

CHAPTER 29

JEWISH STUDIES  
*History, Memory, Scholarship*

DAVID N. MYERS

Among the conceptual and terminological touchstones of the founding generation of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, one scarcely encounters the notion of “memory,” either as a repository of transmitted recollections that anchors group identity or as an analytical category worthy of study. Nor, surprisingly, does the term “history,” in the sense of a discrete disciplinary orientation to guide scholars, abound. Far more ubiquitous in the writings of the founding generation was the term *Wissenschaft*, with its perceived curative powers.

The formulation of “history and memory” that has been such a routine part of scholarly discourse in recent decades is a much later, twentieth-century invention. Its emergence required, it would seem, a clear sense of the unbridgeable distance to a past that can be conjured up imaginatively but not relived. This distance was a product of the “rupture of equilibrium” of which Pierre Nora speaks in his introduction to *Les lieux de mémoire*: “An increasingly rapid slippage of the present into a historical past that is gone for good, a general perception that anything and everything may disappear . . . The remnants of experience still lived in the warmth of tradition, in the silence of custom, in the repetition of the ancestral, have been displaced under the pressure of a fundamental historical sensibility.”<sup>1</sup>

In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the members of the Verein für Kultur und Wissenschaft der Juden, in Berlin, still dwelt in proximity to “the warmth of tradition.” Two of the key founders, Leopold Zunz (1794–1886) and Isaac Marcus Jost (1793–1866) were raised in traditionally observant homes “but slightly touched by the rays of Enlightenment.” And yet, they were educated together in a new-style school informed by the ideals of the Haskalah, whose headmaster aimed to show students how “to appear better and more respected among the nations than heretofore.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Nora’s introduction to the multi-volume *Les lieux de mémoire*, which appeared between 1984 and 1992, has been translated as “Between Memory and History: Les lieux de mémoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989), 7.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Michael A. Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1794–1824* (Detroit: Wayne State Press, 1967), 146, 148.

The logical path toward respectability for them was university study, where they were introduced to the latest methods of the German academy. They set out to apply these methods to the sources of the Jewish tradition to which they had been amply exposed as children. In so doing, they came to articulate and memorialize the growing distance they felt from the world of their forebears. Indeed, they set in motion a process of distancing that transformed living memory into a more mediated form of analysis, collection, and commemoration.

Pierre Nora's words are again worth recalling in this context. Commemoration, particularly in the form of *lieux de mémoire*, "occurs at the same time that an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears, surviving only as a reconstituted object beneath the gaze of critical history." Such objects are "the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it." The impulse to preserve, though not reconstitute, a once vibrant memory prompts the creation of archives, anniversaries, and celebrations – preservative agents and symbols of what once lived.<sup>3</sup>

It is this very impulse that guided Zunz in his well-known manifesto from 1818, "Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur." The young Zunz set out a sweeping agenda for modern Jewish studies, calling for the systematic collection and examination of a vast trove of post-biblical (or, as he called it, "neo-Hebraic") literature. Writing at a point of growing distance from the past, when his fellow German Jews were increasingly unfamiliar with the textual pillars of classical Judaism, Zunz declared that "science [*Wissenschaft*] steps in demanding an account of what has already been sealed away." The antiquarian function that Zunz imagined for the emerging *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was a telling reflection, we might say, of the transition from memory to history, at least in Nora's terms.

And yet, that function was not the entirety of Zunz's mission, nor of his comrades in the fledgling *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In fact, the annals of modern Jewish scholarship reveal the persistent presence of two animating functions or impulses: what we might term, with a trace of exaggeration, the taxidermic, on one hand, and the instrumental, on the other.<sup>4</sup> Zunz and other founding members of the Verein held out the hope that elevating their enterprise to the rank of other *Wissenschaften* – indeed, the very ones they studied in university – would have a salutary effect not only on Jewish scholarship, but on Jews as well, specifically, by hastening or

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Meyer has identified this phenomenon in "Two Persistent Tensions in *Wissenschaft des Judentums*," *Modern Judaism* 24, no. 2 (2004): 105–119.

facilitating their path to full emancipation. A generation later, the most popular Jewish historian in Germany, Heinrich Graetz (1817–1891), utilized his multi-volume *Geschichte der Juden* to carve out a more particularist sense of collective identity for the Jews. Graetz was no longer content with the emancipatory model of his predecessors, and instead agitated for a richer, more self-conscious, and distinctive sense of Jewish identity rooted in the past. It was in part because of his audacious renunciation of the deferential path of an earlier generation that he earned the enmity of both Jews and non-Jews in Germany, perhaps most famously, the Christian historian Heinrich von Treitschke.

Like Zunz and Graetz, later Jewish scholars in the twentieth century continued to navigate between the poles of critical distance from and empathic identification with the past. They frequently pledged fealty to the norms of objectivity first articulated by the early *Wissenschaft* scholars, while at the same time seeking to stoke the embers of the past to ignite a vibrant memory in the minds of Jews. Especially energetic in advancing this latter impulse were those operating under the ideological aegis of nationalism. The renowned Russian-Jewish historian, Simon Dubnow (1860–1941), crafted a narrative of the past that comported fully with his own Jewish nationalist agenda. Thus, he regarded Jewish history as marked by a series of evolving cultural centers, one after another, up to his own day. The present center in Dubnow's time was the large concentration of Jews in Eastern Europe. It was this center that deserved recognition as the cultural capital of the Jewish nation – and that stood at the heart of his Diaspora nationalist vision.

Other nationalist historians shared the ambition of mobilizing the past to frame an active historical memory for the Jewish collective, but on different ideological grounds. Most prominently, Zionist scholars placed “Zion,” the ancestral land of Israel, as the axis around which all of Jewish history revolved. For an historian such as Ben-Zion Dinur (1884–1973), historical description and political prescription converged at the point at which the age-old aspiration of Jews to return to Zion began to be realized. Even with his fervent and unabashed embrace of Zionism, Dinur clung firmly to the ideal of objectivity that received new attention and approbation among his colleagues at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

It would seem as if history and memory, at some level and in some sense, had been melded together anew in this generation of Jewish nationalist historians, reversing the trend of distancing that the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* set in motion more than a century earlier. Yet this seeming conjunction was short-lived. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the gap between the project of critical history and the possibility of recreating a rich and nurturing memory seemed to widen even further.

It was at that point, at the brink of the chasm, that scholars became conscious about and gave voice to the distinct properties of “history and memory.” The mission of this chapter is to chart the evolution and growth of that discourse in the field of Jewish studies. In particular, it will focus on the impact of the American scholar, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi (1932–2009), whose 1982 book, *Zakhor*, introduced a new vocabulary and consciousness about history and memory into Jewish studies.

Arguably the most significant book in the field of Jewish studies over the past fifty years, Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor* posited a stark distinction between the rich fabric of pre-modern collective memory, comprised of strands of ritual, liturgy, and commemorative literature, and the dispassionate labors of the modern historian. If “Jews were the fathers of meaning in history” in biblical and medieval times, they surrendered that patrimony by the nineteenth century, a development that Yerushalmi analyzed with a mix of melancholy, empathy, and deep insight.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, history in its modern guise had become, in Yerushalmi’s memorable phrase, the “faith of fallen Jews,” at once a symptom of the unraveling of the fabric of traditional memory and a sharp and unsentimental critique of traditional Judaism.<sup>6</sup>

The dolorous tenor of Yerushalmi’s reflections in the fourth chapter of *Zakhor* on the modern practice of history, and particularly of Jewish history, would seem to be rooted in an oft-quoted line attributed to Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907) that is perhaps the boldest articulation of the taxidermic function of Jewish scholarship mentioned earlier. According to a younger colleague Gotthold Weil, the great German-Jewish bibliographer believed that the goal of Jewish scholarship was to “give Judaism a decent burial.”<sup>7</sup> Whether Steinschneider articulated or even harbored such a desire to entomb is not at all clear (although Gershom Scholem, the towering twentieth-century scholar, certainly argued that he did in

<sup>5</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington, 1982), 8. A number of recent works have appeared that shed additional light on Yerushalmi and his oeuvre. See Sylvie Anne Goldberg, *Transmettre l'histoire juive: Entretiens avec Sylvie Anne Goldberg* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2012), as well as the conference volume edited by Goldberg, *L'histoire et la mémoire de l'histoire: Hommage à Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2012). See also the recent collection of Yerushalmi’s writings, *The Faith of Fallen Jews: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History*, ed. David N. Myers and Alexander Kaye (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 86.

