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## APOLOGY FOR S. D. GOITEIN: AN ESSAY<sup>1</sup>

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Michel de Montaigne (1533–92) begins his classic essay, “Apology for Raymond Sebond,” in praise of scholarship. “Truly, learning is a most useful accomplishment and a great one.”<sup>2</sup> Truly, great scholars themselves require the closest study.<sup>3</sup> I write as a working historian of religions whose career began beholden to the massive accomplishments of Shlomo Dov (Fritz) Goitein (1900–85). My questions, pursued here in retrospect, concern the often under-theorized notions of religion and framing assumptions about humanism that he brought to his oceanic researches.<sup>4</sup> I do so not because he was “great,” although I am constrained to confess my OTSOG-ian deference toward him.<sup>5</sup> Rather, I see floating in the sea-change of civilizational conflict breaking around us the shards of Goitein’s wishful edifice, which we perhaps cannot put back together again.

The Orientalism culture wars were getting underway when I entered graduate school in 1978 – Patricia Crone and Michael Cook published *Hagarism* in 1977, Edward Said published his *Orientalism* in 1978. Territory I was entering was contested, intimidating. It hardly helped that my primary inspiration was Goitein – his reputation as an arch-Orientalist and true believer in the civilizing humanism of the philological vocation seemingly rendered him vulnerable from both flanks. Nevertheless, directly following his scholarly lead, I chose the “creative symbiosis” between Muslim and Jew as subject of my research.<sup>6</sup> He died in 1985, just as I was writing the last pages of my dissertation. In other words, I set forth fully under the sign of Goitein.<sup>7</sup> And so, answering an invitation from the editors to write an essay on the Mediterranean, I thought immediately of Goitein’s

valediction, delivered in the last year of his long life.<sup>8</sup> In 1987, taking my academic post, I was at once perplexed and impressed by this heartbreakingly optimistic talk. Its title faced me as a challenge: “The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies.”

Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond Sebond* (1580) sheds an odd light slantwise on my encounter with Goitein. A kind of irreligious defense of religion written under the bloodstained insignia of the Wars of Religion, Montaigne’s innovative essay form shares with Goitein’s “sociography” a resolute aversion to abstraction. In the spirit, I hope, underwritten by Montaigne and Goitein, I too seek to see a person whole. In the case of Goitein, seeing the whole person is dauntingly difficult indeed. Goitein’s constellation of accomplishments is rare in the history of scholarship.<sup>9</sup> Nor was he a mere energetic pedagogue – he took understandable umbrage when Gershom Scholem denigrated him as a “born Schulmeister.” Eric Ormsby, a student of Goitein who reported his teacher’s hurt feelings, captures his rainbow of attainment.

Goitein was a very great scholar and historian, an Islamicist by formation but also a biblical expert and commentator, an editor of texts, a paleographer, an ethnologist whose fieldwork on the Jews of Yemen remains fundamental, a linguist, a medievalist and economic historian, a pedagogue, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem from its inception, and, not least, a Hebrew poet and playwright. A polyglot, the list of his over six hundred works in Hebrew, English, German, and French fills an entire book.<sup>10</sup>

Ormsby recently asked of Maimonides, “How write the life of such a polymath?”<sup>11</sup> Like Maimonides the polymath, Goitein’s stature as polyglot, universal scholar resists the essayist, who is by definition a miniaturist. How embrace a subject as big as a sea in the intimate terms of the personal essay? The intimacy of the genre Montaigne invented would seem antipodes away from the five oceanic volumes of *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*.<sup>12</sup> But first, back to the *Heimat*.

#### GOITEIN IN GERMANY

Fritz Goitein was proudly descended from Moravian-Hungarian Rabbi Baruch Goitein, the author of *Kesef Nivhar*.<sup>13</sup>

My own great-great-grandfather's *Kesef Nivhar*, which is still popular with the Talmudists and has often been reprinted, also in [the U.S.], appeared first in Prague 1827 [sic], preceded by a long list of sponsors (including, incidentally, the grandfather of Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism).<sup>14</sup>

Kojetin (also known as Gojetein or Goitein) produced a line of rabbis that included his own father, who raised him in Burgkunstadt, Bavaria.<sup>15</sup> The young scholar made a daring leap from orthodox practice of Judaism to philological study of Islam. In the opening remarks at the inaugural conference of the Society of Judaeo-Arabic Studies in 1984, Goitein recalled that, when he entered Islamic studies sixty-six years before, less than half a dozen universities even offered such studies.<sup>16</sup> He wrote his thesis, on prayer in the Qur'an, under Josef Horowitz (1874–1931).<sup>17</sup> His work in this regard descended directly from the co-founder of the Reform movement, Abraham Geiger. Geiger's 1833 *Was hat Mohammed aus dem Judenthum aufgenommen?* began a line of inquiry to which Goitein now centrally returned. Goitein, furthermore, remained animated by this fundamental question, developing it in again in his 1958 essay "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism."<sup>18</sup> However, he began his career with Syriac influence on the Qur'an, but never inimical to Muhammad or his revelation.<sup>19</sup>

In any case, Goitein happily, for him and for us, emerged out of the intense Jewish renaissance of Weimar Germany.<sup>20</sup> As he recalled it nostalgically, "the real formative years of my life were the years 1914 to 1923 which I spent in Frankfurt and partly also in Berlin. It gave me inspiration, knowledge and friendship. It was a time of great enthusiasm."<sup>21</sup> Such enthusiasm was an earmark of the circle around Rabbi Nehemias Anton Nobel (1871–1922). Goitein was only twenty-two years old when he published his eulogy for Nobel alongside those by senior luminaries Leo Baeck and Franz Rosenzweig, among other leaders of German Jewry.<sup>22</sup> He characterized Nobel in terms one associates with the contemporaneous George circle. "The phenomenon of Nobel's notion of personality is thoroughly that of the artistically organized human being" ("Das Phänomen der Nobelschen Persönlichkeit ist das eines durchaus künstlerisch organisierten Menschen").<sup>23</sup> Goitein, it would seem, epitomized the ideal he attributed to his cousin, the distinguished philologist of Islam, D. Z. H. Baneth.<sup>24</sup> He was "one was always in presence of creative thought based on the sound foundation of profound scholarship."<sup>25</sup>

Young Jewish Orientalists were in some serious sense in love with Islam, a love perhaps not inconsistent with the Orientalist depredations attributed to it by Edward Said and others.<sup>26</sup> Some – including al-Raschid Bey, Essad Bey, and Muhammad Asad – “converted” to Islam, in one form or another.<sup>27</sup> A circle of unusually talented Jewish Islamicists formed around their teacher, Hans Heinrich Schaeder. These so-called “puppies” flourished in social proximity to Goitein, although, tellingly, he was not one of them.<sup>28</sup> The majority of these Jewish Islamicist students clustered around. The majority of these Jewish Islamicist students clustered around Carl Heinrich Becker (1876–1933), the teacher both of Goitein and Schaeder.<sup>29</sup> Goitein still praised Becker as late as 1987.<sup>30</sup> It should be said that while Becker was properly lauded as a liberal minister of culture during the Weimar Republic, responsible for visionary innovations in university life, he was also actively devoted to the German colonial project.<sup>31</sup> He was not infected, however, with race-hatred and indeed abandoned Islamic studies to serve as minister of culture in the Weimar Republic, in which position he became patron to leading liberal intellectuals.<sup>32</sup>

Goitein left aside Becker’s colonialism, even when the loyal student returned to his teacher decades later. Writing in the poignantly retrospective epilogue to *A Mediterranean Society*, Goitein paid homage a final time: “My model in Islamic history was Carl Heinrich Becker (d.1933), whose lectures I attended in Berlin. He taught Islam as a civilization (and not merely as a religion), at that time a revolutionary attitude (for which a professor at Cairo University lost his post).”<sup>33</sup> Goitein retained that “revolutionary attitude.” Based squarely on this civilizational imperative, he even coined a new world-age, “the Intermediate Civilization.”<sup>34</sup> Becker’s formulation is explicitly his point of departure. “Did they grasp the spirit of Hellas? ... For C.H. Becker, one of the most competent students of our problem, Islam is Hellenism, to be sure an Islamicized Hellenism.”<sup>35</sup> Becker influentially put it, “Islamic civilization is naught but a fusion of ancient Greek intellectuality with Oriental contemplativeness.”<sup>36</sup> Goitein seemed to demur in favor of a somewhat more nuanced periodization approach, but he then returned to this civilizational ideal.

