



IN MEMORIAM THEODORE "TEDDY" KAUFMAN

September 2, 1924 – July 15, 2012

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Theodore—"Teddy"—Kaufman was born on September 2, 1924 in Harbin, Manchuria, into the secular Russian Jewish family of Dr. Abraham Kaufman. His father is remembered for his role as head of the Far Eastern Jewish Council, under whose auspices he helped save approximately 20,000 European Jews from the Holocaust by assisting their temporary resettlement in Kobe, Japan and the Shanghai ghetto.

Throughout his long life, Teddy Kaufman emulated his father by playing a very active role in Jewish communal affairs. His first such position was as personal secretary to Harbin's Chief Rabbi A.M. Kiselev, where he served as a conduit between Kiselev, a staunch Religious Zionist, and the secular Zionist segment of the local community led by his father.

He emigrated to Israel in 1949 and, though employed as a Tel Aviv municipal employee in a variety of positions for some 35 years, Kaufman's focus in life was the preservation of the heritage of China's Jewish communities and fostering the development of warm ties between Israel and China.

In 1951, Kaufman established, along with 16 other former Jewish residents, the organization known as the Association of Former Residents of China - *Igud Yotzei Sin*. The organization is comprised of residents and descendants from Harbin, Tianjin, Shanghai and Dalian.

Initially the Association aided with the resettlement of Jewish immigrants from China in the years immediately following Israel's birth. Once resettlement efforts were completed, the Association shifted focus to providing scholarships to the descendants of former China residents pursuing post-secondary

AN ANTI-SEMITIC PERSPECTIVE ON INTERNATIONAL JEWRY, THE CHINESE JEWS AND CHINESE COMMUNISM

by Itsvan Bakony

excerpted from www.bamboo-delight.com

[*Editor's Note: I hesitated briefly before deciding to run excerpts from this monograph because of its virulent anti-Jewish perspective but I found it so incredibly and wildly inaccurate that I just had to share it with you, our readers. This excerpt is taken from selected chapters of Bakony's larger work entitled: Imperialism, Communism and Judaism, the Three Forces Dominating the World. While no date is given for the original, the translation of the Hungarian original was done in 1969 and updated subsequently by the author, although no date is given. I can only hope you join me in shaking your head in bewilderment and sadness at his manifest and multiple distortions.*]

The Israelite leader Israel Joseph Benjamin II, Chacham of Israel, after his visit to China at the middle of the last century, says in his report on Chinese clandestine Judaism, presented to the western Israelite leaders, that in one epoch the Chinese Jews mixed themselves with the population of the Mongolic race through mixed marriages...After this, the laborious Chacham referring to what a German Jewish magazine said, talks about a group of Chinese Jews that: "Only one had a real Jewish type, but except for the religion and circumcisions, they are completely converted into Chinese by their language, dressing, customs and habits, they also have Chinese names...they first remained secretly in Ning-hia, Hantcheou and Peking, and later became established in Kai-fung-foo."¹ A dangerous fifth column of secret Jews had entered China, who as a result of their total adaptation through the centuries, to the racial and social characteristics of the Chinese people are now dangerously confounded and diluted in the population of that country. It should be noted that although the Israelites of the former Celestial Empire are considered among the most mixed with the indigenous race, since the last century they have kept the rigid custom of marrying only among themselves and the above mentioned Hebrew leader says that they have kept their faith "with the characteristic tenacity that distinguishes the Hebrew race."

The historian of the Chinese Jews, Alexandre Wyllie, in his valuable book called *Investigations on the Existence of Jews in*

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SJI MEMBERSHIP

<u>Country</u>	<u>Total</u>
United States	179
China	19
Israel	16
Canada	14
England	4
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Indonesia	1
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TOTAL:	244

FROM THE EDITOR

We wrap up volume 27 wishing our Jewish readers—and everyone else for that matter—best wishes for a healthy, happy 5773!

We start this year with a new line-up on the Sino-Judaic Institute's Board of Directors. After controlling both the governance and the media of this fine organization for 4 years, I decided to relinquish control of the former and, in yet another peaceful transfer of power, Rabbi Arnie Belzer is SJI's new president. Dr. Vera Schwarcz is the new Vice-President and Drs. Steve Hochstadt and Ondi Lingenfelter, remain as Treasurer and Secretary respectively. We welcome Denise Yeh Bresler, Jim Michaelson, Rabbi Marvin Tokayer and Cynthia Zeiden as incoming Board members and bid a gradual adieu to Dr. Wendy Abraham, Len Hew and Dr. Al Yee, who are transitioning to the Advisory Board. A summary of the SJI Board meeting will appear in a future issue of *Points East*.

This issue features an obituary for the great Teddy Kaufman, longtime head of the Igud Yotzei Sin (the Association of Former Residents of China) and the Israel-China Friendship Association; a man whose influence was felt far and wide. His death represents the end of an era.

Speaking about the end of an era, one era I would dearly love to see end is that of European anti-Semitism. The other featured article in this issue highlights the perverse and paranoid nature of one part of the European anti-Semitic tradition as it pertains to, of all things, Jews in China and our alleged plot to take over that country and add it to our global empire. All this was news to me. I am a rabbi and reasonably well-connected in the Jewish world and no one ever told me about our plans for world domination. And somehow all this alleged Jewish wealth and power has somehow passed me by. Such is my mazal...

Since its author is obsessed with "public and clandestine" Jews, he would surely have a fit (and I hope he does) over Diane Tobin's article about Jewish racial diversity. She makes a point that bears repeating over and over again: that Jews come

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Points East

Anson Laytner, Publisher

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in all shades of beige from light to dark—just like the rest of humanity.

Add to these articles an account of a professor's visit to China, a review of a new and important book by Jordan Paper, and several other pieces and you have volume 27, number 3. Enjoy.

Anson Laytner

Theodore "Teddy" Kaufman

(continued from page 1)

studies in Israel. The Association also became the main body dedicated to the preservation of the memory of the Jewish communities that existed in 19th and early 20th century China. Kaufman was chairman for almost 50 years.

Kaufman took a particularly active role over the years in maintaining regular correspondence between the Association in Tel Aviv and its sister landsmanschaften located in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Sydney, Australia and Montreal, Canada.

Thanks largely to his efforts, today the Igud Yotzei Sin maintains a head office in Israel, with branches in the United States and Australia. It is an active organization that binds the traditions of the past history of the community in China with the present needs of the communities in Israel, the US and Australia and continues the traditions established in China, namely assistance to students, senior citizens and the distribution of the Bulletin that disseminates information on past and present lives of the former residents of China. It also maintains a highly informative website.

After the normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and China in 1992, Kaufman founded and served as president of the Israel-China Friendship Association and was instrumental in bringing a deeper understanding between the two nations. The ICFS has played an important role in people-to-people relations between Israel and China, maintaining ties with Chinese friendship societies, universities and academic institutions. As president of the ICFS from its founding until his death, Kaufman frequently hosted Chinese diplomats, students and visiting academics at ICFS events and at his home in Ramat Gan.

In an official statement, the Chinese Embassy in Israel lamented the death of Kaufman, lauding the instrumental role he played in promoting the development of Sino-Israeli relations:

"Mr. Kaufman, as president of the Israel-China Friendship Society, had long been committed to promoting China-Israel exchanges in varied fields and maintained friendly relations with the Embassy and Chinese people," said the statement. "He was like the still water, running deep in his efforts to develop relations between China and Israel.

"Mr. Kaufman represented the spirit of selfless giving back," the statement continued. "As an old Chinese saying goes, 'Don't forget the well-diggers when drinking from the well.' Mr. Kaufman never forgot his well-digger, by showing his deep affection to China where he was born and lived for 26 years. He then became a well-digger himself and set an example for younger generations. Mr. Kaufman worked until the last hours of his life promoting the Israel-China relationship."

Kaufman imparted much of his extensive knowledge of the Jewish community in Harbin in his memoir, *The Jews of Harbin Live on in My Heart*. The book was published in 2006 with editions in both Hebrew and English.