<sup>7</sup> Weil made this oft-quoted assertion in an obituary in the *Jüdische Rundschau* 6 (February 8, 1907), 54. For an extended gloss on the comment, see Charles Manekin’s appreciative tribute, “Steinschneider’s Indecent Burial,” <http://seforim.blogspot.com/2007/08/charles-h-manekin-moritz.html>.

his famous 1944 essay “Mi-tokh hirhurim `al Hokhmat Yisra’el”). For his part, Yerushalmi came to believe that Steinschneider and his fellow standard-bearers of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* were products of a *Zeitgeist* and possessed of a set of surgical tools that mandated dissection rather than construction of a holistic collective memory. As a product of the same modern mindset, and possessed of a similar set of critical tools, Yerushalmi could not disavow his own historicist calling. But he observed that the broader Jewish world drew no consolation from the historicist turn. On the contrary, it – and it would seem, he – yearned for “a new metahistorical myth” for which fiction rather than historiography “provides at least a temporary modern surrogate.”<sup>8</sup>

The yearning for such a myth, and for the very strands of collective memory that Yerushalmi so probingly analyzed, gained urgency in the half-century after the Holocaust. In the wake of the catastrophe, the historian, like the owl of Minerva, stepped in to sift through the shattered remnants of Jewish life, community, ideology, and memory in Europe. Dissatisfied with the historian’s status as mere sifter – and, I would argue, mindful of the hulking if unnamed presence of the Shoah – Yerushalmi did not merely reflect on the relationship between history and memory in *Zakhor*. Surprisingly, he imagined a tighter bond between history and memory.<sup>9</sup> He did so fully cognizant of the long martyrological tradition in Jewish history, and particularly of the role of past tragedies as foundations of Jewish collective memory. Ironically, the Holocaust – the greatest of Jewish tragedies – marked not only the culmination of that tradition, but also its disruption. Just as Auschwitz shattered the tools of historical measurement, in the famous image of Jean-François Lyotard, so too the repositories and purveyors of Jewish collective memory were completely uprooted.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, the Shoah brought a conclusive end to the crowded marketplace of competing ideologies that engaged so many Jewish intellectuals in the first decades of the twentieth century – and served as the font of inspiration for Jewish historians who saw a close link between

<sup>8</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 98.

<sup>9</sup> Professor Yerushalmi did not agree with the assessment that his interest in memory reflected a post-Holocaust sensibility or context, as he made clear in response to a paper I delivered at a conference in Germany in July 2000. See my “Selbstreflexion im modernene Erinnerungsdiskurs” and Yerushalmi’s response, “Jüdische Historiographie und Postmodernismus: Eine abweichende Meinung,” in *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute: Themen, Positionen, Kontroversen*, ed. Michael Brenner and David N. Myers (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002), 55–74, 75–94.

<sup>10</sup> Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 57–58.

their labors as students of the past and the future of the Jewish collective (e.g., the Eastern Europeans Simon Dubnow, Meir Balaban, Emanuel Ringelblum, and Ignacy [Yitzhak] Schipper).<sup>11</sup>

We shall revisit the Jewish martyrological tradition at the end of this essay. For now, we return to our reading of Yosef Yerushalmi and his efforts to escape the fate of fallen Jews, a reading that cuts against the grain of the standard account of *Zakhor*. “The burden of building a bridge to his people,” he wrote, “remains with the historian.” The challenge ahead was to maintain a connection not only to one’s group but to the guiding issues that concerned and preoccupied them in the present. Concomitantly, Yerushalmi maintained that it was imperative to overcome the “calamitous” divide between literature and history and marshal the healing narrative powers of the former to the latter. In advancing such suggestions, he was drawn to the prospect of summoning his formidable talents to reverse the erosion of memory by delineating a more serviceable form of historical labor.<sup>12</sup>

This facet of Yerushalmi’s position is often forgotten in light of his better-known assessment in *Zakhor* that “modern Jewish historiography can never substitute for Jewish memory.”<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, it is interesting to trace his efforts to overcome the very professional inhibitions with which he was raised by seeking a tighter bond between history and memory. It is especially noteworthy in light of his well-known “debate” with the one scholar of Jewish history who can be deemed his peer in terms of erudition and profundity: Amos Funkenstein (1937–1995). The great Israeli-born historian wrote an essay in the first issue of the Tel Aviv-based journal *History and Memory* in 1989 that was a response to Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor* and an important statement on the subject in its own right. In the course of this essay, Funkenstein endeavors to undo Yerushalmi’s stark juxtaposition between history and memory. Concurring with Yerushalmi that “historiography hardly existed at all in the sphere of traditional Judaism,” he nonetheless argued that “a well-developed historical consciousness existed elsewhere.” It was part and parcel of the long tradition of rabbinic Judaism that offered up “a continuous and chronological record of innovations in halakha.” Funkenstein went on to argue that this kind of historical

<sup>11</sup> In addition to these notable historians who died during the Holocaust, Raphael Mahler has identified seventeen other Jewish historical researchers from Warsaw alone who were killed during the Nazi reign of terror. See Mahler, “Der krayz ‘yunge historiker’ in Varsha” in idem, *Historiker un vegvayzer* (Tel Aviv: Yisro’el-Bukh, 1967), 309–315. I thank Mark Smith for calling my attention to this article.

<sup>12</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 100.

<sup>13</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 101.

consciousness contradicted neither collective memory nor modern historicism. All three, he affirmed, “express the same ‘collective mentality.’”<sup>14</sup> And indeed, this convergence was present in the very historians whom Yerushalmi saw as detached from the once-vibrant current of collective memory. Funkenstein, for his part, asserted that the modern “nation-state replaced the sacred liturgical memory with secular liturgical memory,” and concomitantly, that the modern historian had become a “priest of culture.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, there was a “functional reoccupation,” to borrow Hans Blumenberg’s term, of the pre-moderns’ work of fostering collective memory by moderns.<sup>16</sup>

Whereas Funkenstein imagined nineteenth-century historians as “priests of culture” who served at the altar of collective memory, Yerushalmi depicted his nineteenth-century forbears as priests delivering last rites to “fallen Jews.” It would seem as if the distance between the two outstanding Jewish historians of the late twentieth century – and particularly the ways in which they understood the relationship between history and memory – could not be stretched further. And yet, Yerushalmi’s own yearning for the historian to act as “a bridge to his people,” expressed late in *Zakhor*, collapses the gap between the two categories, all the more surprising given his general pessimism about the eviscerating effects of modern historicism. This yearning was not a mere episodic sentiment. More than a decade before the appearance of *Zakhor*, in a little-known address in 1970, he insisted to his audience of graduating Jewish educators at Hebrew College in Brookline that “we must consciously carry a Jewish past within us” as a way to “build a Jewish future.”<sup>17</sup> Over time, he became less confident of the historian’s ability to advance this goal and more introspective about his own professional calling, but he never surrendered the aspiration for a

<sup>14</sup> Amos Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness,” *History and Memory* 1 (Spring–Summer 1989): 17, 18, 19.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. Funkenstein makes a similar point, emphasizing that it was in the nineteenth century that the historian served as “the high priest of culture” in “Toldot Yisra’el ben ha-hohim: ha-historyah le-mul ditsiplinot aherot,” *Zion* 60 (1995): 336.

<sup>16</sup> Of course, we should not oversimplify Blumenberg’s “functional reoccupation” by suggesting that he imagined a simple and undifferentiated replication by moderns of earlier structures of thought. It is that position he ascribed to Karl Löwith in *Meaning in History*, maintaining in contrast that there were both strong continuities and discontinuities between modern and pre-modern epochs. See the discussion by David Ingram, “Blumenberg and the Grounds of Philosophical Historiography,” *History and Theory* 29, no. 1 (1990): 1–15.

