



From ‘Shalom Aleichem’ to ‘Live Long and Prosper’: Engaging with Post-war American Jewish Identity via *Star Trek: The Original Series*

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Abstract

Star Trek: The Original Series (TOS) was produced at a time when American Jewish identity was undergoing profound shifts. Jews were becoming less marginalized in American society, less persecuted, more upwardly-mobile, and more central to American national self-conceptions. This essay will gloss that historical context and position the show’s lead actors, Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner (both second-generation Ashkenazi/Eastern-European Jewish immigrants), in this framework, locating them simultaneously in discourses of community representation, alien otherness and passing. The chapter will examine the acknowledged and subterranean ways these actors’ performances are inflected by this identity, as well as the show’s textual attempts to reckon with the Shoah (Holocaust) in episodes like “The Conscience of the King” and “Patterns of Force” (this was also an era in which the Shoah was being reassessed, and more broadly culturally cathected as trauma). *Star Trek* provides an excellent means of teaching this range of Jewish cultural figurations and historical experiences, as well as teaching media criticism as a transferable skillset. In its dealings with Jewishness, *Star Trek* both fails and succeeds grandly, as art and as an articulation of its professed progressive inclinations. In using *Star Trek* as a means of discussing a moment in Jewish experience, we can open up classroom conversations about how the changes of this period have given rise to the US Diaspora’s current ‘Americanization’; how later *Star Trek* has negotiated this terrain and complicated these initial portrayals; and, more broadly, how media arises from and participates in shaping its era.

Keywords

Jewish Studies · History · Cultural history · History of performance · Cultural studies · Trauma theory · *Star Trek*

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Editors' Log: Chapter 02

Star Trek: The Original Series featured two leading actors of Ashkenazi descent, Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner. As Erin K. Horáková shows in her chapter, the show subtly incorporated elements of Jewish culture, and also dealt directly and obviously with contemporary and historical issues at a time when Jewish American identity was changing dramatically. The series now provides an entry point for research and teaching in these fields, and a perspective on the important interactions between popular media and cultural identity. (Eds.)

Star Trek: The Original Series, 02×21, “Patterns of Force” (1968)

Abrom: *Isak, what is all this?*

Isak: *Abrom! Abrom, thank God you're well. This is my brother. They were in the prison. Beaten as I was, Abrom.*

Abrom: *Why were you in their prison?*

Kirk: *I was trying to see the Fuhrer.*

Abrom: *The Fuhrer?*

Kirk: *If I can see him, there may be a way of stopping this insanity.*

Isak: *Abrom, I owe them my life.*

Abrom: *Isak, Uletta is dead. Shot down in the streets.*

Isak: *She would've been my wife.*

(continued)

Abrom: *She lived for five hours while they walked past her and spat on her. Our own people were unable to help her. Now you ask me to help strangers.*

Isak: *If we adopt the ways of the Nazis, we're as bad as the Nazis.*

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, 05x10, "Rapture" (1996)

Winn: *I'm going follow the path the Emissary has laid out for us.*

Kira: *It takes a lot of courage to admit you're wrong.*

Winn: *And you think I lack courage?*

Kira: *I didn't say that.*

Winn: *But it is what you think. Those of you who were in the Resistance, you're all the same. You think you're the only ones who fought the Cardassians, that you saved Bajor singlehandedly. Perhaps you forget, Major, the Cardassians arrested any Bajoran they found teaching the word of the Prophets. I was in a Cardassian prison camp for five years and I can remember each and every beating I suffered. And while you had your weapons to protect you, all I had was my faith and my courage. Walk with the Prophets, child. I know I will.*

Go and see which is the best trait for a person to acquire. Said Rabbi Eliezer: A good eye. Said Rabbi Joshua: A good friend. Said Rabbi Yossei: A good neighbor. Said Rabbi Shimon: To see what is born [out of one's actions]. Said Rabbi Elazar: A good heart. (*Ethics of the Fathers (Pirkei Avot)* [1])

Droxine: But what else can they understand, Mister Spock?

