

On the Middle Eastern Jewish Versions of the Humorous Trickster Tale "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" (Tale Type AT 1831 *C [IFA], "Ignorance of Holidays"): Perceived Peripherality and Ignorance, Evolved from a Stereotype of an Isolated Rural Congregation, into New World or South Asia Deprecation, or into Social Grievance

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Abstract. International folklore knows variants and subtypes of Tale Type AT 1831 *C [IFA], "Ignorance of Holidays". This article focuses on the Middle Eastern Jewish versions of this humorous trickster tale: there are not many of them (arguably because of demographic exiguity), but these versions deserve to be known. We contextualise the localised versions, by placing the material in a social and cultural context. For example, we can see that Iraqi Jews told such stories by reference to experiences in southern Asia, where many of them emigrated. By contrast, Kurdish Jews used the story to depict themselves as patient victims of some unscrupulous fund-raiser: they would rather acquiesce in his demands out of piety. We also argue that the stereotype about outlying communities, as reflected in the tales about emigrants, is akin to Old Country Jewish prejudice about Jewishness in America, well-known from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. We also consider Ashkenazi variants of the tale (from the Israel Folklore Archive, or in Agnon), and an Afghan variant.

Keywords: Trickster Tales; *Predigtschwank*; Festivals; Emigrants; Numskull towns; Middle East.

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1. Introduction

This article analyses all those versions of a particular tale-type that I managed to trace, and contestualises them: this particular type of a Fooltown story turns out to have served different uses when told within different communities. This study could have been developed into a full-fledged book, but I much prefer to make it more widely available in the present medium, and, as to its size, mid-way between usual articles and a monograph. A table of contents is provided in the beginning, so readers can easily pick and choose what to read and what to skip.

From a referee, I understand that the referee possesses further versions. This is unsurprising: with folktales, we can always expect more versions to turn up. I hope that scholar would further develop our present subject, and would discuss those further versions. I am indebted to several persons, both inside and outside academia, for making this study possible, and then what it is. The responsibility for any fault that may remain is mine alone.

This article is part of a broader project in folklore, literary studies, and the sociology of humour, and in fact, Sections 12 and 20 to 27 belong in that wider context. The broader project is concerned with Jewish and gentile humorous imaginings of incompetent communities (at one end of the spectrum of incompetence, you get Fooltown stories, but that is an extreme situation). One subclass of such narratives concerns deculturated or ignorant emigrants in their new setting.

In fact, the ascribed features of immigrant communities are sometimes unflattering not only in the host society, but also in the society in the Old Country they left. In a Jewish context, there used to be a prejudice about how religiously competent Jews in the Americas were. Here we confine ourselves to just one facet: we trace a relevant Jewish tale-type from Islamic countries, to an early stage, when the butt of the numskulls tale¹ (a gullible congregation falls victim to a trickster) were unlearned rural communities in the Old Country itself, rather than a congregation in the Americas, or in a Jewish merchant colony in India. We then bridge the discussion to other parts of the project, which contrast Jewish narratives from literature (Gerson Rosenzweig's *Tractate America*) and a film (Robert Aldrich's western comedy *The Frisco Kid*), to how non-Jewish narratives treat ignorance in the New World.

Immigration to the Americas saw the rise, in Old World Jewish communities, of the notion that New World communities tended to be ignorant in the religious culture. We trace the folkloric origin of this prejudice to an older stage, at which it targeted Old World rural Jewish communities in some areas. There is evidence from Islamic countries for a relevant

¹ Numskulls tales from Jewish folklore were discussed by Jason (1975).

tale-type, "Yom Kippur² in Tammuz". In particular, this article reconstructs the evolution of a Middle Eastern Jewish tale-type about a trickster and a gullible congregation. It is suggested that its butt were originally unlearned rural communities, in an extreme characterisation that participates of the nature of "numskull tales" (cf. Chelm tales from Yiddish folklore).

In this article, we consider a Moroccan version reported by Aharon Maman, four versions from Baghdad (of which three I heard from family members, and one I learned from Myer Samra, who heard them from his father), one version from a Lebanese source (kindly reported to me by Myer Samra), and a somewhat more elaborate version which Ratzaby found in a Middle Eastern manuscript, apparently copied in the 18th century. We then report Heda Jason's brief treatment of Tale Type AT 1831 *C [IFA], "Ignorance of Holidays", which is the one relevant. In the end, we are going to consider a version related by Kurdish Jews: it is quite revealing, in that it offers an altogether different perspective for the how the narrative is interpreted, socially and morally.

Oicotypisation emerges: in the given locale and given generation when a version of the tale was told (and as reported about one or two generation later on), there was a cultural environment (*oicotype*) whose circumstances suggested a given customisation of some *motifeme* (an abstraction of a motif) into a given actual motif. *Motifeme* is a concept introduced by Alan Dundes (1962, repr. 1975). *Oicotype* or *oikotype* or *oecotype* is a concept originally introduced by Carl Wilhelm von Sydow (1948). In Appendix A, Baghdadi Jewish kinds of oicotypisation are discussed, for two international folktales apparently not ascribed to that group in the literature. In Nissan (2011), a lengthy discussion was provided of other tales as related by Baghdadi storytellers, and method, too, was discussed at length.

In this article, I deliberately adopt an eclectic approach, combining different methodological frameworks. Sometimes, for subjects widely researched (such as the history of the Jews of Iraq or of South America) I adopt a personal approach. This may convey an impression of sporadic engagement, whereas it is a matter of maintaining a focus while tackling subjects from within a broad compass, and charting a trajectory developing our argument. It must be borne in mind that we mainly confine our analysis of the tale type considered to its occurrence among Jewish communities from Arab-speaking countries, along with Kurdistan. I therefore refrain from considering the Ashkenazi versions extant in the Israel Folktale Archives and published by Dov Noy.

2. The Gullible Congregation and the Trickster: A Moroccan Version

In the Appendix of Nissan (2001) I introduced and briefly discussed two variants of a short folktale about a gullible congregation that is misled into celebrating a major featural of the Jewish liturgical calendar on the wrong time of the year. I am now able to provide a more complete picture of which kind of variants of this tale-type are found in Middle Eastern Jewish folklore. This tale-type is somewhat related to the category of "numskull tales" — a category discussed by Heda Jason (1975) — of the kind which Yiddish folklore associates with the city of Chelm, and that therefore are known as *שפּוּרֵי חֶלְמָאָם* (*sippurei chelma'im*) in Israeli Hebrew (cf. Sec. 21 below). Yet, the tale-type we are considering is mainly about a trickster character.

The first example I gave in Nissan (2001) was based on a passage in Maman (1999), an article on Jewish vernaculars in the Maghreb (cf. our Sec. 18). For example, on p. 173, Maman discussed examples of Arabic and Hebrew loanwords in a Judaeo-Berber Passover

² Yom Kippur is the most awesome day in the Jewish liturgical calendar. It is the tenth day of the year, and is celebrated in the autumn. It a day of fast entirely spent in prayer, penitence, and confession.

Haggadah. Maman's paper also has a section on the Hebrew element in the crypto-language of traders. The following is my translation from pp. 177–178:

The crypto-language not only borrowed Hebrew words, but also reworked them, sometimes warping them, apparently to disguise their sense even *vis-à-vis* unaware Jews. The well-known song

שתוק שתוק יא חכם מאתבזיש בדבר וכו' האדו חמורים בני בקר
[fn. 141: "Shut up, shut up, o wise man!
Don't shame me about this (etc.),
these [people] are donkeys and cattle"]

which is entirely based on that crypto-language, refers according to its content to a whole community of Jewish ignoramuses, and is uttered by a shrewd Jew from outside the community, addressing another Jew who is likewise cunning but an insider, in front of the members of the community.

Maman described this in a North African context. In Nissan (2001), I signalled two versions related as jokes in the Baghdadi Jewish vernacular. These are described, here, in the following. The numskulls they feature are respectively in South America, and at a coffee house.

3. A Baghdadi Version Set in Argentina

The first Baghdadi version of the story is one I heard from an uncle of mine, Fouad Yamin-Joseph, in the 1970s or in the late 1960s, supposedly takes place in Argentina, or at any rate in South America. A Jew (presumably a Levantine, or anyway one from an Arab country) reaches a congregation which, to his amazement, is celebrating Kippur out of season. He turns to one who appears to be the rabbi or anyway the one conducting service at that congregation, and expresses his surprise by cunningly singing (in the Baghdadi pronunciation of Hebrew):

'Od lo samá 'ti — Kippúr be-θammúz!

עוד לא שמעתי — כפור בתמוז!

"I have never heard [something like that:
Yom Kippur in [the month of] Tammuz!"]

To which the man who is conducting the Yom Kippur service retorts, also singing (and again, in the Baghdadi pronunciation, which of course is the narrator's own):

Šeθóq šeθóq, kullám ḥamorím, ḥaší šellí, ḥaší šelláχ.

שתק, שתק! כלם חמורים! חצי שלי, חצי שלך!

"Shut up, Shut up! They're all asses! Half is mine, half is yours!"

In this context, we should apparently understand something like:

"OK, you've got it. I'll give you one half of what they offer".

Or, then, this refers to the fee the cantor has received for celebrating. In Nissan (2001), I had proposed this explanation:

This version of the narrative clearly belongs to the class of jokes whose locale is in the Americas, also known among Eastern European Jews (and other emigration milieux). Near Eastern Jewry located such stories in South America, as this was the target of the emigration wave of Ottoman Jews, especially of Syrians among those speaking Arabic, and itself apparently triggered by emulation of the wave of Christian emigration from Syria to Argentina, the latter wave having been encouraged as a counterpart to the East European Jewish emigration to Argentina. (Bringing members of the Eastern Churches to the Catholic continent would not only help to preserve the demographic balance among faith communities, but would moreover have a denominationally realigning, assimilating impact on the Levantine immigrants of the Eastern Churches.)

It is my present understanding that the tale-type is an old one that was apparently applied to rural congregations as its butt, but eventually was recycled for emigrant communities in their new locale.

On 28 July 2010, my uncle Edward Benjamin (Fouad's elder brother) volunteered this textually slightly different version, which he sang a little differently, but still apparently by patterning the melody after the liturgy:

Lo ra'ínu be-tammúz [quod corrige: be-θammúz] Kippurím!

לא ראינו בתמוז כפּוּרִים

"We never saw in Tammuz, [Yom] Kippur."

Šeθóq šeθóq, kullám ḥamorím.

שֶׁתֵּק, שֶׁתֵּק! כָּלֵם חֲמוּרִים

"Shut up, Shut up! They're all asses."

This version has both utterances rhyme, and more or less match each other by length, though not by metre.

4. A Baghdadi Version Set Locally: Crypto-Language Among Gentiles

Another Jewish anecdote from Baghdad which I heard from my uncle Fouad is located at some public place, perhaps a coffee-house, as a conversation is taking place among participants of which at least two are Jewish. At one point, one of them — who disagrees with something his gentile interlocutors had said — stands up (or perhaps bows or even kneels down) and utters in Hebrew:

Šeθóq šeθóq, kullám ḥamorím, ḥaší šellí, ḥaší šelláχ.

שֶׁתֵּק, שֶׁתֵּק! כָּלֵם חֲמוּרִים! חֲצִי שְׁלִי, חֲצִי שְׁלָךְ!

"Shut up, Shut up! They're all asses! Half is mine, half is yours!"

He expects somebody present who is Jewish to have understood. Next (apparently the gentile interlocutors questioned him about his behaviour), the man proceeds to explain to the people present that the hour has come for his devotions (such short devotions being commonplace in the dominant, Muslim cultural environment). Not quite credibly, as the Hebrew *kullám*

ḥamorím is somewhat intelligible to Arabic-speakers. It's poor crypto-language, then. Crypto-language is nevertheless a reality sometimes for members of given professional groups or ethnic minorities (e.g., Cardona 1990, Sec. I.3.2, pp. 132–135), or even for age-groups inside a family: see Appendix B below.

In the given context, the sense of "half is mine, half is yours" can only be understood as referring to the supposedly asinine persons present, who do not understand. Donkeys are chattel, so it makes sense that they ought to have owners. As we are going to see, however, the Hebrew utterance was just lifted from another tale, and "half is mine, half is yours" is a promise concerning ill-gained income.

This version of the tale type is rather atypical, and arguably shows a penchant for oicotypisation affected by changed times and circumstances, namely, in the context of early to mid 20th-century life inside Baghdad, as opposed to tales about people who travelled far away — itself a situation that was relevant for many 19th- and early 20th-century Iraqi Jews who travelled to India, South East Asia, or the Far East to make a living.

What is now modern Iraq was home to one of the world's oldest and most historically significant Jewish communities. Jewish settlement began during the Exile after the fall of Judaea (586 BCE), and the Babylonian Talmud was produced there during the centuries before the Islamic conquest (633–56 CE). In making their homes in the region Jews faced many challenges through the centuries as it fell under the dominion of a succession of empires: Arsacid and Sassanian Persian, Arab under the Sunni Caliphate, Shamanist and eventually Islamized Mongol, Persian again (this time, Safavid Shi'i: 1508–1534, 1623–1638), and, both before and after Safavid rule, Sunni Ottoman (1534–1623, 1638–1918). The modern borders of Iraq were defined by the British under a mandate granted them by the League of Nations after the First World War. The former Ottoman provinces of Baghdad, Basra to the south, and Mošul to the north (including Iraqi Kurdistan) were included in the new Kingdom of Iraq, and so was the emirate of Muḥámmara on the border with Iran. The Jews of Iraq spoke either their own Judaeo-Arabic dialect, or, in Kurdistan, Jewish Neo-Aramaic.

In 1920, Baghdad was home to a thriving community of 50,000 Jews. According to the 1920 census, the other religious groups in Baghdad comprised 15,000 Christians, 130,000 Sunnis, and 54,000 Shi'is, meaning that there were almost as many Jews in Baghdad, as there were Shi'is. Jews were found in all walks of life. Jewish role in commerce was more important than their numbers, and Iraq's international trade was largely in Jewish hands. Once the Kingdom of Iraq was established, the Jews of the country were eager to integrate in the new Iraqi state. Things eventually turned sour, and when in 1950 they were given the option to lose their Iraqi nationality and their assets, every 24 Iraqi Jews out of 25 chose to leave that country. Probably less than two dozen Jews remained, by 2010. Apparently there were only seven Jews in Baghdad, and their addresses, known to the U.S. embassy in Baghdad, were revealed by WikiLeaks, thus endangering their lives.

With the turn to modern education among Baghdadi Jews, which had begun in the 1860s (Yehuda 1996a, 1996b), and eventually with standard Arabic being taught at school, Iraqi Jews became increasingly capable to communicate with non-Jews in Standard Modern Arabic (the official language of the country) and augmenting their ability to communicate in its regional Iraqi variety, thus supplementing their traditional mastery of the Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic dialect (see on it, e.g., Blanc 1964a, 1964b, Mansour 1991), and their ability to understand the differently sounding Baghdadi Muslim Arabic dialect.

The latter vernacular, they would on occasion imitate by way of quotation within speech in the Jewish dialect among their own. Moreover, by the 1920s and 1930s, there were sporadic Muslim Iraqi literati capable to provide imitations of the Jewish dialect in their journalistic writings, either sympathetically, or unsympathetically.

The crucial ability to communicate in standard Iraqi Arabic across the denominational divide, certainly cemented the rising Iraqi identity among Iraqi Jews and Christians, communities that were eager to integrate.

5. A Baghdadi Version Set in India, and a Lebanese Occurrence

In an email of 30 June 2010, Myer Samra kindly volunteered this information:

Might I say that my father who grew up in Baghdad used to tell — or rather sing in the Kippur tune — the story/joke of the Kippur service in the wrong season, though his version had it set in India. I was also surprised to hear an elderly Jew who grew up in Lebanon telling/singing the same joke. The coffee-house version that you present, however, seems out of place.

The version set in India really clinches it, because the Iraqi Jews' merchant colonies in India were quite focal in Iraqi Jewish culture in Baghdad and Basra from the 18th century to c.1950. As to the occurrence of the tale-type among Lebanese Jews, it strengthens the other evidence we have about the spread of this tale-type.

In another email (6 August 2010), Dr. Samra explained:

With my father's rendition of the Kippur story, I don't recall whether he was explicit that it referred to an immigrant group in India, I understood it to represent someone coming across an indigenous Jewish and tricking them.

The attitudes, however, of the Iraqi Jew to the Iraqi emigres did include a fair amount of condescension. I did my doctoral dissertation on Iraqi Jews in Australia and was often told by those who'd not lived in the East that the people in the East were effectively the poor people from Iraq who found that their life chances improved in the East, especially on account of the largesse of the Sassoons and others on whom the poor could depend.

On the other hand, there was a similar snobbery among each of the various diaspora communities, with rich and poor members of the community living in different areas within a city, and with the elite looking at recent immigrants from Iraq as poor and uneducated.

Consider however that affluent families, too, sent their young men to India, to the Malay Peninsula, to Burma, to China's coast or to Japan, in order to further develop their families' business activities. Those families did not attach any stigma to their own members, or to those from the same social class, who went overseas. If anything, in the 1940s it was sometimes remarked in Baghdad that such youngsters who had been sent to study at some British boarding school, once they come back were sometimes affecting manners in conversation that were not deemed to be manly enough by the locals.

I would say that the coffee-house version of the tale is merely an adaptation to the oicotype of 1940s Baghdadi Jews (I think I heard it in the 1970s, or then perhaps in the late 1960s), whereas the Indian version clearly reflects the focality for Iraqi Jews (of the elite, or ones with a sustained ambition of upward social mobility) of the India trade in the 19th and early 20th century (and actually even in the 18th century and arguably even earlier). The version set in India is quite important, in that it uses the motif of dislocation: it is Jews who removed themselves far away who are imagined as being at risk of being deculturated, notwithstanding their eagerness to celebrate Yom Kippur: the most awesome day in the liturgical calendar still retains its importance for them, but they are supposedly easily fooled into thinking that their timekeeping was inadequate, and that they got the calendar wrong.

In the next two sections, we are going to first to concern ourselves with Jews of Iraqi descent in the Indian subcontinent, and then to consider the social realities of India's Jews in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and intra-Jewish relations between groups of communities. This would better enable us to consider whether the tale considered, when applied to some

locale thought to be in India, was selecting as its butt lower-class emigrants from Iraq, or instead some native Jewish group. This is also a possibility. In general, however, the destinations of emigrants from a metropolis position themselves structurally in the periphery, and therefore may become the butt of jokes about stupidity or incompetence according to a centre–edge model, which is how Christie Davies explains ethnic jokes about stupidity (e.g., Davies 2011).³

6. Considerations About Both Cultural Persistence and Acculturation of Iraqi Jews in South Asia

Iraqi Jews were important in the development of both Bombay and Calcutta, and settled in other cities in India as well. Several, though usually short-lived, Iraqi Jewish periodicals were published in India. Because of the importance of the Iraqi Jewish communities in Bombay and Calcutta especially in the 19th century, Indian lexical items abound in both the Iraqi and the East Asian varieties (discussed by Wexler 1983) of Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic (for which, see Blanc 1964a, 1964b, Mansour 1991), let alone those from India.

The large Jewish community in Karachi, numbering about two thousand, left in a hurry after a riot erupted just as Pakistan and India became independent. Many had settled in Burma, but most left for Calcutta as the Japanese army approached, during the Second World War. There were Iraqi Jewish communities in Manila and Singapore: the latter especially suffered during the Japanese occupation. There were important Iraqi Jewish communities in Hong Kong and Shanghai, and eventually some Iraqi Jews also settled in Japan, Australia, and Vancouver. Among the Iranian Jews and Muslims who settled in California especially at the time of the Islamic Revolution in Iran, a sizeable portion was of Iraqi Jewish extraction. There had been a Jewish community during colonial times in Penang, in the Malay Peninsula, a region that the British colonial imaginary had conceived of as was referred "the Golden Chersonese".⁴

There also was the occasional coincidence that enabled to familiarise some remote place. From the 19th century, there was an Iraqi Jewish community in Mandalay, Burma. Some relatives of one of my great-grandfathers had moved there. Mandalay was referred to in the vernacular (and in my family's memory) as *Mændli*. Mandali is a town in Iraq, east of Ba'quba. In Iraqi Judaeo-Arabic, the name of the town is pronounced *Mændli*. In the early 20th century, there used to be in Iraq's Mandali a Jewish community of c.350 people. A Jewish school existed in Mandali, supported by the Alliance Israélite Universelle in Paris.

There is more than one way of looking at the follow up question, namely, what happened once Iraqi Jews left Iraq. Take just one face, one that pertains to the liturgy of Iraqi Jews. Exodus from Iraq in 1950 was not the first time expatriates had to adapt to a new environment. Such a process had started at least as early as the late 18th century. In 2004, the journal *Ethnomusicology Forum* published a thematic issue devoted to the "musical outcomes of Jewish migration into Asia c. 1780–c. 1950" (Kartomi and McCredie 2004a). Out of five articles following the introductory essay (Kartomi and McCredie 2004b), three are devoted to the musical heritage of the Iraqi Jewish diaspora in southern Asia and Australia (Randhofer 2004, Manasseh 2004, Kartomi 2004), and two (Yating and Dreyfus 2004, Utz 2004) are

³ Davies (2011) also explains stupidity jokes in terms of a mind-over-matter model. That book contains a chapter entitled 'Mind over Matter: A General Theory of Jokes about the Stupid and the Canny'.

⁴ The Malay Peninsula was referred to as the Golden Chersonese in the colonial period: Rounseville Wildman's *Tales of the Malayan Coast* include, e.g., 'King Solomon's mines', 'A pig hunt on Mount Ophir', and 'In the Golden Chersonese'. Kong and Savage (1986) describe Western mental images of the Malay world in the high colonial period (c.1870 to 1940).

devoted to the music of Shanghai Jews, one of these being also about those of Iraqi background, rather than European background.

An example of acculturation is the coda to a Hebrew song of rejoicing for Simḥat Torah. Several juxtaposed Hebrew adjectives either describe in praise, or express a wish for the congregation: "Beloved; blessed; great; eminent; glorious; veteran". In Iraqi Jewish pronunciation, the Hebrew phoneme /w/ is the phonetic value [w], not [v]; /g/ between vowels is "gh" [ɣ] (a throaty *r*), not [g]; /q/ is the uvular stop [q], not the velar [k]; and /b/ is always [b], never [v]. Therefore, Manasseh (2004, p. 56) transcribes: "ahûbîm; bérûkhîm; gédolîm; déghûlîm; hadûrîm; wâthîqîm".

Then a coda follows, but it is in an Indian language (the suffix is unmistakably Indian indeed), with an English term: "paisâwâlâ; tâqadwâlâ; himmatwâlâ; gentlemen; bhâi lok", which Manasseh translates: "rich; strong; courageous; gentlemen; brothers" (*ibid.*, p. 57). "[T]his interjection gives local colour but is very unusual in the practice of the religious repertoire in Bombay" (*ibid.*, p. 59). Bear in mind that it is Simḥat Torah, hence "the buoyant character of the performance, sung with infectious enthusiasm" (*ibid.*). The coda we have quoted from Manasseh's transcription is "in Hindustani (the language spoken by many in Bombay, though the official regional language is Marathi). This is an individual addition by the singer, reflecting the surrounding circumstances, and does not appear in the printed book of song texts" (*ibid.*, p. 69, note 33). How many Jews who are not Indian would understand? Not even Iraqi Jews would. Here in London, Indian Jews and Indian non-Jews would understand, and apparently the performance is also given in London (*ibid.*, p. 59). Also Kartomi (2002) is concerned with, to say it with the title, 'Continuity and Change in the Music-Culture of the Baghdadi Jews Throughout Two Diasporas in the Colonial and post-Colonial Periods'. Myer Samra (both an ethnographer, and a member of the culture) remarked to me (email, 6 August 2010):

We in Sydney also have people including various -"wala"s in the song — I don't recall hearing a "gentleman" though. I understand "wala" to mean a person who does, sells or possesses what is in the first part of the word, so a "paisawala" is a person with lots of paisa or money; it's not an adjective but a noun.

In fact, some Iraqi Jews went to Australia via India. As to Indian names for monetary units, *ruppî* and *pēsa*, these were in use inside Iraq, along with the currency itself, from the British conquest in 1917, until Iraq's independence in 1932. A paisa is a monetary unit of India, one hundredth of a rupee.

7. Clues, and Two Competing Hypotheses for Interpretation, from Social Inter-Communal and Socioeconomic Realities, Collaboration or Rifts Between Jewish Groups in India Since the Arrival of the Baghdadi Community

Of the three major distinct Jewish communities in India, the oldest is the Jews of Cochin (Kochi) in Kerala, in southwestern India. The largest group however is the Bene Israel, traditionally dwelling in and around Bombay (Mumbai). Whereas there had been an extensively documented presence in India of Arabic-speaking Jewish traders from the Near East in the Middle Ages, and even though the Babylonian Talmud relates, from the pre-Islamic period of Mesopotamia, about the deathbed arrangements made by Rabbi Judah Hinduah (i.e., the Indian), whose slave was bequeathed to another rabbi who was present and transferred that asset while still alive so that the slave would remain Jewish — an episode about which I remarked as follows elsewhere (Nissan 2013–2014) [2014], pp. 59–60):

Elsewhere in the Babylonian Talmud, in tractate *Kiddushin* 22b, concerning how the ownership of his slave was transferred to Mar Zutra who had come on visit, Rabbi Judah the Indian (*Rav Yehuda Hindwa* / יְהוּדָה הַיְּהוּדִי) is shown on his deathbed. Mar Zutra ordered the slave to take Mar Zutra's shoes to the latter's home, and this entitled Mar Zutra (by *ḥazakah*, i.e., usucapion) to succeeding R. Judah as owner. R. Judah the Indian was a convert to Judaism, with no heirs, and who perhaps was lonely, with only his slave for company (but in medieval France, Rabbenu Tam reported a tradition according to which, R. Judah the Indian had a son, Samuel, who also converted. Cf. on p. 332 in Moshe Beer, *The Babylonian Amoraim: Aspects of Economic Life* [Hebrew], Ramat-Gan, Israel, Bar-Ilan University, 1982, 2nd edition, and the literature he cites there in n. 21). Was R. Judah the Indian actually an Indian expatriate settled in Mesopotamia? Perhaps. Or was he rather (I suggest as a possible alternative) a Mesopotamian, or an Iranian, or even an east Arabian — from the port city of Mashmahig (i.e., Bahrain) or of from Beth Qatraye or Beth Qatraya (see below) — provided he used to travel to India for trade? This is the likely reason he is ascribed a tell tale, of a kind more often associated, in the Babylonian Talmud, with Rabbah bar Bar Hana, a scholar who used to travel between the Land of Israel and Mesopotamia. "The Syriac sources tend to use the term Beth Qatraye, or Qatraya, which certainly refers to more than just modern Qatar, and may well indicate most of the west side of the Gulf" (as I learned from the doyen of Syriac studies, Sebastian Brock of the University of Oxford, in an email of 14 August 2014).

— the Iraqi Jewish community of India in modern times traces its origins to the second half of 18th century, there being new arrivals from Iraq also during the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Nathan Katz explains (2005, p. 5006):

These immigrants settled in India's port cities, especially Mumbai and Kolakata. Numbering about five thousand at their peak, they have declined to around one hundred, most all of whom are elderly. The Baghdadis played a significant role in the development of British India's ports. Beginning as jewelers and opium traders, Baghdadi entrepreneurs soon moved into textiles and shipping in Mumbai and real estate, jute, manufacturing, and tobacco in Kolakata. Replicating the Jewish experience in the United States, humble *boxwallahs* (door-to-door salespeople) settled down and became department store magnates. Of the three groups, only Bene Israel remains viable as a community.

Therefore, it is quite possible that the poorer emigrants from Iraq became the butt of the kind of tales I have been discussing in this article. Bear in mind however that there also were affluent urban Jews of Iraqi Background in India who were in assiduous contact with Jews in Iraq, also at the intellectual level, and that short-lived newspapers published by Iraqi Jews in India document a persistence of the culture.

As to the Bene Israel, in early modern encounters with Jews as well as with Christian missionaries, they gave these interlocutors of theirs the impression of clinging to vestigial observance of Jewish rites. Katz wrote (*ibid.*):

Whereas most Bene Israel live in Mumbai, the nearby Konkan coast is their spiritual home. Bene Israel Jews trace their community back to seven couples from Israel who survived a shipwreck off Navgaon in the unknown distant past. Somehow the descendants of these Jews clung to vestigial Judaic observances despite centuries of isolation. Their tenacity in maintaining the Sabbath, ritual circumcision, Jewish dietary codes, and the Hebrew Shema (the affirmation "Hear O Israel! The Lord is our G[-]d, the Lord is One") set the stage for their unlikely transformation from an anonymous oil-pressing caste in the remote Konkan into modern, urban members of the world Jewish community. This evolution occurred over two hundred years, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century.

A Kochi merchant heard rumors of a Konkani caste that rested on Saturday and circumcised their sons on the eighth day, so David Rahabi, the eldest son in Kochi's leading mercantile house, visited them. After spending time with the community, examining their dietary habits as well as their eccentric (by Hindu standards) religious observances, he concluded that they were lost Jews. Rahabi took three of them back to Kochi, where he educated them in Hebrew and the rudiments of Judaism and sent them back with the title of *kazi*, religious leader. This began a

long-standing relationship between Bene Israel and Kochi Jews; as the Bene Israel prospered, they hired Kochi Jews to be their cantors, teachers, ritual slaughterers, and scribes. Bene Israel Jews recall these events as their "first awakening."

Subsequent encounters with British and American missionaries and with the nascent Baghdadi community of Mumbai built upon the sense of Jewishness among Bene Israel. This period is known as their "second awakening." They learned Bible stories from the missionaries, and they shared their synagogues (they built their first one in Mumbai in 1796) and cemeteries with the Baghdadis. Both the British and the Baghdadis offered opportunities in Mumbai, whether in the military, railway, or civil service or in the mills and docks of the illustrious Sassoons, and Bene Israel migrated to the new, glamorous city in search of their fortunes. It did not take long until there were more Bene Israel in Mumbai than in the Konkan.

Eventually, Katz points out (*ibid.*, p. 5006), an unsavoury pattern of prejudice developed:

Gradually the Baghdadis, in an effort to become accepted by the British as "European" rather than "Indian" (a label with tangible economic benefits as well as social snobbery), came to adopt British condescension toward all things Indian, including the Bene Israel Jews, who were unmistakably Indian in both appearance and culture. This condescension became all the more ugly when the Baghdadis began to cast aspersions upon the very Jewishness of the Bene Israel.

In consideration of this, I suspect, it is justified to formulate a hypothesis competing with the one about poorer Iraqi Jewish emigrants to India becoming the butt of the tale type we have been considering, when the tale was told by Iraqi Jews who applied it to some Iraqi Jewish experience in the context of emigration, would be that Bene Israel congregations were the butt, but at present we could not know for sure. It is possible that some such persons who told the story (outside India) by applying it (if they did) to some Jews in India, did not have clear ideas about Indian Jewish circumstances, and in particular, about the difference between the two groups in India who could have been the butt: the Bene Israel, or then Iraqi Jewish "humble *boxwallahs* (door-to-door salespeople) [who] settled down" in India.

