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The Wiley-Blackwell History of JEWS AND JUDAISM



Edited by Alan T. Levenson

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The Wiley-Blackwell History of Jews and Judaism

Edited by Alan T. Levenson

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Preface

The Wiley-Blackwell History of Jews and Judaism offers a panoramic and lively overview of Jewish life from the Ancient Israel to the present. The 37 essays in this volume, written by leading and emerging scholars, clearly and helpfully address questions about Jews and their religion, folk practices, politics, economic structure, and manifold participation in general culture. Building on recent attention in Jewish historiography accorded to the lives of ordinary people, the achievements of Jewish women, and the sustained interaction of Jews with the general environments they inhabit, this volume addresses the fundamental and perennial questions that students and non-specialists ask about Jews and Judaism with sophisticated methods and up-to-date findings. Special attention has been accorded to eras often under-represented in previous anthologies (e.g., the early modern and the contemporary (post-1945) periods of Jewish history). Where a particular era or issue has bedeviled scholars, such as the relationship of Ancient Israel and the Hebrew Bible, or the nature of Zionism as it is reflected in the relations between the Diaspora and contemporary Israel, we have devoted multiple essays reflecting various points of view. Several issues such as the role of the Hebrew Bible in Jewish culture, the Jewish roots of Christianity, the nature of modern Israel in its ethnic, economic, and cultural dimensions (i.e., not only the Arab–Israel conflict) receive the attention they are not always accorded in multiauthored works. Understanding that not every aspect in this long history can be addressed, we have allowed the perennial questions asked by undergraduates about Jews and Judaism to be our text and allowed ourselves to be "ministerial to that text" (Leo Strauss) honestly raising the hard questions, but striving to provide clear answers.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the 37 authors who have generously shared their scholarly expertise and their explanatory passions in the excellent essays that make up this volume. Several of the scholars who contributed to this volume, in addition to contributing their own essays, suggested other contributors, other topics and raised a host of terminological and thematic issues that were of general benefit. Likewise, the anonymous external evaluators provided many alternatives, large and small, to the conception of this volume. The Wiley-Blackwell editors have been consistently helpful, from Andy Humphries who initially approached me for this volume, to Rebecca Harkin, whose wise guidance and encouragement brought it to completion. Special thanks are due to The University of Oklahoma which enabled me sufficient time and opportunity to undertake such an ambitious task. Three of the contributors to this volume (Norman [Noam] Stillman, Daniel Snell, and Carsten Schapkow) are colleagues in the history department. The Schusterman Foundation's Jewish Studies Expansion Project, in conjunction with the Foundation for Jewish Culture helped me identify a couple of additional contributors. The University of Oklahoma Judaic Studies program lent me the services of Mrs Melanie Lewey, who organized the original lemma list; Ms Jan Rauh, our former program administrator for Judaic Studies, who assisted me with correspondence; and Mrs Valarie Harshaw, who began the online index.

I hope that the readers of this book will share the enthusiasm of the authors and benefit from their wisdom.

Alan T. Levenson

Introduction

Since Jacques Basnage (1653–1723) published his first edition of *History of the Jews since the Time of Jesus Christ to the Present* in Rotterdam in 1706–1707, many authors, Christians and Jews, have tried their hand at narrating a story of uncertain antiquity and unlimited geographic scope. Among Christian authors, Basnage, Hannah Adams, Henry Hart Millman, and Paul Johnson have authored one-volume Jewish histories, with increasing empathy for their subject.[1] Efforts by Jews have been even more plentiful, beginning with Isaac Marcus Jost's pioneering *History of the Israelites* (1820–1829), written at the beginning of the movement known as Science (or Scholarship) of Judaism.[2] For the rabbinic and medieval periods, Jewish history writing mainly meant different forms of chronicling: martyrologies, poems, expanded genealogical lists of leading rabbis, and communal histories.[3] Earlier still, when Josephus (d. c. 100 CE) wrote *Antiquities of the Jews* in twenty lengthy chapters, he retold the biblical narrative until the Persian period, and then linked it to contemporary Jewish history. Josephus himself had previously composed *The Jewish War*, following the Greco-Roman tradition of relying on official memoirs and pushing hard for political lessons.[4] Only since Jost, however, have Jewish historians begun to approach their sources more critically, driven by a desire for Jewish emancipation, the spirit of nationalism, and developments within the guild of non-Jewish historians.[5] Arguably, then, nineteenth-century Jewish history writing added a new, non-liturgical, way of enshrining Jewish memory. Michael Brenner's recent *Prophets of the Past*[6] fulfills in a most admirable way the prophetic, tongue-in-cheek caution of his teacher, Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "that someday there could be history of the history of historiography."[7] Without question, Jewish history writing has flourished since the Enlightenment (or Haskalah) without descending into the mundane – far from it. In contrast to the supposed end of

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history, and the supposed decline of interest in historical context at the expense of presentist meaning,[8] the last few years have seen an impressive number of single-authored, one-volume historical surveys.[9]

Modern interest in Jewish history, however, may seem more a renewal than an innovation. The authors of the Hebrew Bible, our preferred designation for the Old Testament, came closer to the historiography of the Greco-Roman tradition than to their Jewish successors. The title of Baruch Halpern's *The First Historians* (1996) suggests that the Deuteronomist (late seventh century BCE) trumps Herodotus (mid-fourth century BCE), at least chronologically. Halpern cogently argues for the importance of historiographical intent: the desire to write history is sometimes present and sometimes absent. The notion of how to write history changes constantly. The Hebrew Bible contains the only written history of early Israel, although at least thirty non-extant books are mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and although archaeologists have turned up numerous sources, material and written, relevant to assessing ancient Israel. Since Jost, and especially since Jews began to create their own modern seminaries and colleges, and (later) succeeded in establishing themselves within academic institutions, a floodgate has been opened. Anyone who wanders down the aisle of an university library in the row labeled DS 135 (Jewish History) will find it a long walk, and if one were to add all the books with a Jewish theme or interest devoted to Bible, religion, anthropology, sociology, literature, or popular culture would find his or her sneakers wearing thin. All of these books have been written in the last century, most in the last half-century, and even if one included traditional works of Judaica, *sifre kodesh* (holy books), such as the Talmud or the Midrash, the actual books are classics translated recently, based on critical editions redacted somewhat recently, largely based on manuscript collections compiled by scholars in the modern world, working on models laid down by professional historians.

No single author could possibly master the secondary literature on Jews and Judaism written in the last decade, much less all that written in the years separating us from Jost. Even the best single-authored volume has another limitation that proceeds from the first: the specialization inculcated in Jewish studies at present (appropriately) channels the upcoming scholar away from exclusive reflection on Jewish sources, and virtually prohibits mastery of all strata of the same. Thus a prospective historian of American Jewry must immerse himself/herself in general American history and probably the literature of a historical sub-discipline (e.g., social history/economic history/cultural studies/gender theory). That scholar, unless he or she happened to have had what is deceptively termed a traditional Jewish upbringing,[10] is unlikely to be able to read rabbinic literature, and, depending on the field of inquiry, may not even be expected to know a Jewish language – Hebrew or Yiddish.[11] Similarly, a Jewish scholar engaged in biblical studies may or may not feel impelled to bring early rabbinic, medieval and modern Jewish exegesis to bear. But that scholar must master one or more of the subdisciplines of the biblical field, among them: Assyriology, Egyptology,

archaeology, comparative religion, and again, gender theory. That scholar of antiquity, unless she or he happened to have a taste for literature, might be quite unfamiliar with the extraordinary career of the Bible as a secondary canon of traditional religious literature from the rabbinic period to the present, or the impressive body of biblical-allusion poetry produced by modern Israeli authors, often self-defined and defined by others as secular.[12]

Indeed, ability to read biblical Hebrew, with its distinct grammar and relatively limited vocabulary, may leave one short of being able to read, understand a news broadcast or converse in modern Hebrew, the dominant language of the modern state of Israel (in which Arabic is an official language, while Russian and English are well represented but unofficial ones.) Few contemporary scholars move comfortably across the universe of texts and languages that once constituted a recognized core or canon of Jewish studies. Salo W. Baron (1895–1989) is often mentioned as the last to try this feat. However, as Robert Liberles notes, the reach of Baron's *Social and Religious History of the Jews* far exceeded its grasp.[13] Baron's project started with a clear thesis (e.g., Jews were better integrated into their environment than had been previously supposed, were always influenced by that environment, and had generally developed institutions of communal self-governance), but eventually got lost in a morass of fascinating detail. Gershom Scholem (1897–1985) a contemporary of Baron's, pioneered the study of Jewish mysticism. Scholem, a charter member of what has been termed the "Jerusalem School," may be the last champion of an internalist perspective on Jewish history.[14] In Scholem's view, the messianic Sabbatian explosion of 1666 emerged less as a proximate reaction to the massacres in Ukraine from 1648–1649, than from the expulsion from Spain a century and half earlier. Yet even the trauma of 1492 would not have led to Sabbatianism had it not been for a dialectical tension at the heart of rabbinic Judaism – that of halakhic (legal) discipline and primal religiosity. For Scholem then, unlike Baron, the motor to modernity may ultimately be found within Judaism itself.

At 18 volumes, the second edition of Salo Baron's work is slow going and the same might be said of some equally impressive achievements such as Shimon Dubnov's *History of the Jews in Poland and Russia* (1916–1920); Eliyahu Ashtor's *The Jews of Muslim Spain* (1993); Yitzhak (Fritz) Baer's *The Jews of Christian Spain* (1961): or, more recently, Jacob Neusner's five-volume *The Jews of Babylonia* (1969). Yehezkel Kaufmann's eight-volume *History of the Religion of Israel* (*Toldot ha-emunah ha-yisraelit*, 1937–1956) provides a comprehensive history of the biblical period, as Ashtor, Baer, and Neusner provide for medieval and rabbinic era Jewries, or, at least, their respective literary remains. Although advances in knowledge since Kaufmann's day in biblical studies have overturned many of his judgments, Kaufmann's work, even in its English-language abridgement *The History of Israelite Religion* (1960, translated by Moshe Greenberg), remains an impetus to further inquiry, as are the aforementioned works. These modern classics are highly reflective of the place and time in which they were written, as all histories are,

this one included. These authors, among others, may nevertheless be reckoned as founders of a growing number of subfields within Jewish studies, including thematic subfields such as economic history, mysticism, literary history, and gender studies. None of these disciplines exist in a vacuum: all have expanded the historians' task.

Multiauthored works such as this have challenging dynamics too, beginning with the absence of a consistent viewpoint, methodology, or literary style. In our postmodern environment this enforced diversity may seem mainly a plus. David Biale's masterful collection *Cultures of the Jews* (2002), adopts, as the name suggests, a broad definition of Jewish studies, and consciously seeks to break the hegemony of intellectual and religious history in telling the Jews' stories. *Cultures of the Jews* pushes the envelope not only in regard to what Jewish studies constitutes, but also the tastes of a readership for the language of the academy. This work has a more modest goal: to be ministerial to the texts produced by Jews and to the issues confronting them, as well as being highly responsive to what both Jews and non-Jews want to know about this civilization.[15] Jacob Neusner and Alan Avery Peck's *Blackwell Companion to Judaism* (2000) focuses on the religious expressions of Judaism, both through the ages and also thematically. Having studied with Professor Neusner three decades ago, I can attest to his consistent position: normative, rabbinic Judaism, while it too deserves to be analyzed text-by-text, can also employ the singular with some legitimacy; modern Judaism(s) cannot, and certainly not Jewish history, which consists of a mélange of many different Jewish cultures temporally and physically. In the modern era, a periodization that we will defend below, not all Jews are Judaists, that is, practitioners of Judaism. In other words, while even in a premodern setting Jewish civilization could not be subsumed into Judaism, that is, religion alone, there was at least a presumption that Judaism represented the ecology of the Jews as a people – that is certainly no longer the case.

When and where Jewish history begins cannot be determined, and it is a source of some amusement to see Jewish history described alternately as 2000, 2500, or 3000 years old. (Try to tell someone that American history begins with the Viking explorations rather than the colonial era, or, for that matter, only with the arrival of European Caucasians.) Of course, each of these positions has a good rationale. One may claim that only with the destruction of the Second Temple and the shift from sacrifice to prayer, priest to rabbi and Temple rite to study-worship do we have Judaism. Before this event, then, we have Ancient Israel or Biblical Israel, but not Jews and Judaism. Unfortunately, as Shaye Cohen has described in the *Beginnings of Jewishness*, the name Jew existed as a geographic designation then as an ethnic designation and only after as a religious one. It remains awkward to have Jews so long before Judaism. Pre-dating the start of Jewish history to the destruction of the First Temple in 587/586 BCE makes political disaster a default marker in Jewish history, yet it may be defended along the lines that the Babylonian exile became the editorial prism through which biblical material

pre-dating the destruction was reformulated. Once again, however, even if the word Jews does not precede the Babylonian exile, the ancient Israelites, Northern (Israel) and Southern (Judah), shared related myths of origins, though different priesthoods, monarchies, and sacred sites.[16] Notwithstanding the conflation, revision and invention of many traditions in the Bible, we accept the antiquity of others. Ancient Israel existed; Second Temple Jews regarded it as their history. If Jewry's beginnings are murky, its current and future conditions all the more so. This volume makes some attempt at summarizing the situation of Jews at present, but does not engage in an effort at prognostication. The well-represented sections on the contemporary Israeli and American Jewries reflect our judgment of the interests of the intended reading audience, the complexity of contemporary conditions, and, frankly, the abundance of good scholarship. No teleological judgment should be inferred.

The Gordian knots that entangle any effort to present Jewish history may be cut in a variety of ways. The first approach, an encyclopedic one, makes its choice of what is significant and what is less so by defining the coverage accorded subjects within a field rather than arguing a clear thesis. In English, *The Jewish Encyclopedia* marked one of the first fruits of Judaica scholarship in the United States.[17] The *Encyclopedia Judaica* (*EJ*), produced in the 1970s, has recently been revised and reissued.[18] The six-volume *Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World* (*EJIW*), edited by my colleague Norman (Noam) Stillman, also a contributor to this volume, counters the overly Ashkenazic, overly male, overly narrow focus of *EJ*, even as ameliorated in its second edition.[19] Both *EJ* and *EJIW* take advantage of the latest technology to create online versions, an improvement over the yearbooks which supplemented earlier encyclopedias, but only in theory, as many libraries lacked the budget or the attention of librarians to order the updates. European Jewries have produced a number of encyclopedias and Israel has produced *Enzyklopedia Ivrit*, a Hebrew-language Britannica, though with greater attention to Jewish interests, *Enzyklopedia Mikrait*, and others. These indispensable works are also enabled by the fruits of the last century of Jewish scholarship – the Talmudim are encyclopedic, but they are not encyclopedias.

Textbooks on Jewish history serve a very specific classroom need and there are several stellar examples, beginning with John Efron's edited volume, *The Jews: A History* (2009). Authored by four talented scholars, *The Jews: A History* offers a very desirable update to Robert Selzter, *Jewish People, Jewish Thought* (1980), for a generation the most widely used textbook on Jewish history and still unsurpassed in some of its discussions of religious and intellectual history. More visually exciting than Seltzer's trusty tome, Efron and his collaborators provide a richly illustrated, charted and time-lined text. This textbook is a teacher's delight and, used with collections of preferred primary sources, enough for a semester. The would-be student of Jewish history also benefits from specialized texts on the history of Jewish women, the histories of particular communities, and several high quality sourcebooks.

Why then, another volume offering this overview of the Jewish past? In a survey of the rapidly expanding field of Judaica Americana Marc Lee Raphael observes that few authors use both "Jews" and "Judaism" in their title. Raphael explains, "The problem is that few, if any, of the historians have mastered both the history of the religious life of American Jews and the history of those who had little or nothing to do with the synagogue. The full story of the Jewish and Judaic experience in America demands that the student read more than one book."[20] Multiplying this challenge by several modern Jewish cultures, not to mention eras, where some relationship to the synagogue could be presumed, it seems entirely reasonable, given the current flourishing of the field of Jewish studies, to make the introduction of new works and perspectives intellectually profitable. The contributors to this volume deserve great thanks for making their scholarly expertise available in a most accessible form. For many of the contributors, this meant summarizing the findings and reflections of long and distinguished careers. They have succeeded in doing so remarkably. For younger contributors, this meant stepping out of the deep immersion that early projects always demand, and placing their findings before a much broader audience of non-experts interested in Jewish history. They too have succeeded remarkably. All contributors, whatever stage in their professional careers, have exceeded my pleas that whatever approach they opted for, and whatever position they argued, the argument should not leave non-experts, non-academics, and undergraduate readers in the dust. For that, the readers of this volume will be grateful.

The organization of this work adheres to the four recognized periods of Jewish history roughly identified by the German-Jewish historians Abraham Geiger and Heinrich Graetz in the nineteenth century, although without Geiger's religious–intellectual designations for these periods.[21] We have stuck to this old-fashioned division: ancient, rabbinic, medieval, and modern, in full awareness that these designations are problematic and without the Hegelian sensibility, shared by most of the founders of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, that gave the nineteenth century its unwarranted confidence in the continual progress of humanity. If "biblical Israel" implies that the Hebrew Bible (or Mikra or Tanakh) governed Israelite society in the centuries separating King David from the dispersion, few, if any, scholars would agree with that implication. As Ehud Ben Zvi argues most sharply in this volume, the reality of ancient Israel is not so simply taken as a given. That being said, the Hebrew Bible's canonical structure deserves scrutiny (Frederick E. Greenspahn); as do the complicated roles played by the Priest and Levites (Steven Geller). Jonathan Stökl dissects the intersection of Israelite prophecy and that of the Ancient Near East, often a stumbling block to students, while Daniel Snell treats the later biblical books of the Persian period.

Treating the emergence of rabbinic Jews as the central story necessarily consigns many non-rabbinic Jews (e.g., God-fearers, Judeo-Christians, Samaritans, sectarians, syncretists, and even non-affiliated) to the sidelines. The chapters by Steve Werlin,

Peg Kershenbaum, and Julie Galambush make clear the wide variety and often locally specific versions of Hellenistic-era Judaism(s) that flourished in the centuries on either side of the dividing line we now call BCE and CE. Galambush emphasizes that stories remembered by both rabbinic Judaism and emergent Christianity reflected the orthodoxies that eventually developed, thus "The fact that Christianity had begun as a form of Judaism and, in some circles, had remained one for centuries, was largely forgotten." Building on his many publications on the subject, Leonard Greenspoon illuminates the role of translation in conveying the biblical legacy to various communities from the Hellenistic world until today, noting especially the role that Hebrew played in Jewish contexts – including the fiction of universal male literacy in the biblical original. Shai Secunda offers an overview of the consolidation of rabbinic culture in Sassanian Babylonia, with a focus on the Babylonian Talmud (the Bavli) as the centerpiece of this process. An enormous amount of work has been done lately reconstructing the history of early rabbinic Judaism, but the problems of dating and attribution in rabbinic sources remains a basically insolvable one – paralleling in many ways the issue of adequate controls on the biblical corpus.

The medieval era only began in the Christian West by the fiat of Renaissance-era Humanists and they were certainly uninterested in the obvious fact that the darkest age in the West (roughly 500–800 CE) corresponds pretty well to the consolidation of Babylonian Jewry, the emergence of the Babylonian Talmud to its long career as undisputed central text in (formal, hence male) education, and the liberation of Byzantine Jewry at the hands of Islam. Norman (Noam) Stillman and Eva Haverkamp, respectively, present the history of Jewish communities in the Islamic Middle East and North Africa (MENA) and of Christian Europe. At the tail end of what might be called the medieval world for European Jewry, Jane Gerber offers a condensed version of the central chapters in her lucid *The Jews of Spain* (1992). Special effort has been made to give due attention to the early modern history, which got short shrift by the first generation of Jewish *Wissenschaft* (see the chapters by Joseph Davis, Hartley Lachter, Gadi Sagiv, Yaron Ayalon, and Dean Bell). Following the seminal works of Jonathan Israel, David Ruderman and others, Dean Bell, one of the contributors here, has argued this (early modern era) has its own integrity.[22]

This volume focuses much attention on contemporary developments in the United States and Israel. While Michael Meyer's "Where Does the Modern Period of Jewish History Begin?" (1975) called attention to the somewhat arbitrary nature of periodization, he also acknowledged its utility as a construct and actually hinted at 1945 and 1948 as potential initiating points of a new era. These two dates correspond, respectively, to the end of the European Jewish tragedy called sequentially *khurban* (Yiddish), then Holocaust (Greek), then Shoah (Hebrew) and the establishment of the modern State of Israel (see the chapters by Peter Haas and David Bamberger). More recently, Moshe Rosman has made a compelling case

that a range of circumstances indeed signify a new era, often called postmodern, with these two centers of Jewish population as one of postmodernity's defining factors.[23] Obviously, the source material in the modern era (also the era – in Yosef Yerushalmi's celebrated view – in which Jewish historiography resumed) enables a much greater range of approaches than in earlier periods. The rich documentary evidence permits a reconstruction of emigration, acculturation, the private-domestic sphere, the role of women which in earlier eras necessarily relied mainly on elite texts on the one hand and the remnants of the material culture on the other (the Cairo Geniza offers arguably, the most striking counterexample).

The modern era is well represented in this volume, with primary focus on the paths of modernization (Carsten Schapkow, Jarrod Tanny, and Sean Martin), resistance to the same (Richard Levy), and Zionism as one example of a political response to modernization (Brian Amkraut). Jessica Cooperman takes migration itself as both a driver and as a mode of modernization. Kerry Wallach devotes a chapter to gender-specific aspects of the modernization process, while Michael Cohen explains the nature of formalizing religious movements in a twentieth-century context. The study of Jewish intersections with popular culture seems to be a quintessentially modern one, both difficult to limn and endlessly fascinating to laypeople. Ted Merwin's chapter presents the Jazz Age, Hollywood, stand-up comedy, and the delicatessen as chapters in a long history of a quest for American Jewish culture. His chapter finds a good companion in Keren Rubinstein's wide ranging survey of Israeli culture from 1948 to the present.

While several of our contributors have written on aspects of economic history, the chapter by Paul Rivlin directly addresses economic development in contemporary Israel. Ari Ariel explains the ethnic diversity of Israel and Laurence Silberstein continues his searching critique of American-Jewish public discourse of Zionism in the twenty-first century. Dana Evan Kaplan offers a panoramic view of American Jewry, while Mark Dunaevsky focuses on the accomplishments and challenges facing traditionalist Jewry, a subject of renewed scholarly interest. To round out the volume, Stanley Schachter provides a thumbnail sketch of Judaism's sacred calendar, and Marsha Edelman summarizes much of her research on Jewish sacred music as an important component of Jewish life and an example of the nexus of religion and that larger, nebulous, category called culture.

My acceptance of already existing interests as the driving force of periodization, subject allocation, and more, may seem to some a Whiggish approach to presenting Jewish history. The Whig historians were notoriously fond of master narratives, majoritarian foci, and happy endings.[24] I believe that a closer perusal of the articles here will go far to dispel that initial impression. The authors of these essays are often quite cutting edge, consistently explain their own premises, and do not shy away from challenging conventional wisdom, even as they portray that conventional wisdom fairly. Ultimately, the selection of topics was driven most of all by a collective sense of what questions we find ourselves answering most – as teachers, colleagues, and as a communal resource.[25]

Notes

1 Despite their considerable influence, I exclude from consideration popular works by Jewish or Christian writers such as Max Dimont's *Jews, God and History* or Thomas Cahill's *The Gifts of the Jews*.

2 On the emergence of the Science of Judaism (*Wissenschaft des Judentums*) see Michael Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987; first published 1974), and Ismar Schorsch, *From Text to Context. The Turn to History in Modern Judaism* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University Press, 1994). For a reflection on the contemporary state of the Jewish historian's task, with special reference to post-modernism, see Moshe Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History?* (Oxford: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2007).

3 Two differing and influential perspectives on the nature of Jewish historical reflection may be found in Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's *Zakhor. Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (New York: Schocken, 1989; originally published in 1982) and Amos Funkenstein's *Perceptions of Jewish History from Antiquity to the Present* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993; first published in Hebrew, 1991).

4 On Josephus scholarship, see Louis Feldman and Gohei Hata's edited volumes, *Josephus, Judaism and Christianity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1987) and *Josephus the Bible and History* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1989).

5 With the possible exception of Azariah Dei Rossi, the critical trend in historiography began earlier in the Christian world than in the Jewish – Voltaire's *The Age of Louis XVI* (1752) is often cited as the turning point.

6 Michael Brenner, *Prophets of the Past* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

7 Yerushalmi, *Zakhor*, 103.

8 Ismar Schorsch on Salo Baron, "The Last Jewish Generalist," *AJS Review*, 18(1) (1993), p. 49.

9 Among the best single-authored works surveying Jewish history, see Raymond Scheindlin, *A Short History of the Jewish People* (New York: Macmillan,1998), Howard Lupovitch, *Jews and Judaism in World History* (London: Routledge, 2009) and Michael Brenner, *A Short History of the Jews* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010).

10 Tradition and Orthodoxy should not be used synonymously, although they often are. On this point, see Jack Wertheimer, ed., *The Uses of Tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992); Haym Soloveitchik, "Rupture and Reconstruction," *Tradition. A Journal of Orthodox Jewish Thought*, 28 (1994), pp. 64–139; Jacob Katz, *Tradition and Crisis Jewish Society at the End of the Middle Ages*, newly translated and introduced by Bernard Cooperman (New York: Schocken, 1993) and the many works of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckman.

11 The issue of what constitutes a Jewish language is not so simple; what constitutes Jewish literature is even more contentious. See Hana Wirth-Nesher, *What Is Jewish Literature?* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994) and Dan Miron, *From Continuity to Contiguity* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2010).

12 Religious and secular are not true antonyms any more than tradition and Orthodoxy are real synonyms. See Jonathan Sheehan, *The Enlightenment Bible. Translation, Scholarship, Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

13 Robert Liberles, *Salo W. Baron: Architect of Jewish History* (New York: New York University Press, 1995).
14 David N. Myers, *Reinventing the Jewish Past. European Jewish Intellectuals and the Zionist Return to History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).
15 See Judith Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, eds, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish Religion and Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), which appeared between the conception and the completion of this work.
16 The Greek word usually translated "Jewish" (*ioudaizein)* appears in the Greek version of Esther 8:17 as a translation of the Hebrew *mityahadim*. The term Judaism does not appear in the Hebrew Bible or Talmud at all, but only in Midrash Esther Rabbah 7:11. See Shaye J. D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness. Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999).
17 Shuly Rubin Schwartz, *The Emergence of Jewish Scholarship in America: The Publication of the Jewish Encyclopedia* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1991).
18 Originally published in 1972 by Keter Press, *Encyclopedia Judaica* was republished under the imprint Macmillan Reference USA in 2007.
19 Norman (Noam) Stillman, General Editor, *The Encyclopedia of Jews in the Islamic World*, 5 vols (Leiden: Brill, 2010).
20 Marc Lee Raphael, "Review Essay: Rethinking the American Jewish Experience," *Religion and American Culture*, 17(2) (2005), p. 250.
21 For Geiger's periodization schema, see Meyer, *Ideas of Jewish History*, pp. 163–170.
22 Dean Bell, *Jews in the Early Modern World* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), pp. 1–15. See also David Ruderman, "Michael A. Meyer's Periodization of Modern Jewish History: Revisiting a Seminal Essay," in Lauren Strauss and Michael Brenner, eds, *Mediating Modernity* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2008), pp. 27–42.
23 Rosman, *How Jewish Is Jewish History*, pp. 56–81.
24 Fritz Stern, *The Varieties of History* (Cleveland, OH: Meridien Books, 1956).
25 Wherever clarity was not impeded, terms have not been standardized across chapters (e.g., both "Judea" and "Roman Palestine" are used), nor have transcriptions of Hebrew words (e.g., the spellings "Hasidism" and "Chabad" are both used, though both begin with the Hebrew letter ḥet).

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Part I
Ancient Israel

1

What Is the Hebrew Bible?

Frederick E. Greenspahn

The Hebrew Bible is a collection that contains 24 or 39 books, depending on whether the Minor Prophets are counted as one book ("the book of the 12") or 12, and whether 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, 1–2 Chronicles, and Ezra-Nehemiah are counted as one book each, as in the earliest Hebrew editions, or as two, as in Greek versions. Ancient Jewish texts designate these *kitvey (ha)qodesh* (holy writings) and *miqra'*. The latter term comes from the root *qr'* ("proclaim," hence, "read"), which also underlies the Arabic word "qur'an" and reflects these books' liturgical use. Medieval Jews spoke of the collection as *Esrim ve-Arba* ("the 24"). More recently, the term "TaNaKh," an acronym based on the Hebrew names of its three sections – *Torah* ("law" or "instruction"), *Nevi'im* ("prophets"), and *Ketuvim* ("writings") – has become popular.

Christians call these books the Old Testament. Ancient church leaders based that phrase on Jeremiah's prophecy that the Israelites' violation of their covenant with God would lead to the institution of a new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34). The term itself reflects the Christian belief that the traditional Jewish canon is preparatory for the distinctively Christian writings which are called the *New* Testament. Modern thinkers have struggled to find a theologically neutral term that avoids such supersessionist implications and can, therefore, be shared by all religious groups. However, it has proven difficult to find a universally acceptable name. For Christians, the term "Bible" includes the New Testament books, which Jews obviously don't recognize, while various compounds, such as "Hebrew Scriptures," "First Testament," and the like, all imply that these books are part of a larger whole of one sort or another. "Hebrew Bible" is probably the most widely accepted term, although parts of Daniel (2:4–7:28) and Ezra (4:6–6:18 and 7:12–26) are actually in Aramaic, as are one sentence in Jeremiah (10:11) and two words in Genesis (31:47).

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The Jewish tripartite division goes back to antiquity. It is mentioned in the prologue to the Wisdom of Ben Sirah (Ecclesiasticus), which the author's grandson added when he translated that book from Hebrew into Greek towards the end of the second century BCE, as well as in the last chapter of the Gospel according to Luke (24:44), which was composed nearly two centuries later. There may also be an allusion to the tripartite division in one of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The first section of the Bible (Torah) is also referred to as "the Pentateuch" (lit. "five books"), a term that originated in the second century CE. It includes Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The literal meaning of the word "torah" is "instruction." During the biblical period that was considered the province of priests (cf. Jeremiah 18:18 and Ezekiel 7:26, where God's word is relegated to prophets), who provided *torot* regarding a variety of different kinds of issues. However, since antiquity it has often been translated "law." That concept has tendentious overtones for both Christians and Jews. Whereas Jews have generally seen the commandments (*mitzvot*) as the Pentateuch's primary content, Christian tradition has often viewed those regulations negatively, frequently contrasting law to spirit. The Jewish emphasis on law has, in turn, raised questions about the purpose of the stories which fill the pages of Genesis and the first half of Exodus. Among the most memorable explanations is that of the medieval commentator Rabbi Solomon ben Isaac (Rashi), who explained that these are included in order to justify God's allowing the Israelites to conquer the land previously occupied by the Canaanites. That implies that God could also take that land away, as actually happened when the Israelite kingdoms fell to Assyria and Babylonia in the eighth and sixth centuries.

By the first century, all five of these books had come to be attributed to Moses, even though he is never mentioned in Genesis, which relates events that took place prior to his birth, and Deuteronomy, which ends with an account of his death. After describing the creation of the universe and a worldwide flood, this section of the Bible quickly focuses on the history of the ancient Israelites, who originated as a semi-nomadic tribe that migrated from Mesopotamia to the land of Canaan; soon after, they were enslaved in Egypt from which they subsequently escaped. The bulk of the Torah then details the regulations which God gave the Israelites while they traveled through the Sinai desert; these constitute the body of the covenant He established with them in anticipation of their settlement as a nation.

That process is described in the next several books, which are often called the Former Prophets. They begin with an account of the Israelite conquest of the land of Canaan (Joshua), followed by their settlement and establishment of borders (Judges), and the creation of a nation that came to be ruled by David and his son Solomon (1–2 Samuel). After Solomon's death, the kingdom split. The northern half (Israel) endured for two centuries before falling to the Assyrians; a little more than a hundred years later the southern half (Judah) was conquered by the Babylonians (1–2 Kings).

These books are followed by the Latter Prophets, which contains extensive collections attributed to Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel (the "Major Prophets") along with 12 much shorter works (hence the "Minor Prophets," also known as "the Twelve"). The books in each of these latter two groups are arranged in roughly chronological order.

The prophets were distinctive figures, who communicated God's expectations and promises to the people of Israel. Although the Bible tells of others, such as Samuel and Nathan who were also called prophets, those whose teachings are preserved in books bearing their names were active from the period when the nation was split into two halves through the return from exile in Babylonia. Their message rests on the concept of God's covenant with the people of Israel. The prophets who lived while the kingdom still existed emphasized His concern that the people abide by its provisions, particularly His expectation that they be loyal to Him and conduct their affairs in a socially just way. Those who preached later cited its promises as a form of consolation.

The final section (Writings) comprises poetic and didactic works (Psalms, Proverbs, Job), followed by five books ("The Five Scrolls") that are arranged in the order of the Jewish holidays on which they are traditionally read (Song of Songs for Passover, Ruth for Shavuot, Lamentations for the ninth of Av, Ecclesiastes for Sukkot, and Esther for Purim). The Jewish arrangement concludes with several books (Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah, 1–2 Chronicles) that focus largely on Jewish life during the Babylonian exile and into the following period of Persian dominance.

