

Bridging the Divide: Holocaust versus Jewish History Research — Problems and Challenges¹

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In his new book, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, David Engel presents a problem familiar to many Holocaust scholars: the separation between the study of the Holocaust and the study of Jewish history. This manifestation is presented throughout the book by a variety of metaphors such as “this great gulf,” “the wall of separation,” and even as a tendency “to sequester the Shoah”² — an expression Engel quotes from historian Steven Zipperstein. This manifestation is not confined to one country and Engel devotes his book to exposing its roots in the two main centers of contemporary Jewish historiography — the US and Israel. In his preface, Engel emphasizes that

To begin with, *this is not a book about the Holocaust or Holocaust studies*, strictly speaking. It is concerned instead with the approaches to the Holocaust most commonly demonstrated by *academic historians of the Jews* whose chief interest lies in *earlier periods of Jewish history* and not in the years of the Holocaust proper.³

Engel presents his book as a combination of historiographical research and an essay urging consideration of the problem. He does not propose a specific course of action but calls for discussion of the problem.

- 1 I wish to thank Lea Prais and Ella Florsheim for reading previous drafts of the article and suggesting improvements. During the writing, I also discussed the work with Amos Goldberg, Dalia Ofer, and David Engel; their input helped me to finalize the article. The responsibility for the contents, of course, is mine alone.
- 2 David Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 22.
- 3 *Ibid.*, pp. xiii–xiv.

This article endeavors to respond to his appeal.⁴ It begins by presenting parts of his claim that contemporary Jewish historiography is based on paradigms that prevent it from integrating Holocaust history into Jewish history as a whole. In this context the article will mainly discuss the deep impression left by the modern Jewish history school that Engel characterizes as “North American.” The theoretical foundation of the outspoken criticism of this wall of separation is then explained. Also presented are the initial attempts that Jewish historians in Europe during the Nazi period made to re-examine the premises regarding Jewish history in the modern age in light of contemporary events.

The second part of the article examines the problem from the opposite perspective to Engel’s viewpoint — that of Holocaust research. Whereas Engel’s book seeks to expose the roots and allude to the price of “sequestering the Shoah” in the field of Jewish history, this article endeavors to examine this subject from the other side of the divide, focusing on Israeli research on the history of the Jews during the Holocaust. The article will attempt to examine the dimensions and implications of the rift between the fields in Holocaust studies and also to indicate certain breaches in the wall of separation that have appeared in recent years in several new research directions, primarily in what is known as the “cultural turn.”

The Holocaust and Jewish Historiography

The starting point for Engel’s study of the connection between the study of Jewish history and the Holocaust is the expectation, expressed so well by Gershom Scholem, that the Holocaust would lead to a great turning point in the conception of the Jewish past as formulated in the modern age. Scholem came from the mainstream of German Jewry, yet the course of his life and his intellectual choices can be interpreted as a revolt against the historical and political viewpoints that emanated from German Jewry. He asserted that “the Holocaust has finally and irrevocably removed a view which was possible only until then,” re-

4 For a critical discussion of Engel’s book, see Richard I. Cohen, “Writing Jewish History after the Holocaust” (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 75 (2010), pp. 201–215. The review will appear as “Jewish History after the Holocaust — A Historiographical Conundrum,” in a forthcoming issue of *The Jewish Quarterly Review* as part of a symposium on the book.

ferring to the decline of the historic German Jewish view that placed the focus on progress and the emancipation.⁵ He assumed that like the expulsion from Spain, which he chose to call in this context “the great catastrophe of 1492,” the Holocaust of European Jewry — the great catastrophe of 1942 — would lead within two generations to a real revolution in consciousness of the Jewish past.

When he examines whether and to what extent Scholem’s vision came about, Engel points to a gap, which is far from self-evident, between Jewish public memory and Jewish historiography. The Holocaust, he asserts, has become a central factor in the new “civil religion” fashioned in Israel. It has also been gradually accepted as a central element in Jewish public thought in Israel and in the Diaspora and has become a central formative factor in contemporary Jewish thought. If we accept the view of Amos Funkenstein, whom Engel presents as his teacher and to whom he dedicates his book, that the historian is the main figure in the shaping of the national and communal memory in the modern age,⁶ it could thus have been expected that not only would Jewish historians join this movement, but they would even lead it. Yet, argues Engel, as already implied above, this has not happened.⁷

This situation is all the more surprising in light of the central status of the Holocaust in the Western academic and intellectual world and in the humanities in general, at least since the 1980s. The Holocaust, Engel asserts, served in a dialectic role in this general controversy “simultaneously catalyzing the spread of postmodern perspectives and setting boundaries to it.”⁸

It was precisely the mass murder of the Jews, and not the horrors of World War II in general, that served as the underlying foundation

5 For the quotation and an initial discussion of Scholem’s view, see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 1–4; for the quotation, see p. 2.

6 Amos Funkenstein, “Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness,” *History and Memory*, vol. 1 (1989), pp. 5–26. In this article Funkenstein presented his position in reaction to Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, who in his book *Zakhor* portrayed Jewish historiography as an enterprise contrary in its nature to the Jewish collective memory. See Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

7 See another discussion on this question in Dan Michman, “How to Integrate the Holocaust within the Broader Context of Modern Jewish History: Approaches of Leading Historians,” in Dan Michman, ed., *The Holocaust in Jewish History* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005), pp. 45–67.

8 Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, p. 11.

for criticism of the basic views of progress and modernity and largely served to undermine the contention of modern historiography that there is one universal truth that can be revealed and formulated in the framework of a “master narrative.” Engel also shows how, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, the Holocaust became a major topic in a variety of theoretical and ethical discussions occupying the Western intellectual world in the fields of literary criticism, history of art, philology, and so forth.⁹ Various questions raised in the book edited by Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation*, well present this trend. This book, stresses Engel, had a broad influence in the humanities and on the significance of writing history in general in the framework of the cultural turn.¹⁰ However, most of the book’s contributors did not come from the field of Jewish history, or even from Holocaust historiography, and its direct influence on these fields was limited.

Seemingly, this can be attributed to the apparent disassociation of the Israeli Jewish history scholars from the general discourse on the humanities, which gave such a central place to the Holocaust, and to their withdrawal into an outdated discipline — a kind of “Jewish history ghetto” — one of the images attached to the Israeli academics working in this field.¹¹ However, Engel also deals with the American Jewish historians whose work is largely based on the attempt to bring Jewish history out of its isolation. The professional lifestyle of these historians, as recently noted by Michael Mayer, “enables them to establish more professional contacts with scholars in non-Jewish fields, and thus to develop deeper and more complete awareness of the new trends in other fields such as general history, sociology, literature, and religious studies.”¹² Ostensibly, they should not have disassociated themselves in this way. Their tendency to make the Holocaust marginal, nonetheless, and by and large not to relate to a problem of concern to many of their colleagues in the general humanities thus calls for investigation.

9 Ibid., pp. 9–18.

10 Ibid., p. 237, n. 72. See Saul Friedländer, ed., *Probing the Limits of Representation, Nazism and the “Final Solution”* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1992).

11 On this matter, see Israel Bartal, “Jewish History: ‘The Punching Bag Syndrome’ of the Humanities” (Hebrew), *Cathedra*, vol. 81 (1996), pp. 177–180.

12 Michael A. Meyer, “Jewish Studies and Jewish Commitment,” idem, *Judaism within Modernity: Essays on Jewish History and Religion* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2006), p. 397.

Indeed, I would argue that the most important contribution of Engel's book is the first chapter, which deals with this question. Here Engel presents the main group of American Jewish historians who have dealt with Jewish history for several decades as one school, with a common professional credo and an ideological, cultural, and political vision that can explain their attitude toward the Holocaust. Jewish historiography scholars in the last two decades became accustomed to critiquing the Jerusalem school and the structuring of the relationship between on the one hand the vision of nation-building put forward by Ben-Zion Dinur, Yitzhak Baer, and their disciples, and on the other, their basic assumptions regarding Jewish history.¹³ The criticism of the Jerusalem school was also keenly articulated in the controversy on the question of the historiography of Zionism and post-Zionism in whose framework the boundaries between historiography and ideology and academic discourse and topical public discourse were also frequently crossed.¹⁴ Moreover, the way in which the Jerusalem school presented Jewish history in the modern age in the framework of a national meta-narrative was already described a decade and a half ago, by none other than Amos Funkenstein, Engel's teacher, as an outdated trend in light of postmodern discourse.¹⁵ Hence, Engel's discussion, principally in his book's second chapter, of the ideological trends that led Dinur, Baer, and their disciples to place the Holocaust on the sidelines of the historical narrative that they wished to foster is not surprising.¹⁶ As he

13 David N. Myers, *Re-inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Arielle Rein, "Patterns of National Historiography in B. Dinur's Works" (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 68 (2003), pp. 425–466; Yitzhak Conforti, *Past Tense: Zionist Historiography and the Shaping of National Memory* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 2006).

14 On this, see for example Yechiam Weitz, ed., *Between Vision and Revision: One Hundred Years of Zionist Historiography* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1998); Pinhas Ginosar and Avi Bareli, eds., *Zionism: A Contemporary Controversy, Research Trends and Ideological Approaches* (Hebrew) (Sede Boqer: The Ben-Gurion Research Center, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996); Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Exile within Sovereignty: Toward a Critique of the 'Negation of Exile' in Israeli Culture" (Hebrew), *Theory and Criticism*, vol. 4 (1993), pp. 23–55; vol. 5 (1994), pp. 113–132.

15 Amos Funkenstein, "Jewish History among Thorns" (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 60 (1995), pp. 335–347.