The Bene Israel of India eventually encountered both Zionism, and the Indian independence movement. Katz explains (*ibid.*, p. 5007): "On the one hand, as Jews they had internalized the longing to return to Jerusalem and rebuild Zion. On the other hand, their unhappy experiences with the Baghdadis led them to mistrust foreign Jews, and as Indians they yearned for independence from the British". Nevertheless (*ibid.*), they were fond of the British, who were their employers and often patrons, and wanted to support them as well. Mahatma Gandhi appreciated their ambivalence." He reportedly advised representatives of these native Jews to remain neutral, "because, as a small community, they would be crushed between the competing and overwhelming forces of the British Empire, Indian nationalism, and Muslim separatism" (*ibid.*).⁵ As a group, they remained neutral indeed, even though some individuals became involved. Like the Jews of Cochin, the Bene Israel mostly emigrated to Israel.

8. Reconsidering a Previous Hypothesis

⁵ Such not requiring a minority to side with one's camp brings to my mind an antecedent, namely, King David's explicitly not requiring Ittai of Gat and his entourage — who were exiles under David's protection — to accompany him and maintain their allegiance to him when he flees from Absalom. During his flight, King David was accompanied by his faithful, which included Ittai the Gittite indeed, and six hundred other men from Gat who were under Ittai's command. David tells Ittai that he is exempt from such loyalty (2 *Samuel*, 15:19): "And the King [Davvid] told Ittai the Gittite: 'Why are you going with us, you, too? Go back, and stay with the King [Absalom], because you are a foreigner, and moreover you are an exile *limqomekha*'" ('to your place', rather than 'from your place': a difficulty for the medieval exegetes).

Given Maman's witness, in Nissan (2001) I wondered "whether the original background of the joke was rather in the Maghreb, in which case, it would have been the emigration wave from Morocco (to Brazil, not Argentina) during the Rubber Boom to motivate it. Moroccan Jewish traders in the Amazon used to gather to celebrate Kippur", about which, see Susan Gilson Miller's 'Kippur on the Amazon' (1996).

[By contrast, see Avni (1991) for the history of Jewish immigration into Argentina. For Chile, see Bohm (1990). Katz (1993) is concerned with the history of the Jews of Brazil. Lesser (1991) is concerned with Jewish Colonization in Brazil's Rio Grande do Sul, in the period 1904–1925. Emigration from the Ottoman Empire to Argentina is the subject of Klich (1993, cf. 1992). Lesser (1992) discusses similar patterns of social mobility among Lebanese, Syrian, and Jewish immigrants to Brazil.]

It must be said, however, that firstly, there is no reason to believe that the variant from Morocco was necessarily applied to a community of emigrants. There were, and persist, internal tensions on mainly geographical basis inside Moroccan Jewry, that translate into prejudice against mountaineers from the interior. Moreover, there were other kinds of tension, which were of social nature and determined by social class or by the contraposition between urban and rural cultures.

Moreover, emigration from Morocco was considerably more varied than the one spurred by the rubber trade. The rubber traders used to eventually return to their town of origin, settle down and have a family; they were middle or middle-upper class. But there was also emigration for good, and, e.g., a lower-class emigration of people who didn't return, and found it difficult to attract women in their steps from their community of origin.

In Brazil there is a Moroccan-rite Jewish congregation of mixed Maghrebine and Native Amazonian stock, descended from menial workers who, not having managed to convince Jewish Moroccan women to reach them, converted native women. It is known to be a devout congregation. The outer appearance of members of the community is Native Amazonian.

Note that from 1864, there even was a Moroccan Jewish quorate congregation in Timbuktu, but that one was established by quite a competent rabbi, trader, and goldsmith, who had brought in his own family. Their descendants apparently didn't have the motivation of the founder, and they eventually converted to Islam. I cite relevant publications, as the subject is little known among scholars (Oliel 1998, Haidara 1999, Beamier 1870, Semach 1928).⁶

⁶ The Moroccan Jewish community set there in the 19th century wasn't the first Jewish community in Timbuktu. Hunwick (1985, 2006) has discussed the disappearance of Jewish communities from the southern Sahara and the Songhay empire in the 1490s. At the time Iberian Jewry was expelled from Spain and Portugal, a Muslim preacher from Tlemcen, Muḥammad al-Maghīlī, convinced Saharan towns (e.g., Sijilmessa in present-day Morocco) and then Askiya Muḥammad, king of Songhay from 1492 to 1528, to expel or kill the Jews that were found in their midst. In the region of Timbuktu, al-Maghīlī still has a reputation similar to that enjoyed by Maimonides in Jewish folklore. Al-Maghīlī's attitude to Jews was not shared, and actually opposed, by some other Muslim scholars on the Algerian coast, but the historical moment in Songhay was such that a strong king, out of both piety and greed (Leo Africanus bears witness also to the second motive), determined that Jews, or even their Muslim associates, should not be allowed again into his kingdom. Some local affluent Jews were killed.

In 1590–1594, Morocco destroyed the Songhay empire; this event is discussed by Abitbol (1992). Apparently, there was some individual of Jewish ancestry who took part in the Moroccan expedition: Tobias Green (pers. comm.) mentioned to me Portuguese Conversos (among those who had stayed in Morocco after the disaster of Alcacer-Quibir, when King Sebastian's fell and half the Portuguese nobility was taken prisoner), but I have also come across a mention of a scribe who was apparently of Moroccan Jewish extraction. Green's own research (2007, 2008) reveals the extent to which early modern Sephardic Jews or Conversos and West Africans adopted cultural features of each other upon contact in West Africa. This digression is intended to show that one should avoid hasty assumptions or too schematic characterisations of patterns of emigration from given Jewish communities. In Nissan (2010, Sec. 7c, pp. 77–78), I discussed al-Maghīlī's persecution of the Jews in a different context, and proposed an interpretation.

9. A Variant in Verse Found in a Manuscript Reported About by Ratzaby

I am now able to augment the typological repertoire of variants with a literarised version which is arguably grounded in oral lore, this lore (or quite possibly the literary text as well) antedating Near Eastern emigration to the Americas (which was relevant for one of the variants given earlier, of the tale-type we are considering).

Ratzaby (1983) provides examples of aphorisms, riddles and puns (originally oral material which underwent literarisation), he found as fillers of blank spaces in Near Eastern manuscripts, "probably copied in the eighteenth century" (p. 127 in the English part of the volume) and which are part of the collection of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. One such item, no. 10 (י) on p. 458 in the Hebrew part of the volume (vowels were added by Ratzaby), is reproduced below, followed by Ratzaby's explanation, *ibid.* on p. 460.

שְׁלוֹם עֲלֶיךָ , מֵאֲרִי הָרֶב
אֶל תְּבִישְׁנִי בְּקֶהֱל רֶב
אֱלוֹ הַחֲמוּרִים נָתַנוּ לִי עֶשְׂרִים זָהָבִים
נִחַלְקֵם בִּיכִינוּ. "עֲנֵנוּ אֲבִינוּ עֲנֵנוּ".

I propose this fairly faithful translation:

Welcome to you, o Rabbi my master,
Do not shame me in public, a large crowd.
These donkeys gave me twenty sequins (gold coins).
Let us divide them among ourselves.
[“Respond to us, Our Father, respond to us”].

Nevertheless, the rhyming structure, as well as the alternance of high and low registers, could be rendered as follows:

On <i>thee</i> let be <i>peace</i> ,	<i>luminary proud!</i>
Put <i>not</i> me to <i>shame</i> ,	<i>amid</i> this big <i>crowd!</i>
As <i>these</i> beastly <i>kids</i>	paid <i>ten</i> and ten <i>quids</i> ,
We <i>ought</i> to divide.	“From <i>us</i> do not <i>hide!</i> ”

The oral tale it preserves is unmistakable. Clearly, whoever wrote down the Hebrew doggerel (better sung than metred), did so with some pretence of literary form, with rhyme at the end of the first and second lines, another, poor one in the hemistichs of the third, and yet another rhyme in the hemistichs of the fourth line.

Pay notice to how the author alternated what the congregation would perceive as hallmarks of the service being celebrated, and the address to the visitor. The first line addresses the visitor, a rabbi, yet the congregation may assume the address is meant highwards. “Don’t shame me” is intended for the visiting rabbi, who can be expected to be on the verge of exposing the trickster. Yet, the first hemistich of the second line, *Al tevisheni* (“Don’t shame me”) sounds rather similar to the beginning of a well-known line from the High Holidays: *Na al tevishenu, na al tashivenu reikam millefanekha* (“Please, doth not shame us, Please, doth not make us go back empty-handed from Thy Presence”).

The second hemistich of the second line describes the congregation as being large, and this, too, is the normal fare of hymns for the High Holidays. The register plummets in the third line, and so does the quality of the rhyme between the two hemistichs. And finally, in

the fourth line, the first hemistich makes a proposal to the visitor: would he please let himself be corrupted? This first hemistich rhymes with a famous refrain from the High Holidays: "Respond to us, Our Father, respond to us".

Ratzaby explains, *ibid.* on p. 460 (my translation):

This epigram is based on a folktale. An ignoramus, who happened to come to a remote Jewish village, set for them a Yom Kippur not on its proper date, and even celebrated for them as a paid cantor. On that day, a Jew who was a trained rabbi happened to be in the same village. The cantor was embarrassed, and in order for the rabbi not to expose him, he interpolated into his prayer those given lines.

The English abstract of Ratzaby's article (on pp. 126–127 in the English part of the volume) points out, concerning folk literature: "Some of it has been rescued by amateur collectors who wrote down the oral material on blank pages of manuscripts or printed books and even on the inside of book covers. [...] Copyists with a literary bent styled the folk creations into literary works".

10. Jason's and Uther's Treatments of Tale-Type 1831 *C, and my Analysis of the Humour Involved

(A) Our handling of international classification here is rather sketchy; for a more refined method, see the lengthy discussion in Nissan (2011), concerning other tales. It must be understood that tale version do not match a type perfectly, but rather approximate types as being abstractions of some versions. Heda Jason (1965, 1988) has signalled the tale type we are discussing in the present paper as occurring in Near Eastern Jewish folklore. Jason (1965) introduced tale type 1831 *C, "Ignorance of Holidays", and came back to it in Jason (1988, p. 87), listing two Iraqi Jewish versions from the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA),⁷ namely: IFA 4595, and IFA 12863. While indexing tale-types from folktales collected in Iraq, Jason (1988, p. 87, tale-type 1831 *C) provides this *précis*:

- I. Country Jews do not know (a) the exact dates of the festivals and of Shabbat, (b) Jewish customs.
- II. Trickster takes advantage of this ignorance: Determines a holiday and gets payment for serving as cantor.
- III. When caught by a friend visiting the synagogue, he promises him (conversation within the prayer) half of the share.

In the *précis*, I., II., and so forth stand for the sequence within the tale, whereas (a), (b), and so on introduce variants. Cf. Soroudi (2008, p. 201, tale-type 1831 *C); she listed the given tale-case, because of the Afghan variant (IFA 1977, which we are going to discuss in Sec. 14 below). Her book covers folk-types of Jews Iran, Central Asia and Afghanistan.

In the present study, we are also going to concern ourselves with the versions of the tale stored at the Israel Folklore Archive. There is a list of the IFA variants of the tale considered in Ben-Amos (2006, Vol. 2, pp. 437–445). Ben-Amos (2006) is a book of tales selected from the IFA, and each tale is followed by a commentary; Vol. 2 comprises Jewish tales from Eastern Europe.

The Israel Folklore Archive stores folktales (the IFA has collected more than 20,000 tales). They also have humorous stories and jokes, and they use the AT indexing to sort them out, that is to say, the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson used for international folktale classification, and whose most up-to-date collection of tale types is Uther (2004).

⁷ The Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) named in honour of Dov Noy, at the University of Haifa.

(B) In Uther (Vol. 2, pp. 435–436), we find several subtypes of Tale Type 1831, or should we rather say, these are different types. The following quotation describes type 1831:

The Clergyman and Sexton at Mass. A clergyman tells his sexton ([or] deacon) that he should steal a sheep (hog) during the service. When the sexton returns, the service is still going on. The clergyman asks him, as if it were part of the liturgy, whether his theft was successful. The sexton replies, also as if it were part of the service, that he got the sheep (that his theft was discovered), but that he lost the clergyman's horse.

Or, other dialogs on other subjects are incorporated into the liturgy, e.g. between the clergyman and his cook or between the sexton and the clergyman.

This type is characterised not only by its plot, but also because: "The conversation between the clergyman and the sexton is made to sound like the words used during the service: Latin word endings are used in a Catholic mass, or word endings are taken from Orthodox liturgy, etc." (*ibid.*, p. 435). Uther cites, from the scholarly literature, versions including Finnish, Finnish-Swedish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Lappish, Danish, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Frisian, German, Austrian, Italian, Sardinian, Hungarian, Slovakian, Slovene, Serbian, Macedonian, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Albanian, Greek, Polish, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Mordvinian, Siberian, Georgian, Spanish-American, African American, Mexican, and Cuban.

Type 1831C — of which Uther (*ibid.*, p. 436) lists French, German, Maltese, Hungarian, Czech, Slovakian, and Polish versions — also involves things during improperly during the church service:

The Clergyman Takes a Bribe. A man named Secula boasts to his rich neighbour Micula ([or] Matila, Picula) that he is named in the church service when the clergyman sings, "Saecula saeculorum". The neighbor offers nine sheep to the clergyman if he will sing "in micula miculorum" instead. The organist (sexton) points out the mistake, so the clergyman gives him one of the sheep.

It must be said that recognising a personal name by wrong segmentation of the Latin wording of the church service is also instantiated in the Italian idioms *Farne quante Nemo* ("To do as disparate and outrageous things like Nemo") — *Nemo* means 'nobody', and the word occurs in sentences from the liturgy that state things nobody could do (or could do with impunity) — and *Finire come il povero Tenenosse, che lo misono in du' casse* ("To end up like poor Tenenos, the one they placed in two biers"), after "Et ne nos inducas", i.e., "Do not lead us into" (sin), whose parallel from the early morning prayers are *Ve'al tevi'enu li-ydei h□et ve-lo li-ydei 'avera ve-lo li-ydei nissayon ve-lo li-ydei vizzayon* ("And do not lead us into sin, nor into transgression, nor into temptation, nor into shame").

Of Tale Type 1831A*, Uther (*ibid.*) lists versions including Finnish, Latvian, Danish, Irish, English, French, Frisian, Italian, Sardinian, Greek, Polish, Russian, FRENCH-Canadian, Spanish-American, Mexican, as well as Judaeo-Spanish (Haboucha 1992):

Inappropriate Actions in Church. (Including the previous Type 1831A.) This miscellaneous type consists of various anecdotes in which people in church act in inappropriate ways because of ignorance. Or, the clergyman ([or the] clergyman and sexton) acts in unsuitable ways, e.g. fighting, ordering alcohol (for cooking), misunderstanding Latin phrases. Cf. Type 1678**.

The latter is about ignorance indeed (Uther 2004, Vol. 2, p. 367):

First Time in Church. A foolish boy goes to church for the first time in his life. He tells his mother what he saw: There was a man who screamed the entire time, someone walked around with a nightcap full of money, a strange contraption roared (the organ was played), etc.

Mixing up festivals is a motif that occurs in Eastern European Jewish jokes: a member of a despised profession has a binder bind for him some prayer books. On Passover, while reciting the *Haggadah*, he finds pages that really belong in the booklet for mourning on the Ninth of Av, and he reads the mournful text even though it has nothing to do with Passover. Uther (2004, p. 457) has a tale type, 1848D, that is apparently first documented in the fifteenth-century *Liber facetiarum* by Poggio. Uther cites Spanish, Italian, Russian, Byelorussian, and Ukrainian versions. Tale Type 1848D is describes as follows:

The Clergyman Forgets Easter (previously **Priest Confuses Easter and Christmas**). A clergyman who cannot read forgets to announce the holy days to his congregation. He hears that it is already Palm Sunday. When he goes back to his congregation, he tells them that Lent was shortened to one week this year because of the hard winter and that Easter will come next week.
Or, an illiterate clergyman forgets or mixes up other of the holy days of the church calendar.

In this tale, the priest is illiterate. Contrast this to the literate Jewish ignoramus, who reads the mournful liturgy of the Ninth of Av when he should joyfully recite the *Passover Haggadah* instead. This depends on the expectation of widespread literacy among Jews. Moreover, contrast Tale Type 1848D to the "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" Jewish tale type. In the latter, the officiant is not an ignoramus himself, and misleads the congregants deliberately. In the tale about the clergyman who declares that Lent was shortened, he is an ignoramus, and so are his congregants. He may be sincerely aetiologising about why Easter will come earlier than expected. Or then he is being unsincere, and trying to cover up for his failings.

Actually the story about the man who while reading the Passover *Haggadah* turns to the liturgy of the Ninth of Av is rather more akin to Tale Type 1835B* (Uther 2004, Vol. 2, p. 4448):

The Pasted Bible Leaves. During the service, a clergyman reads directly from the Bible. Two pages stick together ([or then] he turns two pages by accident) so he is suddenly in the middle of another story and reads an absurd sentence.
Or, the clergyman's hymnbook drops from the pulpit. He can sing only, "La-la-la".

Uther cites Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Danish, Dutch, Frisian, German, Hungarian, Jewish, Spanish-American, and South African variants. Moreover, it must be said that especially the Jewish Baghdadi version set in a cafe, of the Oriental Jewish tale type we have been discussing in this article, is akin to Tale Type 1824 (Uther 2004, Vol. 2, p. 428):

Parody Sermon. This miscellaneous type consists of various parodies of sermons. They range from rhymes with absurd contents to improvised sermons (delivered by the clergyman or by someone disguised as a clergyman). Some of them are critical of the authorities or of the audience.

In Italian folklore, such a tale is ascribed to the Pievano Arlotto. Uther cites Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Danish, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Frisian, German, Italian, Hungarian, Croatian, Macedonian, Bulgarian, Polish, Jewish, Syrian, Saudi Arabian, French Canadian, Mexican, and Dominican variants.

(C) I now provide an analysis of the humour in the "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" family of tales. It shares the same kind of humour as the two categories to which it belongs:

- it is a Fooltown tale (and is akin to ethnic stupidity tales: some of the variants actually have ethnic targets), so it is a tale that derides cognitive inadequacy through a creatively devised situation;

- and moreover it is a *Predigtschwank*: a prank played by a member of the clergy⁸ (even though in this case, it is an impersonator; but in the Afghan version we are going to consider, he is an actual preacher, and in the version told in Zakho, Kurdistan, he is a fund-raising emissary from Tiberiad who apparently was a rabbi).

As a *Predigtschwank*, it has a Bakhtinian Carnival element of the world turned upside down,⁹ but more in general, it is about the credulous crowd who are duped. In a *Predigtschwank* like this one, there is the incongruous juxtaposition of some illegitimate content and of the portion of the liturgy as which that illegitimate content is masquerading.

This particular tale cannot be crisply ascribed to joke: several of the versions are longer than telling a joke could afford, and even when the narration is brief enough for a joke, it is still a humorous folktale, arguably not (or not quite) a joke. The talele does have a punchline in the end, but that punchline is just a commentary made by the trickster to one who is not duped (a rival turned into an ally), and the incongruity of that utterance is because the mischievous content of that utterance is combined with the liturgy. So there is in the end something that broadly speaking one may refer to as a punchline, but unlike in jokes, in my opinion it is not a punchline that resolves the problem of how to interpret the ambiguity of a joke. Rather, the trickster's utterance is the culmination of the tale, and sums it up in a formula: a formula provided by the liturgy. The latter nature of the utterance constitutes by itself humour, in addition to the humour of the narrative previously exposing the utter inadequacy of the crowd who are the butt of the tale.

11. The Ignorant Emigrant Congregation

This section and the next one quickly sketch a contextualisation of how also Jewish communal cultures other than Arabic-speaking have been sometimes acutely aware of actual or potential deculturation among Jews in the Americas. This will be preamble to a comparison, and then to our discussion of the relation between the present paper and the broader project to which it belongs, and then we shall draw conclusions.

Michael Kramer (2008), while discussing early Jewish writers in what eventually became the United States, mentions the case from 1720, "when an Italian Jew, probably of Portuguese descent, named Judah Monis (1683–1764) arrived in Puritan Boston" (p. 538), converted, ("he is said to have continued to observe his Sabbath on Saturdays"), and "parlayed [his Jewish identity] into a respected position in Puritan society, becoming instructor of Hebrew at Harvard College and, hence, its first Jewish faculty member" (*ibid.*). Conversionist discourses by him, or at any rate ascribed to him (which is not beyond dispute) "makes him the first Jewish author in America" (*ibid.*), at least because of his Hebrew grammar, whose authorship is not disputed. Kramer further points out a paradox (*ibid.*):

⁸ Cf. the Italian idiomatic complaint: *Che scherzo da prete!* "What a priest's prank!", i.e., something that takes the victim by surprise, and as bad as a prank played by a man of religion, who is expected to perpetrate none. Whereas *scherzo da prete* is an *elative-cum-negative* form of *scherzo* 'prank' (whereas a depreciative diminutive would be *scherzuccio*), an Italian depreciative for the terminology 'humour' is *spirito di patata*, literally, 'potato spirit', 'alcohol obtained from potatoes', thus being a double sense; cf. *spiritoso* 'witty', 'humorous' (both unmarked, and, sometimes, said despondently).

⁹ Because of how people are observed to behave, not because of outlandish physics, which is the case of the Land of Cockaigne (tale type 1930), where the physical reality is unlike what is found in our own world. The trickster in our tale is one who has come from outside, and it is he who brings about a carnivalesque situation (which the local congregation approaches with awe, not as a carnival). Therefore, this situation is also unlike the Topsy Turvy Land tale type 1935, in which some text, such as a travelogue, replays about a place where everything is mixed up or inverted.

The irony of the apostate's position in Jewish American literary history is compounded by the fact that, while Monis labored to spread the knowledge of Hebrew among the Puritans, American Jews, loyal to Judaism but far from centers of Jewish learning, were evidently losing their facility in the Holy tongue. More ironic still is the fact that this Jewish linguistic erosion engendered Jewish literary creativity, for the next significant Jewish-authored publications in America were translations. Noting that Hebrew was "imperfectly understood by many, by some, not at all", a New York Jew named Isaac Pinto (1720–1791) took it upon himself "to translate our Prayers, in the Language of the Country wherein it has pleased the divine Providence to appoint our Lot".¹⁰

Eventually, there were immigrant communities that quite overtly rejected any religious allegiance to their Jewish identity. Ellen Eisenberg (2008 [Sept. 2007]) states: "Between 1880 and 1910, East European Jewish immigrants established approximately seventy planned farming communities, or colonies, throughout the United States" (p. 162), an activity one more often associated with Argentina, let alone Ottoman and then British-ruled Palestine. Eisenberg points out (p. 163): "The overwhelming majority of the colonies were extremely short-lived, lasting five years or fewer". She also remarks (*ibid.*):

Many of the colonies had regular lecture programs and concerts as well as social activities such as dances. Some organized choirs. Notably missing in many of these colonies was organized religious life. Many of the intellectuals attracted to the colonies had rejected traditional Judaism while still in Russia. Although accounts from several colonies indicate some degree of religious observance, such as the celebration of a Passover *seder*, in other religious law was not only ignored but flouted by such practices as raising pigs.

Even a group of rabbis determined "to inculcate an Old World religious way of life in America", Jeffrey Gurock (2008 [Sept. 2007]) remarks — and these were "initially fifty-nine East European-trained rabbis, the Agudath ha-Rabbanim (Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, or UOR)", who "recognized that it would take a continent-wide organization and considerable pooled resources and energies to defeat the forces of Americanization" (*ibid.*, p. 70) — even these were "different in an essential way from the wider world of Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe" (*ibid.*):

The day these American-based rabbis [...] decided to ignore the view, widely held among the religious in Russia, that the United States was an unkosher land, hopelessly inimical to the survival of traditional life, they evinced a potential willingness to respond pragmatically to Judaism's conditions in the New World.

Already in the 17th century, at a time when the rabbinate in Amsterdam was determined to eradicate the preaching intellectuals among the Jewish freethinkers in town, they would offer as an alternative to excommunication, the option for the reprobate to emigrate to the Dutch West Indies. Thus, there had been for centuries the notion, in Old World Jewry, that the New

¹⁰ Ritterband and Wechsler (1994) have charted the development of Jewish learning at universities in the United States. Harry Wolfson, writing in 1926 (as quoted by Schwarz 1965), remarked as follows about the significance of the fact that English rather than German was the language in which *The Jewish Encyclopedia* was published (Singer et al. 1901–1906):

About twenty-five years ago, there was no greater desert, as far as Jewish life and learning, than the English-speaking countries, and English of all languages was the least serviceable for such a Jewish work of reference. To contemporary European reviewers of the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, the undertaking seemed then like an effort wasted on half-clad Zulus in South Africa and Jewish tailors in New York. Those who were then really in need of such a work and could benefit thereby would have been better served if it were put out in Hebrew, German or Russian.

World was a place where even organised Jewish life was not as fettered by tradition as the communities of old where persons holding such an opinion resided themselves.

In his book about Dutch Jews in the United States from 1790 to the end of the 19th century, Robert Swieringa (1994) devoted pp. 102–105 to quotations from a letter sent by a Jewish man of religion of Dutch extraction based in New York sent to an addressee in Amsterdam in 1848. It was a complex, nuanced letter, and yet, when when a Jewish Dutch newspaper published excerpts from that letter in 1886, the headline was "Letter from New York, 1848: Americans Are Ignorant".¹¹

But the sender had compared the ignorance and widespread laxity he observed among Jews in New York to the ignorance and laxity found among their coreligionists in England: "The Americans, overall, are ignorant just like the English Jews and devout, or not Jews at all". What is more, the letter explicitly states: "As you write from Holland, so it is here also".¹²

If anything, Goldsmiths was lamenting that the ills bedevilling Jewish life from an Orthodox viewpoint in England and the Netherlands were also found in the United States.¹³ That the newspaper simplified the description into the headline it gave the excerpts from that letter has to do with received notions among Old World Jews about what Jews in America were like.

The stereotype was there, whether the attitude was that something could be done about making tradition survive, or the effort would have been futile, or, even, that such remote communities were fit for scornful characterisations of the kind we find in the Near Eastern tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz".

¹¹ Swieringa (1994, p. 102): "The only surviving firsthand account of life among the New York Dutch Jews in the early years is a letter of Emanuel L. Goldsmith (Goudsmit) of New York to S. L. Kyser of Amsterdam, dated April 4, 1848, of which Meyer Roest printed fragments on April 30, 1886 in his *Nieuwe Israëlitische Nieuwsbode (Israelitish New Messenger)*, under the title, 'Letter from New York, 1848: Americans Are Ignorant.' The Reverend Goldsmith was a respected educator, Jewish scholar and Talmudist well-versed in modern languages who in the 1840s and 1850s frequently was called upon to judge in religious disputes in New York congregations. That he held no clerical office gave him a respected independence."

¹² Swieringa (1994, p. 104, his brackets and ellipse): "The remainder of Goldsmith's letter provides interesting insights into synagogue life in New York City, from the viewpoint of an orthodox but mildly progressive Jew who was appalled at the laxity among his fellow religionists: 'As far as the situation of the Jews is concerned, it is terrible in matters of religion. As you write from Holland, so it is here also; it's either Koggel [a pastry] ... with barley soup and 3-year-old wormy smoked beef [a kosher food dish] or else ham and oysters.' This is Goldsmith's unique way of describing the split among American Jews between those who observe the traditional rituals and those who do not. He continues: 'The Americans, overall, are ignorant just like the English Jews and devout, or not Jews at all.'"

¹³ Swieringa (1994, p. 104): "Emanuel Goldsmith reserved his most biting criticism for his fellow Hollanders" in New York City. He pointed out: "The Dutch Jews living here are all of the old nobility". that is, from patrician families. "That is really the worst kind from Amsterdam". Presumably because that was the class of people more likely to become assimilated, and who were more likely to display laxity in religious practice. Goldsmiths was a congregant at an "English" synagogue in New York, but he agreed to judge in religious matters for the Dutch congregation, as well as to give a sermon on the festival at their synagogue, with no retribution. In his letter, he relates how he left them in anger afterwards: There had been a ceremony at the cemetery, on the first day of prayers of penance in preparation for the Jewish New Year's Day. A man who gave an oration, upon leaving "openly ate stewed oysters (in front of the board and the members of the congregations). In addition all year long he eats 'treife' [non-kosher foods] and transgresses the Sabbath. After this they also let him act as speaker in the synagogue. When I heard this, I was mad at them and informed them that I didn't want to have anything more to do with them and would never come to their synagogue and that I will proclaim their behaviour in all Killes (congregations)" (quoted in Swieringa 1994, p. 105).

12. Becoming Deculturated to Survive at America's and Tsarist Russia's Frontier

12.1. Robert Aldrich's Comedy Film *The Frisco Kid* Stereotype in Reverse

The stereotype is alive even in American Jewry's own imaginary about its historical development. A case in point is Robert Aldrich, who in the 1979 western comedy film *The Frisco Kid*¹⁴ described the transformation of the least endowed pupil ordained by a rabbinical seminary in Eastern Europe, being sent by its long-bearded teachers to "San Frantzisko".

When we are first made to see him (while his teachers deliberate: the year is 1850) he is ice-skating outside, and then he tumbles down. The rabbi protagonist, Avram Belinski, was played by Gene Wilder, whereas Harrison Ford played Tommy Lillard, the professional bank robber who befriends him and accompanies him to California.¹⁵ The script was by Michael Elias and Frank Shaw. The producer was Mace Neufeld. The film was distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures. "The film is an underappreciated gem¹⁶ about a Polish rabbi headed to San Francisco and becomes best friends with an outlaw, played by Harrison Ford. The clash and ultimate connection between Jewish and American values is told with heart and humor" (Epstein 2013, p. 98). It

is a buddy film, as well as one from the western-spoof genre (Robert Aldrich had previously made another film in that genre: *Four for Texas*). *The Frisco Kid* is a comedy with great acting from Gene Wilder as Rabbi Avram Belinski and Harrison Ford as Tommy, a bank robber and generally tough Western hombre. Poor Rabbi Belinski isn't in America long on his way to a new pulpit in San Francisco when he gets robbed. He then meets Tommy, and together the two make the journey west (Epstein 2013, p. 99).

¹⁴ Not to be mistaken for *Frisco Kid*, a 1935 western film starring James Cagney.

¹⁵ At http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Frisco_Kid the plot is described as follows: "Rabbi Avram Belinski arrives in Philadelphia from Poland en route to San Francisco where he will be a congregation's new rabbi. He has with him a Torah scroll for the San Francisco synagogue. Avram, an innocent, trusting and inexperienced traveler, falls in with three con men, the brothers Matt and Darryl Diggs and their partner Mr. Jones, who trick him into helping pay for a wagon and supplies to go west, then leave him and most of his belongings scattered along a deserted road. Avram is determined to make it to San Francisco. He fends for himself on foot for a while, spends a little time with some Pennsylvania Dutch (whom he takes for Jews at first), and manages to find work on the railroad. While trying to spear fish in a stream (to no avail), he is befriended and fed by a stranger on horseback named Tommy Lillard (Ford). They travel together, make it through the snowy mountains, experience Native American customs and hospitality, and learn a little about each other's culture. Unfortunately, it turns out Tommy is a bank robber by profession, not only problematic for Avram from a moral point of view, but problematic for Tommy when he robs a bank on a Friday, then finds that Avram (an orthodox Jew) does not ride on the Sabbath — even with a posse on his tail. They remain together somehow, meet and defeat the villains who originally robbed and beat Avram in Philadelphia, and arrive in San Francisco. Avram then must deal with the changes his journey has wrought in his faith and his purpose in life."

