

isolated case and that many other trials exist in the archives of the *Torre do Tombo* that contain correspondence from the Spanish Inquisition.⁴⁵ Modern studies of the Inquisition have to a large extent overlooked the manner in which the Inquisitions in Spain and Portugal were able to cooperate in the repression of heresy across the boundaries of their kingdoms. This oversight is all the more striking since there has been an increasing interest in *converso* communities residing astride the border.⁴⁶ Likewise, there has also been rising scrutiny of the social, cultural, political and economic interaction between the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal in the early modern period.⁴⁷ In spite of this, the state of current research in this area means that the nature of relations between the Inquisitions of both Iberian kingdoms, and their evolution during their three centuries of coexistence, remains elusive. A clear picture of the level of collaboration between the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions between 1536 and 1821 will only emerge through further research in this particular domain in both Spanish *and* Portuguese archives.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ To cite but a few examples see, for instance, A.N.T.T., *Inquisição de Lisboa, processos* n.ºs 1431 and 5035. Also *Inquisição de Évora, processo* n.º 3538.

⁴⁶ PILAR HUERGA CRIADO, *En la Raya de Portugal: Solidaridad y Tensiones en la Comunidad Judeoconversa* (Salamanca, 1994).

⁴⁷ See the work of ISABEL M. R. MENDES DRUMOND, *Um espaço, duas monarquias: inter-relações na Península Ibérica na época de Carlos V*, (Lisbon, 2001).

⁴⁸ I would like to express my thanks to the Awards Committee of the Leverhulme Trust for their grant of a two-year postdoctoral research award (2006-8) that is currently enabling me to conduct research on the theme of collaboration between the Spanish and Portuguese Inquisitions. My gratitude also extends to Ms. K. Chambers, who read and edited this article.

Women as religious leaders: the sources biblical and Rabbinic

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What's in a name? that which we call a rose
By any other name would smell as sweet;
(*Romeo and Juliet* II, 2, 43-44)

Juliet was articulating a simple yet profound truth, that entities are not objectively impacted by their names – whether inherited or given. But what about titles? Do people not change, both in their own and in their fellows' eyes, when honorifics are conferred upon them? For some mysterious reason we humans often react differently to people once we discover them to be persons of title. It is almost as if an invisible barrier has gone up. Victorian etiquette manuals devote chapter after sonorous chapter to correct forms of address, which if breached, heads could roll. Today, especially in democracies, we may be less touchy about points of honour. Even so, in a diluted form, titles have their place in any civilized society, because over and above protocol, titles serve a practical purpose. A title can convey information as to its holder's qualifications, which (though nobody's business!) is not without its usefulness. As to religious titles, they serve as seals not merely of competence, but also of integrity. Additionally, such titles identify the faith-community or denomination of the bearer, and his or her allegiance.

Did I say his or her? While we may find the phrase 'his or her' unexceptional, there are those who are bothered by its use in the context of religious titles. For such use of gender-inclusive language can be construed as taking sides in the debate over religious roles for women. It is certainly not our intention to be partisan. However, the ancient sources are far from monolithic, and while some

curtail women's opportunities in the religious sphere, there are plenty that open their doors wide to the 'woman of valour' as we hope to demonstrate. Within Judaism the bone of hottest contention is the ordination of women to the rabbinate. To understand the pros and cons of women's rabbinic ordination, we might as well kick off with the history of the title rabbi.

The first point to remember is that 'rabbi' is almost certainly unattested as a pre-Exilic Israelite title.¹ At 2Kgs 18:17 we read in the Masoretic text "The king of Assyria sent Tartan, and Rab-Saris and Rabshakeh". Traditionally, these words have been treated as personal pronouns. This seems to have been the understanding of the LXX whose "Thartan, Raphis and Rapsakes" is an obvious attempt at transliteration. Likewise, the Aramaic paraphrases of Scripture (generically known as *targums*) in line with other extant rabbinic writings all treat Tartan, Rab-Saris and Rabshakeh as personal names.

