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Revelation in Progress?! : Jews and Muslims Contending with Modernity

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Prof.dr. Judith Frishman

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Jews and Muslims Contending with Modernity



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Revelation in Progress?!

Jews and Muslims Contending with Modernity

Oratie uitgesproken door

Prof.dr. Judith Frishman

bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar op het gebied van

Bestudering van het Jodendom

aan de Universiteit Leiden

op maandag 16 maart 2009



Universiteit Leiden

*Mijnheer de Rector, Leden van het College van Bestuur, Zeer
gewaardeerde toehoorders, Family and Friends,*

The music which you have just heard accompanying the procession is entitled *Halleluyoh* (Ps. 150) and is just one of forty psalms set to music by the German Jewish composer Louis (Lazarus) Lewandowski (1821-1894).¹ Lewandowski, famous for his synagogue music, was the first Jewish student to be admitted to the Berlin Academy of Arts. In 1840 he was appointed choirmaster to the Jewish community of Berlin in the Heidereutergasse synagogue and in 1864 he took up the same position in the *Neue Synagoge* in the Oranienburgerstrasse where he composed music for the entire service. In 1865 he was granted the title of Royal Musical Conductor by the German government. His music may still be heard today in synagogues throughout the world.² I have asked the organist to play *Halleluyoh*³ firstly because Lewandowski is an example of the successful integration of Jews in Germany in the 19th century, prominent not only in the Jewish world but in society at large. But more important for my lecture today is the fact that this liturgical musical composition was to be performed by mixed choir and organ, a highly debated innovation in the 19th century synagogue.

It was already in 1818 that the newly dedicated Hamburg Reform Temple introduced the use of the organ to enhance services. The ensuing uproar in the Orthodox camp was not merely an objection to the playing of instruments on Shabbat. For some the organ was integral to idol worship, an imitation of the Gentiles and an imitation of heretics, and therefore subject to the prohibition of Leviticus 18:3, “Thou shalt not walk in their ways”. Playing it was to be forbidden at all times! David Ellenson, scholar of modern Judaism has noted: “Debate over the employment of an organ in Jewish worship remained the single most significant marker of the boundary between Liberal and Orthodox Judaism in Germany throughout the nineteenth century”.⁴ The reformers justified their position by making use of legal precedent, referring to the

organ played on Shabbat and festivals in the Maisel synagogue of Prague as early as the 17th c. This use of precedent, typical of rabbinic discourse, was central to the early debates. Their Orthodox opponents pointed to the fact that the practice of Prague was an exception and that even in Prague, after a time, the playing of the organ had ceased, clearly because the congregation realized that it had been mistaken in its assumption that the organ had been played in temple times. However, as the century drew to a close, the majority of the members of the German *Einheitsgemeinden* were liberal Jews. The need to remain part of the rabbinic community was less urgent for the reformers and they subsequently no longer resorted to legal arguments to justify their reforms but turned instead to other arguments.⁵

The debates concerning the reform of Judaism are but part of a wide spectrum of issues and tensions surrounding the question of the emancipation of the Jews commencing at the end of the 18th century. While granting citizenship to the Jews was nowhere self evident, the French and the Dutch - under the influence of Napoleon - did indeed do so after only brief discussion. Such was not the case in Germany where the process spanned a period of more than seventy years, during which rights were alternately granted and rescinded on many occasions. There was general agreement that the Jews were abject; the question was whether they would improve by being emancipated or needed to prove their ability to change first. The reasons for denying them citizenship were manifold. An oft repeated accusation was that of double loyalty: the Jews could never be good citizens because they were a nation within a nation; their hearts were directed elsewhere, to a homeland they no longer possessed but to which they would return at the earliest possible opportunity. Moreover, the Jews were considered misanthropic, consciously and voluntarily separating themselves from others. They performed mindless, baseless ceremonies and resisted the movements and changes of history.⁶ Only by discarding their Oriental ways, surrendering their national distinctiveness and reducing their culture to that of a religious confession would they become worthy.⁷

Many Jews welcomed the new political and economic opportunities offered them by emancipation, even though this meant relinquishing a great deal of their autonomy. Less enamored, for example, were the *parnassim*, the powerful lay leaders of the communities of the Netherlands, who fought emancipation, or the rabbis of Germany whose authority eroded quickly in favor of the members of the boards of the congregations. Entrance into society was accompanied by a decrease in observance: many Jews no longer (strictly) maintained the Sabbath or dietary laws. Yet others hoped to make adherence to Judaism more attractive by accommodating Jewish worship to modern times. It would take a new generation of academically trained scholars, most of whom were rabbis, to enroll *Wissenschaft des Judentums* to - in the succinct words of Michael Meyer - "raise religious reform from arbitrariness to systematic progress; and religious reform, in turn, served as the lever for raising Judaism to the level of contemporary thought and sensibility, thereby assuring its survival in modernity".⁸ *Wissenschaft des Judentums* was thus a religious enterprise whereby scholars attempted to construct a usable past.