¹⁶ The movie review in *The New York Times* was quite negative (Canby 1979). What the film managed to accomplish eluded the reviewer:

Mr. Aldrich's strength is his weakness for the violent and the macabre [...]. "The Frisco Kid" is neither. It's a Gene Wilder comedy of a lesser sort, [...] The original screenplay by Michael Elias and Frank Shaw is all heart and two inches wide. There's scarcely a plot development, [...] "The Frisco Kid", [...], is a movie based on a great idea that, when realized, isn't. The gimmick is exhausted in the telling of it. A Polish rabbi out West? Wow! But unless the gimmick is in some way topped, such a movie runs down hill, like this one. [...] From the evidence here, Mr. Aldrich is not most at home in the kind of lovable comedy this film wants to be. The comic timing is always a couple of beats off. [...] There's no shortage of talent in "The Frisco Kid", but it's the wrong talent for the wrong material.



Fig. 1. Release poster of *The Frisco Kid*.

Step by step in that comedy, what the innocent and trusting Avram undergoes and what he becomes is rather horrific, in an Old World Orthodox perspective (see Appendix C).

All Jewish identity starts with a sensibility. In *Blazing Saddles*, Mel Brooks tried to marry a Jewish sensibility and an American movie genre. The result was a comic success but without substantive comments on a Jewish identity. But *The Frisco Kid* (1979) was an incredibly interesting and entertaining example of how to blend Jewish and American values. At the end, though, the Jewish protagonist relents on his religious values in the face of American realities. (Epstein 2013, p. 99)



Fig. 2. Release poster of *The Frisco Kid* in Spanish.



Fig. 3. Avram, in a still from *The Frisco Kid*.

Change culminates with an imminent duel in which Avram faces his original robbers in a shoot out while already in San Francisco, and being watched by his congregants. But Avram — after a long wrangling, and implored by Tommy to shoot — eventually shoots indeed a villain who contemptuously believes he would never do so. Avram shoots and kills him. Frightfully, the rabbi has shot to kill, and saves Tommy's and his own lives.

The pivotal moment comes when rabbi Belinski, whose life has been saved by Tommy, has a sudden self-realization. He declares: "When those men were shooting at you, I ran and saved the Torah.... I care more about a book than I do for my best friend". And there, in that declaration, is the movie's theme: a lifetime of dedication to religious objects is meaningless and wrong when compared to helping a friend. It's a warm human message and an interesting illustration of how Orthodoxy became Americanized. (Epstein 2013, p. 99)

Once in San Francisco, Avram experiences an internal struggle: he feels he cannot accept the rabbinic chair, because of the shooting in the wilderness when in order to save Tommy, he killed a man:

He has arrived in San Francisco. He finds a beautiful bride to marry. But he feels he cannot truly take on the duties of a rabbi because he has killed someone. The last of the outlaws who stole from him appears, and it looks as though there will be, in true Western tradition, a gunfight to settle the dispute. That is an American value. But Avram draws on Jewish tradition, specifically from Solomon's wisdom [really?] He makes a deal with the outlaw: the rabbi will keep San Francisco, and the outlaw has control of the rest of America. The outlaw accepts. Jewish wisdom has triumphed. (Epstein 2013, pp. 99–100)

"In the end, Avram has come to terms with a composite system which takes into account both traditions", Jewish and American values (Erens 1988, p. 337, quoted by Epstein 1979, p. 99). What is more, while mocking both the western film genre as well as 20th-century California,

the films recreated an image of both the West and California in which proleptically (i.e., by anticipation) some of the customs described were contemporary but injected back into the 19th century. This includes the rabbi drugging himself unwittingly while among Native Americans, and then, while drugged, taking part (and introducing innovations) in a pagan rain dance that results in a downpour. Or then, the cowboy who accompanies him subjecting him to a kind of attentions that the rabbi fails to understand — he explains it out as an attempt to keep warm because of the cold weather — but viewers are expected to interpret the way the filmmaker intended (the cowboy's attentions, that the rabbi doesn't understand even when the cowboy gets physical, are sexual, and a reference to *mores* that gained acceptance in the second half of the 20th century).

A further twist about identity took place in the Italian version of Robert Aldrich's film *The Frisco Kid*, titled *Scusi, dov'è il West?* ['Excuse me, where is the Far West?']. In the Italian version, the rabbi protagonist was dubbed in a gentle Sudtiroler pronunciation of Italian, evidently by an *altoatesino*, a Sudtiroler: otherwise, definitely not the most obvious identity to coalesce with Jewish identity, let alone that of a rabbi. Yet, in Italy it makes sense, in one respect.¹⁷

One thing that Epstein's otherwise excellent book does not mention, is that much earlier than *The Frisco Kid*, there were some Jewish western-spoof films. A discussion of such films can be found in an article by Peter Antelyes (2009), entitled "'Haim Afen Range': The Jewish Indian and the Redface Western".¹⁸

There was a genre of silent film Westerns peopled by bumbling yet earnest Jewish cowpokes, such as *Der Yiddisher Cowboy* (1909; remade 1911), *Cohen and Murphy* (1910), *Tough Guy Levi* (1912), and *Mike and Jake in the Old West* (1913). Nor were these spoofs confined to the earlier periods of the century. The genre has revealed its longevity in films such as Robert Aldrich's *The Frisco Kid* (1981). (Antelyes 2009, pp. 17–18)

The 1947 Yiddish-language song *Haim Afen Range*, by Mickey Katz, was a Yiddish parody of the 1876 song *Home on the Range*. Antelyes gives the opening stanzas of both on the opening page of his article. As early as 1908, there was a song entitled "I'm a Yiddish Cowboy (Tough Guy Levi)", whose lyrics were by Edgar Leslie, with music composed by Halsey K. Mohr and Al Piantadosi.

The song tells the story of Levi, an Indian-hating ("I don't care for Tomahawks or Cheyenne Indians, oi, oi") and Indian-loving ("He loved a blue blood Indian maiden") cowpoke whose Jewishness is both emphasized (in the song's use of "Jewish" words and phrasing) and dismissed (in the song's seeming endorsement of Levi's own claims to toughness). His status as a Western hero, then, is ambiguous, but so, the song reveals, is the Western narrative itself; as tough as it is, it is exposed as just another "shtick". (Antelyes 2009, p. 17)

Antelyes considers this a classic example of Jewish western-spoof:

¹⁷ That is clarified by the following anecdote, from my own undergraduate years in Milan. In one course, the professor, Fabio Alberto Schreiber, was Jewish (I and other Jewish students betted whether he was; before one of his lessons, I scribbled on the blackboard the Hebrew acronym יה"ב as usual among the devout at the beginning of a document, which then he left on the blackboard while wiping everything else, while students were wondering aloud about what it was. His Jewish identity was volunteered to me years later). His assistant was a Sudtiroler, Hasenmeier. One day, Schreiber announced that a lesson was to be given by Dario Bauer (apparently, a relative of a fairly well-known Jewish intellectual). Some students only half-jokingly protested: "Siamo in Italia!" ("We are in Italy!"), because such German family names were proliferating, and exclusive, among those who were teaching that course.

¹⁸ In reality, there was a history of contact between Jewish traders (often of German background) and Native Americans in the Western frontier (Marks 1992). Hollywood downplayed the role of non-Anglo-Saxon in the American expansion in the West.

Jewish immigrants drew on the Western for the same reasons many other Americans did, whether or not they were immigrants. They were seeking inclusion by embracing America on its own terms, a process that entailed observing the paradigmatic oppositions in these tales — between Indian and white, greenhorn and true westerner, greedy landowner and settler — that articulated the nation's perimeters and defined what and who belonged at its center. In short, they played cowboys and Indians like everyone else. Like everyone else, they sometimes figured themselves as cowboys and hence as white, Christian Americans, as opposed to dark, savage others; and sometimes they figured themselves as Indians and hence as original Americans, as opposed to jaded, corrupt, lapsed Americans. More often than not, however, Jewish performers and writers did not simply adopt the form of the Western. They also commented on it, joining criticism to celebration within a peculiarly Jewish diasporic perspective. Along the line of Katz's song, for instance, they often spoofed both the Western and their place in it, particularly in drawing on the odd fit between the stereotypes of cowboy and Jew. (Antelyes 2009, p. 17)

Arguably, *The Frisco Kid* (1979) is unlike Mel Brooks' film *Blazing Saddles* (1974) in that the latter pokes fun at the western genre *per se*, among the other things by adding ethnicities incongruously because of conventions about minority groups, and what would be expected by audiences used to the western cinematic genre. In contrast, *The Frisco Kid* entirely develops its humour from the superposition of the stereotype of a rabbinic graduate and a far West contest through a western-film lens.

In spoofing the Western, an archetypal American form, Brooks is using the classic technique of having minority groups mock the majority. He does this also by making fun of the town's racism after a black sheriff is appointed. It's no accident that Brooks himself plays a Native American in a scene, and, to make his point about minority groups, has the character speak Yiddish (wear a headband emblazoned with the Hebrew words meaning "Kosher for Passover" — except that Brooks, ever the trickster, has reversed the letters of what in English are the "K" and the "P"). It is this unifying of the outsiders in society that is the message of *Blazing Saddles*. (Epstein 2013, p. 95)

Epstein remarks the difference between a satire, which "poke[s] fun at various social conventions, but there was a serious message under the fun" (*ibid.*), and a spoof. "*Blazing Saddles* was a spoof. It also poked fun at those conventions but without an accompanying serious message" (*ibid.*). Then Epstein turns to parody:

A spoof is also different from a parody, its close relative, by not closing following what was the original product. In spoofing the Western, Brooks didn't so much seek to attack anyone, though clearly racism is attacked in the film. Brooks was after pure humour, letting audiences laugh as a way of releasing the anxieties they had brought with them to the theatre from everyday life. (Epstein 2013, p. 95)

The spoof form, Epstein claims, provided Brooks in *Blazing Saddles* "a perfect way for him to present his view of integrating an American and a Jewish identity": the latter spoofs the former, but with no intent to change it. "Additionally, spoofing provides Jews with an aesthetic distance from America, the object being spoofed, so as not to be absorbed by the country" (*ibid.*, p. 96):

In Brooks' conception, then, an American Jewish identity makes Jews permanently partial insiders and simultaneously permanently partial outsiders. This identity allows Jews a connection to the country without disappearing in it, though the tenuous nature of the dual identity is never explored in Brooks' films. (Epstein 2013, p. 96)

For our present purposes, consider that for the protagonist of *The Frisco Kid* to have any chance of succeeding, it turns out it was the least accomplished just ordained graduate of the *yeshivah* that had to be sent to America. That his teachers have chosen him, may be precisely because they didn't think highly of the New World (at any rate, they keep squabbling and are

hushed, so their arguments are not properly articulated). Yet, without the protagonist predisposition to a peculiar kind of "loss of competence", he could not have managed to undergo the transformation that would make him a viable rabbi in imagined early San Francisco. The final duel takes place in the street, in full view of the appreciative Jewish congregation. Even the cowboy who had come along has implicitly become a member of the congregation, even though he knew the flaws of his naive travel companion inside out.

In a sense, quite possibly beyond his own intentions (as he clearly does not refer to the tale-type we have been discussing), Robert Aldrich has subverted the rationale of the tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz": survival of the fittest is achieved by becoming detached from traditional norms. After all, this was the path consciously undertaken, for the sake of integration, by the second and third generations in America, of immigrants from Eastern Europe.

12.2. The Myth of Old Odessa as a Sinful City of Secularists and Rogues

Abandonment of tradition was, in Jewish perceptions in tsarist Russia, associated with the Jews of Odessa, but actually reflected misgivings about Odessa as being a boom city, and in relation to this, about Odessa as a mythical city of sin, also found among others in Russian society. It was in the mid-18th century, under Catherine the Great, that the northern coast of the Black Sea (which itself had geopolitically been until then an Ottoman lake) was conquered by Russia from the Tatars.

The Muslim fishers village of Hājji Bey was renamed Odessa, after the ancient Greek settlement of Odessos (which as known at present, was instead in the territory of present-day Bulgaria). New Russia, as the newly acquired territories became known, needed to be settled with denizens of the Russian Empire as well as with immigrants from abroad. For that reason, whereas Jewish residence was severely restricted to only the Western regions of the empire, it was permitted in New Russia. By the end of the 19th century, an Odessan in three was Jewish.

In the main, Odessa's Jews were considerably more secularised than Jews elsewhere in the Russian Empire. Moreover, this being a boom city, there also was widespread crime, and a myth of Old Odessa as being a city of sin developed, just as was the case in the 19th century for New Orleans and San Francisco.

This is the subject of an interesting book by Jarrod Tanny (2011), who also consider literary and cinematic treatments of fictional or fictionalised Old Odessan rogues, treatments that were often humorous. It used to be proverbially stated (with no humorous intent), among devout Jews (and this found expression in literature, with humorous intentions), that "you can see the flames of hell forty versts around Odessa" (*ibid.*, p. 43). Allegedly, the Hasidic rabbi of Bender "avowed that he would sooner give up fish for twelve successive Sabbaths than eat Odessan steer" (Tanny 2011, p. 42, translating from a short story by Osip Rabinovich 2000 [1860], pp. 82–83).

In Odessa, Mendele Mokher Sforim's character Fishke the Lame is taken aback (as does Sholom Aleikhem's character Menachem-Mendl) by the Western European ways of an upmarket synagogue in Odessa.

Fishke the Lame similarly describes how Jews dance with the Holy Torah [something associated with the festival of Simchat Torah] on inappropriate occasions and that 'the rabbi himself led the dance in a French suit with a trimmed beard'. Revelry has overtaken the synagogue and prayer has resurfaced in the tavern (Tanny 2011, p. 42).

13. A Comparison in Terms of *Telos*

In this section, we draw a comparison between the tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", and an item from popular culture, namely, the kind of gradual weaning off and accompanying acculturation of the rabbi from *The Frisco Kid*. We concern ourselves with the *telos*, the deep message of both narratives. It goes without saying that the actual history of Jewish presence in the Far West and in San Francisco was rather different from the picture in *The Frisco Kid*.¹⁹ Likewise, the Iraqi Jewish communities in India were able to develop religiously normative communal life.

And yet, the tale variant reported by Dr. Myer Samra shows that a mischievous misrepresentation of what Jewish life in India may be like could take ample liberties with the situation on the ground. That version of the tale was originally told in Iraq (but bear in mind that Samra is based in Australia, and he reported it from there to me in London). Robert Aldrich instead portrays his gradually Americanised rabbi from the creatively amused viewpoint of a member of de-Judaised American Jewry. Aldrich is not afraid of the transformation. Quite on the contrary, he embraces it and boasts about it.

Consider the Iraqi tale about dislocated Jews in India: are these Iraqi Jews who forgot how to be Jewish? or are these autochthonous Jews who are less knowledgeable in Judaism than somebody who has arrived from Iraq? At any rate, the persons depicted as ignorant are removed to the periphery of Jewry, and "therefore" of Judaism). What is true of the Iraqi tale about dislocated Jews in India is that it has often been the case, in the middle decades of the 20th century, that many among such Iraqi Jews who left Iraq individually or during the mass exodus, willingly relinquished religious observance.

The risks of dislocation about which the tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" warns have been, in a sense, quite real, with the caveat that the ignoramuses or numskulls of the tale-type really crave living the normative Jewish life, but are unable to, whereas the dynamics of deculturation actually do not work that way.

14. An Afghan Version from the Israel Folklore Archive

The version we are going to consider in this section comes from the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) named in honour of Dov Noy, at the University of Haifa. It is tale IFA 1977, the record is a scanned typed form, and the narrative was recorded in Hebrew by Zevulun Kurt in 1960, from a narrator from Afghanistan, whose name is unusually omitted from the space in the form where the informant has to be named. The tale title is "Yom Kippur she-qabtsan makhreiz 'alav kdei lizkot bi-ndava" ("A Day of Atonement Proclaimed by a Beggar in Order to Receive Charity").

One of the interesting things about this version is that the trickster is introduced as a beggar, but we are also told that he preaches to congregations on Saturdays. That is to say, they let him preach, and he apparently performs reasonably well at that, if on coming back to a place they let him preach again. Nevertheless, he is a vagabond, and lives of charity he begs for. He is not introduced as a fund-raiser for some charity (such as for the benefit of charities in the Land of Israel).

¹⁹ The actual history of Jewish presence in the Far West and in San Francisco was rather different from the picture in *The Frisco Kid*. Jews (and other ethnics other than Anglo-Saxon, Irish, Hispanic, or Native American) played an important role on the Frontier; Hollywood deleted the presence of such ethnics, including Jews, from the history of the Frontier. The nickname 'egg-eaters' given by Native Americans to Jewish traders who would not eat unkosher food was discussed in Nissan (2007). And Jews were prominent in San Francisco in that city's early days (Kahn 2008). In *The Forerunners: Dutch Jewry in the North American Diaspora*, Robert Swieringa (1994) titled his Chapter 9: 'San Francisco: An Instant Elite'.

The protagonist's social position is low, with an exception: they would let themselves to be sermonised by him. Therefore, they admit he is knowledgeable. He has religious knowledge. He has been places (being a vagabond begging in several towns), and he is relatively worldly. The townspeople in turn are made peripheral by the fact that the beggar only visits their place because it is on the way between two towns that he had intended to visit.

The congregation on whose members he plays the trick of fooling them into believing that on the next week there will be the Day of Atonement (not that it is the eve of the Day of Atonement) is not a village (*kfar*), but a small town ('*ayyara*). It may be that being known to be a preacher gives him enough authority to make proclamations about matters of religion, but clearly his discombobulating the locals' Jewish calendar could only work if the locals are numskulls.

I translate from Hebrew into English:

A beggar used to pass from settlement to settlement, and collect charity. Wherever he arrived, he would stay for a while, collect charity, and on Saturdays he used to preach to the congregation at the synagogue. On his way from one settlement to another, he arrived into a small town. He asked for charity. The local people did not want to give it him.

Such behaviour on the part of the local people has two functions in the story:

- ❑ The local people do not give any charity to the protagonist, and he finds a way to obtain it nevertheless.
- ❑ The local people have misbehaved towards the protagonist, to his playing a trick on them can be viewed as retribution.

Moreover, it is a custom of the locals that suggests to the trickster how he could trick them into giving him money:

They were used to give charity once every year, on the Day of Atonement. They told him: "Now it is not the Day of Atonement".²⁰ The beggar was astute. He stayed there for a while. He informed the congregation that on the next week, there would be the Day of Atonement.

Two things emerge from this:

- ❑ The trickster has a place to stay (or is he sleeping on the public way), and he also has means for feeding himself: perhaps with money from charity he had obtained on the previous place he had visited? Perhaps it is because of what he told the townspeople about the coming fast, that they feed him and lodge him?
- ❑ The local people do know what the Day of Atonement is, and they actually have a custom associated with the Day of Atonement: it is the only time in the year when they give to charity. Therefore, one may have supposed that they would know that the Day of Atonement is the tenth day in the Jewish Year, the first two days being New Year's Day. If the beggar tells them that the Day of Atonement will be next week, they must think to themselves that they apparently let New Year's Day slip by without them noticing.

In a folktale, it comes as no surprise that not all details are worked out. This being a tale about numskulls, it stands to reason that they would behave illogically. The narration is

²⁰ This is direct speech, but without double quotes in the Hebrew text of the folktale, which was typed in just one paragraph, with some of the punctuation missing.

succinct, and it gains from that. We are told right away that the congregants fasted, so the narration withholds information about how the community reacted to the news that the Day of Atonement was about to arrive. We are told that the beggar told them that much, and then we are immediately told that they are preparing for the fast, and then celebrating it:

The people of that small town prepared themselves, all of them, and on the day that the beggar told them about it that it was the Day of Atonement, all of them fasted. They gathered at the synagogue, and the beggar was their officiant. He conducted the service, and he retained them at the synagogue, he read to them from various books, all sorts of *qishqushim* [slangish Israeli Hebrew for 'nonsense']. On that very day, another Jew arrived for business purposes into that town. He saw that all the Jews' shops were closed, and that the Jews were at the synagogue. The visitor went to the synagogue. He saw that all Jews were standing and praying. The officiant was reading for them irrelevant things with a special melody. The second Jew called out, with the same melody: "I never saw a workday on the day of Atonement" ("*Lo ra'iti yom h'ol be-Yom ha-Kippurim*").²¹ The officiant replied: "Sir, shut up, shut up, they are all donkeys. 400 golden coins (*zahuv*) I have taken, half for me, half for thee. *We avow to Thee*". He bowed his head, bowed with his body, and finished the service.

"We avow to Thee" ("*Modim anah nu Lakh*") is part of a prayer. In the Hebrew scanned form, the reply of the officiant and his subsequent behaviour are formulated as follows:

השליח צבור ענה: אדוני שתוק שתוק כולם חמורים. 400 זהוב לקחתי
חצי שלי חצי שלך מודים אנחנו לך. כופף את ראשו כשהוא משתחוה
וגמר את התפילה.

In this version of the tale, once he is confronted with a man who has understood the trick, the trickster "finished the service", but apparently this should not be taken to mean that he cut it short and stopped. Rather, he went on, conducting the service as though nothing had happened to interrupt him.

15. An Iraqi Version from the Israel Folklore Archive, About Gullible Villagers

This section and the next one are about two Iraqi variants of the tale considered. They come from the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) named in honour of Dov Noy, at the University of Haifa. The first version we consider here (IFA 12853) was recorded by Eliyahu Aghasi,²² and it appeared inside a book in literarised Hebrew. The tale was given there the title *Be-Tammuz Kippurim*. I translate it into English:

A conman arrived into a village of simple and naïve peasant Jews, and entered the synagogue in order to take part in the evening service. The congregants welcomed him politely, and honoured him by asking him to conduct that service. He stood and prayed by leading the congregation, his prayer was wholesome, and his voice pleasant.

Once his service was over, the villagers surrounded him and told him: "It has been years since we last had a cantor to lead us in the service of the Day of Atonement. Please, [be the cantor for that fast], and we shall pay you ten *zehuvim*". The conman agreed, and established for them a Day of Atonement for two days later.

Zehuvim is a Hebrew word for 'golden coins', and I wonder whether the recorder had replaced here the name for an Ottoman coin with the quaint *zehuvim* for currency from Eastern Europe, often found in either rabbinic or literary Hebrew texts set in that part of the

²¹ This is the only utterance in double quotes in the Hebrew typed form.

²² *Aghasi* is an Iraqi Jewish family name. In Israel it was adapted into *Agási*, as though it was derived from *aggás* 'pear', which is not the actual etymology.

world. Nevertheless, as this word occurs in the Hebrew reply of the first conman to the second conman, and it is also found in texts by Arabic-speaking Jews — we found it indeed in the variant given by Ratzaby (1983) which we considered in Sec. 9 above — this is rather evidence that the recorder used *zehuvim* (actually, in Iraqi Hebrew pronunciation, *zehubím*) in order to make this term here correspond to its occurrence at the end of the tale. It is quite possible that in Judaeo-Arabic performance, the promise made to the cantor names Ottoman currency.

As to the conman decreeing that the Day of Atonement would be quite soon (thus, avoiding for him the need to only come back in some months time), this variant is silent about whether the villagers were surprised, or whether any of them objected. Bear in mind that they had been praying in public at the synagogue before the conman's arrival into their village, so it is strange that they could be fooled so easily. Not having a professional cantor, or not having an officiant with an especially pleasant voice, was a common occurrence at Jewish communities worldwide, and hiring a cantor for the High Holidays was fairly standard in many a place.

On the next day, a second conman reached the same village, and was puzzled by seeing the hectic preparations for the Day of Atonement, but he decided to keep silent and to watch what it was all about.

The Jews of the village stopped working at noon, and congregated early at the synagogue and prayed the afternoon prayer, carried out absolving from vows, uncovered their bodies down to the waist, laid their left arm on a wooden plank that was leaning on the wall, placed their forefronts on their arms and their offered their back to the forty lashes.

I am rather sceptical about this paragraph being a genuine part of the original folktale. It looks like a literary insertion, filled in according to a once widespread sequence of actions on the eve of the Day of Atonement. It may be that the custom of voluntarily submitting to the standard penalty of forty lashes²³ (a custom by no means universal on the eve, but nevertheless widespread in pre-modern times worldwide, including in Europe) was included either because the writer wanted to point it out in disagreement, or because it provides a convenient parallel: the villagers are going to be harmed by the conman, and this is pre-announced, as though, by their letting themselves be lashed at of their own accord.

Afterwards, they rushed home, incited the women to finish their work cooking the chicken of the *kapparot* [i.e., butchered in vicarious atonement]²⁴ and cleaning the house. They bathed²⁵ and put on white clothes, they ate the last supper before the fast in joy and awe, and poured into the synagogue, wearing white socks.

Again, this appears to be an addition, one that is unnecessary for an audience to make sense of the tale. It enabled however to fill an entire page in the printed book.

It was a hot evening of Tammuz²⁶ and hundreds²⁷ of candles²⁸ of oil that were lighted inside the synagogue added their own heat to the heat of the summer, and also the crowding made it even

²³ Actually thirty-nine lashes, a precaution just in case there was an error counting them.

²⁴ In communities where there was socioeconomic disparity among Jewish families, rich families would donate those butchered *kapparot* chicken to the poor. Did the writer mean that among those villagers, every family kept that meat for their own consumption?

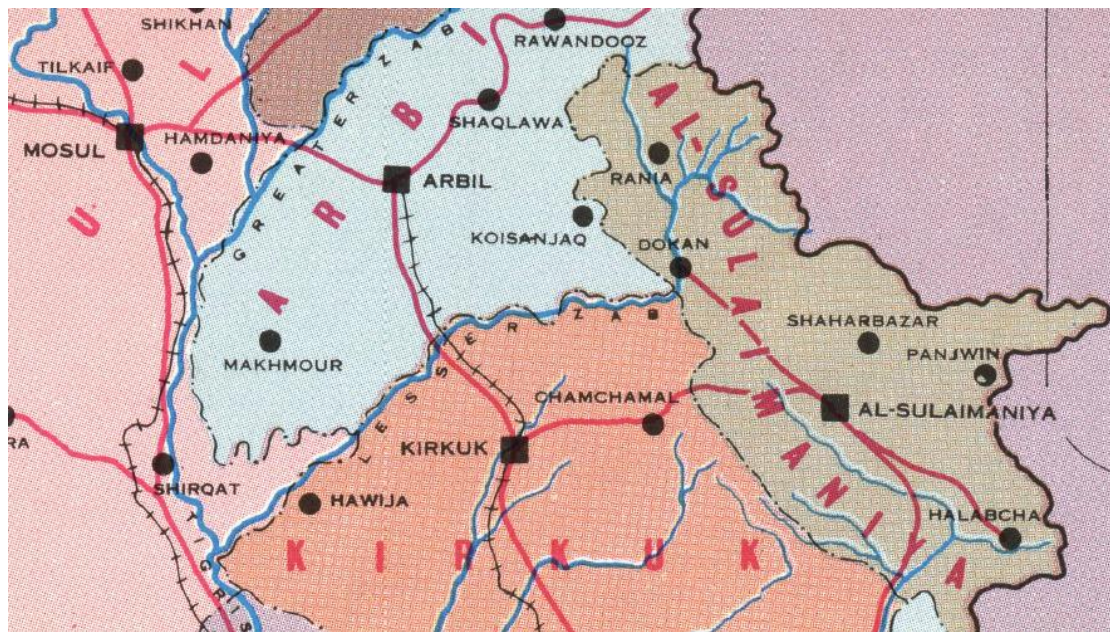
²⁵ Where that? At home, using a basin? Not at a public bath, or in a river or creek?

²⁶ Thus, in mid-summer, roughly in July.

²⁷ Hundreds, in a village! Perhaps the writer was recollecting the sight of an urban synagogue on the evening starting the Day of Atonement.

²⁸ The writer used the Hebrew word *nerót* 'candles', but even though it was part of the phrase *nerot haššemen* 'candles of oil', this is not readily understood by such Israeli readers who are unaware that Oriental Jews were used to light small pieces of cotton inside olive oil, rather than wax candles.

For the sake of literarisation, the recorder lengthened and in practice mangled this tale. Therefore, I don't know whether the word *aṭumim* 'obtuse ones' really belonged in the tale the way he had heard it. It may well be a euphemism replacing *hāamorim* 'donkeys'. At any rate, *aṭumím* sounds to me like Israeli Hebrew. In transcribing the Hebrew utterances at the end of the tale, I did not bother to render them quite the way they would have been in Iraqi Hebrew liturgical pronunciation, because the Hebrew literarised retelling of the story is apparently far removed from authenticity.



Map 1. Arbīl is in northeastern Iraq, in the eastern part of Iraqi Kurdistan.

We now turn to the other Iraqi variant from the Israel Folklore Archive (IFA 4595). It is set in the city of Arbil, in eastern (or, rather, eastern central) Iraqi Kurdistan. See Map 1. This locale of the story is of special importance, as we are going to see. Also the next section is about Kurdistan, but it concerns variants of the tale told by Kurdish Jews, and it is extremely significant that the versions told by Kurdish Jews reverse the perspective of the other

³⁰ The printed Hebrew text in the scanned clipping I obtained from the IFA, but in my opinion it is clear that the same well-known melody of that particular hymn is intended to be sung when uttering what the second conman said. Apparently staccato should be applied.

versions: the tellers show the duped congregation to be local, but they are not so much duped, as polite and acquiescent towards an unscrupulous fund-raiser.

Tale IFA 4595 instead is shaped by anti-Kurdish prejudice, and is Baghdadi-centric, asserting the superiority of any Baghdadi, be it an indebted and delinquent merchant who has fled Baghdad. Tale IFA 4595 was recorded by Haimowitz,³¹ the narrator being Maurice 'Ini,³² a native of Iraq. The scanned clipping I obtained from the IFA is of a printed page from a book, and the tale is given there the title *Yom ha-Kippurim be-Hodesh Tammuz*. The text is in Hebrew, somewhat literarised (but fluid, at times like a journalist report). Both the narrative and the narration are not wooden like the previous (mangled) version, but it is also a text that conveys a prejudice against people (here, Jews) in Kurdistan. I translate into English:

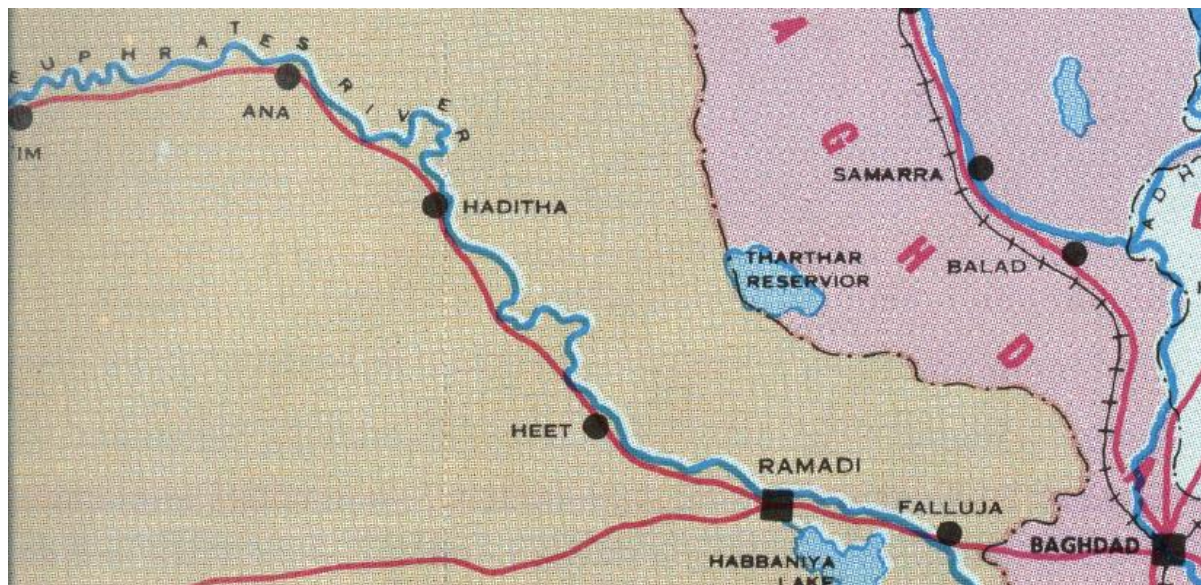
In Baghdad, there used to be a rich Jewish merchant who had become impoverished, and decided to move his residence and trade to the city of Arbil in northern Iraq. Perhaps because of the change of place, also his luck changed.³³ The city of Arbil was peopled with Kurds, and its Jewish residents were not as well educated as the Jews of Baghdad.