The Christian Old Testament originally included several books, such as 1–2 Maccabees, Judith, Tobit, and the Wisdom of Ben Sirah (Ecclesiasticus), that are not in the Jewish Bible. These are included in Catholic editions, but were rejected by Protestant churches, which called them the Apocrypha (literally "hidden"), a term first used by the Church Father Jerome (about 400 CE). Roman Catholic editions of Daniel and Esther are also larger than their Jewish (and Protestant) counterparts; these expansions are included in editions of the Apocrypha under the titles Susanna, Bel and the Dragon, and the Additions to Esther. Various Eastern churches have even more books in their Bibles; these are now generally referred to as pseud-epigrapha (lit. "false writings"). That term was originally chosen because several of these books present themselves as being the product of ancient heroes such as Enoch and Solomon rather than their actual authors. However, not all the books included in this category do so (e.g., Jubilees and 3–4 Maccabees), nor did these ever constitute an explicitly defined collection.

Christian Bibles also arrange their contents differently than Jewish editions, grouping books by genre, with the historical books, including Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther, first, followed by poetic and didactic works, and finally prophetic books. In this configuration, Ruth is placed alongside the book of Judges, since it opens with the pronouncement that it describes events which took place "at the time that the judges judged," Lamentations comes after Jeremiah, to whom it was traditionally attributed, and Daniel is included among the prophetic books

which are found at the very end. As a result, the Christian Old Testament begins with the creation of the world and culminates with the prophet Malachi's anticipation of Elijah's return to usher in the day of the Lord (Malachi 3:23), an allusion to the significance of the New Testament books.

The structure of the Jewish Bible also rests on a religious foundation. Both the second (Prophets) and the third (Writings) sections begin with references to Torah study (Joshua 1:8 and Psalms 1:2), and all three sections close with the people of Israel on the brink of hope, whether to enter the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 34), achieve redemption at the time of Elijah's return (Malachi 3:23), or anticipating their return to their homeland and the reconstruction of the Jerusalem Temple (2 Chronicles 36:22–23).

None of the biblical books, with the possible exception of Deuteronomy, was written with the intention of being part of Scripture, a concept which only began to emerge towards the end of the biblical period. Most scholars regard the Jewish arrangement as the result of the historical process whereby the various biblical books came to be considered holy and authoritative ("canonization"). According to this view, that took place in three stages: First, the Torah was recognized by the time that the exiled Judeans returned to their land in the fifth century BCE. The Prophets, which are mentioned in the Wisdom of Ben Sirah, were added no later than the second century. Finally, the Writings were accepted by the end of the first Christian century, when rabbinic sources describe debates about them as having taken place. This theory is able to explain why Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Chronicles are in the Writings section rather than the Prophets, which contains similar works but was presumably closed by the time these books were accepted as part of the sacred corpus.

Several scholars have recently challenged this view, pointing out ancient sources which mention a two-part canon, divided into Mosaic (the Pentateuch) and non-Mosaic books. In their view, the different arrangements are the result of separate canonizing processes within the Jewish and Christian communities rather than a reflection of the historical stages in which these books came to be regarded as sacred. However it came to pass, the process of canonization was clearly complex. It is even possible that the recognition of these books' authority took place separately from that involving their sanctity.

Virtually all the individual books which make up our Bibles are now thought to be composite. That is self-evident for books such as Psalms and Proverbs. The former is even divided into five "books" (Psalms 1–41, 42–72, 73–89, 90–106, 107–150), while various sections of the latter are explicitly attributed to different sources (thus Proverbs 25:1 "the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied"; Proverbs 30:1 "the words of Agur, son of Jakeh"; Proverbs 31:1 "the words of Lemuel, king of Massah"). It is equally apparent in the way some passages are repeated in different parts of the Bible; for example, the genealogies at the beginning of Chronicles replicate material found in Genesis, and the famous vision of swords turning into plowshares is included in both Isaiah (2:2–4) and

Micah (4:1–3). Such repetition can even occur within a single book, as in the case of Psalm 14, which is virtually identical with Psalm 53.

The rabbis suggested in the Babylonian Talmud (Gittin 60a) that the Torah had been revealed piecemeal; they also acknowledged the presence of contradictions between Ezekiel and the Pentateuch as well as others within the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Early Church leaders also recognized inconsistencies between parts of the Bible, albeit most often within the New Testament, as well as differences between the Jewish and Christian editions of the Hebrew Bible. In the Middle Ages, Moses ibn Gikatilla suggested that Isaiah 40–66 was written long after the first part of the book; today other sections are also attributed to later hands.

The authors of later biblical books seem to have been aware of discrepancies between earlier works, which they tried to reconcile. For example, the book of Chronicles' statement that Elhanan had killed Goliath's brother (1 Chronicles 20:5) appears to be an effort to resolve the inconsistency between 2 Samuel's assertion that Elhanan had killed Goliath (21:19) with 1 Samuel's attribution of that act to David (17:48–51). Similarly, Chronicles' peculiar report about the Passover offering being boiled in fire during the reign of Josiah in accordance with Moses' book (2 Chronicles 35:12–13) combines Exodus' command that the Passover offering be roasted (12:9) with Deuteronomy's insistence that it be boiled (16:7).

The likelihood that biblical books were woven together out of several sources accounts for the presence of diverse literary genres within individual books, such as law and narrative in Exodus or oracles and biography in Jeremiah. At the same time, it means that their literary artistry is not the product of their authors alone, but also the result of the editors who were responsible for their final form. The two stories of creation with which the book of Genesis opens are a useful example. They are stylistically and theologically distinct, focusing on different components of that process and using different terms for God. However, their juxtaposition presents an image of God as concerned with *both* human beings and the cosmos as a whole. That is a significant point for a book that centers on the history of a small, ancient nation. By beginning their account of Israel's history with the creation of the world, the biblical editors presented it as one chapter of universal history and God's treatment of them as His way of addressing cosmic issues.

Modern scholarship has devoted an immense amount of effort to disentangling the strands out of which individual books were constructed in order to comprehend the process of their composition. Differences in vocabulary and grammar in various parts of the Bible reflect both the periods and the geographical regions in which they were written down. Most scholars consider the songs of Moses (Exodus 15) and of Deborah (Judges 5), which were probably composed before the nation was established, to be the oldest parts of the Bible and the book of Daniel, which was finished a thousand years later, to be the last.

Awareness of changes in style and language has provided especially valuable insights, making it possible to reconstruct the development of Israelite culture and

religion. For example, the Passover holiday, which probably originated as a fertility festival, came to be viewed as the anniversary of the Israelites' escape from Egyptian slavery. Although originally celebrated in individual families (Exodus 12), it observance was later centralized at the Jerusalem temple (Deuteronomy 12 and 2 Kings 23:21–23). Legal principles also changed over time, as when the law calling for male slaves to be released after six years of service (Exodus 21:2,7) was broadened to include females (Deuteronomy 15:12). Even theological concepts underwent a process of development, with Israel's originally tribal warrior God (e.g., Exodus 15:1–7) becoming the only God in the universe (Isaiah 44:6–8). Likewise, the ancient concept of collective responsibility (e.g., Exodus 20:4–6), as encapsulated in the proverb "The ancestors have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are blunted," was rejected by the prophet Ezekiel, who insisted that "the person who sins – that is the one who will die" (18:2–4).

Modern archeological discoveries have greatly enhanced our appreciation of the Bible, demonstrating the extent to which Israelite culture and beliefs were at home in the ancient Near East. Our understanding of ancient Hebrew words and Israelite customs has been immeasurably enriched by what we have learned about its neighbors over the past century and a half. Similarities between Pentateuchal laws and those found in the so-called Mesopotamian codes, such as the one attributed to Hammurabi, are probably the most famous although the differences can be every bit as illuminating. For example, both traditions use a goring ox to exemplify the principle of an owner's responsibility for his animals' actions; however, only in Israel is the animal itself punished (Exodus 21:28–32). On the other hand, female officials play more visible roles in other ancient Near Eastern cultures than in biblical rituals.

Myths preserved in the writings of several ancient Near Eastern cultures demonstrate the extent to which Israelite authors drew from these traditions. The famous Epic of Gilgamesh, which was discovered in the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, includes a story that is very similar to the Bible's account of a worldwide flood. However, the two differ in key regards, such as the hero's name (Utnapishtim rather than Noah). The Mesopotamian deities' fear of the floodwaters also stands in marked contrast to the Israelite God's complete control over nature as well as the moral basis for His actions.

Excavations at Ras Shamra, located near the Mediterranean coast of modern Syria, uncovered myths from the ancient city of Ugarit that describe extensive conflicts among various gods. Among these are Yamm, the god of the sea, and Baal, a Canaanite god whom the Bible accuses the Israelites of having worshipped. Similar ideas may have influenced Israelite descriptions of God's battle against the primordial waters (cf. Psalms 93:3–4), the description of historical events such as the crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 14–15), and even attitudes towards Jerusalem (cf. Psalm 48).

Much of the Bible conforms to ancient literary genres. The book of Proverbs contains teachings and ideas that resemble those of Near Eastern wisdom traditions.

One section (22:17–24:22) may even have been drawn from the Egyptian Instruction of Amenemope. This tradition emphasized the orderliness of the universe. The books of Job and Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) drew on human experience to challenge that idea.

Deuteronomy is constructed on the pattern of ancient vassal treaties, which typically begin by identifying the more powerful king and his gracious acts before enumerating what was expected from his vassal. Recognition of that structure has opened the door to valuable insights into the Bible's ideology: just as vassal treaties were agreements between two unequal parties, offering protection to one in return for support from the other, so the book of Deuteronomy demands Israelite loyalty to God in return for His protection.

Biblical poetry incorporates stylistic features that were common in ancient Canaan. For example, successive lines often repeat ideas using different words but the same syntactic structure, a device called parallelism. Traces of this phenomenon are also found in biblical narrative, as when the book of Genesis introduces the story of the flood with the observation that "The earth became corrupt before God; the earth was filled with lawlessness" (6:11). It also occurs in legal passages, such as the commandment to observe the Passover, which begins, "This month shall be for you the beginning of the months; it shall be the first of the months of the year for you" (Exodus 12:2).

Biblical prose also uses repetition stylistically, reiterating words (*Leitwörter*) in order to draw attention to important ideas. Thus, the root *rmh* ("deceive") occurs several times in the stories about Jacob (Genesis 27:35 and 29:25) in order to emphasize the nature of his behavior, just as words containing the consonants *y-r-h* appear often in the story of the binding of Isaac – e.g., *Moriah*, *yr'* ("fear"), *r'h* ("see"), and *har* ("mountain") – presumably to imply that passage's connection with Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*, cf. 2 Chronicles 3:1).

Biblical narrators sometimes use standardized literary motifs in order to create expectations in their readers. For example, the appearance of a woman at a well signals that she will become the hero's mate (Genesis 24:10–20 and Exodus 2:16–21), just as the introduction of siblings as older and younger often foreshadows the latter's eventual ascension over the former.

Biblical narrative style is often succinct. The book of Genesis recounts the Tower of Babel story in just nine verses and Abraham's effort to sacrifice his son Isaac in fewer than twenty. However, authors were fully capable of providing profuse detail. In accordance with ancient Near Eastern stylistic convention, the instructions for constructing the desert tabernacle (Exodus 25–31) are followed by a report of their being carried out (Exodus 35–40) in which many elements are repeated nearly verbatim. Later generations of Christians and Jews exploited these characteristics, justifying apparent redundancies as referring to different ideas, providing names for characters that are anonymous in the Bible, and telling stories about events that took place during periods of time that the biblical account skimmed over. Many of these link later beliefs and practices, such as the coming

of the messiah or the separation of milk and meat, to the biblical text, demonstrating the Bible's importance for later religious communities. Recent scholarship has devoted substantial attention to the history of these interpretations in recognition of the importance of the Bible's role to later generations, even when that has been based on ideas that differ from the original meaning. The process of interpretation had already begun in biblical times. For example, Hosea speaks of Jacob's wrestling with an angel (Hosea 12:5), even though Genesis initially identifies his antagonist as a man (Genesis 32:25) before later claiming that he had fought both divine and human beings (32:29). Similarly, the headings that identify the events in David's life which led to the composition of individual psalms (Psalms 3, 7, 18, 34, 51, 52, 54, 57, 60, 63, and 142) are probably late efforts to provide historical settings for originally liturgical works.

After centuries of attention to the Bible's literary fissures, recent scholarship now focuses on the elements which bind even composite books, such as Isaiah, together. For example, the Minor Prophets are increasingly studied as a single unit ("the book of the 12") in order to identify their shared features and the editorial processes which led to their final collection. In that same spirit, scholars also note relationships between various parts of the Bible (intertextuality). For example, the instructions for constructing the tabernacle (Exodus 39–40) echo the final stage of creation (Genesis 1:31–2:3), and royal psalms play on concepts found in various historical books (cf. Psalm 89 and 2 Samuel 7). One outcome of that approach has been important insights into themes and perspectives which pervade multiple books, revealing evidence of wisdom influence and Deuteronomistic ideology in works as varied as Jeremiah and Esther.

The oldest existing copies of biblical books are those that were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, where they constitute about a quarter of the texts that were discovered in the middle of the last century, though it took nearly fifty years for them to be fully published. These copies were written during the last few pre-Christian centuries; however, it is difficult to ascertain which of these books were regarded as scriptural, especially since that collection also included works such as Tobit, Ben Sirah, Enoch, and Jubilees, which are part of the apocrypha and pseudepigrapha. Although none of these is the original (autograph) text, they do provide a window into what these books looked like during the period of the Maccabees and the centuries preceding Jesus. One of the most striking features of these copies is their lack of uniformity. Some are similar to our own Hebrew edition, which was collated by medieval Jewish textual scholars known as Masoretes. Others match the edition of the Pentateuch that was preserved by the Samaritan sect or the presumed Hebrew originals (*Vorlagen*) from which the ancient Greek and Aramaic translations were made. Remarkably, in those cases where several copies of the same book were found at Qumran, they do not always conform to a single type. That suggests that the text of the Bible had not been standardized at the time these were written. More astounding is the fact that the

conservative, pious group which lived there apparently had no compunctions about including different editions of the same book in their library.

Other copies of biblical works were found in nearby caves that were inhabited by militants who fought against the Romans during the Jewish revolts that took place at the end of the first and the beginning of the second centuries CE. Unlike those from Qumran, these texts generally conform to what became the standard Hebrew edition of the Bible (the Masoretic text), suggesting that a process of standardization was underway in the first centuries of the Christian era.

That process eventually extended beyond the Bible's words. Ancient Hebrew was written with only consonants, making it impossible to be certain as to exactly how each word should be read. In order to avoid mistakes, the Masoretes developed systems for marking vowels and punctuation. Their efforts culminated in the establishment of a reading system which became normative when the great medieval sage Moses Maimonides endorsed a ninth-century manuscript of the Bible that had been produced by the Ben-Asher family of Tiberias. Still, manuscripts diverged in both the biblical text and the order of the books, even as differences among Masoretic schools continued to be noted until the production of a Hebrew Bible at the Venetian printing press of Daniel Bomberg in the sixteenth century resulted in a widely accepted, standardized edition.

The Hebrew Bible as we know it today is, therefore, a compilation of writings from various parts of Israelite society that took shape over several millennia. During that time it was subjected to a wide array of influences, ranging from ancient Near Eastern mythology to the modern printing press. Its concept of a covenant between God and the people Israel is the basis for contemporary Judaism as well as the background for Christianity and an important influence on Islam, even though all three religions subsequently developed in ways that would be barely recognizable to the characters whose words it contains.

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2

How "Historical" Is Ancient Israel?

Ehud Ben Zvi

The first necessary step in addressing the question of how "historical" ancient Israel is, is to ask what is meant by "ancient Israel" and by "historical." Neither of these questions is easy to answer, and, in fact, multiple responses have been advanced for both of them, implicitly and explicitly. It is easier and perhaps heuristically more helpful then to begin by asking the question "What is 'biblical Israel'?"

"Biblical Israel" is the Israel with which the vast majority of Jews and Christians throughout many centuries identified themselves. It is the memory of this Israel along with that of ancient Greece and Rome which has also stood at the center of "Western civilization." "Biblical Israel" is an Israel of memory. It is the one that emerges as the main character in the "national" histories of the Hebrew Bible (i.e., Genesis–2 Kings; Deuteronomy–2 Kings; 1–2 Chronicles), along with YHWH. This "Israel" is the main character in prophetic literature (along with YHWH, again) and the same holds true in most books of the Hebrew Bible. This "Israel" was conceived as having a beginning, and, in fact, multiple beginnings in the past. Among these beginnings: as "children of Jacob" and thus associated with the patriarchs (and the implied matriarchs); as shaped by YHWH's choice and liberating activity at the time of the Exodus, as people centered around the Torah, and thus beginning with the communication of the divine instruction at Sinai); multiple sociopolitical manifestations (e.g., separate tribes, separate kingdoms, a post-monarchic community), multiple locations (both inside and outside "the land" and in multiple lands: Egypt, Babylon, Susa, the "desert," etc.) and above all with a great future, whose memory is reenacted through the readings of prophetic (and other) books. Biblical Israel is a biblical, transtemporal Israel with multiple manifestations.

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Throughout this multiplicity, a core feature remains constant, namely that Israel continuously interacts with YHWH and vice versa, and they do so in unique ways. Israel is, in fact, a people characterized mainly by its relationship with YHWH. They are YHWH's people, that is, they were chosen by YHWH, who is both the only true deity and the particular deity of Israel. YHWH is as close and attached to Israel as a husband to his wife or a father to his son.

All peoples at the time (and in far later times as well) thought of themselves (or imagined themselves) in terms of kinship. Not surprisingly, "biblical Israel" was thought of in terms of the children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To this it was added that their ancestral line was selected and maintained by YHWH. Genealogies served also as mechanisms to include outsiders into the people (see, for instance, Ruth, and the large number of non-Israelites in the genealogies of Judah in Chronicles).

Most significantly, unlike all the other peoples, "biblical Israel" is the people to whom YHWH's Torah (i.e., YHWH's instruction for Israel) was given. It is the people that are supposed to follow this Torah and whose fate depended on YHWH's reaction to its failures and successes in this area. In fact, the main (though not the only, see below) causal principle governing its history is not what we may call realpolitik or economic matters, but by Israel oscillating between following Torah (and YHWH, Israel's true ruler) and abandoning it (/them) along with the consequences that these actions may entail.

At the same time, it is the people whose long-term fate was not dependent on their actions, but on YHWH's promise to bring them to an ideal future (a common motif in prophetic literature; e.g., Hosea 2:16–25; 11:8–11; 14:5–8) that may include a reshaping of Israel as unable to sin (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:16; Jeremiah 31:31–34; 32:38–41; Ezekiel 11:19–20; 36:25–28). Such divine promises were uttered and confirmed even when Israel was most sinful (see prophetic literature, passim), and the promises reflect YHWH's "love" for Israel.

Of course, YHWH was construed as testing the pious (both individual and collective), allowing for repentance, and, above all, able to do things that no one could explain; still, YHWH and YHWH's interaction with Israel provided the key for understanding the force behind the ups, downs, and future of biblical Israel's "history."

Of course, histories are not only about causality, but about narrative and a social memory that binds people together. In a nutshell, the "history" of "biblical Israel" may be summarized as follows: Israel evolved out of the offspring of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who were kept by YHWH and promised by the deity a land that they could not inherit at the time. Eventually, they were led to the land of Egypt and oppressed there. But YHWH not only liberated them through marvelous deeds without equal in the entire world, but gave them YHWH's instruction, and the land. Possession of the land was, however, conditional on their behavior and loyalty to YHWH and YHWH's instructions. As YHWH and Moses (and Joshua) knew already all

too well, Israel would fail the test. Yet exile took centuries and not all of the time did Israel fail to do YHWH's will. In fact, YHWH's act of the creation of Israel in the land was not "complete" until the place of the temple was chosen and Jerusalem became the only place in the entire world in which a proper temple for YHWH could be established. In other words, Torah led to temple, Moses to David and Solomon. Jerusalem was the city of YHWH's "house" but it was also David's city. The city became associated with YHWH and with David – who conquered it with YHWH's support and served as the first king of the only proper dynasty. Jerusalem epitomized the land, and was with temple and proper king, with YHWH, Torah and with the Davidic king. But even Davidic kings failed; Israel sinned and exile had to come and Jerusalem and its temple had to be destroyed, so as to be purified. The fall of Jerusalem and the temple became a central traumatic memory, and, therefore, the twin concepts of Exile and overcoming Exile assumed a central importance. Despite the many narratives on the matter, the converging metanarrative clearly evoked a sense that Israel's sin was grave and had YHWH decided to cancel YHWH's relationship with Israel – and thus remove "Israel," whose very essence and existence was based on this relationship, from the world – the act would have been just since Israel had sinned grievously. But the deity loved Israel so much that YHWH returned the people to the land, so they may live there, rebuild Jerusalem and above all YHWH's house in Jerusalem. This Return was, however, just the beginning of a glorious future yet to come, as YHWH promised Israel an utopian existence in which they would become a great nation, Jerusalem will stand at the center of the world, peoples will come to Jerusalem to learn Torah from Israel, and YHWH, Israel's god/father, will serve as king over the entire universe. At that time, Israel will be elevated above the nations and share some quasi-divine attributes (cf. Hosea 2:20–22; Ezekiel 36:25–28). This Israel was based on Torah and memory of events in the past and the future that were portrayed in a set of texts that a particular community identified as authoritative.

As mentioned above, it was with this "biblical Israel" that Jews identified themselves for centuries, well before the destruction of the Second Temple or the development of rabbinic Judaism. Christians who see themselves as Israel have also identified with this Israel for close to two millennia. Although most historical communities of Christians and Jews have considered themselves as being in continuity with this "biblical Israel" and prized its memory, a question may be asked: Is this Israel "historical"? And if so, in what sense?

These two questions are closely intertwined. Depending on how one answers the second question, several potential responses to the first arise. One may understand the question of whether "biblical Israel" is historical to be tantamount to that of whether "biblical Israel" existed in the "actual world" as portrayed in the books that eventually became the Hebrew Bible. In other words, from this perspective, "biblical Israel" would be historical if these books are seen portraying

a world that is basically identical to that reconstructed by contemporary critical scholarship using current day historical methodologies. The answer to this question is a resounding no.[1] In fact, if one accepts this definition of "historical," no contemporary critical historian would consider "biblical Israel" "historical," and, in fact, many thinkers who lived well before the development of contemporary historical methodology came to the same conclusion (Spinoza, for example). The problem is not only that there is no evidence supporting the "historicity" of many of the crucial events in the life of "biblical Israel," or that some events are clearly impossible (e.g., an exodus involving as many as two million people could not have occurred), but also that if some events had happened, history would have been extremely different and we would not have ended up with our Hebrew Bible and its "biblical Israel."[2] Moreover, no critical historian today would advance a history in which one of the main characters is a deity or in which questions of causality can be answered with "the deity did/wanted this." Yet, "biblical Israel" is encoded in such a history and cannot be taken out of it without being reshaped.

One may approach the basic question of how "historical" "biblical Israel" is from a different perspective. Let us assume the following set of starting points: (i) all histories are by necessity a kind of narrative and ancient historiographical works were not written with the same genre expectations that exist for contemporary historical works; therefore, one should not expect a *detailed and consistent* correspondence between the literary world portrayed in the texts that ended up in the Hebrew Bible and present day historical reconstructions of ancient Israel; (ii) the portrayal of "biblical Israel" whether in historiographical texts or other texts has always been encoded in and retrieved from texts and, therefore, "biblical Israel" cannot help but be to a substantial extent a "literary" construct/character (and so is to a large extent, for instance, "Sparta"). A person accepting these premises can still claim that "biblical Israel" was "historical" in the sense that on the whole its portrayal in the relevant texts reflects – even if through a literary and somewhat "distorting" prism – "actual" historical events. Can "biblical Israel" be considered "historical" in that sense? In other words can it be "historical" and still "biblical"?

Almost all professional critical historians of ancient Israel reject the historicity of Genesis–Joshua. They would agree that the Exodus (as it has been continuously remembered for more than two millennia) could not have happened as described in the relevant books, that Moses could not have received at Sinai a Torah that was to a large extent composed in the Persian period many centuries after any putative time of Moses, and that "the Conquest of the Land," which plays such a central role in "biblical Israel," could not have happened. According to these historians, Israel or most of what became eventually Israel actually emerged in the land, and that at the putative time of the conquest the Egyptians would have ruled the land. Moreover, even the very concept of Israel as 12 tribes including Northern Israel and Judah is widely considered to be the product of either the late monarchic or the

postmonarchic period, taking place well after the time in which not only Moses and Joshua, but also Samuel, David, Solomon, and many other kings were supposed to be alive. Even the image of the glorious Davidic–Solomonic empire is generally considered late and not reflective of the situation that existed at the time of these rulers (assuming that there were two "chieftains" of that name, whose lives were very different than the ones suggested in Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Psalms, Proverbs, and Qohelet). To cite one final example, the archaeological data does not support the idea of a mass Return to the land in the Persian period that is in any way commensurate with the image in Ezra 2. This being so, from this perspective one must agree that "historical" Israel cannot be "biblical," and even more importantly that "biblical" Israel will cease to be "biblical Israel" if historical. After all, an "Israel" without Torah from Sinai, without a majestic and miraculous Exodus, with no equal, without 12 tribes, without Joshua's conquest, without the biblical images of the patriarchs, Moses, David, Solomon, and even without a massive Return, whatever it may be, cannot be "biblical Israel."

Of course, this is not to say that everything that is written in biblical books has no basis in historical events. For instance, Jerusalem was conquered and destroyed by the Babylonians during the time of Nebuchadnezzar; some of the kings mentioned in Kings – both Israelites and non-Israelites – are explicitly mentioned in other, non-Israelite ancient records. King Sennacherib actually attacked Judah and Jerusalem when Hezekiah was king, though, unlike the biblical story, his army was not destroyed by YHWH's angel and he, unlike Hezekiah, remained a very powerful king even after the fourteenth year of Hezekiah. In fact, Judah not only lost that war, but remained an Assyrian vassal till the end of the latter's power in the region. These examples can be multiplied. There are kernels of "historical truth" in the books that were later included in the Hebrew Bible. Critical historians use the books later included in the Hebrew Bible as sources from which to extract these kernels so as to reconstruct the history of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, and of the post-monarchic province of Judah/Yehud.[3] Yet to engage in this type of research, to look for "kernels" to be abstracted out of biblical narratives in order to be reshaped, reinterpreted, and provided with meaning within the very different narrative that the present day historian is writing, basically involves not reading the story of "biblical Israel" and not evoking its memory.

One may take, however, a third approach to the matter of historicity. Remembering and identifying with "biblical Israel" served as a strong historical agent for centuries, as it influenced the way in which multiple groups through time understood the world and themselves. "Biblical Israel" is an Israel of social memory, but social memory is held by historical groups. Of course, different groups of Jews and Christians through time reshaped the basic image of "biblical Israel" to fit their present circumstances – every memory is a "present memory" – but to a large extent one may say that holding an image of "biblical Israel" is what made all these groups "Israel." If so, then "ancient Israel" or the most "ancient" Israel one can reconstruct historically would be the first community that imagined,

remembered, and identified with the basic "biblical Israel" portrayed in the repertoire of books that ended up in the Hebrew Bible. Members of this community saw themselves as one temporal manifestation of this transtemporal "biblical Israel." They were "Israel" because they saw themselves as continuous with their "biblical Israel." It is not by chance that such an identification plays such a core role for identity formation and the ability to socially reproduce. The concept of "biblical Israel" brought together all the central ideological/theological tenets that shaped this particular community (e.g., relationship with YHWH, Torah, Exodus, Exile, Return, Jerusalem, land, etc.). Moreover, it provided the community with a memory and an explanation of their place in the world, both in the past, present, and future. No social group, from nation to family, can sustain itself without a memory of itself. Unless one's idea of "historical" is restricted only to material or tangible aspects, one must consider historical the existence of "biblical Israel": that of this Israel of the mind, memory, and social mindscape. In fact, one may argue that this Israel of the mind was a far more important historical factor for its community than any other Israel that may have existed, but whose memory elided long ago (see below). Since the mentioned community was historical as well, we end up with two historical Israels: the community that imagined "biblical Israel" and remembered its past and future, i.e., "ancient Israel," and the Israel that existed in their minds, in their social mindscape, that is, "biblical Israel."

When did the community that first imagined "biblical Israel" and its imagined Israel exist? Although historians have not come to a general agreement about the details of the process that led to the eventual shaping of "biblical Israel," it is self-evident that it cannot precede the crystallization of a repertoire of texts shaping an image of "Israel" that is in any substantive way essentially indistinguishable from that present in the Hebrew Bible.[4] Since YHWH's Torah, which was so central to the identity of "biblical Israel," was understood in terms informed by the Pentateuch, then "biblical Israel" could not have preceded it. Given that the vast majority of scholars situates not only the Pentateuchal collection but also most of the Pentateuchal books – at least in a form close to their present one – in the Persian period, the earliest time that "biblical Israel" could have existed is in that period. Likewise, the centrality of the concepts of Exile and Return for "biblical Israel" (and for the literature in which it is encoded) requires that the earliest possible period for "biblical Israel" be in the postmonarchic period, most likely in the Persian period (note also books such as Haggai and Zechariah that explicitly refer to the Persian period). Moreover, the first book that reflects a society that held as authoritative a repertoire that included (in a version similar to the their present form) collections such as the Pentateuchal collection, the Primary Historical collection (Genesis–2 Kings), the Deuteronomistic Historical Collection (Deuteronomy–2 Kings), the prophetic books, Psalms, and other literary texts that eventually were included in the Hebrew Bible is the book of Chronicles. This book is dated to either the late

Persian period or early Hellenistic, and for good reason.[5] These and similar considerations lead us to conclude that the most likely period for "ancient Israel," that is, the first community that imagined, remembered, and identified with the mentioned "biblical Israel" of the mind, as portrayed and encoded in the "biblical" books, was situated around Jerusalem in the Persian period. Their Israel of the mind was a Jerusalem-centered Israel, and significantly, they – or their literati – were also most likely Jerusalem centered. Both "biblical Israel" and this "ancient Israel" were very much historical, though each in a different sense during the Persian period (or at the latest, the early Hellenistic period).

Were these the only "historical" or "ancient" Israels? Of course not. There was a social entity called "Israel" around 1200 BCE (i.e., about eight hundred years before the Israels just discussed) somewhere in Palestine. It was reportedly "destroyed" by King Merneptah of Egypt.[6] This was another historical, "ancient" Israel. This one, of course, was forgotten hundreds of years before the time that "biblical Israel" emerged.

Many centuries after the Israel of Merneptah's stela, during the ninth and eighth centuries BCE, there was a regionally powerful kingdom called, among other names, Israel, whose political center was Samaria. Such an entity is clearly referred to in texts such as the Inscription of Mesha, king of Moab,[7] the Tel Dan Inscription,[8] and Assyrian inscriptions.[9] Moreover, YHWH was clearly worshiped in Israel/Bīt-umria,[10] as the names of many of its royals clearly show (e.g., Ahaziah, Athaliah, Jehoram). Moreover, one can safely assume that the people of this kingdom, or at least its elite, developed their own "Israel of the mind and memory," as such an Israel would have been necessary for the social cohesion, long-term stability, and self-identity of the kingdom. Persian period, Jerusalem-centered Israel had memories of this kingdom, this Israel, but these memories were shaped by their contemporary concerns. The social memory about the kingdom of (Northern) Israel that was reflected and shaped by books such as 1–2 Kings or Chronicles was an Israel with whom none of the northern kings or their elites would have identified. It would have been a fully alien Israel to them, one shaped by much later ideologies that they could not have fathomed.

But there was a Persian period Samaria, as well.[11] The ancient Israel we have described above was a social construct that existed in the Persian/early Hellenistic period among a group of Jerusalem/Temple-centered literati in Yehud/Judah. They saw themselves as Israel and construed – as any other group would – a social memory that would support their present identity. But as they construed their own Israel and what we would call "biblical Israel," at exactly the same time, the people in Samaria, who clearly worshiped YHWH, could not but make counterclaims, including a rejection of the position that the only proper temple of YHWH could be in Jerusalem, and the web of memories and texts that generated, communicated, and embodied this position (including, among others, most of the Deuteronomistic historical collection, the prophetic literature, numerous Psalms, Chronicles, and,

significantly, the way in which the Pentateuch was read in Yehud; that is, as a text read in the light of and informed by the aforementioned Jerusalem-centered texts, e.g., the Deuteronomistic historical collect, the prophetic literature, etc.). The people in Samaria were also "Israel" and they were also imagining a transtemporal Israel, only theirs was not the same one that existed in the social mindscape of Yehud of the time.[12] Thus, by the late Persian period, there were two contemporary and historical "ancient Israels" and each of them shaped a different "Israel of the mind" that themselves were historical too, as they were historical (and historically) contingent memory/cultural systems. In fact, the memory-struggle between these two Israels – the one in Samaria and the one in Yehud – may have contributed much to the development of "biblical Israel" in Jerusalem. Yet, even these memory battles have to be set in proportion, as both agreed to share a common, historiographic, memory-evoking central collection, i.e., the Pentateuch, which they likely developed during the Persian period in some form of collaboration. Significantly, this is the case of a shared text made possible by unshared and unshareable readings of it.

In summary, the most formative and memorable events in the life of "biblical Israel" could not have happened in the "real" world as they were portrayed in the biblical texts. But this does not mean that there were no historical Israels. In fact, there were multiple historical ancient Israels. Some were communities of like-minded people that together shaped a mnemonic community, and some were the Israels that existed in the mind of these communities. By the late Persian period, around a small city of Jerusalem,[13] a group construed and remembered an Israel that took the basic shape of the Israel that Christians and Jews remembered for centuries, that is, "biblical Israel." In that sense, we may refer to them as "Ancient Israel." At the same time, they did so in the midst of a struggle about memory and about what and who is Israel with the contemporaneous Israel of Samaria.