16 Richard Cohen disagrees with Engel on this matter and in his article presents a series of Israeli studies in the field of antisemitism and the combating thereof, in which the perspective of the post-Holocaust age is evident. See Cohen, "Writing Jewish History after the Holocaust," pp. 208–213.

shows, the Jerusalem wall of separation between Jewish history and Holocaust studies was also institutionalized with the establishment of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry as a separate division at the Hebrew University in 1959.¹⁷ Even Jacob Katz, who produced many disciples in Israeli historiography in a variety of fields, for instance, the study of Orthodoxy, the Haskalah Movement, and the emancipation Jewry did not succeed, according to Engel, in introducing an alternative heritage to the Jerusalem school in the field of Holocaust and antisemitism studies. Indeed, Katz reflected extensively on the meaning and validity of the wall of separation between Jewish history and Holocaust history, but was unable to shake it.¹⁸

The North American School and the Baron Heritage Regarding the Holocaust

In the introductory article to the scholarly anthology *Assimilation and Community*, published in 1992, Jonathan Frankel painted a picture of the profound change in Jewish historiography in Israel and the Diaspora that commenced in the 1970s.¹⁹ According to Frankel, the study of Jewish history developed in the modern age from the late nineteenth century until the late 1960s, was led by what he called the “Russian Jewish school.” This school, which drew its inspiration, according to Frankel, primarily from Simon Dubnow’s work, tended to see modern Jewish history in the mirror of Jewish nationalism and interpreted its different manifestations in dichotomous terms. Thus for instance, the main processes in the modern history of Western Jewry – the Enlightenment, the transition to the German language and culture, and

17 On the establishment of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry as the institutional means for concluding this separation, see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, p. 132.

18 On this, see chapter 4 in Engel’s book concerning Katz’s attitude to the study of antisemitism and the Holocaust. See also Richard I. Cohen, “Antisemitism in the Historical Writing of Jacob Katz” (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 66 (2001), pp. 331–344; Dan Michman, “A Hidden Leading Motif: The Holocaust in Jacob Katz’s Writings,” (Hebrew) in Israel Bartal and Shmuel Feiner, eds., *Historiography Reappraised: New Views of Jacob Katz’s Oeuvre* (Jerusalem: The Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History and the Leo Baeck Institute, 2008), pp. 99–113.

19 Jonathan Frankel, “Introduction,” in Jonathan Frankel and Steven J. Zipperstein, eds., *Assimilation and Community: The Jews in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 1–37.

religious reform — were perceived as processes that led to the internal weakening of the Jewish people and to the erosion of its will to exist. Ultimately, according to Frankel, the Russian Jewish school, from which the Jerusalem school later developed, gradually declined and from the 1970s a more diversified approach became prominent that was less judgmental of the Jewish past. The representatives of the new approach, who were influenced by the social sciences, now presented the Jewish past in a less dichotomous way and with diversified and open horizons of development and encouraged a broader examination of the manifestation of Jewish modernity in different countries. It should be noted that Frankel, who presents the anthology *Assimilation and Community* as a clear expression of these “new trends,” does not present the new approach as a “school,” which perhaps reflects his opinion that their methodology does not have the ideological tendencies of their predecessors. Moreover, Frankel did not place the new trends only in the American context but also in the Israeli context, and indeed *Assimilation and Community* includes studies written by scholars from both these centers.

Unlike Frankel, Engel does see these new trends as a school. Thus, several of the outstanding American Jewish scholars discussed by Frankel appear in the first chapter of Engel’s book as scholars who considered themselves followers of Salo Wittmayer Baron, the founding father of Jewish historiography in the US. Like the Russian Jewish school and its successor the Jerusalem school, this North American school is also characterized, as described by Engel, by a shared generational experience and an ideological agenda evident in the research perspective of its members. The members of this generation, as Engel characterizes as being born between 1935 and 1955 (although some are younger), commenced their professional careers in the 1960s and 1970s, during the revolution in Jewish studies. They pioneered the dissemination of Jewish history studies in the general American academic world. Their activity stepped back from the ideological framework – too rigid for their taste – that characterized Jewish historiography. Instead, they adopted a social history approach that looks at the “ordinary,” “inarticulate” men and women.²⁰ This transition also corresponded to the liberal or “progressive” tendencies of the period.

20 Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 73–76. On the rise of contemporary social history in Germany and the US and on its ideological platform, see

At least some of the voices in this school wished explicitly to challenge the premises of the Russian Jewish school, as Frankel called it, and particularly its disapproval of assimilation. In its place they proposed a narrative aspiring to create legitimacy *a posteriori* for the integration of Jews in the various European areas where they lived and worked. Thus, instead of a drama involving a struggle between the Enlightenment movement, assimilation, and Jewish nationalism, all in the shadow of antisemitism, they systematically uncovered a complex mosaic that gives more weight to the daily life and integration of the Jews in their environments. However, and without detracting from their great contribution to research, it can be said that the reverse side of the effort to lessen the ideological tension of the Russian Jewish school was in fact an attempt to propose an alternative ideological presentation of Jewish history, a presentation that would correspond to the political culture of their American environment. A brief look at the research projects of several scholars from this school, as against their programmatic expressions concerning Holocaust studies and Jewish history, can illustrate the matter.

Todd Endelman, whom Engel presents as a leading historian of this generation, is a prominent scholar of Anglo-Jewry. Using social history, Endelman challenged the basic premise of the uniformity in Jewish history in different countries and insisted on the distinctness of the modern experience of Anglo-Jewry. In Endelman's opinion the process of emancipation for the English Jew was far less ideological than that of the better-known German Jewish experience; the discourse on the Enlightenment and antisemitism was far less prominent in England and the terms of 'assimilation' and 'emancipation' also have a different and less charged meaning.²¹

Paula Hyman, another major representative of this school, presented herself as the intellectual grandchild of Salo Wittmayer Baron.

Georg G. Iggers, *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2005), pp. 36–47.

21 For a clear programmatic expression of this position, see Todd M. Endelman, "The Englishness of Jewish Modernity in England," in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1987), pp. 225–246. For Endelman's study of Anglo-Jewry, which creates a picture of diversified, less ideological integration in the different social classes, see Todd M. Endelman, *The Jews of Georgian England, 1714–1830: Tradition and Change in a Liberal Society* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979).

In her opinion she and her generation of scholars, who dealt with social history, developed an agenda clearly oriented to the views of Judaism prevalent in the Diaspora. In this spirit Hyman extensively treated the processes of emancipation of the Alsace Jews and presented their integration into their region as a gradual, diversified development and mainly of a socio-economic nature.²² In time Hyman began to study Jewish modernization from the gender viewpoint — an additional aspect of the social history that the North American school greatly helped to develop.²³

Similar trends also existed in the study of Eastern European Jewry. For instance, Steven Zipperstein presented the establishment of the modern Jewish community in Odessa as a socio-economic, rather than ideological, process.²⁴ Zipperstein, whose expression concerning the need “to sequester the Holocaust” is emphasized by Engel, subsequently published a fascinating biography of Ahad Ha’Am (Asher Zvi Hirsch Ginsberg, 1856–1927), in which the Zionist thinker was portrayed less ideologically than usual and more as an “elusive prophet” against his environmental background.²⁵ Benjamin Nathans, a younger scholar, whose book *Beyond the Pale* is undoubtedly one of this school’s best works, also painted a picture of integration with fairly open horizons of many Jews in Czarist Russia (even if based on a much smaller group than the masses living in the Pale). In his preface Nathans calls on historians to stop excluding Russian Jewry — the largest concentration of Jews in the world in the nineteenth century — from the emancipation narrative and to desist from the tendency to characterize their

22 Paula E. Hyman, *The Emancipation of the Jews of Alsace: Acculturation and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991). It should be noted that in other studies Hyman also discussed different questions concerning the political culture of French Jewry up to the Vichy period. See idem, *From Dreyfus to Vichy: The Remaking of French Jewry, 1906–1939* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979). However, from her writings, she clearly did not allow the perspective of later developments to influence the evaluation of the process of integration of the Jews in nineteenth-century France.

23 See, *inter alia*, Paula E. Hyman, *Gender and Assimilation in Modern Jewish History: The Roles and Representation of Women* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995).

24 Steven J. Zipperstein, *The Jews of Odessa: A Cultural History, 1794–1881* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985).

25 Idem, *Elusive Prophet: Ahad Ha’am and the Origins of Zionism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

history as a continued series of crises that reached its climax in the Holocaust.²⁶

The North American school scholars were also attracted to study German Jewish history, which since the nineteenth century had been a focus for programmatic debates on questions of emancipation, assimilation, and Jewish continuity. As deduced from Frankel's argument, this was in fact the most natural arena for challenging the Russian Jewish school, since the roots of the new North American school are drawn from the heritage of German Jewish historiography. One of Engel's examples is Ismar Schorsch's study on the Central Association of German Citizens of Jewish Faith (*Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens – CV*) and its combating of antisemitism, a study whose declared purpose was to clear the association's name.²⁷ Subsequently, Schorsch moved on to research Jewish studies and *Wissenschaft des Judentums* in Germany and expressed sharp criticism of Scholem's negative attitude toward the Jewish studies pioneers.²⁸ In light of Schorsch's rich research activity, wherein at times is detected an implied connection between German Jewry's golden age and the American Jewish golden age, it is possible to understand his fear, according to Engel, of the influence and imprint of the Holocaust on Jewish history. In this spirit Michael Brenner, of German Jewish background but educated in the US and one of the school's younger representatives, devoted his first book *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* to reconstructing that interwar era. It is immediately clear why he decided to begin his introduction by referring to "The image of Weimar Jewry [which was] overshadowed by its tragic end."²⁹

In this way, it is possible to also understand why Marion Kaplan,

26 Benjamin Nathans, *Beyond the Pale: The Jewish Encounter with Late Imperial Russia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 6–9.

27 Ismar Schorsch, *Jewish Reactions to German Anti-Semitism, 1870–1914* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972); and see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 168–171.

28 See, for instance, Ismar Schorsch, "They Did Not Come to Bury," in idem, *Turning to the Past in Modern Judaism* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 2000), pp. 452–456. When presenting the nature of the new trends of writing Jewish history and its fundamental dispute with Russian Jewish historiography, Jonathan Frankel, seemingly intentionally, refers to Schorsch's criticism of Scholem. See Frankel, "Introduction," *Assimilation and Community*, p. 25.

