Yehuda Kaufman (Even Shemuel) (1886-1976) was one of the most accomplished Judaic scholars of the twentieth century. His studies, translations, and editions of texts, particularly Yehuda Halevi’s *Kuzari* and Maimonides’ *Guide of the Perplexed* gained him considerable renown as a scholar, and won him the Israel Prize in 1973. He had received a traditional rabbinic education in Eastern Europe, while also acquiring the tools to access both secular subjects and the modern, scientific study of Jewish history and literature. He then travelled to Western Europe to continue his education at the Sorbonne in Paris. He came to Canada in 1913 to become a disciple of Reuven Brainin, who was the editor of Montreal’s Yiddish-language daily, the *Keneder adler*. Kaufman continued his education at McGill University and simultaneously took up journalism. He also began a distinguished career as a public lecturer. He was an institution builder in Montreal. 1914 saw him assist in the formation of Montreal’s *Yidishe folks bibliotek* [Jewish People’s Library]. At about the same time, Kaufman helped to found the *Yidishe folkshule* [Jewish People’s School] on the basis of curricular equality of Hebrew and Yiddish, and served as the *folkshule*’s first principal. He was secretary of the organizing committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress. Kaufman left Montreal, though not for good, in 1916, at the same time as Brainin. After completing his doctorate in Jewish studies at Dropsie College in 1919, Kaufman became head of the Poalei
Zion sponsored Jewish Teachers’ Seminary [Yidisher lerer seminar/Beit midrash la-morim] in New York. He moved to Palestine in 1926 at the behest of Bialik, who obtained for him a position in his publishing house, Dvir, where he helped produce the first major English-Hebrew dictionary. He then served as head of the Cultural Department of the Vaad Leumi [Jewish National Council].

Yehuda Kaufman thus spent a relatively short, but quite significant period of his life in Montreal and the United States. I have previously published an article dealing largely with Yehuda Kaufman’s North American sojourn between 1913 and 1926. In that article, I surveyed archival sources relevant to Kaufman, and paid particular attention to Kaufman’s Montreal period (1913-1917). The article touched on Kaufman’s academic studies at McGill College, as well as his considerable communal activism.

In this article, I concentrate on one of the most significant aspects of Kaufman’s Montreal career—his journalism. It is likely that Kaufman was initially attracted to Montreal by the presence of the well-known intellectual, Reuven Brainin, who edited Montreal’s Yiddish language daily, Der Keneder adler [The Canadian Eagle]. In any event, on his arrival in Montreal in 1913, Kaufman quickly made contact with Brainin, and began writing articles for his newspaper. When Brainin left the editorship of the Keneder adler, Kaufman also left and wrote articles for the rival newspaper Brainin founded, Der veg. When Brainin’s new publication failed in 1916, Brainin left Montreal and Kaufman left Montreal simultaneously to enroll as a doctoral student at Dropsie College in Philadelphia. However, in the summer of 1917, he returned to Montreal to edit a short-lived Yiddish weekly, Dos folk.

In all, Yehuda Kaufman published well over one hundred articles in the Montreal Yiddish press between 1913 and 1917. This article examines this material, and attempts, through a close reading of the articles, to discern Kaufman’s growth as a Jewish intellectual and communal activist. Through the prism
of the articles, Kaufman’s views of the life and concerns of the Montreal Jewish community emerge clearly.

Kaufman’s views on education, politics, religion, and, especially, the First World War, which deeply affected his perspectives, were influential in several ways. They contributed to the intellectual life of the Eastern European immigrant Jewish community of Montreal at a critical time in its development. They also tremendously contributed to the development of Kaufman’s thought as a young intellectual and activist.

**Jewish Education**

Kaufman was heavily involved in the 1914 founding of the Jewish People’s School and it is not by chance that his very first articles in Montreal were on the subject of education, nor that education remained one of his recurring concerns. This concern was prompted largely by his perception that there was a generation gap. Kaufman was witness to a situation in which the immigrant parents had lost their children to the street, to motion pictures, the “funny papers” and the candy store, as well as to the alien education of the Protestant schools. Kaufman’s diagnosis was preliminary to a call to action to change the older, religious, education which had lost its cogency. New methodologies were called for in order to give the modern generation of Jewish children the ability to satisfy their spiritual yearnings. As well, new means had to be found to create classrooms that equaled in aesthetics and resources those of the Protestant schools. Kaufman thus contrasted Jewish and Protestant schools:

