Chapter Twenty-Nine

Jewish Studies in the United States

Allow me to preface my remarks with two introductory points regarding the content and structure of the following. First, I perceive myself as adhering to the injunction: “you shall speak of them,” recognizing that certain topics are enriched by discussion and debate. Consequently, my words are not meant to constitute an exhaustive lecture but rather to serve as a proposal and an outline for discussion.[[1]](#footnote-1) In truth – and I assert this without exaggeration – I find, in this instance, greater satisfaction in listening than in speaking, aligning with the adage that it is for this reason that Adam was created with two ears and only one mouth.

Second, I certainly hope that my words will not ring reminiscent of “Rav, who was a descendant of the House of David, seeks to interpret in David’s favor (Shabbat 56a),” or “R. Yishmael the priest sides with the priests” (Ḥullin 49a). I am compelled to center my discussion on the United States and Harvard University – this is what the subject demands. I assure you that I would prefer to discuss the state of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem and the Land of Israel.

The topic of the lecture was proposed to me, and I willingly accepted the responsibility to initiate the discussion, given its significance and relative obscurity. It is entirely conceivable that its importance is amplified due to the size, significant influence, and potential of the Jewish community in the United States. However, upon reflecting on the original title and the subject in all its breadth and depth, the title appears somewhat artificial and difficult to address properly. It is widely acknowledged, and I need not belabor the point, that the challenges facing academic Jewish Studies are universal. Philological and historical methodologies are consistent, with no inherent reason to differentiate Jewish Studies in the United States from those in Israel or England. Nevertheless, if delineating this field is warranted, it necessitates a thorough historical investigation to uncover any novel developments that have been presented by scholars of Judaism, or those who aspire to be such, in the United States. Once we establish this foundation, we can proceed to highlight the unique challenges, opportunities, and dynamics that distinguish Jewish Studies in the United States and the broader Diaspora – taking into account the positive influence of location on its inhabitants and the tensions inherent within these communities.

In discussing Jewish Studies, my remarks will necessarily be derived from my particular experience and any insights will necessarily depend upon the degree to which that experience reflects something general. Had I agreed to speak about Jewish Studies without the geographical and temporal constraints imposed by focusing solely on the United States, I fear I might fall short of the mark, echoing Maimonides’ concern about his student: “lest his achievement not equal his desire.”

## A

It seems to me that those who review the history of Jewish Studies in general and in the United States in particular will recognize the special significance of the establishment of the chair of Hebrew literature and philosophy at Harvard University in 1925 – the first university chair dedicated exclusively to Judaism. In other words, here we find a marker for the independent and honorable entry of *Hokhmat Yisrael –* Jewish Studies e – into the general university framework (*civitas litterarum*). After all, engagement in academic Jewish Studies, currently called *Mada‘ei Hayahadut*,previously known as *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, as well as *Hokhmat Yisrael* – and the name change is no small matter[[2]](#footnote-2) – is not a new phenomenon. Nevertheless, the creation of this chair signifies a pivotal moment in recognizing the integrity, unity, and autonomy of Jewish Studies scholarship. It highlights the unique areas of inquiry, focal points, and research needs within Jewish Studies, which deserve recognition in their own right, independent of other academic disciplines. It is evident that Jewish Studies have been blessed with many great scholars of great stature and spirit, most of them Jews, but a minority of non-Jews, who have made significant contributions. We are discussing, of course, scholars in university settings rather than rabbinical seminaries and similar Jewish institutions. These scholars’ efforts often faced obstacles within their universities, including weak institutional support and limited positions within academia. The absence of a robust university foundation limited the production and dampened the spirits of these eminent researchers. Many scholars harbored hopes and dreams, awaiting a great awakening in Jewish Studies within university settings, but their aspirations remained unfulfilled.

I am not well versed in this history in all its details, but I believe that we cannot point to a single chair dedicated solely to Jewish Studies, even in Europe, before the establishment of this chair at Harvard. Perhaps Martin Buber’s chair in Frankfurt might be considered the first, but I doubt it. Prof. A.S. Yahuda’s chair for Hebrew in Madrid, established by Alfonso XIII’s government in 1915, might be regarded as an earlier precedent, but Yahuda’s case was an exception as he was there for only seven years – Yahuda returned to Jerusalem in 1922, and the chair ceased to exist subsequently. Precedents in England, including positions held by Solomon Schechter, and later Israel Abrahams in Cambridge and Sir Hermann Gollancz at King’s College, demonstrate early efforts, but these positions operated outside of the accepted academic framework and did not cumulatively constitute a significant development.

While prestigious, Graetz’s appointment in Breslau was a governmental “Honoris Causa” rather than a full academic appointment. Additionally, there were individuals appointed to positions in fields such as Middle Eastern studies, linguistics, philosophy, and ancient history, who, while not formally recognized in Jewish Studies, dedicated significant time and effort to the pursuit of Jewish scholarship as a secondary focus, believing that it is possible to wear two hats. Eugen Täubler served as a professor in Heidelberg, but for the history of the ancient world; Freudenthal was a part-time professor, and that, too, in general philosophy; Eduard Mahler lectured in Budapest, but always on general topics, and remained outside the academic camp; Julius Guttmann who is here now at the Hebrew University was a *Privatdozent*, but, again, only in general philosophy; Israel Levy from Paris also lectured at the Sorbonne on Talmudic literature, but it seems to have been on an occasional basis. And so on, over and over again, and I do not need to be like a peddler who goes on listing known things. Despite the ambitions of Jewish scholars in Europe to excel and gain official recognition, they often found themselves marginalized. The enduring sentiment of being “not reckoned among the nations” remained, and the researchers continued to “wrap themselves in borrowed cloaks.”

Jewish Studies within universities and institutions of higher education were often relegated to secondary status compared to other disciplines, at least institutionally and academically. Organizational structures, scientific frameworks, and academic theological-political considerations frequently marginalized Jewish Studies, positioning them as ancillary pursuits rather than central academic endeavors. These facts are important for understanding the historical context.