The merchant went around a few days in the city of Arbil, but found nothing from which to earn a living, and his situation was quite bad. He had no choice, but to beg, but the Jews of the city refused to give charity to a foreigner.

The function of the latter statement is to make the man's trick more palatable, as it is conceived of as retribution. The beginning is matter-of-factly, but the subsequent claim that the Jews of Arbil (an urban population, not villagers) could be fooled about the Jewish calendar makes the real city into a town of numskulls.³⁴

³¹ Haimowitz is an Eastern European Jewish family name.

³² 'Ini is a Jewish family name from Iraq. That family used to live in Baghdad. As far as I recall having read once, etymologically that family name is from 'Ānī, that is to say, 'one from 'Āna' (/a/>[i] occurs in some conditions in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, as well as in some other dialects of Arabic). 'Āna is a city in the western desert of Iraq, on the bend of the Euphrates on the way to Syria. See Map 2. After typing this note, I asked an uncle of mine over the phone for the reason the 'Ini family was called that way, and he immediately gave the reason I had already typed, namely, that this is after 'Āna.



Map 2. The Iraqi city of 'Āna is on the bend of Euphrates, after it enters Iraq from Syria.

³³ This is an adaptation of the Hebrew proverb *Meshanne maqom, meshanne mazzal* ("He who changes place, changes luck/constellation").

³⁴ Fooltowns are the subject of Davies (1991).

The merchant resolved in his heart to play a trick on the Jews of Arbil. What did he do? One day in Tammuz, he entered [the shop? of] one of the local Jewish shopkeepers and told him:

"How come that you, as a Jew, are unaware that this evening will be the Day of Atonement?"

"What?" that Jew wondered.

"Yes, yes, this evening is the Day of Atonement!"

Immediately, the shopkeeper ran and notified his Jewish neighbours:

"A Jew from Baghdad has come and made it known that this evening is the Day of Atonement. We must hurry, and sanctify ourselves for the great festival".

The shopkeeper closed down his shop, and his neighbours did likewise. All of them rushed home, and the shopkeeper invited home the merchant from Baghdad. He ordered his wife to prepare in a hurry a fat last supper, as on the next day they would be fasting all the day long.

The merchant from Baghdad ate his fill indeed; it had been a long time he hadn't eaten that much.

This suggests that the trickster has already achieved an immediate goal. Note that as a beggar, the man is unsuccessful, but as a Baghdadite he fills a role of authority, as though the locals were by their own admission far inferior to a Baghdadite, and that being one makes him credible (even when he asserts something quite surprising), and what they had known until then — not as credible. The host is none else than the administrator (*gabbay*) of the synagogue:

"I am the *gabbay* of the synagogue here, and I invite you to be our officiant."

The Baghdadi merchant tried to avoid that:

"You are a poor community, and you'll be unable to pay me the fee to which I am entitled".

"The congregation is not poor, when it comes to the service of the Day of Atonement", the shopkeeper told him. "I'll pay you seventy-five pounds (*lirot sterling*), twenty-five pounds more than ther sum we paid last year".

The merchant from Baghdad refused, and the shopkeeper insisted with him:

"Well, we'll pay you one hundred pounds, what matters is that you'll conduct the service".

The merchant agreed. On that very day, in the afternoon, another Baghdadi Jew found himself in Arbil, because he was in trade relations with the city's Jews, and he saw that the Jews' shops were all closed. Upon asking for the reason, they told him that in the evening it would be the Day of Atonement, and that all the Jews of the city had gone to the synagogue to pray.

Apparently, it was Muslim neighbours who had informed the visitor. Bear in mind that as the Muslim calendar is lunar rather than lunisolar (which is the case of the Jewish calendar, which has leap years with a thirteenth month, a solution that Islam explicitly rejected), the Muslim festivals may fall in different seasons. These neighbours may have assumed that also among Jews, sometimes a festival would fall in the autumn, and sometimes, in mid-summer.

The Jew resolved to go to the synagogue and to find for himself whether it was true, of they were trying to fool him. On entering the synagogue, he found all those present enveloped in their prayer shawls, and praying with great concentration... He was quite puzzled, and then he heard that the voice of the cantor was known to him, so he resolved to come closer and have a better look of him... In fact, he recognised right away in the cantor, his former neighbour, Elijah David, the merchant who had become impoverished and had fled Baghdad.

He was about to shout "Elijah!", but caught himself in time, because it is forbidden to damage the earnings of one's fellow. He stood near the cantor and began to hum as though it was a prayer:

"My dear Elijah, since when the Day of Atonement falls in the month of Tammuz?..."

That utterance is clearly reworded into Israeli Hebrew, and not the way the narrator had heard it himself when learning the tale. Moreover, take notice of the perverse use made of the norm

that one is not to damage somebody else's economical activities. This is indeed a rabbinic norm, but it mosat definitely does not extend to abetting wrongdoing. And the wrongdoing in the case at hand consists of clamorously misguide an entire Jewish community in matters of religion, concerning the celebration of the holiest festival in the calendar.

The merchant turned his head, saw his neighbour and went on with his service:
 "Shut up my dear, they're all here ignoramuses, uncultivated. They paid me one hundred pounds, half for me and half for you..."

Also the conman's reply is reformulated in Israeli Hebrew, rather as an explanation. Only the ending of the utterance resembles what must have been the original formula.

The guest understood, and kept silent.

At the end of the service, they both went home, and on the following day [i.e., in the morning of the false day of Atonement] the Baghdadi Jew who had found himself in Arbil on the eve of the Day of Atonement even helped out his companion by chanting and singing.

In the evening, after the prayer of Ne'ilah (Closure), both of them ate at the home of the synagogue administrator, and after they ate, drank, and rejoiced, the administrator paid the cantor one hundred pounds, praised his service, and invited him to conduct the service again also on the next year.

The cantor took the money, gave his Baghdadi neighbour his share, and went home happy and with his heart rejoicing.

The end of the penultimate paragraph is somewhat clumsy, in that the administrator is literally said to have invited the cantor to return and pray at the synagogue on the next year. Clearly, he was asking him to conduct the service again. Also the last paragraph begins with a somewhat clumsy formulation, because it is as though the cantor had ceased to be a Baghdadi, which would make him an Arbili (rather than a baghdadi resident in Arbil), something that the narrative does not warrant (as Arbili people, or in this narration as per the text, Arbili Jews in particular, are supposed to be numskulls). Nevertheless, the very end of the narrative is rather felicitous, as the wording "and went home happy and with heart rejoicing" is a transparent intertextual reference to the wicked Haman going home "happy and with his heart rejoicing" upon being invited to Queen Esther's first banquet, in the Book of Esther. Haman was to soon meet a bad end, condign to his evil behaviour.

In this tale, which begins by providing some information about Arbil and its Jewish community, certainly in an attempt on the part of the informant to make himself understood by the recorder, there are a few realistic details that are apparently intended for corroboration. It must be stressed however that in this case, an actual community with respectable circumstances fairly well-known to Baghdadi Jews was cast in the role of a Fools town. I must point out that it is by no means the case that telling that story would have gone down well with each and every Baghdadi Jew.

For example, for sure telling that story to my mother's family while in Baghdad would have damaged the reputation of the teller, because of two reasons: (a) an actual group of people who were known to fare reasonably well and to be no less competent than others, was being wantonly besmirched; (b) this was a family that took integrity in trading very seriously, and the story instead appears to glamourise a delinquent and fugitive businessman, whose companion is no better. This negative reaction was not prompted instead by the tale about the trickster among ignorant emigrants in South America, because of remoteness and vagueness (even though concretely, an acquaintance had lived for a while in Montevideo).

From the tale considered, one would infer that there were no rabbis in Arbil, and that the ritually most knowledgeable Jew in town was the administrator of the synagogue, who is nevertheless fooled by the Baghdadi trickster. Of course, Arbil did have rabbis instead, and such was the case both in modern times, and earlier on. The Spanish Hebrew poet Judah

Alh□arizi found in Arbil, around 1216, a Jewish community which comprised also a few poets, according to what he related in Ch. 18 of his masterpiece, *Tahkemoni* (cited by Ben-Jacob 1961, p. 88). Before 1250, the institutionally prominent rabbi (a *Ga'on*) 'Eli ben Zechariah lived in Arbil. A Jewish traveller from Yemen, who visited Arbil in the second half of the 16th century, reported in Hebrew rhymed prose (quoted from at length in Ben-Jacob 1961, pp. 88–89) that he was in Arbil, and discussed mystics with some of the local Jews. A synagogue was built in Arbil in 1793, and was rebuilt in 1803, by notables including Rabbi Jonah Gabriel, he left writings.

Ben-Jacob (1961, p. 90) points out that this rabbi apparently had a personal library, as a fund-raiser from Jerusalem, Rabbi Joseph Uzziel, who visited Arbil in 1859, borrowed from him two books (printed in Livorno and in Eastern Europe). The travelogue of David D'Beth Hillel, a Polish-born rabbi who set forth from his home in Safed, in the Galilee, in 1824, arrived in India in 1828, and then returned home in 1832 (Fischel 1973), was in Kurdistan in the year 5687 *Anno Mundi* (i.e., 1827 C.E.), and reported about Arbil: "About two hundred Arab[ic-speaking] Jews reside there, most of them poor, and the Muslims persecute them. They have two synagogues" (Ben-Jacob, *ibid.*).

From various sources, it is known indeed that there was a pattern of physical assaults against Jews in Arbil in the 19th century (the perpetrators being either civilians, or from within the military), and that when the chief rabbi of Baghdad intervened on their behalf with the Ottoman military and civilian authorities, these took steps to insure that such a state of affairs would not persist, and that culprits would be punished. The army commanders in Mossul and Arbil were subordinates of the commander in Baghdad, and the governor of Arbil was a subordinate of the governor of Kerkuk, who in turn was a subordinate of the governor of Baghdad (Ben-Jacob 1961, pp. 91–92). This illustrates the importance of the centre–edge divide. It is precisely this kind of divide that typically motivates ethnic jokes of stupidity, according to the centre–edge model of Christie Davies.

Rabbi Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad, to whom a fund-raising emissary from the Land of Israel had turned with a question about a local ritual custom he had found in Arbil, gave a *responsum* ordering that custom to be discontinued. It was a custom for times of draught, of slaughtering cattle at the graveyard near the tombs of saintly rabbis, praying there for rain, blowing the *shofar*, and then distributing the meat to the poor. Even though this resulted in charity being given, this form of folk religion (the likes of which was known from Eastern Europe, where a wedding of orphans would be celebrated at the graveyard³⁵ during epidemics: it was a form of charity) is nevertheless objectionable in respect of Jewish law. Rabbi Joseph Hayyim's *responsum* is in his Book *Rab Pe'alim* (Jerusalem 1911/2), Part Four, at *Yoreh De'ah*, par. 23. This is mentioned by Ben-Jacob (1961, p. 93).

A visitor, A.Y. Barur, who was in Arbil in 1933 reported, in an anthology, *Minḥah le-David*, published in Jerusalem in 1933/4, pp. 246–247 (quoted from in Ben-Jacob, *ibid.*), that he found there merchants in good standing, who were able (notwithstanding the competition) to close their shops also during the semifestive days in the middle of the nine-days long Feast of Tabernacles.³⁶ Barur reported that the traditional Jewish school had been turned into a school run by the state, attended by Jewish and Muslim pupils. (There also being non-Jewish pupils at Jewish schools was also the situation at the better among Baghdad's Jewish schools, because same Gentile parents appreciated the quality of the curriculum taught there.) Barur reported that "the Jews of Arbel [sic: a Hebraised form of the name] — apart from a few who recently immigrated from the mountains — are Arabic-speakers in an environment of Muslims who speak Turkish and Kurdish. Their Arabic vernacular causes them to be

³⁵ Such weddings in the graveyard were known as "Black Weddings", *shvartze khaséne* in Yiddish. This is the subject of a study by Hanna Wężynek (2011).

³⁶ Sukkot (the Feast of Tabernacles) is called *'Id as-Sákka* in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic.

appreciated by the Iraqi civil service". Barur also reported about significant support for Zionism as expressed in sums collected by fund-raising (considering that only 1,850 Jews or nearly so lived in town), and which was enmeshed with deep religious feelings. Barur expressed appreciation for the quality of the rabbinic school in Arbil. The 5,500 Jews counted in Arbil in 1947 moved to Israel (Ben-Jacob 1961, p. 94).

Arguably, a sufficient reason for ones prejudiced against Kurdistan, for making the city of Arbil into a Fooltown, was the very fact that it was in Kurdistan. Clearly, the tale we have considered in the present section is shaped from a Baghdadi-centric perspective. In a report by Joseph Niego (cited by Ben-Jacob 1961, p. 92), in Arbil there used to be 1,800 Jews. For comparison, consider that according to the 1920 census, there were 50,000 Jews in Baghdad (that is more than the 44,540 inhabitants that the city of Arbil and its entire province had, according to the census held before the Second World War); the other religious identities in Baghdad were 15,000 Christian, 130,000 Sunnis, and 54,000 Shi'is.

Jews were found in all walks of life. Jewish role in commerce was more important than their numbers, and Iraq's international trade was largely in Jewish hands (in Baghdad and Basrah). Once the Kingdom of Iraq was established after the First World War, the Jews of the country were eager to integrate in the new Iraqi state, which however began to dismiss Jews from the civil service massively (but by no means totally) in the mid-1930s.

The fact that the Jews of Arbil spoke Arabic at home apparently (according to Barur's report mentioned earlier) gave them an advantage, in the Kingdom of Iraq, because the local authorities appreciated it that this community's vernacular was Arabic rather than either Kurdish or Neo-Aramaic, whereas the language of most Muslims in town was Kurdish. The regime in Iraq was committed to Arab and Sunni supremacy.³⁷

Ben-Jacob (1961) enumerated 146 towns and villages in Iraqi Kurdistan where at some time some Jews resided (mostly, up to their exodus to Israel in 1950). He enumerated 190 towns and villages in all, where Jews had resided, by considering Iraqi, Turkish, Persian,³⁸ and Syrian Kurdistan (in Syria, only the town of Qāmāclī).

The Jews of Kurdistan, like the local Christians, used to speak Neo-Aramaic dialects, unlike the Muslim Kurds, whose Kurdish language belongs to the Iranic branch of the Indo-European languages. The majority of the Jews of Arbil spoke Judaeo-Arabic, and only a minority in town used to speak Neo-Aramaic: perhaps 250 out of a total of about 1,900 Jews in the province of Arbil before the Second World War (Ben-Jacob 1961, p. 93). It is of interest to realise the ethnic, religious, and linguistic diversity of the region, as both prejudice and ethnic jokes of Arabic speakers about Kurds had as target all those communities of Kurdistan.

³⁷ Most Kurds in Iraq are Sunnis (except Shi'is near the Iranian border), and most Arbilis also are Sunnis, but they follow the Shafi'i school of the Sunna, unlike the Hanafi school typically followed by Baghdad's Sunnis. As there only were few Christians in Arbil, and as the Shafi'i school, unlike the Hanafi school, does not permit its followers to eat meat slaughtered by Jews, in case Jewish slaughterers found an animal not to be kosher (which may be because the knife state was substandard, or the slaughterer's hand movement was not smooth, or because of anomalies found during anatomical inspection), they had to bury the carcass (Ben-Jacob 1961, p. 93), instead of being able to sell the meat to non-Jews. This made the economics of kosher slaughtering more onerous. For Christians, such meat would have been permissible anyway, and for the Hanafi school what made it permissible was the religious formula uttered by the Jewish slaughterer, as well as the identity of the animal species.

³⁸ Actually it is difficult to provide a precise count; in the case of Persian Kurdistan, the chieftown is Senandagh, and Ben-Jacob (1961, p. 148), who lists six different forms of that place-name, points out that the city was established about 250 years earlier, and that the Jewish and Christian communities had moved there when it was established, after the destruction of the village of the Qal'a Hasan-Abad, where they had been living. The new city is situated west of the site of that village. In Jewish sources, Senandagh used to be named as *Senna*, or *Sene*, or *Sinno*.

The Kurds being made the butt of stupidity jokes in the Near East is something discussed in a dissertation by Khanaka (1990), cited by Davies (2011, pp. 259–260) in the context of a discussion of ethnic jokes about stupidity from around the world.

I would like to stress that that kind of humour is far from harmless, and e.g. in the case of Kurds it has often been accompanied³⁹ by quite real discrimination, or then by insulting behaviour (e.g., I am aware of a primary school teacher who in the early 1960s faced disciplinary action because she insulted a pupil for being Kurdish).

Davies mentions that "Kurds speaking one dialect will pass on the stupidity jokes told by the Arabs and tell them about those speaking another form of Kurdish (Khanaka 1990, 27–28, 62)" (Davies 211, p. 260).

Generally speaking, Davies explains this kind of jokes in terms of a centre–edge model, but he also mentions a challenge to that model from Laineste (2005, pp. 12–14) based on new patterns of stupidity jokes from post-Soviet Estonia, with some jokes having as their butt the Finns, thus, a linguistically akin nation who have a richer society (something that Estonians know quite well) and a much larger country.

Davies counters Laineste's challenge to his model by remarking that her counterexamples are from the Internet, where targets of jokes have been arbitrarily switched (Davies 2011, p. 261). Jokes about Finns were told among the Swedes, and are told among the Russians (Krikmann 2009). "These other countries may well be the sources from which any Estonian jokes on the internet about Finns came" (Davies 2011, p. 262).⁴⁰

17. The Other Edge of the Weapon: Use of the Tale in Zakho, Kurdistan, and the Variant from Tiberias. A Fund-Raiser's Improper Behaviour vs. the Hospitable Congregation's Virtuous Acquiescence

In a book by Haya Gavish (2010) about the Neo-Aramaic speaking Jewish community of Zakho, in Iraqi Kurdistan near the Turkish border, Ch. 4 is titled "Rabbinical Emissaries". One such *shadar* (emissary),⁴¹ who came from Jerusalem and visited several times, in 1902, 1912–15, 1927, and 1930–33, was highly regarded and admired by the community in Zakho, even though in the end he had a bitter dispute with his senders. In contrast, the relations between an emissary from Tiberias, who first visited Zakho in 1922, and the local Jewish community "were complex and had its pitfalls" (Gavish, *ibid.*, p. 117): "it turns out that relations between this shadar and the community were not of one cloth; in fact, they reflect a spectrum of feelings from declarations of esteem and respect to sharp criticism, whether overt or covert" (*ibid.*, p. 119). Criticism was "aroused by his extending his stay in Zakho to two months, all this time enjoying the honor and generous hospitality bestowed upon him, whereas other shadarim used to remain in the city up to two weeks at most" (*ibid.*). Other emissaries had, like him, given instruction to ritual slaughterers in places they visited, but

³⁹ Incidentally, see Kirk Mauldin's (2002) discussion of the role humour in the social construction of gendered and ethnic stereotypes.

⁴⁰ Consider for example that in *The Mirth of Nations* (Davies 2002), Chapters 5 and 6 are 'Canadian Jokes about Newfoundlanders: Neighborly, Bilingual, North American' and 'Jokes about Newfies and Jokes Told by Newfoundlanders'. This is an example of a class of jokes told in a country about the inhabitants of a region in that same country. In *Ethnic Humor Around the World* (Davies 1990a), one of the chapters is 'Who Gets Called Stupid?', which is followed by a chapter entitled 'The Stupid and the Dirty' — an important distinction. Ethnic jokes about stupidity are also the subject of Davies (1990b). Philips (1984) discussed racist acts vs. racist humour.

⁴¹ *Shadar* is an acronym used as an agent noun in Hebrew. The acronym stands for the Aramaic genitival phrase *shluh□a de-rabbanan*, "an emissary of our rabbis". Such emissaries, raising funds for Jewish communities in the Holy Land, and sometimes stopping several years in given cities in order to teach or as congregational rabbis, were prominent in the early modern period up to the middle of the 20th century.

unlike his peers, this one "demanded and received a large sum for his efforts — this at a time when the community was in difficult straits due to the war and the immediate postwar period" (*ibid.*, p. 120). Some resented it, that whereas they had hosted him lavishly, when it was they who paid visit to Tiberias he at most offer a cup of wine to drink. Whereas a fund-raiser could be expected to legitimately keep for his own use some of the donations, it was rumoured with resentment that he kept a large carpet they had donated in Zakho for a shrine in Tiberias.

Nehemiah Hocha, a cantor and amulet-maker born in 1927, "stressed that he knew of shadarim in Zakho only from hearsay. He related that he had heard about two emissaries who were cheats and exploited the naïveté of villagers near Zakho for their own benefit" (*ibid.*, p. 130). Gavish quotes his narrative (*ibid.*, pp. 130–131, the brackets are in the book itself), which apparently combines local conditions with the extant folkloric tale:

They say that there were villages around Zakho that had only a few Jews, perhaps only a few families. The Jews there were not learned in the Torah. They made their livelihood in commerce. They generally sold [felled] trees, making very little profit and living sparingly. They tell about a certain shadar from Eretz Israel who went to a certain village. He said to them, "I came to ask for donations for the fund-raising campaigns." They told him, "We don't give every day; only on Yom Kippur do we give a donation. We don't have money now." That was in the month of Tammuz [i.e., June–July], and he said to them, "OK, on Tuesday it will be Yom Kippur." That was the seventeenth of Tammuz, and for them he transformed it into Yom Kippur. They said, "But we have to slaughter *kapparot* and do this and that." And so they brought fowls on one day, the sixteenth of Tammuz, on the eve of the fast, and slaughtered them. And he organized for them [the ceremonial] lashing and prayers of Yom Kippur. That evening, they began the prayers. [Next day], on Yom Kippur, he began to lead them in the Mussaf [i.e., additional prayers] for Yom Kippur. Suddenly another rabbinical emissary, a shadar, passed by. He [the first one] said to him [in a melodious tone], "Mister, keep quiet, keep quiet, don't say anything. They gave me thirty dinars. Half for me and half for you. Don't say anything, for they are all asses." And he [the second shadar] also continued to pray. They split the money between them and in the evening set out to Eretz Israel.

Clearly, this is not an event from early 20th century, but rather the old folkloric tale. But it was applied to villagers (not residents of Zakho), apparently expressing the resentment of people from Zakho who felt over-exploited by fund-raisers. Whereas on the one hand, one could say that the villagers are being belittled — Arabic-speaking Iraqi Jews not infrequently entertained cruel prejudices against Kurdish Jews (thus replicating the anti-Kurdish and anti-Iranic prejudices of Arabic-speaking Iraqis in general), whereas the Kurdish Jews belittled those in Karatepe (*Qaratappa*), whose name was made to typify a back-of-beyond place⁴² —

⁴² The reference was to the Turkish hamlet of Karatepe, not to Karatepe the way we currently perceive it: is an important archaeological site (discovered in 1946), in Cilicia, inland north of the Bay of Alexandretta, far away from all areas of Kurdistan. The ancient Neo-Hittite city controlled a passage from eastern Anatolia to the north Syrian plain. The city was probably destroyed by the Assyrians in about 700 B.C.E. The archaeological site's importance is especially because of its inscriptions, including bilingual texts in Phoenician and Hieroglyphic Luwian from the eighth century B.C.E. It has been like a Rosetta Stone for making sense of Luwian. For trying to understand why Karatepe was selected, in Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan, as an idiomatic example for a back-of-beyond place, perhaps it is somewhat relevant that in the 18th century, there was a war between the governor of the Ottoman province of Aleppo in northern Syria, and the governor of the Ottoman province of Mosul in what is now Iraqi Kurdistan. Aleppo won, and Mosul went into decline. That was a way for Kurdistan to be for a while attentive to northern Syria, from which Karatepe is not far away.

In Assyrian antiquity, when the Assyrian territorial centre was in what is now Iraqi Kurdistan, Cilicia was part of the Assyrian Empire, as a vassal state or province, Quwê, between the ninth and seventh centuries B.C.E. The capital city of Quwê probably was either Misis, the ancient Mopsouhestia, or then the present-day city of Adana. The Assyrian king Ashurbanipal died around 627 B.C.E. in the lowlands of eastern Cilicia. In that ancient perspective, Karatepe (known in Hittite as Azatiwataya) may have been far away indeed, but not a back-of-beyond place.

arguably we are witnessing here something far more interesting. Here we have pious congregants who hit back.

The congregants in the tale virtuously acquiesced in the fund-raiser's upgrading an actually prescribed day of fast (the Seventeenth of Tammuz) into the main fast of the year, one more expensive, and more profitable for the fund-raiser. This does not necessarily mean that they were incompetent in Jewish traditions or in the Hebrew calendar. It does not show that they were ignorant. It rather means that they were being kind in the extreme even to an undeserving emissary from the Land of Israel. The tale being told by Hocha was, in a sense, a reflection of misgivings that some Zakho Jews had about an emissary they considered extortionate and avaricious, and who did not have, in their opinion, scruples about exploiting excessively their good wills during economically difficult years.

The considerations I am made in the last two paragraphs are my own. Gavish instead, after narrative quoted above, proceeds to relate that in 1994 she interviewed over the telephone Meir Edrei, who had been the mayor of Tiberias in the 1970s, and that he told her that he was well acquainted with the controversial emissary, who was his father's age. He had nice things to say about him, and he related that he was told by the emissary that he had been in Kurdistan. But then (Gavish, *ibid.*, pp. 131–132; double brackets are mine):

Edrei added, at his own initiative, "They said about him that he received a carpet for the tomb of Rabbi Meir, but that the carpet was in his home. They also told a story about him that he received special payment for conducting prayers on Yom Kippur, [that] in Kurdistan he celebrated Yom Kippur on Purim."⁴³

That in Tiberias these stories about the carpet and the celebration of Yom Kippur in Tammuz or on Purim were also attributed to [[the controversial emissary from Tiberias]] does not mean that they are historical fact, but only that they contain some folkloric-literary truth, which makes an even stronger impression because it connects [[that emissary]] to a motif in Jewish folktales about swindlers who cheat a community. In this case, the literary tradition added weight to the criticism of the shadar that accumulated in the oral tradition about [[that emissary]]'s greed and exploitation of his status.

Such stories undermine the positive image of shadarim in general and of emissaries from Eretz Israel in particular. These stories might have stemmed from the economic distress and socioreligious condition of the Jews of Zakho and its vicinity. They may also have resulted from the gap between the lofty conception of a shadar from Eretz Israel — supposed to be without blemish and a symbol of the affinity with the Holy Land and its religious values — and his



Map 3. Location map of Karatepe (from Wikipedia). The site coordinates are 37°15'32"N 36°14'51"E / 37.258801°N 36.247601°E.

⁴³ This is somewhat similar to the variant from the Galilee, set in the Maghreb, discussed in Sec. 18 below.

behavior in real life. Finally, we cannot rule out the possibility that there is a kernel of historical truth in these stories.

More solid and more sordid stories circulate among Iraqi Jews (including my family) about contributions made to secular emissaries in later decades, with claims that they were either appropriated, or taken with the intention that credit would be denied. Of course, this is coloured by communal resentment for the treatment of 'olim (immigrants) in the early 1950s, as well as even three decades later on.

18. A Version from the Galilee in the Israel Folklore Archive

This section is about a tale, IFA 4153 from the Israel Folklore Archive, which was recorded (on a typed form in Hebrew) by Menahem Ben-Aryeh on 13 September 1962 (which was the 14 Ellul 5722, therefore with less than one month to go before the day of Atonement), in the northern town of Rosh-Pinnah, the informant being **סר חיים כרסנטי** – Ḥayyim «Krsntý» (Karsenti?)⁴⁴ from Rosh-Pinnah, a native of Safed in the Galilee. Safed is one of the Four Holy Communities of the Land of Israel (it was the centre of Jewish mysticism), and this is an indicator of exposure to tradition and traditional lore, not necessarily imported. Tale IFA 4153 was given the title *Olam golem* (i.e., literally, 'inept world', cf. the name of the android Golem), an idiom of Ashkenazi derivation, pronounced *oylom goylem* or *oylem goylem*. I don't think it was the informant who gave the tale that title. It must have been the recorder.

The following is my own translation of the first paragraph:

In the times of old (*bymey qedem*), when the popular almanacs were not widespread as yet, the rabbis, or then the communal administrator of the communities (*parnasei ha-'edot*) used to inform to the masses (*la-hamonei ha-'am*) the dates of the festivals and other occurrences [literally: *mo'adei* (dates of) *he-haggim* (festivals of Pentateuchal institutions) *ve-ha-mo'adim* (festivals of later institution, or then fasts, including the day of Atonement, which is not a *hag*), and the masses used to celebrate the festivals (*haggim* [but evidently also the *mo'adim* are meant]) according to their instructions.

The setting is set *bymey qedem*, which usually means "in antiquity", but the continuation makes it obvious that "formerly", or "in the times of old", or "in premodern times" is intended. Such chronology is apparently given in the beginning, because the informant wanted to provide beforehand a counterargument to the argument that the congregation being fooled could have checked the date in a printed calendar.

Moreover, bear in mind that already in the 16th century almanacs were an important product of typesetters in the Hebrew script. Of course there were geographical differences, but in general Jewish books had a vast circulation, and are found far away from where they were printed.⁴⁵ In the case of printed calendars, however, there was an attempt to accommodate the vernacular to which customers were accustomed.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Cf. the family name of Philippe Karsenty, a French media commentator. The likely development of the name is [karsen'ti] < [kar'senti] <? *Crescente* by misvowelling on reading the transcription in the Hebrew script. *Crescente* (Italian) — and Modern Castilian participle *creciente* 'growing' — or *Crescenti* (Italian) are in relation to Latin *Crescentius*, Italian *Crescenzo*, and (in Jewish Catalan onomastics) *Crescas*.

⁴⁵ Concerning liturgical time-keeping, distinguish the calendar from the clock. It is important to understand that Sabbath times (for the beginning and the end of Sabbath) are shown in current calendars, giving the Western hour. But also in Western Europe, time-keeping concerning the hours of the day has changed since the introduction of the railways, which caused watches to follow no longer the different tower clocks of their respective towns, but standard time, the same for an entire country. In an article in preparation, I discuss also time-keeping hardware, "Arabic" watches and "Arabic" clocks (other than paperaceous equipment, which printed calendars are), which were in use (at least in my mother's family in Baghdad) in order to keep the time

After the first paragraph in the scanned form of IFA 4513, the actual story begins:

In one of the days in the middle of the year, an emissary ("meshullah" [in double quotes in the form]) arrived into one of the Jewish communities of North Africa, having been sent to raise funds for one of the rabbinic schools of the Land of Israel.

The narration as recorded in Hebrew is modernised. Traditionally, one would relate about an emissary to "the Lands of the West" (*arsot ha-Ma'arav*, i.e., the Maghreb), instead of naming the place as North Africa (note that in Israeli Hebrew, one usually means by 'North Africa' the Maghreb, whereas one does not refer in that manner to Egypt and Cyrenaica). The emissary, as listeners are supposed to know, lives for years in the region or even the city where he was sent.⁴⁷ In Sec. 2, we considered a variant of this tale type, as originally told in the Maghreb, and reported about by Maman (1999).

