

Editor's Note

The eighth issue of JLS opens with a collective article on the sociology of religion. “Theology of Migration: Toward a Comparative Conceptualization” by Uriya Shavit, Galia Sabar, Andrew Esensten, and Teresa Harings Lavi proposes a theology of migration through an analysis of religious communities with migratory histories and distinguishes between “proactive-adaptive” and “retrospective-adaptive” approaches. The case studies that illustrate these two categories come from a wide spectrum of religions and civilizations: the Mormons and the Black Hebrews (African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem) are examples of a “proactive-adaptive” stance, while the concept of missionary migrations developed by *wasati* Muslim theologians fits into the category of the “retrospective-adaptive” stance. Interestingly, the Chabad Hasidic movement is also taken as an example of the “retrospective-adaptive” conception. Indeed, this branch of ultra-Orthodox Judaism underwent two migrations: the first brought the leader of this Hasidic dynasty from Belarus and Poland to Brooklyn, while the second consisted in sending missionaries to every possible Jewish community throughout the world. A fifth case study, which operates as a counterexample, is that of the clergy of African initiated churches that belong to the Pentecostal movement of Christianity. Those clergymen, who are mainly from Ghana and Nigeria, attend the spiritual needs of some 20,000 migrant workers who started to migrate to Israel in the late 1980s when the first Intifada considerably reduced the number of Palestinian workers. In this case, there is no apparent adaptive strategy, neither proactive nor retrospective. In conceptualizing a theology of migration, the authors also highlight the manners in which theological texts as well as the biographies of religious leaders are reinterpreted to help adapt communities to changing circumstances.

In his article “Islamic Legal Hybridity and Patriarchal Liberalism in the Shari‘a Courts in Israel,” **Moussa Abou Ramadan** deconstructs the various channels of interpretation within shari‘a law as they manifest within the hybrid legal system in which Israel’s Islamic courts function. Ramadan examines a specific type of case—that of appointing women as arbitrators in matters of matrimonial quarrels (*nizāʿ*) and disagreements (*shiqāq*). By examining the reluctance of the shari‘a courts in Israel to allow women arbitrators, a result of their reliance on the Maliki school, the author points out the inherent patriarchalism embedded in the functioning of Israeli shari‘a courts. The author displays extremely wide erudition in Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), which he uses to expose the alternatives to the Maliki jurisprudential tradition with regard to the appointment of women as arbitrators. The adoption of the Maliki opinion instead of the Hanafi one, which does allow for such appointments, is all the more paradoxical since traditionally Ottoman law, which was in use in Palestine until 1917 and even beyond (as far as personal law is concerned), was based on the Hanafi school of *fiqh*.

The legitimization of the preference for Maliki jurisprudence by Israeli law is interpreted as a way to collaborate with the shari‘a courts in order to strengthen patriarchal conceptions of Islamic jurisprudence. The article deals with specific cases that tried to appeal the decision to appoint only men as arbitrators in matters of *nizāʿ* and *shiqāq*. It also presents the attempts of Israeli Arab feminist associations to counter the decision to back the patriarchal stance of the shari‘a court judges.

The concept of hybridity and “in-betweenness” as developed by Homi Bhabha is also central to **Mira Tzoreff’s** article, in which she discusses Muslim activist women’s attempts at conciliating Islamism and feminism. “The Hybrid Women of the Arab Spring Revolutions: Islamization of Feminism, Feminization of Islam” deconstructs the binary opposition between allegedly backward religiosity and supposedly progressive liberalism. In this article the author shows the relation of continuity and change that connects Islamic feminism in today’s Egypt, Yemen, and Tunisia to important pioneers of “veiled feminism” before the Nasserian era or during it: Huda Sha‘arawi, Duria Shafiq, Malek Hifni Nasif, Zainab al-Ghazali, and Nabawiya Musa. The feminist issue as reinterpreted from an Islamic perspective is also analyzed through the case study of the role of the women affiliated with the Muslim Brotherhood during the mass demonstrations in Tahrir Square. One of the focuses that draw Tzoreff’s attention is the reaction of female demonstrators to the ignominious virginity tests organized by Egyptian security forces in order to humiliate the young women they arrested at Tahrir Square. By taking into account three important focuses of the Arab Spring, Tzoreff tries to understand the transition

from revolutionary euphoria to the difficult aftermath of the 2011 events and what these developments reveal about Islamic feminism and feminist Islamism.