Modern scholarship, on the other hand, has identified biblical *tartan* with the Assyrian military title: *tartānu* (see BDB p. 1077). Similarly, the **rab** prefix of Rab-Saris and Rabshakeh it construes as a title signifying chief. Accordingly, in translations that acknowledge the findings of scholarship, such as the New English Bible or the Nova Bíblia dos Capuchinhos, the three envoys become, respectively, "commander in chief, chief eunuch and chief officer" and "o general do exército, o chefe dos eunucos e o seu copeiro-mor". As if to preclude all doubt, the Bíblia dos Capuchinhos adds in a foot-

¹ *Rabbé ha-melekh* (= officials of the king) figure in the Masoretic Text of Jer 41:1. Seeing that the rest of the personages listed there are Judaeans, it is only natural to think of that verse's *rabbé ha-melekh* as ex-courtiers of Judah's king. Those who reason thus, go on to conclude that Jerusalem had adopted the title **rab** prior to the Exile. However, the Jer. 41 story postdates the expulsion of Zedekiah and his retinue, so that their presence at Mispah is all but precluded. So who are these *rabbé ha-melekh*? To modern scholarship the question of their identity has become moot, inasmuch as it doubts the historicity of men who have already vanished by 41:2. No less significantly they are – as John Bright notes – "absent from LXX and II Kings xxv 25, and are probably best omitted". (The Anchor Bible vol. 21 p. 248). They are likewise absent from Josephus (see Ant. X, 9, 4).

note: "Os três enviados de Senaquerib são designados não por nomes, como antigamente se entendia, mas pelos seus cargos, que representavam os títulos mais elevados dos oficiais da corte assíria". Additional **rabs** appear at Jer 39:3,13 (in v. 13 we also meet **rabbé**, the plural construct form of **rab**) and at Jer 41:1. But unlike the **rabs** of the Book of Kings who are Assyrian, Jeremiah's **rabs** are Chaldaean.²

It is believed that the Jews borrowed the title from the Babylonians. However, there is no evidence of the title rab or rabbi (which is rab plus the Hebrew suffix for my) being formally bestowed on Jewish teachers before the tannaic period. To be sure, disciples would address their teacher as 'rabbi' and refer to him as 'the rabbi' among themselves. Both usages are amply attested in the Gospels (e.g. Mt. 23:7-8; Mk. 5:35) as well as in the oldest talmudic sources. While that earlier usage of 'rabbi' was no less deferential in tenor, it would not have defined the man thus addressed for the world at large. Rather would it have been a courtesy title for internal use, as it were, whereby juniors express subservience to their superior; analogous to 'sir' in English public schools and in the armed forces. Thus, in his classroom his students would have addressed the famous Hillel (who flourished around the year 30 BCE), as *rabbi*. But to third parties he was bare, unadorned Hillel, as shown by innumerable mentions of this sage. A couple of generations after Hillel, we encounter the first leader to be inseparable from his rabbinic title. This is Gamaliel I – leader of the Pharisaic sect in the middle of the first century ACE. We are not told what triggered the innovation whereby the rabbinic title began to be formalized. In his letter to the community of Kairouan, Sherira Gaon (d.1006) has this to say on the subject

² See previous note; also DEAN O. WENTHE'S, "The Social Configuration of the Rabbi-Disciple Relationship" in *Studies in the Hebrew Bible, Qumran and the Septuagint Presented to Eugene Ulrich*, Leiden 2006 pp. 143-174.

In the earlier generations when they were very great they were not in need of titles; whether it be the title Rabban, Rabbi or Rab. The use of such titles spread from the students of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai onward [i.e. from the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in the year 70].

At first blush, Sherira Gaon's explanation strikes one as a long shot. Nevertheless, there may be a psychological truth lurking in his words. When people's confidence is assailed, whether by self-doubt or external challenges, they tend to look for compensatory props. A title might help boost someone's flagging morale. So at least as a contributory factor, the psychological should not be dismissed. But as historians point out, to precipitate so momentous a reform in the public domain, the main thrust must have been socio-political - and of some urgency to boot. For the adoption of rabbinic *semikbah* (= ordination) is no trifling matter. Once ordination is instituted, it becomes an admission ticket. Without it, scholars would be disadvantaged, as to prestige and even credentials. Irrespective of an individual's erudition and other merits, no ordination no meaningful authority.