One might conclude that the enduring interest in Judaism spans throughout history, intricately woven into the fabric of Western culture and the study of its development. From the scholars of ancient Greece and Rome to the church fathers, interpreters of the Bible in Charlemagne’s court, medieval scholastics, humanists and reformers of the late Middle Ages and the Renaissance, philosophers, deists, and encyclopedists of the eighteenth century, the influence of Judaism is profound and far-reaching. This interest persists through the works of Fichte and Hegel, Matthew Arnold and Max Weber, and continues to flourish, even to the point of explosion, in our contemporary era. The common thread running through all these stages of development is the notion that, in a sense, “Israel is primary and Jacob is secondary to it” (Berakhot 13a), meaning, throughout history, the interest in Judaism has been fueled by various motives, all of which were of secondary importance for the proper understanding of Judaism. Among these motives were:

(a) The theological motive seeks to advance or encourage polemical objectives or to formulate certain knowledge as a means to religious conversion. *Hebraica veritas,* the original Hebrew Bible, has constantly served as a theological and not as a cultural resource. This dynamic is evident across the ages, unfolding before us as a constant theme: from the disputes of figures like Justin Martyr to Roger Bacon in the thirteenth century, who – with a fervent and strange pathos – contended that the illumination of wisdom (*Sapientia*) would wield greater influence than coercion and persecution; the renowned Reuchlin who advocated for the study of Hebrew “for the sake of God and the Christian faith”; Eisenmenger who delved into Judaism not for enlightenment, but to expose what he perceived as its malevolence and ignominy; and up to contemporary times, where we see that a significant portion of theological research (*Religionsgeschichtliche*) remains entangled in this theological framework, whether overtly or covertly.

In 1921, George Foot Moore, the well-known historian at Harvard University, delivered a penetrating critique of this pseudo-scientific approach and the scholarship that results from it, science *cum ira et studio,* with intense emotion and zeal, condemning it as distorted apologetics.[[3]](#footnote-3) More recently, our own Professor Urbach revisited this issue at the outset of his seminal work, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs,* providing an insightful critique of the fundamentally flawed scholarship and distorted apologetics propagated by this school of thought. It is imperative to underscore that recounting this history is a vital task for the present moment; it is a duty that cannot be overstated. Continuously exposing and denouncing these forgeries is essential, as many individuals, particularly impressionable young people, fall prey to their allure and unwittingly accept a distorted Christian rendition of Jewish history with dire outcomes.

(b) The second motive is of a comparative-historiosophical nature. Scholars who explore various phenomena in general history – such as mysticism, philosophy, law, sociology, and economics – seek to enhance their approach or enrich their lectures by incorporating examples from Jewish history. They gather details based on their observations or whatever they happen to come across, adhering to the fundamental principle of comparative research: the more examples, the better. There is no endeavor to comprehensively define any field and explore it from all angles. This approach is particularly evident in contemporary studies of mysticism. It is important to note that researchers, philosophers, and theologians of diverse backgrounds often turn to Jewish history due to its enigmatic nature. It is perceived as possessing a unique vision that demands interpretation, with some viewing it as commendable while others find reasons to condemn it.[[4]](#footnote-4) Dubnow himself alluded to this “utility” of Jewish history in passing, as mentioned in his essay on the philosophy of Jewish history.[[5]](#footnote-5)

(c) I would describe the third motive as a factual-historiographical one, stemming from the acknowledgment that Hebrew documents offer valuable material or documentation for social, economic, or cultural history. Unlike the previous motive, which is more phenomenological, this motive is grounded in factual analysis and historical inquiry. In essence, there are academic inquiries that cannot be fully comprehended without recourse to Jewish sources. For instance, the Geniza documents offer invaluable insights into trade, industry, and daily life in Mediterranean countries, as demonstrated by the research of scholars like Prof. Goitein. Similarly, medieval Jewish philosophical works, such as Saadia Gaon’s *Emunot ve-Deot* and Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed,* provide crucial information about the development of Arabic *kalam* and foundational concepts for Christian scholasticism, as evidenced by the work of scholars like Professor Wolfson.

Another area of study, currently being pursued by one of my colleagues in the United States, pertains to medieval legislation and the strategies employed by kings to overcome the constraints of feudalism, which often undermined or limited their authority. It has been discovered that laws concerning Jews, often referred to as *Judei Nostri* – our Jews – are crucial for understanding the evolution of this political and state legislation more broadly.[[6]](#footnote-6)

And yet, the Jewish matter in itself is not important; it serves other fields. A distinguished scholar, recognized as one of the greatest humanists of our time, shared with me his perspective on Jewish Studies within universities – and it must be emphasized that he maintains a sincere and very positive attitude towards this development – as a “service department.” Their main purpose is to serve the research needs of other, better-established fields, fields whose importance is unquestionable. If he had known Maimonides’ famous response to R. Jonathan Hakohen of Lunel, he could have reversed Maimonides’ description and said that it was Jewish Studies that “were taken from the beginning to become... perfumers, cooks and bakers.”[[7]](#footnote-7)

On occasion, scholars in various fields may encounter challenges when confronted with obscure references or unresolved issues in ancient texts, whether it be a vague allusion found in the writings of Tacitus or Posidonius, or a theological quandary posed by figures like Justin Martyr or Origen; Hebrew influence, real or imagined, in Dante; the appearance of a Semitic concept in Ibn Khaldun; a kabbalistic topos in Nicholas of Lyra; a Rabbinic expression in Milton’s writings; a Talmudic quotation in John Selden; a particular fact in Walther Rathenau’s biography; a literary symbol in Kafka’s writings, or even a Yiddish idiom in Bernard Berenson’s memoirs.

The Jewish scholar is called upon to stand at attention, lend his expertise, and assist the scholar who grapples with “matters of great importance.” He meticulously dissects important passages, shedding light on obscure or fragmented aspects. Despite these invaluable contributions, however, the complete teaching, with its myriad nuances and complexities, goes unrecognized and unwanted.

