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KABBALIST AND COMMUNAL LEADER: RABBI YUDEL ROSENBERG AND THE CANADIAN JEWISH COMMUNITY

The emigration of millions of Eastern European Jews from their native lands in the latter half of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries had an immeasurable effect upon the history of the Jewish people and of Judaism in the modern era. In particular, this immigration transformed the North American Jewish community from a relative backwater of world Jewry to one of the most significant Jewish communities in the world in a matter of fifty years.

Many have chronicled the emigration of Eastern European Jews to North America, approaching the subject from numerous perspectives. A common thread in most of these analyses is the transformation of the emigrants in adapting to their new environment socially, economically and religiously.¹ Until relatively recently, however, one aspect of this transformation remained relatively unexamined by scholars—the role of Orthodox Judaism and particularly of the Orthodox rabbinate in this process of change and adaptation. The reason for this neglect is fairly clear. Most scholars approaching the subject of the impact of immigration upon North American Jewry tended to see Orthodoxy as a basically foreign implant on American soil. It possessed, to be sure, a residual appeal to a large segment of the immigrant population. In the view of these scholars, however, it was not a movement destined to flourish in the New World. The process of “Americanization” undergone by these Jewish immigrants was seen as one of either rebellion against the religious and cultural norms of Eastern European Judaism or

transmutation of these norms into something distinctly “American”. In this view, the Orthodox rabbinate was seeking to preserve the very norms which were so quickly dissolving. It constituted a voice from the past, unable, despite its best efforts, to prevent this rebellion and transmutation.²

Recently, North American Orthodox Judaism has received a reappraisal which includes a more sympathetic examination of the Eastern European immigrant rabbinate. This is due in large part to the contemporary resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in North America. While it is true that most of the credit for this resurgence can be given to the influence of a post-Holocaust immigration of rabbinic leadership, it is nonetheless clear that the basis for the resurgence was laid in the early part of this century by the almost wholly immigrant Orthodox rabbinate of the time.³

Examining the lives of these immigrant rabbis,⁴ what becomes apparent is that they were more than staunch preservers of their tradition. Beyond that, many of them worked actively to accommodate the Orthodox tradition to the conditions of modern society. They, and like-minded rabbis remaining in Europe, strengthened Jewish Orthodoxy both ideologically and intellectually to face and meet the challenges of modernity.⁵

In this article, I will discuss the life and works of one of these immigrant rabbis. His name was Judah [Yudel] Rosenberg (1859-1935).⁶ Through an examination of his extant writings, it is possible to provide a comprehensive portrayal of the challenges facing an Orthodox rabbi in Canada in the first third of this century, as well as understand the intellectual daring of the solution he proposed for the spiritual regeneration of Orthodoxy.

Rosenberg was born in Poland in the town of Skaryszew, near Radom. He received a traditional Hasidic education in both rabbinic literature and kabbalah. He was also exposed to secular learning both through the Hebrew works of the nineteenth century modernist movement known as “haskalah” [Enlightenment], and through his mastery of the Russian language which he studied in order to obtain governmental permission to function as a rabbi.⁷

It is noteworthy that, unlike many Eastern European Jews with a similar background who were exposed to secular thought, Rosenberg remained loyal to the Orthodox tradition. Despite his lack of rebellion

against the Jewish tradition, however, Rosenberg's exposure to secular thought was decisive in determining his attitude toward that tradition. Throughout his life, he retained an abiding interest in science, politics and economics and, more importantly, internalized many of these interests into his Judaic thought.⁸

Rosenberg received rabbinic ordination, and after a couple of failed attempts at business, functioned as a rabbi in the town of Tarlau and in the cities of Lublin, Warsaw and Lodz. He emigrated to Canada in 1913, at the invitation of a congregation of Polish Jews in Toronto. In 1919, he moved to Montreal, where he served as rabbi until his death.

During the last thirty years of his life, Rosenberg wrote prolifically, in both Hebrew and Yiddish, on a wide variety of subjects. For a scholarly audience, he wrote a supercommentary on the talmudic tractate, Nedarim,⁹ a number of responsa [answers to legal questions],¹⁰ a volume of homilies on the Pentateuch,¹¹ and a short-lived rabbinic journal.¹² He also wrote or edited a number of liturgical and halakhic works meant to be read by a popular audience.¹³ A book he wrote on Jewish folk medicine went through numerous editions.¹⁴ He wrote several hagiographical works, including biographies of King Solomon,¹⁵ the Prophet Elijah,¹⁶ two Hasidic leaders—the “Grandfather” of Shpole¹⁷ and Elijah Guttmacher of Graetz¹⁸—and, perhaps most notably, a series of stories concerning Rabbi Judah Loewe of Prague, most prominent of which was his account of Rabbi Loewe and the Golem.¹⁹ Joseph Dan wrote that this story

seems to be the best known contribution of twentieth century Hebrew literature to world literature. There is but one source for almost all the stories on this subject—the small book of Rabbi Judah Yudel Rosenberg....The vast majority of this book is the fruit of the author's creative imagination.²⁰

