

Australian Journal of Jewish Studies

ISSN: 1037-0838

The *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* is devoted to the study of Jewish culture in all aspects and all periods. One volume is published annually by the **Australian Association for Jewish Studies**, established in 1986 as the only academic association for Jewish Studies in Australia. The views expressed in the articles are those of the authors, and do not necessarily express those of the Editors. A newsletter is also published by the Association.

The *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* is an international peer reviewed journal. All research articles and book reviews in this journal have undergone rigorous peer review.

Manuscripts and books for review should be sent to Dr Myer Samra (samra01@tpg.com.au) as an e-mail attachment. **See style sheet on the back inside cover.**

The *Australian Journal of Jewish Studies* is available by membership in the Australian Association for Jewish Studies or by subscription.

Membership in the **AAJS** is \$50 (full-time Students and Pensioners \$15). Subscription is \$60 for institutions (Overseas \$60 Australian funds).

Send payment to: Dr Marianne Dacy (NDS), Archive of Australian Judaica, c/- Rare Books, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, NSW 2006 Australia.

Back Copies of Journal: \$12 (including postage and handling). Please refer to the website <http://www.aajs.org.au/> for details of contents.

Officers of the Australian Association for Jewish Studies are:

President: Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies, School of Languages and Cultures, A18, The University of Sydney NSW 2006

Vice-Presidents: NSW & ACT: Dr Anna Huenke, email: anna.hueneke@bigpond.com

Victoria: Dr Miriam Munz Victoria, Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation Caulfield, Building H, Level 8 Faculty of Arts, Monash University, PO Box 197, Caulfield East VIC 3145

Secretary/Treasurer: Dr Marianne Dacy (NDS), Archive of Australian Judaica, c/- Rare Books, Fisher Library, University of Sydney, NSW 2006 email: mdacy@library.usyd.edu.au

Editor Dr Myer Samra

Editorial Assistants: Dr Jennifer Dowling, Neta Steingrad, Lyvia Steingrad

**THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL
OF
JEWISH STUDIES**

Volume XXV: 2011

Editor Dr Myer Samra

Editorial Assistants

Dr Jennifer Dowling
Neta Steigrad
Livya Steigrad

Editorial Board

Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod
University of Sydney

Dr Judy Berman
University of Western Australia

Professor Carole Fink
Ohio State University

Professor Sara Japhet
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Dr Rachael Kohn
Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Assistant Professor Mark A. Leuchter
Temple University

Associate Professor Philip Mendes
Monash University

Professor Bill Rubinstein
Aberystwyth University, Wales

Dr Hilary Rubinstein
Australian Jewish Historical Society Journal, Victoria

Professor Suzanne Rutland
University of Sydney

Professor Christian Wiese
University of Frankfurt and the University of Sussex

Associate Professor Ian Young
University of Sydney

THE AUSTRALIAN JOURNAL OF JEWISH STUDIES

Vol XXV: 2011

Table of Contents

Editorial Introduction MYER SAMRA	3
Political Uses of the Hebrew Bible in Current Israeli Discourse: Transcending Right and Left FANIA OZ-SALZBERGER	11
The Curious Case of Kafka, His Papers, the Library and the Archive HEATHER MERLE BENBOW	36
Beauty in the Eye of the Matchmaker: How Religious Zionist Matchmakers in Israel Deal with Their Clients' Desire to Find Beautiful Partners YA'ARIT BOKEK-COHEN AND NITZA DAVIDOVICH	56
"The New Jew" in the Zionist Movement: Ideology and Historiography YITZHAK CONFORTI	87
Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence ISAIAH GRUBER	119
"All a Myth? Come and See for Yourself": Place as Holocaust Witness in Survivor and Second Generation Memoirs of Return ESTHER JILOVSKY	153
Louis Miller, the <i>Warheit</i> , and the <i>Kehillah</i> of New York, 1908–1909 EHUD MANOR	175



Israel Connectedness: Australian, United States and English Survey Findings Compared ANDREW MARKUS	201
In the Desert of the Other: Identity and Lucrimax in Modern Hebrew Fiction HELENA RIMON	222
Reviews	246
Contributors	281





Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

Isaiah Gruber

Zvi Gitelman entitled his popular and highly regarded text on Russian Jewish history from 1881 to post-Soviet times, *A Century of Ambivalence*. Why “ambivalence,” which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as, “The coexistence in one person of contradictory emotions or attitudes (as love and hatred) towards a person or thing”? Gitelman (2001:xi, xiii) explained that Russians and Jews have been “locked into a tempestuous, intense relationship” producing “great enthusiasms and profound disappointments” as well as “enormous Jewish ambivalence toward their [Russian Empire] homeland.” According to this perspective, even the excruciating suffering caused by virulent antisemitism could not eliminate the natural affection simultaneously felt by East European Jews for their Diaspora *rodina* (the land of one’s birth) and for Russian high culture, in which they participated extensively. To this day the descendants of Russian Jewish émigrés around the world continue to cultivate a strong nostalgia for the “world of the shtetl” and the “unique Russian-Jewish atmosphere” of the past—despite the overwhelming pain and deep loss that inevitably accompanied *Yiddishkeit* (Jewishness) during its “Russian” and Soviet phases.

The other side of the extraordinary, uncomfortable, and inextricable association between Russians and Jews was no less complex. Ambivalent Jewish sentiment about Russia in certain respects mirrored pre-existing ambivalent Russian sentiment about Jews. Long before significant numbers of Jews lived in Russia, the Russian state and church cultivated a deep-seated “love-hate” attitude toward the Jewish people. This article will be concerned specifically with one of the neglected aspects of that history: a form of Hebrew study by mediaeval and early modern Russian Orthodox Christian monks. The often strange ways in which these scribes dealt with the

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

language of the Jews manifested traditional Christian ambivalence toward the “people of the book”: outright hostility and rejection on the one hand, mixed with imitation and even occasional veneration on the other. At the same time, as with every facet of Christianity that reached their lands, the Russian literati introduced many unique twists and nuances into the tradition. Their treatment of Hebrew adds a further dimension to our understanding of the formation of Russian attitudes toward Jews in the era before the Partitions of Poland (1772–1795), and may shed some light on outstanding questions and controversies regarding Russian Jewry in the modern period.

Early Russian Attitudes toward Israel and the Jewish People

The word “Russia” (Rossiia) derives from the earlier form Rus’, the mediaeval name (of debated origin) for the lands and peoples of East Slavdom (Ukraine, Belorussia, and Russia). Jews had settled along the southern fringes of these territories in ancient times; for example, in the Crimea. Jewish presence is also attested in the mediaeval states of Khazaria (sixth to tenth century) and Kyivan Rus’ (ninth to thirteenth century). Due partly to the fragmentary nature of extant documentation, virtually nothing can be asserted about Khazaria without provoking immediate and vigorous contention. However, it seems likely that this khaganate or steppe empire adopted Judaism as its official religion at some point in history, while still encompassing a multi-ethnic and multi-religious population. Subsequently, the East Slavic polity with its capital at Kyiv (Kiev) chose Eastern Orthodox Christianity over Khazarian Judaism and other religious options available at the time. Yet its “grand prince” similarly employed the title khagan or kagan, presided over a diverse citizenry, and may have seen himself as the successor to the Khazar rulers. Some researchers even propose that Kyiv had originally been founded by the Khazars.¹

Real-life attitudes toward Jews in Kyivan Rus’ must have derived from multiple sources, including interaction with Khazaria and with domestic Jewish communities in the capital and other towns. Nonetheless, the great majority of extant Kyivan sources concerning Jews do not describe such contemporary realities but rather belong to the general anti-Judaic (kata loudaiōn or adversus Judaeos) tradition

Isaiah Gruber

of Christianity. Scholars disagree on whether such typical anti-Jewish polemics can be linked to actual interaction with living Jews. For example, the “Sermon on Law and Grace” attributed to Orthodox Metropolitan Ilarion of Kyiv includes numerous anti-Judaic tropes; but did these concern real, local Jews of his own day, or only a theological abstraction also called “Jews”? A number of scholars contend that the obvious presence and predominance of religious anti-Judaism in fact tells us nothing at all about actual attitudes toward contemporary Jews. But did East Slavs (or other peoples) really make such a sharp distinction in their minds between the supposedly “theoretical” Jews of theology and their real-life Jewish neighbours? Or were not all Jews seen as part of a single nation extending from biblical times to the present? (Klier 1986:21–32; Franklin 1991:3–29; Pereswetoff-Morath 2002: vol. 1, particularly pages 3–8) These are critical questions, encountered when dealing with later periods as well.

Mongol invasions swept away the Kyivan Rus’ state in the mid-thirteenth century, and a large portion of the East Slavic population thereby fell under the suzerainty of the Qipchaq khanate or “Golden Horde.” By the fourteenth century, Moscow had emerged as a new power centre. Located to the northeast of Kyiv and to the northwest of the Mongol-Tatar and earlier Khazar capitals, this Muscovite principality would grow over the course of subsequent centuries into modern Russia, the largest country in the world.