(d) Another motive arises from a perspective that maintains, directly or indirectly, that only a Judaism that is on the verge of extinction and only those Jews who renounce their traditions and national religious identity are capable of making contributions to general culture and capturing the attention of the broader historian. I detect such a theoretical statement in the writings of Thorstein Veblen, the American economist and sociologist, who discussed the significant presence of Jews in the cultural landscape of Europe in recent generations. He lauded the Jewish community for their substantial contributions to the scientific and research advancements of Christian Europe during this era. Veblen notably emphasized and commended their dynamic, pioneering roles. He writes:

It is a fact which must strike any dispassionate observer that the Jewish people have contributed much more than an even share to the intellectual life of modern Europe. So also it is plain that the civilization of Christendom continues today to draw heavily on the Jews for men devoted to science and scholarly pursuits. It is not only that men of Jewish extraction continue to supply more than a proportionate quota to the rank and file engaged in scientific and scholarly work, but a disproportionate number of the men to whom modern science and scholarship look for guidance and leadership are of the same derivation. Particularly is this true of the modern sciences, and it applies perhaps especially in the field of scientific theory, even beyond the extent of its application in the domain of workday detail. So much is notorious.

The sting lies in the continuation of Veblen’s words:

The cultural heritage of the Jewish people is large and rich, and it is of ancient and honorable lineage. And from time immemorial this people has shown aptitude for such work as will tax the powers of thought and imagination. Their home-bred achievements of the ancient time, before the Diaspora, are among the secure cultural monuments of mankind; but these achievements of the Jewish ancients neither touch the frontiers of modern science nor do they fall in the lines of modern scholarship. So also the later achievements of the Jewish scholars and savants, insofar as their intellectual enterprise has gone forward on what may be called distinctively Jewish lines, within the confines of their own community and by the leading of their own home-bred interest, untouched by that peculiar drift of inquiry that characterizes the speculations of the modern gentile world – this learning of the later generations of home-bred Jewish scholars is also reputed to have run into lucubrations that have no significance for contemporary science or scholarship at large.

It appears to be only when the gifted Jew escapes from the cultural environment created and fed by the particular genius of his own people, only when he falls into the alien lines of gentile inquiry and becomes a naturalized, though hyphenate, citizen in the gentile republic of learning, that he comes into his own as a creative leader in the world’s intellectual enterprise. It is by loss of allegiance, or at the best by force of a divided allegiance to the people of his origin, that he finds himself in the vanguard of modern inquiry.

It will not do to say that none but renegade Jews count effectually in the modern sciences. Such a statement would be too broad, but for all its excessive breadth, it exceeds the fact only by a margin. The margin may seem wide, so wide as to vitiate the general statement, perhaps, or at least wide enough materially to reduce its cogency. But it would be wider of the mark to claim that the renegades are to be counted only as sporadic exceptions among a body of unmitigated Jews who make up the virtual total of that muster of creative men of science that the Jewish people have thrown into the intellectual advance of Christendom.

Only those who break free from Judaism and liberate themselves from its constraints – referred to as “renegades” by Veblen – are the true creative forces and the ones of genuine interest. It is they who can effectively engage with the world at large and fulfill a significant and influential role. Conversely, those who remain entrenched in inward-focused Judaism, content to cultivate their own fields, even while also aspiring towards universality, can be erased from the annals of human history.[[8]](#footnote-8)

It seems to me that this embodies the fourth motive behind the fragmented interest in Judaism – an interest that is confined to those individuals whose focus is outward-facing and who remain detached from their Jewish heritage. Judaism is mere background and nothing more. Authentic Judaism is disposable.

It is evident that approaching Jewish history from such a skewed perspective is untenable. Anyone who pretends to study Jewish history based on the writings of S. Weil, Julien Benda, Henri Bergson, Émile Durkheim, Edmund Husserl, and others will surely come up empty handed and undermine serious research. Indeed, even a course on the history of Jews in modern times anchored solely on the accomplishments and contributions of figures like Marx, Freud, and Einstein, along with lesser-known “contributors,” is bound to end in disappointment and inadequacy. This fragmented interest is further reflected in the bibliographic detail often mentioned by the late Leon (Hyam Yehuda) Roth:[[9]](#footnote-9) In the well-known *Everyman’s Library* series, which serves as a sort of overview for the masses or popular education, nearly a thousand titles are included, six of which purport to represent Judaism or Jewish culture. Among these books are: one volume titled *Ancient Hebrew Literature*, which comprises selections from the Bible and the Apocrypha; one volume containing *The Jewish War* by Josephus; one volume featuring Spinoza’s *Ethics*; another volume showcasing *belles-lettres* by Heinrich Heine; one volume dedicated to Disraeli’s writings, specifically the novel *Coningsby*; and finally, Marx’s *Das Kapital*. The conclusion drawn from this selection is evident: Judaism has been misrepresented and distorted.

This general situation, characterized by Jewish Studies in universities being secondary, trivial, and lacking substance, momentum, and initiative – regardless of the motive behind it, whether theological, phenomenological, or historiographical, and regardless of the resulting knowledge – has undergone a transformation. This change is marked by the establishment of chairs dedicated exclusively and unconditionally to Jewish Studies, facilitating in-depth research in a conducive environment. In essence, research in Jewish Studies is no longer contingent on the fleeting enthusiasm of external factors, which can be easily ignited but just as easily fade away. Instead, it has evolved into a self-sustaining endeavor, capable of carrying itself forward without relying on external interests that may prove constraining or unreliable. This shift represents a departure from being placed in the precarious position of the proverbial Procrustean bed, which can never be a suitable fit in the first place. In this sense, it can be said that the ambition of many nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars has been realized in the present century, particularly in the United States and in Western countries at large.

## B

That is the concrete historical framework. Distinctive problems and particular challenges persist that are absent in Israel altogether or take on altered forms or different emphases. Allow me to touch upon these briefly.

A significant issue that could potentially disrupt Jewish Studies and veer them off course is the challenge of striking a balance in research. This involves navigating between the universal aspect, which is outward-facing, and the inward aspect, which centers on the developmental trajectory of Judaism itself. A prominent aspect of Judaism and its historical trajectory is its dialectical nature, with opposing forces and trends and the continual interplay between centrifugal and centripetal influences. It is only natural that this dialectical process will not only enrich and diversify research but also mirror the richness and diversity inherent within Judaism itself. Throughout history, there have been individuals who disregarded the universal aspect of Judaism, as well as those who overlooked its particularistic dimension. Both of these approaches failed to grasp the essence of Judaism and lacked a solid foundation. Indeed, an exclusive focus on the universal face of Judaism also contributes to fragmented research and one-sided interest, alongside the reasons previously mentioned. This focus is obviously not the same as the sentiments expressed by Veblen in the earlier quote.

