Introduction

Studying Friendship in Jewish History, Religion, and Culture

LAWRENCE FINE

Henry David Thoreau, the remarkable nineteenth-century New England transcendentalist philosopher, writer, and keen observer of the natural world and human nature, thought deeply about friendship. In his work *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, he wrote, "No word is oftener on the lips of men than Friendship, and indeed no thought is more familiar to their aspirations. All men are dreaming of it, and its drama . . . is enacted daily. It is the secret of the Universe."[1] Yet despite friendship's ubiquity and familiarity, Thoreau lamented what he considered to be the scarcity of its consideration in literature: "Nevertheless, I can remember only two or three essays on this subject in all literature."[2]

While Thoreau certainly exaggerated the dearth of literature on friendship, the notion that it has not drawn the attention it deserves—at least in a scholarly way—is still pertinent long after he wrote about it. As one author put it, the study of friendship "is still compelled to justify its place in the history of ideas and the study of social institutions more frequently perhaps than its claims merit."[3] Based on the ethnographic record, friendship in human culture appears to be nearly universal and so commonplace that it may feel as if it may be taken for granted.[4] Indeed, friendship may seem

to be in little need of serious scrutiny, particularly at the hands of scholars. After all, who doesn't know what friendship is or what friendship means? Or at least so it might seem, for when we do begin to inquire into the nature and meaning of friendship, we quickly discover how complex the questions actually are. If we were to gather a dozen people and ask each what it means to them, we would likely hear a dozen somewhat different thoughts and views. Even if we restrict ourselves to thinking about this in terms of the contemporary moment (in, say, American culture), the variables that can influence and shape views about friendship are numerous: one's age and stage of life, social and economic class, education, family, ethnicity, religious culture, sexual orientation, political and civic perspectives, and regional culture, not to mention one's temperament.

FRIENDSHIP IN HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

If this is true with respect to one particular time and place, how much more so when we consider how different cultures and groups of people across time and space have conceived of friendship and engaged in its practice.[5] In his book *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience*, Brian Patrick McGuire writes, "Friendship is a subject that hardly seems conducive to academic treatment, and yet if we look back on the history of western culture we find friendship has been debated ever since the Greeks."[6] Friendship, like every kind of complex social relationship, has a rich and exceedingly varied history. This is true regarding the history of ideas about what friendship is or ought to be as well as its practice and its social history. In this light, the temptation to provide a universal definition or characterization is destined to fall short. Because friendship is historically and culturally situated, no sweeping or single idea can serve to inform its study without running the risk of simplifying complex matters or essentializing it. Social scientists of different types have taken an increasing interest in this subject as they investigate its nature with an eye toward its explanation and understanding.[7] While the results can certainly be valuable, the wide variety of approaches and conclusions in and of themselves attest to the fact that friendship resists fixed definitions and easy generalizations. As the editors of a collection of essays on anthropological studies of friendship have written, "The study of friendship is haunted by the problem of definition."[8]

All this is equally true with respect to the subject of this essay collection. We make no attempt to define friendship in Jewish culture or to conceive in advance what it connotes across the vast expanse of Jewish history and religious life. On the contrary, we are interested in the particulars. Our approach is based on the awareness that notions of friendship, as well as its practices, have varied considerably over time and are rooted in different intellectual, social, political, economic, and religious contexts. These contexts reflect the settings and circumstances in which Jews have lived with and among others, from ancient Israel to the Greco-Roman world, to the cultures of Islam and Christianity, to various parts of Europe and the Near East, to contemporary America. As the contributions to this book make clear, one does not have to look far to see the many ways in which conceptions and practices of friendship among Jews should be understood, at least in significant part, against the backdrop of the cultures among which they have lived. Does this mean that we can say nothing whatsoever of a generalizing nature? Are we altogether limited to many particulars without the ability to discern a larger and broader picture with some unifying features? We'll return to this question toward the end of these introductory remarks.

ATTENDING TO THE STUDY OF FRIENDSHIP

The scholarly literature on friendship in Jewish culture and history is exceedingly slim.[9] This would appear to be surprising, given the great importance of the interpersonal in Jewish religion and culture. After all, rabbinic tradition explicitly *names* the sphere of the interpersonal with the expression *ben adam le-ḥavero*, literally meaning "between a person and their fellow." This is in contrast to the category of *ben adam le-makom*, meaning the relationship "between a person and God." The former expression refers broadly to the obligations and responsibilities that govern the relationships between people, particularly in the realm of *halakhah*, or Jewish law. Rooted in biblical law and its sweeping social legislation and vastly elaborated on by the sages of the Talmudic period, *ben adam le-ḥavero* encompasses an enormous array of ethical *mitsvot*—that is, legal obligations. These include loving one's neighbor as oneself, loving the stranger, providing for the economically and socially marginal, releasing the financially indebted from their debts every seven years, being fair and honest in matters of business and law,

not shaming another person in public, seeking and granting forgiveness for personal offenses, not bearing a grudge, and much more.