The rite of *semikbah* is described in the Talmud as follows

Is a hand placed on the inductee's head?³ ... his name is invoked and he is called 'rabbi' and is invested with authority to adjudicate... (San. 13b)

To be sure, the inductee of this passage is referred to in the masculine. But as we know, Hebrew, like other languages that have only masculine and feminine, employs masculine gender inclusively as well as exclusively. This means that gender alone cannot be relied on to exclude women automatically. A more serious consideration militating against women's ordination is the absence of female rabbis from the records. Throughout the length and breadth of the Talmud, not a single woman carries the title rabbi. For some, such

³ But see the variant (and preferable?) reading preserved by the 11th century R. Yehudah b. Barzillai of Barcelona in his *Sefer ha-Shtarot* (Berlin 1898, p.132) "With hand placed on the inductee's head... his name is invoked etc."

massive evidence, though only *ex silentio*, is sufficient to deprive women's ordination of that all important legitimizer – namely precedent. Others argue for suspending judgement regarding legitimacy until the reason for women's invisibility from the ancient rabbinic rosters is investigated.

It is not as though the talmudic corpus had pronounced on a woman's eligibility for the rabbinate as it had on her eligibility for kingship. Dt 17:15 says "You may indeed appoint over you a king". Sifré's comment on this deuteronomic verse is surprising as it is peremptory: "A king not a queen" (Sifré Dt 157). Sifré's ruling is surprising because history furnishes examples of Jewish queens who, even when criticized for their behaviour, are never impugned qua women. The Pharisees objected to the Hasmonaean king, whom they deemed unfit for the high priesthood, occupying that exalted position (see Qid. 66a; Josephus Ant. XIII, 10, 5-6). No parallel protest is recorded as having been launched against the Hasmonaean queen Salome Alexandra. On the contrary, her reign (76-67 BCE) is remembered as an age of bliss (see Sifra on Lev 26:4 et al). Another heroine of the Talmud is Queen Helen of Adiabene, who is described as a person "whose every action conformed to the Sages' teaching" (Suk. 2b). Even Athaliah, who is nobody's darling, earned opprobrium through her deeds not as a trespasser on men's territory. Nevertheless and despite the earlier tradition that was tolerant of queens, Sifré Dt 157 clearly had it in for them. And once Sifré had ruled, subsequent codifiers of halakhah (=rabbinic law) had no choice but to follow suit. No amount of stories reflecting a permissive attitude to female monarchs could counterbalance Sifré's formal interdiction.

Thus Maimonides (d. 1204) in his magisterial digest of halakhah, *Mishneh Torah* (popularly known as *Yad ha-Hazqah*), quite predictably codifies as law Sifré's ban on queens. So far so good. Maimonides, however, does not leave it at that, but proceeds to expand women's debarment as applying to all leadership roles whose

appointment can be defined by the verb **sum** which is Dt 17:15's word for installing a sovereign (*Yad, Melakbeem* 1:5). Some latter-day opponents of women's ordination think to pounce on this maimonidean text. But in reality, **sum** is not the verb denoting rabbinic – or for that matter juridical – promotion. With the exception of some obviously figurative uses of royal terminology to refer to rabbis, there is absolutely no halakhic equivalence between political kingship and religio-judicial **rabbihood**. Hence it is quite a leap to extrapolate to rabbinic ordination from Maimonides' exclusion of women from **sum** appointments.

That is not to say Maimonides would have favoured ordination for women. Indeed, the fact that he chose to extend the ancient constraints on women (both in the case just reviewed as well as in other instances that we shall yet meet), makes it rather doubtful. But at the end of the day, we do not know what Maimonides thought since he did not deal with women's ordination. Neither did other halakhists before the 20th century.

Thus Julius Newman was able to declare as recently as 1950 that the ordination of women was a question that had never been aired. Newman's book *Semikhab* [*Ordination*] was a pioneering work and bears quoting in extenso.

