

## BOOKS

Daniel Blatman (ed.)

***Historia Mitnageshet veKiyum Meshutaf: Perspektivot Hadashot al haMifgash haYehudi Polani***

[Conflicting Histories and Coexistence: New Perspectives on the Jewish-Polish Encounter]

Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2014. 404 pp.

In September of 1984, scholars from Israel, Poland and other Western countries gathered in Oxford. The aim of this gathering was an international conference dedicated to Polish-Jewish studies. The conference put an end to a relatively long period of time in which there were no official connections between Israeli and Polish academic centers. Following this conference, in 1986, a book was published that included some of the papers that had been presented there.<sup>1</sup> Due to considerations of space, several literary, ethnographic and historical papers were not included in the volume.<sup>2</sup>

The readers of *Gal-Ed* are likely aware of the impact that the Oxford conference and its subsequent volume had on the development of Polish-Jewish studies in Israel, Poland and other countries in the last three decades. Following the conference, there was a conspicuous burgeoning of academic works dedicated to Polish-Jewish studies, even though the first volume of the *Gal-Ed* periodical was in fact already published in 1973. The periodical *Polin*, whose editor Antony Polonsky was behind the gathering in Oxford, began its publication in 1986.<sup>3</sup> Until the end of

1 Chimen Abramsky, Maciej Jachimczyk and Antony Polonsky (eds.), *The Jews in Poland*, Basil Blackwell Ltd., Oxford 1986.

2 Ibid, preface.

3 The statement from the editors that opened the first volume of *Polin* articulated quite well the fact that a new area in the development of the field had begun: "Statement

the 1980s, a series of international conferences were held, such as the one that took place at Brandeis University at the end of the 1980s and was dedicated to the Jews of Poland between the Two World Wars.<sup>4</sup> In addition, various collaborative projects between Israeli and Polish scholars began to be undertaken, as did academic cooperation between Israeli and Polish academic institutions.

The significant contribution made by the 1984 Oxford conference to the field of Polish-Jewish studies was recognized at the academic gathering that was held in March 2009 at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Under the title “Between Coexistence and Divorce: 25 Years of Research on the History and Culture of Polish Jewry and Polish-Jewish Relations,” the conference brought together scholars from Poland, Lithuania, Germany, France, Italy, the U.S., Canada and Israel. The book at the focus of this review was published in 2014, and includes several papers that were presented in the March 2009 conference in Jerusalem, along with several additional papers written by distinguished scholars who did not participate in the conference. However, the 2009 conference and the book that was published in 2014 were not only designed to honor the Oxford conference, but rather also marked the twenty-five years that had passed since that gathering.

In the introduction to *The Jews of Poland* (1986), the editors clarify that the essays in their book describe the establishment, flourishing and destruction of one of the most important Jewish communities in the world.<sup>5</sup> However, at the same time they point out that

The book does not provide a full account of the history of the Jews in Poland. The individual contributors were all encouraged to focus on specific themes and concentrate primarily on the relationship of the Jews to the other people, in the first instance, the Poles, with whom they lived sometimes in harmony, sometimes in conflict.<sup>6</sup>

from the Editors,” *Polin*, a Journal of Polish-Jewish Studies, Volume 1, 1986, 1-2. Of course, it is no accident that the same person who was among the organizers of the gathering in Oxford is the editor of *Polin* — Antony Polonsky.

4 Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz and Chone Shmeruk, *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, University Press of New England, 1989.

5 *The Jews of Poland*, 1.

6 *Ibid.*, 2.

As can be understood from the title of the book *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf* (*Conflicting Histories and Coexistence: New Perspectives on the Jewish-Polish Encounter*), published in 2014, Daniel Blatman, the book's editor, is not interested in presenting a panoramic overview of Polish Jewry. Rather, the aim of the volume is to focus on a single angle, namely, mutual Polish-Jewish existence.<sup>7</sup> Over nearly a millennium during which Poles and Jews lived in close proximity, the two ethnic groups influenced each other. But at the same time, conflicts and hostilities arose in this long and complicated mutual existence.<sup>8</sup> According to Blatman, this angle is not always afforded proper treatment, and when various studies do refer to this side of the story, it is presented in an apologetic manner.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the apologetic approach is evident in quite a few scholarly works. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to argue that the complex Jewish-Polish mutual existence is not presented in a non-apologetic way. Just looking at the different volumes of this literary journal — *Gal-Ed* — one can find a relatively large number of references to this issue that do not necessarily take an apologetic approach.<sup>10</sup>

In the book's introduction, Blatman mentions additional challenges of which scholars who are interested in understanding the mutual existence of Jews and Poles should be aware. The first challenge is one that Gershon Hundert already drew our attention to in his book published in 2006: how to write the history of Polish Jewry before 1939 without the shadow of the Holocaust.<sup>11</sup> The second challenge is how to create mutual (Jewish and

7 The English translation of the title: *Conflicting Histories and Coexistence: New Perspectives on the Jewish-Polish Encounter*.

