

## LAKE SHORE DRIVE SYNAGOGUE

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**IN, FROM, AND WITH EVERYTHING**


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In tying her November 10 tribute to her father, Dr. Joshua Miller, to the weekly portion (Chaye Sarah), Dr. Lauren Kimmel referred to him as one blessed as Abraham was, בכ"ל, "in everything." This reminded me of the blessing we invoke on everyone as we recite the Grace After Meals, the *birchat hamazon*, (page 192 of the Art Scroll Siddur), "May He bless ...ours and all that is ours-just as our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were blessed **in everything, from everything, with everything**, so may He bless us all together with a perfect blessing." The bold-faced phrase in Hebrew is כל, מכל, בכל.

This concatenation of the uses of the word כל is constructed from three verses in Genesis:

Genesis 24:1: "and the Lord had blessed Abraham in all ( בכל ) things"

Genesis 27:33: "And Isaac trembled very much, and said, Who then is he who hunted venison, and brought it to me, and I have eaten of all ( מכל ) before you came, and have blessed him?"

Genesis 33:11 "Take, I beg you, my blessing that is brought to you; because God has dealt graciously with me, and because I have enough ( וְכִי יֵשׁ לִי כֹל )"

The Rabbis (Baba Batra 17a) interpret these phrases to mean that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were given a foretaste of the world to come, the evil inclination had no control over them (לא שלט בהן), nor did the Angel of Death, and neither did the worms. They also use these phrases (Sota 5a) to explain a puzzling use of the phrase "at all" in Job 24:24:

רומו מעט ואיננו נהמכנו ככל

"They are exalted for a little while, but then they are gone; brought low at all." The Rabbis say that the first part of the quote means "Every man in whom is haughtiness of spirit will in the end be reduced in rank, and, lest you think that they remain in existence, they are gone." They go on to interpret the use of the phrase "brought low at all" by connecting this quote from Job with that used in Genesis, and say that the phrase means "If, however, he changes and becomes humble, he will be gathered to his fathers in his due time," just as were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Had Dr. Kimmel expounded on all three "everythings," she could have cited Sota 5a and pointed to one more of Dr. Miller's characteristics, his humility.

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## MOSES'S GRANDSON

The Torah tells us very little about Moses's children. We learn in Exodus 2:22 that the older son was named Gershom, and in Exodus 18:4 that the younger son was named Eliezer. But they are hardly mentioned again, except for brief mentions in I Chronicles, namely (I Chronicles 23: 15-17) "The sons of Moses were: Gershom, and Eliezer. Of the sons of Gershom, Shebuel was the chief. And the sons of Eliezer were: Rehabiah the chief. And Eliezer had no other sons; but the sons of Rehabiah were many" And (I Chronicles 26: 24-25) "And Shebuel the son of Gershom, the son of Moses, was ruler of the treasures. And his brothers by Eliezer: Rehabiah his son, and Jeshaiiah his son, and Joram his son, and Zichri his son, and Shelomith his son."

But there is a disturbing set of verses in Judges 18: 30-31. Here it is in English: "And the sons of Dan set up the engraved image; and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. And they set up for themselves Micah's engraved image, which he had made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh." Sounds like this is talking about another family. This Gershom has a father named Manasseh and a son named Jonathan; Moses's grandson by his son Gershom is named Shebuel. But if you look at the printed Hebrew text for the word Manasseh it is written as מִנְשֶׁה with the נ raised between the מ and the ה, as if it is inserted. And without that suspended נ the Hebrew reads מוֹשֶׁה, i.e., Moses. This of course puts a different cast on the verses in Judges; it indicates that Moses had a grandson named Jonathan who was an idol worshipper.

There is great division among translations of Judges as to how to interpret מִנְשֶׁה. Here's a brief synopsis:

## MOSES

1890 Darby Bible  
1901 American Standard Version  
New International Version  
New Revised Standard Version  
The New Living Translation  
The New Century Version  
LXX Family A (Codex Alexandrinus)  
Vulgate

## MANASSEH

Die Bibel (Martin Luther 1545, 1912)  
Young's Literal Translation  
Jewish Publication Society  
King James Version  
New American Standard Bible  
The New King James Version  
LXX Family B (Codex Vaticanus)  
Septuagint

Where does Rashi stand on this? In a comment in Baba Batra 109b, which refers to this verse, Rashi says that "the נ is hanging because it is extraneous; he [Gershom] is the son of Moses." The rabbis say that the נ was inserted in order to not embarrass Moses over the fact that his grandson was an idolator. And in Baba Batra 110a there is a brief discussion about whether Gershom's son was named Jonathan or Shebuel, and Rabbi Yochanan says, "He was called Shebuel (שְׁבוּאֵל) because he returned (שָׁב) to God (אֱלֹהִים) with all his heart."

Baba Batra 110a reports this colloquy. When asked, "Are you not a descendant of Moses ... Would you be made a priest for idol-worship?", Jonathan said to them, "I have the following tradition from my grandfather's family: At all times shall one rather hire himself out to idol-worship than be in need of the help of his fellow creatures." In Legends of the Jews Louis Ginzberg editorialized, "The rapid degeneration in the family of Moses may be accounted for by the fact that Moses had married the daughter of a priest who ministered to idols."

Much has been written about whether Jonathan was or was not the grandson of Moses. Most of this discussion is based on an interpretation of other material in Judges which relate to Jonathan's age and tribal affiliation. But what these commentators have missed is the Talmudic discussion. The Rabbis of the Talmud certainly knew the text well enough, so if they came to the conclusions that I've referenced here, I would have to discount the other arguments. Jonathan went "off the *derech*," and it is hoped that, in his newly found identity as Shebuel, he went back "onto the *derech*."

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## YID LIDS

An old Yeshivish “proof” that Jacob wore a *yarmulke* goes like this: Jacob was a Jew. It says in Genesis 28:10 that “Jacob went out” (ויצא יצחק). So if Jacob was a Jew and he went out, how could he do so without wearing a *yarmulke*? If that was the case, why don’t we see pictures of Jews in Biblical times wearing *kippot*? And why is this religious requirement not mentioned in the Chumash? How did this mode of headgear evolve in Jewish religious life?

Let’s start with a Talmudic story, from Shabbat 156b, about 4<sup>th</sup> century Reb Nahman bar Isaac. His mother was told by astrologers, “Your son will be a thief.” So she did not let him be bareheaded, saying to him, “Cover your head so that the fear of heaven (אימתה דשמיא) may be upon you”. This story shows that head-covering was not a requirement, though regarded as conducive to piety.

The source of the word *yarmulke* is unclear. There is a folk etymology that says that the word *yarmulke* is a corruption of two Aramaic words, *yira malkah* - fear of the King. But that’s not the phrase used in the Talmud story I just quoted. Some maintain it is derived from the Turkish word *yağmurluk*, meaning rainwear. Others argue the word is derived from a combination of two Turkish words—*yarim* (half) and *qap* (hat) or a half or small hat. In any event, the word *kippah* is Hebrew for small hat, so I will in what follows use only that term. (The Yiddish word, *kapel*, is a corrupted pronunciation of *kippah*, and *kapeleh* is its diminutive.)

We find in Kiddushin 31a that Reb Huna son of Reb Joshua (a 6<sup>th</sup> century rabbi in Babylonia) would not walk four cubits bareheaded, saying, “The Shechinah (“Holy Presence of God”) is above my head. But was this the rule or merely Reb Huna’s practice? In Kiddushin 29b we find the following: Reb Hisda praised Reb Hamnuna before Reb Huna as a great man. Said he to him, “When he visits you, bring him to me.” When he arrived, he saw that he wore no head covering. “Why have you no head-dress?” asked he. “Because I am not married,” was the reply. Thereupon Rab Huna turned his face away from him. And in Kiddushin 8a we find Reb Ashi (a 5<sup>th</sup> century Babylonian rabbi) saying that Rav Kahana, who is a great man, and needs a scarf for his head; but not people in general. (By the way, the term used for head covering here is סודרא, which is translated by scholars as *Sudar*, a kind of turban worn by the learned.)

This four cubit rule appears in the Shulchan Arukh, (published in 1653, see Orach Chaim 2:6) where it says that Jewish men should not walk more than four cubits bareheaded. Subsequent commentaries on the Shulchan Arukh (Taz in late 1600s, Mishnah Berurah in late 1800s) established it as a requirement to wear a head covering even when traversing less than four cubits, and even when one is standing still, indoors and outside. Nonetheless the Vilna Gaon (1772-1821, see Biur ha-Gra Orach Hayyim 8:6) said that one can make a *berakhah* without a *kippah*, since wearing a *kippah* is only a *midos chassidus* (exemplary attribute). To him there is one limited circumstance in which one should cover one’s head, when one appears in front of *gedolim* (great scholars). Even according to Maimonides (12<sup>th</sup> century, Mishneh Torah, Ahavah, Hilkhos Tefilah 5:5) Jewish law merely dictates that a man is required to cover his head during prayer, and scholars have inferred from his writings that to him wearing a head covering outside of the synagogue was originally only a custom.

But despite this and other lenient rulings, the hard-liners are prevailing. Recently, there has been an effort to suppress the study of earlier sources that illustrated this leniency, including erasing lenient responsa from newly published books. One such is the set of responsa of Rabbi David Zvi Hoffman, the early

20<sup>th</sup> century leader of German Orthodoxy, who cites that in Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch’s Yeshiva in Frankfort the students sat bare headed during their secular studies. The page with that comment is blank in the second edition of his responsa. One amusing example of this redaction involves the Rabbi Moshe Hefez Gentili’s commentary on the Torah, Melekheth Mahashevet. The first edition (1710) displayed a portrait of the author with no head covering, whereas the 1860 edition contained a “cover up.”



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## COVENANTS

When one hears the Hebrew word “bris” (ברית, or “brit,” if you are Sephardic), one immediately thinks of “circumcision.” The term, though, has a broader meaning, namely “covenant,” and appears in a number of contexts in the Torah. Covenants are of two types, covenants between two individuals and covenants between God and a person or persons. A covenant between two individuals is an agreement that clinches a deal. For example, we read about the “bris” between Abraham and Avimelech (Genesis 21:27), between Isaac and Avimelech (Genesis 26:28), and between Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:44). All three of these instances are characterized by a conflict between two parties, followed by a deal made between them, which is then ratified by a “bris.”