A most interesting question which has not been explicitly discussed anywhere, is whether a woman is eligible to obtain Semikhah. That this question has not been propounded may be due to the fact that a woman is, according to Jewish law, not eligible to be judge, and since she is incapable of executing one of the most fundamental functions of the ordained, it may be inferred that ordination cannot be bestowed upon her. However, the very question whether a woman can act as a judge or not does not seem to be quite determined. (*Semikhab* p. 99)

The indetermination Newman alludes to stems from the following somewhat recondite circumstances. The Babylonian Talmud omits explicit discussion of women judges. The Yerushalmi, on the other hand, after establishing that women cannot be witnesses, goes

on to conclude that “since women are unfit to testify they are unfit to judge” (Yom. 43b; cf. San. 21c, Shebu. 35b). While women's unfitness to testify it evinces from Scripture, the Yerushalmi furnishes no parallel text to support the disqualification of women judges (ibid.). Indeed, its disqualification of women judges appears to rest on nothing more than an out-of-the-blue analogy with female witnesses; an analogy that obviously presumes the standards for judges and witnesses to be identical. But in the absence of Scriptural authority, what is the basis for such a presupposition of witness-judge parity? Commentators point to a Mishnah in tractate Niddah

Whoever is fit to judge is fit to testify. But one can be fit to testify and unfit to judge (Nid. 6:4).

If the Yerushalmi embraced the position of this Mishnah – as the commentators suppose – exclusion from the judiciary would indeed follow from a person's incapacity to testify. So much for the Yerushalmi.

But when we open the Babylonian Talmud⁴, we find it far less amenable to Nid. 6:4's testimony-judgeship equation. In fact it downplays the equation considerably by identifying its proponent as a single solitary tanna, namely R. Meir who was known to disqualify blind judges. As for the rest of the sages, even while unanimously disallowing a blind man's testimony,⁵ recognized no impediment to a blind man serving on the bench. For they – that is to say the consensus of sages – rejected the very exegesis that R. Meir invoked to invalidate blind judges. Moreover, the Bavli cites the case of a blind judge who practiced with the tacit approval of R. Yohanan (Nid. 49b-50a). Thus, as far the Babylonian Talmud is concerned, the standards for witnesses are not linked to, and might on

⁴ Aka the Jerusalem or Palestinian Talmud, as distinct from the Bavli or Babylonian Talmud.

⁵ Something that was understood to be biblically derived and uncontestedly transmitted (Tosefta Shebu. 3:6; cf. *Yad, Edu* 9:12 et al.).

occasion be stricter than, those for judges. Now when the two Talmuds disagree, the Babylonian takes precedence over the Palestinian. However, where the Babylonian is silent or equivocal, preeminence may be ceded by default to the Yerushalmi. In this instance, surely the Bavli is clear enough: Niddah 6:4 represents in its reckoning a minority, and therefore non-binding, opinion (R. Meir's). Or is it?

Maimonides rules that “a person who has lost the sight of one eye may sit on a lower court of law... but the loss of both eyes renders a person unfit to sit on any [court of law]” (*Yad, Sanhedrin* 2:9). Despite the Bavli's repeated use of the word **somé** (= a blind person), Maimonides is thought to have built on a reference to “a person blind in one eye” that occurs in the course of the Bavli passage. Accordingly, Maimonides was able to limit the entire discussion to a one-eyed individual and thereby reconcile the Bavli with M. Nid. 6:4.⁶

In contrast to Maimonides, the 12-13th century French school of talmudic glossators known collectively as the Tosafists, take the Bavli's unadorned **somé** and **someem** in their only attested meaning.⁷ Hence, they deduce that just as a fully blind person – whose testimony is invalid on biblical warrant – can nevertheless judge, the same might hold for a woman (see Tos. Nid. 50a s.v. *kol*; cf. *Sefer ha-Hinnukh* commandment 77). Because once the nexus between testimony and judgeship is severed, a person unfit to testify can no longer be automatically deemed unfit for judgeship.

Thanks largely to Maimonides, most interpreters of talmudic law are inclined to disqualify women for the bench – albeit not always without a twinge of misgiving. The qualms are engendered, of

⁶ Less plausibly, Maimonides, chose to side with R. Meir against a majority (see *Hagahot Maimoniot*, loc. cit.).

⁷ I.e. “a blind person” and “blind people” respectively. As for the Talmud's reference to **somé be-ehad me-‘enav** (= a person blind in one eye), the Tosafist school no doubt understands it as serving merely to demonstrate the stringency of R. Meir who requires a judge to be fully sighted.

course, by the Biblical example of Deborah (Jud 4:4-5). Like their medieval predecessors, present day halakhists must struggle to square opposition to women judges with Scripture's celebration of Deborah – and the rabbinic designation of Jael⁸ – as judges.

