

“*Mehabevin et ha-tsarot*”: Crusade Memories and Modern Jewish Martyrologies

David N. Myers

The Talmud records the following discussion:

Our Rabbis taught: Who wrote *Megilot Ta'anit* (the scrolls of fasting containing lists of days on which fasting is proscribed)? They said: Hananiah b. Hezekiah and his companions, *who cherished their troubles* (*she-hayu mehabevin et ha-tsarot*). R. Shimon bar Gamliel observed: We too cherish our troubles, but what can we do? For if we come to write (them down), we are inadequate.¹

In tracing the echoes of the Crusades in Jewish historical writing and consciousness, one is arrested by the phrase “they cherish their troubles.” Does it not appear to be a poignant, even shocking, epigram for the Jewish historical experience, or at least for the “lachrymose conception” of that experience according to which suffering assumes pride of place? Here, as elsewhere in Jewish literature, the gates of interpretation were open to various and diverse travelers. Rashi, the great French commentator who was a contemporary of the first Crusaders and who lost relatives and friends to their anti-Jewish excesses, understood “they cherished their troubles” to mean that Jews cherished not their troubles, but rather *their liberation* from such troubles. Jews were compelled to recall their troubles, he claimed, so as to praise God for His miraculous intervention.² Moreover, the sense of inadequacy in recording these travails stemmed, in part, from their sheer ubiquity. Persecutions were so regular a feature of Jewish history as to exhaust even the most practiced hand. Rashi thus equates the course of Jewish history with tragedy, anticipating what would later be designated as *Leidensgeschichte*. However, he does not follow

the plain sense of the Gemara by ascribing a passionate love of the act of persecution.

That step *is* taken by a later Talmudic commentator, the early seventeenth-century MaHarSha, Rabbi Shmuel Edels. On Edels' view, "they cherish their troubles" does not mean that Jews cherish their freedom from troubles, but rather that "they *actually* cherish their troubles" – in and of themselves.³ Edels died before the Chmielnicki massacres of 1648 that left such a deep imprint on the mental landscape of modern eastern European Jewry. But he was clearly no stranger to anti-Jewish hostility, since he apprehended in his own day a certain tendency among fellow Jews to remember, and even revel in, their afflictions. Edels' gloss forces to the surface the darker, pathological aspects of Jewish suffering – not the sense of dignity, glory, and sanctification of the name of God, but the psychological reliance on suffering as a primary means of sustaining group distinctiveness.

Whether or not one agrees with Edels' conclusion, it is indisputable that the recollection of tragedy was deeply woven into the fabric of medieval Jewish collective memory through media such as *selihot*, fast days, and *Memorbücher*.⁴ Moreover, this mnemonic thread did not disappear with the waning of the Middle Ages, but has dangled in the consciousness of the modern Jew, during an era when the broader tapestry of collective memory began to unfold. Few would dispute that the "lachrymose conception" of Jewish history has had tremendous staying power in modern scholarship, traversing the boundary lines, for example, between nineteenth-century German-Jewish scholars and their twentieth-century Zionist critics. No doubt, there has been considerable impetus to the modern recollection of tragedy, primarily from the *recurrence* of tragedy itself in events such as the Russian pogroms of 1881 and 1903-06, the Ukrainian massacres after the First World War, and of course the Shoah.

What is both interesting and understandable is the ritualized nature of recollection. As in times past, the modern Jewish recollection of tragedy is fostered by both literary and calendrical markers. Whereas *yizker* books recount the fate of destroyed Jewish communities, Holocaust memoirs and fiction seek to probe the sense of inner devastation and moral depletion experienced by Jews, and European society more generally, during the Second World War.⁵ These works are often read with a reverence bordering on the sacred, indeed, with the sense that they contain profound truths that can be felt but not necessarily named.⁶ In a similar vein, *Yom Ha-Shoah* commemorations have become a fixture on the yearly calendars of Jews both in the Diaspora and in Israel, surpassing in level of observance *Tisha be-Av* and other traditional fast days.⁷ So too, visits to Holocaust museums convey to many Jews the sense of discharging a difficult but important obligation, as in fulfilling a religious

commandment or even making a pilgrimage. Perhaps even the conference out of which this and other papers in this volume drew marked a form of ritualized recollection of tragedy that has ample precedents, most notably the long series of events and volumes in 1992 to recall the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.⁸

Together, these various modes of remembering resemble what Pierre Nora called *lieux de mémoire*. Such *lieux* surface at the moment that "an immense and intimate fund of memory disappears." In this respect, they are "fundamentally remains, the ultimate embodiments of a memorial consciousness that has barely survived in a historical age that calls out for memory because it has abandoned it."⁹ Mindful of this intermediary role between affective memory and critical history, I would like to examine here a set of modern texts, source collections containing documents relating to past Jewish persecutions, particularly the Crusades. At one level, these texts often aspire to be, and assume the form of, critical scholarly works that stand at a far remove from the Hebrew Crusade chronicles themselves. At another level, though, the modern anthologies attest to and reinforce the importance – even centrality – of the catastrophic in Jewish historical consciousness, especially in the Ashkenazic world where tragedy has been a recurrent feature from medieval to modern times.¹⁰