Rosenberg's major literary project, in which he was engaged for some twenty-five years, was a translation and reworking of the classic work of Jewish mysticism, the *Zohar*. He reedited the work to form a true commentary on the Bible and translated it from an often obscure Aramaic to a clear and simple Hebrew. He also added his own commentary.²¹ As I will argue later on, this project was of the utmost importance for Rosenberg's vision of the regeneration of Judaism.

Within the Canadian Jewish community, Rosenberg elicited both respect and controversy. He had considerable influence in Orthodox circles in the two major centres of Jewish population in Canada: Toronto and Montreal. As well, his reputation spread throughout the Jewish world.²² In particular, his influence was felt in the Canadian Jewish community in the issue of kashrut, the regulation of the Jewish dietary laws.

In the pre-World War I era, the provision of kosher meat in North American Jewish communities was utterly anarchic. Unscrupulous butchers would sell non-kosher meat as kosher and defied most rabbinic attempts to regulate their industry. The situation inspired a major European rabbinic figure to declare that in America, even the stones are impure. This situation spawned several attempts to create a powerful and respected Orthodox rabbinate in New York and elsewhere.²³

Rosenberg, who had been heavily involved in controversies surrounding kashrut during his tenure in Toronto,²⁴ was brought to Montreal by the same issue. Rosenberg's daughter records in her memoir:

Father had originally come to Montreal for a *Din Torah* [rabbinical trial]...between a powerful rabbi and a group of *shoychtim* [ritual slaughterers]. The upshot was that the *shoychtim* were divided into two camps....After the *Din Torah*, father became rabbi of those *shoychtim* whom he thought had been maligned.²⁵

Whereas in Toronto, Rosenberg's scanty income had come primarily from fees paid to him for performing rabbinic functions such as marriages, divorces and circumcisions, in Montreal the bulk of his income was derived from the regulation of kashrut and most of his time was spent in the supervision of kosher slaughtering.²⁶ Efforts to regulate kashrut in Montreal led, in 1922, to the formation of the Jewish Community Council of Montreal [*Va'ad Ha-'ir*]. The *Va'ad* was organized largely to regulate the kosher meat industry in the city. Whereas hitherto payment of those supervising the slaughter and preparation of kosher meat came from the butchers themselves—creating an obvious conflict of interest—now the salaries of those officials would come from a disinterested communal organization, the Council. The Council would receive its funds from a levy placed

upon the slaughter of kosher animals and distribute this income not merely for the salaries of rabbinic supervisors and slaughterers, but also to support local Jewish education.²⁷

The institution of this new system involved the cooperation of the rabbinic supervisors, the slaughterers and the butchers. Such cooperation was by no means easy to obtain in an industry which suffered from nearly constant strife. Rosenberg, in particular, was initially quite ambivalent concerning cooperation with the *Va'ad*, which was under the leadership of his rival, Rabbi Hirsch Cohen. After an initial period of affiliation, Rosenberg and a group of rabbis and slaughterers broke with the *Va'ad* and formed a rump organization which they named *Va'ad ha-Kashrut* of Montreal. This breach caused considerable ill-feeling within the Montreal Jewish community as each side declared the meat produced by the other group to be non-kosher. The fight between the two warring parties involved mass meetings, some violence and a suit brought before the Quebec Superior Court.²⁸ Only in 1925 was the impasse between the two factions resolved when Rosenberg and his group were co-opted into the *Va'ad* organization with Rosenberg serving as vice-chairman of the rabbinical council, a post he retained until his death.

In examining Rosenberg's writings from his Canadian period, it is possible to discern many reflections of the problems and struggles faced by the Orthodox rabbi. The following is typical:

We see with our own eyes...that pious scholars are despised by the people. Their life [is one of] penury and shame. Similarly the religious schools are in a lowly state for the rich men among the people do not wish to support and strengthen them. On the contrary, they...give to support those schools where they make Jewish children into gentiles through teachers...who educate the holy flock in an alien education opposed to the Torah and [Jewish] faith as well as through their directors who are called by the name of "rabbi"—that is to say, "there is evil in him" [ra'bei]....For these leaders and shepherds there is no financial want.²⁹

Rosenberg refers here not to the Protestant school system, which educated the vast majority of Jewish children in Montreal, but rather to non-Orthodox Jewish schools which he felt were detrimental to the

preservation of Judaism. Another reference to non-Orthodox Judaism has to do with the phenomenon, well-attested elsewhere in North America, of immigrants attending services in Reform synagogues in order to hear the polished English sermons of their rabbis. Rosenberg warned:

