

The Torah of the Night: A Shavuos Reader



There's a poet by the name of Rodger Kamenetz. He's best known for his classic on a series of Buddhist Jewish dialogues involving a fascinating cast of characters, *The Jew in the Lotus*, but my favorites of his are his works of poetry. Here's a taste, from the piece that opens his book, *The Missing Jew*:

In the beards of rebbes

in loaves of challa

God was smuggled

Into America.

But when they assembled the pieces

there wasn't enough

God in America

to fill the empty spaces:

too much desert
too many opportunities.
The Jews went about their business
because they forgot God was
looking, and they dropped
the pieces all over the place
a little here, a little there
the sweepers have too
work to do, there are
only a few sweepers and they stand
with their brooms
looking for God in the dust.

I don't know about you, but this makes sense to me, as a Jew in America, the product of four generations of Jews in America. What is our generation, but street sweepers of God left in the dust of America?

Here's another, that points us closer to the holiday of Torah, "Pilpul":

Rabbi, if a child is born with two heads
which head should wear the yarmulke
on which head the tefillin?
Some say the right head and some
say the left. All quote Torah.
Some say both heads, just in case.
But if a man is born with two heads
he is always confused. He never knows
on which head to wear the yarmulke.

Two heads and only two eyes.
He walks towards himself
in the old cemetery, where the rabbis
are buried. There seems to be some
disagreement: some are saying
we are dead; others, we are alive.
Some say both, all quote Torah.

This piece is somewhat more cryptic. A cursory read tells us that one dilemma of the poem is the Talmudic instinct for having two heads: Where do the yarmulke and tefillin go? I'm not sure what it means to have two heads, and my first instinct tells me that it means to be forever trapped in *this* very mode—questioning, considering, doubling back on ourselves in our Jewish search for clarity. The last stanza complicates things, even as it feels more simple—to have two heads is to be dead and alive, or to question which we are, and what a Jew is. Most importantly, “all quote Torah.”

In the final piece that I'll mention, the study of Torah becomes more centered. Here goes:

“Said Rab Zolar,”
When God wishes to speak, he does so
through human voices.
He lets them scatter his thought
through every contradiction.
It is in the harmonic beating
of these varied voices
that God is broadcast.
Neither agreement nor disagreement
but the rhythm created
by agreement and disagreement
defines his wavelength.
We own dictionaries

but God redefines every word

as it comes from his mouth.

Any time God speaks he twists

the language away from itself.

The Jew is left with his Hebrew tenses

to unravel the mystery of living.

The poem continues, but I cut it here, for now, to fit my purposes. Most important here is this line: "It is in the harmonic beating / of these varied voices / that God is broadcast. / Neither agreement nor disagreement / but the rhythm created / by agreement and disagreement / defines his wavelength." It is in the divine polyphony of Torah where we hear the voice of God. And we are left to unravel the mystery of living.

I should need no excuse to turn to poetry such as this when thinking about Torah, but I'll offer one. One of the great benefits of reading poetry is that it allows us to think with more divergence, more non-directional otherness, and in doing so to see our lives in an ever so slightly different way.

Some of us study Torah every day, others of us glean the moments we can, but I suspect that many of us hope to find in Torah something like this—an ancient way of thinking that looks differently at that which we know, that invites us to open our eyes ever so slightly at the world around us. Maybe this is why we stay up so late on Shavuot; It is only by looking at the Torah, and our world, late at night, with sleep-deprived eyes and a stomach full of coffee and cheesecake, that we can realize the alterity of revelation, the otherness of it all.

In honor of your Shavuot reading edification, we offer two articles on the Torah of the night. The first is a classic, by Elliot Horowitz: "Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry." If you've read this before, you know why we included this, and if you haven't, prepare to read a classic. The second is by Yaakov S. Weinstein, on "The Nightly Cry, the Song of Torah," and it's an invitation to consider different ways to think about Torah studied at night. Whether or not you are staying up to study Torah this Shavuot night, these articles have granted us something, and we hope they do for you too.

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"Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry"

Elliott Horowitz, *AJS Review*

"The Nightly Cry, the Song of Torah"

Yaakov S. Weinstein, *The Lehrhaus*

Coffee, Coffeehouses, and the Nocturnal Rituals of Early Modern Jewry

Elliott Horowitz

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COFFEE, COFFEEHOUSES, AND THE NOCTURNAL RITUALS OF EARLY MODERN JEWRY

by

ELLIOTT HOROWITZ

Although religious history has traditionally concerned itself with the transcendent dimension in human life, and social history with the mundane, the latter approach can also be used to illuminate the ways in which religion works itself out on the social plane. In fact, it might be argued that inquiries of this sort should occupy a prominent place on the agenda of any social and religious history of the Jews. Among historians of the *Annales* school, for whom the study of material life was long considered the backbone of historical inquiry, there has been a discernible move in recent years toward the study of religious life, especially in its popular forms. Whereas, for example, previous volumes in the valuable Johns Hopkins series of "Selections from the *Annales*" were devoted to such topics as food and drink in history, the one published in 1982 was entitled, significantly, *Ritual, Religion and the Sacred*.

As that volume well illustrates, however, the historian need not choose between the social and the spiritual. Following an approach I have elsewhere called "the social history of piety,"¹ an attempt shall here be made to

1. Elliot Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth Century Verona: A Study in the Social History of Piety" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1982). Some of the material in this article appeared there in a preliminary form. Later versions were presented at the World Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in August 1985, and at Indiana University in February 1986. I thank Professors Robert Bonfil, Lawrence Fine, Joseph Hacker, S. Z. Leiman, and Kenneth Stow for their helpful comments and suggestions.

integrate these two domains by studying the relations between the spread of a stimulant which introduced far-reaching changes in both individual habits and social norms and the spread of Jewish religious rites involving nocturnal wakefulness. The suggestion is not thereby intended that religious developments always have a social "explanation," but rather, that they always occur within particular social and material contexts (which is not to exclude the cultural) in which they may be embedded to a greater or lesser degree, and in which they consequently make more "sense" than in others. The question of the fit between a religious ritual and the particular set of circumstances in which it arose shall be addressed here, therefore, less from the point of view of etiology than from that of transportability—whether across cultural borders or geographical ones. Where coffee spread it extended the range of possibilities for making use of the night hours, whether for purposes pious or profane (and, as we will see, these were not mutually exclusive). Where it did not, the night remained considerably less malleable and less susceptible to human initiative.

The attribution of a historical role to a beverage such as coffee is less startling than might appear at first glance and certainly less original. More than a quarter of a century ago (in an article that was later to be incorporated in the collective volume *Food and Drink in History*) Jean Leclant observed that "both the history of ideas and the history of customs" could profit from an inquiry into the place of coffee and coffeehouses in seventeenth-century Paris. In doing so he followed a tradition in French scholarship stretching back, as he indicated, to Michelet and to Diderot's *Encyclopédie*.² Although the history of Jewish customs, and perhaps even ideas, may also be linked to the place of coffee and coffeehouses in such cities as Safed or Venice, and although the beverage was much discussed in the responsa literature, the subject of coffee has suffered from conspicuous

2. Jean Leclant, "Coffee and Cafés in Paris, 1644–1693," trans. P. M. Ranum, in R. Forster and O. Ranum, eds., *Food and Drink in History* (Baltimore, 1979); pp. 86–97, (appeared originally in *Annales, E.S.C.* 6 [1951]: 1–12). On the role of coffee in the emergence of the modern world, see H. E. Jacob, *Coffee: Epic of a Commodity*, trans. Eden Paul and Cedar Paul (New York, 1935), who claims that without it "modern civilization would be unthinkable" (p. 20). Jacob asserted somewhat poetically that "coffee has changed the surface of the globe. The muscular and cerebral stimulation and transformation produced in mankind by coffee have transfigured the visage of history" (pp. 23–24). Although his claim will not be fully endorsed in the present study, it serves as a useful contrast with those who have overlooked the role of coffee entirely. For a succinct recent summary of medical findings on its effects, see Melvin Konner, "Caffeine High," *New York Times Magazine*, Jan. 17, 1988.

neglect in modern Jewish scholarship. Whereas the editors of the *Jewish Encyclopedia* saw fit, at the turn of the present century, to include an article on coffee in that work, their modern successors, who have brought us the new *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, evidently regarded the subject as unworthy of scholarly interest. Not only have they abandoned the notion of devoting a separate entry to the subject of coffee, but the only reference to coffee in the latter's index leads us to a certain Rabbi Coffee (first name not given) who earlier in the century served as spiritual leader of a Reform temple in Toledo, Ohio.³

In Islamic scholarship, by contrast, the subject has fared considerably better. An extensive entry under the heading of "Kahwa" appeared, in 1927, in the original *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, and some fifty years later the editors of the second edition saw fit to publish a revised and substantially expanded version.⁴ This, indeed, is quite appropriate, since it was evidently in fifteenth-century Yemenite Sufi circles that the drinking of coffee originated, the beverage having been found useful for producing the necessary wakefulness for their nightly devotional exercises.⁵ By the middle of the sixteenth century coffee had spread to such urban centers as Mecca, Cairo, Istanbul, and Damascus, where its use was no longer confined to religious purposes, and where special establishments were devoted to its preparation and consumption. Before the century's end, as the late Fernand Braudel observed, coffee "had installed itself virtually throughout the Muslim world."⁶

3. *Jewish Encyclopedia* (1901–6), vol. 4, p. 142. Note the ironically prophetic observation in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* (1972), vol. 6, col. 732 (hereafter cited as *EJ*), that many of the *Jewish Encyclopedia's* entries "have remained unsurpassed statements." The German *Encyclopedia Judaica* (1928–34), though never completed, nonetheless progressed far enough to have made clear its exclusion of an entry for "kaffee," and the same is true for the more popular *Jüdisches Lexikon* (1927–30). The *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1939–43) did include a fairly exhaustive article on Rabbi Rudolph Coffee (vol. 3, pp. 232–233) but none on the more famous beverage of the same name.

4. C. van Arendonk, s.v. "Kahwa," *Encyclopedia of Islam* (1927); idem, in *Encyclopedia of Islam*, 2nd ed. (1978), vol. 4, pp. 449–455. A recent and valuable contribution to the subject is the monograph by R. S. Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses: The Origins of a Social Beverage in the Medieval Near East* (Seattle and London, 1985), which includes an ample bibliography.

5. Van Arendonk, "Kahwa"; Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, pp. 14, 22–26. On coffee in the Sufi orders, see also *ibid.*, pp. 74–76, and J. S. Trimmingham, *The Sufi Orders in Islam* (Oxford, 1971), pp. 199, 210.

6. Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism: 15th–18th Century*, vol. 1, *The Structures of Everyday Life*, trans. S. Reynolds (New York, 1981), p. 256, and the earlier discussion; idem, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Phillip II*, trans. S. Reynolds (New York, 1972), p. 762. See also more extensively Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*,

Yet, as suggested above, its position in the Jewish world was hardly as marginal as the silence of the modern encyclopedists might lead us to believe. Israel Abrahams, almost a century ago, correctly noted “the early love” of Jews for coffee and its subsequent impact upon Jewish life, although he may have been somewhat off the mark in linking their enthusiasm for the beverage to their sobriety and “their love of social intercourse with their fellows.”⁷ Before him the considerable impact of the commodity upon Jewish, and especially halakhic, literature had been noted by the Hungarian scholar Leopold Löw, who as early as 1858 appended, in good “Wissenschaft” style, a lengthy footnote on coffee to an article devoted to quite another subject (the history of the Flesch family in Prague). Löw outlined four major areas in which questions arose as a result of the introduction and spread on the beverage.⁸ His list, however, was not complete, and by its nature was evidently not intended to be. It neglected, for example, the question as to whether coffee prepared by gentiles was prohibited not only on the Sabbath but on the remaining days of the week as well, on the grounds of *bishulei nokhrim*.⁹ This was chronologically the first problem to arise in the responsa literature, and it continued to have important implications for social relations between Jews and non-Jews during a period in which coffeehouses were emerging as the major hub of urban sociability, first in the East and then in the West.¹⁰

chaps. 2, 6, and the colorful description of the arrival and rapid popularization of coffee in mid-sixteenth-century Istanbul, quoted at length in Bernard Lewis, *Istanbul and the Civilization of the Ottoman Empire* (Norman, Okla., 1963), pp. 132–133. On the last point see also E. Birnbaum, “Vice Triumphant: The Spread of Coffee and Tobacco in Turkey,” *Durham University Journal*, December, 1956, pp. 21–27.

7. Israel Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages* (London, 1896), pp. 137–138. Abrahams proudly made a point of noting that “coffee was introduced into England by Jews” (*ibid.*). On this see more recently David Katz, *Philosemitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England* (Oxford, 1982), p. 40 and the sources cited there, n. 154. Compare, in a similar vein to Abrahams, the remarks of Attilio Milano, *Storia degli ebrei in Italia* (Turin, 1963), p. 567.

8. These were the permissibility of drinking it before morning prayers; whether coffee, when taken at the end of a meal, required a separate blessing; whether, after drinking coffee (outside of a meal) a final blessing (*berakha aharonah*) was necessary; or whether, on account of its being sipped in small quantities no such blessing was necessary; and finally, whether coffee might be drunk on the Sabbath in non-Jewish coffeehouses. See Leopold Löw, *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Immanuel Löw (Szegedin, 1890), 2:225–227. It was perhaps through Löw that Abrahams, who cites him frequently, was alerted to the topic.

