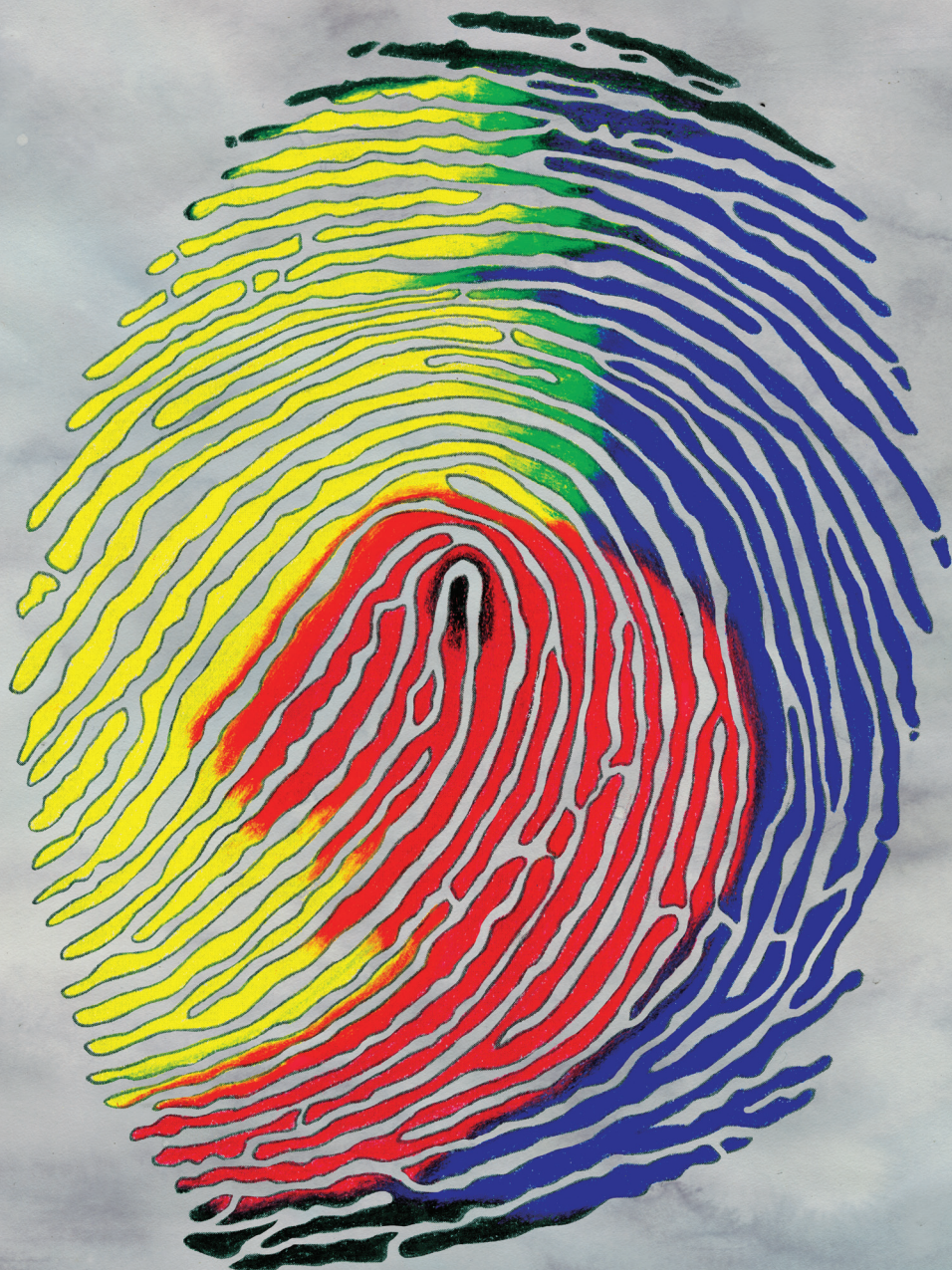


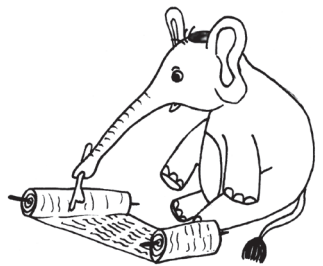
Spring 2012

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Leviathan

Jewish Journal





Leviathan
Jewish Journal



Statement of Intent

Leviathan Jewish Journal is an open medium through which Jewish students and their allies may freely express their opinions. We are committed to responsibly representing the views of each individual author. Every quarter we aim to publish a full and balanced spectrum of media exploring Jewish identity and social issues. The opinions presented in this journal do not always represent the collective opinion of *Leviathan's* staff, the organized Jewish community, or the University of California.

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Letter From the Editor

After a hectic and controversial year, the Leviathan Staff thought it would be beneficial to revisit the subject of what it means to be Jewish in today's world. This is in no way a simple question, as the diversity of the Jewish people speaks to the fluidity of our identity. Are we the culmination of our history, inheriting monotheism through our holy lineage? Or are we just fingerprints, products of our ever-changing environment, blips on the cosmic stage? Are we grounded in our past, or is it our obligation to live in the present and look towards the future?

We did not decide on our cover image this quarter without much deliberation. We hope the message is clear: while we may feel overwhelmed as little individuals within our greater communities, as Jews, as Americans, even as Santa Cruz students, we must remember we are greater than the sum of our parts. Some groups overlap, some clash, but if we allow ourselves to learn from a different perspective, what we find is so much more meaningful and surprising than if we choose to remain in uniform ignorance. Our steadfast refusal to admit fault and listen to those who disagree will only result in the division of our collective identity; we must remain conscious of our assumptions. Even when we disagree, there is still room for all of us within the Jewish community. If we maintain these basic humanist standards, we can become empowered by our differences, and the solidarity of our community will not waver. Through active listening and mutual acceptance, not only can we cultivate something beautiful, we can begin to truly know one another.

Our hope is to inspire you not only to accept Jewishness in all its forms, but to actively push your own boundaries. Grapple with ideas that make you uncomfortable. Play the devil's advocate. Don't allow yourself to fall victim to your own assumptions, and don't just hear, but listen. If you disagree with the ideas in this journal, good! And if they make you question, or even make you think, we will have done our

job. Enjoy!



Aaron Giannini
Editor-in-Chief



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SAVYONNE STEINDLER

Thank You Jewish Studies!

The Leviathan Jewish Journal staff wishes to extend our heartfelt thanks to UCSC's Jewish Studies Program. Without the Program's generous support, we would have been unable to publish this issue. We are grateful for the Program's help and hope to continue working together in the future!

Fall 2012 Jewish Studies Courses

Interested in exploring Judaism through an academic lens? Want to develop a background in Jewish literature, history, languages, or cultures? You don't need to be a Jewish Studies major to enrich your Jewish knowledge. Check out the courses the Jewish Studies program is offering Fall quarter!

HEBR 1A Intensive Elementary Hebrew

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HIS 162 Canaan, Israel, and Palestine from Polytheism to Monotheism with Gildas Hamel

HIS 172A German History with Mark Cioc

HIS 175B Modern Russian History with Peter Kenez

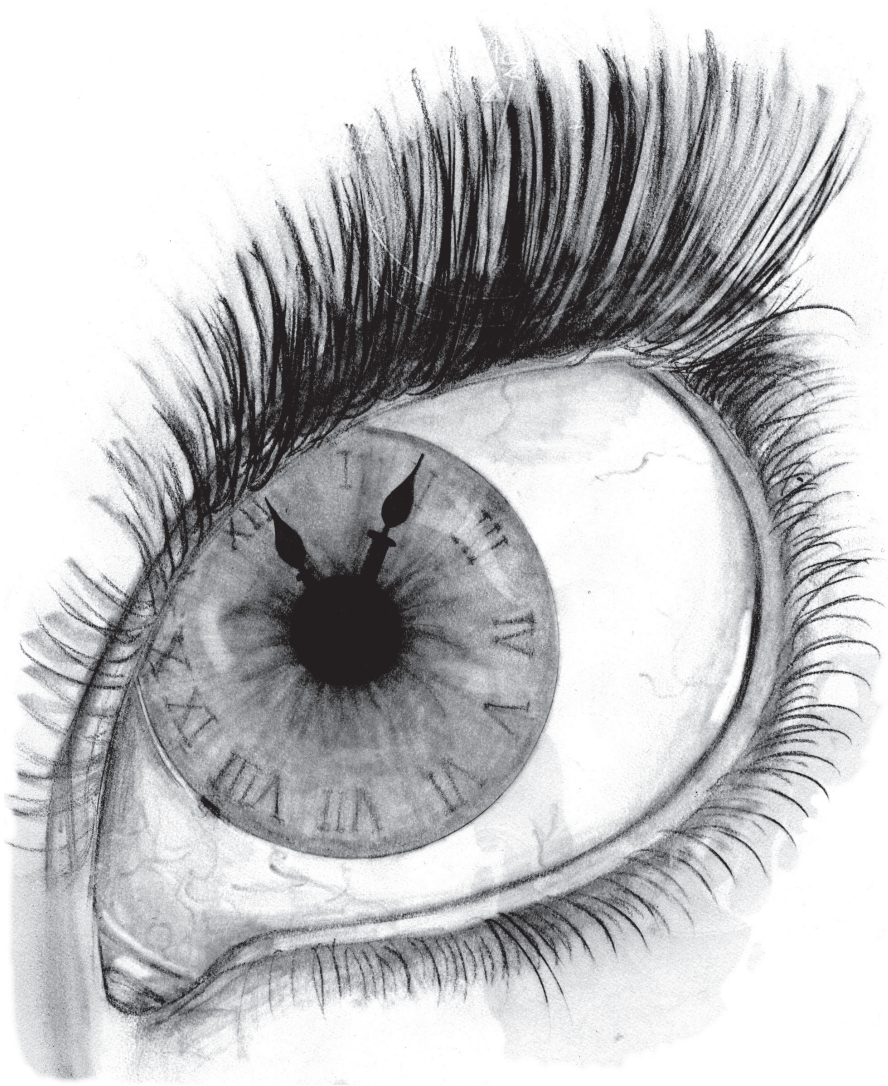
LTMO 144H Jewish Writers and the European City: Venice with Murray Baumgarten

LTMO 190Y Topics in Modern Jewish Literature and Culture: Jewish Comedy with Bruce Thompson

MUSC 80T Mizrach: Jewish Music in the Lands of Islam with Avi Tchamni



AMBERLEY YOUNG



Time's Eye
Karin Gold

Why is This Night Different?

Shani Chabansky

The congestion got to her consciousness first. Then came the afternoon sun, staring at her through the slats of the venetian blinds she'd forgotten to shut before her afternoon nap. When she reached for the clock on her nightstand, she felt the sweat that had seeped through her clothes and onto her bed sheets. 5:00 p.m. Sophie Reznik still couldn't breathe through her nose, but the lack of tension in her neck and shoulders and the ease with which she could move her limbs told her that the fever had broken.

"Soph, are you awake? I need your help in the kitchen!" Her mother had been bustling about all week long, preparing for the seder. Watching her multitask was like watching a professional circus clown, juggling her zillions of post-it notes and to-do lists.

"Yeah, I'll be there in a minute!"

Wading through the mountain of used Kleenex, damp pajamas, and piles of half-highlighted social theory articles ripped unceremoniously from school readers, she tossed on a pair of jeans and a t-shirt and shuffled into the kitchen.

The pre-Pesach preparations dance began. There is no professional choreographer in the world who could match the elegance of a mother and daughter symbiotically concocting a meal. It was pure telepathy, the way they skirted around each other like Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers.