Covenants between God and man are of another nature. The simplest of these consists of a promise and an associated sign. The first such is found in Genesis 9:9-17, where God makes a covenant with mankind (represented by Noah) that He will never again initiate a flood, and that the rainbow shall be the sign of that covenant. The one we are most familiar with is found in Genesis 17:2-14. There God makes a two-part covenant with the descendants of Abraham (represented by Abraham), (1) that He would be their God and (2) that, as promised earlier (Genesis 15:18), He will give them the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession. The circumcision (“brit milah” ברית מילה, to give it its full name) becomes the sign of that covenant, and it is that covenant that God remembers when he promises (Exodus 6:3-5).

But there are two covenants between God and man that take on a different aspect—the Shabbat and covenant at Sinai. Regarding Shabbat, in Exodus 31:16 there is no promise; indeed there’s a threat of death to those who do not observe the Shabbat. The Israelites are told to observe the Shabbat “for an everlasting covenant” (ברית עולם), and that the Shabbat is to be a sign (אֵימָת) reminding the Israelites of the creation, once again repeating the reason for observing the Shabbat given in the sixth commandment in Exodus 20:10. This contrasts with the reason for observing the Shabbat given in the reprise of the sixth commandment in Deuteronomy 5:15, “And remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the Lord your God brought you out from there with a mighty hand and with a stretched out arm; therefore the Lord your God commanded you to keep the sabbath day.” Notice that there is no longer a reference to the creation. Rather, the reason for observing the Shabbat given in Deuteronomy is that God delivered you from Egypt, and in return, as part of the deal, you are to observe the Shabbat. So perhaps the covenant of the Shabbat is like any other covenant, namely a sign associated with a deal, albeit a deal on a grander scale.

The most important covenant is the covenant between God and Israel at Sinai. Exodus 19:5-6 summarizes it: “Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be my own treasure among all peoples; for all the earth is mine; And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation.” As part of the covenant, God gave Israel the Ten Commandments. And the Ten Commandments begins with an announcement: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery.” Once more one sees the essence of the covenantal form—the graven Ten Commandments are a sign of the deal between God and Israel, where Israel is bound to God for what He has done for them. And the Shabbat is another sign of part of that deal, which is why the importance of the Shabbat is reiterated and expanded in Exodus 31, after the revelation at Sinai.

The way I’ve characterized the covenant at Sinai is at variance with the midrashic tale (Mechilta, Hachodesh 5) that God went around to all the peoples of the world peddling the Torah, and only the Israelites would accept it, and accept it without even learning its content (“All that the Lord has said will we do, and obey” Exodus 24:7). This, the midrash says, is out of a love for God and an appreciation of the way of life charted out by the mitzvot. It is this midrash that forms the basis for Rabbi David Hartman, in his 1985 book The Living Covenant, to term the covenant at Sinai as one of love, not one of obedience to a authority. His metaphor of the relationship between God and Israel is not that of king and subject, but rather that of husband and wife. A marriage is a relationship in which there is reciprocity as well as a respect for individuality. As a consequence of this metaphor he sees the covenant at Sinai as evolving through time, with both partners, God and Israel, changing in their relationship to each other. The book traces this evolution through the Talmud and rabbinic writings, illustrating the subtitle of his book, “The innovative spirit in traditional Judaism.”

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**THE CHIEF RABBI**


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As you may have read, on July 24 Israel elected two Chief Rabbis, David Lau as the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi and Yitzhak Yosef as the Sephardic Chief Rabbi. Both, interestingly, as sons of former Chief Rabbis, Rabbis Meir Lau and Ovadia Yosef, respectively. Their term of office is 10 years, and they were elected based on a vote of 147 electors (a mixed group of rabbis, laymen, Knesset members, and elected officials). So what is the function of this office, what is its jurisdiction, how did it originate, and why is there no such office in the United States?

Chief Rabbi is a title given in several countries to the recognized religious leader of that country's Jewish community, or to a rabbinic leader appointed by the local secular authorities. The institution of the Chief Rabbi (*Hakham Bashi*) was established by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II (1432-1481) as part of his policy of governing his exceedingly diverse subjects according to their own laws and authorities wherever possible. The first Turkish Chief Rabbi was Eli Capsali, beginning in 1452. The first *Hakham Bashi* of Palestine was Rabbi Moshe Galante, who served from 1665 to 1689. As the Jewish community was overwhelmingly Sephardi, there was only one such until 1860, when Rabbi Meir Auerbach was appointed as the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi. From then on Palestine, and then Israel, has had two chief rabbis, one Ashkenazi and one Sephardi.

Cities with large Jewish communities may also have their own chief rabbis. Under current Israeli law, the post of Chief Rabbi exists in only four cities (Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Beersheba. In other Israeli cities there may be one main rabbi to whom the other rabbis of that city defer (e.g., Rabbi Riskin in Efrat), but that post is not officially the Chief Rabbi. The most celebrated of Chief Rabbi positions is that of the Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of Great Britain and the Commonwealth, established for the Ashkenazim of the British Empire in 1696 (though the Sephardi equivalent, the *Hakham*, was established in 1664). This was also the case for Jewish centers in Europe prior to the Holocaust, with Austria establishing this post in 1578. North American cities rarely have chief rabbis. One exception however is Montreal, which in the late 1960s established two such—one for the Ashkenazi community, the other for the Sephardi.

A chief rabbinate never truly developed within the United States for a number of reasons. While Jews first settled in the United States in 1654 in New Amsterdam, rabbis did not appear in the United States until the mid-nineteenth century. This lack of rabbis, coupled with the lack of official colonial or state recognition of a particular sect of Judaism as official, effectively led to a form of congregationalism amongst American Jews. This did not stop others from trying to create a unified American Judaism, and chief rabbis did develop in some American cities despite lacking universal recognition amongst the Jewish communities within the cities. For a brief period (1888-1902) Rabbi Jacob Joseph was the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of New York. In Chicago Rabbi Yaakov Dovid Wilovsky served as Chief Rabbi from 1903 to 1905. And St. Louis has had a Chief Rabbi continuously since 1943. In his 2004 book, American Judaism, Jonathan Sarna argues that the desire of many Jewish immigrants to the US to break from an Orthodox past effectively prevented the establishment of the office of Chief Rabbi in America.

As can be seen from this brief description, the Chief Rabbi is at best a ceremonial function. The job carries little in the way of religious authority (except when it is coupled with a position as head of the Bet Din, the religious court of law), officiating at most only over the Orthodox community, and even more particularly over the Ashkenazi Orthodox community. In Great Britain the Chief Rabbis of the past have taken on pet issues from their “bully pulpit.” Rabbi Hertz, for example, devoted his energy to the refutation of the so-called Higher Criticism of the Torah (as one can see from reading his Chumash). Rabbi Jakobovits concentrated on medical ethics. And in Palestine Chief Rabbi Kook (1921-1935) reached out to secular Zionism and sought to integrate its ideals with that of Orthodox Judaism. But these are really emanating from the personalities and interests of the particular Chief Rabbis, not from the office. Though their track records and that of their parents lead me to predict that the two new Israel Chief Rabbis will not be at all inspirational in either their words or their deeds, we can only hope that I am wrong.

לשנה טובה תבתבו

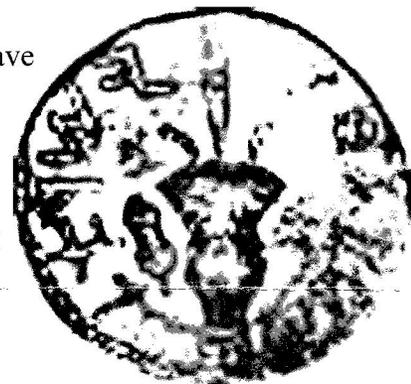
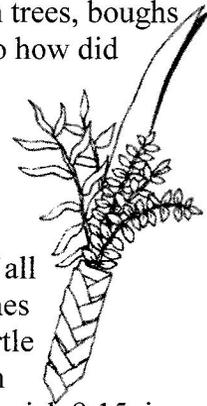
## THE LULAV

Leviticus 23:40 tells us “On the first day you shall take the product of *hadar* trees, branches of date-palm trees, boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.” So how did we get from that vague description to the *lulav* depicted to the right, with one date-palm branch (and not “branches”), two willow branches, and three myrtle branches?

The simple answer is that the Mishnah in Sukkah 34b says, “Rabbi Ishmael says, one must have three myrtle branches, two willow branches, one date-palm branch and one *ethrog*. Even if two of the myrtle branches have their tips broken off and only one is whole the wreath is valid. Rabbi Tarfon says, even if all three have their tips broken off.” The Gemarah goes on to explain that the reason for two willow branches is that the Hebrew description is “*arvei nachal*,” i.e., made up of two words, and the reason for three myrtle branches is that the Hebrew description is “*anaf etz avot*,” i.e., made up of three words. And the selection of the myrtle tree as the mysterious “leafy tree” is based on the description of the Succot festival in Nehemiah 8:15, in which the myrtle tree is specifically referenced. Rashi adds an explanation for the single palm branch, based on a spelling irregularity in the Torah. The phrase for “branches of date-palm trees” is written as כַּפֹּת תְּמָרִים, where the word כַּפֹּת is misspelled, and should be written as כַּפֹּת. The letter ו was missing on purpose, to be interpreted to mean that only a single branch of a date-palm tree is to be used.

So why does the ancient Bar Kochba coin (minted in 132-35 CE) pictured to the right, have only one willow branch and one myrtle branch? This is not just a stylized picture of the *lulav*. It is a depiction of a real *lulav*. For in that same Mishnah Rabbi Akiba said, “Just as it is needed to have but one date-palm branch and one *ethrog*, so it is needed to have but one myrtle branch and one willow branch.” Since Bar Kochba, the Jewish general who led the revolt against the Romans, was a disciple of Rabbi Akiba, small wonder that when his government minted a coin with a *lulav* on it the design would follow the paradigm of Rabbi Akiba.

(I am indebted to Albert Milstein for pointing out this connection to me.)



