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Jewish Historical Studies
A Journal of English-Speaking Jewry

Article:

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How to cite: Beinart-Smollan, G. 'Community cookbooks: a new lens on postwar South African Jewish culture'. *Jewish Historical Studies*, 2023, 55(1), pp. 84–105. DOI: https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.jhs.2024v55.05.

Published: 12 January 2024

Peer Review:

This article has been peer reviewed through the journal's standard double blind peer-review process, where both the reviewers and authors are anonymised during review.

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Open Access:

Jewish Historical Studies is a peer-reviewed open access journal.

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https://doi.org/10.14324/111.444.jhs.2024v55.05

Community cookbooks: a new lens on post-war South African Jewish culture*

GAVIN BEINART-SMOLLAN

> On Tuesday and Thursday afternoons there were WZO [Women's Zionist Organization] meetings that could never be missed, no matter what, and once a year, with great fanfare, there was the publication of the famous *New International Goodwill Recipe Book*, or the Yeoville Book, as it is known throughout South Africa. First published in 1950, the latest 326-page edition came out in 1982, updated and matriculated, with kosher recipes submitted by the ladies of Johannesburg, all of which, according to my mom, were useless. What Jewish woman, she wanted to know, would give away her most precious culinary secrets in a society where small talk was king and talk about food was almost a religious experience?
>
> Hirsh Goodman, *Let Me Create a Paradise, God Said to Himself* (2009)

After the Second World War, South African Jewish women began to put out community cookbooks *en masse*. It seemed that almost every branch of every Jewish organization, as well as many a synagogue and Jewish school, needed its own cookbook. This glut of cookbook production was not limited to large urban centres like Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban; women's groups from Paarl to Port Elizabeth, Vereeniging to Welkom, produced their own recipe compendia. Some of these books, like the "famous" *Goodwill*, became ubiquitous, selling more than 72,000 copies over the course of its publication history, and holding pride of

* I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals and organizations: Louise Bethlehem and Anat Helman for their guidance and support in the writing of the MA thesis that was the basis for this article; Charlene Beinart, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, William Pimlott, and Tzipora Weinberg, as well as the journal's editors, Avril Alba, Shirli Gilbert, and Adam Mendelsohn, and the two anonymous reviewers, for their insightful comments; Jemima Jarman for her administrative support; Isaac Roszler for his suggestions for reading material; the many individuals across the globe who shared their cookbooks with me; and the Center for the Humanities at New York University, and Adam Mendelsohn, Katie Garrun, Alex Abrahams, and Ben Vigne at the University of Cape Town's Kaplan Centre, for crucial support in creating a digital archive of South African Jewish community cookbooks, located at sajewishcookbooks.org.za.

place on many newly married Jewish couples bookshelves.[1] Others had more modest print runs. The Vereeniging Union of Jewish Women's *Cookery Nook* (1980), for example, sold two thousand copies, its editors proudly proclaimed.[2] Dozens of women served as cookbook editors, and hundreds more, perhaps against their better judgment, gave away their "most precious culinary secrets", as the South African-Israeli journalist Hirsh Goodman wrote in his memoir.[3] South African Jewish women produced more than a hundred individual titles between the 1940s and the end of the apartheid era in 1994.[4]

These women created community cookbooks primarily to raise money for a charitable cause. However, their books served as far more than mere fundraising tools. As Anne Bower argued, the discrete elements of the cookbook – recipes, titles, advertisements, prefaces, and guidelines – combine to tell a story of the lives of the women who compiled it. In their community cookbooks, women claimed the right to self-definition, and to project and transmit their value systems – social, economic, religious, and cultural.[5] In Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's words, cookbooks "reveal with special clarity how the highly perishable and ephemeral medium of food embodies core cultural values".[6]

Reading community cookbooks provides a window into the lives of South African Jewish women in the postwar period, carving out a space for women within South African Jewish historiography that has, with a few important exceptions, largely overlooked them.[7] Elsewhere, I have argued

1 Hazel Levin and Mimi Sacks, eds., *The New International Goodwill Recipe Book, Sixth Edition* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, 1981), 10.

2 Erica Cohen, Ethel Jacks, and Noreen Cutler, eds., *Eat's a Pleasure* (Vereeniging: Vereeniging Union of Jewish Women, 1980), foreword.

3 Hirsh Goodman, *Let me create a Paradise, God said to Himself: A Journey of Conscience from Johannesburg to Jerusalem* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2009), 11.

4 Veronica Belling's list of cookbooks in her forthcoming updated edition of the *Bibliography of South African Jewry* helped me greatly in arriving at this figure. I thank Dr. Belling for sharing a draft of this list with me.

5 Anne Bower, "Our Sisters' Recipes: Exploring 'Community' in a Community Cookbook", *Journal of Popular Culture* 31, no. 3 (1997): 148.

6 Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Recipes for Creating Community: The Jewish Charity Cookbook in America", *Jewish Folklore and Ethnology Review* 9, no. 1 (1987): 11.

7 For studies focused on Jewish women in South Africa see Marcia Gitlin, *The Vision Amazing: The Story of South African Zionism* (Johannesburg: Menorah Book Club, 1950); Riva Michal Krut, "Building a Home and Community: Jews in Johannesburg, 1886–1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of London, 1985); Veronica Belling, "Recovering the Lives of South African Jewish Women during the Migration Years *c.* 1880–1939" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cape Town, 2013).

that producing and consuming community cookbooks helped South African Jewish women establish a place for themselves in the apartheid system and in the country's broader white culture.[8] Here, I turn the gaze inwards, demonstrating how women influenced South African Jewish culture and religious practice by creating these books.

Scholars have defined postwar South African Jewishness as being distinctive in three central ways: in its concentrated Litvak (Lithuanian Jewish) character, its ardent Zionism, and its "non-observant" Orthodoxy. Community cookbooks complicate our understanding of all three of these features of South African Jewish life. In their cookbooks, South African Jewish women constructed a connection with their Eastern European heritage more eclectic and multicentric than scholars have previously allowed, while also helping to create the conventional view of South African Jewry's Litvak character. They offered a style of Zionism that integrated South African Jewry's Yiddish-speaking past, rather than rejecting it. And they testified to a more active role for ordinary people in shaping South African Jewish religious practice than a "non-observant" label suggests. This approach to reading community cookbooks does not merely add women to the story of postwar South African Judaism. It offers a path forward for rethinking the conventions of that story.

"Traditional" food in the cookbooks

Approximately three million Jews left the Pale of Settlement for a better life in the West in the three decades before the First World War. Forty thousand of those immigrants chose South Africa as their destination.[9] Most came from the Lithuanian borderlands of the Russian Empire, particularly Kovno Province. In both popular memory and scholarship, there is a well-established truism that South African Jewish culture is "genetically" Litvak.[10] Scholars have claimed the community's

8 Gavin Beinart-Smollan, "Co-opting Domesticity: Apartheid, South African Jewish Women, and Community Cookbooks", *Food, Culture & Society*, 4 April 2023, 1–17, https://doi.org/10.1080/15528014.2023.2196200.