We are guilty with respect to our children, when we take them from that “Garden of Eden” [i.e., the public schools] to our “Gehennas” [hells] where there are small cramped rooms with no air, gray walls, used up furniture, torn books, two to three classes together in one room, tired teachers ... Are we not [thus] bringing our children to assimilation and conversion? Better to close all Talmud Torahs, *heders* [traditional primary schools], and *shules* [elementary schools]. [The
It was clear to Kaufman that his generation was witnessing a transformation of Judaism. In leaving behind the old, however, he was ever mindful of the necessity of determining what elements of historical Judaism to discard, and what to transmit to the new generation. As he put it:

The new Judaism must form a new synthesis from itself. May it be equal in stature and beauty with the previous [Judaism] and be blessed with greater length of days.13

As far as Kaufman was concerned, a contemporary Jewish curriculum was to be constructed from the following key elements: Torah, Prophets, Aggada, as well as selections from the works of such medieval Jews as Maimonides, Yehuda Halevi, Isaac Abarbanel, and the Baal Shem Tov.14

It will serve us well to take the several components of Kaufman’s curriculum one by one and to see exactly what he meant by them. “Torah” for him signified education in its broadest sense. Indeed he characterized the ceremonies of the “last day of school” before the summer vacation in the Protestant schools as “a modern Torah holiday.”15 Historically, as he put it, “Jews did not know what it is to live without Torah.”16 Jewish history, for him, was the “living holy ark [aron kodesh]” which contained the Torah.17 But the Torah he advocated was not and could not be exactly the same as that of previous generations of Jews.18 His was a call to positive action. Kaufman did not advocate a renewed Judaism as merely a theoretical ideal, as he characterized the teachings of Christianity, but rather an embodiment of a way of life.19

Direction to this new Torah is provided by the prophets. These prophets certainly include those whose works are included in the Hebrew Bible, and who were very dear to him. Kaufman thus described himself as:
a former heder boy who absorbed the morality of the prophets. The Bible gives wings to my soul, taking me from today’s troubles and makes me feel the joy of the future.20

For Kaufman, though, the term “prophets” included as well people of all times, including such contemporary socialist leaders as Karl Kautsky, August Bebel, Jean Jaurès, Eduard Bernstein, Karl Liebknecht, and Georgi Plekhanov,21 as well as the Russian Narodniki [agrarian socialists, forerunners of the Bolsheviks and other Russian revolutionaries].22 In this context, he could mention Rabbi Akiva and Nietzsche in the same breath.23 These prophets were characterized by him as being both realists and idealists: realists in terms of their keen understanding of what is actually happening, and idealists in terms of their vision of a future based upon justice and righteousness.24 It is they who gave, and who can still give the elixir of life to Jews.25 It is their ideals, in the weakened form of the prophetic ideal of the future, that inform contemporary collectivist and communist aspirations.26 Indeed it was Kaufman’s opinion that the biblical prophets lived thousands of years before their time, and that only in contemporary times is their message having an effect upon the people as a whole.27

For Kaufman, the vitality of Judaism, which was embodied by the Biblical prophets, did not perish with them.28 It was significantly continued by the Aggada of the ancient rabbis29, who, for Kaufman, represented the democratic impulses of the broad Jewish masses of that era, as opposed to the Essenes, from whom, in his opinion, Christianity developed.30 In this evaluation of Aggada, he was fully in line with a number of modern Jewish intellectuals of his era, including Micha Yosef Bin Gurion (Berdyczewski) and Hayyim Nahman Bialik (with Ravnitsky).31 It was further continued by the Hasidim, who made sure that the richness and special holiness of Kabbala did not become an abstraction, separating earth from heaven, as Kaufman asserted happened in Christianity, but rather became the possession of the entire people, from the masses to the intelligentsia.32
In accordance with Kaufman’s *Poale Zion* [Labor Zionist] standpoint, it was “the people” that set the agenda for a healthy Judaism, and he posited that Judaism’s success was in fact the result of a union between Jewish intellectuals and the Jewish masses that achieved good results through the nineteenth century. Kaufman held up Maimonides’ *Mishneh Torah* as a shining example of the sort of Jewish intellectual activity that succeeded in influencing the broad masses of Jews. It was, of course, possible in oppressed Jewish communities for the growth of a dichotomy between Jewish scholarship and Jewish life. However, Kaufman stated, should intellectuals, like Maimonides, go astray and write something only for intellectuals like the *Guide of the Perplexed* in Arabic, the learned language of the era, then the Jewish masses would rise and demand a translation of the work into their own language, Hebrew. It was thus to be the task of a present day coalition of intellectuals and the masses to engage in a worldwide struggle for the revival of the modern Hebrew language and culture.

