

Summaries of David Patterson Seminars 2009-10

Shadows of Jews in the Early Medieval Muslim Conquests *Professor Fred Astren*

A number of reports of Jewish involvement are found in narratives that describe the seventh- and eighth-century Muslim conquests of the Near East and Spain. First appearing in Arabic Muslim sources, but later in Latin and European vernaculars, the historical reliability of the evidence has been widely accepted. Closer examination reveals that the lack of corroboration for these reports, the lateness of the attestations and the ubiquity of Jews as theological and historical signifiers in Christian and Muslim writing, support their unreliability as historical evidence. When the historical circumstances of the narrative sources are identified, the symbolic function of Jews in administrative, theological and cultural contexts becomes appreciable.

Each of several reports of Jews as collaborators or as beneficiaries of the conquests found in the ninth-century Arabic work 'Conquests of the Lands' by al-Balādhurī can be shown to have historical inconsistencies or overarching imperial and administrative agendas that undermine the historical trustworthiness of the reports. For example, a report of the sweeping capitulation of all the cities in Syria places the Jews in a central role at the city of Ḥims, even though it is unlikely that Jews would have supported a foreign invader after suffering the negative consequences of having done so a few decades earlier when the Persians occupied Syria. More opaque are the earliest reports of Jews and the conquests in North Africa in the work of the tenth-century Ibn 'Abd al-Ḥakam, whose concerns are often theological and legal rather than historical. The historical unreliability of these kinds of narratives is most strongly supported by the complicated and often contradictory reports on the role of Jews in the conquest of Spain. Whether Arabic or Latin, these stories of Jews as collaborators are clearly shaped by rhetorical and ideological concerns.

In highlighting the symbolic value of Jews in both Christian and Muslim worldviews, this paper speaks both to common theological components of Western monotheism, by which Jews could function as historically significant players and to the Mediterranean environment in which Jewish political activism could be imagined and regarded as credible.

Ernest Bloch's Concepts of Race and Composition, and the Representation of Hasidism in *Baal Shem* *Dr Joshua Walden*

The violinist Yehudi Menuhin characterized Ernest Bloch, a composer and teacher whom he met as a young child growing up in San Francisco, as 'the musician as Old Testament prophet, whose speech was thunder and whose glance lightning, whose very presence proclaimed the divine fire by which, on occasion, a bystander might feel himself scorched'.¹

In fact, Bloch's role as musical prophet was largely self-styled. Secular and not particularly knowledgeable about his Jewish culture during the years after his barmitsvah, Bloch, born in Geneva in 1880, began to feel in his mid-twenties that the

¹ Humphrey Burton, *Yehudi Menuhin: A Life* (London 2000) 47.

path to defining his identity and achieving a successful musical style was by learning about the history of Judaism, unifying himself with Jews displaced throughout the Diaspora. Bloch conceived of race as a compositional inspiration and force, and put this ideology into practice in instrumental works such as *Baal Shem: Three Pictures of Hasidic Life* for accompanied violin, which evokes Eastern European Hasidic Jewish prayer rituals.

Many musicians who pioneered Bloch's music during this period, particularly his protégé Menuhin, developed a performance style that Bloch and other listeners considered to express a particularly 'Jewish' sentiment. Bloch prepared to compose by conducting library research into Jewish musical history, and incorporated into his works both preexisting melodies and those he claimed to invent by plumbing his Jewish soul. Menuhin, in performing Bloch's works, sought to convey 'Jewishness' by employing techniques that represented the sounds of Jewish ritual music-making as he imagined them. They shared a romantic notion that *Baal Shem* channelled an innate, racial Jewishness that brought it in touch with the Diaspora.

This notion of so-called 'Jewishness' in music was conveyed to listeners through the use of particular compositional motifs and performance gestures, combined with titles referring to Jewish traditional culture, and was based on the will of many Jewish and non-Jewish critics, composers and performers during this period to ascribe authentic and self-affirming racial feeling to music by Jewish artists.