Muscovite ideas and practices turned out to be eclectic, drawing from the earlier traditions of Rus’, the influence of Qipchaq overlords, and eventually an intensive but selective adaptation and reinterpretation of Byzantine models (see for example Ostrowski 1998; Uspenskiĭ 1998). The seat of the Orthodox Christian metropolitanate of Rus’, still formally subservient to Constantinople, moved to Moscow; it unilaterally became autocephalous (self-ruling) in 1448 and a fully independent patriarchate in 1589. Anti-Judaic themes continued to form a major component of Russian Orthodox literature during this period. In his classic study, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, Simon Dubnow (1916:vol. 1,13–38) therefore regarded the Muscovite state as intractably hostile to Jews virtually from its inception. By contrast, Alexander Pereswetoff-Morath (2002:vol. 2, and in particular pages 24–29) contended that

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

the Muscovite elite had little problem interacting with Jews until well into the sixteenth century.

In the late fifteenth century, a group appeared in Novgorod and Moscow whom opponents described as *židovstvuīuščie*, “Judaizers.” Their existence caused a great deal of consternation at the time—and continues to produce no end of controversy in historiography to this very day. The contemporary monastic leader Iōsif Volotskiī (Ivan Sanin) penned a scathing book, now known as *The Enlightener, or Exposure of the Heresy of the Judaizers*, in which he called (successfully) for their annihilation. Volotskiī’s text came to be regarded as one of the most significant compositions of the Muscovite period. This *defensor fidei* accused the so-called Judaizers of denying a whole range of Orthodox Christian teachings, including the Trinity, the divinity of Christ, the physical coming of Jesus, abrogation of the Mosaic Law, the propriety of icons and other physical objects in worship, the permissibility and desirability of monastic life, the authenticity of the New Testament and Church fathers, and the proper manner of dealing with heresy and heretics (see: Volotskiī 1896; Kazakova and Lur’e 1955; Luria 1960; Goldfrank 1988; Goldfrank 1992; Raba 2001).

It may be impossible now to determine how accurate these allegations were; but they were not implausible. Throughout history, Christian theologians manifested a deep opposition to and concern about “Judaizers.” Church hierarchs, conscious of Christianity’s reliance on a fundamental reinterpretation and allegorization of Hebrew Scripture, generally sought to prevent a “return” to earlier “Jewish” ways of understanding the text. Traditionally such passages as Acts 15—which stated that Gentiles did not have to become Jewish proselytes in order to join the community of faith—were interpreted to mean that all Jewish practices should be forbidden. During the first several centuries C.E., as Gentile Christianity gradually separated from Judaism, the early Church fathers had encountered and condemned various groups of Jewish *talmidey Yeshu’a* (disciples of Jesus such as Ebionites and Nazarenes) and of alleged Gentile Judaizers. Several of their charges against these non-conformists were identical to those leveled by Volotskiī over a millennium later (Daniélou 1958; Murray 2004; Boyarin 2006; Skarsaune and Hvalvik 2007; Dacy 2010; compare Parfitt and Semi 2002).

Isaiah Gruber

One school of thought concerning the Russian “Judaizers” insists that they were probably not Judaizers at all, that is they had no connections whatsoever to Jews or Judaism. According to this view, the term “Judaizer” was merely employed as a traditional, delegitimizing slur (Luria 1960; Goldfrank 1988:22; Luria 1995; Ostrowski 1998:6–7). Yet other scholars have argued for the opposite possibility. Henrik Birnbaum (1973:246, n. 71) characterized the alleged heretics as “undoubtedly profoundly influenced by genuine Judaism but remaining, in part at least, within the confines of non-Orthodox Christianity.” Following Moshe Altbauer (1992), Moshe Taube (1995, 2005, 2010a, 2010b) has repeatedly argued that the Judaizers were strongly influenced by fifteenth-century Jewish translations (from Hebrew to Slavonic) of such authors as Josippon, al-Ghazālī, Maimonides, de Sacrobosco, and pseudo-Aristotle. Taube (2005:187; compare Vernadsky 1933:443) even goes considerably further, adding:

I also believe that the Muscovite Principality in the second half of the fifteenth century may well have been on the brink of succumbing to a Jewish conspiracy to proselytize Muscovy from the top, a plan orchestrated by learned Jews from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with mystic inclinations, with the perhaps unsuspecting collaboration of highly placed officials in the court of Ivan III, and with the sovereign himself hesitant for a while and playing his cards both ways.

Though many would reject this notion out of hand, it cannot be immediately discounted as just another anti-Semitic myth (Taube is a respected senior professor at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem) or as an entirely impossible fantasy. In mediaeval times, Judaism did compete with a multiplicity of other religions for official status throughout the Eurasian steppe-lands. Documents from multiple civilizations tell us that the Khazars, as noted above, chose Judaism rather than Islam or Christianity. The story of the *vybor very* or “faith choice” of the Kyivan prince Volodimer in the late tenth century specifically included Judaism as one of four considered options, along with Eastern Christianity, Western Christianity, and Islam. Further east, other steppe peoples adopted Nestorian Christianity, Manichaeism, or Buddhism; Jewish communities could also be found in Central Asia along the Silk Road (Arkhipov 1995:17–54; Shapira 2005:504–505;

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

Shapira 2010:83–85). By the fifteenth century, Muscovite Russia had hundreds of monasteries and a well-established Orthodox Christian tradition, so any attempt to convert its prince and elite to a different faith would have been quite complicated. Yet if Taube's speculative theory does contain a grain of truth, it may be that some Jews, Jewish-Christians, and/or Jewish-leaning Gentile Christians hoped to draw Russian Orthodox Christianity closer to Jewish ways of thought. However, even this more restricted hypothesis remains unproven and highly controversial at the present time.

The Russian regime may have been especially sensitive to any perceived threat from "Judaism" due to its own self-identification as "Israel." In the sixteenth century, Muscovite literati developed an extensive paradigm of *translatio imperii* whereby their state and church laid exclusive claim to the sacred inheritances of biblical Israel, ancient Rome, mediaeval Byzantium, and Kyivan Rus'. Occasionally the corresponding notion of Russia as the "Third Rome" appeared in ecclesiastic sources; this prompted some modern historians and commentators to latch on to it as a key to the Muscovite (as well as later Russian and Soviet) mindset. However, more recently a number of scholars have noticed that the widespread "Third Rome" interpretation had actually distorted the primary source base as a whole. Muscovite society much more commonly depicted itself as God's chosen "New Israel." Muscovite political and religious literature continually imitated biblical forms, drawing innumerable comparisons to Israel's heroes of old and constantly incorporating other biblical quotations and allusions (Rowland 1976:116–17; Vinogradov 1980:13, 18; Bushkovitch 1986; Rowland 1996; Ostrowski 1998:219–243; Raba 2003:92–104; Levin 2010; Miller 1979:270, 364–365).

Russian identification with Israel went even further than this. Muscovite political figures regularly spoke of "Israel" (without even the "New") and clearly meant "Russia." Muscovite authors considered aspects of Torah—including not only promised blessings, but also the dire curses for disobedience—to be directly applicable to their own society. Jewish historiography provided some of the models for Muscovite chronicles and narratives; such events as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans had great resonance during periods of calamity. The Muscovite elite obviously regarded itself as God's new "chosen people," and they apparently saw no fundamental distinction

Isaiah Gruber

between their status and that of the ancient Israelites (*AJ* 1841:1.291–292; Riha 1969:vol. 1, 87; Raba 1992; Rowland 1996; Ostrowski 1998:164–165, 204; Raba 2003; Gruber 2012:23–50).

Muscovite Russia, in other words, cultivated an unusually strong ideological connection to biblical Israel. Of course, the “New Israel” idea was not unique to the Russians, nor had they invented it. Roman Christianity had already posited a “replacement” of Israel by the Church. Subsequently, virtually all Christian branches built on this understanding. Yet the peculiarities of history led Russia down a path of comparatively even greater reliance on and affiliation with the “New Israel” concept. In Western Europe, the Church became distinct from a plurality of states, thus altering the original imperial notion of a unitary politico-religious entity. In the east, Byzantium fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1453, completing the Muslim conquest of Orthodox Christendom with the exception of Russia. Regarding all other Christians as heretics, schismatics, or subjugated to “infidel” powers, Orthodox Russia came to view itself as the single remaining holy *tsarstvo* (empire or khanate) on earth. Put differently, Muscovite Russia was God’s only “Israel” (Crummey 1987:116, 137; Halperin 1985:175; Dagron 1996; Majeska 2004; Flusin 2004).