9. On this prohibition see Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Maakhalot Asurot* 17:14–21; Joseph Karo, *Shulhan 'Arukh, Yoreh De'ah* 113–114.

10. On the rise of the coffeehouses in the Near East, their social life and social norms, see

Furthermore, only one of the four areas in which Löw noted the impact of coffee related to the drink's special qualities as a stimulant—its capability of driving away sleep and creating, on short notice, a refreshing sense of wakefulness. It was precisely these qualities which popularized the drinking of coffee among the Sufis of Yemen and Cairo, among whom it became an essential, and in some cases ceremonial, aspect of their nocturnal devotions.¹¹ In the case of Jewish society it would be, therefore, equally appropriate to inquire into the role of coffee in generating or popularizing new forms of night life, whether pious or profane. Was it incorporated, for example, into the nocturnal rituals popularized by the kabbalists, and did its subsequent spread affect the degree of receptivity accorded those rituals as they, together with coffee, crossed the Mediterranean? This line of inquiry owes much, of course, to the work of the late Fernand Braudel, whose wise words may serve us as both a warning and an invitation: "There is a danger that the history of coffee may lead us astray. The anecdotal, the picturesque, and the unreliable play an enormous part in it."¹²

* * *

When and where, then, does coffee make its first appearance in Jewish history? The earliest responsum in which it is discussed concerns the question of its permissibility for consumption when prepared by non-Jews and was composed by R. David ibn Abi Zimra (d. 1573). This is hardly surprising, for the forty years in which Radbaz resided in Egypt (1513–1553) coincided with the period in which coffee drinking spread from Sufi circles to the Egyptian population at large.¹³ He saw no problem with the beverage

Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, chaps. 6–8. On those of Europe see, among the many treatments, William H. Ukers, *All About Coffee* (New York, 1922), pp. 27–28; Leclant, "Coffee and Cafés"; Antonio Pilot, *La bottega da caffè* (Venice, 1916).

11. See above, no. 5. Note the contemporary account quoted by Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, p. 14: "At the beginning of this [the sixteenth] century, the news reached us in Egypt that a drink, called *qahwa*, had spread in the Yemen and was being used by Sufi shaykhs and others to help them stay awake during their devotional exercises." On the ceremonial character of its use, see also *ibid.*, p. 28 and Ukers, *All About Coffee*, p. 17.

12. Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life*, p. 256.

13. Shortly before 1553 Radbaz returned to Palestine, where he spent his final two decades. It would seem more likely, however, that the responsum was penned in Egypt, over whose Jews his spiritual hegemony lasted some four decades. See Israel Goldman, *The Life and Times of Rabbi David ibn Abi Zimra* (New York, 1970), chap. 1, esp. pp. 5, 13, and H. J. Zimmels, "David b. Solomon ibn Abi Zimra," *EJ* 5:1356–58. Concerning the spread of coffee in early-sixteenth-century Cairo, where Radbaz resided for the bulk of his Egyptian period, see Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, pp. 27–29, 38–40.

being prepared by a non-Jew, both because separate utensils were used for coffee and because it was too insubstantial an item to fall under the prohibition of *bishulei nokhrim*. Coffeeshouses, however, were for him another matter entirely, prompting him to add:

Nonetheless, I do not consent to its being drunk at a meeting place [*mesibbah*] of non-Jews, for this has some undesirable consequences and the Jews are holy. . . . And, especially since that beverage has no [pleasing] taste nor odor nor appearance, if it is needed for medicinal purposes one may send for it and have it delivered home. This is done by their leading figures, who would be embarrassed to drink it at such establishments.¹⁴

In distinguishing between the beverage and its characteristic place of consumption, Radbaz expressed an opinion strikingly similar to that of his fellow Cairene, the Islamic jurist al-Jaziri. The latter composed a lengthy treatise on the subject of coffee in the wake of the sometimes violent clashes which had occurred in Cairo after its introduction there in the early sixteenth century.¹⁵ In it he praised coffee on account of the many benefits it provided, especially that of driving away sleep during the performance of nocturnal devotions. On the other hand, however, he carefully limited his advocacy of the beverage by insisting that its use be kept free of the taint of the reprehensible activities then associated with the coffeeshouses.¹⁶ Like his Muslim colleague, Radbaz demonstrates considerable awareness of the social realities of coffee drinking and of the problematic status of the places in which it was engaged in publicly.

14. David b. Solomon ibn Abi Zimra, *Responsa* (Warsaw, 1882), 3:637. This responsum was discussed by Goldman, *Life and Times*, as part of his treatment of "medicine and health practices" in the responsa of Radbaz, but the author unfortunately did not realize that the "medicine" referred to was coffee! On the medicinal qualities attributed to coffee, see Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeeshouses*, pp. 68, 70, 155; Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life*, pp. 256–257; Leclant, "Coffee and Cafés," pp. 87–88; and among the earlier works, P. S. Dufour, *Traitez nouveaux et curieux du café* . . . (Lyon, 1685), chap. 12. On the avoidance of the coffeeshouses by respectable people, see Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeeshouses*, p. 93. For an earlier period, compare S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1967), pp. 114–115.

15. On al-Jaziri and his treatise *'Umdat al-safwa fi hill al-qahwa* I have relied upon the discussion in Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeeshouses*, pp. 25, 42–45. On the manuscripts and date of this work, as well as partial translations of it, see *ibid.*, pp. 13 ff.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 45. For a similar view on the part of the early-sixteenth-century jurist al-'Arraq, who complained of "all sorts of reprehensible things" in the coffeeshouses, see *ibid.*, p. 37. For a discussion of some of these, see *ibid.*, chap. 7, "Society and the Social Life of the Coffeeshouse."

As time passed and the beverage spread, many halakhists exhibited a similarly intimate knowledge of its properties and manner of consumption, one of them going as far as to assert that in Egypt “one cannot attain presence of mind without the aid of coffee.”¹⁷ Yet some differences of opinion emerged concerning its consumption when prepared by non-Jews. R. Hayyim Benveniste of Smyrna, who died a century after Radbaz, reported in response to a query on this subject that drinking the coffee of non-Jews was customary “in all the places of which we have heard,” but he himself had recently decided to abstain from it. He claimed, moreover, to have found support for such a position in the literature describing the customs of the “divine kabbalist” R. Isaac Luria—the ARI.¹⁸

Luria, a younger contemporary of Radbaz, had, like the latter, migrated from Egypt to Palestine during the second half of the sixteenth century, settling in Safed. There, as is well known, he gathered around him a circle of disciples who followed his kabbalistic system and observed his distinctive practices, both of which they continued to disseminate after his death in 1572. One of the practices popularized by the ARI and his disciples was the regular recitation of a midnight rite mourning the Temple’s destruction and praying for its return. This practice, known as *Tikkun Hazot*, had been

17. R. Hezekiah de Silva, *Peri Hadash to Shulhan 'Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 89:3 (for another example of his taking coffee’s properties as a stimulant into consideration, see *ibid.* to *Orah Hayyim* 481) Although de Silva lived in Jerusalem, one may note the corroborating testimony of his contemporary R. Abraham b. Mordecai ha-Levi of Cairo that it was “an everyday practice at sizable meals” that after drinking a glass of wine at the conclusion of the grace “another beverage called coffee” would be brought in order to restore one’s presence of mind. Responsa *Ginat Veradim* (Constantinople, 1716), *Orah Hayyim* 1. Ha-Levi and the Jerusalem rabbi Abraham b. David Yizhaki engaged in an extended dispute on the question of whether a “final blessing” need be recited after a cup of coffee or whether, on account of its being sipped slowly while hot, the beverage was exempt. See above n. 8 and the latter’s responsa published under the title *Zer'a Avraham*, pt. 1 (Smyrna, 1732), *Orah Hayyim* 2–5. In no. 3 reference is made to the custom of discussing the quality of the coffee (“*ha-tova hi im ra'ah*”) while drinking it, which served as a social impediment to downing the cup swiftly. For other customs followed in the drinking of coffee, such as passing the cup, see Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, chap. 8. On conversation obligatorily accompanying the drinking of coffee, see also Leclant, “Coffee and Cafés,” p. 91.

18. See Hayyim b. Israel Beneviste, *Ba'ei Hayyei*, pt. 3 (Salonika, 1788), no. 155. Among his considerations was his sense that “coffee is important enough among those who drink it for one to extend an invitation for a single cup.” For other attributions to the ARI of the opinion that coffee prepared by non-Jews was prohibited, see Immanuel Hai Ricchi, *Mishnat Hasidim* (Amsterdam, 1727), “motzaei shabbat” 7:7, and Isaac Lampronti, *Pahad Yizhak*, vol. 7 (Lyck, 1874), fol. 61a, s.v. “caffè.” Cf. also Menahem Navarra, *Penei Yizhak* (Mantua, 1744), fols. 39a–b.

observed in various forms throughout the Middle Ages as an individual act of piety. As Schechter noted, “midnight, with its awe-inspiring silence and the feeling of utter isolation which comes upon man,” was a favorite time for voluntary prayer. Only in late-sixteenth-century Palestine did *Tikkun Hazot* suddenly take off and become a mass rite, spreading from there to other countries in the Near East and the Mediterranean basin.¹⁹ Its popularization was, of course, part of the wider diffusion of kabbalistic rites during this period and their penetration into daily life, but it can hardly be divorced from the increasing availability, by day and night, of a stimulant such as coffee.

Although increasingly available, the beverage was not as universally familiar in the Near East of the sixteenth century as we might expect. R. Joseph Caro, for example, who came to Safed from Turkey in 1536 and completed his *Bet Yosef* there some six years later, shows no signs in the relevant sections of that work (nor of his later *Shulhan 'Arukh*) of any familiarity with coffee.²⁰ Yet Caro would have had good reason to be interested in a stimulant which could effectively promote wakefulness. For he, together with his brother-in-law R. Solomon Alkabetz, introduced the custom of observing an all-night study vigil on the festival of Shavuot, and he also invested much energy in remaining awake at night on a year-round basis in order to commune with his personal “Maggid.”²¹

By 1580, however, there was at least one coffeehouse in Safed, for it is mentioned in the responsa of R. Moses Trani, Caro’s successor as spiritual

19. See Gershom Scholem, s.v. “Luria, Isaac,” *EJ* 11:571–578, and, on the shift in *Tikkun Hazot* in Luria’s circle, idem, “Tradition and New Creation in the Ritual of the Kabbalists,” in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York, 1965), pp. 146–150. For the quotation from Solomon Schechter, see his essay “Saints and Saintliness” in *Studies in Judaism*, second series (Philadelphia, 1908), pp. 155–156. Concerning the prehistory of the rite, note also the comments of Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1961), p. 662. A comprehensive study of Jewish night prayer during the Middle Ages remains a desideratum.

20. See, for example, *Bet Yosef* and *Shulhan 'Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 89; *Yoreh De'ah* 113–114.

21. For an annotated English translation of Alkabetz’s account, see Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies* (Jerusalem, 1976), pp. 99–104. For the sources in which it originally appeared, see *ibid.*, pp. 99, 118, and R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Caro: Lawyer and Mystic* (Oxford, 1962), pp. 2, 19–22. On Caro’s “Maggid,” on his need to remain awake at night in study in order to merit maggidic visitations, and on his difficulties in doing so, see *ibid.* chap. 12. It is possible that Caro’s Balkan background made him less aware of the beverage and its properties than his colleagues who hailed from Egypt, to which coffee came earlier and where its absorption into daily life was rapid. See above, n. 13.

head of the community, who died in that year.²² Whether or not the Jews of Safed actually patronized the establishment, they could hardly have been unaware of the special properties of the beverage in which it specialized, and which, as Trani testifies, continued to attract customers late into the night. Furthermore, among the fundamental changes resulting from the introduction of coffee and coffeehouses in the cities of the Islamic eastern Mediterranean during the sixteenth century was the gradual breakdown of some of the conventional divisions between day and night. The latter, it has been noted, became associated to an increasing degree with activity rather than repose, and with sociability outside the home.²³ Did not this shift, together with the easy availability of a new stimulant, present the ideal conditions for the revival of a “half-forgotten observance,” to use Scholem’s phrase, which required nocturnal wakefulness and which, under Zoharic influence, focused upon the hour of midnight, an hour which had otherwise lost almost all significance in positive Judaism?²⁴

It has been suggested, as a corrective to Scholem’s version of the Luri-

22. Moses b. Joseph Trani, *Responsa* (Venice, 1629–30), pt. 3, no. 150. This responsum was cited by Jacob Kena’ani, “Economic Life in Safed and Its Environs in the Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries” (Hebrew), *Zion*, o.s. 6 (1934): 186, who also noted its testimony that the coffeehouse in question was open late at night. See also Izhak Ben-Zvi, *Eretz-Israel under Ottoman Rule* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1967), p. 172. On the links between Egypt, from whence coffee evidently came, and Palestine during this period, see A. Cohen and G. Baer, eds., *Egypt and Palestine* (Jerusalem, 1984), especially J. R. Hacker, “Spiritual and Material Links between Egyptian and Palestinian Jewry in the Sixteenth Century,” pp. 241–250.

