

# RESHIT

STUDIES IN JUDAISM

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## EDITORIAL MANAGER

DAVID WIETCHNER

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Address: Reshit, Shalom Hartman Institute, P.O. Box 8029, Jerusalem 9108001.

All questions should be directed to David Wietchner, editorial manager.

Email: [david.wietchner@shi.org.il](mailto:david.wietchner@shi.org.il)

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# THE SONG OF DEBORAH: HUMAN HEROISM OR DIVINE SALVATION

ISRAEL KNOHL

*The Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Shalom Hartman Institute*

## Abstract

The Song of Deborah (Judges 5:2-4) is, according to many scholars, the earliest text in the Bible, although there are different opinions regarding editorial additions that were incorporated in the ancient layer. In this article I would like to distinguish between the original and the editorial additions and demonstrate that as a result of the editorial intervention, the thematic sequence of the poem was damaged, and its sophisticated numerical-symbolic structure went wrong.

The poem reflects a complex relationship between the initial existence of the Israelites in the mountain ranges and the Canaanite cities in the valleys. On the one hand, the poetry draws from the patterns of the Canaanite poetic work. On the other hand, it tells the story of the war between the Israelites and the Canaanites. Theologically, too, the poem shows that the only god of the Israelites is YHWH, a god who is not recognized in the Canaanite culture.

The analysis also makes it possible to reveal a principled debate. The original creators of the poem saw the victory as the result of a joint effort by God and the heroes of Israel who came "to YHWH's help" (Judges 5:23). However, the editors responsible for the current text, sought to downplay the value of the Israelites and their abilities and present the victory as the result of purely divine salvation - "with the help of God".

ON THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE ACADEMIES  
OF ISAAC LURIA AND HAYYIM VITAL

ADAM AFTERMAN

*Tel Aviv University and The Shalom Hartman Institute*

CHEN MAARAVI

*Tel Aviv University*

Abstract

This article delves into the profound concept of the Holy Spirit within the Kabbalah teachings of Rabbi Isaac Luria, and its subsequent development by his disciples, with a particular focus on the writings of Rabbi Hayyim Vital. In this perspective, the Holy Spirit is regarded as the objective wellspring for unlocking the enigmatic secrets concealed within the Torah, especially those elucidated in the sacred Book of the Zohar. Through an examination of Luria's teachings and Hayyim Vital's seminal work, "Shaarei Kedusha," a noteworthy contrast emerges in the interpretation of the Holy Spirit. While Luria perceives it as a conduit for receiving hidden revelations, Hayyim Vital portrays the Holy Spirit as a pivotal element in his mystical doctrine, entwining the pursuit of divine revelation with the sublime aspiration of self-perfection, wherein the divine essence merges with the human realm through the holy spirit's embodiment.

"THE LESSON" OF THE BESHT",  
ITS SOURCES AND REVERBERATIONS

MOSHE IDEL

*Tel Hebrew University of Jerusalem and The Shalom Hartman Institute*

Abstract

In this study, three extant versions of a short text describing a lesson delivered by R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov - the Besht, are presented and analyzed together for the first time. It then claims that this is a version parallel to a longer text adduced also in his name, and in the two cases the principle of the "the power of the creator is found in the creature" - koah ha-po'el ba-nif'al - is prominent. However, it is only in the "lesson" that it has been associated with extraordinary powers attributed to the Besht. The essay argues that this idea stems from a Neoplatonic text widespread in the Middle Ages - *Liber de Causis* - whose traces can also be detected later in the Besht's career, in the famous "Parable of the Walls." Other Hasidic terms can also be better understood as related to this Neoplatonic treatise.

The Besht's lesson reverberated in a number of Hasidic texts, up to the 20th century: in the school of R. Dov Ber Friedmann, the Great Maggid of Medzirech, in the writings of R. Isaac Yehiel Yehudah Safran of Komarno, of R. Zvi Elimelech Shapira of Dinov, of R. Zadok ha-Kohen of Lublin, and in the 20<sup>th</sup> century R. Aharon Roth from Me'ah She'arim. In some of its versions the Hasidic theory of the divine immanence has been associated with this Neoplatonic principle.

# JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN AFRICA THAT DISAPPEARED DUE TO MISTAKEN GEOGRAPHICAL IDENTIFICATIONS

NIR SAGI

## Abstract

A Common paradigm in the literature holds that Ethiopia has been isolated and cut off from the world until the nineteenth century. This conception reflected upon the research of the Ethiopian Jewish community, which was perceived in turn as a community that has been disconnected from the rest of the Jewish world for two thousand years. This article claims that this paradigm reflects common conceptions in Ethiopia research, drawing on both Christian and Colonial points of view. However, examination of Jewish documents and sources, reveals the existence of consecutive relationships between Ethiopian Jewry and the rest of the Jewish world, a relationship which is also affirmed by many documents contained within the Genizah. The article comprehensively reviews the various documents related to the general and Jewish geography in Ethiopia, many of which testify to their ongoing connection with the rest of the world.

'MY WISH IS THAT WOMEN COULD ALSO VISIT THE  
SYNAGOGUE': ON THE INCLUSION OF WOMEN IN  
WORSHIP AT THE HAMBURG TEMPLE

NAAMA JAGER-FLUSS

*Bar Ilan University*

Abstract

The article reviews and examines the homiletical sermons of Gotthold Salomon (1784-1862) during the first half of the 19th century, concerning the status of women in the Jewish religion. This article suggests that during his tenure as the Preacher in the Hamburg Temple, he was responsible for the significant change in the religious status of Jewish women in the community. He led this change by advocating, from an early stage, for the integration of women into the community's life and public sphere. Salomon claimed that women should be included as participants in public worship, a change made easier by translating the Hebrew prayer to German and delivering sermons in German. He also argued that the responsibility for the religious education of children, especially synagogue attendance, was the responsibility of mothers. Thus Solomon's perspective oscillated between conservative and innovative approaches. On one hand, he maintained a patriarchal perception regarding women and their religious status, where women were responsible for nurturing domestic religiosity. On the other hand, he strongly advocated for the integration of women into the public sphere and community life. His modern Jewish sermon reflected his theology about the status of women in the Jewish religion and their integration into community life.



THE VOICE IS THE VOICE OF THE RIGHT, BUT THE HANDS  
ARE THE HANDS OF THE LEFT: ON MEIR KAHANE

SHAUL MAGID

*Dartmouth College*

Abstract

Meir Kahane is mostly known as an American immigrant to Israel who founded a political party based on Jewish militarism and supremacy that was eventually outlawed. However, in this essay I examine the foundations of Kahane's thought by claiming liberalism – whether American or the Israeli political culture in the 1960s and 1970s – was his main enemy. Yet Kahane had a complex relationship with the progressive American Left and often adopted their tactics and positions against liberalism. Kahane came to public notoriety in the late 1960s when the New Left in America was in full swing, when Black Nationalism, the quest for power supplanted civil rights and the culture and race wars threatened the liberal status quo. Kahane adopted the radical left politics as a tool to foster Jewish pride and rebellion against the assimilatory program of mainstream American Judaism. When he immigrated to Israel, he tried to transplant the American context into an Israeli one: Viewing the the secular Labor government as the American liberal mainstream, and the Arabs as the blacks who were threatening the Jews in their quest for recognition and power. I argue that understanding the religio-political program of Kahane in America, is essential to fully understanding his program, including its successes and failures, in Israel.

# HAS RELIGIOUS ZIONISM GIVEN UP ON UNITY?

DOV SCHWARTZ

*Bar Ilan University and The Shalom Hartman Institute*

LILACH BEN ZVI

*University of Haifa and The Shalom Hartman Institute*

## Abstract

This article examines the current possibility of dialogue between different groups within the Religious Zionist sector in Israel. We begin by exploring different opposing tendencies within Religious Zionism in recent years. We then discuss two possible areas in which the different groups interact – the Israeli Parliament, and the sector’s attitude towards sexual assaults. We claim that the existence of these two common issues, demonstrates that cooperation within the sector is possible. While the sector’s representatives in the parliament are located within the political sphere, the discourse and policy regarding sexual assaults takes place in the public sphere. Drawing on John Rawls’ philosophy, we explain why sectorial polarization within the political sphere intensifies, while the public sphere enables a cooperation even amongst the sector’s furthest extremes. It is therefore our conclusion, that the way to bring the different groups within the sector closer together, is to increase the level of cooperation in the public sphere.