What I propose to undertake in this essay is a number of interrelated tasks. In order to set the backdrop to our discussion of modern anthologies, I will briefly survey modern Jewish historiographical portrayals of the Crusades, an event which, as Alan Mintz has observed, offers "a new ideal, a norm of response to catastrophe in the imagination of Ashkenaz over the next eight hundred years."¹¹ Then I will identify a number of distinct representatives of documentary collections that focus on the Crusades, and situate these texts in their diverse historical contexts. As I hinted at above, each of these texts is a source collection accompanied by the critical apparatus of the modern historian. Yet, at least three of the texts (Jellinek, Bernfeld, and Habermann) aim quite explicitly to impart an emotional bond between the pre-modern sources presented and the modern reader. Does this make them qualitatively similar to the medieval Jewish chronicles themselves, which Ivan Marcus has defined as "imaginative reorderings of experience within a cultural framework and system of symbols"?¹² Or might we see these texts as a bridge that narrows the vast gulf between history and memory proposed most famously by Yosef Yerushalmi in *Zakhor*?

Modern Jewish historiography provides an interesting laboratory to explore and refine the distinction between history and memory. When dealing with the Crusades, modern scholars have often produced narratives that burst forth with impassioned descriptions of, and implicit prescriptions for, Jewish history. For

example, the early eighteenth-century Protestant scholar, Jacques Basnages, writing at the dawn of an age of new-found equanimity toward the Jews, imputed a venomous spirit to the Crusading masses in his *Histoire des juifs*. "Come," Basnages imagined the Crusaders proclaiming, "let us massacre them in such a way that they do not remember any longer the name Israel."¹³ One can assume that Basnages' own condemnation of this sentiment resulted in equal (and related) parts from his incipient philo-Semitism and his Protestant disdain for Catholic excesses. Curiously, the passion with which Basnages wrote of the Crusades was not matched by the first modern Jewish scholar to write a comprehensive account of the Jewish past, Isaak Marcus Jost. In his *Geschichte der Israeliten*, Jost dispensed with the anti-Jewish violence of 1096 in typically workmanlike and dispassionate fashion.¹⁴ Quite different in temperament was Jost's childhood friend from Wolfenbüttel, Leopold Zunz, who gives resounding voice to the lachrymose theme in Jewish history: "The Middle Ages is the age of barbarism – that is, of rule by brute force, ignorance, and clerical oppression." Central to this epoch of Jewish history, as well as to Zunz's investigation of medieval Jewish liturgy, were the Crusades which established new standards both of anti-Jewish antipathy and of Jewish poetic excellence.¹⁵

If Zunz laid a solid foundation for the lachrymose motif in Jewish historical writing, Heinrich Graetz constructed an entire edifice. With his characteristic flair and ardor, Graetz described the first Crusaders as "the scum of the French, English, and Flemish (who), in the absence of Mahometans, began the holy work of plundering and murdering with (*sic*) the Jews."¹⁶ Indeed, in Graetz, Jewish history as *Leidensgeschichte*, with the Crusades as the defining experience, receives its most complete and elaborate expression, but hardly its last. Graetz's Russian-Jewish critic, Simon Dubnow, who inveighed against the overly mournful depiction of Jewish life in previous historiography, describes the period of Jewish history commencing in 1096 as the "era of mass slaughter (*die Ära des Massengemetzels*)."¹⁷ Somewhat earlier, the traditionalist historian, Zev Yawetz, struck a deeply reverential tone in writing of the Jewish victims of the Crusades. In language reminiscent of the very *paytanim* whose memory he sought to evoke, Yawetz proclaimed in his *Toldot Yisrael* that "the eye of our great writers, the poets of the holy, was never obstructed from the grandeur and the heroism that shone through the darkness and destruction" wrought by the evil Crusaders.¹⁸

Not surprisingly, the central and hallowed place of the Crusades experience in Jewish historiography vanishes in the work of Salo Baron. It was Baron, after all, who declared battle against the "lachrymose conception" of Jewish history, and particularly against "the new generation of historians (who) outdid one another in passionate accounts of Israel's woes and sorrows."¹⁹ In countering this

tendency, Baron did not describe the suffering of Jews during the Crusades in great and graphic detail. In fact, in the sub-chapter on "Religious and Economic Intolerance" in the 1937 edition of *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, Baron spends far more time describing the protections accorded Jews by rulers and urban patricians against mob violence than relating poignant episodes of Jewish martyrdom during the Crusades.²⁰

Baron's presentation deliberately cut against the grain of accepted Jewish historiographical practice. It was born of the desire to liberate Jewish scholarship from tired and outmoded assumptions, particularly from the claim that all interaction between medieval Jews and Christians was rooted in murderous hostility. A fair number of contemporary scholars have followed Baron's lead in challenging older, lachrymose approaches to the Jewish Middle Ages. And yet, it has been the older approaches that have shaped, to a great extent, the historical imagination of modern European Jewry.