Attuned to contemporary sensibilities, these scholars hoped to shape an attractive non-orthodox alternative for Judaism as they knew it. They internalized much of the criticism of Judaism expressed by their surroundings. Their writings are therefore often apologetic, dismissing rituals or even large parts of Jewish history as outmoded. Abraham Geiger (1810-1874), for example, in his *Allgemeine Einleitung in die Wissenschaft des Judentums* considered the period between the 6th and mid-18th centuries to be legalistic⁹ and Samuel Hirsch (1815-1889) in his *Die Humanität als Religion* concluded that the Jews sought truth in literalness for two thousand years.¹⁰ At the same time both Geiger and Hirsch attacked Christianity, denying it any originality and deeming it to be a derivative of Judaism adulterated with paganism, a compromise necessary for its role as messenger to the non-Jews.

Establishing criteria for change was no sinecure. Aside from the aforementioned traditional use of precedent, a distinction needed to be made between civil law and religious law. What aspects of life were now to be regulated by the state and which by the rabbis? According to some, not even family law - questions of marriage and divorce and personal status - should be wholly left to the Jewish religious courts. Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860), for one, called for the recognition of civil divorce in order to solve the age old problem of the *agunah*, the woman whose husband could not divorce her, because he was missing, his whereabouts unknown - or even refused to divorce her. The degree to which the state was to manage religious matters depended on the expectations one had of the state. Reformers often optimistically identified both the goals of civil society and those of Judaism with the universal. In doing this they needed to distinguish between the universal essence of Judaism and its particularistic expression by way of critical study. The use of extra-legal arguments and criteria culled, for example, from rationalistic reasoning and philosophy, was not eschewed. This inevitably led to the question: which sources may be studied critically and which not; which sources were still relevant and which not. Rabbinic texts were the first to come under fire but even the Bible was not safe when an understanding of revelation went beyond the literal. Could Judaism be progressive if revelation was a one time, historical event? Were the words of the written Torah dictated by God to Moses? Even if this were the case, the question of historical context remained.

For Abraham Geiger the essence of Judaism was to be found in revelation, its prophetic genius or religious spirit whose message of reform progressed and developed over time. Geiger countered the idea that Judaism had nothing to offer the world. But with his definition of Judaism as spirit he needed not only to justify reform but to explain why the ceremonial laws were necessary altogether. Hirsch and Holdheim could both defend a civil servant working on Shabbat for the good of the state. For Samuel Hirsch, Judaism stood for human

freedom, truth and justice for all. Therefore all ceremonies that obstructed the maintenance of civil society were secondary. According to Holdheim the German state as well as Judaism strove for morality (*Sittlichkeit*). The rabbis of the Talmud had mistakenly retained all sorts of national law after the Jews had lost sovereignty on their own land. In order to be good citizens, Jews needed to recognize this historical error made by the rabbis, remove all laws that pertained to the nation and retain only those which were purely religious, i.e. those pertaining only to the relationship between God and man. The legal system could thus in no way conflict with beliefs or ceremonies, seeing that they dealt with two separate realms.¹¹

Even those less radical than Geiger, Hirsch and Holdheim distinguished between the spheres of life informed by religion and those that were simply matters of custom and thereby religiously neutral. What type of architecture was appropriate for the synagogue? Did Jews need to be distinguished by dress? Was it permitted to use the vernacular? Questions like these may not have been raised prior to the Enlightenment, when Jewish identity was self-evident and unquestioned. Now that identity was a matter of negotiation, lines needed to be drawn. In the distant past the rabbis had already permitted prayer in the vernacular - an indication that many Jews no longer understood Hebrew (even when a related Semitic language such as Aramaic was their mother tongue). Yet the resolution passed by members of the rabbinical conference at Frankfurt in 1845 declaring that Hebrew was unnecessary for public worship caused even more moderate reformers like Zacharias Frankel (1801-1875) to walk out in protest. For Frankel the use of Hebrew was connected to Jewish sentiment. The Hatam Sofer (1762-1839), Moses Schreiber of Pressburg, not only prohibited the use of the vernacular for prayer;¹² he also was opposed to studying the Bible in translation or delivering sermons in German. His insistence on the divine nature of the Oral Law eventually led him to declare: “chadash asur min ha-torah” or “All innovation is prohibited by the Torah”, including deviation from custom if necessary to distinguish the Torah-true from both Reformers and non-Jews.¹³