29 Michael Brenner, *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 1.

who made an outstanding contribution to elucidating the gender perspective of German Jewry, joined the appeal not to refer to German history as “from Bismarck to Hitler.”³⁰

These views that characterize the main axis of historians of European Jewry working in the US, as noted, are inspired by Salo Wittmayer Baron’s heritage, and principally by his appeal against the “lachrymose conception of Jewish history.” Engel discusses Baron and his heritage extensively and argues that the unequivocal interpretation that his followers gave to his historic view is not self-evident. Thus, he shows that in the 1928 article “Ghetto and Emancipation,” Baron argued precisely that the lachrymose conception creates too sharp a dichotomy between ghetto and emancipation.³¹ His denial of the lachrymose conception does not therefore come, as is generally thought, from an approach that sees the emancipation era positively and rejects the ghetto heritage, but precisely from an aspiration to moderate the contrast between them, to create a picture of continuity in Jewish history and even to draw positive inspiration from the heritage of medieval Jewish collectivism for the survival of Jewish existence in America. Thus, we find a critical approach toward the emancipation and a cautious and rather qualified position as regards the challenges, temptations, and dangers of assimilation and not a clearly binding position for integration of the Jews into their environment, such as in the writings emanating from the North American school.

The history of the Baronian heritage that could have developed following the Holocaust into a critical, reflective, and perhaps more pessimistic position regarding the emancipation era is portrayed in Engel’s book as a missed opportunity. Baron did try to encourage Holocaust research even if he himself did not engage in the field or undertake a programmatic reformulation of his historical views in its wake. Moreover, the incisive critical discussion by one of his students, Arthur

30 Marion A. Kaplan, *The Making of the Jewish Middle Class: Women, Family and Identity in Imperial Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 13. Kaplan’s case is particularly interesting in that her warning against the influence of the Holocaust on the study of German Jewish history in the Second Reich did not prevent her from subsequently contributing an important study to the life of German Jews under the Nazi regime in idem, *Between Dignity and Despair: Jewish Life in Nazi Germany* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

31 Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 55–57.

Hertzberg, in his book *The French Enlightenment and the Jews*, which indicated a possible development in this critical direction, was firmly rejected by the rising generation of the North American school who turned, as aforesaid, to more positive and optimistic presentations of the European Jewish past.³² Thus, too, in the US the wall of separation arose between Jewish history and Holocaust studies — in this case through the combination of the liberal viewpoints, the experiences of the integration of the Jewish historians into the American academic world, and the social history trend. Seemingly in the American case, the matter also partly concerned the Jewish historians' inclination to help in structuring a Jewish identity that would aid their integration into the liberal democratic environment and their fostering of a suitable picture of the past.³³

On Walls of Separation in the Historian's Work — a Theoretical View

Before presenting my arguments regarding the impact of the wall of separation on Holocaust Studies, I shall endeavor to elucidate its significance from a more theoretical perspective. The following short review is based on the positions of outstanding historians and thinkers who have dealt with the basic questions of presentation of the past and inquiry into the prominent trends in the contemporary historical discourse.

In his well-known treatise, *The Historian's Craft*, written in France under Nazi occupation, Marc Bloch studied the inseparable relation between the past and the present in the historian's consciousness and research. "This solidarity between the ages is so effective," wrote Bloch, "that the lines of connection work both ways. Misunderstanding the present is the inevitable consequence of ignorance of the past. But a man may wear himself out just as fruitlessly in seeking to understand the past, if he is totally ignorant of the present."³⁴ For knowledge of the

32 On Hertzberg and how his book was received, see *ibid.*, pp. 70–73.

33 For a discussion of this question both in the American and the Israeli context, see Meyer, "Jewish Studies and Jewish Commitment," pp. 393–401. This trend is entirely legitimate in my opinion, but it should be conscious of, and open to, criticism.

34 Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft* (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), p. 43. For Engel's brief mention of Bloch's position on this question, see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 37–38.

present, argued Bloch, it is very important to foster the historic sensitivity that is so necessary in the historian's work.

Bloch's position can be a starting point for understanding the highly problematic significance of the separation of Holocaust study from Jewish history and vice versa. The supporters of the separation, particularly the main representatives of the North American school, as already shown, argue that the very relating to and consciousness of the Holocaust's horrors lead to the danger of their influence on interpretation of the earlier past, especially, though not only, the emancipation era. The memory of the Holocaust, the consciousness of it or its "noxious fumes"—as one of them argued—might prejudice their impartial efforts to reconstruct the pre-Holocaust Jewish past "as it actually was." On the contrary, Bloch asserted that the very idea of disconnecting the present from the past is unrealistic; each of them is vital for an understanding of the other. Moreover, the absence of a constant dialogue between the scholars of the different periods is liable to prejudice the basic and overall purpose of their research:

Some men will always specialize in the present, as others do in the Stone Age or in Egyptology. We simply ask both to bear in mind that historical research will tolerate no autarchy. Isolated, each will understand only by halves, even within his own field of study; for the only true history, which can advance only through mutual aid, is universal history.³⁵

In her comprehensive study of the views and practices dealing with contemporary history, Elizabeth Clark takes the position that the historian's very location in the present is a problem that the historian must constantly strive to overcome in order to investigate the past on its terms.

This approach, which impedes North American historians seeking to investigate the pre-Holocaust age of Jewish modernization without the bias that they are living after the Holocaust, is presented by Clark as the traditional historiographical approach. The newer, contemporary historiography, argues Clark, tends rather toward the position that she calls "presentism." According to this approach, the perspective of the present is the starting point for our entire contemplation of the past and not a lens that distorts the true image of the past. The anti-pre-

³⁵ Bloch, *The Historian's Craft*, p. 47.

sentism of some of the positivist historians, argues Dominick LaCapra, an essential figure in outlining the agenda of the new cultural historiography, includes remains of outdated historicism.³⁶

Naturally, the view of history and the research agenda of Bloch and the Annales School, which was positivist, should not be identified with LaCapra and the cultural historiography scholars. In fact, the differences between them sometimes can erupt into an open conflict on basic questions concerning the epistemology of the past. Nevertheless, interestingly, on the question of presentism their positions are similar. Thus, as early as 1937, when Bloch and his partner Lucien Febvre outlined the research and ideological agenda of the Annales School, they both emphasized that the starting point of the historians' work is the questions that concern them and their societies in the present. The fact that historians base themselves on the world of concepts in the present, they argued, is not a limitation but a fundamental issue. The questions that they ask, that are expected also to change from one generation to another, and their different perspectives on the past are precisely what distinguish the historians from antiquarians who purport to collect the remains of the past in order to reconstruct it.³⁷

Naturally, these positions are not to be seen as a kind of ratification for indiscriminate mixing of the perspectives of the present and the past and blurring the distinctions between them. Undisputedly, study of the past must be approached cautiously and it must not be distorted for purposes of the present, and in our context clearly all modern Jewish history must not be reduced to leading to the Holocaust. Our topic here is first the legitimacy of the very raising of the questions deriving from the present generation's encounter with the past. According to these approaches that call for presentism, clearly it is only natural and obligatory that historians of the post-Holocaust generation contemplate European and world Jewish history and base their research, *inter alia*, on questions arising from the catastrophe that occurred in the mid-twentieth century. Naturally, they will carry out their work faithfully only if they examine the sources critically and study them extensively in order to maintain the correct balance between the perspective of the present and the sources of the past.

36 Elizabeth A. Clark, *History, Theory, Text, Historians and the Linguistic Turn* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2004), pp. 19–20.

37 *Ibid.*, p. 65.

Another, more philosophical tradition, on which the legitimacy of dealing with the Jewish past from the perspective of the Holocaust can be based, is hermeneutics, whose most outstanding representative was Hans-Georg Gadamer. According to Gadamer, any human contemplation of the past, or any text from the past, is immediately looked at through the prism of the present. The historian and the humanities scholar in general is presented by Gadamer as a historic subject in himself and therefore his openness to the sources cannot, and does not have to entail adapting a forced position of neutrality or ignoring his “ego.” Therefore, it is impossible to strive for an unbiased encounter between the historian and the humanities scholar in general and his sources, and it would be incorrect to do so. Moreover, the idea that prejudice is fundamentally negative is itself unfounded.³⁸

From Gadamer’s viewpoint a distinction must thus be made between a hasty premature judgment of the past on the one hand, which must be disqualified as a factor that overshadows the reliability of the research, and on the other, the legitimacy of the bias — based on the historian’s viewpoint and the time in which he writes — which is part of man’s historic nature. Only the scholar’s deep awareness of the perspective that he brings with him and of the concomitant prejudices instilled in him by this perspective, will enable a profound and fertile encounter and infusing meaning into the sources of the past that have no meaning in themselves. The fundamental refusal of the North American school historians to come to terms with the influence of the Holocaust on their consideration of the Jewish past, a position of their fear of “reading in the opposite direction,” is therefore explained in Gadamer’s terms as a clear implementation of the ungrounded prejudice of the heritage of the Enlightenment Movement, the prejudice against prejudice itself.³⁹

Facing a Dark Historic Horizon — Jewish Historiography in the Nazi Age

Engel argues that Jewish historiography missed an opportunity to change its basic paradigms. Dinur’s momentary deviation at the height

38 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), pp. 268–273.

39 *Ibid.*, pp. 274–287. On Gadamer’s position and its influence on the view of contemporary history, see Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, pp. 111–112.

of the Holocaust period from the basic views of the Jerusalem school, the more pessimistic version of the Baronian heritage that appeared briefly in Hertzberg, as well as Katz's feelers on the relationship between the Holocaust and Jewish history are presented by Engel as interesting first steps that had no real continuation. However, these were not the only beginnings. In fact, in Jewish historical thinking in Europe on the eve of the Holocaust, initial attempts can be identified as pointing to a reconsideration of the entirety of Jewish history, at least in recognition of the need to rethink Jewish history in the light of the rise of Nazism.⁴⁰

In 1935, Ismar Elbogen published in Berlin the first comprehensive survey of German Jewish history. Elbogen's book was written, according to Michael Meyer, as a Greek tragedy rushing unstopably to the question of the survival of the Jews.⁴¹ Elbogen's book aroused a variety of reactions in the contemporary German Jewish press; some examined the fundamental question of the very legitimacy and need to change the overall historic perspective in light of the present horrors. Historian and liberal educator Fritz Friedländer referred in this context to the paradoxical fact that precisely in such a difficult period for German Jewry a comprehensive, scholarly description of their history was published for the first time.⁴² The publication of this pioneering book particularly at that time, he argued, raises the question of what is the best timing to experience history and to deal with its significance — whether only out of a feeling of achievement and security or precisely when confronting the consciousness and perplexity of a crisis.