In the early eighteenth century Richard Pococke was to report of his visit to Safed, “I was recommended to the *cadi*, who received me with great civility and entertained us with coffee.” See his *A Description of the East* (London, 1743–45) vol. 2, p. 76.

23. See Hattox, *Coffee and Coffeehouses*, pp. 127–128. He writes furthermore that “in earlier times, there were few and particular reasons for a person to be out at night. . . . The coffeehouse did much to change this. Men went out at night to drink, meet with others, exchange information, ideas, or pleasantries, and otherwise amuse themselves.” Some of these amusements would seem to have been behind the later decision of the Jewish community of Jerusalem to prohibit bachelors from going out to *Tikkun Hazot* at night. See Ya’akov Barnai, “The Regulations (*Taqanot*) of Jerusalem in the Eighteenth Century” (Hebrew), in Amnon Cohen, ed., *Jerusalem in the Early Ottoman Period* (Jerusalem, 1979), p. 308 and the sources cited there.

24. On the mystical significance attributed by the Zohar to the hour of midnight, see, for example, Zohar 1:242b, 11:46a [=Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar*, vol. 2, pp. 413–414], 111:121b. See also Fine, *Safed Spirituality* (New York, 1984), p. 17. It was reported that Luria, for mystical reasons, postponed marital coitus on the nights of his wife’s ritual immersion until after midnight. See Moses Zacuto, *Iggerot RMZ* (Livorno, 1780), no. 12; H.Y.D. Azulai, *Zipporen Shamir* (Livorno, 1835), no. 124.

anic revival, that the messianic prayer vigils instituted in Jerusalem during the first quarter of the sixteenth century provide a missing link between the medieval tradition of mourning the exile and the rite popularized in Safed at that century's end.²⁵ This may have been the case on the ideational level, yet it is worthy of note that the Jerusalem vigils were held in conjunction with the afternoon prayers, while those in Safed were held in the middle of the night. Although the Zohar's fascination with midnight was presumably known to the mystics in both cities, coffee had not yet affected Jerusalem in the early sixteenth century in the way that it would affect Safed before the century's end.²⁶ From the perspective of their social history, the differences between the rites practiced in the two cities signify more than do the similarities.

In the Safed rite popularized in the circle of the ARI and his disciples, the custom was encouraged not only of rising at midnight for prayer (the mournful *Tikkun Rahel* followed by the messianically charged *Tikkun Leah*) but of remaining awake and engaging in Torah study for the remainder of the night.²⁷ For those who could not adhere to such a grueling schedule, however, the alternative suggested was to rise at midnight and study briefly after the recitation of prayers, then return to sleep, to rise again half an hour

25. This view was expressed by Ira Robinson, "Messianic Prayer Vigils in Jerusalem in the Early Sixteenth Century," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 52 (1981): 38–42. After I wrote this article, Moshe Idel's article, "On Mishmarot and Messianism in Jerusalem in the 16th–17th Centuries" (Hebrew), *Shalem* 5 (1987), came to my attention. Idel, too, stresses, contra Robinson (pp. 88–89), that the vigils instituted by R. Abraham in Jerusalem were considerably different from the *Tikkun Hazot* later practiced in Safed.

26. Unfortunately, Hattox's otherwise quite comprehensive work fails to deal with the cities of Palestine, but it would appear that coffee came to Jerusalem, or at least to its Jews, considerably later than it did to Safed. As late as 1616 an emissary from Jerusalem in Iraq seems to have been unable to identify the drink when a cup was poured for him. See Yom Tov Zahalon, *New Responsa* (Jerusalem, 1980), no. 3, previously published by Meir Benayahu in *Kobez 'al Yad* 15 (1950): 164–166. Zahalon, who lived primarily in Safed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, discussed elsewhere the question as to whether coffee prepared by non-Jews was permissible. See his *Responsa* (Venice, 1694), 1:60.

27. See Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation," pp. 149–150. Note there the quotation that "the time from midnight to morning is a time of grace, and a ray of this grace falls upon him even in the daytime." See also Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, pp. 17–18. The kabbalist R. Meir Poppers, in a work written in Jerusalem in 1643, asserted that rising at midnight "is extremely beneficial for acquiring *ruah ha-kodesh*." See his *Or Zaddikim* (Hamburg, 1690), p. 2. The first section of that work is devoted to "the time of waking in the morning," but most of its twenty-four paragraphs actually deal with waking at midnight for *Tikkun Hazot*—a sign of the custom's increasing penetration into normative practice.

or so before dawn so as to link day and night through study.²⁸ A glimpse of Safed by night is provided in the local tradition concerning R. Abraham ha-Levi Berukhim (d. 1593) who

every night would rise at midnight and walk through all the streets, raising his voice and shouting bitterly, "Arise in honor of the Lord . . . for the Shekhinah is in exile and our Temple has been burnt." . . . And he would call each scholar by his name, not departing until he saw that he had left his bed. Within an hour the city was full of the sounds of study—Mishnah and Zohar and midrashim of the Rabbis and Psalms and Prophets, as well as hymns, dirges, and supplicatory prayers.²⁹

A central element in Safed spirituality then, especially in its Lurianic variety, was the considerable stress it placed upon nocturnal forms of piety. It would, of course, be unfairly reductionist to claim that this shift was possible only with the aid of the newly available stimulant served in the coffee-house. The history of religion knows countless instances in which human beings, when present in spiritually charged environments (of which Safed is a classic example), have been able to transcend the normal limits of their physical constitutions. Yet what of the later survival and wider influence of their practices among others? The introduction of coffee brought with it, beyond the mere availability of a new stimulant, the emergence of a new perception of the night in which the hours of darkness could be shaped and manipulated by human initiative rather than condemn man to passive repose. *Tikkun Hazot*, it is maintained, was embedded in such a "coffee culture" whether or not it could have arisen without benefit of stimulants. The extent of its embeddedness is most clearly apparent when we examine the survival of the nocturnal forms of piety first cultivated in Safed and the history of their reception elsewhere.

Evidence from the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries sug-

28. See, for example, Poppers, *Or Zaddikim* 1:3; *Shulhan 'Arukh ha-Ari* (Frankfurt, 1691), pars. 4, 12; Jacob Zemah, *Naggid u-Mezavveh* (Amsterdam, 1712), fol. 6a (reprint ed. [Jerusalem, 1965], pp. 12–13); Hayyim Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavvanot* (Tel-Aviv, 1960) vol. 1, fols. 353a, 374d–379d; idem, *Peri 'Ez Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 344–352.

29. Published by Simha Assaf, "Letters from Safed" (Hebrew), *Kobez 'al Yad* 3 (13) (1939–40): 122–123, and from there by Ya'ari, *Iggerot Erez Yisrael* (Ramat Gan, 1971), p. 205. Compare the text as published by Meir Benayahu, *Toledot ha-ARI* (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 227–228. See also Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation," p. 149, and Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, pp. 47–48.

gests that coffee had indeed become a standard part of the nocturnal ritual as practiced in the land of Israel and its environs. When the Italian rabbi Moses Zacuto responded, in 1673, to a query from Mantua regarding the permissibility of drinking before the recitation of morning prayers, he expressed the opinion that only such beverages as beer or wine were prohibited but that water or medicinal drinks were not. As evidence he cited the practice “throughout all the land of Israel and the kingdom of the Turks, where it is customary to drink coffee every [night] after midnight, for it is similar to medicine in that it drives away sleep, as is known.”³⁰ Zacuto’s main point in the responsum, as Tishby has noted, was not the permissibility of coffee, which was still relatively unknown in Italy and concerning which his Mantuan questioner did not explicitly inquire.³¹ Rather, he used the coffee consumed in the East as an illustrative example of the sort of medicinal beverage that was permitted before prayers. One assumes that its consumption “after midnight” was popular both among those who rose at midnight to perform the abbreviated rite and among their more pious counterparts who remained awake in prayer and study from midnight to dawn.

Although R. Moses Zacuto came to Italy by way of Amsterdam and had never been to the East,³² his close familiarity with Jewish nocturnal habits in

30. Moses Zacuto, *Responsa* (Venice, 1761), no. 59. This text seems preferable to the one published in *Iggerot ha-RMZ*, no. 3. Compare also the version modified by the author of *Hemdat Yamim* (IV, 23c) and quoted by Isaiah Tishby, “*Hanhagot* of Nathan of Gaza, Letters of R. Moses Zacuto, and *Takkanot* of R. Hayyim Abulafia in *Hemdat Yamim*” (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 54 (1979): 172. Zacuto’s opinion is also cited in a 1788 letter published by R. Bonfil, “Twelve Letters of R. Elia Levi de Veali” (Hebrew), *Sinai* 71 (1972): 182.

31. Coffee was introduced into Venice in 1615, but in 1683 there was still only one cafe in the city (see below). Just two years before Zacuto penned his responsum, Fausto Nairone’s *Discorso della Salutifera Bevanda Cahve ò vero Cafe* (Rome, 1671) appeared in Italian translation from the original Latin (in which it had been published in a learned journal some three years earlier; see Dufour, *Traitez*, p. 35). In this work Nairone described coffee as one of the miracles of nature, stating that it had been discovered by an Arabian shepherd and enthusiastically embraced by (Christian) monks who found it useful for the performance of their nocturnal orations. Its subsequent spread, he believed, had been aided by divine providence (pp. 21–23). Nairone also quoted such travelers as Pietro della Valle on the merits of coffee, and testified that during his own travels in the East during 1650 he had sampled coffee and found it beneficial primarily “per la corroboratione dello stomaco e per la vigilanza della notte” (*ibid.*, p. 53). Writing from Turkey earlier in the century the English traveler George Sandys had commented similarly on the popular drink “black as soote, and tasting not much unlike it . . . which helpeth, as they say, digestion, and procureth alacritie.” See *Sandys Travels* (London, 1673) p. 51, quoted also in Samuel Purchas, *Hakluytus Posthumous; or, Purchas His Pilgrimes*, vol. 8 (Glasgow, 1905), p. 146. On della Valle see below, n. 49.

32. See Gershom Scholem, s.v. “Zacuto, Moses,” *EJ* vol. 16, cols. 906–908. Although

“the land of Israel and the kingdom of the Turks” is hardly surprising. For, as he testified in a letter published by Scholem some forty years ago, he had performed the midnight *Tikkun* “innumerable times” with the Safed emissary in Italy, R. Benjamin ha-Levi.³³ Zacuto presumably heard from the latter about the manner in which Jews of the East prepared themselves for the performance of the midnight rite. He may even have witnessed R. Benjamin drinking what was then in Italy still an exotic beverage on some of the long nights they spent together.

Zacuto’s testimony concerning the role of coffee in midnight vigils as practiced in the land of Israel is corroborated by a first-hand observer. R. Gedaliah of Siemiatycze, who arrived there as a member of R. Judah Hasid’s entourage early in the eighteenth century.³⁴ His account of their stay includes a description of the annual vigil observed at the grave of the prophet Samuel on the 28th of Iyyar. After the afternoon and evening prayers, he reports, those present would read from the Book of Samuel and other texts in which the prophet was mentioned.

And at midnight all the lights in the cave were extinguished, and they sat in the darkness reciting *Tikkun Hazot* in a lachrymose voice. After they completed the *Tikkun* they studied some Zohar, and then the drink called coffee was brought, quite hot, and given to each person. . . . Afterwards songs and hymns are recited . . . and there is celebration until the morning. At first light the morning prayers are recited and all return home in peace.³⁵

R. Gedaliah’s testimony points not only to the use of coffee in nocturnal rituals, but to the existence of an almost formalized coffee break, dividing

according to the tradition cited there Zacuto had once fasted for forty days in order to forget the Latin he had acquired in his youth, the Italian edition of Nairone’s work would have been accessible to him. There is, of course, no proof that he actually read it.

33. Gershom Scholem, “Regarding the Attitude of Jewish Rabbis to Sabbatianism,” (Hebrew), *Zion* 13–14 (1948–49): 62. On R. Benjamin ha-Levi see Abraham Ya’ari, *Ta’alumat Sefer* (Jerusalem, 1954), *infra*, and, especially on his role in the dissemination of *Tikkun Hazot*, Gershom Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi: The Mystical Messiah*, trans. R. J. Z. Werblowsky (Princeton, 1973), pp. 369–370, 478–479.

34. See Meir Benayahu, “The Holy Brotherhood of R. Judah Hasid and their Settlement in Jerusalem” (Hebrew), *Sefunot* 3–4 (1960): 133–182, and the bibliography cited there, p. 133 n. 3.

35. Abraham Ya’ari, *Mas’ot Erez Yisrael* (Ramat Gan, 1976), pp. 347–348. For earlier editions of this account, see *ibid.*, p. 772. For the history of the observance at Samuel’s grave, see *idem*, “History of the Pilgrimage to Meron” (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 31 (1962): 72–101.

the portion of the night spent in lamentation from that devoted to joyful song.³⁶ Although his account relates to a special occasion, the procedure followed then, especially in light of Zacuto's testimony, would seem to have largely replicated the manner in which *Tikkun Hazot* was performed in that same region under more ordinary circumstances.