In addition to these ethically rooted halakhic obligations, rabbinic tradition insists on conduct that goes beyond what is sanctioned by Jewish law. The rabbinic language of *gemilut ḥasadim*, usually translated as "acts of loving-kindness," captures this category of behavior. As Michael Fishbane puts it, "*Gemilut ḥasadim* . . . denotes gratuitous kindness (*ḥesed*); unrequited care; and superogatory acts. For the sages, such deeds were typified by clothing the poor; providing a dowry for indigent women; and burying the dead. The common core is that these actions express pure giving—works that cannot be repaid."[10] While there is a considerable body of scholarly literature that examines all these matters, the more specific subject of *friendship* has largely been neglected.[11] When it is occasionally discussed, it is typically subsumed under a more general discussion of ethics and the interpersonal rather than studied in its own right.

Why is this so? The most prominent reason is the privileging of *family* in the consciousness of Jewish tradition itself when it comes to the sphere of interpersonal and social intimacy. The narrative traditions of the Hebrew Bible, especially Genesis, provide the clearest evidence of this. We find numerous dramatic accounts of familial relations, particularly family conflict, but much less in the way of what we would identify as some form of friendship. And as we shall see, even the latter is usually associated with family ties. In postbiblical tradition, rules regulating the relationships between and among family members, wives and husbands, and parents and children, as well as extended relatives, continued to be a great focus of Jewish law (and nonlegal ethical literature) down through the rabbinic period, the Middle Ages, and beyond. Matters of betrothal, marriage, and divorce alone have occupied enormous attention on the part of legal authorities throughout Jewish religious history. Given all this, it is perhaps less surprising that scholars have shown little awareness of friendship as a category of inquiry.

Despite these considerations, the fact is that abundant evidence attests to rich and interesting notions and practices of friendship and to the fact that they have played a significant role in Jewish life. The studies in this collection amply demonstrate this reality. Our materials are diverse in a number of ways. First, they span the whole of Jewish historical experience, from the Hebrew Bible to the twenty-first century, as well as many of the different countries and regions where Jewish life has thrived. In addition,

they include a wide range of types of evidence: narrative, legal, philosophical and kabbalistic, personal letters and diaries, and additional kinds of historical documentary materials. Further, our book is interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary in nature; contributors employ a variety of methodological approaches associated with the fields of history, religion, literary criticism, and feminist and gender studies, among others.

This book is divided into four parts representing a thematic approach in which we cluster together studies that bear on what we believe to be instructive and illuminating categories. Each of these categories helps identify and focus on a range of different questions that orient our study. To be sure, these essays could have been valuably organized in a strictly chronological way insofar as traditions build upon themselves over time. It is also the case that there is considerable overlap among these categories. Thus, for example, the question of gender is implicated to one degree or another in just about every chapter. Still, we believe that the approach we have taken will serve the reader well, as we hope the rest of this introduction will suggest.

LOVE, INTIMACY, AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN MEN

Discussions of friendship in late antiquity were predicated on the conviction that friendship was primarily, if not exclusively, a prerogative of men. This belief had enormous consequences for Jewish views of friendship for centuries. In his study of male friendship in medieval Germany (i.e., Ashkenaz), Eyal Levinson analyzes traditions that—in the rabbinic view—could only apply to males. The primary, but not exclusive, basis for friendship and intimate personal relations was the study of Torah (i.e., the study of sacred Jewish texts), something limited, at least formally, to men. This is dramatically brought home by Ashkenazi rules that encouraged males to study privately without the distraction of women and sexual temptation. Levinson demonstrates that in the early thirteenth century, R. Judah b. Samuel and his disciple R. Eleazar b. Judah, two leading Ashkenazi rabbis, emphasized the value of love and intimate friendship between two males and urged its cultivation by means of a number of strategies and practices. Male friendship was regarded as contributing to the spiritual development of the individuals involved as well as to the spiritual well-being of the community as a whole.

