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VCU Menorah Review

For the Enrichment of Jewish Thought

Summer/Fall 2014 no. 81

Books in Brief: New and Notable

candelabra gold

A poem by Richard Sherwin

Education: Yeshivah style

A Review essay by Matthew Schwartz

Moreshet: From the Sources

The daily schedule of Maimonides

Mysteries of the Book of Job: From Elihu to Elie Wiesel

A Review essay by Cliff Edwards

Two Nations Are In Your Womb (Gen 25:23)

A Review essay by Peter J. Haas

When Rhetoric Dominates The Message

A Review essay by Steven Windmueller

Zachor

St. Augustine (345-430), excerpt from Contra Judaeos

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Books in Brief: New and Notable

***Spinoza for Our Time: Politics and Postmodernity* by Antonio Negri**

New York: Columbia University Press

Negri offers a straightforward explanation of the philosopher's elaborate arguments and a persuasive case for his ongoing relevance. Responding to a resurgent interest in Spinoza's thought and its potential application to contemporary global issues, Negri demonstrates the thinker's special value to politics, philosophy, and related disciplines. Negri's work is both a return to and an advancement of his initial affirmation of Spinozian thought in *The Savage Anomaly*. He further defends his understanding of the philosopher as a proto-postmodernist, or a thinker who is just now, with the advent of the postmodern, becoming contemporary. Negri also connects Spinoza's theories to recent trends in political philosophy, particularly the reengagement with Carl Schmitt's "political theology," and the history of philosophy, including the argument that Spinoza belongs to a "radical enlightenment." By positioning Spinoza as a contemporary revolutionary intellectual, Negri addresses and effectively defeats twentieth-century critiques of the thinker.

***Jewish on Their Own Terms* by Jennifer A. Thompson**

New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press

Over half of all American Jewish children are being raised by intermarried parents. This demographic group will have a tremendous impact on American Judaism as it is lived and practiced in the coming decades. To date, however, in both academic studies about Judaism and in the popular imagination, such children and their parents remain marginal.

Thompson takes a different approach, telling the stories of intermarried couples, the rabbis and other Jewish educators who work with

them, and the conflicting public conversations about intermarriage among American Jews. Thompson notes that in the dominant Jewish cultural narrative, intermarriage symbolizes individualism and assimilation. Talking about intermarriage allows American Jews to discuss their anxieties about remaining distinctively Jewish despite their success in assimilating into American culture.

***Rashi* by Abraham Grossman**

Portland, Or: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization

To this day, the commentaries on the Bible and Talmud written by the 11th-century scholar known as Rashi remain unsurpassed. Rashi's influence on Jewish thinking was, and still is, significant. His commentary on the Pentateuch was the first Hebrew book to be printed, giving rise to hundreds of super-commentaries. Christian scholars, too, have relied heavily on his explanations of biblical texts. In this volume, author Avraham Grossman presents a masterly survey of the social and cultural background to Rashi's work and pulls together the strands of information available on his life, his personality, his reputation during his lifetime, and his influence as a teacher. Grossman discusses each of Rashi's main commentaries in turn, including such aspects as Rashi's sources, his interpretative method, his innovations, and his style and language. Attention is also given to his halakhic monographs, responsa, and liturgical poems. Despite Rashi's importance as a scholar and the vast literature published about him, two central questions remain essentially unanswered: what was Rashi's world-view, and was he a conservative or a revolutionary? Professor Grossman considers these points at length, and his in-depth analysis of Rashi's world-view — particularly his understanding of Jewish uniqueness, Jewish values, and Jewish society — leads to conclusions that are likely to stimulate much debate.

***Rhinestones, Religion, and the Republic: Fashioning Jewishness in France* by Kimberly A. Arkin**

Stanford University Press

During the course of her fieldwork in Paris, anthropologist Kimberly Arkin heard what she thought was a surprising admission. A French-born, North African Jewish (Sephardi) teenage girl laughingly told Arkin she was a racist. When asked what she meant by that, the girl responded, "It means I hate Arabs."

This girl was not unique. She and other Sephardi youth in Paris insisted, again and again, that they were not French, though born in France, and that they could not imagine their Jewish future in France. Fueled by her candid and compelling informants, Arkin's analysis delves into the connections and disjunctures between Jews and Muslims, religion and secular Republicanism, race and national community, and identity and culture in post-colonial France. Rhinestones argues that Sephardi youth, as both "Arabs" and "Jews," fall between categories of class, religion, and culture. Many reacted to this liminality by going beyond religion and culture to categorize their Jewishness as race, distinguishing Sephardi Jews from "Arab" Muslims, regardless of similarities they shared, while linking them to "European" Jews (Ashkenazim), regardless of their differences. But while racializing Jewishness might have made Sephardi Frenchness possible, it produced the opposite result: it re-grounded national community in religion-as-race, thereby making pluri-religious community appear threatening.

Rhinestones thus sheds light on the production of race, alienation, and intolerance within marginalized French and European populations.

***A World without Jews: The Nazi Imagination from Persecution to Genocide* by Alon Confino.**

New Haven, Ct: Yale University Press

Why exactly did the Nazis burn the Hebrew Bible everywhere in Germany on November 9, 1938? The perplexing event has not been adequately accounted for by historians in their large-scale assessments of how and why the Holocaust occurred. In this gripping new analysis, Confino draws on an array of archives across three continents to propose a penetrating new assessment of one of the central moral

problems of the 20th century. To a surprising extent, Confino demonstrates, the mass murder of Jews during the war years was powerfully anticipated in the culture of the prewar years.

The author shifts his focus away from the debates over what the Germans did or did not know about the Holocaust and explores instead how Germans came to conceive of the idea of a Germany without Jews. He traces the stories the Nazis told themselves — where they came from and where they were heading — and how those stories led to the conclusion that Jews must be eradicated in order for the new Nazi civilization to arise. The creation of this new empire required that Jews and Judaism be erased from Christian history, and this was the inspiration — and justification — for Kristallnacht. As Germans imagined a future world without Jews, persecution and extermination became imaginable, and even justifiable.