9 Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain, *The Jews in South Africa: An Illustrated History* (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2008), 33.

10 See Gideon Shimoni, "From One Frontier to Another: Jewish Identity and Political Orientation in Lithuania and South Africa, 1890–1939", in *Jewries at the Frontier: Accommodation, Identity, Conflict*, ed. Milton Shain and Sander Gilman (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 149; Gideon Shimoni, *Community and Conscience: The Jews in Apartheid South Africa* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 4; for an argument against

Litvak origins to be determinative of many of its recognizable cultural characteristics, including its commitment to Jewish education, its religious practices, and its dedication to Zionism.[11] Reading community cookbooks, a more heterogeneous, eclectic picture of South African Jewry's cultural origins begins to emerge. At the same time, looking at the development of the cookbooks over time reveals how the idea of "traditional" Jewish food developed in South Africa. Cookbook editors and contributors synthesized these eclectic influences into a symbolic canon of traditional Jewish recipes that they presented as a direct line of transmission from their Litvak ancestors.

Some of the early community cookbooks produced in the 1940s and 50s did preserve evidence of a Litvak oral tradition. For example, many Litvaks, especially those from rural areas, spoke a form of Yiddish that other Eastern European Jews derogatorily referred to as "Sabesdiker Losn" (Sabbath language) – the pronunciation of the "sh" sound as "s".[12] Such cookbooks thus offered recipes for "Saltenosses",[13] a Lithuanian form of the Yiddish *Shaltenosses*.[14] The dishes *hamentashen*, *geshmirte matzos*, and *kishke* appear in a number of earlier cookbooks as "hamentasen", "gesmirte matzos", and "kisker".[15] Similarly, the 1951 *Union Cook Book*

attributing immutable "genetic" cultural characteristics to Jews in general see Adam Mendelsohn, *The Rag Race: How Jews sewed their Way to Success in America and the British Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), 1–2.

11 See e.g. Jocelyn Hellig, "Religious Expression", in *South African Jewry: A Contemporary Survey*, ed. Marcus Arkin (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1984), 6; Gideon Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism: The South African Experience, 1910–1967* (Cape Town: Oxford University Press, 1980), 18–19; Shimoni, "From One Frontier to Another", 149; Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 3.

12 See Uriel Weinreich, "*Sábesdiker Losn* in Yiddish: A Problem of Linguistic Affinity", *Word* 8, no. 4 (1952): 360–77.

13 L. Miller and M. Felder, eds., *Favourite Home-Tried Recipes* (Randfontein: Randfontein Women's Zionist Society, 1940), 10; Elizabeth Miller, Effie Schauder, and Winnie Glasser, eds., *Magen David Adom Recipe Book, First Edition* (Port Elizabeth: Magen David Adom, Port Elizabeth Branch, 1950), 45; *King David Schools Ladies Committee Recipe Book* (Johannesburg: King David Schools Ladies Committee, 1958), 107; Marion Kangisser and Paddy Wolf, eds., *Cookery Capers, Second Edition* (Benoni: Society for the Jewish Handicapped, 1960), 81; Jeanette Cohen and Dina Marshak, eds., *King David Schools Recipe Book* (Johannesburg: King David Schools, 1964), 157.

14 "Saltanoses", in *Sound Archive of the Language and Culture Atlas of Ashkenazic Jewry*, http://www.eydes.de/bin/a?A=55249-137.160.new3 (accessed 19 Oct. 2022); Mordkhe Schaechter, "Litvish Dialektish Shprakhvarg in Ginsburg un Mareks Gezeml", *YIVO Bleter* 2 (1994): 195. See the Glossary below for food terms.

15 Miller and Felder, *Favourite Home-Tried Recipes*, 17; Miller, Schauder, and Glasser, *Magen David Adom Recipe Book, 1st Ed.*, 51; Gertrude Harvey Cohen, Violet Wittert, and Becky Myers,

featured a recipe for "Carrot Chimmes",[16] a North-eastern Yiddish dialectical variant of the word *tzimmes*.[17]

By the 1960s, these uniquely Litvak words had disappeared from the pages of South African Jewish cookbooks, replaced by general, pan-Yiddish spellings. They probably disappeared because this culinary culture had come under the influence of the United States, the place to which the great majority of Eastern European Jewish immigrants had gone during the period of mass migration. Hasia Diner has demonstrated how Jewish immigrants arriving in the United States from all over Central and Eastern Europe created an intra-Jewish food exchange. Their eclectic regional cuisines coalesced to form eventually a generic American Jewish repertoire.[18] The homogenizing effects of this American Jewish food exchange spread across the Eastern European Jewish diaspora, in the form of written recipes and cookbooks. As Veronica Belling has noted, South African Jews only began seriously to produce their own cookbooks in the 1950s. Before then, Jewish bookshops imported cookbooks from America. American *matza* manufacturers distributed brochures with Passover recipes in Yiddish and English in South Africa, and South African Jewish women cut recipes from American Yiddish newspapers.[19] The editors of the South African cookbooks adopted American Jewish recipes and spellings too, mixing them with recipes inherited from their Litvak parents and grandparents.

This process of mixing can be seen most clearly in the example of gefilte fish. In his classic study of Yiddish linguistics (1965), Marvin Herzog argued that the line that divides the Central Yiddish dialect (spoken in what today is Poland) with the North-eastern dialect (spoken by Litvaks in what today is Lithuania, Belarus, and parts of north-eastern Poland) corresponds almost exactly to geographical differences in the preparation of gefilte fish.[20] While Polish Jews added a lot of sugar to theirs, Lithuanian

eds., *The International Goodwill Recipe Book, Third Edition* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, 1957), 34; Kangisser and Wolf, *Cookery Capers, Second Edition*, 85.

16 *Union Cook Book* (Cape Town: Union of Jewish Women of South Africa, Cape Town Branch, 1951), 29.

17 "Tshimes", in *Sound Archive*, http://www.eydes.de/bin/a?A=53257-108.070.new (accessed 24 Oct. 2022).

18 Hasia Diner, *Hungering for America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 202.

19 Belling, "Recovering the Lives", 68.

20 Marvin I. Herzog, *The Yiddish Language in Northern Poland: Its Geography and History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1965), 18.

Jews preferred it heavily flavoured with black pepper.[21] South African Jewish cookbooks featured recipes for both kinds. While the imported sugary gefilte fish proved more popular in the long run, the Litvak peppery variety persisted too. Some recipes combined both sugar and black pepper.[22] Gefilte fish and the other Jewish food in these cookbooks had multiple and complex origin points, making them the product of a distinctly modern set of circumstances.