Undoubtedly, the contemporary Jewish historiography that is examined in Engel's book — both the Israeli and North American versions — indeed was written and is still being written principally out of a feeling of achievement: the realization of the Zionist dream, or alternatively, the prosperity of American Jewry. Friedländer's comments,

40 Part of this chapter is taken from chapter 4 of my book, *The Waning of the Emancipation: Jewish History, Memory and the Rise of Fascism in Germany, France and Hungary* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, forthcoming).

41 Ismar Elbogen, *Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland* (Berlin: Erich Lichtenstein, 1935); Michael A. Meyer, "Without Wissenschaft There Is No Judaism: The Life and Thought of the Jewish Historian Ismar Elbogen," *Braun Lectures in the History of the Jews in Prussia* (Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University Press, 2004), p. 28.

42 Fritz Friedländer, "Elbogen's 'Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland,'" *Der Morgen* (November 1935), pp. 369–371.

from which a view is deduced that corresponds with presentism, could assist us in clarifying the question on the limitations of this perspective.

The need for restructuring Jewish historic thinking in light of the dark horizon of Jewish history in the 1930s was dealt with in a richer and more dramatic way in Paris where several of Simon Dubnow's outstanding disciples, principally Elias Tcherikower, were concentrated in the late 1930s. All were graduates of what Frankel called the Russian Jewish school. In December 1938 a symposium was held in Paris with Eastern European Jewish intellectuals presenting various views on the "return to the ghetto" — a question that arose most acutely in the Yiddish international literary discourse following the writer Jacob Glatstein's declaration on his withdrawal from the modern world and return to ghetto life.⁴³ The dark historical horizon behind Glatstein's declaration, in the wake of the Austrian Anschluss in March 1938, became even darker in December 1938. In the wake of the events of the following months, from the failure of the Evian Conference through the Munich Agreement and the deportation of Eastern European Jews to the Kristallnacht pogrom, the atmosphere of despair in the Jewish world deepened. In France the anti-Jewish incitement reached its climax after Herschel Grynszpan's assassination attempt on the Third Secretary at the German Embassy in Paris, Ernst vom Rath, in November 1938; in the eyes of many Frenchmen this was an attempt to sabotage their country's foreign policy of appeasement.⁴⁴ This heating up of the anti-Jewish climate, as well as the growing threat to European Jewry overall, induced a harsh atmosphere of pessimism and sometimes even fatalism among French Jewry, and principally among the Yiddish-speaking immigrants.⁴⁵

The symposium, organized by Yisroel Efroykin, the former leader of the federation of immigrants in Paris, was opened by the historian

43 For a review of the public dialogue conducted in the international Yiddish press, and principally the American Yiddish press, on the "the return to the ghetto," see Elias Tcherikower, "The Jewish Intellectual Crisis in the Light of the Press (An Overview)," (*Yiddish Oyfn Shaydveg* (April 1939), pp. 201–217. Tcherikower's review was in fact part of the actual debate.

44 Vicki Caron, *Uneasy Asylum: France and the Jewish Refugee Crisis, 1933–1942* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), pp. 171–205, 268–295.

45 David H. Weinberg, *Community on Trial: The Jews of Paris in the 1930s* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 171–188.

Elias Tcherikower.⁴⁶ The opponents of the “return to the ghetto” idea, argued Tcherikower, maintain that the ghetto was never a privilege for the Jews but was always imposed on them. However, this is untrue. For centuries the Jews set themselves apart in a separate residential area and only afterwards did the ghetto become a decree enacted against them. In the current controversy, he argued, many of the speakers fail to explain what they mean by the words “return to the ghetto.”

Most of the participating immigrant intellectuals expressed fundamental opposition to any denial of the idea of progress. They described the Revisionist Movement, which tended to doubt the validity of the enlightenment and revolutionary legacy, as a kind of weakness of spirit in the fight against the Nazi assault. These were not the only opinions, however. A few days after the symposium, Volf Vevyorke published an article in *Parizer Haynt*, the main Yiddish mouthpiece of Paris’s Eastern European immigrant population, in which he proposed an overall revision in the understanding of Jewish history. “Let us not quibble,” argued Vevyorke.

The Jews must have the courage to admit that they signed a promissory note for the emancipation that they received 150 years ago, a promissory note that in their national subconscious they had no intention of paying, a promissory note that they cannot pay even if they wished to do so.... The promissory note that the Jews signed for the rights given to them by the French Revolution obliges them to disappear as a nation.⁴⁷

We Jews, continued Vevyorke, then supported our friends in the National Assembly who invited us to join the French nation and we fought our enemies when they argued that we must remain without rights because Jews will never waive their identity as a nation. Now it emerges that our enemies were right.

The “return to the ghetto” controversy continued over the next few months. It concerned both the political aspects of the approaching struggle against fascism and the cultural aspects concerning the attitude toward tradition and refashioning of the historic Jewish memory. The controversy reached its climax in the periodical *Oyfn Shaydveg*

46 “Back in the Ghetto?” (Yiddish) *Parizer Haynt*, December 12 and 22, 1938.

47 Volf Vevyorke, “Article – Discussion, Back in the Ghetto,” (Yiddish) *ibid.*, December 23, 1938.

(“At the Crossroads”), whose first edition was published in Paris in April 1939.⁴⁸ The opening article of the editors, Yisroel Efroykin and Elias Tcherikower, expressed the insight that the Jewish world had entered in a period of crisis in which a profound need for contemplation of the past was necessary:

We live in a time of the painful dissolution of the emancipation period with its humanitarian and democratic principles. We are becoming a people of refugees, homeless standing before the closed doors without any prospect of a new home.... We must honestly and sincerely consider our ancient Jewish vision and grasp what can help us to preserve the fallen Jewish soul and revive our national energy —[looking at the past] not simply for criticism but to find in it new methods to fight for Jewish existence. The purpose of our periodical is to seek these methods.⁴⁹

Tcherikower and Efroykin were in fact appealing for a re-examination of the Jewish past and fashioning it as a “usable past” that would help their contemporaries to confront their Jewish future. Seemingly, there is no clear historic debate here, but in fact their starting point did not differ in this respect from the viewpoint of the Jerusalem school of historians who also sought to fashion a usable Jewish past. Baron also in his way dedicated his work to this object, though naturally in the American Jewish context. Hence, Tcherikower’s actual starting point does not disqualify examination of his positions as part of the historiographical discourse of that time.⁵⁰

Seemingly, Tcherikower’s life history helped him to develop a historic sensitivity for the situation of contemporary European Jews. He was born in the Ukraine in 1881 and was Dubnow’s student in St. Petersburg. In 1915 he moved to New York and, at the outbreak of the Revolution in February 1917, he returned to St. Petersburg (Petrograd). After the Bolshevik Revolution, Tcherikower moved to Kiev and participated in the attempt to establish Jewish autonomy in the

48 For the first research discussion of the controversy, see Weinberg, *A Community on Trial*, pp. 189–197.

49 Elias Tcherikower and Israel Efroykin, eds., “A Word to Our Readers,” (Yiddish) *Oyfn Shaydveg*, first anthology (April 1939), p. 4.

50 On the teaching of the “usable past” as one of Baron’s outstanding goals, see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, p. 62.

Ukraine. He then moved to Berlin where he lived until moving to Paris in 1933.⁵¹

In a basic programmatic article at the beginning of the first edition of *Oyfn Shaydveg*, Tcherikower argued that the Jewish soul had proved its survivability after previous national catastrophes, for instance, the destruction of the Second Temple, the Crusades, the expulsion from Spain in 1492, and the Khmielnicki Massacre of 1648/49. After each of these disasters the Jews performed a searching self-examination, which led to a spiritual revival, sometimes even to a real cultural revolution — Yavneh after the destruction, the Musar literature, the liturgy and mysticism of medieval Ashkenazi Jewry, Rabbi Isaac Luria's Kabbalah after the expulsion from Spain, and the Sabbatean movement followed by Hasidism in the wake of the 1648/49 pogroms. The outbreak of antisemitism in Western and Eastern Europe in the late nineteenth century also led the Jews to creativity, producing the national revival movements in Palestine on one hand and liberal Jewish life in America on the other.⁵² Against these precedents in Jewish history, Tcherikower raises the question of the way the Jews will cope with the contemporary challenges in a period he calls the “swastika crusade.” Will the Jewish people again creatively cope with its disaster this time and turn the catastrophe into a source of strength?

Tcherikower's position is very skeptical and hints at his view of the “swastika crusade,” which in time became what we now call the Holocaust Era, as an unprecedented crisis in Jewish history. However, interestingly, he considered that the reason for the difference in the Jews' capacity to resist lay not only in the force of the violent suppression implemented against them but no less in a mistaken historic view that the Jews must amend. In his words, “Over the years a blind and unlimited faith in the hard and fast rule of the emancipation took root. With the emancipation the essence of Judaism weakened.”⁵³ The force of this belief, and the spread of assimilation in all spheres of Jewish life, prevented shaking up of the Jewish soul, something that is so vital for true self-examination. The Jews must therefore recognize that the basic

51 On Tcherikower, see Joshua M. Karlip, “Between Martyrology and Historiography: Elias Tcherikower and the Making of a Pogrom Historian,” *East European Jewish Affairs*, vol. 38, no. 3 (2008), pp. 257–280.