In many ways it was sure to be a typical seder, nothing special. It would be just as anxiety-inducing and potentially explosive as the years before. The subjects of tonight's arguments would be the only variable to set this seder apart. It was her stepfather's first Passover experience, as her grandmother would be sure to mention. Although she claimed that she'd made peace with her daughter's newly acquired Italian husband, Bubbe's subtle little comments about the "unconventional" relationship gave her true



KARIN GOLD

feelings away. And then there'd be her father, who was quite the character himself—an Israeli, obsessed with the high-tech industry in Silicon Valley. He was sure to bring his latest toy, this time a tiny digital video camera to record the evening and share with the *chevrei* in Ramat Gan. And then there'd be Rosa, Sophie's first girlfriend.

The doorbell interrupted their trance-like preparations.

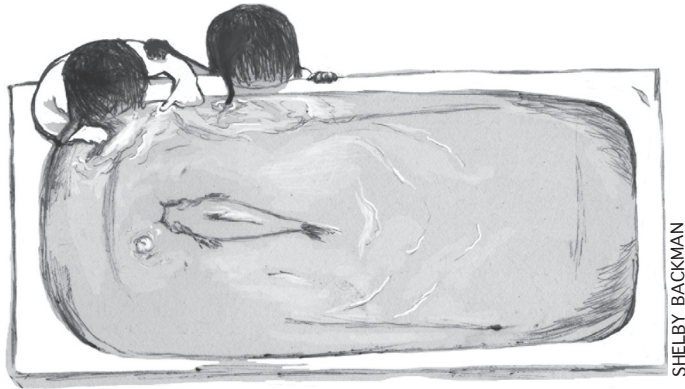
"Hello?" A septum-pierced nose followed by a pair of brown eyes peered around the door.

"Hey!" Sophie said. "Mom, I'd like you to meet Rosa."

When she came out to her parents back in high school, she didn't have any proof to support her claim that she was a lesbian. As much as she enjoyed the bi-curiosity of the girls in the drama department, an actual lesbian relationship seemed as impossible as acceptance into a *Haredi* community. But during her first quarter at UC Berkeley, she enrolled in FMST 1: Introduction to Feminist Studies, and that's where she met Rosa. When she informed her parents that she would be accompanied by her first girlfriend at the seder, they supported her (albeit with raised eyebrows and tones tinged with skepticism).

More than anyone, it was Bubbe's reaction to Rosa that Sophie was concerned about. Radical in all senses of the word, Bubbe was the kind of grandma your friends envy, while you're stuck coping. Sure, her noodle kugel made Sophie's house the high school hang-out spot and, once in a while, the old jewelry she gave Sophie for birthday presents would come back into fashion. But somehow, dinner conversations with Bubbe always involved a half-hearted attempt to avoid anything remotely controversial, the inevitable slip, and then the plunge into the political whirlpool (no snorkels involved).

She could just imagine the dinner conversation unfolding. Her father would inevitably tell the story of when his mother bought a live carp and kept it in their bathtub for a few days before the seder. He and his sister grew attached to the fish, then were forced to witness the death of their pet when their mother turned the carp into *gefилte*. Bubbe would be white-knuckling her walker



SHELBY BACKMAN

while Sophie and Rosa discussed the prison industrial complex. Having had enough, Bubbe would open up the floodgates, arguing that, in fact, slavery *is* a thing of the past and that, in fact, the United States *is* a post-racial society. What do undocumented workers in Los Angeles have anything to do with Moses and the burning bush?

“Let’s turn now to the first page and begin with the kadesh,” her mother announced.

Sophie grabbed Rosa’s hand underneath the table and gave it a reassuring squeeze. The first cup of wine, as always, went down silently. Sophie wondered why they always sang “Ma Nishtana” before they were sufficiently sloshed. By the time they’d downed the second cup, Sophie’s congestion came back with a vengeance and her patience for Bubbe’s wisecracks started waning.

“Well, I’d ask you when I can expect grandchildren, but now that you’re *lesbian*, things are different...”

“You want different?” Sophie exploded, blowing a wad of phlegm into her napkin and tossing back her second second cup. “I’ll give you different! How about the difference between an egalitarian, agrarian society and a colonialist, capitalist enterprise? You wanna talk differences? How about the differences between a progressive Judaism driven by social justice and a conservative Judaism blinded by faith?”

“Progressive Judaism? You’d be happier in a Marxist system where, as we all know, Jews are treated with the utmost respect,” Bubbe sarcastically spat. “I’m sorry to say, sweetie, that you should

get a life and step outside your crazy leftist echo chamber.”

“*Banot...*” her father interjected. “We haven’t even hidden the *afikoman* yet! *Nu?* What’s with the pause? Save the fireworks for the dinner. *Yalla!*”

“What’s the point of finding the *afikoman*? I know what’s coming. What’s the prize this year, a new freaking iPhone?” Sophie demanded. Rosa squeezed her hand under the table and Sophie sighed. “Okay, okay. What’s next? The Four Sons?”

“Let’s see, let’s skip ahead to the plagues,” her mother finally spoke up. “Let’s start with *dam, sephardaya, kinim...*”

They managed to get through the first half of the seder without any further interruption. Well past midnight, Sophie toyed with the half-eaten macaroon on her plate. Between the wine and the fever that was claiming her mind, it was getting extremely difficult to recall the lyrics to “Chad Gadya.” Bubbe was nodding off into her Nescafe. She looked across the table and found her mother’s gaze.

“Well, I guess it’s about that time, folks,” said her mother. “Don’t worry about the dishes, just leave everything where it is.” Sophie walked around the table and touched Bubbe lightly on her shoulder. “Hey Bubbe, it’s time to get up. The seder’s over.”

“What’s that? Oh, thanks Soph. You’re a good girl,” Bubbe said.

“Thanks, Bubbe.” Sophie helped her out of her chair, called a taxi, and waited with her in the living room.

“I think we forgot to let Elijah in,” Sophie murmured. The prophet’s absence was the least political thought she could muster up. She hoped Bubbe’s exhaustion would prevent another argument.

“Serves him right,” Bubbe replied. “Seventy-five seders and not once have I seen the guy lift a finger around the house.” Outside, the taxi honked. Sophie helped Bubbe into the car.

“Are you sure you don’t want to take home any *haroset*?”

“No, no. I’ll be fine. Thank you, sweetheart.”

“*Lyla tov*, Bubbe.”

“Good night, Sophie.”

A Meditation on Muscular Judaism

Ephraim Margolin

The stereotype of Jews as being physically inferior has existed for centuries. The otherness of the Jews, their insistence on being a people who dwells alone,¹ and their characteristic refusal to assimilate has engendered a long and storied history of anti-Semitism. Unfortunately, much of this virulent anti-Semitism has perpetuated fallacious tropes, such as the existence of a “Jewish nose,” from as early as the 13th century. The advent of science helped legitimize physical anti-Semitism, which deemed Jews effeminate for their fast-style of talking, narrow chests, shorter arms, and flat feet.²



KARIN GOLD

Yet, the *fin de siècle* milieu of Eastern Europe, which gave birth to Theodore Herzl and modern Zionism, helped reimagine the Jewish people not as weak, *nebbishy*, and physically frail, but as healthy, strong, and able.³ Max Nordau, a Zionist leader and social critic who was co-founder of the World Zionist Organization with Herzl, gave a speech at the 1898 World Zionist Congress in which he used the term *muskel-judenthum*, muscular Judaism. He described a new type of Jew: one who is both intellectually and physically fit.⁴ According to Nordau, “the victims of anti-Semitism suffered from their own disease, a condition he called *Judenot*, or Jewish distress. Life in the dirty ghetto had afflicted the Jews with effeminacy and nervousness.”⁵

1. Num. 23:9

2. Hoedl, Klaus, *Physical Characteristics of the Jews*, (Central European University), http://web.ceu.hu/jewishstudies/pdf/01_hoedl.pdf

3. Stanislawski, Michael, *Zionism and the Fin-de-siècle: Cosmopolitanism and Nationalism from Nordau to Jabotinsky*, (Berkeley: University of California Berkeley, 2001).

4. Presner, *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*, n.d.

5. Stanislawski, *Zionism and the Fin-de-siècle*.

“In the narrow Jewish streets,” he wrote, “our poor limbs forgot how to move joyfully; in the gloom of the sunless houses our eyes became accustomed to nervous blinking; out of fear of constant persecution the timbre of our voices was extinguished to an anxious whisper.”⁶ While Nordau’s acceptance of Jewish stereotypes is incredibly disconcerting and his obsession with perfecting the body was unhealthy, muscular Judaism helped renew the idea that Jews could be whatever they wanted to be and that Zionism was the answer to the *Ostjuden*’s, Eastern European Jews’, ills.

Nordau’s muscular Judaism was a call for the regeneration of the Jewish people through the body. “We want to restore to the flabby Jewish body its lost tone, to make it vigorous and strong, nimble and powerful.”⁷ He proclaimed that sport, which “will strengthen us in body and character,” was the panacea to the problems of European Jewry.⁸

According to Todd Presner, professor of Jewish studies at UCLA, Nordau’s idea of muscular Judaism “was understood as a call for corporeal and spiritual regeneration” and that “National regeneration [of Zionism] would come through moral and physical rebirth.”⁹ If only the Jews of Europe could defend themselves, no longer would they be pushed around. If only they had a homeland, as Nordau imagined. Nordau’s theory found a home with Hakoach Vienna. This sports club was founded in 1909 on Nordau’s ideals of what the modern Jew should be, and offered fencing, soccer, hockey, track and field, wrestling, and swimming for the roughly 180,000 Viennese Jews.¹⁰ Hakoach, which in Hebrew means “The Strength,” was an unmistakable symbol of Jewish nationalism.

Fritz “Beda” Löhner and Ignaz Herman Körner founded the club and oversaw its growth after World War I. Despite Europe’s precarious financial situation at the time, the two benefactors added more sports to the club and built a stadium with a

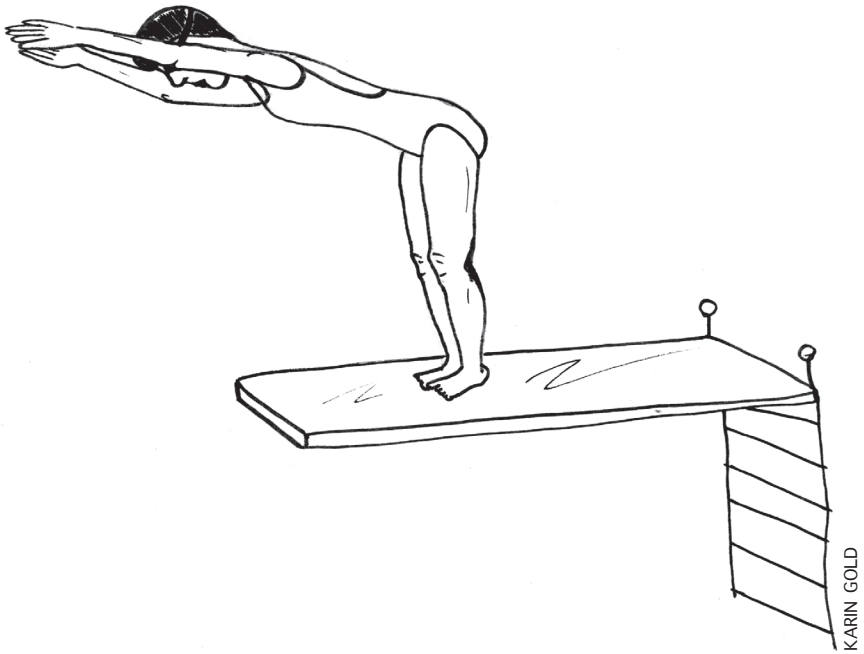
6. Foer, Franklin, *How Soccer Explains the Jewish Question. How Soccer Explains the World: An Unlikely Theory of Globalization*, (New York: Harper Collins, 2004).