The editors themselves understood the place of "traditional" Jewish food in their cookbooks differently. They claimed that the "traditional recipes . . . have been handed down from generation to generation".[23] They emphasized that this was food "Just Like Mamma Made".[24] Contributors eagerly shared recipes from beloved grandmothers.[25] Brandied fruit could be served "as our grandparents would have loved it, with Russian tea".[26] By contrast, the editors proudly declared the eclectic origins of the non-Jewish dishes in their cookbooks – the fancy French recipes from famous chefs at the exclusive restaurants at which they had eaten, and recipes that they had requested from the wives of foreign diplomats.[27] Sharing the origins of such recipes helped first-generation South African Jewish women demonstrate their newly acquired bourgeois cultural capital.[28] The Jewish recipes acted as the foil to these exciting new foods. They represented the women's connection to the imagined *shtetl* – to a fixed, mythologized version of their Litvak past.[29] The mixed origins of some of

21 I thank Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett for talking through some of the issues with and nuances of this formulation with me.

22 E.g. Miriam Horowitz, ed., *Second Helpings (including Cooking with Confidence)*, 2nd ed. (Pretoria: Pretoria Women's Zionist League and Union of Jewish Women, Pretoria Branch, 1950), 56; Gertrude Harvey Cohen, Violet Wittert, and Becky Myers, eds., *The International Goodwill Recipe Book, Second Edition* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, 1954), 77; Elizabeth Miller, ed., *Magen David Adom Recipe Book, Second Edition* (Port Elizabeth: Magen David Adom, Port Elizabeth Branch, 1960), 55; Selma Brodie, ed., *The Singing Kettle, Third Edition* (Port Elizabeth: Port Elizabeth Union of Jewish Women, 1976), 66.

23 Judy Druck, ed., *The Club and I* (Durban: Durban Jewish Club, 1974), 129.

24 Horowitz, *Second Helpings*, 62; Kangisser and Wolf, *Cookery Capers, 2nd Ed.*, 81; Cohen and Marshak, *King David Schools Recipe Book*, 155.

25 Shirley Edelman, ed., *Arcadia Recipe and Household Guide, First Edition* (Johannesburg: Arcadia South African Jewish Orphanage, 1968), 26; Cohen, Jacks, and Cutler, *Eat's a Pleasure*, 212; *Pesach, Passover Recipe and Guide Book: A Herzlia High Schools PTA Project* (Cape Town: Herzlia High Schools PTA, 1990), 134.

26 *King David Schools Ladies Committee Recipe Book*, 158.

27 E.g. Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book, 2nd Ed.*, 91.

28 Beinart-Smollan, "Co-opting Domesticity", 3–6.

29 A number of scholars have written about the imagined shtetl and the mythologization

these cookbooks' supposedly "traditional" recipes had no place in this understanding.[30]

The Jewish food in these community cookbooks can therefore be seen as a kind of invented tradition. As Eric Hobsbawm argued, invented traditions are "responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations". They emerge at times of rupture, as part of a deep desire to structure "at least some parts" of the rapidly shifting modern world as "unchanging and invariant".[31] The twin ruptures of mass migration and the Holocaust irretrievably altered the relationship of Jewish migrants in the West with their Eastern European Jewish cultural origins.[32] Like other Jewish immigrant communities in the West, Shirli Gilbert has argued, Jews in South Africa had to figure out how to reconstruct and restore Jewish life after the war without access to their spiritual and cultural "reservoir" in Eastern Europe.[33] The rise of the Jewish community cookbook in the postwar period helped to meet this need. Cooking, eating, and writing about "traditional" food offered Jewish women a way to cling to an imagined "traditional" past.[34]

These ruptures catalysed a process of "formalization and ritualization", in which unremarkable aspects of daily life became highly self-conscious acts.[35] Cookbooks turned food that Jews and non-Jews in Eastern Europe

of the Eastern European Jewish past, e.g. Gennady Estraikh and Mikhail Krutikov, eds., *The Shtetl: Image and Reality* (London: Routledge, 2000); Steven T. Katz, *The Shtetl: New Evaluations* (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Markus Krah, *American Jewry and the Re-Invention of the East European Jewish Past* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018).

30 Lara Rabinovitch makes a similar argument in the American case: "A Peek into their Kitchens: Postwar Jewish Community Cookbooks in the United States", *Food, Culture & Society* 14, no. 1 (2011): 99.

31 Eric Hobsbawm, "Introduction: Inventing Traditions", in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence O. Ranger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

32 See Krah, *American Jewry*.

33 Shirli Gilbert, "Jews and the Racial State: Legacies of the Holocaust in Apartheid South Africa, 1945–60", *Jewish Social Studies* 16, no. 10 (2010): 55–7.

34 Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture 1880–1950* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002), 171; Rabinovitch, "Peek into their Kitchens", 99. As argued by Cara de Silva, ed., *In Memory's Kitchen: A Legacy from the Women of Terezín* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 2006), xxvi, writing down food memories served as an act of resilience and "psychological resistance" for Jewish women imprisoned in the Terezín concentration camp.

35 Hobsbawm, "Introduction", 4; Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Contemporary Orthodoxy", *Tradition: A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought* 28, no. 4 (1994): 71.

had once eaten unselfconsciously as part of their daily diet into "Jewish food". South African Jewish community cookbooks boxed almost all their "traditional" recipes into a special, standalone section. Over time, these cookbooks created and perpetuated a canon of symbolic Jewish recipes. Immigrants, Richard Wilk notes, do not feel a sense of nostalgia for the entire cuisine that they have left behind. Instead, their memories and longings usually revolve round a limited set of emblematic dishes.[36] The repertoire of Jewish recipes presented in the South African cookbooks remained remarkably consistent between different books, different editors, different cities of origin, and across time. Almost every cookbook included recipes for *perogen*, chopped herring, gefilte fish, *babke*, *kugel*, *p'tcha*, *kreplach*, *kichel*, *tzimmes*, *kneidlach*, *blintzes*, *bulkes*, *teiglach*, *pletzlach*, and *ingberlach* (see the Glossary below). Occasionally, a more unusual dish appeared in one of them, like "Peas and Kleis", "Holishkes", or "Essig Fleish", but these were the exceptions that proved the rule. The cookbooks themselves played a crucial role in the formation of the canon. Their editors included certain recipes and excluded others. Earlier cookbooks influenced those published later. Newer books almost never added new "traditional" recipes to the repertoire. These few dishes came to stand for the entirety of Eastern European Jewish cuisine.