Modernity, in short, brought great change in Judaism, both progressive and ultra-conservative. But Judaism is not the only religion that seeks to “sustain continuity with the past” while experiencing the “uprootings and dynamic of constant change that characterise modernity”.¹⁴ In the past I have often called for a comparative perspective on religions in modernity, especially between Judaism and Islam, and this because of their legal systems which regulate (every moment of) daily life. Fortunately, over the past few years, others have joined me such as Khaled Abou El Fadl, professor of law at UCLA and most recently Suha Taji-Farouki of the University of Exeter and the Institute of Ismaili Studies, London, who writes: “There are evident parallels between Muslim responses and those of modern Christian theology, and between modern Muslim debates concerning approaches to the sacred text and Biblical studies and interpretation. However, a comparative perspective might perhaps more usefully focus on Islamic and Jewish responses to modernity specifically, and on efforts of modern reform within the two traditions.”¹⁵ Such a comparative study, even if limited to Judaism and Islam, would be a vast project, covering many centuries and countries. A reasonable starting point might be a comparison of the hyphenated identities of Jews and Muslim minorities in the West. One facet would be an inventory of the expectations majorities have of and the demands they make on minorities, whether through legal institutions or more informal channels. Examples are the attempts made by governments to regulate the appointment of rabbis and imams or the language and content of their preaching. Another facet would deal with the distinction between civil and religious law, and the more recent use of civil law to enforce or correct religious laws, as in the case of divorce. Both facets would involve historians of religion as well as experts in law and legal history. Yet a third facet may concern efforts of reform and I hope to provide a few examples of Muslim reactions to modernity and their Jewish counterpart in the following section of my lecture.

During my intense course of reading on contemporary Islam throughout the past half year, I discovered that parallel to the use of the organ in the synagogue in 19th c. Germany, the following two topics are the most significant markers of the boundaries between Muslim moderates and fundamentalists¹⁶ in our times: 1) the first concerns the compatibility of Islam, democracy and human rights; 2) the second the position of women in Islam. The first topic comes as no surprise, seeing that public debate centres on this issue, especially since the events of 9/11 and the activities of the Taliban. Perhaps less self-evident at first, the gender question not only marks boundaries between Islamic groups but has also marked the boundaries between the various movements of Judaism over the past 45 years as well.¹⁷ Both issues involve all the elements I have brought to the fore in my discussion of Judaism. The compatibility of Islam and democracy, for example, invariably leads to enquiry into the essence of Islam and whether or not theocracy is beneficial or harmful to this essence. Further considerations are whether or not the imposition of (possibly) non-Islamic western categories on Islamic thought is desirable or permissible. By extension this holds true for the position of women in Islam as well. Is the demand for change propelled by western feminism or is it a topic inherent to Islam? And should one indeed wish to bring about change, how could one go about doing so? Is it a matter of *fiqh*, i.e. Islamic legal deliberations? If so, how flexible is the law and how open is it to debate and contextualization? The same questions are by extension applicable to the Qur'an and Sunna as well.

Most moderate Muslim intellectuals use similar paths of reasoning to draw similar if not identical conclusions. Swiss born Tariq Ramadan (1962), in *Muslimans d'Occident*¹⁸ - a brochure primarily intended for a Muslim audience - encourages fellow Muslims to construct a specifically western-Islamic identity. This hyphenated identity, clearly not identical to other French identities, entails engagement in society based on the opportunities offered by civil law and democracy. Full participation, however, calls for education, as nothing short of an intellectual

revolution is required.¹⁹ At the same time engagement means adherence to certain fundamentals: faith, ethics of responsibility, inalienable independence and promotion of justice. The use of modernity to further one's own claims and rights while opposing assimilation was a tactic used by many of the orthodox opponents of the reform of Judaism, and is in itself a sign of modernity although not necessarily progressive.²⁰ So too, in other works Ramadan is more explicit about how to be modern without being unfaithful to Islam.²¹ While acknowledging that there is a specifically western form of modernity that is a part of the history and value system of the West, he refutes the popularly held opinion that modernity is an invention of the West. Muslims can achieve their own variety of modernity, making use of the same principles of freedom and autonomy of intellect and willingness to change. Like other prominent Muslim thinkers such as Abou El Fadl - leading authority on Islamic law - and Amina Wadud (1952) Professor of Islamic Studies, Ramadan calls for a contextualization of Qur'an and Sunna, neither of which is sufficient for providing answers to the questions posed by present day life. These scholars consider the verses of the Qur'an, even if divine, as illustrative examples, answers related to a specific historical situation. Behind these answers one must discover the leading principles of the Qur'an, which must be distilled from the text and can not be found in its strictly literal formulation. Scholars are quick to point out that this approach is not new, exerting great effort to amassing evidence of Islamic precedent for their claims, referring for example to the concept of *Maqasid Ash-shari'a* (the goal and principles of orientation of Islamic law) from the famous early Hanifa and Ash-Shafi'i Muslim schools of law. Some go even further, claiming that even the shari'a, the eternal, immutable law of God, the way of truth and justice, is in God's mind, remaining unknown to humans. Thus even the shari'a is in some way dependent on interpretation and can only be realized as best as possible.²² Abou El Fadl dares to ask whether it makes sense that "God would intervene at one point in time in history and decree His immutable Will to a people who are constantly evolving and changing? Does it