<sup>17</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, “A Jewish Historian in the ‘Age of Aquarius,’” Commencement Address, Hebrew College, Brookline, MA, June 1970, reprinted in *The Faith of Fallen Jews*, ed. Myers and Kaye.

more meaning-laden historical project of which the Hebrew Bible was the first major exemplar.

That said, it would be a reach to argue that Yerushalmi's main legacy to the field of Jewish studies was as a "physician of memory" (a term he borrowed from Eugen Rosenstock-Huussy).<sup>18</sup> Rather, it was as the blazer of a number of entwined research paths that have been popular and consequential in the field, two of which will be discussed here. One of the most relevant for our purposes was the study of the content, function, and impact of Jewish historiography. Yerushalmi's growing preoccupation with the history and philosophy of history, culminating in *Zakhor*, did not take rise in isolation. Rather, the 1970s and 1980s were a period of intense new inquiry in the American academy into the semiological and literary properties of the historiographical text. Hayden White's provocative and influential *Metahistory* (1973) consciously blurred distinctions long held sacred by historians – between history and the philosophy of history, history and literature, and, most daringly, fact and fiction.<sup>19</sup> In the process, it induced a new sophistication into the analysis of the process of historiographical production. At the same time, the engagement by North American scholars with a select but diverse array of European thinkers, including Derrida, Gadamer, and Foucault, generated new interest in the hermeneutics and discursive practices of history – to the point that observers spoke of a "linguistic turn" in the field.<sup>20</sup> Yerushalmi barely acknowledged the impact of these developments in *Zakhor*.<sup>21</sup> But he read widely and was keenly aware of important trends in the field. And, in fact, his meditations in *Zakhor* contributed to an important moment of new scholarly scrutiny of the practice of history and the function of the historian.

The second and closely related scholarly trend that Yerushalmi set in motion in the field of Jewish studies was the study of the formation and adaptation of collective memory. Here too he did not operate in a vacuum. Around the time of the appearance of *Zakhor*, Pierre Nora, as we have already noted, was opening new horizons of research into collective memory through the multi-volume *Les lieux de mémoire*. Similar to Yerushalmi, Nora posited a widening chasm between "real memory – social and

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 59, and Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 93.

<sup>19</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, John E. Toews, "Intellectual History after the Linguistic Turn: The Autonomy of Meaning and the Irreducibility of Experience," *The American Historical Review* 92, no. 4 (1987): 879–907.

<sup>21</sup> Perhaps the sole exception is the footnote devoted to Hayden White in Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 142, n. 14.



unviolated, exemplified in but also retained as the secret of so-called primitive or archaic societies – and history, which is how our hopelessly forgetful modern societies, propelled by change, organize the past.<sup>22</sup> In articulating this divide, and especially in their shared understanding of the category of collective memory, both Nora and Yerushalmi drew on the landmark book of the earlier French sociologist, Maurice Halbwachs (1877–1945), *La mémoire collective* (1950).

Consistent with the first current, Yerushalmi did not take conscious note of Nora or other French scholars working in this area until after the publication of *Zakhor*, when he began to make frequent visits to France for extended periods and befriended leading intellectuals there.<sup>23</sup> The effect of this encounter – and the resulting convergence of interests acknowledged more readily by younger scholars – served to erode the boundaries that often separated an insular Jewish studies from broader historical and literary studies, and thereby generated added cachet to the burgeoning field of Jewish memory studies. What follows in the next section is a survey of the entwined scholarly lineages that Yerushalmi's pioneering work inspired. In surveying this field, we will also see the traces of Yerushalmi's great peer, Amos Funkenstein, especially as reflected in the work of students of his who opened new pathways of research at the juncture of history and memory.

#### HISTORY AND MEMORY AS ENTWINED PATHWAYS OF RESEARCH

Yerushalmi and Funkenstein were not, it should be said, the first Jewish historians of the twentieth century to focus attention on the professional and textual practices of their discipline. Yerushalmi's own teacher, Salo W. Baron (1895–1989), published a collection of essays with an historiographical focus in 1964 entitled *History and Jewish Historians*. Baron opened this volume with the statement that “a history of history is an

<sup>22</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 8.

<sup>23</sup> Of course, it was not only scholars in France who were immersed in the study of collective memory. It is important to note the contributions of German scholars, impelled in no small part by their society's freighted relationship to the Nazi past. Of particular note are the interlacing projects of Jan Assmann and Aleida Assmann; the former has developed a key distinction between cultural and communicative memory in *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis: Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (1992), whereas the latter has undertaken important theoretical work on group memory formation in a series of books and articles from *Arbeit am nationalen Gedächtnis. Eine kurze Geschichte der deutschen Bildungsidee* (1993).

excellent mirror of the changing attitudes of human societies.” He went on to point out that “a comprehensive history of Jewish historiography” was a long-standing desideratum in the field, especially since the last study of any significance to be published was Steinschneider’s bibliographic survey from 1905, *Geschichtsliteratur der Juden*.<sup>24</sup> Baron was also quite forward in acknowledging the utilitarian function of historical research. In the first issue of *Jewish Social Studies*, in 1939, he envisaged history as “an applied social science, which is of practical significance to statesmen, men of affairs, and the intelligent public at large.”<sup>25</sup>

Following Baron, a number of prominent scholars began to devote substantial labors to the study of Jewish historiography. Among them were two American scholars, Ismar Schorsch and Michael A. Meyer, both experts in German-Jewish history. Meyer commenced a career-long interest in the subject in 1967 with his book, *The Origin of the Modern Jew*, whose final chapter discussed the emergence of the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* movement through the lens of one of its founding figures, Leopold Zunz.<sup>26</sup> Some years later, in the mid-1970s, Ismar Schorsch began to write a series of article-length studies that explored the intersection of history, faith, and denominational struggle in the early *Wissenschaft* generations. In exploring this juncture – and later in his position as Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary – Schorsch sought to understand how and when history was mobilized to the task of Jewish religious and communal fortification. He brought together this body of work over two decades in 1994 in a collection whose subtitle bore the revealing title “The Turn to History in Modern Judaism.”<sup>27</sup>

The theme of the turn to history – or more accurately, the return to history – figured prominently in a major study devoted to the leading Jewish studies scholar of the twentieth century: David Biale’s *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (1979). Biale wrote the dissertation on which the book was based at UCLA under Amos Funkenstein,

<sup>24</sup> Salo W. Baron, *History and Jewish Historians* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964), xiii. See also Baron’s chapter, “Moritz Steinschneider’s Contribution to Jewish Historiography,” in *ibid.*, 276–321.

<sup>25</sup> See Salo W. Baron, “Emphases in Jewish History,” *Jewish Social Studies* 1 (1939): 15.

<sup>26</sup> Meyer, *The Origins of the Modern Jew*. Schorsch has recently published a full-length biography of Zunz. Ismar Schorsch, *Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

<sup>27</sup> Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1994).

who provided inspiration for the concept of “counter-history” that figured so centrally in his treatment of Scholem.<sup>28</sup>

Three years later, Yosef Yerushalmi published *Zakhor*, and in its wake the pace of research into Jewish historiography hastened significantly.<sup>29</sup> The book was a touchstone – and in some cases, a polemical foil – for many of the authors who contributed to the special issue of the prominent journal *History and Theory* in 1989 devoted to Jewish historiography. Edited by the British-Israeli scholar Ada Rapoport-Albert, the issue featured essays on Jewish historiography ranging from antiquity through the modern age, and accorded a new degree of recognition and respectability to the study of Jewish historical writing.<sup>30</sup>

In this new age of visibility, Jewish historiography attracted a generation of younger researchers the world over. In France, Perrine Simon-Nahum widened the lens of inquiry into modern Jewish historiography beyond its largely German focus in her 1991 study on French Jewish scholarship, *La cité investie: La “science du judaïsme” français et la République*.<sup>31</sup> In the same period, the Israeli historian Shmuel Feiner undertook a study of the embrace of history by advocates of the Jewish Enlightenment movement, the maskilim. Published in 1995 as *Haskalah ve-historyah* (Haskalah and History), this volume challenged a key claim of Yerushalmi’s, that the shift from the late eighteenth-century maskilim to the early nineteenth-century practitioners of *Wissenschaft des Judentums* represented “a drastic leap into a new kind of thinking.”<sup>32</sup>

In the same year, I published a revised version of my Columbia dissertation (1991) on the transfer of European Jewish scholars and scholarship to Palestine. This book, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*, explored the interplay between Zionist ideology and the writing of history within the institutional

<sup>28</sup> David Biale, *Gershom Scholem: Kabbalah and Counter-History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979). On his idiosyncratic use of “counter-history,” see also Biale’s essay in the special issue of *Jewish Social Studies* devoted to the memory of Amos Funkenstein, “Counter-History and Jewish Polemics against Christianity: The *Sefer toldot Yeshu* and the *Sefer zerubavel*,” *Jewish Social Studies* 6 (Autumn 1999): 131.