"Traditional" Jewish recipes served a ceremonial purpose, brought out on Shabbat and festivals as a way to demarcate Jewish time, fencing it off from the rest of the week.[37] A number of cookbooks decorated their Jewish sections with stylized illustrations of holiday symbols – a menorah, a Kiddush cup, a prayerbook, Shabbat candlesticks, and the Star of David.[38] By marking the Jewish recipes as separate from the rest of the cookbook, these illustrations distinguished the holy from the profane. "Traditional" food also symbolized the transfer of heritage from one generation to another: in *Eat's a Pleasure* (1980), for example, the "Jewish Traditional and Passover" section is illustrated with a cartoon cat mother and daughter setting the festive table.[39] As the first-generation South

36 Richard Wilk, "Paradoxes of Jews and their Foods", in *Jews and their Foodways*, ed. Anat Helman, Studies in Contemporary Jewry 28 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 242.

37 Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Recipes for Creating Community", 11.

38 Edelman, *Arcadia Recipe, 1st Ed.*, 5; Gertrude Harvey Cohen and Violet Wittert, eds., *The International Goodwill Recipe Book, Fifth Edition* (Johannesburg: Johannesburg Women's Zionist League, 1969), 113; Cohen, Jacks, and Cutler, *Eat's a Pleasure*, 209; *What's Cooking in Edenvale* (Edenvale: Sharon Jewish Nursery School, 1981), 126; *King David's Recipe Collection* (Johannesburg: King David Primary School, Linksfield, 1989), 167.

39 Cohen, Jacks, and Cutler, *Eat's a Pleasure*, 209.

African Jews acculturated into white South African society in the postwar period, "traditional" food gained enormous symbolic power. By offering their readers a connection to their "genetic" inheritance through this symbolic "traditional" food, community cookbooks created a usable past for postwar South African Jews.

Zionism and Yiddish culture in the cookbooks

"Traditional" Eastern European food was not the only type of Jewish food present on the pages of postwar South African Jewish community cookbooks. These books also celebrated the food of the new Israeli state. Scholars of Yiddish culture in South Africa have typically understood Yiddish culture and Zionism as being in direct conflict. In South Africa as elsewhere, this conflict played out as a battle between the Hebrew and Yiddish languages. These language wars, they argue, served as a battleground for intra-Jewish class conflict, with the "bourgeois" Zionists pitted against the working-class Yiddishists.[40] Reading community cookbooks complicates this binary. The cookbooks presented Eastern European, "traditional" recipes and Zionist, Israeli recipes in starkly contrasting ways. But "traditional" and Zionist recipes still sat side by side in the same books. Women who led Zionist organizations created cookbooks suffused with nostalgia for their Litvak heritage, and filled with dishes that had Yiddish names. At a time when male leaders were purportedly attempting to suppress Yiddish language and culture in the name of Zionism, community cookbooks offered a more integrated version of South African Jewishness.

Compared to other English-speaking Jewish communities, Gideon Shimoni has argued, South African Jewry had an "overwhelmingly"

40 Taffy Adler, "Lithuania's Diaspora: The Johannesburg Jewish Workers' Club, 1928–1948", *Journal of Southern African Studies* 6, no. 1 (1979): 70–92; E. A. Mantzaris, "Class, Community, Language and Struggle: Hebrew against Yiddish in South Africa 1900–1914", University of the Witwatersrand History Workshop, 1987, drawing on the classic account of the conflict between bourgeois Zionists and working-class Yiddishists in Ezra Mendelsohn, *Class Struggle in the Pale: The Formative Years of the Jewish Worker's Movement in Tsarist Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 118; Joseph Sherman, "Between Ideology and Indifference: The Destruction of Yiddish in South Africa", in *Memories, Realities and Dreams: Aspects of the South African Jewish Experience*, ed. Milton Shain and Richard Mendelsohn (Johannesburg and Cape Town: Jonathan Ball, 2000), 28–49; Veronica Belling, "Yiddish", in *The Social and Political History of Southern Africa's Languages*, ed. Tomasz Kamusella and Finex Ndhlovu (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 331–8.

Zionist character.[41] Zionism, Richard Mendelsohn and Milton Shain suggest, served as the "civil religion" of South African Jewry.[42] Women had long served as the backbone of day-to-day Zionist fundraising in South Africa.[43] In the postwar period, one of the most important women's fundraising activities was the production and sale of community cookbooks. The sheer number of cookbooks created by women's Zionist organizations across the country, over more than half a century, testifies to the importance (and effectiveness) of this fundraising method.[44] These cookbooks fostered a sense of pride in the South African Jewish contribution to Israel, by highlighting the specific projects that the proceeds from the cookbook would support.[45] Buying a cookbook was a serious business. As L. Wunsch, the National Chairman of Magen David Adom South Africa, noted in a foreword to the *Magen David Adom Recipe Book*: "The publication of this cookbook in aid of funds for the Magen David Adom does not only serve a useful purpose in many homes, but also enables us to assist Headquarters [to] carry out its essential services in Israel – a service which contributes to the health of the people and to the security of the State."[46] The fledgling State of Israel represented the Jewish future in postwar South African Jewish cookbooks, in contrast to the Eastern European past. Israeli culture seemed new and exciting, and putting "Israel" or "Tel Aviv" in the title could make all manner of simple dishes sound more interesting. Readers could find recipes for "Tel Aviv Cake", "Israeli Stuffed Cabbage", "Israeli Shortbread", "Israeli Nut Rusks", "Tel Aviv Brinjal" (aubergine), "Israeli Salad", "Israeli Cheesecake", "Israeli Roast", "Tel Aviv Cabbage Stew", and "Israeli

41 Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 27.

42 Mendelsohn and Shain, *Jews in South Africa*, 170.

43 Gitlin, *Vision Amazing*, 258–65.

44 These cookbooks included Cohen, *International Goodwill Recipe Book*; Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book*, 1954; *Bloemfontein Cooks Calling*; Horowitz, *Second Helpings*; Slome and Solomon, *Food Frolics*; Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book*, 1957; Miller, Schauder, and Glasser, *Magen David Adom Recipe Book*; Miller, *Magen David Adom Recipe Book*; *Recipe Roundabout*; *The Kitchen Glove Recipe Book: Incorporating Passover Palatables* (Johannesburg: Magen David Adom South Africa, 1975); Levin and Sacks, *New International Goodwill Recipe Book*; *From Hatikvah's Kitchen* (Cape Town: Bnoth Zion Association, Hatikvah Branch, 1984); *Just up your Street* (Cape Town: Bnoth Zion Association, 1988). Many other cookbooks were published by general Jewish women's organizations, which fundraised for Israel among a number of other activities.

45 Miller, Schauder, and Glasser, *Magen David Adom Recipe Book, 1st Ed.*, 5; *Kitchen Glove Recipe Book*, 5; *From Hatikvah's Kitchen*, foreword; *Just up your Street*, foreword.