Some 25 years ago scholars at the Jewish Theological Seminary of America were asked their opinion as to whether ordaining women was compatible with talmudic law. Several of the responses were sympathetic in principle to women's ordination – provided the women stay away from juridical assignments and selective cantorial duties. Outside the Seminary, this compromise met with a mixed reception – notably at the two poles of the Jewish spectrum. Feminists felt it sold them short, while the traditionalist camp insisted that immemorial tradition knows only male rabbis. And so the debate rages on.

But why are we so fixated on the rabbinic paradigm? Force of habit? Inertia? After all, both Bible and Talmud offer alternative models of religious and spiritual leadership; yet no serious attempts have been made to explore the possibility of their revival. Simon Schwarzfuchs explains the advent of the rabbi as an inevitable development.

From the day Judaism turned a theocracy into a nomocracy, the need for exponents of the Law was strongly felt. With the disappearance of prophecy [and] the neutralization of the priesthood [...] commentary and the commentators become indispensable. In such a context, the appearance of the rabbinate was unavoidable. (*A Concise History of the Rabbinate* 1993, p. x)

Now the value of Schwarzfuchs's presentation lies not its chronology – which seems all jumbled up. Particularly problematic is his suggestion that the rabbinate arose in order to fill a vacuum left by the loss of prophecy and the decline of priesthood. As we have

⁸ *Ruth Rabbah* 1:1; Rashi to Jud 5:6. See also pseudo-Rashi (whose actual author was a 13th century member of the Tosafist circle) to 2Chr. 13:4 whence we learn that “Jecoliah judged the people for the duration of her husband Amaziah's fifteen year absence”.

seen, there is no evidence of formal rabbinic leadership prior to Gamaliel the elder, whereas the prophetic voice ceases to be heard in the public arena half a millenium before Gamaliel. As to nomocracy – as Schwarzfuchs dubs it – its ascendancy can be traced back to a similar date, and at the latest to Ezra. Moreover, nomocracy as a system, left no space for prophecy. Thus, whether or not by design, the prophet was crowded out long before the first rabbi appeared on the Jewish scene. Finally, until the large-scale Hellenization within their ranks, the Temple priests had maintained their traditional stewardship of Torah (see Jer 18:18, Ezek 7:26, Hag 2:12-13 etc.). In a word, Schwarzfuchs puts the cart before the horse. These reservations notwithstanding, one can still retain his theory as valid for explaining the rabbinic model's longevity. The priesthood being so deeply invested in temple and cult, was dealt a death blow by the events of the year 70. Simultaneously, the rabbinate, now unrivalled, begins its heyday. Or, to repeat the formulation of Sherira Gaon (cited earlier): “The use of such titles [as *rabbi*, *rabban* etc.] spread from the students of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai onward [i.e. from the destruction of the Jerusalem temple]”. But even if the original triumph of the rabbinic model was destined and unstoppable as Schwarzfuchs intimates, which triumphs endure forever? Perhaps it is timely to revisit leadership models, other than the rabbinic; ones that beckon from the pages of Torah and Talmud.

RO'EH = shepherd

Moses our rabbi (*moshe rabbenu*) becomes increasingly the standard appellation for Moses in talmudic literature. The Mishnah, completed around the year 200, never employs *moshe rabbenu*; but contents itself with plain, unembellished Moses, or exceptionally, *moshe ha-saddiq* (Moses the righteous at Ned. 3:11). Thus the ‘rabbinization’ of Moses is thought to have come into vogue only after the promulgation of the Mishnah. But leaving dates aside, the re-

markable thing is that Moses' scriptural epithets such as prophet (Dt 18:18; 34:10), man of G-d (Dt 33:1) and the L-rd's servant (Dt 34:5) have disappeared to be supplanted, for all intents and purposes, by non-scriptural *rabbenu*. Had the concepts behind the biblical epithets grown so alien or inaccessible that they needed replacing? Or did Moses have to be transformed into a rabbi in order to bolster the new designation which had begun to demarcate the Torah elite? Concrete evidence is sparse, but there is one report that is rather telling. Dt 34:5 records the death of Moses as follows: “Moses the L-rd's servant died there”. On reaching this verse, Samalyon paraphrases it as: “Moses, Israel's great scribe, died there” (Sot. 13b; cf. Sifré Dt. 357; Yalk. ibid. 963). Unfortunately, nothing further is known of Samalyon. One can only speculate that he may have lived in an age when the Scribes dominated the Torah scene, or more plausibly, that he had preserved an old targum (=Aramaic paraphrase) originating in the era of the Scribes. Either way, the fact that Moses the L-rd's servant was set aside to make way for Moses the scribe, speaks volumes.⁹