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## THE PEW REPORT

On October 1, 2013 the Pew Research Center's Religion and Public Life Project released its 212 page report, [A Portrait of Jewish Americans](#). Immediately came the headlines. The New York Times wrote, "Poll Shows Major Shift in Identity of U.S. Jews". The Forward wrote, "Jews Bound by Shared Belief Even as Markers of Faith Fade". There has been lots of editorializing, hand-wringing, and blogging about the report. What I will try to do here is put the report into perspective and summarize its highlights, as I see them.

**Background:** The Jewish Federations of North America (the umbrella group for the various local Jewish Federations) have for decades conducted decennial surveys about the state of Jewry in the United States. The 1990 National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) startled the Jewish world with the finding that the intermarriage rate was, loosely speaking, 52%. The 2001 NJPS startled the Jewish world with the finding that the US Jewish population (vaguely defined) was about 5,200,000, down from the 5,500,000 estimated in the 1990 NJPS. (The count of those who are Jewish by religion or otherwise consider themselves Jewish was 4.3 million; the other 900,000 were "people of Jewish background" who do not consider themselves Jewish.)

Because the 2001 NJPS came under fire for some data processing glitches, and because it cost about \$6 million to administer, the Jewish Federations decided to no longer fund the decennial survey. Individual communities could develop their own surveys (as Chicago did in 2010), and some enterprising sociologists have tried to combine these disparate studies to create a picture of Jewish America. The Brandeis University Steinhart Social Research Institute did one such summation, published in 2007, and came up with 7-7.5 million Jews (6-6.4 million who are Jewish by religion or otherwise consider themselves Jewish).

The American Jewish Committee has published the American Jewish Yearbook since 1899, and gave it up in 2008 due to the economic downturn. This project was taken over by two sociology professors, who in 2008 stated that the US Jewish population is 6,489,110, consistent with the Brandeis number and based substantially on their methodology. This estimate was criticized by Sergio DellaPergola, the premier Hebrew University demographer. Subsequently the three joined forces in developing the count for the 2012 Yearbook, and they put the Jewish population at 5,425,000. Interestingly, the Pew study puts the Jewish population at 5.3 million, with the count of Jews by religion at 4.2 million. Looks to me like the 2001 NJPS population count was vindicated.

**Findings:** Stephen Cohen, the eminent HUC sociologist, has done his own analysis of the PEW findings and has come up with the following bullet points, which go beyond the text of the report:

- Fertility rate for non-Orthodox Jews: 1.7, as against a Zero-Population-Growth requirement of 2.1. That alone means a decline in the subsequent generation of about 15-20%.
- The overall rate of intermarriage is 44%, that of Orthodox Jews is 2%, so that of non-Orthodox Jews is 49%. The percent of the Jews who intermarried since 2005 is 58%.
- The rate at which intermarried raise their children as Jewish-by-Religion is 20%, as against 96% for the in-married.
- The number of adult Jews with a Jewish parent who are now not Jewish is 2.1 million, or 29% of all adult Jews with Jewish parents (which Cohen takes to be 7.2 million).
- At best 43% of the children of mixed marriages identify as Jewish but 83% of them marry non-Jews. By extrapolation, just 8% of the grandchildren of the intermarried will marry Jews.
- 27% of all Jewish children who are Orthodox; 10% of Jewish adults are Orthodox.
- Most critically: One generation ago non-Orthodox had 75,000 children; the current generation of non-Orthodox had 53,000 children, a loss of about 30% in births.

His conclusion: We US Jews go into the coming generation with: A diminished group of non-Orthodox Jewish children, the vast majority of whom will intermarry when they grow up, and then go on to have a small number of children, many of whom will be raised non-Jewish, producing an even smaller number of non-Orthodox Jewish children. The decline

will be offset somewhat by ongoing immigration from Israel, France, and elsewhere, as well as the addition of Orthodox-raised Jews from an ever-expanding Orthodox population.

**Definition:** The question “Who is a Jew?” is critical in understanding these studies. An interesting comparison between the three studies is the screener to determine religion:

NJPS 1990: What is your current religion? [Open-ended]

NJPS 2000: What is your current religion, if any? [Open-ended]

Pew 2013: What is your present religion, if any? Are you ... [followed by a list of 12 specific options read to the respondent, apparently not in random order: Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, Atheist, Agnostic, Something else, Or nothing in particular]

Pew includes those who choose "atheist" or "agnostic" as their response to the religion question in the "Jews of no religion" category, which they define as "people who describe themselves (religiously) as atheist, agnostic or nothing in particular, but who have a Jewish parent or were raised Jewish and who still consider themselves Jewish in some way." As you can see, the way the question is phrased influences the statistics. In an open-ended question, or in a forced-choice question that doesn't include "atheist" and "agnostic" as options, maybe more people of Jewish ancestry would respond "Jewish."

And, for those whose answer is “Jewish”, here was the follow-on question:

NJPS 1990 Do you consider yourself to be Conservative, Orthodox, Reform, Reconstructionist or something else?\* [no randomizing of the order]

NJPS 2000 Do you consider yourself to be Conservative, Orthodox, Reform [these three randomized], Reconstructionist, Just Jewish, or Something Else? [asked only of a smaller, more Jewishly connected base]

Pew 2013: Do you consider yourself to be Conservative, Orthodox, Reform [these three randomized], Something Else, Or no particular denomination?

**Jewish Beliefs:** The University of Chicago’s National Opinion Research Corporation (NORC) conducts an annual social survey of the United States. In 2005 the American Jewish Committee commissioned the director of this project to extract data from the 24 such surveys that relate to Jews and produce a report entitled “Jewish Distinctiveness in America,” along with a 2009 follow-up entitled “Religious Switching among American Jews.” Among this report’s findings was that, when given a choice of 5 alternatives, only 27% of Jews checked off the response “I know God really exists and I have no doubts about it.” The Pew report asked “Do you believe in God or a universal spirit, or not?” And 80% of “Jews by religion” and 45% of “Jews of no religion” answered “Yes.” There are lots of other contrasts that can be made between the Pew findings and those in the AJC report.

**Talk:** Since I was chief statistician on the 2001 NJPS, as soon as the results were public I brought copies of the Jewish Federations of North America PowerPoint slides relating to the study to Lake Shore Drive Synagogue and gave an after-*kiddush* presentation about these findings. And after the release of the AJC report I gave a *dvar torah* about its findings. The PEW study warrants similar consideration, and so I will give a talk about it at our *shul* on **January 16, 2014 at 7:00 PM**. As with all my talks, there is no charge; the cost you bear will be the tedium associated with listening to a statistician talking about statistics.

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## UNETANE TOKEF

The following piece is really appropriate for the Rosh Hashana Bulletin, as it gives some background for that most moving prayer ונתנה תקף in our High Holiday liturgy. But maybe, because this is the beginning of the secular New Year it may still be an apt bulletin piece, perhaps reminding us of the warm days of September as we freeze in January.

We all know the story, summarized at the bottom of page 359 of the Birnbaum *machzor*, that this poem was published by Rabbi Kalonymus ben Meshullam of Mayence (Mainz, today) in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, based on a dream. The backstory of this dream is that Rabbi Amnon was pressed by the rulers of Mayence to convert. He asked to be given three days to think about it, and, after realizing that by doing so he was expressing doubt in his belief in the God of Israel, he fasted for the three days, was arrested and his hands and feet were cut off. On Rosh Hashana Rabbi Amnon was brought to the synagogue, where, before the *musaf kedusha*, he recited this prayer and died. Three days later he appeared to Rabbi Kalonymus in a dream, and taught him this prayer. As Birnbaum says, the oldest mention of this story is found in the 13<sup>th</sup> century work *Or Zaru'a* by Rabbi Isaac ben Moses of Vienna (1180-1250). Actually, if one reads the original manuscript, one learns that Rabbi Isaac copied this story from a manuscript by Rabbi Efrayim of Bonn (1132-1197), who claimed that the story came from Rabbi Kalonymus, who was killed in the First Crusade in 1096. (One can read a translation of the manuscript in pages 35-7 of Essays on Hebrew Literature in Honor of Avraham Holtz.)

Many scholars have pointed out that this story is a fiction, for a variety of reasons. The primary argument was a consideration of the language of the prayer. In his 1929 *Otzar Hashirah Vhapiyyut* Israel Davidson said, “its simplicity of style and lucidity of expression are reminiscent of the most ancient prayers.” The hardest evidence is that the prayer-poem was found in a Genizah fragment from the late 8<sup>th</sup> century. Another Genizah fragment indicates that Unetane Tokef was written by Yannai, a 7<sup>th</sup> century poet who lived in Israel.

More recent research by Armand Kaminka and Eric Werner have found similarities of this poem to “Hymn of Romanus upon Christ’s Reappearance” written by Saint Romanus (Wikipedia gives his life span as 490-556, but there is evidence that he was an 8<sup>th</sup> century poet), who was born Jewish and converted as a young boy. He wrote over 1000 hymns, replete with what Wikipedia refers to as “abundant Semiticisms.” Here are some of the parallels:

Unetane Tokef (Birnbaum)

Inscribing and recording all forgotten things  
Thou openest the book of records  
The angels, quaking with fear  
The great shofar is sounded  
The angels shudder  
Declare, “The day of judgment is here”  
They are not guiltless in Thy sight  
As a shepherd seeks out his flock  
But repentance, prayer, and charity cancel the stern decree

Romanus

The hidden things are made public  
The books are opened  
Everything trembles  
Upon the sound of the trumpet  
The angels are dragged before the throne  
They cry, “Glory to Thee, most just judge”  
Nobody is pure before Thee  
Like a shepherd He will save  
Therefore penitence and prayer will save you

The punch line, “But repentance, prayer, and charity cancel the stern decree” is given in the Hebrew as הריגה מעברין תא רע הקדצו והלפת הבושתו, where the word מעברין is, I believe, better translated as “avert.” This conclusion is based on a verse of the Jerusalem Talmud Taanit 8b, “three things annul the severe decree, prayer, charity, and repentance” (השלש מירבד וילטבמ תא הריגה השק לאו זה הלפת הקדצו הבושתו). Note the change from “annul” (וילטבמ) to “avert” (מעברין). The Babylonian Talmud, by contrast, (Rosh Hashana 16b) says that “four things cancel the doom of a man, namely, charity, supplication, change of name, and change of conduct.” (The word “cancel” is given as ויערקמ.) There is a great theological difference between “annulling/canceling” and “averting” the severe decree. The Unetane Tokef prayer uses the Hebrew word for “avert,” because it is by no means certain that repentance, prayer, and charity will lead to annulment/cancellation of that “the severe decree.” Rather, the use of “avert” is to indicate that these three acts (repentance, prayer, and charity) will help ourselves to cope with what is facing us, and so in that sense help us moderate the profound effects of “the severe decree.”