While devoted to his German teachers, the young Zionist determined that, on receiving his doctorate, he would emigrate to Palestine. In a moving recollection, he invoked his prayers at the home of Franz Rosenzweig, on Rosh Hashana 1923, the day before he boarded the boat with Scholem.<sup>37</sup>

I did not have to “look” into the Scriptures; I was in them. It happened on September 11, 1923, when Erich Fromm (to become renowned for his psychoanalytical writings) and I officiated as cantors at the Jewish New Year’s service in the house of the philosopher Franz Rosenzweig ... When I recited Genesis 21:12, “God hears the voice of the boy wherever he might be,” I was to leave the next day for Palestine ... [t]hat the boy in the biblical story was Ishmael seemed to be altogether appropriate for a fledgling Arabist.<sup>38</sup>

Goitein then sailed the Mediterranean Sea, together with Gerhard (Gershom) Scholem. Even now I imagine them dividing their worlds down the middle of that sea – Goitein relishing his eastbound journey both to a new home and to a scholarly mastery of an ancient “Orient” while Scholem gazes forward toward Zion even as he remains rooted in the spiritual history of European Jews.<sup>39</sup> Goitein implied that his emigration coincided with his disillusionment with orthodoxy. Thus, the elderly scholar reminisced about German Jewry with a sardonic edge. “In the magnificent, *hyperorthodox* synagogue of Frankfurt am Main (now destroyed, of course) [the service immediately following conclusion of Sabbath] did not take more than twenty minutes at most, but endless rows of cars waited outside to take busy executives to their offices.”<sup>40</sup> Subsequently he would identify with Abraham Maimonides, who “went so far as to accuse the *hyperorthodox* of their disregard for the laws of nature and of the sciences that studied them.”<sup>41</sup>

#### GOITEIN IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

I too was once a medieval man; now, I am a medievalist, which is, of course, quite a different matter.<sup>42</sup>

Like the similarly disillusioned medievalist Scholem, Goitein carried compensatory ambitions with him in his emigration.<sup>43</sup> It is not surprising that Goitein, like many of his cohort, identified with the twelfth-century Andalusian emigration generation.<sup>44</sup> Jews of his generation in Germany thrived on the wish-fulfillment of reliving the Golden Age of the Jews of Spain. More generally, German Jews identified with the Jews of Islam, in the now well-known romantic myth of Sepharad.<sup>45</sup> But only some could recognize that the myth of German–Jewish symbiosis was disintegrating and that they needed therefore to find a national homeland of their own.

The Islamist emigrant was especially enamored of the poet laureate of the Andalusian emigration, Yehuda Halevi.<sup>46</sup> This love was consistent with the German–Jewish love affair with this great poet, whose devotees included Moses Mendelssohn, Moses Hess, Heinrich Heine, and Rosenzweig.<sup>47</sup> One of Goitein’s first publications was a passionate 1924 review of Rosenzweig’s translations of Halevi’s poetry.<sup>48</sup> Goitein made major contributions to the study of Halevi, including the identification of autograph letters found in the Genizah.<sup>49</sup> “From Biblical times down to modern Hebrew literature, there has certainly been no Hebrew poet, as *perfect in form* and as true an interpreter of the spirit of the age as Judah ha-Levi ... [whose *Kuzari*] is perhaps the most authentic exposition of Judaism in existence.”<sup>50</sup> He made the point slightly differently in the last pages of *A Mediterranean Society*, to the effect that in “the combination of his *perfection in form* and the elementary power of religious conviction ha-Levi seems to have been unique.”<sup>51</sup>

Goitein became a founder of so-called “Oriental studies” in the new Jewish state.<sup>52</sup> He did so in part by continuing projects connected with his graduate school mentors. Milson notes that “According to Goitein, in his introduction to his edition of volume V of *Ansab al-ashraf*, it was Weil who originally suggested this project to Horowitz, and Carl Becker, the famous German Islamicist who discovered the manuscript, warmly agreed.”<sup>53</sup> Goitein’s view of “symbiosis” thus was fully formed rather early. A good example is his 1937 Hebrew essay “Some Comparative Notes on the History of Israel and the Arabs.”<sup>54</sup>

His major contributions from this period of his career were collected in *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions*.<sup>55</sup> At the end of his forty-year Islamic career, he publically changed some positions he had long espoused.

There is no subject of Islamic social history on which the present writer had to modify his views so radically while passing from literary to documentary sources, i.e., from the study of Muslim books to that of the records of the Cairo Geniza as the *jizya* or the poll tax to be paid by non-Muslims. It was of course, evident that the tax represented a discrimination and was intended, according to the Koran’s own words, to emphasize the inferior status of the non-believers. It seemed, however, that from the economic point of view, it did not constitute a heavy imposition, since it was on a sliding scale, approximately one, two, and four dinars, and thus adjusted to the financial

capacity of the taxpayer. This impression proved to be entirely fallacious, for it did not take into consideration the immense extent of poverty and privation experienced by the masses, and in particular, their persistent lack of cash, which turned the ‘season of the tax’ into one of horror, dread, and misery.<sup>56</sup>

Turning away from sustained success as a major Islamicist, Goitein largely left the field, on retirement, to pursue Geniza studies.

### GOITEIN’S GENIZAH

The de rigueur comparison with the socio-historical project of Ferdinand Braudel is not as flattering as it was just a few years ago.<sup>57</sup> Goitein was aware of the *Annales* project and contributed to its flagship journal in 1958.<sup>58</sup> His preferred self-designation was a practitioner of “Oriental studies.”<sup>59</sup> Of all the forms he had practiced – philology, history, literary criticism, *Religionswissenschaft* – he ultimately choose “sociography” for his life work. His was perhaps the largest and most influential application of Clifford Geertz’s “thick description,” whose influence he cites.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps Goitein’s closest sociographic forerunner to *Mediterranean Society* was his 1937 ethnography, *Von den Juden Jemens. Eine Anthologie*.<sup>61</sup>

It is no longer agreed that “Mediterranean society” is the best designation for his object of study.<sup>62</sup> In fact, it seems clearly superseded today. There are many factors for this supersession: documentary sources for real life, social life, lived practices, intimate letters, all aspects of social existence. In short, Goitein studied people. Some find a romance in the Geniza, which has given rise to such novels as Amitav Ghosh’s *In An Antique Land* and A. B. Yehoshua’s *A Journey to the End of the Millennium*.<sup>63</sup>

Late life was laden with honors.<sup>64</sup> These included, in 1983, the third year of the John D. and Catherine T. Macarthur “genius” grant, given to the “doyen of Genizologists.” Goitein’s mastery of the Cairo Geniza, arguably the most significant horde of medieval manuscripts discovered anywhere, was thus properly recognized as a colossal accomplishment.<sup>65</sup> Even more impressive is the range of other scholarly areas in which he had a broad impact. These include popularizations;<sup>66</sup> advances in Geniza research;<sup>67</sup> studies on poverty and charity;<sup>68</sup> messianic movements,<sup>69</sup> and marriage.<sup>70</sup> In all this work, he sustained an old-fashioned, straightforward, head-held-high

Orientalism that inevitably drew some fair critiques.<sup>71</sup> Shlomo Goitein passed away in 1988, as the anti-Orientalism controversies were reaching their peak.