Spock: All the little things you and I understand and expect from life, such as equality, kindness, justice. (*TOS, "The Cloud Minders"* [2])

The Uses of Jewish Studies and *Star Trek*

Jewish Studies is concerned with history, theology, cultural studies, war and genocide studies and many other mechanisms of inquiry, insofar as they relate to the core element of Jewish experience. In the United States and Israel (and, to a lesser extent, in the United Kingdom), several universities offer dedicated Jewish Studies degree programs. Many additional universities without such programs do offer some courses on the subject. It speaks not only to Jewish university students (41% of whom, in a survey conducted in America in 2000, said they had taken such a course [3, p. 229]), [24] but also to broader audiences.

The richness of this dynamic and diverse culture's arts, its religious variegation, its body of thinkers and its unique position in historical settings from ancient Alexandria to modern Atlanta attract students to the subject. All of these qualities,

as well as the scholarly and common interest we afford any body of people, render this heterogeneous ethno-religious community a self-justifying subject of academic work. Jewish Studies additionally enables us to access the several disciplines it touches.

Due to the specific history and position of world Judaism, the material that Jewish Studies addresses can help us think about, and come to in part understand, the mechanics of diaspora. The American Jewish history of immigration, assimilation and cultural resistances to assimilation (from within this composite community and without) can yield insights into many immigrant populations' experiences. Jewish Studies can similarly help us try to reckon with the incomprehensible: dynamics of violent prejudice and genocide. Without some understanding of the subjects encompassed by Jewish Studies, we cannot meaningfully engage with modern Western history and the current geopolitical situation.

Similarly, Jewish Studies can also help us understand American history generally. According to Jeffrey Shandler, "[t]he United States offers the most extensive opportunities for studying Jewish popular culture. This is not simply due to the variety and quantity of examples, or to the fact that, in the past century, America became home to the world's largest and most stable Diaspora Jewish population" [4, p. 470]. It is because "Judaism [is] now celebrated as one of the nation's three great faiths, even though the Jews [make] up but 3.2 percent of the population." [3, p. 226] It is thus difficult to understand American culture and the nation's *zeitgeist* without grasping the nuanced position and perhaps outsized impact of Judaism thereupon. And given America's influence for good and ill on the world stage, many people both within and without that nation find themselves interested in attempting to understand it.

As Stefan Rabitsch has argued in another chapter of this volume (in the context of wider debates in media studies et al. about the value and necessity of studying popular culture), *Star Trek* has a great deal to say to us as 'literature'. It is equally a testament to, and was a cultural agent in, the eras in which it was produced. We can use *Star Trek* as a medium with which to teach media literacy as a transferable skill-set. And as this volume as a whole demonstrates, like Jewish Studies itself, *Star Trek* can also provide us with a means of engaging with the wide variety of subjects it touches on—the subjects its various stories invite us to consider (or, in some cases, cause us to consider despite themselves).

Star Trek: The Original Series (TOS) was produced during a period when American Jewish identity was undergoing profound shifts. Jews were becoming less marginalized in American society, less persecuted, more upwardly-mobile, and more central to American national self-conceptions. Due to this timing, the people involved in its production, and the content of several of its episodes, *TOS* provides an excellent means of teaching this range of Jewish cultural figurations and historical experiences. This chapter will gloss that context and position the show's lead actors, Leonard Nimoy and William Shatner (both second-generation Ashkenazi/Eastern-European Jewish immigrants), in this framework. It will examine those actors' contributions in relation to discourses of community representation, alien otherness and passing, and explore both the acknowledged and subterranean ways their

performances were inflected by this identity. Some of the show's important early writers and producers were also Jewish, and these discourses of representation and passing also played out behind the scenes in ways that reverberated throughout the program. We will examine the show's textual attempts to reckon with the Shoah (or Holocaust)¹ in *TOS* episodes such as "The Conscience of the King" and "Patterns of Force". This period of assimilation was also an era in which the Shoah began to become a touchstone of American Jewish identity, during which those events were being reassessed and more broadly culturally cathected as trauma.

A Transitional Moment for American Jews

In its dealings with Jewishness, *Star Trek* fails and succeeds grandly, both as art and as an articulation of its professed progressive inclinations. In using *TOS* as a means of discussing a moment in Jewish experience, we can open up classroom conversations about how this era's changes gave rise to the US Diaspora's current 'Americanization'; how later *Star Trek* has negotiated this terrain and complicated these initial portrayals; and, more broadly, how media arises from and participates in shaping its time.