Last but not least, Moses was a shepherd. Moreover, as a shepherd is how he seems to perceive himself. When his end draws near, Moses petitions G-d to provide a successor “So that the L-rd's congregation shall not be like sheep without a shepherd” (Num 27:17; cf. midrashim to Exod 3:1). Those words are more than a Freudian slip. They bespeak a man who believes that in him the people are about to lose a shepherd. Other shepherd scriptures to be associated with Moses include Isa 63:11-12 and, more germanely, Zech 11:8. The latter verse speaks of three shepherds whom the Talmud identifies as none other than Moses, Aaron and Miriam (Ta'an. 9a). Far-fetched or not, this talmudic hermeneutic is mighty pertinent to the question of women's leadership. Not only does it recognize Miriam's pastoral contribution, but it puts her on an equal footing

⁹ Cf. the Scribes into which the Targum metamorphoses *nebi'eem* (2Kgs 23:2) and *nabee* (Isa 3:2).

with the rest of the triumvirate. In asserting that the Bible grants uniform shepherd status to Moses, Aaron and Miriam, the Talmud opens up the shepherd role indiscriminately to men and women.

Other sacred duties placed by the sources within women's reach include, transmission of Torah; peripheral, but no less elemental, aspects of the cult; and, of course, the enigmatic 'ministering at the entrance'.

HOR'AH = Torah instructorship

We are all familiar with the valorous wife of Proverbs chapter 31, who opens her mouth with wisdom and on whose tongue is the Torah of love. Though she spreads Torah, there is nothing to suggest that she does it in anything but a private capacity. Huldah's Torah, on the other hand, is an entirely different kettle of fish. Both the Targum as well as R. Solomon son of Isaac - better known by his acronym RaShI (d. 1105) - have preserved a tradition that envisions the prophetess Huldah presiding over a Torah academy in Jerusalem. In the biblical story, King Josiah sends a delegation to seek prophetic council. The delegation decides to consult Huldah, and has no difficulty finding her at her post in a location Scripture designates THE MISHNEH (2 Kgs 22: 14). Now the literal meaning of THE MISHNEH is the second wall, and denotes the Jerusalem neighbourhood that had, in Josiah's day, been newly enclosed. Incidentally, a sizeable expanse of the wall has been excavated and remains on view in situ. But RaShI and Targum will not settle for a meaning as mundane as bricks and mortar. Instead, they transmogrify the mishneh into a BET ULPHANA, which is a *yeshibab* or 'Torah academy.'¹⁰ Lest we misunderstand Huldah's function in the

¹⁰ Etymologyizing MISHNEH as an offshoot of *sb-n-n*, the root of *ve-shinnantam*. Commenting on that word at Dt 6:7, Jeffrey H. Tigay writes "Hebrew *sb-n-n* is probably an alternate form of *sb-n-b*, "repeat," "teach." It refers to oral teaching, which remained the primary means of instruction in Israel even after the spread of literacy." (*The JPS Torah Commentary*, Deuteronomy 1996, p.78).

academy, an anonymous commentator spells it out: "She taught the Oral Torah to the scholars".¹¹

According to the Talmud, prior to the waiver granted to the writers of the Mishnah, it was forbidden to commit Oral Torah to writing. If so, any oral teachings that Huldah imparted to her disciples would have made her a link in the living chain of Torah transmission. That, in turn, tells us that her elders felt no inhibitions handing down to her their Torah legacy. Among the multitude of mishnaic voices, we hear a small yet audible clamour against Torah study for women. The voice the 'anonymous commentator' chose to eternalize came, obviously, from a different chorus; one, that, rather than shoo women away from Torah, calls them to Torah partnership for the greater good. RaShI (this time RaShI for certain!), provides yet another source that allows of women's Torah potential.