As historical background, Levinson points out that this is rooted in earlier talmudic teachings in which the disciples of master sages—always

males—were enjoined to study together in pairs. An oft-cited passage in the popular rabbinic treatise *Pirkei Avot* (*Ethics of the Fathers*) 1:6 teaches, "Get yourself a teacher, and acquire a friend" (*aseh le-kha rav u-knei le-kha ḥaver*). *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (*The Fathers According to Rabbi Natan*), a treatise closely related to *Pirkei Avot*, elaborates on this teaching in a way that explicitly encourages male intimacy around the study of Torah: "This teaches that a man should get a companion for himself, to eat with him, drink with him, study Scripture with him, study Mishnah with him, sleep with him, and reveal to him all his secrets, the secrets of the Torah and the secrets of worldly things."[12]

More generally, the entire rabbinic project in late antiquity was essentially a male phenomenon. Master sages and their students were exclusively male, and the numerous schools and academies, in both the Land of Israel and Babylonia, were composed entirely of men. Certainly, though, some women found less-formal ways to acquire rabbinic knowledge, especially but not exclusively in the home. The voluminous corpus of rabbinic literature, the *midrashim*, the two versions of the Talmud, and other cognate literature were produced by men and thus were written exclusively from their point of view. These sources provide abundant evidence concerning the nature of social relations, at least among the elite intellectual men who inhabited rabbinic culture.

I would like to expand briefly on the question of rabbinic friendship raised in Levinson's chapter. In what is the most detailed study of friendship in rabbinic tradition, Catherine Heszer—in a book dedicated to the relationship between the Jerusalem Talmud and Greco-Roman literature—explores different settings in which male friendship among the sages came to life.[13] Her work is especially valuable insofar as it does not limit itself to prescriptive traditions but draws primarily on anecdotal and narrative descriptions of different types of activities. As such, it offers a window onto the world of personal rabbinic relations as lived experience, at least to the extent possible based on ancient literary sources. Heszer tells us that in the Jerusalem Talmud, the noun *ḥaver*—which appears hundreds of times—can connote many different things depending on the context in which it is employed, but it is especially prominent in connection with the study of Torah.

In addition, there were other settings for close personal relationships. Similar to Greco-Roman practices, friendship also developed in connection

to sages' visits to one another's homes and included the sharing of weekday meals as well as festive banquets. A closely related setting was participation in one another's family celebrations, such as weddings and circumcision ceremonies. Weddings, in particular, were occasions where fellow sages served as groomsmen and assistants in preparations for the wedding, as well as guests at wedding banquets. Similarly, the Talmud also provides numerous stories of rabbis visiting their friends at home when they were ill, accompanying them in mourning when members of their family died, and attending the funerals of rabbinic friends themselves. Still other narratives describe friendship among sages in a more public domain, in connection with working, traveling, visiting bathhouses together, and occasionally even going on journeys by ship to travel abroad. Finally, Heszer notes that rabbis also expressed friendship by giving gifts and supporting each other in moments of personal trouble, as well as by writing letters to each other when living at a distance.

All this is to say that interpersonal relations among rabbinic sages appear not to have been limited to intellectual and scholastic activities, as central as these were in rabbinic culture. Consistent with the intimation in the tradition cited from *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, companionship among sages was holistic in nature. Rabbinic culture was unquestionably based on exceedingly strong hierarchical rules and customs—and our sources do not shy away from depicting competition and interpersonal conflict. Nevertheless, we find a model of friendship that involved concern for one another's well-being, mutual support, and engagement in a broad landscape of interpersonal and social activities.

As with rabbinic friendship in the talmudic period, Eitan Fishbane's study of the kabbalistic fellowship depicted in the *Zohar*, the great medieval work of Jewish mystical tradition, attests as well to the ideal of all-male companionship. In its fictive description of the second-century sage R. Shimon bar Yoḥai, the putative author of the *Zohar*, and his circle of disciples, the *Zohar* offers a dramatic picture of male fellowship. Walking on their mystical journeys in an idyllic imagined landscape in the Land of Israel, the members who compose the *Zohar*'s *ḥevrayya* (Aramaic, "fellowship") encounter one another on the road, greeting each other with extreme joy and enthusiasm. These emotions are characteristically expressed by how happy they are to see the divine Presence—in kabbalistic parlance, the *Shekhinah*—shining forth from each other's faces. Profound friendship, marked by an intense

feeling of love and unity between individuals and among the companions as a whole, is absolutely central to the *Zohar*'s narratives and helps define the very essence of the companions' collective life. Fishbane explores this and other associated themes through a close textual reading of passages from the *Zohar*, drawing in part on a literary critical methodology.