Though Jews had lived in North America since before the American Revolution, what we now think of as the American Jewish experience essentially began in the late nineteenth century, when a wave of Ashkenazi immigrants arrived fleeing pogroms in their old homelands and/or seeking economic opportunities in a new one. Like other uprooted new arrivals to America's crowded urban centres in this period, they faced privation and hardship [25]. Shandler observes that

To a considerable degree, American Jewish popular culture is defined by the two million Jews who arrived at these shores from Eastern Europe during the period of mass immigration, lasting from the early 1880s to the start of World War I in 1914. These immigrants expanded the number of Jews in the United States exponentially, making their presence newly prominent in major American cities, especially New York. [...] The East European immigrant community and its descendants have dominated the public profile of Jews in the United States ever since [...]. Consequently, the public identity of future generations of American Jews has continued to be measured against these immigrants from Eastern Europe and their experiences. [4, p. 471]

These Ashkenazi immigrants developed flourishing Yiddish-language publishing (newspapers, poetry, etc.) and theatre cultures. The hopping pre- and inter-war Yiddish vaudeville [26] and comedy scenes birthed the Catskills circuit. This region

¹A definitional note: "In the Bible, the Hebrew word 'shoah' connotes a sudden disaster or catastrophe. Thus, 'the Shoah' strikes many scholars as a more descriptively accurate term by which to refer to the persecution and murder of European Jewry between 1933 and 1945 than the more commonly used 'the Holocaust.' That word, of Greek origin, means 'a sacrifice (or offering) totally consumed by fire.' [...] By virtue of being direct and unmetaphorical, 'the Shoah' avoids the sanctification of senseless killing that is implicit in the word 'holocaust.'" [5, p. 233]

of New York state contained modest resorts popular with Jewish families (who were often bared from gentile hotels, even if they could afford them). There was even a nascent Yiddish film industry.

American Jews integrated into the larger economy to a limited degree, but faced bars to their participation in several elite professions and quota-based discrimination at various institutions of higher learning. Neighborhood covenants prevented Jews who made it out of the slums from alighting within *them*. American anti-Semitism “was pervasive, prevalent, and deeply-rooted during the interwar years. [...] When asked in June 1944, as World War II was under way, to name “what nationality, religious or racial groups in this country are a menace,” 24 percent of Americans surveyed named Jews; 9 percent named the Japanese.” [3, p. 223]

Despite this, “World War II marked a watershed in American Jewish life. The murder of six million European Jews shifted, by default, the center of world Jewry to the five million Jews of the United States. In the ensuing decades, anti-Semitism waned, and the nation voiced enthusiasm for its Judo-Christian heritage.” [3, p. 225] National prosperity, Jewish service in World War II, and Truman-era legislation outlawing racism in hiring and higher education enabled Jews to be accepted and successful in America. It was Jewish cultural achievements, however, from Yiddish loan-words to Phillip Roth books and Woody Allen movies, that, over time, positioned Judaism as part of the “triumvirate of the nation’s major faiths”. [3, p. 225] Secular and non-secular Jewishness became an important component of American self-conceptions of national identity. This is in keeping with the contested ‘melting pot’ rhetoric liberal American multicultural discourses routinely deploy: the whole takes on elements of the character of its components.

Jewish Bodies, Jewish Characters?

And speaking of ‘melting pots’, what is popularly considered more all-American than *Star Trek*? This public perception arises both despite and because of the program’s internationalist leanings and diverse cast. Perhaps Kirk functioned for some viewers as a WASP²-reading anchor leading a crew of ‘diversity picks’, representing how well this lot could do ‘when led by white officers’. Perhaps the show depicted a diverse, ascendant Federation-America, but safely contained that diversity by subordinating, by means of military discipline in pursuit of Higher Causes, the different to a presumed-dominant European hierarchy in the person of Kirk [27]. But reading Kirk is actually more complicated than that, in part due to issues of embodiment: *both* lead actors in *TOS*³ were the sons of Ashkenazi Jews who’d fled Eastern Europe. According to Shatner, he and Nimoy both grew up “in kosher homes, with three sets of dishes, presumably one meat, one milk and one for Passover, and they both were ‘called all the anti-Semitic names [...]”.

²An acronym for ‘white Anglo-Saxon protestant’.

³Additionally, “[Walter] Koenig’s parents were Russian Jews who had emigrated from Lithuania” [6].