8 Daniel Blatman, introduction, *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 12-13.

9 Ibid.

10 Jacek Krochmal, "Hayahasim bein ha'ironim ve'hakenessiya be'Przemyśl, 1559-1772," *Gal-Ed* XV-XVI, 15-35, Havi Ben Sasson Dreifuss, "Eleh she'al ezratam hayeta lanu ha'zekhut lismokh: yahasim bein Yehudim le'Polanim bereshit Milhemet Ha'olam Ha'sheniya," *Gal-Ed* 21, 2007, 49-76, Judith Kalik, "Economic Relations between the Catholic Church and the Jews in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," *Gal-Ed* 23, 2012, 15-37, Scott Ury & Theodore R. Weeks, "O Brother Where Are You? The Search for Interethnic Solidarity in the Late Imperial Era," *Gal-Ed* 23 2012, 97-130.

11 Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 4; *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 12-13.

Polish) historical memory, despite the violence and hostility that were part of the coexistence of Jews and Poles.<sup>12</sup>

The attempt by *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf* to meet the first challenge is manifest in the way that the book is constructed. It is not organized by chronologically periodization, but rather according to four themes: Poland and the Jews — the legal status and local interactions;<sup>13</sup> the mutual influence in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish writings;<sup>14</sup> stereotypes and hostility — anti-Semitism and the Holocaust;<sup>15</sup> and historiography and memory.<sup>16</sup> With this structure, the book articulates what Hundert defines as a “distorting prism impeding our vision of what came before without the shadow of the Holocaust.”<sup>17</sup>

Blatman can thereby present a continuity in Jewish-Polish encounters through different periods of time. This construction may encourage readers to wonder whether there are links between things that happened in the early modern period and later developments; whether legal decisions made in the early period had any implications for the issues discussed in Marcus Silber’s article regarding the sense of belonging that Jews had to the place they had lived over a relatively long period;<sup>18</sup> or whether the early political reforms, which are at the center of Marcin Wodziński’s article, had any effect on the non-Jewish majority’s rejection of the Jewish minority that developed over the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>19</sup> The article by Hanna Węgrzynek, which is also part of this section, makes us wonder whether stereotypes against Jews that were developed in early periods affected later Polish anti-Semitic views and perhaps had an impact on the decisions of those Poles who refused to help Jews who were their friends and neighbors during the Holocaust, an issue which is discussed in

12 *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 13.

13 *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, First Part; 25-119.

14 *Ibid.*, 119-217.

15 *Ibid.*, 217-319.

16 *Ibid.*, 319-394.

17 Gershon Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 4.

18 Marcus Silber, “Ezrahut ambivalentit, havnayata shel hishtaychut hayehudim le’polin hamithava 1915-1918,” 79-100.

19 Marcin Wodziński, “Tikkun ve Harhaka, Hazonot hareforma shel hayehudim beshilhei tekufat ha-haskala,” 61-79.

Grzegorz Krzywiec's article.<sup>20</sup>

The only part of the book in which one can find partial continuity is that which deals with historiography. The articles by Rachel Manekin and David Engel, which are dedicated to historiography, deal with the Galician roots of the historiographical writings of Polish Jewry and the Polish roots of the historiographical approach of Shalom Salo Baron. Indeed, the phrase "Polish roots" appears in the titles of both articles. However, Manekin and Engel examine different angles regarding the interactions between the various schools of Polish historiographical writing and the influence they had on early Jewish historians and on Baron, who is most often placed in the Jewish-American environment.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, the absence of continuity in this section of the book is not very crucial, because the introduction contains a relatively broad reference to the development of Jewish-Polish historiography in different geographical centers over the years.<sup>22</sup>

The structure of the book also helps to meet the second challenge — to create mutual (Jewish and Polish) historical memory despite the complications of the mutual Jewish and Polish existence, by giving us an opportunity to reexamine the different directions in which research in Israel and Poland respectively has developed over the past 30 years.