Hear not the poisoned speeches of the Reform “rabbis,” who possess the selfsame sinful souls of the prophets of Ba‘al, who caused...the destruction of the First Temple, or else the selfsame sinful souls of the Hellenistic leaders who brought upon the Jewish people the destruction of the Second Temple.³⁰

The observance of the Jewish sabbath and holidays has classically been considered the hallmark of Orthodox Judaism.³¹ Thus the non-observance of the sabbath and festivals by vast numbers of Jews was roundly condemned by Rosenberg. He did not, however, merely condemn: He also attempted an analysis of the situation and offered some solutions. Many Jews excused their non-observance by blaming economic conditions which made it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain the sort of job which allowed for sabbath observance. Rosenberg acknowledged this argument and stated that the solution to this problem was to be found in the five-day, forty-hour week, then advocated by labour.³² He further stated, in an argument addressed to the increasing number of Jews who viewed their Judaism as being primarily ethnic rather than religious, that one could justify the observance of the sabbath not merely on religious, but also on nationalistic grounds. Jewish national pride dictated that the Jews should observe their day of rest, as did both Muslims and Christians.³³ Owners of stores and factories employing Jews on the sabbath and festivals were warned of divine punishment awaiting them in the next world.³⁴

Beyond the willful desecration of the sabbath by many Jews, over whom Rosenberg could exercise no control since they had consciously abandoned the halakhah, there was also widespread ignorance of the details of sabbath observance even by those who considered themselves observant. These people thought nothing of performing such actions on the sabbath as pushing baby carriages on the street,³⁵ turning electric lights on and off,³⁶ or purchasing bread (after the sabbath) which had been baked on the sabbath day.³⁷ Even worse than

ignorance was the fact that public desecrators of the sabbath, when they did choose to attend synagogue services, whether on the High Holy Days or else to commemorate the anniversary of a relative's death, could and did receive all possible synagogue honours.³⁸

Despite this, however, Rosenberg recognized that the support of the non-observant was essential for the continuation of Orthodox institutions. This somewhat ambivalent relationship was discussed by Rosenberg in terms of the birds sent out of the ark by Noah:

The raven which fled from Noah symbolizes those merchants who do not observe the sabbath properly and flee from it in order to earn money.... Yet they obtain some merit if they support the Torah and bring bread and livelihood to those who occupy themselves in the Torah. The dove which did not flee...designates those who observe the Torah...[who] say it is better [to obtain] a bitter livelihood from the hand of the Holy One Blessed be He...and to avoid desecration of the sabbath than [to obtain] a sweet, bountiful [livelihood] from flesh and blood [in which] he is forced to desecrate the sabbath.³⁹

Another area of Jewish law which was widely ignored, even by the ostensibly "observant" was the mikveh, the ritual immersion marking the end of the period of forbidden sexual intercourse as determined by the woman's menstrual cycle. Even in those places where ritual baths were established, many women refused to immerse themselves out of modesty or because of fear of unsanitary conditions in those baths. Rosenberg attempted to rectify this situation through the publication of a pamphlet, entitled *Mikveh Yehuda*, giving detailed instructions on how to set up, at minimal cost and effort, a mikveh in one's own home.⁴⁰

Other areas of lax observance attacked by Rosenberg included *sha'atnez*, the mixing of linen and wool in cloth. Because of new manufacturing techniques, thousands of Jews were now guilty of this sin unbeknownst to them.⁴¹ Kashrut, of course, was a primary concern of Rosenberg. He expressed this concern in one of his homilies:

Our sages—their memory be a blessing—stated, "The most proper among butchers is a partner of 'Amalek'....For... 'Amalek... is the impure power which

seeks to defile the mouths of Israel with forbidden foods.’ This is a very grave sin. For a sin [committed] outside the body can be erased through repentance and disappear. However if the body has been fattened with forbidden foods...even if there is repentance, the body remains with the sickness of impurity....Thus...the butcher who boasts that he is kosher and yet does not wish to place himself under the supervision of the local rabbi...signifies that he feeds [the public] non-kosher food.⁴²

Moreover, other Jews felt that kashrut in general was not worth the trouble, since, as they asked: “What did it matter whatever was eaten. Does not everything become dung in the intestines? What holiness is attached to the intestines?”⁴³

In general, the impression given by a perusal of Rosenberg’s writings is that the life of the Orthodox rabbi in Canada was a ceaseless struggle. As Rosenberg put it, somewhat apocalyptically, it was a fight

between the pious remnants of Israel and the helpers of Satan...in the end of days. At that time, Jacob, the spirit of Ancient Israel [*yisra’el sabba*] will remain almost alone with no help or support. For the people will go in darkness and will not wish to go in the spirit of Ancient Israel. Only the tiny minority will be the remnant which God calls. Then Jacob will remain limping on his hip because of the coldness of those who support the Torah “until the dawn breaks”—that is, until the light of messiah glimmers.⁴⁴