Experiences like that create a sort of subtext, and as we got to know each other, those common experiences helped bind us together. It's almost an emotional shorthand.'" [6]

Nimoy's Jewishness in particular can operate as an additional layer of meaning for those who recognize it (often as an act of self-recognition) in the half-human, half-Vulcan Spock, and thus parse Nimoy and/or Spock as representational. If Nimoy as an actor's body or deportment signaled otherness, Spock as a character also clearly signaled his minority status in a way that 'read' in American political terms. "Many minorities empathized with Spock and identified him as one of their own. A young biracial girl wrote to Spock through a fan magazine [and] Nimoy was so moved by the letter that he responded to her, as Spock, in the following issue". [6]

Of the two leads, Nimoy was (and is) more often read as non-WASP. Nimoy's 'non-standard' body was able, with the aid of minimal 'China Yellow' makeup and prosthetic ears, to code him as (half) alien. Naturally there is a production rationale for this minimalism.⁴ Even so, it is striking that in a world where alienness is often signaled by extreme physical difference—Andorians, the Gorn, the Horta—Spock's 'alien characteristic' is, yes, his ears, but *moreover* the 'otherness' inherent in his looks and bearing. Nimoy's 'raced' body becomes the site and communicator of Spock's otherness. Additionally, in making Spock 'not entirely human', *Star Trek* makes him half Vulcan. This gives him something else—something equal to, or, in some ways, something even better than human—to be. Traditionally, the 'not-fully-human' quality ascribed to a raced body like Nimoy's was nothing like positive.

The episode "The Galileo Seven" [7], however, by Jewish writer Shimon Wincelberg, is less optimistic, and features Spock indeed being treated as 'less than human'. In this viscerally uncomfortable story, Spock is thoroughly undermined by humans who refuse to trust him or behave professionally under his temporary command on a fairly standard away-mission-gone-very-wrong. These members of Starfleet forget themselves (and their training, we must assume) and behave mutinously, explicitly because Spock is culturally different from them, as demonstrated by his divergent attitudes on such socially-constructed and religiously-coded subjects as the treatment of corpses. Spock is thus marginalized in realistic and contemporary ways.

Spock is not only non-human, he also lives outside the culture he was raised in. As his human mother Amanda suggests in "Journey to Babel" [8], due to his mixed heritage Spock feels at home nowhere. Nimoy himself was far from his family and home while *TOS* was being shot. During filming, Nimoy so missed Yiddish that he

⁴It would have been difficult for Nimoy to work for years in a cumbersome get-up. This character design would also have been time-consuming to maintain (and thus expensive for the studio). Such factors also need to be borne in mind when we make generally valid criticisms of the Federation's apparent pro-human biases. By *Star Trek: The Next Generation (TNG)*, producers trusted *Star Trek* as a property sufficiently to make frankly Herculean production efforts for Brent Spiner and Michael Dorn's characters. But circa *TOS*, no one yet understood that *Star Trek* would become *Star Trek*, a property that would pay dividends on such storytelling investments. For a similar case of logistics limiting a televisual depiction of alien otherness, see the production-level revisions to *Blakes 7*'s Cally.

found a psychologist with a similar background, paid her for her time, and simply spoke to her regularly in their shared language [9]⁵.

As a creation of Nimoy's and as a character considered more fully, Spock is perhaps most Jewish in his 'failure' to fully integrate and be completely happy. After all, it is a truth universally acknowledged that the quintessential affects of Jewish experience are the unease attendant on displacement and/or perpetually being in the minority, and longing. Traditionally, one longed for lost Israel, and for the destroyed Temple. The Wailing Wall, one of the central devotional objects in Jewish thought, is an incomplete and ruined monument not just to the holy place in question but also to the abiding memory of its loss. The site has since become cathected with the memories of other losses—I am writing this essay on Tisha B'Av, a fast day that originally commemorated the destruction of the first and second temple. The wall and day alike are now also charged with carrying the memory of subsequent disasters to befall Jews, including hard-hitting Soviet purges and the Shoah.

Spock goes through the world contained, but when his emotional control is fractured (in "The Naked Time" [10], for example), he grapples with a sadness that, despite the consolations of logic, apparently lies close to the surface. Despite how immensely poorly the development was handled, it almost made sense for the 2009 reboot film to destroy Vulcan, because in a way Vulcan was always inaccessible, longed-for and lost. It seems narratively impossible for Spock to live at home on Vulcan, happily settled rather than positioned as something of a 'wandering Jew'. *Star Trek: The Motion Picture (ST:I)* makes this explicit [11]. Spock fails to complete the final ritual of *kolinahr* and returns to the *Enterprise*. Even as an old man in *TNG* we see Ambassador Spock living in self-imposed exile on Romulus, separated from his closest friends and sundered from his patrimony (leaving Picard, like the wrong brother, to receive Sarek's dying blessing and pass it on) [12].