These rich narrative traditions served as inspiration for later kabbalists, most notably Isaac Luria (d. 1572), by far the most influential figure in the great renaissance of kabbalistic community that developed in sixteenth-century Safed.[14] Luria was at the center of a fellowship that comprised about forty disciples, whom he enjoined to love and to support one another in every manner. In accordance with his teachings on the transmigration of souls (*gilgul neshamot*), Luria personally identified with the soul of R. Shimon bar Yoḥai and considered his closest disciples as soul incarnations of the other members of the zoharic *ḥevrayya*. Luria believed that he and his disciples were replicating and furthering the work of cosmic redemption in which the zoharic fellowship had been engaged. Among the most critical features of this work was his insistence that his disciples avoid anger, pettiness, and jealousy and instead cultivate a spirit of unity and love. Indeed, he taught that they should begin their morning prayers by contemplating their love and support for one another in times of trouble.

The Lurianic fellowship, in turn, influenced the development of other intentional kabbalistic groups with a similar commitment to interpersonal relationships. For example, in Jerusalem, the "Pietist's Study House of Bet El" (*Midrash Ḥasidim Bet El*) was established in 1737.[15] Four "contracts" or "bills of association" were produced over a series of years and signed by a small number of individuals within Bet El. In one of these pacts, the participants pledged uncompromising loyalty, love, and brotherhood toward one another. Aptly, they referred to their fellowship by the name *Ahavat Shalom* (Love of peace): "First, we the undersigned, twelve of us . . . agree to love one another with great love of soul and body. . . . Each man's soul will be bound to that of his companion (*ḥaver*) as if the latter were part of his very limbs, with all his soul and all his might, so that if, God forbid, any one of us will suffer tribulation all of us together and each one of us separately will help him in every possible way."[16]

Taken together, these and similar fellowships exemplify an intense and distinctive expression of interpersonal intimacy in medieval and early modern Judaism. We see that male companionship and friendship in the

history of Jewish mystical tradition took place in the context of community or, more precisely, within the context of intentional communities. Love, humility, trust, honesty, mutuality, and unity were the social goals that defined the community and were intended to transcend any particular relationship between, say, two individuals.

In a wide-ranging study, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson explores ways in which friendship is treated in the Jewish philosophical tradition from late antiquity through the early modern period. She demonstrates the great influence of the Greek philosophical tradition, primarily Aristotelian, on Jewish philosophical views of friendship, just as it dominated Western discourse on this subject more generally. Medieval and early modern Jewish philosophers—as in the case of their Christian and Muslim counterparts—were generally far more focused on metaphysical questions than on ethical and interpersonal ones. Friendship was nevertheless a subject of considerable interest among a range of Jewish authors. By far, the most important of these was Maimonides (d. 1204), whose teachings on this subject—firmly rooted in Aristotle's conception of virtue friendship as articulated in the *Nicomachean Ethics*—exerted great influence over Jewish philosophical writing for the next several centuries. Other Jewish writers, especially figures living in Spain, Italy, and the Ottoman Empire, were influenced directly by Latin translations of Aristotle's *Ethics*, unmediated by Maimonides. In the course of her study, Tirosh-Samuelson simultaneously addresses the ways in which premodern Jewish philosophers sought to exclude women from philosophical life, which male philosophers believed to be necessary for acquiring friendships. She writes that despite the classical view of women that led Jewish philosophers to believe that only men could truly experience friendship, we have evidence that some teachers—including Maimonides himself—conceived of the possibility of women's friendship under certain circumstances. *Dialoghi d'amore*, by Judah Abravanel (d. ca. 1523), imagines women's friendships through its fictive account of an intellectual and emotional relationship between a male and a female philosopher. Beyond this, Tirosh-Samuelson points to several early modern Italian women who we know had friendships with men, including the notable Italian benefactor Sara Copia Sullam (d. 1641).

WOMEN AND THE BONDS OF FRIENDSHIP

As the example of Sara Copia Sullam makes evident, Jewish women were not necessarily paying attention to what philosophical men thought about their interest in or capacity for friendship. There is a documented history of friendship between and among Jewish women, as well as between women and men, even prior to the modern period. Even biblical authors had no trouble imagining friendship between women, as is clear from the narrative account of the relationship between Ruth and Naomi in the book of Ruth. True, theirs is also a familial relationship, as Ruth and Naomi are daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. However, as Saul Olyan shows in his exploration of women's friendship, Ruth and Naomi forge a relationship that goes far beyond what one would expect between female in-laws. Under circumstances that begin with extreme suffering, they develop a relationship characterized by trust, loyalty, intimacy, and radical kindness, the latter evidenced by the repeated employment of the language and social gestures of *ḥesed*. Olyan ultimately poses the question of how depictions of female friendship compare with accounts of male friendship, most notably the relationship between Jonathan and David.