52 Elias Tcherikower, “The Tragedy of a Weak Generation,” (Yiddish) *Oyfn Shaydveg*,” first volume (April 1939), pp. 5–6.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 10.

order of the modern world they welcomed has now failed miserably: “If the great world order led us astray we must now turn to the small world order. We wagered on the call to the emancipation and human fraternity and this card lost.... But we must not leave the game now in a climate of despair.... At this time we need a new national will....”⁵⁴

The Tcherikower article alluded to a new view of Jewish history, differing from that of the Russian Jewish school. This is evident from the response that appeared on the first page of the periodical’s next volume, an article sent from Riga by Simon Dubnow, then aged 79.⁵⁵ Dubnow concurred that the Jewish people are currently experiencing one of the greatest crises in their history, and concluded that apparently the destruction of European Jewry has commenced. He also said that the hegemony of the Jewish people must go elsewhere: to America or to Asia. Still, he asserted, now is not the time for rethinking and ideological revision of Jewish history. It is the time for fighting, opined Dubnow, and the self-examination following “the expulsion from Ashkenaz” must be undertaken after the struggle is over and not in its midst. Not only did Dubnow call for postponing the self-examination, but he also hinted at his position, indicating that precisely now, the dreadful counter-emancipation age, the 150th anniversary of the French Revolution — “the time of our liberation” — was being celebrated.

It is interesting and in some ways symbolic that Dubnow, the founding father of the Russian-Jewish school, tried to defend the heritage of the French Revolution from Riga — the capital of a small Eastern European country — whereas Tcherikower continued to undermine it and its entire symbolic baggage, ironically in Paris. Moreover, his response to Dubnow came at the height of the 150th anniversary events of the French Revolution and the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen, held in France on the eve of hostilities with Germany.⁵⁶ In his reply to Dubnow, Tcherikower rejected out of hand the claim that the crisis befalling the Jewish people, however severe, is not the right

54 Ibid., pp. 25–27.

55 Simon Dubnow [Riga], “What Should We Do in Haman’s Time? A Letter to the Editor of Shaydveg,” (Yiddish) *Oyfn Shaydveg* (August 1939), pp. 3–7.

56 For a discussion of the different opinions held in France on the eve of the 150th anniversary of the French Revolution, see Pascal Ory, “La commémoration révolutionnaire en 1939,” in René Rémond and Janine Bourdin, eds., *La France et les Français en 1938–1939* (Paris: Presses de la Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1978), pp. 115–136.

time for historic self-examination.⁵⁷ Tcherikower in fact repeated Fritz Friedländer's argument in 1935 on the right to deal with the meaning of history precisely in times of crisis and perplexity. Dubnow himself, Tcherikower asserted, had taught of the need for self-examination in such times: even in the 1880s when you carried out the revision in the view of assimilation, wrote Tcherikower to Dubnow, this was not a normal period but, nevertheless, this was the time when you proposed the ideology of Autonomism. The Jews, opined Tcherikower a few days before the German invasion of Poland, cannot allow themselves to wait for peace in the world before dealing with their most profound problems. In concluding his answer to Dubnow, Tcherikower attacked the way in which his veteran teacher presented the French Revolution as "the time of our liberation," basing himself on things that he had learned from Dubnow himself and alluding to a critical and pessimistic historic narrative of the emancipation era in the nineteenth century.

Shortly after publication of the second edition of *Oyfn Shaydveg*, World War II broke out and the dialogue between Dubnow and Tcherikower was interrupted. Neither scholar survived for very long. Dubnow was murdered in Riga in December 1941. Tcherikower emigrated in 1940 from Paris to New York and there finished writing, *inter alia*, his Yiddish work on the Jews during the French Revolution. Therein he expressed his skeptical position on the nature of the emancipation and the significance of the price that French Jewry had to pay for it.⁵⁸ Tcherikower died in 1943. His studies on the history of the Jews living through revolutionary times went unpublished in English and left no real impression on Jewish historiography in the New World. In Engel's terms it is thus possible to speak here of another missed opportunity.

Study of the Holocaust and Jewish History as Seen from the Other Side of the Wall of Separation

Engel's book, as he attests, deals with the placing of the Holocaust on the sidelines of the Jewish historical discourse and making it a sepa-

57 Elias Tcherikower [Paris], "Regarding Shaydveg and the Killing Field, A Friendly Response to a Friendly Critique," (Yiddish) *Oyfn Shaydveg* (August 1939), pp. 8–13.

58 This work was translated from Yiddish into Hebrew in the mid-1950s. See Elias Tcherikower, "The Jews and the French Revolution" in Tcherikower, *Jews in Times of Revolution* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1958), pp. 28–103.

rate field of research. His main interest, as noted, is in the ideological sources of this marginalization, and he repeatedly emphasizes what he considers as a missed opportunity for enrichment of the understanding and global interpretation of Jewish history. What is the position from the opposite side? What price does Holocaust research pay for its disconnection from the more comprehensive study of Jewish history?

Any attempt to make a general claim about such a question may err on the side of making sweeping generalizations, primarily because of the tremendous dimensions and international deployment of Holocaust history studies in recent decades. In order to lessen the generalizations but nonetheless try to present a real argument, the following discussion focuses on the history of the Jews in the Holocaust: their inner world, political and cultural activities, self-awareness, etc. In the future a broader examination might include possible connections between Jewish history, including antisemitism, and the course of the Final Solution, the ways the Germans carried it out, and the various reactions of non-Jewish populations. The interesting manifestation, which seemingly is only at the beginning, of an attempt to weave together a profound study of the policies of persecution of the Jews and consideration of the internal world and responses of the Jews will also not be discussed below.⁵⁹ Such studies, which deal comprehensively with mutual relations and that can perhaps be characterized as an implementation of the approach known today as *Histoire Croisée*, could benefit from a broader historic perspective dealing with Jewish history, but due to lack of space I am unable to undertake this discussion here.⁶⁰

Thus, only studies dealing with the Jews' inner world during the Holocaust and based mainly on Jewish documentation concern us here. These studies, carried out mainly though not only by Jewish scholars, are an integral part of what is today called in many places, Holocaust Studies. To refine the boundaries of the argument even further, I focus principally on Israeli historiography of the last generation, which at its core can be characterized as a "school."

59 As an example of such studies, see Saul Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939–1945* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007); and David Silberklang, "The Holocaust in the Lublin District," Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2003.

60 On *Histoire Croisée*, see Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory*, vol. 45 (2006), pp. 30–50.

In a comprehensive article that attempted to outline the essence of Israeli Holocaust historiography, Dan Michman recently asserted that Holocaust studies in Israel were established during the decade of the 1970s. Michman places Yehuda Bauer and Israel Gutman's work at the foundations of this research and presents Gutman's comprehensive study of Warsaw Jewry as the first clear sign of the development of an Israeli school of Holocaust studies. Gutman expressly recognized his debt to the Jerusalem school. The research group that he and Bauer consolidated as responsible for Holocaust studies at the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry is presented by Michman as a subsidiary group of this school.⁶¹

Michman traces the development of the main research trend that followed Gutman's Warsaw study, which in the last two decades with his active support as teacher and supervisor produced a series of monographs on Jewish life in the ghettos of Eastern Europe, including Lodz (Łódź), Białystok, Grodno, Lvov (Lwów; L'viv), etc.⁶² In another study also written under Gutman's supervision though from a differing viewpoint vis-à-vis others, Daniel Blatman presented a history of the Bund Party in the Holocaust.⁶³ Many of these studies were prepared

61 Dan Michman, "Is There an 'Israeli School' in Holocaust Research? Research on the Holocaust and Research on Antisemitism through the Prism of the Holocaust in Israel" (Hebrew), *Zion*, special issue: Remembering and Forgetting: An Israeli View of the Jewish Past, vol. 74 (2008–2009) pp. 227–228.

62 For Gutman's study on Warsaw, see Yisrael Gutman, *The Jews of Warsaw, 1939–1943: Ghetto, Underground, Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). The outstanding studies published after Gutman include Yael Peled (Margolin), *Jewish Cracow 1939–1943: Resistance, Underground, Struggle* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Ghetto Fighters House, 1993); Sara Bender, *The Jews of Bialystok during World War II and the Holocaust* (Waltham: Brandeis University Press, 2008); Elijah Yones, *Smoke in the Sand: The Jews of Lwow during the War, 1939–1944* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001); Tikva Fatal-Knaani, *Grodno Is Not the Same: The Jewish Community in Grodno and its Vicinity during the Second World War and the Holocaust, 1939–1943* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2001); Michal Unger, *Lodz: The Last Ghetto in Poland* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2005). Avihu Ronen's doctoral dissertation, written at Tel Aviv University, also in many senses belongs to this group of studies. See Avihu Ronen, "The Jews of Zagłębie during the Holocaust, 1939–1943," (Hebrew) Ph.D. diss., Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, 1989. Ronen later turned to other directions of study.

63 Daniel Blatman, *For Our Freedom and Yours: The Jewish Labor Bund in Poland, 1939–1949* (London and Portland: Valentine Mitchell, 2003). This book opens with a foreword dedicated to the pre-Holocaust history of the Bund Movement. See also Blatman's article, "The Wall and the Dream — the Young Bundists in the Warsaw Ghetto," in Marek Edelman, ed., *The Ghetto Fights: The Young Bundist in the War-*

and published in cooperation with Yad Vashem's Research Institute, which Gutman and Bauer headed from its creation in 1993. This series of studies, mostly produced under the aegis of the two institutes at the Hebrew University and Yad Vashem, had the effect of setting up the framework for the social and political history of Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust, with intensive use of Jewish documentation from that period. They presented, each from its own perspective, the historic narrative from the Jews' viewpoint, thus fleshing them out as a living, active collectivity – a trend that became conceptualized as *amida yehudit* – Jewish defiance. In this way they embodied one of the principles of the Jerusalem school, a principle consolidated all the more forcefully in the context of Holocaust research following the Arendt–Hilberg–Bettelheim controversy.⁶⁴

The majority of these works, which foregrounded the Eastern European context, came to fruition in the Hebrew University's Institute of Contemporary Jewry and not in the Jewish history faculty. Abraham Margalio and Shaul Esh before him, both of whom studied German Jewry in the Holocaust period, can be included in the trend; indeed, they wrote and published their studies under the auspices of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and Yad Vashem.⁶⁵ The untimely deaths of Esh and Margalio effectively discontinued the development of German Jewry studies as a branch field in the school under that dual institutional framework.