Let us turn now to the next paragraph of the tale as recorded in Rosh-Pinnah:

One day, the emissary told the members of that community (*li-vnei ha-qehilla*): "Don't you know, tomorrow is the Day of Atonement". The members of the community were startled, and said: "We didn't know, we haven't prepared the *kapparot* [i.e., the chicken customarily slaughtered on the eve], and we have no cantor to conduct the service". The emissary calmed them down, and said: "The *kapparot*, you can take them from your courtyards, and there is still time to prepare, until sunset, everything needed for the holy day (*ha-yom ha-qadosh*). As to the cantor, I'll be the one conducting the service, and will lead you in prayer".

We can see then that the community accepts this man's authority. There is nobody who would contradict him.

The members of the community agreed, and prepared in a hurry everything needed for the holy day. Everyone invited the emissary to eat at his table, and everyone wanted to see him as a guest at his home.

according to the liturgical hours instituted in Jewish law, and which like the Catholic and Nestorian hours, as well as those in use among Muslims, are derived from the market hours of the Roman Empire.

According to the "Arabic" time (i.e., Jewish liturgical time), the Sabbath always starts at the same hour. This is why the pocket watch and the clock as working in "Arabic" mode needed adjustment. I own a large, Ottoman-period pocket watch with four hands, one pair the usual hands, and the other pair adjustable to show the Jewish hour, according to the seasonal variation. The digits are Arabic-Arabic, not the usual European "Arabic" numerals. Of the two pairs of hands, a pair shows Western standard time with fixed-length hours, and the other pair is adjustable to show time with hours of seasonally adjustable length, checked on the town's tower clock.

This was the pocket watch of my great-grandfather, and was part of a broader system of denominational time-keeping: he also used to have a large clock with four hands. He would check the clock tower (subserving the ritual needs of all faith communities, including the Jews, in Baghdad), then would adjust accordingly his four-hand watch, and once at home, he would use his watch to adjust his four-hand clock. This was important for Baghdadi Jews and other faith communities. At present, we only have the Jewish calendars, but we lost the very notion of Jewish watches and clocks.

⁴⁶ In an article discussing early modern Jewish calendars from Italy in the Hebrew script, and which used to give the Jewish day by reference to the Christian calendar (for practical reasons, as users were likely to be involved in commerce), Bonfil (2012) notes that both southern and northern Italian phonetics or terminology are reflected in the Hebrew transcriptions. Bonfil (*ibid.*, p. 521) briefly makes considerations about the name for 'Xmas' appearing in the "hybrid" form *Nidal*, considered to be typical of an Ashkenazi *milieu*. Bonfil (*ibid.*, p. 521, fn. 21) refers to the etymologies of such names for 'Xmas' as discussed by Shapiro (1999), and remarks in addition about [d] being a Northernism in the Italian dialectological context. Names for other Christian festivals in the calendar in the Hebrew script are interesting for Italian dialectology (Bonfil 2012, pp. 519–521).

⁴⁷ It even happened that, so that the emissary would not remain without a wife, a poor or orphaned girl was wedded to him, and he would divorce her years afterwards, when he was about to return to the Land of Israel. This only happened in countries under Islamic rule, where in given conditions the Jews would allow husbands to wed a second wife, by influence of the customs in the environment. At any rate, both the emissary and his local wife and children would be in practice maintained with part of the funds raised locally.

This would suggest that until then, the emissary had been left to his own devices, presumably living on funds he had already collected, perhaps in that town or perhaps elsewhere. At any rate, it is only now that he is welcome everywhere as a guest.

In the evening, everybody gathered at the synagogues, dressed in white. The emissary conducted the service, and prayed [aloud] with a pleasant voice.

Apparently the emissary [this is one of only two occurrences of *meshullah* not in double quotes] was not a rabbinic scholar (*lo haya mi-talmidei ha-hakhamim*). In the middle of the prayer of "Amidah" ([i.e.] Eighteen [Blessings])

— this is the Standing Prayer, and the recorder placed in double quotes its Hebrew name 'Amidah, which is in used among Sephardic and Arabic-speaking Jews, while defining the term with its Hebrew name *Shmone 'Esre*, the Eighteen [Blessings], a name which is in use among Ashkenazi Jews (the recording having been done in 1962, it is totally unsurprising that the standard is taken to be Ashkenazi, given the ethnocentrism that has persisted much longer than that period) —

of the Musaf service [i.e., the Supplementary Prayer following the Morning Prayer on festive days], the emissary [acting as] cantor (*ha-meshullah ha-hazzan*)

— this is second one of only two occurrences of *meshullah* not in double quotes; here it is part of lexical binom, literally 'the emissary the cantor', for 'the emissary-cum-cantor' —

began to say: "It came to pass in the days of Mordecai and Esther in the capital, Shushan (Susa)", or "Shoshannat-Ya'akov".

The latter, "Blossom of Jacob",⁴⁸ is the title of a joyous hymn sung after the reading of the Scroll of Esther during the festival of Purim. As to "It came to pass in the days of Mordecai and Esther in the capital, Susa", this misquotes the first verse of the Book (Scroll) of Esther, namely, "It came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus".

That is to say, this cantor is mixing up the Day of Atonement (Kippur) with Purim. What we have here is a contamination of the tale of "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" (nowhere in this version are we told that the time is in mid-summer), with a family of tales about mixing up the holidays. This, too, is part of a wider tale type of "Ignorance of the Festivals".

For example, in Eastern Europe an *arendar* (tax-farmer or other governmental licensee; *mokhsan* in Hebrew), and "therefore" an ignoramus (*arendar* jokes were the equivalent of Italy's stupidity jokes about the *carabinieri*) has the Passover haggadah bound, but the binder binds it by error with pages from the dirges of the Ninth of Av (the summertime fast commemorating the destruction of the Sanctuary).

The *arendar* reads also the wrong pages at the Passover banquet, and when his boy son tells him that on the previous year he had been a guest and they read the Passover Haggadah differently, the father tells the child that his host of yeasteryear is an ignoramus. Also notice that *Purim* and *Kippur* share the substring [pur], and that all the more so, the overlap is more extensive if the forms *Purim* and *Kippurim* of the names of those two festivals are used, and that this has motivated selecting those two festivals for festival mix-up tales, as well as the family names of a betrothed couple in a short story by Shalom Aleikhem.

Contrast this to what we have seen in Sec. 17 above, concerning an emissary to Kurdistan from the Galilee, according to a tale from Tiberias: during an interview he gave Gavish in 1994, Meir Edrei (*Edre'i < Der'i*), a former mayor of Tiberias, told her about a controversial emissary (Gavish 2010, pp. 131–132).

⁴⁸ With the flower name popularly taken to mean 'rose', but it may denote 'lily' instead.

They said about him that he received a carpet for the tomb of Rabbi Meir, but that the carpet was in his home. They also told a story about him that he received special payment for conducting prayers on Yom Kippur, [that] in Kurdistan he celebrated Yom Kippur on Purim.

That is to say, a folktale about Yom Kippur being celebrated on the day of Purim (a folktale that certainly was already in existence) came to be applied to that particular emissary, as though it was he who was the protagonist.

The next paragraph in the scanned form of IFA 4513 is given here in my own translation:

There was there a second emissary ("*meshullah*" [in double quotes in the form]) from the Land of Israel who apparently knew more [added by hand in the typed form: about prayers, and was] more learned, and who upon hearing that the cantor was saying: "It came upon to pass in the days of Ahasuerus" [sic, unlike the earlier misquote] or "Shoshannat-Ya'aqov", approached him, stood near the officiant's platform, and with a melody of the Day of Atonement asked the cantor:

"Let our master teach us, what has Purim to do with Kippurim?"

The cantor answered him with a melody of the Day of Atonement:

"Shut up, shut up, all of them are donkeys (*hamorim*),
They paid me one hundred *agorim*,
half for me, and half for thee (*shellakh*)
(bowing down) and for this, 'We thank Thee' (*Modim anahnu Lakh*)".

יִלְמְדְנוּ רַבָּנוּ, מָה עֲנִין פֻּרִים אֶצֶל כַּסּוּרִים?
הַשֵּׁיב לָנוּ הַמִּזֶּן בְּנִגּוֹן שֶׁל תַּפִּילַת יוֹם הַכַּפּוּרִים:
"שְׁתוּק שְׁתוּק, כֻּלָּם חֲסוּרִים
נִתְּנוּ לִי מֵאָה אֲגוּרִים
חֲצִי שֶׁלִּי וְחֲצִי שֶׁלָּהּ
(תוֹךְ כְּרִיעָה) וְעַל כֵּן מוֹדִים אֲנַחְנוּ לָךְ"

When the entire congregation heard the cantor saying "We thank Thee" (*Modim anahnu Lakh*) while bowing down, they all bowed down, and said the *Modim* prayer in a chorus, and continued the service of the Day of Atonement.

This ending belongs to the tale type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" indeed, apart from the different timing mentioned in the middle of the story (in the middle months of the year — this being topped by a mix-up with the Purim liturgy — instead of in the month of Tammuz).

19. Ashkenazi Versions from the Israel Folklore Archive

19.1. The Polish Jewish Tale "Hershele the Cantor" (IFA 9606)

On 24 March 2011, I received three Ashkenazi variants of the tale type from Dr. Idit Pintel-Ginsberg of the Israel Folktale Archives (IFA) named in honour of Dov Noy, at the University of Haifa. These three variants are IFA 6976, IFA 7245, and IFA 9606. In the present Sec. 19, we are going to only consider IFA 9606 and IFA 6976, whereas IFA 7245 will be dealt with in Sec. 21, about the city of Linsk taken to be a Fooltown.

Let us begin with IFA 9606. This version is similar to the Levantine, Afghan, and Maghrebine variants about villagers fooled by a trickster. No locale is given as setting for IFA 9606, other than its being a village. The tale was recorded by Sara Greenstein, the informant was Tzvi Aviah, and the geographical origin of the informant is Poland. The tale was given the title "Hershele the Cantor". I translate this tale from Hebrew:

Once in mid-summer Hershele was in dire straits, as usual, and he had already exploited all those sources from which he could extract some pennies, and his wife was nagging him as she had no farthing for buying bread for the children. As usual in such situations, Hershele left his house, and wandered aimlessly until he reached some village, and then he conceived of an idea, and came into [the shop? home doubling as an artisan's shop?] of a Jew who was busy with his job, and told him: "How about you, Jew, it's the eve of New Year's Day, and I see that you are working as though nothing happened?"

The Jew was startled, and said that he didn't know at all that today was the eve of New Year's Day. He immediately threw away his tools, went to a neighbour, and told him that a Jew had arrived from the city, and had said that today is the eve of New Year's Day. Instantaneously, this rumour spread in the village, and all men stopped working and began to prepare for the Day of Judgement [i.e., New Year's Day]. The problem was that it occurred to them that they had no cantor for New Year's day, and it was late in the day, so how could they get a cantor? They asked each other: "Where is that Jew?" They sought him until they found him, and asked him: "Rabbi, Jew [רבי, יהודי] in the Hebrew transcription, but I think this is *Reb yehidi*, 'Mr. Jew', a form of address for one whose name is unknown], perhaps you could be [our] cantor for New Year's Day? And we'll pay you as much as we can afford". Initially, Hershele postured as though he had no desire of accepting that proposal, but later, he said: "What can I do, I see that it is providential that I happened to be here exactly on the eve of New Year's Day, and therefore I don't have the right to refuse". And he agreed to be their cantor for a fee of one thousand Israeli Liras[!!! with an acronym: *במחיר של אלף ל"י*].⁴⁹ That night, all villagers gathered at the synagogue. Hershele prayed [i.e., conducted] the Evening Prayer of New Year's Day, and they all enjoyed his service. On the next day, Hershele prayed the Morning Prayer, and in the middle of the service he noticed that a Jew who was not local had come in. Then he thought to himself: "I am entrapped, because my lie will be found out", but he immediately recovered, and as though it was a passage of the prayer, he hinted to the uninvited guest and said with a prayer melody: "One thousand quids they paid me, half is thine and half is mine, today here and tomorrow 'He Fled' (*Vayyivrahk*),⁵⁰ Holy".

אלף כסף נתנו לי חצי שלך וחצי
שלי, היום כאן ומחר ויברח, קדוש.

The [other foreign] Jew took the hint and kept silent, and so Hershele made an earning, and shared with the [other foreign] Jew, and went home in much gladness, knowing that now he would be welcomed by his wife.

In the variant (IFA 7245) we are going to consider at the beginning of Sec. 21, the word order makes *Vayyivrahk* rhyme with "thine" (*shellakh*), whereas in the text we have been considering now, that option does not eventuate. It would have taken saying "half is mine and half is thine", rather than "half is thine and half is mine".

In IFA 9606, the festival the trickster fakes is New Year's Day, not the Day of Atonement. In a sense, this is more "credible" than the versions about the Day of Atonement, because the Day of Atonement is the tenth day of the year, so the fooled congregation has to also be convinced that New Year's Day had slipped by and they did not know about it.

I would like to make two considerations about the last paragraph of the tale. Firstly, the intruder because of whom the cantor feels in danger is referred to as "the Jew" twice. This is apparently because his name is unknown, whereas Hershele's name was initially unknown to the villagers, but it was known to the audience since the very beginning. Secondly, Hershele going home in much gladness can be taken to be an allusion to the formula with which the congregation is dismissed (and invited to go home and eat in gladness), after the Evening

⁴⁹ Arguably this must be taken in the saense: a hefty sum, let us say one thousand of our Liras now here in Israel (at the time when the tale was recorded).

⁵⁰ That word is found twice in the Pentateuch (*Genesis* 31:21 about Jacob, and *Exodus* 2:15 about Moses), twice in the Book of Judges (9:21 about Jephthah, and 11:3 about Jotham), as well as in *1 Samuel* 19:12, 20:1, 21:11, 22:20, *2 Samuel* 13:34, *1 Kings* 11:17, 11:40, *Jeremiah* 26:21, *Hosea* 12:13, and *Job* 14:2. Presumably the trickster is alluding to either the episode about Jacob fleeing from Laban, or Moses fleeing from Pharaoh having become a wanted man.

Prayer following the end of the Day of Atonement; the problem with this interpretation is that this is a version about New Year's Day, not about the Day of Atonement.

19.2. Rumanian Jewish Variants Set in Germany (IFA 6976)

Version IFA 6976 comprises two parts: part IFA 6976(a) is recorded in Yiddish, it is entitled in Hebrew "Khatsi shelli, khatsi shellakh" ("Half mine, half thine", and this is given in Yiddish in the first line of text: "halb mir, halb dir") and was told by Israel Furman (Fuhrmann), based on his recollections from Rumania. In that Yiddish variant, unsurprisingly the pseudo-liturgical exchange between the conmen is in Hebrew: "Shalom aleikhem, Reb Khayim, amarti lahem, Yom-Kippur ha-yom, khatsi shelli, khatsi shellakh (or: shelkha?). Kadosh", that is to say: "The peace be upon you, Haim. I told them: 'Today it's Yom Kuppur'. Half for me, half for you. Holy!", where the latter word is taken from the liturgy, so that the congregation would take the entire utterance for a line from the hymn ending with that particular word.

Part IFA 6976(b) comprises three variants in Hebrew, on the second page of the scanned entry IFA 6976. All three Hebrew variants were recorded by Dr. Israel Furman (Fuhrmann), and all three are stated to have been heard by him in Rumania. In particular, IFA 6976(b₁) — which is entitled "Khatsi shelli, va-khatsi shellakh" ("Half for me *and* half for thee") is the first one translated below.

It is remarkable that the setting is in Germany, whereas the protagonist is Polish. In more traditional areas of Eastern Europe, German Jewry was considered to be assimilated (Westernised) to an unseemly extent; this enabled the ascription of ignorance on matters Jewish.⁵¹

I translate from Hebrew the tale variant IFA 6976(b₁):

One fair summer day, a Jew from Poland arrived into a German small town in order to look for a living. He considered the Jews of that town, and found them to be unlearned and ignorant [in Jewish matters], all of them. What did he do? He seized his opportunity and notified the town's Jews that the next day will be the Day of Atonement. The Jews were taken by surprise: where will they get a cantor from?

The Jew [i.e., the protagonist] heard this and immediately proposed that, being an expert cantor, he was willing to remain in that place and to conduct the service, if they paid him a hefty sum.

The town's Jews were gladdened, they agreed to the cantor's conditions, and on the next day they celebrated the Day of Atonement. But during prayer, out of sudden Haim, one from the same city as the cantor, entered the synagogue; he happened to be there [in town] by chance. What did the cantor do? When he saw Haim coming into the synagogue, he continued to pray as per the liturgy, by changing the words:

The peace be on thee, Reb Haim,
I told them it is the Day of Atonement today,
Half is mine and half it thine,
Holy.

Variant IFA 6965(b₂) is translated in the following (the informant was א. שרף):

⁵¹ During the 2000s, a newspaper report about the celebration of the Jewish High Holidays at a synagogue in Egypt — made possible by the presence of tourists determined to hold a quorate celebration, and with some individuals from the vestigial Jewish community of Egypt — related that one local woman inquired about which festival it was: the New Year's Day? This shows that there are conceivable situations in which some Jews would be uncertain or confused about the identity of a festival. I recall an entirely secular colleague of Jewish ancestry in Israel (he had recently returned from Sweden, with a Swedish non-Jewish wife) asking me whether the current festival was Hanukkah or Purim.

A Jew from Poland was loooking for a living, and began to sell candles. One day, he reached a city in Germany, and turned to the local Jews in order to sell them large candles. But who would buy such large candles? What did the Jew do? He turned in an astonished tone to the local Jews:

— What? Don't you know that tomorrow is the Day of Atonement?

Upon hearing that, the Jews bought the entire batch and candles, and moreover voiced to the Jew their concern: — We are in a quandary. Where are we to get a cantor from?

The Jew calmed them down: — I am willing to pray [i.e., conduct the prayer] for you, if you'll pay me generously, a sum I am being offered elsewhere.

The local Jews were gladdened, agreed to the cantor's conditions, and on the next day, they celebrated the Day of Atonement...

The continuation of IFA 6976(b₂) is like in IFA 6976(b₁). The following is a translation of IFA 6976(b₃):

Reb Haim was a commercial traveller. Upon reaching a city in Germany, he found there all Jewish firms closed with no exception (*sgurim umsuggarim*).⁵²

Reb Haim asked in amazement the Christian businessmen: — What does it mean? Why are the shops of the Jews closed? In what is this day different from the other days?

— They are all at the "synagoga" (at the *beit-hakneset* [Hebrew for 'synagogue']) — they answered him.

Reb Haim went to the synagogue, and what did he see? The synagogue was quite full, and a merchant, from the same city as he, was conducting the service and saying the prayers of the Day of Atonement.

What did the cantor do? When he saw Reb Haim coming into the synagogue, he continued to pray as per the liturgy, by changing the words:

The peace be on thee, Reb Haim,
I told them it is the Day of Atonement today,
Half is mine and half it thine,
Holy!

— Holy! — Reb Haim accommodated himself to the prayer of the cantor...

In these variants set in Germany, it is as though the assumption is that [assimilated, Reform, or secularised] German Jews were so much at a remove from [Orthodox] Jewish orthopraxy, that listeners would not be offended by hearing about them doing some unworldly things: quite as could be expected from them. Polish Jewry used to export Orthodox rabbis to the Orthodox Jewish communities of Germany.

Therefore, in terms of a centre–edge model of stupidity jokes, Orthodox Jews in Eastern Europe did not consider Germany to be legitimately superior, notwithstanding Germany's economical superiority. Rather, they considered those regions of Eastern Europe that produced highly competent rabbis to be the centre, and Germany to be the edge.

20. An Alternative from Agnon: An Ignorant But Well-Meaning Man Officiating

An eastern European Jewish tale relates about an ignorant householder who reads the Haggadah at home, during the Passover Seder night, without realising that litanies of the Ninth of Av were bound together by error. His family is also ignorant; they cannot disabuse him. At most, his boy son tells him that on a previous year, when the boy was a guest of

⁵² *Sgurim umsuggarim* is a reduplicative adjectival superlative, being a biblical intertextual reference to besieged Jericho. Clearly this detail in the Hebrew narration is to be ascribed to the recorder. Cf. in Sec. 21, in my translation of IFA 7245.

another family, they read the Haggadah differently. His father retorts that that other householder is an ignoramus, and that there must have been some rare calendrical constellation.

A similar Jewish tale from Eastern Europe is about an ignorant congregation. An ignorant man in good faith is officiating for them, and is misled by typographical features of the book from which he is reading. He is sincerely devout, and has no intention to swindle his flock. This tale is part of a wider class of tales about the devout but ignorant devout person (either an adult, or a child), who out of ignorance devises his or her own religious practice. As it is sincere, it is liked High Above.

A version of the tale about the ignorant congregation whose well-meaning officiant is misled by the way a book was printed was told by Agnon.⁵³ It appears in the short story 'Two Cantors' (שני חזנים) in the section *Takhríkh shel sippurím, A[leph]* (*A Fascicle of Tales, Part I*) in Agnon's posthumous book *Takhríkh shel sippurím* (תכריך של סיפורים), edited by his daughter Emuna Yaron. The story first appeared in the periodical press, and then in both editions of the book (Tel-Aviv: Schocken, 1984¹, 2001²; in the latter, it is on pp. 143–146).

In Agnon's story, two cantors — who fifty years earlier were fellow assistants of a master cantor — haven't met each other ever since, until they recognise each other at an inn. Before parting, one of them asks the other to teach him a melody. The other instead tells his a story (which presumably contains a melody, when it comes to text that is sung). On a particular year, Jews scattered in hamlets were unable to go and pray in a city, as it was wartime. Therefore they celebrated the High Holidays in the countryside. They appointed one of them as an officiant, and let him use a machzor (*prayerbook*) for the High Holidays — the *Machzor Korban Ahron* edition of 1826, printed in Slawucie (סלאוויטא). On New Year's Day, the officiant sang what he read on the frontispiece (which Agnon quotes in detail). When the officiant gets to lines written in the Roman alphabet, he prays to be exempted to read such intrusive extraneous material, caused by the people of Israel being in exile. In Agnon's book, a reproduction of the frontispiece of that particular edition of the prayerbook is reproduced after the end of the story.

Clearly, the cantor who tells the story inside the story wasn't a witness to the situation described, because had he, a skilled cantor, been available, then he, and not the character in the story he tells, would have been officiating for those rural congregants. Therefore, the cantor who tells the story is relating what folklorists call a *favolate*, rather than a *memorate*.

Although 'personal narrative' is the general term for autobiographical accounts framed as stories, a distinction is made between a *memorate*, an account related by the individual who personally experienced the events, and a *favolate*, a narrative attributed to another person, but which is understood as exemplary or as expressive of the first person's own situation (Dégh and Vázsonyi 1974).

Ilana Rozen, whose subject is Jewish personal narratives from Subcarpathian Ruthenia (Carpatho-Russia, the easternmost part of Czechoslovakia between the two World Wars), similarly classified the stories she collected into memorates for narratives about oneself and favolates for those told about someone else (Rozen 1999, pp. 19, 30). Stahl (1989, p. 13) distinguished between secular personal narratives and faith-related or mystical memorates. Honko (1964) used the term memorates in relation to folk beliefs.

⁵³ Shmuel Yosef Agnon, a writer of Hebrew fiction, as well as a keen collector of anecdotes, is known by the acronym of his Hebrew initials as Shai Agnon. Irony and humour in Agnon are the subject of Fuchs (1985, 1987). Agnon was born Samuel Josef Czaczkes in Buczacz, Galicia, in 1888, and died in Jerusalem in 1970. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1966. Agnon lived in Germany in 1913–1924, and in Palestine both before that (in 1907–1913) and afterwards.

21. Fooltowns

21.1. Lorbottle and Gotham in England

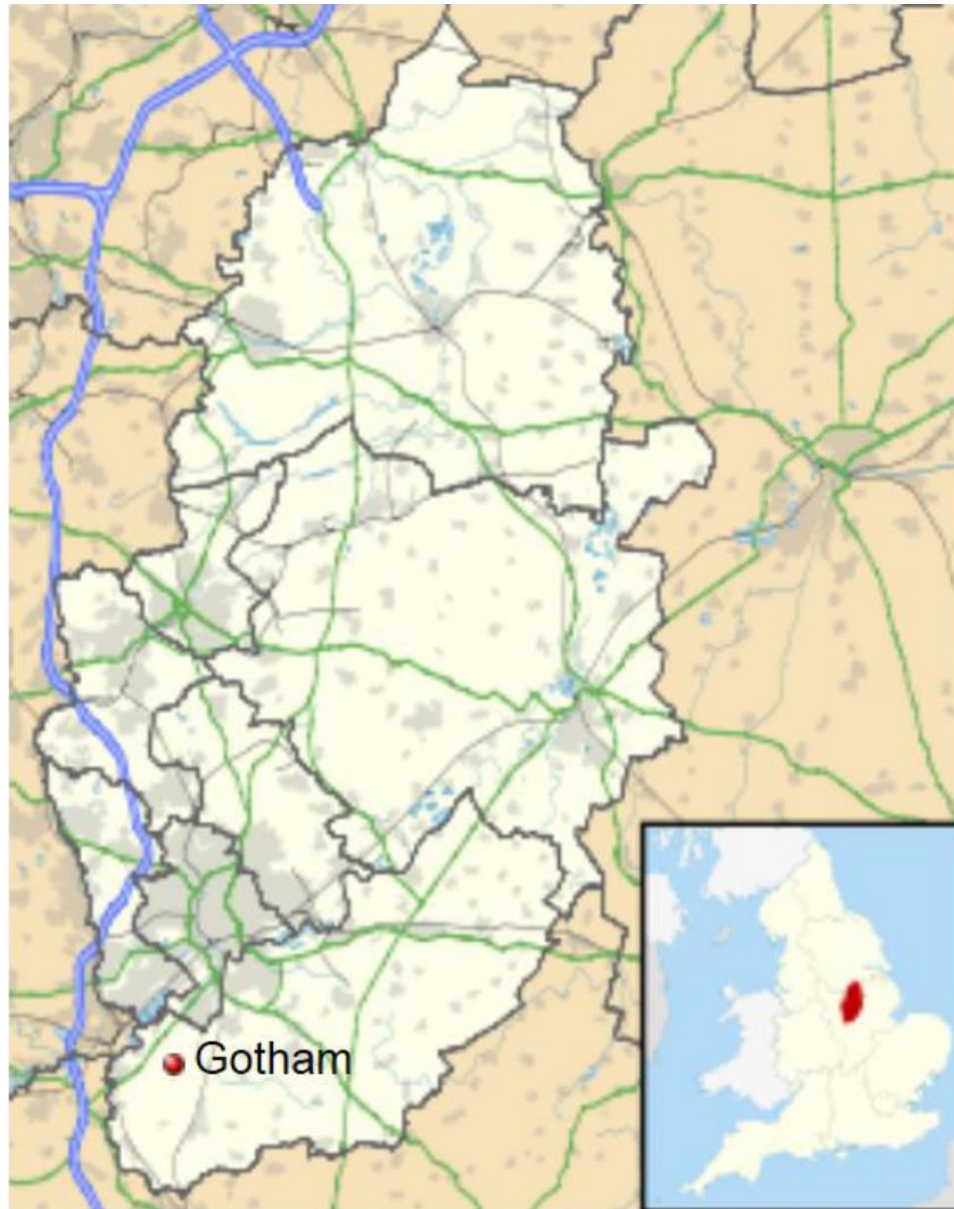
Fooltowns are the subject of Davies (1991). Townsfolk as numskulls are not just a theme about which some scholarly papers in folklore studies would dwell; some older paper on folklore may even refer to the inhabitants of some place as being silly. In the following, we are told about a geographically situated belief, along with a narrative, which actually is a numskulls tale, and this is followed by variants, as well as its contextualisation within the original tale about the wise men of Gotham, or rather the fools of Gotham, who weren't fools after all ("the wise men of Gotham"), but only feigned they were, not unlike the biblical David feigning madness (Hardy 1879, pp. 67–69). Not as well known is the town of Lorbottle (*ibid.*, p. 67):

A notion prevailed at Lorbottle, a small inland town in Northumberland, that the cuckoo was the cause of summer. These silly folks, popularly known as "the coves of Lorbottle", agreed that, if she could be secured "within a pinfold there", they would never have winter more. One particular plantation was noted, whither she was accustomed most frequently to repair, and utter her notes earliest and most mellow. It was evidently a favourite haunt, where she loved to linger. This it was determined to environ with a wall, to render her stay perpetual, and give her unquiet footsteps rest. They were encouraged to this also by the short flights the bird takes in spring. The wall was reared in haste and with solicitude, but, alas, just as it was completed and a home prepared, the capricious and ungrateful bird glided quietly over the top, "and flapped her well-fledged wings and sped away". Thus perished all hopes of Lorbottle's being blessed with a never-ending summer. It is still, however, a fondly cherished opinion among the seniors of the place that if the wall had only been elevated a little higher the darling project would have been achieved. "Certain Cornishmen", according to Mr. Hunt, "built a wall around the cuckoo to prevent that bird from leaving the county, and thus insure an early spring. When built the bird flew out, crying, 'Cuckoo! cuckoo!' 'If we had put one course more on the wall we should a' kept 'n in', said they".

As for Gotham — which is a village in Nottinghamshire, England, south of Nottingham and north-east of Kegworth — Hardy's text continues as follows (1879, pp. 67–69):

A similar design was once entertained by that sage race, the wise men of Gotham. They, too, attempted to hedge in the cuckoo. The story is as follows: — On an eminence about a mile south of Gotham, a [p. 68:] village of Nottinghamshire, stands a bush known as the "Cuckoo Bush", which represents an older one connected with one of the legends that has given notoriety to that place. King John was once marching towards Nottingham, and intended to pass through Gotham meadow; but the villagers, believing that the ground over which a king went became for ever afterwards a public road, to save their right of common, contrived means for preventing the king from going in that direction. The king, incensed, sent messengers to inquire the reason of their incivility, intending, doubtless, to punish them, by fine or otherwise, for their rude behaviour. When the king's servants arrived "they found some of the inhabitants endeavouring to drown an eel in a pond; some dragging their carts and waggons [sic] to the top of a barn to shade a wood from the sun's rays; some tumbling cheeses down a hill in the expectation that they would find their way to Nottingham market; and some employed in hedging in a cuckoo which had perched upon an old bush. In short, they were all employed in such a manner as convinced the king's officers that they were a village of *fools*, and consequently unworthy of his majesty's notice. They, of course, having outwitted the king, imagined that they were *wise*. Hence arose the saying, 'The wise fools of Gotham'" [Chambers' *Book of Days*, Vol. 1, pp. 462–463].

An original "Merry Tale", as reprinted by J. O. Halliwell, of the Gothamites and the cuckoo, is this: "On a time the men of Gotham would fain have *pinn'd* (*sic*) in the cuckoo, whereby she should sing all the year; and in the midst of the town they had a hedge made round in compass, and they had got a cuckow, and put her into it, and said, 'Sing here, and you shall lack neither meat nor drink all the year.' The cuckow, when she perceived herself



Map 4. Gotham shown within Nottinghamshire (from Wikipedia).

encompassed within the hedge, she flew away. ‘A vengeance on her’, said the wise men, ‘we made not our hedge high enough.’” (*Notes and Queries*, 4th ser. vol. iv. pp. 305–6.) The wise men of Somersetshire once attempted to solve the mysteries of cuckoo-life by building a high wall round an unfledged cuckoo, in which they fed and kept it like a prisoner of state. “The [p. 69:] bird quietly grubbed until it was fledged, when it spread its wings and easily flew over the high wall and escaped. The wise men had forgotten to roof their enclosure — they had penned the cuckoo but had forgotten that it would fly”. Hence they were derisively called “Cuckoo-penners.” (*Ibid.*)

Fulke Greville, Lord Brook (1554–1628), declares —

“Fools only hedge the cuckoo in.”