7. Foer, *Soccer Explains Jewish Question* 69.

8. Foer, *Soccer Explains Jewish Question* 69.

9. Presner, *Muscular Judaism*.

10. “Hakoach Website,” <http://www.hakoah.at/en/textedetail.asp?Block=1&ID=156>.



capacity of 28,500 people.¹¹ The sports club's most successful team was its soccer team, which regularly competed in the Austrian first division. Hakoach won the league championship in 1925 and was one of the first teams to market itself globally. The team toured England and the United States unabashedly with the Star of David on its blue and white uniforms, drew thousands of Jewish fans, and became the first continental club to defeat an English team. Many of the team's players also represented the Hungarian and Austrian teams in international competitions. Moreover, Hakoach Vienna's success and Nordau's theory were not limited to men. The women's swim team also achieved astounding success, as documented by the 2004 movie *Watermarks*. The film tells the team's story and focuses on Judith Haspel, a record-setting swimmer who refused to represent Austria in the 1936 Olympics because of Nazi Germany's policy of anti-Semitism. The rise of Nazism and the desertion of many of the club's star soccer players during the tour of America meant the end of Hakoach, but not the end of Nordau's theory.

11. "Hakoah Website," <http://www.hakoah.at/en/textedetail.asp?Block=1&ID=156>.

The modern state of Israel embodies Nordau's concept of *muskel-Judenthum*. Nordau was a Zionist, and his ideal of the modern Jew was congruous with his vision for a Jewish homeland. Nordau's image of the new Jews, strong in both mind and body, became an integral part of what it meant to be a member of the *Halutzim*, Zionist pioneers. The mores of the State of Israel fall directly under Nordau's vision of Jews as a people able to adequately defend itself as a distinct entity, without the help of anyone else.

While Israel has been the paradigm of *muskel-Judenthum*, the stereotype of Jews as physically inferior still persists in America. The Jewish man is often portrayed (and portrays himself) in American popular culture as neurotic, *nebbishy*, and even sex-obsessed. From Alexander Portnoy to Woody Allen to Larry David, the archetype of the modern Jewish American male is far from the muscular and intelligent man Nordau imagined.

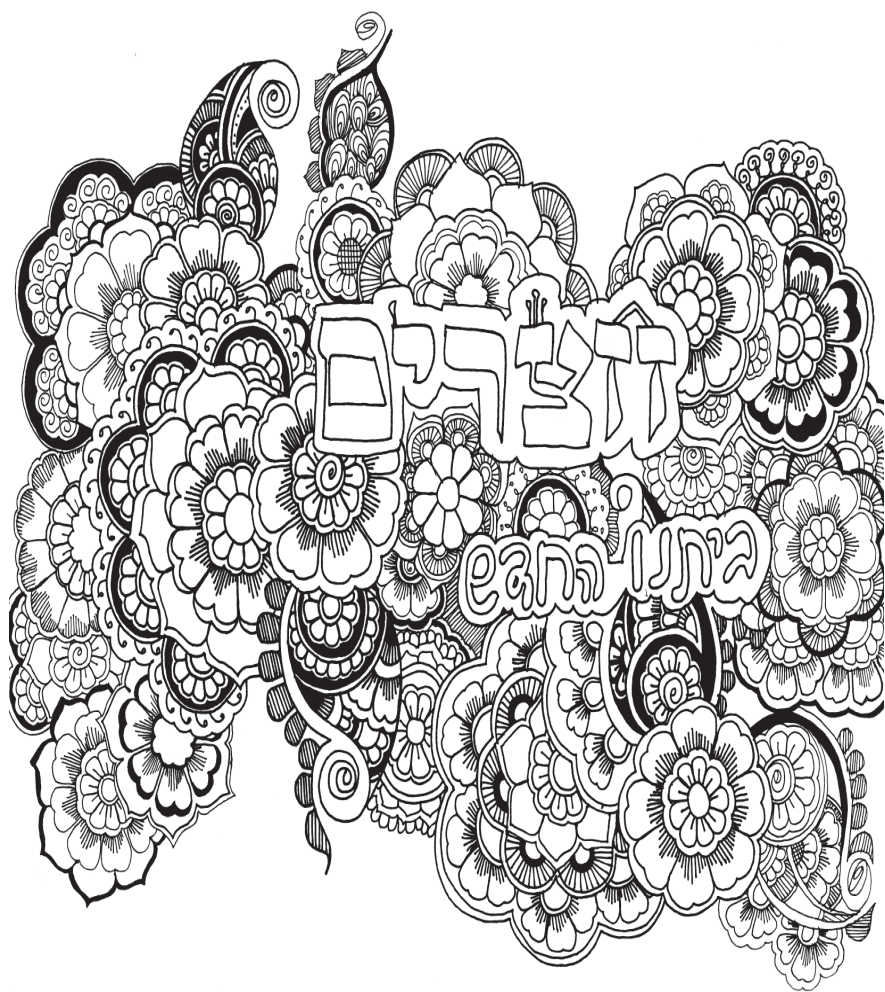
However, the South Philadelphia Hebrew Association (the SPHA) comes to my mind immediately when I think about Jews in sports. Like Hakoach, the SPHA flaunted its Judaism openly with Hebrew lettering on its jerseys and also like Hakoach, the team was very successful. The SPHA was the dominant team in the American Basketball league, the premier league before the advent of the National Basketball Association. Even still, the stereotypes of Jews and Jewish athletes abounded, often giving rise to anti-Semitic explanations for their success. "The reason, I suspect, that basketball appeals to the Hebrew with his Oriental background," wrote Paul Gallico, Sports Editor of the New York Daily News and one of the premier sports writers of the 1930s, "is that the game places a premium on an alert, scheming mind, flashy trickiness, artful dodging and general smart aleckness."¹²

Growing up in suburban America, completely infected by my father's love of sports and reading two sports pages every morning, I had very few Jewish athletes to look up to. Like the joke in the movie *Airplane!* in which a passenger on the plane asks for some light reading and the flight attendant hands her a leaf-

12. "The First Basket: A Jewish Basketball Documentary," <http://www.thefirstbasket.com/story.html>.

let entitled “Famous Jewish Sports Legends,” I similarly owned a book called *Famous Jewish Athletes* (although I will admit that my book was a little thicker). Yet, while the book with its stories about Hank Greenberg, Sandy Koufax, Dolph Schayes, Nat Holman, Sid Luckman, Slapsie Maxie Rosenbloom, and Benny Leonard managed to capture my imagination, it failed to hold it. Where were the great Jewish athletes of my day? Sure, we had Jordan Farmar, Omri Casspi, Ryan Braun, and Dmitry Salita, but Tamir Goodman never became the Jewish Jordan. None of them managed to be as successful as their earlier counterparts, or even as visible or self-identified with their Judaism as Tim Tebow, Jeremy Lin, and Manny Pacquiao are with their own form of muscular Christianity. And just as Franklin Foer likes to recount in his book, *How Soccer Explains the World*, I also loved to guess which professional athletes were members of the tribe. “Funny, Youkilis doesn’t sound Jewish. And Scheyer? Oh yeah, most definitely. Can Amar’e really be Jewish?”

Judaism is inextricably intertwined with sports for many American Jews. The proliferation of JCCs with basketball courts and sports as a means for assimilation has placed Judaism and the sporting world very close to each other. While Nordau’s theory of muscular Judaism is fraught with the potential for misuse and misappropriation, it can hopefully serve as inspiration for today’s Jews to succeed in athletics. By peering into the past feats of Jewish athletes and visualizing the future, we can create a vibrant new understanding of what it means to be a modern Jew and what athletics mean to (American) Jewry.



Our New House
Hannah Broad

On Religion as a Defense Against Psychological Weakness: Rethinking Stereotypes of *Baalei Teshuvah*

Savyonne Steindler

The following is an excerpt from Savyonne's senior thesis in anthropology: "Being a Baal Teshuvah: Religion and Secularism in the Lives of Newly Observant Jews in Washington Heights." Her paper is grounded in two weeks of ethnographic fieldwork in Washington Heights, New York, one in August of 2011 and the second in December of 2011. Her ethnographic research draws upon 17 interviews with 11 baalei teshuvah (newly Orthodox Jews), participant-observation, and informal discussions. In her thesis, she first examines how religion and secularism are intertwined in the circumstances and tensions baalei teshuvah face, and then proceeds to analyze moments of intervention during which her informants disrupt common scholarly, secular ways of conceptualizing religious peoples. The excerpt below comes from this second part of the paper. She has changed the names of her informants to maintain their anonymity.

During my fieldwork in Washington Heights, I came to realize that some of my preconceived notions about *baalei teshuvah*, which I had learned both from books and casual conversations, did not resonate with my informants' life stories. Instead, these assumptions seem to be stereotypes that many secular Jews and FFBs, Jews who are *frum* (religious) from birth, have internalized. During our interviews, I asked *baalei teshuvah* if they also felt that there are stereotypes about newly observant Jews and, if so, what are they? Leah Silver, a NYU graduate student in her mid twenties, replied with the following answer:

That *baalei teshuvah* had really wild and crazy lives before they became observant. People assume that I did drugs, that I slept around. I was the nerdiest child ever. I did none of those things, not to say that it negates anything if I had, but they were all so shocked when they found out how boring my life was pre-religion. They think that they're ignorant, overenthusiastic, that they became religious to deal with something, like some trauma, to cover something up, like something that relates to having a really wild life or whatever.

Approximately half of the *baalei teshuvah* I interviewed gave similar responses to my question. These stereotypes of the wildness and instability of the early lives of *baalei teshuvah* are not wholly representative of the experiences of my informants. Instead, they fit within a larger secular explanation for religion as a defense against some kind of psychological weakness.

The argument that religion is a tool used, either universally or by particular individuals, as a defense against psychological vulnerability is widespread in academic approaches to religion. Talal Asad calls this explanation the Marxist-inspired idea of religion as a “psychological response to an emotional experience” (1986: 12). In a later piece, he contextualizes this view of religion as beginning with Enlightenment ideas that “make it possible to think of religion as a more primitive, a less adult mode of coming to terms with the human condition” (1993: 46). This view of religion extends past Marx and the Enlightenment and is apparent in some anthropological approaches to religion. Melford Spiro (1987), for example, draws on Weber and Freud to describe two psychological functions of religion. Consciously, religion gives meaning to and alleviates adult concerns with suffering. It also acts as a defense mechanism, allowing individuals to unconsciously redirect the potentially dangerous feelings they have towards their parents to the socially acceptable outlet of the “mythicoreligious world” (181-182). Thus, religion masks reality for an individual who is not psychologically equipped to handle it. This view of religion resonates with stereotypes about the pasts of *baalei teshuvah*, which can be broken into two parts, each indicative of psychological vulnerability: the family trauma of the *baalei teshuvah*, and the wild period of their early adulthood.

Above, Leah presents the belief that the *baal teshuvah* uses religion “to deal with something, like some trauma.” In her book on the virtues of modesty, author and *baalat teshuvah* Wendy Shalit (1999) discusses how this characterization manifested in her childhood, specifically regarding *baalot teshuvah*, newly observant women. Among her Reform Jewish family and friends, *modestyniks* (*baalot teshuvah*) were rumored to be *abuseniks*. Nonobservant Jews would whisper to one another when they saw a newly observant

woman: “She is turning herself into the kind of woman her father could never touch” (5). Shalit felt the gap between this perception and lived experience when she looked at a picture of a happy, newly married religious couple. She compared religious women to the anorexic and bulimic women she met at college and began to feel that perhaps all *modestyniks* are not *abuseniks*. I similarly found the stereotype of family trauma in the early lives of *baalei teshuvah* to be not entirely accurate. Some of my informants did have troubled childhoods. Elliot Levin, a married lawyer in his late twenties, has a physically abusive father. Chava Shloss, a married mother of two, was raised by drug addicts. Both Chava and Leah lost a parent at an early age, and several informants told me their parents had difficult divorces. But if family trauma is the primary explanation for why *baalei teshuvah* become religious, then Daniel Greenburg, an undergraduate student at Yeshivah University, Abby Weintraub, another NYU graduate student in her mid-twenties, and Joseph Kramer, a man in his thirties who is trained in medicine, should never have become observant at all. Trauma did not characterize their early lives and they are still incredibly close with their families. Joseph even told me that his father is his best friend. As Dafna Stein, a recent college graduate, said to me, “There are people from stable, loving homes who become religious.”

