Out of the Shtetl
Sinkoff, Nancy

Published by Brown Judaic Studies

Sinkoff, Nancy.

For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/74907
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am delighted to acknowledge the individuals and institutions that have assisted me in the completion of this book. This work began as a doctoral dissertation under the guidance of Michael Stanislawski, who was a supportive mentor and teacher throughout my years at Columbia. His scholarship on the Jews of Eastern Europe is the measure by which all of his students gauge themselves. I am grateful for his continued counsel. Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi played a critical role in my graduate education and I will always be indebted to his uncompromising intellectual standards and boundless passion for the Jewish past. During my sojourn as a U.S. historian at Columbia, I benefited greatly from my contact with Professors Eric Foner and the late James Shenton. At the Jewish Theological Seminary of America I was fortunate to study with the late Baruch M. Bokser, whose brilliance as a Talmudist was not lost upon even the most beginning students. Elisheva Carlebach, a teacher and mentor in an informal capacity, was and is always generous with her time. She read and commented on the entire dissertation on which this book is based. Elliot Wolfson’s glosses on the material related to Jewish mysticism and Kabbalah in this book that is drawn from my dissertation were critical in saving me from errors.

While doing the archival research for this book in Israel, I participated in the seminar, “Change and Response in Eastern Europe, the 18th-20th Centuries,” at the Institute for Advanced Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, which was an unexpected delight. Since that time, I have benefited greatly from the erudition, as well as the friendship, of the scholars I met there. I mention in particular the discussions with Israel Bartal, Shmuel Feiner, Moshe Rosman, David Sorkin, and Mordechai Zalkin. Professor Rosman, as well, helped me with my initial contacts with Polish archives and also suggested that I send my manuscript to Brown Judaic Studies, fruitful connections in both cases, and a sign of his natural collegiality.

It gives me particular pleasure to thank Jeffrey Shandler, who was a friend before he was a colleague, and whose support through the research and writing of this book has been unwavering. I am indebted to my senior colleague at Rutgers University, Yael Zerubavel, whose mentorship, professionalism, and intelligence make working in the Department of Jewish Studies an honor. She has graciously shepherded me through the many obstacles that lurk in an assistant professor’s life. Much of my thinking about Polish and East European Jewry comes from the numerous conversations I have had with my dear friend, Olga Litvak, whose energy for history is only surpassed
by her intelligence and wit. Other colleagues have read various drafts of chapters and of the book, making them immeasurably better, including Zachary Braiterman, Paul Clemens, Lois Dubin, Jeremy Dauber, Paul Hanebrink, Rebecca Kobrin, Barbara Mann, and Daniel Unowsky. Rudolph Bell offered me lots of practical advice about how to make a book. Daniel Abrams was only too happy to pore over a piece of manuscript, even one unrelated to the history of Jewish mysticism. Deborah Dash Moore nudged me at just the right time to make the book my own. Mike Siegel of the Rutgers University Geography Department made the excellent maps that illustrate the written argument. Steven Seegal generously took time away from his own research to expedite my receipt of images from the Czartoryski Archive in Cracow. Ulrich Groetsch vetted all of my German translations. I enjoyed discussing the Hebrew employed by the maskilim with Reuben Namdar and Donny Inbar, and I thank Shmuel Sandberg and David Szonyi, respectively, for their help in the initial copyediting and index preparation of the book. Arlene Goldstein and Simone Fisch of the Department of Jewish Studies consistently and graciously offered their skills and advice as I completed this project and throughout my time at Rutgers. Steve Siebert of Notabene was unfappable in the face of my many questions and showed me just how elegant and efficient the program can be. David Jacobson of Brown Judaic Studies took great care in guiding this book from its first review to its final manuscript form, and I owe him a great deal of thanks. Gonnri Runia expertly formatted the book from its manuscript version and my favorite young historian, Nathan Perl-Rosenthal, enthusiastically read and corrected the page proofs.

The following funding sources supported my work in graduate school and beyond: the Mellon Fellowships in the Humanities, the Center for Israel and Jewish Studies of Columbia University, the President’s Fellowship in the Department of History of Columbia University, the Max Weinreich Center for Advanced Jewish Studies, the Jewish Foundation for the Education of Women, the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture, the Leo Baeck Institute, the IIE-Fulbright Fellowship, the Interuniversity Program in Jewish Studies, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Center for Advanced Jewish Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. Publication of this book was made possible by the Koret Foundation, the Research Council of Rutgers University, and the University Seminars of Columbia University. Material in this book was presented to the University Seminar on Israel and Jewish Studies.

The staffs at the libraries of Columbia University, the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, the New York Public Library, the Jewish National and University Library at the Hebrew University, the Central Archives of the Jew-
ish People, and the Czartoryski Library in Cracow were all extremely helpful, and I look forward to working with them again. In particular, I would like to thank the staff of the Department of Manuscripts and Archives of the Jewish National and University Library (JNULA), whose offices became a second home to me during a year in Jerusalem. Its director, Raphael Weiser, recently made sure to expedite my receipt of images from the collection, which arrived in record time. Paweł Prokop gave me invaluable help by xeroxing and sending materials to me from the Czartoryski library. Jerry Schwarzbard, Annette Botnick, and David Wachtel of the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America were always forthcoming with assistance.

I could not have completed this work without the support of my friends and family. Susan Oppenheimer’s friendship nurtures me constantly, despite a distance of 5,710 miles. Mychal Springer and Suzy Stein have always helped to remind me that the book was only one of many important components of my life. Stuart Schear is the best public relations agent a friend can have, and I thank him for his confidence in my work. My mother-in-law, Serina Dreiblatt, nourished my family throughout my years of study. My three incredible brothers, Martin, Richard, and Jim, have been unflagging sources of intellectual stimulation, support, and love.

Poignantly, my joy and satisfaction in publishing this book are tempered because neither of my parents, Dr. Marvin W. and Alice B. Sinkoff, lived to see it. As models of hard work and individuals of fierce passions, both of them helped me acquire the discipline and drive necessary to make myself into an historian of early modern Polish Jewry. My mother also unwittingly fulfilled a Talmudic injunction by insisting that I learn how to swim, a skill that has served me well over the many years it took to hone my craft. I think I have swum around the world in search of the beginnings of the modern East European Jew. My debt to my late father is even more profound. An American-born, Yiddish-speaking child of Russian-Jewish immigrants, he quite deliberately passed onto me his love of things Jewish and of the life of the mind. Nothing pained me more than having to include the words “in memory” in this book’s dedication. I miss him every day.

It is with enormous joy that I thank my three “illuminations,” my children, Ezra, Miriam, and Reuben, who got in the way and therefore showed me the way, every day. Their radiance brightens my world immeasurably. I could not have written this book without them, although they may not believe it. Finally, no words can adequately convey the gratitude I feel toward my cherished husband, Gary Dreiblatt. Over all the years of training, research, and writing that it took to complete this book, he has lived with me and the men of the Jewish Enlightenment with few complaints and not one jealous fit, giving unstintingly of his time and love. His devotion, intelligence, and
incomparable sense of humor have been constant sources of sustenance and guidance. He is my North Star, without whom I would be lost.