Conversely, Otto Dov Kulka, the other outstanding scholar of German Jewish history in the Holocaust, is associated with the Hebrew University's Department of Jewish History, as is Richard Cohen who documented France's Jewish leadership during the Holocaust. Both published their studies principally in languages other than Hebrew.⁶⁶ Michman himself, who studied the history of the Holocaust

saw Ghetto (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2001), pp. 102–127, as an example of an attempt to integrate the pre-Holocaust perspective.

64 On this controversy, see Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, chapter 3, and various articles in Steven E. Aschheim, ed., *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

65 Shaul Esh, *Studies on the Holocaust and Contemporary Jewry* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Yad Vashem and the Leo Baeck Institute, 1973); Abraham Margalio, *Between Rescue and Annihilation: Studies in the History of German Jewry, 1932–1938* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Leo Baeck Institute, 1990).

66 Kulka's Ph.D. dissertation was not published, but his most important contribution

in Holland before commencing his extensive work on Holocaust historiography, also belongs to the Jewish History Department, though at Bar Ilan University.⁶⁷ In the research activity of Kulka, Cohen and Michman, as well as in the broader research discourse in which they participate, many more attempts can be seen to connect the study of Jewish leadership in the Holocaust with the more general narrative of Jewish history. Yet with all their personal contributions to the research effort, one cannot actually say that they have created an active school of Holocaust historians, certainly not like the school that developed under the influence of Gutman and Bauer. Thus, our concern is with the research orientation that grew around the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and focused principally on the political and social history of Eastern European Jewry during the Holocaust.

The French historian Fernand Braudel, the outstanding scholar in the second generation of the French Annales School, is known for stressing the importance of examining social, economic, and political processes from a *longue durée* (long term) perspective.⁶⁸ Only thus, Braudel contended, can the profound significance of processes be identified and characterized, whereas their examination over short periods only will lead to a partial understanding. Focusing simply on the chain of events (or in his words *histoire événementielle*, “eventual history”) was in Braudel’s opinion amateurish and superficial.⁶⁹

to the study of the Jewish leadership in Germany in the Holocaust was his documentation project, Otto Dov Kulka, ed., *Deutsches Judentum unter dem Nationalsozialismus* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), Band I. For Cohen’s main Holocaust research, see Richard I. Cohen, *The Burden of Conscience: French Jewish Leadership during the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987).

67 See Dan Michman, “The Jewish Refugees from Germany in The Netherlands, 1933–1940” (Hebrew), Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1978. Michman is also publishing a new study of the history of the ghettos. See idem, *The Jewish Ghettos in the Shoah: Why and How Did They Emerge?* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

68 For a programmatic discussion of Braudel on this question, see Fernand Braudel, “History and the Social Sciences, The *Longue Durée*,” in idem, *On History* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), pp. 25–54.

69 Braudel applied this view in two comprehensive studies: the first dealt with Mediterranean civilizations and the second attempted to examine the rise of modern capitalism. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II* (London: Collins, 1972–1973), 2 vols.; idem, *Civilization and Capitalism 15th–18th Century* (London: Collins, 1981–1984), 3 vols. In these works he gave first and foremost geographical and economic contexts and sometimes characterized the change of so long a duration that, for his critics, it seems that

We do not need to follow Braudel's entire argument to accept its truth. Indeed, some of his followers who criticized his prioritizing of economic and material dimensions and went on to deal with questions concerning mentality, feelings, images etc., also aspired to stretch their analyses over long or at least medium time spans in their fields.⁷⁰ This insight, that greatly influenced international historical research, also penetrated Jewish historical work.⁷¹

Understanding the profound meaning of the political, community, and cultural patterns in the life of the Jews thus requires consideration of the processes over the *longue durée*, however the term 'long' is defined. This insight can also be connected to the overall unity of Jewish history, which is one of the cornerstones of the Jerusalem school. Thus, cautiously, we can recognize a certain missed opportunity in the research patterns characteristic of the study of the social and political history of Eastern European Jewry in the Holocaust as it developed in Israel. This missed opportunity can be seen as a clear result of the wall separating Jewish history and the history of the Jews during the Holocaust. The twentieth century-focused academic training in the framework of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, the intensive involvement in the specific – sometimes narrow – Holocaust research discourse, the tendency to participate predominantly in conferences dealing with Holocaust research and to publish in periodicals dealing with this field – all these left their mark here.⁷² The presentation of Jewish life in the pre-Holocaust period, mainly seen in studies concentrating on regional history, tends at times to be in a survey format

time stopped for him and that human agency and initiative had no place in history.

70 Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, pp. 69–70.

71 Thus, for instance, Michael Graetz's study on the Jewish leadership in France is based expressly on Braudel's views. See Michael Graetz, *The Jews in Nineteenth-century France: From the French Revolution to the Alliance Israelite Universelle* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996). Eli Lederhendler, who studied the formation of the patterns of modern Jewish politics, based his research on a *longue durée* perspective and studied the patterns of traditional Jewish politics and lobbying (*shtadlanut*). See Eli Lederhendler, *The Road to Modern Jewish Politics: Political Tradition and Political Reconstruction in the Jewish Community in Tsarist Russia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989).

72 Incidentally, it should be noted that recently a structural change was made at the Hebrew University, and the Institute of Contemporary Jewry now works as a research institute, and no longer as a teaching framework. At the present stage the long-term effect of this change is difficult to evaluate.

and of a static nature; sometimes it seems to be a kind of synchronous presentation of the nature of the “world before,” principally in terms of its institutional infrastructure. Such studies do not expand sufficiently on the basic problems of Jewish social history such as rifts in Jewish society, diversified cultural orientations, intergenerational tensions, and questions of center and periphery. Consequently, their review of the processes occurring in Jewish society throughout the actual Holocaust is carried out from short-term perspectives and “colligatory concepts” — the most prominent being ghetto, underground, uprising (the conceptualization proposed by Gutman in his book on Warsaw), and deportation, none of which contains a *longue durée* conceptualization of problems arising from the contemporary events.⁷³ Going back to the heritage of the Annales School, whose founders spoke of the historian’s need to identify a problem in the past as the springboard for his discussion, it can thus be said that the wall of separation between the Holocaust and Jewish history seriously hinders the ability of the Holocaust scholar belonging to this school to confront problems of *longue durée* significance, and at times even to identify them, and orients him principally to a factual, detailed reconstruction of the events on the basis of archival documentation.

It should be emphasized that the Israeli scholars dealing with the social and political history of the Jews in the Holocaust do not hold a fundamental opinion in favor of the wall of separation as do some historians of the Jewish people from the North American school. Many of them were even trained initially in Jewish history faculties. Gutman himself dealt mainly with Holocaust research but also participated in research and documentation enterprises covering the pre-Holocaust history of Polish Jewry.⁷⁴ However, this is perhaps an inevitable result of the development of the institutional infrastructure that created the wall of separation. The Israeli study of the history of the Holocaust that continues to be concentrated, although not as extensively as in the past, at the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and the International Institute for Holocaust Research at Yad Vashem, can be profound and committed to documentation. Still, it is not sufficiently integrated into the

73 On “colligatory concepts,” see W. H. Walsh, “Colligatory Concepts in History,” in Patrick Gardiner, ed., *The Philosophy of History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), pp. 127–144.

74 See for example Israel Bartal and Israel Gutman, eds., *The Broken Chain: Polish Jewry through the Ages* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Zalman Shazar Center, 1997–2001).

broader picture of Jewish history. It does not contribute to it sufficiently and does not benefit from it. Holocaust historians, argued Dan Michman recently in a lecture on the subject, tend to enclose the Holocaust in a “time capsule” or, to use another expression, to approach Jewish history from a micro-diachronic perspective. It should be noted that some scholars who deal with the Holocaust, such as Dalia Ofer, tend to extend their research to the study of theoretical questions in the the humanities and to a general discourse dealing with questions of gender, family, daily life, and social solidarity in times of crisis, and similar subjects. This trend has contributed to the welcome penetration of the interest aroused by Holocaust research to broader fields in the social sciences and leads to an increased presence in the general research discourse.⁷⁵ This trend contributes to the development of the subsidiary field of “Holocaust and Genocide Studies” whose horizons are likely to be broader and more universal, and the colligatory concepts that it proposes open the way to a more diversified and richer study of such past events. However, it does not include Holocaust research in a long- or even a medium-range span of Jewish history. Thus, the work of many scholars of Jewish history in the Holocaust, even if unwittingly and certainly without an ideological intention, realizes the tendency of the wall of separation supporters — principally of the North American school — “to sequester the Shoah.” And perhaps they are not sufficiently attentive to Bloch’s previously noted warning that if the scholars of the different periods work alone, “Isolated, each will understand only by halves, *even within his own field of study*” (my emphasis, G. M.).⁷⁶

In order to avoid sweeping generalizations, I present here several borderline cases which have the potential to break down the wall

75 For Ofer’s activity and appeal for extending the discourse in these directions, see Dalia Ofer and Lenore J. Weitzman, eds., *Women in the Holocaust* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); Dalia Ofer, “The Individual and the Collective in East European Ghettos during the Holocaust: Reflections on a Research Plan,” in Moshe Zimmermann, ed., *On Germans and Jews under the Nazi Regime: Essays by Three Generations of Historians — a Festschrift in Honor of Otto Dov Kulka* (Jerusalem: Richard Koebner Minerva Center for German History, Hebrew University Magnes Press, 2006), pp. 337–352. Daniel Blatman’s studies and principally his works on the death marches also show a breakthrough trend in Holocaust research in Israel, though in the context of the death marches, he concentrates less on Jewish society. See Daniel Blatman, *The Death Marches, 1944–1945* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2010).

76 Bloch, *The Historian’s Craft*, p. 47.

of separation. Rivka Elkin, another of Gutman's outstanding students, wrote a comprehensive study of the Jewish welfare system in Nazi Germany under his supervision.⁷⁷ Elkin presents the background to her study in the first chapter where she describes the development of Germany's Jewish welfare system from World War I onward. Naturally, a more comprehensive discussion could have been developed on these questions and they could have been linked to broader, more *longue durée* contexts in the history of Jewish autonomous welfare, but the opening discussion is certainly a good beginning.⁷⁸ Lea Prais's work, also undertaken in the Institute of Contemporary Jewry framework, deals with the fate of Jewish refugees in Warsaw during the Holocaust. It begins by attempting to explain the Jews' attitude to refugees and issues of Jewish solidarity in the decades prior to the Holocaust.⁷⁹ These two works, however, focus almost entirely on the Holocaust; therefore, it is very doubtful whether Jewish history scholars interested in the broader questions of communal history and Jewish welfare would identify, from their side of the wall of separation, the potential in them for elucidation of these subjects.