But if Spock's Jewishness influences the character's melancholy core, it is also a driving force behind some of Spock's most iconic, beloved and affirming contributions to culture. Nimoy based the famous Vulcan salute "on the raising of the hands during the [Jewish] priestly blessing. This invocation of the priestly sign was deliberate, something [Nimoy] remembered from peeking at the priestly blessing in shul when he was a child, though the congregation is meant to look away from those performing priestly blessing" [6]. There is likewise a certain similarity between the Vulcan call and response 'live long and prosper'/'peace and long life' and the traditional Hebrew blessing 'shalom aleichem (peace be upon you)'/ 'aleichem shalom (upon you be peace)'.

If Nimoy reads as Other and representationally Jewish, then Shatner 'passes', and is effectually the New Jew, completely and even representatively "all-American [in] name and character" [6]. Yet as with Nimoy, for 'those in the know', Shatner's

⁵In an alternate timeline in which Yiddish theatre culture still thrived as before the war, Nimoy, who had "a brief stint working with famous Yiddish theatre maven Maurice Schwartz" [9], might well have been claimed by Jewish theatre, even as Jews now claim him as one of their own. But, in keeping with our discussion of a defining nostalgia, this was not to be: Yiddish theatre is a lost art, formerly conducted in a now-dying language, by and for a now-lost world.

Kirk can simultaneously be read as Jewish. After all, who knows better than other Jews what a crock 'funny, she doesn't look Jewish!' (a cliché Mel Brooks mocked in his sf parody *Space Balls* (1987) [13]) can be?

There are a range of recognizable American Jewish performance styles, most of which are rooted, as Shandler indicated above, in the legacy of the Askenazi community. I speak here not only of 'formal' performance modes associated with Catskills Jewish comedy, vaudeville and Yiddish theatre (etc.), but also of modes of voiced and embodied affect associated with the performance of *Jewishness* (a performative mode functioning something like Judith Butler's formulation of gender does). If cultural affiliations are performative, then Shatner at times brings his own to Kirk—perhaps unwittingly, perhaps slyly. In his eclectic book *Jewish Themes in Star Trek*, Rabbi Yonassan Gershom observes that "*Star Trek* is full of Jewish references and in-jokes. Most American Jews pick up on them. On the other hand, these same references go right over the heads of native-born Israelis. Why? Because most Israelis don't know the Yiddish idioms upon which they are based" [14]. Shatner's at times vehement physical performances and 'stilted' line deliveries strike me not only as strongly rooted in his Olivier-era Shakespearian background⁶, but also as somewhat reliant on the emphatic gestures and 'stilted' speech patterns of the community to which he belongs.

A linguist could, I think, tease out an affinity between Shatner's falling initial syllables and his successive pause-and-pick-up (more prominent in later seasons, as he settled into the role) and the 'you *want* I should *what*?' rhythm of Yiddish speakers communicating via American English. Even Shatner's tendency to let sentences fall as rhetorical questions often seems to append an invisible 'nu?' [28] to the end of his phrases. Given Shatner's background, it would be remarkable if, at least as a young man, he was not thoroughly permeated by the linguistic habits of his family and community and prone to replicating them (without necessarily realizing as much).

The episode "A Piece of the Action" [15] sees Spock and Kirk cheerfully kvetching (moaning and arguing) about Kirk's driving, coming off like an old buby and zedey (Jewish grandmother and grandfather). Kirk's card-game bluffing and his physical position in the final frame are pure Zero Mostel—these scenes play like something out of Mel Brooks' *The Producers* (1968) [16].

Kirk's comedic timing, a hugely important element of Shatner's performance, often feels derived from a Jewish tradition. Freud characterized Jewish humor as uniquely self-deprecating [17, p. 64 f.], and Kirk delivers many of his jokes with a gently wry turn. This is quite at odds with the current popular perception of Kirk as a swaggering, grotesquely confident Zapp Brannigan figure. This retroactive reimagining of the character exaggerates Kirk's performative, contemporary (i.e. twenty-first century) masculinity, simultaneously stripping out these ethnic undercurrents.⁷ Gershom also points out that Kirk's naches-laden (smugly proud) final

⁶This could be a paper in and of itself, but as a brief point, note his treatment of iambs.

