A READING OF JUDAISM THROUGH POST-STRUCTURALIST LENSES

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Abstract

There are various, sometimes contradictory, perceptions about definitions or boundaries of Jewishness. For some, Judaism is a nationality or a cultural identity while for others it represents a religious tradition. There is also a common assumption that Judaism was born as a religion, then, gradually grew into a broad formation including culture and nationality. This article is an inquiry into the ways in which we can understand constructions of Jewish traditions and multiple versions of Judaism. I argue that religious texts, practices, law, and thought of Judaism have been produced through and in relation to various structures of power, whether these structures are institutional, cultural, material or discursive. In order to illuminate the inter-articulation of Judaism and forms of power in particular contexts, I employ a Foucauldian conceptualization of power. This post-structural conceptualization of power enables us to illustrate the ways in which practices, thoughts, and perception within religious traditions are constituted in relation to dominant structures within a particular time and place. Based on this post-structuralist thinking, I examine two concepts in two different periods of Jewish history, gender in Roman Period Judaism and Zionism in Europe. Through examinations of these concepts in different time and places, I articulate the ways in which Judaism or Jewishness have been formed in relation to hybrid social constructions during its encounter with various civilizations, cultures, and authorities. Therefore, I argue that a study of Judaism must be attentive to forms of constitutive and regulative forces in a particular era.

Keywords: History of Religions, Judaism, post-structuralism

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POST-YAPISALCI LENSLER İLE BİR YAHUDİLİK OKUMASI

Yahudiliğin tanımları ve sınırları hakkında bazen birbirinin zıddı da sayılabilecek çeşitli eğilimler mevcuttur. Yahudilik bir din midir yoksa bir milliyet midir? Yahudi olmak bir etnik kökene mi bağlıdır yoksa kültürel bir

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kimlik midir? Örneğin bazı Yahudiler kendilerini seküler Yahudi olarak tanımlarken diğerleri seküler ve milliyetçi bir Yahudi kimliğine karşı çıkar. Dünya üzerinde birçok Yahudi kendisini geleneksel Yahudi teolojisinden bağımsız bir kültürel değerler mekanizması üzerinden tanımlar. Diğer taraftan, İsrailli tarihçi Shlomo Sand gibi bir diğer grup Yahudiliği bir din olarak görür ve Yahudi kimliğinin modern bit icat olduğuna inanır. Yahudiliğin bir din olarak doğup zaman içinde kültür ve medeniyeti de içine alacak geniş bir yapıya dönüştüğüne dair genel bir kabul de vardır. Bu çalışmada Yahudi olmanın veya Yahudiliğin ne anlama geldiğine dair sorular ele alınmakta ve Yahudilikteki her bir pratiğin, düşüncenin ya da yapının anlaşılabilmesi için o düşünce, pratik ya da yapının üretildiği dönemdeki güç ilişkilerinin incelenmesi gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır.
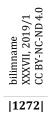
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Introduction

Defining what Judaism is or what it means to be Jewish is a difficult inquiry for both outsiders and insiders. Is it a religion or a nationality? Does Jewishness represent a race or an identity? A number of Jews define themselves as secular Jews, while others oppose the secular and nationalistic Judaism. Many Jews around the world identify their Jewishness through cultural values and mechanisms separate from traditional Jewish theology. On the other hand, those such as Israeli historian Shlomo Sand believe that Judaism is a religion and Jewish identity is a modern invention.[1] There is also a common assumption that Judaism was born as a religion, then, gradually grew into a broad formation including culture and nationality.[2] As we see differentiations in terms of individual engagement with Jewish traditions, there are also congregational disagreements about how Judaism should be understood, such as Reform Judaism, Traditional, Orthodox and Reconstructionist Judaism.

Given the discussions about Judaism, the aim of this article neither is to present a singular definition of Judaism for its all versions nor I see such a task possible, even plausible. Instead, I aim to illuminate some of the ways in which various Jewish traditions, beliefs, and values have been produced in relation to the power structures. Although it is obvious that Jewish traditions

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[1] Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, trans. Yael Lotan, (New York: Verso, 2010).
[2] Since the concept of religion is a complex phenomenon, one needs to clarify what religion means. In this project, I refer to accumulative traditions regarding a transcendent belief system including texts, theological and social institutions. See Mehmet Şükrü Özkan, "Din Kavramına Eleştirel Yaklaşım: Wilfred Cantwell Smith Örneği", *Journal of Divinity Faculty of Hitit University* 15/30 (2016), 437.

have been formed in historical contexts, therefore, they are not isolated from and free of historical and cultural influences, how interactions of Judaism with surrounding environments occurred need further elaboration. In other words, except a literalist perspective that wants to understand Judaism exclusively through the reading of the traditional Jewish texts, anyone might see the historicity of Jewish traditions. However, the ways in which these interactions occurred and produced multiple and different versions of Judaism or Jewish traditions needs more attention that will illuminate how, in what ways, through which tools or by which elements Jewish traditions have been formed.

As a Foucauldian post-structural inquiry, I suggest an analytical lens that enables us to discuss the relationship between power (including its all forms) and production of Jewish traditions. I argue that if we want to understand a particular practice, value and belief in Jewish traditions, we need a careful examination of various forms of power within the period in which this particular value, practice, and belief were produced, practiced and integrated into Jewish traditions. Moreover, the shifting and complex relationships between Judaism and various forms of power as well as the relationships among forms of power are crucial for the understanding the dynamic nature of Jewish religion. Without paying adequate attention to this relational production of Judaism(s) with forms of power, whether the power has functioned in the form of culture, language, ideology, materiality or politics, we assume an understanding of Judaism which is isolated from the historical context even though we theoretically refuse this assumption. Therefore, I insist on the need for further elaboration of relationships between Jewish traditions and dominant structures that entered into religious texts, practices, law, and thought of Judaism(s). Such an examination helps us to unpack the phenomena of historical context and provides a more enhanced discussion of the historicity of religious traditions in general and Jewish tradition in particular.

For an examination of Judaism in relation to multiple and complex structures, I employ post structural conceptualizations of power, based on the Foucauldian philosophy. As discussed in the following section, this post structural understanding of power enables us to illustrate relationships between power and social formations such as religious traditions.[3]

In order to articulate the relations between dominant structures and the production of Jewish traditions, ideologies, and practices, I look into two

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[3] See Deacon, Roger. "An Analytics of Power Relations: Foucault on the History of Discipline." *History of the Human Sciences* 15/1 (February 2002): 89–117; Sergiu Balan, "M. Foucault's View on Power Relations", *Cogito* 2/2 (2010), 55-61.

periods and locations in Jewish history. First, I point out the relational construction of philosophical and cultural tropes in Jewish and Roman societies. Moreover, based on Peskowitz's book, [4] I seek to find traces of gender structures within the written texts and artifacts in the Roman period. Then, I read the Rabbinic tradition of Judaism through the prism of gender roles in Roman society in order to elaborate the ways in which gender in Jewish tradition was produced in relation to philosophical tropes, material constructions, cultural practices and economic activities in Roman society.