<sup>29</sup> Notice should be given to a book of wide scope, though lesser renown, that appeared five years before Yerushalmi’s, Lionel Kochan, *The Jew and His History* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

<sup>30</sup> See *History and Theory* 27, no. 4 (1988): “Essays in Jewish Historiography.”

<sup>31</sup> Perrine Simon-Nahum, *La cité investie: La “science du judaïsme” français et la République* (Paris: Cerf, 1991).

<sup>32</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 93. See Shmuel Feiner, *Haskalah ve-historyah: toldoteha shel hakarat-’avar Yehudit modernit* (Jerusalem: Merkaz Shazar, 1995), translated into English as *Haskalah and History* (Oxford: Littman Library, 2002).

framework of the Hebrew University. It was directly inspired by the work of Yosef Yerushalmi, who supervised the dissertation; at the same time, it sought to demonstrate the large gray area that marked off the space between the mythic poles of history and memory, as laid out in *Zakhor*. Simultaneously, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin was completing a dissertation in Israel that examined from a critical historical and political angle the relationship between Zionism and history: “The Nationalist Representation of Exile, Zionist Historiography, and Medieval Jewry” (1996). Written under the direction of Amos Funkenstein at Tel Aviv University, this dissertation introduced Raz-Krakotzkin’s well-known claim that Zionism had internalized the early modern Protestant rejection of exile (as fall from grace) in the name of a triumphant and triumphalist return to homeland—and history.<sup>33</sup> In both cases, Raz-Krakotzkin and I depicted an historiographical enterprise frequently motivated by and mobilized to the cause of Zionism – in particular, to a narrative of the Jewish past that placed Zion as the primary axis of historical development.

When noting the interest of scholars in the interplay between Zionism and history, it must be recalled that the Zionist movement, in its various strains and as a whole, sought to re-imagine the contours of Jewish history – and promoted the growth of institutions in which that work of scholarly re-imagination could flourish. The institutions that subsequently took rise in Israel contain within them the largest concentration of Jewish studies scholars in the world, as well as the largest concentration of scholars devoted to the study of Zionism. What fostered the intense new focus not only on Zionist history, but on Zionist historiography, was a pair of factors: first, a new interest in the historiographical text as open to and worthy of careful scrutiny in its own right. This impulse was an indirect effect of the postmodern outlook, with its attention to textual and hermeneutic nuance and skeptical stance toward master-narratives and claims of objectivity. Although often wary of postmodernism’s alleged nihilism, historians found it hard to escape some of the intellectual byproducts of the postmodern moment. They trained a critical gaze on the guiding principles of their forbears, pointing out the ideological dispositions that undergirded their work. This perspective served to leaven a novel interest in Zionist historiography as a subject on its own.

A second factor in the growth of this sub-field was the challenge to historiographical convention posed by a group of Israeli (or former Israeli) scholars of Zionism and the Middle East (e.g., Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé,

<sup>33</sup> Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, “Yitsuga ha-le’umi shel ha-galut: ha-histoyografyah ha-Tsiyonit ve-yehude yeme ha-benayim” (Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1996). See also his essay, “Galut mi-toch ribonut,” *T’oryah u-vikoret* 4 (1993): 23–55 and 5 (1994): 113–132.

Tom Segev, Avi Shlaim) who came to be known in the late 1980s and early 1990s as the “New Historians.” Their work took direct aim at a number of foundation myths undergirding the creation of the State of Israel, including claims about British opposition to Zionism and preference for the Arab side, the logistical and quantitative disadvantage of the Jewish side in the 1948 War, and, most provocatively, the voluntary nature of Palestinian Arab flight in the war. The jolt that the “New Historians” delivered to established assumptions and norms emboldened scholars, directly and indirectly, to approach their predecessors with a new-found independence of mind. This meant a willingness to upend the reverential portrait of the historiographical establishment, symbolized by the founding generation of historians in Jerusalem (Raz-Krakotzkin). Not surprisingly, this project of historical revisionism prompted a reaction that pushed back against the perceived irreverence of revisionists by affirming foundational principles, including the ideal of objective or nonpartisan scholarship. This latter tendency can be seen in the defense of the principles of historiographical integrity offered by scholars of Zionism such as Shabtai Tevet, Anita Shapira, Efraim Karsh, and Yoav Gelber.<sup>34</sup> One of the most interesting and detailed responses by an historian came from one of the oldest, Jacob Katz, the dean of Israeli scholars of Jewish history in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In his own rejoinder to the New Historians, Katz introduced a sense of the history of methodological and theoretical criticism of historicism absent in others. At the same time, he ended up affirming that if historians adhered to the same “methodological rules of the profession” and relied on a shared body of sources, there would inevitably be considerable overlap in their descriptive work.<sup>35</sup>

This statement points to the emerging boundary line between reverential and critical, as well as continuous and disjunctive, visions of the past – indeed, between an old guard and a new group of firebrands. But in the course of this scholarly and political contest, which was often quite heated,

<sup>34</sup> See, for example, the well-known response of veteran journalist and biographer, Tevet, to the work of the New Historians, and particularly, Benny Morris, in Shabtai Tevet, “Charging Israel with *Original Sin*,” *Commentary* 88, no. 3 (1989): 24–33. See also Anita Shapira, “Politics and Collective Memory: The Debate over the ‘New Historians’,” *History and Memory* 7, no. 1 (1995): 9–40; Efraim Karsh, “Benny Morris and the Reign of Terror,” *Middle East Quarterly* VI, no. 1 (1999): 15–28; and Yoav Gelber, “The Disease of Post-Zionism,” <http://zioncon.blogspot.com/2007/07/yoav-gelber-disease-of-post-zionism.html> (accessed October 17, 2011).

<sup>35</sup> See Katz’s chapter “Historyah ve-historyonim, hadashim ke-yeshanim,” in *‘Et laḥaḳor ve-’et le-hitbonen: masab hiṣṭorit ‘al darko shel Bet Yisra’el me-’az tse’ato me-artso ve-’ad shuvo aleha* (Jerusalem: Shazar Center, 1998–99), 21.

the field of Jewish historiography became an accepted and legitimate domain of research in Israel. In addition to Raz-Krakotzkin's provocative work, the Haifa scholar Jacob Barnay shifted his attention from the history of Palestine to the place of Palestine in Jewish historiography in a 1995 book, *Historyografyah u-le'umiyut* (Historiography and Nationalism).<sup>36</sup> New dissertations were now devoted to the historiographical past, including two studies in 2000 of Ben-Zion Dinur, a key architect of Zionist historical consciousness, by Arielle Rein and Daniel Marom. Several years later, Yizhak Conforti sought to address, in a dissertation later published as a book, the broader role of Zionist historiography in shaping a new national memory.<sup>37</sup>

To be sure, these were not the first Israeli scholars to address the history of Jewish historiography. A lineage commencing with Dinur and including Shmuel Ettinger, Shmuel Almog, Yisrael Kolatt, and the contemporary Yisrael Bartal evinced an active interest in the subject. But the topic, it is fair to say, became far more common and legitimate in its own right in the Israeli academy in the last two decades. On the face of it, we might be tempted to see the rising interest in historiography – and the accompanying critical perspective on previous generations – as connected to the fracturing of a once-coherent collective memory in Israel, a process sometimes thought to have commenced after the unpopular Lebanon War of 1982. But such a claim presumes both a unified collective memory hitherto – in the face of often bitter internal Jewish divisions within Israel and the Yishuv – and, more to the point, a deep ontological divide between history and memory. In fact, historiography was yoked to the Zionist movement from its early decades, serving as an indispensable tool in framing a new Jewish collective memory. There was, then, a closeness, even inextricability, to the categories of history and memory that has been noticed and scrutinized with new vigor by recent scholarship.

