchase from him a threshing floor upon which to build such an altar. In this place the Temple is destined to be built. From a literary perspective, the story related in Chronicles is manifestly parallel to the story of the Binding of Isaac.[4] Both tell of a mortal danger, whereupon a delivering angel appears at the last minute. In the Jerusalem story, God commands the angel "stay your hand" – an expression reminiscent of the angelic appeal to Abraham, "Do not raise your hand." Just as Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in a thicket, so did David look up and see the angel. Most importantly, both stories tell of consecrating a holy area in which live animals are sacrificed to deliver men from death. Unrolling both stories in parallel reveals the unique view of the author of Chronicles, who identifies Mount Moriah in the story of the Binding of Isaac as the site upon which the Temple was constructed in Jerusalem.[5] The story in Chronicles in turn portrays David as the founder of the city and its Temple, and as Abraham's successor.

The account of David's purchase of a threshing floor from Ornan the Jebusite is remarkably similar to the story that follows immediately upon the Binding of Isaac: the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron from Ephron. In both, the owner – here a Hittite, there a Jebusite – offers the site as a gift, but the buyer insists on paying. There are also clear linguistic parallels: the act of bowing as part of the negotiation, the similarity between the expressions "Sell me a burial site among you, that I may remove my dead for burial" (Genesis 23:4) and "Sell me the site of the threshing floor, that I may build on it an altar to the Lord" (1 Chronicles 21:22), as well as the weighing of the sum owed – 400 shekels for the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron, 600 shekels for the threshing floor in Jerusalem. Jerusalem is, after all, a bit more expensive than Hebron. The author of Chronicles thus combines the story of the Binding of Isaac at Mount Moriah and the story of the purchase of the cave at Hebron into a single narrative of King David's founding of Jerusalem.

I believe that the exegete in the *Mekhilta* was not blind to these broad associations. I assume that he was already familiar with the link between the Binding of Isaac and the Passover offering, and that he sought to unite the holy time of Passover with the holy place of the altar where the seeing, remembering, and forgiving God is present. The God who sees the blood of the Passover offering "remembers" the offering of Isaac's blood. Hence we learn that it is not the blood of the Passover offering, the blood of the lamb, that pacifies the "destroyer"; it is merely a means of reminding God of the blood of Isaac, which alone holds the power to atone. The *Mekhilta* does not state exactly what blood God saw during the Binding of Isaac, but the expression "the blood of the sacrifice of Isaac" gives the impression that this is an early allusion to the later myth that Abraham did

indeed sacrifice Isaac. This would also explain the ambivalent use by the homily of the verse "God will see to the lamb for His burnt offering," clearly linking the lamb to the sacrificial son.

The Midrash thus hints at a great story not told by the Pentateuch: namely, that Abraham, in his zeal to perform God's bidding, insisted on slaying his son despite the interdiction not to lay a hand upon him. According to one version, Abraham struck him and drew blood. A more extreme version recounts that Abraham actually slaughtered his son, who was later resurrected.[6] The first to discuss these legends was Shalom Spiegel.[7] He did not, however, explain why the Sages entertained the possibility that Abraham slaughtered Isaac. These were, in his opinion, muffled whisperings of an old pagan tradition that the Bible was already trying to silence, according to which the supreme sacrifice is that of a human being.

Bound, slaughtered, and resurrected, this new Isaac story was perceived by some historians as a Jewish response to the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. Since this theory was first proposed in 1872 by Abraham Geiger,[8] this interpretation has aroused lively debate among scholars.[9] Its opponents claim that the tradition concerning the slaughter of Isaac was not an innovation of the Sages, but was already known before the destruction of the Temple and before the beginning of the Jewish–Christian polemic. Among the advocates of this view is C. T. R. Hayward, who discusses the *Mekhilta* at length.[10] He also sought to prove the antiquity of the *Mekhilta*'s tradition regarding Isaac's blood from *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 18.4, in which God explains to Balaam that he cannot curse Israel because God had already promised to Abraham that He would choose his seed:

> And I sought his son as a burnt-offering and he brought him to place him on the altar, and I returned him to his father. And because he did not refuse, he was made an acceptable offering before Me. And I choose him because of his blood.

Hayward quite correctly observes that the expression, "because of his blood" (*pro sanguine ejus*) refers to Isaac, not to Abraham. According to his claim, the passage from the *Mekhilta* quoted here is a natural sequel to the words of the *Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, so that there is no need to assume that the *Mekhilta* is responding to a Christian tradition.

However, there are two fundamental differences between the *Mekhilta* and what is stated in the *Antiquitatum Biblicarum*. First, the blood mentioned in *Antiquitatum Biblicarum* is virtual blood, its account being consistent with the biblical story that Abraham did not slaughter Isaac. It was not an *act* of slaughtering that led God to choose the seed of Abraham, rather Abraham's *willingness* to do so ("because he did not refuse"). By virtue of this, God considered the act as if it were literally a sacrifice. By contrast, the *Mekhilta* compares God seeing the blood of the paschal sacrifice in Egypt to His seeing the blood of the Binding of Isaac. Just as in Egypt there was blood which God saw, so too at the *Akedah*, the Binding, God literally saw blood. Second, in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*, the blood serves a symbolic function, expressing Abraham's belief that by its virtue

his seed was chosen, whereas in the *Mekhilta* the blood serves an atoning function. These two facts taken together strengthen the impression that the *Mekhilta* expresses a new approach and that it is not to be seen as merely an internal continuation of an ancient Jewish tradition from the time of the Second Temple.

This reading of the *Mekhilta* is strengthened by the third side of the triangle added by the exegetical author: the story of the purchase of the threshing floor from Ornan the Jebusite. If the *Mekhilta* indeed saw the broad biblical and literary context of the similarity between the story of the plague and the salvation from the Destroying Angel by the construction of the altar, on the one hand, and the story of the Binding of Isaac and the purchase of the Cave of Machpelah, on the other, one must assume that the religious significance of this imagery was also clear: namely, the wish to lend to the Binding of Isaac the status of a model for the ceremony of offering sacrifices on the altar. Such a significance turns the Binding from a story whose essence is the choosing of Isaac (Genesis 12:17: "and your seed shall inherit the gate of their enemies") to one whose essence is the forgiveness of sins (ibid., 8: "God will show the lamb for the burnt offering, my son"). The addition in the *Mekhilta* of the blood of the paschal lamb, which was also intended to save the Israelites from the "destroyer" (Exodus 12:13: "and there shall be no plague to destroy you"), transforms not only the offering of sacrifices in the Temple, but also the Redemption in Egypt, into a continuation of the Binding. One may therefore state that, whereas the Book of Chronicles was the first to draw a connection between the site of the altar on the Temple Mount and the site of the Binding, the *Book of Jubilees* was the first to draw a connection between the Binding and Passover; and the *Mekhilta* was the first to create the new triangle: Passover–Jerusalem–human sacrifice. It is superfluous to mention that all these components are also present in the story of the Crucifixion.

And indeed, it would seem that one can argue, specifically from the New Testament, that the earliest Christians did not know the ancient Jewish tradition regarding the actual Binding of Isaac, for had they known it they would have made typological use for the crucifixion of Jesus. The Binding of Isaac is mentioned three times in the New Testament but is never given typological status equal to the Crucifixion.[11] According to the Epistle to the Hebrews (11:18–19), Abraham was tested by his faith, not in his acts, and the Binding is described as an act that was incomplete. Therefore it serves typologically for Jesus only with regard to the Resurrection, not with regard to his Crucifixion. The contradiction between the promise, "for in Isaac shall your seed be called" (Genesis 21:12), and the demand to offer his son is resolved by Abraham by saying that the same God who commands him to bind his son can also restore him to life. In the Epistle to James (2:21–23), the Binding of Isaac serves as proof that faith requires acts. Abraham's faith was not made truly lasting through the act of the Binding. In the Epistle to the Romans (8:32), it is said of it, "He who did not spare His own son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?" Geza Vermes relies upon these verses in his argument that prior to Paul there was already an ancient Jewish tradition;[12] however, as has correctly

been noted by Swetnam, Paul's intention was that, just as Abraham did not spare the son whom he loved, so did God not spare the Son He loved, namely, Jesus. The comparison is between Abraham and God, and of the willingness of Abraham to bind and of God to crucify, but it does not require an equal status being granted to the Crucifixion, which took place in practice, with the Binding, which was not carried out.

The words of Justin Martyr, from the middle of the second century, can also be interpreted as closer to the *Mekhilta*, though still significantly distant from it. He draws an analogy between the blood of the Passover and Jesus' blood: just as the blood of the Passover saved the Israelites in Egypt, so does the blood of Christ save from death those who believe in Him. This is also proof that he did not know a similar analogy to the Binding of Isaac, for if this were not the case, he certainly would have made use of it here.[13] His contemporary, Melito of Sardis, likewise draws an analogy between the two events, and he too compares only the events that preceded the Binding itself – i.e., the three days' waiting and the carrying of the wood – but when he comes to the Binding itself, the analogy with Jesus ceases.[14]

An additional argument raised by Hayward is that the tradition regarding Isaac's Binding in the *Mekhilta* and in several additional midrashic parallels are unusual traditions, which were suppressed by the central stream in rabbinic literature that rejects them. According to his argument, it is precisely in this move of negating the tradition of the actual slaughter of Isaac that one finds expression of an anti-Christian outlook that rejects the idea of human sacrifice. One must admit that this claim sounds no less convincing than the opposite one, but it may be that there is no need to decide between the two. It is possible that there were two different tendencies among the Sages: one that adopted the story of the Crucifixion and substituted for it an alternative Jewish story, and a second that suppressed it completely and attempted to conceal its very memory. This likelihood is strengthened by Hayward's assertion that, throughout the literature of the Church fathers, there is no mention of a Jewish tradition according to which Abraham slaughtered Isaac. From this we may conclude that this Jewish tradition originated at the turn of the second century or the beginning of the third century and was later silenced by most of the Sages out of fear of appearing too similar to the Christians.

The very transformation from the Biblical story centered around Abraham's trial to a rabbinical account centering on the sacrificial son, is itself adequate testimony to the need to offer a Jewish alternative to the Crucifixion tale. The atoning role assigned by the *Mekhilta* to Isaac's sacrificial blood recalls the redemptive role of Jesus on the Cross. It is hence probable that this is also what lies behind the Sages' reinterpretation of the blowing of the Shofar on the Jewish New Year.[15] The Sages required that the Shofar itself be made from a ram's horn so that it would recall the offering of Isaac. God, upon hearing the Shofar blast, is supposed to remember the atoning power of the sacrifice and to forgive sins. The *Mekhilta* should also perhaps be read as an indirect polemic in response to the Epistle to the Hebrews, which denigrates the Temple ritual of animal sacrifice, in contrast to the uttermost sacrifice of Jesus. The *Mekhilta* would answer that every sacrifice, even that of an animal, reminds God of the ultimate sacrifice of Isaac.

III

The Jewish and Christian faiths both agree that the "seeing" God is a remembering God, a forgiving God, but also a vengeful God. He forgives the sins of martyrs, yet demands their blood be avenged on their tormenters. This kind of agreement sharpened the dispute over just what it is that God remembers, that is, the content of God's historical memory and its implications. This can be illustrated by means of a number of legends and interpretations that developed in both religions around the murder of the Prophet Zechariah, a name whose meaning (from the Hebrew ¸ «¦"to remember") underscores the remembering aspect of God.

The source for Zechariah's murder is 2 Chronicles 24. Zechariah was a prophet, assassinated by fiat of Yehoash, King of Judea, inside the Temple courtyard. At the moment of his death he cried: " ¸ ©¶ ¤¹ ¥ ¸ £–©May the Lord see and requite it," calling upon God to "see" his blood and avenge his death. Though the Bible tells of only one other case involving the assassination of a prophet, that of Uriahu,[16] the Book of Nehemiah expresses the gross allegation that vaticide was rather characteristic of Israel.[17] According to Odil Steck, the Deuteronomic conception is that Israel sinned before God and was hence punished with exile, while the Book of Nehemiah shifts the allegation of disloyalty from God onto His prophets.[18]

The prophet-killing motif sank into near oblivion in Second Temple literature. A solitary echo of it survives in the *Book of Jubilees*, suggesting that this tradition, though marginalized, was not extinguished completely.[19] The appearance of Christianity of course turned this state of affairs completely on its head, and thenceforth the tradition took center stage in Jewish–Christian disputation.[20] Matthew 23 describes Jerusalem as the city that "kills the prophets" (v. 37). The Pharisees rejoined that they had treated the prophets better than had their forebears during the First Temple Period, but this was anyhow an indirect admission, at least in the eyes of Matthew, to the murders perpetrated during the First Temple Period: "So you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets; fill up, then, the measure of your ancestors" (vv. 31–32). Hence the sin of vaticide had been hanging over Israel for many generations, while retribution awaited the "filling of the measure," i.e. Jesus' crucifixion. The Crucifixion itself was the last in a series of prophet murders, the culmination of which meant that the guilt of all the generations would devolve onto Jesus' executioners:

> Therefore I send you prophets, sages and scribes, some of whom you will kill and crucify … so that upon you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar.
>
> (vv. 34–35)

The punishment for the killing of Jesus was the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

Employing a phrase in echo of Zechariah's appeal in the face of death, "May the Lord see and requite it," Matthew – and he is the only evangelist to do so – has the Jews who were involved in Jesus' crucifixion declare, "his blood be on us and on our children" (Matthew 27:25).[21] The anticipation of vengeance occupies a central place in the New Testament.[22] In the third century Origen linked Jesus' murder with the hostility shown by the Children of Israel toward Moses: "Oftentimes a few of the people went and threw stones at Moses."[23] Most surprisingly, even a Jewish contemporary of Origen, the *Sifre Zuta* on Numbers 15, shows that the Israelites wished Moses dead: "You will end up harming Moses … you will end up harming the prophets … you will end up harming the Temple."[24] Although the prophecy envisions the future, this is really a case of *vaticinium ex eventu*. The exegete knows that the Children of Israel smote the prophets, he also knows that the Temple was destroyed, hence the prophecy that foretells of Moses being harmed is as good as pleading guilty to the act.

The content of the Jewish Midrash is rather surprising, in that it links the murder of Moses with the killing of the prophets, and the killing of the prophets with the destruction of the Temple. Lo and behold, this is the very same claim that Matthew puts forth in the name of Jesus: that the killing of prophets in general and of *the* prophet in particular – of him, Jesus, and in the Midrash, Moses – will bring about the destruction of the Temple! How can we make sense of the fact that just when Christian interpretation of the destruction of the Second Temple was declaring itself, a Jewish exegete proclaimed that the killing of Moses ushered in the eventual destruction of the Temple? The similarity between the *Sifre* and Origen gives the impression that both sides are speaking the same language, even if they hold opposing views. By the third century CE the punishment – the destruction of the Second Temple – was historical fact. The only question being disputed was: just what is the sin? The Jewish Midrash acknowledges the Jewish sin. Indeed, our forebears sinned gravely by killing the prophets, but their sin was not in killing Jesus, but rather Moses, for which they had already been punished with the destruction of the First Temple. Killing Jesus is frankly of little import in Jewish eyes, for he was neither God, nor prophet, nor Messiah.

We have seen how Matthew viewed Zechariah's murder as an event marking the end of a protracted era of Jewish murderousness, one that traces its beginnings all the way back to Cain's slaying of Abel. Surprisingly enough, the prophet Zechariah plays a pivotal role in Jewish Midrash as well, as a memory that both necessitates and justifies an unbearable punishment. Recall that Zechariah cried out as he was being murdered "May the Lord see and requite it"; indeed, his plea was granted. According to the Talmud, Zechariah's blood knew no peace until Nebuzaradan, wrecker of the First Temple, came and slew thousands of Israelites:

> When Nebuzaradan came in, the blood [=of Zechariah] began to drip. He said to them, "What sort of blood is this dripping blood?" They said to him, "It is the blood of oxen, rams, and sheep that we have offered on the altar." He forthwith sent and brought oxen, rams, and sheep and slaughtered them

> in his presence, but the blood continued to drip. He said to them, "If you tell the truth, well and good, but if not, I shall comb your flesh with iron combs." They said to him, "What shall we tell you? He was a prophet who rebuked us. We conspired against him and killed him. And lo, years have passed, but his blood has not stopped seething." He said to them, "I shall appease it." He brought before him the great Sanhedrin and the lesser Sanhedrin and killed them until their blood mingled with that of Zechariah: "Oaths are imposed and broken, they kill and rob, there is nothing but adultery and license, one deed of blood after another" (Hosea 4:2). Still the blood seethed. He brought boys and girls and killed them by the blood, but it did not stop seething. He brought youngsters from the school house and killed them over it, but it did not stop seething. Forthwith he took eighty thousand young priests and killed them on his account, until the blood lapped the grave of Zechariah. But the blood did not stop seething. He said, "Zechariah, Zechariah, all the best of them I have destroyed. Do you want me to exterminate them all?" When he said this the blood forthwith came to rest. Then he considered repenting, saying, "Now if one soul matters thus, as to that man who has killed all these souls, how much more so!" He fled and sent a parting gift and converted.[25]

The question that practically asks itself is: why do the Sages of the Talmud see fit to elaborate on the legend surrounding the avenging of Zechariah's blood, given that this legend seemingly sustains the core of Christian propaganda, which sees Zechariah as a prototype for Jesus and which claims that Jerusalem was laid to waste to requite the slaying of her prophets? The role played by Nebuzaradan in the Jewish legend recalls that of Vespasian in the Christian apocryphal legend known as *Vindicta Salvatoris*. In both narratives, the wrecker of Jerusalem is the avenger of the slain prophet's blood, and in being portrayed as a messenger of God he merits a sort of rehabilitation. The Nebuzaradan of the Jewish legend converts to Judaism, while the Vespasian of the Christian legend believes in Jesus despite never having been baptized.

Jean-Daniel Dubois reflected that the meaning of the name Zechariah is realized in both stories, Jewish and Christian alike: God remembers, and he remembers the blood, the blood of Jesus and the blood of Zechariah.[26] Dubois holds that the Jewish legend is original and independent, and should not be viewed as an acculturation of the Christian accusation. Galit Hazan-Rokem is another who tends to downplay the dialogical interchange between the Jewish legend and the Christian story.[27] She perceives an original and independent Jewish legend, whose purpose was to establish in the national memory the site of the ruined Temple as the place where Zechariah's blood bubbled up. This "holy" place is accredited with healing virtues in *Lamentations Rabbah*. It should be noted that the Jews' identification of the scene of Zechariah's murder as a "holy" place already implies a Jewish response to the Christian parallel described by the Pilgrim of Bordeaux from the year 333, who claimed that even in his own time traces of Zechariah's blood remained in the Temple.[28]

The story about Zechariah differs in a very significant detail from the midrashic account of the killing of Moses. Here we are presented with a meticulous and completely overstated account of the punishment inflicted by Nebuzaradan in avenging Zechariah's blood. This exaggeration is novel and has no equivalent in earlier literature, and thus requires explanation. The assumption that we are dealing with a Jewish memory that is internal, innocent, self-contained, and heedless of the gravest accusation that Christianity ever hurled at Judaism, seems less likely in this case. It is equally unlikely that the Jews would put a sword to their necks just so that they might carry on their own memory of a "holy" place on the Temple Mount, one which they are anyhow prohibited from approaching. The inclusion of the Nebuzaradan story among the stories of the destruction of the Second Temple (in the Babylonian Talmud and in *Lamentations Rabbah*) strengthens the possibility that we are dealing with a polemical context.

It is reasonable to assume that the Jewish legend surrounding Zechariah integrated a Christian fable and in so doing engaged it polemically. It accepted in principal the accusation of vaticide, but at the same time pushed the Christian explanation back to a more neutral point in time, i.e., to the First Temple Period. The exaggerated overstatement of the punishment was meant to rebuff the Christian accusation by claiming that Zechariah's blood had already been set to rest, atoned for by the blood of the countless fallen at the hands of Nebuzaradan. There no longer remained an abiding vengeance, and there was no longer any blood to atone for. We are dealing with a counter-narrative that adopted the Christian paradigm but turned it upside down. Matthew has Jesus claim that the measure has not been filled by the killing of Zechariah; another killing is needed, the crucifixion of Jesus himself, in order to wreak destruction and exile upon the Jewish people. To this the Jewish legend makes a practical and pithy reply: "'I have slain the best of them; do you want me to destroy them all?' When he said this to him, it [the blood] ceased [to bubble]." The measure had been filled, the balance restored; there was no longer any irreligion weighing on the Jews.[29]

IV

What happened to this common Jewish-Christian memory in the Middle Ages? We have seen that the Jews did not gainsay their involvement in killing the prophets, and thus accepted the basic premise underlying the Christian allegations. They also never disputed their full implication in Jesus' crucifixion. Whereas the Gospels charge the Sanhedrin only with prevailing upon Pontius Pilate, attesting that the actual crucifixion was carried out by the Romans, the Talmud does not hesitate to challenge an explicit rule of conduct from the Mishnah on the grounds that a different procedure was in effect at the trial of Jesus, as though this trial was carried out in full accordance with Jewish law.[30]

And yet, although in late antiquity there was a tendency to assert that the Jews had already been exculpated of vaticide, by the Middle Ages the rules of the game had changed. From the end of the eleventh century on, the Jews found themselves on the receiving end of persecution, and they needed to come up with

some rationalization for their suffering. This new reality caused them to adopt an ideology of martyrdom in response to the Christian accusation of deicide. The Jews could now turn the cry "his blood is upon us and upon our children" back upon the Christians, and hope for future retribution. Now the Jewish martyr, too, could identify with Zechariah's vengeful cry "May the Lord see and requite it" – but only because the sin that had to do with Zechariah was no longer hanging over him. The Jews saw themselves as innocent of any crime, but suffering nevertheless. Here was a complete acculturation of the Christian viewpoint in reverse: the Jewish martyr became the "lamb of God."

This was accomplished by means of the motif of a seeing, remembering, and avenging God. In the year 1171 the Jews of Blois were burned at the stake on trumped-up accusations of having ritually slain a Christian on Easter. According to the story, before being lashed to the stake they uttered a cry well-known among them: "¤ ¸'¶¤¸¤ ┼ on the mount of the Lord there is vision,"[31] alluding to the Binding of Isaac. By invoking the seeing God, the Jews were flouting the Christian demand to convert. Like Zechariah, so too the Jews of Blois proclaimed in the throes of dying that their blood would be seen and remembered before God, intending that at the moment of redemption, God will redeem and avenge upon Israel's enemies the spilt blood of those who died to sanctify his name. This is a novel interpretation of the verse, "on the mount of the Lord there is vision": namely, it is not God who shall be seen, but rather the blood of those martyred in His name shall be seen by Him. This interpretation of "seeing" appears again in a dirge by Rabbi Yoel ben Yitzchak of Bonn, who petitions God to avenge the blood of the slain: "And now, O Lord, until when? … May the Lord see and judge the adversary."[32]

Jews and Christians seem to have exchanged roles. Whereas in late antiquity the Christians looked to avenge the blood of Jesus, now the Jews have deflected this claim upon themselves: We are the victim, and our blood shall be avenged in the days to come. The place held by Zechariah or Jesus in the first centuries CE was usurped in the Crusader era by the Jewish martyrs. Following upon Zechariah's words, "May the Lord see and requite it," Christianity had over generations laid the accusation "his blood be on us and on our children" on the Jews. To this the medieval Jewish martyrs replied: "on the mount of the Lord there is vision," referring to their own blood. The centrality of the Binding of Isaac motif among Ashkenazic depictions of martyrdom was meant to lend it equal status with Golgotha and the Crucifixion story.

The Jews, in fact, adopted the language of the opposite party, that of the oppressor. Both sides were now expounding a divine memory of murder wanting retribution, and both agreed that such retribution would come at the End of Days. Nor did they dispute anything but the question of just whose blood was to be avenged: the blood of the Messiah, Son of God, or the blood of the righteous martyr? In the Franco-Ashkenazic world Jewish martyrs filled the role that Jesus played in Christianity. Elsewhere I have shown the uncanny similarity between the story of Rabbi Amnon of Mainz, who was martyred on the Day of Atonement, rose to heaven, and three days later transmitted his message to his people, and the

story of Jesus who, crucified to death, rose on the third day to transmit his gospel to the entire world.[33] The Jewish story is an internalization of the *Imitatio Christi* ideal. Just as the Christians produced secondary figures of saints who mimic the acts of Jesus, so did the Jews develop figures of righteousness, martyred in the name of God.

The creation of a new Jewish martyrological language did not come about *ex nihilo*; rather, it was an appropriation of notions long prevalent in Christianity that occurred in response to Crusader ideology. The remembering God of both faiths served as an avenging God. But the remembering God of the Jews during the Crusades was the God of the oppressed and persecuted, and his divine memory betrays the political passivity of a human memory that lacked the strength to punish the wrongdoers. The remembering God was created by a society that was not prepared to forget, yet lacked the strength and ability to turn its memory into an active force, and so ascribed it to God.

I have already elaborated elsewhere on the Messianic aspect of the Jews' yearning to avenge the blood of their martyrs.[34] The idea expressed by the martyrs of Blois that their blood would be avenged in the days to come on the mountain where God will be seen, i.e., the Temple in Jerusalem, recalls a certain section of the Babylonian Talmud, Tractate *Ta'anit* 16a, where there are presented three interdependent customs to do with fasting: Why does everyone put ashes on his head during a public fast? The answer is that God may remember the ashes of the bound Isaac. And why do those who fast visit cemeteries? So that the dead may intercede for mercy on their behalf. And what is the meaning of "Mount Moriah"? It is the mountain whence fear came upon the heathens. What fear is supposed to have issued from Mount Moriah? I believe that the Talmud is alluding to the fear of retribution sure to be inflicted in the days to come upon such as slew the martyrs. This is the fear of vengeful deliverance, linked with the memory of a God who "sees" the blood of those who were sacrificed and slaughtered in His name. The Tosaphists hence comment about the ashes placed on the mourners' heads: "And these ashes are derived from human bones, for these very ashes are meant to recall the Binding of Isaac."[35] This dry legal language reveals just how pervasive was the view that ascribed to the Binding of Isaac the symbolism of human sacrifice.

Early Christian literature also provides an eschatological interpretation to the claim that states that the Jews alone are responsible for the Crucifixion of the Christ. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem in the middle of the fourth century, writes in his interpretation of Zechariah 12:10, "And they shall lament to Me about those who are slain," that this verse refers to the Jews at the End of Days, according to which interpretation the Jews stand to be punished on the Judgment Day for Jesus' crucifixion.[36]

This also seems to be the correct historical context in which to read descriptions of the First Crusade. Both the Latin and the Hebrew sources mention that the main impetus behind the Crusaders' pillage and plunder of the Jews was to avenge the blood of Jesus upon them.[37] This summons is in contradiction to canonical law, which sets great store by the duty to endure the presence of the

Jews within Christian society and to refrain from harming them. What sort of interpretation then could justify implementing the cry "his blood be on us and on our children"?[38] Jews and Christians today both tend to view this cry as a prophecy that fulfilled itself throughout a history red with the blood of medieval Jews; however, I know of no churchman who considered this cry a license to spill Jewish blood. Christian interpretation postponed its realization to the Second Coming of Jesus. The call to wreak vengeance upon the Jews during the First Crusade so as to requite Jesus' crucifixion is yet another point in favor of those who hold that, behind the malicious persecutions of the Jews stood the eschatological ambition of a small group of crusaders, led by Graf Emicho, who saw himself as the "last emperor."[39]

V

We have thus far discussed the motif of the seeing, remembering, forgiving, and punishing God, and how this functioned in rabbinic literature and in the Crusader era. We have also located Christian parallels to these ideas, suggesting that the remarkable similarity is the result of Jewish acculturation of Christian symbolism. However, during the First Crusade another kind of behavior persisted among Jewish martyrs, one conspicuously lacking a Christian counterpart: self-immolation and parricide in order to forestall conversion. In some such cases, the blood weighed outstandingly, and the acts fell little short of actual blood-rituals. How shall we explain what lies behind this extreme behavior?

Although some historians have chosen to view this behavior as an acculturation of Christian martyrological values, this position is a difficult one to accept. To be sure, Christian martyrs during the great persecutions of the first few centuries CE were quite willing to lay down their lives uttering *Christianus sum*, but they always perished at the hands of others, never by their own. Also during the period of religious persecution in ninth-century Muslim Spain (Andalusia), dozens of Christian martyrs advocated that it was permissible to rail at Islam and insult Muhammad for the purpose of being caught and summarily executed. But even this left the Christian martyr passive. No doubt he brought death to his doorstep, but he did not perform the act, and certainly did not do it to others.

The Jewish martyrs of medieval Ashkenaz, on the other hand, were active in their violence. Perhaps this can be better understood against the backdrop of Crusader violence against the Jews. Victims tend to identify with the aggression of their assailant, internalizing it and then redirecting it onto themselves and their loved ones. Identifying in this manner is really a desperate attempt to overcome a feeling of impotence through an allegedly "epic" portrayal of a hero. It is very probable that "heroism" was needed to compensate for the profound humiliation that the Jews felt throughout the Crusades. The People of Israel, the Chosen Nation, beloved of God, are immersed in an exile with no foreseeable end; while the enemies of God, sons of a spurned and reviled Esau, conquer the fatherland from yet another group of infidels. Instead of the Children of Israel returning to the land of their fathers, it is their Christian neighbors who undertake the journey.

This humiliation must have raised some very thorny theological question marks, and perhaps it is this feeling that encouraged the violent and extreme reaction calculated to make sacrificial victims of Jews, quite literally. This would indicate that Jewish behavior during the Crusades was an internal Jewish process, the result of extraordinary and unique historical circumstances.

Notes

1 Ahad Ha'am, "Some Consolation," in *Selected Essays by Ahad Ha'am*, translated from the Hebrew, edited and with an introduction by Leon Simon (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1962), 204.
2 *Pisha* §7; *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Ishmael*, ed. and trans. Jacob Z. Lauterbach (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 2004), 1.40.
3 Jubilees 15:14; 18:19. On the importance of Jubilees for an early dating of the link between Passover and the Aqedah, see Roger Le Déaut, *La nuit pascale. Essai sur la signification de la Pâque juive à partir du Targum d'Exode XII 42* (Rome: Institut Biblique Pontifical, 1963), 179–184. Contrary to Le Déaut, P. R. Davies and B. D. Chilton ("The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 [1978], 518–519) claim that, given the fact that Jubilees connects every biblical festival with events in the lives of the Patriarch, the link between Passover and the Aqedah does not prove an essential relation between them.
4 Yair Zakovitch, *David: From Shepherd to Messiah* (Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1996), 135–140.
5 2 Chronicles 3:1.
6 *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai*; *Vayera* §6; *Tanhuma*, *Vayera* §23. In *Pirqei de-Rabbi Eliezer*, chapter 31 (eighth century), Isaac dies and is later resurrected.
7 Shalom Spiegel, *The Last Trial* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1967), esp. 6–8, 30–32, 45–48.
8 Abraham Geiger, "Erbsünde und Versöhnungstod; deren Versuch in das Judenthum einzudringen," *Jüdische Zeitschrift für Wissenschaft und Leben* 10 (1872), 166–171. One hundred years later, Davies and Chilton reached very similar conclusions, albeit with stronger arguments. See "The Aqedah: A Revised Tradition History," esp. p. 536.
9 For a detailed description of the various discussions and attitudes, see James Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac. A Study of the Epistle to the Hebrews in the Light of the Aqedah* (Rome: Analecta Biblica, 1981), 4–22; Edward Kessler, *Bound by the Bible. Jews, Christians and the Sacrifice of Isaac* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33–36, 123–137. For an overview of the main currents, see also Jeremy Cohen, *Christ Killers. The Jews and the Passion from the Bible to the Big Screen* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 38–44.
10 C. T. R. Hayward, "The Sacrifice of Isaac and Jewish Polemic Against Christianity," *Catholic Quarterly* 52 (1990), 292–306. Kessler, *Bound by the Bible*, 33–36, 123–137, suggested a double influence: the Christian perception of the Crucifixion of Jesus motivated the Jewish midrashim to portray Isaac as a martyr whose blood was shed by his father, and vice versa. This new Jewish interpretation motivated the Church fathers to minimize the role of Isaac in the Aqedah and to highlight the role played by Abraham.
11 Swetnam, *Jesus and Isaac*, 80–85.
12 G. Vermes, "Redemption and Genesis XXII – the Binding of Isaac and the Sacrifice of Jesus," in his *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1961), 193–227.
13 Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 111.3.
14 "But Christ suffered, whereas Isaac did not suffer" (Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha and Fragments*, ed. Stuart G. Hall [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979], 75).

15 *b. Rosh Hashana* 16a.
16 Jeremiah 26:20–24. Cf.: ibid. 2:30; 2 Chronicles 24:20–22; 1 Kings 19:10.
17 Nehemiah 9:13.
18 Odil H. Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten. Untersuchungen zur Überlieferung des deuteronomistischen Geschichtsbildes im Alten Testament, Spätjudentum und Urchristentum* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1967).
19 Jubilees 1:12.
20 It seems reasonable to assume that this is also the historical background for the appearance of the story about the murder of the prophet Isaiah by King Manasseh in the apocryphal literature (*Martyrdom and Ascension of Isaiah*), in the patristic literature (*Lives of the Prophets*), and in the talmudic literature. See Eli Yassif, "Traces of Folk Traditions of the Second Temple Period in Rabbinic Literature," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 39 (1988), 216–220. Yassif suggests a "folkloristic process of transmission" (ibid., n. 1). I tend to understand this common story-telling as an expression of a polemical discourse, in which refutation of the other's story and its acceptance live side by side.
21 On the history and impact of this verse in Christian literature, see Rainer Kampling, *Das Blut Christi und die Juden: Mt 27, 25 bei den lateinsprachigen christlichen Autoren bis zu Leo dem Grossen* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1984), esp. 221–238. On its impact in the ninth century, see Johannes Heil, *Komilation oder Konstruktion. Die Juden in den Pauluskommentaren des 9. Jahrhunderts* (Hanover: Hansche, 1998), 111–118. See also Friedrich Lotter, "'Der Gerechte wird seine Hände im Blut des Gottlosen waschen.' Die Reaktivierung des theologischen Antijudaismus im Psalmenkommentar des Brono von Würzburg," *Aschkenas* 10 (2000), 43–115, esp. pp. 45–46, 107–108. Matthew 27:25 is quoted in a commentary of R. Ephraim ben Ya'akov (Germany, twelfth century) on a Hebrew *piyyut* named *Elohim lekha al domi*. The commentary demonstrates the profound Jewish awareness of the impact of this verse on relations of the Christians to Jews. See *Sefer Arugat Habosem*, ed. E. E. Urbach (Jerusalem: Mekitse Nirdamim, 1963), 4.47–48.
22 Matthew 21:33–44; Acts 7:52; Hebrews 11:36–38; 1 Thessalonians 2:15. On medieval interpretations of the verse in relation to vengeance, see Christopher Ocker, "Ritual Murder and the Subjectivity of Christ: A Choice in Medieval Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998), 164–166. According to Thomas de Cantipré, since the Jews declared "let his blood be upon us and our children" they have been afflicted with hemorrhoids. In order to recover from this malady they were advised by a sage once a year to take Christian blood. See Julius Aronius, *Regesten zur geschichte der Juden im fränkischen und deutschen Reiche bis zum Jahre 1273* (Berlin: L. Simion, 1887), 728, 306–308; Joshua Trachtenberg, *The Devil and the Jews* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1943), 148.
23 His commentary to Matthew 10:18 (*Origenes Werke*, vol. 11 (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1933).
24 *Sifre Zuta* 15.23, p. 284. Freud was probably unaware of this midrash when writing his *Moses and Monotheism* (New York: Knopf, 1939).
25 *Lamentations Rabbah – An Analytical Translation*, trans. Jacob Neusner, Brown Judaic Studies 193 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1989), 65. For parallel versions, see *j. Ta'anit* 4.5; *b. Gittin* 57b; *b. Sanhedrin* 96b; *Ma'aseh Daniel*, ed. A. Jellinek, in *Bet ha-Midrasch*, 5.118; *Targum Sheni* to Esther 1:3.
26 Jean-Daniel Dubois, "La mort de Zacharie: mémoire juive et mémoire chrétienne," *Revue des Etudes Augustiniennes* 40 (1994), 23–38. See also Sheldon H. Blank, "The Death of Zechariah in Rabbinic Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 12–13 (1937–1938), 327–346; Henry A. Fischel, "Martyr and Prophet," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 37 (1946–1947), 265–280, 363–386; Betsy Halpern Amaru, "The Killing of the Prophets: Unraveling a Midrash," *Hebrew Union College Annual*, 54 (1983), 153–180; cf. Hans J. Schoeps, "Die jüdischen Prophetenmorde," in ibid., *Aus frühchristlicher Zeit*

(Tübingen: Mohr, 1950), 126–143; Steck, *Israel und das gewaltsame Geschick der Propheten*; Rosemary R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide: the Theological Roots of Anti-Semitism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1974); David M. Scholer, "Israel Murdered Its Prophets. The Origin and Development of the Tradition in the Old Testament and Judaism" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Harvard University, 1980).

27 Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Web of Life: Folklore and Midrash in Rabbinic Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 169–171.

28 *The Anonymous Pilgrim of Bordeaux*, in *Itineraria et alia geographica*, ed. P. Geyer and O. Cuntz (Turnhout: Brepols, 1965), 14–16. The English translation can be found in John Wilkinson, *Egeria's Travels* (Jerusalem: Ariel Publishing House, 1981), 157.

29 A medieval reading of the midrash is portrayed in the lament of Judah Halevi, *Yom Akhpi*. See Daniel Goldschmidt, *Seder ha-Qinot Le-Tish'ah be-Av* (Jerusalem: Mosad Ha-Rav Kook, 1972), §35, 120–122.

30 *b. Sanhedrin* 43a.

31 Shalom Spiegel, "*In Monte Dominus videbitur*: The Martyrs of Blois and the Early Accusations of Ritual Murder" [Hebrew], in *Mordecai M. Kaplan Jubilee Volume*, ed., Moshe Davis (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1953), 267–287.

32 A. M. Habermann, *Sefer Gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Zarfat* (Jerusalem: Sifre Tarshish, 1971), 101. See also ibid., 111, where the *payytan* draws a connection between the name *Moriyah* and the Hebrew verb ¥ ,(©will have fear"), referring to the non-Jews, as a result of the Divine vengeance (based on *j. Berachot* 4.5 (8c): ¹ ® ¹ - © ¸ © ¥ ¶¬ ¥).¬ -

33 Yisrael J. Yuval, "The Silence of the Historian and the Ingenuity of the Storyteller," *Common Knowledge* 9 (2003), 228–240.

34 Yisrael J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb. Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), chapter 3.

35 Tosafot at *b. Ta'anit* 15b, s.v. *venotnin 'afar*.

36 Oded Irshai, "Cyril of Jerusalem: The Apparition of the Cross and the Jews," in *Contra Iudaeos. Ancient and Medieval Polemics between Christians and Jews*, ed. Ora Limor and Guy G. Stroumsa (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1996), 101–102.

37 Friedrich Lotter, "'Tod oder Taufe.' Das Problem der Zwangstaufen während des ersten Kreuzzugs," in *Juden und Christen zur Zeit der Kreuzzüge*, Alfred Haverkamp (Sigmaringen: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 1999), 122–127.

38 Kampling (*Das Blut Christi*, 223), writes: "Der Gadanke, dass es den Menschen obliege, die Juden wegen MT 27, 25 zu bestrafen, lag den Predigen und Theologen fern. Es war einer späteren Zeit vorbehalten." He refers, of course, only to texts until the middle of the fifth century. On the shift in the Middle Ages, see Jeremy Cohen, "The Jews as the Killers of Christ in the Latin Tradition, from Augustine to the Friars," *Traditio* 34 (1983), 1–27; Heil, *Komilation oder Konstruktion*. For a broader overview, see Cohen, *Christ Killers*.

39 Carl Erdmann, "Endkaiserglaube und Kreuzzungsgedanke im 11. Jahrhundert," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte*, 51 (1932), 384–414. On the messianic factor in the First Crusade, see Lea Dasberg, *Untersuchungen über die Entwertung des Judenstatus im 11. Jahrhundert* (Paris: Mouton, 1965), 173–193; Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London: Maurice Temple Smith, 1970), 73–74; Hans Liebeschütz, "The Crusading Movement in its Bearing on the Christian Attitude toward Jewry," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 10 (1980), 97–111; Jonathan Riley-Smith, *The First Crusade and the Idea of Crusading* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1986), 50–57; Hannes Möring, *Der Weltkaiser der Endzeit. Entstehung, Wandel und Wirkung einer tausendjährigen Weissagung* (Stuttgart: Thorbecke, 2000), 166–175.

