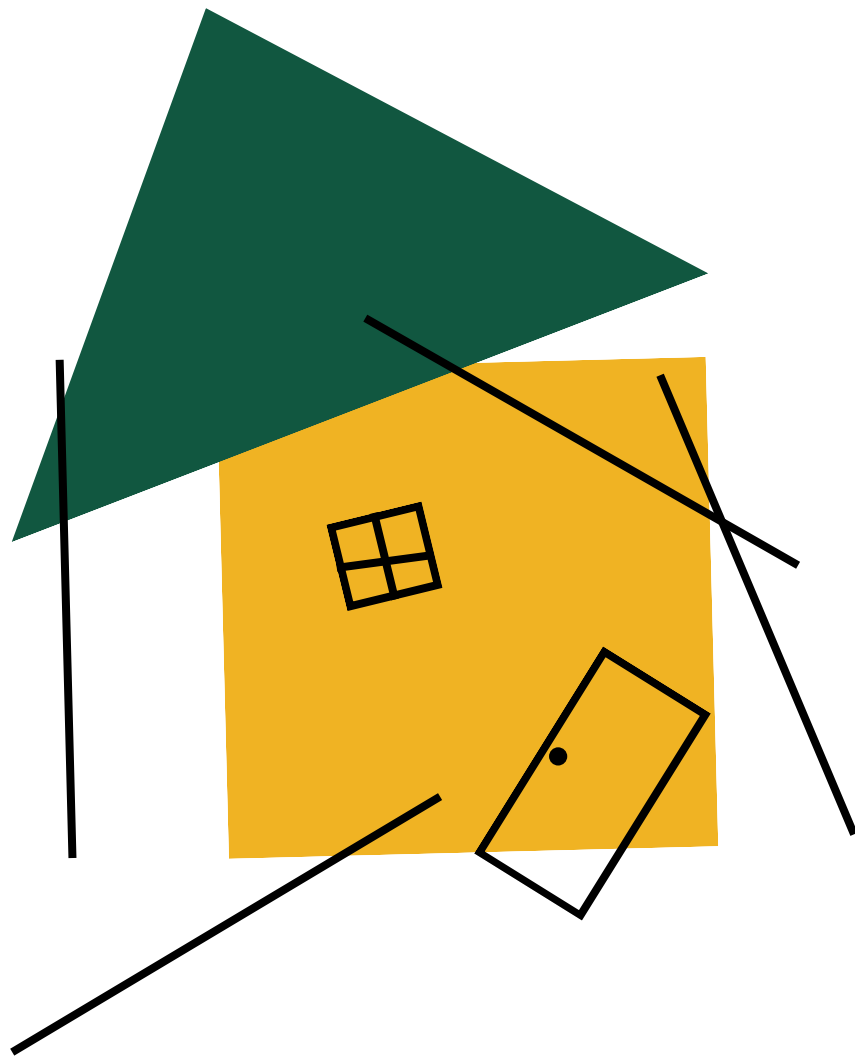


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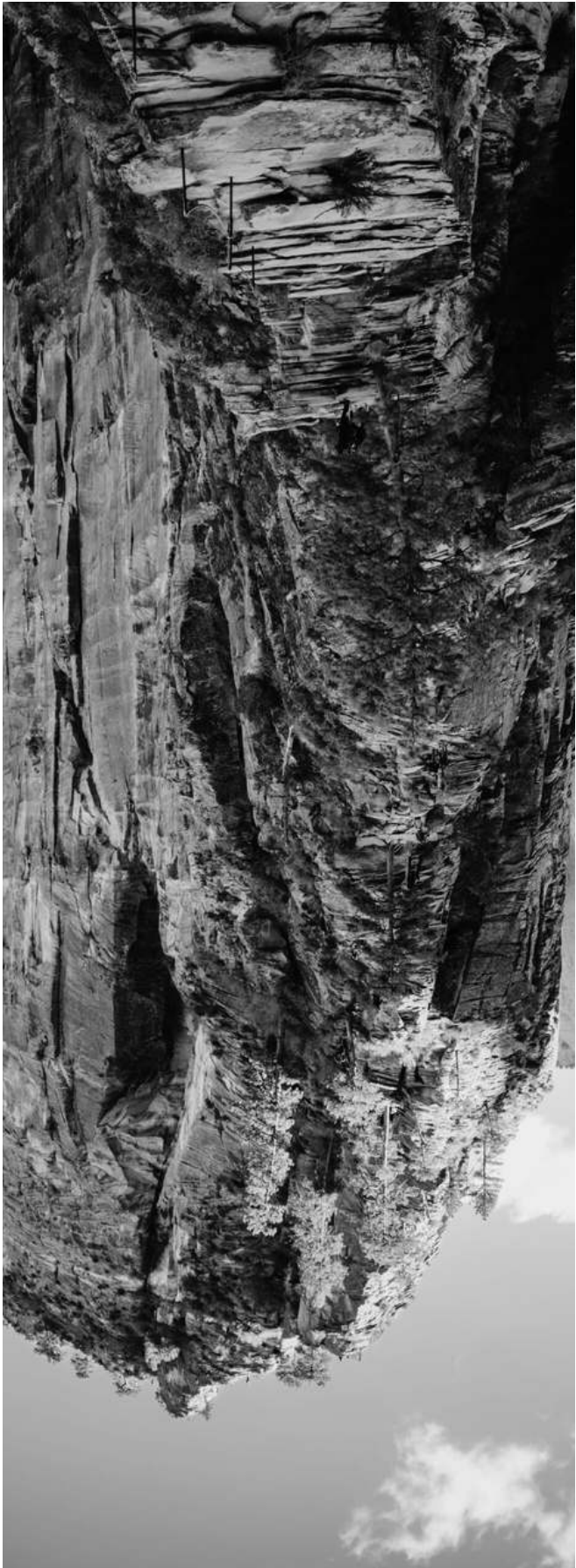
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A NOTE FROM THE EDITORS

We would like to thank you for your patience in receiving this volume a few months behind schedule. On a positive note, unlike previous iterations of the *Judaic Studies Review*, this edition features writing across multiple semesters, providing you, the reader, with a greater depth of student work and thought than any previous edition. Take that as a silver lining!

Volume 6 showcases five exemplary articles from William & Mary undergraduates. The first, Annie Wicker's *On Elazar*, focuses on the ongoing debates between purist and covenantal, Elazar and Buber, religion and politics. Next, Robert Coleman steps back in time, highlighting "the simultaneously empowering and tragic efforts of creative expression during the Holocaust on Jewish prisoners." Further, in *A Historical Review of the Use of the Jewish Trope and Its Implication in the Holocaust*, Ragan Arrington underpins current worries around stereotypes and inherent bias with a case study on Jewishness and the perception thereof in the leadup to genocide. Jewishness in times of crisis thematically continues in the last two papers presented here. Jacob Goldberg peers into Amery (1980) and Wiesel (1960), utilizing the latter to contradict Amery's thesis that Jewish life post-genocide is incompatible with the happiness needed by all humanity; Wiesel's inherent optimism in the aftermath of generational suffering provides a roadmap for Jewish life and love through the present. Finally, Vanessa Walrath reviews Arnon Degani's (of U-Penn's *Molad: Center for the Renewal of Israeli Democracy*) recent presentation during this semester's *Scholarly Perspectives Series on the Middle East*, reviewing Israeli and Palestinian claims of superpower status, legitimacy, and colonialism.