The second period in Jewish history that I want to look into is the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Europe. During the enlightenment and modernization of Europe, its Jewish subjects were "reformed" according to the ideological ideals of modernity and enlightenment. The modernist ideology of Europe urged Jews knowingly and unknowingly to get adapted to this environment. In this section, I particularly pay attention to the ideology of Zionism which was constructed in relation to the nationalist and modernist ideologies of Europe. While the Jewish identity had been grounded on collective memories of Jews, during the enlightenment, the Zionist ideology re-constructed the Jewish identity based on territory. [5] In contrast to a European Jewish identity which is understood in religious terms, Zionism produced a secular Jewish identity which was imagined as essential and unchanging under the influence of the modernity and nationalism in Europe. [6]

Theoretical Background

For Foucault, technologies of power, knowledge, identity, and discourses have intertwined within historical conditions since antiquity. [7] According to Foucault, power pervades society and constitutes knowledge, institutions, discourses, and material structures. [8] During the constitutions of identities, productions of knowledge or formations of categories such as religious traditions, some structures of power govern others and produce new forms of power. [9] Based on poststructuralist analyses inspired by Michel Foucault, the power operates as a productive factor for possibilities of

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[4] Miriam B. Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, History*, (Berkeley, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 11-17.

[5] Jonathan Boyarin, "Palestine and Jewish History," *Storm from Paradise, The Politics of Jewish Memory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 126.

[6] Laurence Silberstein, "Toward a Postzionist Discourse", *Judaism since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 95.

[7] Roger, "An Analytics of Power Relations: Foucault on the History of Discipline", 89–117.

[8] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: The Will to Knowledge*, (London: Penguin, 1998), 63.

[9] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–1977*, (London: Harvester Press, 1980), 98.

relations between the elements of society.[10] In this conceptualization, power does not necessarily contain negativity.[11] It can be understood as making possible of certain actions and lines of thought which are brought about by relations of power.[12] As Bove puts it, "as power disperses itself, it opens up specific fields of possibility; it constitutes entire domains of action, knowledge, and social being by shaping the institutions and disciplines."[13] This poststructuralist mode of analysis aims to describe this "linkage between power, knowledge, institutions, intellectuals, language, the control of populations, and the modern state as these intersect in the functions of systems of thought." [14] In terms of studies on religious traditions, this mode of thinking turns us to the analysis of power in its all forms for the production of religions.

The acknowledgment of the role that structures of power play for the production of religious traditions means the acknowledgment of the relativity of religious traditions to historical events, institutions, disciplinary structures and logical frameworks by which they were constituted. In this sense, being a Christian, a Jew or a Muslim is neither solely based on certain religious texts nor a deep religious devotion. Rather, the everyday lives of people contribute to the constitutions of religious practices, believes or ideologies within the context in which everyday life is experienced. [15]

These constitutive factors can be discursive structures or leading figures such as intellectuals that produce knowledge about religious experiences and practices as well as material and social conditions. The language describing categories, practices, and experiences of religion, for instance, is a tool of the discursive structures of power. A term produced by a discursive regime engages us in specific contexts whether we are aware or unaware of it.[16] A term that describes a category of religion or value and meaning within a religious tradition are produced in relation to specific historical and spatial elements which exercise their power during the production of meanings, values or categories. Therefore, categories or meanings expressed by language do not transcend history and culture

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[10] Balan, "M. Foucault's View on Power Relations", 55-61.

[11] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison*, (London: Penguin, 1991), 194.

[12] Paul Bové, "Discourse", *Critical Terms for Literary Study*, ed. by Frank Lentricchia, and Thomas McLaughlin, 2nd ed., (The University of Chicago Press, 1995), (sec 2, Para 22).

[13] Bové, "Discourse", (sec 2, para 22).

[14] Bové, "Discourse", (sec 2, para 13).

[15] Steinunn Kristjandottir, "Becoming Christian: A Matter of Everyday Resistance and Negotiation", *Norwegian Archaeological Review* 48/1 (2015), 15.

[16] Thomas McLaughlin, "Introduction", *Critical Terms*, eds. Frank Lentricchia and Thomas McLaughlin, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 4.

because they are outcomes of an active process within the society. This means that even a literary criticism of Jewish texts must be sensitive to the functions of language and its relationship to power, institutions, dominant discourses and cultures.

Leading figures of a religious tradition, who are contributing to the production of knowledge and practices within that tradition, are also positioned in the discursive regimes of a particular era in which they live. Put it differently, leaders and intellectuals can also integrate forms of a dominant power into the established order of values in a religious tradition, in a form of both continuations of the tradition or a newly emerging order.[17] Scientific, legal or religious knowledge, which is produced by authoritative figures such as scientists and intellectuals, exercise power and disqualifies alternative realities by claiming superiority in fields of knowledge. According to Foucault's concept of power, the effects of power get attached to the categorization of knowledge as true/false or valid/invalid. Certain discourses can exercise power in society because they supposedly represent the truth which is valued by leading figures of the society while others are seen as false or invalid. For example, claiming scientificity is an exercise of power since other sources of knowledge are made less credible or less true.[18] The law sets itself even above these scientific discourses and expands its sphere over them by claiming that it has true methods to establish the truth of events. Because of the legal methods which are taught in law schools, non-legal knowledge becomes suspect, irrelevant or secondary. Namely, everyday experiences lose their meanings, unless they are translated into legal forms of knowledge in order to be valid for the procession through the legal system. Smart gives the issue of sexual morality in rape cases as an example of the separation of legal and non-legal true. In these cases, judges retain their authority from legal methods and apply it to non-legal issues. She calls this "legal imperialism" that alleged legitimacy of law is extended to every issue in social life.[19]

In a similar vein, religious knowledge justifies certain actions as "true," "valid," or "virtuous" while making others "false," "invalid" or "transgression". Some authoritative texts and historical figures in religious traditions contribute to this type of classification of religious knowledge and produce new discursive regimes including new terms and concepts. Therefore, it is crucial to examine how, by whom or in which contexts knowledge, practices, and categories are constituted, and the ways in which

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[17] Dan O'Hara, "Intellectuals in Power: A Genealogy of Critical Humanism" (Book Review), *Journal of Aesthetics & Art Criticism* 45/4 (1987), 416-418.
[18] Carol Smart, *Feminism and the Power of Law*, (London: Routledge, 1989), 9.
[19] Smart, *Feminism and the Power of Law*, 10-12.

they work as a form of the dominant power. [20] If we learn how meaning is produced and how language works, we can reach the productive activity that leads to the understanding of alternative histories and to the production of frameworks for present activities. For this purpose, we need to enter into the process of productions of these traditions.

In this article, I apply this understanding of power relations onto Jewish traditions and thought. These poststructuralist lines of inquiry oppose the idea that "Judaism comes entirely from Jews, that as a religious and cultural practice Judaism is not ever formed in reaction to others."[21] By attending to Foucault's understanding of power, this article calls into question the understanding of Judaism based on Jewish literature and suggest reading Jewish ideologies, practices and believes within the historical and social contexts. More specifically, Jewish traditions have been constituted by certain material, institutional and intellectual structures of power at specific historical moments.