7 Pharaoh's bloodbath

Medieval European Jewish thoughts about leprosy, disease, and blood therapy[1]

Ephraim Shoham-Steiner

Leprosy

Leprosy was, and probably still is, one of the most feared diseases known to mankind.[2] Like other feared diseases it is not only the illness itself but its external manifestations, the physical corruption of the body alongside vivid facial and limb disfigurement, that both inhibit and paradoxically draw public reaction. Throughout the centuries, the disease received much attention by both intellectuals as well as medical practitioners, leaving behind a long paper trail and an extensive body of writing. This corpus of knowledge dealt with the causes of leprosy; the social, religious, and moral status of those afflicted; and the medical, magical, and theological means to cure it.

Almost 35 years ago N. S. Brody published a seminal study on the legacy of leprosy in the medieval European world. In this study Brody pointed out that due to its harmful nature and acute graphic bodily manifestation, authors from late antiquity, the early medieval period, and the high Middle Ages related to leprosy as an embodiment of sin itself, a manifestation of immorality as well as punishment for sin.[3] On the other hand, more recent research, like that by Bernard Hamilton in his study on the leprous king of Jerusalem, Baldwin IV, has shown that according to some Christian theologians in the Middle Ages "if viewed in the right manner, leprosy serves as an avenue to a meta-corporeal way of spiritual existence."[4]

From quite an early stage there has been a close connection between leprosy and human blood. This chapter highlights this connection, attempts to clarify it, and looks into some of the traditions linking these two concepts and their social meaning, especially in the mentality, writing, and art of medieval European Jews. Specifically, I wish to discuss a Jewish tradition related to leprosy and its potential cure by use of blood therapy. The tradition first appeared in late antiquity and then evolved during the Middle Ages. It bears no specific name other than those modern ones provided by scholars. I choose to refer to it as "Pharaoh's Bloodbath," invoking both the sense of carnage involved as well as the bathing aspect used for therapeutic reasons.

The *Oxford Etymological Dictionary* states that the phrase "bloodbath" can be traced to the nineteenth-century work *The New Sydenham Society Lexicon of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, which indicates that a bloodbath is a "bath in

warm blood … supposed to be a very powerful tonic in great debility from long-continued diseases."[5] This definition falls short of stating exactly what kind of "long-continued diseases" are meant, although I believe that leprosy would indeed be one such disease. Only in the nineteenth century was the term used in its common contemporary English sense, influenced by other European languages, indicating a wholesale slaughter and massacre.

Leprosy and blood – the conceptual meeting point

It is probable that as early as the time of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible in the third century BCE, the biblical disease *tzara'at* was associated with what was then a rather newly imported disease, known in the Near East as *lepra*.[6] The juxtaposition of these two terms, *lepra* and *tzara'at*, caused, and to a certain extent still causes, many misconceptions about them both. It also turned *tzara'at* into a unique conceptual meeting point between biblical morality, the sociological aspects of group identity, and the tensions between the sacred and profane. The Hebrew Bible mentions *tzara'at* in a few places: It appears in juridical references (Leviticus 13–14; Numbers 5; Deuteronomy 24) as well as in the literary narratives, both in the Pentateuch (Exodus 4; Numbers 12) and in the books of Kings and Chronicles (2 Kings 5; 2 Kings 7; 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 26).[7] In these texts biblical figures like Moses, his sister Miriam, Na'aman the Syrian general, Gehazi (the prophet Elisha's right-hand man), the three men outside the gates of the city of Samaria, and King Uziya of Judea are all mentioned as afflicted with *tzara'at.* In some cases the biblical narratives use the Hebrew word *Nega'im* (closely associated with *tzara'at* in Leviticus), as in the story of Sarai's abduction and removal to the Egyptian Pharaoh's bedchambers (Genesis 12); homiletic writing on Genesis understood this term as used to invoke the notion that Pharaoh, as well as his household, was afflicted with *tzara'at*.[8] In the Hebrew Bible *tzara'at* as well as the other afflictions mentioned in Leviticus 13–14 are clearly a divinely inflicted disease, designed – like most diseases in the biblical narrative – as a punitive instrument forged to chastise moral transgressions. This concept is most clearly illustrated in the case of Miriam's critique of Moses (Numbers 12), the case of Gehazi's greed (2 Kings 5), and the case of King Uziya's affliction (2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 26).[9]

The Levitical code, which discusses *tzara'at* at great length, does not ascribe any physical cure for this disease. It is clear from most of its biblical descriptions that *tzara'at* is a unique malady. It was believed to be a divinely inflicted ailment and therefore existed in the realm of purity and impurity, moral behavior and immoral behavior, the sacred and profane, as opposed to that of illness and cure. It is for this reason that the priests rather than physicians are those whom Leviticus entrusts with its diagnosis and "treatment." One is specifically instructed by Scripture to turn to the priest if the signs of *tzara'at* appear on the skin. The priest would then determine either that one is impure and therefore should temporarily be ostracized from the community, or that although one might manifest the illness all over the body he or she is pure and fit for human company.

It is during the process of the purification, described in great detail in Leviticus 14, that we find the first mention of blood with reference to *tzara'at*. Once diagnosed as having *tzara'at*, the afflicted is sprayed with the blood of one of the birds that were offered as sacrifice, and the right thumb and right big toe as well as the right earlobe were painted with the blood of this *asham* sacrifice. The *metzorah* – he who is afflicted with *tzara'at* – is both metaphorically and physically "earmarked" with sacrificial blood in the process of purification, eventually enabling him or her to re-enter the Israelite camp after a period of being expelled. From a strictly textual point of view all the above is valid for Hebrews only. In the biblical cases involving *tzara'at* and a non-Hebrew protagonist like Na'aman the Syrian general or Pharaoh the Egyptian (in the instance of Abraham's wife, Sarai), the deliverance from the disease is achieved through the mediation of a man with a close affinity to the almighty (such as Abraham or the prophet Elisha) who intercedes on the protagonist's behalf.[10] The biblical narrative does not mention sacrifice or blood in either of these cases.

As described earlier, the blood mentioned in the process of purifying a *metzorah* in Leviticus is sacrificial animal blood.[11] The connection between human blood and *tzara'at* does not appear anywhere in the biblical narrative, but surfaces later, in post-biblical writing. Early Jewish biblical exegesis, midrashic and talmudic literature, are the first to recount such a connection, probably based on the above-mentioned overlap in terms between *tzara'at* and *lepra*. Unlike *tzara'at*, described in the Hebrew Bible as a malady affecting the skin, the manifestations of *lepra* were not restricted to the human skin but caused multiple systemic dysfunctions, horrible disfigurement, the loss of limbs and distorted facial features. As early as Hellenistic times, *lepra* was understood as a disease caused by humoral imbalance attributed to moral transgressions (with a special relationship to those of a sexual nature) thus suggesting that the malady externalizes inner moral and spiritual problems. By late antiquity, although Jews seem to have inferred that theoretically the biblical *tzara'at* and *lepra* were not one and the same, there seemed to be an increasing overlap if not confusion in terms, and we find Jewish circles that use *tzara'at* and the terms typical to the Hebrew descriptions of *lepra* (for example: afflicted with *schehin*) interchangeably.

One such Midrash in *Leviticus Raba* mentions the humoral imbalance as the cause of biblical *tzara'at*, thus manifesting the cause of confusion. It refers to an already existing combination of terms describing a situation somewhere between the biblical malady as reflecting a moral disease and the notorious *lepra* caused by the humoral imbalance. Drawing on a quote from Job (28:25) the Midrash says:

> "…the waters by measure" (Job 28:25). This human is balanced, half of him is water and half is blood. When he is righteous neither the water overcomes the blood nor the blood overcomes the water; however, when he transgresses at times the water overcomes the blood and he becomes a hydroficium [=ill with dropsy] and at times the blood overcomes the water and he becomes *metzora*.[12]

According to the principals of medicine in antiquity and through the Middle Ages, most, if not all, human physical maladies as well as mental disorders were caused by an imbalance in the human "humors" or bile fluids. One of those fluids was blood (referred to as red bile; others were yellow bile, white bile and black bile). When an imbalance occurred, usually associated with excessive living habits – unbalanced behavior in either one's sexual conduct or dietary regulations – the humors were thought to move away from their natural balance, thus causing disease and disorder.[13]

One example of what was considered a bodily discharge of "corrupt blood" was female menstrual blood. Given the nature of post-biblical thinking regarding the concept of *tzara'at* and its confusion with terms signifying leprosy, leading to their conceptual linkage with "corrupted" blood and impurity, it is not surprising that female menstrual blood and *tzara'at* were closely associated as well. In late antiquity and in the medieval period both Jewish and non-Jewish lore tended to stress this connection quite extensively. Homiletics dating back to the commentaries on biblical verses found in the tanaitic and talmudic discussions made considerable exegetical efforts in this direction, drawing on the close textual proximity (*smi'chut*) between the legal rulings regarding menstruation and female impurity following childbirth, and the rules regarding *tzara'at* in Leviticus 13 through 15.[14]

It is not surprising to find, therefore, that sexually improper behavior had become linked to the outbreak of *tzara'at* and leprosy. By the European Middle Ages, Jews and non-Jews alike strongly associated leprosy with punishment for sexually promiscuous behavior or transgressions of a sexual nature. One such theme, repeated time and again in writings from that period, connected *tzara'at* and sexual intercourse during the monthly period of menstruation.[15] This was considered to be a prime cause for the outbreak of leprosy. Similar to their Christian neighbors, Jews believed that sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman might bring about leprosy. This idea was by no means novel and clearly drew on previously existing notions found in talmudic and midrashic literature of late antiquity. Rabbi Yitzchak ben Moshe of Vienna (known as "Or Zaruah" after his thirteenth-century popular Jewish legal compendium) states explicitly, quoting the *Midrash Tanhuma*:

> Rav Acha said: If a man had intercourse with his wife while she was bleeding the children that will be conceived will be afflicted with *tzara'at*.[16]

In a commentary on the Pentateuch attributed to Rabbi Elazar of Worms (the author of the early thirteenth-century German halakhic compendium *Rokeah*), but probably written by a contemporary from the same circle of German Jewish Pietists, we find the following quote:

> If she [the wife] has intercourse with her husband and she is menstruating, she causes her offspring to contract leprosy even twenty generations later. If she has intercourse in broad daylight the offspring will contract *baheret*

> [a biblical term used in the discussions about leprosy in Leviticus 13:2–4]; if the sexual act takes place in moonlight the offspring will contract *tzara'at*.[17] *Niddah* [female menstruation laws] are of a special nature in the eyes of the Holy One Blessed Be He that if one is negligible about them he will eventually contract *tzara'at*. That is why the discussion of childbirth and the issues of ailments [illegible] are in close textual proximity.[18]

From these sources we see that menstrual blood was considered both impure and foul, a fact that played a key role in the logic behind preventing contact with it, for it was thought to cause disease. It should be noted that the ideas expressed by Rabbi Elazar of Worms were not restricted to the Ashkenazi realm and were common among other medieval Jews as well. The thirteenth-century Jewish sage Nachmanides, a native of northern Iberia and a leading Jewish intellectual, was also a medical practitioner familiar with the learned medical wisdom and tradition of his time. In his commentary on the Pentateuch he explains how human sexual behavior might cause the outbreak of leprosy and why it was wise of the Torah to forbid intercourse during menstruation altogether:

> And the physicians, in their writings, have further mentioned that if the fetus is nurtured on fine blood and all its feeding in the womb will be from good blood [it] will grow up fine; however, if there are some deposits of menstrual blood in this blood the entire blood of the womb will go sour and he will be born with sores, ulcers, and various inflammations. And according to our Rabbis (*Tanhuma, Metzorah 1*), if a little of it [the menstrual blood] enters the fetus's body he will be leprous. And for all these reasons it is fitting that the Torah wisely counseled us to abstain from intercourse during menstruation.[19]

It seems Nachmanides attempted to reconcile the learned medical traditions of his time and his own ethical and religious tradition. It also marked, as does the work of his above-mentioned Ashkenazi contemporaries, a clear attempt to regulate and control behavior intrinsic to the private realm (i.e., sexual habits), by extending the customary scope of rabbinic authority through instilling the textual directive of abstaining from intercourse during the monthly period. The association of leprosy with menstrual blood, and more specifically the association of sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman and with the outbreak of leprosy in the offspring, clearly marks this attempt.

Nachmanides does not, however, refer to any healing methods regarding *tzara'at*, apart from the adoption of proper sexual behavior as a preventative technique. One German Jewish sage of the late thirteenth century, Rabbi Meir of Rothenberg, went even further, stating that although the Talmud explicitly states that even the most extreme cases of leprosy, referred to in the Talmud as *ra'atan* disease, do have a cure, he has no knowledge of what might comprise such a cure. In his words: "There is no ascribed cure for it [leprosy], and even if there is, it is highly uncommon."[20]

Contrary to the prevailing Jewish beliefs, according to the Greco-Roman medical tradition if one contracted leprosy it could be cured, though through an extreme method. Based on the conviction discussed earlier that leprosy was a disease caused by humoral imbalance, it was believed that one must either counter the cause of the humoral imbalance with its "same" or with its "opposite," an idea crystallized in the Latin phrase: *simil similibus – contra contraribus*.

Humoral theory attributed the outbreak of leprosy to excessive quantities of red bile. It is here that human blood first appears as a cure and not just as a cause for the outbreak of leprosy.

The acute remedy ascribed from ancient times to this imbalance was blood therapy. The humoral imbalance was thought to have corrupted the patient's blood, requiring a cure that would restore its purity. Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus) in the fifth section of Book 26 of *Naturalis Historiae*, compiled in the first century CE, referred to human blood therapy for leprosy employed by Egyptian kings.[21] It was probably texts like these that late antiquity Hebrew homiletics drew upon when they used this imagery and employed it with regard to the evil doings of the Egyptian Pharaoh during the time of the Exodus from Egypt.

Pharaoh's bloodbath – the midrash

In the Hebrew homiletic text *Shemot Raba* (commentary on Exodus), the rabbis clearly preferred a meta-textual exegetical mode of the simple reading of the text in order to portray the Egyptian monarch as ruthless and exceptionally brutal. *Shemot Raba* draws upon the proximity (*smichut*) between the biblical account of the death of Pharaoh (Exodus 1:23–24) and the Israelites' sigh and cry for deliverance. This sigh (¥ § °), the midrash says, came in the aftermath of many days of sorrow and enslavement followed by an evil council and a horrible decree.[22]

According to the midrash, Pharaoh did not actually die, as stated explicitly in Scripture, but actually fell ill with *tzara'at*. The portrayal of *tzara'at* as equal to death is a common concept in Hebrew homiletics and seeing the *metzorah* as "as good as dead" appears in a few incidents in Hebrew homiletic texts. It derives from a parallel text, the biblical description of Moses' appeal to the Almighty to deliver his sister Miriam from her *tzara'at* (Numbers 12). When Moses refers to his ill sister's symptoms he says: "Let her not, I pray, be as one dead, of whom the flesh is half consumed" (Numbers 12:12). Thus the *metzorah* is portrayed as reminiscent of the dead.[23] Indeed, Hebrew homiletic texts speak similarly of the sinner, the blind, the childless, and the poor as those whose lives are not worth living and therefore are as good as dead.[24] Once this parallel has been established it serves as a hermeneutical tool in order to explain scriptural conundrums and inconsistencies. One such example is in the ordination prophecy received by the Prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 6). Scripture states that the ordination prophecy took place in the same year King Uziyah died (¥©¥ ²ª ¬ ®º¥®º º¹ ¡). The midrash, realizing that this dating is improbable, concludes that the reference is not to the actual death of the king but rather to his metaphorical death, placing the event during

the year the king contracted *tzara'at*.[25] This brings us full circle to our previous discussion, since one of the midrashic proof texts for this perception of the verse in Isaiah 6:1 is in the same homily on Pharaoh's "death," suggesting that he, too, like King Uziyah, hadn't actually died but had contracted death's equivalent – *tzara'at*.

In light of his condition, the midrash tells us that the Pharaoh's physicians viewed the disease as virtually incurable unless the Pharaoh were to slay 150 Hebrew youths twice a day, in the morning and at nightfall, and bathe in their blood.[26] Pharaoh accepted the prescribed cure for his medical condition and subsequently ordered preparations for this blood therapy to be made.

The midrash goes on to say that the Israelites heard this horrible decree and cried to God for deliverance, but at first they were not answered, for they were unworthy of deliverance. Finally, God decided to deliver the Israelites from this evil decree despite the Israelites' unworthiness, due to the merit of the nation's Patriarchs and God's commitment and covenant with the Patriarchs. Thus, according to *Shemot Raba*, Pharaoh was miraculously healed, the evil decree was lifted, and the young children were spared from bloodshed. Interestingly, *Shemot Raba* does not rule out the potency or the plausibility of this blood therapy but rather states that once Pharaoh was delivered from illness there was no longer any use for it. The "humoral" logic behind this prospective cure and mode of therapy follows the line of the argument made by Pliny and the logic of *contra contrari-bus*: Leprosy erupted due to corrupted blood; it is therefore fitting that the cure would make use of the pure blood of newborns to purify or to restore the imbalance. The blood of infants, blood from the hearts of virgins and in Christianity the blood of Christ, as well as the blood of martyred saints, was considered to be most pure and thought to possess healing qualities, even in the case of a horrible disease such as leprosy.[27]

Pharaoh's bloodbath – the Jewish medieval perspective

The above-mentioned passage from *Shemot Raba* served as a basis for later commentaries, which draw on this and speak of the diseased Pharaoh and the horrible therapy suggested by his physicians. Interestingly, some of these sources, particularly those from medieval Europe, fail to mention the miraculous deliverance that *Shemot Raba* speaks of; they do, however, tell us that Hebrew infants were indeed slain and their blood was shed and used in an attempt to rescue Pharaoh by using blood therapy techniques to counter the outbreak of leprosy. I wish to list three short examples of this phenomenon, followed by an attempt to explain the deviation from the midrashic tradition and its conformity to existing scholarship relating to the iconography of Pharaoh's bloodbath.

The first is from Rabbi Shlomo b. Isaac's (Rashi) late eleventh- or early twelfth-century commentary on the Exodus: " 'And the King of Egypt died': he became a leper and he would slaughter Israelite babies and bathe in their blood."[28] It is clear that Rashi draws on the midrashic ideas illustrated above, yet rather than discussing Pharaoh's miraculous healing he highlights the fact that

Pharaoh actually slaughtered the Israelite infants and bathed in their blood.[29] This deviation from the midrashic trope is most probably deliberate. Avraham Grossman argued that Rashi had not merely selected the relevant *midrashim* for his commentary, but had actually employed a clear hermeneutical and philosophical agenda. Interestingly enough, the examples Grossman brings to illustrate this point come from Rashi's commentary on the opening chapters of Exodus, among them the quote from *Shemot Raba* on Exodus 2:23, discussed above. According to Grossman, Rashi's choice of texts here reflects his sense of responsibility toward his people:

> the suffering of the Jewish people in exile, the cruelty of the Gentile rulers, and God's deliverance all emerge from the homiletic texts that Rashi had **selected** [bold in the Hebrew original]. It seems that Rashi's own world-view and his strong will to raise the low spirits of his people at that time were among the considerations governing the line adopted in this choice, alongside pure hermeneutical considerations.[30]

When referring to "that time," Grossman is alluding to the aftermath of the 1096 crusader riots in northern France and the Rhineland, events that had a profound effect on Rashi's mood and state of mind.

Second, in the mid-thirteenth-century popular halakhic compendium *Or Zaruah*, the author, Rabbi Yitzchack ben Moshe of Vienna, quotes a commentary of a liturgical rhyming poem (*piyyut*) by his French contemporary Rabbi Shmuel ben Shlomo of Falaise.[31] Rabbi Shmuel wrote a running commentary on a famous eleventh-century halakhic rhyme for the Sabbath prior to Passover (*Shabbat Ha'Gadol*). The rhyme begins with the Hebrew words *El Elohei haruchot* (God of all Spirits) and was designed to convey through Hebrew verse some of the essential halakhic information regarding the Passover ritual laws and Seder night customs.

The rhyme itself is attributed to the eleventh-century French sage Rabbi Yosef Tuv Elem.[32] In the commentary quoted in the *Or Zaruah*, Rabbi Shmuel stresses that one should make a special effort to use red rather than white wine at the *Seder* table. To reinforce this argument Rabbi Shmuel uses a biblical proof text from Proverbs 23:31 from which we can understand that the default color of wine is red.[33] The reason for preferring red to white wine, he says, is to invoke the memory of blood.

Blood symbolism is of course not altogether alien to the Passover story, rites, and system of symbols; quite the opposite, in fact. However, the more common references to blood in this context allude to the first of the "plagues of Egypt" – the "plague of blood" and the blood of the paschal lamb. Even the blood of circumcision is strongly linked by Scripture to the possibility of partaking of the Passover meal. The memory of menstrual blood – or the blood of circumcision – is mentioned in the Passover Haggadah with reference to the homiletic interpretations of Ezekiel's prophecy regarding the deliverance from Egypt (Ezekiel 16: ª © º º º ¤ £ ¹ ¤ § ®). ¶ « ¤ ¡ ¡ ,

These quite obvious options are overlooked, if not completely ignored, by Rabbi Shmuel when he states that the blood to which he refers, *the memory of which should be invoked*, is that of the Israelite babies slain by Pharaoh when he was a leper.

The first two examples regarding medieval European Jewish sources that alter the midrashic tradition regarding Pharaoh's bloodbath, although found in the writings of the rabbinic elite, come from two medieval equivalents of modern-day "bestsellers." Rashi's commentary was widely circulated in Jewish learned and semi-learned circles in the European Middle Ages long before becoming a hallmark of Jewish biblical scholarship, eventually encapsulated in printed editions of a Hebrew Pentateuch with commentaries in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, as scholars of medieval biblical exegesis point out, Rashi's commentary was known, appreciated, and quoted by medieval scholars outside the pale of the medieval European Jewish community. The thirteenth-century Parisian Franciscan and biblical exegete Nicholas Lyranus (Nicholas of Lyre, *c.*1270–1349) is but one such example. Rabbi Yitzchak's compendium *Or Zaruah* also was such a common and popular text in Jewish circles that the author's son, Rabbi Haim ben Yitzchack of Vienna (also known as "Or Zaruah" after his father's popular book) wrote an authoritative, abridged version of his father's compendium, probably as a result of public demand. Needless to say, both works were extensively quoted and well-known.

The third textual example comes from a source that did not enjoy such popular circulation as the *Or Zaruah* or Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch, although it fits in nicely with the pattern we have illustrated. This example comes from an anonymous commentary on Exodus found in MS Vatican 123, a late thirteenth- or early fourteenth-century Ashkenazi manuscript.[34] This is an eclectic manuscript with quite a variety of textual files bound together in one codex, typical of many Ashkenazi manuscripts of that period. Most of the sources were existing works that were penned in the manuscript over the course of the fourteenth century. The anonymous commentator on Exodus tried to explain the reason for the specific signs that were given by God to Moses at his initiation as a prophet and savior at the scene of the burning bush. The signs' role was to enhance the verity of his mission (Exodus 4:1–10) and they serve as symbols. Moses was given three miraculous signs: the staff that turned into a snake, the miraculously healing leprous arm, and the water that turned into blood when spilt on land. While discussing these signs the commentator states the following:

> And regarding the signs: why was the first a snake? For Pharaoh bit the Israelites like a snake; and finally he [Pharaoh] became leprous, that is why the second miracle has to do with leprosy; and he bathed in blood in order to be cured, that is why the third miracle is blood.[35]

The anonymous commentator speaks of Pharaoh as a snake, as a leper, and eventually as a ruthless ruler bathing in the innocent blood of children.[36] It should be noted that our commentator speaks of the bloodbath not as a potential remedy,

as suggested by the Egyptian physicians to their monarch in the midrash, but as an actual occurrence; namely, that the Pharaoh actually went forward and performed the heinous blood therapy to cure his ailment.

These three examples demonstrate that there seems to have been an Ashkenazi tradition that differed from the *Shemot Raba* version regarding the events of Pharaoh's healing. This tradition stressed that Israelite babies *were indeed slain* to provide the blood required so that Pharaoh could bathe in it and be cured from his leprosy. It should be noted that this Ashkenazi tradition did not remain solely in the realm of the text and its learned readers. It appeared and resonated in other media forms intended for wider social circles, probably those less-versed in Hebrew homiletics. By this I refer to the illustrations accompanying medieval manuscript haggadot; in some of these early illustrations we can find an iconographic tradition that touched on this issue. In a later period, this iconographic tradition continued to circulate through the illustrations and enhancing images found in the mass-produced printed haggadot illustrations.

The iconography of a bloodbath

In an unjustly neglected article published almost 15 years ago, under the title "Infanticide in Passover Iconography," David Malkiel thoroughly discussed the artistic renderings of Pharaoh's infanticide and subsequent bloodbath in the iconography of the Passover haggadot. Tracking this iconography down from the medieval manuscript haggadot and prayer books through the early modern printed versions of these texts, and up until the sixteenth century, Malkiel pointed out two main themes. The first is the tradition itself, the second the interesting interplay between this iconography and the ritual murder accusation and iconography circulating in European society against the Jews. Malkiel suggests that by appropriating this iconographical tradition, based in part on the iconography of the New Testament scene of the Slaughter of the Innocents (Matthew 2:16ff.), Jews deflected ritual murder accusations and turned them back toward the accusers.[37] Another scene that may have influenced this iconography, an exact reversed mirror image of Pharaoh's bloodbath story, can be found in the *Legenda Sancti Silvestri*, which tells the tale of the circumstances that led to the eventual conversion of the Emperor Constantine.[38]

According to Malkiel's argument, Jews attempted to either conflate ritual murder accusations or suggest that, contrary to the popular Christian belief, Jews were indeed the victims of blood therapy rituals and not those instigating them. By transforming the role of aggressor to Pharaoh, a biblical foreign monarch – not surprisingly, resembling contemporary European ones – and turning his envoys into the violent assailants, Jewish, rather than Christian, infants were cast as victims. In his concluding remarks Malkiel states that by drawing the parallel between these two concepts, modern readers will be more attuned to the actual cultural intimacy between Jews and Christians in the European Middle Ages. In his view, "The paradoxical mixture of hostility and intimacy expressed by the Haggada and ritual murder iconographies revealed the inexorable and inextricable

nature of the relationship Jewish and Christian cultures were locked in." I find Malkiel's observation accurate and his argument compelling. The textual tradition referred to above, when put in the context of Malkiel's arguments, suggests that the Christian accusations against the Jews for using the blood of innocent Christian infants specifically in the Passover rites could not pass without a Jewish reaction. The Ashkenazi deviation from the midrashic tradition pointed out above is part of a broader Jewish attempt to counter the Christian claims crystallized in the blood libels during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.[39]

I do wish, however, to suggest one point regarding the observations made by Malkiel in his argument. In light of the role of pure Jewish infant blood as an antidote to Pharaoh's leprosy, I would suggest that this theme served another powerful polemical agenda. As noted earlier, the midrash from *Shemot Raba* mirrors the story of the miraculous healing of Emperor Constantine and his subsequent conversion. In the original Jewish story, as in the Christian one, the monarch is miraculously healed, the infants are spared a horrid death, and the blood of the innocent children is not spilt or used for healing. It may well be, as Israel Yuval has suggested, that the *Shemot Raba* account is a late antique Jewish attempt to counter the Christian story about the conversion of the leprous Emperor Constantine with a Jewish version revolving around Pharaoh.[40] This Jewish version highlights not the monarch's deliverance from illness but instead the renewal of the dialogue between the Israelites and the Almighty, a renewal signified by their cry for deliverance and the role of the nation's Patriarchs as powerful advocates before the Almighty on behalf of the Hebrew nation. This aspect of the story reflects the image of the nocturnal appearance of the church patriarchs Peter and Paul in the Emperor Constantine's dream. However, by the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Jewish midrashic story supplied by *Shemot Raba* no longer served its purpose. Jewish–Christian relations had undergone a change for the worse. In the aftermath of the 1096 riots and the acts of infanticide and martyrdom, miraculous deliverance no longer satisfied Ashkenazi Jews. They wanted revenge for the martyred Jews of the crusades and other anti-Jewish riots and libels.

The eschatological ideology of an avenging God that would come and "settle the score" with the Gentiles was by that time not an abstract notion related to the *eschaton* (1 $. 2) but a pressing issue. In the minds of many Jews of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the blood of innocent Jews functioned as a tool to invoke divine wrath in the final judgment and the subsequent violent retribution toward the Gentiles who spilled innocent Jewish blood. According to this view, Pharaoh could not have miraculously been healed, *innocent Jewish blood had to be and was spilt*, and this blood was an important component in the process of deliverance; it was to be present before the Lord on the day of final judgment.

The absence and appearance of the bloodbath iconography

If we accept the assumptions presented above and determine that this change among the Ashkenazi Jews did indeed take place, we should be able to point to a similar change not only in the realm of text but also in iconography. Here the

foundation of the argument presented is a more speculative one, for the body of iconographical evidence prior to the thirteenth century from Jewish medieval Europe in general and from the Ashkenazi realm in particular is quite sporadic. We should turn therefore to the earliest example of haggadah iconography we have from Ashkenaz. The *Birds' Head Haggadah* (BHH) is an illuminated manuscript haggadah, probably produced and illuminated in Franconia, Germany, in the late thirteenth century. It is the first fully illuminated haggadah manuscript we have from Ashkenaz and as such has been studied extensively since the 1950s.[41] Comparing the same page in this haggadah with later Ashkenazi illuminated manuscript haggadot (such as the *Nuremberg* Haggadah) reveals an interesting difference. The upper register of the page presents a similar iconographic motif (two adults kneeling and praying for deliverance); however, in the lower register of the page we find that the scene of the Binding of Isaac has been replaced by Pharaoh and the slaughter of the innocent Hebrew children.

This difference is significant, for aside from its polemical meaning, the Binding of Isaac signifies, probably more than any other scene from Genesis or the entire Hebrew Bible, the concept of the merit of the Patriarchs. It represents the ultimate sacrifice on the part of the two Patriarchs involved. In late antiquity, as well as in the Middle Ages, Jews saw the Binding of Isaac as the constituent core of the Patriarchs' merit, the act that resonates far beyond the Patriarchs to their immediate kin – the Children of Israel – enabling Jews to make the most of this extreme gesture of ultimate faith in God. Interestingly, this is the exact theme that Ashkenazi Jews had altered when they deviated from the *Shemot Raba* tradition. In their minds, the blood of innocent children designed to heal Pharaoh's leprosy was spilt and that blood symbolically harbored the redemptive qualities they saw in their own blood spilt during riots and libels. When we analyze the iconography of the scene showing the Binding of Isaac in the BHH we find in it an adult poised to slay a younger man. The adult holds the younger man by the hair (in a way similar to the position in which the adult holds the infant in the Nuremberg illumination) about to slay him with a sharp knife or another instrument. The *Yehudah* manuscript (known also as "the sister haggadah" for its similarity to the Nuremberg Haggadah) substitutes the binding scene in BHH with another more powerful scene: the blood of the babies slain in order to cure the Pharaoh of his ailment.

But why was the binding scene avoided in this iconographical construct and substituted with Pharaoh's bloodbath? Could it be that it was not considered powerful enough? Shalom Spiegel, in his classic study on the Jewish traditions relating to the Binding of Isaac, demonstrated that late antique and medieval Jewish tradition highlighted the view that, contrary to the scriptural evidence, blood was actually spilt during the Binding of Isaac and that this blood had enormous redemptive powers. Furthermore, this blood was considered so powerful that it overshadowed in the Jewish mindset the Christological offspring of the Binding of Isaac scene, namely the crucifixion of Jesus.[42]

I believe that this change from a scene highlighting the merit of the Patriarchs to a scene highlighting the blood of the innocent Jews shed by a ruthless Gentile

to cure a hideous ailment served to divert the merit from the Patriarchs to the suffering Jews themselves. It may well be that by the time the Yehudah and Nuremberg Haggadot were conceived, Jews – in the wake of the blood libels – were already too intimidated to present an image or a scene that might have implicated them as those who slaughter rather than those who are slain. We must bear in mind that, for medieval Jewish exegetes, the Exodus from Egypt was understood not only as a historical and mythical memory but as a blueprint, a paradigm for eschatological deliverance.

When envisioning the events of the mythical paradigmatic past, Ashkenazi Jews attempted to shape them in the form of more recent events, stressing their own merit as worthy of deliverance alongside, if not superseding, the merit of their forefathers.

In conclusion, a variety of texts demonstrate that from an early stage a close connection existed between leprosy and human blood, both as a cause and as a treatment. In my view this connection manifested itself in at least one identifiable homiletic tradition. The midrash on Pharaoh's attempts to cure himself from this grave illness involved the use of pure human infant blood. The Jewish late antique homiletic tradition about the monarch's wish to bathe in the pure blood of the innocent Israelite babies probably arose in an attempt to mirror and counter similar imagery common among Christians, images also found in the legends of the conversion of Constantine. These traditions changed over the course of time, providing both the text and the imagery intended to enhance the concept of self-sacrifice among Ashkenazi Jews in the wake of the crusades and ritual murder accusations. This new imagery – not of a miraculous near-escape, but rather of a bloodbath of Jewish infants – was intended both to invoke divine retribution against Gentile assailants and to counter the rising blood libel accusations by highlighting the Gentile protagonist's use of innocent Jewish blood (rather than the killing of Christian children). Through this connection between leprosy, blood therapy, and healing we glimpse the meaning of blood therapy and its relationship with both leprosy and eschatology in medieval Jewish European tradition.

Notes

1 I wish to thank David Biale, Jeremy Cohen, Ira Robinson, and Israel Yuval for their insightful comments on this chapter during the conference held at the University of Florida, Gainesville in February, 2007. I wish to thank Mitch Hart for putting the conference together and facilitating a unique opportunity to present these ideas in an intellectually stimulating environment. I owe special thanks to my friend and colleague Katrin Kogman-Appel from the Art History Department at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for discussing the iconography issues with me. Of course any errors in these or other matters are solely my own. Finally, I wish to thank the Norbert Blechner and Friends Carrier Development Chair at my home department of Jewish History at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev for the aid in facilitating this research paper. All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated.

2 E. Sarno and M. Pessolani, 'Leprosy: Oldest and Most Feared Disease,' *The Lancet* 358 (2001), 39.

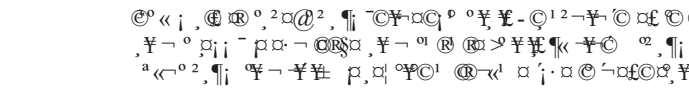
3 N. S. Brody, *The Disease of the Soul: Leprosy in Medieval Literature* (Ithaca, NY, and London: Cornell University Press, 1974).
4 Bernard Hamilton, *The Leper King and His Heirs: Baldwin IV and the Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On Jewish reactions to lepers and leprosy in medieval Europe see Ephraim Shoham-Steiner, "An Ultimate Pariah?: Jewish Social Attitudes towards Jewish Lepers in Medieval Western Europe," *Social Research* 70 (2003), 237–268.
5 *The New Sydenham Society's Lexicon of Medicine and the Allied Sciences*, ed. R.G Mayne, H. Power, L. W.Sedgwick (London: The New Sydenham Society, 1879), vol. 1, 643.
6 If the standard history of leprosy is correct, no skeletal evidence of its existence in the Middle East can be traced to a period earlier than the Hellenic expansion into the Indus Valley (third century BCE). It is probable that the disease, already endemic in the Indian subcontinent, made its first appearance in the *ecumene*. Alexander the Great's hoplites are usually those "blamed" for "importing" the disease from the Indian subcontinent to the Mediterranean basin. See Carole Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 1. As for the identification of leprosy and *tzara'at* and their confusion, see E. V.Hulse, "The Nature of Biblical Leprosy and the Use of Alternative Medical Terms in Modern Translations of the Bible," *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 107 (1975), 87–105; G. Milgram-Beitman, "'Sarrat' Leprosy (Leviticus 13): A Review of the Literature," *Korot* 9 (1991), 818–825.
7 Although modern scholarship has highlighted the different layers within the biblical narrative, and attributed to each an agenda, I will refer to it here in the same way that medieval readers did – as one uniform unit of sacred text.
8 When Sarai, Abraham's spouse (and half sister), was forcibly taken to the Egyptian Pharaoh's bedchambers in Genesis 12, we hear that God inflicted "great afflictions" or great plagues (- © ¬ ¥ - £ ©) upon Pharaoh and his household "because of Sarai, Abraham's wife" (Genesis12:17). The biblical narrative does not mention explicitly, as in the similar story of Sarai in Avimelech's household (Genesis 20) a few chapters later, the exact nature of these grave afflictions. The use of the Hebrew root ² ¢ suggested to the late antique Hebrew exegetes in the midrash, however, that these afflictions were either identical or closely associated with *tzara'at*, referred to time and again in the Levitical code as *negah* (² ¢). See *Genesis Raba* 41:2; *Midrash Tanchuma*, Lech-Lecha 8.
9 Uziyah falls ill after a ritual transgression while attempting to bind together priesthood and kingship in performing the sacrifice of incense in the Jerusalem temple. In the minds of the talmudic sages this was a boundary that should not have been crossed.
10 Abraham is also referred to in a similar occurrence as a prophet (*navi*) when Sarai is taken to the Philistine king Avimelech's bedchambers in Genesis 20:7. However, in that instance neither the biblical text nor the later homiletics refer to the illness that had struck Avimelech's household as *tzara'at* or *negah*. The biblical text suggests that the divine affliction in this case was connected to problems with conception and birth (Genesis 20:18).
11 Animal blood is thought by many scholars of religion to act as a similar substitute for the human blood that is not spilt. See H. Hubert and M. Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, trans. W. D. Halls (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 9–13; 95–103.
12 *Leviticus Raba* (Vilnius edition), 15:2.
13 G. P. Murdock, *Theories of Illness: A World Survey* (Pittsburgh, PA: Pittsburgh University Press, 1980), 8–17.
14 Notions of this nature circulated throughout medieval Jewish communities, within both Islamic and Christian European realms. We encounter similar ideas in a letter of the late tenth-century Babylonian sage Ravi Hai Gaon. See B. M. Levin, *Otzar Hageonim*, *vol. 9 – Tractate Qiddushin* (Jerusalem: Central Press, 1939), 186–189 (on BT *Qiddushin* 76b).

15 As early as Jerome's commentary on the Old Testament we find female menstrual blood and leprosy closely linked. See St Jerome, *Opera omnia: Commentariorum in Ezechielem* in *Patrologia Latina* XXV, ed. J.-P. Migne, (Paris: J.-P. Migne, 1884), vi, cap xviii, col.173. For further discussion see Rawcliffe, *Leprosy in Medieval England*, 81–82. Some scholars have suggested that Jerome drew on much earlier sources for his ideas.

16 Yizhak b. Moshe of Vienna, *Or Zaruah* (Zhitomir, n.p., 1862), Hilchot Nidda, article 340 (page 45 colom 4). This quote is based on the *Midrash Tanhuma* on *Metzorah*, article 3, Solomon Buber edition, p. 44.

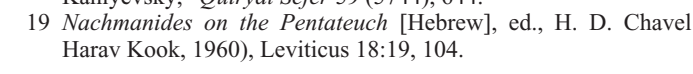
17 On the connection between celestial objects, disease, and leprosy see Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*, 176.

18 See Rabbi Elazar of Worms, *Rokeach: A Commentary on the Bible* [Hebrew] (Bnei-Brak: [n.p.], 1980), vol. 2: Exodus-Leviticus, 238–239. The above text is my translation of the following quote:

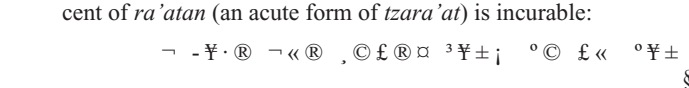


Joseph Dan has questioned the attribution of this commentary to Rabbi Elazar of Worms. See Joseph Dan, "Pirush Ha'Torah le'Rabbi Elazr mi'Garmeiza Mahadurat Kaniyevsky," *Quiryat Sefer* 59 (5744), 644.

19 *Nachmanides on the Pentateuch* [Hebrew], ed., H. D. Chavel (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1960), Leviticus 18:19, 104.

