



Study Guide and Discussion Questions

Part 2 – Pathbreakers

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Study Guide – Judaism in a Secular Age - Pathbreakers

STUDY GUIDE: SIMON DUBNOW

The Man and His Times:

Simon Dubnow was born in Mstsislaw, in the Russian Pale of Settlement, in 1860. In his youth, he received a traditional Jewish education, studying in *heder* and *yeshiva* settings.

By the time of Dubnow's thirteenth birthday, the Russian government had established Jewish schools that used Russian as the language of instruction. Attending such schools would, together with passing entrance examinations, allow Jewish men to enroll in Russian universities. Dubnow persuaded his parents to allow him to attend one of these schools. In 1881, anarchists assassinated Russian Tsar Alexander II. Responding to this event, in 1882 Russian authorities enacted the May Laws, which restricted Jewish migration and shut down government-run Jewish schools. The closed schools included the one Dubnow had been attending, and he was prevented from obtaining the diploma needed to enter university.

During and after his period in Russian government schools, Dubnow studied the literature of the Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] movement, as well as contemporary British, German, and Russian philosophers. Dubnow became interested in linguistics, history, and philosophy. He became particularly interested in the *Wissenschaft Des Judentums* ["Scientific Study of Judaism"] movement in Germany. During this time, Dubnow also ceased to hold the traditional Jewish religious beliefs of his youth, and eventually determined that he no longer believed in any deity at all.

Dubnow's departure from Jewish religious faith did not mean that he left his Jewish identity behind. During the abortive Russian Revolution in 1905, he was active in advancing the causes of Jewish civil rights, including the idea of "automism," that Jews should have political and cultural autonomy in the various countries in which they lived. He also engaged heavily in the study of Jewish history, eventually obtaining a university faculty appointment in St. Petersburg, Russia. He initially welcomed the February 1917 Russian Revolution, but he never trusted the Bolsheviks. He regarded Trotsky and other Communist Jews as having left the Jewish people behind.

After the Bolshevik Revolution, Dubnow moved to Lithuania, and then to Berlin, Germany. During this time, he wrote his *World History of the Jewish People*. In 1927, he initiated an effort to track down records of Jewish life in Poland for YIVO ["Jewish Scientific Institute," founded in 1925]. After Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, Dubnow moved from Berlin to Riga, Latvia, where he lived the rest of his life—even after a Swedish visa was obtained for him in 1940.

In 1941, the German army entered Riga, and Dubnow was evicted from his home. His library was lost, and Dubnow was confined with the Jews of Riga in a ghetto. Dubnow was among the thousands of Riga Jews killed by the Nazis; too sick to travel to a nearby forest where the mass execution was to be carried out, Dubnow was murdered in Riga on December 8, 1941. In his final days, Dubnow was reported to have told other Jews in Yiddish, "*Shraybt un farshraybt—write and record.*"

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Questions for Discussion:

1. Does Dubnow view the forms of Judaism of his time as being flexible or inflexible? What has caused this to be so? (81-82)
2. How does Dubnow think stopping viewing Judaism as a religion will help Jews thrive in the modern world? (84)
3. What does Dubnow think is the true force that has always driven Judaism? What is the place of the Jewish religion in this? (84-85)
4. According to Dubnow, what holds the Jews together as a people? How can the Jewish people be strengthened? (86)
5. What does Dubnow mean when he calls the Jews a “spiritual” nation? (87) What concepts or experiences support this notion? (87) How will these eventually make Jewish life better? (88-89)

For Further Consideration:

6. Which forms of Jewish life does Dubnow refer to when he talks about those who view Judaism as a religion? Why does Dubnow think these Jews view Judaism solely as a religion? (81-82)
7. Dubnow’s opinions about freethinking and assimilationist Jews are largely negative. Would he think Secular Humanistic Jews are like the freethinking and assimilationist Jews of his day? Why or why not? (82-83)
8. How, in practical terms, do you think Dubnow imagined the future development of the Jewish people could best occur? Do you think this approach can work today?
9. Dubnow was not himself a Zionist. Can one be a Zionist and adopt Dubnow’s view of Jewish life?
10. Does Dubnow’s view of the Jewish people retain some notion of “chosenness”? Why or why not? (87)

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STUDY GUIDE: HAIM ZHITLOVSKY

The Man and His Times:

Haim Zhitlovsky was born in 1865 in Ushachy, in the Russian Empire. A Lubavitcher Hasid, he moved with his parents to Vitebsk, Belarus, when he was five years old, where he studied in traditional Jewish settings. Zhitlovsky's father, though qualified as a rabbi, was a prosperous merchant, and Zhitlovsky was privately tutored in Russian while he attended *heder* [Jewish religious school] with other boys his age.

Zhitlovsky had become interested in literary studies, and he later attended a Russian gymnasium [secondary school] where he first encountered socialist revolutionary ideologies; for a time, he drifted away from Jewish life and society. However, the anti-semitic response of Russians to the assassination of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, including pogroms, brought him back to concern for the Jewish community—especially when he learned that many other socialist revolutionaries viewed the anti-Jewish pogroms as a necessary step toward a more general Russian liberation. Zhitlovsky was briefly interested in early Jewish efforts toward settling Palestine, but he disliked the religious tenor of such efforts.

Zhitlovsky eventually found his way back to studying Marxism and history, and in particular Jewish history, and was active in socialist revolutionary movements. He published widely, and eventually earned a Ph.D. Despite his European education, much of Zhitlovsky's writing was in Yiddish.

In the late 1890s, after rejecting Herzl's Zionism, Zhitlovsky became involved with the Jewish Labor Bund. Though initially not considered revolutionary enough by many in the Bund, Zhitlovsky came to be a preeminent fundraiser for the Bund and other Jewish socialist causes, and he traveled frequently between Europe and the United States. In the wake of pogroms in 1903, he began to advocate for Jewish territoriality—Jewish cultural and political autonomy in Russia and other lands. In 1905, in the wake of the first Russian Revolution, Zhitlovsky was elected to the Duma [Russian parliament], but government officials invalidated his election.

Zhitlovsky's involvement in revolutionary politics caused him to travel frequently in Europe, the United States, and Canada. He continued to publish all manner of works in Yiddish, including a two-volume history of philosophy and a Yiddish translation of Nietzsche's *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. He also developed a plan for Yiddish-language schools in the United States, and by the 1910s much of his activity was centered in the United States.

Throughout the rest of his life, Zhitlovsky would continue his involvement in Jewish socialist politics, and particularly in the Yiddishist movement. He viewed Yiddish as the language of the Jewish people and was anti-assimilationist, and his ideas were central to the Bund and other Yiddishist Jewish groups.

After a long career, including an unfortunate shift to support for Stalinist Communism and its complicated support for Yiddish culture during the last years of his career, Zhitlovsky died in the United States in 1943.