A. Gender in Judaism in Relation to Culture of the Roman Empire

As Clifford puts it, the authenticity is constructed as "hybrid, creative activity in a local present-becoming-future."[22] In terms of gender, tropes, metaphors, rhetoric, and categories are interrelatedly constructed rather than being essential patterns. These constructions or inner-articulations are intertwined by relations of power and knowledge production. In terms of Jewish tradition, as Peskowitz puts it, "Rabbinic writings were produced in an environment shaped by the direct Roman rule, by people who had relations both with the bureaucracy of Rome and with the idea of Rome."[23] The notion of "family" is an example of this interaction. While the Roman Empire asserted that their organization of family made them unique in the world, early rabbis simultaneously used family relations as a definition of Jewishness in the cultural environment shaped by the Empire. Thus, considering the Roman social, political and economic structure and their relations with Jews are necessary to understand Judaism during the Roman period.[24]

For example, to articulate the production of gender through common cultural tropes, a female figure in Greek and Roman literature, Penelope, was constructed and reconstructed multiple times by various authors whose motivations and contexts are different from each other. By relating to a figure

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[20] Smart, *Feminism and the Power of Law*, 6.
[21] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 15.
[22] James Clifford, "The Others: Beyond the "salvage" paradigm", *Third Text* 3/6 (1989), 126.
[23] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 14.
[24] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 17.

commonly known within Greco-Roman literature, people wanted to make their own construction of gender familiar, and so, acceptable. The stories of Penelope have shifted, sometimes quietly, sometimes dramatically after her emergence in Homer's *Odyssey*. Penelope in the *Odyssey*, who sits at her loom and weaves, and by night secretly unweaves in order to resist to others' plans for her remarriage, represents Penelope's domesticity, fidelity, and loyalty to her missing husband, Odysseus.[25] Sextus Propertius depicts Penelope as a model of morality, which is a guardian of essential and unchanging human character such as loyalty and faithfulness including his own past as well. Like Penelope, who hopes her husband's return, Propertius awaits the return of the woman who had rejected him; he depicts his own past in the name of Penelope.[26] On the other hand, Penelope, in a letter which Ovid wrote to Odysseus in her name, represents femininity through adorning herself with the most beautiful of decorum and becomes an ideal feminine model for the reader. However, in another letter of Ovid to Ganymedes, Penelope displays an example of the distasteful qualities of teasing and flirtation. Or Juvenal portrays Penelope to police cultural distinctions of male and female gender and as a label of accusation that identifies men who have strayed into femininity. Juvenal's Laronia accuses men, who do not fit sexual or social form, which men are supposed to be, by comparing them to Penelope to show their femininity.[27] To sum up, a single ancient figure, Penelope, was used to depict contradictory gender constructions. She was virtuous but also flirtatious. She displayed proper womanhood as a role for women, and also became a voice for male writers. She was used explicitly to distinguish the role of man and woman, and also she blurred this border as Propertius, who devoted himself to his beloved, did. In other words, the same tropes and figures were used to construct and re-construct gender multiple times by different people and motivations during the Roman period.

The genealogies of Jewish women as well have been produced through the intertwining of social contexts and literature. Within the context of the Roman Empire, genealogies of Jewish women were produced in relation to common culture and discourse. Therefore, reading for gender in Judaism means reading for inter-articulation and construction of gender in Judaism, which was produced by multiple elements. For instance, Shapiro points out how the genealogy of "matter-form" and "female-male" was employed for the construction of gender through the inter-articulation of rhetoric and logic in

[25] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 2.
[26] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 4.
[27] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 6.

Greek and Jewish philosophy. [28] She wants to demonstrate rhetoric's relation to logic through the genealogy of key tropes for gender in Greek and Jewish philosophy through the reading of Maimonides, who was a medieval Sephardic Jewish philosopher and one of the most influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages. [29]

The rhetoric of "matter" and "form" relation was shared by Maimonides and Aristotle. This genealogy between matter-form relation and female-male relation is set up by Aristotle by saying that "the truth is that desires the form is matter, as female desires male… female not per se but per accidents."[30] "Matter" is the source of corruption, while form is permanent, so form and matter are necessarily tied. The relation of matter and form is a marriage in which form rules matter and so husband rules wife.[31] Similarly, Maimonides wants to make matter, which is the cause of corruption, a metaphor for "married harlot" in the Biblical framework. Through these philosophical troops, Maimonides wants to make it clear that a husband should control the wife as form controls matter. As form is superior to matter by its nature, the male is superior to the female by his nature, therefore, the male needs to rule and the female needs to be ruled.[32]

To sum up, in terms of feminine figuration, the rhetoric of matter and form and the figure of Pandora were employed in Greek philosophy to depict feminine as deceptive in dealing with men and to govern the rhetoric in masculine terms. In this rhetoric, maleness is marked as superior to femaleness, and so, men should govern women.[33] This practice of engendering appears also in Jewish philosophy in Maimonides. The rhetoric of matter and form in Greek philosophy was also used by Maimonides and "Married harlot" of Maimonides serves in Jewish thought in the way Pandora was employed in Greek philosophy.[34] This philosophical logic of Maimonides inspired by Greek philosophy and literature has social and cultural consequences for Jewish women. As Shapiro argues, this philosophical trope of marriage in Maimonides, at best, rationalizes and justifies the violence against women in Mishnah Torah, instead of resistance this violence.[35]

The construction of gender in Jewish tradition did not only occurred

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[28] Susan Shapiro, "A Matter of Discipline: Reading for Gender in Jewish Philosophy", *Judaism since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 158-159.
[29] Susan Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 158-159.
[30] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 162.
[31] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 161.
[32] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 163.
[33] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 161.
[34] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 161.
[35] Shapiro, "A matter of Discipline", 165.

through the logic and troops of philosophy and literature. But rather, gender, both in Roman Empire and in its Jewish population, was produced "among landscapes, monuments, and household decorations as well as through writings, speaking, reading, and hearing the languages of travelogue, poetry, and prose."[36] In order to read the ways in which gender was constituted or understood, and its multiple layers, Peskowitz suggests juxtaposing historical, textual, discursive and material evidence. The stories of spinners and weavers in the Roman period Palestine reveal how Roman culture infused into the Jewish texts through the ordinary, banal and mundane everyday practices during the Roman Empire. This ordinariness produced powerful gender images, which appear in texts produced by early Rabbis. Early rabbinic writings concentrated in part on what is ordinary in Roman Palestine and understood the power of embedding religious ideology in the mundane and repetitive events of daily life.[37] Meaning within these texts seems "natural in their reliability, their power makes sense of experience".[38] Because the production of the literature occurs and repeats within cultural situations, its reception is situated in a familiar form. When we read these texts, we encounter values in a familiar, ordinary and mundane form.[39]

In other words, in Rabbinic literature, gender was made "common, nearly invisible, until they seem to be natural"[40] through relating them to work scenes in Roman workplaces. These ancient people's modes of literacy, representation, and meanings were different from our own. Without the division of society into categories such as social role, art, labor, written language or daily performance, ancient people formed and re-formed gender everywhere. The circulation and formation of gender occurred within modes of production in the Roman Empire. Work produced culture, notions, belief, and conversations as well as material goods. Within the ordinariness of workplaces, the notion of gender was made ordinary and familiar.[41] The spinning and weaving stories convey traces of gendering within daily life. Through these stories, we can have multiple readings of gendering in Judaism and see how early rabbis crafted gender in relation to dominant culture and norms in the Roman empire.[42]