#### GOITEIN'S JUDAISM

Among his numerous contributions to Jewish studies, including a substantial body of scholarship on the Bible, were significant studies in the history of Jewish religious practice.<sup>72</sup> He noted, for example, the utter absence of significant Bar Mitzvah practice in the Geniza society and on another occasion could write “Bar Talmud – an Initiation Rite at Sixteen,” in which he proposed a new ritual.<sup>73</sup> Nor was he averse to announcing his own religious suggestions. “If we can learn anything from Jewish family life as revealed by the Genizah records it is this: the renowned cohesiveness of the Jewish family has nothing to do with the non-existent Jewish race. It is the fruit of religious education. If we wish our children should love us, we must teach them to love mitsvot.”<sup>74</sup>

In a 1970 obituary for his friend the Nobel-Prize-winning Israeli novelist, Shmuel Yosef Agnon, Goitein spoke with remarkable directness. Goitein knew Agnon well, having met and become familiar with Agnon’s future wife Esther Marx in 1918, two years before she married Agnon, and having delivered the first lecture on Agnon’s work.<sup>75</sup> Goitein experienced a time out of joint with these friends, literally strolling with Agnon, whom he considered a kind of Halevy *redivivus*. The scholar sketched this encounter with the novelist with an exquisitely dialectical ambivalence.

as rightly expressed in the bestowal of the Nobel Prize, Agnon is the representative Hebrew writer of our age. Since Biblical times there has not been in Hebrew language a corpus of narrative prose of the magnitude, dignity, and meaningfulness of Agnon’s creation. He has done for Hebrew prose what Yehuda Halevy has achieved in religious poetry. Halevy wrote in the forms and the spirit of the 12th century. Agnon expressed the mood and the refinement of the 20th. But both are the mouth-pieces of genuine and integral Judaism.

For my taste, both Yehuda Halevy and Agnon are a little bit too Jewish. I mean, in both the mere human element is too often subordinated to the specifically Jewish aspect. But this cannot be helped. This is the way in which a comparatively small religious community, which had played a very particular role in world history looked upon



itself. Yehuda Halevy in religious poetry and Shumel Yosef Agnon in narrative prose are the most genuine and *most perfect exponents* of post-Biblical Judaism.<sup>76</sup>

From his passionate obituary for Rabbi Nobel, written at age twenty-two, to his dispassionate eulogy for Agnon at age seventy, Goitein remained a religiously engaged though no longer orthodox Jew. While he could acknowledge that Agnon's practice of traditional Judaism was central to understanding his fiction, Goitein remained consistently wary of orthodoxy. His subsequent words, applied to Islam, spoke equally to his sense of his own humanistic Judaism – as only appropriate for the author of “The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies.”<sup>77</sup>

There is nothing wrong with a man's conviction that his religion is the best (at least for himself), as long as this belief does not make him blind to the virtues of others and as long as the supreme values of morality and mercy are not sacrificed to confessional fanaticism.<sup>78</sup>

Goitein expressed his conflicted nostalgia most intimately in his final decade. Originally composed in Hebrew, his 1983 poem “Midnight Watch (Reflections after the Holocaust).”<sup>79</sup> It was no accident that the lover of Yehuda Halevy published this most intimate expression in verse. I find it rather remarkable to compare this intimate verse with that of Gershom Scholem. A number of themes seem saliently shared, including the fall from tradition; the power of the Holy Name; the decline of commentary; the darkness of the hour; and the conviction that “The people of Israel are Your witnesses ... / Witnesses each in their own way.” This poignant confession addressed the past, the beloved gone world to which Goitein devoted his lifework. “A world of Order was there / In spite of everything / *Perfection within perfection* / A great world of Order.”<sup>80</sup> While the poem presumed cultural degeneration and in spite of the fact that he framed it in terms of the Holocaust, the more immediate referent was Goitein's beloved “Intermediate Civilization,” his model of a world in order. His Mediterranean society was a “an orderly and harmonious world, complete in itself. Whether we read the sublime concluding chapter of the *Guide for the Perplexed* of Moses Maimonides or the day-to-day correspondence of his humble contemporaries, we feel that the ideals of a world at peace and a *perfect man* did not appear to them to be out of reach, of course, if God decreed so.”<sup>81</sup>

## GOITEIN'S MIDDLE AGES AND THE PERFECT MAN

The idea common to the three monotheistic religions, that *man is bound above all to work on his own moral and spiritual perfection*, while serving the community, could become a new base for the development of a healthy individualism, as opposed to the ideals of conformity, recommended as leading to success, and to that of following the party line as a means to strengthen an monolithic state.<sup>82</sup>

Goitein saw himself as originally a medieval man. For the truly medieval man, nothing less than perfection itself was the goal and “*a perfect man did not appear to them to be out of reach*, of course, if God decreed so.”<sup>83</sup>

Montaigne and Goitein started out as such medieval men. They subsequently devoted careers to study what they were undergoing, to study medieval society in order better to grasp their respective rapid detachment from that past. Their science of the human, their cleaving so closely to what we can know about people, had more than a little poetic touch to it, but remained first and last committed to the object of knowledge, to people themselves. Ironically, their taste, as a primary inclination, rejected living exemplars of “perfection.”

They were in fact especially occupied with the imperfect, with the plight of those undergoing terrible demands of historical change, the imperfection and the pain of which they sought to describe in detail and with compassion. Montaigne and Goitein were humanists skilled in disparate modes of expression but equally humane in the subtlest precisions of detail, of attention to the truly human. Both loved familiarities of “humanity,” the wideness with the microscopic; both were humanists who confront us with life-worlds of other human beings, while holding no illusions about That Noble Dream of objectivity. Montaigne and Goitein meant the people whom they observed to be nothing more and nothing less than themselves, themselves as such. Montaigne and Goitein sought the seen, artists as much as they were scientists, revealing, as best they could see, both the beauty and the truth of human lives seen as they lived.

Goitein loved the imperfect – but he idealized perfection. On the basis of a humanistic idealization of *Kultur*, he romanticized two figures in particular, Yehuda Ha-Levi and Abraham Maimonides. He leaned not toward the rational Moses Maimonides but rather to Abraham Maimonides, his mystical son, a longstanding hero to whom Goitein dedicated the elegiac concluding lines of *A*

*Mediterranean Society* under the rubric “*A perfect man with a tragic fate.*”<sup>84</sup> Goitein “fell in love” with Abraham Maimonides in 1936 and soon thereafter expressed it in print. “The work before us is a religious testament of the greatest interest. It demonstrates that Abraham Maimonides was not satisfied with the Judaism which he found before him. Seeking a new form of expression suitable to his religious outlook, he found it – in Muslim Sufism.”<sup>85</sup> The young scholar then translated Abraham Maimonides’ *Responsa*, published in 1937. Nevertheless, he could also, rather curiously, later call him “A Jewish Addict to Sufism.”<sup>86</sup> While it lies beyond my scope here, it must be noted that the scholarly consensus concerning Abraham is shifting, with Paul Fenton at the lead.<sup>87</sup>

Still, Goitein sought humanity in the round, in a capacious appreciation for all things human that was almost Montaignean in scale. And, like his French predecessor, he admired the fully integrated personality, in his case as epitomized by Abraham Maimonides. “For Abraham united in one person three spiritual trends which were mostly opposed to each other: strict legalistic orthodoxy, ecstatic pietism, and Greek science – sober, secular humanism. He represented all the best found in medieval Judaism as it developed within Islamic civilization.”<sup>88</sup> “The question is whether this entire intellectual and spiritual endeavor forms an integrated, organic unit behind which stands a strong, single-minded personality. Such was indeed the case.”<sup>89</sup> The question is whether this was his own ideal. Such, I submit, was indeed the case.