Leah referred to the second aspect of the stereotype when she said, “People assume that I did drugs, that I slept around.” Joseph referenced a similar idea when he told me the following:

So this is one thing I hear from either nonreligious Jews or just non-Jews ... when I explain that, ‘no, this isn’t what I was always like. I didn’t grow up this way. This is a decision I’ve made.’ The reaction is usually something like, ‘Oh well, you must have been bad. Or you must have been doing something really wrong to make you move in this direction,’ which I guess seems like sort of a logical thing to guess, but I really don’t think that’s the case for 99% of *baalei teshuvah* I know.

According to the assumptions Leah and Joseph describe, *baalei teshuvah* are people who love extremes; they have been at one extreme—using drugs, partying, having casual sex—and now they have decided to explore the other side of the spectrum and have become devout. Perhaps, in this vein of thought, *baalei teshuvah*’s

supposedly traumatic childhoods first predisposed them to reckless behavior. Like Joseph, I did not find this description of *baalei teshuvah* at all accurate. In fact, several of my informants were attracted to observance because they were the exact opposite of the wild person of the stereotype. Leah said she was “the nerdiest child ever” and has done none of the things her FFB friends assume she did. Dafna even left a public university after two months because she was so put off by the partying culture she found there. Furthermore, several of my informants—like Samuel Jacobson, Leah, and Daniel—started becoming observant in high school, before they had much time at all to live scandalous teenage years. The stereotype of the crazy early adulthoods of *baalei teshuvah* seems even less representative than the stereotype of family trauma.

Both aspects of the stereotype allude to a psychological instability that would invalidate the reasonableness of a *baal teshuvah*'s decision to become religious. The stereotype implies that if *baalei teshuvah* are damaged by something from their childhoods or due to reckless behavior, then their choices are not rational. Leah touched on this point when I asked her if she thought that the argument that *baalei teshuvah* tend to have early experiences of trauma was valid:

Suggestions like that have to be taken with a grain of salt because the underlying assumptions there are that if you weren't messed up, you'd never do this. We can have a whole other discussion about patronizing attitudes towards religion in academic literature. But that being said, was there trauma in my teenage life? 100%. My mom died when I was nineteen. There were a lot of serious issues going on and religion was definitely part of that. It's just a really touchy argument and you should be really careful with it because the underlying assumptions behind it are so offensive. Because the assumption is, normal people who don't have any problems would never have done this and also, the idea is that if it is because of trauma, that somehow invalidates the experience, which I don't think is necessarily true.

The assumption behind the stereotypes is that religion is abnormal and thus its presence must be explained. There is a similar foundation to Spiro's view of religion. In justifying why he needs to develop such a nuanced description of the functions of religion, Spiro claims that other approaches “do not explain, for example, why

religious doctrines persist even in the face of competing, and often compelling, counter-claims of fact or reason, nor why cognitive dissonance is resolved not by abandoning the doctrines, but rather by resting their truth in faith” (171). The driving axiom behind both the stereotypes about *baalei teshuvah* and Spiro’s theory is that religion does not belong in the modern world; it is not rational.



View of Washington Heights

Among FFBs, these stereotypes may just speak to “a general fear, kind of xenophobic: we don’t want anyone who’s different, who’s not sort of blue blood,” as Dafna suggested to me. But among nonobservant Jews, these stereotypes may indicate anxieties with secularism, as they do not reflect the realities of experience. In her 2010 article about the conflicting discourses that arise in debates about the head scarf ban in France, Mayanthi Fernando asks: “Could it be, then, that the consternation about ostensible Muslim unfreedom in fact helps to sustain a secular fantasy of personal autonomy, deferring an underlying anxiety about the very interconnectedness of autonomy and authority that continues to haunt the Republic?” (30) Stereotypes about the pasts of *baalei teshuvah* may similarly reveal “an underlying anxiety” with secular claims to reality. *Baalei teshuvah* threaten secular conceptions of modernity; they choose religion in the age of reason. Academics and lay people alike attribute the apparent anomaly of intensified religiosity in the secular West to psychological weakness, instead of reevaluating their own beliefs about how religion relates to the categories of secularism and modernity.

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PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAVYONNE STEINDLER

Yeshiva University



Supermoon
Andrew Dunnigan

Ha-Tzevah Sagol (The Color Purple)

Gabi Kirk

o. Motherland

Just before my Bat Mitzvah, my dad gave me permission to dye my hair, provided that I choose a “color not found in nature.” He meant neon, a high-resolution hue. I browsed the aisle of fluorescent oranges and pinks before settling on a temporary tone of deep purple. It barely shone in the light on my kinked, dark hair, a subtlety one can just make out in my seventh grade school picture. My hair has often drawn attention, so the color made little difference. Like a web, it attracts questions, traps stares, and entangles a fair share of scratches and tugs, some desired and some not. Curious minds inquire, “So where are you from?” That question holds back possible judgments like a rat in a box. They’re hidden, but you can hear them sniff. If you don’t feed them, they’ll chew their way out. I’ve found rats nesting in my locks, nuzzled against my neck. I’ve been granted phenotypic plasticity. Those who expect an exotic answer to their inquiry will be mildly disappointed. I have successfully blended into markets in Israel, Italy, and the Inner Sunset. But my birth certificate says California, and my “ethnicity,” a European mutt.

i. First wave

I come from red, settlements beyond the pale of my comfortable existence. In cafés and cramped apartments in Eastern Europe, we argued quickly in hushed tones about how the revolution would lift all ships. For all our disagreements and religious differences, we could still share bread. But then, change came, and it didn’t lift ours. We saw our neighbors beaten and broken, the red of dreams pooling in a puddle dripping from a father’s ear. So, abandoning a temporary home for another one that gave a bit more wiggle room, we left behind another set of empty shells, like hermit crabs, scattered across the sands of the globe.

When we crossed to our newly minted Promised Land, we quickly learned the rules of the game. There were others there already who suffered like us, wept unending, felt the sting of the rope

of capitalism and brutality. Their suffering ran through our veins too. Some brought red dreams with them, mixing them with the black of anarchy upon arrival. Most of us were too tired to argue anymore. A more muted hue would do well for us. We eagerly took up the brush to paint the pale of our skins into our spirits.

2. Second wave

My blue spills over dams and crumbling retaining walls. I am tied to a land trapped between seas (*Yam el Yam*) even though I have no blood ties in that small sliver of bitterly contested desert. Those who did not go to America went to the ancient Promised Land. We pretended not to know we were not the only ones there. Those who spoke up for the rights of the natives were flooded with criticism and hate. Sixty years later, the blue of the flag remains. But the blue of the Jordan has been clogged with waste. The blue of the springs have been tapped dry. Blue instead flows into making the desert bloom and swimming pools built on top of crushed homes. We are proud of the blue glow of computer screens we have invented. I wonder if we will solve our wars and have the blue flow freely again, or if both sides will perish in the process.

3. Third wave

Red flows and meets the blue sea in estuarine ecstasy in a sleepy California town. The purple ebbs and dissipates. The seas sustain all life, from the squiggling brine shrimp, to the bellowing blue whale. I want to burrow in the muddy banks and hibernate for a while, rather than make a choice between my values and my community. I feel they should integrate as nicely as these two colors do, but I wonder if anyone else feels the same.

Finding My Religion: Matthew's Story

Aaron Giannini

“Cover your eyes this time, then say it.” At this point, not only had I messed up the ritual of wrapping myself in *tefillin*, I apparently hadn't even recited the *shema* correctly. I closed my eyes, put my hand in front of my face, and waited for further instruction. “The word is *shema*: listen. It's not just about speaking the words; it's about hearing them. Your sight gives you a limited window into what's really happening in the world around you. Close your eyes and hear, allow yourself to be present, then say the words when you're ready.” When I ultimately recited the prayer, I wasn't sure to whom I was speaking. To myself? To God? Was I just humoring a friend, or was I wrapping myself in leather and saying the ancient words in an attempt to share even a fraction of a religious experience with him?

As an atheist and a skeptic, my reaction to Matthew's new-found religious views was one of confusion and doubt. The biblical conception of a “God of the Desert” is not an intuitive idea; it must be taught, internalized, and reinforced over time in order to become personally meaningful. At the time, I simply could not understand what could motivate an educated, critical person to accept the traditional Orthodox views of God and the Bible without having grown up in an Orthodox community. It seemed that Matthew had gone on a self-reflective journey, searching for morality and truth in the world, and the *Tanakh* gave him answers. As someone who feels that Judaism has evolved to become more grounded in culture and genealogical history than in the factual truth of the Bible, I felt the need to pick his brain.

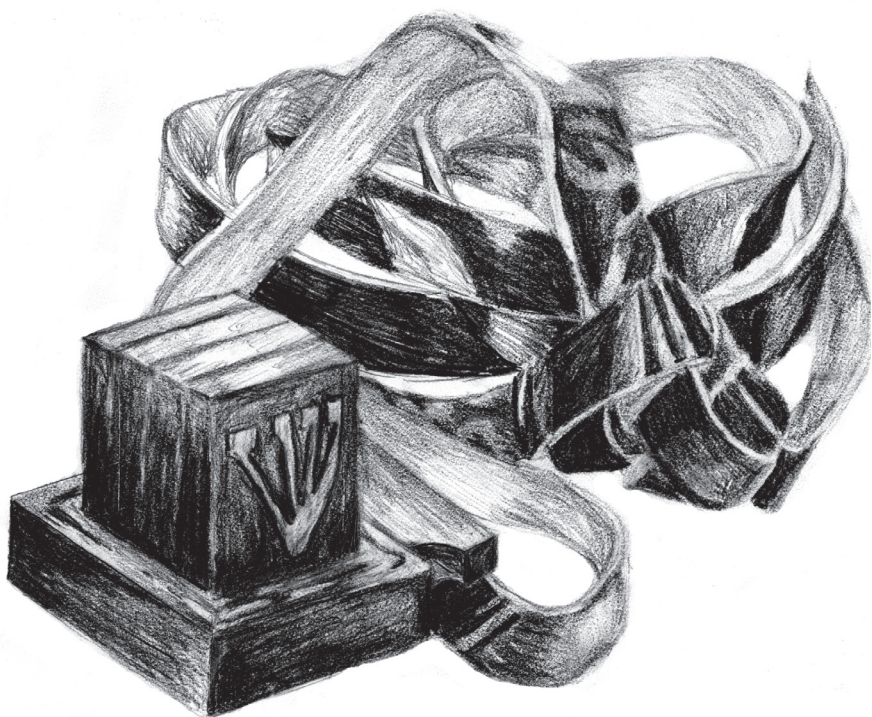
Matthew was raised in a progressive Jewish household, attending Sunday school throughout adolescence and, like many Reform Jews, receiving a parentally motivated Bar Mitzvah at the age of 13. He joined a Jewish youth group in high school not for religious reasons, but for social ones. It was a fraternity of sorts, complete with morally questionable initiations, a code of ethics to swear by, and fierce comradery between its members. While

Matthew believed that spirituality existed in the world, he felt no religious connection to Judaism other than the sense of community it instilled in him. He believed the only thing that tied him to his Jewish brethren was the fact that his parents raised him to know the prayers, the songs, and the rituals. Towards the end of high school, however, his perception of Judaism took a dramatic turn. A falling out between himself and his Jewish peers came to redefine the course of his spiritual journey. After a prank gone wrong, in a single night his relationship with his youth group became sour, turning him off from “social Judaism.” Unbeknownst to him, this fallout would mark the beginning of his search for a true spiritual community.