Examining gender and work as intersected notions in the Roman period rabbinic texts enable us to find the roots of gender in Jewish texts. Workplaces in Roman society were a place of production of culture, stories,

[36] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 10.
[37] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies,* 22-23.
[38] McLaughlin, "Introduction", 6.
[39] McLaughlin, "Introduction", 6-7.
[40] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 21.
[41] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 22.
[42] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 11-12.

and beliefs, and Jews interacted with this culture in forming their own traditions. The spinning and weaving were crucial in Roman life and one of the places where Jews in Roman Palestine intersected with Roman cultural and material conditions. The traces of these interactions can be seen in the Rabbinic texts. For instance, in these texts, a married woman must always perform wool work, even if she had servants to do this work. Or a woman spinning in a public place might be divorced by her husband without a *ketubbah*.[43] In other words, proper or improper actions of gender and gender relations in Jewish texts were depicted by rabbis as related to the workplaces which were an important part of the Roman culture.

As Homer's character Penelope, who was a kind of cultural *lingua franca* in the Roman literature to create and convey notions of gender, spinning and weaving stories as well were key sides of the forming of gender in Roman period Judaism. [44] However, the images of work were metaphoric or symbolic in Rabbinic texts, although notions of gender were made realistic, familiar and ordinary through workplaces. In other words, rabbis created discourses of gender and sexuality through images of work, but these discourses were highly imaginative.[45] For instance, according to some passages from Qiddushin, Jewish men should not teach a craft practiced among women to his son and they give a list of these improper trades.[46] Also, in the explanation of these passages, the Rabbis prohibited male workers from engaging in trades that will bring them into the contact with the female and that women might purchase the product which these men have produced. One, who reads these passages, could imagine a Roman Palestine where was divided so that men were producers and women consumers. In these texts, men were depicted as active workers and producers, while women were consumers or unpaid workers. However, women worked in a broad range of paid labors in Roman Palestine and they did the same work with men.[47] To put it differently, the early rabbis depicted a community image through the tropes of spinning and weaving scenes that does not perhaps reflect the reality. Through these imaginative descriptions, the rabbis wanted to distinguish works men do or women do in order to demonstrate rigid differences of gender and to prevent blurring of borders between genders.[48]

On the one hand, these depictions were a re-inscription of Roman

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[43] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 23.
[44] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 10.
[45] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 62.
[46] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 60-61.
[47] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 64-65.
[48] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 64-65.

gender structures and workplaces as a Jewish construction of gender in Rabbinic texts through the power of ordinary and mundane in life. On the other hand, they did not reflect the reality in Judaism in Roman Palestine, rather, the imaginative construction of gender in Judaism by the early rabbis. However, these gender images produced by the early Rabbis became normative through the classical texts of Judaism since their constructions were made authoritative through relations of power and knowledge production. In order to see what existed beyond the representation of these canonical texts, produced by early rabbis who held the authority to produce religious knowledge, we need to examine social and historical resources from which they were produced such as spinning and weaving stories in Roman Palestine. Otherwise, a reference to the canonical texts of Jewish traditions without paying attention to constructive elements of these texts erases the hybridity and complexity in constructions of gender.[49]

Put it differently, during the Roman period, different pieces of knowledge and experiences about gender circulated within Jewish communities in relation to culture and work in the Roman empire.[50] Then, certain knowledge was privileged during this circulation between regions, groups, classes, cities, and towns. The Jewish texts, which have reached to the present day, convey this privileged knowledge that had been made influential through power relations. For instance, Talmudic tradition was not known by many Jews and its influence was not felt until, at least, the fourth century because of different cultural practices and material conditions in the Jewish society. A wider range of Jewish practice existed in the early period other than the Rabbinic Judaism, although most of the written

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[49] Jonathan Malino, "Interpretation: Modernity, and the Philosophy of Judaism", *The Cambridge History of Jewish Philosophy: The Modern Era,* eds. Martin Kavka, Zachary Braiterman, and David Novak, (2012), 780-816.

[50] By comparing examples from Mishnah Qiddushin and Tosefta Qiddushin, Peskowitz points out alternate categories of gender produced by rabbis and sages, and so, alternate histories. Mishnah Qiddushin (4.14), Rabbi Yehudah sayas: An unmarried man should not herd cattle, and two unmarried men should not sleep beneath one cloak. But the sages permit this. Tosefta Qiddushin (5.10): Rabbi Elizer says: he who has a wife and children, but they do not live with him, ho should not teach sofrim. And the sages say: Israelite men are not suspected in such a matter. We see alternate categories of gender in Mishnah Qiddushin and Tofesta Qiddushin produced by rabbies and sages. There is tension between Yehudah in Mishnah and the sages about gender operates. For instance, Yehudah imagines gender as partially unstable in practice since he possibly regards that adult Jewish men can in fact act "like women". On the other hand, the sages do see gender mostly stable, and the characters of men and women are largely different. [50] This privileged knowledge of gender produced by rabbies in the context of Roman empire became common and natural. This privileged construction of gender in rabbinic literature made non-rabbinic Jews disappear from history as well as multiple experiences of Jewish population. See Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies,* 60-61.

evidence, which has been transmitted to the modern period, was produced by the Rabbinic Jews. Unlike today, the Rabbinic texts were in the process of production and hold authority in a small circle of relatively uninfluential Rabbis in Galilee in the second and third century. However, this particular tradition was privileged in the fourth century and imposed unity by erasing non-Rabbinic Judaism. By erasing all differences –such as differences between Palestinian and Babylon Judaism- the term "Rabbinic Judaism" or "Talmudic Judaism" created a religious unity, which was non-existent.[51] The gender construction of these authoritative texts produced by Rabbinic Judaism erased alternative experiences of gender in Jewish history and created an imagined ideal for Jewish communities.[52]

B. Construction of Zionism through the Enlightenment Ideals of Europe

The modernization in Europe is another period when Jewish traditions and thought were intertwined with dominant structures of power whether these structures are cultural, political, or discursive. The relationship between religious traditions and modernity have been discussed for long through various focuses. Although there are variations of Jewish responses, modernity urged many religious communities to respond to, even adopted, the premises of modernity.[53] The period and characteristics of modernity are described in a wide range and there is a great diversity of experience regarding the premises of modernity around the world. Since there are multiple modernities with continuously changing patterns, sometimes with

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[51] Peskowitz, *Spinning Fantasies*, 15.