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## ADAR 9

One of the most little known of the Jewish fast days is Adar 9. The 9<sup>th</sup> century Hilchot Gdolot says in the section on Laws of Tisha B'Av, "...on the ninth of Adar they decreed a fast day..." But what's the reason for the fast? It continues by saying, "...because Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai had conflict with each other." The 15<sup>th</sup> century Shulchan Aruch mitigates this by first saying "These are the days that tragedies befell our forefathers, and it is worthy to fast on them...on the 9<sup>th</sup> of Adar Beit Shammai and Hillel disagreed." This comes as no surprise to me. According to the Jewish Encyclopedia, the Talmud records 316 disputes between the disciples of Hillel and Shammai. Moreover, I was taught the famous story cited in Eruvin 13b: *R. Abba stated in the name of Samuel: For three years there was a dispute between Beth Shammai and Beth Hillel, the former asserting, "The law is in agreement with our views" and the latter contending, "The law is in agreement with our views." Then a voice from heaven announced, "The utterances of both are the words of the living God, but the law is in agreement with the rulings of Beth Hillel."* Moreover, the Talmud went on to say that the reason for this was "*Because they [Beth Hillel] were kindly and modest, they studied their own rulings and those of Beth Shammai, and were even so humble as to mention the actions of Beth Shammai before theirs.*" Sounds to me like Beth Hillel (at least) were a peaceful group! And, as one can see from this quote, in all but a few instances Hillel's ruling held. So what's the fuss?

There was this one instance cited in the Babylonian Talmud, Shabbat 13b "*And these are of the halachoth which they stated in the upper chamber of Hananiah b. Hezekiah b. Garon, when they went up to visit him. They took a count, and Beth Shammai outnumbered Beth Hillel; and on that day they enacted eighteen measures.*" Sounds like our Congress, where the Republicans outnumber the Democrats and railroads through some pet legislation, doesn't it? Not quite! The Jerusalem Talmud version (Shabbat 2.7) described the scene more vividly. "*That day was as wretched for Israel as the day on which the golden calf was made. It was taught in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua Oniya: The students of Beit Shammai stood below them and began to slaughter the students of Beit Hillel. It was taught: Six of them ascended and the others stood over them with swords and lances.*" This story escalated through time to the extreme version given by Rabbi Eliyahu Shapiro (1660-1712, Prague) Eliyahu Rabba Orach Chaim 580.7, "*On the 9th of Adar they disagreed: And three thousand of the students died.*" Worse still, in one textual version written by the famous Muslim scholar Abū al-Rayhān Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Bīrūnī (973- 1048) it is said that 28,000 students were killed on that day.

To really understand what happened, one has to look at what was going on in Israel in the late first century CE under Roman rule. The House of Shammai supported the Zealots, who wanted to revolt against the Romans. As public indignation against the Romans grew, the House of Shammai gradually gained the upper hand. As the Jewish conflict with the Romans grew, the nations surrounding Judea all sided with the Romans, causing the House of Shammai to propose that all commerce and communication between Jew and Gentile should be completely prohibited. The House of Hillel disagreed, but, when the Sanhedrin convened to discuss the matter, the Zealots sided with the House of Shammai. Subsequently Eleazar ben Ananias, the leader of the militant Zealots, invited the students of both schools to meet at his house; Eleazar placed armed men at the door, and instructed them to let no one leave the meeting. It is conjectured by historians (e.g., Graetz) that it was at this meeting, and not at the "upper chamber of Hananiah b. Hezekiah b. Garon," that this vote took place.

The Shulchan Aruch went on elsewhere to say about the fast of the 9<sup>th</sup> of Adar that "All of the fast days mentioned in this section... I have never seen or heard of anyone who had the custom of fasting on them." So, though that fast day was theoretically "on the books," practically speaking it was a non-starter. And Hilchot Gdolot says, "In the future, The Holy One Blessed Be He, will turn these days into days of rejoicing and happiness."

The Pardes Institute of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem created a subsidiary organization, the Pardes Center for Judaism and Conflict Resolution, whose goal is to deflect the acrimonious disputes among Jews and get Jews to engage in civil discourse. They have drafted a pledge, the Rodef Shalom (Pursuer of Peace) Communication Agreement, and, consistent with their program, has decided to resurrect the 9<sup>th</sup> of Adar, not as a fast day but as a Jewish Day of Constructive Conflict (see [www.9adar.org](http://www.9adar.org)), hoping to turn that day into one of rejoicing and happiness. This is a lovely initiative by Pardes, turning a sad event into a lesson on how to channel disputes into respectful discussions.

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## PARTNERSHIP MINYANIM

The March 5, 2014 Forward carried an article whose opening was, “If it wasn’t clear before, it should be abundantly clear now: The Orthodox establishment will not sanction so-called partnership *minyans*, and it’s willing to go to the mat to fight them.” So what’s a “partnership *minyan*” and why is it being opposed by the Orthodox establishment?

A “partnership *minyan*” is a term used by the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) to describe a prayer group that conforms to the strictures of Orthodox Judaism while still allowing for parts of the services to be led by women. Operationally, this means that, though the *minyan* is made up of 10 men, with men and women separated by a *mechitzah*, and the traditional liturgy is used, women may fully participate in Torah reading, receive *aliyot*, and lead parts of the prayer service such as *psukei d'zimrah* and *kabbalat Shabbat*. Those who advocate partnership *minyanim* have researched the issue and have obtained *halachic* approval from some Orthodox rabbinic scholars. Let’s see what the *halachic* issues are and how they have been resolved by these scholars.

Fundamental to the analysis is this passage from Megilla 23a: “The Rabbanan taught (תנו רבנן) that anyone can be numbered among the seven [called to the Torah on Shabbat], even a minor, even a woman. But the Sages said (והחכמים אומרים) that we do not call a woman to the Torah because of *kavod tzibur* (the dignity of the congregation).” First note the two references to those making the statements. The first is to Rabbin (רבנן) and the second is to Sages (חכמים). The term Sages refers to rabbis who lived in the time of the Mishnah and Talmud formation (after 200 CE), and the term Rabbanan refers to an earlier group of rabbis. We see from this that the barring of women from getting *aliyot* (being called to the Torah) is an amendment to a prior practice. So let’s look at the basis for the amendment.

Jewish law usually demands that public rituals be led by those who are obligated in that particular ritual, and women are generally considered to be not obligated to participate in being called to the Torah. But note that a minor is also not obligated to participate in being called to the Torah, yet both minors and women are singled out by as being allowed to be called to the Torah, even though both of them are not obligated. So the lack of obligation of women is not a reason for barring them from being called to the Torah.

One possible basis for the bar is the notion of “*kol isha*”, the woman’s voice. In Brachot 24a we find this admonition. “Samuel said: A woman's voice is a sexual incitement,” basing it on Song of Songs 2:14 "for your voice is sweet and your countenance comely.” It is this statement that is the basis for the ultra-Orthodox insistence on not attending concerts with women singers (or even events with women speakers). Those who follow this guideline would not allow any female participation in the service, including singing along with the men as they pray. But this is not the basis for the amendment.

The term “*kavod tzibur*” is used in other contexts in the Talmud. One concerns the dress code when being called to the Torah (Megilla 24b), another relates to whether a Cohen can bless the people while wearing sandals (Sotah 40a), a third relates to the treatment of the Torah in public (Sotah 39b). The common denominator in all these is that these actions should be done out of respect for the congregation. Thus I read the invocation of *kavod tzibur* as the basis for denying women the *aliya* to the Torah, as a statement that this act would appear to be disrespectful to the men in the congregation.

So what makes this act “disrespectful”? It was the practice that each person called to the Torah had to read the associated portion. Since this was a difficult task for most people, the position of *Baal Koreh* (Torah reader) was established, and it was his job to read the portion for each person called to the Torah. Now suppose a woman were called to the Torah and was able to read from the scroll. This would be an embarrassment for those men in the congregation who could not do so. And so the notion of “*kavod tzibur*” was invoked to bar this from happening. This is especially obvious after reading the Shulchan Aruch (Orah Hayyim 282:3) text: “All may be included in the number of seven [persons called for *aliyyot* on Shabbat], even a woman and a minor who understands to whom he is reciting the blessing, but the rabbis said that a woman should not read in public because of the dignity of the congregation.” Note that this implies that women can be given *aliyot*, but are not allowed to read the Torah, because of *kavod tzibur*.

There are many medieval precedents for allowing women to read Torah in Orthodox congregations. The most fascinating to me was the ruling of Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg (late 13<sup>th</sup> century) that, in a *minyan* consisting entirely of *kohanim*, women should be called for the third through seventh *aliyah* on grounds that the prohibition against calling two *kohanim* in a row overrides the prohibition against calling a woman. Otherwise, he only allowed women to read the seventh *aliya*. (*I'm not sure of whether this ruling was for a real situation or only a hypothetical-AM.*) Only a few of the medieval commentators held that a woman could intrinsically read all the *aliyot* (e.g., Rabbi Yitzchak of Vienna [known as Or Zaru'a, 1244] and Rabbi David Pardo [18<sup>th</sup> century]); most held they could read only some, and the majority of the opinions (those of the rabbis who carried the most weight in those times) held they could read only the last one. As examples, Rabbi Isaiah de Trani (known as "the Rid," mid 13<sup>th</sup> century) would allow four or three *aliyot*; Rabbi Jacob Emden (late 18<sup>th</sup> century) would only allow women to read when no men were capable of doing so.