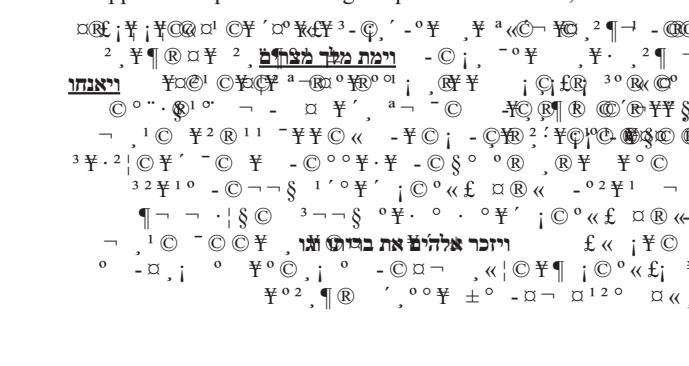


20 See S. Z. Kahana's edition of these responsa by Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg:" The Responsa of *Or Zaruah* and Rabbi Meir ben Baruch" [Hebrew], *Sinai* 9 (1941–1942), 203. In this responsum Rabbi Meir states that the malady in question that is reminiscent of *ra'atan* (an acute form of *tzara'at*) is incurable:



21 Gaius Plinius Secundus, *Naturalis Historiae*, trans., W. H. S. Jones (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), vol. 7, book 26, 5, 271.

> Aegypti peculiare hoc malum et, cum in reges incidisset, populis funebre, quippe in balineis solia temporabantur humano sanguine ad medicinam eam. et hic quidem morbus celeriter in Italia restinctus est, sicut et ille, quem gemursam appellavere prisci inter digitos pedum nascentem, etiam nomine oblitterato.



23 On the broader implications of this concept see Haim Maccoby, "Corpse and Leper," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 49 (1998), 280–285.
24 On this list and its significance see *Babylonian Talmud, Nedarim* 64B and *Genesis Raba*, Theodor-Albeck edition, 71: 30.
25 *Genesis Raba* 1:34; *Midrash Tanhuma* on Leviticus 13:13 with reference to the biblical verses in 2 Kings 15 and 2 Chronicles 26.
26 One should inquire as to the significance of the number 150 in this case, or for that matter the sum total of the dead newborns per day – namely 300. The number 150 brings to mind the 150 chapters of the Book of Psalms – to which magical qualities were and still are attributed.
27 Brody, *The Disease of the Soul*, 72, 152–153, 169–171.
28 Rabbi Shlomo b. Isaac (Rashi), *Commentary on Exodus* 2:23.
29 On Rashi's attitude toward Christianity see Avraham Grossman's long discussion in *The Early Sages of France: Their Lives, Leadership and Works* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2001), 142–147. On Rashi's usage of the midrash and the changes between the midrash and his commentary on the Pentateuch see ibid., 163–166.
30 Ibid., 195–196.
31 Yizhak b. Moshe of Vienna, *Or Zaruah*, *Hilchot Pesachim*, article 256. Ephraim E. Urbach identified Rabbi Shmuel ben Shlomo as one of the successors of Rabbi Yechiel of Paris, and the head of the Paris Yeshiva in the aftermath of the Paris Talmud dispute of 1240–1242 and Rabbi Yechiel's subsequent immigration to Acre. See E. E. Urbach, *The Tosaphot: Their History, Writings, and Methods* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik 1986), vol. 1, 461–465.
32 On this eleventh-century northern French Jewish sage and his impact, see F. Hirschmann, "Stadtplanung, Bauprojekte, und Grossbaustellen westlich des Rheins," *Monographien Zur Geschichte des Mittelalters* 43 (1998), 412, n. 2970. We learn from this that as early as 1015 Rabbi Joseph was a prominent halakhic figure. See also Grossman, *The Early Sages of France*, 46–48, and more recently A. R. Reiner, "The Acceptance of the Book of Halachot Gedolot in Ashkenz," in *Study and Knowledge in Jewish Thought* [Hebrew], vol. II, ed. H. Creisel (Be'er Shevah: Mosad Bialik 2006), 106–107.
33 "Look not thou upon the wine when it is red" (- £ º© © « ¯ ©), Proverbs 23:31.
34 This is an eclectic manuscript with quite a few files. Paleographical evidence suggests dating it to fourteenth-century Germany. However, most of the material was probably edited earlier, only to be copied in the fourteenth century. In the commentary on Genesis and Exodus we can find exegetical traditions dating back to eleventh-century Germany, and references to early twelfth-century German Jewish sages such as Rabbi Jacob son of Rabbi Yizchak Halevi. In another compendium in this manuscript we find exegetical traditions referring to Rabbi Yehuda the Pious (d. 1217).
35 - £ ¡µ§¸¥ º² ¸¶© º¥ ª«¬² ¸¨¶º³¥¡ ¯¥¹ §°«¤² ¸´ - «¹ º¹ ©¬¹ §°¤¯§º ¡ ¤®¬ º¥¥¤¬²´ ³ - £ ©¹©¬¹ º¥ ª« -
MS Vatican 123 fol.59r (Institute for Microfilmed MS at the National and University Library in Jerusalem, serial number: f 08690).
36 This is very powerful symbolism and it is worth a separate lengthy discussion; here, however, it should be noted that the symbol of the snake can signify not only the expected original sin, sexuality, and lust trope, but also leprosy. Jewish traditions of late antiquity and the Middle Ages speak of the snake from Genesis as a beast struck down with leprosy. *Midrash Tanchuma on Leviticus Metzorah*, 2. In his *Book of Gematriot*, Rabbi Yehudah the Pious (d. 1217) explicitly depicts the mythical serpent from Genesis 3 as struck with leprosy, and sees this as retribution for his transgression. R. Yehudah the Pious, *Sefer Gimatriyot Le'Rabenu Yehudah Ha'chassid* [Hebrew], ed., J. J. Stall (Jerusalem: Stall Publishing, 5765), vol. 1 § 112, 121.
37 According to the Gospel of Matthew, when the Magi sought out the birth of Jesus they first visited Herod the Great to ask if he knew the correct location of the nativity. Upon hearing the Magi ask for "He that is born King of the Jews," Herod, feeling that

his throne was in jeopardy, asked the Magi to find the child and return to tell him so that he might worship him, with the hidden intention of killing the identified child immediately. When the Magi, warned in dreams of the king's true intentions, returned home by a different route to avoid being forced to betray the child Jesus, Herod ordered the slaughter of all male children who were two years old and under.

38 The text claims that the Donation of Constantine (*Constitutum Donatio Constantini*) was Constantine's reward to Pope Sylvester I for instructing him in the Christian faith, baptizing him, and miraculously curing him of leprosy. According to the legend, Constantine fell ill with the disease (signifying his disbelief and sins). His physicians advised him to bathe in a tub full of infant's blood, in an attempt to cure himself of the disease. The Emperor dreamed of the Apostles Peter and Paul appearing, suggesting the substitution of baptism and the water of the baptismal font for the bloodbath. This caused Emperor Constantine to experience a change of heart, a subsequent baptism, and finally, deliverance from the horrible illness. (A beautiful medieval fresco depicting this scene can be found in the Santi Quattro Coronati church in Rome.) Israel Yuval, in several noteworthy articles and most recently in his book *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages* (trans: Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman [Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006]) has suggested one way to examine the Ashkenazi tradition of the slain Israelite babies. See also ibid., "'They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man': Jewish Reactions to Ritual Murder Accusations," in *Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. Anna Sapir-Abulafia (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 86–106.

39 Kurt Schubert, "Wikkuach-Thematic in den Illustrationen hebräischer Handscriften," *Jewish Art* 12–13 (1987), 247–256.

40 Yuval, "'They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man,'" 86–106.

41 The Haggadah was published in a facsimile edition by the Bezalel Art Museum, Jerusalem, in the mid-1960s as *The Birds' Head Haggada of the Bezalel National Art Museum in Jerusalem*, two vols (Jerusalem, 1967). The introductory volume containing the basic scholarly material was edited by M. Spitzer. Ursula Schubert compared the style of the BHH to that of the Worms *Mahzor* and claimed that the Haggadah was also produced in Würzburg, like the Worms *Mahzor*. See Ursula Schubert, "Die Vogelkopf-Haggada – ein künstlerisches Zeugnis jüdischen Selbstbewusstseins am Ende des 13. Jahrhunderts," in *Zur Geschichte und Kultur der Juden: Anzeiger des Germanischen Nationalmuseums*, ed. Bernward Deneke (Nuremberg: Germanischen Nationalmuseum Verlag, 1988), 35–57. Marc. M. Epstein has also dealt with the BHH iconography in his dissertation, "If Lions Could Carve Stones: Medieval Jewry and Allegorization of the Animal Kingdom: A Textual and Iconographic Study" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Yale University, 1992).

42 S. Spiegel, "Me'agadot Ha'aqueda" [Hebrew], in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume*, ed. S. Lieberman (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 471–547.

8 The blood libel in Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah**

Jeremy Cohen

I

Largely complete by around 1520, though not published until several decades later, Solomon ibn Verga's *Shevet Yehudah* (*The Staff of Judah*) numbered among the most popular Hebrew books of its day.[1] It captivated many a reader with its stories of trial and tribulation endured by the Jewish people, from the destruction of the Second Temple in the first century CE to the persecution of Spanish–Portuguese Jewry in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and with its picture of the resolute survival of the nation of Israel in the face of adversity. *Shevet Yehudah* proves no less fascinating for the present-day historian, both for its preservation of collective memories of old and for the critical, transitional phase between medieval and early modern periods in Jewish history that it illuminates.

Born to a distinguished Castilian family, Solomon ibn Verga was expelled from Spain in 1492. Forcibly converted to Christianity in Portugal before the end of the century, he evidently fled to Northern Europe after the great massacre of Jews in Lisbon in 1506. He appears to have died soon after 1520 while en route to Ottoman Turkey, where his son Joseph edited *Shevet Yehudah* and prepared it for its initial publication during the 1560s.

As Solomon ibn Verga (and his son) reflected on the course of Jewish history and on the factors that had contributed to the downfall of medieval European Jewry, the libels wherein Christians accused Jews of committing heinous crimes against them and their faith figured significantly in their narrative. One modern investigator has even termed *Shevet Yehudah* "the first Jewish work whose main concern was the struggle against ritual murder accusations."[2] Eight of the 76 tales amassed in *Shevet Yehudah* address instances of the ritual murder – or "blood" – libel,[3] and another mentions an additional libel in a long list of woeful events recently suffered by the Jews. Of these nine chapters, seven represent the work of Solomon ibn Verga, and the remaining tale and brief listing number among the additions of his son Joseph. In addition to these nine libels recounted in the book, nine more stories report instances of other anti-Jewish libels, in which Christians accused Jews of blasphemy, desecrating holy objects (or graves), poisoning the water supply, and the like. In all, over 20 percent of the *shemadot* (persecutions) recorded by the ibn Vergas focus on such libels, over 10 percent on the ritual

murder/blood libel specifically. The blood libel in *Shevet Yehudah* has accordingly commanded the attention of modern Jewish scholars, who have addressed the subject in a range of contexts: analysis of the orientation and worldview of Solomon ibn Verga and *Shevet Yehudah*; studies of medieval Jewish historiography and folklore; and the history and phenomenology of the blood libel itself. Nonetheless, the ritual murder stories of *Shevet Yehudah* have yet to undergo a systematic review unto themselves, which we offer as a step toward a more comprehensive study of Solomon ibn Verga, his work, and its fascinating perspective on the Jewish condition at the dawn of modern times.

II

Let us consider the ritual murder libels of *Shevet Yehudah* briefly, in the order of their appearance; the first seven stories are related by Solomon ibn Verga himself, the last two by his son Joseph.

Chapter 7 (pp. 26–46)[4]

The first and longest of ibn Verga's blood libel tales relates a *vikkuach* (literally, a debate, but actually more a protracted discussion or colloquium) between the wise and pious King Alfonso of Spain and the Christian scholar Thomas concerning the Jews, their history, and their contemporary status. The king solicits Thomas' advice: A bishop has repeatedly charged that the Jews require the blood of a Christian for the rituals of their Passover holiday; and, while the king considers these charges ridiculous, his subjects have rallied behind the bishop, discrediting Alfonso for not acting against the Jews.

> Now that this misconception has been validated in their corrupt mindset, I have almost appeared to them to be pagan, or even Jewish, inasmuch as I have not sought vengeance against the Jews. And even though this matter defies reason in its very essence, I would want to know how to respond to these fools, for they are many, and I cannot dismiss them too cursorily.[5]

How should he relate to the ritual murder accusation in particular and the miserable plight of the Jewish people in general? What sin or natural cause can account for the fall of Jerusalem and the exile of the Jews? Thomas disavows the blood libel completely; as he has learned directly from learned rabbis, the Jews abhor blood and are bound to deal morally with Christians. Only the uneducated masses hate the Jews owing to their pride and wealth, and Thomas advocates that the Jews therefore abide by restrictions recalling those imposed upon them by the Fourth Lateran Council: refraining from excessive interest on their loans, wearing a distinguishing mark to separate themselves from Christians, and avoiding lavish clothing. At this point in the story people enter the court to accuse the Jews of murdering a Christian, whose corpse they have discovered in a Jewish home, and using his blood in their rituals.

> People came before the king and said they had found a dead body in the house of a Jew, and that the Gentile had been killed in order to extract the blood. The king said to Thomas: "You should answer these fools; for I am afraid I shall lose my temper and get angry at them." Thomas then answered, repeating all that he had said to the king, and rebuked them severely, and at the conclusion of his words he said: "The king already knows the malady that motivates you, and that your grievances are just, that the cursed Jews took away your money and your lands, and he has already ordered that the land be returned to you. And he who took from you usurious interest will return it to you; and they will not wear silk, or clothes identical to yours. It is enough for you that you received everything you needed; do not ask for what is shameful to you, and do not follow nonsense and be infected by it."[6]

Once promised that Jewish usury will be curbed and that any property forfeited by Christians to Jews unfairly will be returned to them, the mob relents, and the guilt of the Christian conspirators is exposed. Thomas and the king then discuss the noble lineage of the Jews, extending back to antiquity and surpassing that of any other people in its authenticity. The Jews themselves believe that they are a higher species of creature, and this leads the king and the sage to discuss the futility of attempts at converting them, and to consider other Jewish traits and teachings, some admirable and sagacious, some deplorable and absurd. Returning to the king's original question after an exchange peppered with moments of enlightened philosophical insight as well as occasional sarcasm, Thomas finally concludes that the Jews have repeatedly brought their own misery upon themselves. He adduces ten cases in point, ranging from the division of the ancient Israelite kingdom after Solomon's death to the destruction of the Second Temple. Echoing well-known rabbinic homilies, Thomas explains the Babylonian captivity in the wake of the First Temple's destruction as punishment for idolatrous rites in God's sanctuary, while the present, seemingly endless exile of the Jews has resulted from their sins against their fellow human beings. Just as the death of Jesus atones for human guilt in general, so does the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem atone for the sins of the Jewish people.

Chapter 8 (pp. 46–50)

Blood libels at Passover-Easter time lead to anti-Jewish violence and fatalities in the cities of Ecija and Palma during the reign of the Spanish King Alfonso, and both accusers and representatives of various Jewish communities come to plead their case at court. The king rejects the accusations but nevertheless chastises the Jewish delegates: "What you say [about your innocence in the case of the murder] is true, and I know that … Jews do not bear any guilt in this matter, but you have other sins, and because of these sins and the hatred (caused by them) the people rise up (to destroy you) every day."[7] The king proceeds to indict the Jews on six counts whereby they incite the masses against them: charging usurious interest on loans to the very people who welcomed them when they were impoverished

exiles; violating the royal order and wearing silk clothing; parading ostentatiously on Christian holy days; discarding any wine in a goblet that Christians may have touched; teaching their children to play musical instruments, when as a people they should be in mourning; teaching their children swordsmanship, even though they never go to war – and for what conceivable purpose other than to kill Christians? The Jewish delegates' responses notwithstanding, the masses demand that the accused Jew be tortured, but the king rejects judicial torture, remembering a precedent set at the beginning of his reign. Again, money is revealed to be the key factor at work in the libel, and the offer of financial reward leads to the exposure and punishment of the guilty parties – above all a courtier who himself conspired against the defendant because of his debts to him.

Chapter 12 (pp. 56–59)

During the reign of King Manuel, son of King Alfonso, a Christian in the Castilian town of Ocaña killed the three-year-old son of a woman whom he hated and then threw the corpse into the home of a Jew around the time of their holiday. Feigning pregnancy, the Jew's wife hid the body under her clothing to prevent its discovery by the authorities and, circulating rumors that she had miscarried, had it buried by her relatives. A day or two later, the mother of the dead boy discovered what had occurred; the guilty Christian confessed under torture, and, assured that no harm would come her way, the Jewish woman admitted to having disposed of the body. The king discussed the shrewdness of the Jews with his courtiers, one of whom read an address reportedly delivered by a Jew to the leaders of Rome in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple – an address in fact composed, as Yitzhak Baer showed long ago, by the Spanish moralist and writer Antonio de Guevara (1480–1545).[8] The Jewish emissary boldly declared that Jerusalem had fallen owing only to God's wrath, not Rome's might, and neither Roman nor Jew could woo the other to his own religious perspective. Nonetheless, the Jew beckons the Romans to rule the Jews in peace and justice, thereby winning the love and allegiance of the people – unlike the wicked, merciless, self-serving procurators that Rome had sent to Palestine, officials who brought shame to Rome and unrest to Judea. "Know how to decree and command like Romans, and we shall be submissive like Jews.… Implore us before you command us, for in entreaty rather than in injunction" you will induce your subjects to love you, not to rebel against you. King Manuel, in turn, marveled at the cunning and boldness of this Jew, whom the Romans admired (and forgave) for his forthrightness and audacity.

Chapter 16 (pp. 62–63)[9]

Supported by a confidant of the Spanish king, Christians claimed to have found a corpse in the home of a Jew; they threatened the king that if he would not act, they would take matters into their own hands. The king knew these charges to be false and cried out to God: "Praise and exaltation to the true ruler, righteous

judge, a God of faithfulness without iniquity! Now I shall expose your lies and all the wicked counsel offered by my advisors." Then, on a sleepless night, he looked down from his terrace and saw people carrying a corpse, whereupon he dispatched his servants, who witnessed the conspirators depositing the body at the said Jewish home. Having assembled the Jews and questioned them about the duplication in the Psalmist's famous words, "the guardian of Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps" (Psalm 121:4), the king explains the verse to mean that God does not sleep nor does he permit Israel's guardian – the Spanish king! – to slumber.

Chapter 17 (pp. 63–66)

Two evildoers testified before the king of France that a Jew had abducted a Christian on the eve of a Jewish holiday in order to kill him. Though the king "was a king of justice and a lover of truth" and threatened to behead the conspirators, they rallied the masses behind them, finding others to swear falsely that they had seen the Jew wielding a bloody knife when they had gone to borrow money (at interest) from him, and charging that the king "has mercy on rebels, criminals, and those who despise the Christian faith, but not on the Christian faithful."[10] The king submitted the accused Jew to torture, and he confessed to having slaughtered the Christian at the behest of 50 distinguished Jews. Yet when the king prepared to torture the other Jews of the town, they protested their innocence, and brought convincing arguments against the use of torture on them as well. A visiting dignitary from a Muslim land deplored and dismissed the libel against the Jews as well as the use of judicial torture to secure a conviction – neither of which would occur in his own country, especially inasmuch as Muslims do not believe that the Jews killed Jesus. Certainly the Jews would not expose themselves to recrimination in so foolhardy a fashion! The Muslim's self-righteousness incensed both the king and his courtiers. One retorted:

> If this does not happen in your kingdom, it is because the Jews have no grievance or grounds for plotting against the Muslims; but on account of Jesus they do have cause to plot against the Christian, such that they will take a Christian man, call him Jesus, and eat his blood to exact their vengeance upon him.[11]

Additional false testimony led the king to decree that all 51 defendants roll to their deaths in barrels fitted with sharp nails. Yet when the king – as one of his courtiers, "a veritable angel of the Lord of hosts,"[12] asserted that by law he must – sought to kick the first barrel into deadly motion, he collapsed, overcome by spasms in his legs. Sensing the hand of God in what transpired, he released the Jews without injury, and further investigation exposed the Christian who had left the body at the home of the falsely accused Jew. This Christian had his hands and legs severed, and the Jews lived on in peace.

Chapter 29 (pp. 72–74)

During the reign of King Alfonso, Christians accused a certain Jew of ritual murder on the eve of the Passover. When the judges dismissed the charges as groundless and fraudulent, just as they had been the previous year, the people appealed to the king, who interrogated the concerned parties and likewise reproved the accusers for their lies. For a Jew "has not even the power to hurt a fly!"[13] Yet the conspirators produced testimony, including that of the allegedly murdered Christian's wife, suggesting the Jew's involvement in foul play – namely, that this Christian had visited the Jew in the matter of his debts – and the king had no choice but to proceed. He submitted the Jew to torture, the Jew confessed, and the king condemned him to the flames. Before his execution, however, a bishop testified that he had seen the Jew's alleged victim alive in a different town, thereby proving the charges entirely false. The king then expressed his sympathy for the Jews and their miserable lot, "not because they are Jews but because they are lowly and weak," and he thanked the bishop for demonstrating the worthlessness of judicial torture.

Chapter 61 (p. 126)[14]

Spanish Christians accused Jews of murdering a Christian youth and excising his heart for ritual purposes. A Jewish sage and kabbalist magically revived the dead lad, who then revealed who had killed him and had removed his heart in order to slander the Jews.

Chapter 64D (p. 144)

On the basis of ritual murder charges actually brought against the Jews in Amasia and Tukat (both in Turkey), and alluding to the tales summarized thus far, Joseph ibn Verga reports of Jews tortured in Cairo for having killed a Christian, only to have the alleged victim appear within days thereafter. Sultan Suleiman then punished the conspirators and ruled that all such charges would henceforth be tried in the royal court.

Chapter 64F (pp. 148–149)

A list of medieval decrees and actions against the Jews appended to *Shevet Yehudah* by Joseph ibn Verga includes a ritual murder libel in Provence, in the town of Valréas. Jews were accused of murdering a Christian woman who had sunk to her death in quicksand.

III

Even such a summary overview allows for some instructive observations. The two final reports in our list, added to *Shevet Yehudah* by Joseph ibn Verga, relate actual historical events documented in other sources, and they follow the ritual murder

libel from medieval Christendom into the Muslim society of the Ottoman Empire where Joseph resided. By contrast, none of the seven of Solomon ibn Verga's ritual murder stories have any attested historical basis whatsoever and are set in Christendom, six in Spain and one in France; together they present a typical narrative profile, as evident in the accompanying table. Christians, sometimes at the prodding of a wicked cleric or courtier, accuse Jews of ritual murder, usually during the season of Passover and Easter; and the conspirators eventually – at times after a magistrate initially dismisses their charges – plead their case before the king. In almost every instance the king knows the accusations to be groundless, and, frequently with the help of a beneficent prelate or counselor, he too seeks to dismiss them. Yet the conspirators characteristically persist, accusing the king of favoring the Jews over the Christian faithful, sometimes fabricating evidence that would justify the use of judicial torture to elicit confessions from the Jewish defendants. Nevertheless, justice generally wins out – either through the perseverance of the king and his well-minded counselors or through the miraculous intervention of God's hand – and the threat of extensive violence against the Jews is curbed. Investigation reveals that economic and social factors (Jewish usury, flamboyance, and pride) have fueled the anti-Jewish conspiracies, whose stories ibn Verga often blends into accounts of royal inquiries into the history and survival of the Jews, and discussions of their behavioral and religious characteristics that fan the flames of hatred against them. Distinguished Jewish leaders at times participate – or at least are cited – in these conversations, which usually give expression to serious criticism of the Jews for insensitivity and ingratitude in relating to their Christian neighbors.

IV

Viewed as such, Solomon ibn Verga's ritual murder stories, among the most interesting and significant tales in all of *Shevet Yehudah*, raise various questions for the modern reader, both with regard to the history and phenomenology of the blood libel and with regard to the nature of the Jewish–Christian encounter at the end of the Middle Ages.

As Ronnie Po-chia Hsia has argued, the discourse of ritual murder figured prominently in the social and cultural dynamics of late medieval European societies. The essential mentality underlying that discourse, he explains,

> was the Christian belief in sacrifice, the dominant form of its representation being the story of Christ's Passion.… The tortured Christian children, the bleeding little martyrs, and the abused Eucharist became symbols by which a society created its own moments and loci of sanctity. In acting out this sacred drama of human redemption, everyone was assured a role: the innocent Christian martyrs, the murderous Jews, the conscientious magistrates, the treacherous Christians who kidnapped and murdered children for money, and the entire Christian community, which participated both in witnessing the execution of the Jews and in receiving the fruits of divine redemption.

Table 8.1 Analysis of Solomon ibn Verga's ritual murder stories

Chapter	*7*	*8*	*12*	*16*	*17*	*29*	*61*	*64D*	*64F*
ibn Verga	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon	Solomon	Joseph	Joseph
World	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Muslim	Christian
Provenance	Spain	Spain	Spain	Spain	France	Spain	Spain	Egypt/Turkey	Provence
Textual parallels			Antonio de Guevara	Maaseh Book 185			Maaseh Book 171 Ahimaaz p. 27		
Characters:									
King	Alfonso	Alfonso	Manuel, son of Alfonso	Unnamed	Unnamed	Unnamed		Sultan Suleiman	
Good sage/ prelate/courtier	Thomas		Judge, courtier		Muslim, courtier	Judges, bishop			
Evil prelate/ courtier	Bishop			Courtier					
Victim			Child				Youth		
Jewish sage(s)	Abravanel (cited)	Abraham Benveniste Joseph Hanasi Samuel ibn Shoshin Juan de la Vera				Don Solomon Halevi		Jacob Abiob Moshe Hamon	
Plot:									
Historicity	No basis	No basis	No basis	No basis	No basis	No basis	No basis	Attested	Attested
Symposium	Extensive	Yes	Yes	Very brief	Yes				
Time	Passover	Passover/Easter	Jews' holiday		Holiday	Passover			
Blood use	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Heart	Allusion	No
Motivation	Economic, social	Economic	Personal vengeance			Economic			
Torture		Demanded	Of a Christian		Central	Central		Used	

(Continued)

Table 8.1 Continued

Chapter	*7*	*8*	*12*	*16*	*17*	*29*	*61*	*64D*	*64F*
Resolution: For Jews	Good Saved, restricted	Good Many killed by mob, king protects	Good Saved	Good Saved	Good 1 killed, rest saved	Good 1 tortured, rest saved	Good Saved	Mixed Jews suffer, sultan protects	Bad Jews suffer
Basis for resolution, classification (Noy, Aarne/ Thompson)	Royal justice	Royal justice	Royal justice	Sleepless king (730.5)	Miracle	"Victim" alive (730.6)	Victim revived (730.4)	"Victim" alive (730.6)	
Evaluation/ criticism of Jews	Extensive	Extensive	Yes	No	Yes	Yes			
Death of Jesus		Jewish deicide mentioned			Indirect allusion				
ibn Verga's source			Latin chronicle of the rulers of Rome		chronicle		Word of mouth	Joseph: contemporary report	Joseph: Shem Tov list of events

> The murdered children, like Christ, become sacrificial gifts. The offering of their blood through the double sacrifice of Jewish murder and Christian vengeance was meant to create a bond of exchange between heaven and earth for assuring the incessant flow of divine grace.[15]

Little in Hsia's helpful assessment, which derives from numerous instances of the ritual murder/blood libel in medieval Christendom, appears controversial. When one considers the libels reported in *Shevet Yehudah*, however, one finds few, if any, of the elements that Hsia has noted. Notwithstanding the importance of the blood libel for Solomon ibn Verga, his stories consistently avoid the libels' theological underpinnings and characteristic religious symbolism. Apart from the occurrence of the alleged crimes around the time of the Jews' Passover holiday (sometimes called simply "their festival"), the themes of Christian sacrifice and martyrdom are remarkably absent. The alleged victims bear no resemblance to Jesus, to the saints, or to the ideal Christ-like martyr. More often adults than children, they generally remain nameless, completely devoid of identity and character; the typically cursory reports of their deaths do not evoke the story of Jesus' crucifixion, nor do they induce the development of local cults and shrines in their memory.[16] As for the Jews, one reads almost nothing of their alleged rituals of shedding (or using) Christian blood: no graphic descriptions of them torturing their victims,[17] merely passing mention of their deicidal role in the Passion narrative,[18] no references to their need for Christian blood in baking their Passover *matzah* (unleavened bread) or preparing medicinal potions, no mention of the host or its desecration, few allusions to the Jews' typological thirst for vengeance against Christians and Jesus himself.[19] The Jews themselves make no effort to protest their innocence on religious grounds, arguing that their law outlaws murder and the consumption of any blood, human or animal. Rather, as they play their stereotypical roles in the drama of the ritual murder accusation, neither Christian nor Jew appears to place much credence in the charges leveled against the Jews. The accusers fabricate evidence unabashedly and incite the populace against the Jews with little pretense for establishing the truth. When assured that the king will work to prevent the Jews' exploitation of their non-Jewish neighbors, most Christians relent rather willingly. Most strikingly, as we have noted, all of Solomon ibn Verga's blood libel stories are fictional. Their characters, events, and speeches all appear to derive from popular tradition, from the creative imagination of ibn Verga himself, or both.

Why the transparency, why the lack of substance and depth in *Shevet Yehudah*'s ritual murder stories? These questions ring louder when one considers the intensification of anti-Jewish hostility in late medieval Europe, hostility expressed in the writings and sermons of theologians and polemicists on the one hand, and in the culture and imagination of the laity, on the other hand. Such hostility certainly underlay the two most notorious blood libels of the later Middle Ages, both of which occurred during Solomon ibn Verga's own lifetime, and whose impact on Christian culture has endured over generations and centuries since.

On Easter Sunday of 1475, the mutilated corpse of Simon, a young Christian boy, was discovered in the underground water cistern of the home of Samuel the Jew in Trent, in northern Italy, not far from the border with Germany (present-day Austria). The investigation of the local authorities led to the arrest, imprisonment, extensive interrogation, torture, trial, and eradication of the local Jewish community, which numbered three households and several out-of-town guests. By the time the proceedings ran their full course in 1476, all but one of the men had been executed, and the women and remaining man had been baptized. They stood convicted of kidnapping, torturing, and murdering Simon in imitation of Jesus' crucifixion, then collecting, distributing, and using his blood in observance of the Passover. In the magistrates' own words, the Jew was "bloodeater and drinker, and blasphemer of the holiest passion of Jesus Christ, his godly majesty and the most praised Virgin Mary."[20]

Relying on the research of Ronnie Hsia and others,[21] we can appreciate why the Trent libel had the extensive impact that it did, and we can use it to explore the depth of the blood accusation itself. First, in the background lie important trends and events in the late medieval history of Jewish–Christian relations. The Jewish presence in Western Europe was declining rapidly. Already expelled from England (1290), France (first in 1306, more permanently in 1394), and much of Germany, the Jews would soon be banished from Spain, Sicily, Portugal, and southern Italy. Where they remained in parts of Germany, in the Papal States, and in northern Italian cities, their treatment worsened steadily. Fifteenth-century Italy served as the setting for inflammatory sermons on the part of Franciscan preachers who lashed out at the Jews for their hostility toward Christ, his Christian church, and Christians – hostility, alleged the preachers, that led them to exploit Christians by lending them money at exorbitant rates of interest. Earlier in the century, Friar Bernadino of Siena, himself a bitter opponent of the Jews, had charged suspected heretics of brutally murdering a Christian child every year, pulverizing his body, and drinking the potion made from the powder. Friar Bernadino da Feltre preached in Trent during Lent of 1475, rebuking Christians for tolerating the Jews and warning them of impending disaster. Trent's ruler was at once a prince subject to the German emperor and a bishop under the authority of the pope, and its politics illuminated the tensions in the difficult relationship between Catholic Church and secular state. Over the course of 1475 and 1476, various interested parties sought to steer the course of the proceedings one way or the other, exerting their political influence overtly and covertly. In fifteenth-century Trent, anti-Jewish libels blended the peculiar circumstances of a given setting with complex issues at the bedrock of Jewish–Christian relationships – and at the very foundations of Christianity. As such, the context of the Trent blood libel bore many similarities with that of the last century of Jewish life in medieval Spain: an increasingly vulnerable Jewish community, subject to violence and missionary efforts, caught in entangled relationships between secular authorities, clergy, and Christian populace.

Second, word of what happened in Trent spread like wildfire, and the affair became a *cause célèbre* in the contemporary Christian world. The invention of

the printing press allowed not only for the rapid, widespread circulation of information, but also for the incorporation of Simon's story, the *interpretation of that information*, into the prevailing Christian mentality. Printing transformed Simon of Trent into a martyr and saint with amazing speed and success. Prose, poetry, and artwork elaborate how sketchy, inconclusive "factual" information testified to the certain "truth" embedded in the story, a "truth" that fanned the flames of popular piety and religious zeal. Third, and most important, is that mythic "truth" itself. According to the story that emerged from the torture chambers of Trent, the Jews needed the body and blood of a Christian to sacrifice in their Passover rituals. They kidnapped the toddler Simon, subjected him to the most gruesome and agonizing tortures and death – restraining and gagging him, piercing his body and tearing apart his flesh with pincers, collecting his blood for their ritual use, killing him, disposing of the corpse in a ditch – and proclaimed their hatred for Christ and Christianity.

The authorities in Trent fabricated what Hsia has called an "ethnography of blood," interrogating the Jews endlessly about the symbolism and significance of blood in their religion, its use and abuse, and its propulsion of the Jews to commit ritual murder, especially at Passover and Easter time. Although the Jews at first protested their innocence and ignorance and then, when tortured until ready to cooperate, were at a loss to provide the answers desired of them, the persistence and ruthlessness of their torturers eventually produced the results that they sought. Most ironically, the Jews of Trent ended up suffering much of the very agony that they had purportedly inflicted on little Simon. If popular piety resulted in the ritual murder of any innocent victims in Trent on Easter weekend of 1475, those victims were the Jews. Yet the victimization of the Jews was ostensibly justified by their alleged victimization not only of Simon, but of Jesus himself. The motifs of Passover, Easter, the sacrifice of an innocent young boy, and the need for his blood all pointed clearly in yet another direction: the Passion of Christ. The libel of Trent entailed not only ritual murder and ritual cannibalism, but ritual crucifixion as well. Recounting the crimes of the Jews in what became the most influential pamphlet printed in the wake of the affair, Giovanni Tiberino,[22] a physician who examined Simon's dead body that fateful Easter Sunday, emphasized repeatedly how the Jews had suspended their victim as if on a crucifix.

> Behold, O faithful Christian, Jesus has again been crucified between thieves. Behold what the Jews have done, so that they might rule over Christians. Glorious Simon, innocent, virgin martyr scarcely weaned, who could not yet even speak in human fashion, was extended on the cross by the Jews in contempt of our faith.

Along with many other anti-Jewish libels of the later Middle Ages, that of Trent expressed a Christian perception of Jews as so hostile toward Christ and his church that they could no longer be tolerated. As one of the condemned Jews was made to "confess" at his trial, "now that the news is out that Jews kill Christians for blood and to scorn Jesus, the whole world will hate Jews."[23] Only

in October 1965, upon the promulgation of the Second Vatican Council's landmark declaration limiting the Jews' guilt in Jesus' crucifixion, did the Catholic Church withdraw the status of martyr from Simon of Trent and declare the Jews executed for his murder innocent of that crime.

I have alluded at some length to the blood libel of Trent because Solomon ibn Verga's Spain – where incendiary anti-Jewish preaching, increasingly fierce works of anti-Jewish polemic, and tensions between various political, socioeconomic, and ecclesiastical interest groups over the status of the Jews and the *conversos* in the fifteenth century laid siege to the Jewish communities and ultimately contributed to their expulsion – should have proven receptive, fertile ground for a controversial libel like that of Trent along with the anti-Jewish hostility facilitating it. And indeed it did.[24] In June 1490, as the story of the martyred Simon continued to fuel the anti-Jewish fantasies of European Christians and as the ruthless activities of the Spanish Inquisition gained momentum almost daily, a Spanish Christian named Benito Garcia, who had converted from Judaism to Christianity several decades earlier, made his way home from a pilgrimage to Compostella. At an inn in the town of Astorga, he had the misfortune to spend the night in rowdy, rather drunken company. Rifling through his belongings, his companions allegedly discovered a consecrated host. With their suspicions aroused, they conveyed Garcia to the local clergy. Arrested, interrogated, and subjected to excruciatingly painful torture, he "confessed" that he, together with several other *conversos* and unbaptized Jews, had used the consecrated host and a human heart in a demonic conspiracy against Christianity and Christian society.

The Inquisition quickly entered the picture and arrested those whom Garcia had named as his accomplices. Subterfuge and torture characterized their interrogations, too, which extended for months. The inquisitors did not know exactly what they were looking for or where they were headed when they began. But by the end of the judicial proceedings late in 1491, their fantasies and instruments of torture – much like those of Trent – had created a story of ritual murder, crucifixion, host desecration, and blood sorcery all in one. The Jews confessed that they had kidnapped a Christian boy from La Guardia, tortured him mercilessly, crucified him, torn out his heart, collected his blood, and used heart, blood, and host in a magical rite that promised insanity to any inquisitor that would threaten them. Once the inquisitors had constructed and "authenticated" the conspiracy, the story assumed an active life of its own. News of the plot may well have contributed to the decision to expel the Jews in 1492. Even after the expulsion, Spanish writers freely embellished the story, adding graphic detail to the agony inflicted upon the body in memory of Jesus' Passion. Every spot along the road traveled by the Holy Child of La Guardia to his miserable end became holy, fit for a church, a chapel, or the performance of miracles. Learned scholars continued to defend the "truth" of the inquisitors' story well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. To this very day, the legend of *el santo niño* (the Holy Child) still flourishes. He is still the patron saint of La Guardia, and the church still supports and benefits from his cult. Presented with such an amazing story, one might well forget the most astonishing facts of all: There was no child reported missing or murdered in La

Guardia in 1490, no body ever discovered, no accoutrements of torture or magic ever unearthed among the convicted parties.

V

Why do Simon of Trent and the Holy Child of La Guardia receive no mention in *Shevet Yehudah*? Surely their stories could have contributed roundly to the description of the woes that plagued Iberian Jewry – and European Jewry in general – at the end of the fifteenth century. Other traumatic and catastrophic events of the last century of Jewish life in medieval Spain did command Solomon ibn Verga's attention. Several chapters concern the pogroms of 1391 and their aftermath; another recounts the Disputation of Tortosa at some length; still others bemoan the plight of the Jews expelled from Spain in 1492. Moreover, other Jewish and *converso* writers of the generations of the Spanish expulsion and its aftermath – among them Isaac Abarbanel, Joseph Hacohen, and Samuel Usque – did address the historical realities of the blood libel, in some cases offering reports of documented and important episodes, from Blois in the twelfth century to Trent in the fifteenth.[25]

Yet not only did Solomon ibn Verga avoid any reference to Trent, La Guardia, or any other medieval blood libels, including those that transpired in Spain, but he displayed no interest in their significance in the history of the Christian–Jewish encounter: the "ethnography" of blood and magic created by the torturers in either case, the impact of the accusations on Jews and Christians alike, and their revelation of the depths to which the satanic mythology of the Jew had penetrated the medieval Christian mind. Even as rabidly anti-Jewish Spanish preachers such as Vincente Ferrer[26] (at the beginning of the fifteenth century) and Alfonso de Espina[27] (shortly after the middle of the century) subscribed to this mythology and accused the Jews of ritual murder and other such heinous crimes, ibn Verga cast his blood libel stories in an entirely different mold. Contrived, devoid of specific historical information, all of them have an essentially "happy end," in which disaster for the local Jewish community is largely averted. Some of the blood libel stories in *Shevet Yehudah* fit neatly into the categories proposed by folklorist Dov Noy for classifying Jewish blood libel narratives, categories adapted from Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson's *The Types of the Folktale* that highlight the different outcomes and means whereby the Jewish community avoids destruction: discovery that the individual allegedly murdered is still alive (chapters 29, 64D); the sleeplessness of the king, leading to the discovery of the real murderers (chapter 16); the magical revival of the victim (chapter 61)[28] – to which one could add the effective administration of royal justice (chapters 7, 8, and 12)[29] and some other miraculous intervention of the hand of God (chapter 17). Why did ibn Verga ignore instances of contemporary Jewish suffering with which he and his Jewish readers were undoubtedly familiar and which bore directly on the central themes of his work? Did his interests lie truly in the history of the Jewish people?