I have quoted verbatim from the eloquent and informative exposition in Hardy (1879), and in fact our present subsection has just the function of preamble to the following.

21.2. Linskers as Numskulls, in Tales from the Israel Folklore Archive

The rest of this section is concerned with such tales that treat Linskers as numskulls, and their town of Linsk as Fooltown (a role with Eastern European Jewish tales more often reserve to Chełm). The actual town in Linsk is in eastern Galicia.

Let us begin with a variant of the "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" tale, being an Ashkenazi variant, IFA 7245, from the Israel Folklore Archive (cf. Sec. 19 above). The clipping at IFA is stated to be (according to the scan I received) from a memorial booklet about the Jewish Community of Sanok (חֻבֶּרֶת סָאנוֹק). Incidentally, *Sanok* is the Polish name of the city (the free Royal City of Sanok, *Królewskie Wolne Miasto Sanok*); its Yiddish name is Sonik (סאָניק), and its Latin name, *Sanocum*. As per current boundaries, Sanok is in southeast Poland, and from 1998 is part of the Subcarpatian Voivodeship (region). Historically, Sanok was part of the Ruthenian Voivodeship (1340–1772), which was part of the Lesser Poland province. Interestingly, a snake with the upper part of the body of a child coming out of its mouth is part of Sanok's coat of arms. That is also the coat of arms of the house of Visconti, which ruled Milan in 1277–1447. This is why it appears in the logo of Alfa Romeo cars.



Map 5. The position of Sanok (from Wikipedia), at 49°33'N 22°13'E.

The Wikipedia entry for Sanok states that in 1,589, Sanok had 1,700 inhabitants; in 1883 it had 5,181; in 1939 it had 15,600; and in 2000 it had 41,401 inhabitants (citing Motylkiewicz 2005, p. 37). Moreover:

In the mid-18th century, Roman Catholics constituted 48.7% of the population, people of Jewish faith 36.5%, and 14.7% of the inhabitants belonged to the Greek Catholic Church. In 1900, the town had 6123 inhabitants, 57% Polish, 30% Jewish of various ethnicities (Polish and/or other), and others. The town had a high percentage of Jews before World War II.

The names of the informant and of the recorder of the IFA tale version are not very easy to decipher, but the tale is from Pipe, Samuel Zanel Pipe (1967),⁵⁴ *Twelve Folktales from Sanok*, and the informant was Alter Hersh Pipe, from Galicia.

ל"ג פסח ואני זאנעל פייפ, א"צ

I understand from Dr. Idit Pintel-Ginsberg that Alter Hersh Pipe was the father of Samuel Zanel Pipe. The title of the tale is "Yom Kippur in Linsk". I translate from Hebrew:

Once Froym (Ephraim) Greidinger came to Linsk. That was precisely when there was a fair there. People bought and sold, they were doing business. What matters, they were earning money. Whereas Froym hadn't even a penny.

"What could one do here?" Froym thought. He thought and thought, until he found a trick: he ran to the stalls, and shouted: "Jews, what are you doing? Today is the eve of Yom Kippur! One must go and pray the Afternoon Prayer!"

"That is impossible!" some Jews said. "Had it been the eve of Yom Kippur, the rabbi would have certainly told us that much."

This version stands out, because some Jews resist the claim made by the trickster, and moreover, they mention the local rabbi as being a more credible authority.

"Your calendar is wrong!" Froym shouted to the Linskens. "I am going to find the rabbi".

Once he was at the rabbi's he kept shouting in such a manner, that the rabbi became convinced: indeed, there is an error in the calendar, and true, today is the eve of Yom Kippur.

Therefore, in this version a necessary step is to convince the rabbi. The rabbi becomes convinced, because of the shouting. There is a cultural precedent for that. In *Genesis Rabba*, a late antique homiletical collectanea, Adam lets himself be convinced by Eve to eat the forbidden fruit, because she was shouting at him. This does not mean that the literary precedent shaped this particular detail in the folktale about Linsk.

In a sense, one individual, the most competent one found locally, being convinced by Froym exonerates the Linskens, as it was their local religious authority that was supporting the trickster's claim. Actually, the Linskens are convinced not by Froym, but by the rabbi, and even this is by the intermediary of the sexton:

Immediately, the sexton proclaimed in all streets that the stalls should be closed, because they would go immediately to "Kol Nidrei" [the initial prayer of the evening of the Day of Atonement, of releasing from vows].

The Linskens obeyed the sexton, and went to pray...

On the Day of Atonement, they honoured Froym by having him conduct the Musaf service [i.e., the Supplementary Prayer following the Morning Prayer].

⁵⁴ I am grateful to Dr. Idit Pintel-Ginsberg of the Israel Folktale Archives for deciphering the citation. I had originally thought that the initials "Sh.Z." stood for "Shneur Zalman", a frequent juxtaposition.

This makes the tale more "reasonable". This foreigner is not let to conduct the entire service of the Day of Atonement by himself (such a city can be expected to have a local cantor), but he is just being honoured, by being made to officiate a portion of the liturgy.

On that very day, Hershele of Ostropol [=Ostropoler]⁵⁵ came to Linsk. He watched, and saw that there was absolute silence all around, everything was closed with no exception (*sagur umsuggar*).⁵⁶

Where would a Jew go? Of course to the House of Study! He was very much puzzled: what is this? On a normal workday, there were Jews enveloped in their prayer shawls?!

He approached the officiant's stand, to see who the officiant was; and whom did he see there? Froym.

As soon as Froymk saw Hershele, he raised his voice and continued the melody of the Day of Atonement:

Today it is the Day of Atonement for me,
Four hundred quids they gave me,
Half is mine and half is thine (*shellakh*),
Today here and tomorrow 'He Fled' (*Vayyivrahk*),
Holy!

היום יום כיפור לי,
ארבע מאות כסף נתנו לי,
חצי שלי וחצי שלך,
היום כאן ומחר ויברח,
קדוש!

Concerning the word *Vayyivrahk*, which here subserves rhyme, contrast this text to the end of the first tale we have considered in Sec. 19, namely, IFA 9606, "Hershele the Cantor" from Poland, set in a village.

All in all, the urban Linskans do not fare too badly, in comparison to the duped congregations (usually rural) we have found in other versions. The Linskans have a rabbi, so blame the rabbi who let himself be convinced by Froym. Bear in mind however that the Linskans are treated as numskulls, and Linsk as Fooltown, is some lore from Galicia. Dr. Idit Pintel-Ginsberg of the Israel Folktale Archives kindly sent me a scan of IFA 7124, starting with a tale in Yiddish, entitled in Hebrew and in Yiddish "How the Fire Erupted in Linsk". Once I had seen IFA 7245, she pointed out: "Another occurrence of Linskans as Chelma'im is in the tale IFA 7124" (that is, Linskans are a less frequently named identity than the Chelmians of Chelm). IFA 7124(a) is a Yiddish version, whereas IFA 7124(b) is a Hebrew version. The latter's title is "A Fire in Linsk". Both texts were recorded by Ozer Pipe, who heard it from Shmuel Goldstein, who heard it from Hillel Isser from Linsk, in eastern Galicia. The translation from Yiddish into Hebrew is ascribed in the scanned typed page of IFA 7124(b) to Gershon Giv'oni, of Yad Mordechai (a kibbutz in Israel's southern coastal plain). I translate from Hebrew:

This happened about 48 years ago. Once a foreign Jew arrived into Linsk, and entered a restaurant in order to eat. The owner of the restaurant stood, and placed a whip on the table. The guest asked him: "What does this mean?"

The owner of the restaurant told him: "Just sit and you'll see".

⁵⁵ Hershele Ostropoler is the protagonist of several East European Jewish funny folktales (Stern 1900).

⁵⁶ *Sagur umsuggar* is a reduplicative adjectival superlative, being a biblical intertextual reference to besieged Jericho. Clearly this detail in the Hebrew narration is to be ascribed to the recorder. Cf. above in Sec. 19, in my translation of IFA 6976(b₃).

As soon as he placed a loaf of bread on the table, a rat jumped from the corner onto the table.

The owner of the restaurant shouted: "Why are you standing up?"

The Jew did not know what to do, and therefore the owner of the restaurant caught the whip, and whipped and whipped until the rat fled.

The owner of the restaurant related to the Jew that there were in town so many rats, that were it not for the whips, one could not eat at all.

The Jew promised to bring in a beast that would kill all the rats, but that one must not feed it meat after milk. And the Jew went away.

After some time the Jew came and brought the beast with him. He apparently gave it to the head of the [Jewish] community, and they brought the beast first into the house of the rabbi, and next into the house of the head of the community, and eventually into the houses of the common people of that the town. After the beast had already eaten all the rats, they [the local people] were afraid lest it would also eat human beings. And they did not know what to do with that beast.

They went and gathered the council of the community, but they reached no decision as to what to do with that beast. They called a gathering in the great synagogue. One Jew said they should kill the beast. Another one retorted: "How that, it's impossible because of cruelty to animals!"

So-and-So said: "Throw the beast into the river!"

They thought it over, and found: to bind the beast inside a bale of straw, to set the straw alight, and this cause the beast to be burnt.

As they were afraid to set light outdoors because of the local nobleman, they introduced the beast into a little room at the courthouse, they bound its leg to a table, and set the straw alight.

This took place on the last day of Passover. The room started to burn, and next the house, and next yet another house, until the whole city was burnt.

An ancient house was left standing, of Chone the Water-carrier, who was, so they say, one of the Thirty-Six [Hidden] Righteous Ones.

According to Jewish ritual law, it is forbidden to light a light on the first two and last two days of Passover, other than for cooking purposes. Perhaps the teller was mistaken, and the day after the last day of Passover was originally meant. It is at any rate remarkable that a man from the real Linsk was telling a tale denigrating the Linsk, but then, those numskulls were the people of a fictional Fooltown also called Linsk.

Whereas *Linsk* is the Yiddish name of the actual town in Galicia, its current Polish name is *Lesko*. The Polish name was *Lisko* until 1926. The Latin name is *Olesco Lescovium*.



Map 6. The position of Lesko (Linsk). This map is from Wikipedia.

Lesko had a population of 5,755 in early June 2009. In 1890, the Jewish population of Lesko was 2,425. Lesko is situated in the Bieszczady mountain range, and is part of the Subcarpathian Voivodeship since 1999.⁵⁷ Its geographical position is 49°28'28"N 22°19'44"E, not far from Sanok. This is not the village of Łęsko in Pomerania. The Wikipedia entry for Lesko in Galicia states:

In September 1939, following the territorial division of Poland by the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, the border between German and Soviet occupation zones ran along the river San in the area of Lesko. Thus the town ended up in the Soviet zone, as it was located on the eastern bank of the river. In 1940-1941, as part of the construction of the Molotov Line along the new border, the Soviets constructed a line of bunkers along the river to defend the river crossings, some of them right in the town. During Operation Barbarossa the Germans destroyed the bunkers in the initial days of their invasion (their ruins exist to this day). The town was liberated from the Germans by the Red Army in September, 1944. In 1945 the border between Poland and the Soviet Union was moved somewhat eastwards from the San river, so Lesko ended up in Poland following the postwar territorial rearrangements. Nevertheless it remained very close to the Soviet border until the 1951 Polish-Soviet territorial exchange which moved the border further eastward.

During the war, after the town was occupied by Nazi Germany in 1941, its Jewish community (about 60% of the town's population) perished in the Holocaust.

In the immediate postwar years the area was the scene of the fighting between Polish military forces and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army. The fighting ended after the Ukrainian population was expelled in the course of Operation Vistula in 1947. The city and its economy only started to recover in the 1950s, after a government program encouraging people from other areas of Poland to settle there.



Fig. 4. The synagogue of the actual town of Lesko as it currently stands.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesko>

⁵⁸ The photograph was taken by Henryk Kotowski (Kotoviski). Licensed under CC BY 2.5 via Wikimedia Commons. http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Synagoga_lesko.jpg#/media/File:Synagoga_lesko.jpg The

22. Yuletide in Summer: Rationales per Type of Occurrence

Following a string of failed launches by American private companies, on 5 July 2015 an unscrewed Russian Progress craft managed to resupply the International Space Station, whose crew reportedly stated: "Feels like Christmas in July (*New Scientist*, 11 July 2015, p. 7). Thus, a winter festival in summer has a cultural place in non-Jewish, Christian idiomatics. Similar to the folkloric Yom Kippur in Tammuz, yet radically different in their functions, are Christmas celebrations on 25 August in the lodges where visitors to Yellowstone National Park, in the Rocky Mountains of Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, come to register. Anita Smith (1967) explained that while vacationing, her family had come to register at Canyon Village Lodge, and they were amazed "to see several decorated Christmas trees, and Christmas lights strung about among profuse evergreens, in the big entrance hall and dining room". The local manager explained to them that an event is the reason why the Yellowstone lodges celebrate Christmas on 25 August every year. "On that date in 1957, a heavy snow blanketed the area and everyone was snowed in." Lodge managers, faced with the need to entertain tourists, "decided to have a Christmas celebration. Guests and personnel joined in trimming trees, and the younger park employees [sic] organized a Christmas Eve dance. This became "a summer tradition at the Yellowstone lodges", with "Christmas decorations — and roaring fires in the huge fireplaces".

Like in the Kippur in Tammuz tales, there is a figure of authority who convinces a group of persons to whom he attends, to hold a celebration of a major festival. In the case of the Yellowstone lodges, clearly the visitors are not being duped. They are nevertheless game: they fully co-operate, and apart from the religious dimension, which is not relevant, they otherwise behave as though at Yuletide celebrations. This is precisely because they fully understand the motive of the lodge managers, which is to entertain them. In the original event of 25 August 1957, the lodge managers had to somewhat indemnify their visitors for being unexpectedly snowed in, even though it was still in August. Tourists were faced with the option of dwelling in a feeling of disappointment, vs. rejecting dejection and enjoying themselves. By conniving in the posture, they got out of the unforeseen situation whatever they could get, by way of organised enjoyment, while staying indoors because of the snow.

By contrast, consider the effects that commercialisation is having on the Christmas season, in western countries, of course mainly in Christian countries. Christmas decorations inside some shops or shopping centres can be seen in early December, or even in November. The rationale is that there is a period in the year when customers would let themselves being infantilised, and would therefore shop eagerly. This is why shopping centres come to resemble a theme park at Yuletide, and it is not merely to provide entertainment for the children of visitors. Adults, too, are tempted to enter the atmosphere of a fairytale. I have seen Christmas decorations already in place in late summer, in parts of the big John Lewis shop in the City of London.⁵⁹

Lesko Synagogue was "built in the first half of the 17th century, to replace an older wooden building. Its interior was destroyed during World War II by the Nazis. After the war, with no Jewish community left in Lesko, it fell into ruin. Gradually restored from 1960s onwards, it currently houses an art gallery" (the quotation is from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesko> and is linked to http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lesko_Synagogue).

⁵⁹ Globalisation, a strong urge to acculturate among the more extreme secularists, and especially the early 1990s influx of Soviet immigrants, part of whom were Christian relatives who accompanied repatriated Jews, are the reason why from the 1990s, in December one can sometimes see Yuletide decorations and products at Israeli shopping centres. Such ornaments and products, not targeting the general public (nominally or overtly Jewish or Moslem) that passes by and apparently takes no attention, but specifically catering to those immigrants from the former Soviet Union who are not Jewish themselves, but accompanied into the country their Jewish relatives. Malls are borrowed from present-day American culture anyway, and even though the Christmas decorations *per se* have a long tradition in Europe, still the objects on display at European malls (and at a few stands at Israeli malls) reflect the Americanisation of the trade. Nevertheless, for social reasons, stands with such seasonal

23. Provincial Incompetents: Similar Stories from the Old and New Worlds

The ascription of incompetence to New World societies — either the locals, or than the immigrants — occurs in the discourse of Old World observers and locals alike, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Consider, however, the following two examples from fiction, that relate somewhat similar episodes, yet one of them sets the locale in a remote provincial setting in northern South America, whereas the second one is set in rural Sicily.

- ❑ There is a meta-narrative episode in the novel *Cien años de soledad* by Gabriel García Márquez (1967). The novel mixes a kind of (*sui generis*) realism and the fantastic, while relating the saga of a mythical Latin American town. One episode has two Italian brothers settle in town. One of them opens a cinema, an absolute novelty for the local populace. On the first screening, the audience empathises in the extreme with the protagonist. On the next evening, as the film is screened again, the audience destroys the theatre, upon discovering that the protagonist they had mourned is alive and well and at it again. Later on, the townspeople lose interest in the medium: there is no point in experiencing emotions for something that is not there in real life.
- ❑ A passage in a book on Italian cinematography by Gian Piero Brunetta (1998) discusses an episode, *Che cosa sono le nuvole?* ['What is a cloud?'], directed by Pier Paolo Pasolini as part of the 1966 film *Capriccio all'italiana*, produced by Dino De Laurentiis. The setting is a performance of *Othello* at a marionette theatre (*teatro dei pupi*) in Sicily, only instead of actual marionettes, three roles are played by well-known comedians Franco Franchi, Ciccio Ingrassia (then at the zenith of their career), and the veteran of Italian cinematic comedians, Totò. The latter acted in the role of Iago. Franchi and Ingrassia were Cassio and Roderigo. These human actors played with disarticulated movements, as though they were marionettes. "The audience, before the tragedy takes place and Othello kills Desdemona, takes justice into their own hands, and kills the baddies" (*ibid.*, p. 420).

Incidentally, these two examples involve *metalepsis*, or *violation of level*, i.e., a transgression on levels of representation. In *ascending metalepsis*, the transgression is from embedded to embedding story level or representational device. This is the case of, say, a character in a story who kills the reader (as in a story by Cortázar), or of bullets that come out of a television set while a violent film is being watched. In *descending metalepsis*, instead, the transgression is *intrametaleptic*. It is this latter kind which "may result in collaboration between narrator and narratee (the narrator of *Adam Bede* inviting the extradiegetic narratee to visit the protagonist's sitting room with him)", in the words of Pier (2005, p. 304).

We are interested here with the two examples — the one from South America, and the one from Sicily — because it is fairly striking that a motif based on metalepsis was adopted in both cases, by the respective authors, in order to illustrate provincial people as "innocent" incompetents. One example is from the New World, whereas the other example is from the Old World. This can be tied back with our argument from this article: even before folkloric narratives began to emerge, in Jewish communities, about the cultural incompetence of Jews

products and decorations within a mall which may itself be in Beer-Sheva, a town in the southern desert Negev region of Israel, are not there merely to bear witness to globalisation. Rather, there is a third identity involved, as those stands at the mall are perceivably there so they would cater to a subsector within the "Russian" immigrant community. In Beer-Sheva and towns nearby, in fact one can also notice globalisation affecting the local Bedouin or settled Arab sectors, too, as graduates coming back from Europe, not infrequently bring in a European wife, or at the very least adopt (and impose at home) a globalised lifestyle.

in the New World, such narratives had been circulating, being applied to some rural communities in the Old World.

Now consider the following example, a joke which appeared in an issue of the French women's magazine *Confidences* from the 1970s:

Deus comédiens, gloires de tournées provinciales, se vantent de leur succès.

- Moi, dit l'un, un soir, je jouais la scène de la mort d'Hamlet; eh bien! mon cher, trois femmes se sont évanouies dans la salle!
- Ce n'est rien, fait l'autre. Un soir, je jouais la même scène au casino de Houilles! J'avais invité mon assureur. Eh bien! mon cher, il s'est levé et s'est précipité chez moi pour payer à ma femme ma police d'assurance.

Two comedians, famous in the provinces, boast of their success

- One evening, says one of them, I was playing the scene of Hamlet's death. Just imagine, my dear: three women in the audience swooned!
- That is nothing, the other one says. One evening, I was playing the same scene at the casino of Houilles! I had invited my insurer. Just imagine, my dear: he stood up, and rushed to my place in order to pay compensation to my wife.

This joke is about boastfulness (ascribed in this joke to second-rate actors, but in other jokes to men from Marseilles), and it is also about the gullible attitudes of provincial audiences (as in numskull tales). In this joke, the place names is Houilles, a town which administers a *canton* (i.e., a sub-sub-unit of a *département*, a sub-unit of a *sous-préfecture*) in the department of the Yvelines, whose own chieftown is Versailles. In this joke, Houilles is modern enough to have a casino, and the one gullible is the actor's insurer, who is not necessarily an *ovillois* (i.e., one from Huilles). It is in the unnamed town where the other actor played, that the local women are claimed to be exceedingly suggestible where an urbanite would rather be *blasé*. Is the insurer from the provinces? He probably is, or then he is unacquainted with a theatre. He is provincial enough to mistake an actor's cogent performance for a real tragic event. In the episode from Houilles, the insurer, who because of his profession must be very suspicious, turns out to be extremely gullible.

24. A Glimpse of the Rest of the Project

In other papers (Nissan 2002, 2012a, 2013, 2014b), I discussed Gerson Rosenzweig's *Tractate America* (a Hebrew-language masterpiece of the talmudic parody genre), which satirises American and especially New York Jews (various categories of them, and all of them), and in particular lampoons deculturation and acculturation, as well as the resulting impoverished brand of Judaism. The New York-based Gerson (or Gershon) Rosenzweig (1861–1914) published *Tractate America* in 1892. Starting with a cosmogony of the continents, then foreshadowing Columbus' anguish lest his discovery be named after him, Rosenzweig mock-aetiologised the names *America* and *New York* jocularly. Rosenzweig then turns to enumerating unflattering categories which according to him feature in immigrant sociology. Therefore, his caustic deprecation is actually collective, communal self-deprecation.

He then proceeded to describe satirically aspects of life inside his own immigrant community, as well as to contrast such situations as the peddler faced with a hostile policemen, to what American institutions ensure in theory.

In yet another paper (this one is in preparation), I discuss (drawing literary comparisons) a dialectal piece of narrative — written in a vernacular called by its speakers *taliàn* but referred to by Italian linguists as *veneto-brasiliano* — that is central to the canonical culture of Brazil's Italian Catholic immigrants: a friar, Aquiles Bernardi (Frate Paulino), published in

1924–1925 an early version of *Nanetto Pipetta: Nassuo in Italia e vegnudo in Mèrica per catàre la cucagna* [= 'Nanetto Pipetta: Born in Italy, and Having Come to America to Find Prosperity'] (Bernardi 1956), in the periodical *Stafetta Riograndense*, later renamed *Correio Riograndense*.

The immigrant community could find solace in the knowledge they were much better skilled for coping with their environment, than the teenager protagonist. In the end, when he is starting to cope, tragedy strikes, and readers are made to understand that this is in retribution for the tragedy he caused back at home in the Old Country, by disappearing. And yet, those stories are humorous.

Nanetto Pipetta is a boy in his early teens from Venice, who flees, with tragic consequences for his family. Discovered while a clandestine passenger, he does not have a clear idea of what the captain will do to him. He prays. He then throws himself into the sea near the coast of Brazil, manages to reach the shore, and survives. He is welcome into the house of an Italian family, and eventually works his way up to winning the heart of a girl and being able to buy a property for him to live there as a small landowner. But then he drowns in the river. The girl becomes a nun. His widowed mother and his clever, perfect brother arrive in South America, and manage to find the family that had adopted Nanetto. And there they learn about the tragedy.

But Aquiles Bernardi, who implies that Nanetto was punished for his sin towards his family, manages to interleave this story with comedy, even when the man who hosted him writes on behalf of the dead Nanetto a hilarious will.

Because of the success of *Nanetto Pipetta*, Bernardi also wrote *Storia de Nino, fratello di Nanetto Pipetta* ('Story of Nino, Nanetto Pipetta's Brother'), which was published in the same periodical in 1965–1967. Works from the same cycle, that followed later on, and that were written by other clergymen include, e.g., Ricardo Domingos Liberali's *Togno Brusafraiti, braùre de do compari*, i.e., 'Tony Burn-the-Friars: Adventures of Two Companions'; those sequels, however, alternate Portuguese and *talian* but privilege the former, and their respective protagonists are successful, unlike the Ne'er-do-well Nanetto Pipetta.

25. Contrasting "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" to the Incompetent Emigrants in *Tractate America* and *Nanetto Pipetta*

For our present purposes, *Nanetto Pipetta* is interesting, as it is an example of an incompetent emigrant, yet, quite importantly: this is an individual incompetent immigrant, as viewed by his own immigrant community. Bernardi could afford to poke fun at an individual numskull, affectionately, yet eventually he kills off the character: Nanetto Pipetta dies as an effect of his sheer socio-cultural incompetence. Italian immigrants to Brazil knew all too well that they were smarter. The numskull, Nanetto, shared in the same culture, but he lacked the basics for survival in any environment. Thus, this is not a self-deprecation satire, as the butt is not collective. By contrast, in *Tractate America* the butt is collective, and Rosenzweig, the author, does not exclude himself, especially when he ponders about the indignities of being a Jewish communal writer and journalist in America.

There is an important difference between both *Tractate America* and *Nanetto Pipetta*'s adventures, on the one side, and the story type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz". The former two are affectionate towards immigrants, even though right in the beginning, Rosenzweig refers to them in quite derogatory a manner. By contrast, the tales against New World Jews as told by Jews in the Old World, and the earlier version of "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" whose butt was the ignorant provincial Jews somewhere in the back of beyond (yet apparently, in the earlier versions, in the same country as the storytellers), display no degree of empathy towards the

provincial type who is de-Judaized through ignorance. The incompetence of the congregation that falls victim to a hoaxer is of a religio-cultural nature, yet they had to also be numskulls to be so vulnerable. The storyteller saw nothing in common between himself and the butt of his humour, other than the given of their shared religious identity, in which he felt competent enough, whereas the numskulls were hopelessly incompetent.

By contrast to Rosenzweig's *Tractate America*, the tale about the rural numskulls and the trickster, that was eventually turned into a tale about congregations of emigrants that had become grossly estranged from the devotional culture, is deprecation of the periphery on the part of the metropolis, that is in the urban Old World. We have considered enough variants of the tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", to be able to reconstruct the cultural dynamics that shaped its evolution.

Both this tale-type, and Nanetto Pipetta have to do with the category of numskull tales. This is not the case of *Tractate America*. This is because the tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz" stems from the metropolis, and does not exhibit empathy. By contrast, both Nanetto Pipetta and Rosenzweig's satirical work were brought into existence by an intellectual acutely aware of the problems of the immigrant society in which he lived: Rosenzweig in New York, and Bernardi as a friar in Brazil. Bernardi could afford to poke fun at an individual numskull, affectionately, yet eventually he kills off the character: Nanetto Pipetta dies as an effect of his sheer socio-cultural incompetence. Or rather, as an effect of his original sin, of callousness towards his family back in Venice.

There is a religious morale: by eloping from home in Venice, Nanetto wrecked such havoc with the lives of his family, that he was meted punishment (apparently by the Virgin Mary), and at the very time when he could have looked forward to settling down with a wife, he dies instead.

26. Dickens' Disillusionment with America, Portrayed as Incompetent

In this section, we are going to consider how the Americans were portrayed as incompetents by Charles Dickens. Though their stock is known to be from the British Isles, Dickens had imagined them to be different: a refreshingly new nation. Upon touring the place, his opinion of the Americans changed. He proceeded to chastise the locals, not new immigrants.

Meckier (1984) is concerned with the impact on Dickens of his first visit to America, an impact recorded both in his *American Notes*, and in the American chapters of his novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*. Meckier's article is responding to previous concern with Dickens in respect to America, and in fact its appearance followed by a few years Slater's book (1978) *Dickens on America and Americans*. In Meckier's words (1984, p. 266).

Dickens discovered America in 1842. He was world-famous, universally beloved, yet profoundly unhappy with social condition in the Old World. America had been haunting his dreams: did this democratic republic coincide with his utopian fantasies? Not long after arriving, he began to realize that it could not. When his expectations collided with a country still mostly frontier in its habits, the first visit became a nasty formative experience, [...]. His projected triumphal tour turned out to be a voyage of self-discovery. [...] He had travelled across the Atlantic to be a spectator and an honoured guest, not the spectacle he immediately became. As a result, although *American Notes* tries to record what Dickens saw, the American chapters of *Martin Chuzzlewit* are about being seen and the discomforts that steady scrutiny brings. [...] During the worst of these debacles, in Philadelphia, Dickens became a hand-shaking machine. [...] In London, Dickens walked the streets at will. Gaping Americans taught him the meaning of dehumanization.

In a letter from February 1842, Dickens was writing, for example: "I get out at a station, and can't drink a glass of water, without having a hundred people looking down my throat when I

open my mouth to swallow" (Dickens, *Letters*, vol. 3, p. 87; cited by Meckier 1984, p. 267). "Martin Chuzzlewit has similar experiences when duplicating the worst aspects of Dickens's visit" (Meckier, *ibid.*, p. 267). "Conventional views of Dickens's 1842 visit [such as in Slater (1978, p. 18)] blame inadequate copyright protection and the existence of slavery for his increasingly negative reactions" (Meckier 1984, p. 267).

Meckier disagrees. "Outcroppings of vulgar curiosity that became a virtual persecution make a better case" (Meckier 1984, p. 268). "The presence of slavery and the absence of copyright, although seemingly unrelated, stemmed from a disrespect for individual integrity which the novelist felt he had experienced at the hands of overbearing Americans from the outset of his visit" (*ibid.*). "In America Dickens found out how fundamentally English he was. Americans, he felt, desecrate a Briton's cherished conceptions of proper reserve" (*ibid.*). Meckier (*ibid.*) explains how this was reflected in a novel:

Swiftian procedures in the eight American chapters make *Martin Chuzzlewit* [with respect to *American Notes*] a product of further consideration in which Dickens dramatized the negative reactions of an ingrained Englishman to a country that was everywhere provincial [...] a rude and countryfied America. [...] During dinner aboard the riverboat returning from Eden, 'a gentleman in a high state of tobacco' ('overflowings of that weed ... had dried about his mouth and chin' (p. 583 [in Dickens 1965])) sucks his knife before making a 'cut' at the butter. Sickened, young Chuzzlewit loses his appetite, to Elijah Pogram's delight. Pogram attributes Martin's disgust to 'the morbid hatred of you British to the Institutions of our country'. This view, objects Dickens, puts matters the wrong way round. The knife-sucker's atrocious manners place the value of America's ideals and institutions in jeopardy. 'A man deliberately makes a hog of himself', Martin exclaims, and his fellow countryman calls it 'an institution!' (p. 584). Dickens came to praise America but ended up conferring institutional status on the prevailing vulgarities. Selfishness, crassness, and hoggishness, he suggests, are America's real institutions, the governing factors in business, politics, and indeed for human relationships generally.

"In America Dickens discovered that a man in his natural state, in a country at an earlier phase of development than England's, was not necessarily preferable to their average European" (Meckier 1984, p. 269). "From Americans Dickens learned that innocence, not knowing how one appears in the eyes of one's peers, can be a particularly objectionable form of vulgarity that tells [p. 270:] heavily against Rousseau's respect for simpler kinds of social organization". "In Dickens criticized America for not corroborating the theories of Rousseau" (*ibid.*, p. 270). "Greed, shallowness, sharp practice (fraud), and a concomitant talent for boasting in inflated language are the un-English hallmarks of the American character in *Martin Chuzzlewit*" (*ibid.*). "Throughout *Martin Chuzzlewit* the main trouble with Americans is that they are not English. An English virtue exists for every American failing Dickens catalogued" (*ibid.*). Meckier writes (1984, p. 273):

The mood of Dickens's novels from *Martin Chuzzlewit* on began to darken as he resumed the uphill task of transforming an unsatisfactory England into that best of all possible worlds he had hoped to discover in America.