When he addressed Maimonides *père*, to whose study he made major contributions, he returned to the possibility of perfection. On Goitein’s reading, Maimonides “impresses on the reader that the *ultimate purpose of life was the perfection of one’s own individuality*, consisting, according to him, in the right knowledge of God, and in permanent consciousness of His presence. This insistence on *incessant striving for one’s own perfection is an ideal valid for all times.*”<sup>90</sup> Goitein gives readers this advice directly. With proper irony, the road to perfection runs through the acknowledgement of the limits of human knowledge.<sup>91</sup> “The reader who wishes to attempt the study of the Guide without additional help is advised to start, after the reading of the introductions, with Book I, Chapter 32, and then to read wherever he is attracted by the subject matter. He will be richly rewarded.”<sup>92</sup> Goitein himself held perfection as a personal ideal. The words he applied to his cousin Baneth can thus be read to be

self-reflexive: “Baneth had always the totality of a text in mind, that is, together with its language, its content and the social and spiritual ambiance in which it was written ... However, only a man possessed of the universal knowledge and the penetrating critical mind of Baneth could do full justice to such demands.”<sup>93</sup>

From here, from the thirteenth century, Goitein concluded that the “thirteenth century witnessed the definite turn for the worst. With the fourteenth, the night of the Middle Ages had become total.”<sup>94</sup>

### GOITEIN’S RELIGION

As a religious man Goitein described a religious society, ironically from the outside, but precisely the better to see inside as well. This double position might be the definition of a certain sort of humanism, pioneered, he repeatedly noted, by Muslims – and, I add, by Montaigne too.<sup>95</sup> With regard to the goal of my discipline, that of understanding religion, I certainly agree with his observation that “when we compare Shahrastani’s detailed, well-informed and remarkably unbiased accounts with the Greek and Latin texts related to Judaism, we have to confess that between Tacitus and Shahrastani, humanity has made a great step forward.”<sup>96</sup> I cannot resist the unpopular parallel, that is, that, between Montaigne and Goitein, religious studies made a great step forward. Goitein made much the same comment in 1971. “A particular title of honor of Islamic civilization is the creation of the science of comparative religion ... [Shahrastani’s] objective and valuable survey of human belief is one of the finest expressions of the concept of mankind in Islam.”<sup>97</sup>

In 1973 he stressed that monotheisms “shared one basic concept of the world” which constituted their “great common spiritual heritage.”<sup>98</sup>

Writing as a historian of the history of religions, I am constrained to note some features of Goitein’s characterization of “religion” that are no longer generally operative for working scholars. These include his claim that there was in Genizah Judaism “a total absence of intermediaries.”<sup>99</sup> The same may be said of his conventional distinction between magic and religion.<sup>100</sup> Thus of an abjuration he says that this “formularly belongs to the world of magic rather than of religion.”<sup>101</sup> Montaigne made the same distinction, contrasting “real” religion with “jiggery-pokery, enchantments, magic spells producing impotence,

communication with the spirits of the dead, prognostications, casting horoscopes and even that absurd hunt for the philosopher's stone."<sup>102</sup> Goitein programmatically disregarded the vast reservoir of literary sources found in the Genizah, in favor of those "documentary" sources of which he was the undisputed supreme master. One consequence of this choice, on my observation, is that he did not encounter the anthropological breadth and depth of religious expression of this Mediterranean society.

He once observed that "it lies in the very nature of religion, as Plato had it, that there are many who carry the thyrsus, and only a few that are *entheoi* or 'enthusiasts' that is, 'filled with God.'"<sup>103</sup> Given his descriptions of his own experience, it seems clear that he met at least two such *entheoi*, Rabbi Nobel and Franz Rosenzweig, both of whom he characterized in terms of their *Gefühl* (religious feeling).<sup>104</sup> His more distant heroes, Yehuda Halevi and Abraham Maimonides, were historic examples of *entheoi* for him. It is rather less certain, though I think likely, that Goitein excluded himself from the ranks of the *entheoi*. Given his various autobiographical statements, it would seem that he considered himself, as Max Weber did, as "religiously unmusical."

If, finally, we seek the Judaism of Goitein, we should recall that his vast resurrection of the Geniza people, and of previous generations more generally, was an expression of a characteristically Jewish dilemma. It would not be irresponsibly misleading to consider him as a type of the historically self-conscious modern Jew, tragically constrained from but hopelessly nostalgic for an 'unhaddable' history. Goitein literally walked with legends of the modern Jewish predicament: Agnon, Scholem, Rosenzweig, among many others. With them, Goitein felt achingly out of synch with the times, and recognized that ache as constitutive of his people's misadventure with the modern. In his own words, the ache and the self-recognition are equally unmistakable.

#### GOITEIN'S HUMANISM

In the spirit of apology, and in spite of current polarization, I submit that this man was even-handed. His 1958 lecture "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism" might seem an insult to the uniqueness and authenticity of the Islamic revelation.<sup>105</sup> However, this was a man who

could proudly pronounce the honorific that accompanies the name of the Prophet Muhammad.

When the present author studied *Hadith* with the late Sheikh Sa'ud al-'Uri in Jerusalem, the master always succeeded in preceding the disciple by the split of second in pronouncing the eulogy over the Prophet whenever his name was mentioned. It took me some time to understand that the saying of that blessing by a non-Muslim, notwithstanding the good intention, was bad form.<sup>106</sup>

Goitein even stated flatly that “Muhammad was one of the great men of all time.”<sup>107</sup> In any case, he was just as willing to turn the tables, to utilize the Arabic language to interrogate the sources of Torah too.<sup>108</sup> He taught Arabic in Jewish schools and Hebrew in Palestinian schools.<sup>109</sup> Indeed, he saw them as part of a larger whole. For example, see his 1937 “Some Comparative Notes on the History of Israel and the Arabs.”<sup>110</sup> For Goitein, the very essence of symbiosis is that this road ran both directions. He was tolerant, dialectically and continuously, capable of saying that “Islam rested on Judaism” but also that “it was Islam that saved Judaism.”

By contrast, Montaigne was not always “enlightened” with regard to Islam: “The religion of the heathen had no constant belief or confession; and the religion of Mahomet on the other side interdicts argument altogether; so that the one has the very face of vague and manifold error, the other of crafty and cautious imposture.” Or: “When Mohammed promises his followers a paradise tapestried, adorned with gold and precious stones, peopled with wenches of surpassing beauty, with rare wines and foods, I can easily see that they are mockers stooping to our folly to honey us and attract us by these ideas and hopes appropriate to our moral appetites”

Goitein's humanism began far from the freshly minted and therefore defensibly under-informed essayism of Montaigne. It was formed in the “culturally advanced” Weimar Republic, with its characteristics of philological purism, *Kultur*, and world-spanning erudition. His teacher Becker specified these features in the opening pages of the inaugural issue of *Der Islam*. It was a humanism, in any case, and it was explicitly a humanism predicated on “the Intermediate Civilization.” In one of final sentences of *A Mediterranean Society* he made this point directly, one more time: “the centuries between, say, 850 and 1250 could be described as ‘humanistic Islam’ with all the facets of meaning – *mutatis mutandis* – included in the ‘humanism.’”<sup>111</sup>

Goitein summarized his scholarly self-understanding in the 1952 Hebrew University jubilee symposium. "The study in Israel of the Ancient East, or of Medieval Islam, or of folk life in the contemporary Orient, is therefore part and parcel of that search for self-knowledge which is one of the main aims of humanistic studies."<sup>112</sup> Goitein gave a talk entitled "The Life Story of a Scholar" to the assembled faculty and students of the Department of Oriental Studies on 30 April 1970 in which he reiterated this creed. He did so yet again in the 1980s when eventually he reflected on his mission in "the Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies"<sup>113</sup> He consistently believed that humanistic scholarship, in Montaigne's phrase, "is a most useful accomplishment and a great one." Finally, the oceans of ink in *A Mediterranean Society* washed ashore in its final section, bearing the noble title "The Prestige of Scholarship."<sup>114</sup>

That being said, it is also the case that this great scholar did not countenance the dark side of "Oriental studies." He neglected to inform readers that his revered teacher Carl H. Becker was an architect of German colonial policy. He also did not want to see or at least to express the less pleasant implications of his imperial if not prophetic notion of his Orientalism. In this sense and not only in this sense, Goitein's Judaism is considerably Cohenian in temper. Noting that Hermann Cohen, citing Psalm 73, "defines nearness to God as the absolute good," Goitein insisted that "the Geniza people were not theologians, but, as far as they were thinking at all, *their basic attitude was consonant with Cohen's concept.*"<sup>115</sup> His longstanding and often repeated emphasis on the sobriety, rationalism, and secularism of the Geniza world express what was emphatically an identification he originally made in Germany.