This past year, the program hosted engaging events and guests, contributing significantly to the discourse here on campus. This year, the *Mideast Lecture Series* captivated students and staff alike! The program featured distinguished speakers such as Arnon Degani, a fellow at the Center for Israel and Democracy at the University of Pennsylvania, and Yossi Klein-Halevi, a fellow at Hartman Institute in Jerusalem and internationally acclaimed author of *Letters to My Palestinian Neighbors*. Additionally, the program welcomed Peter Ochs, Bronfman Professor of Judaic Studies, Emeritus at the University of Virginia, who delivered a compelling lecture on Religion and Conflict Resolution. Further enriching the academic landscape, the program sponsored talks by Andrew Port, Professor of History at Wayne State University, shedding light on "Germans and Genocide after the Holocaust." Notably, the program also hosted a conference on biblical studies, expertly helmed by Professor Andrew Tobolowsky, offering attendees a deep dive into this rich field of inquiry. These events and visitors underscore the program's commitment to fostering dialogue, scholarship, and understanding within the realm of Judaic Studies and beyond.

From an exciting, nearly overwhelming past few months here at William & Mary to a remarkably difficult international moment, we find that nothing is more important in this instant than the free exercise of quality Religious and Judaic studies journalism, research, and scholarship. However trite it may sound, educating ourselves and those around us is the first step towards peace at home, abroad, and within ourselves. We hope that this volume brings some of that education to you today.

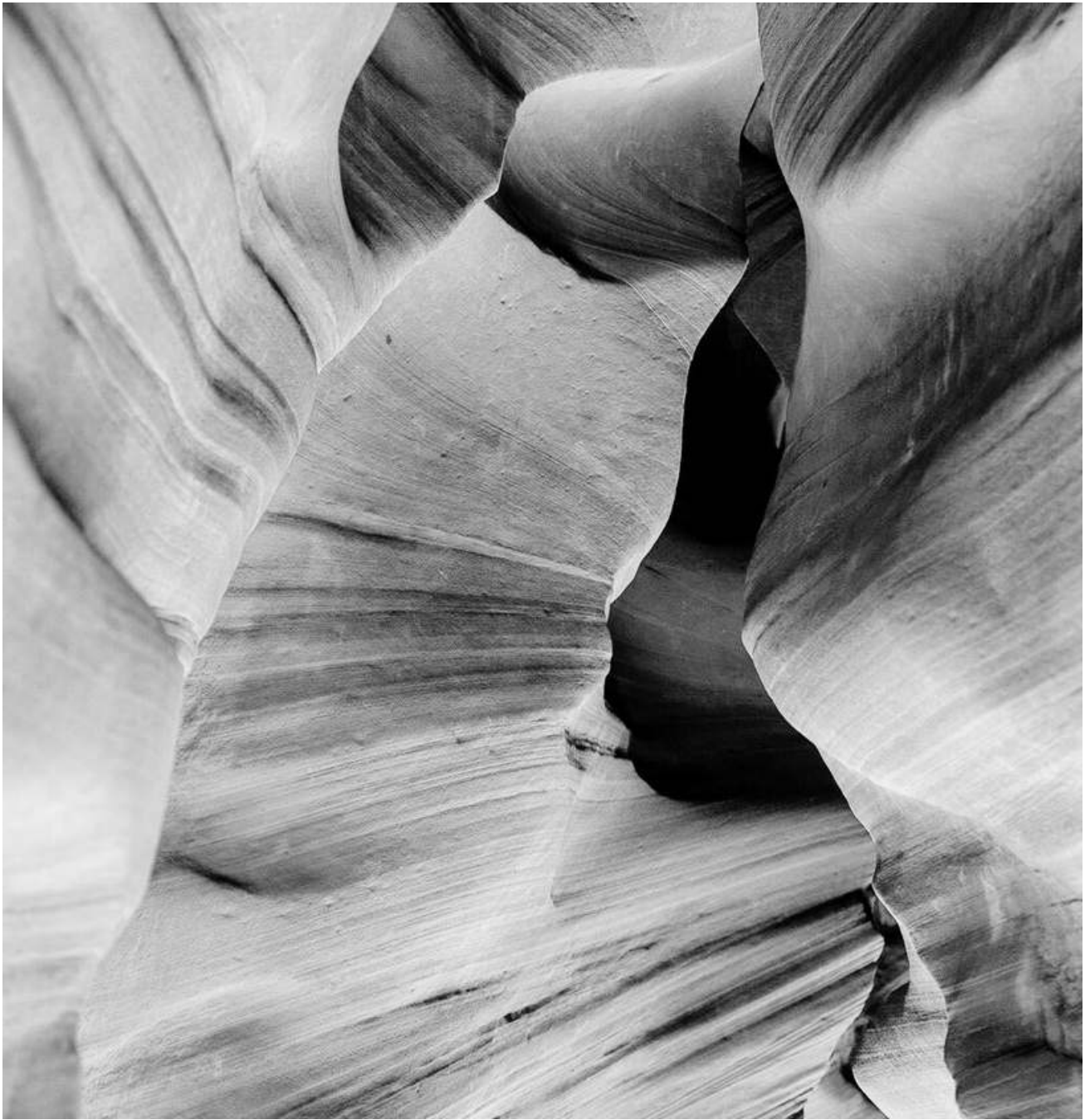
As always, thank you,


Randi Rashkover

Nathan and Sofia Gumenick
Chair of Judaic Studies


Jack Boyd

Master's Candidate in Education
Murray Family 1693 Scholar



**ON ELAZAR: VIEWS OF
THEOPOLITICS & MONARCHY**

ANNIE WICKER

In the contemporary moment, the question of religion and politics is alive and pressing. Judaism has an established theopolitical tradition and provides many models for how religion and politics relate. One central issue that illuminates one of these models is the relationship between covenantal politics and a secular regime like a monarchy. In his *Kinship and Consent*, Jewish scholar Daniel Elazar argues that there is no contradiction between covenant-based theopolitics and a monarchical form of government as presented in the biblical text. In doing so, Elazar makes a compelling case for the legitimacy of the covenantal aspect of the Jewish political tradition, as opposed to prominent twentieth-century Jewish thinker Martin Buber's primitive theocracy. Elazar's defense of the coexistence of theopolitics and a monarchy proves that humans can worship and obey God while being ruled by a king. In what follows, I will use biblical texts from Gideon, Samuel, and Deuteronomy to corroborate Elazar's claim that theopolitics and monarchy do not contradict each other.

In the Jewish political tradition, theopolitics manifests itself in two ways. The purist way, presented by Martin Buber, argues that God is the only legitimate and justified political actor in a theopolitics. Thus, according to Buber, God must mobilize all political activity. Alternatively, Elazar presents the covenantal model through which humans harness legitimate political activity through rational consent to a legitimate God via a covenantal agreement. Elazar argues that the powers God provides in the covenant can subsequently be divided among the Torah as interpreted by the prophets, priesthood, and monarchy, which comprise the three ketarim. These three ketarim are expressions of humans'

political freedom. While it might seem that the people might mistake a monarchical king for their God, this essay will demonstrate how monarchy fits into Elazar's covenantal model of theopolitics.

First, the story of Gideon in the book of Judges sets the precedent for how a king should not be appointed. In Judges 6:1-8, God enables Gideon to lead the Israelites in defeating the Midianites. After the battle, the Israelites demand a king, with Gideon replying, "I will not rule over you myself, nor shall my son rule over you; the Lord alone shall rule over you"¹. Gideon reveals the Israelites' eagerness to appoint him and his sons as their leader defies God's plan. In his analysis of the Judges passage, Columbia sociologist Allan Silver refers to the "wrongness" of appointing a king based on personal will². This excerpt from Judges is not evidence that there can never be a king, but rather that a king cannot rule on illegitimate grounds, such as human will. Instead, a king must only be appointed under the conditions established by God. By providing instruction on how not to have a king, Judges 6:1-8 implies that there is a right way to appoint a king, as further clarified in 1 Samuel. Gideon's story in Judges alludes to the possibility of a coexistence of monarchy within the covenant-based theopolitics.