Jews and Judaism posed a “threat” to this Muscovite ideology by their very existence. Common Christian theology, including within Russian Orthodoxy, posited that the Jews had been rejected by God and scattered from their homeland for the crime of “killing Christ.” According to this conception, the original Israel had lost its special status as the people of God and been reduced to a position of perpetual inferiority to true Christians, the “New Israel.” Now Russia, as the only Orthodox state, claimed to be “Israel.” Yet the argument was at least mildly abstruse and it is highly doubtful whether ordinary, illiterate Muscovites understood the reasoning at all (Fletcher 1964:260; Massa 1982:70–71; Margeret 1983:21–22, 29; Crummey 1987:138). Meanwhile, “real” Jews could advance a much simpler claim to the succession of biblical Israel, one more easily graspable (because essentially tautological). Muscovite emphasis on a posited “New Israel” status thus competed with contemporary Jewish claims to continuity as the chosen people.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

This perspective helps to explain Muscovy's decision to exclude Jews from living within its borders whenever possible—a ban that would persist into the eighteenth century. Dubnow (1916:242–261) actually believed that the experience of the Judaisers had “struck terror to the hearts of the pious Muscovites,” traumatising them to the extent that they could not tolerate the presence of actual Jews. Most scholars today would consider that an exaggeration. Yet the evidence Dubnow compiled from Russian sources, while it may not prove his conclusion, is quite telling in other respects: “The Muscovite people dread no one more than the Jews” (by an ambassador of Vasili III); “Jews... lead astray the Russians from Christianity” (from the diplomatic correspondence of Ivan IV); “Jews shall not be allowed to enter the Muscovite Empire” (a clause from a 1610 proposed treaty with Poland-Lithuania); “the time has not yet come to unite the two nationalities [Russians and Jews]” (attributed to Peter I the Great). Even in the second half of the eighteenth century, Russian governments continued to express their anxiety that Jews, if allowed to dwell in the empire, would “seduce” Russians away from Orthodox Christianity. Although these statements may not tell us anything about the actual activity of Jews or Judaisers, they do reveal Russian *perceptions* of a threat from the Jewish direction.

Thus, even as the Muscovite politico-religious regime identified itself as the “New Israel,” it appears to have been quite conscious of a need to defend this claim against the “Old” Israel. Since the mere existence of actual Jews was sufficient to call into question the entire scheme, Jews (with rare exceptions) had to be kept out of the state altogether. Strikingly, the issue was often phrased as a question of Russian national identity²: the presence of Jews was said to be dangerous for the Russian Orthodox essence of the state, the church, the people, and the land. Russia had inherited Christianity's generic love-hate perspective on Jews and Judaism (see Raba 2003:13–19); but it added an extra twist. Both an integral identification with Israel and a deep repugnance of things Jewish had already been built into *Russian* national identity, long before the Partitions of Poland transferred about one million Jews into the Russian Empire.

Isaiah Gruber

The Curious Case of the Hebrew-Russian Glossaries

Muscovy was notoriously bad at learning foreign languages (see Ryan 1999:10; Pereswetoff-Morath 2002:vol. 2, 66). One of its words for “foreigner” or “European” (later restricted to “German”) was *něm'ts'*, literally meaning “mute” or “one who speaks indistinctly”—similar to the Greek word *barbaros* (Sreznevskii 1893:vol. 2, 486; Fasmer 1986: vol. 3, 62). A sense of religious superiority seems to have bred relative, although perhaps not absolute, insularity and xenophobia. Yet all throughout the Muscovite period from the fourteenth to the seventeenth century, the Russians developed and promoted a kind of Hebrew study. One might even argue that Hebrew was the first foreign language to be taken semi-seriously in Muscovy, although Greek would soon eclipse it.

Numerous copies of Hebrew-Russian glossaries circulated in Muscovy, bearing titles such as *Rěč' židov'skago ĭazyka preložena na ruskuĭu* (“Speech of the Jewish language translated into Russian”) or *A se imena židov'skaĭa rus'sky t'lkovana* (“And these are Jewish names in Russian interpretation”). The earliest extant versions date from the late thirteenth century. In contrast to the Hebrew interest of the Judaisers, condemned as heretical, these glossaries represented the work of scribes in Russia's most prestigious Orthodox monasteries. Moreover, such Hebrew study clearly predated the Judaisers and continued long after their demise. After incorporating word entries (lemmata) in Greek, Arabic, Tatar, and several other languages, the glossaries came to form the foundation for more developed, modern Russian dictionaries (Tseĭtlin 1958; Kovtun 1963; Alekseev 1968; Kovtun 1975; Kovtun 1977; Kovtun 1989, Pereswetoff-Morath 2002:vol. 2, 66–67; Raba 2003:173).

The roots of these Hebrew-Russian glossaries lie in the corpus of early Slavonic translations of biblical and related texts. Most translations prior to the fifteenth century had been made from copies of Jewish-Greek texts, including the Septuagint (LXX) version of Scripture. However, several scholars have suggested that certain books were translated directly from Hebrew by Jews living in Slavic areas. Spirited debate over that hypothesis continues to this day

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

(Meščerskiĭ 1964; Alekseev 1987; Lunt and Taube 1998; Alekseev 1999:180–181; Lysén 2001; Pereswetoff-Morath 2002: vol. 2, 70–82; Kulik 2008). Regardless of their true *Vorlage* (antecedents), East Slavonic biblical translations clearly featured some unusual and markedly “Jewish” characteristics. The first books of the Bible appeared in the form of an Octateuch (Torah plus Joshua, Judges, and Ruth); most manuscripts included glosses on Hebrew words and corrections in accordance with the Hebrew Masoretic text (MT). The texts designated reading divisions according to synagogal *parashiyot*. Such features strongly suggest that these translations were made by Jews and for Jews. Subsequently they passed into the libraries of Orthodox Christian communities (Pičkhadze 1996; Alekseev 1999:182–184; Kulik 2008:58, 61–64; Alekseev 2010:353–355).

Other biblical books were rendered into Slavonic accompanied by Christian explanatory glosses and commentary. The fourth-century notes of Athanasius of Alexandria on the ever-popular Psalms furnished a direct source for many entries in the Hebrew-Russian glossaries. Athanasius had interpreted biblical Hebrew words in a metaphorical sense and with a strongly anti-Jewish slant. The compilers of the Russian glossaries drew also from mediaeval Greek onomastica, which were themselves based on classical Jewish and Christian word studies by Philo, Josephus, Origen, Jerome and others (Hieronymus 1845; Lagarde 1870; Gottheil and Ginzberg 1901:281–282; Kovtun 1963; Grabbe 1988). Thus, like the society they serviced, the Hebrew-Russian glossaries were highly eclectic and paradoxical. Most notably for our purposes, they built on both Jewish and anti-Jewish traditions of interpretation—a good recipe for ambivalence.

One result of utilizing such disparate sources was unpredictability and inconsistency in the glossary translations, most of which were to some degree linguistically incorrect. Consider the example of אדם *'adam*. Classical and mediaeval sources interpreted this word literally as “human, person, man.” They also recorded the connection to אדמה *'adamah* (“earth”) implied by Genesis 2:7:

וייצר [ה' אלוקים] את האדם עפר מן האדמה³

And YHWH God formed the human, dust from the earth

Isaiah Gruber

Philo of Alexandria actually translated *'adam* directly as γῆ *gē*, “earth.” Other sources based their interpretations on another related Hebrew word, אָדָם *'adom* (“red”).

However, the Russian glossaries ignored all of these and opted instead for two more unusual renditions, both translated from mediaeval Greek sources: *zeml'ia voploščenna*, “incarnated earth,” and *roditel'*, “begetter” (*Skazanie* 149; Hieronymus 1845:773, 775, 798, 801, 843, 851–852, 855, 858; Kovtun 1963:401, 409; Kovtun 1975:273; Grabbe 1988:129). The second of these glossary definitions represented an extrapolation from the role of Adam, the first man, in the Genesis narrative. The first definition obviously drew on the *'adam*-*'adamah* parallel, but with the additional infusion of a theological principle. 1 Corinthians 15:47 had stated:

ο πρωτος ανθρωπος εκ γης χοικος ο δευτερος ανθρωπος
εξ ουρανου

*The first human [was] of clay from earth; the second human
[was] from heaven.*

In the context of this passage, “second human” (or “second Adam”) referred to the messiah (χριστος *christos*). The specific theological notion of “incarnation” was then projected back onto the “first human,” enhancing the didactic comparison and contrast. Such strategies often produced interpretations of words that strayed rather far from their literal meanings.

Many definitions in the Hebrew-Russian glossaries cannot legitimately be termed “translations” at all. Rather, the scribes creatively listed meanings that fulfilled a variety of desired functions in their worldview. Some entries did give literal renditions of the Hebrew. Others manifested extrapolation from biblical narratives. A third category consisted of theological inferences. A fourth had no readily apparent connection to the words in question. It may be useful to look at these four categories of meaning as a kind of Russian Christian variation on the rabbinic and kabbalistic *PaRDeS* model of exegesis: *peshat*, *remez*, *derush*, *sod*. In both systems, the intended purpose was not always to disclose actual linguistic meaning, but to convey a

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

range of religious doctrines. A few examples of each type of glossary entry follow below.