Although Dov Noy did not focus directly on *Shevet Yehudah*, the folkloric character of its blood libel tales has prompted other investigators to debate the

historical and literary character of the work. As early as 1892, Isidore Loeb parted company with Heinrich Graetz, who had asserted the historicity of much of the material in *Shevet Yehudah*; Loeb preferred to view the bulk of the work – including the seven blood libel tales of Solomon ibn Verga – as folklore, not history. While elaborating the role of "fantasy," "embellishment," and "invention" in ibn Verga's storytelling – again with specific reference to some of the blood libel tales (chapters 8, 12, 16, 17, 29) – Yitzhak Baer nonetheless objected to Loeb's approach as overly dismissive. However great the license with which ibn Verga may have embellished his stories, they, their characters, their concerns, and their messages derive entirely from his own world of experience; and, as such, they prove invaluable for the historian.[30] More recently, folklorist Eli Yassif has classified all of the blood libel tales in *Shevet Yehudah* as "historical legends" reflecting the cultural perspectives of different sectors of the medieval Jewish communities that told and transmitted them. He proposes to distinguish between the "realistic" tales in the work, those in which Solomon ibn Verga conveys to his readers the perspective of the Hispano-Jewish social elite, and those deriving from the oral traditions of a more popular culture. The tales of the first group share a basic paradigm, in which justice as administered by the king ultimately brings the truth to light, and the conspirators are punished. For Yassif,

> this model reflects Solomon ibn Verga's profound belief (presumably shared by members of his circle) in the basic fair-mindedness of the regime: it comports itself rationally and recognizes the worth of the Jews. It is only the pressure of religious zealotry and the inflamed passion of the masses that compel him to act against the Jews.

The tales of the second group in Yassif's classification, the folk traditions, do not rely on the justice of the king but look to supernatural means of divine intervention to facilitate the rescue of the Jews.[31] Still other scholars have continued to subscribe to Baer's more historical approach. *Shevet Yehudah* figures prominently in various discussions of the historical writings of sixteenth-century Iberian Jewish émigrés and their descendants. In Robert Bonfil's words, it

> constituted a kind of resumé of the collective memory in which spiritual reckoning and self-criticism were combined on the one hand with a high degree of self-esteem and on the other with the yearning for far-off Spain and the distress occasioned by the distance [from it].[32]

And beginning with *Shevet Yehudah*'s original editor or publisher, who highlighted the blood libel tales on the title page of the work's first edition,[33] historians have recognized their importance for understanding Solomon ibn Verga's sixteenth-century Jewish worldview and political agenda. In Joseph Dan's paraphrase, "the great danger that Judaism is facing in the present and the future is the blood libel in its multiple forms."[34]

VI

Yet our question remains: Toward what ends, for what purposes, did Solomon ibn Verga attribute to the blood libel the importance that he did? Why did contrived blood libel tales serve these purposes better than "real ones" like Norwich, Blois, Trent, and La Guardia?

The purview of this chapter allows for only preliminary answers to these questions, inasmuch as questions and answers alike bear on solutions to the overarching "puzzle" of *Shevet Yehudah*, a puzzle to which I plan to return in forthcoming publications. For the moment, I venture the suggestion that Solomon ibn Verga avoided "actual" blood libels because he had little interest in them, either as individual historical events or as an extremely important aspect of the confrontation between Jews and Christians in prior centuries. The events of the libels, their theological foundations, their incorporation of traditional symbolic motifs of Christian anti-Judaism, and the virulent anti-Jewish mythology that they expressed and perpetuated did not rank high on his agenda. Rather, ibn Verga viewed ritual murder as emblematic of other issues that concerned him more, and he offered a narrative caricature of the blood libel as a metaphor for the complex situation in which Iberian Jews (and *conversos*) found themselves in the wake of popular violence, inquisitorial persecution, and royal expulsion. What issues, then, took precedence on Ibn Verga's agenda? By way of conclusion, I briefly mention two of them, issues that underscore the ability of *Shevet Yehudah* to illuminate a key transitional age in the Jewish past.

First, as ibn Verga assessed the situation of Iberian Jewry in view of most recent developments, trying to forge a viable mold for Jewish survival in a new, early modern European context, the relations between Jews and enlightened monarchs assumed critical importance in his eyes. In a groundbreaking study published over three decades ago, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi explored ibn Verga's enduring faith in royal authority in an analysis of his account of the great massacre of *conversos* in Lisbon in 1506;[35] other scholars have since contributed further to this discussion, some confirming, others rejecting Yerushalmi's evaluation of ibn Verga's politics as essentially conservative, grounded in the realities of the medieval Jewish experience. Our initial appraisal of the blood libel in *Shevet Yehudah* leads us to a more qualified conclusion. In most of the libels, royally administered justice – direct access to which the thirteenth-century decree of the Castilian king Alfonso X had already guaranteed the Jews in the case of ritual murder charges[36] – proved efficacious. Yet even an initially well-intentioned Christian monarch could succumb to popular pressure, or to the blindness of a defensive pride induced by the critique of a Muslim visitor from abroad (chapter 17). A similar ambiguity emerges with regard to the use of judicial torture in the blood libel tales. On the one hand, Jewish communities accused of ritual murder adopt a conservative posture with regard to torture, appealing repeatedly to long-standing precedent in protesting the use of torture against them – as in their citation of a law disallowing the use of a torture-induced confession to convict anyone but the tortured defendant himself (chapters 8, 17). But when a Christian conspirator

himself confesses his plot against the Jews under torture (chapter 12), one senses no discomfort whatsoever on the part of the author. On the other hand, ibn Verga used his various characters – Jew, Christian, and Muslim alike – to voice principled objections to the fairness and reliability of judicial torture. Somewhat ahead of their time, they herald the practical realism and rationalism of sixteenth-, seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century critiques that ultimately rendered judicial torture obsolete in European criminal procedure.[37]

Second, for all that the blood libel "played a horrific role in the lives of medieval Jews,"[38] and for all that the ritual murder accusation bears directly on the Jewish–Christian encounter of the Middle Ages – which, as Yitzhak Baer noted, constitutes the foundation for ibn Verga's opus – ibn Verga showed no concern for refuting the charges of ritual murder per se or the anti-Jewish polemical arguments that underlay those charges. The folkloric, even metaphoric caricature of the blood libel that he offered instead suggests that for a post-medieval Jew like him – expelled from Spain, now forcibly converted to Christianity, and witness to the slaying of many of his compatriots – the theological debate between Christianity and Judaism was a thing of the past. No point remained in demonstrating the validity of one religion and the error of the other. Spanish Jewry had now suffered all the consequences that that debate could conceivably have had for them. Present circumstances now demanded that Jews and Christians progress beyond interreligious polemic, including their disagreement over the saving power of sacrificial blood. As I shall seek to demonstrate elsewhere, this ostensive apathy manifests itself elsewhere in *Shevet Yehudah*, both in its reports of disputations (real as well as contrived) between Christians and Jews and its ideas as to how Jews properly "fit" in the Christian society and culture of the post-expulsion era. In all, the blood libel served as a marker of the Jew-hatred deriving from entangled political, social, and economic relationships that accounted for the past history and present predicament of the Jewish people – much of what the Jews now had to overcome in order to insure their survival. As Solomon ibn Verga reflected on the Jewish past and present, inextricably rooted as he was in the experiences of the later Middle Ages, he and his *Shevet Yehudah* nonetheless reached out, albeit in an unsure and uncharted direction, for a novel, qualitatively different sort of Jewish future.

Notes

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1 On *Shevet Yehudah* and its author, see (among others): Yitzhak Baer, *Untersuchungen über Quellen und Komposition des Schebet Jehuda* (Berlin: C. A. Schwetschke & Sohn, 1923), and "New Notes on Shebet-Yehuda" [Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 6 (1934), 152–179; J. D. Abramski, *Al mahuto u-tekhano shel "Shevet Yehudah": Deyokan shel Sefer* (Jerusalem: Yedidi, 1943); Abraham A. Neuman, "The *Shebet Yehuda* and Sixteenth-Century Historiography," in *Louis Ginzberg Jubilee Volume*, ed. Saul Lieberman (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1945), 253–273;

Meir Benayahu, "A New Source Concerning the Spanish Refugees in Portugal; Their Move to Saloniki after the Edict of 1506; Concealment and Discovery of the Book *Sefer ha'Emunot*" [Hebrew], *Sefunoth* 11 (1967–1973), 233–265; Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre of 1506 and the Royal Image in the Shebet Yehudah*, Hebrew Union College Annual Supplements 1 (Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College, 1976), and *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982), chapter 3; Eleazar Gutwirth, "The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain and Jewish Historiography," in *Jewish History: Essays in Honour of Chimen Abramsky*, ed. Ada Rapaport-Albert and Steven J. Zipperstein (London: Peter Halban, 1988), 141–161, and "Italy or Spain? The Theme of Jewish Eloquence in 'Shevet Yehudah,'" in *Daniel Carpi Jubilee Volume*, ed. Minna Rozen, Anita Shapiro, and Dina Porat (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University, 1996), 35–67; José Faur, *In the Shadow of History: Jews and* Conversos *at the Dawn of Modernity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), chapter 9; Margarete Schlüter, "Zuchtrute und Königszepter; zur Frage der Komposition des 'Shevet Yehuda,'" in *Jewish Studies in a New Europe*, ed. Ulf Haxen, Hanne Trautner-Kromann and Karen Lisa Goldschmidt Salamon (Copenhagen: C. A. Reitzel International Publishers, 1998), 712–731; and Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism, IV* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1999), chapter 2 ("*Shevet Yehudah*: Past and Future History") – among others.

2 Israel Jacob Yuval, "'They Tell Lies: You Ate the Man': Jewish Reactions to Ritual Murder Accusations," in *Religious Violence between Christians and Jews: Medieval Roots, Modern Perspectives*, ed. Anna Sapir Abulafia (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 100.

3 As will become evident below, the difference between the ritual murder (often ritual crucifixion) and blood (or ritual cannibalism) libels will prove inconsequential here, owing largely to ibn Verga's own lack of interest in such a distinction. I shall therefore use "ritual murder libel" and "blood libel" virtually interchangeably. By contrast, see Cecil Roth, "The Medieval Conception of the Jews," reprinted in *Essential Papers on Judaism and Christianity in Conflict*, ed. Jeremy Cohen (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 305ff.; and Gavin I. Langmuir, *Toward a Definition of Antisemitism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), esp. chapter 11.

4 Chapter and page numbers refer to Solomon ibn Verga, *Shevet Yehudah* [Hebrew], ed. Azriel Shochat and Yitzhak Baer (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1947).

5 Ibid., 26.

6 Ibid., 32; trans. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 32–33.

7 *Shevet Yehudah*, 47; trans. Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 41.

8 Baer, "New Notes," 154ff.

9 Cf. other versions of tale in *Ma'aseh Book: Book of Jewish Tales and Legends*, trans. Moses Gaster, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1934), 2:400–401; and Gutwirth, "Expulsion," 153–155.

10 *Shevet Yehudah*, 63.

11 Ibid., 64.

12 Ibid., 65.

13 Ibid., 73.

14 Cf. the similar tales in *Ma'aseh Book*, 2:356–358; and Ahimaaz ben Paltiel, *Megillat Achima'atz*, ed. Binyamin Klar, 2nd edn (Jerusalem: Sifrei Tarshish, 1974), 27.

15 R. Po-chia Hsia, *The Myth of Ritual Murder: Jews and Magic in Reformation Germany* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1988), 226–227.

16 On the far-reaching social and cultural ramifications of the blood libel in medieval Christendom, see also Langmuir, *Toward a Definition*, esp. part 4; Christopher Ocker, "Ritual Murder and the Subjectivity of Christ: A Choice in Medieval Christianity," *Harvard Theological Review* 91 (1998), 153–192; Lee Patterson, "'The Living Witnesses of Our Redemption': Martyrdom and Imitation in Chaucer's

Prioress's Tale," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 31 (2001), 507–560; Israel J. Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), esp. chapters 3 and 4 – among many others.

17 Chapter 61 of *Shevet Yehudah* very quickly relates that the Jews were accused of excising their victim's heart in order to use it in their rituals.

18 In *Shevet Yehudah*, chapter 8, p. 50, the servant of Juan de la Vera reports to the king how his master engineered the conspiracy against the Jews and proclaimed to his Christian neighbors: "The blood of these Jews who did what they did to our savior can rightly be shed"; while in chapter 17, p. 64, the Muslim advocate of the Jews tells the Christians that even according to their view that the Jews killed and tortured Jesus – Muslims do not believe as much – it is he who should seek vengeance upon them and not they on Jesus' Christian faithful.

19 Chapter 17 (p. 64, lines 21–22) is truly exceptional in this regard.

20 Ronnie Po-chia Hsia, *Trent 1475: Stories of a Ritual Murder Trial* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 89.

21 On the libel, the judicial proceedings that it triggered, and the cult that developed in their aftermath, see (among many others) ibid.; Anna Espositio and Diego Qualioni (eds), *Processi contro gli ebrei di Trento (1475–1478)* (Padua: CEDAM, 1990); Susanna Buttaroni and Stanislaw Musial (eds), *Ritual Murder: Legend in European History* (Cracow: Association for Cultural Initiatives, 2003), 77–158; and Klaus Brandstätter, "Antijüdische Ritualmordvorwürfe in Trient und Tirol: Neuere Forschungen zu Simon von Trient und Andreas von Rinn," *Historisches Jahrbuch* 125 (2005), 495–536 – all with additional references.

22 Tiberino's report appears in Frumenzio Ghetta, *Fra Bernardino Tomitano da Feltre e gli ebrei di Trento nel 1475* (Trent: Estratto da "Civis," 1986), 40–45; see also Hsia, *Trent 1475*, 53–56.

23 Ibid., 90.

24 On the libel surrounding the Holy Child of La Guardia, see Fidel Fita, "La Inquisición y el santo niño de La Guardia," *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia* 11 (1887), 7–134, and "Memoria del santo niño de la Guardia," ibid., 135–160; Henry Charles Lea, "El Santo Niño de la Guardia," *English Historical Review* 4 (1889), 229–250; Yitzhak Baer, *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, trans. Louis Schoffman *et al.*, 2 vols (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1961–1966), 2:398–423; Stephen Haliczer, "The Jew as Witch: Displaced Aggression and the Myth of the Santo Niño de La Guardia," in *Cultural Encounters: The Impact of the Inquisition in Spain and the New World*, ed. Mary Elizabeth Perry and Anne J. Cruz (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 146–156; John Edwards, "Ritual Murder in the Siglo de Oro: Lope de Vega's *El niño inocente de La Guardia*," in *Proceedings of the Tenth British Conference on Judeo-Spanish Studies*, ed. Annette Benaim (London: Queen Mary and Westfield College, 1999), 73–88; and, most recently with regard to the myth of *el santo niño*, Rachel Landshut, "The Holy Child of La Guardia: The Birth of a Myth" [Hebrew] (MA thesis, Tel Aviv University, 2006).

25 Samuel Usque, *Consolation for the Tribulations of Israel*, trans. Martin A. Cohen (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1965), 171, 172, 185–186, 195–196; Joseph Hacohen, *The Vale of Tears (Emek Habacha)*, trans. Harry S. May (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1971), 29–31, 60–61, 64–65. Especially interesting are the comments of Isaac Abarbanel, *Mashmi'a Yeshu'ah*, *Mevaser* 5, *Nevu'ah* 4, in his *Perush 'al ha-TaNa"kh*, 4 vols (Tel Aviv: Bnei Abarbanel, 1954–1960), 4:520, who interprets Ezekiel 36:13–14 as looking forward to the messianic era when Jews will no longer suffer from the deadly blood libel as they do now under Christian domination. See the citation in Yuval, "They Tell Lies," 104, n. 22; I thank Ram Ben-Shalom for his suggestions in this regard.

26 See the report of the contemporary Jewish writer Isaac Nathan cited in Ram Ben-Shalom, "The Social Context of Apostasy in Fifteenth-Century Spanish Jewry: The Dynamics of a New Religious Borderland," in *Rethinking European Jewish History*, ed. Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman (Oxford: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2008), 187–191.
27 See Baer, *History*, 2:287f.
28 See Dov Noy, "Alilot-Dam be-Sippure ha-Edot," *Mahanayim* 110 (1967), 32–51; and Antti Aarne, *The Types of the Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, translated and enlarged by Stith Thompson (Helsinki: Academia Scientiarum Fennica, 1981).
29 In this regard, see Ram Ben-Shalom, "The Blood Libel in Arles and the Franciscan Mission in Avignon in 1453: Paris Mabuscript, Héb. 631" [Hebrew], *Zion* 63 (1998), 391–408), documenting another southern European blood libel of the mid-fifteenth century, in which effective royal intervention did save the Jews from physical harm. Here too, ibn Verga preferred to ignore attested events in favor of his literary caricatures.
30 Heinrich Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, 4th edn, vol. 8 (Leipzig, n.d.), 419ff.; Isidore Loeb, "Le Folk-lore juif dans la chronique du *Schébet Iehuda* d'ibn Verga," *Revue des études juives* 24 (1892), esp. 18–29; Baer, *Untersuchungen*, 61ff., 81ff., and "New Notes," passim.
31 Eli Yassif, *The Hebrew Folktale: History, Genre, Meaning*, trans. Jacqueline S. Teitelbaum (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), esp. 300–304.
32 Robert Bonfil, "The Legacy of Sephardi Jewry in Historical Writing," in *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, ed. Haim Beinart (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1992), 465; cf. also Yuval, "They Tell Lies," 101: "The author of this book took historical material and turned it into literary fiction in order to reflect his particular view of Jewish history during the period of the exile."
33 Benayahu, "A New Source," 255; Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 68.
34 Dan, *Jewish Mysticism*, 29.
35 Yerushalmi, *The Lisbon Massacre*.
36 Dwayne E. Carpenter, *Alfonso X and the Jews: An Edition of and Commentary on* Siete Partidas *7.24 "De los judíos,"* Publications in Modern Philology 115 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 29. But cf. Ram Ben-Shalom, *Facing Christian Culture: Historical Consciousness and Images of the Past among the Jews of Spain and Southern France during the Middle Ages* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute for the Study of Jewish Communities in the East, 2006), 292 n. 39, who cites the more pessimistic reading of Baer, *History*, 1:116.
37 On the establishment, use, and critique of judicial torture in late medieval and early modern Europe, see John H. Langbein, *Torture and the Law of Proof: Europe and England in the* Ancien Régime (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); Edward Peters, *Torture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), and "Destruction of the Flesh – Salvation of the Spirit: The Paradoxes of Torture in Medieval Christian Society," in *The Devil, Heresy and Witchcraft in the Middle Ages: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey B. Russell*, ed. Albert Ferreiro, Cultures, Beliefs and Traditions: Medieval and Early Modern Peoples 6 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 131–148; Michèle Escamilla-Colin, "L'art de ménager la violence dans la pratique inquisitoriale," in *La violence en Espagne et en Amérique (XVe–XIXe siècles)*, ed. Jean-Paul Duviols and Annie Molinié-Bertrand (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1997), 197–216; and, with especially helpful regard to the religious and martyrological associations of pain, Esther Cohen, "Sacred, Secular, and Impure: The Contextuality of Sensations," in *Sacred and Secular in Medieval and Early Modern Cultures: New Essays*, ed. Lawrence Besserman (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 133–143, 210–213.
38 Baer, *Untersuchungen*, 65.

9 The symbolic power of blood-letting

Bernard Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais*

Hilit Surowitz

> It is also a fact that there is much mutual love and assistance among people that are united by the same sign when they consider it as [the symbol of] a covenant.[1]
>
> Rabbi says: "*As ye*" means as your forefathers: As your forefathers entered in the Covenant only by circumcision, immersion and the sprinkling of blood, so shall they [proselytes] enter the Covenant only by circumcision, immersion and the sprinkling of blood.[2]

The metaphorical and physical blood of circumcision was a focal point of group and ethnic identity for the Portuguese Jews following their expulsion from Spain in 1492, and their mass conversion in Portugal in 1497. Portuguese Jews, by synthesizing both Iberian and Jewish conceptualizations of blood and blood lineage, and circumcision (particularly the blood shed during the ritual), constructed a uniquely Iberian Jewish communal identity during the early modern period in Europe and its colonies. At the same time, non-Jews also utilized the ritual of circumcision, and ideas of Jewish blood to construct Jewish identity and community. The seventeenth-century French artist, Bernard Picart, was one of several non-Jewish artists during the period to depict the Jewish circumcision ritual. His etchings illustrate the complexity of Jewish identity and civility, the 'difference' of Jewish ritual, and the central role that circumcision and circumcision blood played in the identity of Jews in early modern Europe.

Throughout the early modern period, Portuguese Jews and New Christians (known collectively as *La Nação*) recreated their Iberian Jewish identity and religious community. This process drew from the community's experience with the peninsula's construction of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood), the experience of the Inquisition, a reintroduction to halakhic Judaism, and the interpretation of *La Nação*'s history through biblical stories and divine events. Four of the ways that blood formed *La Nação*'s identity both by group members and outsiders are: (1) the manner in which *limpieza de sangre* was reinterpreted by *La Nação* in the Iberian diaspora so that Jewish blood was no longer understood as impure but rather as a symbol of purity and devotion to God's covenant with the people Israel; (2) the belief that Jews and *conversos* of the community were bound by blood both in the context of traditional Jewish sources and the memory

of the Inquisition; (3) through the central role of the blood-letting ritual of circumcision which reinforced and enacted *La Nação*'s physical and metaphorical ideas of blood; and (4) by acting as an imagined biological connection at the heart of the common European conflation of contemporary Jews and biblical Israelites, and Jews and indigenous Americans.

Following a discussion of the centrality of circumcision to the re-Judaizing Portuguese Jewish community, these themes will be considered in terms of Bernard Picart's image *La circoncision des juifs portugais*, a seventeenth-century etching, which appeared in his multi-volume encyclopedia, *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde* [*The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*]. In the final section of this chapter, *La circoncision des juifs portugais* will be considered in tandem with Picart's *Ceremonies que les Mexicains pratiquent à l'egard de leurs enfans* (*Ceremonies used by the Mexicans with regard to their Children*), an etching of Mexican ritual in the New World, which may serve to reinforce the early modern popular connection of Jews and indigenous Americans.

The centrality of blood and circumcision, and the conflation of Jews and Israelites, are reflected in *La circoncision des juifs portugais* – an etching illustrating the moment following the circumcision of a Portuguese Jewish infant as he sits on his godfather's lap and bleeds.[3] This illustration prominently features the infant, his godfather, and three Christian women, and captures the centrality and mystery of circumcision in the Jewish and Christian imaginations in a precise time and place. Picart's etching suggests the importance of circumcision as witnessed by Jews and others, the fluidity of identity, and the transformations of religion and religious community in the early modern period.

La Nação: circumcision and identity

Following King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella's expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492, and King Manuel's mass conversion of the Jews of Portugal in 1497, Iberian Jews and New Christians settled throughout Europe and the Ottoman Empire. The expulsion, conversion, and resettlement of these communities of Portuguese Jews, known as *La Nação*, brought new religious and social challenges as the community constructed and maintained social and commercial networks, and sought to define itself in the Iberian diaspora.

As community members re-Judaized, many after generations of living as Catholics, the experience of Iberia, the Inquisition, and the interpretation of halakhic texts played a central role in *La Nação*'s identity and community boundaries. During the seventeenth century Amsterdam became the hub of *La Nação*'s institutional and religious life. Though there is some uncertainty surrounding the origin of the community, one of the documents which recounts the community's beginning highlights the redefinition of community members and the formation of community through circumcision. A pamphlet published in Portuguese in 1710, written by an unknown author for the Portuguese Jewish community, explains that

> In the early seventeenth century Rabbi Uri Halevi was living in the seaport of Emden, when he witnessed the arrival of fourteen Spanish *Marranos*. The *Marranos* saw the Hebrew inscription over the door of the rabbi's house and they asked him to circumcise them and help them establish a Jewish community. Since Emden was a Lutheran stronghold, the rabbi discouraged them from settling there, suggesting instead that they travel to Amsterdam, rent a house and wait there for his arrival. At the appointed time the rabbi appeared in Amsterdam and circumcised all the men.[4]

This anecdote reflects the power of blood and circumcision in the definition of a distinctly Iberian Jewish community which embarked on a process of identity formation severed from Catholicism. As the community read its history as part of the *akedah* (the offering as a sacrifice of Isaac by Abraham), the Exodus story,[5] as well as a history of the Jewish people and their God, the ritual and meaning of circumcision and blood became focal points for members of the community undergoing a process of re-Judaization. Blood, and the blood-letting ritual of circumcision, became central tenets in the redefinition of Judaism and Jewish community for *La Nação*. This focus was an amalgamation of both Jewish and Iberian Catholic theology and tradition.

At the heart of this distinctly Portuguese identity was a strong sense of unity and community based on the symbolism of blood, which indicated *La Nação*'s purity and difference from European non-Jews and non-Iberian Jews. For the Portuguese Jews the symbolism of blood and bleeding resonated deeply since blood represented religion, purity, salvation, persecution, martyrdom, and outsider status in Inquisition Iberia. For this reason, circumcision – the act of marking the body and shedding blood – became a powerful indicator of identity, commitment to community, and Judaism.

La Nação's focus on circumcision and bleeding synthesizes the influence of Iberian Catholicism's theology on salvation and blood purity, and Jewish rabbinical debates on the importance of blood for atonement.[6] Just as blood had a strong place in salvation theology in Catholic Iberia, the role of blood in atonement, conversion, sacrifice, and descent prominently feature in Jewish canonical writings as well.[7] Miriam Bodian and others have noted that many *conversos* imagined circumcision as a transcendent rite of passage akin to a Christian sacrament.[8] Records left by the community show religious dialogue and debate as rabbis attempted to dispel mythologies that circumcision was necessary for salvation and that the very act was sacramental, similar to baptism and associated with the concept of Original Sin.[9]

In conjunction with biblical and rabbinic ideas of blood, it was the bloodshed during the Inquisition that further intensified the meaning of blood in the Portuguese Jewish imagination. So potent was the performance of circumcision that the ritual, often performed on adolescent and adult males, was absolutely necessary to assure the full legal benefits of membership in the community: inheritance rights, and recognition of the honorific rites of the synagogue, such as being called to the Torah, burial in the community's cemetery, and inclusion in

communal prayers for the deceased.[10] In 1620 in Amsterdam, one congregation decreed that men who were not circumcised by the Sabbath before the Jewish New Year could not enter the synagogue and newcomers to the community would have two months to undergo circumcision.[11] This focus was critical throughout the Iberian Jewish diaspora as ritual circumcisers traveled in Inquisitorial territory in order to perform circumcision ceremonies covertly.[12] There are numerous community and Inquisition records that attest to *converso* men undergoing circumcision while passing through lands where Judaism was practiced[13] and, likewise, of men who were circumcised by itinerant *mohels*.[14] One example is Isaac Farque's covert journey to Spain in 1635 to circumcise men in Madrid's clandestine Jewish community.[15] Another example taken from Inquisitorial documents is the circumcision of a Jew in Mexico by a visiting rabbi.[16] Sometimes *converso* men would elect to symbolically mark their flesh (sometimes a cut running "longitudinally along the male genital"[17]) for fear that actual circumcision would put them and their families at risk.[18]

These alternative forms of circumcision not only allowed for the circumcision of *converso* men but also created an avenue for women to undergo this ritual of symbolic bleeding. David Gitlitz and Seymour Liebman cite incidents of *converso* women who pierced their flesh to draw blood in order to feel themselves as active participants in the renewed covenant.[19] The performance of alternative circumcision rituals illustrates the emphasis on the inscribing of a covenant and reveals the centrality of ritual bleeding, the imagined power and meaning of blood, and the necessity of blood in the process of re-Judaization for *La Nação*.

Though Inquisitorial documents mention the mark of circumcision, Jewish texts, the Iberian focus on blood-purity, as well as the Iberian Jewish conceptualization of blood as a symbol of the community's collective history, demonstrate that the actual blood of circumcision (and bleeding that accompanies circumcision) was just as important as the mark of circumcision in the Portuguese Jewish emphasis on this ritual. This follows long-standing Jewish tradition. Lawrence Hoffman writes:

> Even a cursory look at the legal corpus demonstrates clearly that the essential event was not the cutting and removing of the foreskin – though that was necessary, of course – so much as it was the shedding of blood. According to Jewish law, if boys are born circumcised they must still have a token drop of blood drawn ritually from their already circumcised penis. Similarly, we have the case of male converts to Judaism, who become social beings in the Jewish community by being circumcised; if they are already circumcised from childhood, they, too, must undergo the drawing of blood.[20]

For *La Nação* during the early modern period, the ritual of circumcision marked one's flesh, symbolizing both the ancient covenant of Jewish males with God and membership in the Portuguese community. More importantly, the blood of circumcision fused *La Nação*'s ideas of nobility, lineage, nation, community,

and the embodiment of a communal narrative and covenant that was part of biblical stories of redemption.

Marking sameness and difference: Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais*

Beyond the extensive textual records kept by *La Nação*, Jewish and non-Jewish European artists also documented the centrality of circumcision during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[21] Early modern ethnographic books documenting Jewish rituals always depicted the circumcision ceremony. The exoticism and "primitiveness" of the ceremony played a role in the non-Jewish European imagination and construction of Jews and Judaism.[22] One well-known representation was Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais* [*The Circumcision of Portuguese Jews*]. This image illustrates the manner in which the circumcision ceremony came to represent for both the European Portuguese Jewish community and the European non-Jewish communities a broader set of beliefs, allegiances, and networks of connection or identification. In seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe, civility and difference were often entangled with physiology; the Jewish blood of circumcision and the transformed male body in the circumcision image reflect the ambivalent status and civility of Jews. Whereas the Portuguese Jews understood their community's purity as circulating and transmitted through their blood, non-Jewish Iberians believed that Judaism was biologically transferred and therefore continued to infect blood, making New Christians tainted heretics susceptible to Judaizing.[23]

Picart's illustrations attest to this Jewish racial and civil ambiguity, and the fascination with the "exotic" in early modern Europe. Echoing early modern popular sentiments that linked Jews and blood, *La circoncision des juifs portugais* situates Jewish acculturation, Jewish difference, Jewish blood, and blood-letting at the forefront of Jewish life-cycle rituals. In Picart's depiction of the circumcision of a Portuguese Jewish male infant, the ritual takes place at home and is attended by family, friends, and, as labels announce, the rabbi and the *mohel* (ritual circumciser). The terrified baby is held by a man labeled as his godfather[24] (*le parrain*), who has blood squirted over his lap. Sharing the focus of the frame are three women, one of whom is wearing a cross; Picart labels all the women as Christians. None of these women is the mother, since Picart writes "*La Mere dans une autre chamber, avec la Marraine car les femmes Juives, n'assistent pas a cette ceremonie*" ["The Mother and Godmother in a separate room, the Jewish women being excluded from this ceremony; those present are Christian"].[25] It is clear then, that all the women witnessing the circumcision are Christian. This obviously raises questions regarding the presence of Christian women at the ceremony and the absence of Jewish women.[26] Except for the Christian women – the two standing behind the infant and the godfather, and the one behind the *mohel* – the guests in attendance do not seem focused on, or interested in, the ritual taking place and lack reverent decorum, a common feature of Picart's renderings of Jewish ceremonies, and perhaps a reality of Jewish ceremonies.[27] The Christian woman is also

significant because it is only in another Picart illustration of Jewish ritual, which also focuses on an infant, that a Christian woman wearing a cross is again prominently placed. There is no mention in either Picart's text or in the captions to the etchings as to the identity of the Christian women. It is unclear whether they are domestic servants or guests.

Picart may certainly have been illustrating a social fact, that Christian women attended circumcision ceremonies. Nonetheless, the prominence and significance of the Christian woman in Picart's etching, her voyeurism, and the direct line of her gaze to the baby, to his circumcised penis and his spilled blood can, I argue, be read as a woman who is witnessing and experiencing the circumcision of the Portuguese baby boy as the circumcision of the infant Jesus. Moreover, with Picart's goal of introducing the peoples, rituals, and religions of the world to his (presumably Christian) audience, this woman becomes a stand-in for Picart's female audience who are then able to experience for themselves, through Picart's work, the circumcision of Jesus. Moreover, it is also possible that the Christian women view the Jewish babies as savable souls, or as Christ-like, reflecting the era's fascination with the circumcision of Jesus, and are therefore directing their attention and energies toward the infant.

Biblical Israelites and first-century Jews were conflated with contemporary Jews during this period, in which numerous images of Jesus' circumcision were created.[28] Many European artists were concerned with capturing historical likeness and thus turned to contemporary Jewish models for their depictions of Jesus. Moreover, European Christian laity and clergy connected the blood and pain of circumcision with that of the Crucifixion.[29] Two of the numerous examples of the conflation of Jews and the historical Jesus are paintings by Rembrandt and Govert Flinck. Both prominent artists used Jewish models for their paintings of Jesus and figures in the biblical period.[30]

Though not all circumcision images illustrate the centrality of blood, the connection between circumcision and bleeding, and blood and Jews was very prevalent in the early modern European imagination, as echoed in popular culture and Church writings. The focus on the ritual of circumcision following years of depictions of blood libel imagery reinforces the link between Jews, Jewish ritual, Jesus, and the significance of blood in Jewish ritual life. The prominence and replication of circumcision imagery places the ritual at the forefront of the understanding of Judaism and Jewish ritual life. Many of the Dutch etchings from the early modern period bear striking resemblance to one another – Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais* is very similar to Hendrick Goltzius' *Circumcision of Christ from Life of the Virgin* from 1594, for example. Goltzius took his inspiration from Albrecht Dürer's 1511 image *Circumcision of Christ*,[31] and a 1599 image entitled *Circumcision of Christ* by an unknown artist who illustrated *L'Histoire du Vieux et du Nouveau Testament* from Nicholas Fontaine also bears a strong likeness to Picart's etching. Some of the similarities in these circumcision images are the positioning of the crowd, the placement of the baby and godfather in the image, and the presence of a Marian-like figure or an unidentified Christian woman prominently witnessing the ceremony.

The prominence of blood in Picart's illustration differs from many of the other images of circumcision during this period. Picart's focus on the blood of circumcision provides a visual linkage between the many circumcision, blood libel, and crucifixion images that were created during the era. Whether Picart was aware of the cultural and theological significance of blood for Portuguese Jews is unclear; however, there certainly existed an association between blood and Jews in the public imagination, and this ritual bleeding attests to Jewish difference and civil ambiguity. In a scientific spirit, Picart may be presenting the reality of blood in the circumcision ceremony, or he may have intended the blood to evoke connections to Jesus and the biblical era. Of course, it may have been both.

During a period of efforts to historicize Jesus and discover the secrets of ancient Semitic cultures and languages, Jews served for many European Christians as a living link to the ancient world. This conflation reflected and reinforced the ambiguity regarding the civility and acculturation, or at least the possibility of acculturation, of Jews in European society. The "transtemporal" and "translocative"[32] quality of the Jew is illustrated in the images, which use contemporary Jews as models and situate them in a backdrop that includes a desert and/or biblical scenes with tents and herds, or Jerusalem's Temple. Such practices were widespread and not limited to non-Jewish authors and artists. Menasseh ben Israel's treatise *The Hope of Israel*, and the frontispiece to Leon Modena's compilation of Jewish rituals, *Historia de Riti Hebraici*, are two seventeenth-century examples of this sort of transtemporal imagery produced by Jews for Christian audiences. Menasseh ben Israel believed that the scattering and settling of Jews throughout the world was a harbinger of the messianic age, and exploited the function of Jews in Christian stories of messianic redemption in order to make a case for the value of the Jews for Cromwell's England. Utilizing biblical events, stories, and figures as representative of Jews and Judaism allowed Jews to serve as living links to both the ancient world of the Bible and the coming messianic age. The presence of Jews in European cities, their seemingly exotic and ancient rituals, and the role that Jews play in the stories of Jesus and the messianic age, are presented simultaneously, thus linking past, present, and future. Rabbi Leon Modena, the author of the widely disseminated volume of Jewish rites, also collapses time and space when presenting Jews in his frontispiece. Richard Cohen writes of a

> Dutch copper-engraving (1683) that later resurfaced as the Dutch frontispiece to Modena's *Riti* [*Historia de Riti Hebraici*,1725] and to its subsequent editions in the eighteenth century.… Combining two themes, the print alludes to the circumcision rite and the ascendance of Christ to Jerusalem and the Temple (Luke 2:21–28).… The meaning of this illustration, chosen as the frontispiece for Modena's discussion of Jewish ceremonies, was clearly self-evident to a Christian raising the question of its particular context. Apparently, in this subtle way, the customs and habits performed by Jews, as recounted by Modena, were linked to a central event in Christianity, wherein Simon announces that Jesus is the Messiah who will redeem Israel. Iconography transmitted a social

> message that underscored the unique interest that Christians had in Jewish rites in general and the subject of circumcision in particular. The weighty ideological pedigree carried by any reference to circumcision was such that even with a most objective, visual depiction, ostensibly bound by express Christian interpretation, the link to Christianity was still present.[33]

These depictions conflated historical periods and people yet served to present an accurate illustration of the world. Insofar as Picart documented the religion and ritual lives of communities, he served as an "anthropologist," and like any anthropological and ethnographic artist he was bound to create still-life images that captured a muted moment or "reality" in a frame. David Morgan, in his work on contemporary religious visual culture, explains that images have the "special ability to mediate imaginary, linguistic, intellectual and material domains"[34] and that they are indicators, constructors of reality, and creators of social facts. This may help to explain the transtemporal and translocative that allow the viewers to be "constantly moving 'across' … history and geography,"[35] allowing, in Picart's case, the Jewish child to become a Christ-like figure and the viewer of the image to be present at the circumcision of Christ. Additionally, the power of visual culture to construct reality may explain the popularity of the images and the beneficial effect that the images had for Jews, as they potentially made Jews more human, familiar, and less threatening (i.e., more European).[36]

Imaging and representation play an integral role in anthropology and ethnography as, like texts, visual representation is a mode of "acquiring, preserving, and manipulating knowledge."[37] Through the presentation of ritual and difference the images and accompanying text toy with the status, race, civility, and morality of Jews. One such allusion to this ambivalence in Picart's work is the juxtaposition of the cosmopolitan and assimilated Portuguese Jews and the foreign and "uncouth" Ashkenazi Jews.[38] However civilized and acculturated the Portuguese Jews in Picart's images appear to be, the circumcision ritual depicted reminds European Christians that Jews (even cosmopolitan and acculturated Jews) are marked by their Jewishness – by the cutting and the letting of blood. The seemingly integrated Portuguese Jewish males presented in Picart's images are permanently differentiated by the bodily mark of circumcision, thereby rendering them forever Other.

Picart's illustrations of Jewish life are based on the Askenazi and Sephardic Jews residing in Amsterdam during the early eighteenth century. Picart presents the rituals of Jews as simultaneously European and biblical, linked to an ancient world. He dresses Portuguese Jews in fine European clothing and places them in indoor settings with all of the adornments of a Dutch home. He depicts most non-Christians, in contrast, outdoors and scantily clad. The buildings within which Portuguese Jews are placed are just like those in which European Christians reside, with fine linens, paintings on the walls, and common household items. Again, this may hint at the acculturation and civilization of Jews, raising the possibility that Jews are seemingly European. What differentiates Jews from European Christians is not their environs, but their unfamiliar rituals, religious objects, their blood, and the bodies of men.

Mexicans as Israel's lost tribe

Picart discusses and depicts circumcision numerous times throughout his volumes. Though mentioned in connection with a half-dozen religious communities, the act is depicted only twice: once in *The Circumcision of Portuguese Jews* and later in *Ceremonies used by the Mexicans with regard to their Children* (though the latter is called a circumcision only in the accompanying text). I would like to suggest that Picart's parallel images of Mexican and Jewish infant ceremonies affirm and reinforce the popular belief and offer visual "proof" that Native Americans and Jews were related peoples. Picart notes that "some Critics have pretended to prove that Circumcision was not peculiar to the Jews." The text explains "that if it was used by other people, they first borrow'd it from the Jews as I shall now endeavor to prove."[39] He explains that circumcision is found among the "Mohametans," the Africans, the Egyptians, natives of Guinea, and the Mexicans; yet, he claims that these practices came to be known and "borrow'd" from Jews, though he does note slight variations in the ritual.