From Baltimore Dickens wrote to his actor-friend Macready the saddest traveller's letter ever penned: 'This is not the Republic I came to see. This is not the Republic of my imagination' (*Letters*, iii, 156). Extravagant expectations and ingrained British prejudices made it impossible that he should be pleased. 'What are the Great United States for, sir', demands General Choke, 'if not for the regeneration of man?' ([*Martin Chuzzlewit*] p. 392). This was Dickens's own position before leaving England. Shattered hopes lie behind the transfer of so important a question to a scoundrel like Choke. If America could not return man to the Garden, a resentful Dickens would show one of her unregenerate citizens absurdly boasting that she can.

Although morals were bad in America because manners were, Dickens could not show the moral sense triumphant in Britain, where manners had perceptibly improved. Instead, he was obliged to sketch damaging parallels: the Eden Land Corporation [in *Martin Chuzzlewit*] and the Anglo-Bengalee Disinterested Loan and Life Assurance Company, for example. [...] *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a tale of two countries, not just an anti-American tract. In reciprocal exposure,

Britain throws into high relief the crudities of savage America, while Americans reveal what cultured societies are still like beneath the surface. If America is a country of caricatures which add up to a caricature of a country, the country being caricatured is Britain.

Elsewhere, in a forthcoming article of mine on Pascarella's epic *La scoperta de l'America* in Rome's *romanesco* dialect, I consider yet another example of America being used in order to say something sad about the Old World.

There is a major difference between Gerson Rosenzweig's critique of America in *Tractate America*, and the critique we found in Dickens. "After one month in America, an alarmed Dickens felt himself moving back towards the political centre" (Meckier 1984, p. 272). Dickens could afford that. "A social critic at home, Dickens became a British supporter abroad" (*ibid.*, p. 274). In *Martin Chuzzlewit*, American braggadocios blast Britain (e.g., "the Lion shall be roasted whole" [p. 404]), and on the other hand (Meckier, *ibid.*):

After several chapters of this [i.e., of American bragging], Mark Tapley, Martin's cockney servant and companion, wants to repaint the American Eagle 'lime a Bat, for its short-sightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like an Ostrich, for its putting its head in the mud' (p. 594). The deepseated Englishman in Dickens sounds as biased as [American fictional characters he despises and lampoons].

Dickens could afford some impopularity in America, after having been immensely popular there. He is not the kind of author of whom Rosenzweig quipped that to come with his book to America, an author must be mad in his head. Rosenzweig, unlike Dickens, had come to settle, and was not an Anglo-Saxon. He was member of a mainly poor minority, living in squalid conditions in ethnic neighbourhoods in New York. His critique in *Tractate America* does not spare the gap between the freedoms enshrined in the Constitution and the realities of law-enforcement, judicial, trade, and employment abuses in American society at large, yet his critique was mostly targetting what he found wrong with American Jewish society. After all, that was the community that deeply interested Rosenzweig.

We know that Rosenzweig was an American patriot, and that he translated the American anthem. We also know that he saw America's fate rising, whereas the Jews were old, and he could not be too optimistic for them. It may also be that the satirist's venom being mostly reserved for his own collective Self, the Jews, rather than for dominant society and its institutions was the result of mental conditioning in tsarist Russia: one could not be overly critical of the Other.

This reluctance to criticise an all-powerful authority, and rather target the Jews for fierce criticism, is a phenomenon that Aberbach (1993) diagnosed for Mendele Moikher Sfurim (S.J. Abramowitsch). Mendele, too, had set for himself an educational task within the Jewish community, but that was back in Russia. Lithuanian Jew Rosenzweig moved to New York. Lithuanian Jew Abramowitsch had moved to Odessa, and he especially targetted phenomena such as superstition, which remarkably, is not a target in Rosenzweig's *Tractate America*.

27. A Self-Image of Limited Competence from Brazil: Lima Barreto's *A Nova Califórnia*

This section comprises two parts. The first part is concerned with public discourse in republican Brazil, from sentiments of inferiority and positivist pride, to the rhetoric of the Melting Pot, known in Brazil as Cultural Anthropophagy. The second part of this section is about a particular literary work, *A Nova Califórnia*; that literary work in turn is about societal disgregation through contact with the intellectually and culturally superior individual.

Rosana Kohl Bines⁶⁰ (2011) is concerned with a particular polemic from Brazil.⁶¹ She has used this "as a case study for examining the notion of Cultural Anthropophagy, which emerged in Brazilian Modernism in the 1920s, to become the current main strategy for dealing with the country's enormous ethnic, religious and social diversity" (in the words of her speech abstract at the 2008 conference which preceded the 2011 journal special issue). This is a kind of strategy that in the United States has been known as the Melting Pot.

Bines explains that the metaphor of Cultural Anthropophagy is based upon "graphic depictions of the Brazilian natives swallowing, digesting, incorporating and expelling whatever was left of the foreign elements" (*ibid.*); such depictions "consolidated a critical representation of cultural encounters that pay tribute to Brazil's capacity to synthesize the external sources into a genuine cultural mixture, best glorified through Carnival [...]" (*ibid.*).

In the 1920s, "a group of modernist intellectuals, championed by Oswald de Andrade, Tarsila do Amaral and Mário de Andrade, among others, advocated a critical nationalism, which entailed a cosmopolitan openness to the world" (Bines 2011, p. 103). "The cultural anthropophagy model⁶² fostered the idea that Brazilians have to come into contact with external sources, if they want to make sense of themselves", as "the 'other' is absolutely necessary to [...] regenerate the Brazilian identity" (*ibid.*). "The cultural gesture is [...] one of absorption" (*ibid.*).⁶³ David Haberly's *Three Sad Races* (1983) is a study of how Brazilian literature reflects the themes of racial identity and national consciousness; de Andrade is the last of six major writers Haberly's book discusses in detail, and the chapter about him is entitled "The Harlequin".

In this section, we are going to deal with an unflattering self-image of provincial Brazil, reflected in Lima Barreto's short story *A Nova Califórnia*, whose final part is a harrowing episode, of a citizenry gone wild out of greed, unburying the dead in the hope of transforming their bones into gold. In the next section we offer a parallel: a play by Sholem Aleichem.

Let us turn to an earlier phase than Brazil's 1920s Modernists. In his 1901 patriotic tract, *Porque me ufano do meu país* [Why I Take Pride of my Country] (hence, in Brazilian Portuguese, the term *ufanismo* for this brand of nationalism), "Afonso Celso and the apostles of the new Brazil can conceive of her only as a kind of utopian form of Eldorado or Promised land: 'O Brasil deve tornar-se o verdadeiro El-dorado que tanto nele buscaram os antigos aventureiros'" (Oakley 1983, p. 842, citing Celso 1943, 12th edition, p. 42) — i.e., "Brazil has to transform itself into the true Eldorado that the adventurers of old were so much searching for". "It may well be true that *Porque me ufano do meu país* was provoked by the widespread feeling of national inferiority that existed in Brazil in the early years of the young

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⁶¹ It is a polemic that "made the headlines in Brazil and spread throughout the global internet press. The polemic affair concerned a lawsuit by the Jewish Federation of Rio de Janeiro against a popular samba group that planned on parading during Rio's famed Carnival with a float depicting a dancing Hitler on top of naked mannequins, posing as Holocaust victims" (in the words of her speech abstract at the 2008 conference which preceded the 2011 journal special issue).

⁶² See Andrade (1928). As to cordiality in the special sense in which the movement used that term, see Andrade (1990). Note however that racial theorising and eugenics thrived in Brazil: see Adams (1990).

⁶³ Bines (2011) illustrated and discussed "[t]he double-bind present in 'cordial' interactions in Brazil, pointing simultaneously to a safe state of inclusion and to the menace of violent devouring" (*ibid.*, p. 108), with "the cannibal aspect of cordiality [...] embedded in the ideology of miscegenation" aiming at whitening of the local population with the influx of white people (or not quite white, like Jews in the 1930s: *ibid.*, p. 104).

The stated purpose of Bines (2011) is "to make evident the paradigmatic quality of Brazilian cordial culture, with its seductive pull towards integration, which tends to obscure and silence more nuanced negotiations among the diverse parties involved", as oftentimes "the discourse of cordiality overshadows potential internal conflicts, impeding a painstaking analysis of particular historical circumstances in the name of preserving a static picture of a tolerant Brazil" (*ibid.*, p. 105).

Republic's attempting to throw off the stagnation of the Empire and to live up to its Positivist device — *Ordem e Progresso*", even though Oakley suggests that the picture was more complex (Oakley, *ibid.*, p. 838). "During the first two civilian presidencies (1894–1902) a considerable degree of political and economical stabilization was achieved, fostering optimism and trust in the future which grew alongside the sentiment of inferiority into something approaching euphoria by the beginning of the Alves presidency", in the early years of the new century (*ibid.*). "This euphoria itself may have been cultivated as a protection against the knowledge that Brazil was a backward country by European standards" (*ibid.*).

Let us turn now to a literary work⁶⁴ from 1910, *A Nova Califórnia*. Afonso Henrique de Lima Barreto (1881–1922) is best known for his Realist novels of social denunciation (in particular, of the treatment of Black people). His novel *Triste Fim de Policarpo Quaresma* [*The Sad End of Policarpo Quaresma*] "is today the most universally admired of Lima Barreto's longer fictions" (Oakley 1983, p. 839). *A Nova Califórnia* [*The New California*, i.e., *The New Eldorado*] is "his most highly-regarded short story" (*ibid.*), and "was written and published in 1910, a matter of months before the appearance in serial form of *Triste Fim*" (*ibid.*). Oakley (*ibid.*, pp. 839–340) supplies a *précis* of *A Nova Califórnia*:

A mysterious stranger, Raimundo Flamel, comes to live in the small town of Tubiacanga, where he settles down to the life of a recluse. Some say he is a forger and others that he is in league with the devil, because of the oven installed in his dining-room and an array of scientific equipment. But gradually the locals are won over by his civility, his kindness to children, and his charity, [...]. Moreover, he earns their respect, since the correspondence and magazines he receives from abroad in several languages appear to indicate a learned and internationally famous scientist. Finally Bastos, the local pharmacist, comes across a reference to Flamel as a distinguished chemist in a magazine. One day Flamel enters Bastos's shop, requesting a private conversation. Flamel informs him that he has discovered how to make gold, and invites Bastos and [p. 840:] any other two educated men of the town to witness his experiment, an essential ingredient for which is human bones.

A conflict between the moral norm of respecting human graves, and the greed of the populace. Oakley's summary proceeds as follows:

The day of the experiment is set for the following Sunday. It duly takes place, and a few days later Flamel disappears without trace or explanation. Not long afterwards, the sexton of the town's only cemetery announces that graves have been violated and human remains stolen. A guard is mounted by night and two men are shot in the act of violation. They turn out to be the additional witnesses, provided by Bastos, to Flamel's experiment. One of them, still alive, says that their accomplice, who has escaped, is the pharmacist, Bastos, and that they took the bones to make gold. The whole town now converges on Bastos's shop. Frightened that he may be lynched for body-snatching, the apothecary stands on a chair, brandishing a small gold bar, and promises to print the recipe for distribution the following day if they will spare his life.

Whereas previously, it had been the witnesses to the experiment who were tempted to break the norms, now almost the entire citizenry is tempted:

The mob agrees; but that same night, the whole populace rushes to the graveyard, gripped by the lust for gold. A pitched battle ensues as they dispute the remaining bones. There are not enough to go round and the violence increases [...] (*ibid.*).

It is announced that the graveyard is going to host, on the next day, more dead people than it had in the thirty years of its existence. "Only one man takes no part in the sack of the graveyard" (*ibid.*). This is not because of any moral superiority; rather, he is a marginal individual, who seeks to reward more immediate goals: "Belmiro, an alcoholic student drop-

⁶⁴ A literary work unrelated to cultural anthropophagy, yet very much about the role of the outsider and his effect on the local people.

out, takes advantage of an unattended shop to steal a bottle of sugar-cane brandy and to sit by the river" (*ibid.*), and Lima Barreto points out that both Belmiro and the river were likewise indifferent to the events, and contrasts this to the eternal firmament of stars under which Belmiro sits and the events in town unfold.

My point here is that in respect of incompetence, several levels are involved: Flamel (is he the Devil? Oakley's opinion is quite different) appears to be most competent — as a cultured man, then a recognised scientist, then a discoverer — and amongst the local populace, Bastos appears to be the most competent member of the elite. The rest of the populace appear to be incompetents, and moreover they lose control. Belmiro is, in a sense, the most peripheral, apart from Flamel) and the most incompetent (the student who has dropped out, and has no remaining interest in life other than sating his thirst for alcohol. Yet Belmiro has in a sense the moral luck, that for the very reason that his social marginality and incompetence have such an impact on his goal-setting, he does not participate in the citizenry's degeneration.

In Lima Barreto's *A Nova Califórnia*, "we are in the world of fable, a brand of magic realism *avant la lettre*. This is not to say that *A Nova Califórnia* is not susceptible to a Realist reading. It is a story which examines on one level the power of superstition — ultimately, the evil of superstition. *A Nova Califórnia* may be read as a Realist treatment of greed and gullibility in a backward and rural Latin-American environment" (Oakley, *ibid.*, p. 841). The protagonist is Raimundo Flamel. "There is no information about Flamel beyond the single reference in the magazine (indicating him to be a great chemist); his origins and destination are unknown. [...] We never know if his discovery is genuine or if Bastos's gold bar is part of some elaborate hoax. If the former, the story is of course transformed into fantasy, since the Philosopher's Stone is unattainable. The only clue is the clear indication that Flamel is an authentic scientist" (*ibid.*, p. 840). According to Oakley (*ibid.*, p. 842),

Flamel's religious scepticism marks him out as a latter-day version of the magus of Renaissance theurgy. The conservative ideology of Tubiacanga is completely out of phase with the way of life represented by Flamel. It can comprehend his discovery only on its own terms: it cannot conceive of the creation of gold other than as a means for increasing personal wealth. [...] Afonso celso and the apostles of the new Brazil [...] are inimical to Flamel's example of love and patient toil, [...]. Flamel is the man of action whose actions and way of life are rejected and totally misunderstood. [...] Flamel's energy's radiates outwards to destroy the social and political systems of Tubiacanga. The fabric of society beneath its placid, immovable exterior cannot withstand the presence of his symbolic discovery once it is converted into Bastos' equally symbolic *potosi*.

This is a place-name made into a common name. I would like to draw attention to a possible underlying level: in Portuguese, *potoca* means 'lie', 'fib' (hence, the intransitive verb *potocar*). *Potosi* and *potoca* differ by *si* and *ca*. *Si* means 'itself', 'oneself', whereas *cá* means 'here'. It may be *potosi* in the mythical Potosí or the mythical California or the mythical Eldorado, but here, in Tubiacanga, it is a lie. I promptly concede however, that such playing with names may be overreading into the text something that was not in the authorial intentions.

Unlike in the Jewish tale type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", the outsider in *A Nova Califórnia* is not obviously a conman. He wrecks the locals' most sacrosanct conventions, and it is not obvious that he derives any advantage from that (unless he is the Devil in disguise).

In "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", the trickster perhaps also compromises the locals' *future* orthopraxy (apart from their having celebrate Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, when it is *not* the Day of Atonement), as if they celebrate Yom Kippur in the mid-summer month of Tammuz, then they are unlikely to celebrate it three months later, at its proper time. This potential however remains implicit.

There is a sense in which that implicit potential is in relation to a class of Jewish folktales from Eastern Europe about a devout man, even a rabbi, who because he sinned by beginning the sabbath in the early afternoon of Friday, which by itself is licit, but prevented another man who was due to come and would only arrive in the late afternoon, from celebrating with him the start of the Sabbath, is supernaturally punished by oversleeping on another occasion, so that for a prolonged period of several weeks or even months, he keeps celebrating the sabbath on the wrong day.

It would be overreading "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", if we were just to state that the motif of the *permanent* disruption of the liturgical calendar is shared by the folktales (and literary versions) of the individual who celebrates the Sabbath on the wrong day, and "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", because in the latter there is only such an *implicit* potential, and it would be wrong to expect of folktales that one could derive from them all effects as though from a set of logical formulae. In "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", the Day of Atonement that is explicitly mishandled is the one celebrated in the wrong time of the year, on one particular occasion.

In contrast, in *A Nova Califórnia*, once the whole populace of the town has rushed to the graveyard, taken out the dead's bones from their graves, and disputed among themselves the remaining bones, there are permanent effects indeed: the bones are no longer in their graves, and the graveyard is destroyed. The inhabitants who are alive and took part in that event have lowered themselves into such a vile state, that it is difficult to think of them redeeming themselves, or at least recovering (individually and collectively) the level of integrity, whichever it was, before that event was precipitated.

Such is not the situation of the congregants in In "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", who behaved naïvely, and behaved devoutly. Their being devout is not questioned. At most, their blame (in some variants of the tale) is their having been uncharitable towards the trickster before he fooled them.

28. A Parallel to *A Nova California*: Sholem Aleichem Makes the Man from America the Competent One, and the Old Country Townsfolk into Deluded Yokels

Contrast to Lima Barreto's story from Brazil, Sholem Aleichem's Yiddish play *Di goldgreber* (*The Golddiggers*). It was written in Geneva in 1907, published in 1927, and set in an impoverished town, visited by an orphan who moved to America and has come back as an adult, "[t]he legend that Napoleon once buried thirteen barrels of gold in the old cemetery is revived, and the whole town rushes in a state of mass hysteria to find this treasure" (Bechtel 1991–1992, p. 71). In that play, the visitor who is an observer is from America, where he has become enlightened, in contrast to the people who have remained in the *shtetl* in Russia, and who are not rational. Delphine Bechtel remarks (1991–1992, p. 70):

Sholem Aleichem addresses the American-Jewish experience in many of his works, in which he most often describes the situation of the new immigrant on the American soil, the illusions and the disillusionment of the new immigrant in America, "the economic and social degradation of parts of the Eastern European Jewish intelligentsia and middle-class in America" (Shmeruk [1987]). In *Di goldgreber*, however, the situation is reversed: Beni, who left Europe as an orphan to go to America, is coming *back* to the *shtetl*, the East European Jewish small town, as an adult and a self-made man. He, as an American Jew, is confronted with the Jews of his home town, who, having remained behind in a state of economic deprivation, nourish the hope of being saved from it by finding a treasure. His predicament follows the pattern of the "traveler disguised" (Miron [1973]), a motif typical of the *Haskalah* [i.e., Jewish Enlightenment] literature of the nineteenth century, in which the hero comes back to the *shtetl* after his edification abroad, America here replacing Germany as the educating country. [...] In fact, the very structure of the *Haskalah* drama is fundamental to the play. The careful reader will notice that there is an incongruity between Sholem Aleichem's use of specific genre structure, that of the *Haskalah* drama, and his treatment in the

play of the topic of messianic utopia, a content which, from the historical and ideological point of view, stands in radical conflict with a *maskilic* form. The confrontation between the *shtetl* and America will be explored in the interaction between those two models. In this, as in all *Haskalah* plays, the *shtetl* is described as an unhealthy society, totally impoverished.

The townspeople are after a treasure supposedly hidden by Napoleon at the cemetery. "In *Di Goldgreber*, it is Mozgovoyer, the chief representative of the *shtetl*-establishment, who launches the whole illusion, which comes to assume mythical dimensions" (Bechtel 1991–1992, p. 71). "Its discovery has been prophesied by Mozgovoyer's grandfather on his deathbed, and is supported by Mozgovoyer's superstitions, visions and dreams, in which his father appears to him. Yet, Mozgovoyer constantly claims not to believe in 'puste Bove-mayses,'⁶⁵ *vayberishe pizmoynes*', [empty fairy tales, women's litanies] and other superstition" (*ibid.*, Bechtel's own brackets). Bechtel explains (*ibid.*, p. 72, her brackets):

We also find the *maskilic* theme of the "genarte velt" [the deceived world]. The *shtetl* is presented as a world of lies and corruption. Everybody is cheating everybody for the sake of finding the treasure, including the finest *balebatim* [heads of household], the Polish nobleman and the Russian *gorodovoy* [police officer]. Sholem Aleichem uses exactly the same pattern as Aksenfeld does in his play *Di genarte velt* [The Deceived World]: the cheaters will be cheated by the young enlightened hero, he will use their superstitions about the treasure in order to realize his own goals, and, by deceiving them, defeat them with their own weapons. Beni, Sholem Aleichem's American hero, is staging a "comedy within the comedy", what Shtshupak, Aksenfeld's hero, calls "*a komedye fun der genarte velt*" [a comedy of the deceived world].

29. Concluding Remarks

This article presents several versions of the humorous trickster⁶⁶ tale type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", itself being a Near Eastern Jewish adaptation of Tale Type AT 1831. Uther (2004, Vol. 2) provides references for instances of the more general tale type from international folklore. In the present essay, we focused on the Near Eastern Jewish versions, trying to place them in their cultural and social context.

This paper discusses how the ascription of innocent or numskull provinciality was shifted from back-of-beyond rural communities, to communities that had settled in either India, or the New World. To Jewish authors or tradents, it especially mattered that the butt of their critique or disparagement had lost mastery of Jewish religious culture. The one variant of the tale that does not fit in the latter pattern is the one set at a coffee-house, and the numskulls are not Jewish in the first place, which is why they do not possess knowledge of Jewish culture which to traditional Jews was and is commonplace.

In the humorous tale-type "Yom Kippur in Tammuz", there is a devotionally (or even rabbinically) competent observer, but he is an outsider, and the trickster even hopes (hopes against hope?) to buy him off. Such hope can only be envisaged because the congregants are portrayed as being so incompetent, as not to deserve sympathy. They are numskulls beyond hope. The trickster and the observer have their wits intact. Even in the interpretation offered by Ratzaby (he refers to the trickster in the given text as to an ignoramus), wit if not learning

⁶⁵ Literally, "Bovo tales". This is patterned after an epic in Early Yiddish from Renaissance northern Italy, Elye Bokher's (i.e., Elia Levita's) *Bovo-Buch*, or *Bovo d'Antona*, which was quite popular among Yiddish readers, and was patterned after Italian chivalric epic: Elye Bokher's source of inspiration was an Italian (Tuscan) version of *Buovo d'Altona*, itself based on the Anglo-Norman romance of Sir Bevis of Hampton.

⁶⁶ Of course, trickster tales are pervasive in international folklore, as well as in the history literature. For example, see Donald Beecher's discussion (1987) of the manifestations of the archetype of the trickster in the comedy of the Renaissance.

is what is shared by the visiting rabbi and the unscrupulous cantor (cantors used to have a poor image also in Yiddish culture).

The epigram edited by Ratzaby is an utterance of the trickster, and the addressee is a rabbi: the trickster must have identified him as some because congregants had addressed him, or referred to him, as a rabbi; or perhaps because of his clerical garb (if the dress was distinctive indeed in the given culture in the particular period when the tale originated); or perhaps even because the trickster is acquainted with that person. There is no need, in the version edited by Ratzaby, for this addressee (the rabbi) to have addressed the trickster first.

In contrast, in the version from Iraq in which the visitor sings "I have never heard [such a thing]: Yom Kippur in Tammuz!", the very fact that he communicates by singing in Hebrew, as though this was part of the liturgy, suggests that this visitor, too, is a trickster, trying to find out who is the smart one among the numskulls. He is willing to negotiate with him *ab initio*. Interestingly, both the two versions provided by Myer Samra (who heard them from his Iraqi father, and from a Lebanese Jew) and the two Iraqi versions I heard from an uncle of mine, and the one I heard from his brother, were *sung*. This ought to be a reminder that narrative folklore items are communicated through a *performance*.

The version of the tale type collected by Gavish among Zakho Jews is revealing. They turn the message on its head. The congregants in that other version of the tale were neither dupes, nor ignoramuses. Rather, they virtuously acquiesced in an avaricious fund-raiser's upgrading an actually prescribed day of fast (the Seventeenth of Tammuz) into the main fast of the year, one more expensive, and more profitable for the fund-raiser himself. The congregants were being kind in the extreme even to an undeserving emissary from the Holy Land. This expresses the misgivings of Kurdish Jews, as well as their own self-perception as being patient because of their piety.

Appendix A: Examples of Baghdadi Jewish Oicotypisation: Tales That Either Fit In or Somewhat Approximate Tale Types 1543 C* and 1828*

The present appendix much simplifies the discussion of two of the examples from Nissan (2011), where the relation to international folktale types is considered to be much more nuanced. Readers are urged to read Nissan (2011), whereas this appendix is to be considered but a provisional introduction to the subject.

(1) The adaptation of an international folktale type to local conditions (denominational, social, and material culture) is discussed here, concerning two Baghdadi Jewish folktales, apparently unreported in the literature. The first tale is as follows. A man complains to a rabbi because he, the former, is a compulsive liar, and would invariably lie. Then the rabbi orders this man to keep stirring *shnīna* (diluted yoghurt: it is refreshing, and usually eaten with cut cucumber inside) in which goat dung was put inside. Eventually the man is so nauseated that he complains: "It's shit!", and the rabbi retorts by pointing out that he told the truth (and thus declaring him healed of his lying). This is an oicotypised instance of Tale Type 1543 C* from Uther (2004, Vol. 2, p. 284), from which book the following is quoted:

The Clever Doctor. A man complains to a doctor that he has no sense of taste, can never tell the truth, and has a bad memory. The doctor treats him with three capsules filled with feces (puts dung in his mouth). The first restores his sense of taste, after the second, he is able to speak the truth, and when he takes the third, he proves that his memory is good.

In some variants, a clever doctor heals a patient by diverting his attention. For example, in a Jewish variant a king has an inflamed eye because he touches it all the time.⁶⁷ The doctor tells him

⁶⁷ Cf. the Italian proverb: "Only touch your eye with your elbow", i.e., never touch your eyes.

that he is pregnant and will give birth in nine months. The king begins to worry about his stomach and touches it: Thus his eye is able to heal. When the birth does not take place, the doctor explains his trick and is made court physician.

The Jewish variant (the one about the king's eye) was reported by Heda Jason (1988, concerning Iraqi Jewish tales), and more recently included in Haboucha (1992, concerning Judaeo-Spanish tales). Uther cites these, and also cites from the scholarly literature versions including Finnish, Latvian, Lithuanian, Portuguese, Dutch, Frisian, Polish, and "US-American".

In the Baghdadi Jewish version of the tale we are considering, the rabbi's statement that the man is healed of his compulsive lying depends upon the assumption that if he was made to tell the truth once, then he is no longer a compulsive liar. Interestingly, this raises a problem with the Liar Paradox (the proposition, known from ancient Greece, about the Cretan who claims that Cretans always lie). The man had told the rabbi that he always tell lies, but then, either this, too, was a lie, and he does not always tell lies, or then he was telling the truth, but then it is untrue that he always tell lies. Interestingly, this tale type does not exploit the opportunity to dwell upon the Liar Paradox, of which it takes no notice. About the Liar Paradox, see: Parsons (1984), Visser (1984, 2004), Barwise and Etchemendy (1987), McGee (1991), Koons (1992), Simmons (1993), Gupta and Belnap (1993), Yaqub (1993), and Beall (2003).

Arguably, the Baghdadi Jewish version, even though it is vulgar, was denominationally too inhibited to place faeces, all the more so human faeces, inside the mouth of a Jewish man, one who is supposed to pray, and whose mouth therefore must not be defiled. Bear in mind that when the prophet Ezekiel receives the divine order to eat faeces and tell the Jews that this is their fate, Ezekiel retorts that he (who after all is a *kohen*, bound by priestly rules of purity) always avoided defiling himself; he is permitted therefore to replace the human faeces with cattle dung (*Ezekiel*, Ch. 4).

Rabbi Joseph Ḥayyim al-Ḥakham (this is his family name) of Baghdad (1834–1909) is the best-known Iraqi rabbi from the last two centuries, and he is especially known in present-day Israel, because Levantine Jewish communities (not only Iraqis) have adopted his normative compendium, *Ben Ish Ḥay*, for popular use. In *Ben Ish Ḥay*, among the other things Rabbi Joseph Ḥayyim took issue with women's traditional custom of putting urine (a woman's urine) in the mouth of a child with measles, out of the belief that this would prevent him having a bad-smelling mouth later in life because of the measles. *Ben Ish Ḥay* points out that doctors retort that in Europe no urine is used for that purpose, yet children do not (all) grow up with a bad-smelling mouth. (That is to say, halitosis is not an effect of measles.) *Ben Ish Ḥay* acknowledges that women counteract that argument, by invoking the different climate of Europe and Iraq. Given that state of affairs, *Ben Ish Ḥay* warns at least adults to be careful, lest they would be unwittingly subjected to that dubious treatment if they contract measles as adults.

Based on oral sources, even among siblings there was a therapeutic difference between a boy contracting measles as a child, when he was not a bar-mitzvah as yet, and bar-mitzvah his brother contracting measles after he was bar-mitzvahed. The former used to be treated by having him drink *bōl u-šēbāgh* (urine and aloe). By contrast, had the boy already been bar-mitzvahed when he contracted measles, so he was treated to *kāzābghæ u-māy wāghd* (coriander and rose-water; the dot under the m of the word for 'water' velarises the pronunciation of that consonant). What is more, my uncle Edward, while relating about this, was still subtly resentful about the disparity of treatment. The point is, that the unobjectionable, even the not unpleasant mix of rose-water with kusbara (ground coriander, that, though bitter, was mixed with sugar) was recognised as a valid traditional remedy. But

apparently the harsher treatment was considered more effective, and was only avoided, for one who had already been bar-mitzvahed, because a mouth that prays must not be defiled.

The bitterness of aloe is reflected in the following. It is from the Arabic name for 'aloe', *aṣ-ṣabr* (الصَّبْر), that the Spanish noun *acíbar* originated. It denotes 'aloe' (the plant) and 'aloe juice' (which is bitter), as well as 'bitterness', 'grief', 'distaste'. In Spanish, there also is another name for 'aloe', *zábila*, that is used mainly in Latin America, and is allegedly derived from Andalusian Arabic *ṣabíra*.

(2) The second tale we consider is about the trickster rabbi, Ḥakhām Zambartūt (who is typically claimed to have actually existed). He once bet with friends of his, that on the next Saturday, the congregation would be crowing like crows. He kept his word. That Saturday, he read in public the pentateuchal weekly portion, which was Qedoshim, and when he got to *Leviticus* 19:28, which proscribes having oneself tattooed, he read the word for 'tattoo', *qa'aqá'* (קִּאֲקָא'), as though it was *qa'qá'* (קִּקָּא'). Immediately, the congregants shouted to correct him: *Qa'aqá'! Qa'aqá'! Qa'aqá'!* Bear in mind that both /q/ and /' / are pronounced as pharyngeal, and that in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, the name for 'crow' is *bqē'*. This Baghdadi Jewish tale is *Predigtschwank*, a humorous folktale about a practical joke carried out by a member of the clergy, and vaguely resembles Tale Type 1828* from Uther (2004, Vol. 2, p. 433):

Weeping and Laughing. A clergyman makes a bet that he can give a sermon that will cause half the congregation to laugh and half to weep. Or, a clergyman wants to show his bishop (the lord of the area) how badly his congregation behaves.