Literal or near-literal entries (compare *peshat*, “simplicity”) included אבא *'abba* and אמה *'imma*, translated as “father” and “mother,” as well as several Hebrew names. אבשלום *'Avshalom* was rendered as “father of peace,” and אלעזר *'El'azar* as “God’s help.” אדוני *'Adonay* was given as “Lord,” while אמן *'amen* had two correct definitions: “truly” and “so be it.” הר-אל *Har-El* and בית לחם *Beyt-lehem* received direct translation as “God’s mountain” and “House of bread.” The Hebrew word צבאות *tseba'ot*, used in the divine title “Lord of hosts,” was given realistically as “force(s).” Yet despite a number of accurate translations, it seems clear that the compilers of the glossaries did not know Hebrew and did not usually consult with Jews. They frequently failed to recognise theophoric morphemes such as יהו *yahu* and אל *'el*. Their transliterations, having arrived via Greek into Slavonic, were not always very accurate (much like Anglicized versions of biblical names). Thus it would appear that the Russian scribes were mostly restricted to copying the transmissions of earlier authors about Hebrew—notes which they sometimes misunderstood (*Skazanie* 148–148v., 149v., 152v.–153; Kovtun 1963:398, 406–407, 409, 411–412, 419–420, 433; Kovtun 1975:264, 266, 269–270, 273, 275–276).⁴

A large number of entries in the glossaries shied away from linguistic exactness but had been extrapolated out of biblical narratives (compare *remez*, “hint”). An alternative meaning ascribed to *Beyt-lehem* was “woodland meadows,” a type of natural environment believed by some commentators to characterize that geographical area. In addition to the literal “beloved,” the name דוד *David* gained further definitions on the basis of stories about the famous king of Israel: “meekness” and “valiant of hand.” Similarly, יעקב *Ya'aqob* became “God’s lad,” rather than “heel-grabber” as in Genesis 25:26. Sometimes this name was rendered instead as “last” or “latter,” a reference to Jacob’s birth as the second twin and related to the root עקב *'qb* through the meaning of “following.” Rather than “God heard” or “asked of God” (1 Samuel 1:20), שמואל *Shemu'el* was characterised as “God’s servant.” ירושלים *Yerushalayim* came to mean “promised land.” Following a tradition traceable to Philo, ישראל *Yisra'el* was rendered as “seeing God”—in apparent contradiction of Genesis 32:28/29.

Isaiah Gruber

Perhaps the prototypical example of this type of exegetical definition was the equating of פסח *Pesah* with not only “passing over” but also “freedom” (*Skazanie* 148v.–149v., 152v., 153v.; Kovtun 1963:20, 401–404, 406, 408–410, 414, 416, 418–420, 434; Kovtun 1975:266, 275; Grabbe 1988:172–173).

Other definitions could have been reached only by means of theological reasoning (compare *derush*, “exposition”). Some texts rendered שאול *Sha'ul* as “turmoil”—juxtaposing it with Greek Παυλος *Paulos*, which was given as “calm.” This seems a clear reference to the common if anachronistic tradition that Saul, the Jew, had converted and changed his name to Paul, the Christian. Acts 13:9 would seem to imply instead that like many Jews of his day, this individual used both a Hebrew and a Greek name concurrently. *Samaritans*, perceived as antagonistic to God’s people, had their name rendered as “devils.” Yet this was a double-edged sword so far as the Jews were concerned: another enemy of Israel, *Gath*, was said to mean “the falling away of the Jews,” while the *sons of Qorah* received the long definition “Jews who were stripped of grace” (*Skazanie* 148; Kovtun 1963:27, 398, 400, 406–407, 414, 418–419).

A final category of glossary entries belonged to the realm of the mysterious (compare *sod*, “secret”). Sometime between the thirteenth and the sixteenth century, ירמיהו *Yirmeyahu* lost the plausible meaning of “exalted Lord” and became instead “disappearing.” This may have been the result of a new interpretation falling into the hands of a redactor. However, unclear renderings could also result from scribal errors. Sixteenth-century glossaries gave the Arabic word for God as *ama Ama*, obviously a copying mistake for the graphically similar *alla(h)* (*Skazanie* 148v., 150v.; Kovtun 1963:415; Kovtun 1975:265).

As seen from the selected entries presented above, a significant number of purported translations dealt explicitly with Israel and Jews. Many theological renderings expressed an anti-Judaic bias. At the same time, however, positive connotations also accrued to such words as *Jerusalem*, *Israel*, and *Zion*. The last of these intriguingly illustrated the ambivalence of Christianity in general, and Russian Orthodoxy in particular, toward the Jewish people. In antiquity Jerome had given the meaning of *Sion* as *specula*, “a look-out” (compare הר הצופים Mt.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

Scopus). This same interpretive slant apparently reached Slavdom as *pozračišče*, an uncommon word connected to the act of “looking down on,” in both the physical and the metaphorical senses. The glossaries updated this to *pozorišče*, meaning “spectacle”—once again a word that could convey either positive or very negative connotations. The meaning of “shame, dishonour” eventually displaced all others in modern Russian. Some bookmen may thus have understood the meaning of “Zion” to be “shame.” However, “Zion” was also regarded as a name for the Church, creating complications. Perhaps this is why one version of the *Rěč' židov'skago ĭazyka* has an altered entry reading Сидонъ *Sidon* instead of Сионъ *Sion* (*Skazanie* 154; Hieronymus 1845:819; Sreznevskii 1893:2.1090–1092; Kovtun 1963:18, 20, 69, 398, 403, 419, 432; AN 1975:vol. 16, 122–126; Ephrem 2011).

What better expression of the Russian mind's two opposing views of Israel? On the one hand, biblical Jews were the source of all that pious Orthodox Muscovites claimed to hold dear. On the other hand, contemporary Jews were seen as rejecting and endangering the “true faith,” and deserving of ignominy. In such a case, there could not but be an ambivalent view toward this unique nation. So how did Muscovy negotiate the tension inherent in its notion of “good” and “bad” Israels, when both went by identical names? How did this affect Russia's own self-identification as “Israel”? A further, debated question underlies these two: what did the Muscovite literati even mean when they said “Jewish”?

Did “Jewish” Really Mean “Jewish”?

The glossary authors termed their texts translations of *židov'skyĭ ĭazyk*, “the Jewish language.” Sometimes they also referred to words as coming from *evrějskyĭ ĭazyk*, another way of saying “Jewish language” or “Hebrew language.” But did this really mean “Hebrew”? Did the authors truly associate these words with the national language of the Jews? Some analysts think not. In his study of *Rěč' židov'skago ĭazyka*, Fiodor Buslaev (1850:28–31) noted that a smattering of Greek and South Slavic words accompanied Hebrew ones even in the oldest extant glossaries. He was intrigued by the fact that early Russians distinguished between their language and Church Slavonic, while his own contemporaries often argued against such a distinction

Isaiah Gruber

(compare Halperin 2007). Some later analysts understood Buslaev to be inferring that the word *židov'skyĭ* in the title could not have meant “Jewish” or “Hebrew,” but rather referred generally to all foreign and incomprehensible words—what Buslaev called “barbarisms” and “archaisms” (Kovtun 1963:13).

This perspective begged the question of why the glossaries had not then simply been termed “foreign”—or, for that matter, “Greek” or “Latin” or “German” or “Mongol.” Why ostensibly “Jewish”? Some later multilingual glossaries were in fact entitled “Interpretation of unfamiliar words”: so this was certainly an option. And why did these texts include mostly Hebrew words, if that was not the intended meaning? Ljudmila Kovtun, who studied the glossaries lexicographically more thoroughly than anyone else, raised another point. She felt that the included Slavic words would never have been mistaken for Hebrew; but neither would they (as against Buslaev) have seemed “incomprehensible” or “foreign” to Muscovites. Accordingly, she proposed that *židov'skyĭ ĭazyk* in this case actually meant “the language of Holy Scripture [or, Writings].” Kovtun stated that the glossary title *Rěč' židov'skago ĭazyka* should therefore be translated as “Words from the language of Holy Scripture,” rather than “Speech of the *Jewish* Language.” This revision could explain the presence of Greek and Slavonic terms as well as Hebrew (Kovtun 1963:13–14, 391–392).

Pereswetoff-Morath, the foremost specialist on anti-Judaic literature in mediaeval Russia, endorsed Kovtun's interpretation, remarking:

the 'dictionaries', which very probably have roots going back some way before the 13c, are in no way Hebrew lexica, but dictionaries of, or *onomastica* with, *biblical* words and names... Obviously, the attribute *židov'skyĭ* did not first and foremost evoke a picture of an original *versio hebraica*. Rather, it suggested the unintelligible 'terminology' of the Bible—the Old Testament in particular—relating *res iudaica*, the Jewish matter (2002:vol. 2, 66).

In a footnote on the same page, Pereswetoff-Morath added ambiguously: “It is uncertain if the Rus' bookman would have been able fully to appreciate a Hebrew origin for his Bible; even though

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

the *versio hebraica* was known, for example, from discussions in Theodoret's *Commentary on Psalms*."