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Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Zhitlovsky, when someone becomes an *apikoyres* [non-believer], how does she or he respond to the trappings of traditional Jewish religion? (91-92)
2. What happens to the *apikoyres* over time in Zhitlovsky's account? What place does religion have in Jewish culture—even for the *apikoyres*? (92)
3. If the Jewish people have begun to reject traditional Jewish religion, how can the Jews be reborn as a people without giving Judaism over wholesale to traditional religious ideas? (93-94)
4. According to Zhitlovsky, must a nationally minded remaking of Jewish life completely dispense with the trappings of the Jewish religion? If not, how can such a rebirth of Judaism use the trappings of traditional Jewish religion? (94)
5. How does Zhitlovsky think Reform Judaism went astray? (95)

For Further Consideration:

1. Are knowledge of and initial experience and rejection of Judaism as-it-was essential to successfully follow Zhitlovsky's approach? Or is it possible that the reborn Jewish people of Zhitlovsky's vision can perpetuate itself without having fully experienced the rejection and alienation of the *apikoyres* that Zhitlovsky describes? In other words, do liberal or secular Jews who were *not* raised religious have a Jewish future without this nostalgia for a tradition they have left? (91-93)
2. Zhitlovsky says that religion "is an everlasting branch on the tree of human culture." Does the national poetic rebirth of the Jewish people substitute for religion, or supplement it? (93)
3. Zhitlovsky talks about a continued place for the trappings of Jewish religion in a reborn Jewish people. Can you think of particular ways in which Secular Humanistic Jews have done this? (94)
4. Can Secular Humanistic Jews adopt Zhitlovsky's argument that the ideals of the prophets should be a core of our Jewish identity? Why or why not? (95)

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STUDY GUIDE: MICAH JOSEPH BERDICHEVSKY

The Man and His Times:

Berdichevsky was born in 1865 in Ukraine to a family with many Hasidic rabbis in its lineage. Berdichevsky's father was the rabbi of Medzibezh during Berdichevsky's childhood. Berdichevsky received a traditional yeshiva education, but eventually encountered Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] literature. He was then married, but he was forced to end the marriage once it was discovered that he had accepted the liberalizing influences of Haskalah.

Berdichevsky eventually left traditional Jewish life in the Pale of Settlement and traveled to Germany and Switzerland. He worked as a journalist and earned a Ph.D. in this period. Berdichevsky was strongly influenced by the German philosophers Nietzsche, Hegel, and Schopenhauer, and he wrote prolifically, particularly in Hebrew. He eventually remarried and had a son who would go on to be a literary figure in the early state of Israel.

Berdichevsky lived briefly in Warsaw, and as a result of what he saw there he began writing about the decline of the shtetl world, largely through fiction. In 1901, Berdichevsky returned to Germany, living in Breslau until 1911. He later settled in Berlin, where he died in 1921. Berdichevsky's wife and son assisted him and carried on some of his literary work after his death.

In his own time, Berdichevsky was viewed as a kind of Jewish Nietzsche, attacking traditional Jewish heroes like Ezra and Nehemiah as weak and advocating for more aggressive approaches to the world. Berdichevsky argued that "transvaluation"—a kind of complete reevaluation of Jewish thought—needed to occur, and criticized not only the Haskalah but also Zionist thinkers like Ahad Ha'am and Theodor Herzl.

Berdichevsky also produced a large amount of Hebrew literature, including fiction and literary criticism, and he collected Hasidic and rabbinic folklore and stories. Much of his literary work reflected the unsettled nature of Europe in the early 20th century; the same might be said for his intellectual work, too.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What situation faces the Jewish people? According to Berdichevsky, is this like or unlike prior eras in Jewish history? (97)
2. What does Berdichevsky think Jews must do in the face of their situation? (98-99)
3. How does Berdichevsky think Jews should view their history—positively, or negatively? What are the implications and consequences of this view? (99)
4. What is the place of tradition for modern Jews who wish to survive and thrive in the modern world? (99)

For Further Consideration:

1. Berdichevsky writes that the people of Israel precede the Torah. Is the way he understands that idea compatible with Secular Humanistic Judaism? Why or why not? (99)
2. When Berdichevsky writes about transvaluation, what do you think he has in mind? (99)
3. What does Berdichevsky think about problems like assimilation? How does his approach deal with those problems? (98)

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STUDY GUIDE: MAX NORDAU

The Man and His Times:

Max Nordau was born in Pest (now part of Budapest, Hungary) in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1849. He received a traditional Jewish education and remained religiously observant through age 18. After that time, he became a physician and moved to Paris.

Even in his adolescence, Nordau was interested and active in journalism, and his attention in Paris soon turned to journalism. In 1892, Nordau and Theodor Herzl became friends and observed the increasing anti-Semitism of French society, culminating in 1894's Dreyfus Affair. That prompted the two men, together with a few others, to found the World Zionist Congress in 1897. Nordau routinely addressed meetings of the Congress, giving comprehensive summaries of the situation of Jews throughout Europe. Nordau was convinced that political Zionism leading to a Jewish state was the only way to forestall an eventual disaster that might wipe out the Jewish population of Europe. Nordau rejected the cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am and the pragmatic approach suggested by Chaim Weizmann, and advocated for swift and large-scale immigration to Palestine rather than gradual agricultural development.

Nordau's rejection of gradualist approaches to Zionism was connected to his broader work as a European cultural critic. In 1892, Nordau wrote his most important work of cultural criticism, *Degeneration*, which characterized the major creative figures of the time—Wagner, Tolstoy, Nietzsche, Emil Zola, and others—as “degenerate” and indicative of some coming human catastrophe. Nordau would eventually propose a view of human purpose dedicated to the very humanistic goals of reducing suffering and achieving selfless love. He viewed modern anti-Semitism as a symptom of the broader cultural problems of the age.

Theodor Herzl had named Nordau as his successor to lead the World Zionist Congress, but Nordau refused the post. He spent most of World War I in Spain, then a neutral country, and returned to Paris after the war. In 1920, Nordau gave a speech at the Royal Albert Hall in London, England, in which he advocated for swift settlement of Jews in Palestine as the only way to realize the 1917 Balfour Declaration. His suggestions for large-scale immigration went largely unheeded during his lifetime. In the 1930s, when Revisionist Zionist Vladimir Jabotinsky developed a program for mass resettlement of Jews in Palestine, he called it “The Max Nordau Plan.”

Nordau died in Paris in 1923.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Nordau identify as the origins of the Bible? How does he think it compares to other world literature? (101-102)
2. How does Nordau portray the ways in which people of his time related to the Bible? (102)
3. How does Nordau think modern persons should use the Bible? How should they relate to traditional religious forms and practices? (102-103)
4. What role does Nordau say religion plays in public life? (103-104)

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For Further Consideration:

1. Why does Nordau attack religion in modern life so vehemently—what is motivating him, and what is his goal? (101-103)
2. Nordau attacks the mismatch between modern values and knowledge and the values and knowledge of ancient texts and rituals. Do you think the mismatch he identifies truly requires abandoning traditional ways of being Jewish?
3. Whatever you think about the previous question, is there a place for Jewish identity in Nordau's understanding of what it means to be modern?
4. What standards would have to be met for Jewish rituals and celebrations to be acceptable for modern life as Nordau saw it?

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STUDY GUIDE: AHAD HA'AM

The Man and His Times:

Ahad Ha'am was born Asher Hirsch Ginsberg in 1856 in Skvira near Kiev, then part of Russia. Ha'am grew up in a prosperous Hasidic family and received a traditional Jewish education, but was also exposed through private tutoring to Talmud and Maimonides's *Guide for the Perplexed*. He also studied Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] literature and remained interested in philosophy and science, but he was unable to enter a university for formalized study. Ha'am's rationalism eventually led him to cease religious practice and belief.

Ha'am lived for many years in Odessa and worked with Zionist organizations and publications. Visits to the historical land of Israel caused him concern with the approach of political Zionism. He eventually tired of Zionist work and took a job with the Wissotzky Tea Company, but renewed pogroms in 1906 caused him to reengage with Zionist issues. In 1907, he was sent to work in London, where he remained until 1922.

Despite his active involvement in Zionist causes, Ha'am eventually came to reject the mass-migration approach to Jewish settlement in Palestine. He instead focused on the need for cultural development and education. Ha'am argued that Jews, despite being a nation, lacked the nationalistic identity that would be necessary for the vision of the political Zionists like Herzl, and disagreed on the necessity of political Zionism as a cure for the precarious situation of many Jews. Instead, Ha'am thought the bigger problem was that many Jews were not convinced there was any reason to remain Jewish at all, so he sought ways to address that problem. He thought the circumstances of Jews, together with the trajectory of the development of Jewish tradition, were to blame for this problem—but he seems to have assumed that a Jew simply was Jewish as an immutable fact.