What, however, of the spread of *Tikkun Hazot* beyond the confines of the land of Israel and the Ottoman Empire? This question is part of a much larger one concerning the manner and extent to which Lurianic Kabbalah, in the words of Scholem, "changed the face of Judaism in all its aspects, theoretical as well as practical."³⁷ Here we shall concern ourselves primarily with Italy as a case study and with the manner in which coffee and *Tikkun Hazot*, two Middle Eastern "products" which began moving westward across the Mediterranean between the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, came to attain considerable popularity among its Jews. Although various factors, social as well as spiritual, contributed to the eventual popularization of the midnight rite in that country, it shall be argued here that the changes brought about by the introduction of coffee and coffeehouses were particularly instrumental. These changes prove especially useful in helping to explain the otherwise puzzling delay in the popular reaction to *Tikkun Hazot*. Although it was at first virtually ignored in Italy in favor of the home-grown rite of *Shomrim la-Boker*, it was able eventually to overtake and then supplant the latter. Coffee, it shall be maintained, played a central role in opening the night to ritual activity.

Beginning in the 1570s a new form of Jewish piety made its presence felt in Italy, beginning in Venice and spreading to some of the neighboring communities in the region. Societies calling themselves by such names as *Shomrim la-Boker* and *Me'irei Shahar* were founded for the purpose of perform-

36. These would seem to correspond to the *Tikkun Rahel* and *Tikkun Leah* respectively. On the similarly ceremonial use of coffee in Sufi nocturnal devotions, see the sources cited above, nn. 5, 11.

37. The quotation is from Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation," p. 135, where a social history of Kabbalah is implicitly called for. In the present paper only some aspects of the social history of *Tikkun Hazot* are addressed. On some others see Scholem, *Sabbetai Sevi*, pp. 250, 501–504 (its history during the period of Sabbatian messianic ferment); Simha Assaf, *Mekorot le-Toledot ha-Hinnukh be-Yisrael*, vol. 3 (Tel-Aviv, 1936), p. 85 (on women and *Tikkun Hazot* in nineteenth-century Iraq). See also above, n. 23. On its recent incorporation in a demonstration at the Western Wall against the screening of films in Jerusalem on Friday nights, see *Haaretz*, Sept. 15, 1987, p. 1.

ing and promoting a predawn rite of voluntary prayer.³⁸ Those involved in the promotion of this rite could hardly have been unaware of the midnight ritual then practiced in Safed and the East. We have it on the authority of R. Aaron Berechia of Modena that the initiator of this rite in Italy was none other than his teacher, the kabbalist R. Menahem Azariah of Fano, whose familiarity with the writings emanating from Safed is well known.³⁹ Moreover, R. Aaron Berechia himself, in the handbook he prepared for use by his own Modenese Me'irei Shahar confraternity, testifies that the Palestinian emissaries Israel Sarug and Gedaliah Cordovero had been in the habit of rising, during their stay in Italy, to perform midnight devotions—the former in the author's own home.⁴⁰ Yet in the same work he presents two alternative liturgies, the preferred one to be recited not, as we might expect, at midnight but rather, shortly before dawn, and the second, for those unable to rise early, to be recited before bed.⁴¹

Midnight, however, had nonetheless been on the minds of some of his

38. On this phenomenon see the discussions in M. A. Shulvass, *Jews in the World of the Renaissance*, trans. E. Kose (Leiden and Chicago, 1973), pp. 212–213; Shlomo Simonsohn, *History of the Jews in the Duchy of Mantua* (Tel Aviv, 1977), pp. 553–554; and, more extensively, Horowitz, “Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth-Century Verona,” chap. 4.

39. Aaron Berachia of Modena, *Ashmoret ha-Boker* (Mantua, 1624), fol. 264b. The actual founder of the first *Shomrim la-Boker* society, however, was Isaac Treves. See E. Horowitz, “R. Isaac b. Gershon Treves in Venice” (Hebrew), *Kiryat Sefer* 59 (1984): 254–256. On R. Menahem Azariah's relationship to Safed kabbalism, see Isaiah Tishby, “The Confrontation between Lurianic and Cordoverian Kabbalah in the Writings and Life of R. Aaron Berachia of Modena” (Hebrew), *Zion* 39 (1974): 9–13, and Robert Bonfil, “New Information on Rabbi Menahem Azariah da Fano and His Age” (Hebrew) in *Studies in the History of Jewish Society . . . Presented to Professor Jacob Katz* (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 103–104.

40. Aaron Berachia of Modena, *Ashmoret ha-Boker* (Mantua, 1624), fols. 248a–b. See also Tishby, “Confrontation between Lurianic and Cordoverian Kabbalah,” p. 21, n. 37, who notes the evident disingenuousness of Modena's claim to have known nothing of the (probably Lurianic) rite observed by Sarug. On the latter, see Gershom Scholem, “Was Israel Sarug a Disciple of Luria?” (Hebrew), *Zion* 5 (1939–40): 214–243. On Cordovero, see Abraham David, s.v. “Cordovero, Gedaliah,” *EJ* 5:967, and the bibliography cited there. The somewhat misleading assertion, however, is made there that in Modena both Sarug and Cordovero “urged the adoption of the Safed customs of rising early to mourn for the destruction of the Temple and to pray for the redemption.” Compare also Abraham Ya'ari, *Sheluhei Erez Yisrael* (Jerusalem, 1977), p. 151.

41. Neither one adheres, furthermore, to the custom which, according to R. Aaron Berachia, was followed by his grandfather R. Hillel Modena of Viadana, who would *remain awake* each night until after midnight, and then recite verses from Daniel and the Book of Psalms while sitting on the ground (*Ashmoret ha-Boker*, fol. 248b). This, too, was evidently excessively demanding for the wider public.

Italian Jewish contemporaries. During the early summer of 1586 one of them, R. Jacob Alperon of Lodi, queried some rabbinical colleagues concerning the merits attached to midnight by the rabbis and especially the kabbalists. According to the latter, he understood, it was desirable to rise for prayer at midnight, the hour when God amused himself with the righteous in the garden of Eden, "or at least before the last third of the night." Yet, asked R. Jacob, "now that the short nights are beginning, to be followed by the longer ones [of winter], how shall we determine the hour of midnight or the third watch, for . . . when it is midnight for us, in other places a third of the night will not yet have passed, and vice versa. . . . Or perhaps the rabbis and kabbalists had in mind the time of midnight in the land of Israel."⁴² R. Jacob, it would appear, had heard of the custom then practiced in the land of Israel but was looking for an acceptable excuse to avoid implementing it in northern Italy, especially during the short summer nights. In neighboring Mantua Abraham Portaleone, writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, noted the considerable merit attached by the Zohar to Torah study at midnight. Rather than encouraging the adoption of this practice by his readers, however, he was content to suggest that study during the first watch of the night had largely the same value.⁴³ Both Italian authors flirted with the idea of midnight but shied away from even suggesting that prayer or study be regularly pursued at that inconvenient hour.

During the period in which they were writing, the predawn rite of *Shomerim la-Boker* was flourishing in Italy. Between the end of the sixteenth century and the late 1620s no less than seven separate editions of liturgies

42. Jacob Alperon, *Responsa Nahalat Ya'akov* (Padua, 1622), pp. 6 ff. On the author, see Marco Mortara, *Indice Alfabetico dei Rabbini e Scrittori Israeliti* (Padua, 1886), p. 3, to which add now Shlomo Simonsohn, *The Jews in the Duchy of Milan* (Jerusalem, 1982–86), index, s.v. "Jacob . . . Alperon" (especially vol. 3, pp. 1777, 1785), and Daniel Carpi, ed., *Pinkas . . . Padovah*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1979), where he appears between 1618 and 1625.

43. Abraham Portaleone, *Shiltei ha-Giborim* (Mantua, 1612), fol. 132b. The author, who was a prominent physician, may have been professionally prejudiced against nocturnal study. The physician Amatus Lusitanus, upon treating another Mantuan Jew, Azariah dei Rossi, in the mid-sixteenth century, wrote concerning the latter's symptoms: "Here we must refer to study at night, which is harmful and contrary to nature and is therefore to be avoided; at night the spirits withdraw into the interior, and the effort and excitement of study forces them out." See Harry Friedenwald, *The Jews and Medicine* (Baltimore, 1944), vol. 2, p. 400. Contrast these remarks, however, with those of another physician—Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah, Talmud Torah* 3:13. The social and intellectual history of nocturnal study among the Jews, like the history of nocturnal prayer, requires a separate monograph.

for predawn prayer had been published there.⁴⁴ Societies for the recitation of these prayers existed by the latter date in all the major Italian communities, with some, like Mantua and Modena, hosting two, and Venice, where it all began, as many as three.⁴⁵ Yet during the same period not a single edition of *Tikkun Hazot* appeared in Italy. Only in Mantua, at the end of the 1620s, do we first hear of a Hevrat Hazot Laila in Italy, which, however, was founded later than the two local confraternities for predawn prayer, and, unlike them, did not publish its own liturgy.⁴⁶

This resistance to nocturnal rituals in Italy is especially striking in light of the popularity of those involving rising before dawn and in light, furthermore, of the considerable propaganda then taking place in that country on behalf of the Safed form of spirituality. Geographical factors, it is true, must be taken into consideration. Venice, for example, at upwards of 45 degrees of latitude, is considerably farther north than Safed, at only 33 degrees. Hence its summer nights could be shorter by as much as two hours, leaving precious little sleep on either side of midnight for those who chose to rise at that hour.⁴⁷ Kabbalistic authorities, however, in both Safed and Italy had been willing to make concessions on this matter during the difficult summer months, so it is unlikely that geography alone can account for the differ-

44. For some of these see Moritz Steinschneider, *Catalogus . . . Bodleiana*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1931), nos. 3001, 3003, 3004, 3022 (hereafter cited as *CB*). For a more extensive discussion of these editions see Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternities in Seventeenth-Century Verona," pp. 198–199.

45. See above, n. 38. On Rome see also H. Vogelstein and P. Rieger, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom* (Berlin, 1895), vol. 2, p. 316; on Modena see Tishby, "The Confrontation," pp. 35–45, where R. Abraham Berachia's comments on developments in other communities are also quoted. On Venice and Verona see Elliott Horowitz, "Jewish Confraternal Piety in the Veneto in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in G. Cozzi, ed., *Gli Ebrei e Venezia* (Milan, 1987), pp. 304 ff.

46. Simonsohn (*Mantua*, p. 557) points to its existence in 1637, but from the testimony of R. Aaron Berachia of Modena we know of its existence a decade earlier. See Tishby, "The Confrontation," p. 41. A *Seder Hazot* was then available in the *Seder ve-Tikkun Keri'at Shema*, published in Prague in 1615 (Steinschneider, *CB*, no. 3082), but it is unlikely that this work was used by the Mantuan confraternity. Their failure to publish a prayerbook of their own, which would have been the first of its sort in Italy, testifies to their own recognition of the custom's lack of popularity in that country.

47. For a similar attempt to make use of latitudinal differences in explaining the difference between customs, see Israel Ta-Shema, "The 'Addition' to the Sabbath" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 52 (1982–83): 317, 322. See also idem, "Two Sabbath Lights" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 45 (1975–76): 136–137.

ence.⁴⁸ Moreover, *Tikkun Hazot* did eventually achieve considerable popularity in Italy without any change, of course, in the length of the summer nights.

What did change, then? Here we return to the matter of coffee. This beverage, of which Italians only began to learn in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries⁴⁹ (when the Jews among them were first hearing of *Tikkun Hazot*), was by then at home throughout the Islamic eastern Mediterranean. From there it was first brought to Venice in 1615, where the first coffeehouse, evidently the first in all of Europe, was opened twenty-five years later.⁵⁰ The period in which the predawn rite of *Shomrim la-Boker* emerged in Italy and spread rapidly among its Jewish communities was thus one in which coffee was at first unavailable in that country and then exotically rare. Although Pietro della Valle had reported from Constantinople that “when drunk after supper it prevents those who consume it from feeling sleepy,” few then in Italy were in a position to change their nocturnal habits with the aid of coffee.

From the middle of the seventeenth century, however, side by side with *Shomrim la-Boker*, the nocturnal rite of *Tikkun Hazot* becomes an increasingly visible presence upon the Italian scene. Giulio Morosini, the former Samuel Nahmias who was baptized in 1649, provided in his *Via della fede* an insider’s description of the two “shifts” of Venetian Jews who would come to the synagogue before the regular morning services. The members of the first, whom he calls “the most devoted,” arrive “one or two hours before

48. See Zacuto, *Iggerot ha-RMZ*, no. 11, where the opinion of R. Hayyim Vital is also cited. Abraham Rovigo, who had queried Zacuto on this matter, was evidently unhappy with his master’s ruling that in the summer the *Tikkun* could be recited shortly before or after dawn, but never before midnight. He was emboldened to inquire what the saintly ARI did in the summer on the nights of his wife’s ritual ablutions, after which he would wait until midnight before performing intercourse (see above, n. 24). R. Moses responded curtly that the ARI would certainly have risen before dawn even then, “but there is no need to inform us of this, since it is obvious.” See *ibid.*, no. 12. On special summer hours for *Tikkun Hazot* see also Isaiah Bassan, *Lahmei Todah* (Venice, 1741) fol. 88d.