Meanwhile, the interest in Jewish historiography developed in parallel fashion in the other major centers of scholarship in North America and Europe. Following on the labors of Yerushalmi, Michael Meyer, and Ismar Schorsch, Susannah Heschel undertook to study a major figure of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, Abraham Geiger. Her 1998 book portrayed

<sup>36</sup> Jacob Barnay, *Historyografyah u-le'umiyut: megamot be-be'aker Erets-Yisra'el ve-yishuvah ha-Yehudi, 634–1881* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1995).

<sup>37</sup> See Arielle Rein, "Ha-historyon be-vinui umah: tsemihata shel Ben-Zion Dinur u-mif'alo ba-Yishuv" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2000), and Daniel Marom, "The Thought and Practice of Ben Zion Dinur as Educator" (Ph.D. diss., Hebrew University, 2000). See also Yitzhak Conforti, *Zeman 'avar: ha-historyografyah ha-Tsionit ve-'itsuv ha-zikaron ha-le'umi* (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi 2006).

Geiger, the Reform rabbi and scholar, as a self-possessed and assertive scholar, aggressive in resisting the anti-Jewish impulses of Protestant historical and biblical scholarship. In her view, Geiger's project was "a rebellious effort, a contestation of the prevailing viewpoint established by the Christian eye." More generally, she portrayed *Wissenschaft des Judentums* not as defensive and apologetic, but as intent on "reversing the gaze" and casting a critical eye on the history of Christianity. Its adepts, and Geiger chief among them, conformed more to Funkenstein's model of "priests of culture" than to Yerushalmi's "fallen Jews." They were possessed of their own agency and powers of criticism as Jews – so much so that Heschel, in a fit of admiring enthusiasm, declared them post-colonialists *avant la lettre*.<sup>38</sup>

This approach challenged a long-standing image rooted in Zionist historiography and most famously associated with Gershom Scholem's previously mentioned essay from 1944, "Mi-tokh hirhurim `al Hokhmat Yisra'el" (Reflections of Jewish Scholarship). In that famous polemic, Scholem argued that *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as a project, manifested a disconcerting degree of subservience to German Christian hosts. Joining Heschel in proposing a corrective to Scholem was Nils Roemer, a student of Yerushalmi who followed in his mentor's trail in exploring the history of modern Jewish scholarship. Roemer wrote a dissertation at Columbia that was published in 2005 as *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in 19th-Century Germany: Between History and Faith*. He aimed to demonstrate that German-Jewish scholars readily assumed responsibility for combating the rising currents of antisemitism in late nineteenth-century Germany. At the same time, these scholars, many of whom were alumni of the new rabbinical seminaries that took rise in Germany in the latter half of the century, came to see their labors as a key tool in augmenting the religious knowledge of the broader Jewish public in Germany.<sup>39</sup> In illuminating these dual functions, Roemer sought to depict a Jewish historiography decidedly in the service of the broader German-Jewish public. Further work in this direction has been undertaken recently in Germany and the United States by Jeffrey Bluting, Anthony Kauders, Markus Pyka, and Gideon Reuveni.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>38</sup> Susannah Heschel, *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998), 2–3.

<sup>39</sup> Nils Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in 19th-Century Germany: Between History and Faith* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 126.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, the two studies on Heinrich Graetz: Jeffrey Bluting, "Writing for the Masses: Heinrich Graetz, the Popularization of Jewish History, and the Reception of National Judaism," Ph.D. diss. University of California, Los Angeles, 2003; and Markus Pyka, *Jüdische Identität bei Heinrich Graetz* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009). For a recent source collection of Jewish historiographical writings, see *Jüdische Geschichte*

If this scholarship has called into question and rendered more complex the earlier historiographical assumption of a unidirectional assimilatory agenda for German Jews, the case is less clear in France. Along with the book by Simon-Nahum, Aron Rodrigue has written a number of articles that attempt to steer away from the Germanocentric orientation of the study of modern Jewish historiography. Rodrigue's work traces the outlines of a different tradition in France, where powerful universalist and emancipatory impulses animated the writings of scholars such as Léon Halévy, Théodore Reinach, Salomon Reinach, and James Darmesteter. Their narratives of the past describe – and between the lines, prescribe – a sweeping current that propelled Jews from an early state of superstition to a new and glorious age of civilization, in France of course.<sup>41</sup>

Rodrigue's focus on France expands our range of knowledge about Western European Jewish historical scholarship.<sup>42</sup> And yet, the historiographical turn post-*Zakhor* has hardly been confined to Western or Central Europe. The largest concentration of world Jewry prior to the Second World War in Eastern Europe generated a wealth of historical scholarship – in Yiddish, Polish, and Russian – that has drawn increased attention in recent decades. Among those who have contributed to this new attention are Natalia Aleksiu, Brian Horowitz, Joshua Karlip, Samuel Kassow, Viktor Kelner, Jess Olson, Barry Trachtenberg, Kalman Weiser, and Steven Zipperstein.<sup>43</sup> The body of work produced by these scholars

*lesen. Texte der jüdischen Geschichtsschreibung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Michael Brenner, Anthony Kauders, Gideon Reuveni, Nils Roemer (Munich: Beck Verlag, 2003).

<sup>41</sup> See Aron Rodrigue, "Léon Halévy and Modern French Jewish Historiography," in *Jewish History and Jewish Memory: Essays in Honor of Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*, ed. Elisheva Carlebach, John M. Efron, and David N. Myers (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1998), 413–437; and "Totems, Taboos, and Jews: Salomon Reinach and the Politics of Scholarship in Fin-de-Siècle France," *Jewish Social Studies* 10 (2004), 1–19.

<sup>42</sup> In similar fashion, Todd Endelman (who, like Rodrigue, was a Yerushalmi student) has proposed to enlarge the Jewish historiographical map in two regards: first, he has endeavored over the course of three decades to introduce England as a venue of significance in the narrative rendering of modern Jewish history; and second, his research is a call to overcome the privileging of intellectual and cultural elites in favor of the quotidian experience of "average" Jews. See most recently Todd M. Endelman, *Broadening Jewish History: Towards a Social History of Ordinary Jews* (Oxford: Littman Library, 2011).

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Natalia Aleksiu, "Ammunition in the Struggle for National Rights: Jewish Historians in Poland between the Two World Wars" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2010); Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013); Samuel Kassow, *Who will Write our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto, and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007);



reveals the extent to which historiography was mobilized by a variety of modern, often secular, ideological movements – chiefly nationalist – intent on imagining and building a new Jewish future.

In parallel to this current, a growing cohort of researchers, including David Assaf, Israel Bartal, Benjamin Brown, Adam Ferziger, Haim Gerter, Nahum Karlinsky, Jacob J. Schacter, and Michael Silber, has excavated a large body of “Orthodox historiography” – that is, history written by Orthodox Jews – in Europe, Israel, and North America. By its very nature, this body of writing revealed the extent to which its authors owed fealty to two masters: the goal of chronicling important historical events, and the goal of demonstrating God’s hand, or that of a charismatic rebbe, in the Jews’ march through history. Ada Rapoport-Albert has referred to this tradition as “hagiography with footnotes,” in recognition of its unapologetic traversing of the boundary between scholarship and advocacy, or in the terms of our discussion, history and memory.<sup>44</sup>

If the past thirty years have witnessed a significantly increased focus on the historiographical text as a source of prime value to the historian, we have not seen a large number of synthetic works that tie together the various historiographical centers, generations, and schools into a larger whole. A few exceptions are worth noting. The Israeli scholar Reuven Michael offered a simple, though comprehensive, bio-biographical description of Jewish historiography from the Renaissance through the twentieth century in 1993.<sup>45</sup> More recently, Michael Brenner has written a history of