Notes

1 Some religious groups would say that the biblical texts are historically correct on the basis of their faith in their "revealed texts." To be sure, this is not true of all Christian or Jewish religious groups, as evidenced by the fact that theologians and religious thinkers have come up with a very wide spectrum of possible understandings for the "truth" in their revealed texts/revelation, from a very literal to very "liberal" perspectives. This said, any statement of religious truth and any argument based on "faith" is beside the point from the perspective of contemporary historical methodology. No critical historical historian can accept a certain historical reconstruction on the basis of a claimed divine revelation or its theological truth and remain a critical historian.

2 This point is made abundantly clear in Grabbe (2000).

3 Yehud is the name of the province of Judah in Persian times.

4 One may argue that one cannot have "biblical Israel" before the Hebrew Bible, but, at least from a pragmatic perspective, a repertoire of books that shaped an image of Israel that is substantially and essentially identical to "biblical Israel" suffices.

5 See, for instance, Knoppers (2004: 1–17.

6 For an English translation of the Merneptah Stela see "The (Israel) Stela of Merneptah," trans. J. K. Hoffmeier, in Hallo and Lawson Younger, Jr (1997–2002) (hereafter *COS*): 2.6: 40–41 [41]. On this matter see also Grabbe (2007): 77–80 and bibliography there.

7 See "The Inscription of King Mesha," trans. K. A. D. Smelik (*COS* 2.23: 137–138).

8 See "The Tell Dan Stele," trans. A. Millard (*COS* 2.39: 161–162).

9 See, for instance, "Kurkh Monolith," trans. K. Lawson Younger, Jr. (*COS* 2.113A: 261–264 [263]).

10 The common way to refer to this kingdom in Assyrian texts was Bīt-Humria, that is, "the House of Omri," the king who established its most important dynasty and the founder of Samaria. Cf. references to Judah as "the House of David" in the Tel Dan Inscription.

11 It is worth noting that Samaria was much more populated and much wealthier than Yehud. Yehud was a very small, poor province at the time. Samaria's elite, however, suffered a major blow in the very early Hellenistic period.

12 Given the popular tendency to construe "imagination" and verbal forms of "imagine" as an activity that does not involve any clear constraints, it is worth stressing that both the people in Samaria and in Yehud had limits to what they could have associated with their image of past Israel. For instance, they could not imagine Israel as conquering "the world," as Assyrian elites did. Moreover, those in Yehud could not avoid remembering that Jerusalem was actually destroyed and its ruins were for all to see. The study of what could and what could not be part of the social memory of any "ancient Israel" (i.e., what literati in Yehud or Samaria had in mind when they thought of "Israel") is a very interesting issue that demands further research.

13 Current estimates of the total population of Jerusalem during the Persian period vary from 1250 to 400 people, including women, men, and children. See Lipschits (2009) and Finkelstein (2009). It is worth noting that such a small community and likely precisely because it was so small did construe, remember and kept visiting in their imagination an Israel that was so great both in the past and even greater in the future. The matter, of course, cannot be discussed here.

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3

Priests and Levites in the Hebrew Bible

Stephen A. Geller

Like their neighbors, the Israelites had a professional, hereditary priesthood. Because of the tribal organization of early Israelite society, the priesthood was interpreted as belonging to a specific "tribe," Levi. In fact, the tribal model was forced, because Levi had no territory of its own, but was scattered throughout Israel as a priestly group. The Bible does present a picture of an actual, non-priestly tribe of Levi, supposedly one of the sons of the patriarch Jacob-Israel. The Pentateuch attempts to explain how this secular group lost its independent tribal status and became associated with the priesthood. But there are different, and often conflicting, accounts of how this happened, so that it is difficult to trace a clear development based on the Pentateuch. Examination of information from the rest of the Hebrew Bible only complicates the matter, so that the question of the relationship of the various biblical views of the priests and Levites in relation to each other and to the actual Israelite cult at different periods is one of the most complicated and debated in the study of the Hebrew Bible. Practically all the biblical evidence is tinged with inner-priestly polemics. Therefore, it is best to survey the information in the Pentateuch first, and then the data presented by the rest of the Hebrew Bible, before finally attempting a synthesis to produce a coherent picture. But there are so many uncertainties and scholarly debates about these issues that this discussion is bound to be only one of many possible interpretations.

Terms

The Hebrew term for priest is *kohen*, a participial form. Since the root meaning of the verb is unknown from Hebrew or related languages in which the term also

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occurs, the effective sense is simply, "one who acts as a priest." Hebrew *lewi* can refer to Levi, the ancestor of the tribe of the same name, or to the later priestly group of Levites. It seems to be related to the Hebrew root *lwh*, which has two discrete meanings, "to accompany," and "to borrow." In the explanation given of the name of Levi in Genesis 29:34 the term is derived from the first sense, "to accompany," in the passive "to be joined." Leah, frustrated by the lack of love shown her by Jacob, calls her third son Levi, hoping that her husband would now "be joined to her" in love rather than mere duty. Like most biblical explanations of names, this is a purely literary etymology. The term *lewi* is a gentilic, describing one as a member of a group. According to the two meanings of *lwh*, *lewi* might mean someone who "accompanies" or "is borrowed by" or "lent to," perhaps a deity in both cases. The term *lw'* occurs in reference to a person or thing devoted to a god in Old Arabic inscriptions, and the root seems also to appear much earlier as a component of a name in Akkadian texts from Mari, "*lawi ili*," "devoted, or attached to the god" or the like. The concept of "lending" people to God as priests is attested in the Bible in the case of Samuel (1 Samuel 1), but there a different term, *sh'l*, "ask, be asked, lent," is used. Other terms are also used elsewhere in the Bible for things or persons devoted to God (*hrm*, *nazir*). Note also the term *natin*, "one given," for a type of cultic servant, which occurs in the post-Exilic period. In the Pentateuch, the Levites themselves are said to be "given" (*netunim*) to God (Numbers 3:9; 8:16; 18:6). The only example of the term *lwh* being used of a group of people in connection to the Deity is in the reference to those who "join themselves to YHWH," which seems to refer to non-Israelites (Isaiah 56:3, 6; Jeremiah 50:5; Zechariah 2:15). But the exact nature of this group is not clear. It seems to refer to non-Israelites attracted to Yahwism, and may have an indirect connection to the topic under consideration if the use of the term *lwh* is a memory of, or a play on, the original sense of Levite.

The Pentateuch

In the Pentateuch one must distinguish between the Tetrateuch, the first four books, especially Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers, and the book of Deuteronomy. In the former, Levi refers first to the son of Jacob, and then to the family and eventually to the tribe descended from him. Levi joined his elder brother Simeon in killing the male inhabitants of the town of Shechem in revenge for the rape of their sister Dinah (Genesis 34). This bloody event is apparently what is referred to in Jacob's final blessing to his sons, where both Simeon and Levi are cursed and condemned to be "scattered in Israel" (Genesis 49), a reference to the fact that neither became normal tribes. Simeon was absorbed later by Judah, and Levi became a priestly tribe. Moses and Aaron were both great-grandsons of Levi in the genealogy presented in Exodus 6. In the aftermath of the apostasy of the golden calf,

Moses's tribe, the Levites, rallied to him and to Yahweh and slaughtered the miscreants, not stopping at their own relations. For this act of loyalty and zeal the curse on them was changed into blessing (Exodus 32:26–29). The "Blessing of Moses" in Deuteronomy 33:8–11 describes the reward of the Levites: to them are entrusted the Urim and Thummim, which in the early period served as a kind of divine oracle. Probably they were a pair of stones or dice, which were cast and could offer only a simple yes or no answer. Later they seemed to have fallen out of active use and appear as part of the elaborate costume of the high priest, set into his breastplate (Exodus 28:30). Two additional functions awarded to the Levites are mentioned as well; they will teach Israel "judgments" and offer incense and sacrifices to God.

This shift of Levi from being a secular, warlike tribe to zealous guardians of Yahwism and cultic functionaries is sealed by Numbers 3. A hierarchy is established: Only Aaron and his descendants through his two surviving sons, Eleazar and Ithamar, are to be true "anointed" priests. The rest of the Levites are to serve the Aaronides, maintaining the shrine and its sacred vessels. In these duties they act as substitutes for the first born of all Israelites, who would otherwise have to be "devoted" to the cult; for all the first born, both of animals and men, are holy and belong to Yahweh. "Holy" has here the usual sense in priestly writings of "separated, set aside," so that the status of Levite is a kind of vicarious offering on behalf of male Israelites. Numbers 3 divides the Levites into three groups, according to the sons of the patriarch Levi. The clan of Gershon is to take care of the inner parts of the shrine, its hangings and partitions, as well as the altar of sacrifice. The clan of Kohath, to which Aaron belonged by descent before his elevation to the priesthood, will care for the Ark of the Covenant, the lamps, other altars and sacred vessels. This is clearly the most sacred task (cf. Numbers 4:2–4) and they are to be personally supervised by Aaron's own son Eleazar. The clan of Merari, one branch of which is termed Mushites (on the significance of this, see below), is to take care of the actual structure of the desert shrine, which is portrayed as an elaborate portable tent, namely, its physical structure of posts and sockets, pegs, ropes, etc.

The hierarchy of priestly officiants and levitical servants is strengthened and confirmed in Numbers 16–18. The Kohathite clan of Korah disputes the status of the Aaronides, not just for themselves but for all Israel: "All of the congregation are holy, because God is in their midst; why do you (Aaron and sons) raise yourself up above the rest?" God causes the earth to open and the Korahites are swallowed up. The rebellion was taken by God and Moses to be a general challenge by Levites against the Aaronide priesthood. As punishment, the Levites are further demoted. They are henceforth to serve the priests in various secondary duties at the shrine, but they are now to have no contact with the inner part of the sacred place, or any of the holy vessels or the altar. Only priests are to have that prerogative. The supremacy of the Aaronides is sealed by a miracle. Each of the leaders of the 12 tribes is to place a staff (the symbol of leadership), with their names written on it, in the shrine overnight. The staff of the tribe of Levi is to be inscribed with Aaron's

name. The next day the staff of Aaron was found to have blossomed miraculously, producing not just blossoms, but actual fruit, almonds. That staff was to be preserved as a divine sign of the supremacy in sacred matters not just of Levi, but specifically of Aaron over the rest of the Levites, such as the rebellious Korah (Numbers 17). In sum, the Tetrateuch presents the following picture: The patriarch Levi was noted for his violence in defense of the rights of his violated sister Dinah (Genesis 34). The zeal of Levi's descendants in punishing the sinners, the apostates in the story of the Golden Calf, shows them to be ardent warriors for Yahweh (Exodus 32). As a reward they are made into guardians of the shrine and its sacred objects, but only one of their families, the sons of Aaron, is allowed to be real priests, offering sacrifices on the altar. Considering that Aaron was deeply implicated in making the Golden Calf, the supremacy of the Aaronides is somewhat strange. But that supremacy is further strengthened when the Korahite clan of Levites challenges the authority of Moses and Aaron. As a result, the Levites are demoted further into mere servants and secondary assistants to the sons of Aaron, the only true priests (*kohanim*). This rather polemical view of the relationship of priests and Levites, connected to historical events, certainly reflects the dominant viewpoint of the Tetrateuch, specifically of the writings of the priestly school (P).

The income of Aaronide priests was to consist mainly of parts of offerings. According to the Tetrateuch, there were five major types of sacrifice, the "peace" or "well-being offering" (*shelem*), the burnt offering" (*'ola*), the "sin" or "purification offering" (*hatta't*) and the "guilt" or "trespass offering" (*'asham*). There was also a "grain offering" (*minha*). The burnt offering was entirely consumed by fire on the altar, but portions of other sacrifices were due to the Aaronide priests. The difference between the sin and guilt offerings is by no means clear, but in any case, the priests were enjoined to consume them in the sacred precincts, after having burnt the fat and innards on the altar. Only males could partake. The consumption of these sacrifices was an aspect of the rite of expiation and forgiveness of sin that they represented, and was therefore a kind of holy sacrament. The well-being offering was essentially a communal meal for the sacrificer and his family, but the priest was entitled to certain portions, the right thigh and the breast, which might be consumed beyond the sacred precincts (Leviticus 7; 10:12–15). In addition priests were to receive most of the offering of grain. Finally, the first fruits of crops and the first born of flocks and herds belonged to the priests. All these perquisites were in compensation for the fact that the priests, like all Levites, were to have no territorial possessions. Their Levite assistants were to receive no meat or grain, but instead the regular tithe, from which they themselves were to set aside a tenth for God, i.e., for the priests, from the best part (Numbers 18). In addition, to support Levites in general, 48 cities were to be set aside for them from the holdings of the other tribes, along with the pasture land around them (Numbers 35:1–8).

In addition to their cultic, sacrificial function, and their duty to maintain the most sacred parts of the shrine, the priests also had the task of instructing people on the laws of purity and supervising certain specific purification rites, especially those

involving the ritually unclean disease of leprosy (generally now held to refer to a variety of skin diseases), which was held to be an affliction that could infect also the walls of dwellings. Priests also performed the trial by ordeal involving a woman suspected of adultery (Numbers 5). Finally, priests were enjoined to bless the people on cultic occasions. The text of the blessing in Numbers 6 is the only biblical passage that has turned up so far, with some minor variations, in an extra-biblical inscription from the seventh century BCE (see below).

The hierarchy of priests and Levites had at its apogee the office of high priest, of whom Aaron was held to be the first. Exodus 28 contains an elaborate description of his costume: the sacred garment that covered his shoulders (*ephod*), the breastpiece inset with precious stones engraved with the names of the 12 tribes, inside of which were to be placed the Urim and Thummim. The passage describes in detail the turban and diadem on his head, down to the tassels and pomegranate ornaments and the bells attached to the hem of his robe. He is clearly a kind of quasi-royal figure. In addition to his regular sacrificial duties, the high priest alone could perform the supreme ritual act of the year, when he entered the Holiest Place of the shrine on the Day of Atonement. This act, like, indeed, the rest of the cult, expressed an underlying, mainly unexpressed, theology, discussed briefly below.

The site of these rites, and the scene of the activities of priests and Levites, was the shrine. In the Tetrateuch this is represented as an immensely elaborate portable structure, a tent-shrine, or tabernacle (*mishkan*), also called the "tent of meeting (with God)" (*'ohel mo'ed*). According to the Book of Exodus, a model of the shrine was shown to Moses, and elaborate rules for its construction were communicated to him by God, so that every detail was divinely inspired. The shrine represented a domain of holiness, the basic purpose of which was to provide a place for God to "dwell in the midst of Israel." It expressed a kind of architecture of holiness and divine immanence. The outermost part of the shrine was the court where the main altar of sacrifice was placed. Blood from sacrificed animals was to be dashed against it or poured around its base, and the offerings that burned on it, from the entire burnt offering to the fat and innards of other sacrifices, were believed to ascend to God as a smoke with a "propitiating odor." The structure itself consisted of an outer room in which were located sacred vessels, a table for the "bread for the divine Presence," a seven-branched candlestick (menorah) and the eternal light. Separating this outer room from the Holiest Place, the secluded innermost area of the shrine, was a curtain. Inside this sanctum the Ark of the Covenant was to be placed, a wooden box with golden images of cherubim (composite angelic beings with the bodies of lions, eagle wings, and human heads), whose outstretched wings formed its lid. In the Tetrateuch the ark is viewed primarily as a container for the tablets of the covenant brought down from Sinai by Moses, "written by the finger of God" (Exodus 31) Older viewpoints seem to be reflected in the ideas that the cherubim were not just a lid, but actually a throne for God, when he came down to earth (see below). Another, seemingly older, view of the ark is found in Numbers 10:35–36,

which represents it as a kind of paladin of the nation, carried before the warriors into battle with their foes (as in 1 Samuel 4, there with disastrous results).

In sum, about half of the Tetrateuch is taken up with the priests and Levites, sacrificial and purificatory rituals, and the structure and functions of the shrine. This corresponds to the religious demand that Israel be "a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6). How much of this body of cultic material represents actual Israelite religious practice, at least before the Exile, is uncertain. The tent shrine is held by most scholars to be a later elaboration of a very ancient type of sacred structure, but as it stands in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, it is a kind of cultic ideal, which stands in some tension with the actual temple of Jerusalem built by Solomon, as narrated in the book of Kings. The ideal itself is the symbolic reflection of a theology of divine immanence, of a protective divine presence at the shrine. This theology of divine immanence is accompanied by a doctrine of divine forgiveness of sins and atonement. Many scholars think that in the Tetrateuch the older types of sacrifices, the burnt offering and the well-being offering, were subordinated in terms of religious significance to the purificatory sin and guilt offerings, so that the sacrificial cult was reinterpreted to have mainly a penitential function of attaining forgiveness for national and personal sin. The means was the blood of sacrifice, which worked in some mysterious way to effect atonement. The central cultic event was the Day of Atonement, when the High Priest was to enter the Holiest Place and sprinkle, or fling, blood at the Ark of the Covenant, thereby restoring the original cultic purity of the shrine from the taint of national sin. This theology of atonement by blood is deeply embedded both in the rituals of the shrine and in the priestly narratives of the Pentateuch. For example, Genesis 9:4 and Leviticus 17:10–15 are clearly interrelated, because both prohibit the consumption of blood.

As for the fifth book of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy, which is presented as a kind of "second instruction" (*mishneh tora*) to the Tetrateuch, the topics of priest, Levite, and cult are relatively briefly dealt with, and then only to emphasize certain specific points essential to Deuteronomic points of view. The most common term for priests is "the levitical priests" (*hakkohanim hallevi'im*), though occasionally the term priest occurs by itself, and once, Levites. In fact, Deuteronomy seems to know nothing of the distinction between Aaronide priests and Levites that is so important in the priestly tradition of the Tetrateuch. Of Aaron, the book of Deuteronomy knows mainly that God was wroth with him after he led the people astray by forging the Golden Calf (Deuteronomy 9:20). Nor is Deuteronomy much interested in the details of the cult. The essential focus of the book is on centralization of worship, the injunction that all cult be carried out in only one place, which the book refers to as "the place on which God will choose to place his name." There can be only one place of worship. At this place of worship no distinction is made between Levites: All may come to serve and also be supported there with equal shares (Deuteronomy 18:6–8). The priestly offering consists of the shoulder, cheeks, and stomach (a different list from the Tetrateuch), as well as first fruits and first

shearings of sheep, and the tithes of two years. But Levites (priests) not at the central shrine are listed with those needing special support: widows, orphans, and strangers, for the Levites have no tribal territory of their own. In exchange, they and the other poor are to receive the tithe of every third year (Deuteronomy 14:27–29; 18:1–2). This is a different schedule of tithes from that presented in the Tetrateuch, where, despite the fact the Levites have no tribal territory, they are rather amply provided for. In Deuteronomy, however, the levitical priests represent, rather oddly, both a sacerdotal and an indigent class.

Deuteronomy devotes little attention to the sacrificial role of the priests, beyond stressing its limitation to the central shrine. The other levitical priestly functions consist of activities in which they are associated with the secular leaders, the elders. The exception is the priestly duty of dealing with the impurity of leprosy, which is mentioned only briefly (Deuteronomy 24:8–9). Otherwise, one may bring cases too difficult for the normal judges to the levitical priests at the central shrine, and one must abide by their decision. Somewhat confusingly, a non-priestly judge is also listed as an alternative, which makes it seem that one may choose between priestly and secular judgment (Deuteronomy 17:8–13). Deuteronomy 21:5 seems also to hint at a larger legal role for the clergy. A similar legal function, with cultic overtones, is the case involving a corpse found between two cities, not clearly in the jurisdiction of either. The elders of the city closer to the deceased are to break the neck of a heifer in a deserted desert valley and make a declaration before the priest present at the ritual that they are ignorant of the crime, thereby being absolved of blood guilt. The rite seems to be a kind of legal sacrifice of atonement, at which priests must be present but not as officiants.

Levitical priests also have a role in ceremonies associated with the covenant, either providing instruction or serving as witnesses. In Deuteronomy 26 the farmer's annual bringing of the first fruits is made into a rite affirming the covenant. The priest at the central shrine is to take the basket of fruit from the farmer, who then makes a declaration that consists of a brief historical survey of how Israel came to occupy its land, from the time it was "a wandering Aramean," through its slavery and redemption from Egypt, to its occupation of the land. The particular offering of each farmer is thus represented as an example of divine favor for Israel as a whole. Although the term covenant is not used, the context is one that the Book of Deuteronomy regularly presents in a covenantal context: In return for loyalty to the covenant, Israel will receive the fertile blessing of the land. In this case, the priest acts both in his cultic function, receiving the produce and placing it before the altar, and as a witness to the covenantal declaration of the individual Israelite. Priests are also involved in the unique event that seals the covenant relationship between God and Israel. In Deuteronomy 27 instructions are given for a solemn ceremony to be held at Shechem after Israel enters the land. An altar is to be built with the terms of the covenant inscribed on it, sacrifices are to be made by the levitical priests, who are then to lead the people in responding antiphonally to a set of curses on covenant breakers. Later, in Deuteronomy 31, Moses instructs that the

written copy of the covenant be entrusted to the "priests, the sons of Levi, who bear the Ark of the Covenant" and that it should be read every seven years to all the people on the fall pilgrimage festival of Sukkoth. The law of kingship in Deuteronomy 17 assigns them a similar function as instructors in covenant. The king is to follow the laws of the covenant as written in the book scrupulously, as guided by the levitical priests and the judges.

In sum, one cannot speak of a view of priests and Levites in the Pentateuch as a whole. One must carefully distinguish between the views of the mainly priestly documents of the Tetrateuch in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, and those of the book of Deuteronomy. Each complex treats the topic of priests and Levites in a manner that conforms to its own theology. This is clearly the case with Deuteronomy, which hardly notices their cultic function and emphasizes their judicial and covenantal roles, in relation to which they are often associated with secular leaders like judges and elders. This conforms to the dominantly covenantal and legal focus of Deuteronomy, whose only real cultic interest is centralization of worship. Instead, the book emphasizes teaching, loyalty, and obedience, precisely the tasks assigned to the priests. No distinction is made between priests and Levites; the terms appear to be synonymous or complementary, as indicated by the frequent Deuteronomic phrase "levitical priests." The social position of Levites not at the central shrine is by no means exalted. Their income is mainly limited to triennial tithes they share with the poor, with whom they seem to be classed as objects of charity.

Quite different is the viewpoint of the Tetrateuch. The radical distinction between true priests, descendents of Aaron, and Levites is basic to the priestly viewpoint, and reflects the focus in priestly theology on distinctions and separations of all kinds. As the various precincts of the desert tabernacle, and, later, the Jerusalem temple, reflect increasing degrees of sanctity in their growing seclusion as one approaches the Holiest Place where the ark rests, so the cultic personnel are graded in terms of which of these areas they are allowed to penetrate. Levitical assistants must remain in the outer courtyards, only Aaronic priests can enter the structure of the shrine, and only the highest grade, the high priest, can enter the Holiest Place itself, and then only on one day in the year to make atonement for Israel. On the underlying theology of divine immanence implied by these views, see also below. Yet the Tetrateuch, unlike Deuteronomy, makes ample provision for the support of the Levites. Those living outside the sacred shrine are assigned 48 towns with their surrounding land, and all Levites receive annual tithes. Later tradition, which viewed the Pentateuch as a seamless whole, had to labor mightily to reconcile these contradictions. The real question is whether either the Tetrateuch or Deuteronomy reflects the actual role of the priesthood in Israelite culture, both in regard to priests and Levites, if there is in fact a distinction to be made between them. To answer this question, we must first survey what information is provided by the rest of the Hebrew Bible, namely, the Prophets and the Writings.

Then we can present a thesis about what the actual historical development might have been, to try to make sense of a difficult topic.

Prophets and Writings

Scholarship since Julius Wellhausen (1844–1918) has generally viewed the Pentateuch, despite some ancient material it undoubtedly contains, as among the latest section of the Hebrew Bible (except for some even later books in the Writings). In its present form it is a product of the sixth–fifth centuries BCE. The other books contain viewpoints that seem in many cases to be older than those in the Pentateuch, or at least at variance with it. Closest to the priestly views of the Tetrateuch in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers is Ezekiel 44. Ezekiel himself was a priest as well as a prophet, who was among the Judeans exiled with King Jehoiachin in 597 BCE. In the context of a vision of the future temple in the messianic age, Ezekiel castigates the Levites for having led Israel astray with idolatry. He states that "no foreigner, uncircumcised of heart and of body, shall enter my shrine; but the Levites, who went far away from me when Israel strayed after idols (lit. pellets of dung), they must bear the punishment." This somewhat unclear statement seems to concede tacitly that Levites, although allowed to enter the shrine, may not do so in the same status as before because they abetted Israel in its idolatry. The reference is probably to the situation before the Josianic reform, when the high places were served by levitical priests. The Josianic reform had allowed them to come to Jerusalem to be supported at the central shrine, but not to officiate at its altar (2 Kings 23:8–9). Ezekiel now confirms and regulates their demotion to an inferior clerical status: In the restored, ideal temple they are to be servants, appointed over the gates and, in general, serving the shrine. They shall slaughter the sacrifices, but they will no longer serve as actual priests, to approach the holy precincts, especially the Holiest Place. Their status as servitors and guardians basically conforms to the views of the Tetrateuch.

The true priesthood, Ezekiel says, is limited to levitical priests (the same term favored by Deuteronomy), but only of the "sons of Zadok." Zadok rose to prominence under David and Solomon, ousting Abiathar of the Elide priests of Shiloh. The latter were descended from Aaron's son Ithamar and were slaughtered by Saul at the shrine of Nob (1 Samuel 22), except for Abiathar. Zadok, like Abiathar, was an Aaronide, but through the line of Aaron's son Eleazar and the zealous priest Phinehas (Numbers 25). Solomon firmly established the Zadokites as the legitimate priesthood of the Jerusalem temple (indeed, the name itself means "true, faithful, legitimate"; see the discussion below). Only they "may approach my table to serve me." When on duty the priests must wear only linen because wool produces sweat. They must neither remain unshorn nor shave their heads, but

must trim their hair neatly. They must avoid wine when on duty. They must marry virgins, not divorced women or widows, unless it be the widow of another priest. They must instruct the people not only in matters of cultic law, but also in secular cases. They must have no contact with the dead, except for their closest relations. Their perquisites from the sacrifices are briefly listed, and generally conform to those described in more detail in the Tetrateuch.

This firm distinction between Levite assistants and priestly officiants is clearly related, and perhaps ancestral, to the views of the priestly source of the Tetrateuch, with some minor differences. Ezekiel provides a reason for the inferior status of the Levites, which the Tetrateuch itself does not contain. In the latter, the Levites are portrayed in Exodus 32 as zealously militant adherents of Yahweh, slaughtering the miscreants who worshipped the Golden Calf, for which they are rewarded with priestly status. Aaron is also a sinner, who led the people astray. But later, the Aaronides are declared to be the only true priests, and the Levites their servants! Ezekiel supplies the implied underlying reason, which comes from the historical situation before the Exile: it was actually the Levites (=priests) of the country shrines who led Israel astray. Only the Aaronides (of the Zadokite line) at the central shrine remained loyal, precisely because they were the clergy of that shrine. To be sure, the Aaronides were also Levites themselves, "levitical priests" in the sense used by Deuteronomy, but that fact is downplayed in the Tetrateuch. Ezekiel provides the logical and historical reason behind the situation in the Tetrateuch, so that the laws regarding priests and Levites in Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers must be read with Ezekiel 44 in mind. This rather confusing situation ultimately arises from the religious and clerical struggles of the pre-Exilic and Exilic periods, specifically the later seventh through sixth centuries, which are reflected, like geological fault lines, in the Pentateuch of the fifth century BCE.

The other major source of information about priests and Levites is Chronicles, which dates from the period after the completion of the Pentateuch, probably around 400 BCE. Its author, or compiler, the Chronicler, is fairly obsessed with the Levites. Living in the restored community, in which the Aaronide priesthood, headed by the high priest, was dominant, the Chronicler seems determined to establish the rights of the Levites. He portrays David as the true founder of the Jerusalem temple and its sacerdotal system. Although he does concede the legitimacy of the Aaronide–Zadokite priesthood, he stresses the positive role of the Levites in the cult. He outlines their divisions, and adds to their functions some not described in the Pentateuch and Ezekiel, especially that of composers of liturgical music and poetry for the shrine (1 Chronicles 15–16; 23–26). In regard to the latter role, the Chronicler seems to reflect the actual situation in the temple cult, since levitical authorship of cultic verse is supported by the Psalter, which contains many psalms stated to have been written by members of the levitical guilds that the Chronicler enumerates, especially the sons of Korah (Psalms 42, 44–9, 84–5, 87–8) and Asaph (Psalms 73–83). Some think the sacrificial cult even in the First Temple was carried out in silence, with no spoken liturgy or prayers, as Josephus says it was

in the Second Temple. But in both temples there were certainly hymns as well as music. Solomon's long prayer at the dedication of the temple is followed immediately by sacrifice (1 Kings 8:62), and in the ceremony recorded in 1 Chronicles 16, the hymn of the Levites follows a rite of sacrifice. The absence of prayer in the ritual texts of the Pentateuch is perhaps more likely the result of their being viewed as manuals of ritual actions rather than prayer.

Although the bulk of biblical evidence on priests and Levites is in the works just discussed, the Tetrateuch, Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and Chronicles, scattered passages elsewhere offer additional information, although in each case the texts are difficult and liable to many interpretations. Perhaps the most important in shedding light on the earliest period is the narrative in Judges 17–18. In its present form, this is a late passage, part of an appendix of narratives added to the Book of Judges, chapters 17–21, intended to illustrate the chaotic and immoral state of Israel before the founding of the monarchy, which, it is implied, brought order. Judges 17–18 tells the story of a man who made a "molten image," possibly of Yahweh, as well as an ephod and other images, called Teraphim (on which, see below), and appointed his son to be a priest to his private shrine. But he then hired a wandering young Levite, originally from Judah, to be his priest. The tribe of Dan, migrating to the north, stole the image and the priest and set him up to officiate in their shrine in the far north, where the image was served by "Jonathan son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh and his descendants to this day." The name Manasseh is curiously spelled with the "n" (nun) of the name raised above the line. This is clearly a rather incomplete editorial attempt to hide the fact the lineage of Jonathan was none other than Gershom, son of Moses. In fact, the northern shrine was served by a Mushite priesthood, descended not from Aaron but from Moses. Now, the story is, as noted, intended to portray the period it described as one of chaos, when "every man did what was right in his own eyes," and the main biblical traditions are hostile to the northern shrine of Dan, which was viewed by the (southern) editors of the Bible as idolatrous. Nevertheless, it sheds interesting light on the nature of at least some of the clergy in the earlier period. Apparently, any male could be a priest, but a Levite was preferred, if one could be obtained. Similarly, David at first appointed his own sons to be priests (2 Samuel 8:18), along with the Aaronides, Abiathar and Zadok. Other bits of information in the historical books, the Latter Prophets and the Writings, allow one to glimpse a picture of the priesthood that is not as standardized as that in the priestly literature of the Tetrateuch or in Deuteronomy.

Historical Reconstruction

There is no archaeological evidence that bears directly on the role of priests and Levites. As noted above, the Khirbet Beth Lei inscriptions of the seventh century

BCE, two silver foil amulets with a form of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6 scratched into them, are the only biblical texts found in any archaeological site so far. Otherwise, the ruins of several Israelite shrines have been excavated, the most significant of which is at Arad in the south. High places (*bamot*) have been excavated, with their cultic pillars and horned altars. But material remains are unlikely to shed direct light on the development of a class of people like the priests and Levites. Therefore, an attempt to reconstruct a history of the priesthood in ancient Israel must be largely dependent on the biblical texts and general outside parallels from the ancient world. The enterprise is fraught with many difficulties and glaring uncertainties. The main problem is that both the main religious traditions of the Hebrew Bible, the priestly and the Deuteronomic, reflect King Josiah's centralization of worship in 621 BCE, and polemically distort the earlier cultic situation, so that much reconstruction and reading between the lines is necessary to unravel the situation before that date. The following outline is one that many scholars might accept as a working hypothesis. (For a quite different account, especially in regard to the relationship of priests and Levites, see especially Haran (1985).) In this very complicated topic only broad lines of development can be indicated here. We may distinguish four main stages.

Stage 1: early Israel

Before the formation of the states of Israel (probably by the late tenth century) and Judah (probably a century later, according to some archaeological evidence) the organization of society was along tribal, clan, and family lines, and the evidence for the priesthood corresponds to that stage of development. There does not seem to have been a regular priesthood. This is shown by the fact that non-priests like Gideon are portrayed as performing the sacrificial rites themselves (Judges:25–7). Similarly, Elkanah slaughtered the sacrifice himself, though it took place at a shrine served by priests (1 Samuel). The cult could, as in Judges 17, be a purely local, personal one. It is generally believed that the use of Teraphim dates from this early stage (Genesis 31; 1 Samuel 19); though Hosea 3:7 shows they were also known somewhat later. These were probably images that played a role in family religion, perhaps as household gods. The main places of sacrifice were the *bamot*, the "high places," the multitude of rural shrines that, even after the organization of the states, remained the dominant cultic centers, alongside the official royal shrines at Jerusalem in Judah and Dan and Bethel in Israel. The high places contained an altar, accompanied by cultic pillars (*massebot*) and representations of the sacred tree in the form of a pole (*'ashera)*, which may have stood for the mother goddess. The *bamot* need not have been open shrines, but could also have been simple temple structures. There is evidence that along with sacrifice they were the centers of cults of dead heroes (*repa'im*) and perhaps of the cult of dead ancestors in general.