It is interesting to recall in this connection a modern scholarly genre that seems to offer an even more concentrated dose of the lachrymose than the grand narratives of Jewish history: namely, the source collections containing texts of Hebrew literary responses to the Crusades published from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth. The most renowned of these collections may well be Adolf Neubauer's and Moritz Stern's *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* of 1892. But there were source collections both before and after this edition that merit our attention.

The enterprise of source collections is an important, though under-researched, subject in the history of modern scholarship.²¹ Serving as a repository for critical editions of important documents, this genre was central to the ongoing professionalization of the historical discipline in the nineteenth century. But behind the declared goal of presenting primary sources without interpretive bias, this genre has often masked a far more tendentious mission. One of the most famous prototypes is the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, the vast compendium of sources relating to medieval German history, which served, as one nineteenth-century observer noted, as "the most national work of our time."²² Within Jewish scholarly circles, works such as the *Germania Judaica*, on the one hand, or the later volumes of *kinus* produced by Ben-Zion Dinur and Simha Assaf, on the other, aimed not only to present historical texts in orderly fashion, but also, in their respective ways, to fashion visions of Jewish group identity.

With this mixed agenda in mind, we should now turn our attention to the modern Jewish anthologies dealing with the Crusades. An important early figure in forging this body of literature was Adolph Jellinek, the noted Viennese Jewish scholar, who produced the first modern edition of Hebrew Crusades material.

Widely regarded as one of Europe's finest Jewish preachers, Jellinek was at the same time an extraordinarily prolific researcher, among whose many studies was a string of monographs on Jewish mysticism. Jellinek was also an indefatigable editor who, in 1854, commenced publication of a series of sources relating to the Crusades. His first brief volume contained two sources: a text reporting the destruction of German-Jewish communities in 1096 attributed to Rabbi Eliezer bar Nathan (and later identified as Eliezer's abridgement of R. Solomon bar Shimshon's account); and Rabbi Isaac Tsarfati's letter to German-Jewish communities regarding the prospects of relocating to Turkish lands.²³ In introducing these Hebrew sources, Jellinek noted the global impact of the Crusades "through the unspeakable sufferings that they brought down upon millions of people." Their effect was especially deleterious to Jews not only as a result of the physical destruction visited on their Rhineland communities, but also due to the assault on their "inner spiritual life." Writing in the mid-nineteenth century, Jellinek did not veer from the rationalist orthodoxy of his liberal Jewish milieu. Hence, one particularly unfortunate outcome of the Crusades experience, to his mind, was the recourse of Jewish scholars to mysticism, which he aphoristically labeled "the cradle of depression and the grave of good humor."²⁴

While making this point, Jellinek did not want to miss the opportunity to inspire the sympathy of his readers. The Eliezer bar Nathan text was "no mere chronicle for the curious, but was written with the tears and life-blood of the author."²⁵ In typical fashion for a nineteenth-century Jewish scholar, Jellinek's rationalist faith in the present went hand in hand with – indeed, built upon – his lachrymose view of the past. We might also note that Jellinek's intellectual agenda was informed by the prevalent desire of his generation of Jewish scholars to undertake critical editions in fulfillment of Leopold Zunz's 1818 charge to produce "sundry and good preliminary works" necessary for a stable *Wissenschaft des Judentums*.²⁶ This impulse not only guided Jellinek in 1854. It lay behind the creation of the Institut zur Förderung der israelitischen Literatur in Leipzig in 1855, of which Jellinek himself was a founding member, and which published an important early modern martyrological text (containing Crusades material), Yosef Ha-Kohen's *Emek ha-bakhah* in 1858.²⁷

The impulse to produce "good preliminary works" motivated Jellinek to continue his editorial work several decades later in a series of text editions, a number of which contained sources from the Crusades period. For instance, in 1880, he published a pamphlet with two Hebrew texts, the first a list of the Jews killed in the community of Worms in 1096 and the second a list of deceased members of the Viennese Jewish community from the early eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Jellinek was partly interested in these lists as sources for

Jewish onomastics, especially the earlier one with its smattering of Arabic, Italian, and Babylonian names. Apart from this intriguing, though arcane line of inquiry, Jellinek made one passing reference to the traumatic nature of the events of 1096, alluding to the "wild hordes of Crusaders."²⁸ And yet, the linking of Worms and Vienna in his pamphlet begs for further commentary. The former represented a tragedy of hitherto unsurpassed brutality and scale. The latter symbolized a tragedy averted, given that the expulsion of the Jews from Vienna in 1670 was followed shortly thereafter by their readmission. The association between the two texts and the two Jewish communities bespoke two possible historical paths for Ashkenazic Jews.

