contemporary Christian ecclesiology, and the Christian notion of the church as the body of Christ.

Moreover, the title of the book, *Kabbalistic Revolution*, seems misleading. If "the assertion of secrecy is intrinsically political," as Lachter writes insightfully (20), then a kabbalistic revolution ought to be political as well. As Lachter himself argues, however, his four kabbalists—viewed as political agents—were conservative figures who evinced little revolutionary élan. Lachter excludes from his purview, for example, the more radical author of the *Ra'aya' mehemna'*, whom Baer focused on in his day. The kabbalistic "reimagining" of Judaism, as Lachter terms it in his subtitle, was certainly intensely novel. But it is precisely in the realm of politics that Moses de Leon and his circle cannot be seen as revolutionary.

Revolutionary or not, the new Kabbalah represented a crucial turn in Jewish theology. We are indebted to Lachter for his very successful and readable effort to place medieval Spanish Kabbalah within the political and religious context of thirteenth-century Iberia.

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David B. Ruderman. *A Best-Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era:* The Book of the Covenant *of Pinḥas Hurwitz and Its Remarkable Legacy.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014. 172 pp.
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David Ruderman's *A Best-Selling Hebrew Book of the Modern Era* is a welcome addition to the growing fields of modern rabbinic history and Jewish print culture. It shines light on the relationship between science and Kabbalah and the politics of book publishing in eighteenth-century Europe. Most importantly, it productively complicates narratives of modern Judaism that often reduce rabbinic history to the struggle between modernists and traditionalists, Orthodox and Reform, secular and religious.

Ruderman's study focuses on Pinḥas ben Eliyahu Hurwitz and his encyclopedic work, *Sefer ha-brit* (Book of the covenant), published in 1797 in The Hague. Employing data culled from archives across Europe, Ruderman carefully and engagingly retraces Hurwitz's intellectual journey, beginning with his birth in Vilna sometime in the 1760s and then onto The Hague, Pressburg, and Cracow, revealing the myriad influences on his life. Ruderman paints a colorful portrait of an otherwise enigmatic scholar and relates important information about the censorship of media, book distribution, and Jewish publication rights.

Ruderman explains how Hurwitz's book acted as bridge between two intellectual orientations. *Sefer ha-brit* was written as a scientific commentary to Ḥayim Vital's seventeenth-century kabbalistic work *Sha'are kedushah* (Gates of holiness). In this regard Hurwitz's magnum opus operated as the primary medium

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through which nineteenth-century eastern European Jews reared in kabbalistic and rabbinic works were introduced to scientific knowledge. While *Sefer ha-brit*'s popularity spread far and wide, covering European and Mediterranean lands, its largest readership were Russian Jews, who saw in it a potpourri of new scientific and philosophical knowledge. As described by Ruderman, reading *Sefer ha-brit* and having one's eyes opened up to the wonders of the world was a rite of passage for early nineteenth-century Russian Jewish intellectuals who looked beyond the folios of talmudic tractates.

Sefer ha-brit can be seen as the intellectual starting point for the flourishing of eastern European Jewish *Naturewissenschaft* and more generally the story of Jews and science in Russian lands. Social scientists have been confounded by statistical anomalies of Jews' involvement in the medical and scientific professions. More than one dissertation has made its subject explaining how a group that in the middle of the nineteenth century was denied access to institutions of higher learning could by the end of the century be flooding the gates of universities. Though not directly addressing this question, Ruderman's work gives us a better sense of the various ways in which scientific knowledge circulated among early nineteenth-century Russian Jews. Put alongside the scholarship of Mordecai Zalkin and Marina Mogliner, it provides us with more insight as to the prehistory of Jews and the sciences in Russian lands.