[52] This does not mean that there are no multiple readings of these authoritative texts in the later period. For example, Baskin and Boyarin point out the variety of competing for interpretation of the Rabbinic texts and assert that the Rabbinic texts might be read from alternative perspectives through considering multiple gender identities. Baskin stresses on patriarchal features of Rabbinic tradition by saying that androcentric is an inherent feature of the classical texts of Rabbinic Judaism. Through analyzing the creation accounts, which original human being was male -created in the divine image; only later was a female formed from his body- Baskin posits that rabbinic literature constitutes women a secondary and subordinate conception as objects of male agency, rather than subjects of their own life. See Judith R. Baskin, "Rabbanic Judaism and the Creation of Women", *Judaism Since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, (London: Routledge, 1997), 126. On the other hand, Boyarin tries to reconstruct the past by focusing on the effeminate Jewish man. He aims to reconstruct alternative types of women and men, rather than oppressed or abused women, who are the product of a particular reading of the past. See Daniel Boyarin, "Justify My Love", *Judaism Since Gender*, eds. Miriam Peskowitz and Laura Levitt, (London: Routledge, 1997), 136. Both Baskin and Boyarin, construct masculine types for Jewish tradition based on the Rabbinic texts, however, their constructions are multiple, incompatible to each other and derived from different concerns and motivations.

[53] Asaf Sharabi, "Religion and Modernity: Religious Revival", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44/2 (2015), 227.

distinctive patterns, one needs to clarify how one uses the term modernity. When I refer to modernity, I mean the Euro-centric trends in culture, science, and politics that arose out of the Enlightenment and Renaissance. These characteristics include scientific empiricism, secularism, the instrumental use of reason, nation-based state structures and the emphasis on individual choices to name but a few. While these trends got spread in European societies, the Jewish populations in Europe were also impacted,[54] although they responded differently to challenges of modernity.[55] For example, those who insisted on the observance of traditional practices of Judaism became known as Orthodox. Others known as Reform Judaism were open to the reformation of a traditional form of Judaism while maintaining prophetic Judaism. Some emphasized "rational belief" and meanings of law more than its traditional practices and constitute Conservative Judaism.[56]

However, while Jews were living within this Enlightenment context of Europe, universalist understanding of Judaism and its emphasis on reason and modernity became appealing to many, if not most, Jews. The traditional observance of Jewish rituals seemed exotic.[57] Rabbis, who were trained both in modern Western universities and in the knowledge of Talmudic texts, legitimized changes in tradition.[58] The Haskalah (education) movement, which started in the second half of the eighteenth century, within Jewish communities also accelerated the influences of European modernity on Jewish thought. Haskalah aimed to integrate Jews into European societies through the study of European thought and application of its postulates to Judaism. [59]

Haskalah did not have a ground in Eastern Europe, but even in these countries, we can see traces of dominant culture and authority on Jewish populations. For example, Russian Jews were under the influence of the environment they live in and felt necessary to get adapted to the dominant culture surrounding them in order to modernize Jews and Judaism. Within this environment, Osip Aronowich Rabinowich, who was the founder of the first Jewish journal in Russia, conjoined being good Jews to speaking the pure

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[54] Micheal Meyer, "Modernity as a Crisis for the Jews", *Modern Judaism* 9/2 (1989), 152.
[55] "Judaism and Modernity, (Correspondence)", *First Things: A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life* (2001), access: 8 January 2019, http://go.galegroup.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&u=temple_main&id=GALE|A80344675&v=2.1&it=r&sid=AONE&asid=c43f1f4#.
[56] Fikret Karčić, "Jewish and Muslim Encounters with Modernity: Common Experiences", *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37/4 (2017), 521.
[57] Sefton Temkin, (Review Essay), "How Reform Judaism Developed -- Response to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism", by Michael A. Meyer. *Judaism* 40/3 (1991), 374.
[58] Temkin, "How Reform Judaism Developed", 369.
[59] Fikret, "Jewish and Muslim Encounters with Modernity", 521.

language of Christian brothers in Russia. He describes Yiddish, which was local jargon of Jews in Russia, as a corrupted jargon, incapable of expressing sublime thought, old rags and heritage of dark Middle Ages, and praises Russian as a glorious language.[60] He suggests making Russian the language of Russian Jews because Russian would guide Jews for "enlightenment."[61] In a similar way, in *The New Jews in the Modern World*, Isaac Dov Levinson also calls Yiddish a corrupted jargon, which was created as a mixture of corrupted words from Hebrew, Russian, French, Polish and German. He claims that this language is not sufficient for higher concepts except for popular usage. He suggests perfectly learning Russian not only as the language of the country in which they live, but also as a pure and rich language that will enrich the Jewish thought. According to Levinson, through this perfect language, Russian, the Jews can articulate their thoughts in a correct manner in contrast to Yiddish.[62] As reflected in Rabinowich and Levinson's claims, Russian Jews were under the influence of the environment in which they live. The leading figures of the Jews in Russia suggested to re-produce the proper Jewish language in relation to the dominant language surrounding them. They believed that the traditional Jewish language, Yiddish, is not sufficient to articulate Jewish thought and "modernize" and "enlighten" the Jewish population. These figures related enlightenment or emancipation of the Jews in Russia to the assimilation of the Jews in terms of language into the dominant language of Russia.

Although Judaism interacted with and affected by Christian cultures and authorities since antiquity,[63] during modern times, this interaction intensified. European Jews use to maintain their autonomous communities (kehilla) as long as they paid taxes and did not offend Christian teachings. These Jewish populations were subjected to religious law (halakha) and Rabbis was the religious leaders (dayanim). With the rise of the idea of individual citizenship, European states demanded the individualization of their Jewish communities, known as "Emancipation". Modernity challenged Jewish communities as a public corporation and the compulsory application of Jewish law.[64] The observance of Jewish law was replaced with individual

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[60] According to the 1891 population census, 32 percent of all Jewish men in the Russian Empire spoke Yiddish, and 17.5 percent of Jewish women were able to read Russian. See Paul Mendes-Flohr and Jehuda Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: A Documentary History*, (New York: Oxford University Press), 219.

[61] Osip Aronowich Rabinowich, "Russian Must be Our Mother Tongue," The Jew in t*he Modern World*: *A Documentary History*, (New York: Oxford University Press. 1980), 322.

[62] Isaac Dov Levinson, "Yiddish is a Corrupt Jargon," *The Jew* in t*he Modern World*: *A Documentary History*, (New York: Oxford University Press. 1980), 324.

[63] Alexander Deeg et al. (ed.), "Preaching in Judaism and Christianity: Encounters and Developments from Biblical Times to Modernity", Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter, Inc., 2008.

[64] Fikret, "Jewish and Muslim Encounters with Modernity", 520.

conscience.[65] Rabbis or the community lost imperative religious authority to impose the traditional way of life on individuals but could only convince people to observe the law.[66]

The state authorities of Europe were also concerned with the "Emancipation" of Jews. In the eighteenth century, German state abolished Rabbinic juridical functions. In 1791, French Jews were emancipated through legal equality and full citizenship without any condition.[67] In 1808, Napoleon took over the control of its Jewish population in France. These Jewish communities, therefore, lost the authority to function in the traditional way of life.[68] Jewish congregations became expressions of state authorities more than voluntary associations. [69]

Levitt points out how modernization or emancipation of Jews became an assimilating way under the nationalist ideology and dominant frameworks of Europe. Through reading the questions of Napoleon to Jewish Population and the answers of Jewish notables on Jewish emancipation and "Concerning the Amelioration of the Civil Status of the Jews," Levitt addresses some of the ambivalences within liberal discourse and its claims to liberation regarding Jews. She examines the relationship between Jews and the liberal state and calls attention to the role of submission within these negotiations.[70] Levitt argues that the emancipation of Jews means assimilation of their differences.[71]

For instance, the French revolution aimed to solidify national loyalties around French identity and demanded adherence of Jews to French laws and customs.[72] However, whether or to what extent Jews were able to assimilate into the French citizenship identity raised the Jewish question as related to fidelity to the state. The French state saw the solution of the "Jewish

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[65] Meyer, "Modernity as a Crisis for the Jews", 154.