We would do well to situate Jellinek's perhaps unconscious pairing within the charged environment of his day, highlighted by the rising tide of new and virulent forms of anti-Semitic expressions. By the late 1870s, Georg von Schönerer had begun to incorporate anti-Semitism into the political program that gained him electoral success in the Austrian parliament.²⁹ Indeed, when Jellinek published the Worms and Vienna documents, new anti-Semitic groups were beginning to populate the Austrian landscape. Among them was the Christian Social movement which produced the most renowned anti-Semitic politician of the period, Karl Lueger.³⁰ In this ambience of escalating anti-Jewish tensions, which inspired Jellinek to "gigantic (scholarly) productivity" as well as activism in defense of Jews, the linking of Worms and Vienna seems not entirely coincidental.³¹

It is at this point that the diverse functions of the source compilation come into focus. Adolph Jellinek belonged to a generation of Jewish scholars intent on bringing order to the rich thicket of classical Jewish sources. But the impulse to produce critical editions of these sources, and thereby to let them speak for themselves as it were, often belied a more complicated psychological or ideological motivation.³² In Jellinek's case, it may well be that the coupling of Worms and Vienna addressed both his scholarly interests and his anxiety over social conditions of the day, particularly in his adopted home city.

A different mix of functions informs the first systematic critical edition of Hebrew sources from the Crusades period, Neubauer's and Stern's *Hebräische Berichte über Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge*. Published in 1892 by the Historische Commission für Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland, this volume made no explicit reference to the impending 800th anniversary of 1096. Moreover, Moritz Stern's preface to the Hebrew texts with German translations was a terse bio-bibliographical description of the material collected in the volume. His language could not have been more dispassionate as he discussed the provenance and redaction of five Hebrew chronicles (including Eleazar bar Yehudah's text) into critical form. A similar tenor pervaded the historical

introduction of Harry Bresslau, the medievalist and co-founder of the Historische Commission that published the edition. Bresslau brought considerable prestige to the task due to his reputation as a leading scholar and compiler of historical documents from medieval and early modern Germany.³³ In his introduction to the Neubauer-Stern volume, Bresslau offered a schematic survey of the historical context of the chronicles that barely acknowledged the tragic nature of the events described therein. At the end of his opening presentation, Bresslau observed somewhat innocuously that the publication of this volume of sources would be of benefit not only to Jewish history, but to general history as well.³⁴ The claim that Jewish history was interesting and important not merely to Jews – and the related claim that Jewish history was interwoven into the history of surrounding cultures – would become leitmotifs in subsequent Jewish historical writing in Germany.³⁵ They were rooted in the ideal of harmonious union between Jews and Germans that extended back to the late eighteenth-century Enlightenment. Such an ideal stood in curious tension with the lachrymose thrust of the Crusades material itself, and helps explain the somewhat detached tenor of the Neubauer-Stern volume. Although the Neubauer-Stern collection was replete with affecting tales of Jewish suffering, the volume's editors omitted rhetorical flourishes describing the extent of Jewish suffering during the Crusades.

A similar restraint appears in another source collection of this period, Siegmund Salfeld's *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuches* (1898) which was also published by the Historische Commission für Geschichte der Juden in Deutschland. This collection contained materials relating to Jewish persecution in German lands from 1096 to 1349, including long lists (martyrologies) of fallen Jews. In his forward, Siegmund Salfeld did express the hope that this volume might serve as "a monument to a period of Jewish suffering, erected in piety and love." Beyond this remark, though, the editor offered little explanation for the motivation or timing of his undertaking.

This neglect is all the more noteworthy in light of the 800th anniversary of the First Crusades in 1896. In general, it is quite striking to note how little attention German Jewry paid to this date. It is certainly true – and quite telling – that the Neubauer-Stern and Salfeld volumes, with their Crusades material, were published in this period. But these volumes did not present themselves as works of active commemoration of the events of 1096, intended to foster communal memory. In the constant balancing act of German-Jewish life, such active commemoration may have served only to highlight Jewish distinctiveness at a time when the community still aspired to fuller social integration.³⁶

One of the few explicit discussions of the Crusades in German-Jewish journals and papers in 1896 appeared in *Die jüdische Presse*, the Orthodox weekly edited by Hirsch Hildesheimer in Berlin. A lengthy editorial from 6 May expressed the

sentiment that the Crusades were but “a page in Israel’s book of sufferings.” The tragic emplotment of Jewish history was expressed in traditionalist language, and imparted the sense that continuous suffering had a certain ennobling quality to it. What is particularly interesting about this piece is not its lachrymose undertone, but rather its author’s disdain for scholars who forget the true essence of Jewish history, but “can never forget the (standards) of ‘objective’ historiography.”³⁷ Although the Neubauer-Stern edition was not explicitly mentioned in this regard, it would seem to exemplify the kind of historical work that the editorialist of *Die jüdische Presse* found both dismaying and lacking. Rather than serve the cause of Jewish collective memory, it worshiped, one could imagine the critic lamenting, at the altar of *Wissenschaft*.