An Extraordinary Historian of the Jews: The Life and Times of Elias Bickerman, 1897–1981 *Professor Albert I. Baumgarten*

Professor Baumgarten's book, *Elias Bickerman as a Historian of the Jews: A Twentieth Century Tale* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), analyses the links between an extraordinary life and the work of an outstanding scholar. Bickerman was born in Kishinev in 1897, lived in St Petersburg until after the Revolution, and then successively in Berlin (1922-33) Paris (1933-42) and the USA until 1981, before dying in Tel Aviv and being buried in Jerusalem. How, the author asks, did the fact that he lived in the most important centres of Jewish life in the twentieth century relate to his ability to contribute as a historian of the highest level?

Bickerman would not have wished this book to be written and would have disagreed with its argument. He refused to prepare an autobiography and ordered his personal papers to be destroyed. He considered the dislocations of his life a tragedy, and viewed his writings as a historian of the Jews as subsidiary to those on Greece and Rome. He was a positivist who believed that no contemporary agenda motivated his research.

Professor Baumgarten, who has discovered material in the archives of organizations and individuals who were not bound by Bickerman's order to destroy his papers, argues that Bickerman's scholarly contributions were much enriched by the radical changes in his life. He presents him primarily as a historian of the Jews, with a deep personal interest in discovering a version of the Jewish past that can be of use in the present.

Bickerman's personal motivation is clear from a curious anachronism in his writing on the Maccabees. In this he asserts that Jason and Menelaus asked Antiochus IV to outlaw Jewish beards, even though this has no basis in the ancient sources and is completely implausible for Seleucid antiquity. It makes perfect sense in the history of

Jews in Russia, however, proving Bickerman's determination to see ancient and modern Western Jewish experience in the light of each other, and to employ the past for understanding the present.

The Four Stages of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: A Reinterpretation *Professor Alan Dowty*

Israel studies, although well developed in Israel, account for only 5-10 percent of papers in Middle Eastern studies and Jewish studies at professional conferences internationally. Middle East conferences deal almost exclusively with 'the Palestine issue', while Jewish studies meetings mostly avoid the Arab-Israel conflict. Israel studies is emerging as a distinct field to cover both the conflict and domestic issues.

The first stage of the conflict, from the 1880s to 1948, featured competition over land and political control between the two communities in Palestine. Primary sources suggest that initially, during the first *aliyah* (1880s-1905), Zionist settlers 'saw' the Arab population, but did not regard their presence as a problem. Settlers experienced consistent hostility, but believed that their introduction of modern civilization into a 'backward' area would reconcile the local population to the reestablishment of a Jewish homeland.

The second stage of the conflict, from 1948 to the late 1980s, saw confrontations between Israel and neighbouring Arab states. It was only during the third stage that Palestinians emerged as the major actors opposite Israel, marked especially by the *intifada* in the late 1980s. Although the conflict appeared to be heading for a two-state solution, tectonic shifts in world affairs – the rise of non-state actors, changes in the nature of warfare and the rise of religious radicalism – inhibited this development. The turn of the century saw the conflict enter a fourth stage, characterized, especially after 2006, by the arrival of new parties (Iran and its proxies), religious militancy and the fragmentation of authority among Palestinians. Some achievements of the Oslo peace process remain intact, but it is unclear how long this stage will endure or where it will lead.

A Thirteenth-century Arthurian Tale in Hebrew: A Unique Literary Exchange *Dr Tamar Drukker*

In 1279 an anonymous Jewish scholar from Italy, probably Tuscany, translated into Hebrew an Arthurian prose romance, of which only a fragment now survives in a single manuscript. This comprises the writer's introduction and the beginning of a tale entitled 'The Book of the Destruction of King Artus' Round Table'. It seems to be an adaptation of a now-lost Italian source, combining material from the prose tales of *Merlin* and the *Mort Artu*.

It faithfully retells the story of Arthur's birth and of the adulterous affair between Lancelot and Guinevere. Yet the focus of the narrative, its aims and its significance have been modified, perhaps in response to the rich biblical echoes in Hebrew and the expectations of its Jewish audience. The translator delights in describing the world of romance, but tries to minimize direct Christian references,

despite the Christian and chivalric ethos of the courtly world of the Hebrew Artus and his knights.

