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ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES

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A J S R E V I E W THE JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR JEWISH STUDIES VOLUME XXV, NUMBER 1, 2000/2001

Articles

- 1 ZACHARY BRAITERMAN Joseph Soloveitchik and Immanuel Kant's Mitzvah-Aesthetic
- 25 JON D. LEVENSON Religious Affirmation and Historical Criticism in Heschel's Biblical Interpretation
- JEFFREY R. WOOLF
 Between Law and Society:
 Mahariq's Responsum on "The Ways of the Gentile"

Review Essays

71 MATT GOLDISH
New Approaches to Jewish Messianism
Moshe Idel. Messianic Mystics
Harris Lenowitz. The Jewish Messiahs

85 BENJAMIN SCHWARTZ, z"I
On Memory: Personal and Cultural
Vera Schwarcz. Bridges Across Broken Time:
Chinese and Jewish Cultural Memory

Book Reviews

- 97 Nehama Aschkenasy. Woman at the Window:
 Biblical Tales of Oppression and Escape
 Alice Bach. Women, Seduction and Betrayal in Biblical Narrative
 ESTHER FLICHS
- 101 Meir Bar-Ilan. Some Jewish Women in Antiquity
 CHARLOTTE FONROBERT
- 104 Edward Lipiński. Semitic Languages:

 Outline of a Comparative Grammar
 ROBERT D. HOBERMAN
- 107 Daniel Sperber. *The City in Roman Palestine* HAYIM LAPIN

- 109 Dov Gera. Judaea and Mediterranean Politics, 219 to 161 B.C.E. ADAM PORTER
- 111 Miriam Peskowitz. Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender and History ARYEH COHEN
- 113 Malachi Beit-Arié, Colette Sirat, and Mordecai Glatzer.

 Codices hebraicis litteris exarati
 quo tempore scripti fuerint exhibentes. Vol. 1: Jusqu'à 1020

 MENAHEM SCHMELZER
- Joseph Yahalom. Palestinian Vocalised Piyyut Manuscripts in the Cambridge Genizah Collections WOUT JAC. VAN BEKKUM
- 120 Naḥem Ilan. "Metzah Aharon" Commentary on the Pentateuch by Rabbi Aharon Garish BENJAMIN HARY
- 122 Robin R. Mundill. England's Jewish Solution:

 Experiment and Expulsion, 1262–1290
 PAUL BRAND
- 124 Steven B. Smith. Spinoza, Liberalism, and the Question of Jewish Identity HEIDI M. RAVVEN
- 129 Louis E. Newman. Past Imperatives:

 Studies in the History and Theory of Jewish Ethics

 MILTON R. KONVITZ
- 131 David Assaf. Regal Way: The Life and Times of R. Israel of Ruzhin Arthur Green
- 133 Issachar Ben-Ami. Saint Veneration Among the Jews in Morocco
 MICHAEL M. LASKIER
- 137 Jonathan Frankel. The Damascus Affair:
 "Ritual Murder," Politics, and the Jews in 1840
 HILLEL J. KIEVAL
- 142 Edna Nachshon. Yiddish Proletarian Theater:
 The Art and Politics of the Artef, 1925–1940
 JACOB WEITZNER
- 144 Rakhmiel Peltz. From Immigrant to Ethnic Culture:

 American Yiddish in South Philadelphia
 GEORGE JOCHNOWITZ

[1]

	Hebrew Article
175	Books Received
163	Collected Studies
	Milton Shain. Antisemitism ZEV GARBER
159	Kevin MacDonald. Separation and Its Discontents: Toward an Evolutionary Theory of Anti-Semitism
155	David A. Brenner. Marketing Identities: The Invention of Jewish Ethnicity in "OST und WEST" GABRIEL FINDER
152	Glenda Abramson. Drama and Ideology in Modern Israel NANCY E. BERG
149	Yaacov Shavit. Athens in Jerusalem Translated by Chaya Naor and Niki Werner. ELLIOT RABIN
147	David Aberbach. Revolutionary Hebrew, Empire and Crisis: Four Peaks in Hebrew Literature and Jewish Survival JAMES S. DIAMOND

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For much of the modern period, the Jews of Eastern Europe constituted the human reservoir of Jewish civilization, the source of many of the currents that shape Jewish life even today. Scholars of literature and religion, historians, and experts in allied fields, stimulated in part by the new accessibility of long-hidden archival materials in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, have begun to re-envision East European Jewry and its place in modern Jewish history and culture. In 2002-2003, the CAJS will sponsor an interdisciplinary seminar devoted to assembling and placing in perspective the fruits of the new scholarship.

Among the possible questions the seminar will consider are: What are the limits of "crisis" as an explanatory model for individual and collective change among East European Jews? In what ways did East European Jewry remain a coherent entity across the periodic recastings of political boundaries in the region? What were the lines of influence between Jews and their mostly Slavic neighbors? The seminar will also consider neglected issues of gender and economic life among East European Jews. What historical contexts made possible the rise in Eastern Europe of Jewish cultural modernism, with the ideal of the emancipated (male or female) self at its center? How have the pioneering figures of Jewish scholarship in Eastern Europe, with their pronounced populist bent, shaped the field's intellectual lineage? How can attention to the intersection of elite and popular culture illuminate such epochal developments as the rise of Hasidism as a mass movement, the political mobilization of the Jewish 'silent majority' at the beginning of the 20th century, and the renewal of Jewish national identity in the USSR during the Cold War?

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Applications are available on our website: www.cjs.upenn.edu or contact

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