Yfaat Weiss's study shows a skillful attempt to take on the broader challenge of building a bridge between the Holocaust and general Jewish history. Her book deals with German and Polish Jewry from 1933 to 1940. Weiss, writing and publishing primarily outside the framework of the Jerusalem school of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and Yad Vashem, begins her book with a long chapter on Jewish East–West relations in Europe before the Nazis came to power and examines her conclusions from the wider perspective of Jewish history at the end of her study.⁸⁰ However, this study is the exception, not the rule, and it is

77 Rivka Elkin, *The Heart Beats On: Continuity and Change in Social Work and Welfare Activities of German Jews under the Nazi Regime, 1933–1945* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004).

78 For further discussion following Elkin's study, see *Aspects of Jewish Welfare in Nazi Germany, Search and Research*, vol. 7 (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2006).

79 Lea Prais, "The Impact of the Refugee Problem on Jewish Communal Life in the City of Warsaw and in the Warsaw Ghetto (Sept. 1939–July 1942)," (Hebrew) Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2006.

80 Yfaat Weiss, *Citizenship and Ethnicity: German Jews and Polish Jews, 1933–1940* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Leo Baeck Institute, 2001). For a German translation, see Yfaat Weiss, *Deutsche und polnische Juden vor dem Holocaust: Jüdische Identität zwischen Staatsbürgerschaft und Ethnizität, 1933–1940* (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2000).

perhaps not by chance that it does not enter into the actual extermination period.

Cracks in the Wall of Separation – First Signs

The picture presented here, though certainly generalized and not always exact, reflects a problem that should be discussed both in the Jewish history scholarly community and among Holocaust researchers. Furthermore, the discussion must not conclude here. In recent years, one can identify in studies of the history of the Jews in the Holocaust early signs of cracks in the wall of separation or of the building of certain bridges, even if narrow, between the two fields. I wish to discuss two manifestations here. First, I will present the appearance of studies of the “surviving remnant” (*she’erit hapleitah*) as a kind of subsidiary field of Holocaust research. I will then discuss the possible implications of moving the emphasis from social history to cultural history on this topic.

As part of a growing worldwide interest in the subject, Israeli scholars in the 1990s began publishing studies on the surviving remnant, then a relatively new area of historical endeavor that was developing in Holocaust research. Zeev Mankowitz wrote about political life in the DP camps in the American-occupied zone in Germany and Hagit Lavsky comprehensively described Jewish life in the British zone from a socio-historical perspective.⁸¹ Other studies showed how the survivors coped with the challenge of building a Jewish education system in the DP camps and delved into their cultural life.⁸² Others, from

81 Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002). Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945–1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002). Scholars outside Israel also addressed Holocaust survivors, sometimes from different viewpoints. For example, see Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Avinoam J. Patt, *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2009).

82 Ada Schein, “The ‘Uniform Education’ System in the DP Camps in Germany, 1947–1950” (Hebrew), *Yalkut Moreshet* 85 (2009), pp. 70–113. Schein wrote a comprehensive doctoral dissertation on Jewish education in the DP camps. See idem, “Educational Systems in the Jewish DP Camps in Germany and Austria (1945–1951)” (Hebrew), Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, January 2000; Ella

different viewpoints, looked at the encounter between the Holocaust survivors and Zionism — both as an idea and as an active political movement — and also, at their emigration to, and absorption in, Israel.⁸³ Some of these studies were carried out under the influence of the Jerusalem school of Holocaust research, but many came from completely different directions.

Most of these studies build relatively narrow bridges connecting the Holocaust with the history of the State of Israel and do not help to bridge the deeper chasm between Holocaust history and the Jewish history prior to it from the *longue durée* perspective. Moreover some, principally the studies treating Holocaust survivors in Israeli society, are becoming part of a relatively new research field, Israel studies, that is gaining an independent institutional status in recent years but is also likely to become another isolated time capsule, separate from mainstream Jewish history.⁸⁴ Nonetheless, the very breaching of the Holocaust-era time capsule and the extension of the boundaries of the discourse, alongside the partial integration into the framework of the institutional boundaries of Holocaust research discourse, is very important. Moreover, seemingly, the study of Holocaust survivors is likely to help rescue Holocaust research discourse from its isolation from general Jewish history studies. In light of the rehabilitation of Jewish

Florsheim, “*Undzer Shtime* [Our Voice], The Newspaper Published in the Bergen-Belsen DP Camp as a Tool for Cultural Rehabilitation” (Hebrew), *Chulyot: Journal of Yiddish Research*, vol. 10 (Autumn 2006), pp. 239–260. Florsheim is writing a doctoral dissertation at The Hebrew University of Jerusalem on the revival of Yiddish culture in the DP camps in Germany as reflected in the press run by Holocaust survivors.

83 See for instance Irit Keynan, *Holocaust Survivors and the Emissaries from Eretz-Israel: Germany 1945–1948* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1996); Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999); Sharon Geva, *To the Unknown Sister, Holocaust Heroines in Israeli Society* (Hebrew) (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2010); Michal Shaul, “Holocaust Survivors and Holocaust Memory in the Rehabilitation of Ashkenazi Haredi Society in the Yishuv and the State of Israel, 1945–1961” (Hebrew), Ph.D. diss., Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 2009.

84 This subject naturally requires separate and comprehensive clarification elsewhere. For an initial discussion of the subject, see Michael A. Meyer, “Jewish History and Israeli History: The Problem of Distinguishing between Them,” in Marc Lee Raphael, ed., *The Margins of Jewish History* (Williamsburg, VA: College of William and Mary, 2000), pp. 95–101.

life in Europe, in Israel and various other immigrant nations, and their patterns of activity in political, social, and perhaps more importantly, cultural fields, it is necessary to recognize the existence of continuity between these patterns and those that existed before the Holocaust.

The clearest potential for profoundly breaching the wall is, in my opinion, in the cultural history arena. Engel's book, as noted, argued that the North American school scholars turned to social history as part of their revolt against writing the more intellectual Jewish history, which they felt was ideological and isolationist. He even links this with their aspiration to create an integrative Jewish history narrative and to adapt their work methods to norms that became accepted in American historical research since the 1960s. Even though the baton of historical research passed a long time ago from social to cultural history, such a change is not to be seen among the North American school scholars. "It seems that many historians of the Jews working today in the United States do not feel nearly the same compulsion as before to swim unreservedly with the general historiographical current."⁸⁵ Here is not the place to enter into a critical discussion and empirical examination of the influence of the cultural turn on Jewish historiography in North America. For the present discussion, what is important is the insight that social history was more responsible for creating the wall of separation than cultural history.

The nature of the cultural turn is difficult to define. Engel relates it generally to postmodern theories and a pessimistic approach toward the Enlightenment project. From the historical research viewpoint, in my opinion, it is chiefly an expression of the historians' dissatisfaction with finding a global and exhaustive explanation for manifestations in the social and economic arena. In addition, there is a growing tendency to place topics concerning representations (like the title *Representations* of the periodical considered a flagship of the cultural turn), subjective views, diversified interpretations, and methods of constructing meaning at the center of the debate. The cultural foundation and the methods of its subjective understanding of reality, argue the new cultural historians, are no less true than the social structures such as "class," "community," or "family" studied by the social historians.⁸⁶ Elizabeth

85 Engel, *Historians of the Jews and the Holocaust*, pp. 78–81; citation from p. 79.

86 For a detailed introductory discussion on the subject see Richard Biernacki, "Method and Metaphor after the New Cultural History," in Victoria E. Bonnell

Clark, who calls this new orientation a “new intellectual history,” points to its theoretical roots in contemporary French thought and describes Dominick LaCapra’s central place in imparting these principles and in their implementation in American historiography since the 1980s.⁸⁷ It is interesting to note in this context that the growing interest in Holocaust issues in the general humanities and social sciences frameworks is fundamentally related to the cultural turn. Therefore, it is not by chance that LaCapra, one of its outstanding voices, took an interest in, and wrote about, the Holocaust.⁸⁸

From the viewpoint of historical study of the Jews during the Holocaust, the historians’ turn to the cultural arena opens the field to new questions. In my view, this is not necessarily a use of postmodern theories or an explicit position vis-à-vis the Enlightenment project, but *primarily the presentation of new research questions*. A clear example of this is Havi Dreifuss’s book, based on a doctoral dissertation in the Jewish history department at the Hebrew University, supervised by Israel Bartal and David Engel, about the relations between Jews and Poles in the Holocaust, as seen from the Jewish perspective.⁸⁹ Dreifuss’s study is heavily based on historical documentation, but the questions she asks differ in their nature from those characterizing Holocaust research studies of the Jerusalem school of the Institute of Contemporary Jewry and Yad Vashem. Dreifuss deals with images and subjective views (or we might say representations), which clearly emanate from

and Lynn Hunt, eds., *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999), pp. 62–92.

87 Clark, *History, Theory, Text*, pp. 113–128. For a basic article discussing problems arising from cultural history and the difficulties that it raises in reconstructing a “true story” of the past, see Peter Mandler, “The Problem with Cultural History,” *Cultural and Social History*, vol. 1 (2004), pp. 94–117.

88 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). For an up-to-date and detailed discussion of the challenge of Holocaust research from the viewpoint of cultural history, see Dan Stone, “Holocaust Historiography and Cultural History” (English section), *Dapim*, 23 (2009), pp. 52–68, and see subsequently (pp. 69–93) the debate on the subject in which several scholars participated, including LaCapra and Michman. The essence of the debate in this context focuses on the question of the use of theoretization from the field of cultural history for Holocaust research and far less, except for parts of Michman’s response, on the questions concerning Jewish history.