Following the Israelites' continued demands for a king, 1 Samuel provides an account of how God establishes a king in Israel. 1 Samuel 8 complements Judges 6 by providing an account of the proper role a king can have in Jewish society. God instructs Samuel to appoint a king, but not without stipulating the extent of his power³. In Silver's analysis of 1 Samuel, he writes, "...the story does

not open the way for kingly despotism, because the powers it ascribes to the king...open the way for secular political rule"⁴. 1 Samuel demonstrates the limits of the king's power so that he can rule while still believing in and obeying God's legitimate authority. This account shows how a monarchical king is still bound by the covenant and does not mimic or replace God. A joint reading of the accounts of Gideon and Samuel provides a referendum on a monarchy to corroborate Elazar's claim that theopolitics and monarchy can coexist.

Deuteronomy 17 further clarifies the roles of the monarch within the bounds of the three ketarim. The biblical text reads, "...he shall have a copy of this Torah written for him...by the Levitical priests. Let it remain with him and let him read in it all his life..."⁵. This shows how the king cannot exercise his political power without the influence of prophetic interpretation of the Torah and the priests. In his analysis of Deuteronomy 17, Walzer emphasizes how ordinary Israelites merely had to write the laws in a prominent place and teach them to their children, while the king is instructed to always carry the Torah and read it wherever he goes⁶. The king is accountable not only to the other branches of the ketarim, but also the people. Prophecy aligns with the Torah branch of the three ketarim to hold the king accountable to God. The king's political power is only justified if it is exercised within God's account of what is right. Deuteronomy 17 shows how monarchy can exist with the theopolitical model because of the enforcement mechanism the three ketarim provides.

The accounts in Judges, Samuel, and Deuteronomy and their accompanying analyses provide compelling evidence for Elazar's claim that a

covenant-based theopolitics and monarchical government are not contradictory. The story of Gideon in Judges implies that there is a wrong way to have a king while the account in Samuel demonstrates God's acquiescence to the people and the limits on the king's power that accompany it. Finally, Deuteronomy places the monarchy within Elazar's concept of the three ketarim, showing how the king must not be placed about the law. Taken together, these biblical texts show that a king can exist within covenant-based theopolitics while avoiding the temptation for the people to worship him as God or the king to see himself as God and thereby provide evidence for one compelling model of how religion and politics can relate.

¹ Walzer, Michael, Menachem Lorberbaum, Noam J. Zohar, and Yair Lorberbaum, eds. *The Jewish Political Tradition: Volume I: Authority*. Yale University Press, 2000, 118

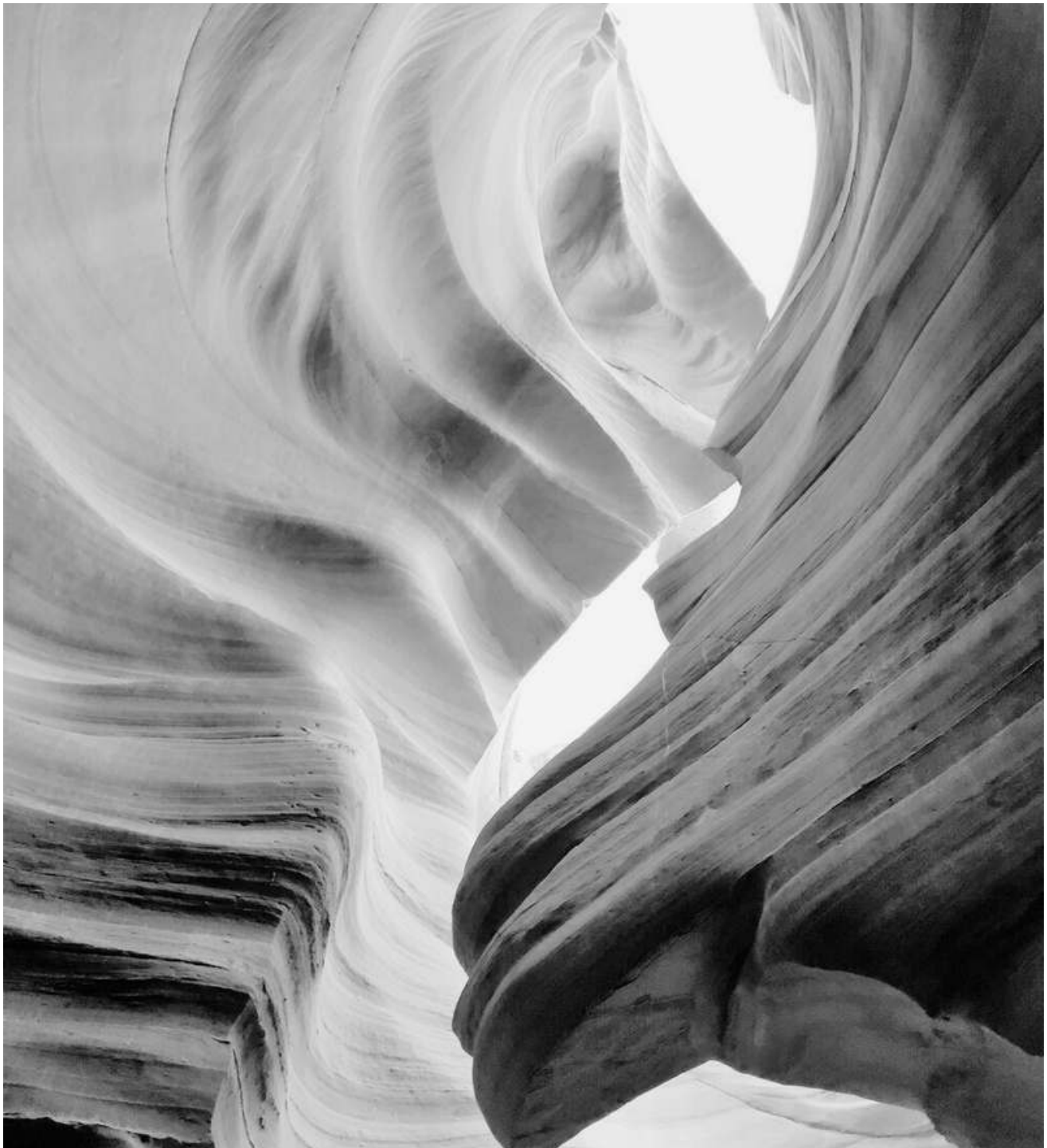
² *Ibid.*, 123

³ *Ibid.*, 121

⁴ *Ibid.*, 126

⁵ *Ibid.*, 133

⁶ *Ibid.*, 140



**REALITY OR HUMANITY: EXAMINING CREATIVE AND
INTELLECTUAL EXPRESSION IN THE HOLOCAUST TO
BALANCE LACHRYMOSITY AND ANTI-LACHRYMOSITY**

ROBERT COLEMAN

On December 14th, 1941, the highly educated and musically gifted Michael Flack arrived at the Theresienstadt ghetto in Czechoslovakia.

Famine, disease, and unpredictability were the norm in this unique and wretched location. The threat of deportation and uncertainty of survival loomed over the heads of Flack and the rest of these unfortunate prisoners, as their lives became wrought with dehumanizing conditions orchestrated by the Nazis. Miraculously, however, Flack found himself immersed in Theresienstadt's rich and vibrant culture of artistic and intellectual expression. Sounds of classical and folk music permeated the ghetto as a professor was giving a lecture on medieval Judaism in one of the barracks while artists were painting their souls in another. Flack participated in one of the ghetto's several orchestras and even wrote a play that was performed in the ghetto. While motivations varied, Flack and other prisoners displayed their humanity and resilience in the face of persecution and dehumanization by engaging in art, music, literature, and scholarship.¹

However, if one traveled one hundred ninety miles south of Theresienstadt to the Mauthausen concentration camp in Upper Austria, they would have seen music and art being used by the Nazis to torture, degrade, and dehumanize the Jewish prisoners. As the Nazis ruthlessly beat Joseph Drexler to the point of unconsciousness, he was forced to sing the church hymn "Jesus blood and wounds."² Hans Bonarweitz, who was executed after attempting to escape his confinement, was forced to listen to the Jewish camp orchestra play music as he

¹ RG-50.934.0023, Oral history interview with Michael Flack, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

² Guido Fackler, "Music in Concentration Camps 1933-1945," *Music and Politics* I, no. 1 (January 2007): pp. 1-25, 2.

walked to his death, humiliating Bonarewitz and making the orchestra members feel complicit in Bonarewitz's death.³ These stories highlight the simultaneously empowering and tragic effects of creative expression during the Holocaust on the Jewish prisoners.