While Ruderman notes Pinḥas's relationship to eastern European sources of influence, he highlights what he calls his protagonist's "moral cosmopolitanism" and relationship to ideas he identifies as Italian. According to Ruderman, Hurwitz "stands out" for boldly employing "the language of love in describing relations [with gentiles] and in insisting that ultimate religious fulfillment—that is, imbibing the Holy Spirit—could not be reached without a total commitment to moral cosmopolitanism" (79). Ruderman contends that Hurwitz's ethic of loving gentiles can be traced back to an Italian provenance where Jews and gentiles expressed greater openness toward one another. Thus, Ruderman concludes that, "an Ashkenazic Jew from Vilna, no doubt drew inspiration from Italian models" (81). Ruderman's identification of Pinḥas's worldview with early modern Renaissance thought could be interpreted as a response to critics who have claimed that his presentation of early modern Judaism has emphasized the experience of Italian Jewish life at the expense of eastern European Jewry. By connecting *Sefer ha-brit* to a certain set of liberal and progressive religious values whose origins run back to Italy, Ruderman minimizes the gap between these two intellectual centers.

What made Hurwitz's work a *best seller* among eastern European Jews, however, had little to do with his moral cosmopolitanism. In the first half of the nineteenth century the overwhelming number of citations of *Sefer ha-brit* (Isaac Haver, David Tevele, Abraham Zakheim, Jacob Ẓvi Mecklenburg, and Ḥayim Zelig Slonimsky, to name but a few) relate to its scientific information or its invocation of Kant's critique of metaphysics. As noted by Ruderman, Hurwitz's knowledge of Kant was itself funneled through the works of Solomon Maimon. However, unlike Maimon, who defended Leibniz against Kant's critique of metaphysics, Hurwitz supported Kant's position and hailed it as a watershed moment in the history of theology. Kant's critique affirmed Hurwitz's belief that "all human

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knowledge was finite, tentative, and time bound" (46). Ironically, eastern European rabbinic Jews used *Sefer ha-brit*'s citations of Kant to discredit reason and the religious value of scientific knowledge. Put another way, they accepted Kant's critique of metaphysics but largely ignored his ethics. Ruderman, however, steers clear from addressing this important philosophical story, choosing instead to focus on other Jewish groups' employment of more progressive and liberal aspects of *Sefer ha-brit*.

Hurwitz's peripatetic lifestyle and eclectic use of sources leads Ruderman to refrain from placing his protagonist in the camp of Enlighteners, Hasidim, Mitnagdim, or Orthodox. As Ruderman admits, his cautiousness may leave some wanting a more robust thesis. However, Ruderman should be applauded for his refusal to reduce Hurwitz's writings to a set of categories that have often obscured more than revealed the nature of modern rabbinic thought. Ruderman could have made his point even stronger and used his case study as an opportunity to highlight the paucity of academic histories of modern rabbinics. While he links his work to a set of recent studies on modern Jewish thought, he does not address the shared assumption behind these new works, namely challenging an entrenched secularization theory that has long structured the way rabbinics have been addressed in history writing.

Ruderman's analysis of *Sefer ha-brit* not only lends support to these new studies but also implicitly challenges the field of rabbinic thought that has been hampered by what might be called the "modern-Orthodox" historiographical paradigm. Instead of looking at rabbinic figures in the context of wider and deeper eighteenth- and nineteenth-century intellectual debates, scholars have reduced rabbinic thought to anachronistic political and confessional labels. Ruderman breaks with the modern-Orthodox paradigm (and the larger secularization theory of modern Jewish history) that presents rabbinic figures as either modern, Orthodox (traditional), modern-Orthodox, or publicly Orthodox but secretly modern. These nonintellectual categories are the discursive remnants of a nineteenth-century *Kulturkampf* on German lands that reduced ideas to political positions and denominational tag lines. Over time what has come to pass for the academic study of modern rabbinic thought has been either the debunking of ultra-Orthodoxy's historical claims, showing the influences of "secular" ideas on the bearded and black hatted or, conversely, proving the endurance and so-called brilliance of talmudic casuistry and exegesis. Pinḥas ben Eliyahu highlights how rabbinic thinkers were first and foremost intellectuals concerned about the relationship between the metaphysics of Kabbalah and the empiricism of science. Ruderman's work brings us one step closer to a revision of modern Jewish intellectual history, providing us with a window onto the myriad ways in which Jewish thought was transformed in modern Western life.

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