If the Neubauer-Stern and Salfeld volumes stood at one end of the spectrum of Crusade commemoration, the other pole was inhabited by a volume published in Germany more than three decades later by the Galician-born scholar and writer, Shimon Bernfeld. Along with thousands of other Eastern European Jews in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Bernfeld made his way to Berlin (in 1894), where he contributed to the burgeoning enterprise of Hebrew and Yiddish publishing.³⁸ Bernfeld wrote prolifically in both Hebrew and German, producing a long series of books on Jewish history and thought. Among them was one of the most manifestly martyrological texts in the modern Hebrew literary canon. Entitled *Sefer ha-dema’ot* (The Book of Tears), this book belonged to an historical moment in which the anthological genre – particularly, the genre of source collections – was increasingly mobilized to the cause of Jewish nationalism.³⁹ For instance, *Sefer ha-dema’ot* was published in Berlin in 1923, three years before the appearance of Ben-Zion Dinur’s *Toldot Yisra’el*, a work that was later expanded into the famous eight-volume *Yisra’el ba-golah*.⁴⁰

That Bernfeld shared Dinur’s desire to utilize primary sources to mold historical consciousness will become clear shortly. However, the two scholars’ historical visions were far from identical. Whereas Dinur aimed to demonstrate both the national character of Jewish life in the Diaspora and the ceaseless yearning of Jews to immigrate to the land of Israel, Bernfeld had a more singular mission: “to establish the martyrology of the Jewish people according to (extant) historical accounts...”⁴¹ Here the dual aspirations of the source compiler come into sharp focus. In introducing his book, Bernfeld announced that he did not intend to offer an historical narrative, “but rather the original tales themselves that are hidden in our historical and liturgical literature.”⁴² What resulted was a two-volume work that contained reports of anti-Jewish persecutions from the second century BCE to the late fifteenth century CE. Not surprisingly, Bernfeld’s intimation that his voice would not intervene in the presentation of sources was

not altogether accurate. In language strikingly distinct from that found in the earlier Neubauer-Stern volume, Bernfeld's Hebrew resonated with a tremulous and poetic passion. Jewish tragedy was not at a remove from his world. Indeed, he was writing in the aftermath of the greatest episode of human destruction known to that point in history, the First World War. And he was surely cognizant of the brutal deaths of scores of thousands of Jews in Ukraine in the immediate wake of the Great War.

In the preface to *Sefer ha-dema'ot*, appropriately dated Tisha be-Av 5683 (1923), Bernfeld observed that "in our days, we see, unfortunately, that tragedy has not come to an end, but continues. Every historical period is one of the links in this long chain that has no end." One of the most important links in that chain was the Crusades. The widespread destruction wrought by the Crusaders led Bernfeld to ponder:

How can one describe in detail those tragedies whose number reaches in the thousands and tens of thousands? The acts of cruelty of those animals are such that they have no parallel. All of them are but one act – a terrifying madness that brought the Goyim to a level of brutality that can not be measured.⁴³

In the midst of his impassioned, at times hyperbolic, and unequivocally lachrymose delivery, conveyed in a Hebrew that swayed to rhythmic cadences, Bernfeld sought to extract meaning and solace from the Crusades. "The events of 1096 and beyond," he wrote, "are the eternal foundation of Jewish history." They left an indelible imprint on the Jews, educating them to be "learned in afflictions" and conditioning them for the ultimate duty of *kidush ha-shem*, martyrdom.⁴⁴ Bernfeld described the Jewish victims of the Crusades in sanctified terms: "The death of these dear souls, the heroic death of all Jewish martyrs in every place and at every time – this is one of the chief reasons for the existence of the Jewish nation."⁴⁵

Bernfeld's equation of Jewish victims from 1096 with Jewish martyrs throughout the ages was part of a broader genealogy of martyrs that gave shape to *Sefer ha-dema'ot*. Such a genealogy is familiar to the pre-modern Jewish literary mind which recorded and recited the names of fallen Jews with ritual devotion.⁴⁶ But it seems at odds with the objectives of the modern source compiler who seeks to arrange documents so that they can speak for themselves. This seems to be in the aim in Siegmund Salfeld's *Martyrologium* which presented a critical edition of lists of fallen medieval Jews without editorial comment. By contrast, Shimon Bernfeld's allegiances lay with the more traditional function. Not only was tragedy a constant in his world-view. It was spiritually uplifting, a theme evoked in the very Crusade-era texts, the Hebrew

Chronicles, that Bernfeld included in his work.⁴⁷ In succinct fashion, Bernfeld disclosed his own martyrological perspective: "The afflictions that befell the people of Israel were afflictions of love, because they cleanse its sins and elevate it to an exalted ethical plane that has no parallel."⁴⁸ The notion of "afflictions of love" (*yisurin shel ahavah*), frequently invoked in rabbinic literature, recalls the Talmudic story with which this paper opened. In that story, Hananiah ben Hezekiah and his companions were said to "cherish their troubles." Bernfeld cites this statement without mentioning Rashi's gloss to the effect that what Jews cherished was *liberation* from their travails. Rather, he emphasized that "our ancestors cherished their afflictions, and for that reason, left a written record in books."⁴⁹ It is interesting to consider to what extent Bernfeld came to cherish Jewish afflictions since he too left a written record of them in *Sefer ha-dema'ot*. It is not unreasonable to assume that he was guided by his own dictum that "stories of affliction from the past are the songs of consolation for the future."⁵⁰