Kaufman’s description of himself as “a former *heder* boy” is not the only time he alluded to his youth and the role of tradition in shaping his response to the modern world. Particularly revealing is his article on the Mona Lisa, which had been stolen from the Louvre in 1913 by an Italian nationalist who thought it belonged in Italy, and not France. When it was recovered, he wrote an article in which he spoke of his first encounter with “La Joconde” when he was a student at the Sorbonne:

> As a *beys medresh* [traditional academy of Judiac learning] student I was at first impressed by the modesty [*tsnies*] which accompanies you from your first glance [at the Mona Lisa] to your last.

At another visit, he was impressed with her pride, which he compared to that of the biblical judge, Deborah.

Kaufman was most self-revelatory in an article he wrote in the fall of 1914 entitled “Rosh ha-Shanah Impressions” in which he contrasted the High Holidays of his youth, when Jews in general had God in their hearts, with the present day,
in which religion has been eclipsed. Whence will his moments of holiness come? Not, apparently from synagogues in which Jews, who have “sold their Sabbath for the possibility of a dollar...tremble before the God of Rosh ha-Shanah.” Only in the words of the sages, and in the traditional chant of rabbinic study [gemore nign] did he find some comfort.38

The War

Yehudah Kaufman’s Montreal period coincided with the onset of the First World War, and his journalistic reactions to the war, and especially to its onset, are highly revelatory. Even prior to the outbreak of war, in early 1914, Kaufman’s articles made his readers exquisitely aware of the divisions and strife in the world between races, and classes, and even within the working class itself.39 In one article he spoke wistfully of the power of science, art, music, poetry and philosophy, which could serve to unite the world, becoming instead further dividing factors. On June 21, 1914, mere days before the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28 triggered the events that would lead to war, Kaufman wrote a commentary on French politics which condemned its “modern militarism”. He stated:

Thus there daily grows an enormous world war that corrupts millions of young lives ... and damns all of mankind.40

This article was followed, on June 24 and 25, with a two-part article on the future of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in which he predicted that “all freedom loving people should hope that Austria-Hungary remains a state of nationalities, and that it would take the outbreak of “the most terrible European war” to divide the Austro-Hungarian Empire.41

When the War did break out in late July, Kaufman stated his hope that this must be the last war, after which the world will be completely free from war.42 This is certainly an instance of the then widespread notion that final, total peace could be achieved through the catharsis of a final or total war.43 After the war, Kaufman looked forward to the building of a new culture
based upon the equality of men and women, in which women’s more peaceful weltanschauung will triumph and there will be no victors and no vanquished.44

Kaufman’s angst over the war in general, and over the suffering of Eastern European Jewry in particular, which he called the third destruction45, translated into anger at those intellectuals who allowed themselves to be co-opted by the militaristic spirit of the time. In particular he lashed out at the English poet, Rudyard Kipling, whose anti-German poem “For All We Have and Are,” with its memorable line, “The Hun is at the gate,” had galvanized the English public at the outbreak of war and greatly aided the British war effort. Kaufman criticized Kipling for speaking of “the Huns” and not the Germans, not the people that produced Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich Heine, Immanuel Kant, Georg Frierich Wilhelm Hegel, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and Ferdinand Lassalle. Kaufman wrote that he expected politicians and generals to speak this way. However he had expected an intellectual like Kipling to understand that in the present war the English are as guilty as the Germans and that it is the militaristic parties on both sides that are fanning the flames of war. For Kaufman, Kipling had thus betrayed the “holy spirit” [ruah ha-kodesh] that had inspired his poetry and should rather have remained silent.46

Canadian Jewry

In his search for what he could do about the dire situation of the Jews in Europe, Kaufman turned to the movement for the organization of the Jewish community in Canada that culminated in the formation of the Canadian Jewish Congress in 1919. His very first comment on the state of Canadian Jewry comes from an article published on June 18, 1914. In that article, he emphasized the newness of Canadian Jewry, which appeared to him to be much more youthful than the Jewish community in the United States. This meant to him that American Jewry cannot truly serve as a model for the development of Canadian
Jews. Kaufman felt himself to be part of a Canadian Jewish community that was, practically speaking, in its first generation, and that had not yet generated the institutions necessary for its proper development.\textsuperscript{47} It had, further, not yet created any literature for itself.