How the Levites fit into this situation is very unclear. It possible that Levi was a secular warrior tribe, as portrayed in the Pentateuch, but how they then developed from a secular tribe to a priestly group is unknown. Perhaps their status as relations of the national hero Moses made other Levites desirable cultic personnel, as portrayed in Judges 17; except that the antiquity and veracity of the Moses traditions is by no means certain. It has been suggested that it may have been the Levi group or clan who experienced Egyptian slavery, since the curious presence of several Egyptian names may attest to close contact with Egypt: Moses ("child"), Phinehas ("the Nubian"), Hophni ("tadpole, frog"), Hor (Horus), probably Miriam ("Beloved") and possibly Aaron ("the name is great(?)"). But in form the term *lewi* is an appellative: "one joined to (the cult)" or the like, along the general lines of the practice portrayed in 1 Samuel 1. Samuel is "lent" (*sha'ul*) to God at the shrine of Shiloh in fulfillment of a vow made by Hannah. Note that Samuel is not presented as from the tribe of Levi; he is an Ephraimite. The status of Levites might have been similar. They were "joined to" God because of a vow or other act of religious devotion, like Nazirites (Numbers 6). The difference was that the Nazirite status was temporary (except in the case of Samson), but the levitical status was permanent. It is also possible that, along with Levites, there was actually a group of priests (*kohanim*) who may have had sacrificial and oracular functions, like the pre-Islamic Arabic *kahin*. Another early cultic institution was the Urim and Thummim, the oracular dice or stones, mentioned above. Some scholars think that priests in the early period, and even in the period of the monarchy, also had a prophetic function of delivering oracles to worshippers who had come to "seek God," i.e., ask for a divine message. There may also have been actual cultic prophets associated with the shrine to deliver oracles for the king or for private individuals. Such a function may be reflected implicitly in many psalms; but there is little positive evidence for this view, and it remains speculative; though Samuel, who was both a cultic functionary and is also termed a "seer," seems to have had such a prophetic role. Indeed, the situation at the shrine of Shiloh, as portrayed in 1 Samuel, may have been characteristic of the original cultic state of affairs: a family of priests (the Elides) and a cultic "lent person," Samuel. To be sure, the term *sha'ul* is used of him rather than *lewi,* but both words can mean "lent." It is said of Samuel that he became a *na'ar* ("lad, young man") at the shrine of Shiloh (1 Samuel 1:24; 2:17–18), a term that in the early period seems to have had the connotation of "cultic officiant" or the like; cf. the probably early text in Exodus 24:5. Samuel is said to have been dressed in a "linen ephod," apparently a priestly garment that is an early form of the linen costume of later priests, especially the high priest. The ephod seems also to have referred to some sort of freestanding object, probably an image. Gideon is stated to have set one up as an object of worship (Judges 8:27), and an ephod is associated with an image in Judges 17–18. The ephod may have had some oracular function. There is no reason to assume these early priests had any connection with Aaron, whose position as ancestor of the entire priesthood reflects much later ideas; indeed, as noted, they may have been locally appointed, as in

Judges 17. Whether the cult practiced in the early period was in any way monotheistic or even monolatrous is seeming, as more archeological evidence appears, to be less and less likely.

Stage 2: the states of Israel and Judah

The real organization of the cult and priesthood came about as a result of the foundation of the states of Israel and Judah after about 950. David is presented as having as his main priest, not his sons but Abiathar, an Elide. Later Zadok was added, who ousted the Elides and was made chief priest by Solomon at the new temple in Jerusalem. That shrine was, in fact, a royal chapel adjoining the palace on Mount Zion, and both shrine and cult were established according to Canaanite models as part of the consolidation of the monarchy. The temple was built by Phoenicians (i.e., Canaanites); it contained a building surrounded by a courtyard in which the altar of sacrifice stood. Two pillars stood before the entrance, possibly standing for dynastic stability. Inside there were three rooms, in the standard Canaanite manner. The innermost room was the "Holiest Place" where, according to the Bible, the ark that accompanied Israel in the desert rested, containing the Tablets of the Covenant. The ark may be, as noted above, an old institution, but in the shrine the main function of the ark was to act as a throne for the deity, who sat on the images of cherubim (mythological beings with human heads, lion bodies and eagle wings, borrowed from Mesopotamian–Canaanite iconography). Whether God was believed to be always present in the Holiest Place, as the people seemed to have believed, or only came down for important cultic occasions, especially the Day of Atonement, as the Pentateuch implies (Leviticus 16), is unknown. Certainly, prophets like Jeremiah view the popular sense of permanent divine presence and protection in Zion as deceptive.

A curtain separated the Holiest Place from the rest of the Temple, where the sacred vessels stood: a small gold incense altar, the eternal light, the menorah (probably a branched incense holder, representing the tree of life), a bronze basin called the "Sea," supported by bronze bulls, sets of elaborate lavers and stands, and, before the reforms, the image of a snake (*nehushtan*; cf. Numbers 21:9; 2 Kings 18:4), perhaps representing one of the Seraphim, "flaming ones," cobra- like mythological beings borrowed from Canaanite-Egyptian iconography. There were also cultic poles, originally symbols of the mother goddess, but now perhaps representing Yahweh's power to bless with fertility. They, as well as other objects later considered idolatrous, like the "chariots of the sun" (2 Kings 23:11), were removed in the later reforms.

The priesthood of the Jerusalem temple was Zadokite. There is evidence that this priesthood might have had Canaanite connections. In Genesis 14 the Canaanite king of Salem (Jerusalem), Melchizedek, is portrayed as blessing Abraham in the name of "El, Most High" (originally a Canaanite deity). The element *sedeq*, "right, legitimacy," also occurs in the name of the king of Jerusalem defeated in the later

conquest, Adonizedek (Joshua 10). The priestly Zadokites may have been native to Jerusalem, a city that remained Canaanite until it was conquered by David in the tenth century. Psalm 110, the text of which is obscure, seems to address the Judean king as "a priest, after the manner of Melchizedek." It is very possible that not only temple and priesthood, but also the kind of religion practiced under the monarchy in Judah was borrowed from the Canaanites, or at least heavily influenced by them. Some of the Levite clans may also have had Canaanite roots, since the names of two of them, "Ethan, the Native-Born" and "Heman" appear in 1 Kings 5:11 as foreign wise men, and are also presented as composers of psalms (Psalms 88–9; cf. 1 Chronicles 15:19). The tradition that there were Canaanite "hewers of wood and drawers of water" at the shrine may be reflected in the story of the Gibeonite deception in Joshua 9:22–27. Many scholars think that, although Yahweh remained the national deity, perhaps joined by a consort Asherah, the core of religion in Judah was the covenant between God and the Davidic king, which is described as one between father and son. In any case, the royal cult on Zion centered on the monarchy, as reflected in a series of "royal psalms" (Psalms 2, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 132). But local worship continued in Judah at the high places, as reflected even in the Pentateuch in the cultic regulations presented in the earliest codes. For example, Exodus 20:24–25 states that one may choose either an altar of earth or of unhewn stones, a choice that reflects the legitimacy of many shrines, "in all the places where I shall come and bless you." These local *bamot* were probably manned by local Levites, "lent" to God, and perhaps beginning to form a sort of loose clergy. The Zadokites at the sole royal shrine, the Jerusalem temple, may have come to claim descent from Aaron, Moses's brother, as a way of obscuring their Canaanite origin.

In the northern kingdom of Israel there seem to have been two royal shrines, at Dan (see above) and Bethel (1 Kings 12:25–33).The Bible claims that worship there centered on two golden calves, like the one in Exodus 32, a propagandistic Judean assertion that the religion of the north was perverted to idolatry. This is surely a distortion. Most scholars view the "calves," i.e., young bulls, as symbols of Yahweh or as pedestals for the invisible presence of the deity, like the cherubim lid of the ark in the Jerusalem temple. The north did not seem to have a royal cult, though its first king, Jeroboam, did institute a festival in the eighth month corresponding to the one in Judah in the seventh. There is reason to think that the festival in the south may have been a kind of New Year rite, centering on God's support of the monarchy. Most scholars think that covenant religion was preserved in northern Israel, or perhaps even originated there, and moved south to Judah, or was revived there, only after the destruction of Israel in 722 BCE.

Stage 3: the Josianic reform and the Exile

The next, and crucial, stage is the reform instigated by King Josiah in 621 BCE, perhaps taking up earlier attempts by Hezekiah a century earlier. The picture of the

priesthood in Deuteronomy largely corresponds to this stage. The religious activity of Josiah is presented as a reform, a purification of religion from idolatry that had sullied the original Mosaic dispensation. In fact, it was a revolution, which used an idealized imaginative picture of a distant golden age of religious purity in the past to justify current actions. The motives of the reform were both political and religious, entwined as usual in history. The dominant Assyrian empire was collapsing and Josiah hoped to expand Judah northward and attain the glory he believed it had had in the reigns of David and Solomon. The remnants of northern Israel were to be united with southern Judah. In terms of religion, the desire for unity and royal supremacy was expressed in a new doctrine of absolute monotheism. Yahweh was now viewed as the sole God and ruler of the cosmos, to whom one owed the duty not just of obedience to his covenant, but also complete and constant devotion, even love. The uniqueness of God was reflected also in the cult, in the revolutionary demand that henceforth all sacrifice be limited to the Jerusalem temple. The local *bamot* and other shrines were closed and their priests brought to Jerusalem, where they were allowed to partake of sacred offerings but were not allowed to "go up upon the altar," i.e., officiate (2 Kings 23:8–9). The revolution was based on a book "found" in the temple that purported to be Moses' final exhortation to Israel, but which was, as its language shows, a contemporary work. That book was undoubtedly some form of Deuteronomy. The view of some scholars that its supporters and even authors were Levites seem unlikely, since the law of centralization put most of them out of work.

The later position of priests and Levites is a logical result of the processes of the Deuteronomic Reform and the religious and political developments that followed, especially the Babylonian Exile of 586–539 and the post-Exilic period until about 400. Deuteronomy reflects the pre-Exilic situation in the late seventh century. As the term "levitical priests" indicates, there was as yet no distinction in principle in the clergy, but there began to be a practical differentiation. Both the country priests and the Jerusalem clergy were Levites. The latter naturally defended their right to be the only officiants at the shrine, though the other Levites were tolerated as objects of charity. This picture is something less than what Deuteronomy 18:7 allows, which is equal participation in the cult for Levites who come to Jerusalem, but it otherwise more or less corresponds to what Deuteronomy says: the rural Levites, now unemployed, are to be supported together with the poor. Since the triennial tithe to which they were entitled would scarcely be enough to provide for them, supporting them liberally through charity became an aspect of the new concept of absolute devotion to the One God, just like providing freed slaves with abundant property (Deuteronomy 15:13–14).

Of course, many Levites must have bridled at this effective demotion, and the biblical texts of the next two centuries seem to contain evidence of struggles between them and the Jerusalem priesthood, which now claimed absolute power. In the Exile the case of the Aaronic Zadokite priests was defended by Ezekiel, as

described above. The other Levites were to be servants, and a reason for their lowered status was found: when serving at the high places they had abetted the people's "idolatry." That this charge is propaganda is shown by the fact that even pious Josiah did not kill the priests of the Judean local shrines but rather brought them to Jerusalem. No doubt some narratives in the Pentateuch also reflect the struggle. The story of the Golden Calf in Exodus 32 is generally held to be an anti-Aaronide, pro-Levite polemic. Aaron enables the people's apostasy and the zealous Levites alone rally to Yahweh. On the other hand, the Korah narrative in Numbers 16 represents the riposte of the Aaronides: The levitical challengers to Aaron are swallowed alive by the underworld! The blossoming of Aaron's rod also reflects Aaronide supremacy.

The victory of the Zadokite line of Aaronides was supported after the Exile. Zechariah 3 recounts a heavenly trial of the first high priest of the restored temple, Joshua. He is acquitted of an unstated charge, clothed in the splendid high priestly garments and appointed to be the anointed priest over the returned exiles. Despite apparent prophetic agitation to also restore the Davidic monarchy, its revival was prevented by the Persian rulers. Instead, the Jerusalem temple and its clergy, the only true priests henceforth, were to be dominant for centuries in the lives of the Jews. Chronicles represents a last twinge of levitical resistance. Their status as an inferior, subordinate grade of clergy is accepted but the prerogatives they do have are presented by the Chronicler as sanctioned by David himself, from whom they inherit the musical and poetic functions in the temple, as well, it seems, as some of the prophetic ones.

The final form of the Pentateuch contains a compilation of priestly views, as outlined above. A picture is promulgated of a cult revealed by God at Sinai manned by an Aaronide priesthood sanctioned by him. The elaborate imaginative construction of the desert tabernacle and its rites are a kind of utopia of the ideal order, along the lines of the picture presented by Ezekiel 40–47, but even more archaizing, because the temple has been replaced by a sacred tent. Deuteronomy presents a somewhat earlier picture of the cultic situation, as described above, but even the Tetrateuch, between the lines, contains a record of the long struggle of priests to differentiate themselves from other Levites, and the resistance of the latter. In fact the Tetrateuch derives the priesthood not just from Aaron's son Eleazar, through the exemplary zealot Phinehas, to Zadok but also from his brother Ithamar. Descendants of both Eleazar and Ithamar are said to have returned with Ezra in the fifth century (Ezra 8:2), which may point to other tensions between Zadokites and non-Zadokites inside the Aaronide priesthood in the early Second Temple Period, or even from before the Exile. But the supremacy of the Zadokites in the high priesthood was firmly established, until they were ousted by the Maccabean dynasty in the middle of the second century BCE, an event that, among other things, seems to have led to the splitting of the Qumran group from the Jerusalem cult, whose non-Zadokite high priests they rejected.

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4

How Unique Was Israelite Prophecy?

Jonathan Stökl

Introduction

There are several ideas that may come to mind when we think of prophecy in Israel. The grand, lonely figure who speaks out against theological and moral misbehavior; an individual inspired by a deity speaking in ecstasy; or perhaps temple musicians singing inspired by their god. If we seek to explore Israelite prophecy further, and indeed any subject of research, it is important to be aware of preconceptions that we bring to the object of enquiry. This chapter will enquire into prophecy in the Hebrew Bible, in ancient Israel and Judah and in other ancient Near Eastern societies and show their similarities and differences.

A number of questions arise that we have to address in order to carry out this plan: What is prophecy? How do we have access to Israelite prophecy as opposed to other forms of prophecy? What other forms of prophecy were out there? And what do we mean when we say "unique"? It is to these questions that we shall now turn.

What Is Prophecy? Toward a Definition

The English term "prophecy" is ultimately derived from the Greek word προφήτης (*profetes*), which literally means "spokesperson," someone who speaks on behalf of someone else. This is the word used by the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible) to translate the Hebrew word נביא (*nāḇīʾ or more*

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simply nabi). *Nabi* is used in the Hebrew Bible to refer to a wide variety of people – but, interestingly, few of the so-called "writing prophets" like Amos or Ezekiel are referred to by this title (Auld, 1983a, 1983b; Carroll, 1983; Williamson, 1983; Gonçalves, 2001). The people referred to as *nabi* in the Hebrew Bible are Aaron, Abraham, Ahijah, Deborah, Elijah, Elisha, Gad, Habakkuk, Haggai, Hananiah, Huldah, Iddo, Isaiah, Jehu ben Hanani, Jeremiah, Jonah, Miriam, Nathan, Oded/Azariah, Samuel, Shemaiah and Zechariah.[1] The Hebrew Bible also use two further titles normally translated as "seer": ראה (*rōʾœ*, or *roeh*) and חזה (*ḥōzœ*, or *hozeh*) and the "man of G/god" (איש האלהים; *ʾīš hāʾœlohīm*, or *ish ha'elohim*). Some characters, like Samuel, Gad, and Elijah, have several of these titles attributed to them.

On the basis of biblical and ancient Near Eastern texts, Manfred Weippert (1988, 2001) suggested a definition whereby

> prophecy is present when a person
>
> (a) through a cognitive experience (a vision, an auditory experience, an audio-visual appearance, a dream or the like) becomes the subject of the revelation of a deity, or several deities and, in addition,
> (b) is conscious of being commissioned by the deity or deities in question to convey the revelation in a verbal form (as a "prophecy" or a "prophetic speech"), or through nonverbal communicative acts ("symbolic acts"), to a third party who constitutes the actual addressee of the message. (trans. Nissinen, 2004)

I would contend that it is difficult to know whether a person must be "conscious of being commissioned by the deity" in order to be a prophet. It would certainly exclude all manner of possession cults from the category "prophecy," which may not be desirable. I would suggest a slightly different definition of prophecy, but before doing so let us look at the relationship between prophecy and technical divination.

Prophecy and technical divination

In common usage the term divination refers to all manner of techniques to find out the outcome of decisions, such as haruspicy (entrail reading), astrology, reading tea leaves, and many more. The idea behind these techniques is that some transcendent entity "writes" the future into a sheep's liver, the stars, or the tea leaves so that a sufficiently skilled human can read them. In the past, prophecy and divination have been interpreted as opposing forces. This is mainly because of the Bible's value judgment in favor of "prophecy" and against "divination" (e.g., Deuteronomy 13 and 18). But even within the Hebrew Bible this value judgment is by no means as obvious as it may seem: In the story of the woman of Endor, the text in 1 Samuel is

remarkable in that Saul is not condemned for consulting the necromancer/medium; this particular condemnation is added by the Chronicler.[2] The use of Urim and Thummim is remarkably similar to forms of technical divination elsewhere. Further, research into ancient Near Eastern prophecy and divination has shown that the two are not that different. In fact, it appears that prophecy is an integral part of the system of divination, which includes technical forms, such as astrology or haruspicy, and intuitive forms, such as prophecy. The terms "technical" and "intuitive" signify one distinction: "technical" forms of divination require the diviner to have technical knowledge about how to interpret the message in the stars or a sheep's liver. In "intuitive" forms of divination, the divine message does not require further explanation, but is formulated in understandable words in and of itself. Using this terminology, "divination," by whichever means, becomes the term signifying all forms of acquiring divine knowledge (Nissinen, 2004). This does not exclude the possibility that cultures can develop forms of divination which show an overlap between these two categories. Early biblical exegesis in Qumran appears to have been just that. It requires knowledge of how to interpret scripture, acquired through formal education, and additionally it requires divine inspiration (Nissinen, 2010). Because it requires divine inspiration scriptural exegesis became the legitimate heir of biblical prophecy for the Qumran community (Jassen, 2007).

Thus, "divination" is subdivided into "technical" and "intuitive" divination. "Prophecy" is but one kind of "intuitive" divination; another form would be message dreams (Nissinen, 2010; Scurlock, 2010). Dreaming is an interesting case in this taxonomy, as significant dreams can fall into either category: if it is a clear message dream, it is to be categorized as intuitive divination, but if it needs the help of a dream interpreter, then the dream interpreter is the (technical) diviner who "reads" the divine message that the gods have "written" into the dream of the other person.

If we use this terminology, how do we understand the biblical terminology and value judgment that distinguishes between "good" prophecy and "bad" divination? I suggest reading this difference as an emic value judgment, whereby the authors of the Hebrew Bible attempted to portray all forms of divination of which they did not approve (however inconsistently) as bad – in other words the Bible "others" forms of divination that some of its authors do not endorse. Another example of "othering" in the Hebrew Bible is the term "Canaanite," which refers to anything that some authors of the Hebrew Bible did not accept and wanted to paint as "bad."

Equipped with this terminology, we can now define divination: Divination is when humans acquire transcendental knowledge by whichever means and for whatever purpose. Prophecy, as an element of the subset "intuitive divination," occurs when a deity sends a clearly understandable message to a human through another human (the "prophet").[3] Whether the human expresses this message through words (an oracle) or behavior (sign-act) is, for this definition, of no importance.

Literature and history

Most of our information about ancient Israel and Judah comes from the Hebrew Bible and archaeology. Both of these require careful analysis (see Ben Zvi, Chapter 2 in this volume) when being used as an historical source. Biblical texts are written (and rewritten) at a considerable distance of time after the events that they narrate. They use the past to make theological points, and therefore the texts do not in fact correspond directly to events in Israel's past. Thus, when the book of Isaiah claims that Isaiah of Jerusalem announced the coming of Cyrus the Great, it may make a valid theological point, such as that YHWH has complete control over history and delivers his people, but it is unlikely that an eighth-century BCE court prophet in Jerusalem called Isaiah pronounced those words. Although biblical texts evidence various ways in which prophecy worked, the "reality on the ground" can no longer be established with complete confidence. The literature on the relationship between history in the Hebrew Bible and the history of Israel and Judah is vast and growing (see, e.g., Liverani, 2005; Miller and Hayes, 1999). The same is true for the reconstruction of Israelite prophecy. Because of the literary nature of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible recent attention in the study of biblical prophecy has moved away from the prophet as an individual and toward the prophetic book (e.g., Floyd, 2006).

Armed with this definition of prophecy as part of the wider field of "divination," and some thoughts on the relationship between the Bible as literature and history, we can now examine prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and in ancient Near Eastern texts.

Prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and in Israel and Judah

Moses is probably Israel's prophet par excellence. He is a great leader of the people and is in direct contact with YHWH. However, the Bible never directly confers the title "prophet" or "seer" on him. The only time it comes close to doing so is in Deuteronomy 34:10 where the text implies that Moses is a prophet ("Never again did there arise in Israel a prophet like Moses whom YHWH knew, face to face").[4] Similarly, most of the so-called "writing prophets," those who have prophetic books attributed to them, do not bear the title *nabi* ("prophet"). Instead, tradition attributes the title to them. This process already starts in the Hebrew Bible and continues in postbiblical texts. A good example can be found in the book of Jeremiah. Two different editions from antiquity survive in the (Hebrew) Masoretic Text and the (Greek) Septuagint. Fragments of both versions (and an intermediate version) have been found at Qumran (Eshel, 2000). The Masoretic Text uses the title *nabi* 31 times referring to Jeremiah, while the Septuagint refers to Jeremiah as a prophet only four times. As the Septuagint is usually considered the older of the

two variant editions of Jeremiah (McKane, 1986), it follows that the younger Masoretic Text reflects the growing tendency to use the title "prophet" for Jeremiah. Let us therefore take the "writing prophets" as well as those individuals either called "prophet" or "seer" as examples of the prophets of the Hebrew Bible.

What do biblical prophets do?

In the Hebrew Bible there are a variety of types of prophet. In the book of Kings Elijah and Elisha lead groups of prophets and perform acts that would be called magical if performed by other characters, such as making an axe float on the water. There are also prophets employed at the court, such as Nathan and Isaiah, who give advice to the king in difficult situations. Then there are figures who are portrayed as powerful voices of dissent, such as Amos, who insists on being neither a prophet nor a prophet's disciple (Amos 7:14). They criticize the ruling classes and point out serious deficiencies in the behavior of "the people." We also have groups of ecstatics who are called "prophets" in the books of Samuel (*1 Samuel* 10, 19). It is unclear what their connection is to prophecy as such, as they do not transmit any form of message. Prophets such as Jeremiah and Ezekiel represent authority – both are identified as priests – and at the same time criticize the people and the ruling classes as Amos does. Finally, if we believe the influential theory of Siegmund Mowinckel (1923), we have cult-prophets; their literary output is, according to this theory, still evident in some of the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 60). Mowinckel's theory has the disadvantage that it identifies anybody who prophesies or who pronounces oracles, or who uses pre-existing oracles for writing Psalms, as a prophet. As we have seen above, prophecy is a subdiscipline of divination and it is not always possible to distinguish between oracles resulting from technical and intuitive divination. Thus, it is impossible to identify with certainty anybody as a prophet, as opposed to a different form of diviner, simply on the basis of the oracle attributed to them. Furthermore, not everybody who prophesies is a professional prophet; deities can also use people with different professions as their mouthpieces.[5]

Common forms of oracles are the "oracle against the nation(s)" and the "salvation oracle," both of which are attested in the ancient Near Eastern evidence as well (Westermann, 1960 and, for the ancient Near Eastern texts, Nissinen, 2003b). Prophetic oracles in the Hebrew Bible often criticize the ruling classes and, at times, even question the earthly monarchy fundamentally. This goes so far that Amos announces that "the end has come" for the Northern Kingdom (Amos 8:2). The function of divination in the ancient Near East is to show people outcomes of their decisions, rather than showing an unchangeable future. The oracle would thus contribute to the decision-making process, much in the same way that modern scientists and economists will give predictions on the basis of which governments make decisions (although one hopes that these predictions are more successful than those of ancient diviners). Schmidt (1998) and Tiemeyer (2005) recently affirmed

that biblical prophecy operated in the same way. To be sure, this interpretation contradicts Deuteronomy's advice on how to recognize a true prophet (18:20–22):

> But any prophet who presumes to speak in my name an oracle that I did not command him to utter, or who speaks in the name of other gods - that prophet shall die. And should you ask yourselves, how can we know that the oracle was not spoken by YHWH? If the prophet speaks in the name of YHWH and the oracle does not come true, that oracle was not spoken by YHWH; the prophet has uttered it presumptuously: do not stand in dread of him.

But it does agree with the picture drawn in the book of Jonah, where the prophet is sent to announce the impending destruction of Nineveh to the inhabitants of the city, only for YHWH to have mercy on the city when its inhabitants repent. Thus, the book of Jonah constructs prophecy in a way similar to that of divination in general, suggesting that different biblical writers had a different theory of prophecy. The question we will address in the next section is in which way biblical prophecy corresponds to prophecy in ancient Israel and Judah.

What did prophets do in ancient Israel and Judah?

Pre-Exilic Israelite prophecy was presumably somewhat different from prophecy in the Hebrew Bible. As already affirmed, most of our evidence was written after the time of the exile in Babylon and then rewritten and (re-)edited after that, which means that we only have access to echoes and footprints of pre-Exilic prophecy. It is likely that many of the kinds of prophets attested in the Hebrew Bible also existed in pre-Exilic Israel and Judah. In order to be credible to an ancient readership, they must have corresponded to some form of reality. If there had been no kings of Judah, the book of Kings would not have been credible to an ancient audience.

Stories about prophets who are court advisers in particular are regarded as painting a generally credible picture of arrangements (e.g., de Jong, 2007, on Isaiah of Jerusalem), although this does not mean that specific oracles or events happened as narrated. The realization that court prophets are likely to reflect historical reality has led to a radical change in modern scholars' views about what kind of oracle is regarded accurately to represent historical reality. Whereas for much of the last century the "oracles of doom" were regarded as the older form to which "oracles of salvation" were added at a later stage, authors such as de Jong now affirm the "oracle of salvation" as a likely candidate for oracles pronounced in pre-Exilic Judah (and, by transfer, Israel), to which "oracles of doom" were added. This view was recently criticized by Blum (2008) and Williamson (forthcoming) on the grounds that ancient Near Eastern texts also include the oracle doom by Balaam from Deir ʿAlla (Hackett, 1984).

If prophecy's function is not to announce the future for its own sake, but rather to announce what the future will be unless something is done about it, oracles of doom make sense as part of a court prophet's job description – after all, he or she had to warn their king of the possible negative outcomes of their decision. Going back to the rule in Deuteronomy 18 that one can tell whether a prophet is a true prophet by seeing whether his (or her) oracle comes true, we can now say that Deuteronomy's theory contradicts another biblical theory of prophecy (Jonah), as well as that of (late) pre-Exilic Judah.[6] Finally, I remain doubtful about the existence of cult-prophecy as an institution in pre-Exilic Judah – although individual prophecies may have occasionally occurred in the temple during religious services.

The main difference, then, between the representation of prophecy in the Hebrew Bible and prophecy in ancient Israel and Judah, appears to be that the role of "leader of the people" is based less on the historical role of the prophet in ancient Israel and Judah, and more on the literary elaboration of that role. As has been pointed out by Martti Nissinen (2006), however, it is only leaders in Israel's past who acquire the title "prophet," rather than people in Israel's present at the time these texts are written.[7]

Before we can assess how unique Israelite prophecy was, let us consider prophecy in non-Israelite cultures from the ancient Near East.[8]

Prophecy in the Ancient Near East

Most ancient Near Eastern societies seem to have known various forms of divination, which were used to help kings and others in positions of power to decide on important issues, taking the will of the gods into account (for overviews, see Borghouts, 1995; Farber, 1995; Frantz-Szabó, 1995). Prophecy itself, however, is not attested throughout the ancient Near East. It is, of course, impossible to prove that a certain ancient culture did not contain prophecy, but there is no evidence of prophecy from some cultures, namely Egypt (Shupak, 1990)[9] and the Hittite empire in Anatolia, even though Beal (2004) and Beckman (1997) argue – somewhat speculatively – that a term for prophet can be found in Hittite texts.

Trans-Jordanian prophecy

Several Trans-Jordanian kings had texts inscribed on stone stele after important events in their lives, some of which attest that the concept of prophecy existed among Israel's Trans-Jordanian neighbors. The Zakkur inscription (e.g., Nissinen, 2003c: 202), the Amman Citadel inscription (e.g., Nissinen, 2003c: 203) and the Deir 'Alla inscription (e.g., Nissinen 2003c: 207) all mention people referred to as *ḥz'* (plural *ḥzn*), cognate of the Hebrew title *hozeh* ("seer"). The

Zakkur and Amman Citadel inscriptions are both royal inscriptions in which a king writes of how the gods have helped him in a difficult situation, and how the divine advice was imparted through these "seers." The Deir 'Alla inscription contains an oracle of doom by Balaam bar Beor, *ḥzn* of the gods. Sadly, the text is very fragmentary, so its context and narrative setting remain somewhat unclear.

Prophecy in Mesopotamia

Two Mesopotamian royal archives contain a considerable number of texts pertaining to prophecy. The older of the two archives is from Mari, the capital of a state rivaling that of Hammurapi the Great of Babylon and ultimately defeated by him.[10] There are about fifty letters from Mari and a few further documents pertaining to prophecy giving a total of about eighty texts. These texts specify one professional title for "prophet": *āpilum* (feminine *āpiltum*; "spokesperson"; or simpler '*apilum*'). The *apilum* used to be translated as "answerer" since morphologically the form is a participle of the verb *apālu* ("to answer"). As no *apilum* is attested as answering a question, and since the semantic range of *apālu* allows for either translation and a lexical list (dictionary) from third-millennium BCE Ebla equates *apilu* with EME.BAL ("translator, spokesperson"), the translation "spokesperson" is better (e.g., Fronzaroli, 1980; Merlo, 2004). Additionally, there are some cult officials: the *muḫḫûm* (feminine *muḫḫūtum*; "ecstatic"; or simpler '*muhhum*'), the *qammatum* (no masculine equivalent; "shock-head"?) and the *assinnu*, as well as several people who are not given a title.[11] Most texts were published by Durand (1988) and Charpin (1988).

The second archive is the Neo-Assyrian State Archive from Nineveh in the seventh century BCE. The professional title used in that data is *raggintu* (masculine *raggimu*; "caller"), who appears to fulfill a similar function to the *apilum* in Old Babylonian Mari. The *muhhum* is also still attested, albeit more tangentially. No oracle is attributed to anybody identified as a *muhhum*. The prophetic texts from the Neo-Assyrian Empire were mostly edited by Parpola (1997) and Nissinen (1998).

From these texts we learn that prophecy was neither limited to professional prophets nor to any gender, unlike more technical forms of divination, which were predominately carried out by men. A deity could choose to speak through a prophet, through cult officials, or through other people.

Thus, lines 15–25 of Durand (1988), text no. 215, a letter to King Zimri-Lim of Mari, include the news that an ecstatic (*muhhum*) had given an oracle in the temple of the god Dagan:

> An ecstatic [r]ose before Dagan and spoke; he (said) t[h]us: "Until when will I not drink clean water? Write to your lord so that I may drink clean water!" Now, herewith I send fur of his head and his hem to my lord. May my Lord perform a purification-ritual.[12]

Through the mouth of this ecstatic, Dagan demands that he be given clean water, presumably so that the temple-worship for him could function properly (see also the demands in Parpola (1997), text no. 3.5 below). Since temple worship was part of the responsibility of the king, it makes sense that the deity directs his complaint straight to him.

Another letter, Durand (1988), text no. 199, contains several very interesting oracles. Lines 29–39 are dedicated to an oracle by the "spokesman of Dagan" Lupahum. In these lines Dagan warns against a political alliance with another state, Eshnunna, without checking through a form of technical divination whether the moment is good. Dagan goes on to remind King Zimri-Lim that in the past he had warned him in a similar way during a war with a tribal group called the Yaminites ("Southerners"):

> And he spoke to me, (saying) thus: "Hop[ef]ully the king will not make a treaty with the king of [Esh]nunna without asking a god. As before when the Yaminites came down and stayed in Saggaratum. Then I spoke to the king, I (said) thus:[13] 'Do not ally yourself with the Yaminites! I will drive the shepherds of their herds into the Hubur[14] and the river will finish them for you!' [N]ow, he {the king} must not swear a tr[eaty] without having a[s]ked a g[o]d!"

This message containing wordplay is reinforced by another oracle, this time by a woman referred to as *qammatum* of Dagan, again in a rather literary style:

> After his departure, on the second [da]y, a *qammatum* of Dagan of T[erqa] came to me. This she said to [me, (saying) th]us: "Under the straw water r[uns]! They keep sendin [g you] messages for peace. They send their gods [to you] – but in their heart another wind blows. The king must not swear a treaty without having asked a god!" (Durand 1988, text 199, lines 41–49)

This oracle against an alliance with Eshnunna, using what appears to be a proverb, "under the straw water runs," is quoted twice further (Durand 1988, texts nos 197 and 202; see also Sasson, 1995), which can either be taken as an indication that all these letters report the same oracle, but in slightly different words, or that various prophetic figures used an existing proverb in order to communicate a warning against an alliance with Eshnunna, or a combination of the two. The fact that Mari's king Zimri-Lim ultimately did not heed the warning shows that prophecy was not considered to have a status of ultimate authority.

A form of prophetic oracle well known from the Hebrew Bible, the "oracle against the Nation" (e.g., in the books of Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel), is also attested in the documents from Mari, usually without naming the enemy in question (e.g., Durand 1988, text no. 216, lines 5–18):

> In the temple of Annunitum which is inside the city, a certain Ahatum, servant-girl of Dagan-Malik raved. She spoke, (saying) thus: "Zimri-Lim! And if you were to disregard me I will (still) love {lit. hum over} you! Your enemies, I will deliver

> theminto your hands! And I will seize those who steal from me! To destruction by Belet-ekallim I will gather them!"