Picart's European interpretative categories and framework are critical to comprehending the narrative of how circumcision spread to various locations, and the relationship between the various peoples of the world. In Europe and among many colonial Euro-Americans, there existed a belief that Native Americans were descended from Jews.[40] As Lynn Glaser has argued, "In the face of the mystery of the Indians' origin it was necessary to find a biblical, or at least ancient, authority for their presence."[41] Therefore, European theologians and explorers tried to reconcile the peoples of the "discovered" lands with a biblically constructed understanding of the universe by conflating indigenous Americans and Jews through the story of the Lost Tribes of Israel.[42] The theory was not new to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but rather had been a prevalent idea since the initial arrival of Spanish explorers:

> The doctrine that the American aborigines were Jews who had rejected the Gospel, and were therefore on the same level as the Jews of Europe, commended itself strongly to the Spaniards. It was not confined to the educated but was a popular belief among the ordinary Spanish colonists. It was held that they were not only Jews, but Jews in a state of degeneration. They still showed some traces of their origin. Their stature, dark eyes and skin, and frequently aquiline nose, were external evidence of it. But the most important proofs were furnished by their moral qualities. In the first place they were errant "unbelievers," even after baptism they were prone to relapse into heatheness (unless constantly and sharply watched).… Lastly, the dress which they affected was pronounced to be truly Jewish while their habitual meekness of bearing was ascribed to an innate pusillanimity, which had descended to them from centuries during which they had sojourned as bond-slaves in the land of Egypt.[43]

Picart's text and illustrations include this very common collapse of indigenous Americans and Jews. Evidence supporting this idea was based on physical

appearance, ritual life, circumcision-like practices,[44] behavior, and, of course, the failure of both groups to believe in Christ.[45] Franciscan missionary and historian Torquemada, utilizing the work of an unknown author, even claimed linguistic similarities between Native Americans and Jews as definitive proof:

> but if any difficulty should be felt, it is removed by considering the American languages, which are nothing but so many sorts of Yiddish, so many corrupt Hebrew dialects.… Consider the word "Cuba"; is it not excellent Hebrew?[46]

The collapse of time between the biblical period and the contemporary period, and the conflation of ancient Israelites and early modern European Jews, is furthered through Picart's etching *Ceremonies used by the Mexicans with regard to their Children*. Extending the myth of lost tribes and Israelites into the New World, Picart depicts in this image four clusters of adult Mexican males huddled around male infants. One group seems to be immersing a baby in water (Picart points out that following the circumcision, which is like that of the Jews, the Mexicans "dunk" the child in water, which can be likened to a Baptism),[47] two groups are operating on the genitals of the infants, and the final group (in the center of the image) is placing a sword in the hand of the infant. Like Picart's rendering of a Portuguese Jewish circumcision, this ritual takes place indoors and the scene appears chaotic. The majority of the attendees are male, yet there are a few women present in prominent roles and with fixed gazes. Though blood is not drawn into the image, the various weapons and the clear depictions of genital cutting reflect the assumed savagery and bloodiness of the ritual. The lack of blood in this representation differs from the prominently displayed blood in Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais*. Picart's use of blood in the Jewish circumcision ceremony, and its absence in the Mexican ceremony, strengthens my belief that by portraying the bleeding of the Portuguese Jewish infant, Picart was reinforcing the connection between Jewish ritual and blood, the blood of the Jewish circumcision ritual and Jesus' Crucifixion, and the biological link between contemporary Jews and the biblical world. Further, Picart was aware of the focus on blood in the Jewish circumcision prayers, and in Jewish canonical writings, since he wrote that "Some [Jewish] Children are born with the Marks of Circumcision. On these a slight Incision only is made, to draw at least a few Drops of Blood from the Part, which otherwise must have been circumcised."[48]

Picart does not simplify Jewish practice, and notes differentiations of custom and folk practice with the circumcision ceremony among various communities of Jews. In some sense the Mexican circumcision is simply an extension of this. His discourse on ritual gives the appearance of being static and stable, transcending time and space, but Picart also recognizes that rituals change over time and with different locations. His text includes a discussion of the biological connection between Mexicans and Jews, and he prefaces the description of the Mexican ceremony with "This kind of Circumcision, and the Immersion which follow'd it, resembled in some measure the Circumcision of the *Jews*."[49]

The evident similarities between the images and the text propagate the myth of the biological relationship between Jews and indigenous Americans, and the centrality of bloodletting in non-Christian ceremonies – a theme evident throughout Picart's volumes. As Picart frequently references the Bible as a historical source, he engages the question of whether or not the inhabitants of the Americas arrived by land and were native to the Euro-Asian continents. The Mexicans, the text explains, are descendants of the "*Carthaginians*, and the *Canaanite*"[50] which can simultaneously be proven by their savagery and their elaborate city infrastructure and temples. Utilizing the language and narrative of the Hebrew Bible and the story of the Israelites, the creation and construction of the tabernacle and Temple, and the arrival of the Israelites to the Land of Canaan, Picart explains the settlement and construction of the Mexican Empire and how many among the initial settlers were the "posterity of the ancient Jews, who were dispers'd up and down after the Assyrians had ruin'd their State."[51] The grand Temples and the system of priests and sacrifice were thought to be relics of the ancient Temple system in Jerusalem. Additional first-hand evidence was given in Diego de Landa's sixteenth-century *Relacion de las Cosas de Yucatan*, in which he writes:

> Some of the old people of the Yucatan say that they have heard from their ancestors that this land was occupied by a race of people, who came from the East and whom God had delivered opening twelve paths through the sea. If this were true, it necessarily follows that all the inhabitants of the Indies are descendants of the Jews.[52]

A close reading of the images portraying the Mexicans furthers the connection between Mexicans and Jews. Mexicans, often placed in or near their temples, are the only indigenous American group presented devoid of a backdrop of volcanic structures, which would have seemingly represented a primordial and primitive era. However, unlike the Jews, who according to Picart were civilized by their immersion in Christian European culture, the Mexicans are not portrayed as fully civilized. Picart portrays the incredible Mexican cityscapes as infused with elements of European style. Yet he juxtaposes this with the "barbarity of their [the Mexicans'] religion,"[53] depicting the performance of their religious ritual, the circumcision, as bloody and violent.

Read together, Bernard Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais* and *Ceremonies que les Mexicains pratiquent à l'egard de leurs enfans* reinforce the role of Jews during the early modern period as links to the biblical era and Jesus, and as a means to explain the newly encountered peoples of the Americas in a biblically constructed world. Picart's critical gaze reflects the seriousness with which he approached his subjects, and the scientific nature of his work as he catalogued and described "the Various Nations of the Known World." The detail in his images and the vast quantity of text that he stitched together reflect the ethnographic tendency and scientific spirit of the era,[54] and the desire during the period to provide European elite society with a window to the world.[55] *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, along with

other such encyclopedic volumes,[56] was a success, appearing as it did as the nations of Europe – long engaged in the colonial project – were beginning to encounter, translate, and question categories of religion, race, ethnicity, and the concept of belonging to a nation.

Conclusion

Bernard Picart's project to introduce Christian Europeans to the religion, culture, and customs of the "various nations of the known world" was a lofty and successful endeavor. His beautifully crafted etchings were intricate, informative, and beautiful, and reveal pervasive questions and ideas of the early modern period. Reserving rituals of bloodletting for non-Protestant Europeans, his images play with ideas of race, civility, sameness, and difference. Though Jewish ceremony is not illustrated in the same manner as other non-Christian ceremonies, which are generally placed outdoors with volcanic surroundings, scenes of Jews always show a mixture of chaos and refinement, savagery and civility.

Picart's work draws together many of the questions surrounding Jews in early modern Europe. He acknowledges the complexity of Jewish religious practice and text, yet asserts that it is misguided and antiquated; he substantiates these claims with a presentation of Judaism's "Idle and Impertinent Traditions."[57] Picart provides plenty of detail, nuance, and attention to local custom in his description of Jews and Judaism; yet he follows this with a section entitled *Concerning the Morality of Jews as Compared With That of Christians*[58] in which the savagery and the misgivings of Jews are articulated, as is the hope for their salvation. Picart's volumes express the European dialectical concern of Jews as indistinguishable from other Europeans, yet at the same time a very different people whose presence transcends time and space, connecting Old and New Worlds, and the contemporary and biblical periods.

Like Picart, the Portuguese Jews used circumcision to create and maintain identity and communal boundaries. Both Picart and *La Nação* were exploring conceptualizations of community and nation, and ideas of a nation apart and within. It was the mark of circumcision, the power of bleeding, as well as circumcision's imagined transcendent meaning to the Portuguese Jews, that marked their membership in the Portuguese community and bound them to Judaism. The circumcision ceremony was both a powerful and a permanent inscription of these ideas as it marked difference, created a link between Christianity and Judaism through Jesus and his blood, and differentiated between the bodies of Jewish and Christian men (and sometimes women). The letting of blood in the Jewish and non-Jewish imagination created and maintained a distinct community, drawing boundaries, maintaining membership, and performing the embodiment of religion, community, identity, and collective history.

Notes

1 Moses Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed* (New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, Inc.), 2004, 628–629.

2 BT Keritot, 9a (citation from *The Babylonian Talmud*, trans. Isidore Epstein (London: The Soncino Press, 1948).
3 Ilana Abramovitch and others who cite her work provide an alternative reading of Picart's *La circoncision des juifs portugais* as they believe that Picart is being humorous by having the baby urinate on the *mohel*. I argue that congruent with many of Picart's other images, which focus on sacrifice and blood, and with the fascination during this period with the blood of Jesus on the cross and of his circumcision, the infant in the image is bleeding. See Abramovitch, "Picart's Ceremonies and Customs of Several Nations of the Known World (1723): Moving Pictures," *Proceedings of the Tenth World Congress of Jewish Studies* (1990), Division D, vol. 2, 95; S. Baskind, "Bernard Picart's Etchings of Amsterdam's Jews," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, Society* 13, 2 (2007), p. 45.
4 The original story appeared in *Narraçao da Vidados Judeos Espanhoes a Amsterdam*, a pamphlet published in 1711. Though cited widely, I am utilizing the translation from H. Livotsky, *Sephardic Playwrights of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries in Amsterdam* (Lanham. MD: University Press of America, 1991), 15.
5 Miriam Bodian, *The Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation:* Conversos *and Community in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 15–17; Yosef Kaplan, "The Curaçao and Amsterdam Jewish Communities in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *American Jewish History* 72, 2 (1982), 194. In addition to the Exodus story, the redemptive story of Purim held special significance for the Portuguese Jews. For a brief discussion on the significance of Purim see Steven Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 98–103.
6 For further discussion of Jewish rabbinical debates on the role of blood in atonement see Leonard Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49–54; David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol Between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 62–74.
7 For further discussion on the significance of sacrificial and circumcision blood and bleeding for the renewal of covenant and atonement see Biale, *Blood and Belief*; Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).
8 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 97–98; David Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit: The Religion of the Crypto-Jews* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2002), 202, 207; David Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute:* Converso *Identities in Iberia and the Jewish Diaspora, 1580–1700* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 93, 223 n. 107; Michael Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt: Jews and the Christian Image in Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 14.
9 Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 203–207; Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 97–99; Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 93, 223 n. 107.
10 Bodian, *Hebrews of the Portuguese Nation*, 72, 112–113; ibid., " 'Men of the Nation': The Shaping of *Converso* Identity in Early Modern Europe," *Past and Present* 143 (1994), 71–72; Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 79.
11 Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 79.
12 The presence of itinerant circumcisers throughout Inquisition territories in both Europe and the New World attests to the importance of circumcision in Iberian Jewish communities. Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 64, 72 n. 93; Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 74–76.
13 Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 205.
14 Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 101.
15 Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 72 n. 93.
16 Garcia Genaro, Autos de fe de la Inquisición de México con extractos de sus causes 1646–1648 (Mexico: Libreria de la Viuda de Ch. Bouret, 1910), 54.

17 Seymour Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain: Faith, Flame, and the Inquisition* (Coral Gables: University of Miami Press, 1970), 76.
18 Liebman, *The Jews in New Spain*, 76–77; Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 206; Glick, *Marked In Your Flesh*, 83.
19 Gitlitz, *Secrecy and Deceit*, 206. Seymour Liebman, utilizing Inquisition sources, cites a story that following the arrest of the wife of Duarte de León Jaramillo by the Inquisition in Mexico,

> Duarte took his younger sons and three daughters into a shed and cut a very small piece of flesh from the left shoulder of each. On October 5, 1646, his son Francisco de Léon testified that his father had said that "their mother had been imprisoned as a punishment because the sign of circumcision was not on the children."

See Liebman, The Jews in New Spain, 77.
20 Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood*, 96.
21 Some of the artistic works that illustrate circumcision during this period are Jan Luyken's *The Circumcision* (1683, Venice), Johannes Leusden's *Philologus Hebraeo-Mixtus*, the frontispiece to Leon Modena's *Historia de Riti Hebraici* (1683 Dutch edn), and Romeyn de Hooghe's *Circumcision in a Sephardic Family* (1688, Amsterdam).
22 For a discussion of some early modern Christian views of circumcision see Richard Cohen, *Jewish Icons: Art and Society in Modern Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 38–42; Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 55–84.
23 Bodian, "Men of the Nation," 57–58; Graizbord, *Souls in Dispute*, 116–120.
24 The godfather (*sandak* in Hebrew) holds the child during the circumcision ritual. This role is considered a great honor, and the *sandak* is also referred to as *av sheni* (second father). In Judaism this is a privileged position, and in kabbalistic traditions, acting as the *sandak* even has "atoning qualities." See *Encyclopedia Judaica*, second edn, vol. 18, 10.
25 Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*, vol. 1: *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Jews and the Roman Catholicks*, translator from French unknown (London: William Jackson, 1773), 80.
26 For more on the role of women, as well as the absence of women in medieval and early modern circumcision ceremonies, see Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood*, 190–207; Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 59.
27 The decorum, or rather the absence of reverent decorum, in Jewish rituals and religious services, was a common theme in the writings of European Christian travel writings. For a brief discussion see Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt*, 168–169, 175. Yosef Kaplan explains that the self-conscious Portuguese Jewish community, aware of behavioral expectations of the non-Jewish European community, sought to regulate behavior and emulate more "proper" European behavior. For further discussion see Y. Kaplan, *From New Christians to New Jews* [Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center, 2002).
28 Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*, 44–45; Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt*, 54. Zell highlights this conflation by drawing our attention to the fact that the earliest known title for Rembrandt's *Jews in a Synagogue* (1648) is *Phariseen in den Temple* [*Pharisees in the Temple*].
29 Glick, *Marked In Your Flesh*, 93–96. Even seventeenth-century English poet John Milton drew this connection in his poem "Upon the Circumcision," in C. W. Eliot (ed.) *Complete Poems of John Milton* (New York: P. F. Collier and Son, 1909), 42.
30 Mozes Gans, *Memorbook: History of Dutch Jewry from the Renaissance to 1940* (Baarn, the Netherlands: Bosch & Keuning, 1977), 69, 77. Rembrandt used a "young Amsterdam Jew" as a model for his painting *The Head of Christ*. See Zell, *Reframing Rembrandt*, 56; Nadler, *Rembrandt's Jews*, 44–45, 67.

31 The Mint Museums, Available online at www.themintmuseums.org/collections_detail.php?collection_id=11&item_id=166 (accessed October 1, 2007).
32 Thomas Tweed, *Our Lady of Exile: Diasporic Religion at a Cuban Catholic Shrine in Miami* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 94.
33 Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, 42–43.
34 David Morgan, *Visual Piety: A History and Theory of Popular Religious Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 8.
35 Tweed, *Our Lady of Exile*, 94.
36 Samantha Baskind, "Distinguishing the Distinction: Picturing Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Amsterdam," *Journal for the Study of Sephardic and Mizrahi Jewry* (Summer 2007), 11, 13; Cohen, *Jewish Icons*, 48–51.
37 Whitney Davis, "The Origins of Image Making," *Current Anthropology* 27, 3 (1986), 193.
38 For more on the difference in the presentation of Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews see Baskind, "Distinguishing the Distinction," 1–13; ibid., "Bernard Picart's Etchings," 40–64. The differences between Ashkenazi and Sephardic Jews were not only a focal point for *La Nação* but were also commonly noted by non-Jews.

> The Dutch also noticed this difference, as witness not only their paintings, but also a poem published in 1684 in which Sybrand Feitama contrasted the rank and unpleasant German synagogue he had visited on one of his youthful walks with the splendid edifice the Portuguese were building not so far away. In other words, though the Portuguese Jews, too, were alien creatures to the Dutch – and at times very alien! – the social gulf between them was not nearly as wide as that dividing the Dutch from the "Smousen."

In Gans, *Memorbook*, 55.
39 Bernard Picart, *The Ceremonies and Religious Customs of the Various Nations of the Known World*, vol. 3: *Containing the Ceremonies of the Idolatrous Nations*, translator from French unknown (London: William Jackson, 1774), 223–224.
40 Jonathan Schorsch, *Jews and Blacks in the Early Modern World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 187.
41 Lynn Glaser, *Indians or Jews? An Introduction by Lynn Glaser to a Reprint of Manasseh Ben Israel's The Hope of Israel* (Gilroy, CA: Roy V. Boswell, 1973), 23.
42 Glaser, *Indians or Jews?*, 23.
43 Glaser, *Indians or Jews?*, 27.
44

> European travelers' first impulse was to assume that primitive folk in strange lands must have shared a common ancestry with the Jews. If the origins of humankind, as the Bible taught, traced from Adam through Noah and his sons, perhaps remote tribes had inherited circumcision from some anciently dispersed patriarch. Speculating about the fate of the so-called lost tribes of Israel, Londoner Thomas Thorowgood, in a book called *Jews in America* (1660), decided that "many Indian Nations are of Judaicall race, seeing this frequent and constant Character of Circumcision, so singularlie fixed to the Jews, is to be found among them."
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> (David Gollaher, Circumcision: A History of the World's Most Controversial Surgery [New York: Basic Books, 2001], 54–55)

45 Glaser, *Indians or Jews?*; Jonathan Schorsch, 'Blacks, Jews and the Racial Imagination in the Writings of Sephardim in the Long Seventeenth Century,' *Jewish History* 19 (2005), 112.
46 Glaser, *Indians or Jews?*, 22.
47 Picart, *The Ceremonies*, vol. 3, 163.
48 Ibid., vol. 1, 235.
49 Ibid., vol. 3, 163.

50 Ibid., vol. 3, 150.
51 Ibid., vol. 3, 145.
52 Glaser, *Indians or Jews?*, 25–26.
53 Picart, *The Ceremonies*, vol. 3, 144.
54 Baskind, "Bernard Picart's Etchings of Amsterdam's Jews," 43. Ilana Abramovitch also notes the that "the popularity of the work can be attributed to the taste for exotica amongst the educated classes of the eighteenth century" ("Picart's Ceremonies and Customs," 94).
55 The volumes of *Cérémonies et coutumes religieuses de tous les peuples du monde*, divided into chapters based on religious tradition, and into subchapters on rituals, practices, texts, and beliefs, are fashioned in an encyclopedic style. The text is accompanied by illustrations, which are complemented by glossaries that distinguish ritual objects and key individuals (e.g, the *mohel*).
56 Numerous projects of this sort were published throughout the early modern period, such as William Hurd's *A New Universal History of the Religious Rites, Ceremonies, and Customs of the Whole World …* (London, 1780) and Johann Christian Georg Bodenschatz's *Kirchliche Verfassung der Heutigen Juden Sonderlich Derer in Deutchland* (Frankfurt, 1748), often copying images and text from one another.
57 Picart, *The Ceremonies*, vol. 1, 131, 160, 197.
58 Ibid., vol. 1, 111.

10 Blood and myth in the thought of Franz Rosenzweig

Hagai Dagan

Many regard the theology of Franz Rosenzweig as an attempt to set Jewish identity within a larger framework of rational philosophy. I tend to agree with that. Nevertheless, I consider the core of Rosenzweig's thought to be more mythical than rational. The "philosophical" framework is not very convincing (philosophically) to a critical eye,[1] but it is also a sort of diversion from the real character of Rosenzweig's project, which is *mythical*. He himself admitted Schelling's great influence upon him, and he meant the late Schelling – the Schelling who turned away from philosophy toward myth.[2]

Rosenzweig was profoundly influenced by Schelling's shift from Hegelian rationalism to an "*Erzaehlende Philosophie*," a "storytelling philosophy" that puts myth and religious thinking at the focus of the philosophical discourse. That shift involved a retreat from the Hegelian pretension to submitting the whole of reality to the rational mind. Experience and revelation were instead granted the status of constitutive patterns of true epistemology. Further, the subject of the telling philosophy is no longer the *Geist*, not even the individual mind, but the person, in the sense of the one who tells the story; and in the context of philosophy, the particular philosopher who *tells* its unique philosophy.[3]

One of Schelling's basic insights was that – contradictory to Hegel's notion – thought cannot contain reality. There is an elementary "that," which will not submit to rational thought. This idea not only affected the dialectical materialism of Marx and Engels, but also Rosenzweig's theology and his "believing science." This aimed to combine rationality with revelation,[4] following Schelling's notion about the limits of rational thought.[5] Schelling, it appears, is to a great extent responsible for Rosenzweig's shift away from "pure" philosophy to theology, the latter gaining the meaning of a remedy for a sick philosophy that could offer no real cure for the human condition. The "believing science" is intended to continue where philosophy failed, in apprehending the whole being; at the same time, it is aware of its limitations in doing so.[6]

Such a view is much less committed to a single adequate truth and leaves vast room for mythical, poetic and story-like descriptions of core notions. A notion such as existence is, to begin with, quite illusive, but as Rosenzweig's mythic-theological philosophy comes to the point in which it should account for the special existence of the Jews, it doesn't really *account* for it in the systematic way

one would perhaps expect; it rather tells a story or paints a picture. Rosenzweig doesn't really supply us with a methodical description of a cognitive, realistic, historical or sociological reality. He rather provides a poetic, mythical reality. Such intensified depiction could be intended to function as a prophetic vision, but it can also be seen as a metaphor for an ideal reality. According to such interpretation, terms like 'blood' and 'procreation' are part of a picturesque image, an image of self enfolded, a religious, enthusiastic existence.

Rosenzweig's mythical attitude intensifies as he approaches the unique status of the Jewish people. In this discussion – which seems to be the heart of his theology – the liberal Jew of the early twentieth century departs from his liberal cradle and goes back to the long (biblical and rabbinic) Jewish tradition of self-superiority based on mythical notions.[7]

The two main mythical themes of Rosenzweig's conception of superiority are "blood and procreation" (*Blut und Zeugung*) and cyclic sacred time. I have discussed the nature of his blood notion elsewhere.[8] Here I will attempt to link it to the myth of the lonely Jew.

Rosenzweig, like many Jewish thinkers before him, portrays Judaism as a biological or ethnic community. The practical meaning of this approach does not essentially extend the halakhic rule that whoever was born to a Jewish mother is a Jew. But the practical aspect is not the most important thing here. Rosenzweig was a thinker and not a halakhic *posek* (a religious law giver). One should therefore ask what kind of a mental atmosphere his views create. I would argue that they create an atmosphere in which this technical-restricting definition of identity, constituted by relation to the mother, becomes a substantive characterization of Judaism on a biological basis: blood and birth.

In the early Rosenzweig I identify a tendency of ethnicization or biologization of Judaism, whereas in *The Star of Redemption*[9] those concepts become modified and the word "blood" acquires a meaning that may be understood as a metaphor for a broader one – existence. Still, Rosenzweig's tendency in *The Star* is to see in the Jewish community of blood a superior and ultimate form of existence that embodies redemption in a non-redeemed world.

The substance of this community is common blood.[10] This continuity, rooted in blood, is first and foremost the responsibility of the woman, who gives birth, who gives life.[11] Rosenzweig does not attempt to conceal this aspect of his thought in his book: "It [the people of Israel] does not have to hire the services of the spirit; the natural propagation of the body guarantees its eternity."[12] His intention is stated explicitly: the Jewish people does not rely upon the spirit, nor upon intellectual or ethical uniqueness, nor upon one or another mental quality, but upon blood ties and natural procreation alone.

In the context in which these things are stated, blood serves as a metaphor for stability, non-dependence, being gathered in upon oneself. The people are gathered within their own existence. The meaning of redemption for Rosenzweig is that the Jew is cut off from the world that surrounds him.[13] He lives practically within history, but essentially outside of it.[14]

The Jewish community depicted by Rosenzweig is a lonely, detached one, proud of its loneliness and undisturbed by its detachedness. It is completely concentrated in its blood-bondage, its inner uniqueness and intimacy. Blood and corporeality serve here as a contrast to the spirit. Rosenzweig creates a highly corporeal version of Judaism. This version is poorly supported, if at all, by a historical or sociological structure, and is rather vividly and poetically described. This leads me to think that it was almost consciously created as an ancient-new myth, the myth of a secluded, biological Judaism. It is not necessary to enter into a detailed exploration or analysis in order to demonstrate that Judaism was never biologically secluded. From the start, it was only an ideological and imaginary radicalization of the Chosen People concept, a radicalization that resulted in attempts at implementation, such as those in the time of Ezra.

Nonetheless, one should note that, as in the old myth, in *The Star*, too, Rosenzweig does not remain at the purely corporeal. He binds the blood theme to a cognitive one: the way we experience sacred time, the religious year.

This separate existence manifests itself in the image of the Jewish people as the burning fire inside the Star of Redemption. This fire creates its own time,[15] and procreation itself,[16] meaning existence itself, is quite enough for it: it is self-sufficient and consummates its own everlasting religious time and experience. This enables the Jew to live as redeemed in an unredeemed world.[17]

The substance of the 'us' of that community is the blood togetherness.[18] It is a substantive closeness that gives the community vitality and connects it to the present, whereas communities with no such blood-bond are tied together solely by good will and hope, which means that they are future-oriented.[19] (This entire observation by Rosenzweig regarding community types seems quite weak to me.)

Rosenzweig regarded this "present" of the Jewish community, strengthened by blood and inner religious time and experience, as being quite acceptable. It does not require an essential change, and hence the diaspora is not something that requires amendment. He did not, however, stop there. He went as far as to determine the diaspora to be a necessary condition for the authentic life of the Jewish people.[20] One should notice, though, that Rosenzweig does not duplicate the line of previous rabbinic writers; for them the diaspora was, in general, a menace that would one day pass. They treated it as a condition linked to a sense of non-belonging and *aspired to maintain this sense* and the longing for a different (almost impossible) place/condition that goes along with it. Rosenzweig's utterly different view is deeply linked to his notion of blood: since the Jews are exclusively, metaphorically – but also physically – sunken in their blood, they do not really need anything further to be satisfied or to feel that they belong. They need no land or political framework. Hence, they can stay where they are, in space as well as in time (meaning Germany and the present time) without turning a longing, restless gaze elsewhere or toward the future. Unlike Abraham Geiger, Hermann Cohen, and many others, Rosenzweig does not even discuss integration in this context, for his Jew does not really need German culture or society. He is self-content and so integration is replaced, in Rosenzweig's conception of the Jew, by a relaxed seclusion.

The concept of blood allows Rosenzweig to assemble a first-class home for his Jew. It is a home in a far more primary and intimate sense than a brick house is, not to mention the broader and looser homeland. In fact, only the concession of that homeland enables the Jew to gain a home that is not time- or space-dependent, like the snail's shell.[21] This is something as evident and primary as blood itself. Being itself becomes a home. Such belonging requires no explanation or justification. Judaism, *Das Judentum*, as an abstract noun, requires justification,[22] but being what you are, being in your self, requires no such thing.[23]

Rosenzweig regards Judaism as something closed, unapproachable to outsiders, or even to Jews who converted to Christianity.[24] Further, he describes it as a secluded group, closed within its own "eternity that stems from the dark roots of [its] blood" (*der eigenen Ewigkeit aus den dunkeln Quellen des Bluts*).[25] Rosenzweig thus insists upon a tribal myth, based on family relations and a unique religious experience that stems from those relations. Although he explains this uniqueness, one sometimes gets the sense of a sort of *mysteria*. The *mysteria* of Christianity centers around the blood of Christ, and the *mysteria* of Judaism is rooted in the blood of its members, who gain eternity[26] by being "deeply rooted … in our own body and blood" (*tief verwurzelt in uns selbst, in unserem eignen Leib und Blut*).[27]

That myth of blood community is linked in Rosenzweig's thought to another ancient motive, one that belongs to the old myths of the pre-monotheistic era: cyclic time. This cyclic time, presented by Kohelet (*Ecclesiastes*, chapter 1) and then again by Nietzsche as an erosive time that mocks the uniqueness of personality, regains in *The Star of Redemption* its optimistic aspect as a time of renewal,[28] a time that enables us to escape the curse of modern, linear time, which Heidegger called *Lauf zum Tod* (running unto death). It is rather this cyclic pagan time that serves Rosenzweig as a time loaded with religious significance,[29] a time that allows us to draw God into our present religious experience.[30] Here, the cyclic rainbow prophecy proffered to Noah (Genesis 8:22) – "While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease," a prophecy that reveals a reality of pure nature, guaranteed solely by God – becomes a ritual cycle filled as much as possible with divine presence.

But this divine presence is being evoked, maintained, and stored in the human experience of the Jewish individual and of the Jewish community.[31] For Rosenzweig, this experience is a very powerful and moving one, and when taken to the edge – as perhaps, with himself on that Yom Kippur in 1913 – it is a radical "border experience," a transformative one. It is not anything like the religious, cozy environment of his liberal parents. It is something that almost sweeps away and overtakes the whole being.[32] It goes as deep as possible and becomes intimately ours. That is, it is rooted in our blood. In this context this phrase gains a different meaning, one that justifies its use from a different perspective: it is not (just) in the blood for its ethnic meaning, but (also) for its intensity as an experience.

Still, this intensity is limited. It is limited because the same cyclic time keeps us in an orbit that attaches us to the ground and prevents us from being sucked

into the world of God.[33] It is the time of the earth, of crops and seasons, the time of the Canaanite gods; a human time, not a divine one. God suits Himself to human time and by doing so keeps us alive; He does not rob our time for His. We remain human; we remain in our human bodies, not wholly spiritual. We remain within our blood. And what is more human than the blood?

Thus, Rosenzweig's use of the blood concept can be portrayed as one of a mythic and even poetic nature, aiming to posit Jewish experience as a unique religious and intimate one, linked to the reviving and comforting nature of cyclic time. It is not a wholly racist concept, but it is also not completely free of racism. I do not see evidence that Rosenzweig grasped Jewish blood as purer or substantively different from the blood of the other nations, but rather as a productive term to capture what he identified as the Jews' distinct dynamic of autarkic existence, at least in their own self-experience. Rosenzweig uses the term "blood" to say something like this: let us seclude ourselves, let us sink into our secluded self – it is so delightful.[34]

The blood concept is related here to Rosenzweig's effort to distinguish the Jews from all others. This effort manifests itself in different levels of distinction that all relate to one another. Thus, Rosenzweig tries to demonstrate how the people of Israel designate time differently and distinguish it through its sanctification. Time ceases to be profane and becomes a time of redemption. This is a narrower case of a broader phenomenon of capturing time in patterns – such as days, weeks, and so on. Through this human effort, time is no longer a mere stream of drifting moments. The ritual cycle attaches a permanent pattern to it. It keeps on passing but it also remains, in the sense that it leaves permanent marks. This pattern of change within what appears to be stability frees us from what seemed before as a rapid sliding toward death. Thus, the erosion becomes rejuvenation[35] within a guarded continuing present.[36] This present remains human, but the eternal (through religious experience and the religious year) is invited to come and dwell in it.[37] Thus, the time of the minimal existence, the time of blood, is being pumped with eternity without relinquishing the intimate self.[38]

One can observe how Rosenzweig understands the implementation of this conception when he refers to the "redemption feasts," i.e., Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkoth. Such holidays exist, according to Rosenzweig, only in Judaism, since only Jews actually live the reality of redemption,[39] by which he means living as being redeemed in present time. It is precisely this effect that is achieved in the redemption feasts, which create an atmosphere of the actual occurring of redemption in the present, through the resounding of the Shofar.[40] The lonely Jew stands face to face with God and eternity[41] and his private time is filled with this sense of the eternal.[42]

Unlike Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur,[43] Sukkoth manifests a redemption that is not full, but only partial, only the amount of redemption that can be achieved within history.[44] The *sukka* (booth), being fragile and not solid, returns the Jew to the reality of the world that rules outside the inner world of Jewish blood and existence.[45] The experience of Yom Kippur is so tremendous that it almost wipes out the cycle of time and leads humanity into the divine realm.

Human beings, however, must still live in the world; entering completely into the realm of the divine would mean passing away. Rosenzweig is no mystic, so he sets Sukkoth as the restoring of cyclic time, as a means of preserving life,[46] a life that can only contain as much eternity as possible in an unredeemed world. In this context, the *sukka* is not a temporary house; it is rather our permanent condition, one that characterizes us as human beings. Nevertheless, the Jew lives in this world (maybe paradoxically) as redeemed,[47] and his seclusion, centered around his community-blood feeling, renders it inaccessible to others. This is the reason why others cannot participate in Jewish feasts. The others (well, the Christians) have a different messianic role in Rosenzweig's messianic script. If they participate successfully in Jewish rituals, if they become part of the Jewish blood uniqueness, they will cease being others and will no longer be able to play that role. The Christians are destined to become a part of the fire burning in the star, but only at the End of Days. Meanwhile, the blood terminology helps to keep them at a remove. In this sense, Rosenzweig, after already detaching himself from the rabbinical notion of Redemption as something bound to happen only at the End of Days, restores something of that notion here: the Jews are not obliged to wait for the End of Days in order to be redeemed – but the rest of the world must. The seclusion is necessary to maintain this separation.[48]

Notes

1 To demonstrate this would go beyond the range of this chapter. I have demonstrated it in Dagan, *The Concept of Redemption as a Solution to the Death Anxiety in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig* [Hebrew] (Tel-Aviv: Tel-Aviv University 1998).
2 See my discussion in *The Concept of Redemption*, 92.
3 All references to Rosenzweig's books refer to the *Gesammelte Schriften* edition: Rachel Rosenzweig, Edith Rosenzweig-Scheinmann and Bernhard Casper (eds), *Franz Rosenzweig – Der Mensch und sein Werk, Gesammelte Schriften*, *Band I: Briefe und Tagebücher*, 2 vols (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1979); *Band II: Der Stern der Erlösung* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1976); Reinhold Mayer and Annemarie Mayer (eds), *Band III: Zweistromland* (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984); R. N. Rosenzweig (ed.), *Band IV: Jehuda Halevi* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1983). It will be cited as follows: *GS* I, 148, etc.
4 Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Franz Rosenzweig and the German Philosophical Tradition," in *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. P. Mendes-Flohr (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1988), 1–19.
5 Robert Gibbs, *Correlations in Rosenzweig and Levinas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 35–38.
6 *GS* II, 46–47.
7 This tradition is well represented in *Baba Metzia'*, 114b: "And ye my flock, the flock of my pastures, are men; only ye are designated 'men'." Actually, the Soncino translation is relatively mild here; the Hebrew original goes on to say: "and the ones who worship the stars (*'Ovdei kokhavim'*) are not designated human beings." The same view is expressed more radically in *Shabbath*, 145b:

   The star-worshipers are filthy, since the snake had sex with Eve in paradise and contaminated her. R. Yohanan says that only Israel could rid themselves of that filth because they stood at Sinai. Abba bar Kahana agrees that only Israel got rid of the filth, but he thinks they were able to do it through a long process of purification:

Abraham begot Ishmael and only then Isaac, and Ishmael was the filth that was secreted from his body. Then Isaac begot Esau and only then Jacob.

Clearly, this presents a sheer biological view of purification.

8 "The Motif of Blood in the Thought of Franz Rosenzweig," *AJS Review* 26 (2002), 241–249.
9 *GS* II: *Der Stern der Erlösung*. Below, I will use the abbreviation: *GS* II.
10 *GS* II, 332. The characterization of Judaism as an organic body, from which it is impossible to separate oneself, already follows from the correspondence with Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. When someone (such as Rosenstock) converts to Christianity, it indicates that from the outset he was not an integral part of this body, for if he really belonged to it he would have been unable to sever himself from it. See Reinhold Mayer, *Franz Rosenzweig – eine Philosophie der dialogischen Erfahrung* (Munich: Ch. Kaiser Verlag, 1973), 40.
11 *GS* II, 362–363.
12 *GS* II, 332.
13 See the reaction of Emmanuel Levinas to that position in Levinas, "Zwischen zwei Welten," in *Zeitgewinn – messianisches Denken nach Franz Rosenzweig*, ed. G. Fuchs and H. H. Henrix (Frankfurt am Main: Knecht, 1987), 60–64.
14 *GS* I, 554–556.
15 *GS* II, 364, 374.
16 *GS* I, 105–106.
17 *GS* II, 467; *GS* I, 137; *GS* III, 557; Stephane Moses, *System and Revelation*: *The Philosophy of Franz Rosenzweig*, trans. Catherine Tidany (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 164, 177, 183.
18 My phrase. See *GS* II, 332; *GS* I, 501; Mayer, *Franz Rosenzweig*, 40.
19 *GS* II, 317, 379.
20 *GS* I, 317.
21 *GS* II, 440.
22 *GS* III, 557.
23 *GS* III, 567.
24 *GS* I, letter to Eugen Rosenstock, 7.11.1916, 288.
25 *GS*, II, 338.
26 *GS* II, 332.
27 *GS* II, 339.
28 *GS* II, 322.
29 See for example *GS* II, 368.
30 *GS* II, 325.
31 *GS* II, 443.
32 *GS* II, 4.
33 This is one meaning of the concept of eternity within the moment. See *GS* II, 282.
34 One can find an echo of this tendency of seclusion in a story told by the German-Jewish rabbi, Daniel Alter, in an interview that was conducted with him recently (*Die Zeit*, January 9, 2007):

> I asked a non-religious [Jewish] immigrant [from the former Soviet Union to Germany] where he met his wife. In the synagogue, he said. I replied: But what were you looking for in the Synagogue? You are not religious! So he said: What do you mean what was I looking for? – I was looking for a woman! For some reason Jews look for other Jews as partners with whom they can raise families and have children (my translation from the German)
>
> (Ich fragte einen Einwanderer, der nicht religiös war, wo er seine jüdische Frau kennen gelernt habe. In der Synagoge, sagte er. Und ich: Aber was machst du in der Synagoge, du bist doch gar nicht religiös! – Er: Was soll ich

da schon machen? Eine Frau suchen! Aus irgendeinem Grund will man als Jude andere Juden kennen lernen, einen jüdischen Partner haben, später auch jüdische Kinder.)

According to this example, what ties the Jews together is not religion, but something else. Rosenzweig would have named it blood and procreation.

35 Moses, *System and Revelation*, 196.
36 *GS* II, 324.
37 *GS* II, 325.
38 *GS* II, 325; Moses, *System and Revelation*, 196.
39 *GS* II, 412.
40 *GS* II, 360.
41 *GS* II, 360.
42 *GS* II, 360; Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World* (New York: Schocken Books, 1982), 87–88; Moses, *System and Revelation*, 197, 203.
43 Moses, *System and Revelation*, 201.
44 *GS* II, 364.
45 Moses, *System and Revelation*, 195.
46 *GS* II, 368.
47 *GS* II, 364, 368.
48 I hope to develop this theme elsewhere.

11 "Man's red soup"

Blood and the art of Esau in the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg

Neta Stahl

Introduction

The abundant use of the word *dam* (blood) in the poetry of Uri Zvi Greenberg (1896–1981) is obvious to anyone who is familiar with his work. The son of a Hasidic family, Greenberg broke with religious orthodoxy in his youth but returned to traditional Judaism in his later years. He became one of the most important and controversial writers of Yiddish and Hebrew modernism, known for his ultra-right-wing ideology. It may seem unsurprising that this right-wing poet considered blood as "*yakar li mi-kol*" ("dearest to me of all") and invoked it frequently. But upon closer examination, Greenberg's use of this seemingly trite symbol conveys significant esthetic and artistic meaning that far transcends its fascist context.

As I intend to show in this chapter, the blood metaphor in Greenberg's poetry goes through several major changes: blood plays a key role in his poetic manifestos of expressionism, becomes a symbol of the "New Jew" in the context of his adoption of the bloody "Art of Esau," and finally serves to embody the poet's tears, which fall on the bodies of the Jews murdered by Esau's descendants in the Holocaust.

The blood metaphor is used by Greenberg to signify the "Jewish self," and the transformation it must undergo in order to become "a nation like all other nations." After the Holocaust, Greenberg again employs this metaphor, this time in order to reclaim the traditional Jewish view of Christians as bloodthirsty persecutors. These changes in Greenberg's perception of blood develop into questions about the boundaries of poetic language in general and his own early poetic enthusiasm for blood in particular.