This observation pertains primarily to the study of the Bible and philosophy. The books of the Bible serve as a cornerstone of Western culture, as Maimonides aptly expressed, albeit in a different context, “And already the world is filled... with the words of the Torah... and these words have spread to the distant islands” (end of *Hilkhot Melakhim*). Similarly, the study of philosophy is inherently universal, transcending narrow and rigid frameworks, including national historical boundaries, a notion recognized as far back as the Middle Ages. The phrase “accept the truth from whoever says it” illuminated the path for all seekers of wisdom, transcending national or linguistic barriers. In an intriguing *responsum*, R. Elijah Mizrachi eloquently articulates this approach, echoing the wisdom of his predecessors: “These wisdoms are books compiled by the sages of the Greeks (may their names and memories be erased), and they are studied from the day they were compiled until this day from nation to nation, from Gentiles to Jews and from Jews to Gentiles, from Ishmaelites to Jews and from Jews to Ishmaelites, and from the Gentiles to the Ishmaelites and from the Ishmaelites to the Gentiles.”[[10]](#footnote-10)

The realms of Bible and philosophy have historically served as bridges between Israel and other nations, often blurring distinctions between them. (This is why, in my presentation, I refrain from discussing academic chairs primarily focused on the Bible or Semitic linguistics. In the current context, which can be described as a “breaking of the vessels,” there exists a separate issue that falls outside the scope of our discussion. This is an area where the scholars of Israel residing in the Land of Israel are best positioned to address and rectify any distortions present.) It is noteworthy to recall the words of Prof. Wolfson at the outset of his article on Solomon Pappenheim:

Towards the end of the eighteenth century, among the first Jews who gained their way into general literature, there was a predominance of those who worked in the field of philosophy. Some of them, like Solomon Maimon and Moses Mendelssohn, achieved fame and distinction, either through the profundity of their thought or through the elegance of their table talk. Others, less famous, like Marcus Herz and Lazarus Bendavid, succeeded only in enshrining themselves in an occasional footnote in the history of German philosophy or in being included among those who lived and philosophized, but still, they will always be remembered as the pages, if not the armor-bearers, of Kant. That philosophy should have been the vehicle through which the first linguistically emancipated Jews should break into the world’s literature was only natural, for outside the Bible philosophy was the only field of knowledge which the Jews shared in common with the rest of Europe.[[11]](#footnote-11)

The rationale behind these words continues to ring true as an accurate depiction of the realities on the ground in the 20th century.

Yet, it was not solely the natural interplay between conflicting trends, alongside the innate inclination towards these domains that served as a bridge between Jews and non-Jews, that left their mark here. This one-sided and unbalanced interest was also bolstered, both knowingly and unknowingly, by Jewish scholars who sought to promote their ideas to broader audiences in an attempt to garner sympathy, understanding, and support. Thus, for example, in 1913, the Association for the Study of the History of the Jews in Italy issued a call for the study of Jewish history. Concluding the call, it asserted that Jewish history holds great interest for sociologists, economists, scholars of literature and art, historians of philosophy, and historians of medicine. Undoubtedly, this assertion is true and is widely acknowledged. However, one must ponder whether this call aimed to broaden or narrow the field of interest. It is intriguing to juxtapose this with the well-known article by Alexander Marx regarding the goals and objectives of Jewish historiography, published in the United States in 1918.[[12]](#footnote-12) This article includes a comprehensive overview of the aims of historical research. Prof. Marx, who possessed some familiarity with the United States, highlighted certain achievements as well as many objectives and outlined the fundamental principles for many significant endeavors. Reading between the lines, it becomes apparent that Marx could not have dreamed that well-known and prestigious universities might collaborate to fulfill the noble tasks he outlined. Instead, his primary audience was Jewish institutions and the Jewish community, whom he implored to provide support for scholarly endeavors. This perhaps explains why his words are so measured and balanced, without specifically emphasizing the outer-directed aspects or the integration of broader historical factors and processes.

Indeed, it is worth revisiting Felix Perles’ article “Die Erforschung des nachbiblischen Judentums im Rahmen der Universitas Litterarum, [The Study of Post-Biblical Judaism in the Context of the ‘University of the Arts and Sciences’],” published in *Der Morgen* in 1926. Perles’ work stands as a critique of the biased tendencies present in Bost’s research. Perles meticulously examines each universal aspect of Judaism, underscoring the imperative for universities to embrace Jewish Studies since they extend beyond a strictly Jewish framework and merit inclusion in a broader academic context. Even those who make light of Judaism cannot afford to disregard its significance entirely.

It is therefore no coincidence that the inaugural chair at Harvard, discussed earlier, primarily focused on philosophy. Intriguingly, in the same year of its establishment, both the philosophy department and the Semitics department contended that a chair had been added to their respective domains: the former asserting ownership due to philosophy, and the latter due to Hebrew studies. A discrepancy arose in the university president’s report, where he inaccurately stated that one chair was added to philosophy and one to the Semitic department. While the organizational framework holds significant importance with wide-ranging consequences, delving into detailed specifics exceeds the scope of our discussion here.

The very same Wolfson, a graduate of Slabodka’s Yeshivas Knesses Beis Yitzchak, widely regarded as one of the foremost philosophical scholars of our era with extensive expertise spanning Greek, Christian, Muslim, and Hebrew philosophy, would certainly acknowledge that the primary focus of Jewish Studies should be the examination of Rabbinic literature. This body of work serves as the central pillar and foundational support for the expansive edifice of Judaism. However, within the university context, the cultivation of philosophy holds greater merit as it fosters connections with broader cultural currents.[[13]](#footnote-13) Indeed, there appears to be a deliberate concession here, grounded in the recognition that the university framework often dictates certain directions. It is indeed essential not to overlook the universal implications, including identifying points of intersection and correlation between the history of Judaism and the broader history of the world – an idea passionately advocated by the prolific writer Edmund Wilson. In his eloquent essay advocating for Jewish Studies at the university, Wilson proposes a two-year study program. He emphasizes the necessity of coordinating and aligning the accomplishments of Judaism with those of the broader world: “To correlate the adventures and achievements of the Jews with those of the rest of the world.”[[14]](#footnote-14)

While these connections and contexts are integral to Jewish history, and no Jewish scholars can allow themselves to be distracted from them, Jewish scholars must remain vigilant against a phenomenon highlighted by Goldziher in a completely different context.[[15]](#footnote-15) In discussing the important role of Muslims in the East in the development of Islam in all its layers and variations, Goldziher pointed out that scholars often allocated disproportionate attention to Spain in their assessments. This was due to Spain’s significant influence on the external world, particularly in shaping Europe’s perception of Islam, thereby elevating its prestige in academic circles. A great deal of caution is warranted in this regard. We must avoid confusing external influence with internal significance. While acknowledging the importance of external factors, we must not elevate them at the expense of understanding internal processes. And certainly, the latter should not be abandoned due to exclusive preoccupation with the former.