An analysis of creative and intellectual expression during the Holocaust serves to show that the history of the Jews is both one of oppression and power. Music, art, literature, and scholarship served many functions throughout the duration of the Holocaust. On one hand, the Nazis used music and art as a form of torture, destruction, propaganda, and humiliation in order to demoralize and dehumanize the Jewish prisoners in ghettos and concentration camps. On the other hand, prisoners used various modes of creative expression in order to resist the degrading effects of their persecution. Examining creative and intellectual expression in the Holocaust shows that in order to provide an accurate and humanizing portrayal of Jewish history, scholars must emphasize themes of persecution and empowerment simultaneously.

Scholars of Jewish history have traditionally portrayed the story of the Jews as one that is heavily lachrymose or anti-lachrymose. In other words, they have sought to emphasize themes of oppression or empowerment when depicting the story of the Jews. In 1963, Salo W. Baron, arguably the most notable and influential Jewish historian, wrote in his article *Newer Emphasis in Jewish History*:

All my life I have been struggling against the hitherto dominant 'lachrymose conception of Jewish history' a term which I have been using for more than forty years - because I have felt that, by exclusively overemphasizing Jewish sufferings, it distorted the total picture of the Jewish historic evolution and, at the same time, it served badly a

³ Fackler, "Music in Concentration Camps," 9.

generation which had become impatient with the 'nightmare' of endless persecutions and massacres.⁴

Essentially, Baron criticized historians like Heinrich Graetz and Simon Dubnow, who were pioneers of Jewish history and of the previous generation, for placing too much emphasis on the oppression, persecution, and dehumanization of the Jewish people. While Baron focused primarily on medieval Jewry, his anti-lachrymose approach has almost been universally accepted by scholars. A heavily lachrymose conception of Jewish history simplifies the story of the Jews to a narrow construct that does not capture the complexities, nuances, and humanity of the Jewish people. Baron argues that Jewish history should not be defined solely by suffering, oppression, and dehumanization.

However, contemporary historians such as Adam Teller and Benjamin Gampel have criticized Baron's anti-lachrymose approach by claiming that Baron downplayed the suffering of Jewish people throughout history. They argue that Baron's work does not accurately reflect the reality of Jewish lives. Gampel and other scholars have claimed that "awareness" and "a willingness to accept" Jewish lachrymosity is just as important as anti-lachrymosity. These historians further argue that Baron's approach is "not useful either for a way of understanding Jewish history or even for Jewish life today."⁵ Similarly, Teller advocates for a reinsertion of lachrymosity in the discussion of Jewish history in

⁴ Salo W Baron, "Newer Emphases in Jewish History," *Jewish Social Studies* 25, no. 4 (October 1963): pp. 235-248, 240.

⁵ Benjamin Gampel, "Reembracing the Lachrymose Theory of Jewish History" (lecture, Columbia University, New York City, NY, October 30, 2018).

order to fully understand “normal” Jewish life and not downplay Jewish oppression and persecution.⁶

This paper seeks to create a more accurate and humanizing depiction of Jewish history by finding a balance between emphasis on empowerment and emphasis on persecution of the Jewish people and their complex stories. It demonstrates that the history of the Jews is one of resilience in the face of oppression and dehumanization without downplaying the grim reality of much of Jewish history. Understanding this balance is significant because it allows us to acknowledge and analyze the nuances and complexities of Jewish history, giving us a more accurate and human depiction of the Jewish people and their stories. By striking a balance between lachrymosity and anti-lachrymosity, scholars can write a history that empowers the Jewish people while not downplaying the persecution, oppression, and dehumanization that they have faced throughout history.

The sources that this paper utilizes will primarily come from oral histories in the form of Holocaust survivor testimonies from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yad Vashem, and the USC Shoa Foundation. It will also consult oral histories from documentary films such as *Terezin Diary* and *Paradise Camp*, where survivors of the Theresienstadt Ghetto (and other concentration camps like Auschwitz) relay their experiences and perspectives during their imprisonment. While oral histories may present issues of reliability and accuracy, they nonetheless provide varied and nuanced perspectives that allow us to

⁶ Adam Teller, “Revisiting Baron’s ‘Lachrymose Conception’: The Meanings of Violence in Jewish History,” *AJS Review* 38, no. 2 (November 2014): pp. 431-439, 439.

conceptualize the Theresienstadt ghetto and the Holocaust in elaborate ways. Additionally, this paper consults a multitude of documented creative initiatives such as musical scores, poetry, drawings, play scripts, and official records that will be used as evidence for the forced and voluntary artistic environment in which the prisoners engaged (can't end a sentence with a preposition!).

The Theresienstadt ghetto provided the Jews with a voluntary yet secret culture of intellectual and artistic expression. There were several motives for the prisoners to engage in creative and intellectual expression during their persecution. Michael Flack was a musician and playwright in the Theresienstadt ghetto, and his survivor testimony is representative of the experiences of many other prisoners. Michael Flack explains that by engaging in art, music, literature, and scholarship, he was "feeding [himself] with normalcy."⁷ Before the war, Flack explains, he and his family surrounded themselves with music and art daily in Czechoslovakia. Music, according to Flack, played a significant role in his adolescence and pre-war life. A skilled violinist, Flack was a member of various orchestras, including the Brno Symphony Orchestra. In short, Flack engaged in music and art in the Theresienstadt ghetto because it was normal for him to do so in his pre-war life. Flack coped with the tumultuous situation and chaotic conditions that surrounded his everyday life in Theresienstadt by doing what he felt was normal: engaging in music and art. Thus, creative expression allowed Flack to resist the degrading and dehumanizing effects of Nazi persecution and gain a sense of normalcy.

⁷ RG-50.934.0023, Oral history interview with Michael Flack, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, DC.

Artistic expression in the Theresienstadt ghetto served as a mechanism for prisoners to retain their humanity. Prisoners who engaged in music, art, literature, and scholarship were constantly expressing and affirming their humanity. This rich cultural activity created a medium of release from the misery of their current situation, enabling prisoners to display incredible resilience. Felix Kolmer, a survivor of Theresienstadt, stated that “This cultural resistance was really a fight for the self-preservation of the inmates [and] for the improvement of their mental state.”⁸ Creative and intellectual expression allowed prisoners to resist the process of dehumanization and counter the Nazis’ attempts at mental degradation. The famous Czech composer Raphael Schacter and his choir bravely and covertly condemned the Nazis by performing Verdi’s “Requiem” in Latin. The lyrics expressed the resilience of the Jews, as one verse says “Whatever is hidden shall be revealed and nothing shall remain unavenged.”⁹ Additionally, children performed a musical called “Brundibar,” which came to symbolize the Jews’ triumph over the Nazis.¹⁰ The Nazis could never achieve their ultimate goal, the complete dehumanization of the “Jewish race,” because prisoners in the Theresienstadt ghetto were constantly affirming their humanity by engaging in an exceptionally vibrant cultural and artistic atmosphere.

⁸ *Terezín Diary* (The Terezín Foundation, 1989),
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4X0O79Wlmc&t=258s>.