***Unclean Lips: Obscenity, Jews, and American Culture* by Josh Lambert.**

New York University Press

Jews have played an integral role in the history of obscenity in America. For most of the 20th century, Jewish entrepreneurs and editors led the charge against obscenity laws. Jewish lawyers battled literary censorship even when their non-Jewish counterparts refused to do so, and they won court decisions in favor of texts including *Ulysses*, *A Howl*, *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, and *Tropic of Cancer*. Jewish literary critics have provided some of the most influential courtroom testimony on behalf of freedom of expression.

The anti-Semitic stereotype of the lascivious Jew has made many historians hesitant to draw a direct link between Jewishness and obscenity. Lambert addresses the Jewishness of participants in obscenity controversies in the U.S. directly, exploring the transformative roles played by a host of neglected figures in the development of modern and postmodern American culture.

The diversity of American Jewry means that there is no single explanation for Jews' interventions in this field. Rejecting generalizations, this book offers case studies that pair cultural histories with close readings of both contested texts and trial transcripts to reveal the ways in which specific engagements with obscenity mattered to particular American Jews at discrete historical moments. Jews have played in the struggles over obscenity and censorship in the modern United States.

***A Bride for One Night: Talmud Tales* by Ruth Calderon**

Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society

In this volume, Ruth Calderon's first to appear in English, she offers a fascinating window into some of the liveliest and most colorful stories in the Talmud. Calderon rewrites talmudic tales as richly imagined fictions, drawing us into the lives of such characters as the woman who risks her life for a sister suspected of adultery; a humble schoolteacher who rescues his village from drought; and a wife who dresses as a prostitute to seduce her pious husband in their garden. Breathing new life into an ancient text, *A Bride for One Night* offers a surprising and provocative read, both for anyone already intimate with the Talmud and for anyone interested in one of the most influential works of Jewish literature.

***The Iranian Talmud: Reading the Bavli in the Sasanian Context* by Shai Secunda**

Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press

Although the Babylonian Talmud, or Bavli, has been a text central and vital to the Jewish canon since the Middle Ages, the context in which it was produced has been poorly understood. Delving deep into Sasanian material culture and literary remains, Shai Secunda pieces together the dynamic world of late antique Iran, providing an unprecedented and accessible overview of the world that shaped the Bavli.

Secunda unites the fields of Talmudic scholarship with Old Iranian studies to enable a fresh look at the heterogeneous religious and

ethnic communities of pre-Islamic Iran. He analyzes the intercultural dynamics between the Jews and their Persian Zoroastrian neighbors, exploring the complex processes and modes of discourse through which these groups came into contact and considering the ways in which rabbis and Zoroastrian priests perceived one another. Placing the Bavli and examples of Middle Persian literature side by side, the Zoroastrian traces in the former and the discursive and Talmudic qualities of the latter become evident. *The Iranian Talmud* introduces a substantial and essential shift in the field, setting the stage for further Irano-Talmudic research.

***The Bible's Many Voices* by Michael Carasik**

Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society

The most common English translations of the Bible often sound like a single, somewhat archaic voice. In fact, the Bible is made up of many separate books composed by multiple writers in a wide range of styles and perspectives. It is, as Michael Carasik demonstrates, not a remote text reserved for churches and synagogues but rather a human document full of history, poetry, politics, theology, and spirituality. Using historic, linguistic, anthropological, and theological sources, Carasik helps us distinguish between the Jewish Bible's voices — the mythic, the historical, the prophetic, the theological, and the legal. By articulating the differences among these voices, he shows us not just their messages and meanings but also what mattered to the authors. In these contrasts we encounter the Bible anew, as a living work whose many voices tell us about the world out of which the Bible grew — and the world that it created.

***Are You Not a Man of God? Devotion, Betrayal, and Social Criticism in Jewish Tradition* by Tova Hartman and Charlie Buckholtz**

New York: Oxford University Press

This work challenges the accepted readings of several iconic supporting

characters from canonical stories of Jewish tradition. These characters have been appropriated throughout history to represent and reinforce central cultural values: the binding of Isaac and the religious value of sacrificing relationship for a higher purpose; the biblical Hannah, appropriated by the rabbis as an archetype of the spirit and practice of prayer; the Talmudic Beruriah and the significance of women's learning and knowledge; and the struggle for intellectual autonomy of the rabbis of the Talmudic story known by its tag-line, "It is not in heaven!" Tova Hartman and Charlie Buckholtz make use of religious, psychological, philosophical and literary perspectives to bring these characters to life in their multiple incarnations, examining their cultural impact and varied symbolic uses.

These are texts that have been studied widely with characters that are known well. This study shows, however, that the dominant interpretations mask darker, more insightful, and ultimately more critical dimensions of these important figures. Hartman and Buckholtz discover muted voices of personal betrayal and criticism that resonate as damning social critiques of the rabbis themselves. These critiques often highlight the ways in which cultural authorities use, and abuse, their power; revealing the implications of these moral failings on their legitimacy as communal leaders. In these voices of social criticism, the rabbis evince an awareness of their own vulnerability to such abuses and failings as well as their hurtful, marginalizing effects on members of less powerful social groups.

***Rethinking Jewish Philosophy: Beyond Particularism and Universalism* by Aaron W. Hughes**

New York: Oxford University Press

Jewish thought is, in many ways, a paradox. Is it theology or is it philosophy? Does it use universal methods to articulate Judaism's particularity or does it justify Judaism's particularity with appeals to illuminating the universal? These two sets of claims are difficult if not impossible to reconcile, and their tension reverberates throughout the

length and breadth of Jewish philosophical writing, from Saadya Gaon in the ninth century to Emmanuel Levinas in the twentieth.

***Fackenheim's Jewish Philosophy: an Introduction* by Michael L. Morgan**

University of Toronto Press

One of the most significant Jewish thinkers of the twentieth century, is best known for his deep and rich engagement with the implications of the Nazi Holocaust on Jewish thought, Christian theology, and philosophy. However, his career as a philosopher and theologian began two decades prior to his first efforts to confront that horrific event. In this book, renowned Fackenheim expert Michael L. Morgan offers the first examination of the full scope of Fackenheim's 60-year career, beyond simply his work on the Holocaust. Morgan explores the most important themes of Fackenheim's philosophical and religious thought and how these remained central, if not always in immutable ways, over his entire career. Morgan also provides insight into Fackenheim's indebtedness to Kant, Hegel, and rabbinic midrash, as well as the changing character of his philosophical "voice." The work concludes with a chapter evaluating Fackenheim's legacy for present and future Jewish philosophy and philosophy more generally.