The religious outlook of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg, as gleaned from his writings, was quite pessimistic. In this, he was similar to many of his contemporary Orthodox rabbinical colleagues, though he was, perhaps, more articulate than most. It would be wrong, however, to assume that Rosenberg felt that the cause was by any means lost. In fact, he believed that he possessed the key to the salvation of Orthodox Judaism and its reconciliation with the modern world. This key was kabbalah.

By the early twentieth century, kabbalah—the Jewish mystical tradition—had been thoroughly discredited among westernized Jews, and while it was formally honoured by Eastern European Jewry,

particularly by the Hasidim, it was little studied per se by the masses.⁴⁵ Nonetheless kabbalah, to kabbalists, held the promise of nothing less than the salvation of the Jewish people should its study become sufficiently widespread.⁴⁶ Rosenberg, in particular, was convinced that “the raising of the fortune of the community of Israel in its holy faith” rested upon the popularization of kabbalah.⁴⁷ It is to this popularization that he devoted the greatest portion of his literary effort for some twenty-five years.

What Rosenberg hoped to do in his magnum opus, the translation and re-edition of the *Zohar*, was to make this classic of kabbalistic literature available to the masses, which was impossible to accomplish in its original Aramaic. As he stated:

I know that my book...is not needed by the great men who are comparable to divine angels....However they too will rejoice...when they see the awakening of ordinary men to study and understand the statements of the holy *Zohar*. For that is a sign that salvation will be soon revealed....The good of the community of Israel will arise through the study of the *Zohar*. We cannot say that that [salvation] depends upon [the study of the *Zohar*] by the great ones of the generation alone....For there will yet come a new revelation [of the *Zohar*] to the masses of Israel...who will taste of the Tree of Life.⁴⁸

In order to bring about this new revelation of the *Zohar* to ordinary Jews, Rosenberg laid aside his hesitations at translating the *Zohar*.⁴⁹ He felt that the translation would serve to help stem the tide of secularism which was engulfing the Jewish people. Secular literature was popular among Jews, he felt, because the authors took pains to beautify their works and to write them in a pure and simple style, whereas holy books—and the *Zohar* in particular—were written obscurely and looked upon as basically incomprehensible. In such conditions, obviously, no new revelation could come about.⁵⁰

For these reasons, Rosenberg engaged in what he felt to be a war against secularism. His weapon was the pen. Addressing the Jewish masses, he declared:

Why must you bring into your houses impure books and stories full of poison, whether the poison of heresy or the poison of immodesty, and read them. They sully the mind

and deaden the heart... Would it not be better for you to bring into your homes books of ethics and wisdom which are not against the Torah for your sons and daughters to read especially in these times of the “footsteps of the messiah”. For heresy is strengthened every day as our sages—their memory be a blessing—foresaw in the period prior to the revelation of king messiah.

Therefore, there is a holy obligation upon everyone who possesses the fear of God to fight with all his strength against heresy.... The strongest weapon to fight against it is the pen, to distribute to the people books like these from which the heart will be able to understand without going into the “counsel of the wicked.”⁵¹

Once again, the sentiments expressed by Rosenberg, and particularly his belief that the Jewish people was experiencing the events of the generation immediately preceding the messianic advent were common to many rabbis of his time. They constituted a response to the onslaught of modernity and the breakup of the universal halakhic consensus within the Jewish community.⁵² What serves to differentiate him from his peers—beyond his belief in the efficacy of the popularization of kabbalah—was his belief that kabbalah was also the key to the reconciliation of Torah and science.

Rosenberg prided himself on his knowledge of secular affairs and science,⁵³ and always rejected the notion that Torah and science, properly understood, were antagonistic. Taking aim at those Jews who had abandoned the tradition in favour of what they considered to be a modern lifestyle, Rosenberg stated:

Possibly you believe that civilization is connected to the profanation of the sabbath. However, you must know that among the Jewish people there have always been found great sages, researchers, philosophers, doctors, astronomers who were quite Orthodox and strictly observed the sabbath.... Now you understand very well [from the example of] Maimonides that the holy Jewish Torah does not conflict with civilization as fire [does

source of all spiritual sciences and also the source of the highest and noblest morality.”⁵⁵ His goal was to present his material such that it be in accordance with both kabbalah and science “so that all the nations of the world and their sages should see that everything is implicit in the holy Torah.”⁵⁶