49. On the reports of Prospero Alpini and Pietro della Valle, see Jacob, *Coffee: Epic of a Commodity*, p. 44, and Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life*, p. 256. The latter had written from Constantinople in 1615 concerning coffee that “when drunk after supper, it prevents those who consume it from feeling sleepy. For that reason students who wish to read into the late hours of the night are fond of it.” See also above, n. 31.

50. Braudel, *Structures of Everyday Life*; Robert Hewitt, *Coffee: Its History, Cultivation, and Uses* (1872), p. 17; *Enciclopedia Italiana* (1930), s.v. “Caffè,” vol. 8, pp. 262–263; Pilot, *La bottega*, pp. 6–7.

daybreak and . . . sit on the floor reciting, in a sad and mournful voice, some verses and compositions . . . called *Kinot*," especially one beginning with the words *Al heikhali*. The members of the second, whom he calls "the less devoted" and belong to the Hevrah (*sic*) Shomrim la-Boker rise only shortly before dawn and go to the synagogue, where "they wait until the lamentations of those of the first class are completed, and then, in a rather livelier (or at least less mournful) voice, they recite several penitential prayers . . . and confessions."⁵¹ Although the former group is not identified as a confraternity, its members would undoubtedly have described the rite they performed as *Tikkun Hazot*. In 1655 a liturgy for the "midnight" ritual was published in Italy for the first time, in R. Nathan Shapira's *Tuv Ha-Aretz*.⁵² In that same year a *Hazot* confraternity was founded in Verona (more than four decades after the foundation there of a Hevrat Shomrim la-Boker) and another was operating in Ferrara.⁵³ The rather delayed emergence of *Tikkun Hazot* in Italy, then, occurred only after the arrival there, also by way of the Mediterranean, of coffee.

It was not, moreover, the only nocturnal rite to experience such a fate. Ferrara's *Hazot* confraternity saw fit, in 1655, to publish a book of readings

51. Giulio Morosini, *Via della fede mostrata a' gli Ebrei* (Rome, 1683), vol. 1, pp. 245–246. On the date of his baptism, see Y. H. Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York, 1971), p. 201, n. 14. Cecil Roth, in his [*History of the Jews in Venice* (Philadelphia, 1930), p. 142, drew heavily upon Morosini's description without indicating his source. Earlier in that work, however, Roth noted that Morosini's *Via* is "extraordinarily replete with information for the reconstruction of the social history of the Ghetto" in the author's day (*ibid.*, p. 118). On Morosini see most recently Benjamin Ravid, "Contra Judaeos in Seventeenth-Century Italy: Two Responses to the *Discorso* of Simone Luzzatto by Melchiorre Palontrotti and Giulio Morosini," *AJS Review* 7–8 (1982–83): 328–348, and the literature cited there, p. 328 n. 57. Ravid has correctly observed that the work still awaits systematic examination, especially from the perspective of its relationship to the descriptions of Jewish rites by Johannes Buxtorf and Leone Modena (p. 339). For one attempt to do so, see my study "The Eve of the Circumcision: A Chapter in the History of Jewish Nightlife," *Journal of Social History*, in press.

52. Nathan Shapiro, *Tuv Ha-Aretz* (Venice, 1655), fols. 64b–68b. See Steinschneider, *CB*, no. 3024 and s.v. "Nathan Spira." On the author and his role, together with R. Benjamin ha-Levi of Safed, in the dissemination of *Tikkun Hazot* and other Lurianic devotions in Italy, see Scholem, "Attitude of Jewish Rabbis to Sabbatianism," p. 62, and *idem*, *Sabbetai Sevi*, pp. 370, 478–479.

53. For the foundation of Verona's *Hazot*, see Menahem Navarra's introduction to *Seder Tikkun Hazot* (Mantua, 1746) and Leopold Zunz, *Die Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes* (Berlin, 1919), p. 152. On the Ferrara *Hazot* Laila confraternity, note the *Seder ve-Tikkun* for the nights of Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah it published in Mantua, 1655. The work is not mentioned by Steinschneider, but a copy is found in the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.

for use at the vigils of Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah; and Shapira's *Tuv Ha-Aretz*, published in the same year, contained material for recitation on those nights as well. The custom of remaining awake in study on the former night had been introduced by R. Joseph Caro and R. Solomon Alkabetz in the early 1530s, and spread, by the century's end, among the adherents of kabbalistic piety in Safed and elsewhere in the land of Israel. In the list of customs prepared by R. Abraham Galante it is reported that on the night of Shavuot, "following the meal, every congregation assembles in its own synagogue and those present do not sleep the whole night long," reading selections from biblical, rabbinic, and mystical literature "until the break of dawn."⁵⁴ "Throughout the night of Hoshana Rabbah," it is reported in the same source, "they recite psalms and penitential prayers." Early in the seventeenth century R. Isaiah Horowitz reported that Hoshana Rabbah, like Shavuot, was observed in the land of Israel with all-night Torah study.⁵⁵ In some of the Palestinian sources the very fact of sleeplessness on these nights was stressed over and beyond the importance of study. Both vigils, moreover, fell on days on which (unlike the Sabbath) coffee could be prepared by a Jew. It may thus be presumed that significant numbers of those who observed them fortified themselves with the stimulant which the hidden hand of God had recently brought to their region.

It is therefore quite telling that despite the many avenues of communication between the Jews of Italy and those of Palestine, these two holiday vigils

54. The text of Galante's customs was published by Solomon Schechter in the appendix to his "Safed in the Sixteenth Century," *Studies in Judaism: Second Series*. See there p. 295, and, for the translation, Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, p. 43. See also the discussion of the Shavuot vigil in Y. D. Wilhelm, "Sidrei Tikkunim," in *'Aleï 'Ayin: The Salman Schocken Jubilee Volume* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1948–52), pp. 125–129, and Scholem, "Tradition and New Creation," p. 139. For Galante's date of death, however, which Wilhelm places prematurely at 1560, see David Tamar, *Studies in the History of the Jewish People in Eretz Israel and in Italy* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1972), pp. 104–106. R. Hayyim Vital expressed the view that anyone who avoided sleeping for even a minute on the night of Shavuot would be assured of surviving the coming year. For his view and those of others, see Wilhelm, "Sidrei Tikkunim" (cited above). R. Isaiah Horowitz, in "Massekhet Shavuot" of his *Shne Luhot ha-Berit* (reprint, Jerusalem, 1963), pt. 2, fol. 29c, completed in Palestine during the 1620s, encourages wakefulness on that night for one who wishes to "cling to holiness." See also Moses ibn Makhir, *Seder ha-Yom* (Lublin, 1876), fol. 38b.

55. Schechter, *Studies*, p. 296; Fine, *Safed Spirituality*, p. 44; Isaiah Horowitz, *Shne Luhot ha-Berit* ("Massekhet Sukkah"), pt. 2, fol. 76a. See also Moses ibn Makhir, *Seder ha-Yom*, fol. 46c ("some remain awake and do not sleep at all"). For other sources, as well as a discussion of the Hoshana Rabbah rite before the sixteenth century, see also Wilhelm, "Sidrei Tikkunim," pp. 138–143.

hardly made an impact in Italy until the middle of the seventeenth century. When they did appear, moreover, they took a predictably different shape. In 1648 a Hoshana Rabbah liturgy was published in Mantua intended for recitation not during a night-long vigil but rather “before dawn on the great day, the day of the willow.” Its author, Hananiah Eliakim Rieti, had been associated with the local *Shomrim la-Boker* confraternity, whose rite represented a similar Italian compromise with the rigors of Safed kabbalism.⁵⁶ In the same year a book of readings intended for use on the nights of Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah was published in Venice, but its contents differed considerably from the rites then favored in the land of Israel. Its title page, furthermore, mentioned the custom of studying Torah on these nights, but spoke only of doing with “little sleep.”⁵⁷ It was evidently as a corrective to these editions and to Italian practice on these two nights that R. Nathan Shapira included in his *Tuv Ha-Aretz* (Venice, 1655) the Palestinian version of the rites for the two vigils, stressing, with regard to Shavuot, that anyone who avoided sleep would be assured of surviving the year. As part of his campaign to reorient Italian Jewry toward closer adherence to the rites favored in Palestine, R. Nathan also included in the same work the “authentic” version of *Tikkun Hazot*—its first appearance in print.⁵⁸

Yet despite such efforts, Italian Jewry of the mid-seventeenth century responded with considerably less enthusiasm to the latter rite than it had to

56. *Mekiz Redumim* (Mantua, 1648), introduction. Rieti had also been responsible for much of the *Ayelet ha-Shahar*, published there in 1612 by the local *Shomrim la-Boker* society. On *Mekiz Redumim* see also Wilhelm, “Sidrei Tikkunim,” p. 142. Its author had been dead for some twenty-five years before it was published (see *ibid.* and Simonsohn, *Mantua*, p. 731). This, too, reflects the initial lack of receptiveness in Italy for a special rite for Hoshana Rabbah. The day eventually became a kind of festival for the *Shomrim la-Boker* societies in that country. See Horowitz, “Jewish Confraternal Piety,” p. 312, and G. Laras, “Un Componento Poetico di J. M. Padoa,” *Rassegna Mensile di Israel* 36 (1970), pt. 2, pp. 193–203. I hope to discuss the Hoshana Rabbah vigil somewhat further in a future article.

57. *Seder Keriat Ve-Tikkun (?) le-Lailei Hag Shavuot ve-Hoshana Rabbah* (Venice, 1648). See Steinschneider, *CB*, no. 3046; Meir Benayahu, *Copyright, Authorization and Imprimatur . . . in Venice* (Jerusalem, 1971), pp. 279–281; as well as the comments of Wilhelm, “Sidrei Tikkunim,” p. 143.

58. Shapira, *Tuv ha-Aretz*, fols. 74b–76b. The custom of remaining awake all night in study is described there as “*minhag pashut be-Yisrael*.” In 1659, four years after the publication of *Tuv ha-Aretz*, the now rare *Shefer Tikkunim*, containing a liturgy for these two nights by R. Moses Zacuto, was first published in Venice. See Steinschneider, *CB*, no. 3049, and Benayahu, *Copyright*, p. 280. Later editions appeared in Venice in 1674, 1682, 1696, 1706, and 1717. Of these I have examined only the last three, none of which explicitly refers to the custom of remaining awake on either of the nights. See further below, no. 80.

Shomrim la-Boker several decades earlier. The few *Hazot* societies which emerged were generally short-lived, competing unsuccessfully with the preexisting societies for predawn prayer,⁵⁹ and leaving behind little documentation. In no case, unlike *Shomrim la-Boker*, was the rite popular enough for there to be two competing confraternities in a single community, nor did any Italian confraternity publish its own *Tikkun Hazot* handbook during the course of the seventeenth century.

During the same period in which *Tikkun Hazot* was playing second fiddle to *Shomrim la-Boker* in the Italian communities, coffee was just becoming available in that country but not yet widely popular. Venice, where the first coffeehouse was established in 1640, still had only one in 1683.⁶⁰ Jewish sources, too, attest to the relative foreignness of the product even in the latter half of the seventeenth century. R. Moses Zacuto, in his 1673 responsum discussed above, refers to the drinking of coffee as primarily an Oriental custom. At about the same time R. Shabbetai Ber, writing in Italy, dealt with the question as to whether “the coffee, which is imbibed especially in Eastern countries,” was prohibited when prepared by non-Jews.⁶¹ During the same years some of the most devoted kabbalists in Italy pressed hard for permission to recite *Tikkun Hazot* before midnight, making it clear that remaining awake beyond that hour posed enormous difficulties.⁶² The cooler reception given the rite in the Italian communities than in those of the eastern Mediterranean would seem, therefore, to have stemmed in no small degree from the fact that in Italy, as in all of Europe, the night had not yet been conquered with the aid of coffee.

* * *

59. On the sense of competitiveness with *Shomrim la-Boker* on the part of the adherents of *Tikkun Hazot*, note the introduction of R. Nathan Nata Hannover to *Sha'arei Ziyon* (Prague, 1662). The author had spent time in Italy in the 1650s and had been closely associated with the Palestinian emissaries Nathan Shapira and Benjamin ha-Levi, whose views he would seem to echo. See Israel Halpern, s.v. “Hannover, Nathan” *EJ* 7: 1273–74.

60. Pilot, *La bottega*, p. 13.

61. Shabbetai Ber, Responsa *Beer 'Esek* (Venice, 1674), no. 105. In a letter of advice written by another Italian rabbi, Samuel Aboab (d. 1691), to a scholar planning emigration to the land of Israel, he saw fit to warn him “to be strict with regard to the prohibition of remaining alone with [non-Jewish] maidservants and also with regard to their performance of work on the Sabbath and in heating the drink [called] coffee.” See Responsa *Devar Shemuel* (Venice, 1702), no. 156.