Ultimately, Ha'am would recognize that Judaism had been the result of historical development, and sought a way to correct errors in that development. Along with his rejection of political Zionism, Ha'am would also reject the idea that the gathering of all Jews in a Jewish homeland was possible or even desirable. He instead envisioned a Jewish society in the land of Israel as a cultural center that Jews worldwide could use as inspiration for their own efforts and values. Eventually, he also argued that mass migration of Jews to Palestine would be problematic because it would disregard the national rights of Palestinian Arabs.

In 1922, Ha'am moved to British-governed Palestine, where he died in 1927.

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Ahad Ha'am, what is the central difference between Judaism and Christianity? Which does he say is better? Why? (107-113)
2. What version of "the golden rule" does Ahad Ha'am say is the better one? Why? (112-113)
3. What does it mean for the Jewish people to be "the people of the book"? What does Ahad Ha'am say is wrong with being "the people of the book"? (113-115)

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4. What does Ahad Ha'am say was the great advance that Maimonides brought to Judaism? How did Maimonides's advance affect later Jewish thinkers who sought to move beyond traditional ways of being Jewish? (115-116)
5. Based on his correspondence with others, what does Ahad Ha'am seem to have thought was central to being Jewish? In what ways did he think his interlocutors misunderstood him? (116-119)

For Further Consideration:

1. Ahad Ha'am emphasizes the communal nature of Jewish ethics. Is this important for Zionism? Why?
2. What role do you think Ahad Ha'am envisioned for Jewish religion in modern Jewish life?
3. Why is Ahad Ha'am's challenge of the idea of Jews as "the people of the book" important for Zionism?
4. Do you agree with Ahad Ha'am that Torah has been the basis of Jewish survival? Why?
5. Is Ahad Ha'am's claim that the key to Jewish survival is in study and ethics true? If so, how can Secular Humanistic Jews relate to his approach to Jewish life?

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STUDY GUIDE: BER BOROCHOV

The Man and His Times:

Ber Borochov was born in 1881 and grew up in what is now Ukraine. He was educated in a Russian high school, and after high school studied philosophy, languages, and socialist and Marxist theory on his own. He was initially active in Russian socialist politics, but he was concerned enough with specifically Jewish issues that he established a Zionist socialist political party in 1901.

Unlike some, Borochov specifically desired not merely autonomy, but a Jewish state in the land of Israel. He therefore opposed the proposal for a Jewish territory in Uganda. He was ultimately responsible for the solidification of socialist Zionism, and helped found the World Union of *Poalei Zion* [“workers of Zion”], a socialist Zionist bloc within the World Zionist Organization.

In 1907, Borochov left Russia for Vienna, where he worked as a publicist for the *Poalei Zion* movement in Western and Central Europe and studied philosophy and researched Yiddish language and literature. When World War I began in 1914, Borochov left Vienna and migrated to the United States, where he continued to advocate socialist Zionism and edited a Yiddish newspaper.

When the Russian Revolution began in 1917, Borochov returned to Russia. He was involved in public activities in the months before the Bolsheviks’ October Revolution, advocating for socialist Zionist settlement in the land of Israel. Actively engaged in a speaking tour, he contracted pneumonia and died in September 1917 in Kiev.

Though firmly socialist, Borochov was able to blend socialism with Jewish nationalist interests. Thus, he believed that only by actively pursuing a Jewish state could Jews avoid the lesser status that came from living in non-Jewish countries. He thought that non-Jewish countries would likely not do any work to rectify “the Jewish problem,” even after the transformation of political and economic affairs through a socialist revolution and successful response to counterrevolution. And, like many Jewish socialists of the time, he viewed assimilation of Jews to broader culture in a negative light.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Borochov think about the position of Jews in the modern world? How has this affected the satisfaction of Jews with their lives? (121-23)
2. Borochov thought that Jews would no longer face mass expulsions or other large-scale violence in Europe. If so, what then is the problem with “progress” that Borochov believes requires Jews to leave the Diaspora for the land of Israel? (123-24)
3. What does Borochov think will happen to Jews in the Muslim world when “progress” comes? (124-25)
4. What does Borochov think is central to how ethnicity works that will require Jews to become Zionists? (125-26)

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For Further Consideration:

1. Why did Borochov think that Jews no longer faced the prospect of mass expulsions or other large-scale violence in Europe? Did his argument make sense, even if it turned out to be incorrect? (122)
2. How do you think Borochov's Marxist political ideas affected his views on what he calls "progress"? (123-24)
3. Borochov thought that Diaspora Jews had become both disaffected with and complacent about their place in European and, to a lesser extent, American society. Could those two conditions exist alongside one another? Do you think they exist today?
4. Borochov did not think that the "case for Zionism" became less persuasive when Jewish communities were not in grave danger. Was he right or wrong? How should the safety of Jewish communities affect the way Secular Humanistic Jews approach Zionism?

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STUDY GUIDE: JOSEPH HAIM BRENNER

The Man and His Times:

Joseph Hayyim Brenner was born in 1881 in Novi Mlini, Ukraine, and received a traditional yeshiva education. While still in school, he became a member of the Jewish Socialist Bund.

From 1900 until 1904, Brenner lived in Bialystok and Warsaw, Poland, and served in the Russian Army from 1901 to 1904. During this time, he became a writer, publishing stories and a short novel about Jewish life in Russia. In 1904, when the Russian-Japanese War began, friends helped smuggle Brenner to London, England. There, Brenner joined *Poalei Zion*, a socialist Zionist party and founded a periodical. In 1908, Brenner moved to Lemberg (now Lviv, Ukraine).

In 1909, Brenner moved to the land of Israel, then ruled by the Ottoman Empire. He eventually became a high school Hebrew teacher and continued writing, publishing, and editing periodicals. With the coming of World War I, Brenner became an Ottoman citizen so he could remain in the land of Israel. In 1921, Brenner was killed during a riot in Jaffa, where he had lived since 1915.

Brenner's subject matter and stories are largely drawn from his own life and focus on the travails of the Jewish people in the various places Brenner lived. Though Brenner had a traditional yeshiva-style education, his thinking is, like that of other secular Jewish Zionists from Eastern Europe, both secularist and nationalist. Much of Brenner's writing was in modern Hebrew, and he enlarged the still-nascent language by supplementing its vocabulary with Yiddish, Russian, and German forms.

Brenner, in common with many other Zionists of his time, viewed labor and working in and on the land of Israel as critical to the future development of the Jewish people. Thus, he viewed the Diaspora as a model of idleness to be rejected.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What facet of Jewish life does Brenner see creating tension in modern Jewish efforts to build Jewish life and Jewish identity? How does it do so? (128-29)
2. What does Brenner think is the most important aspect of religion? How does he claim religion is shaped by doctrines, and how is it shaped by those who practice the religion and their circumstances? (129-30)
3. What does Brenner think about the assimilation and conversion to Christianity of some Jews? (131-32)
4. What does Brenner think is the best remedy for assimilation? (132-33) What role does Brenner think Judaism should play in addressing that problem? (133-34)

For Further Consideration:

1. How do you think Brenner's approach to traditional Jewish religion might relate to the approach of Secular Humanistic Judaism?
2. Brenner places considerable weight on what people do, rather than what they believe or which doctrines their scriptural texts espouse. Do you think he is correct on this point?
3. Do you think Brenner successfully addresses the problem of the place of Jewish religion in broader Jewish and Zionist cultural life in this selection? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: RAHEL (BLUSTEIN)

The Woman and Her Times:

Rahel, often called “Rahel the Poetess” in Hebrew, was born Rahel Blustein (sometimes spelled “Bluwstein”) in a small town near Siberia in Russia in 1890. Her family eventually settled in Russian-controlled Poland, where she attended a Russian-language high school. Rahel’s mother died in 1906. After her father remarried, Rahel and her sister, Shoshana, moved to Kiev, where they lived with another sister. From there, Rahel and Shoshana moved to Odessa in 1909, where Rahel studied art.