While his experience with his own small Jewish community ended with a feeling of betrayal, he retained his belief in the spirituality inherent in the world. Matthew had always felt that something was “out there,” something omnipotent and beyond his comprehension. If only he could find a way to connect to it, he believed his life could take on new meaning. In college, he explored the *Tao Te Ching*, and also researched how Islam and Christianity differ from Judaism. He was not convinced by the Christian idea of transubstantiation, and also found little value in the rigidity of Islam and the abstractness of Taoism. His frustration with the irrationality and perversion of other religions inspired him to take a deeper look into Judaism. He dove into Jewish canonical texts, studying the traditions of his forefathers and the reasoning behind them. His intensified engagement with religion motivated him to go to Israel one summer, an experience that changed his outlook on life and Judaism.

In Israel, Matthew enrolled in a study group that focused on how the *Tanakh* and its corresponding interpretive literature constitute the forefront of Jewish consciousness. He learned biblical stories and traditional explanations for how they retain their relevance in Jewish daily life. He studied Jewish history, seeing firsthand the place where our ancestors built the temples and passed on the story of our lineage. Having been burned by one Jewish organization in the past, Matthew felt the need to be critical during his

stay in the Promised Land. He didn't break down in divine bliss in front of the Western Wall, but instead studied its significance in the Jewish world and appreciated it all the same. Unlike many visiting Jews, he didn't hastily begin wearing *tzitzit* or a *yarmulke* upon his arrival into a *yeshiva* environment. He researched what they mean and why they are important aspects of Jewish identity, and only then did he feel comfortable using them as an expression of his connection to the divine. Slowly, Matthew's experiences in the land of Israel and his newfound religious knowledge gave him a context in which he could understand the traditional Jewish conception of God. The customs that define Orthodox Judaism started to make sense to him. He found himself personally affected by the spirituality and history woven into the words of the *Tanakh*.



SAVYONNE STEINDLER

What I found most fascinating about Matthew's recent Orthodoxy was the fact that it was not inspired by a single spark of revelation. It was already clear to him that spirituality existed in the world, but his decision to study Torah and live by its teachings arose from research and careful analysis. The more he read, the more he learned, and the more he grew attached to the *balakbic* lifestyle. He began to attribute the existence of life on Earth to God, drawing on the fact that such a phenomenon is a staggering statistical anomaly. According to Matthew, so too is the survival of the Jewish people, now a flourishing nation despite an exile that lasted for thousands of years—further proof of the divinity of our lineage.

For Matthew, believing in God comes naturally. The world is a spiritual place, and one doesn't need to be religiously devout to deduce that there are greater forces at play in life than can be understood by our narrow perception of reality. The historical significance of his own religious bloodline, the ancient traditions, and the inspiring words of the Hebrew Bible provide Matthew with a language to speak about the spiritual aspects of life. Orthodoxy also gives him a community in which he can thrive and discuss God and Jewish identity in terms familiar to all within it.

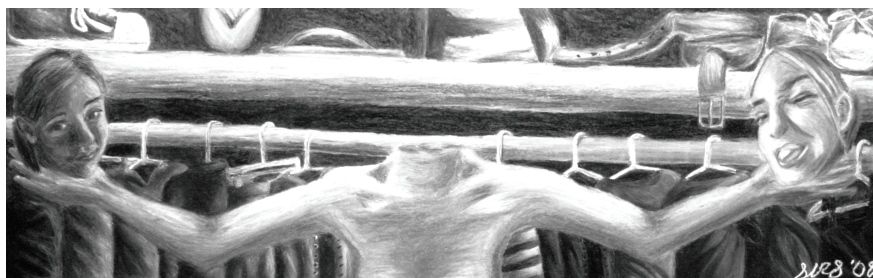


While belief in the divinity of the world may be intuitive for Matthew, the practice of maintaining his Orthodox lifestyle is a daily struggle. The act of recognizing the holy nature of all aspects of life is essential to what makes him Jewish. He describes the process of blessing wine on *shabbos* as a symbol of what separates people from animals:

We recognize that the ‘fruit of the vine’ (*boray p’rei bagafen*) that created the wine, in the end, came from God... We pause, recognize what an honor it is to eat and drink the creations that God made in this world, and we thank God for giving us the knowledge to do this, and even more so, to be here today to participate in this ancient tradition that goes back scores of generations to the time of Moses. This is just a small example of the many traditions and commandments we perform as Jews on a daily basis. Every time we bless God before a meal, wear a *talit*, wrap *tefillin*, or read the Torah, we are suppressing our animalistic, barbaric nature, and making sure the intentions of our actions come from a pure source.

For Matthew, this commitment to seeking out spirituality in all aspects of life represents a metaphysical elevation into the realm of God. It can be exhausting, especially for a newcomer, but ultimately he finds that it gives his life depth and meaning in ways that transcend the natural world.

Matthew is a critical and passionate person. While I may not agree with the religious conclusions he drew from his spiritual journey, I have come to respect them as part of our greater culture as Jews. He shares a similar outlook on my atheism: “The name ‘Israel’ means ‘to struggle with God,’ which I do as a *baal teshuva* and which Aaron does as a skeptic.... After all, if God wanted everyone to believe in him, what would be the purpose of God?” His beliefs, like my own, represent the culmination of our millennia-old history. I am happy to say, there is room for both of us under the umbrella of Jewish identity.



The Morning Routine



The Movie Philosopher *Savoyonne Steindler*

**The Story of Yael:
My Transition From Orthodoxy into
Non-Observant Jewishness**

Shelby Backman

I have two sets of names. The first set consists of my federally recognized first, middle, and last name: Shelby Alexandra Backman. The second set I rarely use or even with my closest friends: Shira Yael Hertzliya. These are my three Hebrew names. It is Jewish custom to be named after ancestors; my names are the female version of my two great-grandfathers and a great uncle: Asher, Yoel, and Hertzl. Two of them were supposedly rebbes and all three of them had escaped from Russia to the United States at the turn of the century. “All of them,” my mother would say, “were great men and leaders in the Jewish community.”

I do appreciate that I am named after these men. But I never associated my names with theirs, nor my life with theirs. I’m not ashamed of my Hebrew names; they just don’t have a place in my everyday life. Still, despite the fact that I rarely use these names, they define a part of me. My relationship with them mirrors my relationship with Judaism and how it has developed and been redefined throughout my life. In fact, when I lost my faith in God, my Hebrew names returned to me a Jewish identity that I thought I would never regain.

For most of my early life, my mother raised me as an Orthodox Jew. I was a part of a Chabad congregation in San Diego and attended the same Jewish summer camp as the children in my synagogue. My mother and I weren’t as strictly observant as the other members of Chabad. We still drove and turned on lights during the Sabbath, and only used one set of plates even though we kept the laws of *kasbrut*. Even still, she and I would study the *Midrash* (rabbinic commentary of the Torah) on a weekly basis. I even joined and actively contributed to an adult *Midrash* group while I was still in elementary school. I loved knowing that I was Jewish. I was one of the chosen people, and the world was my oyster.

My names reflected this feeling. In the Orthodox community I preferred being addressed as Shira, or sometimes Herzliya. Shira means “[holy] song,” and Hertzliya is both related to the word for “deer” as well as a city in the Tel Aviv district of Israel. A search on Google will give “mountain goat” as the common translation for Yael. In comparison to a song or deer, a mountain goat did not feel particularly flattering. Later, during my *Midrash* studies with my mother, I learned that Yael is also the



KARIN GOLD

name of the heroine who saved the Jews by stabbing an enemy general with a wooden pin. In comparison to my other names, Yael’s relationship to Jewish history seemed relatively unimportant. Firstly, her tale is recorded in the book of Judges, Jewish scripture not included in the five books of the Torah. Secondly, only two *parshas* (chapters) are dedicated to her story. Thirdly, Yael isn’t even a Jew. As a child, I only wanted to be known by the two names that explicitly portrayed my Jewish identity. Yael wasn’t a part of that agenda, so I shunted the name and dismissed it as “just another name I have.”

As I got older, I felt less and less connected to the Orthodox community. This disconnect was partly exacerbated by the problems that developed between my mother and me. More importantly, it was difficult for me to relate to the Orthodox customs or beliefs any longer. I hated having to wear long skirts and long-sleeved shirts, even during the summer, as mandated by Orthodox Jewish law. I could never commit prayers beyond the *Shema* and the *Aleinu* to memory and never felt the desire to. I wanted to be like my non-Jewish friends who didn’t have to go to temple on Saturdays and didn’t have to read the *Midrash* every night. Bit by bit, I began to cut away pieces of my Jewish upbringing.

Once I came to UCSC, I stopped attending temple altogether. I didn't want to return to the Orthodox way of life, but I still recognized myself as Jewish. However, because I'd grown up extremely religious, I felt like I couldn't connect with any Reform or Conservative Jewish group. Essentially, I felt like I wasn't a part of the Jewish community, regardless of my steadfast Jewish identity. So I kept my relationship with Judaism private and personal.

Then, earlier this year, I became an atheist. I fell into a depression. I had lost God. I knew that I could count on my friends to celebrate my successes and to sympathize with my struggles. However, I felt that only God could experience my life as I experienced it. Losing him meant I lost my closest confidant. His existence also reaffirmed my Jewish identity. The belief that my relationship with him had a different meaning in this life because I was Jewish allowed me to be comfortable with my Jewishness, regardless of which prayers I said or which customs I chose to keep. By losing God, I felt like I'd not only lost the ability to be a part of any Jewish community, but I'd also lost an integral part of my being, a part that shaped so much of my childhood.

Once I became an atheist, even my favored Hebrew names seemed foreign to me. All three belonged to ancestors who, unlike me, were proud of their Jewish heritage. At that point, it was much easier to shun my Jewish identity because I felt like I didn't deserve to call myself Jewish. I was the stereotypical "wandering Jew."

Soon after I became an atheist, I began dating a fellow atheist-Jew who, unlike me, embraced his Judaism. In my relationship with him, I saw that it was possible to be Jewish without believing in God, but I still didn't understand my place in the community. I thought I would never reconcile with my Jewish identity, let alone my Hebrew names (which I had long since stopped using).

During my last quarter at UCSC, I enrolled in Rabbi Chein's "Women of the Hebrew Bible" class in order to understand what it means to be a Jewish woman, especially one without faith. Weeks went by and I felt no more connected with Judaism than I had at the beginning of the quarter. Then, as I was starting to accept my fate as an outsider, I revisited the story of Yael.

The story takes place in Israel, where the evil King Jabin had sent his general Sisera to wage war against the Jews. In response, Deborah, the reigning prophetess, appoints a Jewish man, Barak, to lead his army into a war against Sisera's forces. Meanwhile, the story introduces Yael's character. She is married to Herber the Kenite, a man who has separated himself and his tent from the Jews and has befriended King Jabin. Because of her association with Herber, Yael is considered an outsider in respect to the Jewish people. Barak and Deborah ride into battle against Sisera's army and the Jews come out the victor. Unfortunately, General Sisera survives the defeat and runs to the safety of Herber's tent. When Sisera arrives, Yael greets him and serves him a glass of milk. After Sisera lies down to rest, Yael takes a wooden tent pin in one hand and a hammer in the other. She then drives the pin through Sisera's temple. When Barak rides up later in pursuit of Sisera, Yael shows him the general, lying dead on the tent's floor. She, the wife of Herber the Kenite, friend to King Jabin, had killed the enemy of the Jews despite her husband's allegiances. Even as an outsider, she came to the aid of the Jewish people when she was handed the opportunity, betraying her expected loyalties.

After rereading the story of Yael, my names were no longer a painful reminder of the Jewish identity I had discarded. In fact, the name that I had once regarded as the least Jewish of the three now gave me a sense of identity within Judaism. Deborah and Yael represent two extremes within the Jewish community: Deborah is completely involved and immersed in Jewish life, whereas Yael is essentially detached from it. During my childhood, I was a Deborah in my Jewish community. As an adult, I have become a Yael. The story of Yael demonstrates the important role that both women play in the survival of the Jewish people. By chronicling the heroism displayed by these two extreme Jewish identities, the story of Deborah and Yael showed me that my lack of faith didn't have to dictate my place in the Jewish community. It didn't matter which path I chose to express my connection with Judaism; Judaism could manifest itself in many forms. From religious practices to cultural observances to recounted histories, I could be a part of all of it, or none of it, or somewhere in between and still

identify as Jewish. My ability to relate to other Jews through my experiences and our shared history is what matters. This is what makes me a Jew.