⁷Among other referents, such as Hornblower, Kirk's acknowledged nautical-fiction predecessor [18].

lines in “The Changeling” [19] are (particularly their delivery, I think) “a classic Jewish joke!”

Kirk: Well, it thought I was its mother, didn't it? Do you think I'm completely without feelings, Mister Spock? You saw what it did for Scotty. What a doctor it would've made. My son, the doctor. Kind of gets you right there, doesn't it?

Beyond Embodiment: Jewish Stories in *Star Trek*

If we step back from the leads, we can consider the whole project of *TOS*. The show has at times been billed as a Space Western, chronicling the exploration and expansion of the “final frontier”. This perhaps ought to be read in light of the actual ‘pioneer settlement’ occurring contemporaneously: the contested colonial project of making the Israeli desert bloom. This was not a minor development in the American political consciousness. In the wake of World War II, Jewish Americans advocated Zionism as a response to the Shoah and advanced funds and aid towards this goal, sometimes emigrating themselves. The 1958 book and 1960 film *Exodus* chronicled the foundation of the Israeli nation state, and they were very popular with non-Jewish Americans. “*Exodus* became an international publishing phenomenon, the biggest bestseller in the United States since *Gone with the Wind*. [The writer] sold the film rights in advance” [20].

Exodus's narrative of settlement relied somewhat on the already-familiar and popular framework of the Western (paralleling the ‘new’ nation of Israel with early America—the Jews are just like us!) for its American appeal. *Exodus* also presented a heroic and *current* narrative of ‘the frontier’ that was then coded as socially progressive. (Though all three frontiers in play—the West, Israel and space—were of course already peopled with culturally, racially Other inhabitants.) Thus to an extent not now readily accessible to us, *TOS* was being read in light of this slightly-antecedent Jewish political story that, like *TOS*, ‘adapted’ the Western framework. This gave *TOS* a sort of implied, structural Jewish association.

Like *Exodus* and the events that book was based on, *TOS* at times represents an attempt to respond to the Shoah. The force the Shoah now exerts on the American political consciousness has obscured the more ambivalent history of America's relationship with these events. Immediately after the war's conclusion, Peter Heyes tells us that “survivors often encountered insensitivity about what they had been through and lack of interest” [5, p. 254]. He notes “the oft-repeated view that silence enveloped the story of the Shoah in the 1950s and 1960s”, and states that

the enormity and extent of the destruction wrought by World War II tended to blot out the particular horrors visited on the Jews. It was only when the Shoah emerged as a cinematic theme at the beginning of the 1960s (*The Diary of Anne Frank* in 1959, *Exodus* in 1960, *Judgment at Nuremberg* in 1961, *The Pawnbroker* in 1965), and then the great breakthrough into public consciousness of the TV drama *Holocaust* in 1978, that survivors in North America felt empowered to reflect on their experience in public and were assured of an attentive audience. [5, p. 254]

The Shoah only became 'the Holocaust' ("a term not yet in use" in the 1950s [5, p. 226])—only *became* a "pillar of American Jewish identity" [3, p. 229] and a key part of Americans' visions of morality and political possibility—after time, after processing, and via art. The media and ideological entity of the Shoah is a construction of popular consciousness (even as the actual genocide is an indelible mark against the popular consciousness that enabled it).

Star Trek's negotiations of the Shoah therefore stem from a very specific, dynamic period—a period when the weight and meaning of these events was contested and shifting. For example, in 1968 it was possible to ask Jewish actors to dress up as soldiers of a regime that had slaughtered their people, including members of Nimoy's extended family [6], for a bit of a romp—like an unironic "Springtime for Hitler" [16].

In that episode, the well-meaning but ultimately ham-fisted "Patterns of Force" [21], the *Enterprise* comes to the planet Ekos to retrieve Gill, a Federation citizen and former friend of Kirk's who has gone missing. We later learn this over-ambitious academic decided to 'help the Ekosians' development' (somehow or other, it is never clear) by introducing Nazism.