[66] David Ellensen. "How Modernity Changed Judaism" (Interwiev with Rabbi David Ellenson), Semptember 2008, access: 8 January 2019), http://jcpa.org/article/how-modernity-changed-judaism-interview-with-rabbi-david-ellenson/.

[67] Monika Richarz. "The History of the Jews in Europe during the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries", *In The Holocaust and the United Nations Outreach Programme*, (New York:2009), volume I, access: 2 January 2019, http://www.un.org/en/holocaustremembrance/docs/pdf/Volume%20I/The_History_of_the_Jews_in_Europe.pdf.

[68] Meyer, "Modernity as a Crisis for the Jews", 153.

[69] Temkin, "How Reform Judaism Developed", 270-271.

[70] Laura Levitt, *Jews and Feminism: The Ambivalent Search for Home*, (New York: Routledge, 1997), 52.

[71] Zionism was also seen as an assimilation. For example, Citing Aurbach, Arkush sees Zionism as a collective assimilation of Jews. See Allan Arkush, "Rethinking Zion and Modernity", *Jewish Social Studies* 9/1 (2002), 145.

[72] Levitt, *Jews and Feminism*, 58-59.

problem" in making Jews "loyal subjects or citizens." French state demanded individual Jewish citizens who free from any constitution and order. The Jewish population needed to become undifferentiated citizens, who were needed for the building of the liberal state.[73] The notables of the Jewish community also contributed to the assimilation of the Jews into the national identity of France. For example, they indicated that Jewish obedience to the laws of a prince was an ancient injunction in Halakhah to ensure Napoleon about Jews' fidelity.[74]

The ideology of Zionism emerged within this context of "Emancipation" and modernization of Jews in Europe, and so, it was constructed in relation to ideologies of Europe more than traditional Jewish thought. The Zionist movement emerged out of heterodox elements including some religious frameworks. Therefore, it is not possible to delineate concrete boundaries for the ideology and postulates of Zionism. As Shenhav states, "Zionism is quintessentially hybrid. It is originally European, yet materializes in the Middle East; arguably secular, yet imbued with theology; modern, yet relying on ancient roots".[75] In this section, I aim to exclusively point out its roots in the nationalism and the Enlightenment in Europe, in order to illuminate the influence of dominant power of European ideologies on Jewish traditions and thought.

As Shenhav puts it, all the actors and precursors of Jewish national movement "from Graetz, Hess, and Smolenskin to Herzl, Nordau, Ussiskin, Pinsker, Sokolow, Borochov, Gordon, and Ahad Ha'am- were based in Europe." [76] The ideology of Zionism was originally hostile to religion and constructed around the nationalist ideology through the negation of religious

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[73] Levitt, *Jews and Feminism*, 53-54.

[74] To measure the loyalty of Jews, Napoleon also used the polygamy as criteria because they related the fidelity to state with loyalty to spouse. Thus, they linked "public and private notions of fidelity and belonging" to each other. Polygamy was dangerous to the stability of the state because it breaks the family unity of the society. Then, the noble Jews claimed that polygamy is an Eastern practice. They were appealed to colonial assumptions about eastern practice, so they distinguished themselves from the Jews, eastern Jews, who Napoleon worried about by following French state's assertion. By decelerating that Jewish law was already compatible with the civic law of French; Jews alleviated the fear of Napoleon as well as keeping the fidelity to the state as a Jewish principle. This subordinating relationship between the state and Jewish population was extended to "to speak French, attend to French schools, and adhere to French middle-class notions of propriety even within the private realms of family and religious life". See Levitt, *Jews and Feminism*, 52-59.

[75] Yehouda Shenhav, "Modernity and the Hybridization of Nationalism and Religion: Zionism and the Jews of the Middle East as a Heuristic Case", *Theory and Society* 36/1 (2007), 4.

[76] Shenhav, "Modernity and the Hybridization of Nationalism and Religion", 10.

life.[77] For instance, rationality and autonomy of the individual, progress through science and technology, work and productivity were central to values of the Zionist ideology as they were to the Enlightenment of Europe. As Boyarin puts it, Zionism was employed "to strip the Jews of their collective memories, the practices, and subcultures that sustained them for thousands of years, and to replace all these with secular progressivism and ideology of the land".[78] Similarly, Silberstein argues that Zionism transformed the discourse of Jewish identity "from a divinely ordained body of belief, norms, and practices into a manly created, secular-national culture" based on European center national and secular discourses.[79] In other words, the Zionist movement emerges with resembles to the secular character of modern nationalism in the West.[80] Even when Zionism referred to theological myths, such as the redemption of the land, Hebrew language, and return to Zion, religion was surpassed by modern nationalism.[81]

According to Herzl, who was the father of Zionism, "Zionism seeks to secure for the Jewish people a publicly recognized, legally secured, home in Palestine."[82] He stresses on the "Jewish question" by saying that wherever Jews migrate the Jews question comes in together with Jewish immigrant and their existence gives rise to persecution. The forms of persecutions vary according to the country and social circle, but it is inevitable. He writes that the Jewish question neither a social nor a religious one, but it is a national question.[83]

While Hertzl seeks a solution for Jewish question, which emerged within the nationalist atmosphere of the twentieth century Europe, he finds the solution in the establishment of a Jewish nation-state. He mentions all other possibilities to solve the Jewish question throughout the text, but the nation-state seems to him as a natural and only possible solution, because he believes that nation-state is normal or ideal state structure. He regards

[77] Although Zionism was born out of hostility to religion, religious faith and practices have been integrated into Zionism later on in Israel. For example, the rate of secular and religious Zionist participate in the Israeli army are the same.[77] See Asaf Sharabi, "Religion and Modernity: Religious Revival Movement in Israel", *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 44/2 (2015), 244.
[78] Boyarin, "Palestine and Jewish History," 126.
[79] Silberstein, "Toward a Postzionist Discourse", 95.
[80] Although Zionism turned Judaism from a religious denomination to a nationality, Zinonism's practical achievements in Palestine gradually won over the opposition. Especially after the 1930s, when Palestine provided a home to Jews, the opposition lost its affect in practice.
[81] Shenhav, "Modernity and the Hybridization of Nationalism and Religion", 11.
[82] Theodor Herzl, "Theodor Herzl Appears", *The Zionist Idea, A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg, (New York: Atheneum, 1969), 203.
[83] Herzl, "Theodor Herzl Appears", 209.

diaspora life of Jews as a prison, which separates people from their ordinary life, and asks "shouldn't we 'get out' at once."[84] To demonstrate that Jews had already had a dream of a state in Jerusalem, and to convince his audience that he calls them to live their own dream, he quotes that "Next year in Jerusalem" is our age-old motto."[85] However, he does not read this motto based on religious or cultural identity, but on national identity. He considers nation-state structure as essential and believes that Jewish have enough power to create their own nation base state like other normal and civilized nations do.