Teddy is survived by his wife Rasha in Israel and brother Isai Kaufman in San Francisco, USA. He will be missed by all who knew and respected him as a giant in understanding and promoting China-Israel relations.

An Anti-Semitic Perspective on International Jewry

(continued from page 1)

China, since the Most Ancient Times to These Days, notes that the existence of the Jews was hidden for the majority, but that, nevertheless, "some accidental observations in Marco Polo's trips, show that Jews were sufficient enough to be able to exert political influence in China and Tartaria"² It is natural that a clandestine Judaism as secret as the one functioning in China for the last eighteen hundred years, was not easy for Marco Polo to identify, but the clandestine Jews who themselves know the problem very well, can identify its existence better than anyone else, through Marco Polo's reports in his writings.

Chinese Clandestine Jews: Mandarins, Magistrates and Military

Rev. H.H. Milman (a protestant) in his *History of the Jews*, writes of the Chinese: "They were cultivated, and some of them, according to existing inscriptions, have been highly honored by the imperial will and have obtained the rank of Mandarins. One of these inscriptions—dated in 1515—praises the Jews for their integrity and fidelity in agriculture, commerce, magistracy and in the army, and for the adequate observance of their own religious ceremonies". This clergyman states—after saying that the Chinese Jews revered Confucio's name and followed the Chinese custom of religious revering their ancestors: "In other aspects they are strictly Jews...They only marry among themselves...They neither do nor attempt to do proselitism".³

S.M. Perlmann, the Jewish historian, in his *History of the Jews in China*, London, 1913, also tells of the existence of Chinese Jews in the army and of Mandarins, one of whom, called Chao-Yng-Cheng, commanded a section of the army and rebuilt the city of Kai-fung-foo. Hebrew historians agree in ascribing great military talents to the Chinese, Tartaric and Mongolian Jews, and this may explain their infiltration into the Chinese communist army, where they gossip against Chairman Mao Tse-tung and plead for a reconciliation with the Soviet Union, apparently to achieve world communist unity, but in reality to turn

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Popular China into a satellite dominated by the Jews who lead the Soviet Union. Clandestine Jews infiltrated in the Chinese Communist Party and in the governing and social institutions of the country, work in the same direction...

The distinguished Israelite historian confesses something that is well-known, but which coming from a famous Jewish historian has greater probatory value: that it is not possible in most cases to distinguish the Chinese clandestine Jews—because of their Chinese names and last names, their Chinese racial type and customs—from other Chinese. Although they appear to be a part of the Chinese people, in fact they belong to a foreign nation and people—to the Jewish nation. In other words, they represent an infiltration of the Israeli nation and Israeli imperialism into the heart of the Chinese nation...

How can it be explained that in China—where the famous Jewish historian S.M. Perlmann confesses that the Israelites have never been persecuted, and readily denies any case of intolerance—the phenomenon of clandestine Judaism has existed for many centuries up until our days, and Israelites hide their identity to appear as part of the Chinese people?...It is evident that they have chosen this path as a political strategy to enable them to infiltrate the society of the country in which they live in order to monopolize the leading positions and to bring the host country under their control...In China, as in other countries of the world, clandestine Jews—as the mentioned authorized sources confess—obtained high positions as Mandarins, Magistrates and Chiefs of the CHINESE army...

S.M. Perlmann...also states that these immigrant Israelites turned themselves into ferocious nomads and great warriors in Tartaria.⁴ These Tartaric Jews are at present the bulldogs of the Soviet Jewish regime in Siberia, and it is well known that there are many Jewish-Tartaric officers in the Red Army, for the Chinese and Tartaric Jews differ from those of other nations in possessing great military talents.

These millenary Chinese Jews, who have a Chinese racial aspect, practice Chinese customs, and use Chinese names, have

been known to World Judaism, up to the present day, as Chinese Jews Tiao-Kiu-Kiaou...(that means those who remove the tendon)...

In addition to the communities of clandestine Jews spread throughout China...there is another Israelite community in the city of Kai-fung-foo, former capital of Honan Province, which has been operating in a more or less public way for several centuries...

Jewish encyclopedias and other books produced by the Jews for the Gentiles, provide [what] the Jewish imperialists allow the Gentiles to know, but hide, minimize and even misguide the Gentile reader on those affairs which Judaism considers to be POLITICAL SECRETS and which MUST BE HIDDEN from the Gentile readers. This is why it is not strange that such encyclopedias and books when speaking of the very ancient Chinese Judaism, usually only talk about the communities that have operated publicly mainly those of Kai-Fung-Foo city. About this community they give much information which is highly interesting; saying that it flourished in other times but is today in painful decadence. *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, in addition to mentioning the Kai-Fung-Foo community also says that Catholic missionaries of the Seventeenth Century found other public Israelite communities in Hangchao-Foo and OTHER CHINESE TOWNS without expressly saying how many of them they found.⁵ *The Encyclopedia* adds that the attention of the Israelite historians has been concentrated mainly in the community of Kai-Fung-Foo, and not on others because of the archeological relics found in an old Synagogue, comprising marble tablets engraved in the Chinese language which help clarify several unknown aspect of the history of Chinese Judaism...Among them, however, there is an engraving mentioning the Chinese Jews that reads: "They are outstanding in agriculture, commerce, in public positions (magistracy) and in the art of war" (army). In fact, it can be seen that Chinese Jews have stood out in trade, as the Jews have in other countries, and had achieved leading positions in the government, as the Jews have in the Gentile nations. But it seems to be a special characteristic of Chinese Judaism, as many Israelite historians have said—and

also these archeological monuments confirm—that Chinese Jews Tiao-Kiu-Kiaou were experts in agriculture. This has allowed them to infiltrate among the peasants, just as their great military talents have also allowed their infiltration in the army, creating a fifth column of Israelite Imperialism infiltrated at all levels in China. This must undoubtedly constitute a serious danger for the Popular Maoist China if it is not found and extirpated, because both the public or hidden Chinese Jews, like all Israelites around the world, are in reality members of a foreign nation and agents of a millenary super-imperialism. As such, their complicity with their Jewish brethren of the Kremlin in their struggle to turn Popular China into a satellite of the Soviet Union, just like the satellite socialist states of Eastern Europe, excepting Albania and Roumania.

Going back to the engravings of the Kai-Fung-Foo Synagogue, another inscription mentions the revolt that overthrew the Mind dynasty that protected Jews...The engraving...refers to the fall of the city...during the revolt and the destruction of the Israelite Synagogue and slaughter of a number of Jews by the rebels in 1642...They also say that in the middle of this disaster a Jewish Chinese Mandarin appeared leading an army, and that this Jewish Mandarin rescued the sacred writings (the Bible) that had been thrown into the water by the rebels, reconstructed the city...and that this Mandarin and his brother rebuilt the Israelite Synagogue in 1663...These engravings, which constitute a historical monument of incontrovertible documentary value, show the great political and military influence that Jews had in China in the XVII Century. Not only did they hold senior positions in the Imperial Government, but they had also Chinese armies under their command.⁶

The Jewish Encyclopedia, referring to the Chinese Jews of Kai-Fung-Foo, also says that many of them: "emigrated—during the war between the Chinese and the Tartars—to Kiang-su, Amoy and Peking; but they do not have synagogues in those places, and that some Jews with English protection, went to Shanghai and Hong Kong, where they practiced the traffic of opium and cotton."⁷ This...makes us see that the opium traffic...not only benefit-

ted British and Indian Jews, but also the Chinese Jews Tiao-Kiu-Kiaou, who also participated in the opium traffic in Shanghai and Hong Kong under the protection of the British government, which as we all know was already a satellite under the control of Jewish Super-Imperialism. Under Jewish control, the British government even sent...its own people to fight and die to protect and expand the Jewish opium trade, so that the Jews might make a profit out of poisoning the Chinese people, and Chinese Jews participated in this trade at the expense of their Chinese hosts.