The same distinction holds in the study of Judaism. Just because something has had a notable impact beyond Judaism does not necessarily make it superior in importance to aspects that are significant solely within Judaism. The notion that what captures the interest of non-Jews should also be of interest to Jews is not a novel concept. Indeed, with a shift in emphasis, we have consistently contended that the wisdom and understanding we seek to showcase to non-Jews should also be a concern for Jews. Throughout history, philosophers and intellectuals of various backgrounds have often invoked the verse “For this will be your wisdom and understanding in the eyes of the peoples” (Deut. 4:6) to assert the legitimacy and superiority of their pursuits. This slogan resonated deeply with students of philosophy. In his will, R. Joseph Ibn Kaspi lamented openly: “Woe unto us, for we have sinned. The Jews today despise or abandon the *Guide*... while the Christians respect it and raise it up and make copies of it, and even more so the Ishmaelites in Fez and in other countries where they established *madrasas* to study the *Guide* from Jewish scholars.”[[16]](#footnote-16)

While acknowledging these external influences, it is crucial to maintain caution and balance in determining the scale of priorities. No one could disagree that Maimonides’ renown stems not only from his impact outside the Jewish community – his influence on Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas is significant and undeniable – but also from his profound importance within the Jewish tradition. Even within the university setting, there is no justification for bifurcating his multifaceted work, relegating him to a divided world and focusing solely on fragmentary aspects of his oeuvre. Maimonides without the Rambam is merely half the man.

The disregard for Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah,* even among his most fervent adherents, serves as a poignant example of the broader issue concerning the study of *halakhah* (Jewish law) and Rabbinic literature. *Halakhah*, which offers a direct window into the essence of Judaism, its ethos, and its intricacies, has often been overlooked, lacking the sympathetic and thorough examination it deserves. Certainly, it is an intricate and difficult field, resistant to simplistic universalist generalizations – a complexity that has led some to withdraw from it for this reason.[[17]](#footnote-17) What prevails in this arena is not a spirit of universality but rather animosity and a dearth of comprehension, both from within and without. The unfortunate legacy of the Haskalah movement, which regarded Talmudic study as barren and unproductive – *geistestötendes Geschäft*, in the words of Salomon Maimon – contributed to this perception. This movement often portrayed matters of *halakhah* as fostering a monotonous and narrow routine, lacking in religious depth and disconnected from spiritual aspirations.[[18]](#footnote-18) And so, this field was initially neglected due to powerful bias, and now it faces neglect due to suffocating universalism. It is clear that the centrality of *halakhah* in Jewish history and its significance for Jewish identity should be duly reflected in both teaching and academic endeavors.

In general, challenging conventions and re-evaluating what is deemed important versus unimportant is crucial. It appears to me that many academics rely on something like the definition proposed by T.S. Eliot, who wrote: “A people is judged by history according to its contributions to the culture of other peoples flourishing at the same time and according to its contributions to the cultures which arise afterwards.”[[19]](#footnote-19)

We are all too familiar with this idea. We have had our fill of the notion of being mere “contributors” to various fields – the contributions of Jews to science, philosophy, literature, and art, acting as mediators or intermediaries, Judaism’s role in educating humanity, the Jew as the quickener of Western culture, as the eternal rebel and the perpetual adversary. Jewish Studies cannot thrive on the premise of “…and they will take my contribution” (Exod. 25:2). If we persist with this unbalanced approach, we will be mistaken and foolish. We must not allow others to dictate the trajectory of our research or determine the foci of our interests. In conclusion, I can state with certainty regarding Jewish Studies that its interior differs from its exterior. Indeed, its internal richness far surpasses what is apparent to an external observer, who may only see the surface without grasping the depth of its significance.

As a sub-section to our discussion on this outward focus, I would like to address a related problem. Pedagogically, it is often best to start from the easier and move toward the difficult, from the known to the unknown, facilitating understanding of the familiar before returning to the more complex matter. Therefore, when delving into an esoteric or obscure subject or addressing an unfamiliar case, it is beneficial to employ comparisons to aid comprehension. Such exercises are customary for anyone involved in Jewish Studies. However, if we stretch the facts or present events inaccurately merely for the sake of a convenient comparison or an instructive parallel, we have not truly gained anything. For example, drawing a comparison between the Vilna Gaon and Lessing, the author of “Nathan the Wise,” and attempting to parallel the place of the Vilna Gaon in Jewish history with Lessing’s place in the intellectual history of Germany should raise questions. Does this comparison truly enhance the understanding of the individual’s character for the student? Or does it ultimately obscure rather than clarify?

Close associates and admirers of the renowned Gilbert Murray suggest that his effectiveness and influence as a teacher and writer stem largely from his skillful use of a particular technique: he had a knack for making Greek literature more accessible to his contemporaries by offering insightful and illuminating comparisons, as in the Rabbinic idiom: “to what might this be comparable?”[[20]](#footnote-20) The Rabbinic teaching referenced by Maimonides in the introduction to his *Guide* underscores this point: “Thus did Solomon say one parable after another and speak one word after another until he understood the meaning of the words of the Torah.” This highlights the importance of effective parables and comparisons in facilitating understanding. If a parable fails to resonate or a comparison lacks precision, it can lead not to enlightenment but to ignorance.