While in Odessa, Rahel and Shoshana became friendly with members of a Zionist youth group, and with them went on a trip to Palestine, intending only to visit. The sisters fell in love with the land and remained there.

Rahel became a devotee of the thought of A.D. Gordon, who advocated a return to the land and to manual labor, and she also became interested in agriculture. In 1913, Rahel traveled to Toulouse, France to study agronomy, and was the only Jewish student at her school. When World War I broke out, Rahel was unable to return home to Palestine from France, because France and the Ottoman Empire were at war. After finishing her studies, she traveled to Russia and stayed with relatives for some time, working in relief efforts while there. During this period, which lasted until 1919, Rahel also contracted the tuberculosis that would cut her life short and prevent her from working in agriculture again.

It was also during Rahel’s time in Europe that she began to write poetry. Her first few poems were written in her native Russian. After her return to the land of Israel, now administered as Palestine under the British Mandate, she began to compose poems in earnest—and in Hebrew.

From 1919 until her death, Rahel wrote numerous poems and even composed a short play. Much of Rahel’s work featured themes related to agriculture, the connection of the Jewish people to the land, and mortality. Some of these themes are autobiographical in nature, and much of Rahel’s naturalistic poetry drew inspiration from Russian rather than Jewish poets. Rahel also used biblical texts in her work, often alluding to these texts through use of language and wording instead of relying explicitly on biblical themes.

Because of her poor health, Rahel spent much of her life after 1919 in hospitals and sanatoria. She died in Tel Aviv in 1931.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In “Here on Earth,” Rahel speaks of rolling a stone from the mouth of a well. What task do you think she is referring to? Who is responsible for carrying that task out? (135)
2. What is the original source of the “stone from the mouth of the well” in “Here on Earth”? (135)
3. In “My Strength Grows Less and Less...,” what Rahel asks that something “be good to me.” To whom or to what is she speaking? What might she be speaking about? (135)

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For Further Consideration:

1. What aspects of Rahel's poetry seem like they would be most compatible with Secular Humanistic Judaism? Which might be most problematic?
2. Does Rahel's poetry connected to the land of Israel and to working the land make it suited to use in the United States?
3. How does Rahel draw inspiration in both poems from the limits of the natural world and her own life?

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STUDY GUIDE: SAUL TCHERNIKHOWSKY

The Man and His Times:

Saul Tchernikhowsky was born in Russia in 1875, to a pious family that nevertheless was open to the influences of the Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment] and *Hibbat Zion*, a pre-Herzl movement to gradually migrate into and settle the land of Israel. Tchernikhowsky received a relatively modern education in Hebrew and traditional Jewish texts through age 10. After this, he began to study secular topics, including business and, at 14 he began attending school in Odessa to prepare for a university education.

Unable to gain admission to Russian universities, Tchernikhowsky studied medicine in Heidelberg, Germany, and Lausanne, Switzerland, where he completed his medical studies. Even before this, however, Tchernikhowsky had begun composing and publishing poems, as well as studying several Western languages including German, Latin, French, and Greek. After completing his medical studies in 1906, Tchernikhowsky returned to Russia but initially had difficulty obtaining work as a physician because his degree had not come from a Russian school. By 1910, he established himself in St. Petersburg and was drafted into the Russian Army as a doctor when World War I began in 1914.

Disturbed by the Russian Revolution of 1917, Tchernikhowsky migrated to Odessa, where he eked out a living as a physician and attempted to move to Israel. Unsuccessful in these efforts, he left Russia for Berlin in 1922. Throughout his time in Russia, Tchernikhowsky sustained his literary production, writing poems and translating numerous works into Hebrew, including the Greek poems of Homer and English-language poetry of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

Moving to Berlin, Tchernikhowsky earned a living primarily from his literary work, including numerous translations of literary materials into Hebrew (including Shakespeare), and made several attempts to migrate to Israel. It was also in Berlin that Tchernikhovsky composed his play, *Bar Kokhba* about a second century CE Jewish revolt against the Roman Empire. He was finally successful in his efforts to move to Israel in 1931, moving first to Tel Aviv and later to Jerusalem in 1936, where he lived until his death in 1943.

Tchernikhovky's Hebrew poetry is distinct from that of many of his contemporaries. His work shook off many of the rigid forms of Hebrew poetry at the time, and he brought many European forms into his poems, including a focus on rhythm and rhyme. Though he worked with biblical language, Tchernikhovsky tended to do so through allusion rather than direct reference. His poetry focused on themes of nature, nostalgia for life in Eastern Europe as he remembered it from childhood, and on the connection of the Jewish people to the land of Israel. Some of this work was in line with European Romanticism, and while Tchernikhovsky successfully blended European traditions into his Hebrew works, he nevertheless believed that Diaspora Jewish life was compromised.

Questions for Discussion:

1. To whom do you think “the Dreamer” in “I Believe” is speaking? (137)
2. What does Tchernikhowsky mean when he writes, “my soul still yearns for freedom/unbartered to the calf of gold”? In what does the speaker have faith? (137)

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3. Does the speaker in “I Believe” address the fate of the Jewish people? How? (138)
4. In “They Say There is a Country,” what is the land with “seven pillars”? Why does Rabbi Akiba call the land’s returning inhabitants “Maccabees”? (138-39)

For Further Consideration:

1. What biblical images can you identify in “I Believe”? (137-38) Who is “the Dreamer” in “I Believe”? Does the identity of the speaker matter? (137)
2. Is the message of “I Believe” compatible with a Secular Humanistic Jewish approach?
3. Is there a specific location referred to by the “seven pillars” of “They Say There is a Country”? (138)
4. Why do you think Tchernikhowsky identifies Rabbi Akiba as the one who welcomes new settlers to the land?

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STUDY GUIDE: AVRAHAM SHLONSKY

The Man and His Times:

Avraham Shlonsky was born in Ukraine in 1900. Though Shlonsky's family was affiliated with Chabad Hasidism, they were also strongly attached to the Cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'am; in her youth, Shlonsky's mother had been involved in socialist politics in Russia.

At age 13, Shlonsky was sent to the land of Israel to attend high school in Herzlia, and he returned to Russia shortly before World War I. During the war, Shlonsky continued his studies in a secular school, and it was as a youth that he began composing poetry.

After a brief period of wandering in Russia and Poland, Shlonsky returned to the land of Israel, where he worked in road and building construction; he would later call himself a "poet-roadbuilder in Israel." Shlonsky did more than compose poetry, however: he also wrote dialogues for theater and jingles for advertisements. Shlonsky also helped publish literary journals and became heavily involved in leftist politics and in international antiwar activities.

Shlonsky was the most important poet in Israel for much of his literary career. Shlonsky's poetry broke away from the naturalist- and Romantic-influenced Hebrew poetry before him. Much of his poetry incorporated the language and atmosphere of Israeli pioneer life. His poetry also responded to anti-Semitism and broader global events, to the point that his literary productivity stopped during much of World War II as the events of the Holocaust became known. Shlonsky also argued publicly for dramatic efforts to improve the quality of Israeli literature, including adopting new approaches to the formal composition of Hebrew poetry; Shlonsky himself took advantage of the Sephardi-based pronunciation of Hebrew newly adopted in Israel.