The question of friendship among family members takes center stage in Joseph Davis's study of Glückel of Hameln, whose fascinating seventeenth-century story-filled memoir is a classic of early modern Jewish literature, among the first full-fledged autobiographies by a Jewish individual, man or woman.[17] Davis pays close attention to the (Yiddish) vocabulary Glückel uses to denote friendship in the course of her lively and poignant account of her life as wife, mother, and businesswoman. We learn that for her, friendship was largely, though not exclusively, associated with kin, near and extended. This was partly due to her conviction that while not perfect, kin were more likely to be trustworthy and reliable, especially when life was tough.

In her essay, Martha Ackelsberg explores the vital but complex role played by friendship and solidarity in the Jewish women's movement in the United States. In particular, she focuses on the origins of the movement in the 1970s. Here, as well, the relationship between family and friendship is a central question, but quite dissimilar to Glückel of Hameln's views. Ackelsberg describes the Jewish women's movement as creating a (necessary) space for social and personal intimacy *outside* of the family, something

that goes to the very heart of a broader feminist critique of the constraints that traditional family structures have historically imposed on women's autonomy and agency.

The bond of friendship between women in the contemporary period is also exemplified in an especially compelling way in the writing—as well as in the life—of the great social activist and author Grace Paley (1922–2007). Through the voice of her semiautobiographical protagonist, Faith, Paley expresses the paramount importance of loving friendship among women: "By love she probably meant that she would *die* without being *in* love. By *in* love she meant the acuteness of the heart at the sudden sight of a particular person or the way over a couple of years of interested friendship one is suddenly stunned by the lungs' longing for more and more breath in the presence of that friend."[18]

FRIENDSHIP AND ITS CHALLENGES

Like every other type of social relationship, friendship is unquestionably a complicated matter, easily fraught for any number of reasons. It may be fair to say that the longer and deeper a relationship is, where much is at stake, the more likely there will be problems to navigate. Sometimes we stumble and have to repair a relationship. And naturally, even meaningful relationships sometimes come to an end. Glückel's memoir is filled with the turmoil and vicissitudes she experienced, frequently leading to disappointment, regret, and resentment. The several essays in this section speak as well to some of the challenges that come with friendship and the longing for it. In a study of the unique nature of twinship, George Savran explores the tense, complicated relationship between the biblical twins Jacob and Esau. While twins often have the very closest of friendships, at the same time they are susceptible to particularly intense rivalry and competition. Through a close reading of the Jacob and Esau narratives, Savran demonstrates how the possibility of intimacy and friendship between the two brothers ultimately fails.

Michela Andreatta's essay explores conceptions and practices of friendship among Jews during the Italian Renaissance, focusing particularly on one of the most famous rabbis of the seventeenth century, Leon Modena (d. 1648). In a way that is representative of broader sensibilities around friendship in early modern Italian literature, Modena speaks to concerns about the inconstant or fickle friend. Like Glückel, Modena worries about

disloyalty, dishonesty, and untrustworthiness, whereas true friendship—ideal friendship—is known by sincerity and faithfulness. The strong bond of genuine friendship survives changes in the fortunes of its partners, often involves self-sacrifice, and may even transcend the death of one of them. For Modena, such friendship between two people is described in ways that verge on the erotic, the union of like souls.[19] Andreatta also provides an account of the relationship between Modena and Sara Copia Sullam.

Glenn Dynner's account of friendship among young Hasidim in early twentieth-century Poland navigates the question of challenges to friendship in the context of highly distinctive social and political circumstances. Dynner describes the traditional religious culture that originally served as the basis for interpersonal relations among Hasidim, going back to an earlier stage of the Hasidic movement beginning in the eighteenth century. Friendship was forged through comradery among fellow Hasidim in the daily practice of the community. What happens, though, when commitments to tradition and the ethos of the community begin to wane among some—in this case, among younger members of the community drawn to emerging intellectual, social, and political movements? Can friendships survive when individuals break from the community and seek a different life, as in post–World War I Poland?

