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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

RELIGIOUS LEADERS. POLITICAL leaders. Military leaders. They have been among the most prominent members of the establishment, Jewish and non-Jewish, for millennia. From their positions (elected, appointed, or stolen) they have exercised authority, which has on occasion been met with dissent.

As I reflected one last time on the essays in this volume and the symposium where presenters made their presentations, I was once again struck by how universal and yet distinctively Jewish so many phenomena are at one and the same time. As has been the case before, so here too it seems like a swatch of autobiography most efficiently makes the point.

Many years ago, sometime in the 1980s, I was president of the Conservative synagogue in Greenville, South Carolina. Because the membership numbers were relatively modest, I was able to pass through the various stages of the *cursus honorum*, from member at large to president, while I was still a pretty young guy. But because of the time—1950s and '60s—and the place—Richmond, Virginia—of my upbringing, I was especially attuned to the nuances of deference I was expected to pay to those older than myself.

Giving senior members of the congregation essentially *carte blanche* to discourse on any topic for almost any amount of time led not surprisingly to very long meetings. (Come to think of it, why did they ever reelect me?!) Very quickly I observed that the older males (rarely females) on the board could talk with seemingly great authority on just about any theme, secular or religious, I could imagine. And, of course, some topics I would never have thought of. Their authority as promoters of a given set of beliefs was invariably matched by others who held out in dissent.

How, I wondered, could everyone know just about everything, pro and con, on any and every topic? Of course, I was young and naïve then. But the question still intrigues me. Is there a special type of authority and expression of dissent that Jews characteristically voice? The answer I got then, which fit its context pretty well, went something like this: “Each of us board members started and grew a small business. We could figure it out in the office or store. And we could figure it out in shul or synagogue. No one could tell us anything we didn’t already know. Although we were blessed, if you will, with a unique knack for lighting the way of our otherwise unenlightened colleagues.”

It seemed about right to me then—each individual developed a unique quality of authority based largely on his own unique experience. And when, as inevitably occurred, there was a clash of authority derived from a righteous sense of dissent, how was resolution achieved? As I remember it, the clamor of thunderous rhetoric on often the most seemingly picayune point was resolved only by the infinitive patience of our ever-nimble young hero—I mean me.

If, as I do, you sometimes appreciate the ad hoc (if not ad hominem) nature of such vignettes, we can agree that this mid-1980s account from Upstate South Carolina is an at least adequate reflection of a given set of circumstances as experienced and recalled by one individual.

I make no excuses for that. But I also offer sincerest personal and professional gratitude to the more than a dozen of my colleagues who bring the range of their scholarship as well as their storytelling to instances of authority and dissent in over two millennia of Jewish life. That is what this book is all about.

The first four essays look back to historical accounts from rabbinic through the Byzantine period. First is “Figurative Language of Authority and Rebellion in the Story of the Death of Rabbi Judah ben Bava” by Chen Marx, The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College. In his essay Marx examines the martyrological tale of Rabbi Judah ben Bava, who was brutally murdered by the Romans after the Bar Kokhba Revolt (136 CE) as punishment for ordaining five of his disciples as rabbis, an action that preserved the Jewish faith. The tales of ben Bava deal with how his memory should be preserved. Marx enumerates the ways rabbinic figurative language represents ideological struggles and how the Jewish religion has faced and interpreted rebellion, failure, and victory.

Azzan Yadin-Israel, Rutgers University, offers the second study, on “Midrash, Oral Law, and the Question of Rabbinic Authority.” As Yadin-Israel explicates, the early rabbis are characterized in two ways: they are masters of midrash and they are adherents of the Oral Law, a tradition handed down from master to disciple that stretches back to Moses himself. What is generally overlooked is the potential incommensurability of these claims: each implies a different model of religious authority. As a result, there can be disputes between them. Yadin-Israel traces the contours of this foundational

struggle in the rabbinic sources and the ultimate triumph of midrash and decline of Oral Law as a source of authority.