Shlonsky's literary output continued throughout his life in Israel; his final book was sent for publication on the day of his death in 1973.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In "Toil," what imagery does Shlonsky use to describe the effect of work upon the land? What is the purpose of work? (141)
2. How does Shlonsky connect traditional Jewish ideas to the work of building up the land of Israel? (141)
3. Who does the work of creation in "Toil"? (141)
4. In "Toil" and "Everything Ordained," does any sense of the existence of a god appear? (141-42)
5. Who is the "you" addressed in these poems? (141-42)

For Further Consideration:

1. How do Shlonsky's poems connect to the experiences and feelings of those who worked to cultivate and build the land of Israel? (141-42)
2. What biblical images does Shlonsky use? How does he use them?
3. Is there a place for traditional Jewish belief in Shlonsky's poetry?
4. Is his work meaningful or useful outside the land of Israel? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: SIGMUND FREUD

The Man and His Times:

Sigmund Freud was born in Freiburg, Moravia (now the Czech Republic) in 1856. His family was Jewish and celebrated holidays but was not especially religious. When Freud was four years old, the family moved to Vienna, Austria, the capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Freud attended a secular gymnasium school, and after graduation pursued medical studies at the University of Vienna.

While at the University of Vienna, Freud experienced considerable anti-Semitism but was able to begin working in neurology and physiology. Though interested in research, Freud also took clinical positions in hospitals in Vienna and Paris. It was in Paris that Freud became particularly interested in physical manifestations of neurological problems.

After marrying in 1886, Freud established a private clinical practice. It was in this setting that he began to develop what would become his most lasting medical legacy: psychoanalysis. Freud applied his techniques to himself as well as to patients; his approaches included dream interpretation and evaluation of sexual developmental issues.

Freud would also turn his techniques to the analysis of religion. He concluded there was a connection between religious ritual and obsessive behavior. Freud also came to view traditional religion as a means of addressing the unease of people in the world.

Despite his critique of religion, Freud maintained a strong Jewish identity. This may have stemmed in part from his experiences with anti-Semitism as a child and in university. His decision to remain Jewish instead of converting delayed his promotion to full professor at the University of Vienna. Nevertheless, Freud continued to associate with Jewish groups and causes, including B'nai Brith and Zionism. Near the end of life, Freud turned his psychoanalytic approach to the story of the Exodus in his *Moses and Monotheism*, concluding that the Israelites had risen up against Moses in the desert and killed him, thus connecting Jewish origins to his Oedipal theories.

Freud was still living in Vienna in 1938 when Nazi Germany took control of Austria during the Anschluss. Colleagues helped Freud and his daughter Anna escape Vienna, and the two relocated to London, where Freud died in 1939.

Questions for Discussion:

1. According to Freud, to what needs in human life does religion respond? (144-45)
2. What justifications does Freud say have been traditionally advanced for religious belief? Why does he reject them? Why, if they are unpersuasive, have they held sway for so long? (145-48)
3. In what way does Freud suggest that religious belief is akin to a delusion? How is it not like a delusion? Why does he think that philosophical approaches to religion are unhelpful? (148-49)

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4. If religion and philosophy are not adequate paths to knowledge of the world, why does Freud identify science as the best approach? How does he defend against the claim that religion is less effective in helping people cope with their world *because* of science? (148-50)
5. How does Freud address the claim that even if religion is untrue, nevertheless people thrown into a world without religion will be unable to cope? What does he expect the result will be? (150-51)

For Further Consideration:

1. Freud characterizes religion—at least, religion in its typical Western European understanding—as an illusion. What problems can you see with calling religion an illusion or delusion?
2. Freud views science as an antithesis to religion. Need that be the case? How can we account for scientists who maintain some form of traditional religious identity or belief?
3. Do you think that Freud is correct when he describes the results of philosophical or internal personal reflection as “intuition and introspection...particulars about our own mental life”? (148) What value might philosophy have in discussions of religion?
4. What faults might there be in Freud’s optimism that scientific knowledge will necessarily be more beneficial than traditional religious norms in helping people adjust to the difficulties of life?
5. How might one square Freud’s critique of religion with a cultural Jewish identity? With a Secular Humanistic Jewish identity?

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STUDY GUIDE: EDNA FERBER

The Woman and Her Times:

Edna Ferber was born in 1885 into a middle-class Jewish family in Kalamazoo, Michigan. Her family relocated to several other Midwestern cities before settling in Appleton, Wisconsin. Ferber had been interested in pursuing drama, but her family could not afford to send her to college. Instead, at age seventeen Ferber became a newspaper reporter in Appleton. She later moved to Milwaukee and, from there, to Chicago, working as a newspaper reporter in each city.

Ferber also invested time in creative writing, writing a novel in 1911 and, in 1915, publishing a collection of short stories that popularized her writing. Ferber continued to write novels, publishing more than twenty books. Her stories frequently involved strong women whose determination leads them to success. Ferber won the Pulitzer Prize for her 1924 novel, *So Big*.

In 1926, Ferber published another novel, *Show Boat*, which was adapted as a long-running and regularly performed Broadway musical. Several other novels were adapted into films, including her 1952 novel, *Giant*, which in 1956 became a movie starring Rock Hudson, Elizabeth Taylor, and James Dean. Ferber also published two memoirs of her life; the first of these included discussion of her life as a Jewish youth in Midwestern towns with smaller Jewish populations.

While a youth, and even as an adult, Ferber was exposed to anti-Semitism. Though she rarely gave voice to these experiences directly in her work, many of her works included a secondary character that faced discrimination on ethnic or other grounds and proved to be a person of good character. Ferber identified strongly with her Jewish background in other ways, and like other secular Jews, her Jewish identity was strengthened by her experiences with anti-Semitism.

Ferber never married or had children, but took an interest in the career of a niece, Janet Fox, who performed in Broadway productions. Ferber died in New York City in 1968.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How did Ferber view her Jewish identity in light of her upbringing? Was this a positive experience for her? In what ways? (153-54)
2. What was Ferber's experience with Judaism as a child? Was she drawn to her Jewish identity on its doctrinal merits, or for some other reason? (154-55)
3. How does Ferber understand the idea of the divine in this selection? (155-56)
4. How did Ferber express and maintain her Jewish identity as an adult? (156-57)

For Further Consideration:

1. Ferber's negative experiences played as much of a role as her positive ones in forming and strengthening her Jewish identity. Are there enough experiences like this today in the United States to form similar Jewish identities?
2. Ferber characterizes her Jewish identity in a way we would likely characterize as secular or cultural Jewishness. Does her expression and understanding of her identity resonate with you? Why or why not?
3. In your experience, does the kind of anti-Semitism Ferber describes at Mrs. Wolcott's home exist today in the United States? How does anti-Semitism express itself today?

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STUDY GUIDE: EMMA GOLDMAN

The Woman and Her Times:

Emma Goldman was born in Kovno, Lithuania, in 1869. She grew up in Kovno and Konigsberg, and, eventually, St. Petersburg, Russia. Goldman had formal schooling until conflicts with her father and teachers foreclosed that avenue for her. Goldman continued to read and was largely self-educated, and in 1885 she left Russia for the United States.

Goldman became a devotee of anarchist thought, and eventually became one of its most prominent advocates in the United States, along with her long-time companion, Alexander Berkman. Goldman also believed in acting upon her convictions, and it was to that end that she and Berkman developed an ultimately unsuccessful plot to murder an industrialist after a labor strike was crushed in Pennsylvania.

Goldman published the journal, *Mother Earth*, from 1906 to 1918. She spoke and wrote often and with conviction on issues related to women's liberation, gender equality, economics, and the inequalities of capitalism. Goldman was vocal in her support of contraception, as well, and advocated for individual liberation and the elimination of the coercive power of the state in people's lives.