Expressionism and blood enthusiasm

In the preface to his first poetry collection in Hebrew, *A Great Horror and a Moon* (*Eima Gdola ve-Yare'ach*), published shortly after his arrival in Palestine in 1925, Greenberg presents the principles of his expressionist poetry in the form of a poetic manifesto. The symbols of blood and flesh stand at the center of this lyrical text, which Greenberg considers as representative of the basic principles of expressionist poetry.[1]

Expressionist poetry sought an ecstatic lyricism that aimed to condense and strip down verse, representing the quintessential feelings of human experience with strings of nouns and few adjectives and infinitives. As in the existential philosophies of Nietzsche and Heidegger, expressionists demanded that the poet face his real inner Being by giving it literary expression.[2]

In Greenberg's poetry, the literary method of externalizing the most hidden feelings – those not even known to the poet – finds its most interesting articulation through the symbolism of flesh and blood. For Greenberg, flesh and blood are the essence of human experience; they are what remains after a man is stripped of all his covers: his *talith* (ritual prayershawl), clothes, and false persona. Social, cultural, and religious norms are often depicted in Greenberg's poetry using the symbol of a cover – a fabric that prevents man from reaching an understanding of his own Being. Man can only reach this *mamashut* – Being, the core of his existence – by stripping away all these covers from his blood and flesh.

Moreover, blood carries another symbolic meaning, that of human feelings: "Bitter O bitter is Man's blood, who walks alive and breathing; bitter for he is lost and always in need of mercy."[3] This line, taken from the poem "Le-Hakarat ha-Yeshut" ("Toward the Recognition of Being"), demonstrates blood's role in revealing one's Being. It is particularly central because it serves as a metonymy for human emotion. The overlap between the Hebrew words for blood (*dam*) and man (*adam*) emphasizes the close semantic link between the two. Greenberg points to the fact that the word *adam* contains *dam*, vocally and graphically, and that the two are distinguished by only one letter. These similarities suggest a synecdochic relation – the blood is an inner, essential part of the human body that corresponds to emotion. This line may even be read with blood as the grammatical subject, which itself "walks alive and breathing."

In several of his poems Greenberg transforms the word "blood" into a verb, *ledamdem*, a unique composite of the verbs *ledamem* ("to bleed"), and *lidmoa'a*, ("to shed tears"). This small lexical modification contributes to the personification of blood, leading to its figurative use in the representation of human emotion.

Blood thus embodies the recognition of the inner essence of man, as a figurative expression of man's emotions. However, Greenberg uses blood not only to address the essence of man's existence, but also, and more importantly, to address the representation of this essence in poetry. In the manifesto *A Great Horror and a Moon*, Greenberg argues that modern poetry ought to take the symbols of flesh and blood as objects of representation, since they are the core and ground of humanity's fragile, mortal existence. By revealing the flesh and blood, the artist exposes what was previously obscured by civilization and cultural norms in general, and by Jewish law and custom in particular. Uncanny as it sounds, and perhaps precisely because of its threatening aspects, Greenberg argues that this is exactly what the poet should strive for in writing modern poetry.

Early on, in the 1922 introduction to *Albatross*, a Yiddish literary journal for new poetry that Greenberg founded and edited, he presented a "Proclamirung" or declaration, in which he explained the nature of expressionist poetry. Here again, blood plays an important role:

> Thus, the cruelty in the poem
> Thus, the chaotic in the painting
> Thus, the scream of the blood…
> And for: expressing the naked free man; who floods in the waves of the blood.[4]

Surprisingly, in Greenberg's view, blood has nothing to do with death and weakness. Precisely the opposite: it is the blood that screams, that appears as dynamic and powerful as a wave, aiming to cover the world. The blood symbol provides poetry with a vocal expression of the human experience of a scream. It also provides the poem with the powerful, graphic picture of a stream of color and movement, which ultimately represents passion.

Hebrew nationalism and the poetics of blood

The powerful role of the blood symbol is even more crucial for Greenberg when his poetic interest shifts from a general account of modernism and expressionism in poetry to the specific question of national (and later nationalistic) Hebrew poetry. In his famous manifesto *Klapey Tisheim ve-Tisha'a* (*Against Ninety-Nine*, 1928) he presents his vision of the new Hebrew literature. According to Greenberg, modern Hebrew poetry should use the blood symbol to represent the Zionist pioneers' passion in fulfilling their national dreams. The mouth of the new Hebrew poet needs to resemble a wound from which the scream of the Jewish people's history will emerge.[5] The very nature of the Jewish people, he claims, is that of *Am ha-Expressionismus* – the "expressionist people" (or, "The nation of Expressionism") – and as such, the new Hebrew poetry needs to move from the language of silence (*dmama*) – to the language of blood (*dam*).[6]

The question of the role of the modern Hebrew writer, writing in the Land of Israel in the Hebrew language, is central to *Klapey Tisheim ve Tisha'a*: "There must be a reason why a man rises and cuts the language of his mother from his tongue and begins – 'for some reason' – with the sunken blood-tongue of the ancient race."[7] To write modern Hebrew literature, the writer must cut himself off from his "*mame loshen*," i.e. Yiddish.[8] The Hebrew language is the language of blood, and is used as such in modern Hebrew literature. The same theme emerges again in Greenberg's cycle of poems *Ben Damim le Damim* (*Between Blood and Blood*):

> Ay 'tis thus,
> This is not my mother-tongue, which I've cut
> like a living limb from the soul, from her view, from her tune, from the smell of her forest.
> My poem's tongue is the blood-tongue of the wandering race,
> which we have silenced for generations with myriad letters and that even precious qualities are dwarfed in her light.[9]

But what precisely is the language of blood? Interestingly, and despite Greenberg's own shift from Yiddish to Hebrew composition, he states that a poet does not

have to know Hebrew in order to write "Hebrew Poetry"; for example, he considers Heinrich Heine and Elsa Lasker-Schiller Hebrew poets, though both wrote in German. Nor does all poetry written in the Hebrew language qualify as "Hebrew Poetry." "The language of blood," then, is the existential quality to which Greenberg argues modern Hebrew poetry should aspire.[10]

The language of blood is the language of expressionism. Unlike the language used by the "Ninety-Nine" (the other Hebrew poets), it is a language that dares to scream: to describe the very essence of things, this time not merely in regard to general human existence, but rather in relation to the history of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. The language of blood is simultaneously the historical language of the Jewish people and, more importantly, the language that has the power to address the ultimate core of past Jewish existence and its relation to the present.

Greenberg criticized the poetry then being written in Palestine for its poetic style and its thematic choices. He characterizes the writers of the *Yishuv* (the Jewish establishment in Mandatory Palestine) as not daring "to taste from man's red soup."[11]

Blood, or "Man's red soup" – a term both repulsive and threatening – has a crucial political dimension in the context of Greenberg's nationalist poetry. His call for revolt against contemporary language and literature marks the beginning of a shift in his political views: from mainstream Zionism to the ultra-right wing, and toward his eventual role as the poet of the Jewish revisionist movement. He criticized the mainstream "poetry of silence" not only in artistic terms, but also for its failure to deal with concrete political issues. The poetry of blood, on the other hand, would scream, sometimes violently, that which the old poetry was too afraid to say.

By depicting contemporary mainstream modern Hebrew poets as afraid to taste from "man's red soup," Greenberg provocatively identifies himself with the biblical Esau, echoing Esau's words to his brother Jacob: "Feed me please from this red-red stuff" ("*Hal'iteni na min ha-Adom ha-Adom ha-Ze*." Genesis 25:27). The call to taste from this "red soup" is thus a call to become like Esau, the man who lived by his sword (Genesis 27:40).

This is a daring and surprising shift in terminology and values. The poet who had so often used the word blood to figuratively represent familial and national relations now calls upon his own people to desert the traditional Jewish aversion to the sword, and become like the Edomites/Christians.[12] It is important to note that throughout his poetry Greenberg repeatedly casts Christianity and Judaism in oppositional terms; even in his many poems that invoke the figure of Jesus, he draws a clear distinction between Jesus as the historical Jewish Messiah, with whom the poet identifies, and Jesus as the inanimate idol of the Christian Church.[13] Therefore his call to adopt the manners of Esau is indeed surprising. Greenberg here radicalizes the mainstream Zionist rejection of the "Old Jew," to the extent that he demands that the "New Jew" outdo the Gentiles in his willingness to spill blood (both his enemies' and his own) for the sake of the Land of Israel. This position is best exemplified in the poem "Emet Ahat ve-Lo Shtayim" ("One Truth and Not Two", 1937):

Your Rabbis taught: land is bought with money.
You buy the field and dig it with a hoe.
I say: land is not bought with money
And with a hoe you also dig and bury the dead.

I say: land is conquered with blood.
And only when conquered with blood, is it hallowed to the people
by the holiness of blood.

And only one who follows the cannon in the field,
shall merit to follow his good plow
on *this* conquered field.

And only *this* field gives forth nourishing, filling bread

And the house that rises from its mound is a fortress and a temple,

For in *this* field there is honorable blood.

Your Rabbis taught: the Messiah will come in generations to come
and Judea shall rise without fire or blood.
She will rise with each tree, with each new house.
I say: if your generation lags
And does not force the end with blows and bare hands
and will not come in fire with a Shield of David
and his horses will not come wallowing in blood –
the Messiah will not come even in the distant generations.
Judea shall not rise.
[…]
Your Rabbis taught: there is one truth for the nations:
blood for blood – and it is not a Jewish truth.
And I say: one truth, not two.
[…]
And the blood will decide: who is sole ruler here.[14]

In this poem, Greenberg criticizes two competing ideologies. The first is the pragmatic ideology of the Zionist labor movement, according to which the land could be won through purchase and toil. The other is the traditional Jewish belief that only God can bring the Jewish people back to its land, and that it is not up to man to fight for this cause. And though the Labor-Zionists agreed with Greenberg's critique of the "Old Jew," he intentionally dims the distinction between these two opposing camps, since both fail to see that it takes blood to win the land. The poetic voice assumes the persona of a prophet, revealing the truth that the "Rabbis" of both camps fail to realize: "The blood will decide: who is the sole ruler here."

In Greenberg's poetry of the late 1920s and 1930s, blood functions as a symbol of violence and revenge, and as such it is associated with the Gentiles, "the nations," and more specifically with Christianity. At the same time, blood is still the poem's basic material, its ink, and its essence:

> Time poured blood on my eyes, on my hands, on my pen,
> made it flow in a combination of letters: it *is* in my poem.
> And God bears witness that it is not ink – but blood for blood,
> When blood is silenced in the streets, held back, and very hot
> In the poem … but for me the poem is not enough! If blood did not rouse,
> Shall a paper stained with bloody words shatter the silence? […]
> For the time has come and beautiful poems are of no value
> If it come to the world without a blade
> And without a rock for stoning in the raging poet's hand –
> Who shall awake, if not the *voice* of the growling rebel?[15]

Blood functions here as a metaphor for the actual act of writing poetry, but the source of this blood is revenge, and it serves more than an esthetic purpose: it is a call to revolt, a call to arms. The poet writes his poem with blood, but the poem is of no use if this blood does not shake the people and push them to act. And it is the act of shedding blood that the poet strives for.

But even in this very nationalistic context, this blood contains a Christian element. In fact, when referring to the blood as "held back," Greenberg uses the Hebrew word *menutzar*, which may also mean "Christianized." If we understand it in this sense (or even if we retain both meanings), blood assumes the quality "*menutzar*" when it is used to depict violence. The blood that now resides in the poem, but will become concrete when shed by real action, is depicted as having a Christian quality.

Blood is still a metaphor in these poems, but this metaphor is used in order to call for the real, concrete political action of shedding blood: the blood of the Palestinian Arabs and the British occupiers who threaten to thwart the Jewish reclamation of the Land of Israel.

Messianism and the poetics of blood

In many of his poems, Greenberg presents the speaker in the poem as a herald, or even a Messiah.[16] Indeed, in some of the poems discussed thus far, the very act of poetic composition is endowed with the power to change and even create reality. But in order to depict himself as a corporeal Messiah, Greenberg uses the metaphor of blood and flesh, representing the Messiah's humanity. Greenberg argues that only a corporeal Messiah who has suffered the torments of flesh and blood will be able to save the Jewish nation from its suffering.

> Nay, I do not want a heavenly Messiah, whose body is fog, whose head is made of onyx and who does not know our torment and shame in [his own] blood and flesh.
>
> Who does not know in his own flesh and blood hunger, and thirst, and a small child's cry, what a woman screams when a soldier touches her flesh![17]

Earlier in this poem, Greenberg alludes to the Last Supper, and uses the symbols of flesh and blood to present himself as the next Messiah.[18] This use of Christian symbolic elements to refer to a Jewish Messiah is a unique characteristic of this poetry and may also be understood in light of Greenberg's symbolic understanding of blood as an element borrowed from Christianity, which is needed to revive the Jewish nation as it transforms itself into a nation like all other nations ("*Am kechol ha-Amim*"):

> Perhaps not … perhaps he entered in me: he sits in my ribs, burning, raging, and roaring like a possessed lion.
> And I do not tell others of his refuge in my ribs
> And I feed him flesh from the living, and give him blood better than wine.[19]

Even the Messiah has to be fed with the blood (and flesh) that symbolize vitality and renewal (even in the context of an act of cannibalism). It should then come as no surprise that this same blood revives the dead language and literature of the old Jewish nation, a renaissance that will push the New Jews to action, to the very concrete act of shedding blood.

After the Holocaust: back to the Old Jew

Throughout his poetry, Greenberg draws a clear connection between Christianity and the desire for blood. In many of his poems, blood is associated with the violent history between Christianity and Judaism. This symbolic use of blood is most pronounced in Greenberg's *Sefer ha-Kitrug ve-ha-Emuna* (*The Book of Accusation and Faith*, 1937). In this poetry collection (the last that he composed prior to World War II), Greenberg uses the traditional association between Rome and Christianity to address perpetual Christian violence toward Jews.[20] But, as we have seen, Greenberg's poetry is also fascinated by violence and blood, and the desire for blood is a dominant theme in it. Greenberg identifies with Esau, the cunning hunter, the polar opposite of his brother, Jacob, "a mild man, dwelling in tents" (Genesis 25:27) who shies away from any sort of violence. Greenberg calls on the Jewish people to leave their traditional adherence to Jacob's lifestyle and adopt "the art of Esau." For Greenberg, this transformation of values was necessary for the Jews to survive as a nation in their own land. But in the later poetry collection *Rehovot ha-Nahar* (*Streets of the River*, 1951), written as a response to the Holocaust, this admiration for blood and those who shed it is entirely abandoned.[21]

Streets of the River is a book of lament for the European Jewish catastrophe, written after a long period of silence. The poet of screaming blood, a metaphor Greenberg started using after World War I, was silent during World War II.[22] But when the war was over, and Greenberg learned of the loss of his entire family, he started writing this major work. Still, something was missing for those who were familiar with his work from before the war: the poet avoided resuming his poetic call for blood and violence. Many were surprised by Greenberg's choice to focus on lamentation alone.[23] The poet who had called on the Jews to

adopt the art of Esau now re-identifies with the old Jewish stance, distancing himself from "the nations" and the esthetics of blood. Instead, he now focuses exclusively on those whose blood was shed. The blood that in earlier poems served as ink has now become tears.[24]

> And the poem bears witness, that the many tears
> became blood in our body: our cry is blood.
> […] but I, in my time, with the hoe of poetry
> Dig a channel to our blood: from a swamp to the sea. [25]

These lines echo the earlier poem "Masa" cited above, p. 165. We can see that Greenberg calls our attention to the analogy between the two poems, and uses it to demonstrate the change in his poetics. It is not God who bears witness now, but the poem itself, emphasizing the poet's role as the voice of the victims. This time blood does not trigger a poetic call for revenge, but rather a cry, which the poet transforms into a poetic lament. The hoe – condemned in his earlier poem "One Truth and Not Two" as a naïve tool for those who shy from war – now replaces the sword and the stone that he called the people to use in "Masa."[26]

The poet's role has shifted, from the one who calls for blood to be shed, to the one who voices the lament for those whose blood had been shed. This shift is an important theme in *Streets of the River*, many of whose poems are meta-poetic and deal with this very question of how to represent the great *Hurban* (destruction) of European Jewry.[27] The blood metaphor is used again as the poem's raw material, but blood here signifies weeping and lamentation. *Dam* (blood) has become *dema* (tears), and it is the poet's new ink.

But Greenberg uses blood not only as an element of *kina* (lamentation) but also as part of his *kitrug* (accusation). In contrast to his earlier work, the accused are now not his fellow Jews, but rather their killers. In fact, he depicts the Gentiles/Christians (and not only the Germans) as barbarian and bloodthirsty pagans, whose beastly desire has been directed toward the Jews throughout history and has now found its most triumphant fulfillment:[28]

> From the day the pagans of Abram's time
> until the generation of the cross
> received at our hands the knowledge of the one God,
> whom we will not capture in bodily image,
> we know no refuge from the anger of the Gentiles,
> their blood calls to their primordial idol
> and they return to his ancient paths
> covered in moss.
> And they bring our blood with them, a new gift for him.[29]

The blood referenced here corresponds both to the primitive desire of the Gentiles still rooted in their ancient paganism, and to the blood of the Jewish victims that they offer up to their idol. The same poet that called on his fellow Hebrew poets

to taste from "man's red soup" here depicts the murderers of his own family as cooking "a murder-stew in our pots"(*nezid retzach mevashelet ha-nochrit be-kderoteinu*"),[30] alluding again to Esau, but this time in his traditional role, as a representative of Christianity and its hatred of the Jews.

The distinction between the Jewish victims and their Christian murderers is made via the symbol of blood; while the Jews' blood is their own human blood, their persecutors have animal blood, and they hunt their victims for the sake of drinking their blood:

> Indeed, we are of the blood of the Man in the image of whose likeness
> God created him … and they are of the beast blood: from the forest they come
> and from the field … and both the forest and the field are theirs
> […]
> My tortured ones howled, the righteous Gentiles were silent.
> All drank from our blood with beastly thirst.[31]

Greenberg here accuses not only the murderers themselves, but also the silent bystanders, using the verb *damemu* ("were silent"), which is vocally and graphically similar to the word *dam* (blood). The effect is to blame the whole world (*kulam*) for the murder of the Jews, who were created in God's image with man's blood. The Gentiles, with their wild animal nature/blood and desire to consume human blood, have thus murdered humanity itself. This metaphoric language is very similar to that which Greenberg used before the war, only then it was the Messiah who consumed human flesh and blood, and the poet himself who provided him with this feast.

But whereas in the past the poet was fascinated by blood, he is now disgusted by it, and his depiction is intentionally exaggerated, as if to emphasize the scope of this uncontrolled urge to kill:

> Even their instinct ordered their blood: "hold."
> […] "Woman, what a sharp taste in my blood … I can feel it!
> Oh, how good it is to be a Gentile! Oh, Yezunio my god and king!"[32]

Even as his own desire has been slaked, the Gentile is still eager for more blood. Moreover, in this example (echoed in many other poems), it is clear that Greenberg connects the murderers' faith to their desire for blood. The Christian returns from the murder scene, and out of his joy at the Jewish blood in his veins (and not only on his hands), he praises Jesus.[33]

A final example of this shift in Greenberg's view of blood is taken from the poem "Ein od Meshalim" ("No More Fables"), in which Greenberg describes how the Christians may wish to repent by becoming Jews "with a Jewish fate," and he details what they would do, as Jews:

> And to wrap themselves in prayer shawls;
> To crown themselves with the phylacteries

To carry out strictly the Six Hundred and Thirteen commands – and to be silent:
So as not to pollute their lips with their bloody tongue.
Perhaps their blood will then be purified, and they be Israel.[34]

The bloody *lashon* – tongue or language – can be understood metaphorically, but also more concretely, as the tongue of those who spilled and licked the blood of their Jewish victims. The bloody language, the language soaked with blood, is here that of the Christians. As we recall, Greenberg wanted modern Hebrew poetry to become the language of blood. Here, after the horror of the Holocaust, it is the language of the Gentiles that is soaked with blood, and it is no longer desirable in any way. The Holocaust caused a dramatic shift in Greenberg's poetic language; blood could no longer be the desired poetic means of expression. "Man's red soup" had turned into real horror, the blood of his own family had been shed, and he could hold on to no more blood-enthusiasm fables.

Notes

1 Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Kol Ktavav* [*Complete Works*], vol. I (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1990), 7. I would like to thank Eve Krakowski, Andrew Yale, Ze'ev Harvy, Oded Schechter, Lina Steiner, Mitchell Hart, and Yitzhak Melamed for their helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.
2 For a helpful presentation of the esthetics of expressionism see Donald E. Gordon, *Expressionism – Art and Idea* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1987).
3 Greenberg, *Kol Ktavav*, vol. I, 41. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Yiddish and Hebrew are mine.
4 Uri Zvi Greenberg, in *Albatross* 1 (1922), 3.
5 Greenberg, *Klapey Tisheim ve-Tisha'a* [*Against Ninety-Nine*] (Tel Aviv: Sadan, 1928).
6 Ibid., 13–16. See also Dan Miron, *Akdamut le-Atzag* [*Prolegomena to U. Z. Greenberg*] (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 2002), 93–95.
7 Greenberg *Klapey Tisheim*, 3.
8 Indeed, Greenberg's last poems in Yiddish appeared in the last volume of *Albatross* in 1923. From this time on he wrote only in Hebrew. See Miron, *Akdamut*, 39–40.
9 *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 53.
10 Greenberg, *Klapey Tisheim*, 16–17.
11 Ibid., 15.
12 Israel Yuval points out that during the first centuries of the Common Era, Edom was synonymous with pagan Rome, and the Biblical drama between Esau and Jacob symbolized the ongoing conflict between Judaea and pagan Rome. According to Yuval, following the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE the meaning of the terms Esau and Edom changed: "For the Jews, the quarrel between Jacob and Esau ceased to be a story of a territorial quarrel between neighboring tribes and was instead converting into a conflict of messianic dimensions between Judaea and Rome." Yuval shows that with the Christianization of Rome, the Jewish identification of Edom with Rome carried a double meaning, both political and religious: "Edom became the last mythological foe of Israel until the end of days." See Israel Yuval, *Two Nations in Your Womb*, trans. Barbara Harshav and Jonathan Chipman (Berkeley: University of

California Press, 2006), 10–12. For a discussion of the figure of Esau in Judaism and Christianity, see also G. D. Cohen, "Esau as Symbol in Early Medieval Thought," in *Jewish Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 19–48.

13 See Neta Stahl, *Tzelem Yehudi – Yitzugav shel Yeshu be-Sifrut ha-Ivrit shel ha-Mea ha-Esrim* [*Tzelem – Representations of Jesus in Twentieth-Century Hebrew Literature*] (Tel Aviv: Resling, forthcoming).

14 *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 179–180.

15 "Masa," in *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 13.

16 On the prophetic persona in Greenberg's poetry, see also Miron, *Akdamut*, 110–117, 127–144; Hanan Hever, *Moledt ha-Mavet Yafa* [*Beautiful Motherland of Death*] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2004), 77.

17 *Kol Ktavav*, vol. I, 73.

18 "Kfitzat ha-Derech," in *Kol Ktavav*, vol. I, 71.

19 *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 45.

20 See, for example, the poems "Bat-Edom rotza Dam" ("The Daughter of Edom wants Blood"), in *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 75 and "Mi-Dmey Avotay bi-Sfarad" ("From the Blood of my Fathers in Spain"), in ibid., 76–77. This theme is also dominant in his early Yiddish poetry; see, for example, "In Malchuth fon Tzelem" ("In the Kingdom of the Cross"), in *Gezamelte Verk* [Collected Yiddish Works] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), 457–472.

21 Tamar Wolf-Monzon demonstrates that, in *Streets of the River*, Greenberg employs a new poetic language that should be understood as a "constitutive text, which introduces a new poetic and linguistic code." See Tamar Wolf-Monzon and Livnat Zohar, "The Poetic Codes of *Rechovot ha-Nahar*," in *Shofar* 23, 2 (2005), 19.

22 See David Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), 270–271. According to Miron, Greenberg's silence was not due to the war, but was the result of the loss of his readers following the publication of *Sefer ha Kitrug ve-haEmuna*, which was rejected for its extreme right-wing ideology. See Miron, *Akdamut*, 147.

23 See Miron, *Akdamut*, 153.

24 Roskies mentions that Greenberg did not allow any of his pre-war poetry to be republished until the late 1970s, because "the collective was what mattered, and that collective had perished." See Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, 273. In the context of this chapter it is also possible that he could no longer support some of the themes of his early poetry in the aftermath of the war, particularly his blood-enthusiasm.

25 Uri Zvi Greenberg, *Rehovot ha-Nahar* [*Streets of the River*] (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv: Shoken, 1951), 21.

26

> For the time has come and the beautiful poem is of no value,
> If it comes to the world without the edge of the sword
> And no stoning rock at the hand of the raging poet –
> ("Masa," in *Kol Ktavav*, vol. III, 13)

27 Hanan Hever argues that most of the poems in the book are meta-poetic, dealing with the role of the poet and questions of esthetic representation. See Hever, *Moledt ha-Mavet Yafa*, 93. Miron shows that some of the poems in the book are meta-poetic in the sense that they deal with questions of the ability of language to express the human condition, the same question that Greenberg had already posed in his expressionist manifestos of the 1920s. See Miron, *Akdamut*, 161–162.

28 See also Miron, *Akdamut*, 59–161.

29 *Rehovot ha-Nahar*, 32.

30 Ibid., 82.

31 Ibid., 171.
32 Ibid., 70.
33 For further discussion of the image of Jesus in *Streets of the River*, see Stahl, *Tzelem Yehudi*.
34 Translated by Robert Friend, with a few modifications.

12 The "blood motif" in the struggle for political recognition

Zionist "dissidents" contest exclusion

Udi Lebel

> "But freedom was in our blood; we could not submit."
>
> Menachem Begin (*The Revolt*)

> "It is blood plus money that is being given in Palestine."
>
> Golda Meyerson (Chicago, January 1948)

The theme of blood runs as a material and metaphorical thread through Zionist political discourse in the immediate pre- and post-State period. Its appearance is more prominent among the so-called "dissident" groups who were expelled from mainstream Zionism in the 1930s and who sought, through the rhetorical suasion of the "blood theme," to re-integrate their movement with mainstream Zionism and the Jewish State-in-the-making. Thus, this chapter focuses upon the role of blood in the struggle for political recognition by political outsiders, taking into account the exclusionary strategy and tactics of the sovereign powers who determined which "blood" would be recognized as legitimate in the formation of the new state of Israel. The politics of recognition is, in effect, a demarche on the part of those seeking inclusion in a political entity. It embodies issues of personal and collective identity that touch the core of the social self and the historical collectivity.

Within the confines of this chapter, the politics of recognition and identity play themselves out among a number of practices associated with remembrance and commemoration. What is recalled and memorialized are the efforts of those who participated in the armed struggle for independence. Above all, supreme place is given to those who fell, who shed their blood, in the cause of national regeneration. No better symbiosis of blood, commemoration, and rebirth can be found than in Menachem Begin's account of the fate of an Irgun comrade who was shot by the British as he was putting up Underground wall posters. "Many pasting-up operations were therefore accompanied by shooting. There were leaflet-stickers who sealed the message of revolt with their blood." In one such incident, the Irgun member

> was not seen by a doctor nor sent to a hospital. He was dispatched, his wound open and bleeding, to the Acre jail. The wound festered. His jailors

> tied him to the bed. The boy had to wipe the blood and pus from his wound with strips torn from his shirt.… When at last the prison doctor was brought he diagnosed severe blood-poisoning.… After weeks of suffering … he died.

Begin then commemorates this comrade:

> A— T— is one of the noble figures whose memory keeps coming back to me whenever I think of the Revolt and of the wonderful generation that suddenly sprang up like a forest of fresh saplings on the soil of the Homeland.… I mourned for Asher as for a son.[1]

For Begin, the arboreal organic simile, mixed with the material description of blood-loss, is amplified by a metaphorical consanguinity that bound the members of the Underground movement into a "fighting family." Members of the Underground were, in effect, "blood brothers."

To be sure, the rhetorical use of blood in all the Zionist ideological camps extended over meanings that ranged from the material to the symbolic and the metaphoric, but the greater fixation of Underground spokespersons in its application was not a linguistic accident. The more discerning among them, the political leaders and poets, were nearly hypnotized by the affect that the utterance of certain words could effect. Menachem Begin was quite conscious of the differential language use between his movement and the establishment.

Ivan Greenberg, an acolyte of the "dissident" leader and the editor of the English version of *The Revolt*, elaborates on this point:

> While the Irgun dreamed dreams, and pursued and taught ideals and "sacrificed regardless on the altar of the Lord," the men of the Jewish Agency [the political establishment] and therefore the Haganah [its military arm], and therefore the Government of Israel, spoke a very different language – the language of everyday politics. Unless this "talking and thinking at cross-purposes is grasped," no justice can be done in understanding the voices of their leaders.[2]

The quotations at the head of this chapter splendidly illustrate these different voices. Begin alludes to "the fallen" and what they stood for. Golda Meyerson (later Golda Meir, a prime minister of Israel) refers to the pragmatic business of collecting blood for blood-banks and collecting money for the Israeli war effort.

What the word blood conjures up was not lost on Begin:

> There are famous slogans which are usually more exciting in their effect than serious in their content. "We shall fight to the last drop of blood" contains considerable exaggeration even when related to some of the most famous battles in history. "We have nothing to lose" is another example. Usually people do not fight till their last drop of blood. Normally they always have something to lose. Our case, however, was unique.[3]

Begin's view of Jewish history seemed to draw, at least on the surface, upon Hegel. For the German philosopher, history is viewed as the slaughter bench whose victims have been sacrificed for the final realization of freedom. Begin's summary of Jewish history, lacking Hegel's teleological strain, welcomes the end of nearly 2,000 years of wandering "drenched in blood" as a recovery of lost liberty.[4] On other occasions, the metaphoric image suggests an inner necessity of historical outcome: "freedom was in our blood; we could not submit."[5] "It is a stiff-necked people and freedom is in its blood."[6] In a remark which bears some kinship with an utterance of Thomas Jefferson, Begin wrote of the unshakeable belief that "our blood will flourish the tree of freedom for our country and the tree of life for our people."[7] If there is a *telos*, it is not final fulfillment of Jewish potential, but rather recovery of what flowed in memory over generations of "blood and … suffering."[8]

The redemption of the Land was an anthropomorphic apotheosis. "Eretz Israel [the Land of Israel] should be ours again. And that, after all, was our aim. It was in our blood."[9]

This redemptive aim could only result in "sacrificial blood":[10]

> In short, in all history, there is no greater force than the readiness for self-sacrifice, just as there is no greater love than the love of freedom. The soil of their country and the blood of their murdered people infused the Hebrew rebels with both that force and that love.[11]

It was to the fallen rebels and their exploits that Begin wished to give expression in the perennial Jewish command to remember. But Begin was not satisfied with private memory. His movement and its deeds in the establishment of the Jewish State had been excluded from collective memory by the political establishment. He sought out on every occasion a public platform from which to extol the memory of these neglected, but not forgotten, warriors. Interestingly, Begin draws upon his experience in the Soviet gulags and draws a parallel with the contemporary policy of the dominant and domineering Mapai government to deprive memory of its full expression. Citing those martyrs who died proclaiming freedom against the Stalinist regime, Begin understands that the rulers in Moscow "will not permit any heroics, any martyrology on the public platform of the trial. On the contrary, the platform of the trial, in so far as it can be used, has to destroy the ideological blood-witness of the accused."[12] For most prisoners, there was no platform. Begin did not wish to be denied a platform a second time. It is on these grounds that he engaged in political hematology. To be a blood-witness was to reveal the undisguised historical truth. As a participant in the struggle, his use of raw words was meant to ring with authenticity.

Pierre Nora succinctly telescopes the overlapping conceptual complex in which the *agon* of voice seeks to enshrine its memories in the public pantheon:

> [T]he mechanisms involved as well as the sacralization of memory are always the same: confrontation between groups subject to constant change and

> consolidated through constant revival of the memories on which their identities are based. Usually this confrontation takes the form of polemic and conflict, of which Jewish memory may provide a particularly good example.[13]

Paul Ricoeur, in attending to the nexus of mourning and memory on the collective plane, notes that national self-love focuses upon a lost love-object and he perceptively remarks that "it is always in terms of its losses that the wounded memory is forced to confront itself."[14] Tracing the implications of what Ricoeur adjudges an inauthentic or defective mode of mourning would take us far afield of our topic, but it does provide the dimension of a mourning-in-itself which is injured and seeks restitution.

Another aspect of this polemic over the chosen objects of collective recollection is the fear of loss of identity. For if memory is fragile, identity is even more so, and in the confrontation with political hegemony it comes face to face with the prospects of being perennially submerged and possibly crushed. Identity may be termed one's life-blood and it receives much of its construction in the interplay of forces determining remembering and forgetting. Thus, as Ricoeur states bluntly, collective memory can be straightforwardly abused through "a concerted manipulation of memory and of forgetting by those who hold power."[15] In a paradoxical sense, Begin turns the deliberate government policy of national forgetfulness into a political resource for the expansion of collective into historical memory. Historical memory corresponds with national memory and the loss of Jewish blood is metaphorically the losses and sacrifices incurred by the Jewish nation.

This chapter will now take up the historical engagements in which the various meanings of blood are brought to bear upon the struggle for political recognition of a "fallen" minority, the Underground warriors known in Israeli history texts as the *porshim* or the "dissidents."

The metaphor of blood and social suppression

In the initial stages of nation-state formation, particularly when sovereignty is achieved through military struggle, it is the army that first achieves sacrosanct status and many of its leaders and decorated soldiers are privy to civic advantages.[16] Those who sacrificed their lives, as well as their families, attain a special weight in a fledgling public memory, a "golden share" in the entitlements of prestige bestowed by political leadership through preferred public exposure in state commemoration and public holiday ceremonies.[17] In the early years of the Israeli state, groups seeking to legitimize their claims to positions of authority and power were expected to pass a "test of blood" whose underlying questions silently posed such matters as "Who had a greater share in achieving independence?" and "Which sector of society made the greatest sacrifice and had the largest number of fighters and slain soldiers?" In this context, blood clearly emerges as a metaphor that expresses the sacrifices of the past and translates them into present political legitimacy.

Regimes that are interested in depicting a particular group as the only one that successfully passed the "test of blood," to which concepts like sacrifice,

bereavement, and patriotism are connected, need to manage social metaphors very carefully. In the Israeli context, the Israeli public tends to perceive metaphors like "the family of bereavement" (the community of families of fallen Israeli Defense Forces [IDF] soldiers) or "the silver platter" (the community of fallen IDF soldiers in the War of Independence) as objective, universal designations rather than metaphors for communities that have been screened vigilantly and include only a portion of the people who served and fell in the military struggle to establish the state. When the subject is blood, the audience will easily make the connection between metaphors that symbolize contribution to society and sacrifice of life for the state and a particular group. This particular group crowds out competitors, not because of objective numbers – that is, for example, that they comprise the vast majority of participants in the war effort or the vast majority of fallen combatants – but because in the structuring of the national story, parts of history are discarded from public discourse, and thus even more so from public memory and national consciousness.[18] "Memory," explains the Israeli historian Anita Shapira, "is the battlefield of identity: who played a larger part in the struggle to achieve society's over-arching goals? On which side is historical justice? Who was injured and who did harm? Who is good and who is evil?" She emphasizes that "[i]n this struggle, forgetfulness has a role no less important than memory: to remember only what is convenient and to forget all the rest. Historiography becomes a weapon in the campaign for identity, which is also a political campaign."[19] From this perspective, the regime's cultural-political management is indeed its attempt to invite historical items to mount the stage of history and become rooted in society's collective memory while preventing other items from entering the arena. When these discarded voices make their appeal for historical recognition, they do so as outsiders opposing the formed national consensus. Thus, the metaphor of "blood" linguistically becomes a synecdoche, an assignment in this case of the whole which represents only a part, but also the inverse when employed by the excluded minority seeking its incorporation into the whole.

Blood and martyrdom: from tears to heroism

The Jewish historian Salo Baron inveighed against what he termed "the lachrymose conception of Jewish history."[20] His critical remarks were directed at an historiographical heritage whose most renowned representative was the German-Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz. Oriented toward a victim-recounting portraiture of Jewish life, Graetz noted that the first emergence from national enslavement, the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, was in fact accomplished "without shedding a drop of blood."[21] For Graetz, the heroic liberation was retained in collective memory but was only sustained by the "intelligent portion of the nation."[22] Over the ages, most of the people relapsed into despondency, remembering that "we were once slaves in Egypt."

The Zionist movement set out to rectify the passive victim complex that characterized Jewish history, but in recalling blood shed in the past it moved

uneasily, and sometimes radically, between tears and triumph. Since the establishment of the State of Israel, its leaders, like Minister of Defense Pinhas Lavon, made uncompromising assertions about the persistence of Jewish valor. "The reality of Jewish heroism," he averred, "is an uninterrupted historical phenomenon of blood and glory."[23] Immediately after the War of Independence, concepts of sorrow were mobilized as part of the vocabulary of collective deliverance and political resurrection. For example, the expression "family of bereavement" was coined, making it clear that the families of soldiers killed in the war have a public identity and "through their sons' blood" become a single family that the nation and society must hold in high esteem.

At the heart of the Zionist enterprise was not only the creation of the New Jew, but in this particular case, the new parent, projected through the prism of public bereavement and its ritual accoutrements. This entailed a different orientation toward mourning Jewish blood spilled by the hands of its enemies. Jewish blood through much of history had been shed passively; in the Israeli context, it became an active shedding of blood grounded in self-defense, pride, and heroics. Whereas weeping and wailing accompanied the "unnatural" task of parents burying their children, this orientation to mourning was now deliberately set aside. The elevation not only of those who had made the supreme sacrifice, but also their flesh and blood progenitors, that is their parents, to icons of pro-active memorialization, was a means of crystallizing social solidarity at a critical period of nation-building. At the same time, it abetted the hegemonic leadership in its internal struggle of consolidating and maintaining its political supremacy.

Many songs were written praising these families whose sons were willing to give their lives for the nation. Testimonies to their patriotism and praise for the altruistic education they had provided for their sons were perennially paraded before the public. To the Israeli public, it was made clear that these families, more than anything else, were symbols of the reversal of the fate of Jewish blood. In a statement that became a widely distributed social text, a bereaved father explained, "In every generation, Jewish blood has been spilled like water but for no reason. Today, in this place, Jewish blood has value. It has a price."[24]

A model of hegemonic bereavement was formulated, a set of guiding mores of the proper orientation that should be taken toward those who had made the supreme sacrifice. The New Jew was portrayed as someone whose

> love of the land and dedication to the Zionist idea is tested – only if he knows to sacrifice his innards and blood on its altar without retreating from the campaign – this is the only test of a loyal Zionist.[25]

Diaries, songs, and texts written by the fallen soldiers and bereaved parents that expressed this viewpoint were turned into educational publications, and printed and distributed by official publishers. This led to the understanding that death in war is normative.[26] Bereaved parents were assigned a role that the Prime Minister described as "preserving their sons' spirit" while understanding that they ought to

be grateful that they have been given the opportunity to make such a significant contribution – that is, their son – to the homeland.

> These people bear their fate and will bear it until their dying day. May it be willed that they bear not only despair and mourning … but also the realization and recognition of the need for their sacrifice and appreciation of the great mission that this sacrifice has bequeathed to all of us.[27]

A national consensus emerged which portrayed the death of the sons in circumstances of extraordinary heroism. At an early meeting of Yad Lebanim, an officially recognized organization of bereaved parents, one mother, Shoshana Mishkin, proposed changing the name of the organization from Yad Lebanim, literally "memorial to the sons," to "memorial to Israel's heroes" (Yad Lebanim l'Gevurot Yisrael).[28] On every platform bereaved parents stressed that they had a part in their son's willingness to die for the homeland. One father who lost two of his children wrote, "My children's deaths did not come as a surprise to me … all their lives they were educated for this and now I am greatly blessed by both of them, together."[29] The parents were transformed from private mourners to public personages just as the sites of remembrance, the military cemeteries, became public memorial precincts. Personal feelings were to be suppressed and collective purposes embraced. A national day of mourning, Memorial Day, was established to express the gratitude and admiration which society as a whole held for the bereaved families and the slain soldiers. Books listing the names of the fallen (*Yizkor* publications) were produced by the Ministry of Defense; writings from the diaries, letters, and literary efforts of fallen soldiers were published at government instigation and some were included as compulsory reading in school textbooks.[30]

Not only the fallen soldiers but also their families acquired heroic status. In 1949, the head of the Israel Defense Forces Personnel Division proposed that bereaved parents whose children fell between November 30, 1947 and July 20, 1949 should receive medals for *their* role in their sons' sacrifice: bronze for those who lost one child; silver for two children; and gold for three children. In addition, these parents were to receive a condolence certificate signed by the Minister of Defense, on behalf of the President of the State. The idea of awarding the medals was rejected but the certificates were issued.[31]

These efforts were part of a broader societal obligation "to remember" those whose blood was the foundation of the State. This was expressed in a song that became, and remains, one of the most popular Memorial Day songs – "Harei'ut" (literally "Deep Friendship"), written by the poet, Haim Gouri.[32] The poem describes "how we will remember each one" in the context of "love sanctified by blood." In fact, "each one" turned out to be rather selective. It did not embrace all the bereaved families. Some groups whose "sons" fell were not embraced in the metaphor of "love sanctified by blood." Indeed, efforts were made in the official policy of mourning to distance these groups and their fallen soldiers from any public acknowledgment of their contribution to the war effort for national independence.