He preaches a moving sermon that causes half his audience to weep. But he wears no trousers under his gown

Uther (*ibid.*) cites from the scholarly literature several versions, including Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Danish, Spanish, Dutch, Frisian, German, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Serbian, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Ukrainian, African American, Cuban, and South African. It must be said that the character of a trickster clergyman, who to Baghdadi Jews is Ḥakhām Zambartūt, is also known, for example, from Western Christianity: this is the case of the Italian Pievano Arlotto. Importantly, the Jewish arrangement is found here, by which an ordained rabbi does not necessarily live off the public purse, and lives perhaps off his own or his family's business (this was appreciated among Baghdad Jews), and moreover by which a member of the laity often performs the service, or then reads by himself the pentateuchal weekly portion.

Moreover, this is a traditional society, in which many congregants can be expected to know the weekly portion well; or then, they are able to see for themselves the Hebrew morphophonology as set down in the vowel diacritical marks of the word *qa'aqá'*. Bear in mind that the one reading from the Torah scroll sees the text without any diacritics other than the letters of the alphabet in the text in front of him. He therefore has to know by heart both the vowels, and the intonation of the cantillation. The congregants instead have both of these indicated by the diacritics in the printed books they are reading from. If the officiant makes a mistake while reading from the Torah (but not if he does so while reading the Haftarah from the Prophets), and is not made to repeat that portion of the text correctly, this invalidates the public reading of the weekly portion.

A layman addressing the congregation is a social possibility in Judaism as well as in Islam. Where Christian folktales have a clergyman, Muslim variants may have a layman such as Nasreddin Hodja. Such is the case of Tale Type 1826 (Uther 2004, Vol. 2, p. 431):

The Clergyman Has No Need to Preach. A clergyman (often a layman, Nasreddin Hodja) asks his congregation whether they know what his sermon will be about. They do not know, so he berates them for their stupidity. He repeats his question the following week. This time they say they know, so he thinks he needs not preach any more. The third week, the congregation is divided in their answer to the question: half say no and half say yes. The clergyman tells those who understand to teach the others [...].

In some variants, a clergyman has to preach a sermon about a certain saint on the appropriate saint's day. In order to avoid preaching this sermon, he announces that, since the saint performed no miracles that year, he need not give a sermon about him.

Uther remarks: "Documented since the 10th century in Arabian [sic] jestbooks. The form with the sermon about the saint appears in the 15th century [in] Poggio, *Liber facetiarum*". A variant is ascribed to the Italian trickster clergyman, Pievano Arlotto. Uther cites from the scholarly literature variants including Finnish, Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Spanish, Catalan, German, Italian, Hungarian, Czech, Rumanian, Bulgarian, Greek, Polish, Russian, Byelorussian, Ukrainian, Siberian, Tadzhik, Chinese, Iraqi, and Egyptian. Uther also cites a Judaeo-Spanish version from Haboucha (1992).

As for crowing inside a shrine, in the Baghdadi Jewish tale we have seen that it is the congregants who are unwittingly made to do it. Crowing within liturgy in church appears rather differently in Tale Type 1828 (Uther, 2004, Vol. 2, p. 433):

The Rooster at Church Crows. During the service, a rooster flies into a church through an open window. He crows and wakes the sexton, who thinks it is his cue to answer part of the liturgy (sing a certain song).

Clearly, here it is the English lexicon that impinges upon the appropriateness of our use of the word 'crowing', and here it is the crowing of a rooster rather than a crow that is involved. Uthers signals: "Documented in jestbooks in the 17th century". He cites variants from Finnish, Finnish-Swedish, Estonian, Swedish, Danish, English, German, Italian, and Hungarian. This narrative is unlike the Baghdadi tale.

The discussion in this Appendix A is quite sketchy, with no pretence of adequacy, and for a much more detailed and multifaceted discussion, the reader is referred to Nissan (2011). The two examples are made here just in order to signal those tales, as well as that a full discussion is provided in Nissan (2011).

Appendix B: Crypto-Language, vs. Plain or Allusive Hebrew Not Being Understood

A gap in acumen between the shrewd and the credulous is involved in the *kullám hamorím* tales, as discussed in the present study. A special language inaccessible to the uninitiated plays an important role: if not properly a crypto-language, at any rate it is plain Hebrew when in front of people who couldn't understand it. These people come in two categories: such Jews on the periphery who are ignorant of Jewish culture, and (in one variant of the tale considered) non-Jews at a coffee-house, whereas the two persons who are the utterer and the addressee are Jews, and their communication is supposedly unintelligible to the other people present. Wisse reminisces the following (2013, pp. 147–148, her brackets), and in her note 3 on p. 260 she cites Weinreich (2008, Vol. 1, p. 181):

In 1985 I joined a study trip through Poland with professors of the Hebrew University, several of whom had fled the country before the Second World War. One day, on a street in the town of Kaziemierz, as they were talking in Hebrew among themselves, they overheard one Pole remark to another, "That's how they used to speak before the war". One of the Israelis corrected him, "Not exactly. Before the war, 'we' spoke Yiddish, and now we are speaking Hebrew". The Pole replied, "But that's how you used to speak when you didn't want us to understand". This

perceptive witness was accurately describing what the linguist Max Weinreich calls the linguistic style of *yehudi beley* (Jew, beware), a way of speaking Yiddish that incorporates as many Hebrew loanwords as possible so that Gentiles who understand some Yiddish or German will be left in the dark. "Zay shomea vos der orl iz magid [listen to what the Gentile is saying]" had less of a chance of being understood than the synonymous "*her vos der goy zogt!*"

Humour based on what the audience within the ingroup is expected to know, and the outgroup is expected not to know, underlies the following Italian-language joke I made up:

Due ragazzi ebrei conversano: "Che *parashà* sarà, sabato?" "*Shemòt*". Un non ebreo che li ha ascoltati, poi racconta: "Però, questi ebrei si trattano male tra di loro. C'era uno che ha fatto una domanda, e l'altro gli ha dato dello «scemotto»".

That is to say:

Two Jewish youngsters have a chat: "Which *parashah* [weekly portion from the Pentateuch] is it going to be [i.e., shall be read at the synagogue in the morning service], this Saturday?" "*Shemot*" ["Names", the first weekly portion in the Book of Exodus. It is read in December or January]. Somebody non-Jewish overhears them, and later on, makes this remark: "You know, these Jews treat each other harshly. One of them asked a question, and the other one called him 'little idiot'" [*scemotto*, a diminutive of *scemo*].

Clearly, "technical" knowledge is involved: understanding this joke requires having some basic knowledge about Jewish liturgy. The two Jewish characters in this joke are not trying not to be understood by non-Jews, but this is what happens. There being a double sense strictly depends upon the language of the joke being Italian. Now, consider this other narrative I am making up (and if taken to be a joke, is somewhat weak):

Alcuni ebrei spiegano ad un non-ebreo che uno di loro si intende proprio molto, di cose della loro religione. Poi uno di loro chiede proprio a quello: "Che brano del Pentateuco si leggerà al tempio, sabato prossimo?" "*Bò*". Poi quando quello che ha risposto non li può sentire, il non ebreo commenta: "Però, non mi sembra che quello sappia poi tanto come mi avevato detto".

That is to say:

Some Jews tell a Gentile that one of them is really quite competent in the matters of their religion. The one of them asks that one: "Which portion from the Pentateuch is going to read at the synagogue, next Saturday?" "*Bò*" ["Come!", a weekly portion so entitled. It is read in January, and is the second weekly portion after *Shemot*]. One the one who gave that reply cannot hear them, the non-Jew remarks: "After all, as far as I can see he is not as knowledgeable as you said".

The latter utterer misunderstood *Bò* as the Italian interjection (spelled *Boh!* or *Bò!*) which when given in reply is an admission of ignorance (a synonym is *Mah!*). Its semantic scope is somewhat narrower than the scope of English *Bah!* *Vah!* in Latin is roughly equivalent to how *Bah!* is used in English while not in Italian. Take this exchange in Latin from a fragment preserved by Gellius, from a comedy by Caecilius; a character asks: "Sed tua morosane uxor, quaeso, est?" ("But tell me, is your wife difficult?"), to which he gets this answer: "Vah! Rogas?", i.e., "Bah! You ask?" The English translation is by Wolfgang de Melo (2014, p. 457).

In the previous two Italian examples, there is no such use of language that in context is intended not to be understood by members of the outgroup. Crypto-language occurs in various contexts. Jewish Baghdadi mothers or grandmothers, or women inside a conversation group including these, would say: *Māy dōm!* — i.e., literally, "Weekday water!", supposedly a ritual term from ritual rules, to disguise the imperative *Dōm!* ("Hush!", "Keep silent!"), when

inviting other women to change the subject of their conversation, as children are present; the children themselves are to remain unaware of the real sense of the exhortation. Moreover, my mother recalls that her grandmother and the latter's sister would sometimes chat in a crypto-language (so that the children would not understand), whose lexical distortion was by insertion between consonants (thus, in a class of crypto-languages comprising pig Latin among English speakers).

My uncle Həyyawi (Albert) calls the crypto-language his paternal grandmother used to speak when chatting with her sisters, *kəzəlləzí kəzəlləzá*. This is because the syllables of ordinary speech in Baghdadi Judaeo-Arabic, in the crypto-language were interleaved with syllables formed with a [z] followed by a vowel. (This makes this crypto-language rather similar to how utterances in pig Latin are formed by English-speakers.) My uncle claims that even though such was the rule for forming the utterances, he nonetheless never made sense of what was being said when that crypto-language was being spoken.

The difference must be noted between a lexicalised term, and a jocular use as in a given anecdotal context. Judaeo-Roman (*giudaico-romanesco*) has the noun *davàre* (from the Hebrew דָּבָר for 'something' or 'a say') employed as a whispered exclamation: *Davàre!* for "Be careful, let's go away!", in the crypto-language (typically, of peddlers). *Davàre* has various other contextual acceptations ('Hush!', 'nothing'). Another crypto-linguistic invitation to flee together is *Fa' rescíúdde*. Taken fairly literally, it means "Ask for permission [דָּבָר שָׁאֵךְ] (and then go away)", "Say: 'With your permission! [דָּבָר שָׁאֵךְ]' (to take leave)". But its two usages are: (a) "Go!" (or "Let's go away!"), and (b) "Shut up! (it's imprudent to tell them)", which is a more recent acceptation. This and many other Judaeo-Roman linguistic data were explained at a public lecture given in Milan on 27 January 1980 by Giovanna Massariello Merzagora and Ester Kopciowski,⁶⁸ the subject primarily being two then recent dissertations on Judaeo-Roman supervised by Massariello Merzagora (see Kopciowski 1977). Whereas Massariello Merzagora overviewed theories about of the Jewish Italian dialects⁶⁹ (these differ geographically, and resemble the local Christian dialect), Kopciowski explained a terminological list from Judaeo-Roman.⁷⁰

⁶⁸ The lecture was given on 27 January 1980, under the umbrella of Milano per voi: Corsi di aggiornamento culturale aperti a tutti, Ciclo 2°: Gli ebrei in Italia — Aspetti e momenti di cultura e di storia, coordinated by Guido Lopez.

⁶⁹ On the Jewish dialect of Rome, also see Cuomo (1988), Debenedetti (1970), Mancini (1992), Massariello Merzagora (1977), Scazzocchio Sestieri (1970), Milano (1955), Mof (1998). Hebrew lexicon in Jewish vernaculars was the theme of a 1995 conference held in Milan, and Judaeo-Italian vernaculars have their share in such research (Morag et al. 1999).

⁷⁰ There is a whole genre of calque translations into Judaeo-Italian (e.g., Sermoneta 1974; Pasternak 2005; Cassuto 1934, 1937). It is not necessarily the case that historically, Italo-Romance full sentences or longer texts were written in Hebrew characters. Individual terms from Judeo-Italian, or should we rather say, from varieties of Italian (not necessarily Jewish, and perhaps often derived from current non-Jewish glossaries) are also found as glosses.

For example, Cuomo (1977) discussed medieval Salentine (i.e., southern Apulian) glosses in Hebrew script from the Parma MS De Rossi 138 from Parma. The *'Arukh*, authored by Nathan ben Yechiel of Rome (1031–1106), is a dictionary that arguably is Italy's most important contribution to talmudic studies. Names for hats, footwear, belts, and bags as found in the Judaeo-Italian glosses of the *'Arukh* are discussed in detail in Cuomo (2008). Cuomo (1998) discussed the glosses ascribable to Italian in the *'Arukh*, by focusing on such terms that are considered to have a Germanic etymology. Note however that throughout his publications, Mario Alinei has argued cogently that because of factors in the history of modern scholarship, it has often been the case that Italian etymology has been researched by hypothesising an unwarranted Germanic origin.

In the modern period, Judaeo-Italian dialects have much resembled the dialect of the given city, arguably more so than their resembling Judeo-Italian dialects from other regions, apart from the sublexicon pertaining to Jewish religion and custom. There exist studies that look into particular Judaeo-Italian dialects. For example, Maria Luisa Modena Mayer and Giovanna Merzagora Massariello published about Judaeo-Modenese, from the city of Modena (Modena Mayer and Merzagora Massariello 1973). Also bear in mind that the Greek island of Corfu had a Romaniot (Greek-speaking) Jewish community and an Apulian-speaking Jewish community until

Another member of the panel at that public lecture was the coordinator of the lecture series, Guido Lopez (a professional in publishing, the son of playwright Sabatino Lopez, and well-known among Milan's Jews). Lopez related an anecdote which exemplifies *ex tempore* jocular use. At a jeweller's in Leghorn, he was admiring a chain, and the owner chanted: *Ein lànù mèlekh!* (Hebrew for "We have no King"). Quizzed by Lopez, he reportedly continued triumphantly: *Èlla àtta!* ("other than Thou!"), thus completing a line with the melody of the *Nishmat Kol Chay* morning prayer. This is a double sense with the Italian: *È latta!* for "It's tin!" (not gold or silver). Therefore, chanting *Ein lànù mèlekh!* to one's interlocutor was like telling him "*È una fregatura*" ("It's garbage", "It's a hoax"). It was apparently understood so by local Jewish shopkeepers in Leghorn.

Yet, by itself, mention of a few words from prayer in a sense quite different from the context does not necessarily mean this is crypto-language. I was told that a given man (Yehúdah Nunu)⁷¹ who used to live in Baghdad in the first half of the 20th century, and

the Holocaust. Corfiot Judaeo-Apulian clearly belongs to the Italian lingueme. Texts of the Judaeo-Apulian community of Corfu are the subject of Sermoneta (1990).

On the Jewish dialect of Rome, also see Cuomo (1988), Debenedetti (1970), Mancini (1992), Massariello Merzagora (1977), Scazzocchio Sestieri (1970), Milano (1955), Mof (1998). Hebrew lexicon in Jewish vernaculars was the theme of a 1995 conference held in Milan, and Judaeo-Italian vernaculars have their share in such research (Morag et al. 1999). Also Tedghi (1995) is concerned with the impact of Hebrew of Jewish languages.

It has happened that some early modern non-Jewish author in Italy used Hebrew terms, which was when portraying Jews: this was the case of the humorous author Giulio Cesare Croce (see on him Guerrini 1969 [1879]), in a literary imagined brawl between two Jews (Croce 1661). Giulio Cesare Croce was from Bologna. He is best known for his *Bertoldo*, of 1606, its protagonist being an Italian version of the Marcolf character from Germany and France (cf. Nissan, 2012b, 2014a). In Croce's *Bertoldo* (whose sources were discussed by Cortese Pagani 1911 and Marini 1983–1984, 1984), the boorish, wily peasant is the antagonist not of King Solomon (unlike Marcolf), but of King Alboin. Historically, the latter was a Longobardic king (d. 572). Nevertheless, Bertoldo's mention of beans fits the early modern period.

The vernacular of the Jews of Rome is sometimes documented in notary acts from the 16th and 17th centuries, and this is the subject of Debenedetti-Stow (2001). The Jewish poet Crescenzo Del Monte (1868–1935) authored sonnets in both the Judaeo-Roman vernacular (*giudaico-romanesco*, but in the roman script, not the Hebrew script) and the Roman dialect (termed by him *romanesco comune*, i.e., other than Jewish), and also researched Judaeo-Roman. The Judaeo-Roman sonnets of Crescenzo Del Monte are discussed by Debenedetti Stow (1998). Current editions of Del Monte's sonnets include Del Monte (2007, 1955). Freedman (1972) was concerned with Italian texts in Hebrew script, but Del Monte's sonnets are in the roman script instead.

⁷¹ Yehúdah Nunu's house in Baghdad was a house with a traditional architecture, with an inner courtyard. On the same street, more on the left when looking to the street, there was the house of the chief rabbi of Baghdad, Ḥakham Sasson Khdhouri; in front, there was the house of a Jewish ophthalmologist, Dr. Raubitchik, who had moved to Baghdad from Tel-Aviv and married a local Jewish woman in Baghdad, and whose family name was usually distorted by Jews into *Robertchik* in informal talk (e.g., my maternal family, including two individuals who knew German and probably could therefore make sense of the transparent Yiddish etymology of the family name *Raubitchik*). My father, however, being a younger ophthalmologist, had closer contacts with him. After one of my uncles fled Iraq in 1964, the exiles' grapevine let him know that Dr. Raubitchik's daughter was the next Jew who fled the country, within the trickle who were managing to leave under the ghastly Arifian regime, i.e., that of the 'Arif brothers, the second and third dictator of the five that Republican Iraq had until Saddam's fall.

Yehuda Nunu was the father of Albert Nunu, born in 1917, who in 1970 was hanged in Iraq on a false charge of espionage for Israel. He was arrested a first time in 1967, and freed afterwards. He was rearrested in 1968, and was eventually executed. The truth was that Albert Nunu was a wealthy businessman (he was unmarried), and a non-Jewish business associate hoped to seize his assets, and at any rate made a false denunciation against him in 1967. A former classmate of Albert Nunu was a minister in the Iraqi government, and kept him in prison in order to extract money from him. Reportedly, while in prison, Albert Nunu had also paid so that his cousin, my maternal grandmother's sister who had terminal cancer, could leave the country (this was in 1967, and she barely survived two months; I recall myself as a child aged twelve, announcing to her victory in the Six Day War, as she was suffering in bed).

In his memoirs of prison and torture (Sassoon 1999), Shaul [ben] Hakham Sassoon, the son of the chief Rabbi Sasson Khdhouri, states that Albert Nunu (who was his friend, and whom he met in the prison courtyard),

whose family background was in Iran, in order to tell some interlocutor to cut it short and come to the point, used to say: 'Oséh shalom? The source for this was the last sentence in the silent prayer ('Amidah): "He who maketh peace in Heaven, He — taking pity (of us) — will make peace on us and all of Israel. And say: 'Amen'". (Incidentally, with reference to Hebrew-Italian wordplay, it is of interest to mention Dan Pagis' book (1986) on literary riddles.)

It does happen, however, that a speaker is being creative with giving a new sense to such intertextual references, and that the interlocutor fails to understand what was actually intended, because the expression with that sense did not belong in a shared culture. I was told that a man once related (in the 1930s or 1940s) that he had been misunderstood by Baghdad's chief rabbi, Sasson Khdhouri. The rabbi had said that he had a tooth extracted at the dentist's. The man retorted: *Shinnéi resha'im shibbárta*, this being a quotation from *Psalms* 3:8: "The teeth of the wicked ones Thou hast broken". The rabbi was aggravated, as he interpreted this to mean that as his tooth had been extracted, he was being told to his face that he was wicked. (There were in town some discontents of his politics.) What the man had actually meant, was that the given tooth was causing the rabbi pain. One who causes pain is wicked. Therefore, that tooth was wicked. By having that tooth extracted, the rabbi had broken a wicked tooth.

Appendix C: Dissatisfaction with New World Standards, Turned into a Cosmic Condition of the Continent

At the very start of Gerson Rosenzweig's satire *Tractate America* (1892), a pseudo-talmudic pastiche in Hebrew, the three continents of the Old World ask for a continent of refuge (for malefactors) to be created. This is why, we are told, Columbus did not want the place to be named after him. Let us turn to another cosmic conceptualisation of America, which again reflects dissatisfaction with behavioural standards found there among Jewish coreligionists. The headquarters of Lubavitcher Hasidim is in Brooklyn, since the early 1940s. That denomination was previously based in Russia. The glossary of Lubavitch Hasidism's terminology, at the end of Heilman and Friedman (2010), includes the following entries: "*chatzi kadur tachton*: Lubavitcher hasidic conception of the other side of the globe, the spiritually lowest hemisphere, the exile of America" (*ibid.*, p. 279); "*khutse she'eyn khutse mimenu*: spiritually the lowest point on earth" (*ibid.*, p. 280); "*takhtn she'eyn takhtn mimenu*: lowest spiritual realm" (*ibid.*, p. 281). Cf. "*galut be'tokh galut*: living in the lowest level of exile, said of those who are nearly completely assimilated and secularized; living among the barely observant" (*ibid.*, p. 279).

The western hemisphere is conceived of as being "the lower hemisphere", apparently because of the Rabbinic traditional dictum *Eretz Yisra'el gvoha mikkol ha'aratzot*, "The Land

had been well-connected to exponents of the 'Aref regime in 1963–1968. He was well-travelled, and had lived in London for a few years, then returned to Baghdad in order to dispose of his assets, but then he found himself unable to leave Iraq again. His having been able to obtain a passport and leave for London was an element in the charges against him, leading to his execution. The book also relates that Albert Nunu had been in the same cell as a man who had been prime minister under the monarchy. The former premier and Albert Nunu were executed together. The military supreme court, presided by 'Abd al-Hādī, sentenced Albert Nunu to death as a Zionist spy on 10 October 1969, and the sentence was carried out in on 21 January 1970. Four hundred persons were executed on that very same day.

In 1969 eleven Jews were hanged, nine of them on January 27 in the public squares of Baghdad and Basra. At the time, there still was in Iraq a remnant, consisting of 2,500 people, of what Iraqi Jewry had been, and these, too, almost entirely left or fled shortly thereafter. It is little known that the 1969 hangings in Baghdad were soon emulated in Jordan. There only was one Jewish family living in the kingdom. The father, a businessman of Iraqi background, was permitted to reside in the country by royal favour. Then his son was charged with spying, and executed.

of Israel is the highest of all countries", taken to be the explanation for why going there is "to go up" ('*alah*), whereas leaving the country is "to go down" (*yarad*). Arguably most people who are aware of it, are so because it occurs in a pentateuchal gloss by Rashi (at *Exodus* 33:1), thus, in a highly accessed traditional Jewish source, read also by those with little schooling in rabbinic sources. Rashi's gloss reads as follows:

"*Lekh, 'aleh mizzeh*" [Go, go up from here]: The Land of Israel is higher than all countries; therefore it was said "Go up!". Another interpretation: as He told him [Moses] when in anger, "Go, go down!" [*Exodus*, 32:7], when of a good disposition He told him, "Go, go up!".⁷²

But its earliest source⁷³ is in *Sifrei Devarim* 37, s.v. *Harei hu*, and states:

And so it says (*Jeremiah* 5:1): "My Friend had a vineyard in Qeren Ben Shemen [i.e., Horn Son of Oil]". Just as this [i.e., a] bull, nothing in him is higher than his horns, likewise the Land of Israel is higher than all countries. Or [should we rather say]: just as this bull, there is nothing more a refuse than his horns, likewise the Land of Israel is the refuse of the other countries? We learn to say: "in Qeren ben Shemen", the Land of Israel is fat (*shmenah*), which teaches thee that whoever is higher than his fellow, is more excellent than his fellow. The Land of Israel, as it is higher than all, is more excellent than all, as it says: "We shall definitely go up and inherit it" (*Numbers*, 13:30), "They went up and explored the land" (*Numbers*, 13:21), "They went up in the Negev [i.e., the dry southern region]" (*Numbers*, 13:22), "They went up from Egypt" (*Genesis*, 45:25). The Temple, which is higher than all, is more excellent than all, as it says (*Deuteronomy*, 17:8): "And thou shalt rise and go up to the place", and it says (*Isaiah*, 2:3): "And many peoples will go and say: 'Let us go, and go up to the mountain of the House of the Lord'", and it says (*Isaiah*, 31:5): "As there is a day, when the watches shall call" and so forth.⁷⁴

After the four scriptural quotations (*Numbers* 13:30, 13:21, 13:21, and *Genesis* 45:21) in which going to the Land of Israel is expressed by means of the verb for 'to go up', the homiletic text continues with a discussion of the Temple being even higher.

Dante Alighieri, too, held the belief that Jerusalem is on top of the earth (the globe!). To Dante, Hell is entered from a valley near Jerusalem; the bottom of Hell is at the centre of the globe, and from there a tunnel leads to the antipodes of Jerusalem, namely, to the mountain of Purgatory. "[T]he Venerable Bede was, by the eighth century, categorical in stating his view that the earth was a sphere. It is now generally accepted that this was the opinion of the majority of writers and thinkers during the Crusade period" (Tattersall 1981).

The explicit statement that the Earth is sphere-shaped is found in fragment F44 (preserved in text by Geminus), whose English translation is on p. 67 in Duane Roller's edition (2010) of Eratosthenes' *Geography*. Roller's commentary to F44 is *ibid.*, on p. 159. The "spheroid shape of the earth" is also ascribed by Strabo to Eratosthenes where he reports that Eratosthenes remarked that were it not for the size of the Ocean, one could sail from Iberia to

⁷² The Hebrew text of Rashi's gloss reads as follows:

לך עלה מזה - ארץ ישראל גבוהה מכל הארצות, לכן נאמר עלה, דבר אחר כלפי שאמר לו בשעת הכעס (שמות לב ז) לך רד, אמר לו בשעת רצון לך עלה:

⁷³ I am grateful to Dr. Avi Shemesh for locating the earliest source for me.

⁷⁴ The Hebrew text at *ספרי דברים פיסקא לו ד"ה הרי הוא* reads as follows:

וכן הוא אומר + ישעיה ה א + אשירה נא לידי שירת דודי לכרמו כרם היה לידי בקרן בן שמן, מה שור זה אין בו גבוה מקרניו כך ארץ ישראל גבוהה מכל הארצות או מה שור זה אין בו פסולת מקרניו כך ארץ ישראל פסולה מכל הארצות תלמוד לומר בקרן בן שמן, שמנה היא ארץ ישראל, ללמדך שגבוה מחבירו משובח מחבירו, ארץ ישראל לפי שגבוהה מכל משובחת מכל שנאמר + במדבר יג + עלה נעלה וירשנו אותה, + שם / במדבר / שם כא + ויעלו ויתורו את הארץ, + שם / במדבר / שם כב + ויעלו בנגב + בראשית מה כה + ויעלו ממצרים. בית המקדש שגבוה מכל משובח מכל שנאמר + דברים ז ח + וקמת ועלית אל המקום, ואומר + ישעיה ב ג + והלכו עמיה רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר בית ה', ואומר + ירמיה לא ה + כי יש יום קראו נוצרים וגו'

India along the same parallel. This is preserved in fragments F33 of Book 2 of Eratosthenes' *Geography* (Roller 2010, p. 61) — preserved in Strabo's *Geography* 1.4.6 — with Roller's commentary to F33 on pp. 148–151. Strabo, *ibid.*, criticising Eratosthenes, raised (in Roller's words) "the question whether there may be a continent intervening between the Pillars and India" (Roller 2010, p. 149): especially on the parallel of Athens, which is highly inhabitable, one could expect to find one or more further "worlds", between the Pillars and India.

In the sixth century, the early Byzantine geographer Cosmas Indicopleustes, for whom the Earth was not spherical (but rather a rectangle or a trapeze), claimed that a continent existed beyond the sea east of Asia. To Cosmas, that was the land where the human generations between Adam and the Deluge had lived. Cosmas placed the Paradise in an eastern region in the far east, beyond the Ocean (Kitamura 1988, p. 89). Outside the Paradise, that land was rather inhospitable. According to Cosmas, the progeny of both Cain and Seth lived in that region beyond the Ocean, outside the Paradise: Seth's lived closer to the Paradise (III.72) than Adam had done after his expulsion, but Cain's far away. To Cosmas, it was the Deluge that caused the survivors to cross, in the Ark, the Ocean (III.79), that itself can no longer be crossed, just as mortals cannot reach the sky while alive (II.43). During the Deluge, Noah's Ark was carried over to the known lands, as everybody disembarked on Mt. Ararat indeed. Thus, in a sense, in both Strabo and Cosmas we can recognise "America before America". Cosmas' flat Earth is not quite flat and horizontal. The Nile flowing slowly northwards, and the Tigris and Euphrates flowing quickly southwards, suggested to him that the Earth was rather more like a ramp. Kitamura explains (1988, p. 84):

Mais l'œcumène de Cosmas ne se présente pas comme un plan horizontal. Elle est comparable à une piste de ski. Comme l'indiquent les légendes qui accompagnent le dessin de la terre, les régions nordique et occidentale sont élevées, abruptes comme un mur; à contraire les régions méridionales et orientales sont basses, situées au même niveau de l'Océan.

[“However, the Oecumene {i.e., the inhabited world} of Cosmas is not shaped as a flat plane. Rather, it is similar to a ski track. As indicated by the labels that accompany the drawing of the earth, the northern and western regions are high, as steep as a wall; the southern and eastern regions instead are low, at the same level as the Ocean.”]

The idea that the Earth is shaped like a globe, of obvious Greek derivation, is mentioned (*she-ha-‘olám ‘asúy ke-khaddúr*, “that the world is made like a ball”), in the Talmud Yerushalmi, tractate *‘Avodah Zarah*, 42, 2. Medieval Jewish biblical exegetes who believed the Earth to be round (a *kaddur*, i.e., a sphere) include Bachye (at *Genesis* 1 and *Numbers* 7), Abraham Ibn Ezra (at *Genesis* 2), David Kimchi (at *Genesis* 1), Nachmanides (at *Genesis* 1 and *Numbers* 7), Gershonides (at *Proverbs* 8), and Sforno (at *Genesis* 35). Actually, Obadiah Sforno lived in Italy during the Renaissance (c. 1470 – c. 1550).

Ibn Gabirol, a major medieval Hebrew poet from Málaga, stated the belief that the Earth is a globe in a cosmological hymn, *Keter Malkhut* (*The Crown of Kingship*), traditionally read during the night of the Day of Atonement: *Mí yemallél gevurotéikha ba-‘asotekhá kaddúr ha-árets necheláq li-shnýim, chetsyó yabbashá ve-chetsyó máyim?* “Who shall tell Thy feats, as Thou didst the globe of the Earth divided in two, half of it dry land, and half of it water?”. The compound *kaddúr ha-árets* is standard in Modern Hebrew for ‘Earth’, and literally means ‘the globe of the Earth’.

Duane Roller is right to distinguish (2006, p. 51, fn. 47) between Greek ideas about mathematical symmetry applying to the world, and the antipodes as such in geography. Moreover, symmetry could be other than Antipodean: Roller (2006) points out that Cicero (*Republic* 6.20–22) referred to people directly opposite to Rome with respect to the Equator. And even though the idea of the Earth being shaped as a globe is found in Greek antiquity, note that medieval folklore

could accept the existence of Antipodeans, yet apparently assume that Earth was flat, and that they lived, as though, on the reverse of a coin.

Such an example from Jewish medieval folklore is found in Adolf Jellinek's *Bet ha-Midrash* (Jellinek 1853–1877). It is the last one (Vol. 4, pp. 533–534) among the 'Tales about King Solomon'.

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Fig. 5. Detail from a release poster in Spanish of the film *The Frisco Kid*. A spoof of the Western film genre, that film is on the transition from Jewish tradition to an accommodation to ways of life typifying the American frontier.