Goldman was also an outspoken opponent of World War I and the conscription of men into the military. It was this that finally caused her and Berkman to be sent to jail and, after that, to be deported along with more than 200 others to Bolshevik-run Russia in 1919. While Goldman was an advocate of communism as an economic system, she disliked the dictatorial, individually oppressive nature of the Bolshevik regime. Disillusioned with the Bolsheviks, Goldman left Russia in 1921.

She remained in England for much of the rest of her life. Goldman continued to write, but she rarely had the kind of social influence she had enjoyed in the United States before 1918, when she was known widely as "Red Emma." Late in her life she became involved with the anarchist cause in the Spanish Civil War of the mid-1930s, helping to run their press and propaganda outlets.

After her death in 1940, Goldman was buried alongside the bodies of anarchists killed in the Chicago Haymarket Affair in 1886.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why did Goldman think that marriage was inconsistent with true emancipation of women? Did she think external or internal obstacles to women's emancipation were more difficult to overcome? Why? (160-61)
2. Why did Goldman think that emancipated women of her time were less vital than the unemancipated women of their grandmothers' time? (161)
3. How did Goldman think women could best achieve genuine emancipation? On what does she base her claim? (161-62)

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4. What conclusions about governments of all types formed the basis of Goldman's anarchism? What broader social problems did Goldman think governments exacerbated? (162-63)
5. The anarchism Goldman advocated for the entirety of her adult life failed to achieve any of its stated goals. Why, then, did Goldman insist that her life had been worthwhile? (163-64)

For Further Consideration:

1. Do you agree with Goldman's arguments concerning marriage as inherently preventing women's true emancipation? Why or why not? (160-61)
2. To what extent does Goldman's approach to women's emancipation fit with present-day humanistic approaches to gender, racial, sexual, and similar rights-related issues? Is her approach to the question of emancipation one Secular Humanistic Jews could draw from today? (160-62)
3. From what you've read here, in what ways do you think Goldman's anarchic approach might be compatible with Secular Humanistic Judaism? Where would the two not fit well together? (162-63)
4. Goldman's view on whether her life was worth living is a contrarian one: she seems content with having stirred debate, even if ultimately her view did not lead to change in her lifetime. How does her view on what makes life worth living resonate with you? How would you measure whether a life is worth living? (163-64)

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STUDY GUIDE: HORACE KALLEN

The Man and His Times:

Horace Kallen, a rabbi's son, was born in Silesia, Germany, in 1882, and came to the United States with his family in 1887. Kallen studied at Harvard University under William James. He later worked with John Dewey, who would influence strongly not only Kallen but also the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, Mordechai Kaplan.

After teaching at several universities in the early 1900s, Kallen helped to found the New School of Social Research in New York. He began his work at the New School in 1919, and he was eventually made dean of the graduate faculty of political and social science. Kallen remained at the New School until 1965, and later taught elsewhere.

Kallen was heavily involved in Jewish causes throughout his life. He was an early American advocate of Zionism, believing that the Jewish people required a homeland both as a form of protection and for cultural development. Kallen was also an early advocate of cultural pluralism in American society (as opposed to the “melting pot” idea often spoken of during his lifetime): he believed that each ethnic group provided its own contributions to the broader American culture. Kallen favored the formation of economic cooperatives as a counterweight to the influence and power of larger corporate entities. Part of Kallen's approach to social theory was an insistence that all ideas be tested for their usefulness in human life--including religious ideas, which he viewed as the products of human beings rather than as divine revelations.

Kallen died in 1974.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Kallen think of efforts to identify an essence of Judaism or Jewishness? (166-67)
2. How does Kallen think Jews actually identify with and construct their identities? How does this compare to what Jewishness and Judaism actually are? (167-68)
3. What does Kallen suggest we can learn about Judaism from those scholars of Jewish life who are not Jewish themselves? Why are Jews not able to do this themselves? How might learning from non-Jewish scholars help Jews to construct their own identities? (168-69)
4. What problem does Kallen identify in modern efforts to redefine Judaism? How does Kallen think Jewish identity is best understood? (169-71)
5. Does Kallen think Judaism is a religion, or something else? If something else, what? (171-72)

For Further Consideration:

1. Do you think Kallen's demotion of Judaism in favor of a broader idea of Jewish culture is correct? What weaknesses might there be in his approach?
2. Kallen's understanding of Jewish culture is broad, and he recognizes that individuals pick and choose what makes up Jewish identity. What problems can this cause for attempts to recognize Jewish culture as a single phenomenon?

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3. What risks are involved with Kallen's suggestion that we consult non-Jewish scholars of Judaism? How can those risks be offset?
4. Kallen sees Jewish culture as a source of values for the broader Western world. Does his approach seem to value what non-Jewish culture could contribute to Jewish culture?
5. Does Kallen's approach to understanding Jewish culture work for Secular Humanistic Jews? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: ERICH FROMM

The Man and His Times:

Erich Fromm was born in 1900 in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, the only child of Orthodox Jewish parents. Fromm was initially religious, though he eventually ceased to be so. After primary and secondary education, Fromm attended university, first in Frankfurt and later in Heidelberg. He initially studied law, but eventually turned his attention to psychology and sociology, and he earned his Ph.D. in sociology at the University of Heidelberg.

After completing his studies in the early 1920s, Fromm turned his attention to psychoanalysis, beginning his practice in 1927 and completing his education in psychoanalysis in the early 1930s in Frankfurt. The Nazis came to power soon afterward, and Fromm relocated to Geneva and then, in 1934, to the United States, where he joined the faculty at Columbia University. After his time at Columbia University, Fromm was on the faculty of a number of different institutions in the United States and Mexico. He also maintained an active psychoanalytical practice, and wrote and published numerous books on psychoanalytic and social issues.

Fromm's theories were neo-Freudian, focusing on human freedom with additional social and sociological dimensions. He was thus sometimes critical of Freud, though he acknowledged Freud along with Einstein and Karl Marx as the intellectual parents of modern thought.

Much of Fromm's work was infused with insight from and interpretation of traditional Jewish sources, including the Bible, the Talmud, and Hasidic stories and texts. Fromm's humanistic approach to individuals and society drove him toward political liberalism and social activism. He was active in socialist politics in the United States, and was deeply involved in anti-war activities in the 1960s and early 1970s.

Fromm died in Switzerland in 1980, just a few days shy of his eightieth birthday.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What does Fromm identify as the central point of humanistic religion? What place is there for a notion of god in humanistic religion? How does Fromm attempt to incorporate existing traditional religious traditions into his notion of humanistic religion? (174-76)
2. How do specific types of humanistic religion differ from what Fromm terms authoritarian religion? How does Fromm think authoritarian religion works to undercut human freedom and fulfillment? (175-77)
3. Fromm acknowledges that the Hebrew Bible was the result of human work and not divine revelation. What does he contend is the core meaning and purpose of that work? What reasons does Fromm give for why Jewish traditions are, in his view, inherently humanistic? (178-80)
4. What does Fromm identify as being distinct about humans when compared to other creature? What is the consequence of this difference? (180-81)
5. What type of love does Fromm identify as fundamental to all other types? How does love, as Fromm conceives of it, serve to help both the individual and others? Why does Fromm insist we should have faith in the idea of love he has articulated? (181-83)

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For Further Consideration:

1. Fromm distinguishes between humanistic and authoritarian forms of religion. What do you think he means by "religion" in this context? Are either of these types of religion social phenomena, or rather personal convictions of the individual? (174-77)
2. Are you persuaded by Fromm's use of the language of psychoanalysis to describe the differences between humanistic and authoritarian religion? (175-77)
3. Fromm's understanding of the authorship of the Bible is one with which most Secular Humanistic Jews would agree. Do you think that Fromm's interpretations of the Bible and Judaism are believable? Why or why not? (178-80)
4. What do you think Fromm means by the word "love"? Is it an emotion, a set of rational conclusions, or something else?
5. In numerous places in his work, Fromm refers to the idea of a god, but insists that he is not a theist and that his humanistic notion of religion is one that comports with both theist and nontheist approaches to the question of a god. Is he correct? Is his use of the word "god" one that Secular Humanistic Jews could accept?