***The Lion's Gate: On the Front Lines of the Six Day War* by Steven Pressfield**

New York: Penguin Group (Sentinel)

Drawing on hundreds of hours of interviews with veterans of the war — fighter and helicopter pilots, tank commanders and Recon soldiers, paratroopers, as well as women soldiers, wives, and others — Steven Pressfield tells the story of the Six Day War as never experienced it before: in the voices of the young men and women who battled not only for their lives but for the survival of a Jewish state, and for the dreams of their ancestors.

By turns inspiring, thrilling, and heartbreaking, *The Lion's Gate* is both

a true tale of military courage under fire and a journey into the heart of what it means to fight for one's people.

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A poem by Richard Sherwin

nobody needs another old man
dithering doddering deaf and done
usefulness outlasted none
know what to do with who i am
who knows what to pray for other
than painless dying and food enough
however undeserved and shameless
facing those alive and blameless
so far the sidewalks haven't slipped
completely out from under me
stumbling falling losing grip
on time and wind and memory
till now the clouds i grab and pull on
haul me upright on my way
to study what i should have studied
all my life and rather failed
hoping to fulfill at least
a part of what my flesh created
soul's house for and mind's belated
wakening from death defeated
any moment every moment
shrinks into a needle point
all my angels demons homing
in on Gd and out of joint
lord this remnant skeleton
this dust and ashes trashing earth
thanks you for this grace you've won

me time to justify my birth
to study talmud truth and law
to hear you voicing disputation
this and that the word of Gd
to take my part in your creation

Education: Yeshivah style

A Review essay by Matthew Schwartz

Shaul Stampfer, a professor of Jewish History at Hebrew University, has written a serious work of exhaustive scholarship, heavy with footnotes, mostly to Hebrew language sources. It relies on memoirs as well as documents and contemporary published articles, from all of which it quotes extensively. The book discusses the organization and functioning of three major Lithuanian yeshivas of the nineteenth century, as representative of the whole. Professor Stampfer notes that other areas of the history of the yeshivas also need study, but not everything could be covered in one volume.

Volozhin, 1803-1892, was the mother of all later yeshivas, and its story occupies most of the book. Telz and Slobodka began in the 1870's and functioned for a shorter time before 1914 and World War I, the book's terminus. The yeshivas reacted to new trends of the era, and there was much new in them. The old Polish yeshivas had been destroyed in the Cossack War of 1648-9 and had been replaced by *batei midrash* in the various towns, usually loosely supervised by the town rabbi, who might give an occasional lecture. Volozhin was the first of the new type of yeshiva. These were separate from the local community. The town of Volozhin was a small, out of the way place, which certainly could not support a major yeshiva by its own means. The head of the yeshiva was independent of the community, and students organized, over time, their own support groups for health care, financial aid and the like.

Founded in 1803 by Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, the yeshiva was led through its 90 years by noted scholars, e.g. R. Yitzchok (R. Chaim's son) and later R. Naftali T. Y. Berlin (Netziv), R. Yosef Ber Soloveichik and his son R. Chaim. Contrary to a widespread belief, the yeshiva was founded to provide a good place for young men to devote themselves to the study of Torah and personal growth. It was not a reaction to any decline in Torah study in the general Jewish population at that

time. There were no diplomas or titles, and rabbinic ordination was not typically part of the program. Success was measured by a student's accomplishments in Talmud and in human behavior.

Volozhin was not without political disputes and internal factions, while from outside, the Russian government sought several times to close it, finally succeeding in 1892. Maskilim too were actively antagonistic to the yeshivas and strongly opposed their concentration on Talmud. External socio-economic pressures on the yeshiva increased through the century, and many young men began to find universities attractive, with their promises of prestige, better earning power and acceptance into the wider world.

A professor of linguistics recently retired from thirty years of teaching at a major university remarked to me that the most noticeable change during his teaching career was the decline in students' reading ability. Be that as it may, the problems of educating are in constant discussion nowadays in all sorts of media with no easy solutions in sight. Professor Stampfer's book brings a unique perspective to the discussion. How does a school produce seriously knowledgeable students? It is interesting that as all this takes place in America, Jewish Studies proliferates in universities, Jewish Day schools of all types shoot up all over the U.S., and advanced yeshivas and kollels grow far beyond anything predictable a generation ago. In addition, Jewish learning for adults flourishes in many venues, much of it at a highly serious level, with tens of thousands participating faithfully in daf yomi programs.

From this standpoint, the nineteenth century yeshivas are of particular interest to compare with modern schools. For example, in Volozhin, study was continuous. The students studied through the Talmud page by page, and when they completed it, after a number of years, they would start over again. Despite or indeed perhaps because of the rigorous demands, most students found their studies in Volozhin to be a highly positive experience, despite the lack of set requirements and diplomas. Tests too were unimportant. They could be used for specific purposes, e.g., R. Berlin would ask the very young "Meitsheter Ilui"

challenging questions so that the boy would boost his confidence by answering them. There were no structured classes. The yeshiva heads did lecture regularly, but attendance was not mandatory, and the lecture was seen only as an ancillary to personal study. Students studied on their own for long hours, sometimes for many years. There were no set semester beginnings or ends and no vacations. Most students remained in the yeshiva even through Passover, and many attended the Seders at R. Berlin's. Even Yom Kippur was not exactly a day off; prayers went fairly quickly, and the students had a three-hour study session between morning and afternoon prayers. Study knew little schedule and no limitations — day and night, weekdays, Sabbaths and holidays. Some studied eighteen hours a day, seven days a week. Avraham Yitzchak Kook, later chief rabbi of the Yishuv, is said to have put in eighteen hours and studied sixty folios of Talmud every day, an astounding feat but not wholly unusual in Volozhin.

The yeshiva did not maintain a dormitory or a kitchen, but typically helped the students to pay for room and board in the town, although as can be imagined, wealthier students found it easier to get along.