What about the rest of the JOFA agenda, namely leading *psukei d'zimrah* and *kabbalat Shabbat*? What characterizes them as being permissible to be led by women is that they are not considered *dvarin shebikdusha* -- prayers in which the chazzan fulfills the congregation's obligation to say the prayer (items of the service only said if a *minyan* is present and skipped otherwise (for example the *borchu* or the repetition of the *amida*), and are time-bound commandments (because a woman is not obligated to fulfill such commandments). An interesting sidelight to this is the recitation of the collection of Psalms known as the Hallel. Sometimes this recitation is considered a time-bound commandment (e.g., on Shavuot) and sometimes not (e.g., on Rosh Chodesh, last six days of Pesach).

This column is only designed to inform our readers about the details underlying an issue confronting the Orthodox community, and in no way should be construed as a statement of advocacy, neither by the author nor by the congregation.

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## THE BRATSLAV CHASIDIM

The recent death of the movie producer/director/actor Paul Mazursky brought to mind his little known 2006 documentary, "Yippee!" (subtitled "A Journey to Jewish Joy"), about an annual Rosh Hashanah convocation of 25,000 Hasidic Jews in the Ukrainian town of Uman. That film, and the proliferation of bumper stickers, graffiti, and *kippot* in Israel such as these



prompted me to write this piece putting it all together.:

The Bratslav chasidim are a group of chasidim who focus on the personality and teachings of Rabbi Nachman ben Simḥah (1772–1810). The group is named after the town of Bratslav, where Rabbi Nachman lived from 1802 until the last few months of his life. Nachman began to operate as a Chasidic rebbe in 1790. In 1798, he embarked on a year-long pilgrimage to the Holy Land, a journey that led him to believe that he was a supreme spiritual leader, not only to his own generation but to all generations. This messianic self-perception was seen as sheer arrogance by other Chasidic rebbes, and soon resulted in clashes with them. Bitter disputes followed, most notably with Rabbi Aryeh Leib of Shpole (1725–1812). This led to the Bratslav doctrine that being subject to perpetual controversy was a characteristic of the true *tsadik*. This belief enabled Bratslav to embrace its controversial status, and to withstand the hostility it continued to arouse long after its founder's death.

In 1807 Rabbi Nachman contracted tuberculosis, and, when his house burned down in Bratslav in May 1810, a group invited him to move to the nearby town of Uman. This stay was short-lived, for he died in the autumn of 1810, leaving no heir to succeed him. His small circle of followers would have dispersed if not for the efforts on the part of his scribe and chief interpreter, Natan Sternhartz of Nemirov (1780–1844), to attract new recruits to the Bratslav path and revive some of its flagging traditions, above all the annual gathering at the rebbe's court on the Jewish New Year. Natan transformed this into the major Bratslav institution that is today celebrated as the Rosh Hashanah pilgrimage to Rabbi Nachman's tomb in Uman.



Following Natan's death, a number of his disciples became prominent figures in the Bratslav camp, but none of them ever achieved Natan's predominance, and none ever claimed or was accorded the status of Rabbi Nachman's successor as rebbe. This resulted in a unique "cult of the dead Nachman," who is expected to return as Messiah, and who continues

to function to the present day as Bratslav Chasidim's only *tsadik*. It also gave rise to the derogatory nickname "toite Chasidim" ("dead Hasidim"), by which the Bratslav circle is referred to today.

Under the Soviet rule Jews did not have the freedom to congregate and pray, and so the Bratslavers replaced Uman with a center in Lublin, Poland as the site of the annual gathering. After World War II, Bratslav Hasidism reemerged in Israel and the United States. In the absence of a living rebbe, however, the movement remains small and fragmented, led by a number of charismatic individuals who do not always see eye to eye. Since the final decades of the twentieth century, some of its factions have come to enjoy unprecedented popularity among secular Jews, who have been drawn to the Bratslav orbit by messianically driven proselytizing efforts and by a dynamic publication program, which is making widely accessible even the most esoteric strands of Bratslav's older literature. Indeed, what led Paul Mazursky to make his movie was that his optometrist told him that he couldn't finish making his glasses because he was going to Uman,

"Na Nach Nachma Nachman Meuman" is a Hebrew language name and song used by a subgroup of Bratslav Hasidim colloquially known as the Na Nachs. The phrase originated in 1922. Rabbi Yisroel Ber Odesser, one of the first Bratslav Hasidim to come to Israel, was overcome with weakness and hunger on the Fast of Tammuz, and so decided to eat. But immediately after eating, he felt great sorrow at having succumbed to his own physical temptations. After five continuous days of prayer, a powerful thought came to him: "Go into your room!" He obeyed the inner voice, went to the bookcase, and randomly opened a book. In the book was a piece of paper that he would later call "The Letter from Heaven." The paper, written in Hebrew with one line in Yiddish, read as follows: "It was very difficult for me to come down to you my precious student to tell you that I had pleasure very much from your devotion and upon you I said my fire will burn until Messiah is coming. Be strong and courageous in your devotion. **Na Nach Nachma Nachman Me'Uman.....**" Odesser believed the letter to be a message of consolation, directly from Rebbe Nachman's spirit, to himself here on earth. Since there was no addressee in the note, Odesser said that this was reason for every person to consider the note addressed to himself or herself personally. Odesser adopted Na Nach Nachma Nachman M'Uman as his personal meditation and song, and became so totally identified with it that he later said, "I am Na Nach Nachma Nachman Me'Uman!"

If you are interested in learning more about Rabbi Nachman, a good starting point is Martin Buber's [Tales of Rabbi Nachman](#). To see a trailer for Yippee! go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Khd3fP5Fp5I>. And if you are interested in seeing the Na Nach phenomenon, go to this link and you'll get a rocking version of their mantra: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gSoMvDJyp0w>

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**THE “WIFE-SISTER” TRICK**


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In preparing a topical index to my bulletin articles (which can now be accessed on our website) I noted that I have never written an article addressing the stories in Genesis. So I will rectify that gap by discussing the ruse that appears three times in Genesis, wherein a husband tells his wife to pose as his sister when visiting a foreign land. Twice it was used by Abraham and Sarah (in Egypt: [Genesis 12:10-20](#) and in Gerar: [Genesis 20:1-18](#)) and once by Isaac and Rebecca (in Gerar: [Genesis 26:1-17](#)). This is viewed as no accident, not merely by the Jewish Orthodox religious commentators but by secularists as well. The former consider these three true events, with each word and nuance of the tales recorded for a purpose, one that is to be ascertained by Torah study. Speaking for the secularists, in his [Genesis as Myth](#) Sir Edmund Leach, the British social anthropologist said, “It is common to all mythological systems that all important stories recur in several different versions.” Though this story is not as “important” as the ones treated by Leach, the insistence of its repetition leads it to be worthy of careful consideration.

The three stories themselves can be summarized as follows:

1. An introduction (usually a single verse) explains how the characters arrive at their foreign location.
2. The Patriarch claims that his wife is actually his sister. Sometimes the ruler then takes the wife into his quarters.
3. The ruler somehow learns the truth about the wife’s relationship to the Patriarch.
4. The ruler confronts the deceiving Patriarch and, depending on the instance, the Patriarch may offer an explanation.
5. The conflict is resolved.

In a 1985 paper Rabbi Daniel Gordis argued that this template was used by the Biblical author/redactor to express three different ideas within the standard narrative. The first narrative expresses the darker side of Abram’s personality, the second narrative examines questions of right and wrong and appropriate punishment, and the third narrative highlights Isaac’s weakness.

These three stories are embellished in the Midrashic writings<sup>1</sup>, A summary of these can be found in Ginzberg’s [Legends of the Jews](#) (Volume I, pages 220-27, 257-61, and 321-28, respectively). The traditional Jewish Biblical interpreters’ style is typically that of Rashi (1040-1105), who took individual words or phrases as the springboard for his expansions. As a result, compendia of these interpretations, e.g., [Mikraot Gedolot](#), are organized around explanations of phrases, with little outside the framework of these explanations, such as comparisons of recurrent stories, and even fewer contain arguments against the Midrash.

One exception is Abraham Ibn Ezra (1089-1164). In his comment on [Genesis 11:29](#) he says, referring to Sanhedrin 69b, “Our sages, of blessed memory, identified Ischah {see [Genesis 11:9](#) for the mention of this name} with Sarah. If this is a tradition we will accept it.” Thus when he comments on the phrase, “she is indeed my sister, the daughter of my father,” he says, “Some say that this verse is to be understood in the same way as [Jacob’s saying in [Genesis 32:10](#)] O God of my father Abraham.” That is, to those who identify Sarah/Ischah as the granddaughter of Abraham’s father Terah, she could legitimately be referred to as Abraham’s sister. He went on to say, “However, I believe that Abraham put Abimelech off with a timely excuse.” He went on later to implicitly justify Abraham’s lie in his comment on [Genesis 27:19](#). There he indicated of prophets, whose task is not that of God’s messenger concerning commandments but rather to foretell the future, that “(i)f the latter has to say something that is not quite so, there is no harm done.”

Another exception is Nachmanides (1194-1270), who tied the Abraham and Isaac tales together with the principle, gleaned from the Midrash, “whatever is written concerning Abraham is also written concerning his children.” He further indicated that the passing off of the wife as sister was a standard procedure whenever the patriarchs were away from home territory, and that “(s)cripture, however, mentions it only concerning those places where something happened to

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<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, only the first tale appears in [Jubilees](#), without mention of the ruse. The ruse, though, is mentioned in column 19 of the [Genesis Apocryphon](#) of Qumran Cave I. None of these stories is included in the Qur’an, but versions of many of the Midrashic embellishments relating to Abraham can be found in Moslem writings, for example, in collections of Hadith such as Ibn Hanbal’s [al-Musnad](#) and [al-Bukhari’s Sahih](#), in commentaries such as al-Tabari’s [Jami’ al-bayān](#), and in popular works such as [Ta’rikh](#) or [Qisas al-anbiyā’](#).

them on account of it.” Finally, he saw in the events of the Genesis 12 story a precursor to the later relationship of the Israelites with Egypt, where they went there because of a famine, the Egyptians oppressed them and took their wives, God exacted plagues on Egypt, and finally the Egyptians let the Israelites out with silver, gold, and cattle.