Almost twenty years ago, Moshe Rosman pointed out the changes that have occurred regarding the spectrum of topics and the emergence of a new cadre of scholars in Poland, Israel and other Western countries.<sup>23</sup> The list of contributors to this book, as well as the sources upon which they base their research, represents the developments that occurred after 1995.<sup>24</sup>

20 Hanna Węgrzynek, "Minhagim refuiim ba'et ha'hadasha ha'mukdemet be'Polin ve'hashpaatam al alilot ha'dam," 217-240; Grzegorz Krzywiec, "Antishemiyut millenarit ba'masoret ha'Polanit: ha'mikre shel Roman Dmowski," 241-260; Daniel Blatman, "Hitbonnenut oynet, hitbonnenut koevet: itonut ha'mahteret ha'Polanit ve'ha'Yehudit ve'goral Ha'Yehudim," 275-299.

21 Rachel Manekin, "Ha-shorashim ha-galitsiyanim shel ha-historiografia shel Yehudei Polin," 319-331; and David Engel, "Shlilat habakhyanut bemishnato shel Shalom (Salo) Baron: hashorashim hapolaniim," 332-345.

22 Daniel Blatman, introduction, *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 9-12.

23 Moshe Rosman, "Historiografia shel Yehudei Polin, 1945-1995," Israel Bartal & Israel Gutman, *Kiyum veshever II Yehudei Polin le'dorotam*, Jerusalem 2001, 697-725.

24 The year in which Rosman ends his review of the changes that have occurred in the field.

Israeli scholars are not, as Rosman pointed out in 1995, “former Poles,” that is, scholars who were born and educated in Poland and immigrated to the State of Israel. Nor are they native-born Israelis whose academic research is based mostly on Jewish sources, though the spectrum of topics they are interested in studying concerns the intellectual and religious life of Polish Jewry.<sup>25</sup> Israeli contributors to this book such as Marcos Silber, Havi Dreifuss, Nathan Cohen, and the editor of the book, Daniel Blatman, do not base their research only on Jewish sources. Their studies engage with a relatively wide spectrum of topics. They do not examine the topics and sources only via a Zionist lens. A similar change can also be discerned in the works of the Polish contributors to this book. Ewa Geller, Aleksandra Geller, Marcin Wodziński, Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, and Eugenia Prokop Janiec do not base their scholarly works only on Polish sources, but also use Yiddish and Hebrew sources.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, however, in this volume too there is still a residue of the dichotomy that prevailed before the 1990s, where Polish scholars based their researches mostly on Polish sources, while Israeli scholars based their studies on Jewish sources. In Adam Kaźmierczyk’s article, the author asks a significant question, namely whether conversion was significant in the sixteenth-eighteenth centuries.<sup>27</sup> However he provides only a partial answer, not only because, as he points out himself, regarding certain aspects we don’t have enough information, but also because Kaźmierczyk bases his research only on Polish sources.

In this volume, presenting only one side of the mutual Polish-Jewish existence is not limited only to scholars who use only one kind of sources (Jewish or Polish). In his fascinating article, Jacek Leociak presents the design and construction of the Muranów neighborhood in Warsaw upon the destruction of the Ghetto. Based on a rich corpus of sources, Leociak shows how the building of the proletarian neighborhood, which articulated the socialist ideology and socialist urban planning, was in fact

25 Ibid., 15-717.

26 Although Wodziński’s article in this volume is on the reform of the Jewish community at the time of the Polish Enlightenment, Wodziński’s books on Hasidism are considered very influential and central to the contemporary research on Hasidism in Poland and beyond.

27 Adam Kaźmierczyk, “Hamarat dat bekerev yehudim ba-meot ha-17 ve ha-18, ha’im zo tofaa mashmaitit?”, 45-61.

an attempt to erase any trace of the Ghetto,<sup>28</sup> even though, as Leociak does mention in his article, even before the opening of the Polin museum in this neighborhood, the Ghetto and Jewish life before World War II were present in this part of the city in different ways. Nevertheless, Leociak's article disregards a fundamental development that happened at around the time the Muranów neighborhood was built. After all, not far away in the same city, preparations to reconstruct the Stare Miasto had begun. I believe that, if the professional and public discussions regarding the construction of the Muranów neighborhood were accompanied by the discussions regarding the reconstruction of the Stare Miasto, it would add an important dimension not only to the article itself, but more generally regarding the issue of how the shadow of the mutual Jewish-Polish life before and during World War II still lay over different parts of Warsaw after the war.

