

Friday

Soldiers at Prayer



Fritz Daniel Oppenheim, Die Jahrzeit (Minjan) [Minyan], 1871. Jewish soldiers interrupt the battle activity to hold a religious service.

Friday

Oppenheim Sabbath  
afternoon





Moritz Daniel Oppenheim, Sabbat-Nachmittag [Sabbath Afternoon], (1866)



Friday

Oppenheim Bles  
Sabbath Eve





M. Oppenheim fecit  
1867



Friday

General Material

### 3. MY FATHER'S BOURGEOIS JUDAISM (1919)

FRANZ KAFKA<sup>1</sup>

I found little means of escape from you in Judaism. Here some escape would, in principle, have been thinkable, but more than that, it would have been thinkable that we might both have found each other in Judaism or even that we might have begun from there in harmony. But what sort of Judaism was it I got from you? In the course of the years I have taken roughly three different attitudes to it.

As a child I reproached myself, in accord with you, for not going to the synagogue enough, for not fasting, and so on. I thought that in this way I was doing a wrong not to myself but to you, and I was penetrated by a sense of guilt, which was, of course, always ready at hand.

Later, as a young man, I could not understand how, with the insignificant scrap of Judaism you yourself possessed, you could reproach me for not (if for no more than the sake of the piety, as you put it) making an effort to cling to a similar insignificant scrap. It was indeed really, so far as I could see, a mere scrap, a joke, not even a joke. On four days in the year you went to the synagogue, where you were, to say the least, closer to the indifferent than to those who took it seriously, [you] patiently went through the prayers by way of formality, [you] sometimes amazed me by being able to show me in the prayer book the passage that was being said at the moment, and for the rest, so long as I was in the synagogue (and this was the main thing) I was allowed to hang about wherever I liked. And so I yawned and dozed through the many hours (I don't think I was ever again so bored, except later at dancing lessons) and did my best to enjoy the few little bits of variety there were, as, for instance, when the Ark of the Covenant was opened, which always reminded me of the shooting galleries where a cupboard door would open in the same way whenever one got a bull's eye, only with the difference that there something

interesting always came out and here it was always just the same old dolls with no heads. Incidentally, it was also very frightening for me there, not only, as goes without saying, because of all the people one came into close contact with, but also because you once mentioned, by the way, that I too might be called up to read the Torah. That was something I went in dread of for years. But otherwise I was not fundamentally disturbed in my state of boredom, unless it was by the bar mizvah, but that meant no more than some ridiculous learning by heart, in other words, led to nothing but something like the ridiculous passing of an examination, and then, as far as you were concerned, by little, not very significant incidents, as when you were called up to read the Torah and came well out of the affair, which to my way of feeling was purely social, or when you stayed on in the synagogue for the prayers for the dead, and I was sent away, which for a long time, obviously because of being sent away and lacking, as I did, any deeper interest, aroused in me the more or less unconscious feeling that what was about to take place was something indecent.—That was how it was in the synagogue, and at home it was, if possible, even more poverty-stricken, being confined to the first evening of Passover which more and more developed into a farce, with fits of hysterical laughter, admittedly under the influence of the growing children. (Why did you have to give way to that influence? Because you brought it about in the first place.) And so there was the religious material that was handed on to me, to which may be added to most the outstretched hand pointing to "the sons of the millionaire Fuchs," who were in the synagogue with their father at high holidays. How one could do anything better with this material than get rid of it as fast as possible was something I could not understand; precisely getting rid of

Source: Franz Kafka, *Dearest Father: Stories and Other Writings*, trans. E. Kaiser and E. Wilkins (New York: Schocken: 1954), pp. 171-72. Copyright 1954 by Schocken Books Inc. Reprinted by permission of Pantheon Books.



OTE

Rahel Levin Varnhagen (1771–1833). Born into a prosperous Jewish merchant family in Berlin, she was raised in Orthodox Jewish surroundings. She was noted for her scintillating intelligence, and her home became

the informal center of literary, social and political luminaries of her day. In 1814, after repeated romantic disappointments, she married a man fourteen years her junior, a minor Prussian diplomat named Karl August Varnhagen von Ense, and she converted to his religion, Protestantism.

