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**Francesconi, Federica, and Rebecca Lynn Winer, eds. *Jewish Women's History from Antiquity to the Present*. Detroit MI: Wayne State University Press, 2021.**

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Editors Frederica Francesconi and Rebecca Lynn Winer follow in the steps of their mentor, Judith Baskin. With few exceptions, the contributions they have collected consist of papers dealing with Ashkenazi women. Judith Baskin and the women scholars she has guided--mostly other Ashkenazi women--concentrate on Ashkenazi Jewish women's lives. In their preface Francesconi and Winer identify Judith Baskin's limitations as scholar and mentor. She held up the autobiography of Glikl [or Gluckel of] Hameln (1646-1724) as the kind of primary source by a woman that she hoped to encourage future scholars to fully mine. (x) Gluckel's diaries--written between 1691-1719 in Yiddish--spotlight the skewed sexist Athenian-Roman-Christian-European hegemonic hierarchies. Few women cross Europa--Ashkenazi, Christian, Muslim-- enjoyed the freedom of 'a room of one's own,' much less time to acquire literacy in any of the languages to which they had access.

Appropriately, the editors dedicate this over 500-page volume to Judith Baskin, an eminent scholar of Jewish Studies, and the first woman to preside over the Association for Jewish Studies (2004-2006). Most of the chapters focus on Ashkenazi women, including much of Judith Baskin's "Medieval Jewish Women in Muslim and Christian Milieus. Jewish Women and Gender in Iberia (Sepharad) and beyond." Also, two articles refer to the works of Paula Hyman and Carol Meyers, ignoring equally prominent scholars, such as Rachel Adler, Léonie Jane Archer, Phyllis Ann Bird, Athalya Brenner, Leila Leah Bronner, Esther Fuchs, Tikvah Frymer-Kensky, Naomi Graetz, Tamar Kadari, Gail Labovitz, Ruth Lamdan, Susan Niditch, Judith Romney Wegner, Naomi Weisstein, and more.

In "From Medieval to Early Modern" Renée Levine Melammed and Rebecca Lynn Winer skim erratically over hundreds of years of Jewish life in Sepharad. Rachel Adelman's "New Directions in Reading Gender and Women in the Hebrew Bible" briefly refers to the work of earlier scholars, Paula Hyman, Carol Meyers and their contemporaries. Rachel Adelman's "New Directions..." reworks the same premise in similar way.

The table of contents reflects this publication's greatest drawback. It is a mixture, scattering references to Ashkenazi Jewish women across two thousand years. Interspersed with summaries of women's lives, the majority of articles range--at first geographically--across Europe, early modern Italy and central Europe to Polish-Lithuania. Then during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, "hopscotching" from Russia to Germany and Britain, then to France before leaping the Atlantic Ocean to the USA, for spirituality, lesbians and women's lives today (Sylvia Barack Fishman).

Melamed's and Winer's article examines briefly Sephardic materials from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 15<sup>th</sup> century; elite Jewish men seem more their focus than the women. The male fantasies of women that permeate the Jewish Zohar dominate Sharon Koren's 'Gender and Women in the Zohar.' Francesconi skitters across 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century Jewish Italy, cherry picking among elite Jewish men who wrote about their 'feelings,' and their shared ambivalence--and undisguised contempt for Jewish women. Debra Kaplan's and Elisheva Carlbach's approach sort of centered on Central European Ashkenazim, 1500-1800. Again. More about men than women. Moshe Rosman misses the chance to link several centuries of sporadic literacy in Yiddish among a few privileged but severely limited Polish Jewish women, and its upending by Sarah Schenirer. She, the single-handed motive force, created and established the girls-only Bais Yaacov yeshivas in Krakow, Poland in 1917.

ChaeRan Freeze has chosen intersectionality--multiple socio-cultural *de jure* and *de facto* mandates, that together conflict unnecessarily complicating one's life, to highlight Jewish women in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe, most particularly in Tsarist Russia and its satellites.

Benjamin M. Baader joins those 19<sup>th</sup> century German Jewish assimilating elites who received one another in their parallel-to-elite Christians' 'culture' salons, turning their backs on the overwhelming majority of Jews appalling poverty (239). Nadia Valman highlights the usual, 19<sup>th</sup> century England maintenance and enforcement of the millennia-old 'legal' assault of women's rights: banishment of women to the prisons of daily life's routines. A tiny minority of Ashkenazi women muscled against, bending the 'rules.' These Jewish women did 'women's work' in the slums, excelling in mitigating their Jewish immigrant counterparts' difficulties in adjusting to Victorian England.

Dina Danon writes of Ottoman Sephardic women arriving in France and promptly attending--or sending their daughters to--Alliance Israelite schools. They quickly adapted to Ashkenazi French

bourgeois culture and attending social functions. Danon and Frances Malino concur that the Alliance Israelite loosened some of the chains experienced by women--Jews and Christians-- in Europe, and to a lesser extent in North Africa, by affording opportunities for literacy--yet forcing them to pay for the privilege severely. Many of these women were raped--saw their children, husbands, and parents butchered--by Spanish and French soldiers, and their mercenary battalion, the French Foreign Legion. Melissa R.R. Klapper's focuses on 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century Ashkenazi women's immigrations to America consists mainly of generalization about movements. Lilach Rosenberg-Friedman's Yishuv describes some activities, names famous 'names' briefly, but no 'lives lived.' Her thesis that Women's statuses were raised is perceptively wrong. The women's limited autonomy in the Yishuv--doing farm work and giving the credit to the men--only underlined Ashkenazi women's inferior status. Arthur Ruppin, a major figure of the Yishuv movement, abused them economically, politically, and legally.

Only Tal Ilan's 'Gender and Women's History in Rabbinic Literature' castigates the Talmudists, the biblical scribes and their descendants--who unashamedly flaunted their deeply felt misogyny in their writings. Ilan suggests examining extra-Jewish documents of all sorts--Graeco-Roman, in particular--in order to elicit information that can delineates much more detailed and nuanced portraits of women, their lives, labors, creativities, wit and everyday brilliance. Unfortunately, Ilan ignores the glaring links--between the Babylonian Talmud--and the Talmudists' coopting of Athenian and Roman laws, and the sources of the 7+ tractates of *Seder Nashim*.

Contributions about Jewish women's lives as lived in the more than sixty non-Ashkenazi Jewish worlds are glaringly absent. As Dina Danon (300) states in her conclusion: "It is only in recent years that Sephardic Jewry in the modern age has begun to receive the scholarly treatment that it deserves."

I modify Danon's statement to '...has not yet begun.'