Here we have a surprising conundrum. Certain experts insist that the Russian word meaning "Jewish" or "Hebrew" could not possibly have carried that meaning in this particular instance. Such a pronouncement is of major significance, for it might remove what at first glance seemed like an obvious potential connection between the Hebrew-Russian glossaries and Russian views of Jews and Hebrew. Yet the stated arguments also suffer from significant weaknesses, including the following:

1. Kovtun (1963) provided ample evidence, accepted by Pereswetoff-Morath, that the extant glossaries derived from earlier sources and quite possibly textual prototypes. It may well be that these earlier texts had included only Hebrew words, but maintained their original titles (referring to "Jewish" or "Hebrew") as they expanded to include other languages.
2. The notion of *židov'skyj jazyk* as a "technical term" for biblicisms (of all languages) seems to rely on the assumption that Russian scribes did not "fully appreciate" that Hebrew was the original biblical language. However, Pereswetoff-Morath himself admitted that at least some of them did know this. Moreover, just after advancing her thesis, Kovtun quoted extensively from a mediaeval Russian text explicitly explaining that Hebrew writing came first in the history of the Bible, then Greek, then the other languages. In fact, she even stressed that mediaeval bookmen viewed Hebrew as the "chosen" language. Moreover, the lexicon compiled by Maksim Grek in the first half of the sixteenth century clearly indicated certain words as originating in Hebrew and having been translated into Greek before reaching Slavonic and Russian (Kovtun 1963:13–14; Kovtun 1975:313–349).
3. It is therefore not "obvious" at all that Russian literati failed to associate their term "Jewish language" with the original Hebrew language of the Bible; one actually tends to think the opposite.

4. The title of a literary work, especially in pre-modern times but also today, cannot be taken as a comprehensive summation of its contents. The traditional Jewish name for the second book of Torah is שמות *Shemot*, “Names.” However, it would be a considerable error to claim that early Jews thought this book contained only names—or, alternatively, to redefine the word “names” to mean something else only in this specific instance.⁵ Similarly, “Speech of the Jewish language” may well have been a general characterisation of the bulk of the text, rather than an all-inclusive description of its contents. After all, most of the early glossary entries did in fact come from Hebrew—this is evident from extant texts, without even speculating about lost prototypes.

5. Muscovy, obsessed as it was with its claimed “New Israel” status, considered ancient Israel to have been God’s instrument for revealing the Tanakh or “Old Law,” “Old Covenant.” Muscovite literature referred to this specific biblical people hundreds of times as *židov’skyĭ*, “Jewish.” In fact, the accompanying noun *ĭazyk*” meant not only “tongue” and “language” but also “people” or “nation.” In biblical texts, it was regularly used to translate Greek εθνος *ethnos*. Thus it would have been odd for Russian scribes to conceive of *židov’skyĭ ĭazyk*”, the “Jewish language,” as unconnected to the language of *židov’skyĭ ĭazyk*”, the “Jewish nation.”

6. The very same term *židov’skyĭ* was used continuously in reference to contemporary, living Jews as well (*SGGD* 1813:vol. 1, 605; *AAE* 1836:vol. 2, 78–79; *Sreznevskii* 1893:vol. 1, 871–872; *Kovtun* 1963:37; *AN* 1975:vol. 5, 107–108; *Klier* 1986:27).

7. The further development of the glossaries made it clear that, whatever the meaning of the original title might have been, Muscovites understood *židov’skyĭ* to mean precisely “Jewish.” If a “technical meaning” had existed originally, they forgot it. As more languages were added, marginalia and headings frequently distinguished among them. The language called *židov’skyĭ* (or *evrěĭskyĭ*) became just one among many so delineated. The “Jewish language” appeared within lists of many languages from which source material had allegedly been drawn: Greek, Latin, Arabic, Permian, Tatar, Syrian,

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

Serbian, Egyptian, Persian, Canaanite, etc. At least in these instances, *židov'skyi ĭazyk* must have designated a specific language, and not “foreign words” or “biblical language” generally. “Jewish” was not even listed first among these different languages (*Skazanie* 147–147v.; Kovtun 1975:268–269). At least from the fourteenth century on, then, Hebrew must have been seen in Muscovy as a distinct, Jewish language.

8. The glossaries included not only biblicisms, but also extra-biblical ecclesiastic terminology. It would not make sense to consider these Church terms as associated with “the Jewish matter,” even vaguely, in the minds of Muscovite scholars. One would have to resort to Buslaev’s proposal, that is grouping any and all unknown words together under the category “Jewish”; but this has already been judged unsatisfactory by Kovtun and Pereswetoff-Morath.

The simplest solution therefore also seems the best for explaining the evidence: “Jewish” in the glossaries did in fact mean (primarily) “Jewish.” One possible objection might be raised to this conclusion: due to the influence of anti-Judaic theology, “Jew” was perceived as an insult that might sometimes be applied to non-Jews for effect (Sreznevskii 1893:vol.1, 871–872; Magnus 1921:40, 201, n.46; Pereswetoff-Morath 2002:vol. 1, 1ff.). Could not the adjective “Jewish” then also refer to non-Jewish languages in the glossaries? Yet in such cases of applying the label “Jew” to non-Jews (or to “obscene speech”; see Kulik 2012:11), the epithet clearly stood for “evildoer,” “pagan,” “enemy,” or some other suitably repulsive meaning. It would not make sense for Russian bookmen to use what they perceived as an insulting slur to describe what they revered as holy language (biblical names, ecclesiastic titles and the like).

Perhaps this seems a considerable effort expended in attempting to prove something quite simple; and yet it is not without purpose. Regarding *židov'skyi ĭazyk* as actually meaning “Jewish language” permits us to raise the question of the relation between the glossaries and Muscovite conceptions of real Jews, past and present. As we have seen, the glossaries largely reflected anti-Jewish sentiment that had been transmitted in Orthodox Christian tradition, and that was

Isaiah Gruber

also manifest in numerous other Russian texts of the period. Though religiously based, this sentiment cannot be disconnected from Russian attitudes toward contemporary Jews. In contrast to some analysts, the present author does not believe that literate or illiterate Russians distinguished clearly (or perhaps at all) between real-life Jews and the “Jews” of sermons, glossaries, and other religious writings. “Jewish” really did mean “Jewish” in the glossaries and in common parlance.

At the same time, the Muscovite presentation of Jews could not be entirely negative. Even as the Jewish nation as a whole was denigrated, individual biblical heroes such as Moses and David had to be held up as exalted examples. Moreover, the “Jewish tongue” (Hebrew) remained the original biblical language and thus contained keys to understanding the divine will and plan. Contrary to a common, perhaps even unconscious, assumption among scholars, Russian Orthodox believers of the late mediaeval and early modern period were not uninterested in Hebrew and Jewish matters—despite their strong anti-Jewish sentiments. At least according to one interpretation, the Novgorod and Moscow “heretics” had allegedly found Jewish texts or notions attractive; what is to say that in the absence of their suppression other Russians would not have responded similarly? Indeed, was that not the very point of mounting an inquisition? Volotskiĭ called for the annihilation of heretics because (*inter alia*) he believed they might “seduce” the Orthodox flock (Volotskiĭ 1896; compare Goldfrank 1992).

The unremitting Russian concern about a perceived Jewish ability to attract Christians to Jewish learning and thereby draw them away from the Greek Orthodox faith may reveal an important reality almost completely overlooked in historiography: that Muscovites secretly found Jews, Hebrew, and Judaism enticing in some respects. A significant portion of Russia’s own national-religious identity came from reinterpreting Jewish Hebrew writings. Russian sources demonstrate a near-obsession with Jews even when none or few were present. Furthermore, the abundant glossaries illustrate that an acceptably Orthodox (that is, non-heretical) form of interest in Hebrew matters appealed to the mainstream of Muscovite literate culture.

The Roots of Modern Ambivalence

The Partitions of Poland at the end of the eighteenth century dramatically altered the interrelationships of the Russian regime and the Jewish nation. Having attempted to exclude Jews from its borders for centuries, the Russian Empire now became home to the world's largest Jewish community. The Jews themselves had not moved—they continued to reside, together with local populations, in areas that are today primarily Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania. In fact, the tsarist government soon restricted Jews to this area, delineating a “Pale of Settlement” outside which Jews could live only illegally or under special circumstances.

The history of Russian and Soviet antisemitism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is well documented, and there is no need to reconsider that enormous subject here. In any case, it would not be feasible in this space. As attested by the (incomplete) Felix Posen Bibliographic Project on Antisemitism, hosted by the Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, thousands upon thousands of books and articles have already been written on antisemitism in Russia, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, and other territories subject to Russian and Soviet control (SICSA 2011). The modern Russian Jewish experience deservedly occupies a central place in the worldwide history of the Jewish people. Antisemitism in the Russian Empire—especially the pogroms of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—provided the main impetus for mass Jewish emigration to Israel, North America, Australia, and elsewhere. The interactions between Jews and the Russian Empire (including its many nationalities) thus helped to reconfigure not only East European and Jewish realities, but also American popular culture, the map of the Middle East, and many other central aspects of modern world history.