## 10. NO ROOM IN MY HEART FOR JEWISH SUFFERING (1916)

ROSA LUXEMBURG<sup>1</sup>

But look, girl, if you so rarely find the opportunity to take a book into your hand, at least make a point of reading *good* books, not such *kitsch* as the Spinoza novel you have just sent me. Why do you come to me with your particular Jewish sorrows? I feel equally close to the wretched victims of the rubber plantations in Putumayo, or to the Negroes in Africa with whose bodies the Europeans are playing a game of catch. Do you remember the words elicited by the General Staff's work on Trotha's campaign in the Kalahari desert<sup>2</sup>: "...The rattling in the throats of the dying, and the mad screams of those who were withering from thirst, faded away into the sublime stillness of the infinite." Oh, this "sublime stillness of the infinite" in which so many screams fade away unheard—it reverberates within me so strongly that I have no separate corner in my heart for the ghetto: I feel at home in the entire world wherever there are clouds and birds and human tears.

### NOTES

1. Rosa Luxemburg (1871–1919), Marxist theoretician and politician. Born into a Jewish family in Zamosc, Russian Poland, she helped found the Social Democratic Party of Poland and Lithuania. In 1898 she immigrated from Switzerland to Germany, where she became a leading figure in the revolutionary left wing of the German Socialist movement. With Franz Mehring and Karl Liebknecht she founded the Spartakusbund (the Spartacus Party), which at the end of 1918 was transformed into the Communist Party of Germany. She and Liebknecht were arrested in Berlin on January 15, 1919, for their involvement in the Spartacist uprising. While they were being transported to prison, both were murdered by army officers. A consistent internationalist, she found national particularism inimical to socialism—an attitude that is reflected in the letter presented here, in which she rebukes her friend for her Jewish national sentiments.
2. A revolt of Herero and Nama peoples of the German colony of Southwest Africa was brutally suppressed by Lt. Gen. Lothar von Trotha in 1904–1907. Trotha's campaign is said to be the first genocide of the twentieth century.

Source: Rosa Luxemburg to Mathilda Wurm, February 16, 1916, in Rosa Luxemburg, *Briefe an Freunde*, ed. B. Kautsky (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt GmbH, 1950), pp. 48–49. Cited by permission of Europäische Verlagsanstalt GmbH. Trans. By J. Hessing.

## 21. ADDRESS TO THE SOCIETY OF BNAI BRITH (MAY 6, 1926)

SIGMUND FREUD<sup>1</sup>

**M**ost honourable Grand President, honourable Presidents, dear Brethren,—

I thank you for the honors you have paid me today. You know why it is that you cannot hear the sound of my own voice. You have heard one of my friends and pupils speak of my scientific work; but a judgment on such things is hard to form, and for a long while yet it may not be reached with any certainty. Allow me to add something to what has been said by one who is both my friend and the physician who cares for me.<sup>2</sup> I should like to tell you shortly how I became a B.B. and what I have looked for from you.

It happened that in the years from 1895 onwards I was subjected to two powerful impressions which combined to produce the same effect on me. On the one hand, I had gained my first insight into the depths of the like of the human instincts; I had seen some things that were sobering and even, at first, frightening. On the other hand, the announcement of my unpleasing discoveries had as its result the severance of the greater part of my human contacts; I felt as though I were despised and universally shunned. In my loneliness I was seized with a longing to find a circle of select men of high character who would receive me in a friendly spirit in spite of my temerity. Your society was pointed out to me as the place where such men were to be found.