Religion of the Mediterranean "person," as reflected in the Geniza, was proto-bourgeois.<sup>116</sup>

a stern, straightforward, Talmudic type of piety, concerned with the strict fulfillment of the commandments and with the pursuit of the study required for their knowledge. This somewhat jejune character of their religiosity was enhanced by the rigorous rationalism embraced by Jewish orthodoxy in the wake of centuries of sectarian and theological controversies.<sup>117</sup>

He stressed this point even on the very last page of *A Mediterranean Society*. "With the exception of the few really pious and God-possessed, religion formed the frame, rather than the content of the

daily existence.”<sup>118</sup> “Supernatural men seem not to have belonged to the spiritual climate of that society.”<sup>119</sup> He did not forget his rabbinic experience, “medieval” as it was. Indeed, he confessed that “the inside experience gained by me in a previous life might serve as a corrective, a Socratic *daimon*, a restraining inner voice.”<sup>120</sup> By contrast to his shipmate Scholem, whose focus was on the extraordinary, Goitein’s Mediterranean world, like that of Montaigne, was everyday, presenting us with “a fairly regular type of humanity.”<sup>121</sup>

From Athens to Jerusalem, or was it vice versa? That being said, he was still filled with the messianic neo-Kantianism of Hermann Cohen when he penned a final astonishing fugue on humanistic scholarship:

“The breath entered them; they came to life and stood upon their feet, a very large host” (Ezekiel 37:10). “The dry bones,” the dispersed Geniza fragments, had to be brought together, “bone matching bone,” to form skeletons; “sinew, flesh, and skin” grew over these, philological and historical comments making them viable; finally, a breath or “wind,” the contact with the other resurrected, let them come to life as members of “a vast multitude,” a flourishing society.<sup>122</sup>

Cohen’s student, Ernst Cassirer, citing Friedrich Schlegel, had identified the historian in just this way, that is, as “*einen ruckwärts gekehrten Propheten*, a retrospective prophet. There is a prophecy of the past, a revelation of its hidden life.”<sup>123</sup>

One glance back he saw as piercing, and that was the rightful place of the Islamicate era in Jewish history. “Every aspect of what we regard today as Judaism – the synagogue service and prayer book, law and ritual, theology and ethics, the text of the Bible, the grammar and vocabulary of the Hebrew language – was consolidated, formulated and canonized in [the first centuries of Islamicate civilization].”<sup>124</sup>

In fact, he said, “It was Islam that saved Judaism.”<sup>125</sup> On the other hand – and there seems always to be another hand for Goitein –

most of the Jewish authors of the Middle Ages who wrote in Arabic never had the slightest doubt about the absolute superiority of Judaism. I emphasize this fact not because I believe that such an attitude should be adopted in our times, but simply as an indication that Judaism inside Islam was an autonomous culture sure of itself despite, *and possibly because of*, its intimate connection with its environment.<sup>126</sup>



## CONCLUSIONS

Then compare our behaviour with a Moslem's or a pagan's: you always remain lower than they are.<sup>127</sup>

Michel de Montaigne apologized for Raymond Sebond but Goitein hardly needs my puny defense. Still, the greatest scholars require the closest study and Goitein is no exception. Montaigne defended Sebond not because he, Montaigne, was a "Sebondist." Montaigne defended Sebond in the sense that I submit an apology for Goitein, that is, not as an "Orientalist" and certainly not as a "Goiteinist" but simply as a humanist. Both were humanists because they opposed unreality in honoring the limits of human knowledge. Both humanists loved what is available to human knowledge, with its delectable details and deliciously sensory particulars. Montaigne wrote of cannibals, coaches, thumbs, a monster-child, and the armor of the Parthians; Goitein detailed slave girls, piracy, druggists, surnames, dowry, polygyny. Montaigne wrote an essay on war horses and Goitein a chapter on the riding animal as status symbol.

But Goitein looked equally hard at the large scale. Uncharacteristically but not inappropriately, he boasted at the end of *A Mediterranean Society* that "A distinguished reviewer wrote with regard to Volume I of this book: 'Now that we have access to such data, *Islam studies will never be the same again.*'"<sup>128</sup> The poignancy in this pride and irony in this confidence remind me of Herman Cohen's now bathetic pamphlet *Deutschtum und Judentum*, published in 1915.<sup>129</sup> In fact – and this twist makes him rather more compellingly interesting – Goitein could also venture bold geopolitical opinion, world-historical periodizations, and contemporary political journalism.<sup>130</sup> Even in his journalism, Goitein looked to the larger ideals. His propensity for geopolitical generalization about the Middle East is most pointed in his 1957 "Eurafrasia."<sup>131</sup>

These, however, are not the impulses for an apology for S.D. Goitein. I do not apologize for Orientalism – though it appeals to me, I confess, no more than a fork appeals to my appetite. Orientalism is with us, it comprises our usable heritage, however discomfiting; there is no other way to the past but through it. That's the OTSOG-ian way and, however unsteadily, I stand by it. In any case, an apology for S. D. Goitein is not an apology for Orientalism, Zionism, philology. It is a tribute to a complex man and a great scholar in complicated times. While the ideal of

perfection appealed to him, Goitein was not perfect. Goitein's frequent pronouncements on perfection and the perfect man notwithstanding, he stood by the ordinary man and woman, Muslim and Jew, each seen in an appropriately concrete social life-world.

"There is no sign that he ever disguised anything through hatred, favour or vanity."<sup>132</sup> Montaigne preferred a person who saw straight and spoke straight, and so do I. Part of that seeing straight, I hope, is acknowledging that I will always remain far, far from being a Montaigne or a Goitein. I can, however, emulate their example of studying religions. Once this was rare, in the day of Montaigne's Wars of Religion, when "only the highest category of men can stop to take a pure look at the phenomenon itself, reflecting on it and judging."<sup>133</sup> This is still an ideal worth emulating, as is the Montaignean dispassionate attitude toward religions more generally, an attitude so strenuously sustained by Shlomo Dov Goitein. "All this is a clear sign that we accept our religion only as we would fashion it, only from our own hands – no differently from the way other religions gain acceptance."<sup>134</sup>

## NOTES

1. The research and composition of this article was made possible by the Paid Leave Award, the Stillman Drake Fund, and Dean's Research Funds at Reed College. I could not have completed the present work without the dedicated labors of Vahid Brown.
2. The first line of "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," in Michel De Montaigne, *Complete Essays*, trans. M. A. Screech (New York: Penguin, 1993), p. 491.
3. Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999).
4. His humanism may be compared, in philosophical terms, to that articulated by Lenn Evan Goodman, *Islamic Humanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003) and, in historical terms, to the medieval Islamic world described by Joel L. Kraemer in *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* [q] (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1992).
5. Robert K. Merton, *On the Shoulders of Giants: A Shandean Postscript* (New York: Free Press, 1965).
6. This is not the place to review the arguments for and against such "symbiosis." I have tried to summarize the issues in Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Recent Works on the 'Creative Symbiosis' of Judaism and Islam," *Religious Studies Review*, 16, 1990, pp. 42–47, and idem, *Between Muslim and Jew: The Problem of Symbiosis under Early Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).
7. For a partial bibliography, see Robert Attal, *A Bibliography of the Writings of Prof. Shelomo Dov Goitein* (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society/Institute of Asian and African Studies, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1975).