This unique example of Arthurian romance in Hebrew from the Middle Ages illustrates the transmission of a popular tale from one cultural context to another. It is not surprising that a Hebrew translation of the Arthurian tale should exist, since Jews commonly showed interest in, familiarity with and openness towards non-Hebraic secular narratives. But it is curious that only this fragment survives and that there are no references to it, or to Arthurian lore in general, in contemporary Hebrew writings. The translator admits in the introduction that he undertook the work as a therapy for his own depression, but he cannot have been the sole intended audience for the tale, since he goes on to deliver a strong defence of romance in general and of this text in particular.

The work offers a glimpse into the literary world of Italian Jews and helps explain how tales shape their readers and are shaped by them.

Aramaic Targum and the Angelic World *Professor Robert Hayward*

Current scholarly interest in angels during the Second Temple and Early Rabbinic periods prompts one to ask what position they occupy in the Aramaic Targumim, especially the Aramaic versions of the Books of Moses, the Targums of Onqelos, Neofiti and Pseudo-Jonathan and the Fragment Targums. Targum Onqelos, the 'official' Targum promoted by the rabbinic sages, rarely introduces angels into its exegesis of the Hebrew text. But on occasion, when angels are explicitly brought into the interpretation of individual verses, the sophistication and complexity of this Targum becomes apparent.

Onqelos consistently translates the place-name *Be'er-lahai-roi* (Genesis 16:14, 24:62, 25:11) as 'the well over which the living angel appeared'. The term 'living angel' represents an Aramaic phrase which might also be translated 'the angel of the covenant', the same phrase used by Targum Jonathan of Malachi 3:1, to render Hebrew *malakh ha-berit*. The reason that such an expression might be applicable to Onqelos's translation of the Genesis verses seems firmly based in the Hebrew narrative of God's covenant with Abraham, which immediately precedes the story of Hagar.

Onqelos's strategy in dealing with angels in the account of Jacob's change of name to Israel and his subsequent meeting with Esau (Genesis 32 and 33) is similarly marked by profound knowledge of the biblical texts and a nuanced approach to both the Hebrew and Aramaic languages.

While other Targumim refer to angels more frequently than Targum Onqelos, sometimes naming them and explaining their activities at particular times, they offer no systematic description of angels in heaven. Entirely lacking in these Targums is information about angelic organization of the sort described in writings like 1 Enoch and Jubilees. Nor do individual angels assume a leading role in Targumic aggadah, of the kind ascribed to Raphael in the book of Tobit. We do, however, hear of

‘ministering angels’; and much is made in the Palestinian Targums of Israel’s association with these heavenly hosts as they offer regular praise to God.

Graphic Representation in Kabbalah, 1325 -1800 *Dr Menachem Kallus*

Kabbalistic graphic depictions of the relationships between Divinity and creation are some of the most complex visual texts in the history of religion. Dr Kallus is the first to investigate these and has studied microfilms of all relevant manuscripts in the public domain, both those from prior to the mid-sixteenth-century transformation of Kabbalah associated with Rabbi Isaac Luria, as well as those reflecting Lurianic thought.

He has discovered in the Bodleian Library the two most elaborate known graphic scrolls of pre-Lurianic Kabbalah. One of these is the only known copy of the medieval ‘Great Parchment’, composed by Reuven Sarfatti around 1325 (Ms. Oxford-Neubauer no. 2429, which was translated in the 1480s for Pico della Mirandola and regarded in 2004 as lost). The other is an elaborate undated classical Renaissance (?) scroll (Ms. Oxford-Neubauer no. 1949). He also examined notebooks associated with the Kabbalist-artist Nathan Hammerschlag (c. 1685), who was responsible for the most comprehensive and elaborate of the post-Lurianic ‘maps of Divinity’ produced in the first 250 years of its development.

Dr Kallus outlined the background and theological foundations for such works, based on Kabbalistic texts reflecting Neoplatonic pan-en-theism in the case of the pre-Lurianic Ms. 1949, and on Lurianic texts for the later ones. These seek to justify an enterprise which might otherwise have been interdicted by the biblical prohibition on images of the Divine.