Despite these exceptions, more than a few articles in this volume blur the old dichotomy that prevailed between Polish and Israeli scholarly works. Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska examines how the town of Kazimierz Dolny (Kuzmir in Yiddish) is represented in Polish and Yiddish literature.<sup>29</sup> Blatman looks at Jewish and Polish underground periodicals that were published in Warsaw during World War II.<sup>30</sup> Thanks to these articles, this volume articulates quite well the entire process that is described in the introduction regarding developments mostly in Israel and Poland during the last 30 years, leading to the study of Polish-Jewish relations from an entirely integrative perspective.<sup>31</sup> And Havi Dreifuss's observation that until the 1980s two separate "national" narratives were evident, regarding the study of Polish-Jewish relations during World War II, while during the last few years scholarly tendencies have become globalized, can refer not only to World War II but also to other time periods.<sup>32</sup>

28 Jacek Leociak, "Shechunat Muranów be-varsha kemerhav ghetto le'sheavar: rik, tichnun ironi ve'hermenoytika," 346-371.

29 Monika Adamczyk-Garbowska, "Polani tipusi, Yehudi tipusi: Kazimierz Dolny keav tipus shel ha-shtetl," 134-157.

30 Daniel Blatman, "Hitbonnenut oynet, hitbonnenut koevet: itonut ha'mahteret ha'Polanit ve'ha'Yehudit ve'goral Ha'Yehudim," 275-299.

31 Blatman, Introduction, *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 10.

32 Havi Dreifuss, "Hatzala vehitnaklut le'yehudim be'polin bi'tekufat ha'shoa: behina historiografit," 309.

Several of the contributors to this volume are fully aware of the circumstances behind the publication of this volume. In their articles one finds references to the developments in the field. Some even try to link their works to other researches. This is the case regarding Yvonne Kleinmann's article, which opens this volume.<sup>33</sup> Kleinmann examines several issues regarding the privileges awarded Jews, using the town Rzeszów as a case study. She shows how privileges that were given to the Jews in Rzeszów mirrored the interactions between different restricted groups and sectors that lived in the city, as the local mutual political culture.<sup>34</sup> The privileges that were granted to Jews and others in Rzeszów are examined by Kleinmann also as regards other scholarly works, such as by Jacob Goldberg and Adam Teller.

The body of scholarly works in this volume not only represents the impressive and significant developments in Polish-Jewish studies in the last 30 years, but also follows in the footsteps of some of the scholars who contributed to the 1986 volume, as well as others who made their first steps in the academic world at around that time (the 1980s). As noted above, Blatman in his introduction mentions Gershon Hundert, who also contributed to the 1986 volume.<sup>35</sup> He also explains how Moshe Rosman's observation on Jewish history<sup>36</sup> influenced the concept of this volume.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, the scholarly approach of several of the contributors was influenced by the work of those who stood "beside the cradle" of the field in the 1980s, in much the same way that the article by Ezra Mendelsohn (1940-2015), which was published in the 1986 volume, influenced the study of Polish Jewry in the interwar period.<sup>38</sup>

33 Yvonne Kleinmann, "Meshilut ve'Heteorgeniut Datit Ba'et Ha'hadasha ha'mukdemet: Rzeszów ke'mikre mivhan besugyat maamadam hamishpati shel notzrim ve'yehudim," 25-45.

34 Ibid, 43.

35 Gershon Hundert, "The Implications of Jewish economic activities for Christian-Jewish relations in the Polish Commonwealth," *The Jews in Poland*, 55-64.

36 Murray (Moshe) Rosman, *How Jewish is Jewish History?*, Oxford Litman 2007.

37 Blatman, Introduction, *Historia Mitnageshet ve Kiyum Meshutaf*, 13.

38 Ezra Mendelsohn, "Interwar Poland: Good for the Jews or Bad for the Jews?," *The Jews in Poland*; 130-140. On Mendelsohn's work, see: Scott Ury, "Beikvot Mendelsohn: madrikh ezra le'hokrei politika yehudit modernit," *Gal-Ed* 25 2017, 188-195.



We can also find traces of Jacob Goldberg (1924-2011) and Chone Shmeruk (1921-1947) in this volume.<sup>39</sup> Both Goldberg and Shmeruk influenced the field in a variety of ways. Goldberg's famous statement — "There is no history of Poland without the history of the Jews and there is no history of the Jews without the history of Poland"<sup>40</sup> — is echoed in several articles of this volume.<sup>41</sup> As regards Shmeruk, I believe that his article on the trilingual Jewish culture, which was published in another valuable volume dedicated to the Jews of Poland, inspired several contributors to this volume.<sup>42</sup> This influence is apparent not only in integrated studies that examine the trilingual Jewish culture, but also in the attempts to examine cultural, intellectual and literary interactions between Poles and Jews. For example, Aleksandra Geller compares the Polish weekly periodical *Wiadomości Literackie* and the Yiddish periodical *Literarische Bleter*; Nathan Cohen studies the Polish language reading habits of young Jewish people; and Shoshana Ronen presents the ways in which Hebrew periodicals that were published in *fin de siècle* Warsaw were influenced by their Polish intellectual surroundings.<sup>43</sup> At the same time, there are other