make sense to say that God is ever-present in a historical process that is necessarily fluid and constantly changing? Before long we are forced to confront the issue of whether God's will is itself constantly evolving and changing; but if so how can the Divine remain eternal and immutable?"²³ Those familiar with German Jewish history will recall the upheaval the *Reformfreunde* of Frankfurt a.M. - all laymen - caused in 1842 when in the first draft of their statement on reform, they declared: "We consider the Mosaic religion capable of a continuing development (*fortdauernde Entwicklung*)". In the final document this point was emended as follows: "We recognize in Mosaism the possibility of an unlimited further amplification (*unbeschränkte Fortbildung*)."²⁴ - The point of contention being of course whether revelation itself was a one time event or subject to development.

If prophetic genius or religious spirit (Geiger), human freedom, truth and justice for all (Hirsch), or morality (Holdheim) are what Judaism was purportedly all about in the 19th c. - and, I might add, social justice in the 20th c. -, consensus seems to point to justice and ethics as the ultimate objectives of Islam in the 21st century. Conceding that the concept of individual human rights may be foreign to Islamic law, scholars nevertheless see no reason for conflict, pointing to the fact that the concept of justice entails ensuring the welfare of the people including the basic necessities of life. Moreover, the prohibition of the use of force means freedom of religion. While for some the connection between justice and tolerance is obvious, others defend tolerance by referring to God's having chosen to populate the world with a variety of peoples and faiths, a commonly quoted Qur'anic proof text. Abdulkarim Soroush (Teheran 1945), Iranian philosopher and reformer who defines religion as being about duty - obeying God and refraining from sin -, holds tolerance, like love, to be an extra-religious, moral virtue; a virtue sorely needed by believers and non-believers alike.²⁵

Because it is precisely the moderates who suffer under intolerant regimes, there also seems to be unanimity as far as the choice for democracy is concerned. There is, however, no unanimity as to the role of religion in the state. Abdulkarim Soroush writes about his own country, Iran: "Before, we used to live under a secular, undemocratic and intolerant state. Today, we have to endure an intolerant religious state. (Hence, religiosity is not a necessary condition of intolerance, nor is secularity a sufficient condition for tolerance)."²⁶ Others, like Abou El Fadl are clearer, claiming that a religious state law is impossible: "either the law belongs to the state or it belongs to God, and as long as the law relies on the subjective agency of the state for its articulation and enforcement, any law enforced by the state is necessarily not God's law."²⁷

Particularly intriguing to me is the absence of discussion in works on contemporary Islam concerning Islamic rituals, despite the public focus on imams and their sermons, ritual slaughter and the visibility and architecture of mosques. Is the difference between Muslims and Jews on these issues a question of different historical times? Do Muslims coming from countries where Islam is the majority religion feel more secure about their own rites and symbols? Or is it simply a matter of time before the lay community in the West becomes more secularized? I will leave the answer open for now, but this gives food for thought.²⁸ Yet far beyond the protests against "slaughtering of sheep on balconies" is the widespread and overwhelming public disapproval of the headscarf expressed by both the *man* in the street and politicians alike in the West.²⁹ However, the link made between Jihad and the oppression of women is not limited to non-Muslim Westerners, but also a real part of the struggle for power and domination among ultra-conservative or radical groups. Further linked to views on women are attitudes towards non-Muslims: equality and tolerance or intolerance for both groups go hand in hand.³⁰ Clearly the gender question is pivotal; no serious book on Islam and modernity could skirt the issue of what is seen as the marginalization of women and their exclusion from public

life. And there is perhaps no better testing ground than the position of women for the flexibility of Islamic law and the willingness of its interpreters to study critically the historical context of the shari'a, making use of moral and ethical guidelines.

The modern Muslim woman - modern but not western, intellectual yet with covered hair, active in society yet very much supportive of family values - is Tariq Ramadan's vision of the ideal woman, the woman of the future. While acknowledging the limitations of women's social participation and the inequalities of marriage and inheritance laws, he is quick to warn that *not western standards* but principles of faith must determine social and political projects.³¹ As for the headscarf, it is neither a sign of social belonging, nor part of an Islamic façade; it is nothing less than an obligation. It points to the importance of modesty in Islam and the notion that human beings are much more than just "bodies".³² Covering the head is a religious matter which has to be undertaken by the individual herself; that is why the use of force is wholly inappropriate here as in other religious matters. Here Ramadan's position seems to be traditional despite his modern/"traditional" appeal for tolerance. More telling is Ramadan's traditional analysis of Qur'an 4:34, the controversial *sura* on wife beating. A man may reprove a hostile wife by reminding her of proper relations between men and women, then by avoiding her bed and only as a last resort, hitting her - but then with a twig used as toothbrush, Ramadan explains. The text is not in favour of violence but a warning against its use; however, not the verse but the example set by the prophet for proper marital relationships is most important in Ramadan's view.³³