Woven in among his commentaries and homilies are a number of instances in which he combined kabbalah and science. In dealing with the creation account in Genesis, Rosenberg connected the sun and the six planets (Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter and Saturn) to the seven lower emanations of God’s power, or in kabbalistic terminology, the *sefirot*. He continued:

And if recently the astronomers have discovered other planets greater and farther away whose orbit is connected with the sun, it must be said that they are symbolized by the three first *sefirot* of the World of Formation [the third, in descending order, of the four supernal “worlds” in Lurianic kabbalah]. Thus kabbalah and science do not contradict each other.⁵⁷

The fact that scientists believed the world was considerably older than the few thousand years provided for by the Jewish calendar was not a matter of concern for Rosenberg. He did not consider this a contradiction because the kabbalistic book, *Sefer ha-Temunah*, had stated that the world had passed through a number of aeons [*shemitot*] prior to the commencement of the present one.⁵⁸

Indeed, Rosenberg was not content to claim that kabbalah did not contradict the scientists. He also declared that the *Zohar* had anticipated the scientists in a number of discoveries:

The holy *Zohar* is not merely a book for the pious....It also contains many matters of natural science....It is known that the *Zohar* appeared in the world a hundred [sic] years before the discovery of the portion of the earth [which includes] America.... Yet there is found in it the science of geography just as was later discovered by the two scientists, Columbus and Copernicus. That is that the earth is round like a ball, that it is inhabited on all sides, and that it possesses two types of motion, one motion spherical...like a wheel on its axle and the other motion elliptical around the sun...

Everyone who understands will be able to see that almost the same things were hinted at [in the *Zohar*] as were discovered by the scientist Copernicus about three hundred years after the *Zohar* appeared in the world.⁵⁹

Similarly the “tower which floated in the air” which Jewish legend ascribed to King Solomon, was considered by Rosenberg to be a machine, similar to the modern airplane, which worked in accordance with natural properties such as electricity and magnetism.⁶⁰

Even evolution, that most threatening of nineteenth century scientific theories for traditional religious belief, had its connection with kabbalah:

It must be seen that the science called...“evolution” which was established by the mad scientist Darwin has something stolen from the words of the *Zohar* which speaks here of the creatures and types of men found in the other portions of the earth.

Darwin, however, wrote that all men are descended from the apes. And it certainly seems that he is like an ape which is accustomed to imitate men in their movements. Thus he desired to imitate and say [things] similar to the words of the *Zohar* only in a spirit of madness....On the contrary, in several places in the *Zohar* the opposite is stated that the apes are the descendents of sinful men. Something similar is agreed upon by the honest scientists of the nations of the world.⁶¹

In general, Rosenberg wished to leave the impression that the *Zohar* was respected by the scholars of the gentiles, who had even translated it into their own languages. How much more so, then, should the Jews honour and study this book “which is ours and which [contains] our soul and the length of our lives.”⁶²

Rosenberg’s mission to save Judaism through the study of kabbalah might well have seemed quixotic to his contemporaries. His ideas concerning the accommodation of science to kabbalah—and vice versa—may seem naive. Yet they constituted the opening phase of a process which, perhaps in a more sophisticated way, marks the intellectual history of Judaism to the present.

Rosenberg published his edition and translation of the *Zohar* in the 1920’s—the same period that Gershom Scholem began his

masterful life—work of rescuing kabbalah from neglect in the academic world. Both Rosenberg and Scholem, then, had much the same mission. Each was to take a subject which was neglected and misunderstood in the context of contemporary Judaism and to make it the key element in the regeneration of Judaism in the modern era. The difference, of course, is in the audiences they addressed. Scholem and his works found popularity in academe. Similarly Rosenberg's translation found a considerable readership among Orthodox Jews, judging from the numerous reprints of the work.⁶³ Moreover both Scholem and Rosenberg seem—in their respective spheres—to have anticipated that kabbalah was to become a prime factor in Judaic thought. Rosenberg must, then, be considered a predecessor of present-day popularizers of kabbalah (such as Adin Steinsaltz and Aryeh Kaplan) for Orthodox Jews.⁶⁴

Although Rosenberg absorbed a good deal of the scientific information available to him in either Hebrew or Yiddish, he was no scientist. Nonetheless, on this issue as well, he anticipated some of the major strategies of contemporary Orthodox Judaism in dealing with scientific theories and discoveries. These include the notion that all valid science is to be found in the Torah in some form, that there is no basic contradiction between Torah and true science, and that science is the handmaiden of Torah.⁶⁵

In short, we have been dealing with a man whose life and works, though they have been obscured by the passage of time, will amply reward further study. Through him, we may come to understand not merely the pressures of the modern world upon Orthodox Judaism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but also the beginnings of the sort of creative response to these pressures which ultimately enabled Orthodoxy to emerge as a viable force within Judaism of the late twentieth century.