In "Dissenting Literature and Social Formation in the Antique Mediterranean," Zachary B. Smith, Creighton University, expands the basis of our analysis through his exploration of some of the issues of written dissent in texts from the classical and late antique periods. Persuasive literature was the primary vehicle in the process of elite social formation. While not a genre per se, dissent literature was a subset of persuasive literature that attempted to mitigate the effects of authoritative literature. Dissent literature employed a variety of tactics, from ad hominem attacks to intellectual disputes. In Smith's analysis, the kinds of persuasion used in dissent literature tell us something about the conditions, positions, and dispositions of the authoritative and dissenting parties.

Joel Gereboff, Arizona State University, then asks us to consider the nature of King David in "When the Memory of David Is Not Enough to Authenticate the Temple in Jerusalem." Gereboff first shows how King David's connection to the building of the Temple in Jerusalem is described somewhat differently in biblical texts. Rabbinic sources assigned a greater role to David. Some midrashim specifically asserted that in Solomon's time the Temple gates opened only when David was actually present either by bringing in his coffin or through his revival. Thus, the invoking of David's memory alone was not seen as sufficient. Gereboff then correlates these Jewish traditions with developments in the Byzantine era, when they were written.

The next two essays, by Ori Z. Soltes, Georgetown University, and Gil Graff, *Builders of Jewish Education*, are far-reaching in their chronological and methodological range. Soltes titles his essay "From Acosta and Spinoza to Arendt to Laurence and Aylon: Verbiage and Visual Art as Instruments of Dissent in Modern Jewish Thought." Through discussion, disagreement, and dissent, rabbinic literature offered multiple perspectives on every issue. As Soltes shows, one consequence of this was that the concept of "heresy" did not functionally exist within Judaism. The first notable instances of accusations of heresy were against Uriel Acosta and Baruch Spinoza in seventeenth century Amsterdam. Centuries later, Hannah Arendt and Geoff Laurence embodied Spinoza-like modes of dissent from accepted understandings of Holocaust trauma. Later, Hélène Aylon addressed the very concept of dissent against traditionally conceived rabbinic authority.

The title of Graff's study, which was the symposium's keynote presentation, was "Jewish Law and the Law of the State: A Study in Authority and Dissent." Graff observes that from Talmudic times the principle "the law of the kingdom is the law" framed the relationship of Jews and Judaism to the ruling power. With the onset of modernity, state jurisdiction extended to matters long left to religious authorities.

Napoleon brought the issue of defining church-state relationships to a head. In the modern era, “the law of the kingdom is the law” was variously invoked, as Jews charted divergent paths. Echoes of nineteenth and twentieth century debates reverberate today.

The next four essays cover distinctive developments from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries in Europe and the United States. Motti Zalkin, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, explores “‘The Terrible Animal Known as the Masses’: The Status and Authority of the Community Rabbi in Nineteenth Century Eastern Europe.” The status of the community rabbi and his relations, both tension and cooperation, with local elites in his community has been discussed extensively in historical research. This situation changed dramatically with the rise of “the politics of the masses” in the second half of nineteenth century Europe. Traditional elites rapidly lost their exclusive status; the voice of the middle and sometimes lower classes was heard. In his essay Zalkin focuses attention on the impact of this process on the public status of the community rabbi.

Theodore Albrecht, Kent State University, follows with a musically themed study titled “Thumbing Mendelssohn’s Nose at the Nazis: Hans Pfitzner’s Symphony in C, Op. 46 (1940).” Paul Cossmann (1869–1942) and Hans Pfitzner (1869–1949) grew up as friends in Frankfurt, Germany. When the Nazis came to power in 1933, they arrested Cossmann, who was Jewish, for his writings. Pfitzner interceded on Cossmann’s behalf. When the Nazis asked Pfitzner for new music to Shakespeare’s popular “*Midsummer Night’s Dream*,” he replied that he could never improve upon that written by the Jewish Mendelssohn. In 1940, Pfitzner wrote a Symphony in C, using a disguised theme from Mendelssohn’s beloved Italian Symphony as a defiant gesture against the Nazi regime.