While he tries to normalize the Jewish identity, which was marginalized by European modernity and nationalist ideology, he reinscribes the same ideology and discourse because he uses the contemporary intellectual constructions that he perceived as essential and natural. Even when he reads colonization attempts made by the Europeans, he does not question the reason or necessity of gathering Jews in particular places, but examines why the project failed and tried to fix this project based on a nation-state to solve Jewish question.[86] In other words, Herzl aims to solve the Jewish question, which was raised by the nationalist and colonial ideology of Europe, through inter-articulation of these ideologies and Zionism. His explanation points out the inter-articulation of power, knowledge, and ideology as well.

This construction of Zionism transformed the discourse of Jewish identity "from a divinely ordained body of belief, norms, and practices into a manly created, secular-national culture" based on Euro-centric national and secular discourses. In contrast to a European Jewish identity, which was understood in religious terms, Zionism constructed a secular Jewish identity, which was imagined as essential and unchanging as European nationalism attributed to Jews.[87] As Boyarin puts it, "the Zionist program was conceived around the turn of the twentieth century, largely according to European ideologies of national liberation."[88] Thus, the discourse of the Jewish identity was grounded in a territory rather than in collective memory, because geography was an object of social construction and contention. Boyarin writes that "to 'de-Judaize' the Israeli Jews while 'Judaizing' the land means to strip the Jews of their collective memories, the practices, and subcultures that sustained them for thousands of years, and to replace all these with secular progressivism and ideology of the land."[89] Therefore, we need to

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[84] Herzl, "Theodor Herzl Appears", 216.
[85] Herzl, "Theodor Herzl Appears", 213.
[86] Herzl, "Theodor Herzl Appears", 213.
[87] Silberstein, "Toward a Postzionist Discourse", 95.
[88] Boyarin, "Justify My Love", 121.
[89] Boyarin, "Justify My Love", 118-126.

deconstruct the notions and assumptions of Zionism by becoming aware that they were formed in the Euro-centric ideological frameworks more than the tradition of Judaism.[90] Characteristics of Europe played an important role regarding the ways in which discourses of Zionism were formed more than traditions of Judaism.[91]

Concluding Remarks

In this article, through the Foucauldian conceptualization of power, I point out some of the ways in which Judaism or Jewishness have been formed in relation to various structures of power. The poststructural understanding of power enables us to illustrate the relationships between power and formations of religious practices and thought. Practices, values, and meanings within religious traditions are constituted in relation to dominant structures of power within a particular time and place whether these structures are institutional, cultural, material or discursive.

For instance, the stories of spinners and weavers are examples of inter-articulation of gender in Jewish literature and the material, cultural, and discursive context of the Roman Empire. The cultural works in Roman societies joined the constitution of Jewish identity, practices, and perceptions. The boundaries of gender in Judaism, which was used to delineate a Jewish identity by the early Rabbis, were in fact produced through the elements of gendering within a non-Jewish Roman context. Based on a reading of the Rabbinic tradition through the prism of gender roles within the written texts and artifacts in Roman society, we can see the heterogeneous elements within the gender structures in Jewish literature. This post-structural formulation reveals the fact that multiple and complex experiences of gender in Roman Period Judaism were conveyed in Jewish texts in a way that erases the traces of the non-Jewish environment. In other words, although various elements contributed to the production of gender in Jewish traditions such as material structures, Hellenistic philosophical tropes, economic activities, and socio-cultural discourses, the Rabbinic Jewish text presents this complex and multiple constructions of gender as if it is apocalyptic Jewish formulation. Unless we pay attention to how various forms of power were integrated into Jewish traditions, we cannot problematize the presentation of gender in these texts. Moreover, the articulation of relational construction of gender in Judaism enables us to see how certain types of knowledge and practices were privileged in Jewish texts while others were made invisible. We see that a wider and heterogeneous range of Jewish gender practices existed in the early period in relation to

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[90] Silberstein, "Toward a Postzionist Discourse", 97-98.
[91] Boyarin, "Justify My Love", 121.

dominant non-Jewish structures. However, the Talmudic tradition privileged certain practices of gender and presented them as if they were produced within an isolated Jewish environment.

Another example is the enlightenment and modernization of Europe that impacted Jewish thought and re-construction of Jewish literature and traditions. The modernist ideology of Europe urged Jews to knowingly and unknowingly get adapted to this environment. Namely, in contrast to a European Jewish identity, which is understood in religious terms, Zionism produced a secular Jewish identity, which was imagined as essential and unchanging based on European modernist and nationalist ideology. Put it differently, while the Jewish identity had been grounded on collective memories of Jews, during the enlightenment, the Zionist ideology re-constructed the Jewish identity based on territory. A post-structural perspective reveals the inter-articulation of the Zionist ideology and European ideology and problematizes the presentation of Zionism exclusively based on Jewish thought. This conceptualization illuminates how power, knowledge, and ideology were produced in relation to each other, then, how the presentation of Zionism erased this inter-articulation and justified itself as a Jewish construction.

In other words, during the constitutions of Jewish identities, production of Jewish thought and ideologies or formations of categories in Judaism such as gender, various forms of power have operated as productive forces. Discursive, material or institutional structures of dominant cultures in which Jews lived designated the concerns and perceptions of Jewish communities as well as Jewish intellectuals. Therefore, a study of Judaism must reveal linkages between the forms of power in a particular era. In order to reveal these linkages, we should turn our attention to the constructive and regulative power structures in its all forms for the production of religious traditions in general and Judaism in particular. I argue that a study of Judaism must include a study of institutions, materiality, abstractions, and discourses in a particular time and place in which particular beliefs and practices of Judaism were produced. In other words, the study of Judaism must be attentive to constitutive and regulative structures of power as well as interactive and variable characters of these structures.

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POST-YAPISALCI LENSLER İLE BİR YAHUDİLİK OKUMASI

 Hesna Serra AKSEL[a]

Genişletilmiş Özet

Yahudiliğin tanımları ve sınırları hakkında bazen bir birinin zıddı da sayılabilecek çeşitli eğilimler mevcuttur. Yahudilik bir din midir yoksa bir milliyet midir? Yahudi olmak bir etnik kökene mi bağlıdır yoksa kültürel bir kimlik midir? Örneğin bazı Yahudiler kendilerini seküler Yahudi olarak tanımlarken diğerleri seküler ve milliyetçi bir Yahudi kimliğine karşı çıkar. Dünya üzerinde birçok Yahudi kendisini geleneksel Yahudi teolojisinden bağımsız bir kültürel değerler mekanizması üzerinden tanımlar. Diğer taraftan, İsrailli tarihçi Shlomo Sand gibi bir diğer grup Yahudiliği bir din olarak görür ve Yahudi kimliğinin modern bit icat olduğuna inanır. Yahudiliğin bir din olarak doğup zaman içinde kültür ve medeniyeti de içine alacak geniş bir yapıya dönüştüğüne dair genel bir kabul de vardır. Bu çalışmada Yahudi olmanın veya Yahudiliğin ne anlama geldiğine dair sorular ele alınmakta ve Yahudilikteki her bir pratiğin, düşüncenin ya da yapının anlaşılabilmesi için o düşünce, pratik ya da yapının üretildiği dönemdeki güç ilişkilerinin incelenmesi gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır.