Out of a thousand men I have found but one. In the order of things, if a thousand enroll for Scripture no more than a hundred graduate to the Mishnah level. Of the hundred, only ten make it to Gemarah, and of the ten, a single loner will attain the rank of authoritative Torah instructorship [= HOR'AH]. But among all these no woman was to be found, not even among the original thousand. (RaShI on Eccles 7:28)

Admittedly, the sentiment is essentially misogynistic, inasmuch as it reckons women's truancy rates to be higher than men's. But it also has a silver lining. Bemoaning the absence of women enrollees, implies that they would have been welcome had they only made the effort to turn up. Thus in a backhanded way, the text approves women's involvement in Torah – as students first and foremost but yes, also as mentors.

¹¹ These words are absent from the Venice *Miqraot Gedolot* (1524-1526) but appear in later editions of RaShI's commentary as an appendage followed by the editor's remark: "a gloss R.A.". The initials R. A. remain a mystery. Do they stand for a person? A work? On account of these unanswered questions we can speak only of an 'anonymous commentator'.

CULT

The important halakhic midrash known as Sifra,¹² quite emphatically sanctions women officiating at *bamot* (Sifra to Lev 17:6). Now the literal meaning of the word *bamot* is high places. However, after the centralization of the cult in Jerusalem, it was adopted by the deuteronomistic histories to refer to all competing cult centers – whether legitimate or not. That same technical, and mildly pejorative, sense carries over into Sifra. The *bamot* Sifra has in mind are of the legitimate variety; i.e. they flourished before King Solomon built his Temple. That temple was, of course, served by an exclusively male priesthood. But in an earlier and more relaxed age, Sifra seems to say, women could lawfully officiate at *bamot* altars. Sifra's configuration tallies with the anthropologist Max Weber's seminal observations to the effect that a society's initial receptiveness to female spirituality rarely lasts.

The wide variation in the extent to which women are admitted to religious cults and participate in them [...] or are excluded from them is in general a function of the degree of relative peacefulness or military activity. The existence of priestesses, the veneration of prophetesses or sorceresses – in short, the most extreme devotion paid to individual women to whom supernatural powers and charismata are attributed [...] is a situation [that] seldom persists, however, beyond the early period of the congregation's existence [...] When the relationships within the congregation become routine and regularized, there is always a reaction against the phenomena of female inspiration, which are now felt to be disruptive and morbid. (*Selections in Translation*, edited by W.G. Runciman, Cambridge 1978 p. 181)

But was absolutely nothing cultic left to Israelite women, once regimentation prevailed? It depends on whom you ask. Maimonides appears to disenfranchise women of every cultic vestige, while their 'champion' RaShI is more lenient. According to Leviticus 10:14 and

¹² A compilation redacted around the year 400, but incorporating considerably older material.

Numbers 18:11 women partake of certain sacrificial meals. The ideological issue between RaShI and Maimonides, is the significance of that participation. On the exegetical level, it hinges on whether to understand a biblical phrase broadly or straitly (as we shall see anon). Being arcane, the whole topic is often avoided. Yet in a survey such as ours, to gloss over it would be remiss. And so we beg leave to try and do it justice.

Exodus 29:33 says regarding the priests: “**Let them eat the things with which expiation is made**”. The Talmud elaborates: Exod 29:33 teaches that the act of eating by the priests constitutes part of the expiation process (see Pes. 59b). The question is how narrowly is efficacious eating confined to priests. As we have just seen, the Talmud names priests, but that could be influenced by the biblical text under discussion. RaShI makes his opinion crystal clear at Hullin 12a apropos the Talmud's remarks on a layman's (as distinct from a priest's) share in peace offerings. The Talmud asserts that the person who brings a peace offering is duty bound to partake of the animal's flesh once its blood and fat have been immolated. But why? Why this insistence on eating? RaShI steps in to answer that question. He begins by stating that the requirement to consume the flesh of the peace offering is derived from Exod 29:33

Of the peace offering the Merciful One has said “**Let them eat the things with which expiation is made**” – meaning that expiation is contingent upon the eating.

So according to RaShI, not only the priests' eating of their sacred rations entails a piacular dimension, but equally piacular, and therefore indispensable, is the lay-person's consumption of his or her allotted portions. In other words, men and women, with their ritual eating, perform a vital cultic act.