...The revolutionary potential of the Afro-Asian Israelite communities began to develop progressively during the XIX Century, as Western Judaism sent experienced leaders to train them in all aspects in which they were backward in regard to Western Judaism. Regarding the Chinese Judaism and the Kai-Fung-Foo community, *the Jewish Encyclopedia* reports that the Western Jews formed a special organization called the "Society for Rescuing the Chinese Jews" whose task was the revival of the Israelite religion among those Chinese Jews that as we have previously studied is the main generator of the Israelite Imperialism in China.⁸

The Jewish Encyclopedia adds that the Jews of Shanghai cooperated with this society.

According to Jewish encyclopedias, the formerly flourishing Israelite community of Kai-Fung-Foo, fell into a painful decadence, diminishing the number of its members to the point that they had to sell their Temple. We, as experienced researchers of the history of clandestine Judaism, find and can prove that every time Israelite historians talk about decadence or disappearance of a Jewish community in books which the Gentiles can read (such as encyclopedias...) in most cases...what really happens when there is a mass desertion from public Judaism, the majority of "deserters" are just pretending to abandon Judaism in favor of a Gentile religion, while secretly remaining loyal to the Israelite nation and religion. In other words, they merely transfer from Public Judaism to Clandestine Judaism...

Since 1840 China has experienced further migrations of Jews from different countries, mainly European...In 1850, Elias David Sassoon, a rich Jewish trader settled in Bombay, India, established a branch of his firm in Shanghai...he was followed by the Kadoorie, great Jewish capitalists in Baghdad, and their big enterprises—the Sassoons and Kadoories—built a synagogue in Shanghai, founding a new Israelite community which until 1905, was mainly Sephardic. So this new Jewish community had the honor of being founded by the enterprise of a great international Jewish opium dealer, who son, as millionaire as him, used the Moslem name of Abdula when in Baghdad, and used the Christian name of Albert while in London. His Jewish name, the good one always, was David...

The Russian-Japanese war and the persecutions it originated against the Jews, the failed communist revolt in Russia in 1905, that the Imperial Russian government justly imputed to the Israelites, brought as a consequence the arrival in China of fugitive Russian Jews. In 1917 Russian Jews who arrived to Harbin and Mukden in Manchuria were antagonized by White Russians who accused the Russian Jews in the country of being originators of the Red Terror in Russia. When the Japanese invasion of China in 1931, many Russian Jews living in China, who were fleeing from the Japanese (who accused them of being communists), were forced to move to Tientsin, Hankow and Shanghai, where they were reinforced by new immigrants of Polish and Roumanian Jews. In 1928 an Israelite community of Ashkenazim Jews joined with the Sephardic community, under the auspices of the lodge, recently formed in Shanghai, of the secret order of world Jewish Masonry called B'nai B'rith, which was in this way starting to extend its tentacles into China...

A new Jewish immigration into China started in 1933; Israelites fled from Germany and Austria harassed by the Nazis. According to the *Castilian Jewish Encyclopedia* these new Jewish migrants of German origin obtained positions in the administration of the Republic of China [including Dr. Bernhard Weiss, Miriam Karnes and General Moshe Cohen]...⁹

Jews have also used their women in China to ensnare great leaders, following the rules fixed in the Book of Esther in the Bible...which tells how the Jewish Esther, hiding her Israelite origin and religion, beguiled the Persian Emperor into falling in love and marrying her, thus becoming the Empress of Persia. From this position, she engineered the appointment of her uncle as the Prime Minister. In China the Song family of Tiao-Kiu-Kiaou Jews obtained great successes in this century by the same means. One of the Song sisters married Dr. Sun Yat-sen...Another sister married Marshall Chiang Kai-shek...Dr. Sun Yat-sen's widow became a member of the Maoist Popular China, where she presently lives and where, with the prestige of being the widow of the national hero, she can undoubtedly help the plans of international Judaism, in ensuring that a clandestine Tiao-Kiu-Kiaou Jew, or at least a Gentile Chinese easily manageable by the Jews, will succeed Chairman Mao Tse-tung when he dies. If this goal can be achieved, the Jewish Racist Imperialists would seize power in Popular China and subjugate that nation to its yoke, reconciling China with the Soviet Union and putting it at the Soviet Union's vassalage—as projected by international Judaism...

¹ Israel Joseph Benjamin II. Chacham of Israel. "Eight Years in Asia and Africa from 1846 to 1855." Hanover Editions 1863. Pages 206-209.

² Alexandre Wyllie. "Recherches sur l'existence des juifs en la Chine depuis les temps les plus reculés, jusqu'à nos jours". French translation. Paris edition 1864.

³ H.H. Milman.

"The History of the Jews". 3rd volume. London edition 1868. Pages 166 and 167.

⁴ S.M. Perlmann. "The History of the Jews in China". London edition 1913. Pages 29 and 30.

⁵ Jewish Encyclopedia. Published in New York and London, 1903 edition IV volume. Word: China. Page 34, 1st column.

⁶ Jewish Encyclopedia. Published in New York and London, 1903 edition IV volume. Word: China. Page 34, 2nd column.

⁷ Jewish Encyclopedia. Published in New York and London, 1903 edition 3rd volume. Word: China. Page 36, 1st column.

⁸ Jewish Encyclopedia. Published in New York and London, 1903 edition IV volume. Word: China. Page 36, 1st column.

⁹ Castilian Jewish Encyclopedia. Mexico, 1948. Word: China. Pages 328, 329 and 330.

A Professor's Visit to Nanjing and Kaifeng

by David N. Myers

excerpted from the August 15, 2012 websites: http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/jewish_studies_flourish_in_china_20120815/ and http://www.jewishjournal.com/cover_story/article/the_jews_of_kaifeng_china_20120815/

I Jewish Studies in Nanjing and Kaifeng

The last quarter century has witnessed a veritable explosion in the academic field of Jewish studies. During that time, Israel solidified its place as the global center in the field, while in the United States virtually every university and college of note has established its own program, center or chair. In these two venues, the growth of Jewish studies has been closely linked to the presence of Jews, though in the United States an increasing number of non-Jews have entered the field. In other parts of the world where the field of Jewish studies has been expanding, such as Germany, the field is populated almost exclusively by non-Jews.

Surely one of the most interesting sites of the new Jewish studies — and one of the most promising in terms of growth — is China.

Jewish studies in China? Yes, there is a burgeoning Jewish studies presence in the most populous country in the world. The most established program in the country is based at Nanjing University, and it is celebrating its 20th anniversary this year. The founding director, professor Xu Xin...has been at the forefront of the growth of Jewish studies in China, raising several generations of students who now direct Jewish studies programs at other Chinese universities. He is a dynamic, passionate and worldly man whose savoir-faire persuaded Los Angeles Jewish philanthropists Diane and Guilford Glazer to endow his program.

It was the Glazer Institute of Jewish Studies that invited me to Nanjing to teach a concentrated seminar for its graduate students. I had very little idea of what to expect from my academic experience there before arriving. I asked Xu Xin if it would be possible to visit Kaifeng, and he answered affirmatively. When I arrived in Nanjing, he told me we would be

going to Kaifeng later that day and that I'd be giving three lectures there. Little did I know that the lectures would be at a conference on Holocaust studies and Jewish history held at Kaifeng's Henan University! And not just that, but a conference held at a relatively unknown, regional university of more than 40,000 students, housed on a new campus graced by scores of new, architecturally designed buildings. This calls to mind one of the most striking impressions during my time in China: the frenetic pace of building. There is building everywhere, suggesting not only the rapid growth of the country, but also massive investment by the government in infrastructure and higher education, in stark juxtaposition to the defunding of both in our own country.

Meanwhile, I was stunned to enter the lecture hall in Henan University to see nearly 75 master's and doctoral candidates in Jewish studies, all of whom were Chinese. Assembling that number of graduate students in Jewish studies in the United States would be nearly impossible. How much more unlikely in China! But the students were eager, curious and attentive. About half of the lectures were given in Chinese by local professors and graduate students, and the other half were given in English by conference organizer Jerry Gotel, a London-based American and patron of Jewish studies in China; Glenn Timmermans, an Anglo-Jewish scholar of English literature and the Holocaust who teaches at the University of Macau; and me. The students whom I met all read English and had a good passive command of spoken English, though they varied considerably in their ability to speak.