As would be expected, Abou El Fadl's position is much less traditional on this issue. He accuses puritans of considering women as a source of sexual enticement, danger and discord, deficient and subservient to be placed under the tutelage of men. If the divine ideal and goal of Islam is justice, as Abou El Fadl claims, then justice, "provided the circumstances are

appropriate, demands equality in value, worth, and opportunity".³⁴ The question, however, remains as to just what those circumstances must be. Like Ramadan, Abou el Fadl notes that the Qur'an was progressive in its time, protecting the rights of women, and he draws attention to the fact that women themselves demanded these changes in reaction to specific social conditions. While deploring abuse and the violation of rights, pointing to moral rights and social demand, and calling for the use of jurisprudential analysis to effect change, Abou El Fadl concludes that it is women themselves who must play the critical role in bringing about change.³⁵ Reason enough to turn now to the work of Amina Wadud and her book *Inside the Gender Jihad. Women's Reform in Islam* (2006).³⁶

Amina Wadud, Afro-American professor of Islamic studies, like Ramadan, Abou El Fadl and moderate Muslims in general, seeks to develop a female inclusive theory of Islam based on interpretative authority. Her motivation, she claims, is pro-faith and "any comparative analysis with secular Western theories or strategies for mainstreaming women in all aspects of human development and governance is coincidental and secondary".³⁷ Despite her protests, one wonders how coincidental and secondary a comparison with Western theories can be for a scholar born, raised and trained in the United States. She too seeks a guiding principle on the basis of which proposals for change can be judged and implemented, which she finds in care and the ethics of compassion, of which women are the best exemplars. But certainly the principle of justice is an important if not the most important element of these ethics, as I discover in her works. Wadud goes further than her male counterparts when pointing to gender disparity as "an underlying characteristic of shari'a in its historical development" and calling for proper understanding of the importance of gender as a category of legal rules.³⁸ Like some of her Jewish feminist counterparts, Wadud attributes the gender divide in ritual to socially and historically determined custom rather than legal mandate and theological rationale.³⁹ The *hijab* or head scarf is a point at hand with no religious or moral value

per se.⁴⁰ While the gender divide might have been meant for discretion, it leads to hierarchy and disparity in opportunities. Worse, in Islam the male is the norm; men are public leaders and moral agents while women are subservient.⁴¹ Yet anyone with the proper qualifications is in fact entitled to perform any duty or ritual. To right the wrong, women should not become like men, as even most progressives would have it, but must do more than that; to be a woman is to be fully human. But what of the Qur'an, written in the 7th c. from a 7th c. perspective? One can't simply bring in a female perspective or rewrite history, because there is not enough information about women in the past; there is simply too much silence. Once more, one needs to find a Qur'anic principle, an ethical precedent and look for the spirit of the text, which defends the oppressed and downtrodden.⁴² Here Wadud counters her teacher, Abou El Fadl, who places the burden on the oppressed - coming dangerously close to blaming the victim - rather than looking to those in power to remedy an injurious situation.

For Wadud, like Abraham Geiger, reform and Qur'an are synonymous, as she writes: "I consider it integral to Qur'anic intent to *continue to reform*. Not only does the Qur'an squarely address patriarchal privileges, it repeatedly implies, suggests, and commands *change*."⁴³ Not only is the text contextual, in the end even God is contextual.⁴⁴ Reform depends first on considering things from the perspective of human development. This might even lead to saying "no" to the text; and Wadud says *no indeed* to the *sura* on hostile women, but only after having considered 1) the context of the *sura*; 2) the aim of the relevant *fiqh* - bearing in mind the principle of justice and 3) the fact that a text may have multiple meanings. Finally, taking the data on domestic violence into consideration, she must in the end let go of this text.⁴⁵ Yet Wadud goes even further, beyond the text, to reflection on creation, to the transcendent, which has at least an equal say in what human relations and the values of Islam are all about. Does this mean that she, like Susannah Heschel and Judith Plaskow, has come

to the conclusion that the "Right Question is Theological", i.e. that the problem is not just sociological but created and sustained by the text itself, rooted in the very foundations of Islamic tradition and thus beyond any possible contextualization or legal repair?⁴⁶ We will have to wait for her future publications to see which direction her work will take.