8. S. D. Goitein, "The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 9, 1987, pp. 1–13. This was one of the very last things from Goitein's pen.
9. For some overviews see the eulogy by Mark R. Cohen, "Goitein, the Geniza, and Muslim History," Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, <<http://www.tau.ac.il/dayancenter/mel/cohen.htm>>; Gideon Libson, "Hidden Worlds and Open Shutters: S. D. Goitein between Judaism and Islam," in *The Jewish Past Revisited: Reflections on Modern Jewish Historians*, ed. David N. Myers and David B. Ruderman (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 163–198.
10. Eric Ormsby, "The "Born Schulmeister," *New Criterion*, 22(1), 2003, <<http://www.newcriterion.com/archive/22/sep03/goitein.htm>>.
11. *New York Sun*, 10 October 2005.
12. S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza*, 5 vols (Los Angeles: University of California, 1967–88). In paperback: *A Mediterranean Society: An Abridgment in One Volume* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999).
13. Baruch Bendit Goitein, *Kesef Nivhar* (Prague: Baruch Bendit, 1826).
14. Review of *Guide for the Perplexed*, in the *Jewish Exponent*, 6 December 1963, p. 22.
15. See "History of the Jews in Kojetin (Kojetein) Prepared by Arthur Steiner, Engineer, in Brno (Brunn), 1929," <<http://members.tripod.com/~A30s/gold1a.html>>.
16. He was honored as the patron of the event.
17. "Josef Horowitz was an Orthodox Jew, the son of the Rabbi of Frankfurt. An accomplished scholar in Arabic and Islamic studies, between 1907 and 1914 he taught in the Anglo-Mohammedan Oriental College in Aligarh in India, and worked for the Indian government as director of the Islamic Inscriptions Department. From 1920 he was Professor of Semitic Languages in Frankfurt. He became one of Europe's best known Orientalists, famous particularly for his critical editions of Arabic historical texts and his research on the Koran. It was Horowitz who determined the research program of the School of Oriental Studies [of the Hebrew University] when it was established in 1926." Menahem Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem," *Judaism*, 45, 1996, pp 168–183.
18. S. D. Goitein, "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism," *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 9, 1958, pp. 149–162.
19. The Syriac theory has been revived by pseudonymous "Luxenberg." See Christoph Luxenberg, *Die syro-aramäische Lesart des Koran – Ein Beitrag zur Entschlüsselung der Koransprache* (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2004).
20. Michael Brenner: *The Renaissance of Jewish Culture in Weimar Germany* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1996),
21. Cited by Abraham Udovitch, "Foreword," in Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. x.
22. Israelitische Gemeinde zu Frankfurt am Main. Vorstand, *Nachrufe auf Rabbiner N.A. Nobel, geb. 6. November 1871, gest. 24. Januar 1922* (Frankfurt am Main, 1923). He is identified as "Cand. phil. Fritz Goitein" (p. 40). Goitein refers to Rabbi Nobel as "Der Meister" (p. 42). For his role in the Jewish renaissance, see Rachel Heuberger: *Rabbiner Nehemias Anton Nobel. Die jüdische Renaissance in*

- Deutschland*. (Frankfurt am Main: Societät, 2005). See the striking memories of the Nobel circle from Leo Lowenthal in *An Unmastered Past* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), pp. 19–22.
23. *Nachrufe auf Rabbiner N.A. Nobel, geb. 6. November 1871, gest. 24. Januar 1922*, p. 43.
  24. b. 1893, Krotoschin, Germany; d. 1973.
  25. S. D. Goitein, "David Hartwig (Zvi) Baneth 1893–1973," in *Studia Orientalia Memoriae D. H. Baneth Dedicata*, ed. Joseph L. Blau (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), pp. 1–5 at p. 4.
  26. Martin Kramer (ed.), *The Jewish Discovery of Islam: Studies in Honor of Bernard Lewis* (Tel Aviv: Moshe Dayan Center/Syracuse University Press, 1999).
  27. For al-Raschid Bey, see Paul Mendes-Flohr, "Fin-de-Siecle Orientalism, the Ostjuden and the Aesthetics of Jewish Affirmation," *Studies in Contemporary Jewry*, 1, 1984, pp. 96–139. For Essad Bey, see Tom Reiss, *The Orientalist: Solving the Mystery of a Strange and Dangerous Life* (Prince Frederick, Md.: R.B. Large Print, 2005). Ruchama Johnston-Bloom wrote her thesis at Reed College on Asad, and continues this research at the graduate level.
  28. "Concubines and Puppies: Philologies of Esotericism in Jerusalem between the Wars," forthcoming in a Festschrift for Joel Kraemer to be edited by Ilai Alon and Tzvi Langermann.
  29. Becker was a professor at Hamburg, Bonn, and Berlin before becoming minister of cultural affairs for the state of Prussia.
  30. "The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 9, 1987, pp. 1–13 at p. 6.
  31. For his reforms see Guido Müller, *Weltpolitische Bildung und akademische Reform. Carl Heinrich Beckers Wissenschafts- und Hochschulpolitik 1908–1930* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1991). For his colonial views and activities see Carl Heinrich Becker, *Deutsch-türkische Interessengemeinschaft* (Bonn: F. Cohen, 1914); idem, *Das türkische Bildungsproblem* (Bonn, 1916); "Der Islam und die Kolonisierung Afrikas," *Internationale Wochenschrift*, 4, 1910, pp. 227–252; idem, "Staat und Mission in der Islampolitik," *Islamstudien*, 2, 1932, pp. 211–230; idem, "Die Araber als Kolonisatoren," *Jahrbuch der deutschen Kolonien*, 7, 1914, pp. 197–206; idem, "Ist der Islam eine Gefahr für unsere Kolonien," *Koloniale Rundschau*, 1, 1909, pp. 266–293. In 1910 Becker wrote *L'Islam et la colonisation de l'Afrique: conférence faite sous le patronage de l'Union Coloniale Française le 22 janvier 1910* (Paris: Union Coloniale Française, 1910). For his work in China, see Susanne Kuß (ed.), *Carl Heinrich Becker in China. Reisebriefe des ehemaligen preußischen Kultusministers 1931/32* (Berliner China-Studien/Quellen und Dokumente Bd. 4, 2004).
  32. I detail these relations in Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Hans Jonas in Marburg, 1928," in *Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life: The Legacy of Hans Jonas*, ed. Hava Samuelson and Christian Wiese (Leiden, The Netherlands: E. J. Brill, forthcoming).
  33. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 497.
  34. S. D. Goitein, "The Rise of the Near Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times," *Journal of World History*, 32, 1956–57, pp. 583–604; idem, "Between Hellenism and Renaissance: Islam, the Intermediate Civilization," *Islamic Studies*, 2, 1963, pp. 217–233.
  35. Goitein, "Between Hellenism and Renaissance," p. 228.

36. C. H. Becker, "The Origin and Character of Islamic Civilization," in *Contributions to the History of Islamic Civilization*, vol. 2, trans. S. Kuda Bukhsh (Lahore), p. 8. I deal with Becker somewhat more fully in Wasserstrom, "Hans Jonas at Marburg, 1928," in *Judaism and the Phenomenon of Life: The Legacy of Hans Jonas, Historical and Philosophical Studies*, eds. Hava Tirosch-Samuelson and Christian Wiese (Boston: Brill Academic, forthcoming).
37. See the reminiscence in the foreword to Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. xiv.
38. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 597, n. 49.
39. As already implicitly evoked by Arnaldo Momigliano. I once asked a student of Goitein's and he told me the following anecdote. On the boat Goitein asked Scholem, "So what is all this kabbalistic stuff about?" and Scholem replied, "I'll tell you in fifty years."
40. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 632, n. 123.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 475.
42. S. D. Goitein, *Religion in a Religious Age* (Cambridge, Mass.: Association for Jewish Studies, 1974), p. 4.
43. Arnaldo Momigliano observed the contrast. "In September 1923 two young German Jews embarked together at Trieste on their way to settle in Palestine. One, Gerhard (Gershom) Scholem, born in 1897, was soon to become the greatest Jewish historian of our century. The other, Fritz (Shlomo Dov) Goitein, born in 1900, was perhaps slower in developing, from a conventional Arabist into a student of the Jewish–Arabic symbiosis of the Middle Ages and beyond. Yet the volumes of *A Mediterranean Society*, which Goitein started to publish in 1967, amount to a revolutionary picture founded upon new sources (mainly from the repository of documents of the old synagogue of Cairo) that bears comparison with Scholem's achievements." Arnaldo Momigliano, *On Pagans, Jews, and Christians* (Wesleyan University Press/University Press of New England, 1987), pp. 254–264.
44. See Steven M. Wasserstrom, "Jewish–Muslim Relations in the Context of Andalusian Emigration," in *Christians, Muslims and Jews in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Mark D. Meyerson and Edward D. English (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1999), pp. 69–91.
45. Ismar Schorsch, "The Myth of Sephardic Supremacy," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, 34, 1989, pp. 47–66.
46. See his telling, touching review of Rosenzweig's Halevi, in S. D. Goitein, "Franz Rosenzweig: Jehuda Halevi deutsch," *Der Jude*, 9, 1924, pp. 751–752. Even in his last years Goitein held *Der Jude* in high esteem. "This controversial but highly artistic work, with its epilogue and notes full of ideas, is recommended to everyone interested in the subject and in full command of the German language" (Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 635, n. 168). In the *Der Jude* review, Goitein emphasizes Rosenzweig's *Gefühl*, the same characterization he applied to Nobel the preceding year.
47. Adam Shear describes the *Kuzari* as popular for those in transition between *yeshiva* and *maskil*. See "Judah Halevi's *Kuzari* in the Haskalah: The Reinterpretation and Re-imagining of a Medieval Work," in *Renewing the Past, Reconfiguring Jewish Culture from al-Andalus to the Haskalah*, ed. Ross Brann and Adam Sutcliffe (University Park: University of Pennsylvania Press).
48. "Franz Rosenzweig: Jehuda Halevi deutsch."