46 Miller, *Magen David Adom Recipe Book, 2nd Ed.*, 3.

Chocolate Cake".[47] Jerusalem did not feature in these cookbooks. Editors and contributors found inspiration in Israel's newness, and in the Israeli pioneering spirit, encapsulated in the new, Zionist city of Tel Aviv, not the ancient city of Jerusalem. The cookbooks celebrated Israel's technological advancements by featuring advertisements for Israeli consumer products like the "Nanas" pot-scourers, which loudly proclaimed the product's "Made in Israel" status.[48] By purchasing a simple metal sponge, South African Jews could enjoy the fruits of Israeli industry and ingenuity, with the help of a product "far superior to any other available in this country".[49]

South African Jews could also reconcile their Zionism with their white South African middle-class values. After a trip to Israel in 1953, the South African Prime Minister D. F. Malan explicitly sanctioned South African Jews' attachment to the Jewish state, remarking that "the Jew can, and does often, become a good national as well as a good Jew . . . a good South African as well as a true son of Israel".[50] The apartheid system defined the Jewish community as white, and by extension, saw Israel as a white state, notwithstanding the mass migration to Israel of non-white Jews from Arab countries in the 1950s.[51] Bolstered by official endorsement, South African Zionism became a mainstream and respectable pastime. Community cookbooks offered a way into this pastime that went beyond fundraising. Unlike the "traditional" recipes fenced off into a special section, the cookbooks integrated Israeli food into their presentation of the general, aspirational cuisine that would help first-generation South African Jews move up the social ladder. For example, the *Recipe Roundabout* cookbook (1969) described tahini (or tehina) as "a cocktail dip, to be used as an accompaniment with falafel", an "Israeli specialty" which "is an ideal cocktail snack".[52] Serving such food to their party guests offered upwardly mobile South African Jews an outlet for expressing both their Zionism and their white middle-classness.

47 *Bloemfontein Cooks Calling*, 15; Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book, 2nd Ed.*, 102; Kangisser and Wolf, *Cookery Capers, 2nd Ed.*, 102, 109; *King David Schools Ladies Committee Recipe Book*, 8; Rhona Lief and Pam Levitt, eds., *Carmel Cooking for Compliments* (Pretoria: Carmel Schools, 1968), 77; Druck, *Club and I*, 79; *Kitchen Glove Recipe Book*, 64; Brodie, *Singing Kettle, 3rd Ed.*, 75; *King David's Recipe Collection*, 89.

48 E.g. Edelman, *Arcadia Recipe and Household Guide, 1st Ed.*, 200; Lief and Levitt, *Carmel Cooking for Compliments*, 52.

49 Lief and Levitt, *Carmel Cooking for Compliments*, 52.

50 Quoted in Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 214.

51 Ibid, 213–15.

52 *Recipe Roundabout*, n.p.

Eastern Europeanness occupied a somewhat different position in the white South African imagination. Throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, successive South African governments had come out strongly against continued Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe. Social commentators of the time cast Jews as a race apart, unable to assimilate into the majority "Nordic" culture.[53] Fears of "race mixing" came to a head with the Quota Act of 1930, modelled on the United States' Johnson-Reed Act of 1924. The Act effectively halted Eastern European Jewish immigration by imposing a cap on the number of immigrants from "quota" countries, which included Lithuania, Latvia, and Poland. Both the government and the opposition supported the bill, with the aim of preserving South Africa's "white stock".[54] Scholars have suggested that South African Jews in the middle of the century tried to distance themselves from their Eastern Europeanness.[55] Joseph Sherman has chronicled what he terms the "radical negation" of Yiddish and Yiddish culture amongst South African Jews. Litvak immigrants to South Africa, Sherman argued, wanted to give their children all the privileges that came with membership in white society. They quickly shed any cultural baggage that might undermine this. Jewish day schools deliberately effaced the language from the curriculum, and most Jewish children grew up without any knowledge of Yiddish.[56] The South African Zionist Federation played the leading role in this campaign against Yiddish instruction, seeing it as a threat to the Hebrew school system.[57]

In mid-century South Africa, the odds were stacked against Yiddish language and culture. Jews there experienced rapid social mobility in the postwar period. As first-generation South African Jews entered the middle class, they left the Yiddish-speaking, working-class roots of their Litvak immigrant parents behind.[58] The Zionist majority overwhelmed the small

53 Milton Shain, "Jewish Cultures, Identities and Contingencies: Reflections from the South African Experience", *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire* 18, no. 1 (1 Feb. 2011): 92.

54 Milton Shain, *A Perfect Storm: Antisemitism in South Africa 1930–1948* (Cape Town: Jonathan Ball Publishers, 2015), 12–15.

55 For the similar phenomenon that occurred in the American South in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and how it affected Jewish food culture, see Marcie Cohen Ferris, *Matzoh Ball Gumbo: Culinary Tales of the Jewish South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), ch. 4.

56 Sherman, "Between Ideology and Indifference", 33–9.

57 Shimoni, *Jews and Zionism*, 56.

58 Adler, "Lithuania's Diaspora", 92.

leftist, Yiddishist, anti-Zionist segment of the Jewish population. But Yiddish culture persisted in the cookbooks. Moreover, it persisted there thanks in large part to women's Zionist organizations, which published cookbooks filled with Yiddish-inflected recipes in order to raise money for Zionist causes, as noted earlier. By placing "traditional" food in its own special section of the cookbook, and cooking it only for Shabbat and festivals, South African Jewish women literally and figuratively tamed a messy and sometimes uncomfortable history into a carefully controlled and bounded resource. As they explored new and exciting Israeli and global food cultures in their cookbooks, the "traditional" food section offered a comforting cultural touchstone to which they could always return.

One could make a gendered division between the ostensibly masculine sphere of communal policy and official Zionist discourse, which suppressed and ignored Yiddish in favour of Hebrew, and the private, feminine sphere of the home and kitchen, where Eastern European Jewish culture, and remnants of the Yiddish language, persisted through food and oral tradition.[59] The existence of South African Jewish community cookbooks complicates this formulation. The community cookbook acted as a public forum and an official written record. While the subject was the home and the kitchen, women did not compile their cookbooks in an isolated, domestic sphere, but rather as part of their public community roles. In their cookbooks, South African Jewish women created a public space where these two supposedly conflicting forces could mingle and coexist.