Fransız filozof Michael Foucault'un güç (power) kavramı temelinde, güç yapıları (constructions of power) olarak adlandırılabilecek, kurumsal, kültürel, maddesel ve söylemsel yapıların, Yahudi düşüncesinin, hukukunun, pratiklerinin ve hatta metinlerinin oluşumuna etkileri incelenmektedir. Foucault'a göre, kimliklerin inşası, bilginin üretimi ve dini gelenekler gibi kategorilerin şekillenmesi farklı güç yapılarının ilişkisi ve bir birini etkilemesi yolu ile oluşur. Bu yapılar kurumsal, kültürel, materyal veya söylemsel olabilir. Bu bakış açısı, dini toplulukların algı, düşünce ve uygulamalarının nasıl belirli bir zaman ve mekândaki baskın güç yapılarının iç içe geçmesi ile şekillendiğini ortaya koymamıza yardımcı olur. Bu sebeple,

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Yahudilik üzerine yapılacak bir çalışma belirli Yahudi inançlarının, uygulamalarının veya algılarının şekillendiği dönemdeki şekillendirici ve düzenleyici etkiye sahip güç yapılarını incelemek zorundadır.

Bu araştırmada, Yahudi gelenekleri, ideolojileri ve uygulamalarının şekillenmesi ve belirli dönemlerin baskın güç yapıları arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymak için, Yahudi tarihinde iki farklı dönem ve coğrafyaya bakılmaktadır. İlk olarak Roma imparatorluğu döneminde, Yunan ve Roma kültür ve felsefesinin Yahudilikteki cinsiyet rollerinin oluşumu üzerindeki etkileri incelenmektedir. Roma dönemi Filistin'de Yahudi geleneğinde ve metinlerinde cinsiyet algısının nasıl baskın Roma kültürü ile ilişkili olarak şekillendiğine ve bu baskın kültürün etkisinde kaldığına dikkat çekilmektedir. Mirriam Peskowitz'in *Spinning Fantasies: Rabbis, Gender, History* adlı eserinde ele alınan ip eğirme ve dokuma sanatına dair hikâyeler Yahudilerin de içinde yasadığı Roma kültürü ve çalışma hayatına dair ipuçları vermektedir. Bu hikâyeler Yahudi metinlerinde de kullanılmakta ve Yahudilik ile Roma kültürü arasındaki etkileşimi ve Yahudi metinleri ve Roma kültürünün nasıl iç içe geçerek şekillendiğini göstermektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, Yahudi metinlerinde cinsiyet rolleri âdete tarihsel bağlamdan izole edilmiş bir ortamda bağımsız dini değerler olarak ortaya çıkmış gibi sunulmuş ise de, Rabbanik Yahudilerin içinde yasadığı Roma imparatorluğundaki çeşitli baskın güç yapıları Yahudi cinsiyet algısının şekillenmesinde önemli rol oynamıştır. Diğer bir deyişle, bu karmaşık cinsiyet yapıları Yahudi metinlerinde dönemin kültürel zemininden bağımsız olarak sunulmuştur. Hatta Roma döneminde yasayan Yahudi topluluklarının cinsiyet rollerine dair bir birinden farklı inanç ve uygulamaları olsa da günümüze ulasan ve otorite olarak kabul edilen metinler bu farklılıkları yansıtmamakta, tekil ve tarihsel zeminden bağımsız bir Yahudi geleneği izlenimi vermektedir. Roma döneminde baskın olan kültürel, materyal ve söylemsel güç yapıları incelenmeksizin salt bir metin okuması yapıldığında bu karmaşık ve iç içe şekillenişi görmek mümkün değildir.

Yahudi tarihinde dikkat çekilecek ikinci zaman dilimi ve coğrafya ise modern dönem Avrupa'sıdır. Avrupa'nın Aydınlanmacı düşüncesinin Siyonizm'in şekillenmesine nasıl yön verdiğinin aydınlatılması için, Yahudi düşüncesinin nasıl Avrupa'nın modernist ve aydınlanmacı düşüncesi temelinde yeniden yapılandırıldığının ortaya konulması gerekmektedir. Özellikle Siyonist düşüncenin oluşumu o dönem Avrupa'da hâkim olan milliyetçi ve modernist ideoloji ile yakından ilişkilidir. Siyonist düşünceyi inşa eden Herzl Avrupa'daki aydınlanmacı ve milliyetçi akımın tesiri ile ortaya çıkan Yahudi krizini çözmek için yine aynı akımın zihniyetine başvurmuş ve yeni Yahudi

kimliğini bu zihniyet üzerine inşa etmiştir. Tabii ki seküler ve milliyetçi Avrupa düşüncesi üzerine inşa edilen yeni Yahudi kimliği sunulurken Yahudi geleneğinde var olan mitolojik anlatımlara, İbraniceye ve kutsal topraklara dönüş inancına atıflar yapılmıştır. Ancak bu atıflar yeni kimliği inşa eden asıl ögeler değildir. Aydınlanmacı zihniyet temelinde geliştirilen Siyonist ideoloji Yahudi kimliğini ilahi bir inanç, değerler ve uygulamalar sistemi olmaktan çıkarıp, insan temelinde şekillendirilen seküler ve milliyetçi bir kültür eksenine oturtmuştur. Siyonist düşünce daha önce Avrupa'da var olan ve dini temellere oturtulmuş olan Yahudi kimliğini milliyetçilik üzerine temellendirilmiş <u>seküler</u> bir kimliğe çevirmiştir. Bu Siyonist söylem Yahudiliği modernite öncesi dönemde olduğu gibi kollektif hafızaya dayanan bir kimlik olmaktan çıkarıp belirli bir coğrafya üzerinden tanımlamıştır. Bu yeni tanımlamada Yahudiliğin geleneğinde var olandan ziyade Avrupa'nın seküler, milliyetçi ve aydınlanmacı söylemleri esas alınmış ve yeni Yahudi kimliği bu söylemler üzerine inşa edilmiştir.

Bu iki farklı zaman ve mekândaki baskın kültürler ve düşence sistemleri ve bunların Yahudi topluluklar üzerindeki etkileri incelendiğinde Yahudiliğin nasıl her dönemin baskın olan güç yapıları ile iç içe şekillendiği anlaşılmaktadır. Yahudilik çeşitli medeniyetler, kültürler ve otoriteler ile karşı karşıya kaldığında, baskın olan düşünce sistemleri, ekonomik faaliyetler ve politik söylemler ile etkileşime girerek karmaşık bir yapıya dönüşmüştür. Sonuç olarak, bu araştırmada, Yahudiliğe dair bir çalışmanın belirli bir dönemdeki düzenleyici ve inşa edici niteliklere sahip güç yapılarını ele almaksızın Yahudiliği anlayamayacağı tartışılmıştır.

Keywords: Dinler Tarihi, Yahudilik, post-yapısalcılık

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