62. Zacuto, *Iggerot RMZ*, nos. 11–12. See above, n. 48.

Between the end of the seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth, however, such a conquest did occur as “the coffeehouse made great progress in Italy.”⁶³ Venice, where there was still only one in 1683, limited the coffeehouses by law to 206 in 1759, but was able to do little to ensure their closing before the early hours of the morning.⁶⁴ Its Jews, moreover, did not lag behind the trend. The Venetian ghetto, according to a survey conducted in 1713, contained at least two coffeehouses, one of which conveniently occupied the first storefront on the right as one entered from the Canareggio.⁶⁵ Jews in Mantua became increasingly active in the coffee business, and by the middle of the century there was at least one Jewish coffeehouse operating there.⁶⁶ In the ghetto of Verona there were no less than two, and they clearly had an impact upon its social life. Their ambiance was such that the authorities saw fit to issue three separate orders between 1745 and 1755, prohibiting the Jews from introducing “women of any religion” into their coffeehouses, whether by day or night.⁶⁷

Coffee also figures prominently in the sumptuary laws passed by the Italian Jewish communities during the course of the eighteenth century. In some cases it is treated as a luxury item, but in others its consumption is strategically controlled as a means of controlling nocturnal behavior. In an effort to expunge profane elements from the pre-circumcision vigil and to

63. Ukers, *All about Coffee*, pp. 27–28.

64. Pilot, *La bottega*, p. 13. On the coffeehouses of eighteenth-century Venice, see also W. C. Hazlitt, *The Venetian Republic* (London, 1900), pp. 791–792 and the sources cited there; Maurice Andrieux, *Daily Life in Venice in the Time of Casanova*, trans. M. Fitton (London, 1972), pp. 22–23, 48–49; F. C. Lane, *Venice: A Maritime Republic* (Baltimore, 1973), pp. 425, 433. On those of Florence, see Eric Cochrane, *Florence in the Forgotten Centuries, 1527–1800* (Chicago, 1973), pp. 364–365. On the influential periodical *IL Caffè*, published in Brescia from 1764 by a group of Milanese intellectuals, see Ukers, *All About Coffee*, p. 30, and, more recently, D. Carpanetto and G. Ricuperati, *Italy in the Age of Reason, 1685–1789*, trans. C. Higgit (London and New York, 1987), esp. pp. 262–266.

65. Giacomo Carletto, *Il ghetto veneziano nel Settecento* (Rome, 1981), p. 146 and table 13. See also *ibid.*, pp. 191, 251.

66. Although a survey of the Jewish merchants in 1717 listed none in the coffee business, a similar survey in 1739 showed a greater number dealing in coffee and cocoa (6) than in flour and pasta. See Simonsohn, *Mantua*, pp. 77, 306–307, 530, 548–549.

67. A broadside published on 12 May 1755 by the Podestà of Verona at the Jewish community's expense threatened offenders with a fine of 100 ducats. It referred to previous *mandati* of 22 December 1745 and 6 June 1749, both of which pointed to the “pessime conseguenze e perniziosi effetti” which might result from the introduction, by day or night, of “Donne di qualunque religione in . . . loro Boteghe di Caffè.” A copy has been preserved in the Archivio di Stato di Verona, Archivio del Comune: Proclami e stampa, busta 222 no. 374. I thank its director for permission to examine and photocopy the document.

lend it an increasingly sacral character, the Roman community in 1726 limited the consumption of coffee on such occasions to the members of the confraternity dedicated to nightlong study and prayer in the home of the parents. Others were permitted to attend the *veglia*, but only these were given the wherewithal to get through the night. Similar steps were taken later in the century in Ancona and Mantua. The link between coffee and nocturnal wakefulness had thus achieved official recognition.⁶⁸

How did these developments affect the fortunes of *Tikkun Hazot*? We would perhaps be inclined to believe that the incipient modernity of eighteenth-century Jewish culture, at least in the West, would contribute to the decline of a custom so arcane and inconvenient.⁶⁹ The Italian evidence, however, points in the opposite direction. Rather than fading away, *Tikkun Hazot* gathered strength in the eighteenth century and achieved what would appear to be unprecedented popularity. In the seven decades between 1704 and 1774 no less than eight editions of *Tikkun Hazot* were published in Italy, more than twice the total for the entire seventeenth century.⁷⁰ In 1746 alone two separate editions appeared in Mantua, one of which was published for Hevrat Hazot of Verona, a confraternity whose fortunes perhaps best reflect the changing status of *Tikkun Hazot* in eighteenth-century Italy.

Founded originally in 1655, it was soon dissolved, refounded in 1706, and soon dissolved again. When Hevrat Hazot emerged for the third time, however, in 1745, it was able within a short space of time to boast seventy members and to publish its own liturgical handbook.⁷¹ The year of its successful comeback was also the year in which the Jews of Verona were first warned about introducing women into their coffeehouses. From that point on Hevrat Hazot not only grew in popularity, but did so at the expense of its

68. A summary of the 1726 statutes is provided by Abraham Berliner, *Geschichte der Juden in Rom* (Frankfurt, 1893), vol. 2, p. 196. For Ancona, see *Pragmatica da osservarsi dalli singoli dell' Università degli Ebrei d' Ancona* (Ancona, 1766), pp. 12–13, and for Mantua, below, n. 74. It may thus be argued that the spread of coffee played a role in the transformation of the *veglia* in Italy, between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, from a festive celebration into a night-long rite of prayer and study. See my “Eve of the Circumcision,” cited above, n. 51.

69. Cf. Azriel Shohet, *Beginnings of the Haskalah among German Jewry* (Hebrew) (Jerusalem, 1960), especially chap. 7. For Italy see now Lois Dubin, “Trieste and Berlin: The Italian Role in the Cultural Politics of the Haskalah,” in Jacob Katz, ed., *Toward Modernity: The European Jewish Model* (New York and Oxford, 1987), pp. 189–224.

70. See, for example, C. B. Friedberg, *Bet 'Eked Sefarim*, p. 1122.

71. See Menahem Navarra's introduction to *Seder Tikkun Hazot* (Mantua, 1746), which was published for the confraternity.

longtime competitor Hevrat Shomrim la-Boker, which was devoted to early morning prayer. Staying up late at night, it would appear, had become a more attractive choice than rising before dawn among those Veronese Jews interested in such rituals. In 1747 the minute-book of Shomrim la-Boker listed fifteen members who, during the past year alone, had crossed over to Hevrat Hazot and were therefore barred from casting ballots in confraternal elections. Nine years later, in 1755, the minute-book of Shomrim la-Boker terminated rather abruptly and somewhat mysteriously after 115 years, suggesting that the confraternity, too, had ceased to function.⁷² The Jewish coffeehouses of Verona, however, were still functioning at that date and still being warned about their clientele. The beverage in which they specialized and the new perception of the night which they represented would seem to have reversed the relative attractiveness of the two prayer rites championed by the two competing confraternities. *Tikkun Hazot*, previously the more forbidding of the two, had become the more convenient to observe.

A similar pattern emerges in Mantua, where a Hevrat Hazot Laila was founded and dissolved intermittently during the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. In 1790, however, it was founded anew by the members of the Hadashim la-Bekarim society, which, as its name suggests, had been devoted to predawn prayer.⁷³ Here, too, the shift occurred during a period in which at least one coffeehouse was functioning in the community and in which sumptuary legislation referred frequently to the consumption of coffee.⁷⁴

In Modena, as well, coffee appears as a controlled substance in the sumptuary laws of 1765.⁷⁵ It was during that decade that the local Hevrat Hazot, although presumably founded earlier, began to show added vigor, publishing two liturgical handbooks for use by its members. The first, published in 1763, was intended for recitation at vigils held on the eve of a circumcision, and the second, published two years later, was an edition of

72. Pinkas Hevrat Shomrim la-Boker, Verona, MS Jerusalem 4*559. The relevant section is not paginated.

73. Simonsohn, *Mantua*, p. 557.

74. For example, the laws of 1771, par. 34, where coffee is limited on the eve of the circumcision to those studying around the table. The same limitation reappeared in the regulations of 1776 and 1782. On these editions of the Mantuan sumptuary legislation, see Simonsohn, *Mantua*, pp. 541–542.

75. *Pragmatica instituita da osservarsi dalli singoli dell'Università degli Ebrei di Modena* (Florence, 1765), p. 12, par. 10.

Tikkun Hazot.⁷⁶ The popularization of coffee and the ritualization of the night hours thus went hand in hand. The Ashmoret ha-Boker society of Modena, founded by R. Aaron Berachia almost a century and a half earlier, was evidently seriously weakened by the new strength shown by Hazot, for it soon sought to fortify itself through a merger. In 1768 it joined with the Jewish confraternity in Modena devoted to the care of the sick, forming the rather anomalous combination of Hevrat Ashmoret ha-Boker u-Vikkur Holim.⁷⁷

It was not only in Italy that the growing popularity of coffee in the eighteenth century exerted an appreciable impact upon Jewish ritual and confraternal life. Even farther to the north, in Worms, the statutes of the Gemilut Hasadim society reveal a striking change in the status of the beverage during that century, as well as clear evidence of its use in nocturnal rituals. In 1731 the confraternity decided that at its annual banquet no beverage other than wine or brandy would be served at its expense. Tea or coffee, it was added (perhaps half-seriously), would be considered as taboo, as was the “wine of the gentiles,” although members could drink beer and “sour water” provided they brought their own.⁷⁸ By 1763, however, the taboo was broken, and coffee joined wine and brandy among the “official” drinks the confraternity served at its banquets. In that same year, moreover, Gemilut Hasadim of Worms decided to provide coffee on two other occasions—the study vigils held on the nights of Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah. The member in whose home the vigil would be held was required to provide wine at his own expense, but the coffee would be paid for by the confraternity.⁷⁹ The beverage had not only risen in status, but had come to

76. *Seder Mishmeret ha-Ben* (Livorno, 1763); *Tikkun Hazot* (Livorno, 1765).

77. The merger occurred on 21 December 1768, as may be seen in the minute-book preserved in the Central Archives for the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem, HM 181.

78. Avigdor Unna, ed., *Register of Statutes and Protocols of the Hevra Kadisha of Worms . . . 1716–1837* (Hebrew and Yiddish) (Jerusalem, 1980), pp. 64–65.

79. *Ibid.* pp. 100–101, 106–107. See also pp. 118–119, 140–141, 146–147, 150–151. The status of coffee as a relative novelty among mid-eighteenth-century German Jewry is also evident in one of the sermons delivered by R. Jonathan Eyebeschuetz in Metz during the 1740s. The latter, berating his congregants for their conservative resistance to spiritual reform, asked them why they so willingly drank coffee, tea, and chocolate even though these, too, were unknown to their ancestors. See his *Ya'arot Devash* (Jerusalem, 1984), vol. 2, p. 80, and see also the Jerusalem, 1972, edition, p. 67. I thank Prof. S. Z. Leiman for drawing my attention to this sermon. For a reference by Eyebeschuetz to the same three beverages in another context, see Shohet, *Beginnings of the Haskalah*, p. 275, n. 71. The use of coffee as a metaphor for newness requires more extensive study.

be recognized as a necessary prerequisite for the observance of nocturnal vigils.

The widening popularity of coffee in eighteenth-century Italy seems to have breathed new life into the observance not only of *Tikkun Hazot*, but also of the Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah vigils. The history of their dissemination in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is a more complicated process than can be adequately chronicled and analyzed here. Yet it may be noted that only in the latter century, as coffee entered the fabric of everyday life in Italy, did mass-market editions of the readings for these two nights roll regularly off the presses. No less than eight editions of the *Tikkun* for Hoshana Rabbah appeared in Italy between 1728 and 1785, and in Venice alone no less than five editions of readings for Shavuot night were published between 1730 and 1767. These editions, moreover, were explicitly intended for use by those remaining awake all night, and contained prayers to be recited at the successful conclusion of the sleepless vigil.⁸⁰ If coffee was in these years an integral part of the observance in Worms, its role could hardly have been less central in a city such as Venice, where the beverage was first introduced to Europe, and which, in the mid-eighteenth century, boasted some 200 coffeehouses, including some in its ghetto.⁸¹

In the Piazza San Marco, where the best-known of these were situated, a contemporary could experience night as “a dazzle of everlasting day.” In other parts of the city it was also common for the cafes to remain open past midnight (despite the existence of regulations to the contrary) and for the principal thoroughfares to be thronged until early morning.⁸² With the advent of the coffeehouses as hubs of nocturnal sociability, in Venice and elsewhere in Italy, remaining awake past midnight became increasingly a way of life. Further research is admittedly required in order to show precisely how this shift affected Jewish society. It would appear, however, that the surge in the popularity of nocturnal rituals was one of its consequences.

80. See, for example, *Tikkun Hoshana Rabbah* (Venice, 1728), fol. 101a. This work appears to be modeled upon the edition of Amsterdam, 1727. For the earliest publication (1710) of the prayer to be recited at the end of the Hoshana Rabbah vigil, see Wilhelm, “Sidrei Tikkunim,” p. 143. See also *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* (Venice, 1730), fol. 68a. In contrast to the editions of *Shefer Tikkunim* which began to appear in the seventeenth century (cf. above, n. 58), the all-night character of the Shavuot rite is stressed in its introduction. For eighteenth-century editions of the two *Tikkunim*, see Friedberg, *Bet 'Eked Sefarim*, p. 1123.

81. See above, n. 64. On the number of cafes, see also Andrieux, *Daily Life*, p. 22. On coffee in the Hoshana Rabbah vigil in Ancona, see the 1766 *Pragmatica* (cited above, n. 68), par. 16.

82. Andrieux, *Daily Life*, p. 23. Note also Hazlitt, *Venetian Republic*, pp. 791–792 (especially his quotation from Romanin), and Ukers, *All About Coffee*, p. 28.