Religious observance in the cookbooks

As these examples demonstrate, women actively shaped South African Jewish culture through the cookbooks they created. Looking at cookbooks can also help us question predominant views of South African Jewish religious culture. Scholars have typically attributed a passivity to South African Jews regarding religious observance. Like Eastern European Jewish immigrants across the British Empire,[60] most South African Jews

59 For an analysis of the gendered division between Hebrew and Yiddish in this culture see Naomi Seidman, *A Marriage made in Heaven: The Sexual Politics of Hebrew and Yiddish* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

60 Hasia Diner, *Roads Taken: The Great Jewish Migrations to the New World and the Peddlers who forged the Way* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 195–9.

abandoned strict adherence to Jewish laws governing personal, private behaviour, while maintaining inherited forms of religious ritual in public. In other words, they became what Jocelyn Hellig has termed "non-observant Orthodox".[61] Although the majority of South African Jews were affiliated to Orthodox synagogues, they attended synagogue services sporadically, and observed rituals like Shabbat and *kashrut* selectively. Despite their laxity in religious practice, they demonstrated a deep respect for Orthodoxy, which they viewed as the most authentic expression of Judaism.[62] Summing up the commonly held view, Mendelsohn and Shain have referred to a "muted religiosity", a "diluted form of orthodoxy" that South African Jews "honoured in the breach more than in practice".[63] Even in describing the *baal teshuvah* (religious revival) movement that took off in South Africa in the 1970s and 80s, scholars have seen the (mostly male) rabbinical leaders as the drivers and protagonists of this revolution, rather than the majority of ordinary laypeople.[64]

The cookbooks complicate this framing. In their cookbooks, ordinary South African "non-observant" women took on an active role in shaping religious practice. Throughout their publication history, these cookbooks featured religious guidelines written by local rabbinic figures. Cookbook editors gave these rabbis a platform to reach a new audience, but it was a platform on which the audience set the terms of engagement. The way that rabbis constructed these guidelines reveals that women in their homes determined the style of religious observance far more than any rabbinic authority figure. In writing about postwar Orthodox Judaism in America, Haym Soloveitchik has argued that the Jewish home "lost its standing as religious authenticator" as Orthodox Jews started to base their practice of Halakhah (Jewish law) on written guidance from rabbis rather than on what they had imbibed mimetically from their parents.[65]

61 Hellig, "Religious Expression", 102.

62 Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 226–7.

63 Mendelsohn and Shain, *Jews in South Africa*, 165, 189, 215.

64 See e.g. the outline of the movement in Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 226–40; recently, David Fachler, "Tradition, Accommodation, Revolution and Counterrevolution: A History of a Century of Struggle for the Soul of Orthodoxy in Johannesburg's Jewish Community, 1915–2015" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cape Town, 2022), 29–31, has gone some way to correct the record with regard to gender in the movement, highlighting primarily the role played by international "superstar" female speakers and local *rebbetzins* (rabbis' wives) in Orthodox religious revival.

65 Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction", 66–9. Glenn Dynner, "Dynner on Soloveitchik, 'Rupture and Reconstruction: The Transformation of Modern Orthodoxy,'"

But community cookbooks show that Jewish women in South Africa maintained a great deal of religious authority in the home, even after the advent of the baal teshuvah movement. Through the cookbooks, South African Jewish women created their own form of religious literature. These cookbooks acted as a form of "lived religion": what the sociologist of religion Meredith McGuire has called "an ever-changing, multifaceted, often messy – even contradictory – amalgam of beliefs and practices that are not necessarily those religious institutions consider important".[66]

As David Fachler has shown, the pragmatic, "accommodationist" postwar Orthodox rabbinate in South Africa knew that it would have little success trying to convince most South African Jews to take on stricter personal observance. Instead, rabbis and their wives focused on promoting the spiritual beauty of Judaism.[67] Successive issues of the *Goodwill Recipe Book* featured an article by Rabbi Dr. Harry Abt entitled "Jewish Festival Fare", which described the "historic, religious and mythical background of our Jewish Food", and provided explanations for the symbolic meaning of eating certain dishes on certain holidays.[68] In her article on the Passover seder in *Cookery Digest* (1951), Rose Smith, wife of the Worcester rabbi Mark Smith, offered "a word to the housewife on the symbolism of the evening", describing the meaning of the various items on the *seder* plate.[69] Other cookbooks devoted to Passover similarly focused on the symbolism of the seder, leaving out any mention of the many Halakhic stringencies of the festival.[70]

In a separate article in the *Goodwill Recipe Book* entitled "Ten Commandments for the Kosher Kitchen", Abt did attempt to impose some

H-Judaic, July 2022, https://networks.h-net.org/node/28655/reviews/10524792/dynner-soloveitchik-rupture-and-reconstruction-transformation-modern, has called some of Soloveitchik's assertions in this article into question. However, Dynner's critique focuses primarily on the European part of the article, rather than Soloveitchik's assertions about post-migration religious practice, and Dynner acknowledges that "notwithstanding the errors, oversimplifications, and speculations . . . Soloveitchik has identified one plausible explanation for the dynamic changes that occurred within Jewish traditionalism".

66 Meredith McGuire, *Lived Religion: Faith and Practice in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 4; see also David D. Hall, *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

67 Fachler, "Tradition, Accommodation", 50.

68 Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book, 3rd Ed.*, 80–81.

69 Maida Sakinofsky, ed., *Cookery Digest* (Worcester: Union of Jewish Women, Worcester, 1951), 99.

70 *A Book of Passover Recipes* (Cape Town: Bnai Brith Tikvah Sisterhood, 1966), 4; *Kitchen Glove Recipe Book*, 77.

simplified rules for keeping a kosher home. However, reading between the lines of these guidelines reveals some of the ways in which Jewish women in postwar South Africa observed a form of kashrut defined more by mimetic inheritance than by rabbinic authority. Abt warned readers to "purchase meat and all meat products from a butcher whose store is under the supervision of the Beth Din (Ecclesiastical Court)", and "not to think that meat from an animal which has not been ritually slaughtered can be made kosher by soaking and salting it". He also instructed them to cook meat and milk in separate sets of pots and eat them on separate plates, and to buy separate sets of dishes for Passover.[71]

The absence of non-kosher recipes in these cookbooks suggests that most South African Jews would not have mixed milk and meat in the same recipe, nor eaten pork and shellfish. But the guidelines reflect the reality that some people cooked and ate their meat, milk, and Passover meals on the same set of dishes, and that many purchased their meat from non-kosher butcheries that did not slaughter their animals according to the laws of *shekhitah*. Promotions for kosher butcheries and kosher food products sat side-by-side with advertisements for non-kosher butcheries, restaurants, and wine, in the same cookbook.[72] In other words, postwar South African Jewish women observed the rules of kashrut that mattered to them, and ignored those that did not.[73] They formulated an implicit but commonly accepted set of standards for themselves, one which fell outside rabbinic authority. While these practices could be read as logically incoherent when viewed through the lens of normative Halakhah, they had what McGuire calls "practical coherence".[74] They allowed first-generation South African Jews both to maintain mimetic tradition and adapt it to a new South African lifestyle.