⁹ Susan King, “Defiant Requiem’: Nazi Prisoners Found Humanity in Music. This Concert Keeps the Message Alive,” *Los Angeles Times* (Los Angeles Times, April 10, 2019),
<https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-defiant-requiem-20190410-story.html>, 6.

¹⁰ Debórah Dwork, “Raising Their Voices: Children’s Resistance through Diary Writing and Song,” in *Jewish Resistance Against the Nazis*, ed. Patrick Henry (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2014), pp. 279-299, 295.

On the other hand, in concentration camps like Mauthausen and Auschwitz, the Nazis used music in particular to dehumanize, weaken, torture, and humiliate Jewish prisoners. Guido Fackler identifies several ways in which the Nazis sought to use music as a means of destruction. Most commonly, prisoners were forced to sing on command in various scenarios, including during labor, while marching, and to provide background music for punishments. The types of songs prisoners were forced to sing included German folk songs, antisemitic songs such as "Judenlied" ("Jews' Song"), and other songs intended to demoralize and dehumanize prisoners.¹¹ Eberhard Schmidt, a survivor of the Sachsenhausen concentration camp, reported that:

The SS made singing, like everything else they did, a mockery, a torment for the prisoners... Anyone who did not know the song was beaten. Anyone who sang too softly was beaten. Anyone who sang too loud was beaten. The SS men lashed out wildly... The SS men always found a reason... when in the evening we had to drag our dead and murdered comrades back into the camp, we had to sing. Hour after hour we had to, whether in the burning sun, freezing cold, or in snow or rain storms, on the roll call plaza we had to stand and sing of... the girl with the dark brown eyes, the forest or the wood grouse."¹²

Thus, for many prisoners who were forced to sing on command, music became a means of humiliation and destruction that weakened them physically and mentally.

Additionally, the Nazis utilized camp orchestras called Lagerkapellens that served a multitude of purposes. Shirli Gilbert writes that Lagerkapallens assisted in the extermination process by helping maintain discipline and order in

¹¹ Fackler, "Music in Concentration Camps," 2-6.

¹² Eberhard Schmidt, *Ein Lied - ein Atemzug. Erinnerungen und Dokumente.* Gesprächspartner und Herausgeber Manfred Machlitt (Berlin, 1987), 130.

the camps.¹³ Consisting of amateur and professional musicians, members of the *Lagnerkapallen* were generally considered “privileged,” giving them a better chance of survival. However, their emotional survival was still vulnerable to destruction. *Lagnerkapallens* performed during punishments, executions, and the selection process. At the Monowitz concentration camp, the trumpeter Herman Sachnowitz described how a captured man who tried to escape would be forced to shout the words ‘Hurra, hurra, ich bin wieder da!’ (Hurrah, hurrah, I am back again!) while marching to his execution while the orchestra performed parade music.¹⁴ This humiliated the captured victim while subsequently causing some survivors to accumulate feelings of guilt and depression that would persist throughout their lifetimes.¹⁵

Furthermore, *Lagnerkapallens* performed music during the selection process, particularly in Birkenau. Here, the fate of newly arrived prisoners was determined, as the Nazis selected prisoners to either perform hard labor or go to their death. Esther Bejarano, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, writes “We knew that all the people who streamed out of the wagons were going to the gas chambers. And we had to play pleasant music for them.”¹⁶ *Lagnerkapallens* played during this process in order to deceive the newly arrived prisoners and make them believe that they were in no danger. They functioned to deceive prisoners and maintain a sense of order and diminish uncertainty and chaos. This

¹³ Shirli Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust: Confronting Life in the Nazi Ghettos and Camps* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 145.

¹⁴ Gilbert, *Music in the Holocaust*, 176.

¹⁵ Fackler, “Music in Concentration Camps,” 10.

¹⁶ Esther Bejarano, “*Man Nannte Mich Krümel*”: *Eine jüdische Jugend in den Zeiten Der Verfolgung* (Hamburg: Curio-Verlag, 1991), 23.

made the players feel complicit in the extermination process. Halina Opielka, a Polish musician, records that many newly arrived prisoners “listened eagerly to the music” and were given a false sense of “courage and hope that this place where they had just arrived could not be too terrible if they were being ‘greeted’ by an orchestra.”¹⁷ Members of these Lagnerkapellens suffered greatly, especially since the meaning and functions of music for them shifted from a positive mode of self-expression to a medium of deception and torture.¹⁸

Scholars of Jewish history must find a balance between lachrymose and anti-lachrymose conceptions. When scholars advocate for an emphasis on one or the other, they fail to reflect the nuances and complexities of the story of the Jews. They further fall short of relaying an accurate conception of Jewish history. Examining the functions of creative and intellectual expression during the Holocaust allows us to show the resilience and power of the Jews without downplaying their suffering. Therefore, scholars must seek to retell moments and periods in Jewish history through a simultaneous lachrymose and anti-lachrymose lens.

¹⁷ Gabriele Knapp, *Das Frauenorchester in Auschwitz: Musikalische Zwangsarbeit und ihre Bewältigung* (Hamburg: von Bockel, 1996), 229.

¹⁸ Juliane Brauer, “How Can Music Be Torturous?: Music in Nazi Concentration and Extermination Camps,” *Music and Politics X*, no. 1 (2016): pp. 1-41, 15-16.

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**A HISTORICAL REVIEW OF THE USE OF
THE JEWISH TROPE AND ITS
IMPLICATION IN THE HOLOCAUST**

RAGAN ARRINGTON

For a large part of history, the West utilized the trope of the Jew and Judaism to bolster worldviews. The idea of the Jew serves as the “other” to point to as flawed in contrast to the correct or righteous view. The Jew also acts as a scapegoat for the internal problems and flaws of institutions that chose to blame instead of fix, veiling their contradictions and issues. Utilizing these ideas presented in David Nirenberg's book, *Anti-Judaism: The Western Tradition*, this essay will show how the antisemitic and anti-Judaic trope of the Jew is a habit of thought that compounds over hundreds of years and allows for the Holocaust to occur.

Nirenberg argues that the trope of the Jew is used and reused repeatedly throughout history as “a category, a set of ideas and attributes with which non-Jews can make sense of and criticize their world” (Nirenberg, 3). As previously stated, the Jew serves as an example of the opposite of what is right and good as well as someone to condemn for the conflicts or wrongdoings of an institution. “The Jew” does not describe an actual Jewish person or Judaism, but a fictitious figure that can function to understand the world and then reinforce this viewpoint. According to Nirenberg, this idea became a habit of thought through “regenerating...in new forms fitting for new periods” (Nirenberg, 459). However, he stresses that this habit of thought “did not ‘cause’ the ‘Final Solution’ or make it inevitable”, but “the Holocaust was inconceivable and is unexplainable without that deep history of thought” (Nirenberg, 459). In summary, the repetitive diabolizing of the Jewish people and portrayal as wrong and evil in the trope of the Jew allows for the possibility of the Holocaust.

Within the New Testament, both Paul and Matthew employ the trope of the Jew to solidify the belief in Jesus as the Messiah. As Jesus was a Jew but the Jews do not recognize him as Messiah, demonizing non-believers is required to address the contradiction within Christianity. Paul brings the good news to gentiles by using Jews as an example of the opposite of the way of Christ and therefore incorrect. Despite Christians being grafted onto the covenant and Israel, they are not required to do the law because Jesus is the fulfillment of the role of the law. As a result, spiritual belief in Jesus as Messiah is above the law. Nirenberg summarizes Paul's reasoning when he says, "The Mosaic law and the Jewish people and polity...are condemned as 'of the flesh', sentenced to slavery and exile...to be cast out, replaced by the spiritual Jerusalem, set free in Jesus" (Nirenberg, 57). For Paul, while the Jew represents "letter, flesh, slavery, and death" that comes from temporal materialism (Nirenberg, 59), Christians are more positively associated with Jesus, spirit, new life, and the spiritual body. The law-centered focus of the Jew serves as an erroneous example of how not to act for Christians if they want to achieve salvation. The Jew for Paul represents everything wrong and untrue.