Similarly, Ishtar of Arbela tells Esarhaddon (Parpola 1999, text no. 3.5, lines 17–19):

> (It is) as if I had done nothing, given you nothing! Have I not bent the four doorjambs of the land of Assur? Did I not give them to you? Did I not conquer your enemy? Did I not gather your traitors and your foes [like but]terflies? (But) [yo]u, what have you given to me? [The fo]od for the banquet i[s not there] as if there were no temple (at all). I [am deprive]d of my food, I [am depr]ived of my drink. (They) belong to me! I cast my eyes on (them)!

These two texts show how Mesopotamian deities could complain that the earthly king, in many ways their representative, did not fulfill his duties correctly – but they could also promise support of the king in spite of his shortcomings.

On the same tablet that contains the previous oracle, we find Mesopotamian deities claiming control of meteorological (whether real or mythological) phenomena, just as we find it in Habbakuk 3, Isaiah 30, Ezekiel 38, and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible.

> I have taken them from before you! I have driven them into the mountains! I have rained stones, fiery glow on their heads! I have made your enemies to sacrifices! I have fi[l]led the river with their blood! (Parpola 1997, text 3.3, lines 19–23)

A specific form of these kinds of oracles are those directed against enemies within, such as can be found in the following oracle by Ishtar of Arbela to Esarhaddon (Parpola 1997, text no. 2.3, lines 9–18). This oracle also contains a dynastic promise that Esarhaddon's descendants shall be kings in Assyria (for which see also Parpola 1997, text no. 1.10):

> Like a good lion cub I will run about in your palace (and) I will sniff out your enemies. I will keep you secure in your palace. I will cause you to prevail over anxiety (and) fear. Your scion and your scion's scion shall execute kingship before Ninurta. I will be in total control of the territories of (all) the lands (and) I will give (them) to you! Mankind is treacherous I am who speaks and acts (accordingly), the active one am I! I sniff (them) out, I hunt (them) down and I give (them) to you!

Occasionally, these oracles contain ethical demands, just as in this oracle from eighteenth-century BCE Aleppo found in Mari (Durand 2002, text 38, lines 3-11'):

> Abiya, a "spokesperson" of Adad of Aleppo came to me and spoke to me: "Thus (says) Adad: 'I gave the whole land to Yahdun-Lim. And due to my weapons he did

> not meet (his) equal. (But) he abandoned my (cause). So I ga[v]e the land which I had given him to Samsi-Adad. [Samsi]-Adad. . . [BREAK] . . . Let me re[sto]re you. To the t[hrone of the house of your fathers] I restored you. [My weapons] with which I fought Tiamat I gave to you. I anointed you with the oil of my splendor. Nobody stands before you. Listen to one word of me: "When anybody cries to <you> for judging, (saying) thus: 'I h[ave been wron]ged!' Be there! Judge his case! [. . .]" [Th]is is what I d[esire] from you.'"

There is even an example of what appears to be a sign-act by an ecstatic from Mari (Durand 1988, text 206):

> To [my Lord] s[ay]: thus (says) [Yaqqim-Addu], your servant: An ecstati[c of . . .] came to me and [he spoke] th[is], he (said) thus: "[. . .] of Zi[mri-Lim] I will eat. One la [mb. . .] I may eat."
>
> One lam[b. . .] It was alive and [he] ate it in front of the gate. I assembled the elders in front of the gate of Saggaratum. This he spoke, he (said) thus: "A plague will occur! Demand from the cities that they return the sacred donation (=*assakkum*)! (Any) man who commits an act of violence you must evict from the city! For the well-being of your lord Zi[mri-Lim] you shall clothe me with a garment!" This is what he said to me. For the well-being of [my] lord I clothe[d him] in garment. Herewith I send the ora[cle which] he sai[d. . .] to [my lord]. He did not speak his oracle to me in secret. In the assembly of the elders he gave his oracle.

Eating a live lamb to announce that a plague will occur – punning with the root *'kl* ("to eat"; Astour, 1992; Malamat, 1998: 136–137) – is a truly impressive way of driving his message home.

One major difference between the texts from Mari and those from the Neo-Assyrian Empire is that Neo-Assyrian oracles are collected together on tablets (called *Sammeltafeln*, from the German for "tablet collecting several texts"), while the same does not happen in Mari. Among the Neo-Assyrian texts there are three tablets, which combine several prophetic oracles on one tablet, simply listing them one after the other, with a short indication of who the speaker is. It is true that the Mari letters occasionally mention two or more oracles in one letter, but they are contained in letters rather than deliberately collected together.

Comparison and Conclusion

Israelite and Judean as well as ancient Near Eastern prophets pronounced divine support for their rulers, announced defeat for their opponents and dispensed divine criticism of the behavior of "their" kings (see, e.g., Nissinen, 2003a). They promised divine support for their dynasties and threatened to take away kingship if their

demands were not met. They even performed sign-acts of a kind. It appears, therefore, as if there were little to distinguish Israelite and Judean prophecy from prophecy elsewhere in the ancient Near East.

However, we have seen that prophecy in Israel and Judah and prophecy in the Hebrew Bible were not identical. There are two particularly important differences between prophetic texts from the Hebrew Bible and elsewhere: first, that there are no prophetic books anywhere in the ancient Near East apart from in the Bible. Second, there are no prophetic narratives in ancient Near Eastern texts. Both of these features are important aspects of Israel's prophetic literature. In ancient Near Eastern texts, we can find the origins of processes which in Israelite literature ultimately led to the creation of the Bible's impressive literary prophetic books. I have already pointed toward the *Sammeltafeln* which gather several oracles in one text. De Jong (2007) has recently argued that this is the way that prophetic books started. Schart (1995) had previously argued that the Mari letters combining several oracles should also be seen as part of this process, but the letters are mere reports to the king and are very different from the long archival copies of Neo-Assyrian prophecies. Presumably the oracles contained on the *Sammeltafeln* were then used as a source for royal inscriptions and other such texts, although we do not have evidence of these. De Jong has gone further than this and has claimed that even the oracles contained on the *Sammeltafeln* already show the first signs of editing, a result which my own research has led me to agree with (Stökl, 2009).

There are texts from the ancient Near East for which Ellis has introduced the term "Literary Predictive Text" (Ellis, 1989), such as the so-called "Prophecy of Shulgi." These texts pretend to contain prophetic oracles, which shows that they were aimed at audiences which knew the phenomenon "prophecy."

These "Literary Predictive Texts" and the editing process, the beginning of which is visible in the Neo-Assyrian prophetic tablets, indicate that the biblical prophetic books are not entirely *sui generis*. But they also show that all nonbiblical prophetic books remained in an embryonic state. Only the Bible's prophetic books grew to be sustained literary works.

Thus, in response to the initial question of whether Israelite prophecy was unique, I have a twofold answer: on the one hand, prophecy in Israel and Judah was probably very similar to prophecy in the ancient Near East. On the other hand, however, the literary traces that biblical and nonbiblical prophecy left are very different indeed.

Notes

1 Aaron (Exodus 7:1), Abraham (Genesis 20:7), Ahijah (1 Kings 11:29, 14:2), Deborah (Judges 4:4), Elijah (1 Kings 18:22, 36, 19:16, Malachi 3:23, 2 Chronicles 21:12), Elisha (2 Kings 3:11, 6:12, 9:1), Gad (2 Samuel 24:11), Habakkuk (Habbakuk 1:1, 3:1), Haggai

(Haggai 1:1–12, 2:1–10), Hananiah (Jeremiah 28:1–17), Huldah (2 Kings 22:14, 2 Chronicles 34:22), Iddo (2 Chronicles 13:22), Isaiah (2 Kings 19:2, 20:1, Isaiah 37:2, 38:1, 39:3, 2 Chronicles 26:22, 32:20.32), Jehu ben Hanani (1 Kings 16:7, 12), Jeremiah (Jeremiah 20:2, 25:2, 28:5–15, 29:1, 29, 32:2, 34:6, 36:8, 26, 37:2–13, 38:9–14, 42:2–6, 45:1, 46:1, 13, 47:1, 49:34, 50:1, 51:60, Daniel 9:2, 2 Chronicles 36:12), Jonah (2 Kings 14:25), Miriam (Exodus 15:20), Nathan (2 Samuel 7:2, 1 Chronicles 17:1, 2 Samuel 12:25, 1 Kings 1:8–45, Psalms 51:2, 1 Chronicles 29:29, 2 Chronicles 9:29, 29:25), Oded/Azariah (2 Chronicles 15:8), Samuel (1 Samuel 3:20, 2 Chronicles 35:18), Shemaiah (2 Chronicles 12:5, 15) and Zechariah (Zechariah 1:1, 7).

2 I would like to thank Esther Hamori for this observation. Presentation to the Society for Biblical Literature annual meeting in Atlanta 2010.

3 There is a consensus that dreaming and prophecy are hard to distinguish, which leads to message dreams being included in corpora of prophecy. In my view, the two are very similar, indeed, both are forms of intuitive divination, but slightly different. According to Zgoll (2006: 159–169) there is a terminological difference between dreams and visions. Ancient Near East (ANE) dreams always mention that they are dreams, while the one vision text (Durand 1988, text 236) does not; in the Hebrew Bible a similar distinction can be made regarding the use of the terms "to see" and "to dream" for visions and dreams respectively. In my view, the wider and more common definition uses the term "prophecy" in lieu of "intuitive divination," while I distinguish between various forms of intuitive divination. Further, I occasionally attribute agency to deities as in this example. The purpose of this is to take seriously the understanding of ancient societies for whom these deities were real.

4 Biblical citations are adapted from the Jewish Publication Society. Translations of other ancient Near Eastern texts are my own and based on my own readings.

5 This is one of the cases where a theory developed for prophecy in the Hebrew Bible was used to interpret the ANE data – which was then used to support the original theory: a perfect example of circular reasoning. Thus, while it is possible that the *muhhum/mahhu* represents a class of cult prophets, this is by no means sure. In my view, it seems more likely that they are ecstatic cult officials whose professional role was to go into ecstasy, just as other cult officials did in Mesopotamia. In fact, the only texts that give us any clue as to what a *muhhum/mahhu* did is in two ritual texts from Mari (Durand and Guichard 1997, texts 2 and 3), in which they are only required to "go into ecstasy," not to "prophesy." Some recent translations translate the verb as "to prophesy" but its normal meaning is "to rave." They do at times fulfil the sociore-ligious role of a lay-prophet at Mari, but that does not turn them into people whose main role was to prophesy in the cult.

6 It goes without saying that it is also a rather useless form of determining whether a prophecy is true. If one waits for the announcement of doom to come true, before acting on it, then the doom has already happened. But without waiting, one does not know whether the prophecy is true, and therefore it is impossible to do anything about it.

7 Or as he put it recently, when talking about constructions of prophecy in the Hellenistic and Roman periods: "only a dead prophet is a good prophet."

8 While the question of the chapter title does not exclude comparison with non-ancient Near Eastern cultures I will focus on these for historical reasons. Many comparative studies of non-Israelite prophecy and ecstatic religion have been carried out. See, e.g., Overholt (1986) and Grabbe (2000).

9 But see Hilber (2011) who finds echoes of Graeco-Roman prophecy in Egypt. There is, of course, also the Egyptian story of Wen Amun. But that is set in the Levant and, if anything, it attests to Levantine prophecy.

10 On the archaeology of Mari see Margueron (2004). For the history of the Old Babylonian period see Charpin (2004). Most letters from Mari are edited in the series *Archives Royales de Mari*. Good English translations of these can be found in Heimpel (2003) and Nissinen (2003c).

11 The *muhhum* is regarded as a professional term for a prophet by most scholars but the evidence for this is far from unequivocal. I will discuss the role of the *muhhum* further below.

12 It is not uncommon in the Mari prophetic texts to find the notice that the governor or priest sends the "hair and hem," presumably in order to perform some form of ritual to test whether the prophetic message is trustworthy. Durand (1988: 444) points out that the term *etqum* ("curl/fur") used here instead of the normal word for hair is also used of Enkidu's hair before he becomes a member of civilization in Gilgamesh, tablet I, column ii, line 37, which may suggest that the *muhhum* had an unusual hairstyle.

13 It is not quite clear where to divide the two sentences. Heimpel (2003: 253) has the temporal clause "as some time ago, when [. . .] Saggaratum." as part of the preceding sentence, thereby implying that earlier the king did not check with any god. Durand (1988: 427) divides as above comparing the actual reaction of the goddess in both instances and not the possible parallel reaction of the king.

14 Thus also Charpin (2002: 25) and Nissinen (2003c: 31–32) who interpret this as a pun on the Chabur and the underworld river Chubur. It might also include a further play on words with the canal close to Mari that is sometimes called Chubur.

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5

Judaism after the Exile

The Later Books of the Bible

Daniel C. Snell

The period after 539 BCE was formative for all later traditions, and yet we are very ill informed about how the returned exiles from Babylonia usually organized themselves and what the real parameters of their social and religious lives were. This is a dark period in the sense that the preserved books are the only evidence of how Jewish thought and life were progressing. Politically we are not informed about the policies toward minor provinces of either the Persian kings or the Greek ones who succeeded them after 333 BCE. We have tended to assume continuity with the glimpses we see of political developments in the Books of Ezra and Nehemiah, but we may in fact be missing important discontinuities.

The argument has recently been made that the period is not really dark because understanding of the Persian Empire has grown in the last few years. And yet that knowledge has been based to a large extent on the narratives of Greek visitors and not on any new finds from the meager preserved store of Persian royal inscriptions or the opaque records of the king's treasury and fortification archives. All these sources show an empire lightly resting on most of the known world, and the provinces in many respects went their own ways. Persian imperialism was not interested in imposing religious or cultural norms, or any other kinds of influences. A small modicum of tax collections would do, and beyond that local leaders were given their head (Jogoulov, 2009). Among them was the small Jewish community living in and around the old capital of Jerusalem (Briant, 2002: 583–587). There are relevant Persian-period archaeological remains, but they are, as usual with archaeological remains, not particularly enlightening (Meyers, 2009).

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The feeling of ignorance modern scholars have derives in part from the very precision of the information that we do have. The relevant books are sometimes exactly dated, and you get a sense of what some religious intellectuals thought at particular times. And yet, after that, what they thought remains unknown. And what nonreligious people or just the general populace felt eludes us, as ever. And we do not have what we have for earlier periods, a synchronic history that plugs us in to political developments at least at the tops of the hierarchies, with a light onto their concerns and how they connected to actors in other cultures who had access to writing.

Extremely important developments appear to be taking place in the formation of the mode of thinking that became later Judaism, the ways Judahites thought and acted, especially in trying situations. And perhaps the most decisive development is one on which the sources nowhere directly comment, and that is the revision and acceptance as canonical of the books that became the Hebrew Bible.

This was the time in which most aspects of the Bible took shape, and though the dating of individual stages of this development will remain controversial, there is no question but what the Persian and Greek Periods in the Land of Israel played a key role in these developments. The canonical sense was much older than the Exile in the meaning of the feeling among religious people that old things should be preserved, and they should be preserved regardless of their content and possible contradiction to contemporaneous thought and practice. So, for example, people had copied the Song of Deborah, now in Judges 5, because it illustrated the Lord's saving intervention. But it also illustrated the lack of adhesion to any group ideal by several of the tribal groups. And its ambiguities, couched in archaic language, may have implied other things about the development of Israelite culture that later ages did not like, like the implication that "new gods were chosen" (Judges 5:8). The meaning was probably unclear at least by the Exile, but the words still stand because people knew they were old. There was not the later sense of the integrity of ancient texts, and old texts could be stuck in with newer material. Comments, glosses, even retellings could be worked in with older things. But the older stuff apparently could not be materially altered, and in the course of the development of the Bible old forms of words and even of literature have been preserved.

The way later times looked back to the returns from Babylon was a sort of homogenized vision that incorporated later norms, but the contemporary perspectives can sometimes be derived from looking at the sources. Particularly the idea that there was always a tension between returners from Babylonian exile and the descendants of people who had not been taken into exile seems unlikely. The evidence shows the reverse, that Ezra's and Nehemiah's concerns to avoid intermarriage with such folk derived from a time of greater tension. In the earlier material from Haggai and Zechariah, contemporaneous prophets, and from the early chapters of Ezra, which are not about Ezra, we can see that there were efforts to reassimilate the people who had stayed in the land with the people who had come all the way from Babylon (Middlemas, 2009).

Preservation of texts by itself confirms a certain authority, but it may not approach what we later consider as canonical authority until King Josiah of Judah discovered the scroll of the Law in the Temple in 622 BCE, and his reaction to it indicated that he expected it to be authoritative. Its stipulations had not been obeyed, and he was distraught that they had not been. He assumed that the old scroll ought to have such authority attributed to it. He was not eager to proceed on the radical reforms it required without some prophetic confirmation, but he did seek that and moved forward to implement what he had heard read (2 Kings 22).

The earlier fall of the northern kingdom to the Assyrians in 722 BCE may have impelled Judahite, that is, Jewish, intellectuals to recognize that old texts were decaying and ought to be preserved. And because of the ubiquity of deportations under the Assyrians, Jewish leaders in the south probably were inspired to look at their own traditions to insure collection and preservation. These efforts, which remain undocumented, did result in the creation of texts that were carried into the Babylonian Exile of 586–539 BCE.

A crucial fact is that political authority had evaporated with the Exile, and though some people may have hoped for the restoration of a Davidic king, and there were several candidates for that role proposed and then discarded through the pressure of events, the authority that was established tended to be more pastoral than authoritarian. It does not seem that anyone, even Ezra or Nehemiah, had policemen to enforce his views.

Religious authority was diffuse, and it tended to be exercised through cajoling, scolding, preaching, and praying, rather than through direct exertion of power. The structure of that authority too changed in exile. It no longer had a single focus in the Temple of Jerusalem, though that temple was eventually rebuilt, probably by 515 BCE according to the contemporary prophets. Instead, religious authority and thought were spread among people who had a right to an opinion, and who exactly had a right to an opinion was not a foregone conclusion but increasingly a result of literacy, study, and personal application, not heredity or even priestly descent.

These new perceptions extended also to the priesthoods that were established and reestablished. In particular the figure of Aaron only became priestly in this period of the return and not before. Also it appears that with the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 BCE, Bethel, about 12 miles north of Jerusalem became the real Yahweh religious center, though Zadokite priests, presumably originally from Jerusalem, dominated when Jerusalem was restored when the Persians allowed a return after 539 BCE (Blenkinsopp, 2009).

Here we will look at what the books in Late Biblical Hebrew reveal to us about the issues of canonicity and authority in this strange new world (Polzin, 1976). This was a world where exile was in a way over in that the deporting powers no longer existed, but in another sense where exile persisted because large numbers of Jews continued to live outside the land of Israel, especially in Babylonia and in Egypt (Grabbe, 2009). We will examine them in approximately chronological order, at least of the periods they treat.

Haggai

The words of this prophet do not echo with references to earlier scripture, but he stressed the need among the returned exiles to recreate the focus of earlier traditions by rebuilding the Temple of Jerusalem. He hoped that this refoundation would please God, but he also saw it as a focus for Jewish piety in a new age when political independence was out of the question, at least in the short term. The Persian king might or might not have supported the Jews' efforts at this early stage since Haggai's words come from the period 520–515 BCE when scant numbers of returners were trying to reestablish traditional customs.

What would happen in the new temple now? Haggai was not too explicit about that, but he knew priests reestablishing temple worship could draw on the expertise of very old observers who were still around. Haggai noted that some of these were disappointed at the small size of the rebuilt building, having remembered the magnificence of Solomon's edifice before its destruction (2:3). But Haggai stressed this was just the beginning, and better things would follow later.

Haggai probably addressed not just people who had physically come back from exile in Iraq but also others of Jewish heritage whose forebears had not been forced to leave and walk across the Near East into exile. His message was intended to be inclusive and ecumenical; the later concerns for particularism seen in Ezra and Nehemiah were not in his purview. He was probably happy to get as many people as could be mustered involved in the effort (Middlemas, 2009: 183). The emphasis on the role of Zerubbabel, the Davidic descendant, in rebuilding the temple, may have been the focus of the book, a focus that soon seemed misguided since that person was not heard from again; but perhaps as the temple was rededicated, the hope for a Davidic restoration was strong, and if the whole book was really prepared as a foundation deposit for the temple, the upbeat mood would be ensconced forever physically in the building (Boda, 2007a).

Zechariah

The book of the prophet Zechariah dated to the same period as Haggai but had a much more nuanced view of conditions in the restored Jerusalem and a much broader agenda which included, like the pre-Exilic prophets, a call for reform of social injustice, an end to idolatry, as well as for the restoration of king, priest, and prophet in their earlier roles.

Since Greeks were mentioned in chapter 9:13, many commentators have seen chapters 9 through 14 as from a later period. The atmosphere of those chapters is definitely darker, and Zechariah 11:4–16 may play off Ezekiel 34 and 37, with the

vision of bones coming to life (Boda, 2007b: 968). The prophet also witnessed the end of Davidic leadership and the advent of a foolish shepherd after the elimination of Shelomith, the daughter of Zerubbabel, who was the last of the Davidides mentioned (1 Chronicles 3:19). Sections also echo Jeremiah's calls to repent, literally to turn, to the old ways (1–2). As well, chapter 5:3 deals with infractions of the Decalogue, stealing and false swearing, and those Ten Words must therefore have been somehow available, and 8:23 suggests that the nations around Judah would be drawn to the Jews through their pious fasting, somewhat in the manner of Second Isaiah in his concern for the salvation of the non-Jews (Boda, 2007a).

Ezra

The Book of Ezra has a number of suggestive hints about the canonical process, and the later rabbinic tradition was clear that Ezra was closely involved in editing the Torah, meaning probably the first five books of the Bible (Talmud Bavli Sanhedrin 21b–22a). The rabbinic tradition traces other important institutions, such as the Great Sanhedrin, to Ezra too, and so it is not surprising that the Torah itself was laid at his feet. There is perhaps a kernel of truth to the generalization, in that Ezra attempted to impose some aspects of the teaching of the first five books, especially regarding intermarriage, on the Jewish community. He certainly saw Deuteronomy 7, or something very like it, as canonical and needing to be imposed. His power, however, was limited to lament, prayer, fasting, and preaching. He had to cajole his fellows into putting away their foreign wives and children, and since this happened at the end of his preserved book, it may be that this was controversial and perhaps really a failure of his leadership. Later thinkers, however, saw it as a pivot on which to define Jewish identity, and since that identity has persisted into our own days, we can say that they were right to emphasize their understandings of marriage within the group as a value.

Another aspect of Ezra's mission is not clear in the Jewish Publication Society translation of his book, but it is obvious in other translations. In what may be a bogus Aramaic commission from the Persian king preserved in the book, the king gave Ezra authority at least over Jews he might meet as he journeyed from Babylonia to the land of Israel, and the commission stated that he was to act in accord with "the law that is in your hand" (7:25). The Jewish Publication Society translation, "the divine wisdom you possess," is not wrong, but it does not emphasize what may be physically in Ezra's hand, meaning a copy of the Jewish law in some form, perhaps Deuteronomy or a part of it. If it is right to see this as a physical and not just a spiritual matter, then we have for the first time since Josiah reference to a text that people felt should be put into effect, the beginning of the more developed form of canon.

Nehemiah

Nehemiah's book shows a Persian governor of Jewish descent imposing on the small settlement of Jerusalem some aspects of the Law as he understood them. He too was concerned to end intermarriages, on the basis that the children would know only the language of Ashdod, which presumably was different from the language of Judah and may have stood for the religious traditions of the Jews. He also tried to enforce the rule on Sabbath rest by closing the gates of Jerusalem to the foreign traders who came by (13:15–22).

The interesting thing about Nehemiah's reported efforts, though, is that he did not claim to have any Torah in his hand and referred to no written sources. Presumably he was relying on Ezra's tradition and perhaps on the oral traditions of the Jews. Does that count as a canonical moment? Not perhaps as precisely as Ezra's story does, and yet I think we can discern in Nehemiah's self-presentation something of a layman's proclamation of himself as someone making an effort to follow the tradition if not exactly the canon. In what is perhaps the only royal inscription preserved in the Bible, though not, admittedly, from an actual king, Nehemiah asserted that he had done all his duties so that he might be remembered before God for good (13:31). In an age of diminished independent political authority and diffuse religious power, that was the limit that someone without claim to religious authority could do.

Malachi

The prophet flourished at some point between 520 and 450 BCE and dealt with issues raised by Ezra and Nehemiah. The name just means "my messenger," and so may not be a personal name at all. The six disputes the prophet put forward emphasized the continuity of existence of people living in Judah and asserted that God still loved Israel in spite of the Exile and later tribulations. Unlike Ezra, the prophet opposed divorce, even from daughters "of a foreign god," who may have been women descended from people who were not taken into exile (2:11). This is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where divorce was opposed, and it may be a critique of people with Ezra's particularistic attitude (2:15–16).

The prophet did emphasize that priests ought to be more rigorous and careful about their work, and the people who supported the temple were called on to pay their tithes. In view of the large percentage of priests and Levites in the lists in Ezra 2 and Nehemiah 7, it may be that the tithe burden to support them was heavy, and most of the people were quite poor and had difficulty paying (Redditt, 2007).

Perhaps the most canonically aware portion of the book is the very end, 4:4–6, where Moses and Elijah are mentioned. The speculation is that this note, not precedented in the rest of the admittedly short book, may have been inscribed by

another hand as a summation to the whole of the collection of the 12 minor prophets (Fishbane, 1985: 524; Redditt, 2007: 775). If that is right, then the 12 were regarded as a unit already in the Persian period or soon thereafter; we see that this was true certainly by Sirach's time in the 180s BCE (Ecclesiasticus 49:10; Lipschits, Knoppers, and Albertz 2007).

1 and 2 Chronicles

There is no higher devotion to the canon as a received set of texts than what the books of Chronicles expressed in copying out large swatches of the books of Genesis, Samuel, and Kings. The whole history of Israel was recapitulated, though there certainly were other sources besides the ones we regard as canonical. The many other written sources to which the Chronicler referred might or might not have been regarded by him with equal veneration; he cited about thirty other works, none of which have been preserved (Myers, 1965: I xlvi–xlvii), and of course he may have made up the names of some, just to make his work look more authoritative. The backbone of the stories was already before him in the canonical books.

There was of course a difference in how the Chronicler depicted those stories, though. The focus was definitely not on the foibles of the usual heroes of faith as seen in the earlier canon. The focus was on the Levitic singers who worked in the Temple; commentators have concluded that the writer came from that group, who did not seem to other observers to be so centrally important as the Chronicler thought they were. Also he was interested in wearing down the edges of his stories so that they would not display any signs of controversy or bad behavior on the part of kings or other Israelites. Famously, he scrubs David clean, and Solomon too, and bowdlerizes what he could. For example, the scandalous Bathsheba incident of 2 Samuel 11 was omitted, as were Solomon's troubles in 1 Kings 11 (Botterweck, 1956).

In addition to this homage to earlier texts, however, he also preserved information that was not available in the earlier books, perhaps drawing from his other sources. This serves a valuable function for students even of the earlier periods and further illustrates that the Chronicler's sense of canon was not what it later became. As in other portions, the Chronicler was eager to establish the antiquity of institutions to which he was devoted, without regard for the details that earlier texts preserved.

Proverbs

The dating of Proverbs and its various collections remains controversial, and scholars would reasonably argue that many parts of the book were formed before

the Exile. And yet the book is to be found among the Writings, and so the very latest books to reach canonical status, and there is reason to believe that the book had significant additions in the period after the Exile (Snell, 1993).

The main thing is that the book remained unaware of the Israelite story of salvation history as seen in the books of the Torah. This is not to say that the book was not devoted to demonstrating the importance of the God of Israel and His influence in all aspects of life. It does not look for miracles of divine intervention in everyday events, but it has no doubt at all that the Lord directs everything, while human beings have a responsibility for their own actions – the essential monotheistic view.

The detailed concerns of the book were consonant with legal sections of the Bible, and yet it is fairly clear that there was an additional element in Proverbs which we do not find elsewhere. There is a call for right behavior, but not just legally acceptable behavior; in fact we can argue that here, as in few places in the Torah, the commands of the teachers were for ethical behavior above what might be socially and legally acceptable. For example, there was the issue, repeatedly addressed in Proverbs and nowhere else, of signing for other people's loans (Proverbs 6:1, 11:15, 17:18, 20:16, 22:26, 27:13). There was nothing illegal about it, and yet it needlessly entangled the signer in obligations which could pollute community relations for years to come. It should be avoided, the Proverbialists argued.

Perhaps, too, the people who gave us Proverbs were interested in practical behavior and not so concerned about what community norms might be in connection with bribes. In legal contexts, as in the Torah, Proverbs ardently condemned bribes, but in other contexts a gift might be just the thing to bring a petitioner before a great man (18:16; Noonan, 1984: 14–30).

The audience in many sections of Proverbs was assumed to be rich young men, already married but still feeling their oats, and the advice was definitely not to abuse their privileges. You might actually get away with adultery and enjoy it, Proverbs says, but the enmity you create might chase you to the grave and completely disrupt the community (7:10–26). Proverbs does not look for God to zap you directly, and yet the zapping is definitely in the offing as a consequence of your own considerable stupidity.

Proverbs in some cases argued for what might be called the Gospel of Plenty, that if you do the right thing, you will be successful and rich. Certainly there are individual sayings that tend in that direction, assuring the hearers that following Proverbial advice will keep them out of trouble and ensconce them among the wise and the wealthy (21:20). And yet in other places there definitely is more nuance, where it is argued that right behavior might not result in a happy outcome (21:27). But that does not mean that you should not try to do the right thing. The general trend in Proverbs was that acts will bring their consequences, what goes around comes around, and yet Proverbialists seem to have recognized that this is biology, not physics. The rules for human behavior ricochet through society and do not

always produce recognizably positive results, but that does not mean they can be ignored. The wise man, after all, has eyes in his head, as a later thinker wrote (Ecclesiastes 2:14), and that will keep him out of many, if not all, stupid situations and accidents.

Job

Like Proverbs, Job did not acknowledge the legal tradition or the salvation history which dominated other books. But Job did significantly call into question the basic assumption of the Hebrew Bible, and perhaps of all folk religion, that good people are rewarded and bad people are punished. The premise of the book as set up in the prose framework is that what happened to Job was unjust; he did not deserve the suffering.

His friends "comforted" him with the Gospel of Plenty and its correlate, that he must have done something wrong to be so punished. But Job rejected the arguments and in the prose ending was vindicated by God. The reader was supposed to conclude that the human perception of justice in this world is not a concern of God, who makes rain fall where no man is, that is, entirely irrelevantly to human happiness or unhappiness (Job 38:26).

The book is an important corrective to checklist religious thinking, and it appears to be separate from the rest of the Bible. And yet it does echo concerns seen in Proverbs, as well as the desert setting probably to be assumed in the short collections at the end of Proverbs (30:1, 31:1). The wise were felt to dwell in the eastern desert, and, like Proverbs, to be undatable or timeless. Job's language is difficult for us, but it was connected to the poetic tradition which dominated the Hebrew Bible and which was shared with pre-Israelite Ugarit on the Syrian coast. So the language of Job may be an early peripheral dialect, and yet it was part of the larger West Semitic poetic tradition.

Not commenting directly on old books, Job did address simplistic expectations for piety. The language used about God was among the most exalted in any ancient book. The fact that it was copied and revered means Jews understood this and regarded it as their own.

Ecclesiastes

This Book shares with Job a skeptical approach to the assumptions of folk religion, extending explicitly to the new idea that there would be punishment and reward after death since there clearly was not punishment and reward in this world. It probably dates from around 250 BCE and was the product of a sage in Jerusalem. Its

collected one-liners sometimes reflect ones preserved in Proverbs, and yet it is not a commentary on that Book.

At the end of the last poem about the afflictions of old age, probably by the same person who gave us the rest of the book, or most of it, is a series of remarkable statements that seem to be more aware of a developing canonical idea than any other passage in the Bible (Sheppard, 1980: 121–129). In 12:8 the author signed off with his usual statement that everything is insubstantial. Then another hand gave a short encomium on the author and his efforts (9–10). Verse 11 may be from still another hand since it quoted a proverbial-sounding saying, praising the words of the wise as goads to good behavior, but ending: "for they come from one shepherd." That one shepherd was not meant to be any human wise person, but probably meant God.

Then in 12:12 another hand may take up the writing, with a warning that there may be too many books, by implication including the one the reader is now holding! Here is no hint about its canonicity, but mere exasperation, perhaps at its conclusions. Verse 13 tried to sum up "the matter" by arguing you should "fear God and keep His commandments; this sums up the duty of mankind." And in case that did not stand out explicitly enough in contradiction to what the author had been saying for 12 chapters, the text ends with the assurance that God will judge everything, and presumably reward and punish appropriately, just as the author had been arguing that He did not do.

These remarkable additions do not directly discuss canonicity, in later Jewish terms, whether this book "pollutes the hands," meaning that it must be read only by people who are ritually pure; if their hands are not ritually pure, it will be a danger to them. But clearly the comments struggle with and contradict the content of Ecclesiastes, and this struggle would not have been necessary had the Book not already enjoyed something like canonical status. Generations had already decided it was worth reading, and, more laboriously, that it was worth copying, perhaps already with the other scrolls that were used on ritual occasions. But of course the other scrolls do not have such appended comments, though some of them too were subject to doubts expressed by the later rabbis (Trebole, 2007: 556). Only this one was discussed in its own time.