CROSSING BOUNDARIES: FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN JEWS AND CHRISTIANS, WOMEN AND MEN

How much similarity between individuals does friendship require? To put it historically, can we speak, for example, of friendships between Jews and Christians or between women and men in the Jewish world prior to the modern period? These are among the questions at the heart of the three essays that compose the final section of this volume.

In a broadly conceived programmatic essay, Daniel Jütte addresses the question of Jewish-Christian relationships by way of documentary sources from early modern Europe. He argues that while earlier historiography averred that genuine friendship between Jews and Christians was virtually unknown—according to some historians, even impossible—before the Enlightenment, considerable evidence proves otherwise. Jütte demonstrates his argument by unfolding the story of Hans Ulrich Krafft (d. 1621), a non-Jewish merchant from the region of Swabia in southern Germany,

who found himself in dire straits, imprisoned in Tripoli. Over the course of several years in prison, Krafft, raised as a devout Lutheran, was befriended and assisted in critically important ways by two different Jewish men, including a certain Mayer Winterbach. Jütte provides evidence of other early modern Jewish-Christian friendships to support the argument that these relationships were not as implausible and uncommon as other historians have claimed. He illuminates the phenomenon of interreligious friendship by drawing attention to several early modern developments that helped enable them. These included the role played by increased mobility and travel, intra-Christian hostilities that made associating with members of the Jewish minority more appealing, and crucially, as in the case of Krafft and Winterbach, a shared cultural identity as fellow Swabians that transcended religious difference.

In the second of her two essays in this volume, Hava Tirosh-Samuelson continues her discussion of friendship and Jewish philosophical tradition by turning to the modern and contemporary periods. Her study shows how developments that had influenced notions and practices of friendship in the early modern period—as attested in the essays by Andreatta and Jütte—advanced dramatically, beginning in nineteenth-century Europe. Tirosh-Samuelson speaks to the crossing of old boundaries between genders as well as between Jews and Christians. Interestingly, these two types of boundary crossings would overlap and intersect. For example, the nineteenth-century salons of wealthy German-Jewish women—where art, philosophy, music, and literature were discussed—were spaces in which different types of people came together, such as Jews and Christians, men and women, artists, civil servants, aristocrats, and writers. Rahel Varnhagen (d. 1833) was perhaps the most important figure in this burgeoning cosmopolitan culture and a woman whose life inspired none other than Hannah Arendt. Not only did salon life result in the forging of personal relationships (including romantic ones), it also influenced newly emerging conceptions of friendship.

As for the twentieth century, the figures of Martin Buber (d. 1965) and Franz Rosenzweig (d. 1929) loom large in the development of philosophical views about friendship and the interpersonal, as Tirosh-Samuelson demonstrates. Buber and Rosenzweig, themselves friends and scholarly collaborators, forged a philosophy of the interpersonal rooted in the notion of dialogue. Buber's influence, in particular, has been immense, based on

his classic work *I and Thou*. Tirosh-Samuelson also explores the continuing and especially prominent role played by intellectual Jewish women. No person exemplifies this better than the aforementioned German-Jewish émigré Hannah Arendt (d. 1975), philosopher and political theorist and one of the last century's most celebrated public intellectuals. Karl Jaspers, Arendt's doctoral advisor at the University of Heidelberg, spoke of her personal genius for friendship. Indeed, her large circle of friends comprised some of the great intellectual and literary figures beginning in the middle of the twentieth century: Martin Heidegger, Gershom Scholem, Walter Benjamin, Hans Jonas, Paul Tillich, Hans Morgenthau, Mary McCarthy, Salo and Jeanette Baron, Lionel and Diana Trilling, Randall Jarrell, Robert Lowell, and W. H. Auden, among others.[20] Moreover, as Tirosh-Samuelson shows, Arendt's penchant for attracting friends was matched by her highly influential philosophical thinking about friendship. Tirosh-Samuelson also reflects on the significance of the prominent and critical role of Jewish women in the contemporary feminist conversation around moral theory and the "ethics of care."

The crossing of boundaries in the name of friendship took on a literal meaning when Abraham Joshua Heschel (d. 1972) and Martin Luther King Jr. (d. 1968) marched together in protest across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, in 1965. In her account of the extraordinary connection and collaboration between her father and King, Susannah Heschel explores the several bases for their friendship. In addition to their shared opposition to the Vietnam War, Heschel and King held remarkably similar theological views as well as an impassioned, existential commitment to bringing the teachings of the Hebrew prophets to bear upon the evils of racism and anti-Semitism. In light of the sometimes-fraught nature of relations between the African American and Jewish communities, the friendship between Heschel and King has, for many in both communities, served as inspiration and as a reminder that the two have an important history of friendship and cooperation.