The rabbis themselves believed that women were in the driver's seat when it came to the religious future of South African Jewry.[75] Women's

71 Cohen, Wittert, and Myers, *International Goodwill Recipe Book, 3rd Ed.*, 69.

72 Horowitz, *Second Helpings*, 39, 78; Miriam Horowitz, ed., *The Happy Hostess* (Pretoria: Sisterhood of the Pretoria Jewish Reform Congregation, 1952), 24, 39; Kangisser and Wolf, *Cookery Capers, 2nd Ed.*, 48, 72; Lief and Levitt, *Carmel Cooking for Compliments*, 42, 82; Druck, *Club and I*, 39, 95.

73 For a discussion of this kind of mixing of kosher and non-kosher elements in the Soviet context see Anna Shternshis, "Salo on Challah: Soviet Jews' Experience of Food in the 1920s–1950s", in *Jews and their Foodways*, ed. Anat Helman, Studies in Contemporary Jewry 28 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 10–27.

74 McGuire, *Lived Religion*, 15.

75 Rabbis in the postwar United States constructed similar messages. *The Jewish Home*

role in the transmission of religious practice to their children had taken on heightened importance during the migration period, because many immigrant men in South Africa had to work on Shabbat and some of the festivals.[76] In the postwar period, rabbinic figures from both the larger Orthodox and the smaller Progressive congregations writing in the cookbooks placed the task of maintaining the family's religiosity firmly in the hands of the woman of the house. As Rev. Nathaniel Jacobs, minister of the Pretoria Progressive congregation, wrote in *Second Helpings* (1950): "There is a lovely Rabbinic saying: 'A man's wife is his home', and verily the true 'eshet chayil' [woman of valour] will maintain and preserve the essentially Jewish atmosphere of the home and make it an abode of sweetness and light; a centre of Jewish traditional observance and spiritual value for her husband and children."[77] In an article that appeared only in the first edition of the *Goodwill Recipe Book*, Abt playfully acknowledged the gap between South African Jews' abiding cultural traditionalism and their religious laxity, suggesting that "Whole shoals of gehakte herring, hecatombs of gefilte fish, whole pyramids of teiglach, pletzlech and beigel, and gallons of borsht will not lend a Jewish character to a Jewish home, as long as the laws of Kashruth are disregarded". He argued that "The carrying out of the laws of Kashruth falls naturally and almost exclusively in the woman's sphere". But:

> She must be ready to explain her reasons for carrying them out, because on her satisfactory answers to the questions put by her children depends their future adherence to these traditions. Gone is the age when children were content with the reply: "I do this because my mother did it before me, and her mother before her, and we must carry on our customs without question".[78]

Abt both acknowledged the mimetic religious authority of women in the home, and argued that unselfconscious passing of tradition from mother to daughter would no longer suffice in the post-Holocaust, post-rupture world. He called on women to maintain the authority of the home while recognizing the necessity of that authority becoming self-conscious

Beautiful, published by the Women's League for Conservative Judaism in 1947, emphasized the importance of the role of the Jewish woman in the family's religious practice through the performance of "beautiful" holidays, "lovely" meals, and tasteful holiday décor. My thanks to the anonymous reviewer of this article for pointing out this parallel to me.

76 Belling, "Recovering the Lives", 69.

77 Horowitz, *Second Helpings*, 61; see also Brodie, *Singing Kettle, 3rd Ed.*

78 Cohen, *International Goodwill Recipe Book*, 52.

and explicit. Women publishing religious guidelines and explanations in community cookbooks answered that call.

The advent of the baal teshuvah movement in the 1970s and 80s changed many South African Jews' attitudes to religious practice.[79] In Shimoni's telling, the move to greater religious observance came initially from the religious-Zionist rabbis and lay leaders already established among South African Jews, led by the Yeshiva College and its head, the American-born Rabbi Avraham Tanzer, and later by the Yeshiva Gedola (post-secondary *yeshivah*), led by Rabbi Azriel Goldfein. The larger baal teshuvah movement, which eventually attracted even completely unaffiliated Jews, emanated from the small ultra-Orthodox Adath Jeshurun congregation in Johannesburg. Adath Jeshurun formed a *kollel*, a group devoted to full-time Talmudic studies, with the mission to bring young Jews "back" to religious observance. In 1972, the Chabad Hasidic movement, which had established a global outreach organization based in New York, sent its first emissaries, Rabbi Mendel and Rebbetzin Mushi Lipskar, and in 1986 the prominent Jerusalem outreach group Ohr Somayach established itself in Johannesburg. These various organizations attracted thousands of South African Jews to the baal teshuvah movement.[80]

The community cookbooks produced by some of these organizations demonstrate, by contrast, the role that ordinary lay women had in the development of the movement. The publication of *Chag Sameach from Yeshiva College* in 1984 marked a turning point in the history of South African Jewish community cookbooks. In both structure and style, the book demonstrated the inroads that the baal teshuvah movement had already made. Most of the cookbooks published prior to this point had focused primarily on teaching Jewish women how to cook cosmopolitan, international cuisine, and walled off their "traditional" food into a special, separate section. The editors of *Chag Sameach*, by contrast, structured their book entirely around recipes for Shabbat and the festivals. "Over the past few years there has been an increased awareness of religion", Joyce Levin noted in her foreword to the book. "With this new awareness have come the questions of what to do and cook on the various chagim [holidays]. In answer to this, we decided at the Yeshiva College to put together a selection of popular traditional foods as well as more unusual ones".[81]

79 Mendelsohn and Shain, *Jews in South Africa*, 186.

80 Shimoni, *Community and Conscience*, 229–32; see also Fachler, "Tradition, Accommodation", 91–139.

81 Joyce Levin, ed., *Chag Sameach from Yeshiva College* (Johannesburg: Yeshiva College PTA,

Each festival had its own self-contained section that featured all the recipes needed for that particular day, recipes both "traditionally" Jewish and those drawn from the secular repertoire. In the Simchat Torah section, for example, readers could find both the typical stuffed cabbage that Eastern European Jews ate on the festival, and recipes like "Stuffed Artichokes with Avocado" that modified the tradition to suit what had become a spring holiday in the southern hemisphere.[82] This structure implied a new, all-encompassing approach to religious practice. The editors took recipes that their predecessors had created for secular dinner parties, and harnessed them for the celebration of religious holidays. Through food, the editors introduced their readers to holidays like Lag BaOmer, Tisha B'Av, and Shavuot that many who had grown up "non-observant Orthodox" had not celebrated.

In *Chag Sameach* these South African Jewish women created a new religious literature for themselves. Every section of the cookbook included "an introduction to each chag [holiday] which we hope will answer many questions people may have about the various dinim [laws]". These guidelines offered practical Halakhic advice, but also provided a general Torah education for these newly religious women drawn from classic sources. Levin acknowledged that the final authority in Orthodox Judaism belonged to male rabbis, thanking Yeshiva College's head, Rabbi Tanzer, "who very kindly verified our information". But the book remained a product of the editors' own study of Jewish texts. "All of us who have worked on this book have learned something new", Levin wrote, "and we hope that you too will benefit from our research".[83] Levin's statement highlighted the role of the community cookbook as a crucial tool of religious education and socialization for women in the baal teshuvah movement.[84] *Chag Sameach* offered a new female chain of tradition in written form, one that existed between the oral inheritance passed from mother to daughter, and the textual authority of the male rabbinic elite.