The reason is perhaps its detachment from salvation history, like Proverbs and Job, but also because it was probably popular in some circles just because it undercut an easy religiosity. It was copied and included in the canon partly because of the implied attribution to King Solomon but also partly because it retained an explicit theism without, however, attempting to define God's purposes, which it saw as unknowable by humans. The book did find many practices in the world evil, but it did not look to God as the solution to them; in fact they were mostly perpetrated by people, and God did not immediately chastise them. This does not preach that evil should not be resisted, but it does absolve God from responsibility for creating and perpetuating it. And it prepares the reader to live in a world full of disappointments without losing sight of the fact of God's power.

Living in the Diaspora

Two other books are more isolated from the canonical process and yet certainly derived from the Persian period in one form or another, Esther and Daniel. Esther's view of the Persian court and its vagaries seems to ridicule it, and especially "the law of the Medes and the Persians which cannot be changed," but of course was changed in the course of the story (1:19). But the general lesson to be drawn from the book is that you ought not to assert Jewishness without cause, but you should still strive to conform to the needs of the Jewish people and on occasion fast and pray piously. Famously the Book of Esther did not mention God, and this bothered the later rabbis, but piety was nonetheless evident in the heroine's behavior and in that of her mentor. Whether the story really is an etiology for the admittedly trivial feast of Purim is an open question, with ritual and story perhaps as much in tension here as in any place in Biblical literature. Why, after all, two Purim letters?

Daniel is definitely a strange book, composite in that it has court tales not dissimilar from Esther, along with apocalyptic visions seeking to advise people on how to behave until better times might return. Placed among the Writings and not the Prophets, it seems unlikely those who cherished it thought it was prophetic in the same way as the prophets who left books, and yet it, like Esther, presents a series of examples of how religious Jews ought to try to survive in the Diaspora. There were going to be persecutions, but bright young Jews could figure out how to keep the kosher laws and otherwise try to serve the one God even when everyone else was serving theirs (Humphreys, 1973).

Daniel's apocalyptic visions usher in a new ethic perhaps designed for a people oppressed in new ways by their Greek king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who wanted for a time to abolish all public aspects of Jewish religion. You could not even circumcise your son. But you could know, as Daniel argued, that God was on your side, and that things might turn out better in the end. What Daniel advised was quietism, merely knowing that God would in His good time intervene, after the period of tribulations had finally passed. This was in contrast to earlier, actual prophets, who were calling for individuals to reform themselves immediately; passivity would not then have been acceptable to them. But in Daniel's time it was the prudent way to preserve the Jewish people, whose only hope was in knowing that they were in the right and would eventually be vindicated.

Also new at the end of Daniel was the resurrection of some, though not all, of the dead, and the restoration to them of their rightful heritage. This passage in chapter 12:2–3 echoes the miracle foreseen by Ezekiel 37, and presages later ideas among the Pharisees. In Daniel it seems a stopgap idea among those losing hope in the future.

Finale

These books reveal an increasing sense that the past must be preserved so that the future could read of it and draw key lessons from it. And yet, except for the Chronicles and Ezra and Nehemiah we do not think of them as books of history. They are rather books that interpret the experience of the past and plot tentative courses toward a future. That future came to assume the existence of a restored ritual at the Temple of Jerusalem, and yet not all who thought of themselves as Jewish emphasized that Temple. In Elephantine far to the south on the Nile River we know there was another temple to which Jews turned, and Josephus spoke of one in Leontopolis (Porten, 2006; Josephus, *Antiquities*: xiii 3).

Among the books cherished by these Jewish communities were those of earlier prophets who did not value temple ritual at all unless it was accompanied by social responsibility toward the poor and even the foreign. A simple and simplistic religion was not being offered. Something more complex was brewing, and the library of communally received books was not meant as an unequivocal support for contemporaneous Jewish authorities or even for Persian and Greek kings. In fact it was a subversive, unofficial literature from which generations had drawn wisdom and hope, and to which many more generations would turn for understanding.

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6

Translation

The Biblical Legacy to Judaism

Leonard Greenspoon

Anyone going into a large bookstore these days is confronted with, or perhaps enticed by, an array of Bible translations. Most of these are produced by and marketed to Christians, primarily Protestants but also Roman Catholics and adherents of the Orthodox churches. Either in the Bible section, or more often within Judaica or Jewish Studies, may be found one or more Jewish versions. The relative paucity of modern-language translations by and for Jews obscures a point of preeminent importance: It was among Jews that Bible translating began and all subsequent translations, whether Jewish or Christian or under "interdenominational" sponsorship, are profoundly Jewish.

As we shall see, the substantial contributions of Jews and Judaism to scriptural translation are not typically recognized or acknowledged, either by Jews or non-Jews. In order to redress this imbalance, I have written a number of articles and encyclopedia entries, all of which have followed a largely chronological order: from the earliest, the Septuagint into Greek and the Targumim into Aramaic, to the most recent. There is substantial merit to this approach, in that it allows for each version, and its translators, to be placed in its appropriate historical, cultural, and religious context and it permits us to judge the debt (if any) each version owes to its predecessors and the legacy (if any) each version bequeathed to those who followed.

However, in this article I will not replicate this format. Rather, I approach the more than two thousand years of Jewish Bible translating with a series of questions that, traditionally, have been associated with a reporter: Who? What? When? Where? and Why? Every news story, so it went, should consist or an answer, or rather a series of answers, to these queries. The same questions can, I assert, provide a useful and rewarding perspective from which to view a story, or rather a history, more than two millennia in age. Focusing our attention in this manner will allow us to detect many features that diverse translations have in common; it will

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also allow us to detect unique or at least unusual aspects of some of these translations and translators. What we uncover will permit us to use the term "Jewish Bible translation" with confidence, while at the same time raising questions as to the appropriateness of this very phrase. Moreover, what holds true for Jewish Bible translations has relevance more broadly for all versions of Scripture.

Who?

In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it seems safe to assume that Jewish translations of the Bible were undertakings rooted in and supported by Jewish communities or Jewish communal leaders at a given time in history. There are many examples that will give credence to this view. To start with, we may point to Moses Mendelssohn, who was a leading scholar and critic among eighteenth-century German Jews. Although not without some opposition, he strongly supported the entry by contemporary Jews into the larger, mostly Protestant, society of his day. As part of his efforts in this direction, Mendelssohn, at first on his own and later with colleagues, produced a German version of the Hebrew Bible that incorporated the High German spoken by the middle and upper classes of his day rather than the Judeo-German or Yiddish that characterized earlier Bible translations for Jews. Although he initially prepared his version for the benefit of his own children, Mendelssohn's leadership role among German Jewry insured that this text would be widely circulated. Mendelssohn did not intend for his translation to take his fellow Jews away from Judaism, as it were as the "cost of admission" to mainstream German society. Rather he believed that producing a text that exhibited the best of German style and the best of Jewish learning – as seen through the voluminous notes he assembled to accompany the translation – would be most beneficial in all respects.

One individual who rather consciously modeled himself, and his project, on Mendelssohn's example was Max L. Margolis, who was the editor in chief of the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) version that appeared in English in 1917. As a biblical scholar, Margolis did not wield in early twentieth-century America nearly as much influence as did Mendelssohn in his day. But Margolis was fully supported by JPS, which had among its financial and intellectual backers a vast number of the richest and best-connected Jews of that time. Moreover, Margolis' reliance on the diction of the King James Version (KJV) mirrors Mendelssohn's preference for the language of Martin Luther's classic German Bible. In addition, Margolis, himself an immigrant from Eastern Europe, saw the JPS version as a means of educating fellow Jewish immigrants in an elevated form of English. We may recall that Mendelssohn had something similar in mind with regard to the German language.

As we continue along these lines, singling out individuals or groups of important individuals as the originators or supporters of Jewish Bible translation, it becomes

clear that we cannot entirely separate "who" from related queries, such as "where" and "why." But it is nonetheless salutary to continue our inquiry with an emphasis at this point on "who." Thus, we may look to the latter part of the tenth century CE, to a man who is popularly known as Saadia Gaon, the latter word attesting to his leadership among the Babylonian Jewry of his time. Saadia is among the leading Jewish thinkers, although for a variety of reasons he is not as well known as, say, Maimonides. In any case, among Saadia's many accomplishments was the production of an Arabic-language version of the Hebrew Bible for the benefit of members of his community. Saadia, like Mendelssohn and Margolis, was motivated by more than what we might term an academic interest. Among his primary goals was to produce a text that in his view promoted the correct (for him, rabbinic) view over against the dangerously erroneous interpretations proffered by his opponents, the Karaites. To further promote this goal, Saadia consciously formulated his version with language and grammar that would be immediately accessible to his Arabic-speaking audience, even when such forms did not fully accord with the parallel expressions in the Hebrew he was rendering.

We could provide many other examples of well-known Jewish leaders who translated all or part of the Hebrew Bible, generally, but not always, with communal support. Just to mention a few others who are associated with German-language versions: Leopold Zunz, Ludwig Philippson, Samson Raphael Hirsch, Martin Buber, and Franz Rosenzweig.

At the same time, we should also consider that there are counterexamples; namely, occurrences of Jewish Bible translations where the author(s) cannot be identified with Jewish communal leadership. In this category, we must distinguish between those cases, primarily situated in the ancient world, where we simply lack secure evidence as to the identity and status of the translators, and those instances where the translators are known and were distinctly separate from, perhaps even in opposition to, the leadership of the Jewish community at a particular time and in a particular place.

The Septuagint, which ultimately encompassed a Greek rendering of all of the books of the Hebrew Bible, in addition to translations of other Semitic materials and original compositions in Greek (these two categories roughly equal the Apocrypha), is an excellent example from the ancient world. It is generally agreed that the Septuagint or LXX represents the oldest written translation of the Bible, having been initiated sometime in the first third of the third century BCE in Alexandria, Egypt. Initially, so it appears, the translation project included (only) the Torah or Pentateuch; that is, the first five books of the Bible. There is sound linguistic and other evidence to date this version to approximately that time period and to locate its origins in Ptolemaic/Hellenistic Egypt.

There is also a document, certainly also ancient, that purports to be an eyewitness account of these proceedings. It is called the Letter of Aristeas. It attributes the impetus for this translation to the desire by the monarch, Ptolemy II Philadelphus, to have a Greek copy of the Jewish Law or Torah in his great library.

For this purpose, we are told, he summoned 72 scholars from Jerusalem, each renowned for his moral rectitude as well as for his abilities in Hebrew and Greek. The names of these individuals, six of whom were recruited from each of Israel's 12 tribes (hence, the number 72), are actually given in the Letter, and procedures whereby the translation was produced are briefly enumerated.

For a considerable period of time, at least through the Western Renaissance, the Letter of Aristeas was treated as a historically accurate account of the events it narrates. If this is indeed the case, then we need look no further for an answer to the question of "who" produced the Septuagint or at least the LXX Pentateuch. However, from the Renaissance until today almost all scholars have come to the conclusion that the Letter is separated from the events it describes by at least one hundred years; thus, it is now typically dated to the mid- or latter part of the second century BCE. Moreover, the author of the Letter of Aristeas was motivated more by circumstances in his own, contemporary community than by the desire to produce what we would call a historically accurate account.

Thus, we must admit that we do not know the identities either of the sponsors or the translators of this first foreign-language version of the Hebrew Bible. As I will argue below, it is likely that both royal and intra-Jewish concerns precipitated this project, but this cannot be proven conclusively. Moreover, when it comes to the remainder of the LXX, we are without even (semi-)legendary material to provide anything beyond the broadest strokes in any attempt to paint a picture of "who" was responsible for this or that book or section of the translation.

The situation with regard to the Targumim or Aramaic translations is somewhat parallel, in that most of the classical Aramaic texts are identified with one or another Jewish figure in the early centuries of the common era, but there is little basis on which to affirm such connections. Additionally, the Targumim, or at least some of them, undoubtedly circulated orally for centuries before they were committed to writing, and this complicates any efforts to determine who "the" author of any text was.

Nonetheless, it might be the case that we can actually identify a starting point for translation from Hebrew to Aramaic, and this within the Hebrew Bible itself. When Ezra returns from the Babylonian Exile to read what we would call the Bible before an assembled crowd in Jerusalem (as narrated in Nehemiah 8), he is accompanied by some individuals who interpret his words for the people who are listening to him. Although the biblical text does not elaborate on what form this interpretation took, it is tempting to see the work of the interpreters as involving translation from Hebrew (the language of Ezra's text) into Aramaic (the everyday language spoken by Jews in Jerusalem at that time, the mid-fifth century BCE). Although I am comfortable with this understanding, not everyone would agree, nor does it provide evidence that would link this oral activity to the written texts that appeared four or more centuries later.

Given what we know from later periods about Jewish versions prepared and promulgated by those closely connected with the community and its leadership, it

is almost natural to assume such connections for these and other ancient translations. This would especially be the case for those researchers who, like me, believe that we can, with due caution, use later, better documented occurrences to help explicate earlier, poorly (or un-)documented phenomena.

Thus, it is especially instructive to call attention to at least one relatively modern circumstance that does not fall into the paradigm that we have seen elsewhere. We find just this type of circumstance when we look at the origins of Anglo-Jewish versions of the Bible; that is, versions prepared by Jews in England. The first of these versions appeared near the end of the eighteenth century. Relatively modest in their deviations from the King James Version of the previous century, they nonetheless mark an important point in British Jewry's self-understanding and in the way in which they present themselves to others, outside of their community. Nonetheless, these earliest versions were not prepared by leaders of the Jewish community nor did these versions enjoy the immediate support of those leaders. Rather, these texts were produced by individuals on the periphery of the Jewish community and, in at least one example, by an individual at odds with the Jewish establishment. In the nineteenth century, the situation changed dramatically: the translators themselves had very close connections with both lay and rabbinic leaders, and some of the English-language versions actually received the sanction – that is, the official approval or authorization – of the Chief Rabbi.

While not in any case minimizing this subsequent history, the emphasis here is on the distinctly outsider status of those who were initially involved with Bible translating by and for English-speaking Jews. It is this example in particular that must make us cautious in applying any global answer to the "Who" of Jewish Bible translators when we are dealing with circumstances, such as in the ancient world, where so much is unknown, if not unknowable.

What?

In comparison with the question of "Who" produces a Jewish translation of the Bible, the question of "What" is translated seems amenable to a far more succinct answer. And indeed this is the case, even if the answer needs to be extended beyond what is probably obvious: Jews translate the Hebrew Bible rather than the Protestant Old Testament – the contents of which are essentially identical to the Hebrew Bible, with which it differs in terms of order and titles – or the Old Testament of Roman Catholics or Eastern Orthodox Christians, which contains additional books (roughly equal to the Apocrypha) and expanded forms of Daniel and Esther.

The expansion that goes beyond the "obvious" takes several directions. It would, for example, be anachronistic to speak of the Hebrew Bible as a canonically shaped and accepted entity when dealing with the Septuagint. Not only did its translators

work with material (again, roughly equivalent to the Apocrypha) that is not part of the Hebrew Bible, but is – I hasten to add – also of Jewish origin, but they also often worked with a Hebrew text that was not always identical with the consonants of the traditional or Masoretic Hebrew text or with the vocalization or vowels that the Masoretes applied to the consonantal Hebrew text. This reminds us that when we ask "What" the translators rendered, we are referring not only to entire books or parts of books, but also to the wording of every verse and chapter that make up those books. Sometime by the beginning of the second century CE, the rabbis essentially standardized the Hebrew text of what we call the Bible; prior to that time, the text was, to use a phrase widely adopted by scholars today, fluid.

But what of more modern translations, let us say contemporary translations of the Hebrew Bible? Don't all translators, non-Jewish as well as Jewish, follow the established Masoretic Text (MT)? For the Christian world, the answer is "yes" and "no." While more conservative Christian versions (for example, the New American Standard Bible or the New International Version) rarely part company with the MT, other well-known translations, such as the New Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible (the latter, the Bible of English-speaking North American Catholics), do allow for deviations from the MT where what is judged a "better" or "more authentic" reading is found among the Dead Sea Scrolls or in one of the ancient versions into which the Bible was rendered. Some translation committees allow for conjectural readings – that is, readings deemed "original," but not actually preserved in any extant biblical manuscript – to take the place of the MT.

From my perspective as a specialist in Bible translation, there is nothing inherently good/better or bad/worse about such editorial decisions, so long as they are somehow marked for readers and form some coherent system of dealing with the MT when it is difficult, ambiguous, or in some other way seemingly in need of "correction." For it must be admitted that the MT is not always easy to read or understand. Where there are ambiguities or irregularities, we may judge these occurrences as consciously wrought by the biblical authors or editors or as mistakes that were unconsciously introduced by the authors or editors or by later scribes. The Masoretes, who in the eighth–tenth centuries CE were responsible for vocalizing the consonantal Hebrew text, themselves noted a considerable number of difficulties. So, there is clearly nothing un-Jewish about making such observations.

There is, however, something untraditional within Judaism about "abandoning" the MT in the face of such difficulties, even when another ancient Jewish text (for example, a Dead Sea Scroll) provides an appropriate way out. Traditionally, Jewish translators have rendered the MT as it stands; at the same time, they have felt few if any constraints about offering observations and suggested changes in the margins. This is exactly what the Masoretes did when they told readers, in hundreds of cases, not to follow the MT as it was written, but to read it according to the changes that they (that is, the Masoretes) offered. Marginal notes, now typically found at the foot of the page rather than in the margins, are more or less common in contemporary

Jewish versions. But it is there – in the margins and in the footnotes – that Jewish translators and exegetes have traditionally worked out their concerns with the text, and not in the text itself, as is often the case with Christian Bible translating projects.

When?

On the surface, this is precisely the sort of question that can best be answered using the largely chronological approach that I have eschewed in this article. Or more compactly, it would be possible to provide a chart, listing in chronological order, from earliest to most recent, all of the major Jewish Bible translations in a given language or in all languages. However, I will attempt to look at this question from, if you will, a holistic rather than an individualistic perspective; that is, to see if there are certain times or circumstances that have historically, culturally, or theologically proven most conducive to the production of Jewish versions of the Bible. This question, then, is closely related to the last query in our series, "Why?"

Common sense tells us that Bible translation, or for that matter any translation, is closely related to the observation that there is a document or body of literature in one language that, in the opinion of translators and translation sponsors, ought to be made accessible to an audience who does not read or understand the language in which the document(s) was (were) originally written. In this instance, as is so many others, common sense contains some truth, if not the entire truth.

So it is that the first time, in our case, the Bible was translated from Hebrew to a vernacular language probably had something to do with the concern that the biblical text was not being read or could not be read in the original Hebrew – at all and/or with sufficient facility or comprehension. This appears to be one of the concerns that led to the creation of the Septuagint – that is, that the largely Greek-speaking community of Alexandrian Jews was quickly losing the ability to comprehend Hebrew – even though this development is not mentioned as a factor in the Letter of Aristeas. In this instance, the initial translation from Hebrew occurred near the beginning of the large Jewish presence in Alexandria and probably within two generations or so after Alexander the Great's death ushered in the Hellenistic Age, with its emphasis on all things Greek.

But, in other instances, translation into the vernacular did not occur so early with respect to the appearance of Jews in a given culture or society. So, Jewish translations into most of the Western European languages typically occurred centuries, sometimes many centuries, after they settled in a particular place. This can be explained partly by the fact that it was only after a period of time, often an extended period of time, that Jews were allowed more than partial access to these often hostile societies; therefore, there was no reason to have Sacred Writ in the languages of those people, so long as the knowledge of Hebrew was being kept alive.

From the perspective of Jewish communal leadership, translation, and with it the tacit admission of its necessity (namely, that knowledge of Hebrew was no longer or not widespread), was not always a welcomed development. Even when it was conceded that a vernacular version was appropriate, such a version was often addressed and marketed (solely) to women and children, as if adult Jewish males would not be part of the target audience. Of course, this was largely a fantasy on the part of the leadership, who were generally constrained at some point to acknowledge the width and even the depth of the audience for whom translation was needed.

In any given situation, particular factors have also to be taken into account. So, we may ask why, if Jewish communities existed in England from at least the eleventh century CE, it took almost a thousand years to produce an English-language version of the Bible by/for Jews. Into any such discussion must enter the fact that Jews were expelled from English in the late 1200s, not being officially allowed to return until almost four centuries later. Moreover, the large number of Jews who immigrated to England often retained as their primary language either the Yiddish or Ladino they knew from their homelands. A sense of being British and of using the language of Britain, English, as part of worship, Bible study, or for sermons took some time to develop. Additionally, Jews for whom English was becoming a first language might have felt sufficiently at home with the KJV to make use of it, at least for a while. And, as we shall see, there were also external forces at work, in the form of missionary societies, that impelled Jews to provide a translation and interpretation of the Bible of their own.

Thus far in this section we have dealt almost exclusively with the first translation of the Bible by Jews from Hebrew to another language. But, as we know, there are frequently other, later, versions produced in that same language. Some of these later versions consist primarily of changes made to the original translation; technically, these editions are spoken of as revisions. They occur when the diction, style, vocabulary, or possibly even the theology of the earlier version is judged to be out of date, but the overall "feel" of that version, it is judged, should be retained.

In antiquity, Jews revised older forms of the Greek translation, the LXX, because they felt that it did not adequately render the Hebrew text (whether MT or other) that was in use in their community. In modern times, revision is best exemplified by the JPS version of 1917, to which reference was made above. The translation committee was not happy with the earlier work of Isaac Leeser, from the mid-nineteenth century, and chose instead to base their edition on the Revised Version of 1885, which had been prepared by Protestants in England and largely retained the language of the KJV. Thus, as we noted earlier, JPS editor-in-chief Max Margolis strongly felt that this was the time, and the place, and the manner in which to introduce the largely immigrant Jewish community of America to "proper" English and to the Jewish interpretation of key biblical passages that had been overlaid with Christological trappings.

The second JPS version, which began to appear in the 1960s, is an excellent example of the distinction between a revision and a fresh translation. Harry M. Orlinsky, who was the lead translator for much of this new version, was very familiar with the history of Bible translation, both within and outside of Judaism. But he was critical of the largely word-for-word or literal approach taken by almost all previous translators, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. He preferred a translation that more closely mirrored the language, in this case American English, of his target audience. This approach, now called dynamic equivalence, was also being championed by Protestant translators associated with the American Bible Society. Therefore, in this instance, the "When" of a Jewish version was determined not only, or even primarily, by events within the Jewish community, but also by related activities in the larger, in this case Bible translating, world.

Where?

Just as a chronological chart might have been thought sufficient to answer the question, "When," so we might easily imagine that a comprehensive, historical atlas is all we need to answer the query, "Where?" If the map, or collection of maps, is sufficiently detailed, we should be able to locate the city or at least the region in which every translation originated. As readers of this essay can easily imagine, a map is not in any way a bad thing, but it will go only so far in providing a full response to this question, especially after we note a few issues that need to be taken into account – but that may not be at first apparent.

First of all, we must admit that for some translations, especially the oldest ones, we cannot be sure of where they were translated. Of course, this would not be a problem for modern editions, where the place (as well as the date) of publication is easily found on the title page (either in print or in its electronic equivalent). But in antiquity it was not always, or even regularly, the practice for a scribe or author to include details of production (where, when, etc.) in a manuscript.

For the Septuagint, as we saw above, legend has it that it, or at least its first part, was a product of Alexandria, Egypt. That part of the "legend" has been largely confirmed by comparisons of the Greek in the LXX with Greek papyri that were found in and around Lower Egypt in the early Ptolemaic/Hellenistic period. Such papyri, we should note in passing, are also compatible with the early third-century BCE date attributed to the oldest Greek portion of the Septuagint. That said, we lack anything like the Letter of Aristeas, that is an ancient document, to help in determining the place or the time of the remaining sections of the LXX. Sometimes, researchers locate a reference in the text to something that might help place a given book or section of the LXX in a specific locale or even general region. And portions of the LXX do seem to depend on others, which would then be relatively earlier and perhaps from the same location. But few, if any, such determinations have won

general acceptance among LXX specialists. Therefore, we cannot simply assume an Alexandrian setting for all of the Septuagint based on the probability that the Greek Pentateuch did in fact originate there.

As for the Targumim, whose places of origin were almost certainly more diverse than is true for the LXX, certain texts are said to be of Palestinian origin, while others are said to have been composed in Babylonia. But here again the determinations of a given scholar, based on the type of Aramaic that predominates in a given text, are regularly challenged by contemporary or later researchers. Moreover, it is probable that some of the Targumim reflect Babylonian reworking of earlier Palestinian material. It would then be difficult, to say the least, to try to pinpoint on any map, whether real or virtual, the exact place where the Targumim were produced.

As we move forward in time, it is important to keep in mind that, prior to the 1450s, and the perfection of moveable type by Johann Gutenberg, all written materials, including Bible translations, were transcribed by scribes, all of whom (as noted above) were susceptible to a variety of conscious and unconscious frailties in their efforts to reproduce and carry forward the texts on which they were working. This observation or reminder is necessary when we consider that we lack the autograph, or original, of almost all Jewish Bible translations prior to the development of moveable type. Therefore, the location or locations where a version was copied are not inconsequential in answering the question, "Where?" That being said, we should probably add a phrase like "as best we can reconstruct it" when we talk about the Septuagint or the Targumim, for example.

When we do know the location where a particular biblical version was produced, we are thereby presented with information that can be more valuable than we might first think. So, we can easily find out that the JPS Bible translations were all produced and published in Philadelphia, which is (perhaps not coincidentally) where Isaac Leeser's Bible versions were also first published. Along with the new JPS translation, the most widely used English-language version is the ArtScroll's, put out by Masorah Publications in Brooklyn, New York. That location, at the very heart of traditional Judaism in the United States, has become a center for Orthodox presses and learning. The Reform movement, through its Hebrew Union College Press, has also had a significant impact on American Jews and Judaism; the newest editions of its Bible commentary present a distinctive English language translation. Knowing that Cincinnati, Ohio, rather than any larger Jewish community on either of the coasts, is the location of the oldest branch of Hebrew Union College makes it easier to comprehend many of the decisions taken by those responsible for this translation and commentary.

In Britain, it is likewise possible to follow the trajectory of Jewish Bible translating by locating the different cities where the publishers were at work. Finally, in other European countries, as well as in Asia and Africa, the locations where translators worked and published their volumes often coincide with places where substantial Jewish communities had settled.

Why?

This question, which at its core asks about the factor(s) that motivated Jewish translators of the Bible, is, as we have seen, closely related to all of the other questions we raise in this article: Who does the translating, What is translated, When and Where the translation takes place – none of these issues can be fully discussed or appreciated without at least some consideration of "Why?"

At its simplest, the response can be succinctly stated: "Jewish translations of the Bible arose when the need for such versions was felt." Alas, such a formulation really doesn't say very much. But it does allow for expansion, in several directions, that will succeed in producing more satisfying answers.

First, and probably foremost, among relevant considerations has been the recognition that large numbers of Jews in a particular community could no longer understand the Hebrew of the Bible in a meaningful way. Even with increased efforts toward educating the population in Semitic languages, it could have been argued, this gap, or even chasm, in comprehension was not going to be bridged in any other way than translation. Even if biblical versions already existed in a given language, their non-Jewish sponsorship would be perceived as less than ideal for Jewish audiences. Thus it was, as we have seen, that the King James Version was perceived for a period of time as satisfactory for English-speaking Jews, but it was revised and eventually replaced by Jewish translations when the opportunity arose.

The KJV presents an interesting case in this regard. In many ways, the KJV is very Jewish, in spite of the fact that no Jews were on the committees that prepared it. Nonetheless, several of the translators of the Old Testament portion were Christian Hebraists; that is, Christians with a deep respect for Hebrew and for Jewish interpretive traditions. These scholars were able to introduce to their colleagues the distinctive features of the Septuagint and the Targumim, for example. In particular, the KJV translators were influenced by the work of David Kimchi, an important Jewish exegete, to whose tractates the translators had direct and unique access. The recognition of this Hebraic cadence of the KJV may have been one of the factors that influenced British Jews to make use of it for quite a while and to model their own versions on it when they began to part company with it.

Max Margolis, who we identified earlier as the editor in chief of the 1917 JPS version, also made generous use of the KJV. But at the same time he vigorously argued that only a Jew could produce a version appropriate for Jewish audiences. While it was perfectly permissible to be indebted to non-Jewish predecessors in the area of diction or style, only Jews could provide a correct theological understanding of the major issues of the Bible. Or, as we might put it, only Jews – by nature and by nurture – could be entrusted with what was in essence a sacred task.

Margolis was not alone in articulating this view, although I think it is fair to say that many (most?) Jewish Studies scholars of today would be uncomfortable with such an "exclusivist" perspective. I myself would tend to take what can be termed a

"middle of the road" approach. Certainly, up until the last few decades, knowledge of the richness of Jewish biblical exegesis was for the most part restricted to Jews. Only those with a traditional Jewish education had been exposed to the centuries of interpretation and interpreters from whose works and words a translator could draw in fashioning a modern-language version that would reflect the breadth and depth of this lore. And surely a Jewish translation, even a decidedly untraditional one, would exhibit considerable familiarity with Jewish exegetical traditions.

Today, on the other hand, almost any scholar, with sufficient interest and resources, can immerse him- or herself in traditional Jewish interpretations and make use of this in a modern-language Bible version, hence potentially obliterating this distinction between a Jewish and a non-Jewish Bible translation. In practice, however, it seems unlikely that this will actually happen. For the Jewish translator, this exegesis, these interpretations, are ours – not simply something that we study about, but rather something that is part of our lives (and this would hold true for non-traditional, as well as traditional Jews).

This material, from rabbinic and other sources, is then integral, not simply desirable or peripheral, to a Jewish version. And I cannot help but thinking that this is not going to change. While almost every translation of the Hebrew Bible incorporates some Jewish exegesis – and this is true even, for example, of Martin Luther's version (in which Rashi's commentary on the Bible plays a major, if unacknowledged, role) – only Jewish versions will be constructed with these interpretive traditions serving, as it were, as the adhesive or bonding agent that holds everything together in a unified whole.

Thus, a major factor in the production of Jewish translations and revisions is to provide an authentically Jewish understanding (however that is to be explicated) of the Hebrew Bible in a language spoken by members of the target audience. At the same time, translators have additional factors that motivate them. In the case of both Moses Mendelssohn and Max Margolis, the German and English style that they respectively selected was seen as particularly significant. Mendelssohn, living at a time when cultural and political barriers toward the acceptance of Jews in the wider society were rapidly falling, despaired that his fellow Jews, mired in what he perceived as the linguistic abyss of Yiddish (or Judeo-German), would not make appropriate entrances as the doors were opened. Thus, he fashioned his version in the High German that was spoken in polite and politically powerful circles. For Margolis, early twentieth-century America was indeed the land of opportunity, but his fellow immigrants were ill prepared to seize the moment unless they were able to communicate in proper English. By retaining the diction of the KJV, even when he corrected it, Margolis aimed to produce a primer in language as well as in theology.

The Letter of Aristeas, which was introduced in the first part of this essay because of its narration of the putative origins of the LXX, avers that it was royal initiative that propelled this project. Nothing is said in the Letter about the internal needs of the Alexandrian Jewish community. In emphasizing these needs, many scholars

today downplay, if they do not dismiss, such royal patronage. But is it not more likely that it was a combination of these factors, a happy convergence of interests as it were, that lay at the heart of the Septuagint.

This combination of internal and external motivations was also at work, and rather clearly so, at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries in Britain. As we observed earlier, the British Jewish community was beginning to incorporate some English into its prayer books, and congregants were becoming acclimated to hearing sermons in English. If recent immigrants had been making use of German- or Spanish-language versions of the Bible up until this time, their children and future grandchildren would likely not wish, or be able, to do likewise. Thus, Anglo-Jewish Bible translations originated in part because of a set of well-defined internal concerns.

But this is only part of the story. At about the same time, missionary societies, including those like the London Jews' Society that took specific aim at Jews, were being founded and were experiencing considerable growth. These missionary groups were able to take advantage of the mass production of books, a technology largely developed by Bible societies, to distribute huge numbers of Bibles in all sorts of formats and at a very low cost. Eventually, as it happened, even New Testaments in Yiddish would confront immigrant Jews – but that would take a while. Nonetheless, there was an immediate need, perceived at first by only a few, for Jews to have an English Bible of their own. Even if it initially looked and sounded very much like the familiar KJV, it was Jewish, so that Jewish exegesis could be introduced and Christological formulations banished.

Thus, in considering "Why" Jew translators and translations developed when and where they did, I urge that scholars and other interested individuals adopt the widest possible vantage point. This suggests, or more correctly necessitates, cooperation among researchers in different fields, since no one person can have expertise in the multiple social, cultural, historical, and religious contexts that have existed over the past two thousand or more years. It is only by taking into account all of these contexts that we can fully account for "Why" Jews have produced so many versions.

Concluding Thoughts

As I have indicated several times in this chapter, it is my deeply held belief that translations of the Bible by and for Jews have not been given due consideration or weight by scholars, rabbis, or Jewish communities in general. One of the reasons for this is clear: typically, those in leadership positions have sought to maintain the view – often fictional – that all Jews, at least adult male Jews, were able to read the Hebrew Bible in its original languages, without need to resort to a translation. Excluding women and children from this picture, Bibles for the school and home,

traditional realms for women and children, were permitted in environments where modern-language versions would not be encouraged or even allowed in the synagogue.

Today, Bible translations are found in almost every synagogue and are sponsored by Jewish organizations across the ideological/traditional divides. As a result, Jewish Bible translations play larger and more open role than they used to, and they should gain enhanced notice and respect through such expanded usage.

There is, however, another factor that has led to a somewhat diminished interest in Bible translations among Jews, especially when compared to Christians, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants. For all Christians, translation of the sacred word is fundamental to their system of beliefs and practices. The very words of Jesus, which he presumably spoke for the most part in Aramaic, were presented in Greek in the New Testament; that is, in translation. Translation lies, then, at the heart of Christianity. Whatever efforts, if any, were made to preserve and transmit Jesus' words in Aramaic were quickly and completely overwhelmed by the urge to translate.