For our purposes, it is worth noting that most historians now focus on the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the period when modern Russian attitudes toward Jews coalesced. Older religious Judaeophobia is said to have morphed into supposedly “more sophisticated” antisemitism at about this time. John Doyle Klier additionally argued that religious prejudice “never served as either the starting point or the foundation of state policy” after the

Isaiah Gruber

Partitions (Klier 1986:xviii–xix, 53–115, 182–184; Aronson 1990:29–33; Klier 1992:13–18; Gitelman 2001:xiii). Scholars who come from this perspective usually do refer to the earlier history of Russian anti-Judaism, but they consider it of limited or negligible explanatory value when dealing with modern realities, which are often seen as more complex or “ambivalent”.

Yet is this the right approach? Russian national attitudes toward Jews and Israel had a long history prior to the Partitions of Poland. Over the course of centuries, they had arguably even crystallized into a key component of Russian national identity. The expansion of the empire into territories where Jews were present in great numbers unquestionably introduced some changes into the relationship. But did that automatically imply a radically different mindset in St. Petersburg? It stands to reason that the accumulated attitudes of centuries continued to exert a powerful effect. Moreover, as we have seen, pre-modern Russian attitudes toward Jews were no less ambivalent than modern ones. Neither the predominance of anti-Jewish sentiment nor the (sometimes secret or heretical) interest in Jewish matters should be discounted.

The underlying reasons for hesitancy about seeing the earlier period as prefiguring modern realities stem from shifts in both historiography and popular culture with regard to perceptions of Russian Jewish history. In the early twentieth century, when Dubnow wrote his *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland*, hatred of Jews was more than usually rampant, unconcealed, and violent. The English translator of his work, Rabbi Dr. Israel Friedlaender, was killed by bandits in Ukraine in 1920. Dubnow himself was murdered by the Nazis in 1941. Some later authors therefore believed Dubnow to have been overly if understandably influenced by his own context when he described the Russian state and elite as invariably hostile to Jews throughout history. Dubnow also considered modern antisemitism to be the natural and direct continuation of anti-Judaic *odium theologicum*. However, this view has now largely passed out of fashion, as academics generally prefer to differentiate between “anti-Judaism” and “antisemitism.”

Beginning in the late twentieth century, several historians explicitly moved away from Dubnow’s view of Jews as primarily the victims of a hostile state (see Aronson 1990:3–17; Orbach 1990:326;

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

Stanislawski 2010). In a landmark study, Klier (1986, particularly at 21–24, 183–184) emphasized socioeconomic tensions more than religious anti-Judaism as the main cause of anti-Jewish attitudes in the modern Russian Empire. He argued for a more nuanced view of relations between East Slavs and Jews, noting that “ambivalence” and “ambiguity” had characterized their interaction from early mediaeval times to the modern age. Rather than consistent and unmitigated hatred of Jews, Klier believed that Russians and Ukrainians “were not necessarily ill disposed to them,” or at least not always. In the modern age, he claimed controversially, religion did not govern attitudes toward Russian Jews.

In the twenty-first century, a great deal more passionate and contentious explication of Russian-Jewish history has already been produced. The famous dissident and Nobel laureate Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn (2001) rekindled sharp debate in the public sphere with the publication of his *Two Hundred Years Together*, which (somewhat disingenuously) purported to give “both sides” of the difficult relationship. The book immediately became a Russian bestseller and quite predictably attracted both glowing praise and outright condemnation. Meanwhile, other publications focused on unique achievements that emerged out of the tempestuous history, such as the “special Russian-Jewish literary atmosphere” (Khazan 2001). In 2006, Anna Shternshis published *Soviet and Kosher*, a work she described as departing from the once-standard “Oy, we suffered!” school of historiography to give a fuller picture of past reality (Shternshis 2006; Fishman 2006).

Given this “softened” view of the Russian Jewish experience—which does not deny past suffering but attempts to balance it with more positive or neutral phenomena—the earlier view epitomized by Dubnow appears to have lost all relevance. Moreover, the notion of continuity from mediaeval to modern times no longer sounds convincing. In the mediaeval period, the Muscovite state had a clear and consistent policy toward Jews: one of exclusion. Yet the modern Russian Empire, by contrast, never seemed to develop anything like a clear, identifiable “Jewish policy”. For over two centuries, its official approaches were haphazard, self-contradictory, and *ad hoc* (Löwe 1993; Klier 1986, particularly at 38, 53–60; Blank 1995; Stanislawski 2010).



Isaiah Gruber

Nonetheless, the earlier period does in fact shed light on modern times. Much current historiography and related portrayals represent a kind of “antithesis” to Dubnow’s classic “thesis.” Perhaps a “synthesis” is now necessary. Dubnow may have emphasized anti-Judaism and antisemitism at the expense of some other realities, but he was not wrong about their persistent presence, powerful influence, or mutual interconnectedness. The more recent contributions of Klier and others illuminate many other factors of modern Russian Jewish history but sometimes minimize the connections to earlier times and to religious anti-Judaism. A balance should be struck between these two viewpoints.

The complex nature of Muscovite sources on Jews and Judaism, including the Hebrew-Russian glossaries, suggests a strong connection to later attitudes in modern times. Neither the Muscovite nor the Russian imperial mindset were univocal or unambiguous. In each case, contradictions and paradoxes characterized prevailing attitudes toward Israel and the Jewish people. Rather than being forged afresh in the wake of the Partitions of Poland, modern Russian perspectives on Jews had deep roots in pre-modern history. Religiously induced Judaeophobia certainly predominated during the earlier period, yet at the same time, religion also provided the chief stimulus for Christian interest in Jewish and Hebrew matters. Furthermore, self-identification as “Israel” formed an essential part of Muscovy’s national identity and sense of historical importance.

The glossaries illustrate strikingly the difficulties of simultaneously directing adulation and contempt, admiration and loathing, at the same object. Muscovite literati were bombarded with both extremely positive and extremely negative depictions of *židove*, “Jews.” Moreover, neither aspect of the early modern “Jewish question” could be separated from how these bookmen had been taught to think of and portray their *own* society: as both heir to biblical Israel on the one hand, and defender of the “true faith” against Jews, Judaisers and other heretics and infidels on the other. That ambiguous legacy, I propose, continued to exert its influence when Russian governments explicitly considered the “Jewish question” in subsequent centuries.

Modern Russian antisemitism drew from a variety of sources. It may well be that ideas imported from Western Europe and new



Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

socioeconomic concerns changed the discourse to some extent (Klier 1986:182–184). Yet a careful examination across periods indicates more continuity than disruption in the *longue durée*. Gitelman's perspective additionally shows that the condition was one of mutual or dual ambivalence: Russian ambivalence toward Jews was matched by Jewish ambivalence toward Russia—arising out of causes that were sometimes similar and sometimes quite different. When Jews lived on “Russian” territory, they simultaneously experienced a great attraction to Russian culture and a deep wound born of rejection and persecution. When Russians explored Jewish “territory”—the Hebrew language and Bible—they simultaneously experienced a great attraction to Jewish matters and a loathing of God's “former people.” With regard to late mediaeval and early modern Western and Central Europe, Robert Bonfil (1994; also see Yuval 2006) has remarked that Jews and Christians tended to evince mirror images of each other. The situation in Russia, once Jews and Orthodox Christians became “locked together” there, too, was apparently no different. Truly, an uncomfortable embrace.

Acknowledgments

An earlier version of this paper was delivered at the 2011 Conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies in Canberra. The author would like to express his gratitude to the Departments of History and of Hebrew, Biblical, and Jewish Studies at the University of Sydney; to David Goldfrank for supplying the archival *Skazanie řečem” nedovědomym* and for his comments; to Shmuel Rausnitz for helping to compile a database of glossary entries; to George Majeska, Donald Ostrowski, and the anonymous reviewers of the journal for their comments; to Suzanne Rutland for making the research visit to Australia possible and for many other kindnesses; and to Lucy Davey for her excellent work procuring interlibrary loans as well as her wit, imagination, and conversation.

Endnotes

¹ Among a vast literature on this topic, see especially: Golb and Pritsak 1982; Franklin 1991:3, 18; Noonan 2001; Petrukhin, Moskovich, Fedorchuk, Kulik, and Shapira 2005; Brook 2006; Golden, Ben-Shammai, and Róna-Tas 2007; Kulik 2010:13–43, 125–240.

² A considerable controversy exists over the question of when in history it is appropriate to speak of socio-political formations as “nations.” When referring to Russian “national identity,” I do not mean to imply anachronistically the existence of a modern nation-state or modern nationalism. Rather, I use this term in a broader and earlier sense, designating a more or less definable “people group,” in this case also associated with a particular land and state. Other examples from classical languages include Hebrew *goy*, Greek *ethnos*, Latin *gens*.

³ In keeping with the practice of the journal, the Hebrew name of God (tetragrammaton) and word for “God” have been replaced by traditional substitutes.