In this, the situation of Canadian Jewry was, in Kaufman’s opinion, not essentially different from that of Canada as a whole. For him, there was not yet a “Canadian people”, only several groups of people who, through the process of history, had become residents of the land called Canada. In his opinion, there was practically no Canadian literature beyond its press.\textsuperscript{48}

Notwithstanding these conditions, North American Jews\textsuperscript{49} found themselves bearing the responsibility not only for their own future, but also for the future of the Jewish people as a whole. As Kaufman exhorted his audience, paraphrasing Napoleon, “One hundred generations of Jewish history look upon us. We are their last hope.”\textsuperscript{50} In order to meet these high expectations, Canadian Jewry had to discover itself. What does Canadian Jewry mean, he asked? How many are we? Who are we? Where do we live? How do we fit in with World Jewry? What of our communal life?

To answer these questions, Kaufman called for a census of Canadian Jews and the establishment of a scientific statistical bureau.\textsuperscript{51} He followed this up with a call for the Canadian Jewish community to deal with its own immigration problems through the founding of a Canadian Jewish immigration bureau that could fight for Jewish immigration to Canada with fact and not mere sentiment.\textsuperscript{52}

Kaufman plunged into the thick of the battle for the Canadian Jewish Congress, opposing those elements in the community who seemingly did not wish to associate themselves with Yiddish speaking Jews. He called for a Jewish democracy of Yiddish-speaking, Yiddish-thinking and Yiddish-feeling Jews in Canada.\textsuperscript{53}

By the summer of 1917, when Kaufman began to edit his own weekly, \textit{Dos folk}, his thinking on Canadian Jewry and
its potential had matured to the point that he felt that the Jews, in a Canada that was essentially still being formed, had the potential to become a third large national group, after the English and the French. To achieve this, the Jews needed representatives in the Canadian Parliament to show a world that had still not acquired the least concept of a Jewish people that the Jews constitute a people, and not simply a group of peddlers and real estate speculators. The Yiddish language also required formal recognition in Canada. Just as all Canadian governmental documents are published in French and English, and just as Canadian courts are conducted in both English and French, so, at least in the three great Canadian Jewish centers of Montreal, Toronto and Winnipeg, government documents should be published in Yiddish, and Jews be allowed to freely express themselves in Yiddish in court.54

Yehuda Kaufman’s stay in Canada was short, and he went on to an interesting and eventful career in in both the United States and in Israel, but his Montreal journalism of the years 1913-1917 evokes the development of his thought as well as providing a mirror on the development of a Canadian Jewish community in the throes of becoming a self-conscious entity.

Appendix I

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"רֶאָשָׁה תֶּשֶנְאָה יָאֵיר דָּוָיִי, קֵנְנֵדֶר אָדֶלֶר, סְטֶפָּמְרָא 28, 1914.

"שָׁפָמָה בּוּת הָוָּאָזְאָה", Keneder adler, October 7, 1914.

"קֵהְלָת", Keneder adler, October 9, 1914.

"דֻּרְטִיְוָאָה גּוּניְבְרָאָסְטְרָאָהּ מְלָחְמָה אָוַר יָאֵיר דָּוָיִי, קֵנְנֵדֶר אָדֶלֶר, נוּמֶרְבֶּרְוָא 6, 1914.

"דֻּרְטִיְוָאָה גּוּניְבְרָאָסְטְרָאָהּ מְלָחְמָה אָוַר יָאֵיר דָּוָיִי, קֵנְנֵדֶר אָדֶלֶר, נוּמֶרְבֶּרְוָא 8, 1914.

"מַפָּסְכָּה מַלוּתָה", Keneder adler, November 15, 1914.

"דֻּרְטִיְוָאָה עָרְיְדְרָאָר בּוּדְקָה", Keneder adler, November 27, 1914.