Why, one might ask, do these students devote many years of their lives to studying Jewish history? As a number of them told me, they sense an affinity between their people and the Jews. Both peoples possess a noble ancient history, have large dispersions outside their homeland and are marked by an entrepreneurial spirit. Perhaps most centrally, for both, education is an almost sacred pursuit. In fact, one of the most winning features of the Chinese students is their unabashed reverence for the teacher. The Confucian ideal, parallel to the Jewish precept of "kevod ha-moreh," is alive and well today. Unlike the consumerist approach to education in the United States, where students demand attractively presented products from their teachers, students in

China feel happy to receive the pearls of wisdom that issue from their teachers' mouths. At times, this leads to a certain passivity in the classroom on the students' part. But the overall effect, especially for a short-term visitor from America, is wondrous.

Following the Kaifeng conference, I had the privilege of teaching a group of 25 graduate students — again, a rather astonishing number — in an intensive seminar on modern Jewish thought at the Glazer Institute in Nanjing. We spent three hours a day exploring thinkers as diverse as Baruch Spinoza, Moses Mendelssohn, the Hatam Sofer, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Franz Rosenzweig and Hannah Arendt. We did close readings of primary sources together in class. This was a novel experience for most. Graduate students in Jewish studies in China write theses and dissertations on a vast range of subjects, from the Second Temple period to Maimonides' philosophy to the Holocaust to contemporary Israeli society. But their research is based not on an analysis of archival sources in the original languages, which is the standard in the United States, but on a survey of recent secondary scholarship on a particular theme. In this sense, Chinese students are somewhat behind their American, Israeli and European counterparts. Nevertheless, they are quick learners and exceptionally hard workers. They will catch on soon...

Encountering these students made clear how remarkable and worthy an enterprise Jewish studies in China is. It's important for China, it's important for the field — and, it almost goes without saying, it's important for Jews that the Chinese develop an informed understanding of their past and present in the 21st century.

II A Visit with the Kaifeng Jews

...My host in China, professor Xu Xin, one of the founding figures of Jewish studies in China took me to visit Esther Guo Yan, a woman of about 25 or 30 who preserves one of the seven Jewish family names. Esther is the granddaughter of the last renowned Jewish notable from Kaifeng, and she runs a tiny, rough-hewn shrine to the history of Kaifeng Jewry. She waits for the occasional tourist to find her home, which is located in the historic Jewish quarter. Her interests are both to recall the old Jewish com-

munity and to bring knowledge about Chinese culture to what she refers to as her “hometown,” Jerusalem.

Indeed, a strong connection to Israel marks the larger group of Jewish descendants whom I met in Kaifeng. I first visited them at the end of their weekly four-hour study session of English and Hebrew with their ebullient, chain-smoking Israeli teacher, Shulamit Gershovich, who had been sent by Shavei Israel, an international group that seeks out lost Jews. She is concluding a six-month stint teaching the Kaifeng group and lives in one of the two rooms that now serve as a kind of community center under the name Beit HaTikvah (House of Hope). This name was bestowed by the center’s founder, a young American Jew named Eric Rothberg, who began to work with and teach the group two years ago.

On a Thursday evening, I met with a group of eight students, some of them bearing the ancient names of Kaifeng Jews who, thus, are “descendants,” and others who have no Jewish blood but are married to descendants. Here in Kaifeng, as in post-Soviet Eastern Europe, the most important criterion of Jewishness is not the rabbinic standard of matrilineal descent. Rather, it is the willingness and desire to be a Jew. Against remarkable odds, the members of Beit HaTikvah are assiduously studying what it means to be a Jew. Though a small number of younger family members have been sent off to Israel or the United States to study and undergo formal conversion, the majority of the 25 or so attendees at Beit HaTikvah are on their own path of Jewish self-discovery in China, where they likely will remain. (I should add that, in the ancient and venerable ways of the Jews, there is another group of a similar size studying at a different locale in Kaifeng with a Messianic Jew named Tim Lerner, though I did not get to meet them.)

Without a doubt, the highlight of my time in Kaifeng, and a reflection of the group’s indomitable spirit, was the Shabbat I spent at Beit HaTikvah. I was brought to the Friday night gathering by Ari Schaffer, an Orthodox undergraduate at Johns Hopkins University, who is conducting research on the community. The small, nondescript room was filled with some 25 people, ranging in age from 16 to 75. On one wall was an unusual array

of symbols: the flag of the State of Israel on the right, the flag of the People’s Republic of China on the left, and in the middle, the Shema prayer flanked by a pair of Hebrew words, shemesh and kamon. Shemesh means sun. Kamon’s meaning is a matter of dispute; some scholars believe it refers to an angel, while others maintain that it connotes moon. In any case, this pair of words seems to have served a sort talismanic function for the community.

After candlelighting, Gao Chao, the leader of the small community, began to sing “Yedid Nefesh,” the medieval poem sung at the outset of Kabbalat Shabbat. Typically enough for this community, Gao Chao is not of Jewish descent. He is married to a descendent, but has taken on the responsibility of learning Hebrew and Jewish prayers so as to serve as the prayer leader on Friday nights. He led the community through Kabbalat Shabbat, with members joining in their Chinese-inflected Hebrew (which was rendered into Chinese characters for them to follow). The degree of ritual fluency for a community that does not include a single halachic Jew and has been studying Hebrew intensely for only two years was remarkable. The community chanted with gusto and competency many of the standards of Jewish liturgy and custom on Friday night: “Lechah Dodi,” “Veshamru,” and “Shalom Aleichem.” It was particularly moving when the congregation joined with Gao Chao to sing the penultimate line of the Friday night Kiddush: “For You have chosen us and sanctified us from among all the nations, and with love and good will given us Your holy Shabbat as a heritage.”

After services, the entire group sat down to a potluck vegetarian Shabbat dinner, my first with chopsticks as the utensil of choice. Dinner was tasty and spirited, but a mere prelude to the memorable post-meal singing. We sang the grace after meals and then spent several hours singing zemirot and other Hebrew and Israeli songs at the top of our lungs — aided, it must be said, by a potent Arak-like beverage native to the region. One member of the community — not herself a Jewish descendant, but married to one — had assumed the Hebrew name Netta. She seemed to know virtually every Hebrew song sung. She had an infectious smile, beautiful voice and a true sense of oneg Shabbat — the joy of the Sabbath. Other members did not know many of the songs, but added their own enthusiastic and well-timed rhythm by clapping and pounding the table.

The one song that all knew was the one whose name adorns the current Kaifeng community: HaTikvah. At a certain point in the midst of the cacophonous frivolity, the group rose as one to offer a sonorous version of “Hatikvah” — in Chinese! Those of us who knew followed in Hebrew. It was another stunning moment in an evening of stunning moments. Few of the community members are likely to make aliyah, but somehow they have managed to develop a strong bond with and sense of pride for Israel. There was also a strong sense among all of us present of the past and future shared by Jews. Assembled at a long Shabbat table in Kaifeng, we experienced, in the rawest and purest form I’ve ever witnessed, the unbroken spirit that links Jews scattered over the four corners of the world, from California to China.



From left: David N. Myers and Jerry Gotel at a seminar at Henan University

Interest in Shanghai's Jewish Past Grows

by Barbara Demick

excerpted from the *Los Angeles Times*, 17 Sept. 2012

SHANGHAI — The family always knew there was something mysterious about Wang Fanglian, secrets he dared not share with even his closest relatives.

Although he was just an ordinary worker at a diesel engine factory, he spoke four languages, among them English with a guttural German accent. His narrow brick-faced house had a flush toilet, a gas stove and a balcony for drying clothes, all strange luxuries in his rickshaw-wide Shanghai alley.

Only late in life did Wang explain himself, when it was safe to talk about his friendships with Jews...Under Japanese occupation, they were squeezed into one of the city's poorest neighborhoods, living cheek by jowl with working-class Chinese such as Wang.