He also reported a significant recent discovery. The Hammerschlag text shares an illustration with the Latin *Kabbalah Denudata* of 1677, although the latter uses a different text. He found a unique sub-genre in some Bodleian manuscripts predating both these documents and containing the same illustrations with both sets of explanation. This, together the bibliographical discovery that the Hammerschlag codices had formed part of the library of the eighteenth-century heresiologist Rabbi Jacob Emden, helps refine our understanding of these fascinating documents.

The Changing Profile of American Jewry, 1990-2008 *Professor Barry A. Kosmin*

American Jews are becoming more diverse in terms of forms of Jewish identification, as well as in ancestry and ethnic origin, as a result of social processes including secularization, conversion, adoptions, intermarriage and migration. The shift can be attributed mainly to a combination of disaffection from Judaism and intermarriage. Since 1990, half of all marrying American Jews have married non-Jews, so that there are two new mixed households for every homogeneous Jewish one. In the years since the lecturer’s first landmark survey in 1990, the ‘Jewish by religion’ population has lost 750,000, while the ‘ethnic-cultural Jewish’ population has gained half a million. As a whole, the American Jewish population has remained relatively stable over the past two decades. It was 5.5 million in 1990 and is estimated at between 5.2 and 5.4 million today. However, its composition has changed.

The subpopulation of American Jews by religion (including children) is 3.3 to 3.4 million. Roughly one-quarter of these consider themselves Orthodox, and the others either Conservative or Reform. Cultural Jews, who identify by ethnicity alone, have grown from 20 percent to 37 percent of the American Jewish population. This parallels the increase during the same period of Americans who say they have no religion. Between 1990 and 2008, these 'Nones' increased their share of the US adult population from 8 percent to 15 percent.

One consequence of the high number of mixed marriages is that the population with some Jewish ancestry, but following another religion, tends to expand. The population of recent Jewish parentage following other religions (JOR) is estimated at around 2.5 million. In addition, non-Jewish adults living in households with Core Jewish or Jewish origin individuals number around 2.2 million. The 'Extended Jewish population' in the US - the number of Americans eligible under the State of Israel's 'Law of Return' - was estimated at 8 million people in 1990, but is currently estimated to number over 10 million.

The Image of Judas Iscariot Among Jews and Christians *Professor Ora Limor*

Judas Iscariot plays a central role in three literary works, one Jewish and two Christian. *Sefer Toledot Yeshu*, the *Legend of the Finding of the True Cross* and the medieval 'apocryphal' biography of Judas all present Judas as a revealer of a hidden truth, a subversive figure and representative of the Jewish people.

In *Sefer Toledot Yeshu*, Judas has a far greater place than in the Gospels, alone saving the Jews through his own powers and presenting a Jewish counter-narrative to the Christian story. Its different versions also include other plots, legends and even jokes, all of which depict Judas as a great Jewish hero.

The *Legend of the Finding of the True Cross*, known since the late fourth century, also presents a Jewish hero named Judas, whose role is to reveal to Queen Helena, mother of Constantine, the burial place of the True Cross and the Cross itself. This Judas, later named Kyriakos, also represents Judaism, but unlike Judas Iscariot he converts to Christianity, expressing the possibility of correcting the acts of Judas Iscariot. The later darker medieval view that the sin of the Jews is not subject to atonement is evident from the third text, the apocryphal biography of Judas that appeared in Europe in the twelfth century and was included in the thirteenth-century Golden Legend. This describes Judas as incorrigibly continuing to sin even after the worst of his deeds had been forgiven by Jesus. If Judas, as his name implies, was the archetypal Jew, then these must be negative qualities of Jews in general.

The identification of the figure of Judas with the Jewish collectivity may help explain the Jewish preference – from the second century onward – for the name 'Israel' to describe the religious, mythic and historical identity of the Jewish people.

Nineveh the Fallen: Reflections on Nahum the Prophet and Nahum the Book² *Professor Peter Machinist*

² The version of this summary in the 2008-9 issue of the *Annual Report* appeared as a result of an editorial misunderstanding.