That you were Jews could only be agreeable to me; for I was myself a Jew, and it had always seemed to me not only unworthy but positively senseless to deny the fact. What bound me to Jewry was (I am ashamed to admit) neither faith nor national pride, for I have always been an unbeliever and was brought up without any religion though not without a respect for

what are called the "ethical" standards of human civilization.<sup>3</sup> Whenever I felt an inclination to national enthusiasm I strove to suppress it as being harmful and wrong, alarmed by the warning examples of the peoples among whom we Jews live. But plenty of other things remained to make the attraction of Jewry and Jews irresistible—many obscure emotional forces, which were the more powerful the less they could be expressed in words, as well as a clear consciousness of inner identity, the safe intimacy of a common mental construction. And beyond this there was a perception that it was to my Jewish nature alone that I owed two characteristics that had become indispensable to me in the difficult course of my life. Because I was a Jew I found myself free from many prejudices which restricted others in the use of their intellect; and as a Jew I was prepared to join the Opposition and to do without agreement with the "compact majority."<sup>4</sup>

So it was that I became one of you, took my share in your humanitarian and national interests, gained friends among you and persuaded my own few remaining friends to join our society. There was no question whatever of my convincing you of my new theories; but at a time when no one in Europe listened to me and I still had no disciples even in Vienna, you gave me your kindly attention. You were my first audience.<sup>5</sup>

For some two thirds of the long period that has elapsed since my entry I persisted with you conscientiously, and found refreshment and stimulation in my relations with you. You have been kind enough today not to hold it up against me that during the last third of the time I have kept away from you. I was overwhelmed with work, and demands connected

Source: Sigmund Freud, "Address to the Society of Bnai Brith," trans. James Strachey, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. James Strachey in collaboration with Anna Freud and assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1959), vol. 20, pp. 273-74.



longings, he left his native Prague for the Hasidic community of Belz. In Belz, the center of Galician Hasidim, he discovered his spiritual roots and calling and adopted the Hasidic mode of Jewish piety. Langer eventually returned to Prague, but he retained his loyalty to Hasidism. He wrote extensively in Czech and German on Hasidism and Kabbalah. His Freudian interpretations of Jewish mystical literature and piety in particular generated great excitement among students of religion. A friend of Kafka, whom he taught Hebrew, Langer displayed his literary interests in two volumes

of Hebrew poetry and in his rendition of Hasidic tales into Czech, *Nine Gates to the Chassidic Mysteries* (1937), from whose introduction this excerpt is taken. Upon the Nazi invasion of Czechoslovakia, Langer fled to Palestine.

2. Hasidim, members of a religious and mystical revival movement that originated in southern Poland and Ukraine in the eighteenth century and spread to other parts of Eastern Europe (Poland, Russia, Rumania, Hungary). Hasidism is now found mainly in the State of Israel and the United States.

## 25. THE JEWISH WOMAN (c. 1930)

BERTHA PAPPENHEIM<sup>1</sup>

The wife of the Jew was to carry bricks for family life as a beast of burden, her spirit was to remain dull. But how she was praised and exalted—*Esches Chajil*<sup>2</sup> (a love song with *gefuelle* fish)—how were all male commentaries turned against her, whose spirit was certainly also open and willing! This official attitude brought on a serious revenge. What people do not know—or know only as unattractive or a burden—without ethical value, is not highly esteemed, and I see the logical and tragic consequence in that women and mothers of the recent past were not able to raise their children with respect for the spirit of tradition. The thread had been torn and the house was emptied which today is completely blamed on emancipation.... Precisely the lack of interest in what women and girls were learning in the period of early marriage there was scarcely girlhood in our present sense), indifference to the interest in what the boys and men were supposed to learn and to know, brought a slow and in the beginning, not noticeable movement into Jewish womanhood. The most evident reaction to this centuries-old attitude

was seen without question and symptomatically in the attendance of the Baron Hirsch<sup>3</sup> schools in Galicia, with its predominantly strictly Orthodox people. In the beginning, these schools were violently attacked by the *Cheder*; boys were not to attend them; there were also serious mistakes in the management. What Jewish girls were learning was not taken seriously, they frequently attended the Baron Hirsch schools or the Polish schools with great eagerness and growing resistance against their own families and circle which seemed less educated in their religious and outward forms as the "Fraeulein" as they were called with respect even by their own parents. I, myself, could watch, in Austria, Hungary, Rumania, Bohemia, Moravia, Poland, Galicia, Russia, in three generations—as Yiddish, the women's German, developed, how the middle generation spoke its respective country's language, less than German, scarcely fluent, and could not write it. (It is characteristic that in well-to-do families the Jewish cook also spoke German; the other servants, the language of the country.) A definitely German interest in