ENDNOTES

¹See Moses Rischin, *The Promised City: New York's Jews 1870-1914* (Cambridge, MA., 1962); Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers* (New York, 1976); Arthur A. Goren, *New York Jews and the Quest for Community: the Kehillah Experiment 1908-1922* (New York, 1970).

²Rischin, *The Promised City*, pp. 144ff. Cf. the critique of Rischin by Jenna Joselit, "What Happened to New York's Jewish Jews," *American Jewish History* 73 (1983): 163-172.

³Jeffrey Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators: Varieties of Orthodox Rabbis in America, 1886-1983," *American Jewish Archives* 35 (1983): 100-187; Jonathan Sarna, *People Walk on Their Heads: Moses Weinberger's Jews and Judaism in New York* (New York and London, 1981).

⁴E.g. Aaron Rothkopf-Rakefet, *The Silver Era in American Orthodoxy* (Jerusalem and New York, 1981) and Nathan M. Kaganoff, "An Orthodox Jewish Rabbinate in the South," *American Jewish History* 73 (1983): 56-70.

⁵Cf. Gurock, "Resisters and Accommodators," pp. 109ff; Rod Glogauer, "The Impact of the American Experience Upon Responsa Literature," *American Jewish History* 69 (1979): 257-269. Cf. also Ira Robinson, "Because of Our Many Sins: The Contemporary Jewish World as Reflected in the Responsa of Moses Feinstein," *Judaism* 35 (1986): 35-46.

⁶Most of the details of Rosenberg's biography are taken from a biographical sketch published in a souvenir program for a banquet celebrating his seventieth birthday edited by Dr. Zvi Cohen and entitled *Sefer ha-Zikaron le-Hag Yovel ha-Shiv'im shel...R. Yehuda Rosenberg* (Montreal, 1931), pp. 5-6. Cf. also the memoir of his daughter, Leah Rosenberg, *The Errand Runner: Reflections of a Rabbi's Daughter* (Toronto, 1981). I am presently preparing a biography of Rosenberg entitled "A Kabbalist in Montreal: The Life and Times of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg." I have published the following studies related to various aspects of Rosenberg's career: "A Letter From the Sabbath Queen: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg Addresses Montreal Jewry," *An Everyday Miracle: Yiddish Culture in Montreal*, ed. I. Robinson et al. (Montreal, 1990), pp. 101-114; "The Kosher Meat War and the Jewish Community Council of Montreal, 1922-1925," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 22, 2 (1990): 41-53; "Literary Forgery and Hasidic Judaism: the Case of Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg," *Judaism* 40 (1991): 61-78; "The Uses of the Hasidic Story: Rabbi Yudel Rosenberg and His Tales of the Greiditzer Rabbi," *Journal of the Society of Rabbis in Academia* 1, 1-2 (1991): 17-25; "The Education of an American Orthodox Rabbi: Mayer Joshua Rosenberg Comes to Holyoke, Massachusetts," *Judaism* 40 (1991): 543-551. See also Eli Yassif's excellent edition of several of Rosenberg's Hebrew stories with an extensive introduction: *Ha-Golem mi-Prag u-Ma'asim Nifla'im Aherim* (Jerusalem, 1991).

⁷On the study of Russian by rabbis in that period, see Azriel Shohat, *The 'Crown Rabbinate' in Russia: a Chapter in the Cultural Struggle Between Orthodox Jews and 'Maskilim'* (Haifa, 1975), p. 132 (in Hebrew).

⁸For instances of Rosenberg's interest in these secular subjects, see Rosenberg, *Errand Runner*, pp. 22, 65. Cf. also note 51 below.

⁹Rosenberg, *Yadot Nedarim* (Warsaw, 1902). In citing Rosenberg's works, only the first edition will be given. It should be noted that nearly all his works were published in several editions and that most of his Hebrew works were translated into Yiddish. I am

presently preparing a comprehensive bibliography of Rosenberg's writings. For the present, see David Rome, *A Selected Bibliography of Jewish Canadiana* (Montreal, 1959), s.v. Religion, pp. 16-18.

¹⁰This volume, entitled *Allufei Yehuda*, is listed in the biographical sketch cited in note 7 above as being in manuscript. To my knowledge, it was never printed. Rosenberg did, however, publish the following responsa: *Dvar Halakha 'im Muttar le-She'ol ba-Goral*, *Sefer Goral ha-'Assiriot*, ed. Meir Yehoshua Rosenberg [Yudel Rosenberg's son] (Warsaw, 1904), pp. 19-23; *Me'or ha-Hashmal* (Montreal, 1924).

¹¹Rosenberg, *Peri Yehuda* (Bilgoraj, Poland, 1935).