Nahum is a little book, but if placed in what I hope is the right literary and historical contexts, it clarifies much about the course of biblical literary development and about the complexity of political and cultural interaction in the imperial ancient Near East of the first millennium BCE. Nahum has not always had a good press, since its focus on a savage denunciation of Nineveh, and the Neo-Assyrian empire of which Nineveh was the last major capital, has been taken as evidence of an excessively negative, violent and religiously coarse tone and outlook unworthy of the main trends in biblical prophecy. The result of such an evaluation had been a marginalizing of Nahum in biblical scholarship, although not a total neglect. More recently, that orientation has changed: although Nahum continues to be addressed for its violent tone toward Nineveh, the book has found new interest, for example, among feminist scholars because of the imagery it uses to denounce Nineveh; among historians for its possible witness to later Neo-Assyrian history; and among literary scholars for the character and quality of its poetry and the complications of its compositional structure.

This paper, resuming and extending work I have done and am currently engaged in on Nahum, poses three questions: (1) is the book of Nahum a coherent literary composition, or one that is disfigured by fragments out of which it has been assembled and composed in several stages of work? (2) Based on the judgment about its composition, what are the date(s) and setting(s) of the book, and what do they tell us about the book's character and purpose? More specifically, is the book, in its denunciation of Nineveh and Assyria and its description of their downfall, a witness to an event already past or a prophecy, a prediction, of one yet to happen? (3) If Nahum the book is essentially a witness to the past, as I try in fact to argue, how and why did it come to be regarded and classified as a piece of predictive prophecy, as the ancient evidence shows it most certainly did?

The question about literary coherence can be answered in the positive, and at least two facets of the text, as we now read it in its Tiberian Masoretic form, point in this direction. The more important is the dramatic sense of the whole: the three chapters of the book flow from one to the other, moving from a general statement about the Israelite God's awesome cosmic power to punish the guilty and offer refuge to those loyal to him (1), through the enactment of this power in the destruction of Nineveh/Assyria (2-3:17), to a climax referring to the exaltation and relief of all those, implicitly former subjects of Assyria, who hear of the great disaster (3:18-19). This narrative flow is reinforced by the recurrence of words, phrases and images throughout the text, which echo and play off one another. To be sure, there are some textual features which suggest that the text as we have it may not be everywhere coherent, or free of editorial tinkering or confusion in transmission. So, for example, we encounter a verse that seems not quite to fit into its context (2:3), some possible ambiguity in the antecedents of particular verbs and nouns (especially 1:13-2:1), verses that do not make sense and so may be corrupt (e.g. 2:8), and units that appear to be separate unto themselves (e.g. 1:2-3). But these difficulties cannot undermine the markers of coherence just noted. Moreover, many, if not most of the difficulties may be explained on the argument that rather than a continuous rewriting of the book over several stages, we have here one author who used various traditions and even literary units, like 1:2-3, which he adapted for his view of the drama of the text; subsequently, then, the text would have suffered some corruption in the course of transmission.

If there is, thus, a basic authorial coherence to the book of Nahum, what does this say about the date and setting of its composition? The key issue, as noted, is whether the narrative is presenting the downfall of Nineveh as a past event or as a prediction of the future. Scholarship has been divided on this issue, but in recent years more interpreters have looked at the text as a genuine prediction than as a witness to a past event, and so dated it before the known conquest of Nineveh in 612 BCE by the Babylonians and the Medes. On either solution, there is virtual agreement that the text shows familiarity with the Neo-Assyrian empire: with some of its particular terminology, geography and practices (e.g. 3:17), and, more specifically, with the conquest of Thebes in Egypt in 667 BCE by the Assyrian king, Ashurbanipal (3: 8-10) – this conquest furnishing at least a *terminus post quem* for the composition of the present Nahum text. Several features, however, point to the present text post-dating the conquest of Nineveh in 612. These include: the specific description of the use of water in Nineveh's conquest, especially in chapter 2 but also elsewhere in the book, suggesting that it is not simply a literary-theological motif, but a reminiscence of an actual historical event; the framing of the narrative of the conquest in the past tense, involving a messenger who announces it as good news (2:1) and the exaltation and relief felt by all who hear of it at the end (3:18-19); and the employment of a number of verbs in the past or historical present tense to describe the Nineveh conquest and with it the downfall of Assyria (e.g. 3:17). To be sure, there are some verbs describing the conquest that appear to have a future meaning, though this is not certain (e.g. 2:14). But if they do, this, plus the known fact of Assyria's progressively weakened hold on its imperial conquests in Judah and other parts of the western Near East in the decades before Nineveh's conquest, may suggest, as A. George proposed,³ that behind the present form of the Nahum text lies a developing expression in Judah of hope, in advance of the actual conquest of 612, that Nineveh would one day meet its just fate. Indeed, this is a hope already put forward by some leading biblical prophets of a century earlier, viz., the later eighth century BCE - foremost among them the First Isaiah. And Nahum appears to echo in a number of places this Isaiah or the tradition that he represents (e.g. 5:11-13 and Isaiah 5:29-30),⁴ pointing to a deliberate effort to assert that Isaiah's promise of Assyria's eventual defeat (e.g. 10:12) was realized in Nahum's day.