Likewise, Matthew portrays the Pharisees as hypocrites who appear pious, but are actually deceitful because they do not recognize the true Messiah. Nirenberg writes that, "[The Pharisees'] piety was so conspicuous that it sometimes made that of Jesus's disciples seem wanting" (Nirenberg, 73). Consequently, Matthew feels compelled to address the concern posed about Jewish Pharisees that follow the law who seem more devout compared to followers of Jesus that do not. Therefore, they are labeled as idolatrous for their

ignorance and materialism resulting from rejection of Jesus. Matthew believes that "real devotion is motivated by desire for heavenly reward and is done privately" in contrast to performance of Jewish law (Nirenberg, 72). As a result, Matthew "uses the Pharisees to exemplify the dangerous disjuncture that exists in the world between appearance and truth" (Nirenberg, 74). By casting the Jew as the opposition, New Testament writers are able to simultaneously promote and reinforce their religious views while negating any refutations potentially posed by Judaism.

Later, in the sixteenth century, Martin Luther uses the derogatory trope of the Jew to support the idea that the only way to live justly and righteously is through faith and God's grace. This interpretation of Paul is divergent from the works performed in the Catholic Church. By putting works over grace and the scripture, Catholics are attempting to exercise their own righteousness and act idolatrously. Luther connected the Catholic focus on works to the Jewish connection to law, calling these materialistic efforts at self-justification "Jewish". Nirenberg notes that he "associated the hateful age of legality with the Jews...The difference between the law and the gospel...works and faith...the Roman church had become more 'Jewish' than the Jews" (Nirenberg, 250-51). Luther wishes to strip the church of laws and works, thereby de-Judaizing Christianity. For example, he believes that "the story of Christ, not the history of ancient Judaism, was the literal meaning of even the most Hebrew of scriptures", attempting "to redirect the flow of Judaism...away from scripture altogether" (Nirenberg, 251). Like Paul, Luther associated the Jew with incorrect behavior for Christians and everything that threatened correct adherence. He compared

"the Jews and the temptations of the flesh that assail the Christian", and "was always willing to compare the teachings of his rivals with the crimes of the Jews" (Nirenberg 260). Luther's view of the Jew as an ail to Christianity led to his encouragement of violence against them. He endorsed not only "To baptize them...rivers with millstones tied around their necks", but to "'Burn their synagogues...[and] force them to work'" (Nirenberg, 262). Illustrating the Jew as evil and wrong served as a way to critique the Catholic church, thus leading to strong feelings of disdain and violence towards Jewish people as the antithesis of righteousness.

Enlightenment thinkers use the Jew as the opposite of their time-bound definition of humanity. Many use the Jew as the antithesis of being human because they seemingly do not use reason and rationality. Like Paul and Luther, philosophers interpret the folly of the Jew as their obedience to the law. Spinoza believes "Jews despised reason and philosophy...the true covenant is...not on tablets of law" (Nirenberg, 334). For Spinoza, the Jew is not a critical thinker but an obedient servant to the law. In order to convey the principles of the Enlightenment, thinkers of the time demonstrated how not to think and act in order to progress. Nirenberg writes that, "As...philosophers rapidly expanded their sense of the human, they sought as well for its limits. For that purpose they turned often to Jews and Judaism" (350). By portraying Enlightenment values as good compares to the Jewish bad, philosophers reinforce their worldview.

Nineteenth century economics used this same model to critique capitalism. For instance, Max Weber writes that because capitalism relies on a system of credit, only trustworthy Protestants are capable of performing it

correctly. He believes that "Jewish economic activity was fundamentally different...assigned no ethical value to the outcome of transactions with non-Jews...they are so isolated...that their activities contributed nothing" (Nirenberg, 443-44). Marx viewed capitalism as a flawed economic science that creates winners and losers, a permanent underclass. As a result, he views the materialism of capitalism as the cause of this ail. Nirenberg writes that Marx believes, "[private] property...produces only enslavement, estrangement, alienation" (Nirenberg, 432). This description of consequences is extremely similar to the experiences of the Jewish people throughout their history. He too evokes Paul and Luther when he associates Jewish ties to the law with materialism. Despite being a critic of religion, Marx is clearly influenced by the anti-Judaism of earlier Christian thinkers. Nirenberg summarizes this point when he states that Marxists "associate capitalism with the 'Jewish' world of flesh and letter...The history of capitalism...was driven by the migrations of the Jewish people...progressive colonization of the world by Jews" (Nirenberg, 441). Instead of exploring how capitalism could be repaired, Marx and Weber blame the Jew for its economic perversion. With Christian anti-Judaic reference, they mimic Paul in using the trope of the Jew as a warning to those who follow a flawed path.

In the modern era, critics of new ways of thinking and academic disciplines use the Jew to represent incorrect ideas and thoughts. The trope of the Jew is utilized particularly in the development of sciences, as anything "abstract, logical, or allegedly hyperrational" is associated with the Jew (Nirenberg, 449). As a result, mathematics and any scientific discipline that relied on it came under scrutiny. To thinkers of the time, the "formal and rule-bound

language of mathematics" (Nirenberg, 451) is parallel to the law of the Jews and therefore wrong. Not only that, but math stands in contrast to "the fruits of the German spirit, concrete and creative" (Nirenberg, 451). By putting ideas that they disagree with in terms of antisemitism, a well-known example of fault, critics of new ideology attempt to discourage its progression and enforce traditional ways of thinking.

Despite Western philosophers claiming secularity, European thought was steeped in the anti-Judaic influences of Christianity present in the New Testament. The resulting habit of thought that demonized the Jew resulted in a feeling that the Jewish people had to be eliminated. This is why the Holocaust cannot be understood without knowledge of how these ideas accumulated over time and were eventually used to justify the mass murder of Jewish people. This continuous association of Judaism with evil allowed for the Holocaust to happen, which would not have occurred without it.

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JEAN AMERY & ELI WIESEL: ON THE HOLOCAUST AS A CRISIS IN JUDAISM

JACOB GOLDBERG

After enduring Auschwitz, Jean Amery wrote "On the Necessity and Impossibility of Being a Jew," an essay outlining his experience as a Jew after the Holocaust. In this essay, he describes a rupture in Judaism that he claims is unredeemable. In his famous novel, *Night*, Eli Wiesel's literary reflection on his time in the Holocaust, Wiesel presents an experience that remains harrowing, however, it does not contain the same crisis that Amery describes. In this essay, I will begin by outlining Amery's argument for why the Holocaust created a rupture in Judaism. I will then detail how Wiesel's *Night* provides evidence to contradict this rupture.

The rupture that Amery describes begins with his claim that following the Holocaust it is simultaneously necessary and impossible for a Jew to be a Jew, "The necessity and impossibility of being a Jew, that is what causes me indistinct pain" (Amery, 28). The necessity of being a Jew comes from the lack of agency in the matter, Jews are labeled as such by the anti-Semitic society around them regardless of their self-identification. In Amery's view, the uniting factor of the Jewish people is the categorization by the anti-Semites. The impossibility follows from this because if the label of Jew is determined by the anti-Semite, it is also defined by their terms. Thus, a definitional characteristic of being Jewish in the anti-Semites' terms is that the Jew should not exist. In an anti-Semitic society, Jews are marked for death. Amery believes that this causes a crisis in Judaism because authentic existence requires that one does not constantly face death, which is the only option left to a Jew marked for death in the anti-Semitic society. There can be no meaning in life if one is perpetually resisting death, and therefore

Judaism is ruptured because as a theological account of meaning in life, it has no place in a meaningless existence. This is the central rupture in Judaism for Amery.