49. S. D. Goitein, "What Would Jewish and General History Benefit by a Systematic Publication of the Documentary Geniza Papers?" *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 23, 1954, pp. 29–39. For the autograph letters see S. D. Goitein, "Judaeo-Arabic Letters from Spain (Early Twelfth Century)," in *Orientalia Hispanica, sive studia F.M. Pareja octogenario dicata*, vol. 1, ed. Pareja Casanas and J. M. Barral (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1974), pp. 331–350.
50. "The Biography of Rabbi Judah Ha-Levi in the Light of the Cairo Geniza Documents," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 28, 1959, p. 42, emphasis added.
51. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, p. 448, emphasis added.
52. See Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies." For Goitein's own view, see his "Oriental Studies in Israel," in *Hebrew University Garland; a Silver Jubilee Symposium*, ed. Norman Bentwich (London: Constellation Books, 1952), pp. 96–111. See also S. D. Goitein, "The School of Oriental Studies: A Memoir," *Like All the Nations? The Life and Legacy of Judah L. Magnes*, ed. William M. Brinner and Moses Rischin (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).
53. Milson, "The Beginnings of Arabic and Islamic Studies," p. 5, referring to Ahmad b. Yahyā al-Balādhuri (d. 892), *Ansāb al-Ashrāf*, vol. 5, ed. S. D. Goitein (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1936).
54. *Zion*, 3(2), 1937, pp. 97–117 (in Hebrew).
55. S. D. Goitein, *Studies in Islamic History and Institutions* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1966).
56. S. D. Goitein, "Evidence on the Muslim Poll Tax from Non-Muslim Sources," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 6, 1963, pp. 278–279.
57. On this comparison, see Kate Fleet, "The Mediterranean," *Journal of Early Modern History*, 6(1), 2002, pp. 63–72.
58. S. D. Goitein, "Le culte du Vendredi musulman: son arrière-plan social et économique," *Revue Annales*, 13, 1958, pp. 488–501.
59. A usage retained by the American Oriental Society and its journal, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*.
60. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 500.
61. S. D. Goitein (trans.), *Von den Juden Jemens; eine Anthologie* (Berlin: Schocken, 1934).
62. He never developed a defense of the category. "This study is called *A Mediterranean Society* because the people described in it are to a certain extent representative of their class in the Mediterranean world in general and its Arabic section in particular." Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 1, p. viii. W. V. Harris would seem to articulate the consensus, that Goitein's notion of a "Mediterranean society" does not "represent what scholars currently think about the history of the ancient or medieval Mediterranean – a subject that has inevitably passed into other hands." "The Mediterranean and Ancient History: in favour of a wider ethnography," in W. V. Harris, *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, ed. W. V. Harris (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 38–45 at p. 30.
63. Amitav Ghosh, *In an Antique Land* (London: Granta/Penguin, 1994); and A. B. Yehoshua, *A Journey to the End of the Millennium [Masah El Sof Ha-Elef]* (New York: Doubleday, 1999).
64. Note the several collections of essays honoring or dedicated to S. D. Goitein: Amin Banani and Speros Vryonis, Jr. (eds.), *Individualism and Conformity in*

- Classical Islam* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1977); S. Morag and I. Ben-Ami (eds.), *Studies in Geniza and Sephardi Heritage* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981); S. Morag, I. Ben-Ami, and N. A. Stillman (eds.), *Studies in Judaism and Islam* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1981), both dedicated to Goitein, on the occasion of his eightieth birthday, by Misgav Yerushalayim, the Center for Research and Study of Sephardi and Oriental Jewish Heritage; R. Ahroni, *Biblical and Other Studies in Memory of S. D. Goitein* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1986).
65. Stefan C Reif, *A Guide to the Taylor-Schechter Genizah Collection*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Library, 1979); Stefan C. Reif, *A Jewish Archive from Old Cairo* (Richmond, England: Curzon Press, 2000).
  66. S. D. Goitein, "Jewish Society and Institutions under Islam," in *Jewish Society through the Ages*, ed. H. Ben-Sasson and S. Ettinger (New York: Schocken, 1975), pp. 170–185; [q] *Jews and Arabs: Their Contacts through the Ages*, 3rd edn. (New York: Schocken, 1974).
  67. Stefan C. Reif (ed.), *The Cambridge Genizah Collections: Their Contents and Significance*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, England/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
  68. Mark R. Cohen, *Poverty and Charity in the Jewish Community of Medieval Egypt* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005); and idem, *The Voice of the Poor in the Middle Ages: An Anthology of Documents from the Cairo Geniza* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005)
  69. Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *ha-Rambam, ha-mashiah be-Teman vеха-shemad* (Jerusalem: Rubin Mass, 2002) (in Hebrew).
  70. Mordechai Akiva Friedman, *Jewish Marriage in Palestine: A Cairo Geniza Study* (Tel-Aviv/New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1980); idem, *Jewish Polygyny in the Middle Ages: New Documents from the Cairo Geniza* (Tel-Aviv: Bialik Institute, 1986) (in Hebrew).
  71. Kathleen Biddick, "Translating the Foreskin," in *Queering the Middle Ages*, ed. Glenn Burger and Steven Kruger (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001).
  72. His biblical studies written in Hebrew are collected in S. D. Goitein, *Studies in the Bible* (Tel Aviv: Yavneh Press, 1957). Some were translated and published posthumously. See S. D. Goitein, "The Song of Songs: A Female Composition," in *Feminist Companion to the Song of Songs*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), pp. 58–66 (originally in *Studies in the Bible*, pp. 301–307); and idem, "Women as Creators of Biblical Genres," *Prooftexts*, 8, 1988, pp. 1–33.
  73. S. D. Goitein, "Bar Talmud – An Initiation Rite at Sixteen," *Conservative Judaism*, 15(2), 1961, pp. 28–32.
  74. S. D. Goitein, "The Jewish Family in the Days of Moses Maimonides," *Conservative Judaism*, 29(1), 1974, pp. 25–35 at p. 35. Note that he says "love mitsvot," and not "practice mitsvot." That he published in *Conservative Judaism* may presumably be taken as an indicator of his own position in the matter of practice.
  75. S. D. Goitein, "S. Y. Agnon: A Personal Account," in *A Memorial Tribute to Dr. Shmuel Yosef Agnon Presented by Dropsie University and the Consulate General of Israel, Sunday, March 29, 1970* (Philadelphia: Dropsie University, 1970), pp. 9–12.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 12, emphasis added.
77. S. D. Goitein, "The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 9, 1987, pp. 1–13.
78. S. D. Goitein, "The Concept of Mankind in Islam," in *History and the Idea of Mankind*, ed. W. Warren Wager (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1971), pp. 72–91 at p. 84.
79. S. D. Goitein, "Midnight Watch (Reflections after the Holocaust)," trans. Marganit Weinberger-Rotman, *Jewish Spectator*, 48, 1983, p. 14. It was a fairly common practice among German Jews to compose verse for public and private occasions. I address this phenomenon with regard to Goitein's emigration shipmate, Gershom Scholem, Steven M. Wasserstrom, "The Fullness of Time: Thoughts on the Poetry of Gershom Scholem," in *The Fullness of Time: Poems by Gershom Scholem*, trans. Richard Sieburth (Jerusalem: Ibis Editions, 2003), pp. 13–41.
80. *Ibid.*, p. 14, emphasis added.
81. S. D. Goitein, "Religion in Everyday Life as Reflected in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza," in *Religion in a Religious Age*, ed. S. D. Goitein (Association for Jewish Studies, 1974), pp. 3–17 at p. 17, emphasis added.
82. S. D. Goitein, "M.E.'s [sic] Future in 'Eurafrasia': Third World Power Might Extend from France to Persia," *Jerusalem Post*, 33(8737), 1957, pp. 50–52, emphasis added.
83. Goitein, "Religion in Everyday Life," p. 17, emphasis added.
84. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 502.
85. S. D. Goitein, *Kirjath Sepher*, 15, 1938–39, p. 442 (in Hebrew). As cited and translated by Daniel Frank, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 39, 1988, p. 273.
86. S. D. Goitein, "A Jewish Addict to Sufism," *Jewish Quarterly Review*, 44, 1953, pp. 37–49.
87. P. Fenton, *The Treatise of the Pool* (London: Octagon Press, 1981); *idem*, "Some Judaeo-Arabic Fragments by Rabbi Abraham He-Hasid, the Jewish Sufi," *Journal of Semitic Studies*, 26, 1981, pp. 47–72; *idem*, "More on Rabbi Hananel, the Master of the Hasidim," *Tarbiz*, 55, 1986, pp. 77–107 (in Hebrew); *idem*, *Al-Murshid ila al-Tafarrud* (Jerusalem: Mekizei Nirdamim, 1987); *idem*, *Deux traités de mystique juive* (Paris: Verdier, 1987); reviewed by D. Frank, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 39(2), 1988, pp. 273–276; *idem*, "La 'Hitbodedut' chez les premiers Qabbalistes en Orient et chez les Soufis," in *Priere, Mystique, et Judaïsme*, ed. R. Goetschel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987), pp. 133–158; *idem*, "Deux traités musulmans d'amour mystique en transmission judéo-arabe," *Arabica*, 37, 1990, pp. 47–55; *idem*, "A Judeo-Arabic Commentary on the Haftarat by Hanan'el ben Shmu'el, Abraham Maimonides' Father-in-Law," *Maimonidean Studies*, 1, 1990, pp. 27–56; *idem*, "The Hierarchy of the Saints in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society*, 10, 1991, pp. 12–33; *idem*, "'La tête entre les genoux': Contribution à l'étude d'une posture méditative dans la mystique juive et islamique," *Revue d'histoire et de philosophie religieuses*, 72, 1992, pp. 413–26; *idem*, "A Mystical Treatise on Prayer and the Spiritual Quest from the Pietist Circle," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 16, 1993, pp. 137–175; *idem*, "A Mystical Treatise on Perfection, Providence, and Prophecy from the Jewish Sufi Circle," *The Jews of Medieval Islam*, ed. D. Frank (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1995), pp. 301–334; *idem*, "Solitary Meditation in Jewish and Islamic Mysticism in the Light of a Recent Archaeological Discovery," *Medieval Encounters*, 1(2), 1995, pp. 271–296; *idem*, "New Light on