If the present form of the book of Nahum thus reflects the downfall of Nineveh and with it the Assyrian state, its rhetorically charged language, and its use of a variety of literary/theological motifs from both Israelite/Judaean tradition (e.g. 1:2-3; the tradition of Isaiah) and beyond, indicate that what Nahum provides is not a documentary report on Nineveh's fall, but a literary/theological response to that fall. Yet the text cannot have been composed too much later than the downfall in 612, that is, not later than the following century or two (sixth-fifth centuries BCE), because its knowledge of Assyria, in terms of history, terminology and geography, seems often too specific for what was apparently known about Assyria after that period, as indicated by faulty Greek and Greek-Jewish depictions. Our third question thus remains: how, if the present form of the Nahum book is a witness to the downfall of Nineveh already past, did it come to be regarded as a prophetic prediction of that downfall in the future? That it was so regarded is evident from its place as one of the

³ A. George, 'Nahum (le livre de)', *Suppléments au Dictionnaire de la Bible* 6 (1960) col. 297.

⁴ P. Machinist, 'The Image of Assyria in the First Isaiah', *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983) 735-6.

Twelve Minor Prophets in the Hebrew Bible, and from the references to it as predictive prophecy in Second Temple texts like Tobit (14:14: Sinaiticus version), the commentary (*peshet*) on Nahum from Qumran, and Josephus (*Antiquities* IX: 2, 3). The solution to this problem appears to begin with some of the future-oriented elements in the Nahum text, noted above, and with the association of Nahum with another Minor prophetic book, Habakkuk, which is structurally and thematically its mirror. As Nahum deals with the Neo-Assyrian empire, Habakkuk deals with its successor, the Neo-Babylonian (Chaldaeian) and its effect on Judah - the notion of Neo-Babylonia as the imperial successor being widely assumed in the Hebrew Bible.⁵ Furthermore, although within the Twelve Minor Prophets the order of some of the books can vary among the ancient manuscripts, for Nahum and Habakkuk the order is always Nahum, then Habakkuk. And yet there is a significant difference between the two books: if Nahum treats the downfall of Neo-Assyria as past, Habakkuk faces Neo-Babylonia in its period of strength, so can only wonder how long its imperial oppression will continue (e.g. 2:17) and hope for its end (e.g. 2:1-5). I would suggest, therefore, that Nahum and Habakkuk were brought together as a pair, at some point in the period of the Babylonian Exile or early Second Temple, and quite probably before the entire Twelve Minor Prophets section was arranged. Habakkuk, doubtless the later of the two texts to be composed, may even have been in part modelled on Nahum. The point was that the downfall of Nineveh and Assyria, which Nahum had proclaimed, was taken as a precedent for the hope that Neo-Babylonia would also fall. In fact, this very reasoning is attested elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, in the book of Jeremiah (50:17-18). Thus, the connection with Habakkuk made Nahum a predictive prophecy fulfilled, and not simply a witness of something past.

From Joshua to Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai: Towards a Typology of Galilean Hero *Professor Elchanan Reiner*

The lecture dealt with various incarnations of a myth popular among Jews of the Galilee during the Byzantine period. No full version survives, but it can be reconstructed from fragmentary texts and oral traditions relating to sacred sites in the Galilee, and traced also in talmudic and midrashic literature.