"They were good friends. They lived together. They played together. They suffered together under the Japanese occupation," said Wang Fanglian's 21-year-old granddaughter, Wang Kaiyan.

The old man learned English and French from his Jewish neighbors — and Japanese from the occupiers. He bought his house, the one with the Western luxuries, at the end of the war from a departing Jewish family...

To call it a revival would be an overstatement, but the Jewish history of Shanghai is gradually coming out from the shadows.

The old Jewish quarter is in a quaintly ramshackle neighborhood called Hongkou with red-and-gray brick houses, many of them with patterned gables and fluted turrets, a weird fusion of Asian and European architecture that is uniquely Shanghai... Most of the neighborhood has since been rebuilt, the European cafes demolished or turned into Chinese restaurants.

The only remaining Jewish landmark, a onetime synagogue that had been turned into a psychiatric hospital, reopened in 2007 as the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. Wang Fanglian conducted

tours there briefly before his death in 2008. Wang's old house still stands and occasionally receives tourists, though there's little trace of the former Jewish occupants.

In March and April, a theater company performed a play about a romance between a young Jewish woman and a Chinese resistance fighter, with funding partially provided by the Israeli Consulate.

There are now more than half a dozen academic programs at Chinese universities — in Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu and Nanjing among others — devoted to Jewish studies. The Shanghai Jewish Studies Youth Forum, for Chinese students studying Jewish history, held a conference here in July.

The government-owned Shanghai Film Studios is developing a television miniseries about the Jewish emigres in partnership with "Black Swan" producer Mike Medavoy, who was born in Shanghai to Ukrainian Jewish refugees.

"We want something like 'Schindler's List,'" said Pan Guang, an advisor to the project, who heads the Center for Jewish Studies in Shanghai.

Pan says Chinese awareness about the Holocaust is a natural offshoot of rising interest in World War II and in the Nanjing massacre in 1937, when hundreds of thousands of Chinese were killed by the Japanese... "This is a very hot topic among graduate students right now," Pan said...

In 1939, when he was 2, the artist Peter Max and his family fled Berlin for Shanghai. At first the family lived in a large house, but they were later moved to Hongkou, which he remembers as a chaotic, colorful neighborhood...

Max attended an English-language school funded by the Kadoorie family and learned rudimentary Chinese from kids on the street. More important, he learned to draw from his baby-sitter, a Chinese girl who was a few years older and the daughter of an artist.

Now 74, Max is planning his first return trip to Shanghai this fall and has launched a search for the baby-sitter, though he doubts she is still alive.

For Chinese such as Wang, some of the

friendships with Jews lasted a lifetime.

"My father got along very well with them," said Wang's son Wang Jianmin. "After the Cultural Revolution, his old friends started to send him letters. They would come to Shanghai to visit him."

Wang Kaiyan, an English-language major in college, says she regrets she was too young to hear more of her grandfather's stories before his death. But she's pursuing his legacy just the same: as a volunteer tour guide at the museum.

"Jewish people come to the museum who still remember my grandfather and ask about him," Wang said. "I feel bad saying that he's dead and I didn't spend as much time as I should have listening to his stories."

More recently, Chinese tourists have started visiting the old Jewish quarter.

"When we first opened, 90% of the visitors were foreign, but now increasingly we get Chinese tourists and students who want to learn the history of the Jews in Shanghai," museum director Rita Tan said...

My Two Diasporas: On Being Jewish and Chinese

by So-Han Fan

excerpted from the September newsletter of Be'chol Lashon. Originally published at <http://efewishphilanthropy.com/my-two-diasporas-on-being-jewish-and-chinese/>

Diaspora. A fine word, a Greek word, full of grandeur and romance. It sounds desperate and aspirational. "I am the product of... diaspora." In my particular case, two diasporas: Jewish and Chinese. My father, a Chinese immigrant, met my mother, the descendant of Ashkenazi Jews, in the United States, a place that neither was native to but, that both had been dispersed to, by various historical forces, both political and economic.

Growing up I had limited contact with both cultures, learned languages of neither, and, in a rather peculiar turn of events, was unaware that I had Jewish heritage at all until the age of 21. How and why this part of my ancestry was hidden from me is an entire story unto itself, one that I'm not entirely clear on.

For the purposes of this tale, what is relevant is that my mother is descended from Galizian Jews, but I spent most of my life thinking that she was a curious blend of Cajun, Welsh, Irish, and German.

After I found out the truth, I considered my Jewish roots a curious foible of family history, but didn't quite understand that this particular foible makes me a Jew. It took me some time to come to the realization that I was now part of some sort of ancient, global, proto-tribal brotherhood that accepts me as one of their own unconditionally – I didn't have to convert or pray or even believe in God. No matter what I do, I am and always will be a Jew in the eyes of the Jewish people – because it's my mother who is a Jew. That's the catch – apparently it's kind of an all-or-nothing situation.

Some people will tilt their heads and squint and tell me they can see the Jew in me – usually in profile – but it's not what people think when they first see me. They mostly only see someone Chinese. I remember being teased for being Chinese, but at least I was always accepted as Chinese by Chinese people because of the Chinese surname I inherit from my father. This makes me "Chinese" in a way that a half-Chinese person with a foreign surname is not.

I was interested in my Chinese heritage from a young age but never had any friends who were Chinese or even Asian. I was interested in kung fu and Chinese art and Taoism, but I didn't learn the language growing up and, besides eating a lot of Chinese food, I didn't have a very traditional Chinese upbringing.

The Middle Kingdom

In 2009 I received my economic stimulus money and two tax returns at the same time, amounting to about \$1100. I used the money to buy a one-way ticket to China and 8 months later, armed with half a Rosetta Stone's worth of Mandarin, moved to Chengdu, hometown of the Giant Panda and capital of Sichuan province. I lived there for two and a half years, learned to speak Chinese, and did research for an environmental NGO among a slew of other odd jobs. I visited my relatives in Hong Kong and traveled all over the Southwest. As intended, I learned lots of neat things about China and my heritage along the way. I learned that most Chinese people don't actually

eat dog but that donkey is incredibly delicious. I learned that you can make a lot of money in China if you're foreign, even if you have no talent, provided you also have no self-respect. I learned that I, as the oldest male child in the family, am to inherit a book of names of all the family patriarchs going back through history for dozens of generations.

Hebreween

Less predictably, it was also in China that I became interested in Judaism. This is another story for another time, but suffice to say that it involved my much more, shall we say, Jewy cousin visiting and taking me to a Purim party held at the local Chabad house. I went dressed as Communist Mario – all I knew about the holiday is that it is kind of like Jewish Halloween. We read the Megillah Esther and ate hamantaschen; I shared my unusual story, everyone found it very interesting indeed, and then we all drank – heavily...

So Purim was a nice, gentle introduction to Judaism for me because it first and foremost satisfied my "animal soul" with the three C's – Costumes, cookies, and the consumption of alcohol. I became fast friends with the young rabbi, Dovi, and his wife Sarale, who had just moved to Chengdu a week or two prior. He was the first person to drive home to me the idea that I AM a Jew, completely a Jew, without having to do anything religious. It was a fact before I even had the knowledge of it. Had he been preachy or tried to immediately draw me into an observant Jewish lifestyle, I probably would not have gone back. But he didn't; he was more interested in drinking and dancing and singing songs, which are all things I can get behind.

The Accident of Birth

I went back to the Chabad house every day that week, not out of a newfound sense of religious zeal but because I wanted to hang out with my friend Dovi. We drank and smoked cigarettes. I talked to him about my life and he talked to me about his, which, because he is a rabbi who was raised in a Hasidic household, ended up being mostly about Judaism. He never tried to tell me what I "should" do as a Jew, but rather made me aware of what he "should" do as a Jew and also reinforced to me that that world, his world, is fully accessible to me, should I choose to embrace it, simply because of the accident of birth. Having lived my whole life in a world of halves – half

Chinese, half American, never having a distinct cultural identity or peer network – it was nice to be fully included in something.