Despite the differing circumstances of the 19th and 20th centuries, I hope I have convincingly shown that there are great similarities between the questions with which Jews and Muslims are being confronted in modernity and the answers which they have formulated and are still formulating to these questions. Further possible case studies abound: the nature of the Jewish state and the role religion has to play in Israel (e.g. Israel prize winner Yeshayahu Leibowitz and David Hartman⁴⁷ who come to opposing conclusions); feminism and law (e.g. Judith Plaskow who basically rejects the law as a male product and as such incurably anti-female, or Rachel Adler who tries to re-cast the very notion of law⁴⁸); or the return of American Reform Jews to tradition, ritual and even *halakhah* (e.g. the work of Eugene Borowitz⁴⁹). And of course we must remain attuned to how Muslims continue to adapt their tradition to western contexts, creating a synthesis that works, not because it is logical, but because one lives it; because it is a "synthesis which adheres in the doing".⁵⁰ It is these and similar topics that I hope to address in the coming years in my function as professor of Jewish Studies here in Leiden.

Dat gezegd hebbende, wil ik een ieder danken die bijgedragen heeft tot de totstandkoming van de leerstoel jodendom aan de Universiteit Leiden: het college van bestuur en in het bijzonder Prof. Wim Drees, Zwanet Drees-Roeters, de fundraising commissie bestaande uit Ante Schmidt-Abrahams, Susanna Vorst, Eva van der Dussen en Tineke de Witt Wijnen, en natuurlijk de sponsoren. Verder al mijn collegae van het Instituut der Godsdienstwetenschappen onder leiding van Jürgen Zangenberg en Johannes Tromp die mij zo hartelijk ontvangen hebben.

Al in de 19^{de} eeuw hebben de voormannen van de *Wissenschaft des Judentums* geijverd voor de instelling van een leerstoel voor joodse studies. Volgens oprichter Leopold Zunz zou de studie van het jodendom pas haar juiste plaats onder de geesteswetenschappen kunnen innemen als die het niveau van andere wetenschappen zou bereiken. Dit is al geruime tijd het geval. Laten wij dan hopen dat de nieuwe leerstoel joodse studies, de eerste in Nederland, het begin van een nieuw historisch besef betekent en de aanvang van een vruchtbare samenwerking tussen de verschillende disciplines die in onze faculteit vertegenwoordigd zijn. Ik verheug mij op de samenwerking met mijn collegae en zie uit naar de vragen en inzichten van mijn studenten.

Dames en heren, ik dank U voor Uw aanwezigheid vandaag, speciaal diegenen die bij mijn twee vorige oraties aanwezig geweest zijn.

Ik heb gezegd.

10

Noten

- 1 Lewandowski's *Halleluyah* conducted by Joshua Jacobson and performed by the Zamir Chorale of Boston at Sanders Theater on June 3, 2007 may be heard on YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j7EuUoJAnoQ>.
- 2 Additional information on Lewandowski may be found in H. Simon, "'Liebe macht das Lied unsterblich!' - Der Komponist Louis Lewandowski", in: H. Simon and J. Boberg (eds), "*Tuet auf die Pforten?*" *Die Neue Synagoge 1866-1995*, Stiftung "Neue Synagoge Berlin - Centrum Judaicum": Berlin 1995, 129-136.
- 3 My thanks to Dr. Paul van der Werf for complying with my request.
- 4 D. Ellenson, "A Disputed Precedent. The Prague Organ in Nineteenth-Century Central European Legal Literature and Polemics", in: Idem, *After Emancipation. Jewish Religious Responses to Modernity*, Hebrew Union College Press: Cincinnati, Ohio 2004, 121-138: 122. I am indebted to Ellenson's article for the discussion that follows.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 137.
- 6 B. Bauer, *The Jewish Problem* (H. Lederer, transl.), Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion: Cincinnati, Ohio 1958, 5 and 13.
- 7 It is hardly surprising that this negative evaluation is reminiscent of Christian theological doctrines on Judaism as a precursor to Christianity, a religion out of time and an essence without history, considering the degree to which theologians and theological arguments contributed to these public debates. Cf. J. Pasto, "Islam's 'Strange Secret Sharer': Orientalism, Judaism and the Jewish Question", *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 30 (1998) 437-474.
- 8 M. Meyer, "Two Persistent Tensions within *Wissenschaft des Judentums*", in: A. Gotzmann and Ch. Wiese (eds), *Modern Judaism and Historical Consciousness. Identities, Encounters, Perspectives*, Brill: Leiden 2007, 73-89: 81.
- 9 L. Geiger (ed.), *Abraham Geigers Nachgelassene Schriften II*, Gerschel: Berlin 1875, 35.
- 10 S. Hirsch, *Die Humanität als Religion*, in *Vorträge, gehalten in der Loge zu Luxemburg*, C. Troschel: Trier 1854, 212-222.
- 11 S. Holdheim, *Ueber die Autonomie der Rabbinen und das Prinzip der jüdischen Ehe, Ein Beitrag zur Verständigung über einige das Judenthum betreffende Zeitfragen*, C. Kürschner: Schwerin 1843, 10. Cf. J. Frishman, "True Mosaic Religion. Samuel Hirsch, Samuel Holdheim and the Reform of Judaism", in: Ch. Wiese (ed.), *Redefining Judaism in an Age of*