Another sub-section. There are numerous academic conventions, idiomatic expressions and accepted modes of thinking that a Jewish scholar must object to their use, ignore, or employ with careful consideration. For example, something that is at the same time symbolic and essential – similar to the notion of Adam’s naming the animals – is the use of the term “Old Testament”; there is no doubt that this term has no place in an academic environment. It carries theological connotations rooted in Christian tradition and historical anti-Jewish sentiment, and there is no reason for Jewish scholars to accept it as settled usage. Neither the university framework nor the universal tendency obliges him to do so. And yet, it is something to which people do not pay attention and remain indifferent to its consequences.

Another example is the widely accepted tripartite division of history into antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the modern age. It is elementary that the origins of this division lie in Christian historiography. This periodization was shaped by Christian perspectives, particularly influenced by Protestant reformers and by humanist scholars who perceived a significant gap between antiquity and the fifteenth-century modernizing period. One group saw declines and religious deviations and strove to renew the face of religion, while the other saw degeneration and cultural contraction and strove to renew the face of culture.[[21]](#footnote-21) Such transformations have no parallel within the lengthy and rich history of the Jews, replete with vision, passion, suffering, and endurance, encompassing the world in its breadth and depth. A Jewish historian must approach the task of dividing Israel’s history into periods with an original perspective, seeking unique criteria, making independent distinctions, and resisting the temptation to conform to foreign and artificial frameworks, including those prescribed by academic catalogs and programs.[[22]](#footnote-22)

Now, let us delve into another question closely tied to the previous issue: objectivity. This concept is vital for maintaining an honest intellectual approach that withstands scrutiny. All scholars grapple with the complexities of subjectivity and objectivity, reflecting on their actions and striving to justify them within this framework. Indeed, this struggle is not limited to scientists and academics alone. Gedaliah Alon once cited a dilemma attributed to Rabbi Israel Salanter: “Recognizing the truth or brilliant innovation, is there anything that can be done to reconcile them?” And if not, which one is superior? He ultimately ruled that innovation should not be “removed or curbed,” provided that an individual maintains the “purity of his spiritual powers,” ensuring that thoughts remain uncorrupted and unbiased. This standard aligns closely with the principles of scientific cognition, that is, scientific discipline among academics.[[23]](#footnote-23)

The universal nature of this problem is evident in the stark contradictions between sweeping statements about pure science and distinct apologetic trends. Gershom Scholem’s renowned essay on *Wissenschaft des Judentums* comes to mind,[[24]](#footnote-24) in which he extensively explored the profound and entrenched contradiction that gnaws away at it: an oath of allegiance to pure science on one hand and allegiance to political obligations and religious objectives on the other. As noted, this issue transcends temporal and geographic boundaries, impacting scholars universally. However, it appears particularly acute in the United States and the broader Diaspora. The manifestation of this issue begins with matters of expression and terminology, affecting linguistic choices in speech, writing, and lecturing. Allow me to illustrate with an anecdote: a respected academic once confided in me that while he typically refers to “Saint Augustine” or “Saint Thomas” without hesitation or compunction, he is careful not to say “*Rabbi* Akiva” or “*Rabbi* Shmuel ben Ḥofni” lest doubt be cast on his sincerity, reliability, or objectivity as an academic committed to critical inquiry. There are many individuals with refined sensibilities and heightened sensitivity who instinctively recoil from any perceived amalgamation of academic discourse with Jewish identity, even if such a fusion exists only in the realm of imagination.

In a recent conversation, a young scholar who completed his studies at a rabbinical seminary prior to embarking upon an academic career shared a dilemma he has been pondering: Should he permit those students aware of his background to address him with the title “Rabbi,” or should he choose to discard that title altogether? “He shall be called ‘scholar’ but not ‘Rabbi’!” (Bava Metzia, 86a).

Lately, there has been a concerning deterioration regarding this sensitive issue, exacerbated by the swift but not carefully considered expansion of African-American studies. Blacks have railed against the possibility that anyone who is not Black teaching these subjects. Some refuse to enroll in courses taught by non-Blacks, regardless of their expertise or credentials. Even a world-renowned scholar would not meet their standards.

The academic establishment, where Jewish scholars hold prominent positions (and the gradual integration of Jews into various academic disciplines warrants examination in its own right), asserts that merit should be the primary criterion, not race. It emphasizes the importance of knowledge, expertise, and perspective over ethnicity or background. The focus is on intellectual capacity rather than heritage, on the quality of ideas rather than personal grievances. There seems, therefore, to be a discomfort surrounding Jewish scholars engaged in Jewish Studies: Is there a contradiction between their involvement in this field and their stance on other subjects? I have consistently argued against this notion. It lacks merit and should not be an issue at all. Just as members of “Americans for Democratic Action” would not question their ability to teach American history due to their American identity, despite having clear opinions and loyalties, neither would a French or German historian teaching World War II hesitate to contribute based on their nationality. Absolutely, self-criticism and an unwavering commitment to truth are essential. However, feelings of helplessness and inferiority have no place here! I would further emphasize that in the realm of Jewish Studies, the pertinent question is not about the spiritual and experiential capacity of a non-Jew to teach but solely about their academic and professional competence.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The imitation of non-Jewish scholarship, which, due to our collective failings, often seems to be the core of scholarship, deserves special consideration. It is worth noting that Ahad Ha‘am has already cautioned against this:

There is one academic realm entirely our own, both in name and content – *Wissenschaft des Judentums*. In this field, we certainly should have infused our spirit and unearthed the inherent strength within us. Yet what do we actually see? We find ourselves eclipsed by scholars from other nations, with Jewish scholars treading in the footsteps of their non-Jewish counterparts, strictly adhering to their rules and methods of investigation even where there is much to question about them… In essence, *Wissenschaft des Judentums* remains enslaved to foreign influence.[[26]](#footnote-26)

A final remark on the matter of subjectivity versus objectivity: Scholars openly loyal to their research subjects, scholars devoted to Judaism, akin to American historians staunchly devoted to the United States and its ideals, have from time to time found themselves challenged by critics who accuse them of lacking objectivity and argue that their critical faculties have been dulled by affection. It is a notion we often encounter: “Love distorts reality,” fostering apologetics and excessive idealism. And indeed, there is truth to that. However, it is equally important to recognize that “hatred distorts reality” as well, breeding polemics and character distortion.