Passages cited from memoirs are often fascinating for who wrote them as well as for their content. Professor Simha Assaf's memoir was based on his ten years of study in Telz. Professor Ben Zion Dinur too was a student in Telz. Scholars who would become prominent in other areas included historian Gedalia Alon, who studied in Slobodka, and the poet Chaim Nachman Bialik, who studied in Volozhin.

In a time when universities turn more and more to on-line courses, the relationship of students to the heads of the yeshivas is noteworthy for its personal attention. A description of the lectures given by R. Eliezer Gordon in Telz is fascinating. R. Gordon would begin by raising questions on the day's Talmud topic. Almost always, students would begin to interrupt freely with questions and interpretations arguing with both R. Gordon and each other, the whole making a lively scene. If the debating had not started within ten minutes, R. Gordon would feel that the lecture was unsuccessful. The goal was thinking and discussing,

not memorizing.

There were no classrooms in Volozhin, only the one large study hall. Students would become accustomed to the noise level, and the lecture would be given in the same room, mingling its sounds with the studies of the students who were not attending the lecture but studying on their own.

Secular studies were not taught in these yeshivas. Indeed, the Russian government used this as an excuse to close the Volozhin yeshiva in 1892, although the real reason was more likely a paranoid fear of revolutionary activity as well as the usual anti-Semitism. The yeshivas did not necessarily oppose secular learning per se — math, science, languages and the like. However, R. Berlin in Volozhin felt that the yeshiva could not successfully teach both at the same time. R. Berlin himself is reported to have known several European languages, and he had his son Meir (Bar-Ilan) learn Russian. R. Gordon in Telz had read Russian literature and Russian law. R. Chaim of Volozhin wanted to have major works of science translated into Hebrew. The yeshiva in Lida did actually include secular studies in its curriculum, though Lida is not a major topic in Professor Stampfer's book. There were students in every Lithuanian yeshiva who read more widely, including even *haskala* literature. This was viewed as in some measure *bitul Torah*, (time wasted from Torah study) but not a major problem in terms of the content of the books.

Students could take sides in administrative arguments within the yeshiva. In Volozhin, there was tension between R. Berlin and R. Yosef Ber Soloveichik for a time, two very different men with very different teaching styles, and many students preferred one over the other. This particular tension was resolved amicably enough, and R. Berlin's daughter married R. Soloveichik's son Chaim who also would teach in Volozhin. There could be tension between students and yeshiva heads even in cases when the bond between them was very strong, and students could stage a protest or a strike. In Telz at one point, a protest was led by Yosef Kahaneman (the future Ponovezher Rav and a favor-

ite of R. Gordon). In several instances, major arguments arose over the introduction of the study of musar literature and musar teachers

The Telz yeshiva was organized in a more structured form. It was founded about 1870, perhaps to counter the influence of the poet Y. L. Gordon, a major figure in the *haskala*, who lived in Telz at the time. Under R Eliezer Gordon (no relation to Y. L.), who became the head in 1883, Telz presented five classes at different levels. All the students studied the same tractate of the Talmud. Punctuality was emphasized. Students were admitted according to quotas for different regions, and the admission standards were strict. The yeshiva monitored the students' housing and their landlords, although it provided no dormitories or kitchen of its own.

Professor Stampfer suggests that one of the most striking legacies of these yeshivas and perhaps most noteworthy for today's educators of all types is the faith in the supreme value of education, a faith which enabled them to triumph over external challenges and their own human imperfections.

Matthew Schwartz is a professor in the history department of Wayne State University and a contributing editor.

Moreshet: From the Sources

The daily schedule of Maimonides

“The sultan lives in Cairo and I live in Fostat; the two towns are two Sabbath leagues apart. I have a difficult time with the sultan; I must visit him every morning. If he himself or one of his children or harem members is sick, then I may not leave Cairo. I spend most of the day in the sultan’s palace. Usually, I also have to treat some dignitary. In a word: I go to Cairo every morning at the crack of dawn, and if nothing keeps me there and nothing unforeseen occurs, I can come home only in the afternoon, but by no means any earlier.

Here, starving as I am, I find the antechamber full of people: Jews and non-Jews, nobles and lowly people, judges and officials, friends and foes, a motley company awaiting me with impatience. I dismount from my horse, wash, and enter the waiting room with the plea that they may not feel offended if I have to make them wait a bit longer while I partake of a hasty light meal, which normally happens only once every twenty-four hours. Then I go out to them again, treat them, and prescribe medicaments on notes. Thus the people go in and out of my home until late in the evening. Sometimes, I swear it on the Torah, it is 2 a.m. or even later before I manage to consume anything. I am then so worn out that I collapse on my bed; I have to say good night, I am totally exhausted and incapable of speaking. Only on the Sabbath can anyone speak to me alone, or can I be alone with myself for even an instant. Then all or most of the members of the community gather in my home after the morning prayer. I indicate what is to be done in the community during the coming week; then they listen to a short lecture until noon, go home, and return in a smaller number. Now a second lecture takes place, between the minchah and the maariv prayer. Thus do my days go by.”

Mysteries of the Book of Job: From Elihu to Elie Wiesel

A Review essay by Cliff Edwards

***The Book of Job: A Biography* by Mark Larrimore. Princeton: Princeton University Press**

For the patient reader, Larrimore's book builds chapter by chapter an imposing and exciting edifice of conflicting and revealing interpretations of the Book of Job and the wider Job legend. We are left with the possible conclusion that this mystery book of the canon is a troubling guide especially suited to the restless soul of the modern seeker bereft of community and facing a questionable providence. For the impatient reader, I would suggest turning immediately to the final chapter, "Job in Exile," which takes note of modern historical-critical scholarship and follows the book of Job "through the upheavals of the twentieth century," including the fascination and struggles with the paradoxes of Job by Rene Girard, Elie Wiesel, and Margarete Susman. I believe that final chapter will lead even the most impatient to turn back and begin with chapter one to get the full "biography" of the Book of Job.

