Editor's Introduction v40(3)

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Greetings to all of you readers. The world continues to astound and confuse. The seasons turn—but linger on; political unrest settles but maintains a steady undercurrent; racial and ethnic unrest retains a steady background, surfacing and resurfacing unless one looks away; gender issues slip aside unless one pays close attention. We live in one global world, yet our own backyards become our focus most of our waking hours, and no two backyards are the same. And along comes the new issue of *Contemporary Jewry*, flitting from scene to scene, questioning and confronting and provoking, if one probes enough in depth.

The issue contains research on religion and urban dwelling and higher education and Jewish texts—the staples of contemporary Jewish life for so many—yet each with its own twist, raising questions, shedding new insights, hinting at new futures. We begin with a focus on North America: Stuart Schoenfeld's contribution on "Jews, Jewish Institutions, and the Construction of Identity in Changing American Cities and Urban Neighborhoods" places changes affecting urban Jews—demographic, generational, ethical and economic—within the broader context of changes in the settings of the United States, synthesizing decades of research and leaving us with a research agenda to follow for years to come. Robert Brym challenges the leading theory of diaspora Jewry with an examination of the experience of Jews from the former Soviet Union in Canada and the United States. Jordan Chad and Robert Brym challenge the genetic and cultural theories of Jewish exceptionalism in favor of what they call "mundane, social forces" explaining changes in the ethnic composition of graduates from the University of Toronto's medical school.

The next four articles focus on the Israeli setting, but with questions that extend well beyond its borders. All four touch on religious developments as they are related to Israel. Adam Ferziger presents a critical analysis of Yossi Shain's recent "paradigm-changing thesis" of the Israelization of contemporary Judaism, challenging Shain's contention with Ferziger's own alternate perspective, illustrated by examples of "lived religion" which are not confined to Israel. Rachel Feldman provokes thought with her presentation of Third Temple activism at Jerusalem's Temple Mount, where sacrificial reenactments shape and reshape both concepts of Jewish

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selves and the role of Israel in present and future practiced Judaism. Elazar Ben-Lulu presents yet another example of “lived religion” in Israel through his ethnographic analysis of women’s celebration of Tu BiSh`vat in an Israeli reform congregation. Finally, Shlomo Guzman-Carmeli shows how religious texts take on different meanings and roles in four settings spanning a traditional *Kollel*, a secular yeshiva, a kabbalist yeshiva, and a pluralist *Beit Midrash*. Guzman-Carmeli’s observations are presented amid a discussion of the variety of roles the religious text can play for the “People of the Book.” Women’s roles in this context are also portrayed. Clearly, “lived religion” of contemporary Jews in Israel is not static, nor is it limited to one particular tradition or trend.

A research update and book reviews spanning Latin America and “Remix Judaism” round out the issue, bringing to light more innovations on the religious front and on the cultural front as traditions meet and mix.

As we go to press, I note with heavy heart the passing of Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks,^{z”l}, a remarkable teacher whose clarity of vision and morality inspired and will inspire so much of the contemporary world, so deeply grounded in his perception of Judaism and contemporary Jewry. We are also deeply saddened by the passing of Professor David Schneer, who stretched contemporary Jewry in new directions, reinvigorated historical and traditional perspectives with his own, and imparted his values creatively, with dedication and joy. May their memories be blessings for us all.

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