Another issue arises from the absence of a cohesive strategy for establishing academic chairs in the United States. While very significant developments have occurred in this area in recent years, they have often unfolded without careful design. Consequently, there is disorder and lack of coordination. First of all, there is a shortage of qualified individuals deserving of these positions. Not everyone who dons academic robes is necessarily deserving. Furthermore, chairs for Jewish Studies are scattered across various departments, including Semitic studies, Middle Eastern studies, history, linguistics, sociology, philosophy, history of religion, comparative religion, classical studies, and similar fields. As we alluded to above, the academic framework significantly shapes the direction and content of research. Scholars often aim to underscore the similarities between their work and that of their colleagues. Moreover, alongside fortuitous organizational factors, another issue looms large, potentially yielding devastating consequences. There are no professional standards in the appointment of professors, leading to the possibility of a sociologist, anthropologist, Orientalist, or expert in unrelated fields like the history of socialism or modern revolutionary movements being appointed to chairs designated for Jewish Studies.   
It is easy to offer justifications for such appointments, as Judaism indeed engages in dialogue and interaction with these areas. They are of interest precisely because they possess the crucial quality that often determines academic life and death: relevance. However, this issue becomes particularly acute when there is not a large team of academics and scholars involved. Frequently, just one, two, or three individuals are tasked with representing an entire world of study. Students who lack proper mentorship and maturity in their field of study are always at risk of causing harm, especially in situations like this. In Talmudic terms, “If Rebbi did not teach it, how could [his student] Rabbi Ḥiyya know it?” That is why it is crucial to ensure that the initial opportunities are afforded to those capable and qualified to instruct and research in the areas of Talmudic studies or the Middle Ages, which are central to Jewish Studies. Assimilating Jewish Studies or burying them within other fields should not be an option.

We must guard against the dilettante manner in which Jewish sources and ideas sometimes are approached. As we have noted, numerous Jews now hold prominent professorial positions in major universities across all fields, even in areas of study that were entirely devoid of Jewish presence thirty years ago. No one could have imagined, for instance, that a Jewish professor would have a foothold in English literature. This landscape has undergone a profound transformation. One consequence is that intellectuals from this milieu now show interest in a wide array of Jewish topics, encompassing significant and profound aspects of Jewish history and Judaism. The general reader often struggles to discern between amateurish ventures and serious scholarly research. For many, it is challenging to ascertain whether their understanding of the Jewish sources is sound. Skilled writers with robust academic backgrounds but without a solid grounding in foundational Jewish Studies often delve into topics such as Jewish law and philosophy. Their works, often featured in reputable journals, attest to this. The market is inundated with works purportedly aimed at disseminating the essence of Judaism. Sadly, many of these attempts to rectify misconceptions end up perpetuating them instead. In such cases, it would have been preferable for these works not to exist at all. Of course, non-Jewish writers also play a role in spreading inaccuracies, offering distorted assessments and unsubstantiated claims.

When Bialik established the journal *Dvir* in 1923, he expressed, among other sentiments: “The day when the vitality of Hebrew creativity was displaced from its native soil and settled permanently in foreign tongues is more grievous, in my estimation, than the combined destruction of both Temples.” It is difficult to assess the contemporary significance of linguistic choices on the substance and essence of academic research. Undoubtedly, language plays a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of future scholarship. The Hebrew language, in and of itself, imbues scholarship with a distinctive depth. Therefore, it is imperative to acknowledge this issue as problematic.[[27]](#footnote-27)

My discussion has only focused on some of the issues prevalent in contemporary academic Jewish Studies. It is evident that alongside these concerns lies a significant educational imperative, akin to the insights shared by Prof. Dushkin in his presentation, although this warrants separate consideration. Within university settings, one encounters a diverse educational landscape, spanning from introductory studies of the *aleph-bet* – where, notably, in locales such as the United States, France, and England, initial interest often centers on Hebrew language acquisition – to rigorous, advanced courses encompassing Jewish history, *halakhah*, philosophy, Kabbalah, Hebrew literature, etc. In many universities, the focus remains primarily on the study of Judaism rather than academic Jewish Studies, a distinction often influenced by the priorities of the Jewish establishment, motivated by its own set of considerations. Delving into this topic would lead us elsewhere and necessitate examination of the reciprocal influence and mutual relations between universities, secondary schools, and Jewish institutions across the board. Moreover, it raises questions about the role of the Jewish community, which derives honor and esteem from the representation of Judaism within academia.

We still have a long way to go, both in Israel and abroad, before reaching the utopian ideal envisioned by the Sages: “They sought from Dan to Beersheba and did not find an unlearned person” (Sanhedrin 94b). Nevertheless, university Jewish Studies programs, offering introductory and survey courses to undergraduate students, provide a crucial gateway, however narrow, into the hearts and minds of many young individuals who might otherwise remain disconnected from their heritage. The significance of this group should not be underestimated. Indeed, it warrants focused discussion, particularly regarding its impact on the pursuit of “pure scholarship,” but we cannot explore this topic further within the present context.

Additionally, the dynamic between *yeshivot* and universities demands reevaluation, recognizing that in the absence of a reservoir of *Bnei Torah*,well-trained in Rabbinic literature – the scholarly heirs of Jewish tradition – the loss would exceed the gain. While scientific pursuits offer valuable insights, they cannot supplant the foundational knowledge of Judaism. Philosophical and pseudo-philosophical perspectives should not serve as a veneer for ignorance.

To conclude, the evolution of Jewish Studies can be encapsulated by the teaching: “By your name, they shall call you, and in your place, they shall seat you, and from your own, they shall give you” (Yoma 38a). The fulfillment of the first part has occurred; the realization of the latter part hinges upon the actions and dedication of those who occupy these positions.

1. I did not have the opportunity to distill these orally-expressed thoughts into the formal structure of an essay. Therefore, they retain their conversational quality, augmented by some additional commentary. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Different scholars have weighed in regarding this name change and its significance. See, for example, Jekuthiel Ginsburg, “Ḥokhmat Yisrael ve-Hamada Ha’ivri,” *Miklat* 1, 1 (New York, Tishrei-Kislev 5680), 102-113; Aaron Zev Eshkoli, “Ḥokhmat Yisrael u-Mada’ei Hayahadut,” *Sedarim: Me’asef Soferei Eretz Yisrael*, Tel Aviv 5702, 466-475. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. George Foot Moore, “Christian Writers on Judaism,” *Harvard Theological Review*, 14 (1921), 197-254; Lou H. Silberman, “Judaism and the Christian Theologian,” *Journal of Religion*, 37 (1957), 246-253. It should be noted that Moore played a decisive role in establishing the chair at Harvard.