89 Havi Dreifuss (Ben-Sasson), “*We Polish Jews?*” *The Relations between Jews and Poles during the Holocaust - The Jewish Perspective* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009).

the realm of cultural history. In itself, Dreifuss' study is also limited to the Holocaust era in terms of its sources. But the image of the Jews in the eyes of the Poles and their shared fate and suffering really cries out for a discussion involving a *longue durée* that brings in the "failed brotherhood" in Jewish–Polish relations, the title of a Bartal study that mainly encompasses the nineteenth century ending with World War I.⁹⁰ Another example of the history of the Jews in the Holocaust from the cultural perspective of the American research world is found in Samuel Kassow's comprehensive study of Emanuel Ringelblum and the *Oyneg Shabes Archive*. Kassow devotes a substantial portion of the book to describing Ringelblum's life and the intellectual and political environment during the decades before the Nazi occupation and connects his documentation closely to Ringelblum's political and cultural ideals from the prewar era.⁹¹

In his article on the Israeli Holocaust historiography, Dan Michman, relying on Amos Goldberg's findings, argues that "Israeli Holocaust research, focusing on Jewish society, did not deal with the image of the individual in the Holocaust."⁹² Goldberg pioneered this field in his doctoral dissertation on diary writing in the Holocaust period; his work was supervised and written clearly with the stamp of the cultural turn.⁹³ He combined a close reading of diaries with a discussion of postmodern theories and, *inter alia*, with patterns of the representation of the individual's experience and the disintegration of his identity under extremely traumatic conditions. Another important aspect of this work concerns the breaching of spatial boundaries, given that he relates to diaries written in different countries and languages, and discusses theoretical questions of a universal nature. Goldberg wrote his

90 Magdalena Opalski and Israel Bartal, *Poles and Jews: A Failed Brotherhood* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1992).

91 Samuel D. Kassow, *Who Will Write Our History? Emanuel Ringelblum, the Warsaw Ghetto and the Oyneg Shabes Archive* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007).

92 Michman, "Is There an 'Israeli School' in Holocaust Research?" p. 239.

93 Amos Goldberg, "The Helpless I — Diary Writing during the Holocaust" (Hebrew), Ph.D. diss., The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2004. For a fundamental discussion of his approach, see idem, "If This Is a Man: The image of Man in Autobiographical and Historical Writing during and after the Holocaust," *Yad Vashem Studies*, vol. 33 (2005), pp. 381–429. See also idem, "The Victim's Voice and Melodramatic Aesthetics in History," *History and Theory*, vol. 48, no. 3 (2009), pp. 236–237. Here Goldberg presents his approach as an opening to dealing with the history of the Jews in the Holocaust from the perspective of cultural history.

thesis in association with the Institute of Contemporary Jewry, but his two supervisors came from the field of literature and he was also greatly influenced by LaCapra's research. At approximately the same time, the American scholar Alexandra Garbarini wrote another work of a different style that treated Holocaust diary writing across a number of European countries in order to present a broad picture of self-awareness and the subjective experience of the Jews.⁹⁴ In the context of my discussion here it can be determined that the very turning to questions concerning memory, identity, and representation — a clear expression of the cultural turn — must and can be an additional starting point for the connection between the Jewish experience in the Holocaust and their cultural world in the period preceding it.

Another methodology that has hardly been discussed until now in Jewish historiography is “conceptual history” or “semantic history.” Seemingly, this field of research, which began with the German *Begriffsgeschichte* school and in recent decades developed in the English-speaking world as conceptual history and also as the history of semantics, is likely to contribute greatly to Jewish historiography.⁹⁵ Conceptual history scholars endeavor to follow the metamorphoses of the vocabulary in the political language of the cultures that they investigate, seeing this as an outstanding tool to uncover and clarify historic processes and changes. They document and analyze the use of key concepts in specific political situations, including in times of crisis and distress. Their scholarship follows the gradual changes that occur in the meaning of concepts marking various manifestations along the way, as well as the circumstances of the appearance of new concepts in

94 Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

95 The German historian Reinhart Koselleck is considered the founding father of the *Begriffsgeschichte*. For an indication of its basic principles, see the two anthologies of his articles: Reinhart Koselleck, *The Practice of Conceptual History, Timing History, Spacing Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002); idem, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004). The main project of the German *Begriffsgeschichte* school is the encyclopedia of the history of basic political concepts, *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*. On this project, see Keith Tribe, “The GG Project: From History of Ideas to Conceptual History,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. 31 (1989), pp. 180–184. Since the 1990s, this methodology has been applied in a variety of other national histories; and 2005 saw the first publication of the periodical *Contributions to the History of Concepts*, which aspires to create a multinational discourse on the subject.

political and public language. The scholars of semantic history work over the longer, or sometimes, the medium span of time in order to follow the development of political language. This is expressed, for instance, in Reinhart Koselleck's work devoted principally to the "saddle age" (*Sattelzeit*) or the "threshold age" in shaping conceptual history in Germany between 1750 and 1850, and is applied in different ways in studies dealing with other political cultures.⁹⁶

It should be stressed here that a fruitful outcome of work in the semantic history could benefit greatly from a longer-term study of the Jewish past. A *longue durée* examination of Jewish political language through times of distress and crisis, looking at different concepts such as "antisemitism" or "emancipation" and their use in Jewish political discourse, or the changes that they undergo, as well as a comparative examination of Jewish political vocabulary in various languages might prove valuable in clarifying the thought patterns and activities of the Jews. Clearly, the semantic patterns of the Jews during the Holocaust as expressed in their political discourse were inspired by previous political experiences; the effects of history on the changes in these patterns can only be examined over the longer term.⁹⁷

Epilogue: The Study of the Holocaust and of Jewish History and the Challenge of Creating the Combined Narrative

Historian Moshe Rosman recently argued that the main trend in writing Jewish history worked from the 1970s and 1980s chiefly with the

96 For an up-to-date discussion on the situation of the school that created the possibility, *inter alia*, of the "micro-diachronic" study of conceptual history, i.e., studies dealing with short time periods, see Willibald Steinmetz, "Vierzig Jahre Begriffsgeschichte — the State of the Art," in Heidrun Kämper and Ludwig M. Eichinger, eds., *Sprache — Kognition — Kultur: Sprache zwischen mentaler Struktur und kultureller Prägung* (Berlin: Institut für Deutsche Sprache, 2008), pp. 174–197.

97 Perhaps not by chance it was Engel who recently proposed such a critical discussion of the semantic history of the concept of 'antisemitism,' although he did not link it to the principles of the *Begriffsgeschichte* tradition. See David Engel, "Away from a Definition of Antisemitism: An Essay in the Semantics of Historical Description," in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman, eds., *Rethinking European Jewish History* (Oxford and Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2009), pp. 30–53. For a discussion of the micro-diachronic nature of the history of the emancipation and assimilation in the context of German Jewry in the Nazi period, see Guy Miron, "Emancipation and Assimilation in the German Jewish Discourse of the 1930s," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, vol. 48 (2003), pp. 165–189.

commitment to a conceptualization of Jewish history in the different geopolitical entities where Jews lived.⁹⁸ Even if he did not use Engel's terminology, Rosman was critically referring mainly to the North American school; he described the research findings of this group of scholars as a broad variety of narrowly focused monographs that, in an overall view, greatly enriched Jewish historiography — a description fitting the works of Endelman, Hyman, Nathans, Kaplan, and many others. Rosman presented the advantages of this work method based on the historians' profound mastery of the original languages and the history of the geographic region, as well as a focused definition of the research subjects. But he argued that it is still necessary to examine whether the geopolitical borders must be the main shaping factor in the study of Jewish history. If we formulate the problem raised by Rosman as a mirror image of the problem arising from Holocaust historiography, it can be said that the North American social history school of scholars put Jewish history in the modern age in "closed spatial capsules." At the same time, they neglected the attempt of the previous generations of all the main trends — Graetz, Dubnow, Baron, and scholars of the Jerusalem school — to present an overall, or in Rosman's terms, a "trans-geographical" view of Jewish history.⁹⁹ Rosman calls for re-examination of these basic principles and cites several up-to-date examples of attempts to again cross the borders of the narrow political space and to bring about a more comprehensive understanding of various manifestations in Jewish history, *inter alia*, the history of the Jewish Enlightenment, the Sephardi Jewish Diaspora, and the history of Hasidism.¹⁰⁰ Rosman's position seconds Shulamit Volkov's motion, made over a decade before him, concerning the price paid by Jewish history for focusing on individual communities and her appeal to "establish nevertheless a complete modern Jewish history."¹⁰¹

Neither Volkov nor Rosman related in their articles to Holocaust

98 Moshe Rosman, "Jewish History across Borders," in Jeremy Cohen and Moshe Rosman, eds., *Rethinking European Jewish History*, pp. 22–23.

99 *Ibid.*, pp. 17–21.

100 *Ibid.*, pp. 26–29.

101 Shulamit Volkov, "Jews among the Nations: A Unique National Narrative or a Chapter in National Historiographies" (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 61 (1996), pp. 91–111; the quotation is from p. 110. See a discussion on a test case in the context of this fundamental problem in my article, Guy Miron, "Between Berlin and Baghdad — Iraqi Jewish History and the Challenge of Integrated Jewish Historiography" (Hebrew), *Zion*, vol. 71 (2006), pp. 73–98.

studies, perhaps because of the influence of the wall of separation. However, in the wake of Engel's book the combining of Holocaust studies with Jewish history could be and indeed must be the starting point for taking on the challenge of writing a pan-Jewish, or at least a European pan-Jewish, historiography. The Holocaust is clearly a trans-national historic event that crossed the geographical and political borders of modern Jewish experience in Europe and brought into question the very meaning of these borders. The scholars of Holocaust history in the different countries are also accustomed to a trans-border dialogue among themselves. If Holocaust research benefits from the dialogue and combining with Jewish history by crossing the *borders of time* to which the Holocaust relates and from interpretation of the manifestations discussed in the framework of the *longue durée*, then Jewish history study can also benefit from the union by the *crossing of spatial borders*. Naturally, such combinations must be handled cautiously and with due consideration, but it is possible that when the process of Jewish social history enclosed within the geographical borders exhausts itself, these new bridges will present one of the main directions for the future development of Jewish historiography.

Translated from the Hebrew by Stephanie Nakache