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STUDY GUIDE: MARIE SYRKIN

The Woman and Her Times:

Marie Syrkin was born in Switzerland in 1899, the only daughter of two socialist Zionists: Nachman, a prominent thinker, and Bassya Osnos. The family relocated within Europe several times before settling in New York City in 1908. Bassya died in 1914; Nachman died in 1924. Syrkin would marry three times; her first marriage was annulled, the second ended in divorce, and her third marriage would last from 1930 until her husband's death in 1976.

Syrkin attended New York City public schools; her family was not religious, but their activity in socialist Zionist circles left her with a strong Jewish identity. After graduating from high school, Syrkin earned B.A. and M.A. degrees in English literature from Cornell University. Syrkin went on to teach high school in New York City schools, and she published a book illustrating her educational theories, *Your School, Your Children*, in 1944. Syrkin also composed poetry throughout her life, and translated numerous works of others from Hebrew or Yiddish into English.

After the Holocaust, Syrkin published a study on Jewish resistance, *Blessed Is the Match*. In 1950, Syrkin joined the faculty of Brandeis University, where she was the first professor in the country to teach a class dedicated to Holocaust-related literature. Syrkin published works regularly in Jewish and general-interest periodicals.

In addition to her literary activity and teaching, Syrkin was heavily involved in publishing efforts within Labor Zionism. Syrkin was also friends with numerous Labor Zionist figures, including Golda Meir. Syrkin wrote a number of books about socialist Zionist figures, including her father, Nachman, and Golda Meir.

After retiring from Brandeis in 1966, Syrkin received honorary doctoral degrees from several schools, including Brandeis University and the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College. She also was involved in various Zionist organizations in Israel and won several prizes for her political and literary work. Syrkin lived in California until her death in 1989.

Questions for Discussion:

1. In "Law and Order," how do humans compare to the broader universe? How does the poem suggest humans should adapt themselves to the universe around them? (185)
2. What manner of revolution does Syrkin refer to in "Law and Order"? (185)
3. In "The Covenant," does the speaker in the poem believe in a god? Why does the speaker pray? (186)
4. How does the speaker in "The Covenant" identify as Jewish? (186)

For Further Consideration:

1. How might "Law and Order" suit Secular Humanistic Judaism as an approach to connecting human needs with the nature of the broader world? (185)
2. Can Secular Humanistic Jews share the speaker's approach to Jewish identity as expressed in "The Covenant"? Why or why not? (186)
3. In what ways could each poem be read as a response to the Holocaust, a prominent part of Syrkin's academic life and work?

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STUDY GUIDE: SIDNEY HOOK

The Man and His Times:

Sidney Hook was born in Brooklyn in 1902 to Austrian Jewish parents. He earned his bachelor's degree at the City College of New York, and his Ph.D. at Columbia University, where he studied philosophy with John Dewey. Hook was involved in socialist politics at this time, and became a philosophy professor--first at New York University and, later, at Columbia University.

Hook's involvement in socialist politics saw him initially enthusiastic about the Soviet revolution in Russia, but he became skeptical and later openly hostile to Communism as a result of its totalitarian leanings. By the beginning of the Cold War, Hook publicly advocated against Communism in particular, and against both left- and right-wing forms of totalitarianism in general. Hook was also an atheist. He took a consequentialist view of ethics and rejected ideological orthodoxy of all types.

Hook's willingness to work with both the political left and right against totalitarian approaches saw him gradually move away from socialism as the Cold War progressed; he ended his career as a fellow of the politically conservative Hoover Institution at Stanford University in California. Hook's distinguished career in teaching and research resulted in his recognition as a member of the National Academy of Arts and Sciences, a recipient of the Presidential Medal of Freedom, and the establishment of an annual Phi Beta Kappa award in his honor.

Hook was married twice and had three children. He died in 1989.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Hook writes that his criticisms of modern Christian thought are not based on a defense of Judaism. Why, then, would he make his critiques? If he might apply that same criticism to what he calls "Judaism in any of its historic forms," on what basis does he think Jewish identity can have a legitimate claim to continued survival? In what kind of a society might Jews be best able to seek their survival? (189)
2. From what religiously based or supernaturalist criticisms does Hook try to defend humanism? Does Hook think that humanism is a substitute for traditional religion? Does he think that religion has any greater claim to morality than an atheistic totalitarianism? (190-91)
3. What connection, if any, does Hook identify between religion and morality? (191-92)
4. Why does Hook insist that naturalistic humanism would locate its approach to morality in its examination of the consequences of human action, rather than the individual actors' purposes in taking action? (192-93)
5. How does Hook argue that consequentialist ethics can nevertheless be rational? How can people reach agreement on the content of what is or is not ethical behavior? How is Hook's understanding of the source of authority for humanist ethics different from that of other "humanist" theories? (193-94)

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For Further Consideration:

1. Hook argues that Jews can best escape discrimination in what amounts to a liberal democracy. What kind of Jewish identity do you think Hook envisions as a legitimate one? (189)
2. Do you agree with Hook's conclusion that supernaturalist religions do not have any inherent ethical content, but are instead used as pretexts for an adherent's personal preferences? (191-92)
3. Do you agree with Hook's approach to morality as one that comes from the consensus of reasonable persons interacting with one another? (192-94)
4. Do you think that Hook's rejection of institutional authority over ethics--whether in the form of political or religious institutional authority--is necessary for a Secular Humanistic Jewish approach to morality? (193-94)
5. Is Hook's libertarian approach to ethics one that is compatible with Secular Humanistic Judaism? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: HANNAH ARENDT

The Woman and Her Times:

Hannah Arendt was born to a Jewish family in Hanover, Germany, in 1906. She earned a Ph.D. in 1926 after studying with prominent German philosopher Karl Jaspers. Arendt was married twice: once in the early 1930s, and again in 1940.

Arendt was an academic in Germany in 1933, and as a result of the rise of the Nazis left Germany for Paris. After World War II broke out, Arendt and her husband were classified as enemy aliens, and Arendt left Paris for the United States in 1941. While in the United States, Arendt was involved in numerous Jewish organizations, including the Conference on Jewish Relations and Schocken Books. Arendt also served as the Executive Director for Jewish Cultural Reconstruction, which sought to distribute property owned by Jews who, after their deaths at the hands of the Nazis, left property behind without heirs. In 1963, Arendt joined the faculty of the University of Chicago; in 1967, she left Chicago for a faculty position at the New School for Social Research in New York City.

Arendt wrote numerous books and articles. She is known for two especially prominent works: *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, and *Eichmann in Jerusalem*. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, published in 1951, Arendt identified the decline of personal freedom and the rise of totalitarianism as connected in part to anti-Semitism, in part to social upheaval that degraded the nation-state system, and in part to the turn in the public sphere toward private interests rather than public participation in politics.

In *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, published in 1963, Arendt argued that Eichmann himself was evil in a manner that could only exist and be enabled by a modern technological age, but that Eichmann was an otherwise unimpressive, largely un-self-aware mid-level bureaucrat. Arendt also identified European Jews as having been largely complicit in their persecution and eventual murder by the Nazis. *Eichmann in Jerusalem* was met with tremendous upheaval because of its characterizations of both Eichmann and of European Jewish leaders.