Although I still don't use my Hebrew names in everyday interactions, they are just as much a part of my identity as my secular names. Regardless of my feelings about God or Jewish customs, Judaism's history and culture shaped my childhood and connected me to my ancestors. As an atheist, I'm no longer a part of the religious community I'd once identified with. But I also know that to be part of the Jewish community, I don't have to be a Deborah. I'm proud to be a Yael.



KARIN GOLD

Meaning
Anisha Mauze

There is something
these dendrites at the end of my fingertips
cannot touch.
A past time
where I could pass time
doing what, I don't really know.
Now I climb trees
hoping their antenna branches
can contact satellites,
because they know all the answers.
Why we feel in neurotransmitters
and the difference
between what makes people tick
and what makes them talk.
This knowing,
it feels like electricity in my veins.
It feels like my cells
are galaxies.
It feels like there are more wonders in this world
then there are fingers to count them with.
My lungs have holes in them
for my breath to escape through
even though it is already taken
far too easily.
We are all miracles.
Carbon-base we may be,
but then again, so are diamonds.
We are all diamonds.
Sharp and clear
and if there's one thing I know
it's that satellites
are always
right.



The Masked Dash

Allison Carlisle

Katamon Singles in the Mist, the Counter to Today's Hook-Up Culture

Jennine Grasso

Srugim may seem like a strange name for a television show. However, those of us lucky enough to be familiar with the program know that it's more than the Hebrew word for "knitted." It's an Israeli television series about the dating scene in Jerusalem in the Katamon "swamp," an area full of Orthodox singles seemingly left out from the family-centric culture of observant Judaism. The cast of characters include archetypal women: the hopeless romantic Yifat, the almost-reformist Hodaya, and the feminist Reut. The men are Nati, the roguish bachelor, and Amir, the responsible divorcee. As they're all pushing thirty, these characters go on an endless number of dates either arranged online, planned by friends, or through speed dating sessions all with the goal of finding "The One." Think the Jewish version of *Friends*, with more existential quandaries. The show documents the difficulties of being single and Orthodox, supplemented with humorous pop culture references that are relevant even in America. *Srugim* episodes parody the drama of reality television shows, such as *The Bachelorette*, and bring common phrases like "Soup Nazi" into their conversations in Hebrew. The core connection between men and women occurs during *Shabbat*, a time when both sexes can come together and celebrate another week's day of rest.

The series' focus on Orthodox Jewish culture isn't its only engaging aspect. Its emphasis on the individual connection and respect between two people in any relationship—long or short-term—is very refreshing. The show emphasizes an alternative lifestyle. Nowadays, especially in college, there is more leeway with the terms of commitment in the dating scene. Many relationships are founded more on mutual convenience than mutual connection. The real issue, however, is not the institution or the people themselves, but rather the influence of the hook-up culture. Our cavalier attitudes toward intimate relationships permeate into many aspects of our lives. They can be traced into our dances, popular song

lyrics, even our insults. The key problem with hook-up culture is not the sexual freedom it encourages, but instead the demeaning image of women and men as sexual objects that it promotes. Despite the fact that the cast may seem foreign to us, the show speaks to a secular American audience because of its modern and realistic portrayals of men and women struggling with the same desires for individual affection.

True, the Orthodox Jewish lifestyle is a little extreme for our secular sensibilities. After all, the practice of *shomer*

negiya, which many of the characters live by, doesn't allow men and women to touch each other at all. However, respect of one's partner is essential to a relationship, considering the ultimate goal is marriage. As college students, not all of us immediately aspire to such a commitment, but we can still value the series for striving to show relationships based on personal rather than physical connections. This series portrays the battles between physical desire and religious peace of mind in different ways, primarily through the difficulty of defining one's personal identity within Orthodox Judaism.

Hodaya, a rabbi's daughter rebelling against her religious upbringing, embodies this internal struggle. In one episode, she pretends to be married and goes to the *mikveh*, or ritual bath, to purify herself before sleeping with her boyfriend. However, after her purification, she can't bring herself to follow through with her decision. The conflict between her feelings of responsibility to G-d and her own desire for sexual freedom impede her. Yifat, Hodaya's roommate, has to determine how far she wants to go with the no-touching barrier, as it limits her dating options to only Orthodox men who follow similar practices. Nati, Amir's friend, has a shocking realization when one of his Orthodox friends passes away, as it makes him aware of the possibility of dying a virgin. Even Amir, the responsible character, feels guilty because he sleeps with his ex-wife to make up for the lack of affection in his life as a bachelor.

סדרוג'ים

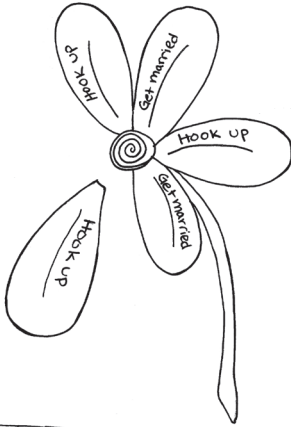
The show emphasizes the subjectivity of boundaries in this struggle, both in religion and in dating. Individual choice counteracts the pressure to conform to strictly religious lifestyles. On the other end of the spectrum, the power derived from resisting hook-up culture's influence comes not only from a refusal to participate in

it, but from a recognition of the way it features in our lives.

Although we may not be able to relate to the characters of *Srugim* on a religious level, they are similarly torn between cultural pressure and what they determine to be right. In both secular American and Orthodox Jewish contexts, the need for human affection is key. The cast of characters are knitted together with ties that are

stronger than their Orthodox Jewish and single lifestyles: their common need for the most fundamental of our five senses, the sense of touch. The show acknowledges this desire by centering on the struggle between faith and sexuality. *Srugim* portrays neither aspect as exclusively "right." Instead, it advocates the method of combining both in order to find personal happiness. The people with the most mature personalities on the show, Amir, Hodaya, and Yifat, are conscious of the influences of others in relation to their religion. Nati and Reut, on the other hand, still struggle to realize their own feelings and differentiate their opinions from the people around them.

Srugim's characters' honest perseverance in their struggles with their cultural norms can also teach us about defining norms in our own lives. Isn't it time we allowed ourselves some more leeway in our definition of the "right" relationship? Before the countercultural revolution of the sixties, people were condemned for being too free in their sexuality. In our supposedly open-minded generation, we still have the same prejudices against those with opposing



KARIN GOLD

beliefs, but now they are directed towards those with more conservative dating practices. Let's truly realize the power of our tolerance and accept those we disagree with. Forgo the Top 20 songs for one night, and break out the soup crackers and gefilte fish to see if we can really change the world with a hilarious Israeli television show. It's definitely worth a shot.



PHOTO COURTESY OF KARIN GOLD

View of Tel-Aviv

I Can't
Karin Gold

I can't write poetry.
I never could.
Words don't come out
the way I think they should.
My words fly out my mouth
choppy, awkward, and broken
Like a poor one-winged dove.
An attempt at grace
That fails miserably.
I can't write poetry.
I really can't.
The thoughts that
cloud my mind
are just too loud.
Too much for
my mouth to form.
For my hand to write.
I can't write poetry.
I never will.
It feels too odd
forming thoughts
while molding them
into short lines and
counted syllables.
Seems a little contradictory.
I can't write poetry.
I never could.

אני לא כותבת שירים
אף פעם לא יכולתי
מילים לא יוצאות
א"כ שכזו להם.
מילים צפות מהפה שלי
בחתכות, מוזרות ושבורות
כמו 'ונה מסכנה אם כנף אחת.
נסיון של חוסר
שנכשל ביצור
אני לא יכולה לכתוב שירים
אני באמת לא יכולה
המחשבות שלי הם בראש
יותר מידי בקול רם.
יותר מידי בשבילי הבה שלי צור
ולפי לכתוב.
אני לא יכולה לכתוב שירים
אף פעם לא אוכל
להמירם מוצר מידי
ע' צור מחשבות
ובאותו לטן לעצב אותם
לשורות קצרות והברות
נראה קצת סותר.
אני לא יכולה לכתוב שירים
אף פעם לא יכולתי

***The Jewish Dark Continent:
A Revival of Jewish Culture***

Shani Chabansky

If you've ever considered Jewishness a part of your identity, you've probably faced the question, "what is Jewish?" For centuries, this question simply was not asked. Jewishness took place in the domestic realm, transferred from parents to children through mimetic pedagogy. A mother would teach her daughters to bake *challah* and a father would teach his sons to read Torah. But in the modern era, the time spent in the home has become increasingly shortened, as the period between childhood and marriage has grown. So, as family becomes less and less central to the life cycle, where does Jewishness happen?

One place where Jewishness flourishes is in literature. Historically, the phrase "people of the book" refers to the Jewish relationship with religious texts. Yet words have also held a special place in less traditional forms of Jewish writing; recently the number of Jewish novels, magazines, and newspapers has skyrocketed. For instance, just before Passover, the Jewish media (and even *The Colbert Report*) gushed over *The New American Haggadah*, an artsy version of the user's guide for the Passover seder. Edited by Jonathan Safran Foer, the author of the much-loved *Everything is Illuminated*, and re-translated by Nathan Englander, this version of the Haggadah is laced with commentaries from the cherished authors Rebecca Goldstein, Jeffery Goldberg, Daniel Handler (also known as Lemony Snickett), and the co-director of UC Santa Cruz's own Jewish Studies Program, Professor Nathaniel Deutsch.

It turns out that Deutsch is a major player in what seems to be a nation-wide project to revitalize Jewish culture through literature. In his recently published book, *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*, Deutsch dusts off the pages of *The Jewish Ethnographic Program*, a survey of the rituals and traditions of the Pale of Settlement. Renowned historian Simon Dubnow called this territory of land, the only place the Russian Empire permitted Jews to live, a Jewish "Dark Continent," inspiring the title of Deutsch's book. The survey was part of a larger proj-

ect called “The Jewish Ethnographic Expedition” and was led by An-sky, a Jewish-Russian revolutionary who was born in the Pale, but lived the majority of his life illegally in St. Petersburg. Afraid of Jewish culture being wiped out as a result of the dramatic rise in anti-Semitism and assimilation during the turn of the twentieth century, An-sky conducted his expedition in order to document the cultural patterns of the *shtetls* (Jewish villages) before they were destroyed. *The Jewish Dark Continent* is the impressive product of Deutsch’s eight-year multidisciplinary enterprise to offer the first English translation of An-sky’s survey from its original Yiddish version.