The vigils of Shavuot and Hoshana Rabbah, previously limited in their appeal and relatively brief in duration, came to be widely observed as all-night affairs. This was due more to the availability of coffee than to the habit of frequenting coffeehouses, but the vogue achieved by the midnight rite of *Tikkun Hazot* would seem to have been equally linked to the latter. After long lagging behind the less-demanding observances of *Shomrim la-Boker*, it came, during the eighteenth century, to enjoy unprecedented popularity among Italian Jewry. Those Jews who, in increasing numbers, were in the habit of spending their evenings in the cafes of the ghettos evidently found it more attractive to recite *Tikkun Hazot* late at night than to rise even shortly before dawn for *Shomrim la-Boker*. The former rite was congruent with their lifestyle, while the latter clashed with it. The kabbalists, it should be noted, had insisted on the recitation of the *Tikkun* after midnight, but not on its recitation after a period of sleep. And lest it be overhastily objected that habitués of cafes are not the sorts of people to show enthusiasm for mystical night rituals, let it be noted that in the religious culture of the Mediterranean such combinations were, and indeed are, rather commonplace. An eighteenth-century traveler, for example, reports the observation concerning the Venetians that “they spend one half of their time in committing sin, and the other half in begging God’s pardon.”⁸³

As Braudel has noted, “A whole book could be written on the devotional practices imported to all parts of Europe” by the men of the Mediterranean.⁸⁴ We have here dealt with only a small chapter of that book, which must, of course, be a collaborative effort. Coffee and *Tikkun Hazot*, as we have noted, both originated in the Middle East and came gradually to Italy by way of the Mediterranean. News of both first arrived there late in the sixteenth century, and in the seventeenth their dissemination proceeded somewhat haltingly. In the eighteenth century, however, both became integral features of the nightlife of Italian Jewry. The vigils of Shavuot and Hoshana

83. Charles Thompson, *Travels of the Late Charles Thompson, Containing His Observations on France, Italy, Turkey in Europe, 1744*, vol. 1, p. 257. On Mediterranean religiosity, see the brief but suggestive remarks of Braudel, *Mediterranean World*, pp. 832–833. Mention should perhaps be made in this connection of the criticism by the moralist R. Eliezer Papo of those who hurried through *Selihot* on the first night of their recitation in order to allow time for sitting afterwards in the coffeehouses. See his *Pele Yo’etz* (Bucharest, 1860), p. 208, cited also by Löw (above, n. 8).

84. Braudel, *Mediterranean World*, p. 833.

Rabbah also thrived with the aid of coffee, not only in Italy but as far north as Worms. The conspicuous role eventually accorded that beverage in their observance is perhaps most clearly evident in the account provided by a nineteenth-century Jewish traveler in North Africa. Concerning Shavuot he wrote, “On the first evening the families assemble in their houses,” reading biblical portions aloud by turns, “and during the pauses, coffee and other refreshments are handed round.” In Tripoli, on the night of Hoshana Rabbah, he observed, “the reading is done as in Europe,” but “between each part selichot is [*sic*] spoken and the shofar sounded; much coffee is drunk on the occasion.”⁸⁵ There are doubtless other sources from which the caffeine nexus of these vigils emerges with equal clarity.

* * *

Although a separate study would be necessary to examine the impact of coffee on modern Jewish society and culture, let us conclude, by way of epilogue, with two examples of the wider implications that a cup of coffee might have. The tension between the attractiveness of coffee as a stimulant and the less-than-wholesome image of the coffeehouse, evident in Radbaz’s sixteenth-century responsum on the subject, continues to animate the reverie experienced one morning by Hirshl in Agnon’s *Simple Story*. Upon waking in Buczacz (Szybusz) after a bad night’s sleep, the following went through his mind:

What he needed to put him back on his feet was a good cup of coffee. . . . A cup of strong coffee was his one hope of recovery—yet where was he going to get it? What passed for coffee in his home was merely coffee-colored milk. Once after his marriage he had been to Stanislaw and had drunk real coffee in a coffeehouse. Of course, there were such places in Szybusz too, but no self-respecting citizen would be caught in one.

Here it is time for morning prayers, thought Hirshl, and all I can think of is coffeehouses. Yet what was so sinful about a coffeehouse? It was simply a matter of local custom. Perhaps no decent person would frequent one in Szybusz, but there were towns where this was not at all the case.⁸⁶

In Venice, where local custom had indeed endorsed the respectability of

85. Israel Joseph Benjamin (Benjamin II), *Eight Years in Asia and Africa: From 1846 to 1855* (Hanover, 1859), pp. 282, 284.

86. S. Y. Agnon, *A Simple Story*, trans. Hillel Halkin (New York, 1985), pp. 163–164.

coffeehouses, the ritual associations of coffee, developed, perhaps, through the nocturnal rites described above, have survived well into the present century. An ethnologist doing fieldwork in the ghetto of Venice a decade ago noted the custom of its Jews to visit a cafe immediately upon returning from a funeral. Then, as in centuries past, the body of the deceased would be transported by boat to the Lido, and return from a funeral thus entailed, in a wider sense, return to the ghetto. Signor Aboaff explained that “here, after a funeral you go for a drink so that the ‘gezera’ won’t follow you home. . . . You go to a cafe . . . You take the disaster to a bar.” Signora Sullam, another elderly resident of the ghetto, added, “On leaving the cemetery . . . We go to get coffee. Oh it’s terrible if you go straight home.”⁸⁷

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87. Stephen Sipporin, “Continuity and Innovation in the Jewish Festivals in Venice, Italy” (Ph.D. diss., Indiana, 1982), p. 147. The author regards the funeral customs of Venetian Jewry as an “example of the oldest stratum of folk culture which serves the community today” (ibid. p. 143).

THE NIGHTLY CRY, THE SONG OF TORAH

By **Yaakov S. Weinstein** - May 28, 2020



YAAKOV S. WEINSTEIN

Lamentations

Arise! Call out (*roni*) at night! ... Pour out your heart like water before God! Raise your hands to Him for the soul of your youth, who are enwrapped in hunger on every corner. (**Lamentations 2:19**)

The anguished call of the prophet Jeremiah (author of Lamentations, as per *Bava Batra 15a*) echoes off the cobblestones of Jerusalem. "God has left us, His Temple is destroyed! Zion lays in ruins, her youth starving in the streets! How can you sleep? How can you stay still? Pour out your heart like water, raise your hands in prayer!"

Yet, Jeremiah's choice of verb for the verse in Lamentations is surprising. Rather than telling the people to call out (*za'aki* or *tza'aki*), cry (*bekhi*), or even awaken (*oori*), Jeremiah says *roni*. This word comes from the noun *rinah*, song, as in the verse, "Then our mouths shall be filled with

laughter, and our tongues, with song (*rinah*)" ([Psalms 126:2](#)). Why? *Rinah* connotes positivity and joy, surely not appropriate for the dead of night amongst the ruins of Jerusalem!

The classical commentators were cognizant of this problem and suggest that the translation of *rinah* as song is incorrect, or at least incomplete. [Ibn Ezra](#) claims that the root *rinah* simply means to raise one's voice, be it in song or in elegy. The Midrash ([Sifrei Devarim 26](#)) lists *rinah* as one of the formulations used for prayer, which may reflect thanksgiving or supplication. Both explanations fit our expectation of the verse.

Jeremiah calls upon a people struck by catastrophe to reject acceptance and complacency. There are widows crying in the streets, there are orphaned children wailing in the darkness. Empathize with them, feel their pain. God is no longer close by to comfort them. Arise! Raise your voices in prayer to God!

Nighttime Torah Study

R' Yohanan said: the song (*rinah*) of Torah is only at night, as it says, "Arise! Call out (*rinah*) at night!" ([Leviticus Rabbah 19](#))

The Sages speak in superlatives of one who spends the night time hours engaged in Torah study. Such people are as the priests who served in the Temple ([Menahot 110a](#)), they are blessed with favor and grace ([Avodah Zarah 3b](#)), only they can acquire the crown of Torah ([Mishneh Torah, Hilkhos Talmud Torah 3:13](#)). Why then, does R' Yohanan see fit to use a verse in Lamentations to highlight the uniqueness of a nighttime Torah vigil? Or, reformulating the question from the opposite perspective, how does the study of Torah at night fit the call of Jeremiah?

Previously, we had interpreted the verb *rinah* as raising one's voice in mourning and elegy, and as calling out in prayer and supplication. Jeremiah certainly wants the people to mourn for the destruction of the Temple and to pray for the starving youth fainting in the streets of Jerusalem. For Torah study to fit with Jeremiah's exhortation it must fulfill these functions. Can the learning of Torah manifest mourning and prayer?

Torah Study as Mourning

The suggestion that Torah study can manifest or fulfill mourning is, on its face, not only incorrect but incongruous. One is prohibited from learning Torah while in mourning because it is a source of joy ([Mo'ed Katan 21a](#) and [Rashi s.v. "v-assur"](#)). Yet, R' Soloveitchik asserts that the learning of Torah on Tish'ah be-Av in order to appreciate and consequences of the events on that day, is a fulfillment of mourning:

While the study of Torah is prohibited on Tish'ah be-Av, the study of the events that happened on Tish'ah be-Av is not only permitted but is, in itself, a fulfillment of *avelut* (mourning). Understanding what Tish'ah be-Av means – a retrospective reexperiencing and reliving of the events it commemorates, appreciating its meaning in Jewish history and particularly the consequences and results of the catastrophe that struck us so many years ago that it commemorates – is identical to *kiyyum avelut* (a fulfillment of mourning). On Tish'ah be-Av *avelut* means to understand what happened, and that understanding or intellectual analysis is to be achieved... in the light of both *Torah she-bi-khtav* and *Torah she-be-al peh*, the Written and Oral Law. These are our only frames of reference... (R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik, *The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways*)

R' Soloveitchik's approach is most appropriate for Tish'ah be-Av, the actual day of the Temple's destruction. On that day, we must relive the events of the destruction of the Temple and its historical consequences of exile, antisemitism, and Holocaust. However, the ramifications of the Temple's destruction from a Torah perspective are much more broad and perhaps just as tragic. With the destruction of the Temple, huge swaths of Torah lost their purpose. Hundreds of commandments were rendered irrelevant. Most of the mishnaic orders of *Zeraim* (Seeds), *Kodshim* (Holy Things), and *Taharot* (Purities) suddenly became obsolete. How do we mourn this loss? How can we reexperience and relive a de-actualization of Torah? Where is our fulfillment of mourning for God's word that now has no ready audience?

R' Yohanan sees in the lament of Jeremiah not only a call to mourn, but instructions on how to mourn. Just like on Tish'ah be-Av we mourn via the study of Torah, so too every evening. On Tish'ah be-Av, our mourning is concentrated on the specific events of the day and its consequences as recorded by our Sages. The rest of the year, our mourning encompasses Torah life as a whole and its incompleteness in a post-Temple world. On Tish'ah be-Av, specific portions of Torah allow us to relive the destruction of the Temple and its meaning in Jewish history. The rest of the year, by exploring all of Torah, the blueprint of Creation, we can begin to fathom the beauty of God's actual plan for the universe, not the shadow-world we currently inhabit. With this comprehension we can truly mourn over the destruction of the Temple. Only through Torah can we realize our loss and mourn what we once had.

However, R' Yohanan goes a step further. It is not only that the learning of Torah constitutes mourning. Jeremiah's instruction of Torah study as the way to mourn is also an elixir.

"A song of ascents. Behold, bless God, all servants of God who stand nightly in the house of God," (*Psalms 134:1*). What does the verse mean "at night?"^[1] R' Yohanan says, "These are the Torah scholars who engage in Torah at night. The verse considers them as having performed the Temple service." (*Menahot 110a*)

The Temple may have been destroyed, its service may have disappeared. But one who studies Torah can accrue the same merit and foster the same relationship with God as those who performed this service.

Torah Study as Prayer

Solomon stood before the altar of God in front of the entire community of Israel and spread his palms towards Heaven. And he said... You should turn, my God, to the prayer and supplication of Your servant, to hear the calls (*rinah*) and prayer which Your servant prays before You today. (Kings I 8:22-23, 28)

King Solomon's address to the people of Israel at the dedication of the Temple ends with a lengthy prayer to God. This prayer entreats God that the Temple should fulfill its divine purpose: to be the place where all humanity turns to pray to God, and where all are assured that God has heard their prayers. As described by King Solomon, the Temple is God's house where those who seek go to find answers, and those who are pained go to find comfort. Can such a connection still exist in a post-Temple era?

Rabbi Elazar said: From the day the Temple was destroyed an iron wall separates Israel from their Father in Heaven, as it says (Ezekiel 4:3) "And take for yourself an iron griddle, and set it as an iron wall between yourself and the city...it will be a sign for the house of Israel." (*Berakhot* 32b)

The destruction of the Temple severed the prayer channel between God and man. Obstructing open communications with God is a wall, blocking Israel's prayers from reaching His Heavenly abode. Can our prayer even penetrate this wall?