Thus it is that for most contemporary Christians the Bible is the Bible in translation, not the Bible in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. For this reason, there are very few Christian denominations or groups that make a concerted effort to teach or preach the biblical languages. The vast majority of Christian clergy are, or appear to be, at best only superficially acquainted with the languages of the Bible.

Not so with Judaism. Even the most nontraditional movements of contemporary Judaism continue to make use of Torah scrolls written in Hebrew and expect the children in their congregations to be able to read, if not fully comprehend, portions of the Bible as part of the ceremony that marks a Bar or Bat Mitzvah. And so it is that no Jewish Bible translation is intended as a practical or implicit replacement of the original, as is the widespread practice among Christians. Every Jewish Bible should point to the original rather than attempt to supplant it. This is most evident when the English (or another modern language) is printed on facing pages with the Hebrew. It is also indicated by the use of Hebrew names (either in Hebrew script and/or in transliteration) for the portions of the week, the books of the Bible, and the Bible itself (T-N-K/CH). Moreover, just as the Hebrew language is read right-to-left – that is, in a direction opposite from the way modern Western languages are read – so the Hebrew Bible in Jewish translation typically opens in the "opposite" way. Along with notes that incorporate Jewish exegesis, the entire look and feel of a Jewish version of the Bible remind the reader that he/she is dealing with a translation of the original, and not the original itself.

That being said, we might conclude that, after all, there is at least one good reason why Jewish Bible translations are held in lesser esteem than similar volumes among Christians. While admitting that there is some validity to this point of view, I nonetheless affirm and reaffirm the value of Jewish Bible translation. When all is said and done, we don't read or study these texts primarily to know what the text meant in its original context, but rather to discern what it is has meant and continues

to mean for different Jewish communities at different times under different circumstances. Thus, while not denying that Bible translators are also interpreters who have something to say about the original meaning(s) of the text, I find that their greatest value is to give us unparalleled access to the very development of Jews and Judaism over the centuries.

When Jewish communities could no longer go back to the ancient text, translators tried, and often succeeded, in bringing the text forward to them. In so doing, they produced versions that combined in countless ways the Semitic language and culture of the Bible with the language and culture of the translators' own time and place. This has enriched not only Jews and Judaism; indeed, the entirety of Western civilization has been the beneficiary, whether or not this was recognized and acknowledged, of the efforts of thousands of individuals who have produced hundreds of Jewish translations of the Bible. It is my hope that this chapter and other, similar, efforts bring to the fore these accomplishments as a legacy of which we can all be proud.

Further reading

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Part II

From Ancient Israel to Rabbinic Jewry

7

Jews in the Land During the Second Temple Period

Steven Werlin

Introduction

The period following the Babylonian Exile was one of renewal and rebirth for the Jews. During the Second Temple period (586 BCE–70 CE), the Jewish people coalesced under a centralized religion and an identifiable culture. The transformation from the biblical "Israelites" to the postbiblical "Jews," however, did not happen overnight. It was a process that took several centuries of political turmoil and religious development, rooted in the biblical traditions.

The Second Temple period – that is, from the Babylonian Exile to the destruction of the Second Temple by the Romans – was characterized by conflict, both internal and external. Jews during this postbiblical period struggled to construct and maintain their identity as they encountered foreign conquerors, including the Persians, Greeks, and Romans. Varying reactions to these encounters led to internal conflicts within Jewish society, as well. Questions arose among the people of Jerusalem regarding their level of integration into the increasingly international community: "Should Jews abandon the native tongue and speak Greek? Should we eat non-kosher foods, such as pig? Are we permitted to attend non-Jewish festivals, even if the worship of foreign gods is taking place there? How much is too far?"

Many of these questions dealt specifically with the Jerusalem Temple. Since the biblical monarchy under the House of David ceased to exist after the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, the hierarchical priestly aristocracy of Jerusalem took on a political role alongside their religious duties. In the Second Temple period, it became nearly impossible to separate politics and religion in Jerusalem.

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The Temple in Jerusalem was the center of public life. Jews from all over the Roman Empire would make pilgrimages to their only house of worship in order to participate in the annual festivals. Ancient historians described how the city would swell with visitors during the Jewish festivals of Sukkot, Passover, and Shevuot. And while the Temple was more regularly the scene of public worship, celebration, and offerings to God, periodically it became the scene of violent confrontation between the Jews and foreign rulers.

Toward the end of the Second Temple period, another institution existed alongside the Temple in Jewish life: the synagogue. Literally a "place of meeting," the synagogue served a variety of functions, both religious and communal. Synagogues could never replace the Jerusalem Temple since sacrifices to God could only be carried out in the latter. Instead, synagogues were a way for Jews who did not live so close to Jerusalem to engage in a wholly different kind of religious experience, often involving the recitation and discussion of sacred texts and the chanting of liturgy. In addition, synagogues may have been used for local town meetings, as hostels for visitors, and as schools.

Sources

To reconstruct the history, religion, culture, and politics of the Second Temple period, modern historians rely on a variety of sources. The most well known is the Bible. While the bulk of the Hebrew Bible (or Old Testament) informs us of "Israelite history," – that is, the First Temple period and earlier – the later books, such as Daniel and Ecclesiastes, reflect the literary style and beliefs of Jews in the Second Temple period. But just because the biblical canon was closed does not mean that Jews stopped writing. In fact, many works that were written by Jews during the Second Temple period and not included in the Jewish Bible found their way into some Christian Bibles. For example, the Wisdom of Ben Sira (or Ecclesiasticus) and Tobit were included in the Catholic Bible in the section titled the Deuterocanon, or "second law" (what Protestant tradition refers to as the Apocrypha or "hidden works"). In addition, much of the New Testament was written by Jews (or more properly, Jewish Christians) and reflects life in first- and second-century Palestine.[1] The earliest rabbinic literature, most notably the Mishnah, also helps to paint a picture of Jewish religion and society toward the end of the Second Temple period.

By far, however, the most important historical sources for Jews in the Second Temple period come from the literary works of Flavius Josephus, a Jewish priest and aristocrat from Jerusalem. Josephus became somewhat infamous in Jewish tradition as a traitor for having surrendered to the Romans during the Great Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE). However, his historical works, especially *The Jewish War* and *Antiquities of the Jews*, provide valuable details and insight into the history, politics, and culture of the Second Temple period.

Lastly, archaeology has made important contributions to the study of the Jews during these formative years. Excavations over the past century have allowed us to confirm many of the details provided by our literary sources. Conversely, archaeology has given us the opportunity to reevaluate, question, and even refute many claims of the ancient texts. But most importantly, archaeological sources often fill in the gaps regarding daily life left by the ancient authors who were typically wealthy, well educated, and generally uninterested in the mundane details of Jewish life. For example, while Josephus imparts valuable insight into the politics of King Herod's court and Roman military strategy, he says very little regarding the eating habits, religious observances, or literacy rates among the farmers of Galilee. Archaeology provides a viewpoint for understanding the practices and lives of the common Jews and the masses. And if the last two thousand years of Western history are any indication, Jews of the lower socioeconomic strata are surely as important as kings and priests.

Hellenistic Palestine (332–167 BCE)

With the arrival of Alexander the Great in 332 BCE, Greek culture began to seep into all aspects of life in the Near East. The term "Hellenism" comes from the word "Hellene," meaning "Greek," however, the Hellenistic period is better characterized by the mixing of Greek and Near Eastern cultures rather than domination. Nevertheless, the monarchs that ruled the Near East during the Hellenistic period were, in terms of language, religion, and tradition, Greek.[2]

In the decades following the untimely death of Alexander the Great, the massive empire stretching from Greece to Afghanistan was divided among the conqueror's former generals. Ancient Palestine sat on the border between the two largest kingdoms of the Hellenistic world: the kingdom of Ptolemy in Egypt to the southwest, and the kingdom of Seleucus in Mesopotamia to the northeast. As a result, Palestine was contested territory, and the Jews, living in Jerusalem and its immediate environs, found themselves under different overlords during the turbulent third and second centuries BCE.

The Jews under the Ptolemies

Under the Ptolemaic dynasty, the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple served as the political liaison between the Jewish people and the king in Alexandria, Egypt. The Ptolemies followed the precedent set by Alexander in allowing the Jews to live by their ancestral laws, including the freedom to conduct religious affairs as they saw fit. In exchange for general security and incorporation within the Ptolemaic kingdom, the duty of the high priest was to collect taxes from the landowners

in Judean territory and – after keeping a cut for himself – pass the sums on to the king. This laissez faire approach to imperial rule kept the Jews in relatively good relations with their overlords for the bulk of the third century BCE.

It was probably around this time that the Torah was first translated from its original Hebrew into a foreign language. The Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, including the Torah, is today referred to as the Septuagint. Although it was probably a work of necessity by the Greek-speaking Jewish community of Alexandria, the mere existence of such a translation suggests an amicable relationship between Jews and the Hellenistic monarchs. In a fictional account of the Septuagint's authorship, known as the Letter of Aristeas, composed by a Jew during the Second Temple period, King Ptolemy is depicted as requesting the translation just so he could possess a copy of such an important and ancient text for his library! It therefore seems that, in the first half of the Hellenistic period, the influx of Hellenism was not seen as an existential threat to Jewish traditions or life. The fear that Jewish practices and culture would be swallowed up by the sea of the Hellenistic world had not yet crystallized. Jews, it seems, were comfortable in the Greek world.

The Jews under the Seleucids

By the beginning of the second century BCE, the Seleucid dynasty had wrested control of Palestine from the Ptolemies. Although the Seleucids at first maintained their predecessors' policies of local self-governance, the rise of Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 175 BCE brought about revolutionary changes. In an attempt to unify his empire under a single culture, Antiochus curtailed the rights of local religious authorities in favor of the cults of Greek deities, like Zeus and Apollo. To foment these changes among the stubbornly monotheistic Jews, Antiochus appointed Jewish aristocrats and priests who were open to his policies to the offices of tax collector and high priest. In effect, the king interfered with the high priest's line of succession as a means of enacting political and religious changes.

When the members of the Jerusalem aristocracy realized they could become religiously and politically powerful by allying themselves with the Seleucid king, infighting erupted, leading to several skirmishes in and around Jerusalem. As punishment, Antiochus, with the help of his "puppet" high priest, enacted the Hellenistic Religious Reforms (also known as the Antiochan Persecutions). These reforms attempted to enforce Hellenization by banning the study of the Jewish ancestral laws, i.e. the Torah, as well as the practice of circumcision. Most severely, the reforms mandated the worship of Zeus in the Jerusalem Temple, including the ritual offering of pig flesh in the Temple precinct. The consumption of pork was not only strictly forbidden by biblical dietary rules, but it was the archetypical food of aversion for Jews. As the most succulent of meats, pork was consumed all over the Mediterranean and Near East. Jewish avoidance of pork was among the more

peculiar – and therefore well known – aspects of their cultural and religious scruples. Offerings of pig in the Jerusalem Temple would therefore have been interpreted as the most vicious of affronts.

That said, the motives behind the Hellenistic Religious Reforms are a matter of debate. Jewish tradition has naturally viewed the changes as a form of religious persecution. By modern standards, such an interpretation is doubtless accurate. However, it is unclear as to whether Antiochus would have understood Jewish religious principles such as monotheism and dietary restrictions. Moreover, we should recall that Judaism – as a culture and religion – was in a state of flux at this time. From our perspective two thousand years later, we know that the stricter views toward issues like pork and the exclusivity of God would win out. But, at the time, this was not a foregone conclusion. To solidify and strengthen such convictions, blood would have to be shed.

The Maccabean Revolt

The consequence of Antiochus' reforms was the Maccabean Revolt (167–142 BCE). While the Jerusalem aristocracy debated whether or not the reforms had gone too far, the rural communities of the Judean countryside – less acquainted with Hellenistic culture and politics than the urban elite – became enraged. A family of lower-order priests from the town of Modi'in, known as the Hasmoneans, led a guerrilla-style rebellion against the Seleucid armies in the Jerusalem area. The patriarch of the Hasmoneans died early in the revolt, and the leadership passed to his most charismatic son, Judah, nicknamed the "Hammer," or, in Hebrew, "Maccabee." Although Judah Maccabee was killed in battle in 161, the revolt continued for almost two more decades before the Seleucid king granted independence to the Jews. Nevertheless, Judah is remembered as the hero of the revolt, particularly because he led the capture of Jerusalem. The rededication of the Temple to the God of Israel following the battle is today commemorated by the festival of Chanukah.

How one judges the roles of the aristocratic and priestly Jews of Jerusalem who supported Antiochus depends largely on the interpretation of the sources. The events of this period are recounted in two books found in the Catholic and Orthodox Bibles that were written by Jews during the second century BCE. Both books – known as 1 Maccabees and 2 Maccabees – are highly polemical, glorifying the Hasmoneans and their followers as freedom-fighters and vilifying the Seleucids as oppressors. However, a careful reading of both texts suggests that the Jews were sharply divided on the issue of Hellenization. That is to say, there were some Jews who were willing to accept the Hellenistic Religious Reforms and become culturally integrated into the Seleucid Empire. Indeed, some scholars have argued that the Maccabean Revolt was more of a civil war than a rebellion (Bickerman, 1979). Despite this nuanced view of history, Jewish tradition tends to remember

the Jews as a united front against tyranny and oppression. In either case, though, the rejection of Hellenistic culture provided a model for Jewish nationalism and pride for centuries.

The Hasmonean Period (167–40 BCE)

Judah Maccabee was succeeded as the leader of the Maccabean Revolt by his brother Jonathan. Since the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the office of the high priest of the Jerusalem Temple had been in turmoil. The ancient line of high priests, which was passed down traditionally within a single family, had been broken. When Jonathan succeeded Judah, he took the additional step of appointing himself high priest. Although his motives may have been to return stability to the supreme religious office, the decision had the practical effect of combining the roles of political, religious, and military leadership into a single position. The dynasty of the Hasmoneans had officially begun.

Jonathan was assassinated in 142 BCE, and he was succeeded by his older brother Simon. As the last of the original Hasmonean brothers, Simon continued to consolidate military and religious leadership. Simon was succeeded in 134 by his youngest son, John Hyrcanus. For thirty years, John Hyrcanus ruled as leader of the Jewish people and high priest of the Jerusalem Temple.

John Hyrcanus

John Hyrcanus's reign saw two important developments. The first concerned the non-Jewish inhabitants of the country. Until this time, the Jews had shared the "Land of Israel," that is, ancient Palestine – from the Mediterranean coast on the west to the narrow strip of land on the far side of the Jordan River in the east – with a variety of non-Jewish peoples. The Jews – or the "Judeans," as they were known in antiquity – lived primarily in Judea, the hilly, inland region around Jerusalem. Immediately to the north were the Samaritans, monotheists who also worshipped the God of Israel but considered themselves the descendants of the ten tribes of Israel that were *not* sent into exile by the Babylonians.[3] Despite their parallel traditions, the relationship between the Jews and Samaritans was frequently fraught with conflict and rivalry. To the south of Judea was the region of Idumea. The Idumeans – descendants of the biblical Edomites – were more typical of the Semitic peoples of the Near East. They worshipped a variety of deities and observed traditions of both local and Greek origin. Along the coast, Greek-speaking peoples from all over the Hellenistic world flocked to the various trade emporia. The result was a string of diverse, cosmopolitan cities from Tyre and Sidon in the north to Gaza and Ashkelon in the south. Among all these peoples, the Jews lived in a small

and somewhat isolated region in the center of the country – that is, until the time of the Hasmoneans.

With their unlikely victories over the Seleucids during the Maccabean Revolt, the Jews under John Hyrcanus began to expand their sphere of influence. Early in his reign, John Hyrcanus led military campaigns into Samaria and Idumea with the goal of subduing and incorporating these regions into the newly formed Hasmonean kingdom. In Samaria, Hyrcanus took the opportunity to destroy the temple on Mount Gerizim, the sacred mountain of the Samaritans (as Josephus related in his *Antiquities*: 13.275–283). On the one hand, it may seem strange that a Jewish ruler would destroy a temple dedicated to the God of Israel. However, the Samaritans were seen by the Jews as a schismatic group that worshipped the God of Israel in an inappropriate manner. To worship God incorrectly was impiety.

In Idumea, John Hyrcanus took a somewhat different approach by forcibly converting the Idumeans to Judaism (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 13.256–258). While his religious convictions no doubt played a role in this policy – as they had in his destruction of the Samaritan temple – we should not discount the political motives behind the forced conversion of the Idumeans. Unifying the kingdom under a single, centralized Temple cult, with Hyrcanus himself as high priest, might have helped to create regional cohesion over time. No doubt the historical irony – considering the cause of the Maccabean Revolt – was entirely lost on John Hyrcanus.

For those familiar with the process of conversion in modern Judaism, it may seem strange that John Hyrcanus forcibly proselytized the Idumeans. Indeed, in modern Judaism, conversion is considered a difficult venture of study and personal sacrifice that can take a year or more to complete. But the rigor of modern conversion to Judaism is the product of centuries of rabbinic discourse. In the age of the Hasmoneans, the tradition of the rabbis was barely in its infancy.

Jewish sectarianism

Those forebears of the rabbis, however, are found in another development during John Hyrcanus' reign: Jewish sectarianism. The term "sect" should not be understood here in the modern sense of a fringe or schismatic group. In Second Temple Judaism, a "sect" was more akin to a modern political party or religious denomination. (Again, politics and religion in Second Temple Judaism cannot be separated.) The two most important sects were the Pharisees and the Sadducees.

John Hyrcanus began his career as a member of the Pharisees. According to the descriptions provided by the ancient historian Josephus, the Pharisees were relatively moderate and accommodating in their religious views. They believed that the Law of Moses, that is, the commandments in the Torah, were paramount, but that they needed to be interpreted in order to be observed correctly. For example, in the Torah, one is commanded not to "boil a goat in his mother's milk" (Exodus 23:19). One could easily follow such a rule by interpreting the dictum literally. From the

Pharisaic perspective, though, that was not good enough. In order to be sure one was adhering to this commandment properly, the Pharisees – as known from the later rabbinic writings – interpreted this to mean that one should not eat *any* meat and milk products together. Thus they expanded the application of the biblical commandments in order to (i) make the Torah applicable in daily life and (ii) get it right in the eyes of God. Their predilection toward interpretation – or overinterpretation, depending on one's perspective – is perhaps a clue to the origin of their name, Pharisee, from the same Hebrew root as the word for "specify" or "explain."[4]

Midway through his reign, John Hyrcanus switched from the Pharisees to the Sadducees (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 13.293–298). According to Josephus' descriptions, the Sadducees took a minimalist view of the Torah. For example, in the case of the "goat in his mother's milk," the Sadducees probably would have taken this literally and gladly have enjoyed milk and meat together. They held that the Torah was paramount, but need not be overinterpreted. From a theological perspective, extra-biblical beliefs – such as predestination, the afterlife, and angels – were of no value.

Considering their aversion to biblical interpretation, it may be surprising to learn that the Sadducees were made up mostly of the priestly aristocrats of Jerusalem. That is not to say that *all* priests were Sadducees, but rather that most Sadducees were either priests in the Jerusalem Temple or members of the upper-class urban elite who were closely allied with priests. Because the Sadducees constituted the powerful priestly aristocracy, they were politically conservative, mostly concerned with maintaining the status quo in Jewish society. Their political conservatism meant that they were always eager to play ball with those in charge, whether they were foreign rulers, like the Seleucids or (later) the Romans, or the indigenous Hasmonean kings. It is probably this conservative flexibility which moved John Hyrcanus to abandon his Pharisaic roots and join the Sadducees.

The Pharisees similarly had allies among the priesthood, though their primary power base came from the masses. While the Pharisees occasionally enjoyed the favor of the rulers, Josephus consistently depicts them as more populist than their Sadducean counterparts. Notions of a middle class are anachronistic for the ancient world, however, the Pharisees are usually considered the educated non-elite. Most Pharisees probably emanated from the skilled urban workers, though the most well-known Pharisees, like Simeon ben Gamaliel and Josephus himself, were surely aristocrats. But it was in Torah study and biblical interpretation that the Pharisees sought piety and gained credibility. For this reason, the Pharisees are considered to be the predecessors of the later rabbis.

Josephus devotes much of his discussion of Jewish sectarianism to a third group, which he calls the Essenes. While the Pharisees and Sadducees were active players in Jerusalem politics, the Essenes were mostly absent from the political arena. Josephus describes the Essenes as a celibate, monastic group, living an ascetic lifestyle in the desert. However, elsewhere he mentions Essenes who married and raised families in the cities and villages of Judea. It seems though that all Essenes spent at least some time in one of several isolated communities in the desert, where they lived in strict piety.

Theologically, the Essenes believed in the sorts of extra-biblical elements that the Sadducees neglected. They believed that all matters were preordained by God and that humans had no free will. They believed in the physical resurrection of the dead in the End of the Days, which, for the Essenes, was imminent. They believed that angels formed an extensive hierarchy of divine beings with God at the head, and that these beings affected life on earth on a daily basis. By all accounts, the Essenes believed that the "biblical period" was not a world of the past, but continued in their own day. For this reason, we refer to the Essenes as an "apocalyptic" group.

Contrary to modern usage, the term "apocalypse" does not necessarily refer to the End of Days. The word in fact comes from the Greek term for "revelation." An apocalyptic group believes that divine information is being revealed to humans on earth. Frequently, this information concerns the End of Days, though it can often be simply a description of the heavens and divine beings or instructions for building a new divine Temple in Jerusalem.

The Essenes were doubtlessly eccentric and on the fringe of Jewish society. Nevertheless, Josephus praises them for their devout piety. But because the Essenes differed so markedly from the majority of Jews, Josephus felt that their peculiar practices deserved an exhaustive treatment in his books. For instance, he spends a considerable amount of time discussing the hyper-sanitary toilet practices of the Essenes, their strict hierarchy, their long process of initiation into the community, and their aversion to spitting and drinking alcohol.

Josephus also discusses the Essenes' purity practices. Throughout the Second Temple period, ritual purity practices became increasingly popular among Jewish communities all over the country. Grounded in the laws of Leviticus, Jewish ritual purity took the form of bodily immersion in water (or "baptism"), whether in rivers or purpose-built pools. It also included the ritual washing of dishes and involved a stricter adherence to *kashrut*, or Jewish dietary rules. Impurity was considered a physical state brought on and spread by all sorts of normal life processes, such as birth, death, menstruation, and bugs. Even contact with parchment – including the Torah! – could render one in a state of impurity. Ritual purity was by no means a measure of one's moral state. That said, most Jews of the Second Temple period probably would have wished to be in a state of purity as often as possible. (It is somewhat analogous to how we in the modern world might want to be physically clean as often as possible, hence our daily showers.) Although most Jews practiced some form of purity, the Essenes took the matter to more extreme levels. By immersing themselves multiple times per day, they aimed to keep themselves in a perpetual state of purity.

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Much of our knowledge of the Essenes is supplemented by a body of writings known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. Numbering over nine hundred separate scrolls, these documents were mostly found during the late 1940s and 1950s in 11 different

caves near the ancient site of Qumran just to the northwest of the Dead Sea in the Judean Desert. The Dead Sea Scrolls form a library of religious literature that apparently served the community living at Qumran from the second century BCE to the first century CE (Magness, 2002).

About half of the documents are various books of the Hebrew Bible, each book written on an individual scroll, the practice before the codex that could bind all the books of the Bible together. There are also translations of the Hebrew Bible into Greek (known as the Septuagint) and into Aramaic, the language commonly spoken by Jews in the Second Temple period.[5] Also included among the Dead Sea Scrolls are various works of the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.

Many of the documents preserved in this library are what we refer to as "sectarian documents." They are known only from this collection and were written by members of the community living at nearby Qumran. These sectarian documents describe the rigorously pious lifestyle of the community, their origin, and their apocalyptic beliefs. The sectarian documents include detailed discussions and interpretations of biblical texts, liturgy and religious poetry, and even calendars. The Scrolls describe how the community was formed by priests who broke off from the Jerusalem priesthood during the Maccabean Revolt. They describe their opposition to the Hasmonean seizure of the high priest's office and how the community would one day reclaim the Temple. The Scrolls give detailed accounts of the End of Days, as the authors believed it had been revealed to them. They envisioned a forty-year battle between the "Sons of Light" (themselves) and the "Sons of Darkness" (everyone else), from which they would emerge victorious. The community would then be led by two messiahs: a priestly messiah descended from Moses' brother, Aaron, and a militaristic messiah descended from King David. The Scrolls also include various instructions and rules for living in a perpetual state of ritual purity, ready to recommence their role as priests in the Jerusalem Temple.

The excavations of the small site of Qumran revealed various aspects that help illustrate the practices described in the Scrolls. Ten large ritual pools – known as *miqva'ot* – were discovered, all connected by an elaborate water system that moved fresh rainwater through the compound. A large communal dining room was uncovered, where, according to the Scrolls, the community would gather for ritual meals. And a long room with a plastered brick table was discovered, within which were small ceramic inkwells, an extremely rare find that allowed archaeologists to identify the room as a "scriptorium" – the birthplace of many of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Since the discovery of the Scrolls, scholars have debated the connection between the community at Qumran and Josephus' Essenes. Because the Scrolls never use the term "Essene," preferring to call themselves simply "the community," it is difficult to make a direct connection. Although there are many similarities between Josephus' accounts and the descriptions provided by the Scrolls, there are also some differences. For example, both descriptions indicate a belief in predestination, angels, and resurrection; both indicate that the groups gave up their possessions and wealth to the community; both consider oil to be ritually impure; and both indicate

that spitting in public was forbidden. However, Josephus' description of the toilet practices indicates that the community members had to march outside the compound in order to "go to stool," while archaeologists discovered evidence for a toilet within the site.

Scholars have proposed various solutions to the discrepancies. It may be that the groups are the same and Josephus just got some of the details wrong. Or that the group changed over the period of their existence. Or that the group at Qumran was simply a subgroup among a more general sect known as Essenes. But even the few scholars who believe that the Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls community are distinct admit that they are similar. Both fall into the broader category of apocalyptic groups in Second Temple Jewish society.

The Hasmonean monarchs

The death of John Hyrcanus was followed by the brief reign of his son, Aristobulus. Like his father, Aristobulus had a traditional Jewish name, Judah, but he was better known by his Greek name. Although his rule lasted for little more than a year, Aristobulus' legacy was marked by his unprecedented proclamation of himself as "king." Up until this time, the Hasmonean rulers had enjoyed the title of high priest, but none had the impunity to adopt a title that recalled both the honored kings of the biblical House of David and the hated kings of the Seleucids. Armed with his new title of royalty, Aristobulus expanded the bounds of his kingdom into the northern country, areas that today include the Golan Heights and parts of southern Lebanon.

Following Aristobulus' untimely death, his brother, Alexander Jannaeus, assumed the throne. Alexander Jannaeus' long reign (103–76 BCE) was similarly marked by territory expansion, this time to the wealthy Greek cities along the coast. But the king himself went down in history for his brutality. One of the more vicious incidents recounted by Josephus occurred following an impromptu mob riot at the Temple while the king was presiding as high priest. Six thousand rioters were executed as a result (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 13.372–373). In another incident, Alexander Jannaeus rounded up eight hundred of his enemies and had them crucified while their wives and children were slaughtered before their dying eyes. The king meanwhile presided over the crucifixions as he "feasted with his concubines" (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 13.380).

Alexander Jannaeus was succeeded by his wife, Alexandra. Noted for her temperance and evenhanded rule, the queen secured her kingdom's borders without expanding them. Moreover, she gave preference to the Pharisees for the first time since the reign of John Hyrcanus. Because a woman could not serve as high priest, she appointed her eldest son, Hyrcanus II. However, Alexandra's younger son, Aristobulus II, was the more ambitious and impetuous of the brothers. When the queen died in 67 BCE, Aristobulus II moved immediately to wrest the throne from his older brother. The mild-mannered Hyrcanus II might

have simply stepped aside had it not been for the prodding of a shrewd advisor named Antipater.

Antipater was an Idumean by birth, but his father had converted to Judaism and served as regional governor under the reign of John Hyrcanus. Realizing that Hyrcanus II was susceptible to manipulation, Antipater encouraged him to fight for the throne. As a Hasmonean civil war loomed, both sides sought assistance beyond their borders. By this time though, the Seleucid kingdom was crumbling, and a new empire was emerging from the west.

Roman influence in Judea and the rise of Herod

The arrival of ambitious Roman generals in the eastern Mediterranean brought strong armies and potential allies. Both Hasmonean claimants to the throne of Judea sent delegations to the Romans asking for assistance. Support from the Romans wavered from one brother to the other for several years. Finally, Rome decided to dismantle the Hasmonean kingdom altogether, absorb several non-Jewish cities into the Roman province of Syria, and limit Jewish autonomy to Judea, Samaria, Idumea, and Galilee. The older brother, Hyrcanus II, was named high priest and official representative of the Jews ("ethnarch"), while the younger brother, Aristobulus II, along with his sons, was imprisoned in Rome. Recognizing his political fortitude, the Romans assigned Antipater to the role of governor, in part as a reward for his support of Julius Caesar in his wars in Egypt. Antipater, in turn, appointed his two sons regional administrators: the older son was assigned to Jerusalem, and the younger son, Herod, at just 17 years of age, was assigned to Galilee.

Herod made a name for himself early on in Galilee. Ruling with an iron fist, Herod rounded up brigand groups who had been terrorizing the Galilean countryside. However, when he overstepped his authority by executing a brigand chief, he was recalled to Jerusalem to appear before the Temple's high court of priests. Rather than pleading with the court for forgiveness, Herod arrived in regal attire and with an armed escort, making it clear that he had no intention of capitulation. Before the matter turned ugly, the Roman provincial governor in Syria defused the situation by ordering Hyrcanus II to have the court exonerate Herod of any wrongdoing (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 14.163–180).

The episode left a distinct distaste for the young upstart among the Jerusalem aristocrats. But the stage had now been set. Herod had shown how he would deal with any challenges to his authority. More importantly, he had shown that he wielded the strong support of the Romans.

In 43 BCE, Antipater was assassinated, leaving Herod and his older brother the sole governing authorities. At this time, the younger son of Aristobulus II, named Matthias Antigonus, escaped from jail and took advantage of the political turmoil to make a play for the throne of Judea. After amassing an army, he captured Herod's older brother and Hyrcanus II. The former committed suicide in prison. Matthias

Antigonus then had the ear of Hyrcanus II cut off in order to disfigure him and thereby officially disqualify his uncle from ever serving as high priest again. Now, only Herod stood in Antigonus' way of reestablishing the Hasmonean kingdom.

Fearing for his safety, Herod fled the country. He traveled first to Alexandria in order to enlist the help of the Roman general in charge of the eastern provinces, Mark Antony. After agreeing to aid Herod, Mark Antony brought the aspiring ruler to Rome to receive official sanction from the Senate. In 40 BCE, Herod received more than he could have imagined. He emerged from the Senate hall, flanked by Mark Antony and Octavian Caesar, having been granted the title, "King of the Jews." Armed with fresh Roman troops, Herod made his way back to Jerusalem to claim his throne and expel Matthias Antigonus, the last of the Hasmonean challengers (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 14.348–491).

Herod the Great (40–4 BCE)

After three years of war, Herod successfully ascended the throne in 37 BCE. Herod owed his rule to the Romans, and his loyalty to Rome kept him on the throne. This loyalty was tested at a key turning point in Herod's career. When Roman civil war broke out between Mark Antony and Octavian Caesar, Herod supported the former. Mark Antony's defeat in 31 BCE put Herod in an unfortunate position. Upon hearing the news of Octavian's victory, Herod immediately traveled to meet with the victor. He then delivered a speech – preserved in Josephus' writings – in which he assured Octavian that he would be as loyal to him as he had to Mark Antony (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 15.187–201). The daring move of political sidestepping impressed Octavian. When the dictator was named emperor for life and honored with the title of "Augustus" three years later, he increased Herod's land holdings to include all of Palestine, parts of Transjordan, and territories to the northeast in modern Syria. The Jewish kingdom, under the reign of an Idumean whose grandfather had converted to Judaism, now stretched farther than it ever had before.

The relationship between Herod and Augustus is somewhat peculiar by modern standards, since both were rulers in their own right. Herod is often referred to as a "client-king" of Rome, meaning that he was king of his own territory, but only by virtue of Roman support. To be sure, there were no Roman troops stationed in Judea during Herod's reign, and Herod maintained his own standing army. From Josephus' testimony, we can see that the Romans benefited from having a local king in charge of the country's affairs, much in the same way that the Ptolemies and Seleucids sought local aristocrats to manage Jerusalem. Sums were probably given to Augustus by Herod in the form of "gifts" that were essentially payoffs to ensure peace in the region. The peace maintained by Rome under Augustus allowed a free flow of trade through Palestine, from the east to the Mediterranean and along the coast. Indeed, Herod's wealth was probably maintained and increased through

the taxation of goods traveling through and being traded in his kingdom (Richardson, 1999).

The prosperity under Herod's rule allowed him to embark on a grandiose building project, the likes of which the country had never seen, nor would ever again. Massive structures built by Herod still dot the landscape, from Herodium – an artificial mountain that served as a palace and mausoleum for the king – to the incredible tiered palaces draped over the cliffs of Masada, a natural fortress in the Judean Desert. Some structures were built to honor the Romans, such as the temple to Augustus and Roma in the newly built harbor city of Caesarea. Others were built as luxury villas to escape the cool winters of Jerusalem and impress his royal guests from abroad, such as the palaces of Jericho.

But Herod was careful always to remember his Jewish subjects. Indeed, he spent much of his reign in a state of paranoia, believing that the Jews would one day rise up against him. It is perhaps for this reason that he chose to entirely rebuild the compound of the Jerusalem Temple. The project was undoubtedly Herod's most ambitious, ostensibly continuing for decades after the king's death, and employing Jewish masons and builders for two generations. Raising the highest hill in Jerusalem, Herod built a broad platform – encompassing almost one third of the city at that time – to accommodate pilgrims and tourists from all over the Roman world. The massive limestone blocks used in the structures of the compound are today still impressively displayed throughout the Temple Mount (Richardson, 1999: 174–215).