In pre-modern Ashkenazic Jewish culture, the value ascribed to recalling Jewish tragedies was didactic and psychological. Episodes of persecution were the raw material out of which collective narratives of Jewish virtue, vice, and above all chosenness were fashioned. Recounting them offered solace by linking the fate of Jews both to forebears and descendants. These impulses were present in a modern text such as Bernfeld's *Sefer ha-dema'ot*, and they are present in the final text to be discussed in this paper: *Sefer gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Tsarfat*, edited by A. M. Habermann, with an introduction by Yitzhak Fritz Baer. This collection of critically edited sources, comprising recollections and *piyutim* written after medieval Ashkenazic persecutions, was published in Jerusalem shortly before the 850th anniversary of the First Crusades in the year 1945. The sense of a fate shared by medieval Jews in Germany and their modern counterparts was uppermost in the minds of Habermann and Baer. After paying homage to the Talmudic excerpt about Jews' cherishing their troubles, Habermann suggested that the recurrence of tragedy in Jewish history, and the underlying belief in divine causality, numbed the feel for historiography among medieval Jews.⁵¹ Anticipating Yerushalmi's line of argument in *Zakhor*, Habermann insisted that *kinot* and *selihot* served as the primary and most effective vessels of collective memory of past persecutions. Republishing this kind of literature, bristling with rage and bewilderment, in 1945 was hardly accidental. It was testament to the unfolding tragedy of Habermann's own day. With an air of incredulity, he wrote:

We never thought that the Middle Ages would repeat themselves. We thought: what was can not possibly recur in our days. And here we were bitterly disappointed. The Middle Ages did return, and with new strength and vigor.⁵²

As with Shimon Bernfeld, the objective of exalting the Jewish Crusades material transcended the aims of critical scholarship. The function was chiefly therapeutic, as Habermann sought to construct a mythic community of historical fate between past and present, medieval and modern. From the Crusades material in particular,

we will hear an echo of what befell our generation. We will also draw from them strength to bear the pain and offer a bit of consolation in order to continue. Our enemies wanted to annihilate us, but we are still alive.⁵³

Yitzhak Baer's introduction to the same collection also hinted, though somewhat more obliquely, at a community of historical fate. His brief essay, dedicated to his one-time colleague in Berlin, the librarian Arthur Spanier, who was killed in Bergen-Belsen in 1944, signaled some of the features that would come to dominate Baer's later historical thought.⁵⁴ Thus, we notice the celebration of a nobly pious Ashkenazic culture at the expense of a promiscuous Sephardic culture. We also notice Baer's persistent effort to root pious Ashkenazic culture in a familiar ancient foundation, that of Second Temple Judaism.⁵⁵ For example, the memoirs and *piyutim* collected in *Gezerot Ashkenaz* were, he maintained, "part of that same unified world-view known from times past, from that grand plot that was formed in Second Temple days."⁵⁶ Presumably, that "unified world-view" could and should continue to inspire models of heroic piety in 1945, the year in which Baer wrote his essay.

One final aspect of Baer's introduction warrants our attention. In writing of the Crusade chroniclers, he argues that they were not capable of producing "historiography in which a theological perspective and a realistic point of observation were combined in equal measure."⁵⁷ When reading this, one wonders if Baer was not offering a recipe his own for successful and serviceable historiography. After all, he was at once the most sober and exacting of archival historians – and at the same time, one of the most passionate and emotive Jewish scholars in our century. Indeed, it was he who suggested in the concluding pages of his plaintive volume, *Galut*, that there may well be "a power that lifts the Jewish people out of the realm of all causal history."⁵⁸

The admixture of "a theological perspective and a realistic point of observation" neatly captures the formula for a number of the texts discussed in this paper, especially those volumes written in the reverential and referential medium of Hebrew. These texts straddle the border between critical scholarship and traditional liturgy. In this respect, they pose a telling contrast to contemporaneous works of modern Hebrew fiction (e.g., Tchernichovsky, Abramowitz, Bialik) which, as Alan Mintz has pointed out, adopt an ironic and

subversive attitude to past tragedy.⁵⁹ And so, the suggestion that fiction might perhaps do what history has failed to in forging Jewish collective memory requires rethinking,⁶⁰ for that which falls under the category of history – including the editions studied here – often contain a passion and tendentiousness at odds with a critical scholarly sensibility.

In the spirit of rethinking, it seems important, as a concluding note, to confront directly the troubling proposition that Jews cherish their troubles. The fact that tragedy has informed Jewish history is empirically unassailable. That recollection of past tragedies can serve a valuable psychological function, as comfort to the victim, also seems beyond dispute. And yet, when the annals of Jewish history are reduced to a martyrology, both historical integrity and a font of creative cultural energy are lost. Psychoanalysts warn that the repeated invocation of trauma hints at a lurking and unresolved danger, at “an unwillingness – or more disturbingly, an inability – to forget.”⁶¹ The dangers are particularly evident in the post-Holocaust world in which the impulse to “cherish affliction” has become a central pillar of Jewish identity, even when that impulse has been shorn of its traditional rationale. In the wake of the 900th anniversary of the First Crusades, it behooves us to re-examine this long-held and deeply rooted Jewish instinct with compassionate, but critical eyes.