- Emancipation. Comparative Perspectives on Samuel Holdheim (1806-1860)* (Studies in European Judaism 13) Brill: Leiden 2007, 278-305.
- 12 See M. Washowsky, "Halakhah in Tradition: The Chatam Sofer on Prayer in the Vernacular", *CCAR Journal* 51,3 (2004) 142-163.
 - 13 See M. Silber, "The Emergence of Ultra-Orthodoxy: The Invention of a Tradition", in: J. Wertheimer, *The Uses of Tradition. Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, The Jewish Theological Seminary of America: Cambridge, Mass. 1992, 23-84.
 - 14 S. Taji-Farouki (ed.), *Modern Muslim Intellectuals and the Qur'an*, Oxford University Press: London 2004, 28 note 2.
 - 15 *Ibid.*
 - 16 The term "moderates" is used by Abou El Fadl in *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, Harper: San Francisco 2005, 16ff. Other often used terms are "progressives", "liberals", "modernists", "critical thinkers" and "reformers". See for a discussion M. Sharify-Funk, "From Dichotomies to Dialogues. Trends in Contemporary Islamic Hermeneutics", in: A. Aziz Said, M. Abu-Nimer and M. Sharify-Funk (eds), *Contemporary Islam. Dynamic, not Static*, Routledge: London & New York 2006, 64-80: 64-66. Abou El Fadl prefers the use of the term puritans to fundamentalists. For his reasoning see *op. cit.*, 18-20.
 - 17 Michael Satlow notes that the most common means used by American Jewish movements to clarify their borders is the issue of gender and sexuality. Cf. M.L. Satlow, *Creating Judaism. History, Tradition, Practice*, Columbia University Press: New York 2006, 47.
 - 18 T. Ramadan, *Musulmans d'Occident. Construire et contribuer*, Tawhid: Lyon 2002.
 - 19 Education is a recurring theme in the works of Ramadan but also other moderate Muslim writers. A parallel in Jewish responses to modernity is the call for *Bildung*, both by the outside world and within the Jewish community.
 - 20 Although in the minority, Modern Orthodox adaptationists like Eliezer Berkovits (1908-1992) or Emanuel Rackman (1910-2008) have attempted to discern the teleology of Jewish law when calling for change, especially regarding women's halakhic disabilities. The approach of thinkers like Abou El-Fadl is at times adaptationist and at times reform, although even Jewish reformers like Geiger made use of halakhic, contextual arguments (cf. A. Gotzmann, *Jüdisches Recht im kulturellen Prozeß* (Schriftenreihe wissenschaftlicher Abhandlungen des Leo Baeck Instituts 55), Mohr Siebeck: Jerusalem-Tübingen 1997, esp. 198-250). Undoubtedly the most famous proponent of tradition in modern form was Samson Raphael Hirsch, founder of Neo-Orthodoxy (b. Hamburg 1808, d. Frankfurt a.M. 1888). For Hirsch see, for example, A. Eisen, "New Reasons for Old Commandments: The Strategy of Symbolic Explanation", in: Idem, *Rethinking Modern Judaism. Ritual, Commandment, Community*, University of Chicago Press: Chicago & London 1998, 135-155. For other modern negative reactions to religious reform see E. Kooij-Bas, "Nothing but Heretics". *Torat ha-Qena'ot. A Study and Translation of 19th c. Responsa against Religious Reform in Judaism*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Tilburg University 2006, 158-183. The incorrect assertion that being modern necessarily means being progressive is undoubtedly at the root of the confusion as to whether Ramadan is a true reformer or a wolf in sheep's clothing. For an example of the latter opinion cf. Caroline Fourest's *Frère Tariq. Discours, stratégie et méthode de Tariq Ramadan*, B. Grasset: Paris 2004.
 - 21 See for example T. Ramadan, *Le face à face des civilisations. Quel projet pour quelle modernité*, Tawhid: Lyon 2001.
 - 22 K. Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, 149 and idem, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, Princeton University Press: Princeton & London 2004, 30.
 - 23 Idem, *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, 162.
 - 24 For a detailed discussion of the *Reformfreunde* see M. Meyer, "Alienated Intellectuals in the Camp of Religious Reform: The Frankfurt Reformfreunde, 1842-1845", *Association of Jewish Studies Review* 6 (1981) 61-86. For Hirsch and Holdheim's criticism of the *Reformfreunde* and their idea that revelation, rather than human beings, was in need of progress, cf. J. Frishman, "True Mosaic Religion".
 - 25 A. Soroush, "Treatise on Tolerance", *Praemium Erasmianum Essay* 2004, 21-22. For his discussion of rights vs. duties see A. Soroush, "The Sense and Essence of Secularism", in: M. Sadri and A. Sadri (eds), *Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam. Essential Writings of Abdolkarim Soroush*, Oxford University Press: Oxford 2000, 54-68: 61-64. Y. Leibowitz similarly claims that the Torah does not recognize moral imperatives but solely divine imperatives, ethics being an "atheistic category par excellence". For Leibowitz on halakhic Judaism and the notion of duty see his article "Religious Praxis: The Meaning of