¹²Rosenberg, *Kol Torah* (Warsaw, 1908). Only one volume of this periodical was published. Approximately half of the material published was written by Rosenberg.

¹³Rosenberg, *Sefer ha-Keri'ah ha-Kedoshah* (New York, 1919); Rosenberg, *Sefer 'Ateret Tiferet* (New York, 1931); Rosenberg, *Mikveh Yehuda* (Toronto, 1914?); Rosenberg, *Seder Hakafot* (Montreal, 1919); Rosenberg, *Seder ha-Prozbul* (Piotrkow, 1910); *Darsha Zemer u-Fishtim* (Piotrkow, 1912); Rosenberg, *A Brivele fun di zisse mame shabbes malkesa zu ihre zin und tekhter fun idishn folk* (Montreal, 1924); Rosenberg, *Sefer Refu'at ha-Nefesh u-Refu'at ha-Guf*.

¹⁴Rosenberg, *Sefer Refa'el ha-Mal'akh* (Piotrkow, 1911). He also translated a work on homeopathic medicine, published in Piotrkow in 1912.

¹⁵Rosenberg, *Sefer Divrei ha-Yamim le-Shlomo ha-Melekh* (Piotrkow, 1914).

¹⁶Rosenberg, *Sefer Eliyahu ha-Navi* (Piotrkow, 1910).

¹⁷Rosenberg, *Tiferet MAHAR'EL mi-Shpoli* (Piotrkow, 1912).

¹⁸Rosenberg, *Der Greidizer* (Piotrkow, n.d.).

¹⁹Rosenberg, *Sefer Nifla'ot ha-MAHARAL 'im ha-Golem*. On the subject of the Maharal of Prague, Rosenberg also wrote *Haggadat ha-MAHARAL mi-Prag* (Warsaw, 1905) and *Sefer Hoshen ha-Mishpat shel ha-Kohen ha-Gadol* (Piotrkow, 1913). He claimed to base all three works on manuscripts from the "Royal Library of Metz". However it is apparent from a perusal of these works that they constitute Rosenberg's original writings. See the following note.

²⁰Joseph Dan, "The Beginnings of Hebrew Hagiographic Literature," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Folklore* 1 (1981): 85 (in Hebrew). Cf. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (New York, 1965), p. 189, n. 1; Arnold L. Goldsmith, *The Golem Remembered, 1909-1980* (Detroit, 1981), p. 40; Joachim Neugroschel, *Yenne Velt: the Great Works of Jewish Fantasy and Occult* (New York, 1976), vol. 1, p. 351. Gershon Winkler attempts to defend the veracity of Rosenberg's account of the Golem, arguing that a rabbi who could publish halakhic works would never knowingly state such a falsehood. See his *The Golem of Prague* (New York, 1980), p. xi.

²¹Rosenberg, *Zohar Torah*, seven volumes. Volumes 1-2 (Montreal, 1924); Volumes

3-5 (New York, 1924-5). The first volume, on Genesis, was published in Warsaw in 1905 under the title *Sha'arei Zohar Torah*. Volumes 6 and 7, entitled *ha-Zohar ha-Kadosh* and comprising the Zohar on Psalms, Song of Songs, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes were published in Bilgoraj, Poland, 1929-1930. Rosenberg also published a bilingual (Hebrew-Yiddish) edition of legends of the Zohar under the title *Nifla'ot ha-Zohar* (Montreal, 1927). Cf. the critical remarks of Isaiah Tishby, *Mishnat ha-Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1982), vol. 1, p. 113, n. 7.

²²Rosenberg, *Errand Runner*, p. 59. Cf. also the numerous letters of greeting from around the world published in Cohen, *Sefer ha-Zikkaron*.

²³Cf. Harold Gastwirt, *Fraud, Corruption and Holiness: The Controversy Over the Supervision of Jewish Dietary Practice in New York City 1881-1940* (Port Washington, NY, 1974); Abraham J. Karp, "New York Chooses a Chief Rabbi," *Proceedings of the American Jewish Historical Society* 44 (1954): 129-198; Aaron Rothkoff, "The American Sojourns of Ridbaz: Religious Problems Within the Immigrant Community," *American Jewish Historical Quarterly* 57 (1968): 557-572.

²⁴Stephen A. Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto: a History to 1937* (Toronto, 1979), p. 281.

²⁵Rosenberg, *Errand Runner*, p. 64.

²⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 39, 65-66; Speisman, *The Jews of Toronto*, pp. 166-167, 173-174.

²⁷Cf. Rosenberg, *Errand Runner*, p. 67.