- 39 Jacob Goldberg, "The Privileges Granted to Jewish Communities of the Polish Commonwealth as a Stabilizing Factor in Jewish Support," *The Jews in Poland*, 31-55. Shmeruk's work is not included in this volume, since literary and ethnographic themes were not included in it. Nevertheless, Shmeruk's contributions to the developments of the 1980s, mostly to renewing the relations between Israeli and Polish scholars, are quite known and very important.
- 40 "A speech delivered on the Occasion of his Being Awarded the Title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the University of Warsaw," in Adam Teller (ed.), *Studies in the History of the Jews in Old Poland in Honor of Jacob Goldbery*, Scripta Hierosolymitana 38 (1998), 13.
- 41 Yvonne Kleinmann, "Meshilut ve'Heteorgenit Datit Ba-et Hachadasha hamukdemet: Rzeszów ke'mikre mivhan besugyat maamadam hamishpati shel notzrim ve'yehudim," 25-45; Hanna Kozińska Witt, "Hamimshal ha-atzmi ve'haironi ve'hayehudim ba'republica hasheniya 1918-1939: hadugma shel Poznań ve'Kraków," 100-119; Grzegorz Krzywiec, "Antishemiyut millenarit ba'masoret ha'Polanit: ha'mikre shel Roman Dmowski," 241-260; Andrzej Żbikowski, "Al Yahasei Polanim-Yehudim ba-kfar Grądy Woniecko, bishenat 1942," 261-275.
- 42 Chone Shmeruk, "Hebrew-Yiddish-Polish: A Trilingual Jewish Culture," Yisrael Gutman, Ezra Mendelsohn, Jehuda Reinharz and Chone Shmeruk, *The Jews of Poland Between Two World Wars*, Hanover & London, 285-312.
- 43 Aleksandra Geller, "Shavuonim teomim? Wiadomości Literackie ve Literarische Bleter behina hashva'atit," 171-186; Nathan Cohen, "Tzeirim yehudim korim Polanit, 186-201"; Shoshana Ronen, "kitvei et ivriim be-varsha be-mifne hameot: bein ha'leumiut haivrit la'seviva hapolanit," 158-170.

contributors, such as Eugenia Prokop Janiec, who points out the necessity of looking at the field from new perspectives, and Havi Dreifuss, who in addition to reviewing the developments that have occurred in scholarly works focusing on Polish-Jewish relations during World War II, presents in her paper several new questions that need to be asked and answered.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, the volume offers a relatively broad perspective that we can use to examine the ways that Polish-Jewish relations have developed since the 1980s. It reminds us of what we know, even though we tend to forget it, mostly in challenging moments; namely, that we need to study Polish-Jewish relations not only via the lens of violence and hostility. It is true, nonetheless, that several articles have already been published in Polish or English in previous publications.<sup>45</sup> And one might wonder what the additional value of a Hebrew publication can be, given that most — if not all — of the readers of this book will be engaged with the wider academic world. Nevertheless, we certainly can look at this book as a kind of report on the field of Polish-Jewish studies. Indeed, it is an impressive report, even though it makes no attempt to present a full account of the history of the Jews in Poland.

Certainly it is not yet time to rest on our laurels. The research on one of the most important Jewish communities in the world, which made enormous contributions to the development of modern Jewish politics, Jewish culture, and Jewish religious and intellectual life, still faces several considerable challenges, and not only due to the complicated contemporary political reality. We still need to go back to study central events and process them from new scholarly angles and perspectives. There is also much to be done regarding Jewish life in Poland during the Communist era and regarding the renewal of Jewish life in the post-Communist era.

**Ela Bauer**

44 Eugenia Prokop-Janiec, “Sifrut Polanit Yehudit, perspektivot mehkariot hadashot,” 201-213; Havi Dreifuss, “Hatzala vehitnaklut le'yehudim be'polin bi'tekufat ha'shoa: behina historiografit,” 300-316.

45 Marcin Wodziński's article was published previously in English and in Polish in *Polin* 24 (2001) and *Pamiętnik Literacki* 101/4 2010. A version of Hanna Kozińska Witt's article was published in *Simon Dubnow Institut Jahrbuch* 7 (2008), and an English version of Ewa Geller's article was published in *European Judaism* 42 (2009).