Kirk: Gill. Gill, why did you abandon your mission? Why did you interfere with this culture?

Gill: Planet fragmented. Divided. Took lesson from Earth history.

Kirk: But why Nazi Germany? You studied history. You knew what the Nazis were.

Gill: Most efficient state Earth ever knew.

Spock: Quite true, Captain. That tiny country, beaten, bankrupt, defeated, rose in a few years to stand only one step away from global domination.

Kirk: But it was brutal, perverted, had to be destroyed at a terrible cost. Why that example?

Spock: Perhaps Gill felt that such a state, run benignly, could accomplish its efficiency without sadism.

Gill had not counted on a replica of an expansionist, hate-fueled, dynamic regime getting out of hand and replicating the aspects of its original he found undesirable—in this case, engaging in a mass racial culling of the state's pacifist, heavily Jewish-coded Zeon immigrants. The parallels are not particularly subtly drawn. Throughout this episode, Spock is coded as visibly different (nominally due to his ears, but people find him suspicious before the helmet comes off), and possibly Zeon: visibly so. We are even treated to a quick mocking of eugenics via a run-down of Spock's supposed deficiencies. 'Zeon' is of course a breath away from 'Zion', and the immigrants have personal names (Abrom, Isak, etc.) to match. Rabbi Gershom makes a fair argument that this episode is actually equally concerned with the then-contemporary Six Day War (1967). While I think that reading ought to be considered, I am here concerned with the episode's more glaringly-obvious allegorical content.

Hayes notes that rather than being extraordinarily competent (a belief this episode forces Spock to espouse), numerous commentators believe the Nazi's "allocation of German personnel and resources to the murder process [involved in the Shoah]" was performed at a huge "military cost to Germany" and "stripped the

Reich of people and often skills it could ill afford to lose” [5, p. 247 f.]. Nor does the manner of those killings speak of great efficiency. “[T]he killing installations were usually ramshackle and primitive [...] the camp more closely resembled a stockyard and slaughterhouse than it did an automated “death factory”.

We often give fascism this sort of retroactive shine: at least Mussolini made the trains run on time (except for how he never did). Such thinking is not only blatantly inaccurate, it is also a particularly dangerous form of nostalgia that privileges power fantasies over reason, let alone decency. In our current political moment, with neo-Fascism and neo-anti-Semitism on the rise globally, it should be only too clear what this kind of thinking can lead to. Yet it is thinking which reoccurs, which academics must thus seek to understand, and to help others to understand and see through.

“The City on the Edge of Forever” [22], written by Jewish author Harlan Ellison, positions the Nazis less ambivalently. In this episode, a change in the timeline in the 1930s enables a Nazi victory. Spock asserts that as a consequence of greater Nazi martial success, “millions [of additional people] will die”. He does not point out any upsides to that. In “City”, the Nazi regime is a threat to human survival and the progress that enables the *Enterprise* to travel the stars. The change in the timeline seems to wipe out the *Enterprise* itself.

TOS’s most sophisticated treatment of the Shoah is also its most veiled. “The Conscience of the King” [23] nominally concerns a genocide on Tarsus IV which Kirk escaped as a child. Kirk is one of the few surviving witnesses to the killings. The episode explores trauma, vengeance, the effects of time on both and the possibility of absolution as Kirk debates whether an aged actor is actually the dictator he watched execute thousands of people, and what to do about it if he is.

“Conscience” was broadcast not long after the 1962 trial and execution of Shoah-organizer Adolf Eichmann, brought about by Mossad, the Israeli foreign intelligence service. Mossad also killed Herberts Cukurs, the “Butcher of Riga” (note the appellation’s similarity to “Kodos the Executioner”) in 1965. These efforts were very much in the public eye. Mossad’s work has long provoked moral debates about justice, punishment, personal guilt and communal memory (especially as Mossad’s targets aged). The story uses several Shakespeare plays to explore these dilemmas, and to triangulate the relationship between Kodos, his daughter, Kirk, and Kirk’s subordinate Riley⁸. Riley is another member of the small clutch of surviving witnesses. Kodos’s daughter has been killing off these witnesses in order to protect her father from detection. She is perhaps Kodos’s most deeply-traumatized living victim: a young woman haunted by the violence of her past and compelled to reenact it, along with her Electra complex, on stage and off.