Victoria Khiterer, Millersville University, takes a close look at “Not So Silent: Jewish Religious and Cultural Life in Kiev, 1945–1970s.” In the second half of the 1930s–1940s, Soviet authorities sought to close Jewish scholarly, educational, and cultural organizations. In this essay, Khiterer examines official Soviet reports showing that, in spite of these efforts, a significant percentage of Kievan Jews continued to attend synagogue or clandestine minyanim after the Second World War and celebrated Jewish religious holidays. The authorities deprived accreditations of several Kiev rabbis, but religious life continued even without a rabbi in Kiev. The Kiev synagogue became the place of dissent and spiritual resistance against Soviet state antisemitism and assimilation policy.

In “When Authority Was a Form of Dissent: Postwar Guides to Reform Practice,” Joan S. Friedman, College of Wooster, looks at a phenomenon of post–World War II America. In Friedman’s analysis, Reform Judaism’s perpetual paradox is that a Jewish movement rooted in rejection of halachic authority nevertheless requires modes of communal religious behavior and agreed-upon methods of determining what those behaviors should be. The quarter century after World War II brought the publication of

the first books on Reform practice. Each of their rabbinic authors sought to offer ritual guidance to Reform Jews as well as to establish the theoretical basis for offering such guidance and the extent to which it could be “authoritative” within the Reform context.

The final four essays of this collection bring us up to the first decades of the twenty-first century. Eitan Abramovitch, *The Institution for the Advancement of Rav Shagar's Writings*, provides a close reading of a key element in the writing of Rav Shagar in “Dispute for the Sake of Heaven’: Dissent and Multiplicity in Rav Shagar’s Thought.” Rav Shagar (Shimon Gershon Rosenberg, 1949–2007) was one of the most original thinkers in Modern Orthodoxy. The central place that he gives to concepts like dissent, dispute, and multiplicity is one of the innovative elements of his thought. Instead of striving for harmony, he prefers multiplicity and even dissent. He connects this attitude to the central place of multiplicity in postmodern philosophy. His influence can be demonstrated, for example, in the claim that the ability to live with multiplicity can open new ways for the coexistence of Jews and Palestinians.

Shlomo Abramovich, Ariel University, introduces another Israeli development in “Limiting the Authority of the Country: Disobedience in the IDF.” The history of Israel is full of examples of disobedience and refusal of soldiers motivated morally and ideologically. On the right, it is most often refusal to participate in the evacuation of Jewish settlements. Abramovich’s essay focuses on the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, when discussions about refusal, especially among Religious Zionists, raised fundamental questions like these: What is the importance of the State of Israel and what are the limitations of its authority? What happens when there is a contradiction between the country and its institutions (like the army) and Jewish values?

Mark Trencher, Nishma Research, provides the results of quantitative research in his essay, “Leaving the Fold: Dissent from Communal Authority in the Orthodox World?” The objective of the quantitative research Trencher conducted was to understand why people are leaving Orthodoxy and to explore the extent to which such leaving represents dissent from community authority figures and/or normative behaviors versus their being lured out by the external world. Trencher’s research showed that for every ten responses citing outside societal attractions as a “luring factor,” there were seventeen citing a communal element from which the departed were dissenting as a “repelling factor.” For the American Orthodox population, departure is ultimately how they often manifest dissent.

In the volume’s last essay, Lindsey Jackson, Concordia University, introduces readers to “Brit without Milah: Adapting and Remixing the Dominant Ritual System.” The debate about male circumcision has garnered increased attention, permeating the Jewish community and propelling some Jews to action. Focusing on Jews in Canada and the United States, Jackson’s research consists of an ethnographic study of Jewish

parents and their engagement with, adaptation of, or rejection of brit milah. Using non-circumcision Jews as the focus of this analysis, she argues that they are challenging authority, reclaiming power, and demanding change by opting out of brit milah and creating alternative rituals that are better suited to their ethical concerns about circumcision and unique understandings of Judaism.

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