Ronen Zeidel's article "The Iraqi Novel and the Christians of Iraq" examines the representation of the Christian other in Iraqi novels published in post-2003 Iraq. This study starts with an analysis of three points of view regarding the status of Christians in Iraq: the pluralism-oriented opinion of the Shi'i Sa'ad Salloum; the more monolithic conception of Iraqi identity expressed by the Sunni Daham 'Azzawi; and the manifestation of political faithfulness and religious distinctiveness that characterizes the discourse of Louis Raphael Sako, the patriarch of the Chaldean community. These debates regarding the status and the fate of the Christians in Iraq provide the framework for Zeidel's literary analysis. Zeidel analyzes the plots of several novels where the mention of the Christians bears a special meaning in the allegories describing Ba'thi or post-Ba'thi Iraq. In some novels the Christian is associated with the Communist Party, a fictional situation that reflects the stereotype of the non-Muslim citizen of Iraq as a vector of foreign (mostly Western) ideologies. The stereotype of the Christian in Iraqi fictional literature often bears a critical attitude toward the alleged cooperation of this religious-ethnic minority with the Ba'thi regime. In other novels the otherness of the Christian is depicted through the grotesque, such as prostitutes or the interlopers of Batawiyeen, an area predominantly populated by Christians in downtown Baghdad. Iraqi Christian writers also portray their own community and reflect on Christian Iraqi identity through the mirror of the novel. Since two-thirds of the Iraqi Christians have left their country, many novels pertain to the literature of exile and deal with the motif of uprootedness from a land where the Christian presence preceded the Arab-Muslim conquest of Mesopotamia in 638.

Zvi Ben-Dor Benite's essay "Of Vines, Fig Trees, and the Ashes of Bigotry" approaches exile from a different perspective. Ben-Dor Benite analyzes the correspondence between the Sephardi rabbi of Newport, Moses Seixas, and George Washington in 1790, where the status of the Sephardi community in Newport is compared with the sitting of "every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Micah 4:4). This biblical quotation echoes others in 2 Kings 18:31 and in Isaiah 36:16 where the Assyrian general besieging Jerusalem promises the population of the city that every man will be able to eat from his own vine and fig tree—on the condition that they accept leaving Judaea for Assyria. Whatever the bad connotations involved in the Assyrian propaganda might be, the mention of the vine and the fig tree in Moses Seixas's letter is intended to establish an acceptable agreement between the Jewish religious minority and the new American nation.

Conversely, the Assyrian false promise is compared with the agreement proposed to King Boabdil of Granada during the siege of the city by the Catholic monarchs in 1491. However, the promises of the Spanish invaders were not kept, and soon after Boabdil's surrender to King Ferdinand, Cardinal Ximénez ordered the burning of the Qur'an and other Muslim books in the newly conquered Granada. The author further examines the issue of book burning and approaches the manifestations of this practice in other historical contexts such as ancient China and Nazi Germany. This excursus on manifestations of religious or ideological intolerance allows the author to reappraise all the more the climate of religious freedom that characterizes the American democracy since its very inception.

The *document* section presents poetry by Mehmet Yashin, a Turkish Cypriot whose writing reflects a state of "in-betweenness" amidst identities and languages. Born in a multiethnic neighborhood in the outskirts of Nicosia, Yashin writes poetry that blurs the boundaries between the rivaling communities of his native country. In one of the excerpts selected in this issue of *document*, the poet briefly switches from Turkish to Karamanid Turkish, a dialect of Turkish written in Greek script. In another instance he inserts a Greek sentence within his Turkish text. Rather than a macaronic exercise, the plurilingualism displayed in Yashin's poetry is a way to reconnect with the pluralistic past of the Levant in general and Cyprus in particular.

Cyril Aslanov
January 2015