The legislative politics of exclusion

Even before the State was founded, Mapai (Worker's Party of Eretz Yisrael) had achieved hegemony in the major institutions of the Yishuv. Beni Kinari notes that

> the opinions of political minorities were disqualified in advance, even when they were justified by professional opinion.… The words "official" and "national" became synonymous with the opinion of the ruling majority while "political" became synonymous with the discounted minority.[33]

This was part of a strategy designed to convince the public that the Underground organizations, the Etzel (National Military Organization in the Land of Israel) and the Lehi (Fighters for the Freedom of Israel) were law-breakers, "a band of crazies … soaked in poisonous, toxic influences," criminals with "criminal countenances."[34] In the name of protecting official interests, even the use of political violence against anyone who did not serve that interest, let alone harmed it, was justified.[35]

However, when the State was established, Mapai faced the same political challenges that it had faced previously: providing a foundation for its political and cultural hegemony, de-legitimizing its political rivals, and imposing political discipline on its top officials. Its former adversaries (the Etzel and Lehi Undergrounds) now joined together in a political party, Herut (Freedom), while former members of the pre-State Hagana (Defense) fighting force supported the ruling Mapai party. One means used in the attempt to de-legitimize the former was to shape collective memory in a manner that made clear that only "the official family of bereavement" was deserving of the "love sanctified by blood." This family was effectively composed of those whose children fell at the order of Mapai when serving in the Hagana or Israel Defense Forces. It did not recognize the blood spilled by the other Underground movements (Etzel and Lehi) in the pre-State period even though they fought for the same purpose, namely the establishment of a Jewish state in the Land of Israel.

The political sphere

The new country perceived the bereaved families as the "silver platter" which served up its independence, a sector that deserved support, nurture, esteem, and recognition of its critical yet most costly contribution to the establishment of the State. Therefore, the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, legislated a series of laws and regulations that were intended to support these families, improve their situation, and acknowledge the great import that the State attributed to their sacrifice. They would receive social welfare rights with regard to rehabilitation and public honors through the perpetuation of their deeds and words in what Pierre Nora, in another context, has termed "the places of memory." The legislation made it clear who had fallen in war, which parents had paid the ultimate price to attain national independence and sovereignty, and which soldiers had fought that

war. Terms of universal signification became, through legislative designation, applicable to circumscribed populations. Who was considered a casualty entailed who was "officially" considered a casualty. Whereas dictionary definitions state that a casualty is "a deceased person, a person killed, dead, fallen or who has died"[36] or "a soldier who dies in battle or in a combat accident,"[37] political legislation, on the other hand, led to a more inclusive definition. The following description of the subjective principles used in the legislation highlights the terminology used in the laws themselves.

The authoritative sphere

Knesset legislation pertaining to combatants in the War of Independence clearly limited the community of participants in that war, soldiers and fallen alike, to those who fought under the command of and with the approval of political institutions that were authorized by the hegemonic leadership to undertake the defense of the pre-State Jewish community. The military arm of these political institutions was the Hagana. It was decided that rights would not be bestowed on "those who fought in unrecognized organizations,"[38] and that the "care provided by the Department responsible for the settlement and rehabilitation of soldiers will be given only to families of those fallen [combatants] who participated in recognized actions. The list will be checked [by] former Hagana personnel."[39] This order was authorized at the highest political echelon of the state.

Angered by the discriminatory legislation, veterans of Eztel and Lehi understood nevertheless why sacrificial military undertakings of the past paid the price of oblivion because of the political present.

> It is clear that the government will recognize only those of Etzel's fallen who participated in agreed-upon actions and that this list of people will also be subject to a "procedure" of inspection, investigation, and approval conducted by former Hagana personnel. The refusal of the government is based on political reasons. If the government were to accept the Underground's injured into its care, it would also be recognizing the war that Etzel waged against oppression, against its will [that is, the hegemonic authority in the Yishuv, later the government], and in violation of the decisions by the recognized authorities.[40]

Despite the requests from the leaders of Herut to the government, the Ministry of Defense made its position clear. "The rights of people who fought in unrecognized organizations will not be recognized."[41] On the other hand, the rights of those who fought in the Hagana were recognized, even if they served in the Hagana before the establishment of the State.

Erasing the struggle against the British

The legislation made clear that the only war that had been fought in the process of gaining independence was the war against the Arabs. The struggle against the

Mandatory power, regarded as resistance to the colonial rule of the British by the Underground, was not even considered as a secondary military engagement of liberation. It was eclipsed entirely from the enumeration of combat operations. One law included a section that clearly stated that the official, fallen soldiers are those who died in the battles against the invading armies and Arab enemies. Military service was defined as "service in the Hagana or service in any organized action against Arab gangs and the invading armies commencing on 17 Kislev 5708 (November 30, 1947)."[42] This step was intended to erase the primary initiative of the Etzel and Lehi Undergrounds, who claimed that they spearheaded the expulsion of the British from the Land of Israel. Decrying this politically partisan orientation, MK (member of Parliament) Yehoshua Henkin (Herut) said in the Knesset:

> To this day, we have not been successful in convincing this House to put aside the existent party considerations that guide the Government and most members of the House in their actions regarding that part of the Jewish settlement that carried the entire burden of the War of Independence. To this day, they are attempting to disinherit this portion of the Hebrew youth, attempting to deprive them of their rights, to make them into citizens without rights and with weakened economic and moral foundations.[43]

Journalist Uri Avneri wrote in his newspaper *Ha'olam Hazeh*:

> The laws of the State do not provide benefits for fallen fighters from the Underground, who fell in the war against British control. The Government avoids legislation of this type, fearing that it might admit that the people of Israel did benefit, in some way, from the efforts of the Etzel and the Lehi. It is difficult to penetrate the shady, political considerations that determine the laws of the State of Israel.… There was a major political difference between members of the Hagana and of the Etzel and Lehi. Even now the debate over their various methods continues. However, it is not reasonable for there to be any argument about one point: they all fell out of an idealistic belief that they were serving their people, and not one party or another, or a fleeting government coalition.[44]

Defining the war's dates

A war that emerges from underlying inter-communal frictions and on-going bellicosity between claimants to national territory often does not have a definitive starting point. James Young has written that:

> Any year can be the first year.… The important step is framing several events in a given time and converting them into being "ours" – an opening date holding special significance must be chosen with this objective in mind.[45]

Ben-Gurion decided that the period during which the war was waged, like the period for recognizing soldiers and casualties, would begin on November 29, 1947, the day the United Nations' General Assembly voted to establish a Jewish state and an Arab state in Mandated Palestine. This date officially marked the beginning of the War of Independence. This was also intended to prevent the inclusion of the Etzel and Lehi Undergrounds, which acted before that date to drive the British out of the Land of Israel.

The war's timeframe was also politically motivated. The head of the Defense Ministry's History Branch set the *terminus ab quo* at November 29, 1947 and the *terminus ad quem* as June 20, 1949, the day on which the last ceasefire agreement was signed (with Syria).[46] The adoption of these dates by the History Branch meant that battles waged by Etzel and Lehi in their campaign against the British would not be included in the battle history publications or the IDF officer training manuals of the Branch. Again, this raised the ire and opposition of families of Etzel casualties: "Twice our dear fighting sons were abandoned. Once before their deaths – we will tell this story when the time comes – and again after their deaths, after they made the greatest of all sacrifices to defend the homeland."[47]

The Herut Party placed the requests for assistance, rehabilitation and social recognition by families of Etzel and Lehi casualties on the Knesset's agenda but they encountered strong opposition from Mapai members, who did not conceal the motivation for their objection. MK Akiva Globman (aka Gvorin, Mapai) stated that including the "dissidents," as they were commonly stigmatized, in the family of the bereaved would be asking the Knesset "to grant credentials to their mode of operation." And he declared: "They will not receive it." The Chairperson of the Labor Committee, MK Pinhas Lubianiker (aka Lavon, Mapai) alleged that including the veterans of the Etzel and Lehi in the law would give *post facto* approval to the Underground's activities.[48] Herut representatives repeatedly encountered what MK Eliezer Shostak (Herut) described as "the State's and the current Government's open denial to the families of the victims of the War of Independence and of the war's casualties themselves." Shostak even noted that this was a very small number of families: "In this war, 260 soldiers from Etzel fell. Of these, only 70 engaged in the war against the English, including several dozen from the ranks of Lehi. The families of these fallen are in need of help."[49] In a letter to the press, Professor Joseph Klausner skillfully expressed the feelings of families of the Etzel and Lehi who had suffered casualties:

> There are many things that arouse anger and bitterness in a person with ethical sensitivity … Hundreds of Etzel and Lehi fighters gave up their lives for the liberation of the Land of Israel … some of them were executed by the British.… And yet these fighters … do not receive any support or assistance from the Government of Israel.… The Government gives nothing to widows and young orphans whose breadwinner was taken.… Those who fought the British, whose blood was spilled and whose youth destroyed … the injured and the handicapped, the widows and the orphans … receive nothing.[50]

Herut members complained that "the State of Israel discriminates among casualties on the basis of their pre-State organizational affiliation" and understood full well what was behind this policy:

> There is a question of serious principle here: Will official approval be given to the attempt being made to portray the War of Independence as the result of the Hagana's efforts, as if the Underground had no part in it and as if the army is a continuation of the Hagana alone and not the people's army, that does not distinguish between people or between their blood.?[51]

To which Minister Golda Meir (Mapai) admitted, "It would be much more pleasant for me to say, 'Everyone is equal' but that would be an illusion."[52] Apparently, for the claimants there was Jewish blood that could be discarded, that did not supply the oxygen of rebirth, even when its bearers fell as liberators of the body politic.

The feeling of discrimination intensified once it was clear that the purpose of the policy was the non-recognition of the Etzel and Lehi casualties while Hagana members were recognized. This became apparent after several bereaved families, whose sons fell while serving in the Hagana, approached Ben-Gurion for recognition, even though their sons fell before the United Nations decision to establish a Jewish state, and some of them even fell in actions against the British rather than the Arabs. In order to include these Hagana casualties in the pantheon of state heroes while ignoring Etzel and Lehi casualties, a retroactive clause was inserted in the laws that permitted individual appeals to the Minister of Defense requesting recognition of causalities who did not meet the criteria set by the law. The discretion of the Minister would carry the day. "Any service that the Minister of Defense so decrees in the official record [will be recognized] as military service for this purpose."[53] Indeed, in the official record Ben-Gurion stated, "If the casualties were members of the Hagana at the time they fell, even if they did not fall in the line of duty, they are included among the casualties of our war."[54]

Some members of Mapai's governing coalition refused to cooperate with this policy of exclusion. One of them, MK Rabbi Mordecai Nurock (United Religious Front) refused to vote in favor of the law proposed by Ben-Gurion and explained that his party opposed

> discrimination between blood and blood … as a religious Jew who espouses Jewish values and the love of Israel, I felt, in every heartbeat, that it was impossible to be, in any way, a cause of fraternal hatred, oppression, and discrimination that cries out to heaven. Nothing should be done to deepen the abyss of separation and hatred that are tattooed on the foundation stones of our building.… I will know that my hand did not spill this blood and I did not discriminate between blood and blood.[55]

Nurock carries the metaphor of blood to the act of voting, of raising one's hand, giving it the dual meaning of the use of physical force and the more benign sign of expressing one's opinion on a matter.[56]

The letters that the bereaved families wrote to decision-makers were of no avail. Sarah Zuckerman, the mother of Shmuel, who fell as a Lehi soldier, frequently asked Yad Lebanim in Tel Aviv to hang her son's picture on the wall next to the pictures of Hagana casualties, but she did not receive a sympathetic response. She described her pain in a letter individually addressed to many national decision-makers:

> My son, Shmuel Zuckerman, of blessed memory, fell together with ten other fighters … on 16 June 1946.… Even now, his name has not been included on the memorial plaque at Yad Lebanim.… I ask, I plead for my son Shmuel's name to be included among the names. This matter will not let me rest and embitters my life, which is difficult and bitter in any case. I would be grateful if the honored gentleman were to check the issue and give instructions that the discrimination between blood and blood be corrected.[57]

Ya'akov Gelbgiser was the father of twin sons, Shlomo and Menachem, who fell in the War of Independence. Both were members of the Etzel but only one of them, Menachem, who was killed after Etzel was incorporated into the Israel Defense Forces, was officially recognized by the Ministry of Defense. The establishment ignored his twin brother who was killed before Etzel joined the IDF. After the Minister of Defense sent him a letter of condolence that mentioned only Menachem and ignored Shmuel, Gelbgiser wrote to the Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion:

> I hereby return the letter informing me of the death of Menachem, of blessed memory. Despite the pain, I am willing to forego the honor. Two trees were felled in my home – both of them were equally dear to me and both equally sacrificed themselves for the nation. If the nation and the army wish to perpetuate the name of one while forgetting the other, because the enemy felled a member of the Etzel and not of the Hagana, I will forego it.[58]

Ben-Gurion wrote in his diary: "I will not recognize Etzel … Etzel cannot be compared to the Hagana."[59] The Prime Minister was not willing to separate shed blood from living blood, past military alliances from current political animosities.

The act of excluding certain sectors of the population from participation in the honors and praises of military accomplishments went *pari passu* with the act of recognizing those who were citizens squared. In a newly emerging state, the status of citizen is newly acquired and constitutes a critical identity in the constitution of personhood and identity. The place of "blood" terminology was a sensitive issue in the wake of the Holocaust and the changing perceptions from losses inflicted as passive victims to losses sustained in active renewal of a national identity. When Begin exclaimed that "the amount of blood spilled is the only measure of an historical event" he was referring to two epochal occurrences in contemporary Jewish history. He was determined that the voice of his followers would not be de-historicized and their deeds expunged from the realms of national memory.

The historiographical sphere

The legislative coordinates that shaped the government's recognition of bereaved families also left its imprint in the arena of historiography. In *A History of the Hagana*, which was produced under Ben-Gurion's guidance, Ben-Gurion's assistant editor attested to the political intentions of the book:

> Anyone who reads this volume of the book on the Hagana and who studied the previous volumes when they appeared will learn that the IDF is the legitimate, direct descendent of the Hagana. I think that it is important to emphasize this point. In the years after the War of Independence, there were many publications by veterans of the organizations that we considered "dissident" organizations. Their intention was, among other things, to blur the centrality of the Hagana in the establishment of the State. The portrait emerging from their publications and writings is that there were three Undergrounds operating in the Land of Israel: Hagana, Etzel and Lehi and that they have equal historical rights. I hope that our book will serve as a convincing response to that presentation of the period in which the State was founded.[60]

The book was published by the Ministry of Defense Publishing House and became the central text on Israel's War of Independence. Menachem Begin, the leader of Herut, spoke about it in anger saying:

> It is doubtful that in any country, a government that manages its affairs at the expense of taxes paid by all of its citizens has published a text so derisive, so false, so malicious … published by the Ministry of Defense.… Is there, in any free, democratic state, a precedent for a government writing official history in which it defames its past and present political rivals, both dead and alive?[61]

The transition to historiography is also evident in the publication of books that teach who is included in the Israeli "family of bereavement" and who are official casualties. The enterprise grew out of a private initiative started by an interested party, Anda Amir, who, like the editors of the book on the Hagana, had been a member of Hagana and moved from there to the formal defense establishment. Ben-Gurion approved her proposal to publish a *Yizkor* (*Memory*) book that listed the names of fallen soldiers from the war and included biographical information about them.[62] Ben-Gurion assigned her the task of finding and collecting, to the extent possible, "a biography, pictures, appreciations and memories, testimonies and articles, as well as the intellectual legacy including letters, diaries, artworks and literary works, etc. of people [who fell in war]." Amir thought that the project should include "all of the nation's founders, beginning with the period of *Hashomer* ["The Watchman," a precursor of the Hagana, 1909–1920], as well as embrace casualties of the Hagana, World War II, the illegal immigration and the struggle for independence."[63] Her concept was that casualties were characterized by "personal and national values" that should be "transmitted as a living asset to

the entire people." Therefore, the department's staff requested any information that "would shed light on the person's opinions, attitude toward the land and its problems, etc."[64] However, Amir's legal mandate limited the project to official causalities, meaning those who had fallen during service in the Hagana or IDF. The first *Yizkor* book was published in 1955. In the introduction, it clearly states that the book includes:

> All who fell during Israel's War of Independence from the day after the UN's declaration on November 29, 1949 until May 10, 1949.... The direct purpose of the book is to serve as a memorial for our fighters who gave their lives for the independence of the people and the redemption of the land. Yet it must be noted that the collection of stories of life and death, with all their many details, large and small, contained herein, can also be a reliable source for researchers who are dedicated to studying the sociological background and psychological state of the generation of new Maccabees.[65]

Indeed, in the case of the IDF and Hagana casualties, the Combatants Department, an officially established and well-oiled organization in the Ministry of Defense, was created to handle national assistance for them. It was supplied with ample budgets and personnel and received the full support of political leaders in the government.[66]

Despite this, not one person working on the official memorial project made the effort to include the Etzel and Lehi casualties – who had not become IDF soldiers before they were killed – in the official memorial books. Returning to the case of the Gelbgiser twins, recall that only one of them was included in the official memorial books. Under the headline, "Blood for Blood," the *Herut* newspaper wrote that no one was making an effort to perpetuate their memory together with that of their comrades from the Underground period:

> These twin brothers – the only case of twins who fell in the War of Independence – did not leave a clear literary legacy, but the editors of this multi-faceted and important memorial book did not even find it necessary to seek material about these casualties.[67]

When it became clear that the twin who fell as an Etzel soldier would not be included in the memorial book, his father again expressed his frustration:

> Even if the Etzel men were not to [Ben-Gurion's] liking, they did give their life's blood for the homeland no less than the Hagana men did. If one family lost two sons, and one of them was not a member of the Hagana, it was unnecessary to extend the discrimination between blood and blood to the point of hurting the feelings of bereaved families.[68]

Screening was also part of the process of approving books for inclusion in the history curriculum. The Ministry of Education approved history books for

inclusion in the curriculum only if the actions of Etzel and Lehi members were not included. At a Knesset session dealing with Jewish consciousness, MK Esther Raziel-Naor (Herut) complained:

> Why do we remove from the child's hearts one of the most glorious experiences that could uplift his spirit? … Is it possible for this country to discriminate between blood and blood, between disabled veteran and disabled veteran, between casualty and casualty, between hero and hero? Is it possible, for ten full years, to hide from the youth the very fact that the Jewish State was established thanks to them and also thanks to Jews who dreamed, fought, worked, built and created but also gave their lives for the establishment of the State? This is what they forgot to say, what they wanted to remove from their hearts.[69]

Steps toward "dissident" inclusion

The recurrence of the phrase "discrimination between blood and blood" played on a theme of national consolidation which had its connective links to other national projects such as the "ingathering of the exiles" and "building and being built,"[70] and familiar sayings from the sages such as "all Jews are bound to one another" and "to save one life is as if to save the world" – both of which emphasized that the viability of the community depended upon the treatment of every single individual within it. The organic image attached to the metaphor of blood had great rhetorical force by touching themes of unity and indivisibility required for a nation and a state-in-the-making.

Many members of the government coalition felt uneasy about the denial of state recognition to the Underground war dead and regarded government policy in this matter as the personal vendetta of the Prime Minister. Yosef Weitz, a member of the establishment and close to Mapai, was the father of Yechiam who fell as a *Palmach* (elite unit of the Hagana) fighter before the UN resolution of November 29, 1947. He wrote honestly in his personal diary on April 11, 1951:

> I met with the Division for Perpetuating the Memory of Soldiers to discuss the construction of a memorial.… The Department is doing this as an afterthought since, officially, the Ministry of Defense only handles casualties of the war [that occurred] after November 29, 1947, and not earlier, in order to exclude the casualties of the Lehi and Etzel. Indeed, we discriminate between blood and blood and have done so in the past – since ancient days.[71]

Gradual changes with regard to the memorialization of the excluded war dead began after David Ben-Gurion resigned as Prime Minister in 1963 and received an added impetus when Menachem Begin's Herut joined the government four years later. Begin initiated a change in the name given to the official day of remembrance from "Memorial Day for the Fallen of the War of Independence" to "Memorial Day for the Fallen of Israel's Campaigns," in order to legitimate and commence the process of including casualties from the Underground movements.

Government ministers who visited military cemeteries on Memorial Day began to visit the graves of Etzel and Lehi combatants. Veterans living in 1968 were awarded the Decoration for State Warriors.[72] The decorations were distributed at a ceremony at the President's state residence and were the first official recognition given to the soldiers of the Etzel and Lehi and to families of the fallen for their contribution to the establishment of the State.[73]

The Herut leader, even before the guns drew silent in the War of Independence, had stressed the difference between his approach to the fallen and that of Ben-Gurion. At the first national meeting of the Herut Council, in October 1948, he solemnized:

> This evening we will remember not only the members of our family. We do not distinguish between work and Hebrew work, between blood and Hebrew blood. We will also remember the heroes of the Hagana this evening.… They are all martyrs, all heroes. We will remember them all in love. In honor of all, we will rise and stand silent.[74]

When Begin became a government minister, he remained faithful to this spirit and promised to implement a change; "The Jewish people will never discriminate between blood and blood." He spoke directly to the fallen:

> My brothers, you have waited twenty years for this day. Just this year, a major change in the attitude of the entire people, of all stripes, towards you has begun. Twenty-one years after the foreign [British] flag was taken down and the flag of the State first proudly flown in our homeland, you have merited the acknowledgement you deserve. We are pleased that soldiers of the IDF are presenting their victorious arms that defend Israel at your gravesides.[75]

The 1977 elections led to a major political change and Menachem Begin became Prime Minister. In his eyes, and those of his colleagues, this marked the end of the period of de-legitimization and the beginning of the "age of correction." Speaking in April 1979, Begin addressed a ceremony at the Western Wall where 1,500 members of the Etzel were awarded a campaign ribbon issued by the government of Israel, similar to the ribbon that Ben-Gurion had awarded to Hagana fighters and the families of the fallen in the early days of the State. "For 31 years, we have waited for this day on which your merit is acknowledged."[76] Begin also reminded his audience:

> Leaders of the Labor Party, who for thirty years rewrote history and distorted the history of our generation,… must request forgiveness from thousands of Etzel and Lehi fighters, from hundreds of families who lost their loved ones in the service of the Underground and from the entire people of Israel. They deprived Etzel and Lehi of their rightful share in the establishment of our state.[77]

Later in the speech, he promised his listeners that he intended to change former practises:

> Since the Labor Party has become the opposition, my colleagues and I have made an attempt to correct the terrible wrong that has been done to the memory of fighters and heroes, those who were executed or sacrificed themselves for the deliverance of the people.[78]

Indeed, an abundance of official publications about the role played by Etzel and Lehi in the War of Independence was published. Once the Likud (a faction that included Herut) came into power, streets, neighborhoods and new cities were named for commanders and fallen soldiers of the Underground. The Ministry of Defense began to support and maintain monuments in memory of fallen Etzel and Lehi fighters and the organizations' memorial centers became official museums of the Ministry of Defense. Asked why so much effort was devoted to memorials and writing memoirs, Begin answered:

> We fought in the Underground, we dug a tunnel. We did the work but other people wrote about our works. What did they write? More accurately what didn't they write? … There are many volumes of "memories" from the period of new Undergrounds' war, but they were written by a hostile, fabricating hand.… Now, in the 1980s, we have, thank Heaven, the ability not only to remember but also to correct the injustices. The IDF presents arms at the graves of Herzl and Jabotinsky, at the graves of the executed heroes in Safed and there is more to come.[79]

By the turn of the century, military remembrance day ceremonies routinely honored Hagana, Irgun, and Lehi war dead. However, the attempt to create a national military museum foundered in part over entrenched bickering on the share of space and exhibits that should be allotted to the various Underground groups.[80]

Widening the arena of Jewish victimization

It seems that in the State of Israel, the test of blood became the main test for positioning identities in the social hierarchy – and so it remains. Even today, many groups continue to clamor for inclusion on the list of official casualties in order to demonstrate that they are worthy of social preference and esteem. For example, since the beginning of the Al Aqsa Intifada in 2000, families of the victims of terrorism have asked to be included in the family of bereavement and the official Memorial Day. It is evident that the public has internalized what Menachem Begin put in words: "The amount of blood spilled is the only measure of an historical event."[81]

Israeli terrorist victimization could be likened to pogroms since innocent civilians have lost their lives in a passive context. But the justification factor plays a role here. In the past, the conception of justification of innocently spilled

Jewish blood had recourse to the notion of the sanctification of the Holy Name (*Kiddush ha-shem*). As John Locke pointed out in another context, when sovereignty is lacking the only appeal is to Heaven. This appeal Zionism sought to rescind. Yet, the blood of the innocent required some sort of redemption and recent efforts to include victims of terrorism within the framework of military losses have met with some success. In addition to financial compensation within the military budget, there is a halo prestige effect of being included among combatants who fell.

Conclusion

Menahem Begin's campaign to win recognition and political legitimacy for his movement has been strongly criticized for its excessive nationalist tones and appeals bearing allusions to racial imagery. The recurrence of the use of the word 'blood' in his writings and speeches strongly reinforces this claim. National rebellion, of course, can take other avenues. For Albert Camus, the word "fatherland" had "bloody connotations that make it forever alien to me."[82] Begin's rebellion, however, drew from a liberal tradition. When he writes that "blood, too, brought the revolt to life" he is recalling the blood of Jews shed on foreign soil that "cried out to us" and "gave the rebels strength." He cites, among others, the Maccabees, George Washington, and Garibaldi "who rose against tyranny in the belief that their ultimate aim justified the resort to … bloodshed."[83] This theme associating blood, revolt, and political severance had already been taken up by Thomas Paine prior to the American Revolution. "Everything that is right or reasonable pleads for separation. The blood of the slain, the weeping voice of nature cries, 'TIS TIME TO PART."[84]

Begin's blood metaphors roam across a spectrum, ranging from life-force – "blood too brought the revolt to life"[85] – to lineage: "Eretz Israel should be ours again.… It was in our blood."[86] Perhaps his most remembered use of the word, employed in the non-metaphoric sense of "killing," was in a speech following the peace agreement with Egypt in 1977: "No more war; no more bloodshed."

The thematic recurrence of blood in Begin's speech and rhetoric raises the question whether his allegiance to the nation supersedes that of the rule of law. We have already noted his harkening to liberal sources of inspiration in revolt. Begin was fond of quoting Latin phrases, many of which he learned in his school days as a law student. One such phrase was *pacta sunt servanda*, "agreements must be kept." *In fine*, it appears, Begin was willing at times to "shed" blood attachments for a loyalty to universal principles embodied in constitutional liberty. Yet the tension between the particular faith in the nation and the supremacy of legislated rulings remained.

Notes

1 Menachem Begin, *The Revolt*: *Story of the Irgun* (Jerusalem: Steimatzky's Agency Limited, 1965), 92. This pulsating repetition of blood occurs in several additional passages in *The Revolt*. Describing the Irgun's campaign to conquer Jaffa, Begin writes:

"Everything cost us blood. Acquiring the arms for the battle had cost blood; the battle itself cost blood; the first breach cost blood; and even the softening-up for which every army paid in sweat alone, cost us blood. The altar of God demanded sacrifices without number. Now we were offering the best of our sons as a Passover-sacrifice in order that our days should be renewed as of old" (p. 358). See also the passage written by four comrades before they were hanged inside the Acre prison, beginning: "our wounds were bleeding" (*The Revolt*, 271). The compressed English edition of *The Revolt* contains over 80 mentions of blood and variations of the word.

2 Begin, *The Revolt*, 360.
3 Ibid., 41.
4 Ibid., 372.
5 Ibid., 211.
6 Ibid., 341.
7 Ibid., 121. Jefferson's famous remark reads: "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants. It is its natural manure" (letter to William Stephens Smith, November 13, 1787 in *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. Julian P. Boyd, vol. 12 [Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1955], 356). The association of blood and freedom is juxtaposed in a series of asserted truths emerging from contradiction: "That is the paradox in the life of every man who fights in a just cause. He puts on a heavy, sometimes too heavy, yoke. He makes war so that there should be peace.… He sheds blood so that there should be no more bloodshed. He accepts enslavement … for the sake of freedom.… He sacrifices his life – in order to ensure life.… That is the way of the world. A very tragic way beset with terrors. There is no other" (Begin, *The Revolt.*, 311).
8 Ibid., 43.
9 Ibid., 39.
10 Begin was a member of Betar, a Revisionist Zionist Youth Movement, whose anthem mentioned blood twice in the three stanzas written by its founder, Ze'ev Jabotinsky. In the first stanza, it is ambiguously phrased so as to apply to Jewish lives lost in past historical sufferings and Jewish lives which will contribute to the rise of a renewed Jewish political entity. Its mention in the third stanza is in the form of a command to "sacrifice blood" for the hidden glory, perhaps hidden since it will not be experienced by those who give their lives to the cause. See Begin, *The Revolt*, 263.
11 Ibid., 41.
12 Menachem Begin, *White Nights* (London: Futura Publications, 1978), 99.
13 Pierre Nora, "The Era of Commemoration," in *Realms of Memory*, vol. III, *Symbols*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 609–637.
14 Paul Ricoeur, *Memory, History, and Forgetting* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 79–80.
15 Ibid., 80.
16 Alessandro Pizzorno, "Politics Unbound," in *Changing Boundaries of the Political*, ed. C. S. Maier (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27–63.
17 Adrian Oldfield, *Citizenship and Community* (London: Routledge, 1990).
18 Earl MacCormac, *A Cognitive Theory of Metaphor* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985).
19 Anita Shapira, *New Jews, Old Jews* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997), 16.
20 Salo W. Baron, "Ghetto and Emancipation: Shall We Revise the Traditional View?," *Menorah Journal* 14, 6 (1928), 515–526.
21 Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. I (Philadelphia, PA: The Jewish Publication Society, 1891), 17.
22 Ibid., 19.
23 Knesset Protocols, May 10, 1959.
24 Avraham Aderet, "Roots Revealed" [Hebrew], *Petahim* 3, 29 (1974), 3–19.
25 Reuven Orenstein, "Summer Weeks 1944," in *Gvilei Eish*, ed. Reuven Avinoam (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 1954), 321.

26 For cultural expressions of this see Gershon Shaked, *Anthology of Israeli Literature* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1982), 197.
27 Speech of the Prime Minister (Moshe Sharet) to bereaved families, Yad Lebanim Convention, September 15, 1954, Conventions folder. Yad Lebanim Archive. File: Moshe Sharet – C1.
28 Yad Lebanim Archive 1954. File: State Policy – B22.
29 *Sorrowful Hearts: Fathers on Fallen Sons*, ed. Reuven Avinoam (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot Publishing, 1957), 26.
30 Explanatory sheet on the work of the IDF Archive (1949), 212–49/7335. *Yizkor* File – Commemoration b#3.
31 Letter from the Head of Personnel Branch, Major General Moshe Tzadok, to the Chief of Staff, August 20, 1949, Rehabilitation File. IDF Archive – 1949 files – Commemoration.
32 Haim Gouri, *Pirchei Aish* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad Publishing House, 1949).
33 Beni Kinari, "Officialness," *Mebifnim* 3, 4 (1988), 318.
34 Uri Ben-Eliezer, *Through the Site* [Hebrew] (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1995), 165.
35 Labor Archive 1944\667.
36 Eytan Avneyon, *Mila Bamilah* (Holon: Itav, 2000).
37 A. Even Shoshan, *Hebrew–Hebrew Dictionary* (Jerusalem: Kiryat Sapir Publishing Company, 1969). The linguist based this entry on 1 Samuel 31:1, "Now the Philistines fought against Israel, and the men of Israel fled from the Philistines and fell down slain on Mount Gilboa."
38 *Igeret L'ach*, April 4, 1949, Jabotinsky Archives – E1–22/8.
39 *Herut*, February 24, 1949.
40 Jabotinsky Archives, March 6, 1949 – e1–22–9\a.
41 *Igeret L'ach*, April 4, 1949, Jabotinsky Archives – E1–22/8.
42 Official Register 1950: 1363. Jabotinsky Archives, – E1–22/8.
43 Knesset Protocols, September 8, 1949.
44 *Ha'olam Hazeh*, June 19, 1959.
45 James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 1993).
46 See the IDF Archive, March 20, 1953, file B2 – 616\3.
47 IDF Archive, March 16, 1949, file c3 – 517\3.
48 *Ma'ariv* April 12, 1949.
49 Knesset Protocols, August 13, 1952.
50 *Herut*, December 30, 1949.
51 *Igeret L'ach*, April 4, 1949, Jabotinsky Archives – E1–22/8.
52 Knesset Protocols, December 30, 1952.
53 Ibid., July 5, 1950.
54 Official Register 1950: 1363, IDF Archive, March 16, 1949, file c3 – 517\3.
55 *Ma'ariv*, April 19, 1949.
56 The association of voting and violence sounds counterintuitive in modern societies propounding a democratic ideology, yet linguistically, ballots and bullets are derived from the same root. An early and primitive form of voting, the *viva voce*, was a decibel contest in which the ayes and nays could erupt in tumultuous proportions. It was replaced by the raised hand, and then by "division," ensuring that the supporters "for" and "against" in large assemblies would not undetectably vote twice, but also guaranteeing that spatial separation during expression of opposition would not generate an immediate opposition to that expression. Violence was so endemic to voting that only sortition in ancient times and the secret ballot in modern times seemed to be able to circumvent most of its ill effects. Note in particular Proverbs 18:18: "The lot causeth strife to cease, and parteth asunder the contentious."
57 *Ma'ariv*, November 4, 1974.

58 Letter from Ya'akov Gelbgiser to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, May 5, 1949. See also the letter from Ya'akov Gelbgiser to Elkana Gal, Secretary to the Prime Minister, September 30, 1949 in the Gelbgiser Archive.
59 Ben Gurion's Diary, March 26, 1950. Ben Gurion Archive at Sde Boker. File: 7a – 614.
60 *Shdemot* (1973), 45.
61 Knesset Protocols, December 25, 1963.
62 IDF Archive, July 3, 1950, file: B303 – 480.a.
63 Ibid., June 18, 1950.
64 Ibid., June 18, 1950.
65 *Yizkor*, ed. Israel Ministry of Defense (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publications, 1956).
66 Ibid.
67 *Herut*, July 8, 1954.
68 Ibid.
69 Knesset Protocols, July 9, 1959.
70 The phrase embraced the Zionist work ethic whereby the New Jew would engage in constructive labor, which in turn would reconstruct the Jewish personality.
71 Joseph Weitz, *My Diaries and Letters to the Children IV*, People's Settlement 1949–1956 (Ramat Gan: Masada, 1965), 134.
72 State Decision 367.
73 Jabotinsky Archives, July 11, 1968, file: 9B – 616.3.
74 *Herut*, October 20, 1948.
75 *Ma'ariv*, April 24, 1969.
76 *Ba'eretz Yisrael*, April 1979, 12.
77 Ely Eshel, "National Martyrs Who Were Remembered, National Martyrs Who Were Forgotten," *Ba'eretz Yisrael*, March 1982, 11.
78 Ibid.
79 Haim Gilad, *In the Shadow of the Scaffold* (Tel Aviv: Zabotinsky Publishing House, 1983), 7–8.
80 See Udi Lebel and Zeev Drory, "Undecided Past National Identities and Politics of Diversity: The Mount Eytan Commemoration Site," *Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies* 2009 (forthcoming).
81 Knesset Protocols, December 25, 1963.
82 Albert Camus, *Resistance, Rebellion, and Death* (New York: The Modern Library, 1960), 15.
83 Begin, *White Nights*, 209.
84 Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2003), 69.
85 Begin, *The Revolt*, 40.
86 Ibid., 39.

13 *Mezizah*

The controversy over the manner of dealing with circumcision blood among contemporary Orthodox Jews

Ira Robinson

In the early months of 2006, Hasidic Jews in New York were confronted with what the Haredi rabbinic organization Hitahdut ha-Rabbanim d'Arzot ha-Berit va-Kanada (Union of Rabbis in the United States and Canada) considered to be an existentially threatening situation. As a full page advertisement the organization placed in Satmar's newspaper, *Der Yid*, stated:

> Recently there has befallen us a horrendous decree from the government of the City of New York, in which we thought to be protected and to live according to the law of our holy Torah, for which our ancestors gave up their lives and offered their throat to the slaughter and did not transgress it.
>
> Who would have thought this possible? For about two thousand years we have experienced exile after exile, and did not retreat from observing the commandment of circumcision according to its law, including oral suction. And now those who wish us ill arose to abolish this commandment, which is a part of circumcision.
>
> Woe! The wicked come upon us and the cruel ones seek our soul. The foundation of our law, the covenant of our Father Abraham is in danger. That which the evil governments in the generations of exile did not dare to do, they dare do in our generation in the government of freedom. The danger is enormous and very close. What shall we do?[1]

The evil decree so described was an attempt by the New York City Health Department to regulate the practise of direct oral suction, called *mezizah be-peh*, on the part of circumcisors from certain Hasidic communities of the New York area because of a concern that several infants who died of a herpes infection may have contracted it through *mezizah* by an infected *mohel* (ritual circumcisor).[2]

This chapter will examine the contemporary controversy concerning that portion of the Jewish circumcision ceremony called *mezizah* (suction)[3] among Orthodox Jews. *Mezizah* is described in the *Jewish Encyclopedia* as follows:

> The mohel takes some wine in his mouth and applies his lips to the part involved in the operation, and exerts suction, after which he expels the

> mixture of wine and blood into a receptacle provided for the purpose. This procedure is repeated several times.[4]

Mezizah, the action that concludes the circumcision, is, in the context of modern Western civilization, counter-cultural in the extreme. Because of its counter-cultural nature, it has become the center of a contemporary controversy. This controversy is for the most part not between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews. Contemporary non-Orthodox Jews, the overwhelming majority of whom have their male children circumcised,[5] are generally only vaguely aware of *mezizah*,[6] and the controversy in such circles regarding circumcision has more to do with the desirability of the continuation of circumcision itself, rather than any specific portion of the procedure.[7] The current *mezizah* controversy is playing out almost exclusively among Jews who think of themselves as Orthodox. Their views on *mezizah* bring to the fore some interesting and important differences in their attitudes toward the issue of blood ritual in contemporary Judaism, the authority of the talmudic sages, the authority of science and medicine, and governmental authority. The issue of Jewish circumcision has recently spawned a plethora of scholarly analyses: historical, sociological, political, religious.[8] However, while drawing on them, this chapter will concentrate on the ways in which the *mezizah* issue adumbrates the tensions and divisions inherent in contemporary Orthodox Judaism, especially with respect to the acceptance of the findings of medicine and science.