As an undergraduate student in the early 1920s, Arendt began an affair with the German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. Heidegger would later become heavily involved in Nazi Party activities within German academic life. Yet the influence of Arendt's affair with Heidegger endured for much of her life, and survived a long hiatus imposed by the rise of the Nazi Party—even as Arendt appeared to have been aware of Heidegger's Nazi ties during the war and his post-war apologetics for his involvement.

Arendt died in 1975 in New York City.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does Arendt argue that culture is separate from religion? Why does she think Judaism found itself unable to respond to the sudden openness of European culture? (196-97)
2. What problem did Arendt identify in prior examples of Jewish culture? How had the development of good approaches to Jewish culture been impeded in the past? (197-98)

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3. How did Arendt think Jewish culture, distinct from Jewish religion, could be fostered? What sources did she consider most important in this effort? What role did Arendt see Jewish settlements in Palestine playing in this effort? What place did American Jews have in this initiative? (198-99)
4. What does Arendt appear to think of Eichmann's blameworthiness for his crimes? How does this compare to Arendt's judgment of blameworthiness for the leaders of various Jewish councils? (200-03)
5. What does Arendt mean by the phrase, "the banality of evil," in light of Eichmann's last moments? (203-04)

For Further Consideration:

1. Do you agree with Arendt's argument that religion is separate from culture? If Arendt is correct, how can Jewish religion and Jewish culture interact while being separate?
2. Arendt concludes that "the development of a Jewish culture ... will from now on not depend upon circumstances beyond the control of the Jewish people, but upon their own will." (199) Does she develop a convincing argument that there *should* be a Jewish culture? If so, what is it?
3. Arendt observes that the laws used to prosecute Eichmann were not enacted with Nazi Party members in mind, but instead were intended for the prosecution of Jews who willingly collaborated with Nazis and collaborator governments. Since Arendt views Eichmann's form of evil as "banal," do you think Eichmann could properly be punished by laws under which Jews who engaged in similar conduct could not be punished?
4. Were the actions of Jews who ran bodies that collaborated with the Nazi rule excusable actions? Looking at Arendt's characterizations of the actions of Kastner, Baeck, and others, what might or might not have made their actions excusable?
5. Given the knowledge now available about the ways in which many Jews were murdered by the Nazis, does Arendt's assignment of blame to Jewish leaders seem persuasive to you? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: ISAAC DEUTSCHER

The Man and His Times:

Isaac Deutscher was born in Cracow, Poland, in 1906 to an Orthodox Jewish family. He received a traditional Jewish education but later in his youth became a Hebrew-speaking Zionist. By 1926, however, Deutscher had joined the Communist Party in Poland, and he served as editor of a number of journals whose editorial content came from the Communist Party. In the early 1930s, he ceased to accept instructions from the Communist Party to characterize other socialist groups as “Social Fascists,” and thus was ejected from the Polish Communist Party as a result of his disobedience.

In 1939, shortly before the outbreak of World War II, Deutscher moved to London, where he joined the editorial staff of several journals, including the *Economist*. He committed himself to historical research, and he became a noted biographer of both Stalin and Trotsky and an expert on Soviet Russia and Communism. Deutscher remained a Marxist, though he was best known as a critic of Stalin and Soviet-style Communism.

Deutscher visited Israel in 1953 and was initially supportive of the idea of Israel generally. Over time, however, he wrote critically against what he perceived as Israel’s ultranationalism in a world he viewed as increasingly internationalist, and it has been reported that Deutscher’s antagonistic writings toward Israel precluded him from obtaining a permanent job in British academia. Deutscher’s commitment to internationalism was, however, sincere, and contributed to his ideas concerning the “non-Jewish Jew.”

Deutscher died in England in 1967.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Why does Deutscher retell the story of Elisha ben Abuyah and Rabbi Meir? (206-07)
2. According to Deutscher, what exceptional traits and circumstances did the “non-Jewish Jews” share that helped reveal their genius? (207-08)
3. Why does Deutscher insist that, despite the “non-Jewish Jew’s” outsider status, she or he will inevitably have “the ultimate victory”? (209)
4. On what philosophical principles does Deutscher insist all the “non-Jewish Jews” share? Why does Deutscher insist that, even though the Holocaust complicates the picture, the “non-Jewish Jews” universalist vision of the solidarity of mankind is correct? (209-11)
5. On what basis does Deutscher criticize the founding of a Jewish state? (211-12)

For Further Consideration:

1. Why might the story of “Akher” (Elisha ben Abuyah) be a good or bad example of the history of “non-Jewish Jews”?
2. Deutscher contends that “non-Jewish Jews” were able to have influence over their broader cultures because of their liminal existence in both the Jewish and secular spheres. But Deutscher has few examples outside of 19th- and 20th-century Europe; his only such example is Spinoza. In light of this, what other explanations for the flourishing of “non-Jewish Jews” can you think of?

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3. Do you agree with Deutscher's contention that Marx, Trotsky, Luxemburg, and others of his "non-Jewish Jews" had "the ultimate victory" he claims for them?
4. Deutscher's argument is premised upon a certain view of how history will turn out. Is his theory on the "non-Jewish Jew" less valid if he was incorrect about such things as a trend toward solidarity among humankind?
5. Is Deutscher's approach to Israel one that you agree with? Why or why not?

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STUDY GUIDE: ABRAHAM MASLOW

The Man and His Times:

Abraham Maslow was one of seven children born in Brooklyn, New York, to Russian Jewish immigrant parents. At an early age, Maslow was diagnosed as mentally ill by a psychologist. Nevertheless, he was able to overcome the anti-Semitism he experienced and attended college at the City College of New York, initially studying law before transferring to Cornell University and then back to City College, where he obtained his bachelor's degree. He then began graduate studies in psychology at the University of Wisconsin. Maslow performed research at Columbia University, and later joined the faculty of Brooklyn College, working there from 1937 to 1951 before moving to Brandeis University from 1951 to 1969.

Maslow was married and had children by the time World War II began, and thus was ineligible for recruitment into the military. In the wake of the war, while at Brooklyn College, Maslow first began to seriously question the dominant psychological theories of the time. His new inquiries and his observation of several of his mentors led him to develop the “third force” in psychology; namely, “humanistic psychology.” This approach to psychology focused on a holistic view of persons and sought to help guide people toward self-actualization—that is, to be their best selves—rather than viewing persons as collections of pathologies.

One of the products of humanistic psychology—and perhaps the thing Maslow is best known for—is his hierarchy of needs. His later career focused on exploring why more people whose basic needs were met did not try to self-actualize. He also began to explore the nature of evil from a humanistic standpoint. In 1963, Maslow helped to found the Association for Humanistic Psychology, but he refused to accept nomination as its president so that humanistic psychology could develop its own identity separate from his reputation. In 1967, Maslow was named Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association.

In 1969, Maslow moved to California to work at a research institute. He died of a heart attack while jogging in 1970.

Questions for Discussion:

1. Does Maslow think human personality and human emotions of all types are inherently good or bad? What conclusions about the possibility of scientifically informed improvement does Maslow reach in light of his view of human nature? (214-16)
2. What does Maslow feel about the possibility of humans being good through their own abilities, without reference to any divinity? Why have humans not yet solved their own problems? (216-17)
3. What role does Maslow's experience with anti-Semitism appear to have played in his work and personal life? (217-18)
4. Where does Maslow think everyday forms of evil come from? Is this consistent with his overall approach to human psychology? (218)

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For Further Consideration:

1. Do you agree with Maslow's generally positive view of human nature? Why or why not?
2. Maslow concludes at one point that being discriminated against caused him to inquire into ethics and psychology, and he states that he thinks this is peculiar to Jews and might be peculiar as well to African Americans. Is this conclusion consistent with his view of the causes of bad conduct?
3. What problems might come from Maslow's suspicion that the experience of persecution is especially useful for the development of sharp inquiries into human nature and ethics?