It is worth noting that Larrimore's book is one of a series of volumes titled "Lives of Great Religious Books" that already contains eight volumes, including such a variety of works as *The Dead Sea Scrolls*, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*, and the *I Ching*, and promises many more volumes, including *The Book of Revelation*, *Confucius's Analects*, *Josephus's Jewish War*, and *Rumi's Masnavi*. If Larrimore's volume represents the scholarship and readability of the series, we are in for much excellent and enlightening reading. Larrimore himself directs the Religious Studies Program at Eugene Lang College of The New School for Liberal Arts in New York City, and has edited the volume *The Problem of Evil: A Reader*, and co-edited *The German Invention of Race*.

The Introduction and Chapter One of *The Book of Job: A Biography* tell us as much about ancient understandings and practices in interpretation as about the complexities of the several stories of Job as viewed

by “ancient interpreters.” Focusing on such works as the apocryphal *Testament of Job*, Gregory the Great’s sixth-century *Morals in Job*, and Talmudic midrashim, the manner in which the entire Bible was read into the Job story by Jews and Christians through allegory and the search for cryptic clues in unlikely places makes for fascinating reading. The more a passage in Job taxed the reason, the better, as it indicated a divine invitation to search through the entire canon and extra-biblical legends to fill in the gaps with hidden solutions. In the *Testament of Job*, for example, the Egyptian King Job(ab), purposely destroys the shrine of Satan in spite of the punishment in store, answering the question of the reason for Satan’s attacks. To tie Jobab into Jewish tradition, he is finally given Dinah, daughter of Jacob, as his new wife. In Gregory the Great, Christ, as the clay of Adam, is both the potsherd fired by the Passion and the act of scraping away evil, prefigured in the life of Job. In “Baba Bathra” of the *Babylonian Talmud*, Job is finally given a double reward on earth in order to exhaust his reward in this life, for he is a heathen and should be excluded from the world to come.

Chapter Two, “Job in Disputation,” views medieval sources, often focused on philosophic views of Job intended to teach us “how to engage in philosophic discussion on providence,” with emphasis on reading Job “aporetically,” a puzzle calling for our solution. In Maimonides’ twelfth century *Guide of the Perplexed*, The book of Job is interpreted as a parable describing God “by means of negations,” concealing truth from the “vulgar.” Maimonides interprets the word “Uz” to be a form of the verb for “meditation,” calling the reader to ever deeper meditation on the Job parable. Thomas Aquinas finds in Job structured debates not unlike those held at the University of Paris. Aquinas interprets evil as privation, and affirms that the fact that this world does not make sense is intended to lead us to trust in providence and the world beyond. John Calvin’s 159 sermons on Job view the “darker side of God’s nature,” and caution “humility and silence” as the best answer to God’s questions.

Chapter Three, “Job Enacted,” goes beyond the Job of philosophers

to locate the Job encountered by ordinary persons, generally through ritual, lectionaries, private devotions and public performances. Holy Week readings, veneration of Job as a saint with accompanying iconography, the story of a "female Job," Griselda, texts for the Office of the Dead, Books of Hours, and the Mystery Play "La Patience de Job," are all explored. Job's story becomes for many a "licensed way to grieve" and a definition of "religious patience." Interesting, though, Larrimore notes that Vatican II "all but excised Job from Catholic liturgy."

Chapter Four, "Job in Theodicy," focuses on poets, philosophers, and theologians dealing with the problem of evil in Job, from Leibniz (who coined the term "theodicy" ("God-justice")), to Alexander Pope, Voltaire, Kant, Schleiermacher and Otto, and to the visionary illustrations of the book of Job by William Blake. For many, Job became a "model of an anguished but fervent modern religiosity." Voltaire saw his *Candide* as "Job brought up to date," and called upon us to leave the vapid affirmations of Pangloss behind and turn to "cultivate our garden." Kant focused upon the moral sincerity of Job and called for not supplication but a religion that begins in honesty, courage, and good conduct. To Schleiermacher's view of a religion whose heart is experience and Rudolph Otto's focus on the mysteriousness of God, Larrimore adds an appreciation of Blake's turn to images, to a restoration of art to worship, and the "seeing of the eyes."

Chapter Five, "Job in Exile," takes us into twentieth-century textual, historical, and literary criticism of the book of Job. Are we to find composite authorship and disjointedness? Why does Satan disappear after the prologue and Elihu appear unannounced? Where does the Hymn to Creation of chapter 28 come from? Is the prose frame intended to cloak the dangerous poetry that follows, or is it a folk story that "provoked an intervention from a brilliant poet?" Larrimore's references to Carol Newsom's *The Book of Job: A Contest of Moral Imaginations* convinced me that creative theories about Job continue to be generated. Newsom suggests that a single author might well be responsible for the several "voices" of the book, and that we might place ourselves beside "Elihu," perhaps companions of the book's first "dissatisfied

reader.”

But it is Elie Wiesel’s reading of Job that dominates this final chapter. “The silence of God at Auschwitz ” has deepened the dark mystery surrounding Job’s suffering and God’s puzzling response. In his 1986 Nobel Prize speech, Wiesel views Job as the face of all the oppressed, while in his *Messengers of God* he notes how deeply troubled he is by Job’s submission. Wiesel prefers to believe that the ending of the canonical book of Job is lost, lest Job become an “accomplice of the killer of his children.” For Wiesel, faith is located in our continuing Job’s questioning, not in our finding there an answer. Larrimore cites Richard Rubenstein as going a step further as he questions faith in any God sustainable after the Shoah. The chapter concludes by turning to the Jewish philosopher, Margarete Susman, who links Kafka’s “evocation of dehumanization” to the story of Job, and who views Job’s negative and anguished forms as closer to the heart of Judaism than the Davidic Covenant. For Susman, Job is the modern soul’s guide.

It would be gratuitous to complain that this or that interpreter of Job is missing from Larrimore’s work when he has made such riches available to us. Yet I would have liked to see, for one example, Jung’s *Answer to Job* given some exposition beyond mere mention of the title. I would also have been interested to know what has been excluded from the “biography” when Larrimore notes that his focus is on *Western* interpreters, or when he admits that Muslim interpretations have been omitted because they are so different. But again, my own view is that Larrimore has put together a fascinating “life” of the Book of Job and its related legends, and has written with a facility that should attract readers to this wealth of material he has gathered.