Viktor E. Kelner, *Simon Dubnow: Eine Biografie* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010); Jess Olson, *Nathan Birnbaum and Modernity: Architect of Zionism, Yiddishism, and Orthodoxy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013); Barry C. Trachtenberg, *The Revolutionary Roots of Modern Yiddish, 1903–1917* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2008); Kalman Weiser, *Jewish People, Yiddish Nation: Noah Prylucki and the Folkists in Poland* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011); and Steven Zipperstein, *Imagining Russian Jewry: Memory, History, Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Among other important contributions, see Ada Rapoport-Albert, “Hagiography with Footnotes: Edifying Tales and the Writing of History in Hasidism,” *History and Theory* 27, no. 4 (1988): 119–159; Israel Bartal, “True Knowledge and Wisdom: On Orthodox Historiography,” in *Reshaping the Past: Jewish History and the Historians*, ed. Jonathan Frankel, Studies in Contemporary Jewry 10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Adam Ferziger, *Exclusion and Hierarchy: Orthodoxy, Nonobservance, and the Emergence of Modern Jewish Identity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005); Haim Gerter, “Reshitah shel ketivah historit ortodoksit be-Mizrah ‘Eropah: Ha’arakhah mehudeshet,” *Tsiyon* 67 (2002): 292–336; Nahum Karlinsky, “The Dawn of Hasidic-Haredi Historiography,” *Modern Judaism* 27, no. 1 (2007): 20–46; and Jacob J. Schacter, “Facing the Truths of History,” *Torah u-Madda Journal* 8 (1998–1999): 200–273.

<sup>45</sup> Reuven Michael, *Ha-Ketivah ha-historit ha-Yehudit: meba-Renesans `ad ha-`et ha-badashah* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1993).

modern Jewish historiography, *Prophets of the Past*, that combines chronology, geography, and biography, while organizing each chapter of the book around a different “master narrative.”<sup>46</sup>

Similar to a good number of those mentioned above, Brenner was a student of Yosef Yerushalmi, who began to refine his interest in historiography while studying at Columbia. It is not only the preponderance of Yerushalmi students that is interesting (alongside a noticeable number of students of Amos Funkenstein). Nor is it that these students draw on their teacher’s interest in historiography. It is rather that their work frequently blurs the bright line of demarcation between history and memory made famous in *Zakhor*. Yerushalmi’s legacy, then, is not one of uncritical imitation by his students, but of opening up a wide, relatively uncharted terrain that has been traversed in both predictable and unpredictable ways by succeeding generations.

Within that terrain of research, it is not always easy to separate the history from memory. The two frequently overlap insofar as acts commemorating the past rely, of necessity, on a measure of historical knowledge and even labor. And yet it may be helpful, if only to reveal the richness of the recent scholarly discourse on history and memory, to isolate a number of works that explore Jewish memory in a more dedicated fashion. One of the most important markers of memory is time, and it is to the intersection of the two that Sylvie Anne Goldberg, a French disciple (though not formal student) of Yerushalmi, devotes a major study. Her wide-ranging *Le Clepsydre: Essai sur la pluralité des temps dans le judaïsme* (2000) takes up the challenge of analyzing the different modes, regimes, and registers of time operative in the lives of Jews over the course of centuries. At the heart of her inquiry is the desire to observe how Jews “navigate between historical consciousness and the play of memory, between sacred temporality, their own, and profane temporality, that of the nations.” Between those two poles exists, as Goldberg suggests in the subtitle, “a plurality of times” through which Jews make sense of the near and distant past.

Meanwhile, the American scholar Elisheva Carlebach, who was a student of Yerushalmi, addresses the relationship between time and memory in her recent *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (2011). Carlebach places at the center of her study the early modern Jewish calendar, which emerges as a tool of negotiating different temporal regimes, cultural worlds, and social habits. As an illuminating “mirror of

<sup>46</sup> Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

experience,” the calendar also served to chronicle and preserve pathways of Jewish memory.<sup>47</sup>

Whereas both Goldberg and, to a lesser extent, Carlebach treat the formation of memory over the entire span of Jewish history, an especially noticeable body of scholarship has been devoted to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This is not surprising for a variety of reasons. First, the past two hundred years witnessed what Pierre Nora called “the acceleration of history” according to which events, and knowledge about them, proceeded at a dramatically escalated pace. The constant barrage of new information about both past and present rendered far more difficult the safeguarding of cherished memories. One result, Nora astutely observed, was that “(w)e speak so much of memory because there is so little of it left.”<sup>48</sup>

As we recall from the beginning of this chapter, the yearning for memory in modern times prompted, as a compensatory mechanism, a new commitment to commemoration. That commemorative work, similar to the calendar, served as a mirror reflecting on a specific group, era, and set of concerns. One of the most interesting and counter-intuitive sites of memory that Jews fashioned in modern times revolved around the figure of the great seventeenth-century philosopher, Baruch Spinoza (1632–1677). Jews of different historical contexts have manifested a keen fascination – even a sense of identification – with Spinoza, who was excommunicated from the Amsterdam Jewish community in 1656. The combination of Spinoza’s Iberian background and religious iconoclasm pointed toward a condition that has been called “Marranism,” a sense of being caught between new and old worlds, as well as between competing religious and social authorities. And that condition spoke to the predicament of European Jews after Spinoza, especially in nineteenth and twentieth-century Germany, who studied, fictionalized, and devoted commemorative days in honor of their fallen hero.

Jonathan Skolnik and David Wertheim have explored the interest of German Jews in Spinoza, while Daniel Schwartz has cast a wider net in tracing this fascination in different centers and genres of modern Jewish culture. In a related vein, the Israeli philosopher Yirmiyahu Yovel has written a number of books that cast Spinoza as the preeminent “Marrano of reason” – and as such, as the first modern, and secular, Jew.<sup>49</sup>

<sup>47</sup> See Sylvie Anne Goldberg, *Le Clepsydre: Essai sur la pluralité des temps dans le judaïsme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 2000), 317, and Elisheva Carlebach, *Palaces of Time: Jewish Calendar and Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2011).

<sup>48</sup> Nora, “Between Memory and History,” 7.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Jonathan Skolnik, “Writing Jewish History between Gutzkow and Goethe: Auerbach’s Spinoza and the Birth of Modern Jewish Historical Fiction,”

The existence of Jewish memory cultures in modern times has animated studies of distinct national and regional variants. In *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemande* (2000), Jacques Ehrenfreund adopted a “socio-cultural historical” approach focused on the dissemination and popularization of historical knowledge among Jews in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Germany – that is, in the generations that followed the rise of the more elitist *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. Ehrenfreund chronicled the rise of learned societies, historical commissions, museums, and commemorative days, all of which were symptoms of a number of defining impulses for German Jews: first, the impulse to grasp onto a rapidly vanishing memory of the past through historical reconstruction; second, the desire to create a canon of heroes and iconic images suitable to the demands of German Jews in this period; and third, the need to assert with certainty the antiquity of and accompanying justification for Jewish settlement on German soil.<sup>50</sup>

Some years before Ehrenfreund, Joëlle Bahloul undertook to study the formation of memory in a different setting through a different pair of methodological lenses. Relying on her training as an anthropologist, Bahloul employed ethnographic tools to reconstruct a family home – her grandmother’s – in Sétif, Algeria. More accurately, she used those tools to reconstruct the overlapping and divergent lines of memory of that home, as articulated by relatives of hers who once inhabited it. Her textured study yielded an “architecture of memory” that captured the loss, longing, and estrangement of its one-time residents, who had long ago migrated from Algeria to France.<sup>51</sup>

It almost goes without saying that the study of loss, longing, and estrangement has been most pronounced in Jewish studies and related fields around the subject of the Holocaust. For the Holocaust left behind a massive crater of historical destruction, but also a rich trail of evidence and the many voices of survivors. The gap between the enormity of destruction and the abundance of evidence yields a decided air of incomprehensibility.

*Prooftexts* 19 (May 1999): 101–125; David Wertheim, *Salvation through Spinoza: A Study of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (Leiden: Brill, 2011); Daniel Schwartz, *From Heretic to Hero: Spinoza in the Modern Jewish Imagination* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); and Yirmiyahu Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics: The Marrano of Reason* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992) and *The Other Within: The Marranos: Split Identity and Emerging Modernity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>50</sup> Jacques Ehrenfreund, *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemande: Les juifs berlinois à la Belle Époque* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000).