At the centre of this myth stand three main figures: Joshua son of Nun, who led the Israelites' entry into Canaan after the death of Moses; Joseph, who died in Egypt but whose remains were carried through the desert for forty years; and Miriam, the sister of Moses, whose water-well accompanied the tribes until their arrival in the land. Galilean Jews seem to have identified the Land of Canaan with their own region, which is why Joshua's name continued to appear there in various forms, most importantly as 'Jesus', and commonly in conjunction with Joseph and Miriam.

That earlier section of the foundation story has been investigated and published. The lecturer went on to describe how the narrative was discredited in the fifth century, at the peak of Byzantine power, when Jesus became a militant and imperial rather than a Galilean figure. In the light of fierce hostility between Jews and Christians, Jewish attitudes towards Joshua moved from ambivalence to hostility, and he came to be merged in the fifth century or so with Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a

⁵ Ibid. 736-7.

second-century leader who had hidden with his son for thirteen years in a cave, and later became the central figure in the central text of the Kabbalah, the Zohar.

Bar Yohai and of Joshua-Jesus were said to have died on 18 Iyar, when Joshua was also commemorated, and which became Lag Ba'omer, a day of festive celebrations at the tomb of Bar Yohai in Meron, a location earlier associated with Joshua.

The Art of Interfaith Dialogue: Looking at Pictures with Jews and Christians *Dr Aaron Rosen*

The assumption that Jews do not possess a tradition of representational art, or that Judaism assigns only negative value to the visual arts, has been besieged in recent years from all directions. Kalman Bland and Margaret Olin have demonstrated how these notions of the 'artless Jew' have little grounding in Jewish tradition and history, arising instead out of modern philosophical and art-historical prejudices. Recent studies in the Hebrew Bible, midrash and kabbalah have borne out this insight, highlighting a rich, long-standing interest in visuality in Jewish thought. At the same time, the study of Jewish art history - the examination of specific Jewish spaces, ritual items and the fine arts - has emerged as a field in its own right.

But while the studies of Jewish art and theological aesthetics have begun to flourish independently, relatively little has been done to draw these two pursuits together, to ask how specific works of art might serve as key resources for thinking about contemporary Jewish life. One arena in which such reflection might be particularly fecund, I suggest, is in the domain of interfaith dialogue, in particular between Jews and Christians. Looking at the ways in which three modern Jewish artists - Marc Chagall, Mark Rothko and R. B. Kitaj - adapted Christian subjects and symbols in their work, yields two important results. On the one hand, unpacking these borrowings can open up unexpected meanings for Jewish viewers, undermining simplistic paradigms of authenticity. On the other hand, this type of investigation can generate new opportunities and topics for interfaith dialogue; a process which too often decays into stale repetitions of commonality, or, worse still, patterns of recrimination.

The Balfour Declaration: An Unexplored Dimension *Professor Jonathan Schneer*

The Balfour Declaration is usually viewed as the fruit of Chaim Weizmann's success in tutoring the British governing elite on the principles of Zionism. Without questioning Weizmann's role, the lecturer showed the Declaration to be the result of a process marked as much by intrigue and betrayal as by idealism and vision. He focused on the secret campaign by British Muslims, Turcophiles and 'Easterners' in the Government to find a way round the killing fields of the Western Front by arranging a separate peace with Turkey. Basil Zaharoff, the notorious arms merchant, made several secret journeys to Switzerland on behalf of the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, and in Geneva met with Turkish envoys and eventually with Enver Pasha himself, to convey Lloyd George's peace terms. He did so even as the British

Cabinet, unaware of Zaharoff's mission, was debating and approving the Balfour Declaration, promising to support establishment of a homeland for the Jewish people in Palestine. Zaharoff was allowed repeatedly to convey to the Ottomans that could continue flying their flag over much of the Middle East – including Palestine - if they would conclude a separate peace with Britain and her wartime allies. The message was delivered for the last time in January 1918, two months after the Balfour Declaration had been made public. Had the Turks accepted the offer, the Declaration would have gone down in history as just another phrase, like 'war to end war', and 'peace without annexations or indemnities', designed to persuade an increasingly reluctant public to go on fighting. It would certainly not be considered a foundation stone of modern Israel.