In the pre-modern era, *mezizah*, like Jewish circumcision as a whole, was usually understood as an internal Jewish affair, with only the occasional outsider paying it any heed.[9] In that era, in which oral suction seemed to offer the most efficient method to remove the blood resulting from the operation itself, it was also invested with great symbolic value, especially in kabbalistic literature. Its status as symbolic blood sacrifice penetrated into halakhic discourse as well. Thus, commentaries to the ruling of the *Shulhan Arukh* that on the festival of Rosh ha-Shana infants were to be circumcised between the reading of the Torah and the blowing of the Shofar evoked the story of Rabbi Meshullam Feivish, head of the rabbinic court of Cracow at the beginning of the seventeenth century,

> Who would circumcise on Rosh ha-Shana and did not clean out his mouth after the circumcision, but rather blew the Shofar with a mouth stained with the blood of circumcision in order to connect the commandments of circumcision [the covenant of Abraham] and Shofar [the Binding of Isaac].[10]

Even a cursory examination of the liturgy of the circumcision ritual reveals the implicit, and, sometimes, explicit use of the motif of blood sacrifice. Thus the *mohel* and the father of the boy recite, "Master of the universe, may it be your will that he will be worthy and acceptable before You as if I had offered him before the throne of Your glory."[11]

In modern times, when most European Jews began to feel that they had an obligation to adhere to Western culture and bourgeois norms, circumcision and,

particularly, *mezizah* began to be regarded with different eyes. It became the center of attention, along with a series of Jewish practices, many of which were blood related, which attracted the notice and the condemnation of many in the Western world in the nineteenth century.[12] Many nineteenth-century Jews, no less than non-Jews, "recoiled emotionally," in the words of Jacob Katz, from a procedure which seemed so at odds with the attempts by many in the nineteenth century to portray Judaism as "civilized" and respectable according to Western norms and mores.[13] Furthermore, public health concerns quickly intruded. The nineteenth century's advances in determining the microscopic causes of various diseases and the development of antiseptic medical procedures impacted on *mezizah* when *mohalim* were accused of spreading syphilis, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases to Jewish children through their practice of oral *mezizah.*[14] The response of those Jews who continued to claim loyalty to the pre-modern Jewish tradition, and were called "Orthodox" by their ideological opponents, was in fact twofold, and can be characterized by the terms "accommodation" and "resistance."[15]

Accommodators noted that the traditional rabbinic sources had never specifically directed that the suction applied should be only direct oral suction, and that there were other methods of adequately removing the circumcision blood, including sponges, gauze, and glass tubes, which did the job without the necessity of direct contact between the circumcisor's mouth and the infant's penis. This type of solution of the problem was seen by some of its rabbinic proponents as a good thing, combining halakhic authenticity and modern technology.[16] Other accommodators felt less enthusiastic, but hoped that these changes would spare Jews from more stringent government regulation of circumcision and, indeed, of an outright ban on circumcision on account of public health considerations.

Resistors, on the other hand, felt that conceding the issue of oral *mezizah* would merely constitute the thin edge of the wedge and ultimately destroy the holistic Judaic system they treasured. Governments would make use of Jewish concessions on this issue to institute further curtailment of Jewish autonomy in other areas of religious practice. More importantly, they felt that this was an issue advocated by those within the Jewish community who stood for Westernization of Jewish mores, and reform in Judaic observance. Because of this feeling of being under attack,[17] they felt that there was a necessity to hold the line and defend the practise of oral *mezizah* as traditionally practiced, at all costs.

In attempting to hold the line on *mezizah*, rabbinic resisters, like Rabbi Moshe Schick, did such things as asserting that oral suction was a *halakha le-moshe mi-sinai* (a law that originated with Moses at Sinai), which is a way of stating that it could not be interpreted but rather must be followed, whatever the findings of modern medical science.[18] They also sought to counteract the influence of an 1837 *responsum* of Rabbi Moses Schreiber (Hatam Sofer)[19] permitting an alternative to *mezizah be-peh.* This *responsum* was especially bothersome to them because the Hatam Sofer was otherwise a major symbol of resistance to the demands of modernity and Westernization in Judaism. Thus there were those who asserted that the *responsum* was designed for a particular case and should not be considered a general permission, while still others sought to cast doubt on

the authenticity of the *responsum*, alleging forgery on the part of those attempting to use it,[20] and citing as proof the fact that the *responsum* does not appear in Rabbi Schreiber's published collection of *responsa*. The existence of the original manuscript of this *responsum*, however, is affirmed in a *responsum* of Rabbi Shmuel ha-Levi Wosner, who claims to have seen it in London, and to have seen as well a later annotation of the *responsum* asserting that it is forbidden to publish it, because the Hatam Sofer did not write it for publication, but only as a limited, temporary ruling (*hora'at sha'a*).[21]

In more recent times, the controversy came to the fore again, appearing first in the United States, but also having major repercussions in Israel.[22] In the 1980s the AIDS crisis caused a number of Orthodox Jews to reconsider the practice of *mezizah be-peh* in light of the possibility of contracting the disease from circumcision blood. At that time, the Agudat ha-Rabbonim in North America issued a proclamation defending oral suction.[23] But that basically internal rabbinic debate did not make nearly the public impact of the dispute over *mezizah* that has taken place over the past few years, when the issue has not so much been the possibility of *mohalim* contracting the AIDS virus, but rather the likelihood that *mohalim* were spreading the herpes virus to the infants they were circumcising through their practice of direct oral suction.

In 2004, a group of physicians concerned about the incidence of herpes infection in several newborns which they attributed to *mezizah be-peh* authored an article that appeared in the American medical journal, *Pediatrics*, followed in 2005 by a similar one in Hebrew in the Israeli medical journal, *Harefuah*,[24] in which the issue of the continuance of *mezizah be-peh* was addressed. They were joined in these publications by Rabbi Dr Moses Tendler, who teaches biology, Talmud, and Jewish medical ethics at Yeshiva University. The tone of the articles was hardly sympathetic to the practice of direct oral suction. As the authors stated:

> the great majority of ritual circumcisions are performed today with a sterile device and not by oral suction by the *mohel*. However, some Orthodox rabbis have felt threatened by criticism of the old religious customs and strongly resist any change in the traditional custom of oral *metzitzah*.[25]

The authors' conclusion was that "the cultural process of replacing ancient customs by modern wound care has to be encouraged by a heightened awareness of this potentially life-threatening medical complication." The Hebrew article was even more specific in its call for halakhic reform:

> Should the medical risks of *metzitza* by mouth be overlooked or denied out of loyalty to ancient tradition, thus allowing the practice to be continued? Or should the recognition of such risks along with aesthetic considerations lead to changes in halakhic thinking to perform the *metzitza* in a hygienic manner? Historically the issue of *metzitza* by mouth has been a bone of contention between traditional outlook and modern halakhic thinking, which takes into consideration advances in medical knowledge. In light of the

> reports in the medical literature about complications in the wake of *metzitza* by mouth, some of the halakhic rulings regarding circumcision should be reconsidered.[26]

Rabbi Tendler, moreover, was quoted in the press as having expressed the opinion that not only was the use of the glass tube for *mezizah* halakhicly valid, but that, because of health risks to the infants, *mezizah be-peh* should today be considered as prohibited.[27]

The reaction within the Haredi community to this chapter included denunciations of Rabbi Tendler and his co-authors in newspapers such as *Yated Ne'eman*, as well as in pamphlets and posters in North America and Israel. It culminated in the vandalism of Rabbi Tendler's house and synagogue in Monsey, New York.[28] The move by the New York City Health Department to regulate oral suction in circumcisions, following allegations of transmission of herpes from a *mohel* to newborns through his use of direct oral suction, evoked further highly emotional reactions. These reflected popular sentiment within the Haredi community, as illustrated in the advertisement with which this chapter began, that the Department of Health's intention was in fact to prohibit circumcision as such.[29]

Within the "modern" Orthodox community, represented by the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA), the reaction included a resolution adopted by the RCA on March 1, 2005, which states:

> that the requirement of *Metzitza* is fulfilled completely and unambiguously by the use of oral suctioning through a tube … Therefore … the use of such a tube is not only permissible, but is preferred (instead of direct oral contact) to eliminate any unintentional communication of infectious diseases … An additional reason to encourage the use of a tube … is that we not discourage less committed Jewish men and women from observing ritual circumcision (and possibly other Jewish rituals).[30]

Today, *mezizah be-peh* continues to be practised largely by segments of the Hasidic community.[31] However, the issues adumbrated by the controversy touch on a number of key issues crucial for our understanding of the dynamics of contemporary Orthodox Judaism in all of its variations.

It is important to note at the outset of our analysis, that the tone and the character of the pro-*mezizah* rhetoric from Hasidic sources has not materially changed since the controversies of the nineteenth century. This is recognized by Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, who stated that "no new ground has been broken in the debate regarding *metzitza b'peh* during the last one hundred years. Few (if any) new *teshuvos* [halakhic opinions] on the subject exist, aside from those that simply reflect the older literature."[32] It is also the case that much of the "scientific" literature adduced by the pro-*mezizah* advocates stems from the turn of the twentieth century and is medically quite outdated.[33] This is so even though, as Rabbi Alfred Cohen observes, something nonetheless of significance has changed:

> for surely the current suggestion that some modification be introduced into *metzitza* is not coming at all from the camp of the irreligious or the anti-religious. Indeed few but the most meticulous Jews are familiar with the practice of *metzitza be-peh*. Rather rabbinic scholars and Orthodox medical professionals are raising the suggestion.[34]

Rabbi N. Daniel Korobkin concurs, expressing this position even more strongly:

> Can it be argued with the same vigor and conviction that medical professionals in the twenty-first century are motivated by a desire to sanitize *brit milah* (and Judaism by extension) and are therefore misrepresenting the results of the clinical studies? 2006 is not 1836 … Accordingly, the often-rhetorical arguments of the nineteenth-century rabbis may be a misapplication of historical precedent.[35]

What can be said is that not merely today, but also for some time, there have been two different types of circumcision, reflecting two tendencies within Orthodoxy. One of them is performed and celebrated by Orthodox Jews who see themselves as following the dictates of a Torah the relevance of which, in the words of Toronto physician Yehudi Pesach Shields, is "its ability to be interpreted by qualified men in the light of scientific achievement."[36] The other is informed by the notion that challenges to Jewish practices based upon supposed scientific verities cannot be the determining factor in the halakhic decision-making process.[37] For their part, spokesmen for the Haredi camp understand that one must speak of two opposing camps within Orthodoxy. As Rabbi Shraga Feivel Zimmerman of Monsey is reported to have said:

> External appearance and practice can be deceiving. Two Jews can wear the same Tefillin, eat the same Matzohs, and learn the same *daf* [page]of Gemara, and nevertheless be different internally. There are those who believe in the divinity of Torah Sh'Baal Peh [oral Torah] and those who don't. There are those who believe in Masorah [tradition] and those who don't. There are those who believe in *Emunas Chachomim* [faith in the Sages] and those who don't.[38]

It would also be remiss on our part to simply assume that Haredim are prepared to concede scientific superiority to their "modern" rivals. On the contrary, pro-*mezizah* spokesmen vigorously defended their own scientific credentials. Scientists opposed to *mezizah*, according to Rabbi Yisroel Belsky, a *rosh yeshiva* (yeshiva principal), *mohel*, and prominent activist in this controversy, are known for their "inaccuracy and … anti-religious bias." Their studies presented no proofs, only associations, whereas, according to Rabbi Belsky, a "famed pediatric urologist [not named] asserted after examining two hundred thousand cases of *Metzitza b'peh*, not even one infection was found."[39] According to the report of his speech, he stated:

> We are the modern ones, basing our positions on scientific proofs and supplying statistical evidence. It is clear by the light of logic that there is no connection between *milah* and infection. It is others that aren't showing cause and effect, engaging in speculation, using kindergarten-level reasoning. Their position is based on primitive emotions and antiquated superstitions.[40]

It is similarly noteworthy that the English translation of a 1980s-era Haredi defense of *mezizah*, entitled in Hebrew *Berit Keruta la-Sefatayim* (literally, "A Covenant Made with the Lips"), by Rabbi Yonasan Binyomin Goldberger, was entitled *Sanctity and Science*.[41] In it, Goldberger is at pains to assert:

> There can be no doubt that when our sages wrote in the Talmud about the necessity of *metzitza b'peh*, they foresaw all that medical science would later discover about these beneficial effects. Judging by the discoveries of science until now, we can expect that future research will show even more evidence that our ancient teachings were right. Nevertheless, one cannot help bemoaning the fact that we have to resort to the opinions of contemporary scientists to validate the sacred teachings which go back to the Torah transmitted to Moshe Rabeinu at Sinai. Although we do not believe that there is a need for any further validation of age-old Torah teachings, these scientific opinions have been quoted to show the fallacy of those who would omit *metzitza b'peh*.[42]

To some, religious Jews' adoption of medical/scientific trappings has, in fact, gone too far. To the consternation of Lubavicher physician and *mohel*, Henry Romberg, there is a sense in which *mohalim* attempt to emulate the role of physicians. As he wrote:

> Unfortunately, too many *mohalim* feel that they enhance the status of *milah* by trying to act more the role of a medical practitioner than that of the religious functionary. They use medical jargon when talking with parents. Some will wear a doctor's smock during the bris. A number of traditional *mohalim* will even don surgeons' rubber gloves![43]

On the other hand, the Haredi assertion and adoption of scientific credentials does not extend to debating their opponents on the level of scientific discourse. While Zweibel, in his sympathetic but moderately critical depiction of the pro-*mezizah* position, asserts that it is possible to cogently critique the scientific literature which problematizes *mezizah*, he also concedes that "unfortunately, though, these questions have thus far been posed exclusively in Charedi newspapers and other outlets that have little standing in the broader scientific community."[44] Moreover, the attempts of advocates of *mezizah* to invoke medical opinion on their side often backfires. This is at least partially the case because the scientific evidence marshalled by the Haredim is in many cases no longer considered scientifically valid and thus not to be relied upon.[45] Furthermore, *Agudath Israel*'s suggestion that *mohalim* should take or apply the anti-viral drug acyclovir to prevent transmission

of herpes during direct oral suction was allegedly based upon inaccurate medical information. Thus, Dr Jonathan Zenilman, chief of infectious diseases at the Johns Hopkins Medical Center, was quoted on this issue as stating, "The lack of [medical] understanding among leaders of this community is truly outrageous."[46]

One important reason that this is so is that for the pro-*mezizah* advocates, as Leonard Glick writes, "the bottom line was a straightforward question: How do we respond when statements by respected physicians appear to contradict Talmudic mandates?"[47] The authoritative answer on the part of nineteenth-century Hungarian Rabbi Moshe Schick is as follows:

> Even if expert doctors testify that *metzitzah* is superfluous, we of course do not accept their word … for all their statements are based on probability … Only information transmitted to us by Moshe from God or stated by other prophets is true in all instances … Even if the doctors' statements are reliable, they are only indications of probability, and when life is at stake we do not rely on probability.[48]

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook also asserts that science and medicine are unable to make absolute claims about health, "with one generation destroying what the previous had built." Science only offers a current assumption regarding certain causes and effects. We rely on current medical knowledge regarding possible violations of *shabbat* or *yom tov*, because even a doubtful risk warrants their violation. But there is no proof that medical evidence is sufficient to abrogate a Torah-ordained commandment.[49] Thus, for those who consider *mezizah* a *halakha le-moshe mi-Sinai*, it cannot be refuted by scientific opinion,[50] especially on the part of those who do not observe the Torah.[51]

One telling issue, reflected in these citations, is the relationship of the Haredi community with physicians. The nineteenth century saw the rise of a class of Jewish physicians who became authority figures within the community and "were not just products of this social and cultural modernization, they were among its foremost creators, pioneers in advocating and exemplifying steady Jewish progress toward bourgeois respectability."[52] The fact that many contemporary physicians consider themselves to be Orthodox Jews has not materially diminished the potential for tension between the Haredi community and the "*doktoyrim.*" Thus Rabbi Menashe Klein exhorted the faithful "Not to listen to contemporary physicians … even if the truth were according to their words we do not listen to them."[53]

These attitudes bespeak the conviction that the medical knowledge of the talmudic sages is perfect, as opposed to the fallible and changing pronouncements of medical and other scientists.[54] One widespread Orthodox response to discrepancies between talmudic assertion and modern scientific observation is well expressed by Rabbi Alfred Cohen, who states:

> When our own experiences directly negate an observed phenomenon in the Gemara, we are forced to conclude that the realities which they confronted were not the same as those we experience.[55]

Rabbi Shlomo ha-Kohen similarly stated,

> We follow the therapies selected by the contemporary physicians since the nature of people and therapies have changed from the time of *Hazal* … the entire matter [oral suction] is not something that requires rabbinical input, but rather requires the input of expert physicians.[56]

Those within Orthodoxy, like Rabbi Natan Slifkin, who challenge the fallibility of the ancient rabbis' scientific pronouncements, experience formidable opposition to their views.[57]

For their part, those Orthodox Jews advocating against the retention of direct oral suction in circumcision tend to be not merely critical of their opponents, but also rather impatient at their reluctance to do what they feel to be obvious. Thus Dr Yehudi Pesach Shields states, "We must not continue to be obstinate in objecting to valid improvement."[58] Rabbi Dr Moses Tendler goes farther than that:

> I'm particularly disturbed that once this information becomes available, the *mohalim* don't do as they're told … *Metzitzah* is strictly medieval medicine, and should have given way to modern medicine. We have a tradition that says that when it comes to medicine, you don't look into the Talmud. You seek the most competent physician to tell you what to do.[59]

As Todd J. Rothschild, a Queens physician, wrote to the *Jewish Press*: "The inability of *rabbonim* to modify the practice of *mezizah* in view of *safek sakanah nefashot* [possibility of danger of life] posed to babies is shocking."[60]

These modern Orthodox attitudes toward the pro-*mezizah* camp are informed by their attitude toward the authority of the contemporary scientific endeavor. A fairly representative statement of a pro-science Orthodox thinker is that of Professor Nathan Aviezer of Bar Ilan University who stated in the context of perceived differences between Torah and science on the question of evolution:

> They [Orthodox fundamentalists] have the view that every word in the Torah is understood literally and the Torah does not need confirmation … But scientists are serious people looking for truth. What they find shouldn't be discarded as an atheistic agenda, but seen as truth in the physical world … It's a pleasure to be a believing Jew in the 21st century; you're not obligated to choose between science and Torah. You can have your cake and eat it too.[61]

There are certainly prominent rabbis, now and in the past, like Zvi Pesach Frank of Jerusalem, whose *responsa* pro-science Orthodox Jews could cite with respect to accommodation to scientific arguments. For Rabbi Frank, physicians' warnings were sufficient:

> Since the physicians testify that a sponge also does the action why should we not believe them? … For also in this era when diseases are present

> through *mezizah* with the mouth, one who is lenient to perform *mezizah* through a glass tube will not go wrong if he does so because there exists a suspicion [of harm].[62]

Another significant factor is the extent of the reliance of both sides in this dispute, but especially the anti-*mezizah* camp, on neither *responsa* nor other published material, but rather on essentially anecdotal oral testimonies in support of their position. Thus Rabbi Shimon Schwab, leader of the Breuer Kehilla in Washington Heights, was anecdotally described as having directed the *mohel* at his grandson's circumcision to use the glass tube for the *mezizah* to make it publicly clear that the method was kosher.[63] Rabbi (Hershel) Schachter reports that Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik reports that his father, Rabbi Moshe Soloveitchik, would not permit a *mohel* to perform *mezizah b'peh* with direct oral contact, and that his grandfather, Rabbi Chaim Soloveitchik, instructed *mohelim* in Brisk not to do *mezizah b'peh* with direct oral contact.[64] Rabbi Mordecai Zimmerman, a *mohel* who trained in pre-Second World War Vilna, similarly reports that no *mohel* in prewar Vilna practiced direct oral suction.[65] There is a report that Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach of Jerusalem permitted *mezizah* with a glass to avoid concern for AIDS.[66] A *mohel* testified that he received a ruling from Rabbi Auerbach in the late 1980s stating that direct oral suction is not even a *hiddur mitzva* ("beautification of the commandment"). When asked why he did not publicize this he replied "I am too old and too weak to withstand having bricks hurled through my windows."[67]

Though there seem to be more published *responsa* supporting *mezizah*, its proponents also extensively utilize the anecdote in their campaign. Thus Rabbi Yosef Shalom Elyashiv is reported to have stated, "G–d forbid that we should change any aspect of *metzitza b'peh*. There is no reason for concern. It is clear that all the calls to prevent *metzitza b'peh* are meaningless."[68] Similarly, Rabbi Moses Feinstein, despite his published opinion that *mezizah* is not an integral part of circumcision and therefore could be omitted in the face of possible danger,[69] was said to have remarked, just prior to his death in 1986 and in the face of the AIDS epidemic, that "Heaven forbid that [*mezizah*] should be abolished since one who observes a commandment will know of no evil consequence."[70]

What emerges clearly from the anecdotal material presented is that not all Haredi communities practise *mezizah* or ban the use of the glass tube. A number of eminent mitnagdic Torah scholars, like Rabbis Isaac Elchanan Spector, Chaim Berlin, Chaim Soloveitchik, and Aharon Kotler are on record as approving of the glass tube.[71] On the other hand, not all of the signatories of the ban on use of the glass tube for *mezizah* were Hasidic. They included such non-Hasidic authorities as Rabbis Abraham Pam, Elya Svei, Mordecai Gifter, and Shlomo Zalman Auerbach.[72] Whereas Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz (Chazon Ish) was said to have praised those who refused to attend circumcisions where there was no direct oral suction, according to Rabbi Samuel Wosner, he did not adhere to this himself, as he explained: "Among the Lithuanians the fence has long been

broken down. We have no power to repair it. But in your circle there has been no change until now, so you must protest vigorously."[73]

Despite the evidence that direct oral suction was largely abandoned among non-Hasidic Orthodox Jews, even in the nineteenth century, there is also an attempt to revise history on the part of some in the pro-*mezizah* camp. Thus Rabbi Yisroel Belsky is reported to have stated that Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky had informed his students that the two *mohelim* of Vilna who didn't do *mezitah be-peh* died from a dreaded disease of the mouth.[74] This story seems to reflect, somewhat in reverse, something that Montaigne recorded of his visit to a Jewish circumcision ceremony: "And they hold that he who has circumcised … when he is dead has that privilege, that the parts of his mouth are never eaten by worms."[75]

In conclusion, the current *mezizah be-peh* controversy is significant in a number of ways. Certainly, one of the consequences of the dispute is that those people working on anti-circumcision campaigns,[76] not to mention anti-Semites,[77] have acquired a new talking point, and some even speak of equating the *mohalim* with pedophiles.[78] Another result is a textbook case of cultural and intellectual tensions within contemporary Orthodox Judaism. *Mezizah* is the point where the conflict between science and Judaism becomes a practical matter, as opposed to the entirely theoretical issue of the age of the universe. It also marks the fault line in terms of readiness to accommodate the norms of contemporary Western civilization between "Modern" and Haredi Orthodoxy.

Finally, one of the most significant aspects of the contemporary *mezizah* controversy is what is *not* being said. With the exception of the anti-Semites and the anti-circumcision activists, no one – certainly not any of the Orthodox protagonists on either side of the controversy – invokes the blood/sacrifice nexus that appears so clearly in the liturgy and the halakhic analysis of the ceremony. An examination of the arguments put forward on both sides indicates that neither side is interested in invoking this issue. There appears to have been a marked de-emphasis, if not outright suppression, of blood-related issues in the literature on the contemporary *mezizah* controversy. Possibly this is because the Orthodox rabbis in the anti-*mezizah* camp do not desire to jeopardize the esthetic and somewhat sanitized Judaism they wish to present to their own adherents and to the public at large. As well, both they and their pro-*mezizah* opponents doubtless understand that blood symbolism could well play into the hands of a radical anti-Semitic discourse.[79]

The pro-*mezizah* activists also seek, by keeping the controversy firmly focussed on halakhic and ideological issues, to preserve the boundaries of their internal communal authority and to avoid a situation in which governments would feel it necessary to intervene in those areas of religious activity previously understood by the Haredi community to be autonomous.

Notes

1 *Der Yid* (Brooklyn, NY) (March 10, 2006), B38; cf. also the advertisement on p. B39 of the same issue. For examples of other such notices, see N. Daniel Korobkin, "*Metzitzah b'peh*, Rabbinic Polemics, and Applying the Lessons of History," *Jewish*

Action 67, 2 (Winter, 2006), 26; Chaim Dovid Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*: An Inside Account of the Metzitza B'peh Controversy," *Jewish Observer* 39, 3 (April, 2006), 6–21. www.cross-currents.com/archives/2006/05/18the-metzitzah-bpeh-controversy/.

2 Maggie Haberman, "Fear Rabbi Gave Tots Herpes," *New York Daily News* (February 2, 2005), www.newyorkdailynews.com/front/v-pfriendly/story/277069p-237314c.html; ibid., "Mike Caught in Row over Rabbi's Herpes," *New York Daily News* (August 12, 2005), www.newyorkdailynews.com/front/v-pfriendly/story/336689p-287485c.html. For a detailed chronological account of the unfolding of the affair, from the perspective of a lawyer for Agudath Israel whose task it was to intercede with the New York City authorities on behalf of the Haredi community, see Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*." For some more recent developments, see Steven I. Weiss, "Doctors Say Circumcision Ritual Still Not Safe," *Forward* (December 15, 2006), http://forward.com/articles/doctors-say-circumcision-ritual-still-not safe/. The political implications of this controversy for New York City politics are mentioned by Shlomo Sprecher, "*Mezizah be-peh*: Therapeutic Touch or Hippocratic Vestige?" *Hakira, the Flatbush Journal of Jewish Law and Thought* 3 (2006), 16.

3 Rabbi Howard Jachter translates the term as "squeezing." See "Modern Brit Milah Issues – Part One" (November 3, 2001), www.koltorah.org/ravj/britmilah1.htm.

4 "Circumcision," *The Jewish Encyclopedia* (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1910), vol. 4, 99.

5 Estimates range from 60 to 90 percent; cf. B. Gesundheit, G. Grisaru-Soen, D. Greenberg, O. Levtzion-Korach, D. Malkin, M. Petric, G. Koren, M. D. Tendler, B. Ben-Zeev, A. Vardi, R. Dagan, and D. Engelhard, "Neonatal Genital Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 Infection after Jewish Ritual Circumcision: Modern Medicine and Religious Tradition," *Pediatrics* 114, 2 (2 August, 2004), http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/114/2/e259.

6 Books on circumcision directed at the general Jewish (non-Orthodox) public often barely mention this aspect of circumcision. Thus, *mezizah* is not mentioned at all in Nathan Gottlieb's *A Jewish Child Is Born: The History and Ritual of Circumcision, Redemption of Firstborn Son, Adoption, Conversion and Choosing and Giving Names* (New York, Bloch, 1960); Eugene J. Cohen's *Guide to Ritual Circumcision and Redemption of the First-Born Son* (New York: Ktav, 1984) mentions the *metzitzah* procedure only in an appendix, pp. 129–130; cf. Kelley Hartog, "Death Spotlights Old Circumcision Rite," *Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles* (February 18, 2005), http://jewishjournal.com/home/searchview.php?id=13676. For this chapter, Hartog interviewed several Los Angeles *mohalim* who serve the general Jewish community, and who reported that they received few questions about it. Reactions to the procedure among many contemporary Jews, when the procedure is brought to their attention, include shock and distaste. See Joanne Palmer, "After Infant's Death, Scrutiny on Circumcision Rite," *Cleveland Jewish News* (February 17, 2005), http://clevelandjewishnews.com/articles/2005/02/17/news/world/tmohel0218.txt. Weiss ("Doctors Say") states that "Jews outside the Orthodox community often hire ultra-Orthodox *mohels*, but are believed to be largely unaware of the practice of direct oral suction."

7 Elizabeth Wyner Mark, *The Covenant of Circumcision: New Perspectives on an Ancient Jewish Rite* (Hanover, NH, and London: Brandeis University Press, 2003), xxii; cf. Judy Peres, "Some Jewish Parents Break Ranks over Circumcision," *Chicago Tribune* (May 22, 2007), http://chicagotribune.com/news/local/chi-0705210916-may22,1,802257.story?page=2&coll=chi-news-hed.

8 There has been a spate of scholarly work on various aspects of Jewish circumcision in the past decade. See especially Lawrence A. Hoffman, *Covenant of Blood: Circumcision and Gender in Rabbinic Judaism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996); Leonard B. Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh: Circumcision from Ancient Judea to Modern America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

9 Cf. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised? Gender and Covenant in Judaism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 3.
10 Cited in *Be'er Hetev, Hilkhot Rosh ha-Shana* 584:4. Both *Sha'arei Teshuva* and *Mishnah Berurah* seem to disagree with this practice since the dried blood on the Shofar might constitute a halakhicly significant barrier (*hazizah*) or because of the importance of the blessing, which should not be recited with a dirty mouth.
11 Nosson Scherman, *The Complete Artscroll Siddur* (Brooklyn: Mesorah Publications, 1984), 213. In its commentary on the circumcision liturgy, the *Artscroll Siddur* twice alludes to the blood sacrifice aspect of circumcision. On the phrase "may his blood be pleasing" (p. 218), the commentary states: "Animals are acceptable for Temple offerings from the eighth day after birth. Thus the blessing is that the eight-day-old infant be beloved to God … as if he were a holy offering." Cf. also the commentary on p. 212, relative to the citation of Ezekiel 16:6.
12 Robin Judd, "Circumcision and Modern Jewish Life: a German Case Study, 1843–1914," in Wyner Mark, *The Covenant of Circumcision*, 142–156; ibid., "The Politics of Animal Advocacy and the Kosher Butchering Debates in Germany," *Jewish Social Studies*, n.s. 10 (2003), 117–150; ibid., *Contested Rituals: Circumcision, Kosher Butchering and Jewish Political Life in Germany, 1843–1933* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2007). For similar voices in France, see Jay Berkovitz, *Rites and Passages: The Beginnings of a Modern Jewish Culture in France, 1650–1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 155.
13 The nineteenth-century controversies have been well described by Jacob Katz, "The Struggle Over Preserving the Rite of Circumcision in the First Part of the Nineteenth Century," and "The Controversy Over the *Mezizah*, the Unrestricted Execution of the Rite of Circumcision," in *Divine Law in Human Hands: Case Studies in Halakhic Flexibility* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1998), 320–402.
14 "Circumcision," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, 100.
15 These heuristic categories were originally presented by Jeffrey Gurock in his investigation of North American Orthodox rabbis in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. "Resistors and Accomodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886–1983," in *American Jewish Orthodoxy in Historical Perspective* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1996), 1–62.
16 Mordecai Breuer, "The Decision-Making Methods of the Rabbis of Germany in the Emancipation Period" [Hebrew], *Sinai* 100 (1987), 166–168.
17 Their perception is reflected in the analysis of Rabbi Alfred S. Cohen, who said of their reaction to this crisis that the rabbis of the nineteenth century "did not descend to the level of polemic and invective which was levelled at them, but chose to respond to the calumnies voiced against *milah* with reasoned arguments and careful explanation of the basis for the traditional practice." "Brit Milah and the Specter of AIDS," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 17 (Spring 1989), 96.
18 Rabbi Menashe Klein, *Meshane Halakhot* 13, 183: "*mezizah be-peh* is of [the category] *halakha le-moshe mi-sinai* [a law given to Moses at Sinai]." Cohen, in a slightly apologetic manner, attempts to mitigate the radical nature of this formulation by stating that Maharam Schick "goes so far as to argue that *possibly mezizah be-peh* is *on the level* of *halacha le-moshe mi-sinai*" (my own emphasis). Cohen, "Brit Milah," 97.
19 See Jacob Katz, *Halakaha ve-Kabbala* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1985), 353–386; cf. Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 39ff.
20 Isaac Jacob Weiss, *Minhat Yitzhak* (New York and Jerusalem: Minhat Yitzhak, 1990), vol. 8, no. 91; cf. Yonasan Binyomin Goldberger, *Sanctity and Science: Insights into the Practice of Milah and Metzitzah* (New York and Jerusalem: Feldheim, 1991), 165, 168, 171, 173.
21 Shmuel Wosner, *Shut Shevet ha-Levi* (New York: B Wosner, 1980) vol. 2, Yoreh De'ah, no. 131.

22 Mordechai Halperin, "The View From Israel," *Jewish Action* 67, 2 (Winter 2006), 38, contends that in 2003 there was a concentrated campaign in Israel aimed at shifting the national consensus on *brit milah*.
23 Goldberger, *Sanctity and Science*, 203–205.
24 Gesundheit *et al.*, "Neonatal Genital Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 Infection"; B. Gesundheit, D. Greenberg, S. Walfish, R. Dagan, G. Koren, D. Malkin, M. D. Tendler, "Infectious Complications with Herpes Virus after Ritual Jewish Circumcision: A Historical and Cultural Analysis" [Hebrew], *Harefuah* 144, 2 (February 2005), 126–132.
25 Gesundheit *et al.*, "Neonatal Genital Herpes Simplex Virus Type 1 Infection."
26 Gesundheit *et al.*, "Infectious Complications."
27 For a fairly large collection of Rabbi Tendler's statements on this issue, see http://dhengah.org/mbp/tendlervstendler.htm.
28 Cf., http://dovbear.blogspot.com/2005/11/mezizah-doesnt-matter.html.
29 Korobkin, "Metzitzah B'peh," 26. Debrah Nussbaum Cohen, "Culture Clash Over Brit Ritual," *Jewish Week* (New York) (February 3, 2006), www.thejewishweek.com/news/newscontent.php3?artid=12007&print=yes.
30 www.rabbis.org/news/articles.cfm?id=100546. The notion that insisting on *mezizah be-peh* will counter efforts to get non-observant Jews to circumcise their children was emphasized by Jonathan Rosenblum, "Shdadlanus: a Matter of Perspective" (May 18, 2006), www.cross-currents.com/archives/2006/05/18/shtadlanus-a-matter-of-perspective; cf., Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*."
31 Hartog, "Death Spotlights Old Circumcision Rite." Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*," is of the opinion that "many if not most *brissen*, certainly in the New York metropolitan area, are done with *metzitza b'peh*." Halperin ("The View From Israel," 36.) estimates that there are fewer than 10,000 circumcisions employing *mezizah be-peh* in the Haredi sector, some 20 percent of the circumcisions performed annually in Israel. Goldberger estimates that perhaps only half of all Orthodox Jews adhere strictly to all traditions and practice oral *metzitzah*; *Sanctity and Science*, 144–145.
32 Rabbi Yisroel Reisman, "A Call to Reason: Focussing the Debate," *Jewish Observer* (April, 2006), 23. Cited in Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 38.
33 D. Shabtai and R. Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking in Halacha: a Case Study. *Metzitzah b'peh*," *Journal of Halacha and Contemporary Society* 51 (Spring, 2006), 37. The century-old material surveyed in their article is advertised in the blurb for Goldberger's *Sanctity and Science* as "the latest scientific research demonstrating the safety and desirability of *b'rit milah* as performed by the traditional method" (cited in Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 39). Goldberger himself is much more careful than the blurb. He states:

> Although the practice of medicine is vastly changed today, I have written this historical overview so that we can see how much of the opposition to *metzitzah* was the result of personal bias, and how little had a genuine medical basis.
>
> (Sanctity and Science, 121; cf., 127)

On the literature from the turn of the twentieth century regarding the benefits of Judaic practice for health, see Mitchell Hart, *The Healthy Jew*: *the Symbiosis of Judaism and Modern Medicine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
34 Cohen, "Brit Milah," 97, 106.
35 Korobkin, "Metzitzah b'Peh," 29.
36 Yehudi Pesach Shields, "The Making of *Metzitzah b'peh*," *Tradition* 13 (1972), 45; cf. Cohen, "Brit Milah,"114.
37 Cohen, "Brit Milah," 113–114.
38 "A *Kinus Hisorerus* Concerning Bris Mila," http://dovbear.blogspot.com/2000_04_16_dovbear_archive.html.
39 The number 200,000 is likely an exaggeration for rhetorical purposes; cf. Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*." Given the conditions under which

ritual circumcisions are routinely performed, Lubavicher *mohel* and physician, Henry Romberg of Cleveland, Ohio remarks, "it is truly wonderous that infection is almost never seen," a situation Romberg attributes both to divine protection as well as to the fact that with the abundance of blood vessels in the area of the circumcision, it is difficult for infection to get started. Romberg, *Bris Milah: A Book About the Jewish Ritual of Circumcision* (Jerusalem and New York: Feldheim, 1982), 94.

40 "A Kinus Hisorerus."
41 Goldberger, *Sanctity and Science*, 198.
42 Ibid., 254–255.
43 Romberg, *Bris Milah*, 26–27, cf. p. 33.
44 Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*."
45 Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking," 37.
46 Cohen, "Culture Clash Over Brit Ritual."
47 Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 129.
48 Cited in Goldberger, *Sanctity and Science*, 112–113; cf. 114, 138.
49 Abraham Isaac ha-Kohen Kook, *Da'at Kohen Teshuvot be-Hilkhot Shulhan Arukh Yoreh De'ah* (Jerusalem: Mossad ha-Rav Kook, 1969), 142; cf. Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking," 38–39.
50 Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking," 40. Moses Schick, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharam Shick* (New York: s.n., 1975?) *Yoreh Deah*, no. 245; Judah Aszod, *Teshuvot Yehudah Ya'aleh Yoreh De'ah* (Jerusalem: s.n., 2000), vol. 1, no. 248.
51 Cohen "Brit Milah," 106.
52 Glick, *Marked in Your Flesh*, 126; cf. 129.
53 Menashe Klein, *Mishne Halakhot* (Brooklyn, NY: Mekhon Mishneh Halakhot Gedolot, 1960) 16, no. 75. Rabbi Klein's opinion is likely informed by that of Rabbi Yekutiel Yehuda Halberstam, who wrote in his *She'elot u-Teshuvot Divrei Yetziv* (Netanya: Mekhon Shefa' Hayyim, 1996), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 155, "that the physicians of our era are desecrators of our holy Sabbath and unbelievers."
54 Sherira Gaon, *Ozar ha-Geonim* 10, on *Gittin* 68a. Cited in Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking," 40.
55 Cohen, "Brit Milah," 100.
56 Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 48–49.
57 Ibid.,19 n. 9. I am presently preparing a study of Rabbi Slifkin's thought entitled "Rabbi Nosson Slifkin on Science and Torah: the Evolution of a Search for Truth."
58 Shields, "Making of Metzitzah," 45.
59 Palmer, "After Infant's Death."
60 "Disturbing Ad," *Jewish Press* (Brooklyn) (January 11, 2006), www.jewishpress.com/print.do/5778/Letters_To_The_Editor_html.
61 Raphael Kohan, "Talking Torah and Science," *Jewish Advocate* (Boston) (January 30, 2007) www.thejewishadvocate.com/this_weeks_issue/news/?content_id=2487.
62 Rabbi Zevi Pesach Frank, *Har Zevi*, *Yoreh De'ah* (Jerusalem: Va'ad le-hotsa'at kitve maran ha-rav Zvi Pesah Frank, 1964), no. 214.
63 Romberg, *Bris Milah*, 57. Goldberger argues that Rabbi Schwab upheld Rabbi Hirsch's dictum that, in the absence of governmental prohibition, only oral suction was acceptable. See *Sanctity and Science*, 193.
64 Rabbinical Council of America, "Metzitza Be'Peh-Halachic Clarification" (June 7, 2005), www.rabbis.org/news/article.cfm?id=100605. It must be noted that the RCA would probably not have utilized the anecdotal evidence if they had access to published *responsa*. Goldberger claims that R. Yehoshua Leib Diskin of Brisk forbade attending a circumcision without oral suction. See *Sanctity and Science*, 198.
65 Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 51.
66 Jachter, "Modern Brit Milah Issues."

67 Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh," 50, note 90. This anecdote has to be juxtaposed with the fact that Rabbi Auerbach signed a ban on the use of the glass tube. See Jachter, "Modern Brit Milah Issues."
68 Mory Schwartz, "Brit Milah and Metzitza b'peh," *ModiInfo*, n.d. www.modiinfo.com/religion/0506_morey.htm.
69 *Igrot Moshe* (Brooklyn, NY: Noble Press, 1995) *Yoreh De'ah* vol. 1, no. 223.
70 A. Romi Cohen, *Brit Avraham ha-Kohen* (Brooklyn, NY: Noble Press, 1993), 199–200, cited in Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk Taking," 32.
71 Cohen, "Brit Milah," 104; cf. Sprecher, "Mezizah be-Peh,"48–50. Goldberger argues that Rabbi Spector's approval was only if oral suction were forbidden by government decree. *Sanctity and Science*, 189–190.
72 Shabtai and Sultan, "Medical Risk-Taking," footnote 8.
73 Goldberger, *Sanctity and Science*, 198.
74 "A *Kinus Hisorerus*"; Sprecher ("Mezizah be-Peh," 52 n. 92) heard Kamenetsky's story as concerning only one *mohel*.
75 Michel de Montaigne, cited in Cohen, *Why Aren't Jewish Women Circumcised?*, 3.
76 Zweibel, "Between Public Health and *Mesores Avos*." Cf. South Africa's National Organization of Circumcision Information, which advocates in its proposed *Circumcision Guidelines for South Africa* that "Mezizah will only be allowed using a sterile tube and not directly with the mouth to prevent viral and other infections being transmitted to the baby." www.nocirc-sa.co.za.
77 *Mezizah* is featured on a number of anti-Semitic websites, e.g., www.vnnforum.com/showthread.php?t=44493&page=7.
78 Hartog, "Death Spotlights." Cf., Christopher Hitchins, "Abusing God's Children," *National Post* (Toronto) (May 2, 2007), A19.
79 Judd, *Contested Rituals*, 7, 12.

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