Over the next few weeks I spent a lot of time at the Chabad house. I learned a little bit of Hebrew, learned to say Shema Israel, learned to lay tefillin, and even got Bar Mitzvah'ed (nearly 30 and a man at last!).

A few months later, I was in Israel.

The Land

My decision to travel to the Holy Land had little to do with my nascent Jewish identity and more to do with my innate love of travel, and my desire to visit my family. I say little, but not nothing – as much as 5% of my motivation had to do with being a Jew who had never been to Israel. I felt like I had given a fair shake to discovering my Chinese roots and that I owed my Jewish half at least a few weeks on my way back to America. My long-held fondness for Israeli women may have also played a small role. Mostly, however, I wanted to visit my relatives, most of whom I had never met or even heard of, and one of whom is an octogenarian Holocaust survivor.

My time in Israel was brief – two and a half weeks to my two and a half years in the Middle Kingdom – but what it lacked in duration it made up for in intensity. I spent the entire time traveling with my young cousin Eli, who speaks Hebrew and spent his high school years in Israel. We visited his friends and our mutual relatives all over the country, beginning in the West Bank and backpacking to Jerusalem, Haifa, Tzfat, and everywhere in between...Over the course of my visit, I acquired a kippah, tzitzit, a siddur, and was given a beautiful set of tefillin by my rabbi at his brother's wedding, which my visit just happened to coincide with.

I can't say I've seen all of Israel, but I've seen a lot of different sides of Israel, and as many different expressions of Judaism. Understanding my diasporic roots is a journey that I am still on, both literally and figuratively. At the moment I'm in New York...a beautiful city and the whole world is here, including both my ancient, inscrutable diasporas. On this leg of the trip I have stayed in Crown Heights, just down the street from 770, and visited the Lubavitcher Rebbe's tomb. I've spent as much time at tea shops and temples

in Chinatown as I have at shul, I've eaten fried chow fun and I've eaten chopped liver and pastrami on rye. Rather than having one foot in either culture, I have both feet in both, and at the same time I'm completely an American. In that sense, I have six feet, like an insect. And as I continue to crawl the surface of this earth I learn more about what it means to be all of the above. The main thing that I know now, that I didn't know before, is that Jewishness and Chineseness aren't things that you can go and simply pick up and put on, like a hat – you have to create them, and it's a process that never ends.

Special thanks to my cousin Nathana and my rabbi Dovi Henig of Chabad Chengdu, without both of whom this story wouldn't exist, and Mazal Tov to Dovi and Sarale who have just been blessed with their first child, a daughter.

Are All Jews White? The Woody Allen Syndrome

by Diane Tobin

excerpted from the *Be'chol Lashon enewsletter* June 2012. Originally published at: (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/diane-tobin/are-all-jews-white-the-woody-allen-syndrome_b_1577788.html)

In the common childhood game of telephone, a phrase is whispered from one person to the next until the last person repeats what is inevitably a distorted version of the original. A version of this game played out over the weekend, albeit unintentionally, when reports came out of a new policy instituted by the City University of New York (CUNY) to augment their racial categorization by adding a White/Jewish category for faculty applicants. As it turns out, while CUNY had held focus groups of Jewish faculty to discuss diversity, and labeled it White/Jewish, the idea of an official check box seemingly came out of the blue. But it didn't. Just like in telephone, where the final distorted phrase often reflects the thoughts, concerns and humor of those who pass the message along, the flawed report of CUNY's misstep reflects a conversation about Jewish identity that is bubbling up and seeping through the cracks of what it means to be Jewish in America...

The problem with a category designated for "White/Jewish," but no other Jewish/racial combination rests on the assumption that Jewish identity is restricted to or only an identity of import for white people. This assumption is widely held both outside and inside the Jewish community and the inaccuracy of it is what sparked the game of "telephone" and is fueling the continuing backlash.

I affectionately call this limited understanding of diversity, race and Judaism the "Woody Allen Syndrome." In other words, a well meaning person might think to him or herself, "Well, I don't know much about Jews, but I know Woody Allen is Jewish, and Woody Allen is white, so all Jews must be white." Absurd, right? As funny and emblematic of a certain kind of neurotic Jewish mindset as Woody Allen is, what could be more ridiculous than assuming that he represents all Jews.

Except this sort of "Woody Allen" thinking happens all the time when it comes to equating Jewish with white, even among Jews. Twenty percent of Jews in the United States are racially, ethnically or culturally diverse. Yet, each year when my organization, Be'chol Lashon, seeks to find children's books with Jewish themes that highlight or at least include Jews of Asian, African or Middle Eastern heritage, we are often left scrambling for appropriate offerings. Most students go through Hebrew school, Jewish camp or Jewish studies classes without learning about the history, food or culture of Greek, Yemenite, Iraqi or Ugandan Jews. Almost daily we hear from individuals who are grateful that there is a Jewish group somewhere that understands the complexity of Jewish identity and does not first ask if they are "really" Jewish. The "Woody Allen" mindset leaves 20 percent of Jews underrepresented and unduly scrutinized.

Diversity among Jews is not a new or a specifically American phenomenon. From ancient times through today, Jews have been a global people, spanning a range of cultural identity and skin colors. The Babylonian Talmud that is the foundation of Jewish law and lore was written not by men with white complexions in long black coats, but by men whose skin color reflected the region in which they lived. One of the greatest Jew-

ish thinkers of all time, Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, better known as Maimonides, knew nothing of central and eastern Europe or the Ashkenazi Jews who lived there but was well familiar with the Moorish culture of the Iberian Peninsula where he lived. The assumption that Jews are white is a relatively new phenomenon and has to do with the success of Jewish assimilation and the history of privileging whiteness. Moreover, in the shadow of the Holocaust, racializing Jewishness has highly problematic overtones.

If the CUNY flap tells us anything, it tells us that it is time we engage in an honest discussion about racial and ethnic diversity in the Jewish community, as well as the broader issue of multi-layered identities among all peoples. A broad look at both Jewish history and the Jewish people today tells you that racial and ethnic diversity is a defining aspect of Jewish identity rather than an anomaly to be overlooked. How we address multiple identities, whether as part of Jewish identity or not, is unclear. Do we add an infinite number of boxes one can check to fully express one's personal identity choices? Do we eliminate them altogether? No one knows, yet. But we do know that we cannot avoid this issue. Humanity is becoming more and more integrated, and the Jewish people in the past and present exemplify the blending of national, ethnic and racial identity that makes singular identification obsolete. The concerns over how one of the largest institutions in one of the most diverse, and Jewish, cities on earth perceives Jewish racial identity reveals an underlying need to address this uncomfortable issue. Despite the reluctance to have this discussion willingly and candidly, it will happen. It is happening. And it makes sense that it is beginning in New York, where Be'chol Lashon works with leaders of Jewish communities originating from Colombia to Syria to India. But it will not stay there. Yes, Woody Allen is Jewish and he is white. But that is only one part of the story.

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BOOK NOOK

A Theology of Kaifeng Jews, 1000 -1850

by Jordan Paper

1790 pages, hardcover, \$85 Can. Ebook available. Wilfrid Laurier University; Waterloo, Ontario; 2012

reviewed by Moshe Y. Bernstein

A Theology from the Past; A Paradigm for the Future

In 1942, William Charles White, who served as Anglican bishop in Henan province for more than a quarter of a century, published his magnum opus *Chinese Jews: A Compilation of Matters Relating to the Jews of Kai-Feng Fu*, still arguably the seminal and most comprehensive work on the historical Jewish community of Kaifeng. In his preface White writes: "Someday it is hoped a writer will be found who will deal with the interpretation of the religious and philosophical ideas of the Chinese Jews, as such may be noted in the inscriptions of the synagogue." Seventy years later, Jordan Paper, professor emeritus for East Asian and Religious Studies at York University, has taken up White's challenge in *The Theology of the Chinese Jews, 1000 - 1850*.