Partly as a result of heightened anti-Semitism, but also in response to the elite status of Jewish intellectualism, An-sky’s goal was to make Judaism accessible to all Jews, regardless of social status or class. In order to facilitate this process, he had to draw upon traditional Jewish scholarship and simultaneously push against it, redefining Torah so that it would include the folk culture of the *shtetl*. In the introduction of his survey, An-sky argues that songs, dances, rituals, jokes, and myths should form the basis of the *Torah Sheba’al Peh* (Oral Torah), and what was formerly part of the *Torah Sheba’al Peh*, the *Talmud*, *Midrash*, and *Mishnah*, should be placed into the category of the *Torah Shebichtav* (Written Torah), along with the *Tanakh*. This new Oral Torah would “...[reflect] the same beauty and purity of the Jewish soul, the tenderness and nobility of the Jewish heart, and the height and depth of Jewish thought.”¹ By elevating folk culture to the status of Torah, An-sky both broke from and continued religious Jewish scholarship. While he remained consistent with categorizing something as Torah in order to legitimize it in the eyes of rabbis and Jewish religious scholars, he also made a radical move by redefining Torah itself. In doing so, he brought Jewishness to the common Jew, so that no matter what his or her background—tailor or rabbi, matchmaker or *rebbetzin*—they too could, as Deutsch says, “become amateur ethnographers, or *zamelers* (literally, ‘collectors’).”²

1. Nathaniel Deutch, *The Jewish Dark Continent: Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 103.

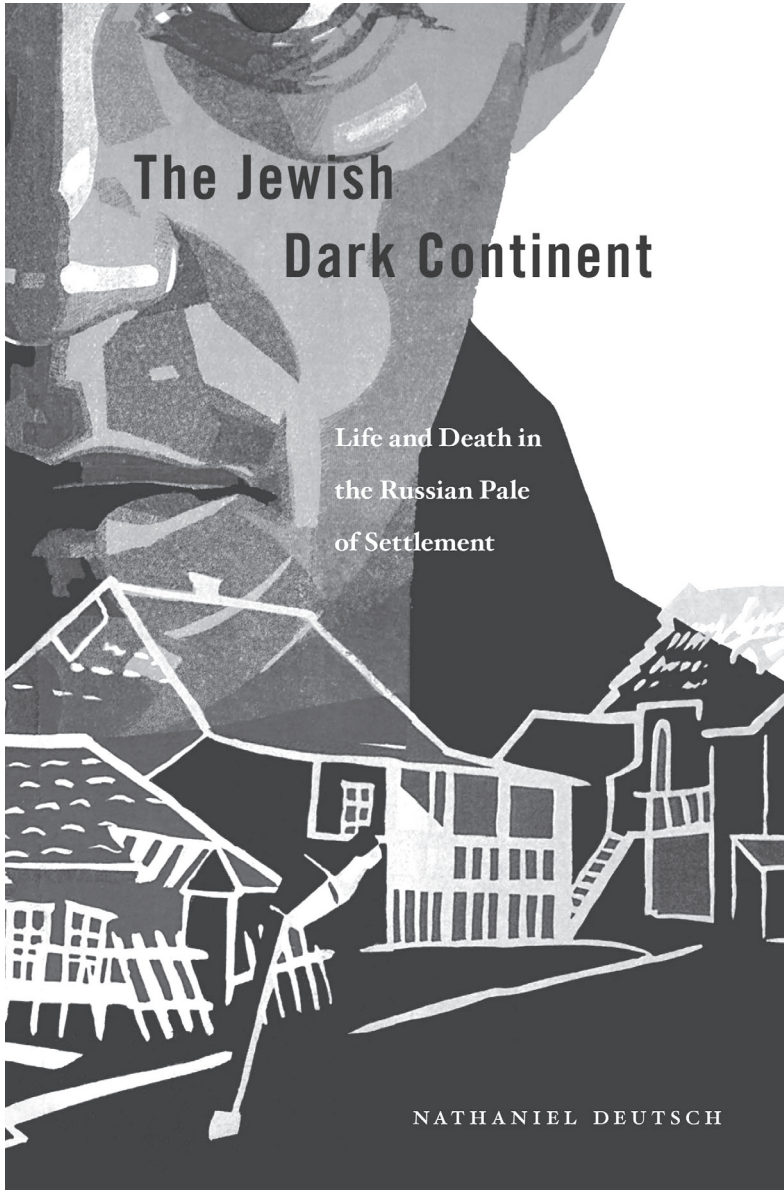
2. Deutch, *Jewish Dark Continent*, 35.

The Jewish Dark Continent is a metaphorical resurrection of An-sky's project. Deutsch's annotations in the survey read like a conversation with An-sky. Just as An-sky hoped that his ethnographic work would inspire common Jews to become ethnographers of Jewish culture themselves, so too does Deutsch extend "... an invitation to those interested in doing their own research, whether by asking the questions of someone they know or by examining the many books, articles, and Internet resources that are available."³ As an atheist, An-sky's project to revitalize Jewish culture was an attempt to divorce culture from religion, opening up culture to individuals who don't identify as religious, but wish to remain connected to Jewishness. Using An-sky's ethnographic study as a launching-pad, Deutsch calls upon today's Jews to take a deep look at their cultural roots.

In many ways, the anxieties of today's Jewish communities echo the anxieties felt by the Jewish communities in the Pale. Today, just as then, Jews face assimilation. Thus, the question what is Jewish becomes an especially heated debate. Ultimately, Judaism is based on practice, the activities that fill up the hours in a day. During the destruction of the Russian Empire, anti-Semitism directly threatened the Jewish community, so that the daily activities documented in An-sky's survey became a danger to Jewish existence. An-sky's project to revitalize Jewish culture was a way of legitimizing, and thereby safeguarding, the Jewish people. Similarly, now in the United States it is difficult to integrate Jewishness into a daily routine without turning to religion or Zionism; the amount of synagogues and Israel advocacy groups far outweigh the number of non-religious or non-Zionist Jewish organizations. Yet now more than ever, Jewish communities have the luxury of being able to practice Jewishness without risking persecution. *The Jewish Dark Continent* serves as a reminder that Jewishness has a rich and vibrant history, one that can serve as a basis for rethinking our current experiences. Unlike the Jews of the Pale, Jewish communities now have the opportunity to explore our cultural ancestry, to wrestle with its contemporary significance, and meditate on what makes us Jewish.

3. Deutch, *Jewish Dark Continent*, 101.

*The Jewish Dark Continent:
Life and Death in the Russian Pale of Settlement*
is available on Amazon.com or the
Harvard University Press website.



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Marley Love
David Lee

Rising from the Ashes

Sophia Smith

The sunny 101 highway shoots your car like an arrow straight north through the verdant farmlands. A green sign flashes “Petaluma, Population: 60,000.” This is your queue to direct your beat-up station wagon to the off-ramp and roll into your home town. New developments have begun to crop up, creeping closer to the freeway. The shiny billboards in front of the construction site show a beaming family of four centered in a comfortably generic living room. The people on the billboard are immortalized in a cookie-cutter vision of Anywhere, USA. This is Petaluma: a perfect snow globe of suburbia.

Now the off-ramp has faded away, and you are avoiding Main Street. It is a Tuesday afternoon, and the SUVs stack up in identical congested lines at 3pm, ready to drive the children to their after-school soccer practice. You skirt the high school by a distance of a few streets, and in five minutes you have arrived at your destination: the Phoenix Theater. You can feel the polarity between the suburban block and the theater’s boundary as your wheels roll from smooth pavement to the crunching, dusty rocks of the Phoenix’s parking lot. You lock your car and turn the corner to the main entrance.

The gray, art deco theater meets the cracked sidewalk right where the dirty stains fall through the cracks. You sit on the tiled breezeway in front of the locked glass doors, on the cracked ground next to the cigarette butts, and you count the number of cars that go straight across the avenue even though the sign says “right-turn only.” You get to nine before Tom Gaffey comes around the corner to unlock the door for you. He smiles wide, happy to see you, but his eyes are sad and distant as he reaches for his impressively jangling key ring.

“Hey kid, what’s happening? You just get back into town?”

“Hey Tom, uh yeah, I was looking at some apartments in San Francisco. Tryin’ to move out of my mom’s place before summer starts, get myself a job down there.” Gaffey undoes the padlock and opens the door for you. He follows you inside, offering

attentive grunts and rubbing his balding head.

“Right on. Well, hey, kid, don’t forget about us here, we’ll miss you when you leave.”

“Oh Tom, don’t be dramatic. I’ll keep visiting when I’m living in the city. It’s not that bad of a drive.” Tom grunts in assent, but has nothing to say, so you continue, “How’re things around here? Did you get that grant proposal approved for the summer music classes?”

Tom heaves up a powerful sigh. He’s got a big manilla folder in his hands, stuffed haphazardly with papers.

“Shit, I gotta tell ya, kid, it’s been real tough around here with the bad publicity. The Downtown Association is up my ass with complaints. Know what happened last weekend?”

You shake your head, but Tom is beginning to heat up and needs no prompting, “Sophomore at Petaluma High decides she wants to get shit-faced and come down to the show here last Friday, she’s too fuckin’ drunk to walk up to the box office, ends up passed out in the parking lot... Vomit! Everywhere! I had Gabe working security in the lot, he called the ambulance, got her outta here. Close fucking call of alcohol poisoning. Fifteen fucking years old! Now I got the parents trying to rip me a new one. They’ve got the whole Downtown Association lobbying to get rid of our concerts. They don’t care that those shows are the only source of funding we got. They know that if the shows go, the whole theater is fuckin’ done for, and that’s what they want.”

“Don’t worry about those assholes, Gaffey. It’s not the theater’s fault that kids get bored in this lame little town and drink themselves stupid. That’ll happen no matter what. If the theater can survive burning down to the ground twice, it can survive this. Just tell that Downtown Shit-Committee that I, for one, am so much better off because of this place.”

Gaffey shrugs and waves his hand indifferently, but before he turns away you glimpse proud satisfaction leak from his eyes. Grunting and clearing his throat, he makes his way down the side hallway to his cave of an office. You are left alone inside the cold theater.

You know that the Phoenix Theater, like its namesake, was born again from its own ashes after being engulfed by fire. It was reborn thirty years ago to become a home: a home for the youth and run by the youth. Now that Gaffey has disappeared to his office, you make your way down the main floor to the piano room and sink down on your favorite couch. You immediately spot some fresh graffiti that was certainly not present yesterday. The lines are clean and even; they are the work of a hand with the muscle memory of a million practiced strokes. Even something as small as a new tag makes you smile. The Phoenix is always changing, and when you are here you find it possible to forget about the suburban snow globe of a town outside the theater walls where everything is kept pristine and predictable.

Slowly, the after-school crowd trickles into the building. You hear the clank of skateboard trucks on the quarter pipes as someone else begins to pick on a guitar. These kids flock to the building for the freedom to skate and to make music. These kids are here for the same reason that you are: to be yourselves. This place is void of city noise ordinances, “No Skateboarding” signs, and strict vandalism laws.

After several moments of reclining on the couch, you rise and imagine that you are transcending your own ashes. At home, at school, and at work you are expected to live up to others’ presumptions of your identity. The theater holds no expectations for you. It is a fluid place of artistic sanctuary begging you to take control of your own identity. Not far from the couch is the grand piano. The keys have been graffitied with a silver paint pen, but the sound is pure and enduring. You let your fingers play on the ivory and soon the room is full to bursting with your song. The melody is fast and catchy, and your fingers prance from key to key effortlessly. You are doing your part in perpetuating the theater’s tendency towards change. You played a different song yesterday, and tomorrow you will play a new one.



KARIN GOLD

After winding down your fingers to the conclusion, you allow another kid to take over the piano. You venture outside again for a breath of fresh air. The suburbs surround the Phoenix on all sides. The manicured lawns, the painted fences, the permit-only parking: it all reeks of a glittering snow globe. It paints a pretty picture so that the suburbanites might feel comfortable with their lives here. You see a jogger, a dog-walker, a mother pushing a stroller; none of them heard your song. It makes you feel special to have a clandestine practice room that most people never discover. Most people in this town are stuck in ruts; they do the same things every day. They burn themselves down, wallow in their ashes, and



KARIN GOLD

are ignorant as to how they might lift themselves into something new. You feel bad for the suburbanites. Although you were raised amongst them, you feel as if you are of a different breed. They see the theater as an ugly blemish that poisons their tiny uniform world, but you feel differently. The theater has taught you to transcend the familiar, to welcome change, and to have the strength to cultivate your own identity above and beyond others' expectations.

Had the theater never risen from its ashes, you might have found yourself loading into a cookie-cutter SUV and heading to soccer practice with the other children. Had the theater never risen from its ashes, you might believe that your only identity is the one defined for you by teachers, parents, and bosses. Had the theater never risen from its ashes, you might find that you had never risen from yours, either.