Wiesel's *Night* fundamentally rejects this crisis in two ways. The first is a rejection that meaning is impossible in the perpetual presence of death. Supporting this, Wiesel's book includes many instances of people finding meaning amidst proximity to death and suffering. Characters are shown to still have meaning when Wiesel depicts them engaging in acts with intrinsic value, not simply means to an end such as survival. One striking example of this happened after Wiesel was subject to a beating by his Kapo. As Wiesel was bleeding, a fellow prisoner risked her life to help him clean up, give him food, and share comforting words even though speaking German put her at risk (Wiesel, 53). This moment demonstrates meaning in the face of death because the woman chose to risk her own life to help someone else simply to do a good deed, without any ulterior motive. In another powerful moment of meaning Juliek, a fellow prisoner, plays his violin as he is on the brink of death surrounded by many more corpses (Wiesel, 95). Juliek feels the urge to play his music, an act of beauty that can only have meaning in itself despite the death around him. These examples prove that Amery's argument that there can only be resistance and no authentic life when faced with death is false because they demonstrate acts of intrinsic value.

The second avenue through which Wiesel contradicts Amery's rupture is by illustrating how the Jewish faith continues to provide meaning for Jews despite

their constant confrontation with death. The most obvious examples of this occur when Wiesel and the other Jews pray. During the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Wiesel and the other prisoners engage in some of the traditional practices and prayers (Wiesel, 66-68). Despite Wiesel himself questioning his faith, he clings to the traditions of Judaism. Furthermore, at one point he befriends two brothers and says that hum Jewish melodies and “often spoke about Palestine” (Wiesel, 50). These examples demonstrate how the Jewish faith still provided the prisoners with a source of meaning and provided a means by which they could form a community while confronting death. If Amery’s claim that Judaism can no longer be a source of meaning were true, then these instances would not be possible.

Further proof of how Judaism still acts as a source of meaning for Wiesel in *Night* comes from the struggle with faith depicted throughout the story. Wiesel relates himself to Job, the Biblical figure known for his struggle with faith (Wiesel, 45). By relating his own experience to Job, he is actively creating meaning out of Jewish text. Later, he continues to explicitly wrestle with his confidence and loyalty as he participates in holiday prayer (Wiesel, 67). These acts may appear to contradict the argument that he is finding meaning, however, they actually prove that Judaism still has meaning for Wiesel. Questioning one’s belief in and loyalty to God proves that there is meaning because struggling with faith is an act of choice demonstrating agency on the part of Wiesel and any Jew that participates in that struggle. This rejects Amery’s notion that Jews are entirely Jews by the anti-Semites’ definition because even by doubting God Wiesel is

performing an act of self-determination and defining his own relationship to God.

Amery makes a compelling case for why the Holocaust created a rupture in Judaism. Coming out of the paradoxical necessity and impossibility of being a Jew, he claims that a Jew cannot exist because they are forced to live in a state of constant confrontation with death, which is incompatible with an authentic, meaningful life. Wiesel, however, rejects this rupture in *Night* by providing evidence that contradicts multiple aspects of Amery's argument. First, Wiesel shows multiple cases of characters finding meaning through acts of kindness and beauty while surrounded by death, refuting Amery's point that meaning cannot be found in such a scenario. Furthermore, Wiesel specifically demonstrates how Judaism remains a source of meaning during the Holocaust. He shows how prisoners hold onto their faith in the camps, proving that Judaism is still a part of their identity. Even the moments of characters questioning their faith contradict Amery's rupture because part of his claim is that Jews are necessarily Jews on anti-Semites' terms, which if true would leave no room for the self-determination demonstrated in questioning one's faith. Through these examples, Wiesel rejects the crisis that Amery proposes the Holocaust caused in Judaism.

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ARNON DEGANI AND THE POLITICS OF ZIONISM: A REVIEW

VANESSA WALRATH

Among the rhetoric regularly launched at Israel across colleges and universities is the frequently heard claim that Israel is a “settler-colonial” state. While Israel is not the only nation to be given the label of “settler” or the label of “colonial,” it is largely the only recipient of the combined term and the only recipient given this designation based on the actions of an indigenous community. Arnon Degani, featured as part of the Scholarly Perspectives on the Middle East series this semester, provided a defense for why this term is employed when describing Israel's actions.

A visiting University of Pennsylvania Professor and contributor to Molad, a progressive think tank dedicated to Israeli democracy, Degani has espoused his views on different interpretations of Zionism and Israeli policy toward Palestinians through various articles featured in *Haaretz* and on the podcast, “Hesket Oslo.”

During his talk on March 7th, 2024, Arnon Degani presented a view on Israel as a settler-colonial state that is unique because it doesn't offer inherent condemnation. His thesis is that there is a distinction between settler-colonialism and colonialism as concepts existing on opposite ends of one spectrum, and Israel falls into settler-colonialism. Moreover, Israel being settler-colonial based on a specific metric affects the contemporary political debates surrounding Israel in a counter-productive way.

According to Degani, the main distinction between settler-colonialism and colonialism is in the motivations of the settlers, i.e. what settlers want to do with the land they are claiming. Colonialism can be distinguished based on use of land to serve a more powerful entity, which is why colonial efforts often include

missionaries, setting up businesses, and exploitation of native labor. On the other hand, settler-colonialism is an attempt for a population to detach from their place of origin; therefore, their ideal is to become something entirely new in the place the population travels to. Where colonialism is predicated on taking resources and security away from a native population intentionally to bolster a specific nation-state, settler-colonial efforts often include invoking an original sovereign claim over territory and due to not using a native population for labor in spite of wanting to expand, is more likely to result in an extermination of native culture. Based on this framework, colonialism, and settler-colonialism are polar opposite approaches to the expansion and/or growth of power through resettlement for nations in the modern era. And while Zionists in the 19th century certainly didn't compose a nation in the traditional sense, it is understandable how they could benefit from the political moves made by established nations during this time, considering Zionism is a nationalist movement for a group of people united by history and cultural customs.

Degani defined colonialism as "expanding imperial sovereignty of other countries." Zionism did not stem from an imperial metropole- the European Jews that began migrating to Israel *en masse* in the 1800s were not a distinct nation nor representative of one. Therefore, colonialism can't be used to accurately describe the creation of Israel. However, he goes on to elaborate that not only does this criterion not disqualify Israel as a "settler-colonial" project, it actively pushes it further to that end of the spectrum. Settler-colonialism does not have a root country; people engage in it to build their identity around the land they're

settling. Even if one's Zionism included a vision of coexistence, the idea of Israel is built around it being a Jewish state, and considering the inevitable collision between Jewish and Arab desires to claim the region, this translates to settler-colonialism based on execution alone.

After establishing the framework of the settler-colonialism/colonialism spectrum, Arnon Degani proceeded to address how Zionism, as an ideology as well as the methods by which it has been executed, fits into the picture. Degani describes Zionism as “[an] ethno-national ideology with an unchanging core that pushed its adherence towards the creation and maintenance of a Jewish State.” Based on this interpretation, any retreating or ceasing in occupation is seen as diluting Zionism. In Israeli politics, right-wing Zionists and anti-Zionists agree that post-1967 occupation is a direct continuation of core Zionist logic; their differences lie in their evaluation of the ethics of this logic.