The answer is no, the wall is impenetrable. Even God, as it were, can only, "Watch out the windows, and peer through the cracks" (*Song of Songs* 2:9). Yet, at times, God will, as it were, tunnel through the wall. He will frequent the synagogue and attend the communal prayer service:

Ravin bar Rav Adda said in the name of R' Yitzhak: From where is it derived that the Holy One, Blessed be He, is located in a synagogue? It says: "God stands in the congregation of God..." (*Psalms* 82:1). And from where is it derived that ten people who pray, the Divine Presence is with them? "God stands in the congregation of God..." (*Berakhot* 6a)

When God attends communal prayer, our prayers can reach Him, and His presence can still be felt by His people.

At least during the day. But what about at night?^[2] How can we feel the Divine Presence when the synagogues are closed and the streets are empty? The Talmud addresses this as well. At night prayer is replaced by Torah:

And from where is it derived that when even one sits and engages in Torah study, the Divine Presence is with him? As it says ([Exodus 20:21](#)) : "In every place where I cause My Name to be mentioned, I will come to you and bless you." ([Berakhot 6a](#))

Torah study, even when isolated and alone, becomes a prayer service.^[3] Just as God is present at the communal prayer service, so too he is with those who study Torah. Thus, God's plan to live amongst His people can still be attained, and those looking to speak will even now find an open channel.

The identification of Torah study with prayer is attested to by another Talmudic statement extolling the virtues of learning at night:

Reish Lakish said: One who occupies himself with Torah at night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, spreads upon him a thread of grace during the day, as it says ([Psalms 42:9](#)), "By day, God will command His grace, and at night His song (*shirah*) shall be with me [as a prayer to God the guardian of my life]." What is the reason that by day, God will extend His grace? For at night His song (*shirah*, referring to Torah study) is with me. ([Avodah Zarah 3b](#))

Reish Lakish, the great student and study partner of R' Yohanan, asserts that one who studies Torah at night is rewarded with grace and favor. His proof text, however, does not mention Torah study explicitly, but rather uses the word *shirah*, which in the context of the verse in Psalms refers to prayer. By identifying Torah learning with *shirah*, Reish Lakish is informing us that Torah study at night becomes prayer.

How does the learning of Torah constitute prayer? R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik (*Shiurim I-zekher Abba Mori* volume 2), based on the formulation of Maimonides in his [Sefer Ha-Mitzvot \(Aseh 5\)](#), categorizes both Torah study at night and prayer as "service of the heart." This concept consists of three elements which both prayer and Torah study share. Engaging in either prayer or Torah study: (1) demonstrates acceptance of the yoke of Heaven, (2) are modes of making requests of God,^[4] (3) is a form of praise to God.^[5] I would submit that the ultimate purpose of both prayer and Torah study is to connect with God and thus bring Him into our world. This is done in prayer by praising Him for all He has created, by sharing with Him our hopes and dreams, and by thanking Him for all He has done and continues to do for us. When learning Torah, we connect with God by studying the blueprint of the universe, and thus engage in an exploration of how our world should be. Studying the blueprint declares that we are not satisfied with the world as it is, but we desire that it fulfill God's original design. In this way, we implicitly ask for God to intervene and coordinate that transformation.

In the call of Jeremiah, the word *rinah*, understood as prayer, is parallel to the other parts of the verse, “pour out your heart... raise your hands...” in prayer. The prayer sought by Jeremiah is one of pleading with God for a rebuilt Temple and a reborn Israel – in other words, a return to how the world ought to be. Hence, the appropriateness of Torah study in answer to Jeremiah’s exhortation.

Torah Study as Repentance^[6]

Jeremiah calls on the people to mourn, to pray, to not peacefully accept the post-Temple world as the “new normal.” However, to turn back the clock to a time when Jews could directly commune with God, to bring His presence back into our lives, requires one more element, *teshuvah* (repentance). Can we read repentance into Jeremiah’s exhortation to awaken at night? In fact, the *Targum Yerushalmi* does just that in interpreting a later part of our verse, “Pour, like water, the crookedness of your heart and return in *teshuvah*.” However, a hint of this can even be found in the first part of the verse, for the word *rinah* also may refer to *teshuvah*:

R’ Eliezer said: [the Jewish] redemption from Egypt was enabled by five catalysts: troubles, repentance, ancestral merit, mercy, and the arrival of the time to end the exile... So too, at the end of days [Jewish] redemption will be predicated on these five catalysts... “When He hears their call (*rinah*)” (*Psalms 106:44*), this refers to repentance (*teshuvah*). (*Yalkut Shimoni on Torah 827*)

If *rinah* refers to *teshuvah*, as *Yalkut Shimoni* suggests, then we can read Jeremiah’s call at its outset as *teshuvah*-oriented: Arise! Call out, raise your voice in repentance at night!

Is repentance possible in a post-Temple world? King Solomon’s address at the dedication of the Temple characterizes the Temple as the place for one to repent and receive forgiveness for their sins: “Should the heavens be shut and there be no rain, because they have sinned against You. Then they pray toward this place and acknowledge Your name and repent of their sins when You answer them. Hear in heaven and pardon the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel...” (*Kings I 8:35-36*). Without the Temple the road of the repentant is a long and arduous one:

Amongst the ways of repentance are, for the penitent to continuously cry out with tears and supplications before God, to give charity according to his means, and to greatly distance himself from that with which he has sinned, to change his name, as if saying: “I am now another person, and not that person who performed those deeds,” to completely change his conduct for the good and straight path, and to exile himself from his place of residence, for exile provides atonement for sins, because it leads him to submissiveness and to be humble and of low spirit. (*Mishneh Torah, Hilkhot Teshuvah 2:4*)

With the destruction of the Temple, it is no longer possible to present oneself before the Almighty where He is found and simply repent. The call of Jeremiah recognizes this. To attain forgiveness one must spend sleepless nights calling out to God, pouring out one's heart like water and raising one's hands to Him in prayer.

Is there another way?

The Talmud (*Yoma 86b*) identifies two unequal pathways towards *teshuvah*: *teshuvah* out of fear, and *teshuvah* out of love. The first method transforms willful transgressions into unintentional sins, while the second transforms willful transgressions into merits. How can one attain *teshuvah* out of love?

Rabbi Hama the son of Rabbi Hanina, also said: Why are tents juxtaposed to streams, as it is written, "As streams stretched forth, as gardens by the riverside; as aloes [*ahalim*] planted by God, as cedars by the water" (*Numbers 24:6*)? To tell you, just as streams elevate a person from ritual impurity to purity after he immerses himself in their water, so too tents [*ohalim*] of Torah elevate a person from the judgment of guilt to that of merit. (*Berakhot 15b-16a*)

Rabbi Hama the son of Rabbi Hanina identifies what action can be taken to transform judgments of guilt into that of merit: the study of Torah! This implies that one attains *teshuvah* out of love via the learning of Torah. Indeed, this claim rings true, since it is via Torah study that one can come to the love of God:

The third *mitzvah* is that we are commanded to love God, exalted be He. This is to understand and closely examine His commandments, His statements, and His works, until we understand Him; and through this understanding to achieve a feeling of ecstasy. This is the goal of the commandment to love God. The language of *Sifrei* (*Deuteronomy 33*): For it says, "You shall love God your Lord" (*Deuteronomy 6:5*), how can I come to love God? It says, "and these words which I command you today shall be upon your heart," (*Deuteronomy 6:6*) that through this you will recognize the One Who spoke, and the world was. (*Maimonides Sefer Ha-Mitzvot, Aseh 3*).

By learning Torah one comes to love God, and through the love of God one can achieve repentance – not just any repentance, but one that turns transgressions into merits.

This analysis leads us in a full circle back to R' Yohanan's interpretation of *rinah* as Torah study. From the time Jeremiah was a young man, his call to the people of Israel centered on one concept: *teshuvah*. This was so before the destruction of the Temple and certainly must be true afterwards. Yet, R' Yohanan is troubled. Is true repentance possible without a Temple? Can one possibly appear before God to beg for penitence when He is hidden? To this, R' Yohanan answers in the positive. True repentance is possible via the study of Torah.

The Torah of Exile

At midnight I arise to praise You for Your just rules. ([Psalms 119:62](#))

Rabbi Levi said: "The harp was suspended over the bed of David and when it was midnight, the northern wind would blow and the harp would play by itself... When David heard its sound he would arise and study Torah. When Israel heard the music, they would say, "If King David is engaged in Torah study, then we should be all the more so!" Immediately they studied the Torah. ([Lamentations Rabbah 2:22](#))

Must the nighttime engagement in Torah be one of praying and repentance? Must *rinah* always be twisted to refer to mourning and not rejoicing?

The above *midrash*, commenting on the very verse of Jeremiah's call, informs us that Jeremiah was not the first to wake people in the midst of the night to engage in the study of Torah. King David did likewise, but in a different historical, sociological, and religious context. Jeremiah called out bitterly, to shock people from their complacency after the Temple's destruction. King David gently brought people out of their restful slumber. Jeremiah's anguished cries were for Torah study as mourning, prayer, and repentance. King David's melodious harp encouraged the Torah study of paeans and praise of God. Jeremiah cried over Jews in exile, King David rejoiced over the Jewish golden era.

Alternatively, Reish Lakish said: One who occupies himself with Torah in this world, which is comparable to night, the Holy One, Blessed be He, extends a thread of kindness over him in the World-to-Come, which is comparable to day, as it says, "By day, the Lord will command His kindness, and in the night His song shall be with me." ([Avodah Zarah 3b](#))

In exile, the nighttime Torah vigil is one of mourning. In the era of redemption, the era of the World-to-Come, this Torah will become one of song and rejoicing.

Rejoicing in Exile

Can one find joy in the study of Torah even at times of darkness, even in the bitterness of exile?

Perhaps R' Yohanan's identification of *rinah* with the learning of Torah is meant precisely to accomplish this transformation. There is no doubt that Jeremiah's call into the darkness of night was to arouse the people to mourning, prayer, and repentance. What else could it be at a time when God has appeared to abandon His people and allowed his abode to be destroyed? Yet, Jeremiah invokes a word that usually means sing and rejoice. Why? To this R' Yohanan replies, because there is a way to transform the suffering and pain into song and rejoicing, by learning Torah.

Jeremiah calls on the people to mourn the loss of the Temple, Torah, and the ruin of God's plan as to how the world should be. Torah is the blueprint of that plan and learning Torah provides us a substitute to the ideal of Temple service.^[7]

Jeremiah calls on the people to pray. Yet, after the destruction of the Temple, there is a wall of iron between God and the Jewish Nation. Studying Torah brings God's presence down to the Jewish people, thus circumventing the wall.

Jeremiah calls on the people to repent for their sins. Yet, after the destruction of the Temple, there is no place to go to seek God's forgiveness. Torah study is a method of turning transgressions into merit.

The nighttime study of Torah can be one of rejoicing even at a time of exile. The divine glory dwells before us even in darkness. Jeremiah provided us the key to this understanding by using the word *rinah*, song. For though we have lost the Temple and have been banished from our land, we still sing the joyful song of Torah before God.

[1] This verse is inherently problematic as it implies that there is service to be done in the Temple at night. While it is true that at certain times there is, in fact, some service that is either left over for night or begins at night (R' Amos Hakham in *Da'at Mikra to Psalms* suggests that the verse referred to those who would come early to the Temple on holidays), the main part of the Temple service was certainly by day.

[2] See *Maharsha, Tamid 32b*.

[3] The intertwining of Torah study and prayer is found throughout the works of our Sages. The *mishnah* in *Berakhot (4:2)* records that "Rabbi Nehunyah ben HaKanah would offer a brief prayer when he entered the study hall and when he left." The Talmud in *Mo'ed Katan (29a)* states, "Rabbi Levi said: One who leaves from the synagogue and goes to the study hall, and from the study hall to the synagogue, merits to receive the Divine Presence." Learning Torah even becomes part of our liturgy, as with the reading of Shema, the recitation of the sacrifices, the *Tosefta* of R' Yishmael's 13 principles of derivation, and the *mishnayot* of the second chapter of *Shabbat* on Friday night. For further examples, see R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik in *Shiurim I-zekher Abba Mori* volume 2.

[4] R' Soloveitchik explains that God understands each individual's needs without the person stating them explicitly. Learning Torah constitutes a request in which one simply throws his burden on God. R' Jonathan Ziring ("The Midnight Song: Nocturnal Torah Study in Solitude," *Tradition* 52:1 (Winter 2020): 28) suggests that this is because engagement with Torah is a process of understanding God's will as expressed in our world. This is an acknowledgement that God knows what is best for everyone

without being asked. The explanation I suggest in the text is similar, but with the emphasis on looking for the world repaired rather than a person's desires.

[5] R' Joseph B. Soloveitchik (*Shiurim I-zekher Abba Mori* volume 2) demonstrates that the true fulfillment of mourning is also done in the heart. In mourning as well we find acceptance of the yoke of Heaven via *tzidduk ha-din*, Justification of God's judgment, and praise to God via the recitation of *kaddish*.

[6] See also R' Daniel Z. Feldman, "[The Teshuvah Beyond Teshuvah](#)," *Rosh HaShana To-Go* (Tishrei 5769): 9.

[7] Avraham said before God: Master of the Universe... when the Temple is not standing, what will become of [the Jewish Nation]? God said to him: I have already enacted for them the order of offerings. When they read them before Me, I will ascribe them credit as though they had sacrificed them before Me and I will pardon them for all their transgressions. ([Ta'anit 27b](#))



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