Most South African Jews did not become observant. The percentage of those who kept strictly kosher, for example, had risen to 37.7 per cent in 1991, compared to 27 per cent in 1974.[85] But the baal teshuvah movement

1984), 2.

82 Ibid., 94–103.

83 Ibid., 2.

84 For an American example of this see Laurence Roth, "Toward a Kashrut Nation in American Jewish Cookbooks, 1900–2000", *Shofar* 28, no. 2 (2010): 74–5.

85 D. Tal and S. DellaPergola, *South African Jewish Population Study, Advance Report No. 11:*

had an outsized impact on South African Jewish religious practice. A study published in 2000 found that many of the parents of South African *baalot teshuvah* (female adherents) became more religiously committed themselves, without taking on Halakhah in its totality.[86] South African Jewish community cookbooks in general, including those produced by "non-observant" women, began to push a more stringent approach to kashrut. This change was particularly noticeable in the cookbooks' treatment of the laws of Passover. As mentioned earlier, community cookbooks from the 1950s to the 1970s discussed the meaning of the seder with little reference to any of the strict laws of the festival. The *Kitchen Glove* cookbook (1975), for example, told readers merely to avoid leaven and legumes during Passover, advising them that "all other foods may be used in the same manner, as at any other time of the year".[87] The *Union Jubilee* (1982), by contrast, detailed with great specificity how one should make one's home kosher for Passover, including instructions on the thorough cleaning required, which utensils may be "koshered", when, and the correct procedure for each type of utensil.[88]

In a special Passover message for Herzlia High Schools' *Pesach, Passover Recipe and Guide Book* (1990), the Chief Rabbi of South Africa Cyril K. Harris noted that the book would not merely provide Jewish women with Passover recipe ideas, but would "help to fulfil the main purpose of the Festival, that in going back we gain strength to continue our traditions in the future".[89] This statement suggests that the Chief Rabbi and his colleagues recognized the key role that these books played in South African Jewish religious practice over the second half of the twentieth century. Thanks in part to the community cookbook, women in the home did not lose their "standing as religious authenticator", at least not in the South African case. On the contrary, rabbis had to seek the authentication of the women who wrote and edited community cookbooks to reach their intended audience. Thanks to the enormous and consistent popularity of these cookbooks, and their ubiquity in South African Jewish households,

Religion and Religious Observance (Jerusalem: Institute of Contemporary Jewry, 1978), 11; Allie A. Dubb, *The Jewish Population of South Africa: The 1991 Sociodemographic Survey* (Cape Town: Jewish Publications – South Africa, 1994), 116.

86 Roberta G. Sands and Dorit Roer-Strier, "'Ba'alot Teshuvah' Daughters and their Mothers: A View from South Africa", *Contemporary Jewry* 21, no. 1 (2000): 69.

87 *Kitchen Glove Recipe Book*, 82.

88 *Union Jubilee Cookbook* (Cape Town: Union of Jewish Women of South Africa, Cape Town Branch, 1982), 3–4.

89 *Pesach, Passover Recipe and Guide Book*, 2.

they arguably shaped ordinary South African Jews' religious practices far more than other, more typical rabbinic texts.

Conclusions

Anne Bower has called the community cookbook "a subtle gap-ridden kind of artifact".[90] Since it is primarily not a narrative or discursive form, it does not always lend itself to easy interpretation. But reading community cookbooks brings to the surface aspects of the cultural and religious practices and beliefs of its editors, contributors, and readers that other forms of writing tend to obscure. The more discursive aspects of these cookbooks, the prefaces and guidelines, made normative claims about cultural, Zionist, and religious ideologies. They claimed to pass down "traditional" recipes from mother to daughter, to champion Zionism in negation of diasporism, and to instruct readers in normative, rabbi-produced Halakhah. The non-discursive elements of the books – their recipes, advertisements, structures, and publication contexts – undercut or complicate some of these claims. They show that women participated in a complex Jewish multinational culinary culture, preserved Yiddish culture within their Zionist beliefs and commitments, and formulated their own type of Jewish law.

South African Jewish community cookbooks thus reveal characteristics of South African Jews and Jewish communities that the existing South African Jewish historiography, based primarily on classic, discursive sources, has not fully noticed. They offer a new lens through which to observe the cultural and religious evolution of the South African Jewish population in the postwar period. Community cookbooks taught South African Jewish women how to be Jewish in ways that subtly tweaked the messages that women heard from their rabbis, synagogues, Zionist organizations, and Jewish day schools. These cookbooks reflect post-war South African Jewishness not as a set of abstract principles or characteristics, but as South African Jewish women practised it in their everyday lives.

90 Bower, "Our Sisters' Recipes", 140.

Glossary of food terms

Babke/babka – a sweet yeast cake

Blintzes – thin crepes folded over a cheese or fruit filling and baked or sautéed

Borscht – a soup made with beetroot, sometimes with the addition of meat

Bulkes/bulkas – yeast buns

Essig Fleish – Sweet and sour roasted beef chuck

Gefilte fish – quenelles of poached, deboned fish

Gehakte herring – chopped herring, normally sweetened and served with kichel (see below)

Gesmirte Matzos/Geshmirte Matzos – moistened matza baked with cheese, sour cream, and raisins

Hamentassen/Hamentashen – lit. Haman's ears, triangular-shaped biscuits filled with sweet fillings or poppy seeds, eaten at the festival of Purim

Holishkes – stuffed cabbage rolls, normally filled with minced beef

Ingberlach – a homemade sweet made of ginger and carrots

Kichel – a sweet biscuit made with eggs and sugar, rolled out thin and cut into diamond shapes; South African Jews typically serve kichel with chopped herring

Kugel – a baked pudding or casserole, typically made with noodles (*lokshen kugel*) or potatoes

Kneidlach – or matza balls, a soup dumpling made with matza meal, eggs, water, and fat

Peas and Kleis – a dish of peas with flour dumplings

Perogen – small pies filled with meat or other fillings, baked, and served in chicken soup or as a separate dish

Pletzlach – a homemade sweet made of dried apricots

P'tcha – jellied calf's foot

Saltenosses/Shaltenosses – dumplings filled with cheese, served in a milky sauce

Teiglach – small, round biscuits boiled in syrup

Tzimmes/Tsimes/Chimmes – sweet stew made with carrots and other root vegetables combined with dried fruits; may also be made with the addition of meat

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