<sup>1</sup>Source: Dora Edinger, *Bertha Pappenheim: Freud's Anna O.* (Highland Park, Ill.: Congregation Solel, 1968), pp. 78–80. Reprinted by permission of Congregation Solel. The original transliteration of Hebrew and Yiddish has been retained.

education within Jewish womanhood developed, an interest which in bilingual and, in educated families, often trilingual women (if they spoke French) met new cultural elements which neglected the Jewish ones in form and essence. Beginning with the prominent families of the Pressburg ghetto and its influence through the waiting rooms of the rabbi of Sadarora and other citadels of "classic" Orthodoxy until the circle of the families Schmelkes, Ringelheim, Ginsburg, Lilien, Buber, Nussbaum, Mandelstamm, Motzkin, I could observe with great reverence the influence of German language and German spirituality, but at the same time among the women less interest in Jewish consciousness, for instance, in Hungary, Poland and Bohemia (today the Czech Republic). Women naturally attended synagogue on the High Holy Days, older ones also on Saturdays, but they could not follow the service. Here begins a break which in later days affected Liberal and Reformed liturgy. It would have been more sensible if women—and, of course, not only women—had been educated to understand the service than later to construct a service which was unhistoric and without tradition adjusted to the lagging understanding of the congregation. Yet it was a fact that most of the women did not understand the mixed language of the sermons with Hebrew quotations, nor did they understand the Torah reading, nor the words of the prayers, though they would follow the service with *kewonoh* (devotion). The old women with their head-bands and *scheitels*,<sup>4</sup> I saw cry bitterly over their big prayer books in Rashi script;<sup>5</sup> the next generation gossiped over prayerbooks printed in square Hebrew type, mostly with a German translation.

According to my own observations, which I can only quote briefly in this context, I must say that the Jewish women of all countries and all the social strata to whom I could talk occasionally understood my suggestions and recommendations on social problems. To men, they were not of interest, or they found them a nuisance. Woman, with tradition in their blood and brains, showed a ready understanding to relate the command to love your neighbor to modern times. I found in the unknown Jewish women of Diaspora Judaism the ability to perform great tasks. This conviction I took back to Germany from travels to my daily work which I did not consider in narrow context.

To show my experience of the development of German Jewish women, it was necessary to sketch

this background....[The spiritual life of Jewish women began to change with] the understanding of the necessity to adjust the *Mizwah* (religious commandment)—to help your neighbor in changing times—from overblown philanthropy and blind, senseless spending of money to sensible and conscientious action. The congregation of Frankfurt-on-the-Main fifty years ago offered a rich and challenging place for such an effort.

If was therefore only a relatively small group of unknown women (Orthodox and Liberal) who, in Frankfurt, understood the work of welfare by women in different ways and in modest, tireless, sacred little work prepared the soil of the *Kehillos Kodaushim* (holy communities), to serve the old culture and to start a new one. Gratefully, one must remember the generation of unknown women who followed these ideas, while men resisted them stubbornly. It is an interesting and strange fact that male resistance against organization of social work resulted in hypertrophy of organization, an "idée fixe" of a Federation which kills all personal social action. Social work, which grew in the religious soil in Frankfurt, would not have had any importance outside the city if it had not found help and encouragement from the German feminist movement. Out of a new congruence of German cultural elements and Jewish civilization grew a spiritual substance of greatest importance, both for the German feminist movement and for Jewish life.... These women who did not know how Jewish they were through their inherited spirituality became strong pillars of the feminist movement, which movement brought to the timid uncertain steps of Jewish women a goal and determination. This confluence of Jewish civilization could not be eliminated from the German, nor from Jewish life. All women, whatever their position and philosophy may be today, are, even if they do not know it themselves, the disciples of the fighters for equal rights for women in everything....

#### NOTES

1. Bertha Pappenheim (1859–1936) was a social worker and a leader of the Jewish feminist movement in Germany. Born in Vienna to a traditional family, she underwent analysis with a colleague of Sigmund Freud, who acclaimed her case ("Anna O") as a decisive breakthrough in psychoanalysis. She subsequently moved to Frankfurt am Main where she directed an