If we cannot produce a definition of friendship that encompasses the many different conceptions and practices studied in these essays, I believe that we can, nevertheless, say some instructive things of a unifying nature. In the first place, in these studies we find a vast intertextual conversation through time in which the Jewish "language" of friendship resonates and reverberates across Jewish literature. For example, the biblical account of

the relationship between David and Jonathan, as well as scriptural passages invoking the motif of friends and friendship found in Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, are cited again and again in subsequent discussions of this subject; these serve as grist for the development of new views and innovative interpretations. A surprising example of intertextual conversation may be found in the very title of Martha Ackelsberg's chapter, which begins with "Got Yourself Some Friends?" This unusual locution is a contemporary adaptation of the language of *Pirkei Avot* cited earlier: "Get yourself a friend." While this may be a whimsical example of what we have in mind, it nonetheless attests to the long career and endurance of a particular vocabulary, one that bears the signature and sensibility of Jewish religious culture.

Beyond a persistent vocabulary of friendship, many of the substantive conceptions and social practices discussed in these studies also reverberate over time. Maimonides's classic articulation of the nature of friendship, for example, influenced Jewish thinkers for centuries. Indeed, his views live on in certain contemporary Jewish understandings of friendship. For a completely different type of example, consider the fact that Arendt wrote a biography of Rahel Varnhagen. It is presumably no coincidence that Arendt—who identified so intimately with Varnhagen—created a latter-day salon of her own in her apartment on New York City's Upper West Side, home to the liveliest of conversation and to affection among friends.[21]

This collection of essays does not, by any means, constitute a comprehensive history of our subject. Many more examples of friendship in Jewish culture could easily be adduced. Taken together, however, we believe they represent and exemplify many of the most important themes and questions. We hope that this exploration will inspire further interest and provide the groundwork for future study of the nexus between Judaism and friendship.

NOTES

1. Henry David Thoreau, *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers* (New York: Penguin, 1998), 213.
2. Thoreau, *A Week*, 213.
3. Julian Haseldine, introduction to *Friendship in Medieval Europe*, ed. Julian Haseldine (Stroud, UK: Sutton, 1999), xvii.
4. On the question of whether friendship is attested universally, see Daniel J. Hruschka, *Friendship: Development, Ecology, and Evolution of a Relationship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 50–55.
5. In a chapter entitled "Friendship Across Cultures" in his book *Friendship*, Hruschka provides compelling evidence

for dramatically diverse notions and practices of friendship among different cultures. These include types of friendships "unimagined by Westerners." This notwithstanding, Hruschka argues that "as one peels away those aspects of friendship that travel poorly to other societies, a core pattern is revealed that consistently appears in descriptions of friendship across a range of societies." According to him, "Mutual aid based on need, positive affect, and gift giving between partners—represent recurring parts of friendship-like relationships as they arise in numerous groups." See Hruschka, 68–75.

6. Brian Patrick McGuire, *Friendship and Community: The Monastic Experience* (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1998), vii. For a valuable overview of the history of friendship, at least in the West, see Barbara Caine, ed., *Friendship: A History* (London: Routledge, 2014).
7. For sociological studies, see, for example, Rebecca G. Adams and Graham Allan, eds., *Placing Friendship in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Ray Pahl, *On Friendship* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000). Important anthropological studies include Evan Killick and Amit Desai, eds., *The Ways of Friendship: An Anthropological Perspective* (New York: Berghahn, 2010); and Hruschka, *Friendship*.
8. Killick and Desai, *Ways of Friendship*, 1.
9. Two important studies include Saul M. Olyan, *Friendship in the Hebrew Bible* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017); and Catherine Heszer, "Rabbis and Other Friends: Friendship in the Talmud Yerushalmi and in Graeco-Roman Literature," in *The Talmud Yerushalmi and Graeco-Roman Literature II*, ed. Peter Schafer and Catherine Heszer (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000). An interesting (and rare) discussion of intra-Jewish friendship in the context of Jews of Arab lands may be found in S. D. Goitein, *A Mediterranean Society: The Jewish Communities of the Arab World as Portrayed in the Documents of the Cairo Geniza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 5:72–97. For studies of friendship in Jewish mystical tradition, see the following by Lawrence Fine: "A Mystical Fellowship in Jerusalem," in *Judaism in Practice: From the Middle Ages Through the Early Modern Period*, ed. Lawrence Fine (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 210–14; "Spiritual Friendship as Contemplative Practice in Kabbalah and Hasidism," in *Meditation in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, ed. Halvor Eifring (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013), 61–75; and "Spiritual Friendship: 'Go Among People Who Are Awake and Where a Light Shines Brightly,'" in *Jewish Mysticism and the Spiritual Life: Classical Texts, Contemporary Reflections*, ed. Lawrence Fine, Eitan P. Fishbane, and Or N. Rose (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2011), 112–18. Certain contemporary French Jewish authors, most notably Emmanuel Levinas (1906–1995) and Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), manifested a particularly strong interest in the question and in the life of friendship. Levinas, Derrida, and the non-Jewish philosopher Maurice Blanchot (1902–2003) had intimate personal and intellectual friendships with one another. See, for example, Emmanuel Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking of the Other* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); Jacques Derrida, *The Work of Mourning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001); Derrida, *Adieu: To Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); and William Young, *Uncommon Friendships: An Amicable History of Modern Religious Thought* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2009), 121–49. See also Alon Goshen-Gottstein, "Understanding Jewish Friendship, Extending Friendship Beyond Judaism," in *Friendship Across Religions: Theological Perspectives on Interreligious Friendship*, ed. Alon Goshen-Gottstein (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015). This book is the product of the Elijah Interfaith Institute, a project