Kirk’s survival of a genocide event and this positioning of him as an avenger again code him as ambivalently Jewish. If “Patterns” shows the 1950s and 1960s’ consignment of the Shoah to oblivion, then “City on the Edge” is more sensitive to the particular gravity of the circumstances, and “Conscience” remains a fine and nuanced attempt to grapple with one aspect of the legacy of the Shoah, which offers few easy answers.

⁸Whom you may remember from “The Naked Time”—he’ll take you home again, Kathleen.

Boldly Going Further: Towards Future Work On *Star Trek* and Jewish Studies

Engaging with Jewish Studies via *TOS* would be far more than an exercise in herding together references. *Star Trek* is a productive framework via which to convey this history. Further, by examining *Star Trek* in light of Jewish Studies we can talk to students about evolving histories of representation, and of television making. We can help students hone their media analysis and critical skills by delving deeply into the complex relationship between this subject and this text. Grappling with something as vast and complicated as the question of how we can or should convey genocide and weighing the mechanisms that have been used to do so can be overwhelming in any context. By isolating and interrogating the quite specific examples *TOS* gives us we have both a discrete focal point and more than enough to start talking about, even before we look at the wider *Star Trek* universe.

The *TOS* material herein could generate several lectures, assignments and discussions (we have not even touched on race and Doctor McCoy). Beyond that, a class might spend a whole year looking at what *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (*TNG*), *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (*DS9*), the reboot films, etcetera, have to say about their periods and changing conceptions of Jewishness, alone or in concert with other, intersectional axes of interest. Thinking about the Ferengi, the Bajorans and the Dominion War in this light could be immensely generative [29]. The narrative role genocide plays in the reboot universe, for example, could be interrogated on craft and representational axes.

It is always difficult to convey the historical contingency of political opinion, or of artistic strategies. It is also often difficult to find a means by which to enter into modern Jewish history and topics. *Star Trek* is a useful and engaging way into the subject. Finally, Jewish issues are important components of several *Star Trek* narratives, and we can better understand *Star Trek* itself with the aid of this lens.

Over the years, *Star Trek* has presented Jewishness both compellingly and awfully. It has an ambivalent track record both in terms of reckoning with the ideas involved and in terms of presenting them. But again, if "Patterns" is one of *TOS*'s weakest episodes, then "Conscience" is one of its best: as art, as entertainment, and ultimately as an attempt to live up to the program's first, best destiny. By that I mean that ideally and quintessentially (the show's American liberal hang-ups taken in stride), *Star Trek* is a progressive, cosmopolitan, thoughtfully-written program and universe, as concerned with the future of human (and alien) relations as it is with the future of technology. *Star Trek* tells good stories about people trying to be good. *Star Trek* thinks the difficult effort of trying to convey life well-lived is worth its time, and yours. It has often managed this beautifully, and there is a certain resonance between the two epigrams that began this piece: between the conversation among rabbis about what it is to live well and Spock's encapsulation of the program's fundamental values. And from the production level to the narrative, Jewish stories have been an important part of this proud tradition.

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Recommended Reading

24. I have quoted extensively from the afore-cited *Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion and Culture*. This volume of essays would serve as a good entry point for students and educators interested in incorporating Jewish perspectives in their courses. If anyone wishes to brush up on the Third Wave of American immigration, during which the American Jewish community (in its current form) took shape, they might receive helpful grounding from George Tindall and David Shi's foundational *America: A Narrative History*. It will also familiarize readers with the American historiographic framing of this period.
25. Anzia Yezierska's 1925 novel *Bread Givers*, *An American Tail* (film, 1986), or the opening speech from Kushner's "Angels in America" might provide students insight into both these events and their reception history.
26. Clips of *Funny Girl* (film, 1969) may help illustrate this. Note that Brooks, Streisand, etc. are producing Jewish-interest films roughly contemporaneously with *TOS*.
27. For more on the American turn of the Federation, see Martin Gabriel, *How to name a Starship: Starfleet between Anglo-American Bias and the Ideals of Humanism*, another chapter in this volume.
28. An explanation of 'nu' can be found here: Wex, M. (2008). "Just Say 'Nu?': Nu!". *The Forward*, <http://forward.com/culture/12736/just-say-nu-01335/> (retrieved July 26, 2017).
29. *The Cambridge Guide* has relevant chapters on modern Israel and the Arab-Israeli conflict, as well as on Jewish mysticism.