Recent Jewish commentators include Professor Gary Rendsburg of Rutgers, who argued that Genesis was written by a contemporary of David, and that the wife-sister stories were included to justify both the marriage of David’s son Amnon to his half-sister Tamar, as well as to justify David’s marriage to Abigail, who is hypothesized to have been his sister. And some other recent Jewish commentators with a nationalistic bent have argued that these stories are included to illustrate both that Israel had a territorial claim on the Philistines (based on the Abraham and Isaac treaties), but, as a result of the difference between the Egyptian tale and the two Gerar tales, did not have a territorial claim on Egypt. Christian commentators on these tales include Augustine, and Luther. Augustine couched his analysis as a debate with Faustus the Manichean, in which Faustus first posits that Abraham was immoral, then tried to discredit the Old Testament as a fabrication, at which point he argued that Abraham’s exposure of Sarah was an act of faith. Luther argued that Sarah’s beauty at such an old age was a miracle, endowed by God to capture the attention of the Egyptians so that they would pay heed to Abraham’s preaching.

I turned to the 1964 Anchor Bible commentary on Genesis to see what it had to say about this story. Its author, the University of Pennsylvania Assyriologist Ephraim Speiser, justified the story by pointing to wife-sister provisions in the Hurrian marriage contracts, using as his model two Nuzi texts which relate to the marriage of Beltakkidumni to Hurazzi, where in one she is promised “as a wife” and in the other she is promised “as his sister,” He argued that all three wife-sister stories followed the Hurrian socio-legal institution wherein a favored wife was also to be considered by her husband as his sister. But in his 1995 book, The Creation of History in Ancient Israel Brandies Professor Mark Brettler pointed out that Speiser got it all wrong. Based on an examination of multiple Nuzi documents he concluded that this sister status was typically conveyed to women of a lower status, e.g., a slave, when entering into matrimony, and further that the two Nuzi texts do not even record the same transaction.

One could, of course, invoke the Documentary Hypothesis and attribute the three versions of the wife-sister story to different authors. This indeed was done by various scholars, with the most accepted view among them is that the first Abraham story and the Isaac story attributed to J and the second Abraham story attributed to E (J and E being code-names for two of the “authors” of the Torah according to the Documentary Hypothesis) Professor Samuel Sandmel of Hebrew Union College, the creator of the concept of “parallelomania,” rejected all of this, arguing that scripture contains both ancient tradition and subsequent aggadic expansion, that the redactors of the Pentateuch appended new material, or glosses on old material, without bothering to remove the old material. One could of course argue that the three stories may be separate developments from a core tradition type-scene.

The great Italian/Israeli Biblical scholar Rabbi Umberto Cassuto, an opponent of the Documentary Hypothesis, brought a refreshing insight to these tales. He postulated that the three tales about such an episode were current in Israel before the Torah was written, that they may have flowed from one ancient saga, but that the Torah’s object “was not to investigate the annals of the Patriarchs historically but only to use the existing sagas for the purpose of religious and ethical instruction.” He thus saw the three stories as being included because they had different aims. Tragically, Cassuto died before completing his work on Genesis and informing us of his views of what the aims of the stories are.

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## ORIGINS OF BAR AND BAT MITZVAH

The term *bar mitzvah* is a mixture of Aramaic (בר, "bar," meaning "son of") and Hebrew (מצווה, "mitzvah," meaning "commandment"), indicating a male who is obligated to observe the laws and rituals of Judaism. The only Talmudic use of the term *bar mitzvah* is in Baba Metzia 96a, referring to a non-Jewish slave as 'not being obligated to fulfill the commandments of the Torah.' In Pirkei Avot 5:25, Rabbi Yehuda ben Teimah delineates life stages worthy of recognition: "At 5 for Scripture, at 10 for Mishna, at 13 for Mitzvot, at 15 for Gemara, at 18 for marriage, etc." We find the term *bar mitzvah* in Midrash Tanchuma, a pre-15th century text, used to clarify the commandment, "You should keep these laws." (Exodus 13:10), with the following dictum, "If a minor is *bar mitzvah* and *bar de'ah* (basically, "of sound mind"), he is obliged to wear Tefilin." But there is no mention of a celebration of any sort surrounding this event.

The primary concern of the rabbis is determining the age when adolescents are considered mature enough in general to take on the responsibilities of the performance of Jewish Law. Halakhic maturity is defined in Mishnah Niddah 5:6 as twelve years and a day for a girl and thirteen years and a day for a boy: "The vows of a girl of the age of eleven years and one day must be examined (to ascertain whether the girl was aware of their significance); the vows of one who is of the age of twelve years and one day are valid (no examination being necessary);...the vows of a boy of the age of twelve years and one day must be examined; the vows of one who is of the age of thirteen years and one day are valid..."

Bereshit Rabbah 63:10, one of the books of the Midrash, amplifies Genesis 25:27, "The boys grew" (referring to Jacob and Esau) by the following: "Rabbi Elazar ben Shimon (a fifth generation Tanna) said: A man must see to the needs of his son until he is 13, from there onward he must say: 'Blessed is He who released me from the responsibility for this one:'" (ךברו שפטרני מענשו של זה). This is the blessing that has worked its way into the *Bar Mitzvah* ceremony, A 14th century writer reported that Yehuda Gaon engaged in the following ritual: "At the first occasion when his son was called up to the Torah, the Gaon, Rabbi Yehuda, rose to his feet in the synagogue and recited that blessing."

The *bat mitzvah* celebration for girls is even newer and less common, but is not as new as one might think.

- In Rabbi Yosef Chaim's (1883-1909) book Ben Ish Chai, a 19<sup>th</sup> century rabbi from Baghdad, talks about the day of a girl's bat mitzvah as a day of celebration on which she should wear a new outfit so that she can say '*She'he'chyanu*' and acknowledge her entrance to the 'burden of mitzvot' (*ol mitzvot*).
- Rabbi Yitzchak Nissim, late Sephardi chief Rabbi of Israel, quotes from Rabbi Mussafya of Spain (1606-1675), who says that *bat mitzvah* is a day of celebration and the dinner is a considered a '*se'udat mitzvah*' (mitzvah dinner)..
- In Italy (Turin and Milan), it was customary to gather the *bat mitzvah* girls and the community during a weekday, have the girls stand in front of the open ark, and recite prayers, including a special prayer written for them '*Baruch Ata Hashem lamdeynee chukecha*' (bless . . . teach me your statutes) and *Shehechyanu*. Then the rabbi spoke and blessed the girls and their families. Afterwards, there was a *Se'udat mitzvah* at the girls' home.

In 1902 the first *bat mitzvah* as we know it today was celebrated in the "Enlightened" congregation of Rabbi Yechezkel Karo in Lvov, Ukraine. The more widely publicized "original" *bat mitzvah* celebration was held in 1922, when Rabbi Mordecai Kaplan called his daughter Judith to the *bimah* for a *bat mitzvah* ceremony at the newly formed Society for the Advancement of Judaism Reconstructionist synagogue.

The Orthodox view of the *bat mitzvah* is succinctly summarized by the following responsae:

- Rabbi Aaron Walkin of Lithuania (1865-1942) wrote: "It is forbidden to arrange gatherings of men and women, young and old, to celebrate a daughter's reaching maturity, not only because of the promiscuity involved, but also because anyone who arranges such gatherings is imitating Gentiles and irreligious Jews, even when the Torah is read and everyone stands in awe."
- Rabbi Moshe Feinstein of New York (1895-1986): "Concerning those who wish to conduct a formal celebration for a *bat mitzvah*, under no circumstances is it to be held in a synagogue, which is no place for an optional function. A *bat*

*mitzvah* celebration is surely optional and even trivial, and cannot be permitted in a synagogue, especially since it was instituted by Reform and Conservative Jews. If, however, a father wishes to make some festivity in his home, he may do so, but there is no reason to consider it a *se'udat mitzvah*.”

• Rabbi Moshe Sternbuch, the anti-Zionist Vice-President of the Edah Hacharedis in Jerusalem: “It is well known that the Reformers celebrate a daughter’s coming to mitzvot with a large festive meal as for a son. Such a party is completely forbidden (*issur gamur*) and a deviation from the ways of our fathers. Any party motivated by the purpose of making women and men equal is completely forbidden. . . . In places where it is customary to gather her friends and family for a small meal, which bears no similarity to a festive meal. . . . I do not find any prohibition against it“

Despite these admonitions, the popularity of the *bat mitzvah* in Conservative and Reform circles, along with the birth of the Jewish Orthodox Feminine Alliance (JOFA), had led the Orthodox to rethink their harsh stance on the *bat mitzvah*. In traditional and more modern Orthodox congregations, girls are permitted to deliver talks on the Torah portion or some other religious topic, either at a *kiddush* following services or from the *bima* itself, once services had ended. Today, in Orthodox women’s prayer groups, *b’not mitzvah* are even called to the Torah. The woman’s role in Traditional synagogues is still evolving, and we look to JOFA as a creative force in this process.

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**THE "SHABBES GOY"**


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The fourth commandment (Exodus 20:10) says with respect to Sabbath observance that "in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates." The Deuteronomy 5:14 version says more, namely, "in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, nor your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your ox, nor your ass, nor any of your cattle, nor your stranger who is inside your gates; that your manservant and your maidservant may rest as well as you." Given the prohibition from servants and even strangers doing work for you on the Sabbath, how did the institution of the "Shabbes goy," the nonJew who performs forbidden duties (e.g., work, kindling fire) for a Jew on the Sabbath get its justification?

My exposition on this question is based entirely on the book The "Shabbes Goy" written by the 1980 Israel Prize Award winner Jacob Katz, first published in Hebrew in 1983 and translated into English in 1988. I only focus on three classes of activities, (a) satisfying personal needs, (b) partnering with a Gentile, and (c) employing a Gentile to do a Jew's work.