dedicated to studying and promoting interreligious understanding. The present volume is the first scholarly book to address the subject of friendship in Jewish culture in a wide-ranging way.

10. Michael Fishbane, *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 152.
11. Scholarly works on Jewish ethics rarely even mention friendship. One generally looks in vain for the entry "friend" or "friendship" in indices to these works. Consider, for example, Elliot N. Dorff and Jonathan K. Crane, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). This impressive book, comprising twenty-nine chapters and spanning 514 pages, contains no reference to our subject. One important exception to this general rule is Hava Tirosh-Samuelson, *Happiness in Premodern Judaism: Virtue, Knowledge, and Well Being* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 2003).
12. *Avot de-Rabbi Natan*, 8:3, translated by Judah Goldin as *The Fathers According to Rabbi Nathan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), 50. Concerning this book, see Jonathan Wyn Schofer, *The Making of a Sage: A Study in Rabbinic Ethics* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005).
13. Heszer, "Rabbis and Other Friends." With respect to the relationship between sages and their disciples, see Moses Aberbach, "The Relations Between Master and Disciple in the Talmudic Age," in *Exploring the Talmud*, vol. 1, *Education*, ed. Haim Z. Dimitrovsky (New York: Ktav, 1978), 202–25.
14. See Lawrence Fine, *Physician of the Soul, Healer of the Cosmos: Isaac Luria and His Kabbalistic Fellowship* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003).
15. See Fine, "Mystical Fellowship."
16. Fine, 212.
17. Concerning the general question of friendship among kin, see Hruschka, *Friendship*, 76–104.
18. Grace Paley, *A Grace Paley Reader: Stories, Essays, and Poetry*, ed. Kevin Bowen and Nora Wiley (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017), 315.
19. The relationship between friendship and the erotic is much discussed in the scholarly literature on friendship. See, for example, Hruschka, *Friendship*, 105–20. In Jewish literature, this matter figures prominently in medieval Hebrew poetry, where the popular themes of male friendship and love often resonate with erotic language. Some regard this as evidence of homosexual culture during the "Golden Age" of Spain, while others see it as an expression of intense homosociality. See, for example, Raymond Scheindlin, *Wine, Women, and Death: Medieval Hebrew Poems on the Good Life* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1986); and the bibliography on this question in Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, 406n59.
20. This illustrious circle of friends exemplifies the fact that by the twentieth century, intimate friendships between Jews and non-Jews (of all strata of society) had become altogether commonplace in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere.
21. Arendt wrote of Varnhagen that she is "my closest friend, though she died some hundred years ago." See Hannah Arendt, *Rahel Varnhagen: The Life of a Jewess*, ed. Liliane Weissberg, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957), 5. It is exceedingly interesting that the close (though turbulent) friendship between Arendt and Scholem began, in part, over their mutual fascination with the life of Rahel Varnhagen. In their conversations in Paris in February 1938, Scholem took great interest in Arendt's project to write about Varnhagen. Arendt sent Scholem a draft manuscript of her work on Varnhagen the following year and encouraged him to help her seek its publication. See Marie Luise Knott, *The Correspondence of Hannah Arendt and Gershom Scholem*, trans. Anthony David (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017), xi–xiv, letter 1.