- Halakhah”, in: Y. Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge & London 1992, 3-29: 18.
- 26 A. Soroush, “Treatise on Tolerance”, 20-21.
- 27 K. Abou El Fadl, *Islam and the Challenge of Democracy*, 34.
- 28 One may of course distinguish between the topics of public debate and those discussed in responsa, intended mainly for internal consumption. On occasion Muslims have questioned the acceptability of not only female but also male circumcision in op-eds or columns of daily newspapers in the Netherlands.
- 29 Not only men but also women criticize the head scarf. Ironically men who do not question the inequality of women in Western society often point to the inequality of Muslim women.
- 30 K. Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, 152.
- 31 T. Ramadan, *Le face à face des civilisations. Quel projet pour quelle modernité*, 96-104.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 301-307.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 381-386.
- 34 K. Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft. Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*, 260-261.
- 35 *Ibid.*, 250-274: 263.
- 36 A. Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad. Women’s Reform in Islam*, One World Books: Oxford 2006.
- 37 *Ibid.*, 16.
- 38 *Ibid.*, 49 and 51.
- 39 *Ibid.*, 168-169.
- 40 *Ibid.*, 219-224.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 182.
- 42 *Ibid.*, 183-185.
- 43 *Ibid.*, 215. For Geiger on reform as Judaism’s leading principle see J. Frishman, *Wat heeft het christendom van het jodendom overgenomen? Abraham Geiger en de geschiedschrijving van het rabbijnse jodendom* (Rede uitgesproken bij de aanvaarding van het ambt van hoogleraar geschiedenis en literatuur van het rabbijnse jodendom aan de Katholieke Theologische Universiteit te Utrecht op donderdag 28 januari 1999; Utrecht 1999/2000) [inaugural lecture, Catholic Theological University of Utrecht 1999].
- 44 A. Wadud, *Inside the Gender Jihad. Women’s Reform in Islam*, 198.
- 45 For Wadud’s discussion of the *surat-al-nisa* see *ibid.*, 191, 198-202.
- 46 J. Plaskow, “The Right Question is Theological”, in: S. Heschel (ed.), *On Being a Jewish Feminist*, Schocken Books: New York 1983, 223-233.
- 47 See for example Leibowitz’s “The Religious and Moral Significance of the Redemption of Israel”, in: Y. Leibowitz, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge & London 1992, 106-122 and D. Hartman, *A Heart of Many Rooms. Celebrating the Many Voices within Judaism*, Jewish Lights: Woodstock, VT. 1999 and *Israelis and the Jewish Tradition. An Ancient People Debating its Future*, Yale University Press: New Haven, CT. 2000.
- 48 J. Plaskow, *Standing Again at Sinai. Judaism from a Feminist Perspective*, Harper & Row: San Francisco, CA. 1990; R. Adler, *Engendering Judaism. An Inclusive Theology and Ethics*, Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia 1998.
- 49 E.B. Borowitz, *Renewing the Covenant. A Theology for the Post-Modern Jew*, Jewish Publication Society: Philadelphia 1998 [1992].
- 50 D. Ellenson, “German Jewish Orthodoxy. Tradition in the Context of Culture”, in: Idem, *After Emancipation*, 237-256: 256.

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Judith Frishman (Ph.D. cum laude, 1992, Leiden University) has been appointed in September 2008 to the newly established chair for Jewish Studies at Leiden University, the first chair for Jewish Studies in the history of the Netherlands. From 1998 until 2009 she was professor of the History and Culture of Rabbinic Judaism at the Faculty of Catholic Theology, University of Tilburg. Between 1995 and 2005 she also occupied the special chair sponsored by the Hague Society for the History of Jewish-Christian Relations in Modernity at the Theological Faculty of Leiden University. Aside from Jewish-Christian relations in the early rabbinic period her research focuses mainly on West European Jews and Judaism in modernity. Her inaugural lecture marks the beginning of a new project entitled “Strategies of Belonging” entailing a comparison of the transformation of halakhah (Jewish law) and fiqh (Muslim law) in the West in modernity.



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