With regard to (a) we begin with the Mishnah in Shabbat 122a, which says, "If a Gentile lights a lamp, an Israelite may make use of its light; but if [he does it] for the sake of the Israelite, it is forbidden." And the 8<sup>th</sup> century Babylonian Gaon Natronai said that a slave is forbidden to collect figs and grapes for Jews in order to bring them to the Jews after Shabbat had begun, since "one's slave is obligated to observe the Shabbat like himself." Yet by the early 19<sup>th</sup> century we find in a responsum of the Hatam Sofer (Austro-Hungary) the following. "In our day, as a result of the Jews being scattered throughout the cold lands of the north, they must have their stoves lit on the Sabbath by Gentiles during the cold winters, and this has led to a proliferation of cases in which the Gentiles do many different jobs on the Sabbath for the Jews. The Gentiles in our lands have thus come to believe that such is Sabbath observance, the Jews themselves refraining from an act but telling Gentiles and having them perform it." And the 17<sup>th</sup> century Polish rabbi Magen Avraham, commenting on similar permissiveness, said "...and we must conclude that a great rabbi handed down this ruling." Part of Magen Avraham's reasoning is that the entire community was behaving in this way, which he believed could only occur if there was some prior ruling allowing this to be the community practice.

Regarding (b) we once again start with the Talmud, this time in Avodah Zarah 22b: "Two saffron-growers, [one of whom was] a heathen who took charge of the field on the Sabbath, and [the other] an Israelite who did so on the Sunday, came before Raba; he declared the partnership as permissible." But "if an Israelite and a heathen leased a field in partnership, the Israelite must not say subsequently to the heathen, 'Take as thy share the profit in respect of the Sabbath, and I will take as mine that in respect of a week-day;' only when such a condition was made originally is it permitted. [Likewise] if they just calculate the profit it is forbidden!" That is, if the Israelite apportions the profits in respect of the Sabbath to the heathen even without telling him explicitly to work on the Sabbath it is likewise forbidden. Subsequent rulings allowing this kind of arrangement were of three sorts: Jewish renunciation or ownership on Shabbat, explicitly having the Gentile accept responsibility, or sale of the enterprise before Shabbat.

Regarding (c) we begin with an item in the Talmud, Shabbat 17b: "Beth Shammai rules: one must not sell, to a Gentile, or help him to load [an ass], or lift up [an article] upon him unless he can reach a near place [before Shabbat] but Beth Hillel permits it. Beth Shammai maintains: hides must not be given to a tanner, nor garments to a Gentile fuller [before Shabbat], unless they can be done while it is yet day; but in all these [cases], Beth Hillel, permit [them]." The law is in accordance with Beth Hillel, and so this ruling served as the basis for subsequent rabbinic lenient rulings with respect to employing a Gentile to do a Jew's work on Shabbat.

As one can see, the permission to use a Shabbos goy to satisfy personal needs evolved through the centuries to meet a demand for such services, the rules for partnering with a Gentile, though based on the Talmud, required some legal maneuvering in order to be legitimated, while the use of a Shabbos goy to do a Jew's work has explicit Talmudic approval.

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**THE PRIESTLY BLESSING**


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We are all familiar with the awe-inspiring ceremony, performed in our congregation only in the *musaf* service on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Pesach, Shavuot, and Succot (except when the holiday falls on a Shabbat), in which the *cohanim* ascend to the ark, turn to the congregation, and bless them. Growing up with this tradition we are surprised, when visiting Sephardic or Italian synagogues and synagogues in Israel (except for those in the Galilee), to find this ceremony performed daily, including on Shabbat. What's the reason for this disconnect?

Let's first look at what we know about the blessing in the days of the Temple. The priestly blessing was a daily occurrence in the days of the Temple, as indicated in the Mishnah Tamid 5:1. Tamid 7:2 and Sotah 7:6 give more detail, saying that it done at the end of the service. But in Berachot 11b we are told that the priest expressed three blessings, one of which was the "priestly blessing," during, not at the end of, the service. These apparent contradictions led to a dispute among the rabbis as to what is meant by the term "priestly blessing" as used in Berachot, especially in post-Temple times. Rashi [1040-1105] said that it refers to the full blessing as we know it today, at the point in which it appears in the service. The Tosafists [1105-1290] and Rosh [1250-1307] argued that there were two "blessings," one the paragraph read by the *chazzan* today during the repetition of the *amidah* and the other the blessing invoked by the priest at the end of the service. Rambam [1135-1204] and Ravad [1120-1198] say that Berachot uses the term "priestly blessing" to refer to the *sim shalom* prayer. In what follows, what we call the "priestly blessing" is what we use today, the three verses delineated in Numbers 6: 24-26.

The priests did not perform the blessing during *mincha*. But the Mishnah Taanit 4:1 says: "On three occasions of the year, on fast-days, on *ma'amadoth* [*special days instituted only in the land of Israel, explained in detail in the Talmud*], and on the Day of Atonement do the priests lift up their hands to bless the people, four times during the day, namely at the *shacharit* service, at *musaf*, at *mincha*, and at the closing of the gates of the Temple." So in Taanit 26b the rabbis discussed the reason for not performing the priestly blessing during *mincha*, yet including it in *mincha* on the three occasions cited. The consensus seems to be that it is banned on ordinary days at *mincha* because of the likelihood of intoxication then, which could not happen on these three occasions.

We don't know when it was eliminated from the Shabbat service, but we do know that it was prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The Shulchan Aruch, written by the Sephardic Yosef Caro [1488-1575], cites that in the writings of the German Rabbi Yaakov Moellin [1360-1427, known as the Maharil] there is a mention that the priestly blessing is not performed on Shabbat. In his contemporaneous Ashkenazic supplement to the Shulchan Aruch Rabbi Moshe Isserlis [1525-1573, sometimes referred to as the Ramo] justified that practice by saying that the priestly blessing can be performed only in a joyous atmosphere. Hence on weekdays, when people are preoccupied with earning a livelihood, and even on Shabbat, when such mundane thoughts are difficult to avoid, the priestly blessing should not be recited. (This also abrogated the Taanit 4:1 invocation of the priestly blessing on fast days.) Since this supplement only applied to Ashkenazic Jewry, the Sephardim continued with the tradition of including the priestly blessing daily in the *shacharit* service and on Shabbat during both *shacharit* and *musaf*.

However, on festivals, which are joyful occasions, the priestly blessing should be recited. But, with the exception of the Frankfurt community, Ashkenazim eliminated the priestly blessing from the *shacharit* service on the festival days and only included it in the *musaf*. They did this because, working off the reasoning of Rabbi Isserlis, they wanted the blessing to be done as close to the festive holiday meal as possible.

There are those who argue that if one of the festivals falls on a Shabbat the priestly blessing should be performed on that day. Indeed, the Shulchan Aruch addresses this issue, and says that there is no rhyme nor reason justifying the practice of those who omit the priestly blessing on those Shabbatot. The Magen Avraham [the Polish Rabbi Avraham Gombiner 1637-1683], though, justifies this omission by pointing out that the priestly blessing prayer service includes personal supplications between each blessing, and one is not allowed to include such supplications on Shabbat (which is also why the supplications when the ark is opened are omitted on Shabbat and why *avinu malkeinu* is not recited on Shabbat).

Those congregations who have reinstated the practice of performing the priestly blessing on holidays that fall on Shabbat do so by eliminating the personal supplications from this rite on that day.

The Talmud further says that in the Temple the people responded Amen at the completion of the three verses but in the provinces the people responded Amen at the end of each of the three verses. The latter is the practice today. At the beginning of the priestly blessing the Sephardim include the verses Numbers 6:2-23, and at the end the Sephardim add verse Numbers 6:27; the Ashkenazim do not include them based on Rashi's comment that these verses are commands to the priests and not part of a blessing.

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## YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS WITHOUT A SCORECARD



I recently bought this pizza, and thought it would be instructive to take you through all six items on the label so that you can see all the kashrut issues that go into making a pizza. (1) Starting on the left is a block headed by the word **Mezonos**. What that indicates is that the appropriate blessing before eating this pizza is that made over cake, not over bread. You are reminded of this in the Hebrew below, which says ברכתו מזונות (literally, “its blessing is mezonos”). This is followed by the parenthetical remark (כשאוכלים שלא בדרך קביעות), literally, “when it is eaten not in the way of appointment,” meaning when it is not considered having been eaten as part of a meal (for example, if one eats more than 8.8 ounces of cake at a sitting this is considered to be sufficient to require a blessing other than mezonos). (2) Next are the words **Cholov Yisroel**, and below that the same words in Hebrew, חלב ישראל, with 212° below that. This literally means “milk of Israel.” In brief, Mishnah 2.6 of Avodah Zarah prohibits “milk which a gentile has milked when no Israelite watched him.” For a fuller explanation see, *Kashrut Today- Part II* in the July-August 2004 Bulletin. The 212° indicates that the equipment used in the pasteurization process was koshered at 212° Fahrenheit, a requirement established in 1970 by Rabbi Dworkin of Crown Heights, New York. (3) Next are the symbols for the two kashrut inspectors, the left one being that of United Mehadrin Kosher and the right one being Star-K Kosher Certification.

Below this is (4) **CHALLA TAKEN** This refers to Numbers 15:19-21: “Then it shall be, that, when you eat of the bread of the land, you shall offer up an offering to the Lord. You shall offer up a cake of the first of your dough for an offering; as you do the offering of the threshing floor, so shall you present it. From the first of your dough you shall give to the Lord an offering in your generations.” To comply with this mitzvah, when baking an amount of dough about the size of an olive is pinched off, burned, and discarded. Full conformity with this mitzvah depends on the amount of flour used. According to one rabbinic authority, when using at least 3 lbs. 10.8 oz. of flour one separates a piece of dough and makes an appropriate blessing; when using flour weighing between 2 lbs. 11.4 oz. and 3 lbs. 10.8 oz one separates a piece of dough and does not make a blessing; when using less than 2 lbs. 11.4 oz. of flour one need not separate a piece of dough. (5) **PAS YISROEL**, literally means “bread of Israel.” Mishnah 2.6 of Avodah Zarah also prohibits the eating of bread made by gentile bakers. Finally (6) **KEMACH YOSHON**, literally “old flour,” refers to the prohibition in Leviticus 23:14 “And you shall eat nor bread, nor parched grain, nor green ears, until the same day that you have brought an

offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” Jews are prohibited from eating from the new crops of wheat, barley, oats, spelt and rye before the second day of Passover, so this is an indication that the flour used is not that from new crops.