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Two Nations Are In Your Womb (Gen 25:23)

A Review essay by Peter J. Haas

***The Jewish Jesus: How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other* by Peter Schäfer. Princeton University Press.**

It is hardly news to point out that Jesus came from and operated within a Jewish background. What is less clear nowadays is what that fact means. One well-worn answer shaped in the nineteenth century has been to view the Mishnah, Talmud and other early rabbinic texts as windows into the Judaism of Jesus' day, providing the social and religious context for Jesus's activities and sayings. This approach has rightly fallen away with the realization that the rabbinic literature as we have it emerged centuries after the time of Jesus. We know these texts reflect a rabbinic Judaism that is much different than the traditions of Roman Judea of the first century C.E. At the same time we have come to appreciate with greater clarity that there was not even such a thing as a single, monolithic "Judaism" during Jesus' time; or a single, monolithic and fully developed Christianity either for that matter. Rather, the old biblical Judean tradition had by Late Antiquity yielded a whole array of Judean-inspired religious groupings, traditions and sects, each establishing its own evolutionary dynamic. While we can all agree that the "Jesus movement" was part of that mélange at the beginning, it is far from clear what it could possibly mean to isolate Christianity and Judaism at that point. Yet it is clear that over the course of the succeeding generations, a sense of a competing "catholic" Christianity and "rabbinic" Judaism did indeed take shape. How that completion came about and took on definition is the question of the day, and it is this inquiry that Peter Schäfer's book intends to address. In the process he makes an even more radical claim; namely that much of early Christian messianic doctrine was deeply embedded in Roman Judaism and conversely that thinkers of later rabbinic Judaism were well aware of Christianity's evolving doctrines of the messiah and addressed these doctrines, sometimes more positively as in the late pesiqta rabbati, and sometimes to distort and reject them. Not

only that, but the debates over power and authority in both communities were informed by the political restructuring going on during the late Roman Empire.

On the surface, Schäfer's approach is fairly straightforward. It is now fully acknowledged among academics that "catholic" Christianity only emerged over the course of several centuries through the work of the various Episcopal Councils that were convened from the time of Constantine forward. Gradually, by defining one doctrine after another to be heretical, these councils sculpted a more fully defined "orthodoxy." The same, Schäfer argues, was true of "rabbinic" Judaism as well. That is, by constantly distinguishing themselves from emerging Christianity on the one side, and from Roman paganisms on the other, early rabbinic leaders gradually shaped an "orthodox" rabbinism. To put this another way, the "minim" in rabbinic Judaism and the "heretics" in catholic Christianity played the exact same role; namely as vehicles for defining what was outside, and so thereby sharpening the definition of what was inside.

But Schäfer also wants us to keep in mind that until an argument or theological assumption was definitively ruled out, it was in fact part of the inside. Thus even the notion of a multiplicity within the godhead, a notion that survives in Christianity in the subsequent form of the trinity, must also be seen as part of the early Judean tradition until it was explicitly excluded at some point, possibly precisely as a reaction to the Church's acceptance of it in the form of a Trinitarian Christology. This last point is significant for Schäfer, and in fact informs the title of the book. His argument is not that Christianity was born out of what we have come to call Judaism, but rather that what we call Judaism and what we call Christianity were each shaped by the other as they struggled over theological self-identity internally and externally during the first several centuries of the Common Era. So not only do the two share a common religious ur-tradition, but they are in fact counter-definitions of each other.

A good example of this dialectic comes in the first chapter dealing

with the different names of God. The center piece of this discussion is a midrash concerning R. Simlai (preserved in both Bereshit Rabba and the Jerusalem Talmud) who is answering a question put to him by "minim" (heretics?) about how many gods created the world. The question behind the question is, of course, the significance of the multiple divine names found in Scripture (YHWH, El, Elohim, etc.) and so presumably the foundation for the Christian doctrine of the trinity. In his analysis of this midrash with the help of other traditions in the rabbinic literature and discussions from early church fathers, Schäfer concludes that while the discussion is about the Christian concept of the divine, it is not about the classical doctrine of the trinity, which had not yet fully developed. Rather it is about the notion of multiplicity in the deity altogether (probably a binary in Christianity at this stage: Father and Son). In fact, it may be reflecting a broader conceptual conundrum of the late Empire, in which the single ruler of the Roman world split into multiple authorities (Basileus, Caesar and Augustus). So this question of multiplicity in the divine authority was not just a theological debate between rabbinic Jews and catholic Christians, but a larger politico-philosophical debate taking place among all Romans.

The multiplicity question of the deity is taken up in Chapter Two. The source text here is Mekhilta, in which Daniel is cited in the context of arguing that the divine appears in different forms (Ancient of Days, young warrior). For some, as witnessed in subsequent Christianity, the implication is that the divine can be realized or even incarnated in different forms. For others, as in emerging Judaism, it is more about our experience of the single divine, but in different contexts. Schäfer offers a third possibility, again drawn from the Roman context. The referent is the "puersenex" the wise child (or the youthful old judge) as an ideal type.

This train of thought takes us logically, in fact maybe unavoidably, to the question of messiahship. In Chapter Three, Schäfer turns his attention to three examples: the images of the Enochic Son of Man as alluded to by Aqiva in the Babylonian Talmud, the messianic Kingship of David in the Apocalypse of David, and the Dura Europos images of

the exalted and enthroned David. What emerges from the discussion is that for the later Babylonian Talmud, the discourse about messiah-ship seems to know a more fully developed Christianity than do the earlier Palestinian sources, and is explicitly rejecting it. In this context, the Dura Europos paintings, in which the enthroned David flanked by two prophets strongly resembles later Christian traditions of Jesus flanked by Moses and Elijah, represents a borderland appropriation of Christianity but in a Jewish vocabulary. In this discussion Schäfer, following Jacob Neusner, insists that we treat different texts differently and not homogenize them into a single "rabbinic Judaism."