Maimonides, in contrast to RaShI, goes out of his way to stress that Exod 29:33 applies solely to priests.

The priests are enjoined to eat the flesh of the holiest sacrifices, namely, the sin- and guilt-offering, as it says “**Let them eat the things with which**

expiation is made". [...] Clearly this commandment pertains exclusively to males of the priestly clan not to women, since the verse [Ex 29:33] refers to the holiest sacrifices of which women do not partake. As for sacrifices of lesser holiness that women may eat, such as the divers peace offerings, even though their consumption constitutes a quasi *misvah*, nevertheless it is not on a par with that of the sin- and guilt-offerings. For in the case of the sin- and guilt-offerings, their consumption completes the expiation process [...]. (*Book of Commandments*, positive command 89; cf. *Yad, Ma'aseh ha-Qorbanot* 9:1-4)

Ministering at the entrance

"The laver was made of bronze ... out of the mirrors of the ministering women (**sobe'ot**) who ministered (**sabe'u**) at the entrance of the Tent of Meeting" (Exod 38:8). The only other mention of the **sobe'ot** occurs in the Book of Samuel (1Sam 2:22), where they again appear as a group with official standing among the sanctuary's retinue. But their Samuel appearance is unique to the Masoretic text. There is no trace of any **sobe'ot** either in the Septuagint's Samuel or in the Dead Sea Samuel Scroll (4Q Sam.). Was there a conspiracy afoot to eradicate the **sobe'ot**'s memory? If so, it did not entirely succeed. Almost miraculously, the ministering women escaped oblivion – albeit by the skin of their teeth.

Which brings us to our closing submission. Of the sources congenial to women's ascendancy that we have looked at, most are quite tenuous. Their affirmative voices could easily be drowned; not by rival voices shouting them down, but by strident indifference. For the overwhelming majority of ancient Jewish texts – whether biblical or rabbinic – neither affirm nor proscribe but simply ignore the possibility of women at the religious helm. Now there is no denying that the handful of restrictive pronouncements (such as those of Maimonides cited above) come across as categorical compared to many of the shy, timid pro-women whispers. But it is the still, small voice that we are exhorted to heed. Torah demands it; Torah whose justice is measured by its solicitude for the mute, the tottering, the inadequate (see Isa 42:3; Prov 31:8).

A diáspora de Francisco Sanches, na busca da consciência do Eu

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Francisco Sanches, médico e filósofo português cristão-novo, nasce *circa* 1551 "*in civitate Tudensi*" (inseto na matrícula da Universidade de Montpellier), assim o declara, ter nascido em Tui – *natus in civitate tudensi* – ou possivelmente mais seguro, português de nascimento segundo assento do seu baptismo¹, na jurisdição da diocese de Braga: "*Aos vinte e cinco dias de Julho baptisei Francisco filho de Antonio Sanches fisico e de sua molher Filipa de Sousa padrinho o Comendador Antonio del Castilho e madrinha Maria Gonçalves molher do Licenciado Manoel Aranba moradores na rua do Souto*". Isto pode explicar em parte a questão da sua naturalidade, embora ele se confesse *hispanus*, tal como o nosso Pedro Hispano (Papa João XXI), a si próprio se referia como antropónimo, trezentos e cinquenta anos antes².

Como se descreve, é filho de António Sanches e de Filipa de Sousa, baptizado a 25 de Julho de 1551, na primitiva igreja paroquial de São João do Souto, tendo em Braga efectuado os seus primeiros estudos no colégio jesuíta de S. Paulo, onde terá tomado contacto com as primeiras fontes de conhecimento do homem e do mundo. Não é despiciente pensar no papel fundamental do pai, médico prestigiado, como tutor e conselheiro nos primeiros anos de estudo do filho.

Em 1562, ainda jovem, parte com os pais para França – Bor-

¹ JOSÉ MACHADO, documento publicado no 1.º volume do Boletim da Biblioteca Pública e Arquivo Distrital de Braga, (A.D.B. – Registo Paroquial, Braga – Souto, S. João, Lv. Misto 1, fls. 83).

² SÉRGIO DA SILVA PINTO, *Francisco Sanches, Vida e Obra*, Ed. Bracara Augusta, Braga, n.º 28, 1952.