NOTES

Author's note: I would like to thank Adam Black for his helpful reading of this paper.

1. *Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbat 13b (emphasis added).
2. *Ibid.*
3. Shmuel Edels, gloss on *Babylonian Talmud*, Shabbat 136.
4. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle, 1982), 45-52.
5. See, for instance, Lawrence L. Langer, *The Holocaust and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven, 1975).
6. See David Roskies (ed.), *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe* (Philadelphia, 1988), 606ff.
7. On the ritualized nature of Holocaust memorial days (both secular and religious), see Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York, 1993), 436-45.
8. The reference to 1992, the quincentennial anniversary of the Spanish Expulsion, invariably summons up the comparison between Ashkenazic and Sephardic Jewries. It is not easy to forget Yitzhak Baer's stern value judgment that Spanish Jews surrendered their national will to the Averroist god of philosophical rationalism, while Ashkenazic Jews clung to their precious religious heritage in valiant and exemplary fashion. Baer's sweeping generalization can be undermined on many different grounds. However, if one assesses not the actual willingness to suffer for the sake of spiritual elevation but rather the valorization of martyrdom *ex post facto*, Baer's utterance has a certain ring of truth. This is not to deny the

- appearance of Jewish martyrological literature in the post-Expulsion Sephardic world of the sixteenth century. But over the past few centuries, it is the Ashkenazim who have had, and surely have placed, tragedy at the center of their historical experience and literary imagination. The bulk of the medieval and modern literary texts in David Roskies' *The Literature of Destruction* are Ashkenazic. See also the important discussions of modern Ashkenazic responses to catastrophe in Alan Mintz, *Hurban: Responses to Catastrophe in Hebrew Literature* (New York, 1984), and Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse: Responses to Catastrophe in Modern Jewish Culture* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984).
9. See Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: *Les lieux de mémoire*," *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 12.
 10. See Robert Chazan's discussion of the resemblance between medieval and modern works of history in "The Facticity of Medieval Narrative: A Case Study of the Hebrew First Crusade Narratives," *AJS Review* 16 (1991), 42.
 11. Mintz, *Hurban: Responses*, 89.
 12. Ivan G. Marcus, "From Politics to Martyrdom: Shifting Paradigms in the Hebrew Narratives of the 1096 Crusade Riots," *Prooftexts* 2 (1982): 42.
 13. Jacques Basnages, *Histoire des juifs depuis Jesus-Christ jusqu'à present*, vol. 3 (Paris, 1710), 109.
 14. I. M. Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten seit der Zeit der Maccabäer bis auf unsre Tage*, vol. 7 (Berlin, 1827), 226-35.
 15. Leopold Zunz, *Die synagogale Poesie des Mittelalters* (Berlin, 1855), 14.
 16. Heinrich Graetz, *History of the Jews*, vol. 3 (New York, 1927), 298-9.
 17. Simon Dubnow, *Weltgeschichte des jüdischen Volkes*, vol. 4 (Berlin, 1926), 271.
 18. Zev Yawetz, *Sefer Toldot Yisra'el*, revised edition (Tel Aviv, 1933/34), 53-54.
 19. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews II* (New York, 1937), 31.
 20. *Ibid.*, 34-5.
 21. A new recognition of the importance of anthologies in Jewish literary history impelled the editors of *Prooftexts* to devote two issues to the "Jewish anthological imagination." See *Prooftexts* 17 (January 1997).
 22. See William Thomas Miller Gamble, *The Monumenta Germaniae Historica: Its Inheritance in Source-Valuation and Criticism* (Washington, 1927), 186.
 23. For a general description and translation of the Hebrew Crusades material, see Shlomo Eidelberg (ed.), *The Jews and the Crusaders: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison, Wisc., 1977).
 24. Adolph Jellinek (ed.), *Zur Geschichte der Kreuzzüge nach handschriftlichen hebräischen Quellen* (Leipzig, 1854), ii. On Jellinek's attitude to mysticism, see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, 1988), 9.
 25. Jellinek, *Zur Geschichte*, iii.
 26. Leopold Zunz's seminal programmatic statement, "Etwas über die rabbinische Literatur," is translated in Paul R. Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz (eds.), *The Jew in the Modern World* (New York, 1980), 197.
 27. See M. Wiener (ed.), R. Joseph ha-Cohen, *Emek habacha* (Leipzig, 1858).
 28. A. Jellinek, *Wien und Worms. Liturgische Formulare ihrer Todtenfeier aus alter and neuer Zeit* (Vienna, 1880), 3.
 29. Carl E. Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York, 1981), 124-33.
 30. Steven Beller, *Vienna and the Jews: A Cultural History, 1867-1838* (Cambridge, 1989), 193.
 31. Moses Rosenmann notes the stimulus of new forms of anti-Semitism in Jellinek's scholarly