In *Chinese Jews*, White had already professed his own translation of the lapidary inscriptions of the stelae in the synagogue courtyard. These stone inscriptions of 1489, 1512, and 1663 – two of which, along with a 1679 stela of the Zhao clan, are currently housed in the attic floor of the Kaifeng Municipal Museum – present a fluid narrative containing diverse accounts of the community's origins and arrival in China, names of prominent communal figures, and a few of the foundational concepts of Jewish beliefs and values. They also express commonality with the philosophical traditions of Confucianism and Daoism, in particular, the Chinese practice of ancestor veneration. During his episcopacy White had made several unsuccessful attempts to cohere the community with their forgotten Jewish legacy. "No spark of interest in their history and in the divine heritage of Israel could be aroused in them," he wrote. "They were Jews no longer, either in a religious sense or as a community." While many scholars, including Paper, contend that the narratives

in the stelae may have been intended more for external public consumption, particularly of the literate Mandarin elite who may have collaborated to compose them, it is presumed that they were in some ways reflective of Sino-Judaic thought.

The various Jesuits who visited Kaifeng in the 17th and 18th centuries made meticulous rubbings not only of the stelae but also of the synagogue's vertical (lian) and horizontal (bian) interior placards. Also in the 17th century, two brothers, Zhao Yingcheng and Zhao Yingdou, who were among the many Kaifeng Jews to achieve the prestigious *jinshi* rank in the Chinese Imperial Examinations, are purported to have written possible theological treatises entitled *The Vicissitudes of the Holy Scripture* and *Preface to Clarifying the Law*, but, unfortunately, neither of these works are extant. Following the final destruction of the synagogue by flooding in the middle of the 19th century, all of the remaining Torah scrolls and artefacts were sold by some members of the by-then impoverished community. Some of these items are still maintained in museums and colleges in the US, UK, Canada and Israel, although many have been lost to posterity; the engravings on the stelae in the municipal museum have eroded considerably with time and are barely legible. Hence, the legacy of the Jesuits recordings of the synagogue and its artefacts is of particular importance in any attempt to decipher a generic theology of the Chinese Jews.

Paper's concise, readable and erudite text takes the reader on a more extensive intellectual journey than its modest title might imply. The author begins by tracking the extent of the Jewish Diaspora, providing evidence of Jewish migration, commerce and settlement throughout the Mediterranean and as far as East Asia prior to the Roman conquest of Judea in 70 CE. He briefly discusses the persecution suffered by Jews as subjects to Christendom in contrast to the greater freedom enjoyed by those living under Islam, although still subject to erratic "expulsions and forced conversions by local leaders who acted on their own." In order to contextualise the Jewish experience in Kaifeng, Paper paints a broad,

brush-stroke portrait of life in China contemporaneous with the more than eight centuries of tangible Jewish culture indicated in the title. Paper contends that "...no concept regarding China has caused more confusion in the Western mind than that of religion, a term that did not exist before it was poorly translated into Chinese in the late nineteenth century." Paper disputes the contention of Xu Xin in *The Jews of Kaifeng* that Chinese religion was of a "secular" nature and, for that reason, deemed compatible with Judaism. He suggests instead that this notion expresses a residual ideology from both the Chinese Communist Party, which eschewed superstition, and the Jesuits, who fought a prolonged theological battle with the Vatican to prove the secular nature of Confucianism in order to effectively proselytise and function within the ranks of Chinese society while circumventing accusations of heresy (the oppositional view of the Dominicans and Franciscans in the Church's Rites Controversy).

Paper postulates a system of "family religion" and "sacred kingship" rooted in the foundational Chinese concept of "xiao", or filial piety. Explaining why this Chinese notion subsumes the scriptural imperative of the fifth commandment, he depicts how the primacy of clan identification, family dedication, and the veneration of ancestors through offerings constitute a religion without belief: "...having grandparents or parents, whichever is the most recently departed, does not involve faith... we know absolutely that we have parents. They are more real to us than anything else. Thus, when they die, they do not disappear from our memory, nor is doubt created as to whether they actually existed." The author further characterises the practice of spirit possession as similarly empirical, as being "real to the senses", since these spirits "could talk or be talked to, touch and be touched in turn." What seems questionable here, however, is that although the existence of ancestors may be factual, the notion that veneration of these relations through providing them with food and drink, or that the prospect of affecting good fortune from doing so, does not appear to be constitutive of empirical processes. Similarly, although the words and actions of a spirit medium

might be perceived by the senses, the idea that the ancestors and/or deities were actually channelled through that medium would appear to be more a matter of faith than fact. Moreover, since Paper is attempting to counter what he considers the misguided perception of the secularism of Chinese religion, his eclipsing of the faith elements in these practices is somewhat perplexing.

This conundrum of the classification of Chinese religion is furthered later in the book when Paper analogises the sinicization of Kaifeng Judaism to the adaptation of American Jews to what he labels the “religion of Americanism”: the usage of the English language, sporting American clothing, the celebration of Thanksgiving, the 4th of July and New Years are deemed comparable to the absorption of the prevalent Chinese religion by the Chinese Jews. The analogy here seems to stretch the normative ideation of these American features as secular rather than religious. Yet, the debate as to how Chinese religion should be classified is in actuality a moot, semantic point rather than an ontological one. The more significant aspect raised by Paper is the pervasiveness of indigenous religion in the landscape of Chinese culture, and, similar to the Americanisms adopted by Jewish-Americans—whether considered secular or faith-based—its resonance with Judaism that facilitated its incorporation into Sino-Judaic culture.

Indeed, it is this relativistic feature of Paper’s argument that augments his thesis on the history, culture and theology of the Kaifeng Jews with the religious politics that up until the present have denigrated the authenticity of Chinese Jewish identity and erroneously castigated its sinicization as the reason for its ultimate demise. In his Introduction, Paper recounts his personal confrontation with this kind of politics when his application for a research grant was turned down by the Canadian Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council on the advice of Jewish reviewers. According to Paper, these reviewers “took umbrage that Chinese Judaism was taken seriously as a legitimate aspect of Judaism. Their expressed attitude was that by assimilating and becoming Chinese, the Chinese Jews were not truly Jews. Jews were a pure race.” (In an ironic twist, the Nazis used the example of Kaifeng Jews as a model of the inverse corollary: the pure race of

Han Chinese had become adulterated with Jewish blood!) The reviewers’ critique struck Paper, who is married to a Chinese academic, on a personal level. In their view, the assimilation of Kaifeng’s Jews with Chinese culture constituted “a warning more than a hope.”

Although his purview is neither the racial identification of “Jewishness” nor its link to the developmental aspect of matrilineal descent (these are discussed in greater depth by researchers such as Shaye D. J. Cohen), Paper nevertheless briefly portrays how the concept of bloodline developed among Ashkenazi Jews parallel to the nationalistic trends emergent in 19th and 20th century Northern Europe. With the arrival of the discipline of anthropology, the influence of these ideas among Reform German-Jewish immigrants to the US perpetuated. (Steven Birmingham’s *Our Crowd* documents how this outlook functioned to the extent that Jews of Eastern European origins were considered racially inferior.) It took the advent of the Jim Crow laws and the threat they posed to the Jews themselves as a race to eventually moderate this stance. Yet, in Europe, particularly among German-Jewish intellectuals, this perception persisted and converged with secular Zionist ideology. Paper quotes the renowned Hebrew-language poet Hayim Nachman Bialik from a 1934 press conference in Jerusalem that, “I, too, like Hitler, believe in the power of the blood idea.” Paper emphasizes how this understanding of Jewish identity as racial has become aggravated through the threat of rampant intermarriage in North America. More ominously, he presents examples within Israel itself where Jews of non-Ashkenazi origin—whether Indian, Ethiopian or even Sephardim—are often victims of racial discrimination. In 2010 this issue became a legal one in Israel when some ultra-orthodox (*haredi*) parents objected to the presence of Sephardim in the classroom with their children.