⁴ New research (Temčinas 2011) suggests that occasional consultation with Jews may have taken place in the sixteenth century. [Note that the letter “v.” in references stands for the word “verso”—that is, the other side of the sheet (leaf). The archive numbered the pages in *Skazanie* as 1, 1v., 2, 2v. (or in Russian: 1, 1ob., 2, 2ob).]

⁵ The Hebrew name for this book, as for many other texts, derived from the first “significant” or unique word it contained. By contrast, the Jewish-Greek LXX translators preferred content-based titles; for them, *Shemot* or “Names” became instead Εξοδος, “Exodus.” Titles can arise from numerous and varied considerations.

References

AAE [=Akty, sobrannyye v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh Rossiiskoi imperii Arkheografičeskoju ekspeditsieju]. 1836(–1838). 4 vols. St. Petersburg: Imp. Vel. Kantsel'ariia.

AI [=Akty istoričeskie, sobrannyye i izdannyye Arkheografičeskoju kommissieju]. 1841(–1842). 5 vols. St. Petersburg: Tip. Ekspeditsii / Imp. Vel. Kantsel'ariia.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

- Alekseev, Anatoliĭ. 2010. "Perevody Biblii," in Kulik 2010: 345–355.
- 1999. *Tekstologĭia slavĭanskoĭ Biblii*. St. Petersburg: Dmitriĭ Bulanin.
- 1987. "Perevody s evreĭskikh originalov v Drevneĭ Rusi." *Russian Linguistics* 11: 1–20.
- Alekseev, Mikhail. 1968. *Slovari inostrannykh ĭazykov v russkom azbukovnike XVII veka*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- Altbauer, Moshé. 1992. *The Five Biblical Scrolls in a Sixteenth-Century Jewish Translation into Belorussian (Vilnius Codex 262)*. Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities.
- AN [=Akademiĭa Nauk]. 1975(–2008). *Slovar' russkogo ĭazyka XI–XVII vv.* 28 vols. Moscow: Nauka.
- Arkipov, Andreĭ. 1995. *Po tu storonu Sambationa: Ėtĭudy o rusko-evreĭskikh kul'turnykh, ĭazykovykh i literaturnykh kontaktakh v X–XVI vekakh*. Oakland: Berkeley Slavic Specialties.
- Aronson, I. Michael. 1990. *Troubled Waters: The Origins of the 1881 Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Russia*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Birnbaum, Henrik. 1973. "On Some Evidence of Jewish Life and Anti-Jewish Sentiments in Mediaeval Russia." *Viator* 4: 225–256.
- Blank, Naomi. 1995. "Redefining the Jewish Question from Lenin to Gorbachev: Terminology or Ideology?" in Yaacov Ro'i (ed.), *Jews and Jewish Life in Russia and the Soviet Union*. Ilford, Essex: Cass: 51–66.
- Bonfil, Robert. 1994. "Aliens Within: The Jews and Antijudaism," in Thomas Brady, Heiko Oberman, and James Tracy (eds.), *Handbook of European History, 1400–1600: Late Middle Ages, Renaissance and Reformation*. Leiden: Brill, vol. 1: 263–302.
- Boyarin, Daniel. 2006. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Isaiah Gruber

- Brook, Kevin. 2006. *The Jews of Khazaria*. 2nd ed. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Bushkovitch, Paul. 1986. "The Formation of a National Consciousness in Early Modern Russia." *Harvard Ukrainian Studies* 10.3–4: 355–376.
- Buslaev, F. I. 1850. "Dopolneniia i pribavleniia ko 2-mu tomu 'Skazaniï Russkago naroda, sobrannykh I. Sakharovym.'" *Arkhiv istoriko-iuridicheskikh svēdēniï, otnosiāščikhsia do Rossii, izdavaemyï Nikolaem Kalačovym*, 1.4: 1–48.
- Crummey, Robert. 1987. *The Formation of Muscovy, 1304–1613*. New York: Longman.
- Dacy, Marianne. 2010. *The Separation of Early Christianity from Judaism*. Amherst, New York: Cambria.
- Dagron, Gilbert. 1996. *Empereur et prêtre: Étude sur le "césaropapisme" byzantin*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Daniélou, Jean. 1958. *Théologie du judéo-christianisme*. Paris: Desclée.
- Dubnow, S. M. 1916(–1920). *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*. 3 vols. Trans., I. Friedlaender. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America.
- Ephrem (Archimandrite), trans. 2011. "[Commentary of Athanasios on] Psalm 86." http://www.anastasis.org.uk/psalm_86.htm. Accessed 24.05.2011.
- Fasmer [=Vasmer], Max. 1986(–1987). *Ėtimologicheskii slovar' russkogo iazyka*. 4 vols. Moscow: Progress.
- Fishman, Boris. 2006. "Mixed Messages." *Nextbook* 27.09.2006. <http://www.nextbook.org>, accessed 27 October 2006.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

- Fletcher, Giles. 1964. *The English Works of Giles Fletcher, the Elder*. Ed. Lloyd Berry. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Flusin, Bernard. 2004. "Les structures de l'Église impériale," in Cécile Morrisson (ed.), *Le monde byzantin*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, vol. 1: 111–141.
- Franklin, Simon. 1991. *Sermons and Rhetoric of Kievan Rus'*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Gitelman, Zvi. 2001. *A Century of Ambivalence: The Jews of Russia and the Soviet Union, 1881 to the Present*. 2nd ed. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.
- Golb, Norman, and Omeljan Pritsak. 1982. *Khazarian Hebrew Documents of the Tenth Century*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Golden, Peter, Haggai Ben-Shammai, and András Róna-Tas (eds.). 2007. *The World of the Khazars: New Perspectives*. Leiden: Brill.
- Goldfrank, David. 1992. "Theocratic Imperatives, the Transcendent, the Wordly, and Political Justice in Russia's Early Inquisitions," in Charles E. Timberlake (ed.), *Religious and Secular Forces in Late Tsarist Russia: Essays in Honor of Donald W. Treadgold*. Seattle: University of Washington Press: 30–47, 287–297.
- . 1988. "Burn, Baby, Burn: Popular Culture and Heresy in Late Mediaeval Russia." *Journal of Popular Culture* 31.4: 17–32.
- Gottheil, Richard, and Louis Ginzberg. 1901(–1906). "Athanasius," in *The Jewish Encyclopedia*. 12 vols. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, vol. 2: 281–282.
- Grabbe, Lester. 1988. *Etymology in Early Jewish Interpretation: The Hebrew Names in Philo*. Atlanta: Scholars.
- Gruber, Isaiah. 2012. *Orthodox Russia in Crisis: Church and Nation in the Time of Troubles*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012.

Isaiah Gruber

- Halperin, Charles. 2007. "The Russian and Slavonic Languages in Sixteenth-Century Muscovy." *The Slavonic and East European Review* 85.1: 1–24.
- 1985. *The Tatar Yoke*. Columbus, Ohio: Slavica.
- Hieronymus [=Jerome of Stridon]. 1845 [series 1844–1864]. *Liber de nominibus hebraicis*, in Jacques-Paul Migne (ed.), *Patrologia latina* [=*Patrologiae cursus completus. Series Latina*]. 221 vols. Paris: Apud Garniere Fratres, vol. 23: 771–858.
- Kazakova, Nataliia, and ĭakov Lur'e. 1955. *Antifeodal'nye eretičeskie dviženīa na Rusi XIV—načala XVI veka*. Moscow: Akademiia nauk.
- Khazan, Vladimir. 2001. *Osobennyi evreisko-russkii vozdukh: k problematike i poētike russko-evreiskogo literaturnogo dialoga v XX veke*. Moscow: Mosty kul'tury.
- Klier, John D. 1992. "The Pogrom Paradigm in Russian History," in John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza (eds.), *Pogroms: Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 13–38.
- 1986. *Russia Gathers Her Jews: The Origins of the "Jewish Question" in Russia, 1772–1825*. DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press.
- Kovtun, Ljudmila. 1989. *Azbukovniki XVI–XVII vv.: staršaia raznovidnost'*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- 1977. *Drevnie slovari kak istočnik russkoi istoričeskoj leksikografii*. Leningrad: Nauka.
- 1975. *Leksikografiia v Moskovskoi Rusi XVI—načala XVII vv.* Leningrad: Nauka.
- 1963. *Russkaia leksikografiia epokhi Srednevekov'ia*. Leningrad: Akademiia nauk.
- Kulik, Alexander. 2012. "Jews from Rus' in Mediaeval England." *Jewish Quarterly Review*. [Forthcoming; n.b., the cited page number refers to the manuscript copy only.]
- (ed.). 2010. *Istoriia evreiskogo naroda v Rossii*. Vol. 1. Jerusalem: Gesharim.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