<sup>51</sup> Joëlle Bahloul, *The Architecture of Memory: A Jewish-Muslim Household in Colonial Algeria, 1937–1962* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

At the same time, both fuel among survivors, their descendants, and others an intense longing for a lost past that yields a rich and complicated web of memories.

Among scholars who have studied history and memory in the Holocaust, the figure of Saul Friedländer stands out. Friedländer's exceptional career has woven together a pair of interlocking pursuits, each of which alone would have amounted to a significant achievement: first, recording, with a vast command of the evidentiary field, the history of the Nazi genocidal campaign; and second, marshalling his considerable theoretical sophistication to address the challenges of representing and narrating the Shoah in light of claims of its incommensurability. These two tasks reach their culmination in Friedländer's *magnum opus*, the two-volume historical account published over the course of a decade: *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution, 1933–1939* (1997) and *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Extermination, 1939–1945* (2007).

To these works, and to the two tasks mentioned above, Friedländer adds another major contribution: profound reflection on the relationship between history and memory. He has thought and written about the relationship at some length in his scholarly works. In *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (1993), he argued that between the poles of collective memory and “dispassionate” historical inquiry rests a middle ground where the informed observer might profitably stand. This blended perspective is especially intriguing and potentially beneficial for the generation of scholars of which he is part. In the introduction to *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, he wrote: “For my generation, to partake at one and the same time in the memory and the present perceptions of this past may create an unsettling dissonance; it may, however, also nurture insights that would otherwise be inaccessible.”<sup>52</sup>

The distinct properties of the historian as participant-observer are on full display in Friedländer. He, after all, was a victim of Nazism's ravages, having been displaced from his native Prague as a child and surviving only by being disguised as a Catholic boy in France. And he saw fit to give voice to his own memories. Thus, in addition to his scholarly work, Friedländer published a moving and powerful autobiographical account, *When Memory Comes* (1979), in which he retells his own physical and spiritual journey from Prague to Jerusalem via Vichy France.

<sup>52</sup> See Saul Friedländer, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), vii and *Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution* (New York: Harper Collins, 1997), 5. See also the incisive review essay by James E. Young, “Between History and Memory: The Uncanny Voices of Historian and Survivor,” *History & Memory* 9 (Fall 1997): 47–58.

Beyond his own work, Friedländer has encouraged research on the intersection of history and memory in several ways. He was a founding editor of the journal *History & Memory*, established in 1989, in which a number of key articles devoted to Holocaust history and memory appear alongside articles on a wide range of other topics (including the important rejoinder to Yerushalmi by Friedländer's close friend, Amos Funkenstein in the first number). And he has directly trained and indirectly inspired dozens of leading scholars of the Holocaust in North America, Europe, and Israel, including Gulie Neeman Arad, Omer Bartov, Phillippe Burrin, Alon Confino, Dominick LaCapra, and James E. Young, as well as his UCLA students Wulf Kansteiner, Gavriel Rosenfeld, and Alexandra Garbarini.

Friedländer's impact has been vast in the field of Holocaust studies, but hardly solitary. The field generates hundreds of new scholarly publications a year, and has attracted to it historians of the highest distinction and achievement including his contemporary and fellow Prague native, Yehuda Bauer. Recently, in pondering the state of this robust field, the New York University scholar David Engel has posed a provocative question: why has Holocaust studies grown outside of, rather than within – or at least adjacent to – Jewish studies? His 2010 book *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* seeks to answer this question. He identifies a set of conscious and subconscious factors in the workings of Jewish studies scholars that led them to engage in “sequestering the Holocaust and removing it from the mainstream of Jewish history.”<sup>53</sup> Thus, he argues for example, that the legacy of Salo Baron's renowned admonition against the “lachrymose theory” of Jewish history hovers over Jewish studies, encouraging its practitioners to avoid the most exceptional and lugubrious of events in favor of the more routine lived experience of the Jews. Engel's evidence in arguing for the neglect of Holocaust studies is not altogether persuasive. But his plaintive tone in making this claim brings us back to a number of central issues with which this chapter began and has been preoccupied: the relationship between history and memory, and the function of the modern Jewish historian. At the end of his book, Engel, who was himself a student of Amos Funkenstein, returns to Yosef Yerushalmi's *Zakhor*, alternately rereading, correcting, and affirming several key arguments in the book. Engel believes that what he sees as the unwillingness of Jewish studies scholars to engage more directly with the Holocaust necessarily consigns them to irrelevance. Moreover, it amounts to an abdication of their mission as guardians of memory and servants of their community. To highlight this point, Engel recalls Yerushalmi's charge: “The burden of building a bridge to his people

<sup>53</sup> David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 23.

remains with the historian.” Far more directly than Yerushalmi, Engel yearns for a broader fulfillment of that calling, especially by integrating the ultimate lachrymose event, the Holocaust, into the broader narrative of Jewish history. At the same time, and in evocation of Yerushalmi’s more doleful side, he expresses skepticism that the historian will be able to rise to the challenge.<sup>54</sup>

#### ON MARTYROLOGY AND HISTORIOGRAPHY: A CODA

By way of conclusion to this essay, I’d like to recall and, ultimately, call into question a number of standard assumptions made about Jewish history and memory. It has been oft-remarked that post-biblical Jews manifested little interest in history before the modern age, except in the wake of persecution or crisis. While the first part of that assertion depends to a great extent on how one defines history, the second part seems more straightforward and sustainable, at least from the Middle Ages on. Commencing with the late eleventh-century Crusades, Jews responded to crisis and persecution in dual and entwined fashion, by chronicling and memorializing the past. They continued to do so throughout early modern times. But did they continue to do so in modern times, including in the wake of the greatest of all persecutions?

Before answering that question directly, it is worth noting that the Holocaust induced an interesting moment of self-reflection on the Jewish practice of recording and memorializing the past. Yosef Yerushalmi’s *Zakhor*, on my reading, belongs to that period of self-reflection. His probing and introspective insights into the historian’s function – and the complex, interlacing relationship between history and memory – took root in a post-War vacuum of faith and comprehension. The “golden age” of Jewish ideology had passed, or more accurately, was violently uprooted; in its place came a considerable degree of intellectual skepticism and lack of certitude that would metamorphose over time into a philosophical and methodological stance known as postmodernism.

In his own nostalgic moments, Yosef Yerushalmi understood and, in part, lamented that an abundance of historical research in his time was not the magic remedy. Jews still sought out and required “a new, metahistorical myth,” for which fiction was a far likelier source than history.<sup>55</sup> In the more distant past, that mythic power was provided by a mix of chronicling and memorializing without the attendant expectation of objectivity and accuracy that accompanies the modern historian.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 227–229.

<sup>55</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 98.

Yerushalmi's reflections on the momentous transitions in the relationship between history and memory call to mind a brief text written forty years earlier, in the dark days of the Second World War; it serves as a prescient adumbration of the later *Zakhor* in a number of important regards. In June 1941, the Russian-Jewish historian, Elias Tcherikower (1881–1943), delivered a lecture at YIVO in New York entitled “Jewish Martyrology and Jewish Historiography.” Tcherikower opened his address with a very Yerushalmian line: “The Jews are a people of the richest history in the world, but of a very scant recording of that history.” Given both the duration and eventfulness of the Jewish past, and given the fact that “the Jews have a classical historical monument – the Bible,” it was surprising that the post-biblical age yielded so little by the way of historiography.<sup>56</sup> Tcherikower went on to discuss a number of the same points that anchored Yerushalmi's analysis, especially in the second and third chapters of *Zakhor*. Thus, on Tcherikower's reading:

- The Talmud was largely uninterested in “mere events, history for history's sake, chronologies” (11);
- “Historical-mindedness” was often suppressed in the name of “religious dogmatism,” though it did not die out among the Jews (11);
- The “dark days of the crusades” yielded a new phenomenon in Diaspora history, “Jewish chronicles” (14);
- The persecutions of the Middle Ages also prompted a kind of ritual-liturgical historiography in the form of *selihot* (penitential prayers);
- A more significant wave of Jewish historical writing arose in the late Renaissance in the work of Capsali, Usque, Yosef Ha-Kohen, and Azariah di Rossi (18);
- While this body of work often challenged existing rabbinic norms, it was manifestly not “purely scientific historiography”;
- The “modern scientific study of history” came about later, in the nineteenth century, and sought to unmoor itself from the strong martyrological impulse of previous Jewish historical writing.