The claim that the Babylonian Talmud had a perspective on the divine that was different from that of the Palestinian community is fleshed out in the following chapters. Chapter Four, for example, examines 3 Enoch and midrashic traditions of the angel Metatron. Metatron in the world of the Babylonian Talmud becomes an enthroned power in the heavens along with YHWH. (One suggested derivation of the name in fact is Meta-thronos, he who is enthroned above.) Schäfer also notes that there is something of an homologation of Metatron with Enoch, Iaoel, Michael and Akatriel, all members of the heavenly host who somehow ascended to heaven and were transformed, to use Schäfer's term, into the "Lesser YHWH." Schäfer goes beyond this, however, and argues that what we have here is in essence a binarian concept in which the angel/messiah reaches down to redeem the world and is thus a parallel, or maybe more accurately, as Schäfer reads things, a counter-point, to Jesus, but without the need to get entangled in a full Christology. The Palestinian midrashim, on the other hand (cf Chapter Five) discuss not angels but whether or not there is a divine family. Over and above the Christian claim of the messiah as the "son" of the divine Father, Schäfer argues that the discussion of the families of rulers makes more sense in Palestine than in Babylonia because the politics of the ruling Roman family, including questions about the status of natural versus adopted sons of the Caesars.

By this point in the book, the general lines of the argument have been laid down. Close readings of early rabbinic midrash show us that many

of the themes that inform later Church Christology are embedded in the Jewish tradition with which the rabbis are working and are related to debates about Roman governance. Are angels (Chapter Six) related conceptually at least to the experience of dealing with the Roman emperor through intermediaries, who are of course not to be confused with the ruler himself, for example? This discussion in turn leads to Hellenistic Jewish interest in the creation of humankind, or more specifically of Adam, taken up in Chapter Seven. The two creation stories in Genesis have given rise to two areas of Hellenistic speculation discussed by Schäfer. One concerns whether Adam was created before or after the angels, and the other with the precise nature of Adam, who was after all created in the divine image. At stake are not only whether Adam is above or below the angels in status, and so whether or not the angels should worship him, but also whether or not Adam is divine (as he appears in the later Christian Logos theology) or of earth and clay, dust and ashes. Once again, the pressing issues of Roman hierarchy can be seen informing these debates.

Chapter Eight returns us to the different perspectives Schäfer discerns between the earlier Palestinian community as documented for him in the Jerusalem Talmud, and the later Babylonian Jewish community as documented in the Babylonian Talmud. The difference is that the earlier Palestinian community saw a nascent or emerging community, while the later Babylonians were dealing with a more mature, but not dominant Christianity. The focus of this chapter is a single story from the Jerusalem Talmud tractate Berachot dealing with the birth (and disappearance) of the messianic baby. What Schäfer adduces from his close reading of the texts is that the Palestinian community could accept the overall idea of messiahship (see, for example, the widespread acceptance accorded to Bar Kochba) while yet deliberately critiquing early Christian accounts as not in fact true. Certainly one stumbling block was the notion that the joyous coming of the messiah could not be associated with the disastrous loss of the Temple.

This finally leads Schäfer to the rabbinic speculation of the two messiahs, one the son of David and the other the son of Ephraim. Chapter

Nine looks at three *pisqa'ot* from *Pesiqta Rabbati*. All three show Schäfer striking parallels to more mature Christian doctrines of the messiah. These parallels not only allow Schäfer to suggest a late date for the *Pesiqta Rabbati*, sometime in the seventh century C.E., but to assert that here again we have evidence of a Judaism that deals self-assuredly with messianic doctrines even though these also form the basis of catholic Christianity.

What we have in the end then are careful and informed readings of selections from the rabbinic literature, readings that are informed by both formative Christian doctrine and by the political realities of the Roman world of the time. These readings lead to a view of rabbinic Judaism that is deeply influenced by the outside world and is self-assured enough to continue to embrace theological doctrines that are becoming central to the emerging catholic church. The breathtakingly dynamic system that Schäfer adduces thoroughly reshapes how we imagine these two religious traditions during their formative phases, and is sure to shape future discussions of the early Church and early rabbinism for a new generation of scholars.

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When Rhetoric Dominates The Message

A Review essay by Steven Windmueller

***The State of the Jews: A Critical Appraisal* by Edward Alexander. New Brunswick: Transaction Publications.**

Professor Edward Alexander treats us to highly contentious assessment of the state of anti-Semitic and anti-Israel rhetoric. The second half of the title, "a critical appraisal" indeed well serves this enterprise as the author inserts his insights and more directly, his political message continuously into the body of this work. The more than 25 essays covering such fields as history, politics, and literature are constructed for the most part around distinctive personalities that either are embraced by Professor Alexander or excoriated by him. Among his foremost enemies, the President of the United States, Barack Obama, "the most hostile American president Israel has had to face since its founding in 1948." But his "enemies list" is indeed long and unforgiving.

Indeed, while this volume is well-researched and extraordinarily well-written, one finds the author taking a particularly wide political swipe attacking in the process liberalism, mainstream Jewish institutions, and Jewish intellectuals. Just as Alexander honors the work of Cynthia Ozick, Ruth Wisse, and Hillel Halkin, he is readily prepared to attack their liberal counter voices. Alexander seems to have limited countenance for liberals or their ideas.

In an interview with *FrontPage Magazine* in 2006, we are introduced to the full force of Edward Alexander's views on liberalism:

"A large proportion of Jewish intellectuals, even more than ordinary Jews, have long assumed that Judaism and liberalism are the same thing, or that Judaism follows an arrow-straight course from Sinai to liberal and left politics, in this country to the left wing of the Democratic Party. So long as the existence of the state of Israel seemed to harmonize with liberal ideals, especially in the years after the Holocaust, it could be actively supported or at least tacitly accepted by most Jewish

liberals. But the June 1967 war changed all this, and with remarkable speed. For now Jewish intellectuals were required to choose between liberal pieties and defense of the beleaguered Jewish state.”

As one of his reviewers observed, “...he sees through the disguises of their (Jews) enemies with the accuracy of a veteran marksman.” In this context Edward Alexander joins a cadre of political voices who have framed a wall around the State of Israel, seeing all who would offer critiques directed against the Jewish enterprise as enemies of this community, regardless of the nature of their concerns. Indeed, Professor Alexander is correct in identifying those individuals who seek to undermine Israel’s right to exist or equate Israel’s political and military policies as aligned with Nazism as being anti-Semitic and a danger to the Jewish people, but he is simply not prepared to withhold his fire-power to these particular critics.