"דֻּרְטִיְוָאָה עָרְיְדְרָאָר בּוּדְקָה", Keneder adler, November 2, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, October 18, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, October 26, 1915.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 2, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 7, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 12, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 14, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 17, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, November 22, 1915, p. 5.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, December 5, 1915.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, December 10, 1915.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, December 16, 1915, p. 4.

"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, December 26, 1915, p. 4.


"דְיָאָס מְלָחְמָה אָוַר דּוּרְטִיְוָאָה", Der veg, January 10, 1916, p. 4.

Yehuda Kaufman’s Montreal Journalism

1 Both men were feted and bid farewell at the Jewish Public Library Annual Meeting in 1916. JPL Third Annual Report. JPLA.

2 He published his dissertation as R. Yom Ṭov Lipman Mihlhoizn : ba‘al ha-Nitsahon, ha-ḥoker yeha-mekubal [Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Muelhausen: Author of ha-Nitsahon, Researcher and Kabbalist] (New York, 5687 [1926/7]).

People’s University in New York, 1918-1968] (Jerusalem, 1979), 116-117.

4 *English-Hebrew Dictionary* (Tel-Aviv: Dvir, 1929). Kaufman worked on this dictionary together with Israel Efros and Benjamin Silkiner.

5 On Kaufman’s career as a whole, see *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd ed., s.v. “Even Shemuel (Kaufmann), Judah.”


8 A bibliography of these articles is appended to this article.

9 *Keneder adler* [hereafter, *KA*], November 17-18, 1913; January 4, 1914; June 18, 1914.

10 *KA* January 12, 1914.
11 *KA* February 6, 1914.
12 *KA* June 29, 1914.
13 *KA* April 21, 1914.
14 *KA* February 6, 1914.
15 *KA* June 29, 1914.
16 *KA* November 21, 1913.
17 *KA* August 21, 1914.
18 *KA* January 12, 1914.
19 *KA* January 19, 1914.
20 *Veg* October 18, 1915.
21 *KA* August 14, 1914.
22 *Veg* November 7, 1915.
23 *KA* May 1, 1914.
24 *KA* December 15, 1913; November 27, 1914.
25 *KA* January 4, 1914.
27 *KA* November 27, 1914.
Kaufman thus criticizes the *haskalah* for basing itself almost entirely on the bible “as if the holy spirit had died with the prophets.” KA June 10, 1914.

KA January 4, 19 and 28, 1914.

KA December 24, 1913.


KA April 21, 1914.

KA April 21, 1914.

KA March 19, 1914. It must be noted here that the Judeo-Arabic in which the *Guide* was written was not a language particularly divorced from that of the masses, nor was Ibn Tibbon’s Hebrew translation particularly accessible to the masses.

KA July 3, 1914.

Veg October 18, 1915.

KA December 18, 1913. On his visits to the Louvre and the British Museum, see KA February 18, 1914.

KA September 27, 1914.

KA February 27, 1914.

KA June 21, 1914.

KA June 25, 1914.

KA July 30, 1914.

On the idea of a war to end all wars, see David Bell, *The First Total War: Napoleon’s Europe and the Birth of Warfare as We Know It* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 2007).

Veg October 26, 1915.

KA August 18, 1914. The first two destructions referred to are the destruction of the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem.

KA September 14, 1914.

KA June 18, 1914.

KA June 19, 1914.

Kaufman initially used the phrase, “we American Jews” in a KA article of August 28, 1914. This may be an indication that he had not yet
conceptualized as separate Canadian Jewish identity. Later, he referred to “our brothers in the United States” in an article dated January 19, 1916, which indicates his increasing differentiation of Canadian and American Jews.

50 *KA* August 28, 1914.
51 *Veg* December 10, 1915.
52 *Veg* December 16, 1915.
53 *Veg* February 4, 1916.
54 *Folk* August 10, 1917.
56 The microfilm copy of the run of *Der Veg* is not complete, beginning only in October, 1915. It is therefore likely that Kaufman published articles in the early issues of the newspaper that were not included in the microfilm.
57 I have included in this bibliography only articles in *Dos Folk* signed by Kaufman or using a clearly referenced pseudonym. Since he was the editor of the newspaper it is very likely that many unsigned articles and editorials were also the products of his pen.