What is striking about this essay is not only the overlap with Yerushalmi's analysis, but rather the tersely articulated, though undeniable, yearning in both authors. Both trace the modes in which pre-modern Jews sought to record and render meaning to their past. Both regarded the modern

<sup>56</sup> Elias Tcherikower, “Jewish Martyrology and Jewish Historiography,” *Yiddish Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1 (1946): 9–10. The English version is based on “Yidishe martirologe un yidishe historiografiye,” *YIVO Bleter* 17 (1941): 97–112. On this article, see Joshua M. Karlip, “Between Martyrology and Historiography: Elias Tcherikower and the Making of a Pogrom Historian,” *East European Jewish Affairs* 38 (2008): 257–280.



historiographical enterprise as a break from those modes, yielding at once more data but less meaning. Just as Yerushalmi cast that enterprise as the sacrament of “fallen Jews,” Tcherikower acknowledged that “our modern scientific study of history ... is no longer instigated by surrounding catastrophes.” He immediately added that “without the old historical primitives we should never fully understand the Jewish past and the innermost experiences of the people, and would soon lose our historical bearings.”<sup>57</sup> These “historical primitives” – alluding to the recollection of past persecutions – could not be left behind altogether if modern Jewish historical scholarship were to play a vibrant and relevant role. A deeply engaged and effecting collective memory, on this view, was an essential leaven for historiography.

We began this essay by noting the presence of competing impulses, anti-quarian and utilitarian, from the inception of modern Jewish scholarship in Germany in the early nineteenth century. Though not alone in this task, Elias Tcherikower and Yosef Yerushalmi sought to overcome, each in his own idiom and circumstances, the divide between these impulses by doing what they knew how to do best: tracing the history of the relationship between history and memory. Possessed of varying degrees of intentionality and self-awareness, each harbored the hope to nudge historians beyond their narrow disciplinary comfort zone. Whereas Tcherikower’s meditations have been largely forgotten, Yerushalmi deserves significant credit for inspiring a generation of scholars to investigate more intensively Jewish history and memory, and particularly, the terrain shared by them. Moreover, he maintained throughout his career the desire to explore and even inhabit that terrain himself, notwithstanding the sober diagnosis of the modern Jewish historian he delivered in *Zakhor*.

This is, admittedly, a strong reading of Yerushalmi, one that militates against the received view of *Zakhor*. Whether or not one agrees that he maintained such a desire to bridge the gap between history and memory, it is clear that Yerushalmi did not see historical scholarship in his day as filling that role. But his assessment of other laborers in the field may have been too sweeping. After all, it is hard to ignore the cumulative weight of the historical work devoted to the Shoah that has been produced over the past half-century. It has carved out a broad ridge of memory in American and American Jewish cultures, prompting us to reconsider Yerushalmi’s judgment that the event’s “image is being shaped, not at the historian’s anvil, but at the novelist’s crucible.”<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Tcherikower, “Jewish Martyrology and Jewish Historiography,” 23.

<sup>58</sup> Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 98.

Indeed, as one surveys the landscape, it appears that the tasks of chronicling and memorializing – those distinctive medieval Jewish pathways to history – have not, in fact, been abandoned altogether. Scholars, many of whom are animated by a sense of moral obligation to give voice to the victims of the Holocaust, have generated an ever-expanding mass of historical research that carefully charts the horrors of Nazi rule down to the last minute. Furthermore, it is scholars, many of them motivated by a sense of obligation as Jews, who have played key roles in conceiving, advocating for, and providing historical content to museums and memorials dedicated to the preservation of Holocaust memory.

To be sure, this set of labors is not equivalent to the medieval chronicle or penitential prayer in genre or even intent. But it does suggest to us a pair of concluding suppositions: first, that the modern historian has not been quite so disengaged from the living currents of memory (or at least, from the more mediated realm of commemoration) as we might have believed; and second, that the binary opposition between history and memory yields, upon close scrutiny, to a far more complicated, enmeshed, and mutually reinforcing relationship.

#### SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Barnay, Jacob. *Historyography u-le'umiyut: megamot be-ḥeker Erets-Yisra'el ve-yishuvah ha-Yehudi, 634–1881*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press 1995.
- Baron, Salo W. *History and Jewish Historians*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1964.
- Brenner, Michael. *Prophets of the Past: Interpreters of Jewish History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.
- Ehrenfreund, Jacques. *Mémoire juive et nationalité allemande: Les juifs berlinois à la Belle Époque*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 2000.
- Engel, David. *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010.
- Feiner, Shmuel. *Haskalah and History: The Emergence of Modern Historical Consciousness*. Oxford: Littman Library, 2002.
- Friedländer, Saul. *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews of Europe*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993.
- Nazi Germany and the Jews: The Years of Persecution*. New York: Harper and Row, 1997.
- Funkenstein, Amos. "Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness." *History and Memory* 1 (Spring–Summer 1989): 5–26.
- Goldberg, Sylvie Anne. *Le Clepsydre: Essai sur la pluralité des temps dans le judaïsme*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2000.
- ed. *L'histoire et la mémoire de l'histoire: Hommage à Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2012.
- Transmettre l'histoire juive: Entretiens avec Sylvie Anne Goldberg*. Paris: Albin Michel, 2012.

- Heschel, Susannah. *Abraham Geiger and the Jewish Jesus*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1998.
- Meyer, Michael A. *The Origins of the Modern Jew: Jewish Identity and European Culture in Germany, 1749–1824*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1967.
- Myers, David N. "Recalling *Zakhor*: A Quarter Century's Perspective." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (2007): 487–490.
- Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- "Remembering 'Zakhor': A Super-commentary." *History and Memory* 4 (1992): 129–148.
- "Selbstreflexion im modernen Erinnerungsdiskurs." In *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute: Themen, Positionen, Kontroversen*, ed. Michael Brenner and David N. Myers, 55–74. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002.
- and Alexander Kaye, eds. *The Faith of Fallen Jews: Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and the Writing of Jewish History*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 2014.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.
- Raz-Krakotzkin, Amnon. "Jewish Memory between Exile and History." *Jewish Quarterly Review* 97 (Fall 2007): 530–543.
- "Yitsuga ha-le'umi shel ha-galut: ha-histoyografyah ha-Tsiyonit ve-yehude yeme ha-benayim." Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, 1996.
- Roemer, Nils. *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in 19th-Century Germany: Between History and Faith*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005.
- Schorsch, Ismar. *From Text to Context: The Turn to History in Modern Judaism*. Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1994.
- Leopold Zunz: Creativity in Adversity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016.
- Simon-Nahum, Perrine. *La cité investie: La "science du judaïsme" français et la République*. Paris: Cerf, 1991.
- Tcherikower, Elias. "Jewish Martyrology and Jewish Historiography." *Yiddish Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1 (1946): 9–23.
- White, Hayden. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973.
- Yerushalmi, Yosef H. "A Jewish Historian in the 'Age of Aquarius.'" Commencement Address, Hebrew College, Brookline, MA, June 1970. Reprinted in Myers and Kaye, *The Faith of Fallen Jews*, 49–59.
- "Jüdische Historiographie und Postmodernismus: Eine abweichende Meinung." In *Jüdische Geschichtsschreibung heute: Themen, Positionen, Kontroversen*, ed. Michael Brenner and David N. Myers, 75–94. Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002.
- Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. Seattle: University of Washington, 1982.

# THE CAMBRIDGE HISTORY OF JUDAISM

VOLUME VIII

THE MODERN WORLD, 1815–2000

VOLUME EDITORS

MITCHELL B. HART

TONY MICHELS



**CAMBRIDGE**  
UNIVERSITY PRESS