But what exactly makes Zionism “settler-colonial,” other than the idea that groups of people moved to a new region and used it to shape their cultural identity? This alone is debatably a weak justification, considering the continuous Jewish presence in the Levant and the clear importance of Israel to Jewish culture seen over centuries prior. Degani’s primary argument draws on the “iron wall” strategy employed by Zionist camps, which is characterized by prioritizing their security in the Middle East consistently when dealing with Arab neighbors. The significance of this strategy shows that while dealing with the Arabs from a position of unassailable strength was meant to yield to a further stage where Israel would be strong enough to negotiate a satisfactory peace with its

neighbors, this does not change the fact that when European Jews decided their solution was elsewhere on the globe, they naturally stepped into settler-colonialism because there were already other people there. Even if the Jews are justified and motivated for nationalism due to their safety, the impact on the Palestinians is the same, therefore there is still resistance to it.

Degani provides evidence of this by showing how, in his eyes, any road towards peace with a Jewish presence in the region falls into “eliminating” the Palestinians in one way or another. There’s the more obvious “elimination via displacement,” which is what was seen in 1947 with the Nakba and reflects an ethno-nationalist aspiration for Jewish demographic superiority. While not an explicitly stated policy goal, this line of thinking is still present in certain sects of Israeli politics. The subtler variation, “elimination via assimilationist logic,” often manifests as a one-democratic-state solution, yet it would still yield a result along the lines of eliminating the Palestinians. Every path would have seen some Arab erasure by guaranteeing political equality of Arabs and Jews. Therefore, the two-state solution arose, influenced by the strength of the indigenous Palestinian population. Supporting a political framework that could appeal to Palestinians became bi-nationalism. Even so, bi-nationalism involves drawing boundaries that would lead to some level of displacement and changing the cultural landscape.

The land acknowledgment itself inherently marks Israel as a settlement enterprise, which, in Degani’s eyes, was exacerbated by actions taken by the Israeli government between 1948 and 1966, such as labeling Arab residents of the British Mandate of Palestine that chose to remain in Israel as a “suspect

population" complete with different forms of identification than those given to Jewish citizens. Obviously, discriminatory actions like these don't necessarily suggest settler-colonialism, but the assertion of the government's power forced Arab citizens to assume a level of Israeli identity, thereby fulfilling the goal of establishing a new identity for the land that came from settlers.

Looking at it from this lens, every road seems to lead to a degree of elimination that supports Zionism as settler-colonialism. Which begs the next question: is this settler-colonialism something to avoid?

It is agreed upon by Zionists and anti-Zionists alike that "settler-colonialism essentially functions as a buzzword/shorthand for saying Israel shouldn't exist."¹ Both sides (Israel and Palestine) understand that colonialism is immoral, meaning that when a term like settler-colonialism is introduced into the conversation and people aren't educated about it beyond the part that includes colonialism, a dangerous miscommunication occurs. The fundamental misunderstanding of what settler-colonialism is not only inflames campus rhetoric but hampers the ability to conduct rigorous scholarship on the Israel-Palestine conflict. What we hear on college campuses mainly calls for a response to Israel's existence as a settler-colonial state with ostracization at best and total destruction at worst. That kind of rhetoric represents a lack of resolution to the conflict that doesn't call for the total defeat of either camp, as that would be the elimination of an indigenous community from their ancestral lands whether it was inflicted upon Israelis or Palestinians.

¹ Arnon Degani, "Hesket Oslo."

Arnon Degani's final point can be effectively summarized as so: "If Israel is a settler-colonial state, it is just as legitimate as all other states." Calls for the destruction of Israel would clearly be out of the question, as they are not levied against any other countries committing similar or worse human rights offenses. Degani's proposal for combatting this perception is to avoid casting Zionists in an inherently positive or negative way during discussions on the conflict. Additionally, one must realize that settler-colonialism is ingrained into the making of nations, and it is unfair to target Israel and call for its destruction on that charge alone when many other settler-colonial states don't receive the same treatment. Settler-colonial alliances are based on combinations of identities and the constantly shifting states of interactions between different populations; they could not be wholly described as 100% positive or negative. It must be acknowledged that the primary function of employing these terms in talks about Israel on modern college campuses isn't to educate people on how Israel is formed. "Indigenous" and "settler" are ultimately arbitrary terms being misused in modern debate and intended to be anti-Semitic dog whistles by many. By properly defining these terms,

Arnon Degani aims to lead more nuanced and holistic discussions of Israel that focus on its policies more so than its status as a country, Arnon Degani's talk helped allow myself to consider Israel as a settler-colonial entity based purely on meeting specific requirements and not on my emotions. I strongly agreed that the ways in which people are receiving and processing this information do not leave much room for actually productive resolutions. The extremity involved is

particularly harmful, as it makes more and more people feel alienated in different ways.

While I can appreciate how elements of Israeli policy and parts of Israeli history do fall into settler-colonialism, even with a morally neutral reframing of "settler-colonialism," I'm hesitant to definitively assign Israel this label. One of the requirements for settler-colonialism outlined in Degani's talk was that the ideal among the settlers was to start something entirely new in the colonized area. Zionism, as part of a heritage that has persevered over hundreds of years, along a core mantra to return to Israel specifically, does not reflect this ideal. And of course, the continuous presence of indigenous Jews in Israel over those hundreds of years does prove that there wasn't something "entirely" new being pushed.

You could argue this doesn't prevent the creation of Israel from utilizing settler-colonialism because families that had been living in the area for a long time prior to 1948 did face being uprooted. However, the primary reason many were displaced wasn't due to the influx of citizens, it was a result of the restructuring and redrawing of camps and houses, which came about during disagreements on the distribution of Jewish vs. Arab sovereignty. The establishment of the new boundaries instigated the First Arab-Israeli War, which, with the militant attacks leading up to it, contributed to the Nakba, not the presence of Jews in the region itself. The direct impact of the influx of citizens was increasing violence committed by Arab and

Jewish militant groups, which had failed to be mitigated by the British, who had control over the region at the time.² The position of this violence shows that it was not an effect of Palestinian displacement, which inherently complicates the situation due to a clear intent for extermination of the Jews by the Arab leadership. Arnon Degani's theory is seemingly predicated on the idea that the official nationalization of the Jewish presence in British Mandate Palestine, despite being a minority in the region when this plan had been conceived, reflects some variation of colonial efforts. While I do not disagree with this on a technical level, I do believe that placing Israel on the spectrum of imperial capitalist expansion risks ignoring the historical context of self-determination beginning to spread globally around this same time and the lack of official Arab nationalization in the region during the inception of Zionism. To Degani's point, he makes a concentrated effort not to attach an ethical evaluation to settler-colonialism. But it is not just the moral stigma that oversimplifies the creation of Israel when it is relegated to this category. Both colonialism and settler-colonialism, according to the professor's own definitions, involve asserting sovereignty in a new territory for the purpose of gaining power in some way. Israel is not "new" to Jews as a people, and the European settlers, for whom it was a different place than they had been in for generations, were refugees from violence and immense danger in Europe that was on the road to unprecedented levels during their increased migrations. This is incredibly important, as there was no push for Jews to become wealthy, validate their

² Shuster, "The Mideast: A Century of Conflict," *NPR*.

religion, or seek influence in global politics when it came to establishing Israel-motivations that are all associated with Europeans engaging in imperial capitalist expansion in the modern era.

The consequences of the ensuing violence and Zionist militarization were horrific for many Palestinians, as were the consequences from colonial efforts around the globe for various populations. I am not intending to protect Israel from taking accountability for many, many wrongs in its history. Nevertheless, there is a real danger to placing Israel in the same category as other imperialist nations, even beyond fueling antisemitism. It does not offer a holistic understanding of the perspectives in the conflict, which causes extremists to double down on their narratives and perpetuate obstacles to peace.

The question of whether or not Israel is a settler-colonial state may not be one that has or requires a definitive answer. When considering where Israel fits as a global power, it is notable that, unlike states that indisputably fall into colonialism or settler-colonialism, Israel faces claims of being illegitimate, a false state, and not possessing a right to exist. And yet, states that benefited from imperial expansion then and engage in it now are great powers that exist without being questioned.

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