²⁸The account of this period in *The Errand Runner*, p. 67, is misleading, though reference is made to a demonstration against Rosenberg in front of his home. The unfolding of events, heavily prejudiced against Rosenberg, may be followed in the pages of the *Keneder Adler*, and outlined in my article "The Kosher Meat War." Cf. Quebec Superior Court, District of Montreal, case no. 3312, Laxer et al. v. Jewish Butchers Society of Montreal et al.

²⁹Rosenberg, *Peri Yehuda*, p. 34. For a similar remark by a European Hasidic leader, Moshe of Kozenice, see the citation in Raphael Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment: Their Confrontation in Galicia and Poland in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* trans. by Eugene Orenstein et al., (Philadelphia, 1985), p. 246.

³⁰Rosenberg, *A Brivele*, p. 11. Despite this, Rosenberg seems to have maintained amicable enough relations with the local Reform rabbi, Harry Joshua Stern, as evidenced by Stern's letter included in the souvenir program for Rosenberg's seventieth birthday.

³¹Cf. Ira Robinson, "Because of Our Many Sins," p. 39.

³²Rosenberg, *A Brivele*, p. 7. Other contemporary Jewish leaders such as Cyrus Adler, President of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, likewise looked to the forty-hour week as the solution to the problem of sabbath observance. Cf. Ira Robinson, ed., *Cyrus Adler: Selected Letters* (Philadelphia, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 183-185.

³³Robinson, ed., *Cyrus Adler*, p. 6.

³⁴Ibid., p. 6.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 14-15.

³⁶Rosenberg, *Me'or ha-Hashmal*, p. 3. In this responsum, Rosenberg ruled that turning electric lights on and off was forbidden on the sabbath but permissible during holidays. Cf. pp. 7-9.

³⁷Ibid., p. 13.

³⁸Rosenberg, *A Brivele*, p. 14. Rosenberg also discusses the phenomenon of kaddish as a spur to synagogue attendance on pp. 4-5.

³⁹Rosenberg, *Peri Yehuda*, p. 16. On the phenomenon of the non-observant 'Orthodox' Jew, see Jeffrey Gurock, "The Winnowing of American Orthodoxy," *Approaches to Modern Judaism*, ed. Marc L. Raphael (Chico, CA., 1984), pp. 41-53, 106-110.

⁴⁰Rosenberg, *Mikveh Yehuda*, p. 3.

⁴¹Rosenberg, *Der Krizis fun Lodz Warsaw* (Piotrkow, 1912), pp. 2-3. This pamphlet is a Yiddish version of *Darsha Zemer u-Fishtim*.

⁴²Rosenberg, *Peri Yehuda*, p. 56.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 34-35. For a similar evaluation by a contemporary European rabbinic figure, see Elhonon Wasserman, *Ma'amar Ikvete de-Meshiha* (New York, 1937).

⁴⁵Cf. Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1971), pp. 341ff. Cf. Mahler, *Hasidism and the Jewish Enlightenment*, p. 282.

⁴⁶Rosenberg, *Zohar Torah*, vol.1, title page: "The Book of the Zohar will be revealed to the inhabitants of the lower world in the end of days and for its sake. Each of you shall return to his possession...." Cf. Rosenberg, *Nifla'ot ha-Zohar*, p. 159. A similar sentiment is expressed in the title page of Zvi Hirsch Khotsh's *Nahalat Zvi*, a Yiddish translation of the Zohar first published in 1711: "It [the Zohar] will be understood by great and small [alike]. And in this merit we will merit to go to Jerusalem."

⁴⁷Cited in letter of H. Medini, *Zohar Torah*, vol. 1, p. 3.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 9.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 3.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 9.

⁵¹Rosenberg, *Nifla'ot ha-Zohar*, p. 6.

⁵²Cf. Ira Robinson, "Torah and Halakha in Medieval Judaism," *Studies in Religion* 13 (1984): 47.

⁵³E.g. Rosenberg, *Krizis*, pp. 1, 7; Rosenberg, *Me'or ha-Hashmal*, pp. 5-6. Cf. note 8 above.

⁵⁴Rosenberg, *A Brivele*, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁵Rosenberg, *Seder Hakafa*, advertisement on last page.

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⁵⁶Rosenberg, *Peri Yehuda*, p. 5.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁸*Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁹Rosenberg, *Nifla' ot ha-Zohar*, pp. 145-146.

⁶⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 126-127.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 147; cf. also p. 146.

⁶²*Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁶³I am aware of at least four editions: Montreal, New York and Bilgoraj, 1924-31; New York, 1955; Jerusalem, 1967; New York, 1970. There are presumably others of which I am not yet aware.

⁶⁴Adin Steinsaltz, *The Thirteen-Petalled Rose* (New York, 1980); Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbala* (York Beach, Maine, 1982).

⁶⁵See Leo Levi, *Torah and Science: Their Interplay in the World Scheme* (New York, 5743 [1983]).