Pesher and Midrash in the Dead Sea Scrolls *Dr Aharon Shemesh*

Pesher is a type of literature unique to the Dead Sea Scrolls, comprising well-organized interpretations of defined biblical text units. Each segment of these texts begins by quoting a biblical verse, followed by its explication, signalled by the phrase 'its *pesher* ["interpretation"] concerns' or 'the *pesher* of the matter is'. All *pesherim* relate to prophetic biblical texts, which they interpret as referring to their authors' own time or to the eschaton. The theological assumption behind *pesherim* is their authors' special ability to extrapolate the secrets embedded in the words of the prophets, who were themselves unaware of them.

The repeated use of phrases such as 'its *pesher* concerns', to present the interpretation of the prophetic vision, has led modern editors to refer to them all as '*pesherim*'.

But this designation *pesher* is inaccurate for two reasons. On the one hand, the only work that uses the word *pesher* to describe its content (4Q180) does not fit the genre designated *pesher* by scholars. On the other hand, the use of phrases such as 'the *pesher* of the matter is', is not limited to the *pesher* genre, since 4Q159 and 4Q252 mention these phrases several times although are not *pesher* in the literary sense.

How then might the Qumran writers have designated their exegetical creations? I suggest they would have called them *midrash*. The verb *darash*, whose original biblical meaning is to seek (e.g. Genesis 25:22), later acquired the meaning 'to inquire,' or 'to interpret', the noun *midrash* denoting the interpretations resulting from this activity. The best example for this use of the word *midrash* in the scrolls is from 4Q249, a fragmentary papyrus scroll whose contents can hardly be recognized. But a note scribbled across the back of one of its fragments states *Midrash of the Book of Moses*, which, placed where it is, must describe the contents of the scroll.

Gershom Scholem and Morton Smith *Professor Guy Stroumsa*

Morton Smith, the eminent American historian of ancient religions, spent the war years studying at the Hebrew University, with Gershom Scholem, and writing a Hebrew doctoral dissertation on the Tannaitic parallels to the Gospels. On returning to the USA he corresponded with his former mentor at first in Hebrew, then in English until Scholem's death.

A trove of about 130 letters in the Scholem archive in the National Library of Israel reflects the deep friendship which developed between the two great scholars. It also sheds light on Smith's discovery of a letter attributed to Clement of Alexandria in the St Sabas monastery in the Judean desert, adding substantially to the case for the authenticity of Smith's find, which has been denied in various, usually ultra-conservative Christian, circles. The correspondence, representing a curious chapter in the history of twentieth-century scholarship, has recently been edited by the lecturer.⁶

The Scribes of the Dead Sea Scrolls *Professor Emanuel Tov*

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered between 1947 and 1956, include literally thousands of scroll fragments of all sizes, providing us with detailed insight into Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek documents from between 250 BCE and 70 CE. They were found in eleven caves in cliffs close to the Qumran settlement, predominantly in the so-called caves 1, 4, and 11, but also in sites south of Qumran. Approximately one-third were written at Qumran, near the Dead Sea, and the remainder taken there from other places in ancient Israel.

The physical aspects of the scrolls, comprising Hebrew and Aramaic Bible as well as non-biblical compositions, allow one to reconstruct the activity of the scribes who produced them, ranging from the preparation of the leather to the actual writing in columns. There is evidence of cooperation between scribes, their varying levels of precision and the learning process undergone by novice scribes, including the way they made errors and corrected mistakes.

The lecturer described the materials from which the scrolls were made, the scripts used, the way sheets were stitched together to form scrolls, the wrappings and jars in which they were stored, and their find-places. The different sizes of scrolls, sheets, columns, lines and margins have been studied, as have the ruling of lines for guiding the writing, the use of columns, different types of ink, correction procedures, writing positions, ways of writing divine names, other signs used in the text and margins, the use of repair patches in mid-text and ways of tying strings around the scrolls to secure them.

⁶ Guy G. Stroumsa (ed.) *Gershom Scholem and Morton Smith: Correspondence, 1945-1982*. Jerusalem Studies in Religion and Culture 9; Leiden, Boston: Brill (2008).