   [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. See Nicholas Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, Cleveland: World Publication Co., 1962, 82 ff.; Friedrich Heer, *The Medieval World*, New York: New American Library, 1963, 312. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Dubnow: Nationalism and History*, ed. K. Pinson, Cleveland: World Publication Co., 1958, 267 ff. See also Guido Kisch, “Research in Medieval Legal History of the Jews,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, *6* (1934-1935), 248. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Gavin Langmuir, “Judei Nostri and the Beginning of Capetian Legislation,” *Traditio*, 16 (1960), 203-239. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Iggerot Harambam, ed. Yitzhak Shilat, p. 502 Ma’aliiyot Publishing 1988 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Thorstein Veblen, “The Intellectual Pre-eminence of Jews in Modern Europe,” *American Social Thought*, ed. Ray Ginger, New York: Hill and Wang, 1961, 35, 38-39. The essay concludes with a resolute condemnation of Zionism, rooted in its perceived aspiration for separation. Veblen expresses concern that if this ambition is realized, it may lead to a drying up of the wellspring of Jews who abandon their traditions and talented Jews may retreat to insular pursuits such as “Talmudic studies,” depriving the world of their potential contributions. See also Isaac Deutscher, *The Non-Jewish Jew*, London: Oxford University Press, 1968, 25-41. This Jewish individual, who was raised in the nurturing embrace of a sincerely religious Polish Jewry, immersed himself in the teachings of Gur Hasidism before embracing Marxism with fervor – an embodiment of Veblen’s stance. Deutscher extols figures such as Spinoza, Heine, Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Freud as exemplars of the Jewish nation and the foremost proponents of “original Judaism.” It is evident, without the need for extensive psychological analysis, that he harbors a hope to be counted among these individuals. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Leon Roth, *Great Jewish Books*, London: Jewish Book Council, 1955, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Responsa, R. Elijah Mizrachi*, Jerusalem 5697, Siman 57, p. 176. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Harry A. Wolfson, “Solomon Pappenheim on Time and Space and His Relation to Locke and Kant,” *Israel Abrahams Memorial Volume*, Vienna 1927, 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Alexander Marx, “The Aim and Tasks of Jewish Historiography,” *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, 26 (1918), 11-32. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Harry A. Wolfson. “The Needs of Jewish Scholarship in America,” *Menorah Journal*, 7 (1921), 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Edmund Wilson, “The Need for Judaic Studies,” *A Piece of My Mind*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1958, 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ignac Goldziher Ignac Goldziher, “The Spanish Arabs and Islam,” *The Muslim World*, 8 (1963) 5-18ff.; reprinted: idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1, Hildesheim: G. Olms, 1967. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. R. Joseph Ibn Kaspi, “Sefer Hamussar,” *Hebrew Ethical Wills*, ed. Israel Abrahams, 1, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1926, 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See: Eliezer Meir Lipschuetz, *Rashi*, Jerusalem 5726, p. 11: “There are many scholars who tend to prioritize literary expressions found in other cultures because they find established standards against which they can measure these literary endeavors. These standards, which are both methodical and creative, are ingrained in their consciousness and influence their perception of literature without conscious awareness. This is why philosophy and poetry have traditionally held significant positions in our literary history, while original spiritual works from our own culture – such as that emanating from French Jewry – may not be viewed with the same importance; it did not occur to these scholars that fields which uniquely characterize our culture offer the most powerful embodiment of the national spirit.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. See, for example, Isaac Eisenstein-Barzilay, “The Treatment of the Jewish Religion in the Literature of the Berlin Haskalah,” *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 24 (1955), 46-47; see above, Chapter 18, n.2 and Chapter 19, p. 440. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. T.S. Eliot, *Notes Toward the Definition of Culture*, London: Faber and Faber, 1948, 129. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Gilbert Murray, *An Unfinished Autobiography*, ed. Jean Smith and Arnold Toynbee, London: Allen & Unwin, 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See, for example, George L. Burr, “How the Middle Ages Got Their Name,” *American Historical Review*, 20 (1914-1915), 813ff.; Theodore E. Mommsen, “Petrarch’s Conception of the Dark Ages,” *Spectrum*, 17 (1942), 226-242; Wallace K. Ferguson, *The Renaissance in Historical Thought*, Cambridge: Houghton Mifflin, 1948. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See, for example, the symposium *Ba’ayat Ḥalukatan Shel Toldot Yisrael Letekufot Behistoriografyah Hayehudit*, Proceedings of the World Congress of Jewish Studies, Jerusalem 5727, 47-56, Participants: B. Mazar, B. Dinur, Y. Baer, R. Mahler. [Accessible online at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23514455>]. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Gedaliah Alon, “Yeshivot Lita,” *Meḥkarim Betoldot Yisrael*, Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hame’uḥad, 5717, Vol. I, 5. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. “Mitokh Hirhurim Al Ḥokhmat Yisrael,” *Lu’aḥ Ha’aretz*, 5705; Reprinted in *Gershom Scholem, Devarim B’go: Pirkei Morashah U’teḥiyah*, ed. Avraham Shapira, Vol. 2, Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 5736, 385-403. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Wilson (ibid, n. 13), p. 152: “Jewish subjects have a way of becoming denatured when they pass through non-Jewish hands.” [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. “Teḥiyat Haru’aḥ,” *Kol Kitvei Aḥad Ha’am*, Tel Aviv: Dvir, 5710, 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. When Professor Israel Davidson undertook the task of compiling and publishing the treasures of *piyyut* and poetry from the *Genizah* that had made their way to New York, he encountered a linguistic quandary: Should he compose the introductions in English, as he initially favored, or in Hebrew? Ultimately, he concluded that there was little value in writing in English. See *Ginzei Schechter*, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 5688, 3; “Piyyutim Ve’shirim Min Hagenizah Shebemizrayim.” [↑](#footnote-ref-27)