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## A FINE KETTLE OF FISH

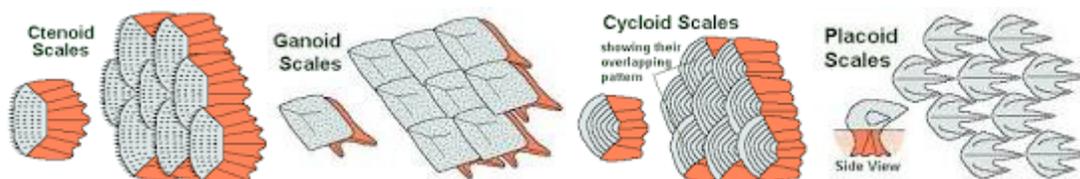
Leviticus 11:9-10 (with an almost verbatim repeat in Deuteronomy 14:9-10) says, “These shall you eat of all that are in the waters; whatever has fins and scales in the waters, in the seas, and in the rivers, those shall you eat. And all that have not fins and scales in the seas, and in the rivers, of all that move in the waters, and of any living thing which is in the waters, they shall be an abomination to you. The word for “scales” is קשקשת (*kaskeset*), and was the subject of a discussion in the Mishnah (Hulin 59a), where Rabbi Judah says, “The scales are those thin discs which are attached to the fish.” The Gemara goes on to ask, “Whence do we know that the term *kaskasim* means the scales that cover the fish like a garment? Because (in 1 Samuel 17:5) it is written: ‘And he was clad with *kaskasim*’” and in that context *kaskasim* referred to a coat of mail.

The Gemara continues (Chulin 66a, repeated in Avodah Zarah 39a), “Our Rabbis taught: If it has no fins and scales now but grows them later on, as the sultanith (סולתנית translated as “sprat”) and the afian (עפיין [aphiz (עפיין) in Avodah Zarah], both translated as “sardine”) it is permitted; if it has them now but sheds them when drawn out of the water, as the colias (אקונום), scomber (אפונם), swordfish (כספמטעים), athrias (אכספמטעים), and tunny (אסונום), it is permitted.” (The translations of fish names are Soncino’s based on Ludwig. Lewysohn, Die Zoologie des Talmuds, 1858.)

What’s interesting here is that both tuna and swordfish were identically categorized in the Talmud as kosher fish. There was a time when both swordfish and sturgeon were considered kosher. They both appear, for example, in list of kosher fish published by Agudas ha-Rabbonim in Ha-Pardes, April 1933. (Barney Greengrass, “The Sturgeon King,” on the upper west side of New York since 1908, was ecstatic.) Despite centuries of it being considered kosher, in 1951 Rabbi Moshe Tendler of Yeshiva University declared that swordfish was not kosher, stating that the swordfish we know today is not the same as that referred to in the Talmud, which he thinks is a “sailfish,” and that it does not have scales even when young. The Chief Rabbinate of Israel had earlier declared swordfish to be kosher, and in a 1960 responsum Rabbi Isser Yehudah Unterman defended this ruling. In 1966 the Conservative Committee on Law and Standards, after looking into the scientific validity of Rabbi Tendler’s statements, found sufficient evidence to counter his allegations, and therefore declared swordfish kosher. But further study (see below) backs Rabbi Tendler’s ban.

What’s the problem? By rabbinic interpretation, *kaskasim* must be true scales that can be removed without damaging the skin of the fish. Bony tubercles and plate or thorn-like scales that can be removed only by removing part of the skin are not considered *kaskasim*. Halacha (Yoreh Deah siman 83) rules that only scales that are loosely attached to the skin and thus easily separated are *kaskasim*. Scales which are imbedded in the skin and cannot be separated from the skin without tearing it are not *kaskasim*. An example of such is eel. Since monkfish, lumpfish, turbot, and catfish have no scales, they are clearly not kosher.

There are four kinds of scales: ctenoid, cycloid, ganoid, and placoid.





Of these scales only ctenoid and cycloid scales are considered kosher. These scales are round and resemble a fingernail. They are flexible, transparent and overlap each other like roof shingles. They lie in shallow pockets on the skin and are easily rubbed off. Cycloid scales are smooth-edged whereas ctenoid scales are toothed. Examples of kosher fish based on these categories are carp and herring (cycloid scales) and black bass (ctenoid scales). Ganoid is the type found on sturgeon, paddlefish, and gars; placoid is the type found on sharks, skates, and rays.

For a list of nonkosher fish, see the following web site:

[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/2998673/jewish/Non-Kosher-Fish-List.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/2998673/jewish/Non-Kosher-Fish-List.htm)

## ADAM I AND ADAM II

Genesis contains two discrepant tales of the creation of Adam. In Genesis 1 Adam is created in “the image of God” but with nothing said about how his body was formed; in Genesis 2 there is a description of Adam being created from the dust on the ground into whose nostrils God breathed the breath of life. In Genesis 1 Adam is told to “fill the earth and subdue it”; in Genesis 2 Adam is told to “cultivate the garden and watch over it.” In Genesis 1 we are told that Adam and Eve were created concurrently; in Genesis 2 Adam emerged alone, with Eve being created subsequently as his helpmate and complement.

In his “The Lonely Man of Faith” (Tradition, Summer 1965, 5-67) Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik dubs these Adams as “Adam the first” and “Adam the second.” Adam the first is “aggressive, bold, and victory minded. His motto is success, triumph over the cosmic forces. He engages in creative work, trying to imitate his Maker.” By contrast, Adam the second is “receptive and beholds the world in its original dimensions.” Adam the first “exists in society, in community with others.” Adam the second sees himself as separate from nature and with an existential uniqueness. Consequently, Adam the first’s goal is to be a “dignified majestic being capable of ruling his environment,” while Adam the second has a “dual role as a lonely individual and as one committed to a peculiar community idea.” Through God’s intervention and Adam’s sacrifice (of a metaphoric rib) Adam the second gains companionship and the relief of his existential loneliness.

Unlike the Higher Criticism, which dismisses the distinct chapters as works by different authors without benefit of redaction, Soloveitchik uses his characterization of the two Adams of these chapters as designed to teach us an integrative lesson. Unlike the community of Adam the first, Adam the second’s covenantal community requires the participation of the Divine. Adam the second is “the lonely man of faith,” the “redemptive Adam,” bringing a “redemptive interpretation to the meaning of existence.” The two Adams are in each of us, both willed by God, creating an unending tension between two conflicting modes of existence.

In his new book, The Road to Character, David Brooks has modernized these two as Adam I and Adam II. Adam I is the career-oriented, ambitious side of our nature; Adam II wants to obey a calling to serve the world. Adam I’s motto is “Succeeds,” Adam II’s motto is “Charity, love, and redemption. Or, as Brooks put it in his TED lecture, Adam I thinks about his resume, while Adam II thinks about his eulogy—a rather shallow and nonintegrative rendering of Soloveitchik’s message.

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## EVE I AND EVE II

In the September-October 2015 Bulletin I pointed out that Genesis contains two discrepant tales of the creation of Adam. In his Lonely Man of Faith Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik introduced the concepts of “Adam the first” and “Adam the second” to differentiate the nature of the two Adams described therein. Of interest also is the nature of the two women that appear in the Genesis versions. In Genesis 1 we are told that Adam and Eve were created concurrently (though the woman is unnamed); in Genesis 2 Adam emerged alone, with Eve being created subsequently as his helpmate and complement. Literal readers of Genesis interpret these versions as referring to two different women, and have even given the first a name, Lilith. A number of tales have developed about Lilith, the key ingredient of these tales being that Lilith was created along with Adam, but she proved to be an inappropriate creation, and so God killed her and next created Eve in the manner described in Genesis 2.

The word Lilith (לילית) appears only once in the Bible, in Isaiah 34:14, “Wildcats shall meet with hyenas, goat-demons shall call to each other; there too **‘Lilith’** shall repose, and find a place to rest.” However, it’s not clear that the reference is to a person named Lilith; other translators have translated the term to mean ‘screech owl’ (King James Version), ‘night hag’ (Revised Standard Version), ‘night creatures’ (New International Version) or ‘night bird’ (English Standard Version). But Lilith appeared in many neighboring cultures. There was a female Mesopotamian storm demon called *lilitu* .associated with wind and was thought to be a bearer of disease, illness, and death. The Assyrian Lilitu was said to prey upon children and women, and was described as associated with lions, storms, desert, and disease. Early portrayals of such demons are known as having bird talons for feet and wings. They were highly sexually predatory towards men, but were unable to copulate normally. Lilith even appears in the Babylonian Gilgamesh epic. Perhaps the Babylonian figure shown here, dating around 1800 BCE, is an early depiction of Lilith.



Lilith appears in the Talmud in Shabbat 151b: “Rabbi Hanina said: One may not sleep in a house alone, and whoever sleeps in a house alone is seized by Lilith,” Eruvin 100b: “She grows long hair like Lilith,” and Niddah 24b: “If an abortion had the likeness of Lilith its mother is unclean by reason of the birth, for it is a child, but it has wings.” So it’s clear that by the time of Rabbi Hanina (around 100 CE) the image of Lilith – long hair and winged – had been well known among Jews.

The association of Lilith with Adam’s ‘first wife’ originates centuries later in the Alphabet of Ben Sira, an anonymous compilation of proverbs and stories dating to somewhere between 700-1000 CE. Here is the relevant quote: “After God created Adam, who was alone, He said, ‘*It is not good for man to be alone*’ He then created a woman for Adam, from the earth, as He had created Adam himself, and called her Lilith. Adam and Lilith immediately began to fight. She said, ‘*I will not lie below,*’ and he said, ‘*I will not lie beneath you, but only on top. For you are fit only to be in the bottom position, while I am to be in the superior one.*’ Lilith responded, ‘*We are equal to each other inasmuch as we were both created from the earth.*’ But they would not listen to one another. When Lilith saw this, she pronounced the Ineffable Name [the true name of God] and flew away into the air.” Adam complained to God, who sent three angels to fetch Lilith back. They told her that if she does not return, one hundred of her children will die every day. She retorted that harming newborns was the reason why she was created, but agreed not to harm any infants wearing amulets with the names or images of the three angels. The Zohar repeats this story and associates her with the serpent that tempted Eve. I have posted a Kabbalistic amulet used to ward off Lilith on the Bulletin tab of the synagogue website. She also appears in Goethe’s Faust and Keats’s Lamia, as well as in many portraits. In the ‘70s she became an icon for the feminist movement, and the magazine Lilith, still available today, began its publication in 1975.