What concerns me about such publications is their degree of certainty as authors like Alexander seem to possess. The rhetoric associated with these this type of writing overshadows the historical and cultural richness that remains embedded in such a volume.

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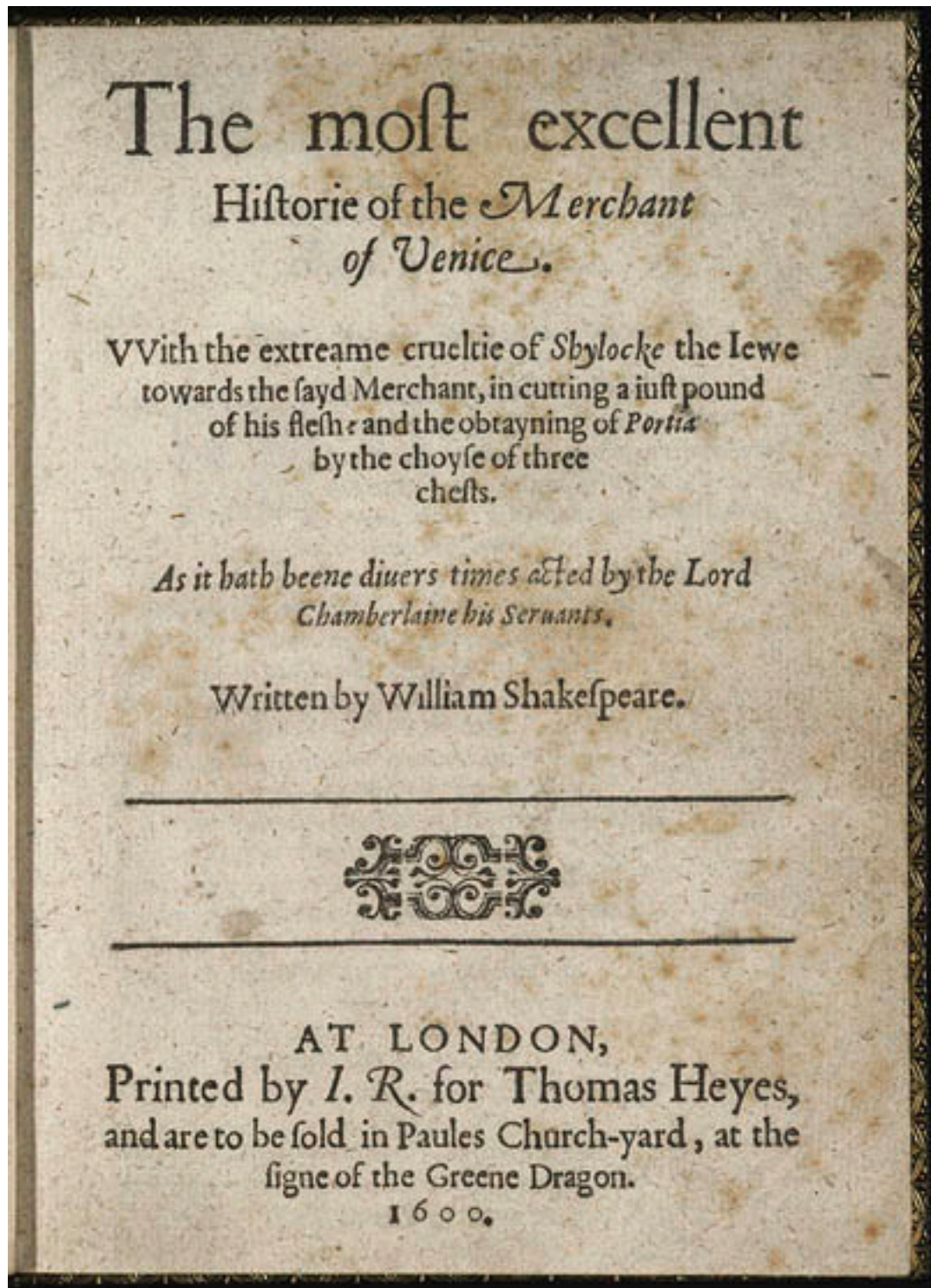
Zachor

St. Augustine (345-430), excerpt from *Contra Judaeos*

Then God says to Cain: "You are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hand. For you shall till the earth, and it shall no longer yield to you its strength. You shall be a mourner and an abject on earth." The Bible does not say: 'Cursed is the earth,' but rather: 'You are cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood at your hand.' So the unbelieving people of the Jews is cursed from the earth, that is, from the Church, which in the confession of sins has opened its mouth to receive the blood shed for the remission of sins by the hand of the people that has chosen not to be under grace [i.e., salvation through Jesus Christ], but rather to exist under the law [i.e., embracing Jewish law]. And this murderer is cursed by the Church: that is, the Church admits and avows the curse pronounced by the apostle: "Whoever are the works of the law are under the curse of the law."

"Groaning and trembling you shall be on the earth." Here no one can fail to see that in every land where the Jews are scattered they mourn for the loss of their kingdom, and are in terrified subjection to the immensely superior number of Christians. So Cain answered God, and said: "My case is worse, if You drive me out this day from the face of the earth, and if I will be hidden from Your face, and I shall be a mourner and an outcast on the earth; everyone who finds me shall slay [i.e., kill] me." Here he groans indeed in terror, lest after losing his earthly possession he should suffer the death of the body. This he calls a worse case than that of the ground not yielding to him its strength, or than that of spiritual death. For his mind is carnal; for he thinks little of being hidden from the face of God, that is, of being under the anger of God, were it not that he may be found and slain. This is the carnal mind that tills the ground, but does not obtain its strength. To be carnally minded is death; but he, in ignorance of this, mourns for the loss of his earthly possession, and is in terror of bodily death. But what does God reply? "Not so," He says, "but whosoever shall kill

Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold." That is, 'It is not as you say; not by bodily death shall the ungodly race of carnal Jews perish. For whoever destroys them in this way shall suffer sevenfold vengeance, that is, shall bring upon himself the sevenfold penalty under which the Jews lie for the crucifixion of Christ.' So to the end of the seven days of time, the continued preservation of the Jews will be a proof to believing Christians of the subjection merited by those who, in the pride of their kingdom, put the Lord to death.



Original playbill from The Merchant of Venice