White Noise

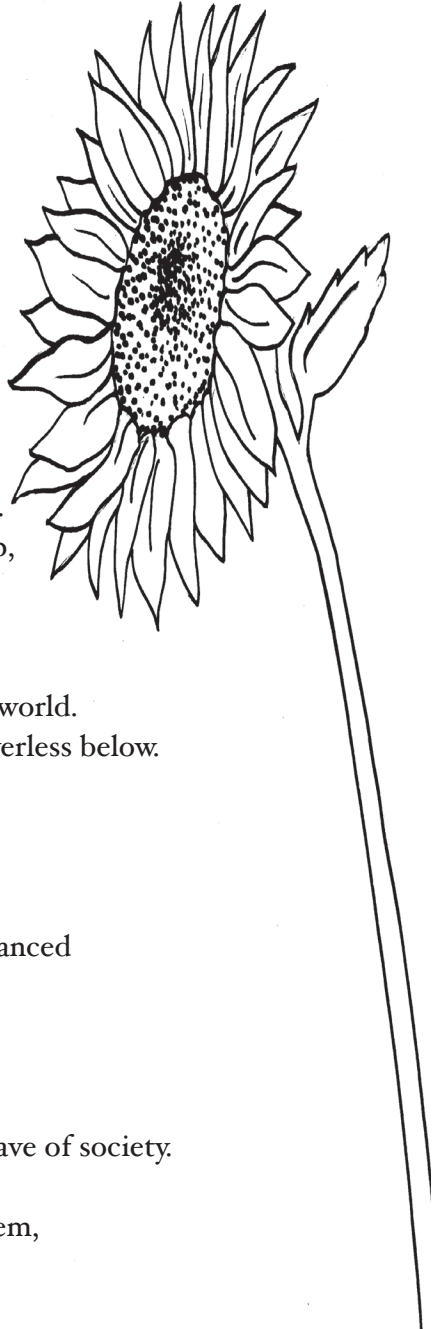
Amrit Sidbu

Run into the field of bounty,
of all that is aesthetically
pleasing.
Bask in the glory of its scent.
Let its poison overflow your lungs
and kill every living cell
within your essence.
Run into that field of
extravagance.

Where sunflowers follow the
path of light
and bestow smiles upon the world.
For behind those smiles lies a deep,
hidden meaning.
Tall and surmounting any
imposing force,
the sunflowers rise up against the world.
Grimacing over the weak and powerless below.
Sucking up all nutrients
and scoffing at the famished.

Run into the field of mercy
and allow yourself to become entranced
by the flash of colours.
They beckon those without souls.

For once you enter,
you are forever signed away as a slave of society.
A dead society full of colour.
Feed them, clothe them, bathe them,
and pray to them.
A slave of a system in which
Agua es vida.



KARIN GOLD

Drown in the sorrows of their rain.
Lay your aspirations and emotions at the gate,
for once you enter, you may never look back.
You must forget all that is sacred,
all that is truly beautiful,
and all that is sad.
Enter and sell your identity
to the whims of society;
Empty out your autonomy into a vessel
and smash it into your heads.
For disorientation is the power of this nation.
Enter the fields of lies
and become a purple sunflower.
So just sit there, and smile upon us.
The weeds.
We are proliferous beyond any means,
yet we refuse to enter your garden of hell;
Choking society with lies.
We are the destroyers of the fake,
and the creators of true *azadi*.



The Trouble With Birthdays

Oren Gotesman

Being a junior in college has its advantages. As I'm sure you can imagine, when I recently turned 21, everyone and their mother told me that I should get completely wasted as a form of celebration. It seemed fitting, as, like most new 21-year-olds, I felt obligated to abuse my newly acquired legal status to drink.

Having recently reached this milestone, I realized some things. For one, the birthdays I have had in the past were a lot more meaningful. Additionally, my future birthdays will be completely and totally lame for the rest of my life.

Let's review my past major birthdays:

At 13 - Had a Bar Mitzvah, a special party to celebrate the coming of age in Judaism. Perks: epic party, lots of gifts and expendable cash.

At 18 - Became an adult in America. Perks: get to smoke, buy lottery tickets, buy a gun, have sex, vote, join the army, go to strip clubs. Righteous.

At 21 - Went through a rite of passage of sorts in America. Perks: get to drink, gamble and go to bars.

After that, birthdays seem pointless. What do you have to look forward to next?

At 25 - You can rent a car, and run for Congress... Boring.

In response to my sad realization that we need more fun birthdays, I have thought of some interesting legalizations people should be entitled to as they pass certain milestones. I'm sure you'll agree, they are extremely necessary measures.

25 yrs - Going to a bowling alley should be illegal until the age of 25. Think about it, bowling balls are dangerous. They lead to more

deaths per year than sharks and vending machines combined. Who here hasn't lost a friend or loved one to the ball return machine? If there are only 25-year-olds bowling, you can truly appreciate how worthless your life must be if you spend your precious free time bowling. This encourages you to succeed more in life.

30 yrs - At the age of 30, everyone should be legally allowed (and perhaps mandated?) to play a rousing game of Flaming Tennis. Flaming Tennis, for those of you with no imagination, is just like regular tennis, except that the tennis balls are dipped in gasoline and lit before you play with them. At the age of 30, as you begrudgingly depart the prime of their life, you should be allowed to play a sport that will truly push you to your physical best. I see absolutely no reason why this sport is illegal, and let's not pretend it wouldn't be the highest viewed sport if it was in the Olympics.

40 yrs - 4 words: Government Subsidized Pony Program. Does this one need to be explained? At the age of 40, everyone should be entitled to receive their very own pony. Who wouldn't want their own pony? The government subsidizes a stable and food for a year. It creates jobs for the economy and I will finally be able to own my very own Buttercup.

50 yrs - Everyone should legally be allowed to own anti-tank weaponry. Can you imagine going hunting with that kind of gear? Knocking trees down left and right, deers just exploding on impact. Let me tell you, no thief would take their chances with your house if there was a sign on your lawn that said "Warning: anti-tank gear present." And it would sure take care of those damn squirrels on your lawn.

60 yrs - Pizza Party. You earned it.

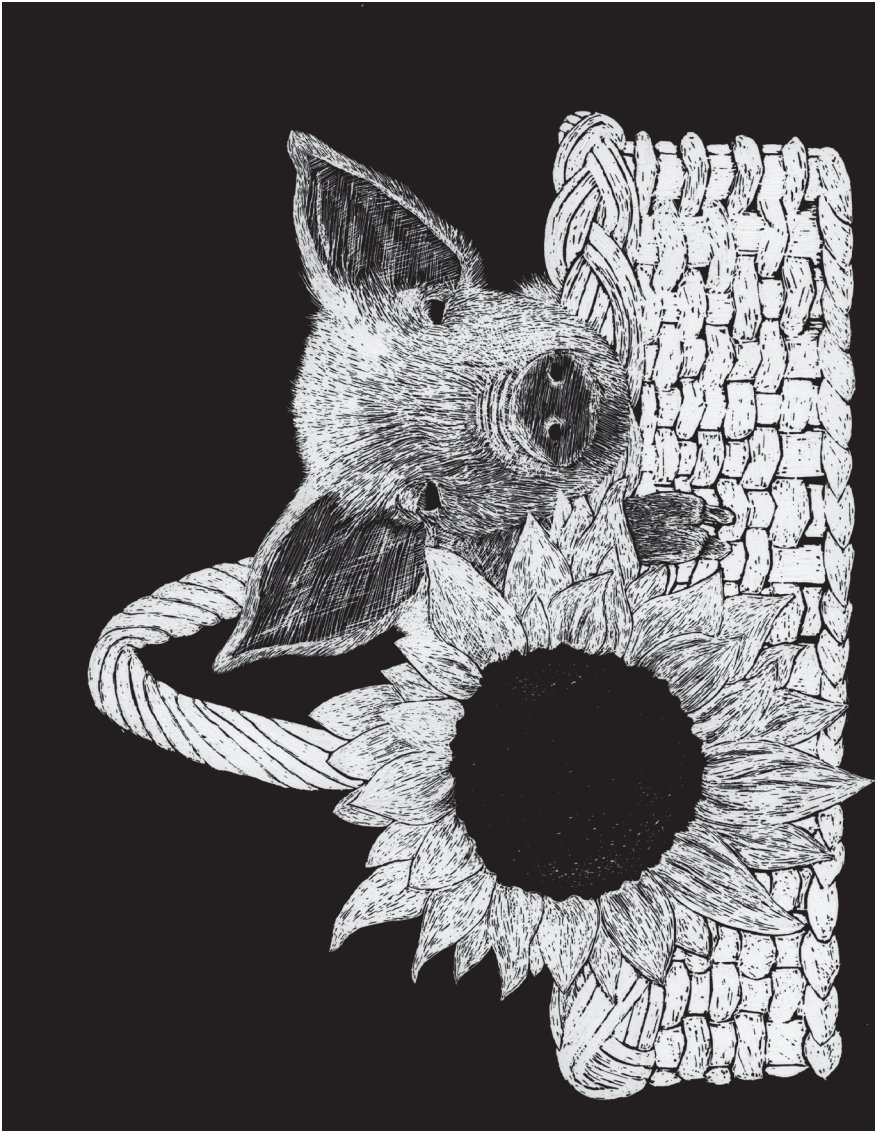
70 yrs - What better way to celebrate retirement than being eligible for a Jetpack license? Fly to the store, visit family, get stuck in an airplane engine, do anything.

80 yrs - The house you live in will promptly be replaced with a MANSION made out of sugar-free jello (only Lime or Strawberry). Any reason? Not really.

90 yrs - Feeling old and tired? SCREW THAT, time to kick it up a notch with an UPGRADE! You will undergo a surgery that will turn you into a cyborg. Your new powers will make Iron Man look like a trash can, as you use your built in ketchup and mustard dispensers to create delicious meals (NOTE: Thousand Island dressing upgrade is available). Also, energy cannons. You will receive environmentally friendly energy cannons. More powerful than your anti-tank weaponry, but not by much. This may come at the cost of your pony, because the idea of a cyborg riding a pony is ridiculous.

100 yrs - Strap in baby, because we're going to Mars! As a cyborg with 100 years of knowledge and experience on Earth, it is time for you to go to Mars in order to colonize it for the good of the human race. You will, of course, be trained to fight the Glorxons (the evil inhabitants of the planet OGLE-2005-BLG-390Lb), who are also preparing to colonize Mars in an strategic attempt to fortify it for a future strike on Earth. We cannot allow Mars to fall into their hands, and you must use your knowledge and strength to defend Earth on Mars before it's too late.

Wasn't I talking about drinking alcohol earlier in this article? Anyway, I'm sure if the United States enacted these laws, more people would look forward to their birthdays and, as we all know, that is what's important. Now is the time to get our priorities straightened out.



This Little Piggy
Scratchboard
Anonymous

LeviaCrew



Karin Gold

Year: Three
Major: Intensive
Psychology

Aaron Giannini

Year: Three
Major: History

Oren Gotesman

Year: Four
Major: Politics

Shani Chabansky

Year: Four
Major: Anthropology and
Jewish Studies

Savyonne Steindler

Year: Four
Major: Anthropology and
Jewish Studies

David Lee
Year: Three
Major: Literature

Jennine Grasso
Year: One
Major: Anthropology

Ephraim Margolin
Year: One
Major: Philosophy

Karina Garcia
Year: Three
Major: Literature
and Jewish Studies

Matthew Davis
Year: Three
Major: Environmental
Studies and Economics



We want you!

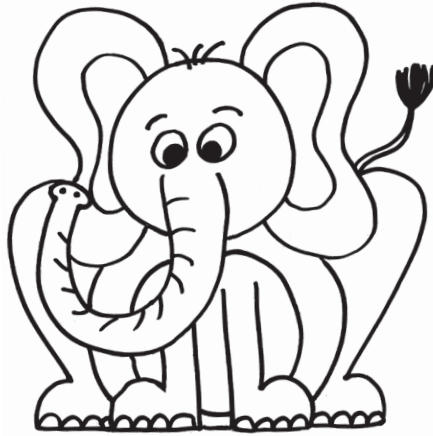
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