- and public careers in his biography of the renowned rabbi. However, he does not mention in this context the series of text editions including the Worms/Vienna volume. See Rosenmann, *Dr. Adolf Jellinek: Sein Leben und Schaffen* (Vienna, 1931), 151-60.
32. Ben-Zion Dinur, perhaps the most important compiler of source collections among Zionist scholars in Palestine, felt the need to offer such collections so that "the student can construct for himself a complete picture of the past." Dinur, "Mah hevi'eni le-shitai bikhetivat toldot Yisrae'el," *Ha-po'el ha-tsa'ir* 26 Adar II 5725 (February/March 1965): 30.
 33. Bresslau's greatest renown as a scholar came through the publication of his *Handbuch der Urkundenlehre für Deutschland und Italien*. Bresslau also wrote a huge official history of the *Monumenta Germaniae Historica*, published as volume 42 of the *Neues Archiv der Gesellschaft für ältere deutsche Geschichtskunde*, (Hannover, 1921).
 34. H. Bresslau, "Zur Kritik der Kreuzzugsberichte," in Adolph Neubauer and Moritz Stern (eds.), *Hebräische Berichte über die Judenverfolgungen während der Kreuzzüge* (Berlin, 1892), xxix.
 35. For instance, the young historian, Eugen Täubler, affirmed the importance of integrating Jewish and "general" history in his opening programmatic statement for the *Gesamtarchiv der deutschen Juden* in 1905. Eugen Täubler, "Zur Einführung," *Mitteilungen des Gesamtarchivs der deutschen Juden* 1 (1909): 4.
 36. It also may be the case that recollection of tragedies was triggered less by anniversaries than by their recurrence, as was clearly the case in the Russian pogroms of 1903 in which the Crusades emerged as an important historical referent. See Roskies, *Against the Apocalypse*, 82, 89.
 37. "Achthundert Jahre (1096-1896)," *Die jüdische Presse*, 6 May 1896, 1. I would like to thank Didier Reiss for his diligent assistance in locating this editorial.
 38. On Berlin as a center of Hebrew and Yiddish letters, see Stanley Nash, *In Search of Hebraism: Shai Hurwitz and his Polemics in the Hebrew Press* (Leiden, 1980).
 39. See Israel Bartal, "The Ingathering of Traditions: Zionism's Anthology Projects," *Prooftexts* 17 (January 1997): 77-93.
 40. On Dinur (né Dinaburg), see David N. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past: European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York, 1995), 129-50.
 41. Shimon Bernfeld, *Sefer ha-dema'ot: me'ora'ot ha-gezerot veva-redifot ve-hashmadot*, vol. 1 (Berlin, 1923), 7.
 42. *Ibid.*, 5.
 43. *Ibid.*, 14, 41.
 44. *Ibid.*, 41.
 45. *Ibid.*, 147.
 46. Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 46. See, for instance, S. Salfeld, *Das Martyrologium des Nürnberger Memorbuches* (Berlin, 1898).
 47. See Shlomo Eidelberg's discussion in *The Jews of the Crusades: The Hebrew Chronicles of the First and Second Crusades* (Madison WI, 1977), 13.
 48. *Sefer ha-dema'ot*, 5.
 49. Bernfeld here seems to contort the Talmudic passage which states that those who write down their afflictions are somehow inadequate.
 50. *Ibid.*, 6.
 51. A. M. Habermann (ed.), *Sefer gezerot Ashkenaz ve-Tsarfat* (Jerusalem, 1945), ix. For a discussion of anthologies produced after the Holocaust, see David G. Roskies, "The Holocaust According to its Anthologists," *Prooftexts* 17 (1997): 95-113.

52. Ibid., xi. Elias Tcherikower offers a fascinating analysis contemporaneous with Habermann, and an interesting adumbration of Yerushalmi, in "Jewish Martyrology and Jewish Historiography," *YIVO Annual of Jewish Social Science* 1 (1946): 9-23.
53. Though I have not analyzed it at length, it is interesting to note Shlomo Eidelberg's edition of Hebrew Chronicles from the Crusades. There Eidelberg expresses the hope that "the presentation of these chronicles...will serve not only as groundwork for further research in the field of Medieval Judaica, but also as a tribute to a certain aspect of the heroic, perhaps lost to the modern world." *The Jews and the Crusaders*, xi.
54. Myers, *Re-Inventing the Jewish Past*, 109-28.
55. According to Baer, it was Ashkenazim who "return to the sources of the nation's life in the days of the Second Temple." *Sefer gezerot Ashkenaz*, 1.
56. Ibid., 6.
57. Ibid., 5.
58. Yitzhak Fritz Baer, *Galut* (New York, 1947), 120.
59. Mintz, *Hurban*, 116.
60. See Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 96.
61. Adam Phillips, *On Flirtation* (Cambridge, Mass., 1994), 37.

University of California, Los Angeles