- 2008. "Judeo-Greek Legacy in Mediaeval Rus'." *Viator* 39.1: 51–64.
- Lagarde, Paul de. 1870. *Onomastica sacra*. Gottingae: Rente.
- Levin, Evgeniĭ. 2010. "Spor o sud'be Novogo Izrailia." *Booknik.ru: Evreĭskie teksty i temy*. <http://booknik.ru/reviews/non-fiction/?id=30141> 20.06.2010.
- Löwe, Heinz-Dietrich. 1993. *The Tsars and the Jews: Reform, Reaction, and Anti-Semitism in Imperial Russia, 1772–1917*. Chur, Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers.
- Lunt, Horace, and Moshe Taube. 1998. *The Slavonic Book of Esther: Text, Lexicon, Linguistic Analysis, Problems of Translation*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Luria, Jakov [=Lur'e, ĭakov]. 1995. "Istočniki po istorii 'novoĭavivšejša novgorodskoĭ eresi' ('židovstvuĭščikh')." *Jews and Slavs* 3:199–223.
- 1960. *Ideologičeskaĭa bor'ba v ruskoĭ publitsistike kontsa XV—načala XVI veka*. Moscow: Akademiĭa nauk.
- Lysén, Irina. 2001. *Kniga Esfir': k istorii pervogo slaviānskogo perevoda*. Uppsala: Acta University.
- Magnus, Leonard. 1921. *The Heroic Ballads of Russia*. New York: Dutton.
- Majeska, George. 2004. "Byzantine Political Theory," in Bruce F. Adams (volume ed.), *The Supplement to The Modern Encyclopedia of Russian, Soviet, and Eurasian History*. Gulf Breeze, Fla.: Academic International Press, vol. 5: 66–68.
- Margeret, Jacques. 1983. *The Russian Empire and Grand Duchy of Muscovy: A 17th-Century French Account*. Trans. Chester S. L. Dunning. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

Isaiah Gruber

- Massa, Isaac. 1982. *A Short History of the Beginnings and Origins of These Present Wars in Moscow under the Reign of Various Sovereigns down to the Year 1610*. Trans., G. Edward Orchard. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Meščerskiĭ, Nikita. 1964. "Problemy izučeniĭa slavĭano-russkoĭ perevodnoĭ literatury XI–XV vv." *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoĭ literatury* 20: 180–231.
- Miller, David. 1979. "The Velikie Minei Chetii and the Stepennaia Kniga of Metropolitan Makarii and the Origins of Russian National Consciousness." *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 26: 263–382.
- Murray, Michele. 2004. *Playing a Jewish Game: Gentile Christian Judaizing in the First and Second Centuries CE*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.
- Noonan, Thomas. 2001. "The Khazar qaghanate and its impact on the early Rus' state: The *translatio imperii* from Itil to Kiev," in Anatoly Khazanov and André Wink (eds.), *Nomads in the Sedentary World*. Richmond: Curzon: 76–102.
- Orbach, Alexander. 1990. "Russian Jewish History." *Modern Judaism* 10.3: 325–342.
- Ostrowski, Donald. 1998. *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influences on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Parfitt, Tudor, and Emanuela Semi. 2002. *Judaizing Movements: Studies in the Margins of Judaism in Modern Times*. London: Routledge.
- Pereswetoff-Morath, Alexander. 2002. *A Grin Without a Cat*. 2 vols. Lund: Lund University.
- Petrukhin, V., W. Moskovich, A. Fedorchuk, A. Kulik, and D. Shapira (eds.). 2005. *Khazary*. Jerusalem: Gesharim.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

- Pičkhadze, Anna. 1996. "K istorii čet'ego teksta slavjanskogo Vos'miknižija." *Trudy Otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 49: 10–21.
- Raba, Joel [=Raba', Yo'el / Ńoel']. 2003. *Ha-terumah veba-temurah: Erets Yiśra'el ve-'am Yiśra'el ba-'olamah ha-ruhaniy shel Rusiyah be-yamey ha-beynayim*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.
- 2001. "Židovstvuušcie' li? Istorija zaduševnoj mysli." *Russia mediaevalis* 10.1: 126–149.
- 1992. "The Biblical Tradition in Old Russian Chronicles." *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte* 46: 9–20.
- Riha, Thomas (ed.). 1969. *Readings in Russian Civilization*. 2nd ed. 3 vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rowland, Daniel B. 1996. "Moscow: The Third Rome or the New Israel?" *Russian Review* 55.4: 591–614.
- 1976. "Muscovite Political Attitudes as Reflected in Early Seventeenth Century Tales about the Time of Troubles." Ph.D. dissertation. New Haven: Yale University.
- Ryan, William. 1999. *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- SGGD* [=Sobranie gosudarstvennykh gramot i dogovorov, khranišačikhsja v Gosudarstvennoj kollegii inostrannykh děl]. 1813(–1894). 5 vols. Moscow: Vsevoložskij / Selivanovskij / Lissner and Roman.
- Shapira [=Šapira], Dan. 2010. "Obščiny evreev Vostoka na territorii Rossijskoj imperii i SSSR," in Kulik 2010: 77–90.
- 2005. "Judaization of Central Asian Traditions as Reflected in the So-Called *Jewish-Khazar Correspondence*, with Two Excurses: A. Judah Halevy's Quotations; B. Eldād ha-Dānī (Judaeo-Turkica VI) with an Addendum," in Petrukhin et al. 2005: 503–521.
- Shternshis, Anna. 2006. *Soviet and Kosher: Jewish Popular Culture in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939*. Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press.

Isaiah Gruber

SICSA [=The Vidal Sassoon International Center for the Study of Antisemitism]. 2011. *The Felix Posen Bibliographic Project on Antisemitism: A Computerized Bibliography on Antisemitism and the Holocaust*. <http://sicsa.huji.ac.il/bib.html>. Accessed 26.05.2011.

Skarsaune, Oskar, and Reidar Hvalvik (eds.). 2007. *Jewish Believers in Jesus: The Early Centuries*. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson.

Skazanie rěčem" nedovědomym, eže obrětaem v" s[v]iā]tykh" knigakh", ōt grečeskago ĭazyka, i ōt evreĭskago, i ōt sir'skag[o], i ōt latynskag[o], i ōt slovenskag[o], i ōt inykh. 16th-century archival manuscript. Russian National Library (St. Petersburg). Kirillo-Belozerskiĭ monastyr' no. 25–1102: leaves 147–158.

Solzhenitsyn [=Solženitsyn], Aleksandr. 2001(–2002). *Dvesti let vmeste*. 2 vols. Moscow; Russkiĭ put'.

Sreznevskiĭ, I. I. 1893(–1912). *Materialy dlĭa slovariā drevne-russkago ĭazyka po pis'mennym pamĭatnikam*. 3 vols. St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoĭ Akademii nauk.

Stanislavski, Michael. 2010. "Russia: Russian Empire," in Gershon Hundert (ed.), *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*. http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Russia/Russian_Empire Accessed 24.05.2011.

Taube, Moshe. 2010a. "Eres' židovstvuĭuščikh' i perevody s evreĭskogo v srednevekovoĭ Rusi," in Kulik 2010: 367–397.

----- 2010b. "Transmission of Scientific Texts in 15th–Century Eastern Knaan." *Aleph: Historical Studies in Science and Judaism* 10.3: 315–353.

----- 2005. "The Fifteenth-Century Ruthenian Translations from Hebrew and the Heresy of the Judaizers: Is There a Connection?" in Vyacheslav Ivanov and Julia Verkholantsev (eds.), *Speculum Slaviae Orientalis: Muscovy, Ruthenia, and Lithuania in the Late Middle Ages*. Moscow: Novoe izdatel'stvo: 185–208.

----- 1995. "The Kievan Jew Zacharia and the Astronomical Works of the Judaizers." *Jews and Slavs* 3: 168–198.

Russians, Jews, and Hebrew: The Makings of Ambivalence

- Temčinas, Sergejus. 2011. "A 16th-century East Slavic Manuscript Manual of Hebrew and its Sources." Seminar presentation to the research group "Cultural Archaeology of Jews and Slavs: Mediaeval and Early Modern Judeo-Slavic Interaction and Cross-Fertilization", Institute of Advanced Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 26 June 2011.
- Tseĭtlin, Ralia. 1958. *Kratkiĭ očerk istorii russkoĭ leksikografii (slovari russkogo ĭazyka)*. Moscow: GUPIMP.
- Uspenskiĭ, Boris. 1998. *Tsar' i patriarkh: kharizma vlasti v Rossii. Vizantiĭskaia model' i ee russkoe pereosmyslenie*. Moscow: Īazyki russkoĭ kul'tury.
- Vernadsky, George. 1933. "The Heresy of the Judaizers and the Policies of Ivan III of Moscow." *Speculum* 8.4: 436–454.
- Vinogradov, V. V. 1980. *O ĭazyke khudožestvennoĭ prozy: izbrannye trudy*. Moscow: Nauka.
- Volotskiĭ, Iōsif [=Volotsky, Joseph]. 1896. *Prosvĕtitel', ili ōbličenie eresi židovstvuiūščikh*". 3rd ed. Kazan: Tip. Imp. Universiteta.
- Yuval, Israel. 2006. *Two Nations in Your Womb: Perceptions of Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages*. Berkeley: University of California Press.