“Wherever Jews moved,” writes Paper, “assimilation through intermarriage with local females was the norm.” This claim appears to be substantiated by the resemblance of Jews across the globe with the physical characteristics of their local hosts. Although Paper reduces the multifaceted premises of matrilineal descent to the singular cause “to protect children who might otherwise be rejected”, he

posits that its origins as an extension of Jewish law metamorphosed into a prerequisite, one which gained added import with the enactment of Israel’s Law of Return. He convincingly argues that apart from the matrilineal condition of identity, both historical and contemporary Judaism display predominantly patrilineal aspects. In addition, he presents genetic evidence that challenges the suggestion of racial purity espoused by Ashkenazi Jews. In tandem, as suggested in his overview of the development of Judaism as a religion, it is the “doctrinaire” approach that evolved in Northern Europe – in sharp contradistinction to the more humane perspectives of Judaism adapted in other regions – that in more recent times has become ensconced with the Knesset’s legislating of an orthodox Chief Rabbinate in the State of Israel, thus establishing the hegemony of a racial and doctrinally rigid form of Judaism. In Israel today issues like the abrogation of the Tal Law that exempted *haredim* from military service, the recent decision of the attorney general to grant funding to non-orthodox community rabbis (including females), and public reaction to the attempts of community extremists to regulate dress codes are challenging this hegemonic entrenchment and signify a time of crisis and transition for contemporary Judaism.

It is in the context of these shifting power relations that the crux of Paper’s thesis, “A Speculative Theology of the Chinese Jews”, takes on particular significance. Unlike theological developments under Christendom or Islam, the synthesis of Chinese Judaism progressed in an environment lacking persecution. The Jews of Kaifeng were able to freely integrate socially, economically and culturally. According to Paper, the Hebrew names recorded for female Chinese spouses were indicative of their conversion, and the patrilineal and patrilocal facets of Han culture served to ensure the adaptation to and preservation of Jewish customs and practices. Though a placard over the ark containing their Torah scrolls gave homage to the Emperor, above it stood a tablet in gold leaf engraved with the primary proclamation of the Jewish monotheism, the *shma yisrael*. Yet, the inscriptions of the stelae suggest that the Kaifeng Jews’ comprehension of this singular God was entwined with the concept of an ancestral deity, a conception supported by prayers they, along with Jews

worldwide, recited three times daily invoking “our God, and God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob.” In the stelae, however, the use of the Chinese names of *dao* and *tian* hints at the selection of classical Chinese concepts of deity that resonated with them as both Jews and Chinese. Paper proposes that the choice of this name from Daoist cosmology expresses “an understanding of God not as anthropomorphic but as all-encompassing, as the source of all life. God is the ultimate that can be named, beyond which is a further ultimate that cannot be named.” In kabbalistic thought, this ineffable ultimate is referred to as “Ayn Sof”, or “the Limitless”. Although in colloquial Chinese *tian* has the meaning of Sky, or, in Hebrew, *shamayim* – often utilised in idiomatic speech as a euphemism for God – its meaning in both the stelae and placards could indicate “the locus of the sacred”, “God as prime mover”, or the transcendent and immanent aspects of deity implied in the compound *tiandi*, literally “heaven and earth”, depending on its usage and context.

Although much of the chapter proposing a speculative theology consists of necessary digressions into purely Confucian, Daoist and Jewish thought to better understand its unique synthesis in Kaifeng, Paper nonetheless convincingly depicts an alternative system of spirituality which, though markedly different from that which evolved in Europe, is situated within the norms of great Jewish thinkers like Sa’adia Gaon and Maimonides. Rather than a onetime historical event initiated by an anthropomorphic, masculinised deity, the Kaifeng Jews viewed creation as a continual process of *creation ex-nihilo* forming the duality of *yin* and *yang* (i.e. *shamayim v’aretz*, Heaven and Earth) from which all forms of multiplicity are constantly emergent. Observance of the Torah commandments was perceived not as stemming from a Divine Covenant predicated on reward and punishment by an authoritarian and potentially wrathful God, but rather on the belief that “being good is being true to one’s nature [the Confucian philosophy of Mengzi], which is essentially divine, while being wicked, which in the Chinese context means acting selfishly, is being perverse to human nature.” Similarly, as the concept of a non-anthropomorphic deity was also impersonal and void of human emotions, the concept of

tshuvah, or “repentance”, in traditional Judaism, embedded in the evasion of punishment, manifested in Sino-Judaic thought as the normative Chinese concept of “rectification of the heart/mind”, the natural, creative yearning to realise one’s full potential. Paper also suggests that traditional prayer in Kaifeng, which the Jesuits attest took place on a daily basis, “would have been understood from a functional standpoint as little different from the chanting that took place in Chinese Buddhist monasteries.” He also proposes that the Chinese Jews may have engaged in private prayer when making offerings to their ancestors, reflective of the widespread custom of petitioning personal prayers at the gravesites of venerable Jewish saints.

These are but some of the hypothetical, yet quite conceivable, theological tenets that are summarized in this book. A minor criticism lies in a few of the assumptions made in painting the details of Jewish life in Kaifeng. For example, Paper assumes that listing of Hebrew names of intermarried females is indicative of “conversion”; as there is no confirmation of formalised conversions in Kaifeng, this assumption is somewhat misleading. So too, Paper declares that the Chinese Jews did not engage with popular religious practices in China. However, given the syncretistic nature and permeable boundaries of Chinese religious culture, other researchers (e.g. Stephen Sharot) have suggested that such an engagement was indeed probable. Furthermore, although a colophon found in Kaifeng lists certain Talmudic tractates, there is no hard evidence to support Paper’s supposition of the existence of the Talmud in Kaifeng and no documentation of Talmudic study or culture. In my view, some of these assumptions appear to be an apologetics to orthodoxy, an attempt, perhaps, to make the Kaifeng Jews even more traditional than they actually were and, in a certain sense, thus detracting from rather than enhancing the thrust of Paper’s main argument.

Paper argues that economic, geographic and demographic factors – rather than assimilation and sinicization – were the root causes of the community’s cultural termination. This view has been substantiated by more recent research (Eber, Abraham, Plaks, Sharot, Urbach, Patt-Shamir and Rapaport, Laytner) that, to the contrary, sinicization represented a

preservative function that enabled this minuscule community, consisting of a mere 5000 souls at its apex in the Ming Dynasty – a drop in the bucket of China’s massive populace – to endure as a distinct and tangible religious culture for a remarkable eight centuries and more. Paper calls attention to the fact that this achievement surpasses that of some of Europe’s most durable Jewish communities (the Old-New Synagogue of Prague, for example, has existed for 700 years). For this achievement to remain unacknowledged due to cultural bias, not only by the Jewish orthodox establishment but even by social science reviewers in academia, represents an extraordinary display of bigotry. As one presently engaged in researching the current revitalisation of Jewish identity among the descendants of Kaifeng’s Jews, who have made exceptional efforts in the face of the negation of their identity by both the Chinese government and the Chief Rabbinate, I can confirm that these prejudices endure.

In the postscript to *The Theology of the Chinese Jews*, Rabbi Anson Laytner eloquently contextualises the Kaifeng Jewish experience with the problems confronting Western Jewry today. Both the Holocaust and modern science, Laytner argues, have had a critical impact on some of the fundamental notions of God and Jewish thought in general. With more than half of Western Jewry unaffiliated and others abandoning Judaism for the spiritual traditions of the East, he believes that there is a need for “a revolution in Jewish thought.” He considers that the Chinese Jews represent a model that, if the cultural blinders preconceiving Judaism as a racial phenomenon are removed, could guide contemporary Judaism in that direction: “Far from serving as a warning to us about the dangers of integration, intermarriage, and assimilation—or, ironically, demonstrating our supposed need of anti-Semitism to ensure our continuity—the Kaifeng Jews show that a successful Jewish culture can flourish in an open society, without hostility, by absorbing the best of the dominant culture and making it one’s own.” This, in effect, sums up the real significance of Paper’s research, which is not simply a theological account of an exotic, remote Jewish enclave of times gone by, but, more notably, a visualization of potentiality for contemporary Judaism and its future development.

中國-猶太學院

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