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89. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 476.
90. S. D. Goitein, "A New Translation of Maimonides' 'Guide for the Perplexed,'" *Jewish Exponent*, 6 December 1963, p. 54, emphasis added.
91. *Ibid.*, p. 75. The limitations of human knowledge is the subject of this chapter.
92. *Ibid.*, p. 75.
93. D. H. Baneth and Joshua Blau, *Studia Orientalia memoriae D. H. Baneth dedicata* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 1979), p. 4.
94. Goitein, "Muhammad's Inspiration by Judaism," p. 404.
95. See the now standard discussion by Joel Kraemer, *Humanism in the Renaissance of Islam: The Cultural Revival during the Buyid Age* (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 1986).
96. Goitein, "Between Hellenism and Renaissance," pp. 229–230.
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98. S. D. Goitein, "The Mediterranean Mind in the High Middle Ages (950–1250), As Reflected in the Cairo Geniza Documents," in *Amalfi nel medioevo: convegno internazionale, 14–16 giugno 1973* (Salerno: Centro Raffaele Guariglia di studi salernitani, 1977), pp. 179, 185.
99. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 336.
100. Steven M. Wasserstrom, "The Magical Texts in the Cairo Genizah," in *Genizah Research after Ninety Years, the Case of Judaeo-Arabic: Papers Read at the Third Congress of the Society for Judaeo-Arabic Studies*, ed. Stefan Reif and Joshua Blau (Cambridge, England/ New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 160–166; *idem*, "The Unwritten Chapter: Notes towards A Social and Religious History of Geniza Magic," in *Officina Magica: Essays on the Practice of Magic in Antiquity*, ed. Shaul Shaked (Leiden, The Netherlands: Brill, 2005), pp. 269–295.
101. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 599, n. 33.
102. Montaigne, "An Apology for Raymond Sebond," p. 631.
103. Goitein, "Bar Talmud – An Initiation Rite at Sixteen," p. 32.
104. This description from the then student Goitein was certainly an allusion to Schleiermacher. See Julia A. Lamm, "The Early Philosophical Roots of Schleiermacher's Notion of *Gefühl*, 1788–1794," *Harvard Theological Review*, 87(1), 1994, pp. 67–105.
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108. S. D. Goitein, "YHWH the Passionate: The Monotheistic Meaning and Origin of the Name YHWH," *Vetus Testamentum*, 6, 1956, pp. 1–9.
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110. Goitein, *Zion*, 3(2), 1937, pp. 97–117 (in Hebrew).
111. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 495.
112. S. D. Goitein, “Oriental Studies in Israel,” in *Hebrew University Garland; a Silver Jubilee Symposium*, ed. Norman De Mattos Bentwich (London: Constellation Books, 1952), pp. 96–111 at p. 97.
113. S. D. Goitein, “The Humanistic Aspects of Oriental Studies,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*, 9, 1987, pp. 1–13.
114. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, pp. 415–496.
115. *Ibid.*, p. 498, n. 3.
116. He was not uninterested in this social type. See S. D. Goitein, “The Rise of the Near Eastern Bourgeoisie in Early Islamic Times,” *Journal of World History*, 32, 1956–57, pp. 583–604.
117. Goitein, “Religion in Everyday Life,” p. 8. I address this characterization in my introduction to Wasserstrom, *Between Muslim and Jew*.
118. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 503.
119. *Ibid.*, p. 337.
120. Goitein, “Religion in Everyday Life,” p. 4.
121. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 501.
122. *Ibid.*, p. 501.
123. Cited in Steven M. Wasserstrom, *Religion after Religion: Gershom Scholem, Mircea Eliade, and Henry Corbin at Eranos* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 114.
124. S. D. Goitein, “Political Conflict and the Use of Power in the World of the Geniza,” in *Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses*, ed. Daniel J. Elazar (Washington: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 169–181 at p. 169.
125. Goitein, “Muhammad’s Inspiration by Judaism,” p. 162.
126. S. D. Goitein, *Jews and Arabs. Their Contacts through the Ages* (New York: Schocken Books, 1955), p. 130, emphasis added.
127. Montaigne, “Apology for Raymond Sebond,” p. 493
128. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society*, vol. 5, p. 501, emphasis added.
129. The range of this lugubrious controversy is conveniently documented in Christoph Schulte (ed.), *Deutschtum und Judentum* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1993).
130. See S. D. Goitein, “Between Hellenism and Renaissance – Islam, the Intermediate Civilization,” *Islamic Studies*, 2, 1963, pp. 217–233; and, for the journalism, Goitein, “M.E.’s [sic] Future in ‘Eurafrasia.’ ”
131. Goitein, “M.E.’s [sic] Future in ‘Eurafrasia.’ ”
132. Michel De Montaigne, “On books,” in *Complete Essays*, p. 470, in reference to Guicciardini.
133. Michel De Montaigne, “On diversion,” in *Complete Essays*, p. 938.
134. Montaigne, “Apology for Raymond Sebond,” p. 497.

# A Faithful Sea

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*Edited by*

ADNAN A. HUSAIN

and

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