Despite the peace and prosperity enjoyed under Herod, the man himself has become historically infamous for three reasons. First, Herod is vilified in the Gospel of Matthew for having ordered the mass execution of the babies of Bethlehem at the time of Jesus' birth. Although the episode is historically implausible, such a tale could not have been told of a king unless he had been unpopular in the first place. Second, Herod's personal life is undoubtedly one of the most dramatic soap operas told by a classical author. Treacherous sons, conniving wives, a vicious mother-in-law, and a seemingly endless string of banishments, assassinations, and executions all contributed to Herod's paranoia and reported madness toward the end of his reign. It is difficult to say how much ancient historians embellished these stories for entertainment value. Indeed, Herod's persona, as presented by Josephus, fits neatly into the literary model of the outwardly successful protagonist plagued by personal tragedy (like *King Lear* or *Citizen Kane*). But while the stories certainly make for good reading, they are unlikely to have been fabricated entirely.

The third reason for Herod's infamy concerns his strained relationship with the Jewish people. Despite Herod's attempts to appease his subjects, he could not escape the facts that (i) his family's "Jewishness" was in question, (ii) he had supplanted the "purely" Jewish Hasmoneans, and (ii) he ruled by the grace of the much-hated Romans. Although his "acts of piety" in reconstructing the Jerusalem Temple were viewed with suspicion, Herod's strong rule maintained peace in his kingdom and brought prosperity to his people. The physical remains of his

incredible building projects continue to serve as points of pride for Jews today. The long reign of Herod the Great marked an important turning point in Jewish history, as the Jews were ushered into the world of the Romans.

The Jews under Roman Rule (4 BCE–70 CE)

The problem of succession

When Herod died in 4 BCE, the problem of succession was immediately clear. First, Herod had not left any suitable successors. The king had emended his will numerous times, right up to his final days when he had his eldest son executed for treason. Although Herod had numerous sons from his nine wives, he had killed off several of the more capable heirs out of paranoia. He had also executed most of the remaining members of the Hasmonean clan, fearing that they might attempt to overthrow him. The surviving potential successors left much to be desired in a ruler.

Second, Herod had left some rather big shoes to fill. As a charismatic king with both political savvy and economic foresight, Herod had fostered personal relationships with his Roman overlords and the neighboring monarchs. Although his grandiose style and iron fist rule were not unique in the ancient world, he could not be easily replaced from the viewpoint of Rome. After much debate, Augustus divided up the kingdom among three of Herod's sons. The difficult rule of Judea and Samaria went to Archelaus, however, he proved to be an inept administrator and was replaced in 6 CE by direct Roman rule.

The Roman prefects

The Romans considered Judea to be a small and unimportant kingdom. As a result, low-level military officials were appointed to administer the country. Because Judea was part of the province of Syria, rather than a province of its own, the number of Roman troops stationed there was limited. Thus the prefects and procurators – as the Roman governors were called – were not well supported by a strong military presence.

The Roman prefects tended to be entirely ignorant of, or at least insensitive toward, Jewish customs. The Romans did not fully comprehend or appreciate the distinct aspects of Jewish culture, including their strict monotheism, abhorrence of foreign cults, and detestation of figural imagery. Josephus recounts several incidents during the tenures of the numerous Roman administrators in which the Jews' literal interpretation of the Second Commandment – forbidding graven images – was altogether ignored. For example, Pontius Pilate (of New Testament fame)

sought to erect military standards depicting the bust of the emperor in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 18.55–59). The mere image of a human was an offense to Jewish sensibilities. A massive crowd of Jews came before Pilate in protest, bearing their throats for execution rather than tolerate such an act of impiety. Pilate acquiesced and the volatile relationship between the Jews and their Roman rulers was eased for the moment.

With each decade of the first century CE, though, the relationship grew increasingly strained. The Roman administrators went from ineffectual to outright corrupt. Emperor Nero in the 50s and 60 CE assigned a series of prefects, each more corrupt than his predecessor. Since these administrators knew that their prefecture would last no more than two years, they each resided to abuse the populace as a source of personal wealth before being recalled to Rome.

Messianism and religious zealotry

The political drama and national despair catalyzed the development of several messianic and apocalyptic groups at this time. We have already discussed the Essenes, who continued to live as a monastic group, awaiting the End of Days, in the desert. Other groups, led by charismatic individuals, are known from Josephus. Some – such as the Egyptian Prophet and Theudas the Magician – commanded a strong following and, since they were seen as threats to the Roman hegemony, were eventually executed. The circumstances surrounding their ministries may not have been too dissimilar to those of the better-known John the Baptist and Jesus of Nazareth. The former led Jewish followers to the Jordan River for purification rituals, while Jesus of Nazareth was known for his critical views toward the Pharisees' overinterpretation of the biblical commandments. All of these individuals catered to the masses, in particular the lower strata of Jewish society. They tended to be highly critical of the Jerusalem priests and Jewish aristocracy, while they thrived on the unstable national psyche.

Messianic and apocalyptic groups occasionally offered legitimacy to political dissidents. (Again, religion and politics were inseparable.) In Jerusalem, an urban terrorist group, known as the Sicarii (or "dagger men") carried out concealed assassinations of the Jerusalem elites and priests, particularly those who worked with the Roman administrators. However, their true nature as murderous thugs was revealed when members of the Sicarii were hired by the Roman prefect himself to assassinate the high priest of the Temple (Josephus, *Antiquities*: 20.160–163)!

The Great Jewish Revolt (66–70 CE)

The socioeconomic and religious divisions within Jewish society, along with the absence of Jewish leadership, the corruption of Roman prefects, and the spread of

religious zealotry, created the perfect storm. In 66 CE, the inevitable revolt began with mob riots in Jerusalem and Caesarea. The few Roman troops in Jerusalem were overcome and massacred. Eventually, the Roman provincial general arrived with his legion from Syria, however, when he underestimated the Jewish response in Jerusalem, his forces were repelled. Nero then appointed the Roman general Vespasian to suppress the uprising.

Over the course of three years, Vespasian, with his second-in-command and son, Titus, marched among the villages and cities of Galilee and Judea, quashing the insurrection. By the time the siege of Jerusalem had begun, the city was chaos. The various Jewish factions that had developed over the short period of independent rule had taken to violent infighting. Their final effort to unite ultimately proved futile against the insurmountable Roman troops besieging the city. In the summer of 70 CE, the Romans, now under Titus' sole leadership, finally forced their way into the city, waging utter destruction and cutting down any opposition. In the upheaval of the battle, the Temple caught fire and was destroyed entirely. With Jerusalem in ruins, the aristocracy scattered, and the Jewish masses disillusioned, the Second Temple period came to a bitter end.

Life after the Great Revolt

The failure of the Great Revolt – or the First Jewish Revolt, as it is sometimes called – was felt throughout Jewish society. Politically, the Jews no longer had any voice in the administration of Judea. The country was officially turned into a Roman province and the Tenth Roman Legion was stationed permanently in Judea, encamped on the ruins of Jerusalem.

Not all consequences of the Great Revolt, however, were felt so immediately. The loss of the Jerusalem Temple was of course seen as a disaster for the Jewish people, partially because it posed a distinct theological problem. The Temple was the means by which Jews communicated with God. Worship had, for the previous half-millennium, consisted of offerings made by the Temple priests on behalf of the people. Such offerings were an integral part of the Jewish religion. Without the Temple, how would one worship and make expiation for transgressions of the Laws of Moses?

But despite the theological dilemma thus presented, the situation may not have seemed quite so dire at the time for two reasons. First, it should be recalled that the Jerusalem Temple had been destroyed once before. In 586 BCE, the Babylonians razed the Temple to the ground, but within a generation, the Jews had begun rebuilding it. In 70 CE, most Jews probably believed that the Temple would be rebuilt in the near future. Indeed, it is very likely that no Jew living in the late first century would ever have imagined that almost two thousand years later Jerusalem would *still* be without a Temple! For this reason, it was probably

not for many years that the Jews began to realize the Temple's permanent state of ruin.

Second, the Jewish religion had developed in part to prepare, albeit inadvertently, for such a catastrophe. The broadening of the borders of the Hasmonean and Herodian kingdoms meant that Jews now lived far from Jerusalem. The numerous Diaspora Jews living throughout the Roman Empire and Near East had little contact with the Jewish Temple. Their religion had become more personal, involving the observance of purity rites, dietary regulations, and the weekly Sabbath, all centered around the home and the synagogue, rather than the Temple. For these Jews, the Temple's destruction was a symbolic loss and an emotional blow rather than a real logistical dilemma.

For those Jews living in the Land of Israel, the loss of the Temple required a new focus for society's leadership. Until this time, the Temple's priests had been the de facto leaders of the nation, with the Sadducees representing the philosophical perspective and political establishment of the Jewish aristocracy. But without a central institution like the Temple, the Sadducees all but ceased to exist. The Pharisees, who had spent the late Second Temple period catering to the masses and developing a religion based on biblical interpretation, were now poised to emerge as the new leaders of the Jewish people. Ultimately, the term Pharisee disappeared, and the teachers and religious scholars of Judaism, who provided religious leadership, moral guidance, and, eventually, a voice for their nation, would be known simply as the Rabbis. These teachers based their traditions in the study of the Torah and proper observance of the commandments, or *mitzvot*. By refocusing the nation away from the Temple and the priesthood, the Rabbis helped establish the Jewish people on a road toward religious and national survival beyond the walls of Jerusalem.

Notes

1 The geographic name "Palestine" is most often used by modern, English-language scholarship to designate the Jewish homeland during the Second Temple period and later. It was first used to refer to the land between the Mediterranean and the narrow strip along the eastern shore of the Jordan River by the Greek historian Herodotus. In the second century CE, "Palestine" became the Roman name for the province. Other terms, such as "Israel," "Judah," or "Judea" are less precise or otherwise confusing from the perspective of both ancient and modern geography. With the changing use of "Palestine" in modern geopolitics, scholars may yet again have to adjust their terminology. However, for our purposes the term will suffice.

2 Alexander the Great and his successors were from the region of Macedonia to the north of Greece. Although they followed Greek customs and traditions for the most part, the more traditional Greeks, like the Athenians and Spartans, probably did not consider the Macedonians to be the proper heirs of the Greek heritage. For our purposes though, it will suffice to consider the Hellenistic monarchs "Greek."

3 These ten tribes are sometimes referred to as the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel." A very small community of Samaritans still lives at the base of their sacred mountain, Mount Gerizim, just outside the modern city of Nablus.

4 Alternatively, the term "Pharisee" may be related to the Hebrew word for "separator," suggesting that the Pharisees deliberately separated themselves from those who followed the commandments in a less precise manner.

5 Hebrew had ceased to be a spoken language by the beginning of the Second Temple period. Most Jews in antiquity did not read or speak Hebrew, but rather used Aramaic, a Semitic language related to, but very different from, Hebrew. Hebrew became a language used primarily in liturgical settings, as it was right up until its rebirth in the nineteenth century and later adoption by the State of Israel.

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8

Jews in Egypt
The Special Case of the Septuagint

Peg Kershenbaum

After their ancestors' miraculous escape from Egypt (Mitzrayim), ending four centuries of slavery, what led the descendants of the Children of Israel back to Mitzrayim? How did they fare in the land of the later Pharaohs and what was their fate after Alexander the Great?

There were three main centers of "Jewish"[1] settlement in Egypt: Elephantine,[2] a fortress town at the first cataract of the Nile (present-day Aswan); Leontopolis (not far from Alexandria, Memphis and Heliopolis where the Nile fans into its delta); and Alexandria (the major port city on the Mediterranean founded by Alexander the Great near one of the mouths of the Nile). While it is the Alexandrian Jewish community that will be the main focus of this chapter, it is useful to examine the stories of the other communities to give a bit more context for the examination of what was, in its day, the most important Jewish Greek community outside of Jerusalem.

Alexandria was not the first location in Egypt where Jews had settled. About 528 miles to the south of Alexandria there had been a flourishing Jewish community on the island of Elephantine in the Nile for several centuries before the advent of Alexander. How long before is a matter of debate.

Jewish Military and Religious Presence in Elephantine

A case is made for the establishment of a Jewish presence on the island in the seventh century BCE when, during the reign of King Manasseh of Judah, Jews were either taken to garrison the island by Ashurbanipal as he reclaimed the area from the Nubians, Cushites, or Ethiopians[3] in 667 BCE,[4] or by Psammetichus I in 663 as the king sought to

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solidify his position after the defection of the original (overworked) garrison. In his lively discussion of the origin of the colony at Elephantine, Egyptologist Emil Kraeling suggests that in return for manpower sent to Egypt by King Manasseh of Judah, this king received horsepower![5] The men-for-horses arrangement may have prompted the ban against such dealings found in Deuteronomy 17:16.[6]

It is also possible that mercenaries joined up in stages, some being sent during the Assyrian military campaigns, some during the consolidation, and some even years later. King Psammetichus I was in the neighborhood of Judah for almost three decades as he laid the longest siege on record against Ashdod.[7] Kraeling suggests that men of Judah would have gotten familiar with the troops and decided to make their fortunes along with others of their countrymen who had gone on before them.[8] But, although Kraeling adduces the testimony of the Letter of Aristeas,[9] a document which will be discussed in more detail below, he is not entirely convinced that it was under Psammetichus I that the colony was founded. The narrator of the *Letter* mentions the presence of many other Jews in Egypt who had "been sent to Egypt to help Psammetichus in his campaign against the king of the Ethiopians."[10] Kraeling infers that this must have been during the reign of Psammetichus II in about 589 because there was no trouble with the Ethiopians under the first pharaoh of that name.[11]

With the initiation of the Josianic reforms in 622, undertaken after the discovery of the scroll identified with the core of the book of Deuteronomy,[12] the availability of willing Jewish troops may have increased. In addition, those people of Judah unwilling to abide by the Deuteronomic laws might have emigrated at that time in order to continue their form of worship. There would have been many of the priestly class no longer able to serve throughout the kingdom once all worship was centralized in Jerusalem.

Indeed, one of the most surprising features of the Jewish settlement in Elephantine was its Temple to "The Lord of Hosts Who Dwells in Yeb." This was a fully functioning institution complete with priesthood, sacrifices, and a system of mandatory tithing. The construction of the Elephantine temple may have predated the Josianic reforms which would have condemned it out of hand as a "high place" in competition with the Temple in Jerusalem. Or, it might have been built in the late seventh/early sixth centuries, during the reign of King Jehoiakim, King Josiah's son and successor (2 Kings 23:34). Kraeling deduces that at least the later worship conducted there reflected a pre-Deuteronomic attitude.[13]

It is possible that the Jews in Elephantine were granted permission to build a Temple because of their exemplary military services. Had they merely served as overseers of the tariffs, or as traders, or quarriers of stone, it is unlikely that they would have been allowed to establish their house of worship (the only one on the island dedicated to a non-Egyptian deity) in close proximity to that of Khnum, the major Egyptian deity of the island.

The Elephantine Temple continued to function after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 586 and even after the building of the second Temple in

about 515. As historian Joseph Modrzejewski points out, during that time, it was "the only place in the world where Jewish sacrificial worship was practiced. In a manner of speaking, Elephantine had temporarily replaced Jerusalem."[14]

While Modrzejewski holds that the Elephantine Temple stood even before the Josianic Reforms, Kraeling disagrees. Although he does not offer a firm date for the erecting of the building, he is troubled by the incident of Jeremiah and those Jewish worshippers of the Queen of Heaven who, among others, were responsible for forcing his reluctant feet into Egyptian exile (Jeremiah 42–44).

By the time that the second wave of captives were taken from Judah and Jerusalem, according to evidence in the book of Jeremiah (44:1), Jews had fled to Migdol, Tahpanhes, Noph, and Pathros.[15] After the death of Gedaliah (586), when most Jews were sent into exile in Babylonia, some, dragging the prophet Jeremiah with them, fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:6).[16] It would have made sense for a Temple to have been built at that time to make up for the loss of the sanctuary in Jerusalem. However, as Kraeling points out, Jeremiah's prophecy that "no one of Judah living in Egypt would henceforth swear by the name of the Lord God (Jeremiah 44:26)," would have seemed ridiculous if there were a well-established Temple flourishing down the Nile.[17]

Part of the problem that Kraeling has with the dating for the construction of the Temple has to do with his rather late date for the creation of the Jewish presence on Elephantine. He argues for a date coinciding with the rise to power of a new pharaoh, Apries, at about the time of the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (589/8).[18] Apries, having goaded the malcontents in Jerusalem to rebel, failed to provide promised support. Defectors nevertheless streamed to Egypt as the end drew near for Judah.

Whenever the military colony and Temple had been founded, there was an established community in Upper Egypt that attracted some Jews even during the Persian period, although Cyrus the Great (559–530) declared that Jews might return to their homeland (Ezra 1:1ff.). A huge find of Aramaic papyri from Elephantine offers insight into that Jewish community. We learn in one of the later letters that the Temple was revered by Cambyses who, as he conquered Egypt, sacked many shrines but left the Temple of the Lord untouched.[19] That the rites should continue according to Jewish law was important enough to Darius II that in 419 he sent an order via his satrap at Elephantine reminding the colony to celebrate Pesach.[20]

However, slightly later in the fifth century, there was a sudden surge of Egyptian "nationalism" as the native population sought to throw off the yoke of Persian rule. In the midst of the turmoil, the Egyptian community nearest the Jewish enclave at Elephantine lashed out at Jewish practice and, in 410, sacked the Temple. Ostensibly, the animal sacrifice practiced there was abhorrent to the Egyptians whose Temple to Khnum, a divinity represented by a ram, was in the same environs as the Jewish Temple. The Jews protested to the local satrap and, while he did not give permission to rebuild the Temple, he was able to quell the rebellion. In a politically savvy move, the Jewish community at Elephantine then sent a petition

to the satrap of Judah and to the civic governor of Samaria, appealing to them to grant permission for this most ancient institution to be rebuilt. The appeal worked. However, either as a matter of respect for the Jerusalem priesthood or out of concern lest there be a resurgence of violence instigated by the worshipers of Khnum, the authorities did not grant permission for the resumption of the sacrifice of animals. In about 406 the Temple at Elephantine was reconsecrated. However, the Egyptian rebellion reignited shortly after this and, slightly after 401, the entire Jewish population of Elephantine was destroyed.[21]

Jewish Hellenistic Experience in Alexandria

After the destruction of the colony at Elephantine, Jews did not have a good reason to remain in upper Egypt. However, the advantages of life in Alexandria under Ptolemy I (called Lagi or Soter; 323–282) attracted Jewish settlers. Although the settlement at Elephantine was older, the Alexandrian community was more cosmopolitan. Located near the seat of government, and near the remarkable Library,[22] the Jewish citizens of Alexandria were familiar with the culture and shared the pride of the sophisticated majority. There is a tradition attributed to Aristobolus (second century BCE) and preserved in Clement of Alexandria and Eusebius (later Christian sources), that Alexandrian Jews believed that a very old Greek translation of parts of the Torah had existed and had exerted influence on the philosophical thought of Plato (428/7–348/7).[23] It is possible that this sense of pride colored the legends surrounding the composition of the Septuagint.

The Alexandrian Jewish community had enjoyed civic rights and even full citizenship from the start of their residency in the days of Alexander himself.[24] Jews were held in high esteem for having served loyally as mercenaries in Alexander's armies and they continued to be an important part of the city after his death. According to the philosopher Philo (20 BCE–50 CE), two of the five districts of the city were known as Jewish districts because of the high concentration of Jews.[25] While loyal to Jerusalem, the Jews of Alexandria were loyal to the government of the Ptolemies as well and were permitted to live under the direct rule of their own ethnarch. Even though Ptolemy I attacked Judea and carried off Jewish and Samaritan captives from Jerusalem and its environs, he settled them and granted them civic rights in Alexandria.[26] Such was the treatment of Jews under the Ptolemies that many more came to settle throughout the period of their control of the area (323 to 30).

According to a tradition stemming from Hecataeus (fourth century) and repeated in Josephus' apologetic *Against Apion* (I, 183–189), after the Ptolemaic victory in the third war among the successors of Alexander the Great (312), there arrived in Alexandria "a Jewish high priest" accompanied by a number of followers and, more significantly, carrying a Torah scroll.[27] The priest, Ezekias, read from the

scroll, like Ezra at the Watergate (Nehemiah 8:1ff.) or like Josiah upon the discovery of the book of Deuteronomy (2 Chronicles 34:29ff.). But the people of Alexandria, even if moved, did not thoroughly understand the Hebrew even then. This incident suggests two independent motives for the creation of the Greek translation of the Torah. First, the ruler of the region, having been involved in a decades-long struggle for control of the area, would have seen the advantage of obtaining a translation of the law code governing the people who made up a large and somewhat *sui generis* segment of his population. Second, a Greek translation would make the principles of the Book of the Law more widely accessible to the Jews of the area.

It appears that under Ptolemy II (285–246), a Greek translation of an *Egyptian* legal compendium was undertaken for a similar purpose. Modrzejewski suggests that there was a like interest in and need for a translation of the law of the Jews.[28] (There is even a hint of this need in the *Letter*. In that text, Demetrius of Phalerum, in his capacity as Chief Librarian, but evidently drawing on his expertise as former Athenian statesman and legal reformer, points out to Ptolemy that the Jewish law code would have to be translated into Greek to be understandable.) Although it was often the practice of the heirs of Alexander to encourage officials to subsume local laws under a growing Greek "common law," Modrzejewski suggests that "the Ptolemies did not strive to unify the legal rules throughout the kingdom."[29] Ptolemy II was himself the originator of a method of administering justice throughout his realm that depended on royal judges assigned to each nome (administrative division) as the permanent authority in legal matters for the nationality of their populace. This respect for ancestral law had been afforded to Jews under rulers as different as Artaxerxes, Alexander, and Antiochus III. But there needed to be texts available in the native language of the governed and the official Greek of the empire to assure that a litigant might expect the application of rule of law in his case.

The Septuagint

Thus, we proceed to the discussion of what was perhaps the most significant translation project undertaken in the ancient world: the production of the Septuagint. The Septuagint, strictly speaking, is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Pentateuch produced in the time of Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt (285–247). In common parlance, however, Septuagint refers to the Greek translation of the entire corpus of the Hebrew Bible plus several extra-biblical books. The translation of the complete Hebrew Bible took place over time, progressing as the books entered the canon or as scrolls from Palestine arrived in Egypt.[30] By 132, according to the testimony of the author of the prologue to Sirach, an extra-canonical book, there were Greek translations of the Law, the Prophets, and "the rest of the books."[31] However,

not all the books of the Hebrew Bible seem to have been translated even by the first century CE. While the authors of the Gospels and other books of the Christian Bible generally cite the Greek version of *Tanakh*, they omit reference to several books.[32]

There are three primary Greek sources that describe the creation of this, the earliest known Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, produced after the conquests of Alexander the Great: the Letter of Aristeas (purportedly second half of the third century BCE but "presumably written in the middle or near the end of the second century"[33]), a reference in Aristobolus, and some citations in Philo.

By far the most important source concerning the origin of the Greek translation of the Hebrew Pentateuch is the Letter of Aristeas. The *Letter* has been considered of spurious authenticity and even a literary forgery for over four and a half centuries. The Spanish scholar Ludovicus de Vives (1522) first cast doubt on its genuineness.[34] It was the English monk Humphry Hody (1684) who was able to show convincingly that the letter was not by a contemporary of Philadelphus. However, there are some elements in the work that can add to our understanding of the translation and its significance to the Alexandrian community.

The *Letter* is purportedly written by a philo-Jewish Alexandrian official at the court of Ptolemy II to the author's brother, Philocrates, in which he describes his role in the arrangements made for a delegation of Jewish notables from Jerusalem to visit Alexandria in order to create and present a Greek translation of the Torah to Ptolemy's famous Library and to the people of the Alexandrian Jewish community.

The *Letter* is a wonderful example of Alexandrian Greek literary style.[35] Indeed, the use of first-person narrative is a standard technique of Greek historiography and, embraced by Alexandrian authors, is used to convey not the historicity of the material but its truth value.[36] The *Letter*, as Orlinsky shows, was meant to gain for the Septuagint "the same sanctity and authority long held by the Hebrew original; in a word, to certify the divine origin of the Septuagint, to declare it canonical."[37] Although there are anachronisms, these should not be read as carelessly included by a misinformed fraud, but rather as a trademark of Alexandrian literature, used to mark a work as fiction to the knowledgeable elite while not detracting from the edification and enjoyment of the hoi polloi, the common people.

Two conspicuous anachronisms are (i) the inclusion of Demetrius as the influential librarian at the time of Ptolemy II and (ii) the prominence afforded the 72-man delegation as representatives of the 12 tribes, six from each tribe. Demetrius had been the Chief Librarian at Alexandria during the reign of the *first* Ptolemy, but had fallen from favor and been retired – if not murdered – by Ptolemy II. It is likely that Demetrius' well-known name would have afforded a flavor of authenticity to the story. The more significant anachronism was the suggestion that the high priest Eleazar chose six sages from each of the 12 tribes for the delegation. As Orlinsky points out, the tribes no longer existed as such at that time.[38] The *Letter* uses both the contemporary authority of the high priesthood and the ancient

authority of the tribes and their elders to confer legitimacy on the Greek translation of the Torah.

An added measure of acceptability comes from the name of the work: "The Translation of the Seventy Men/Elders."[39] For years scholars and commentators ignored or misunderstood the significance of this title, considering it some sort of rounding out of the number of translators from 72 down to seventy. But, as Orlinsky notes, 72 is never otherwise thus treated.[40] Both 72 and seventy are significant numbers. Of this, the author of the *Letter* was aware. There were seventy elders who, in Exodus 24:1, were to accompany Moses and Aaron, Nadav, and Abihu when Moses was to receive the tablets of the Law. There were seventy other elders who, in Numbers 11:16–17, were chosen to receive some of Moses' prophetic powers and to help him minister to the people (a different system from the one proposed by Yitro in Exodus 18:21–26).[41] Thus the number seventy had a special association for Jews. Calling the Greek translation of the Torah "The Translation of the Seventy Elders" improved its pedigree.

Orlinsky indicates several other ways in which the author of the *Letter* builds a case for the sanctity of the translation. The author uses language reminiscent of that in Exodus 24:3 and Nehemiah 8:1–6 to describe the acclamation accompanying the acceptance of the Law as official and binding. He has the Alexandrian Jewish community reflect the sentiment of Deuteronomy 4:1–2 that the sacred words are not to be added to or taken away from.[42] Thus, that community resembles the original people at Sinai, and the 72 elders carry with them a gift of inspiration akin to that infused into the seventy at Sinai. In this instance, however, the elders are more important. They stand in the place once held by Moses in relationship with God insofar as they, as translators, were the ones who brought the words to the people.[43] Numerically and by careful designation, they represent all the tribes, all the people of Israel. In esteem, they are the equivalent of those chosen to share Moses' spirit. Their symbolic power is enormous. In an age when prophecy had been declared to be at an end, in a city far from Jerusalem,[44] the words of the Torah took on new life.

Most scholars accept Hody's appraisal that the author of the *Letter* was not a contemporary of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. Indeed, it seems most likely that the author of the *Letter* (who, it is widely agreed, was a Jew and not an Egyptian courtier as his literary persona suggests) was roughly contemporary with Aristobolus, a prominent Alexandrian Jewish scholar,[45] who wrote about a century after the alleged date of the *Letter*.

Aristobolus' work, a commentary on the Pentateuch, was the first real evidence of the intellectual impact of Greek philosophy on Alexandrian Jewry. According to the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Aristobolus interpreted the Pentateuch "in an allegorical fashion . . . to show that Homer and Hesiod, the Orphic writings, Pythagoras, Plato and Aristotle had borrowed freely from a supposed early translation of the OT into Greek."[46] If there was a translation available, as

Modrzejewski suggests,[47] themes and ideas could certainly have been shared. But according to Victor Tcherikover,[48] there was a lack of interest in Judeo-Alexandrian writings on the part of Greek and pagan intellectuals. The author of the *Letter* and Aristobolus may have been writing to their own community to enhance the prestige of their own, now somewhat Hellenized, heritage.

Although the works of Aristobolus are only extant in fragments, pertinent citations are preserved in the work of the Church Father Eusebius of Caesarea, *Praeparatio Evangelica*.[49] Aristobolus is known to have explained some of the anthropomorphisms in the Pentateuch metaphorically in order to decrease the distance between the Jewish material and Greek philosophy.[50] The best preserved explanation is found in the following letter by Aristobolus to Ptolemy VI Philometor (182–146), who had been questioning him (emphasis added):

> WHEN, however, we had said enough in answer to the questions put before us, you also, O king, did further demand, *why by our law there are intimations given of hands, and arm, and face, and feet, and walking, in the case of the Divine Power:* which things shall receive a becoming explanation, and will not at all contradict the opinions which we have previously expressed.
>
> But I would entreat you to *take the interpretations in a natural way, and to hold fast the fitting conception of God*, and *not to fall off into the idea of a fabulous anthropomorphic constitution*.
>
> For our lawgiver Moses, when he wishes to *express his meaning in various ways,* announces certain arrangements of nature and preparations for mighty deeds, by *adopting phrases applicable to other things*, I mean to things outward and visible . . .
>
> First then the word "*hands*" evidently has, even in our own case, a more *general meaning*. For when you as a king send out forces, wishing to accomplish some purpose, we say, The king has a mighty hand, and the hearers' thoughts are carried to the power which you possess.
>
> Now this is what Moses also signifies in our Law, when he speaks thus: "God brought thee forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand"; and again: "I will put forth My hand," saith God, "and will smite the Egyptians."

Whether or not he wrote primarily for Jews,[51] Aristobolus either referred to the Letter of Aristeas in a letter of his own to Ptolemy VI Philometor, a descendant of Aristeas' Ptolemy Philadelphus, or he knew the story independently. The following is preserved in Eusebius:[52]

> For others before Demetrius Phalereus, and prior to the supremacy of Alexander and the Persians, have translated both the narrative of the exodus of the Hebrews our fellow countrymen from Egypt, and the fame of all that had happened to them, and the conquest of the land, and the exposition of the whole Law; so that it is manifest that many things have been borrowed by the aforesaid philosopher, for he is very learned: as also Pythagoras transferred many of our precepts and inserted them in his own system of doctrines.

> But the entire translation of all the contents of our law was made in the time of the king surnamed Philadelphus, thy ancestor, who brought greater zeal to the work, which was managed by Demetrius Phalereus.

Such a reference would have made sense only if Ptolemy was aware of the Septuagint and its royal sponsorship or of the legend surrounding the work.

Ptolemy Philometor (180–146) could have been aware of the law code of the Jews, referred to by Aristobolus. Living in close proximity to the multiple Jewish sections of Alexandria, he would have noticed the esteem in which the text was held by the citizenry. Evidence of the public nature of the Jews' attitude toward the text comes from our third principal source, Philo of Alexandria.

Philo, who quotes extensively from many of the books of the Greek Bible, brings information of a yearly celebration of the completion of the Septuagint translation. Although the *Letter* mentions that, when the work was read to them, the people acclaimed both the translators and the translation,[53] there is no mention of any festivities to mark the occasion. But Philo describes a festival attended by Jews and all other people of the community, held yearly even in his day, on the island of Pharos, connected to the city by a magnificent causeway, the Heptastadion. Thus, Philo's report is independent evidence of the importance of the Septuagint in the life of the Alexandrian Jewish community.[54]

Philo also contributes a detail about the 72 scholars that differs slightly from the *Letter* but bears out what may be seen in the Talmudic account of Megillah 9a:[55] the scholars are sequestered apart from one another and produce identical results.[56]

It is this combination of documented fact and impossible fantasy that has been misunderstood by centuries of scholars, even as early as St Jerome (342–419 CE). What they failed to understand was that these earlier Alexandrian authors were using literary conventions to establish the primacy of the Septuagint translation. According to Alexandrian Greek literary authority Sylvie Honigman,

> the narrative paradigms in which the author cast his account are crucial in conveying meaning to the story told in [the] B[ook of] Ar[isteas]. Such a resort to a literary pattern rather than to explicit exposition in order to convey meaning is somewhat reminiscent of the characteristics of traditional myth telling. The use of this methodology by the author of B. Ar. strongly suggests that in informing his account with narrative paradigms, his purpose in writing B. Ar. was more than the immortalization of a past event by relating its story. The intent was to *transfigure* it.[57]

The conclusion that one must draw is that the Septuagint was not considered sacred at the actual time of its creation or it would not have needed the very strong push from the later *Letter* or from Aristobolus. It is not unusual for a contemporary work to be held in lower esteem than something of more remote vintage. It is likely that the translation became more and more familiar to the Jews of Alexandria over

time,[58] and that it thus gradually picked up the luster that is the reward of long acquaintance.

Contemporary Political Situation in Judea

There was a good motivation for the activity of both Aristobolus and Aristeas during the reign of Ptolemy Philometor. Their activity may have built on the political situation brewing in Judea at the time. Until then, possession of Judea had passed from the Ptolemies to the Seleucids and back again about five times.[59] In 201, Antiochus III had wrested control back into the Seleucid Empire. The conquests of this ruler were so costly that when his son, Antiochus IV, came to the throne, he was forced to undertake wars of conquest against Egypt (among other areas) in order to attempt to gain money to pay enormous debts. In 169 Antiochus IV invaded Egypt, then under Ptolemy VI. While Antiochus was in the field, the political situation in Jerusalem raged out of control. Menelaos, whom he had appointed high priest in return for promised contributions to his war chest, was pinned in the citadel in Jerusalem by a pretender to the position of high priest, Jason, whom Antiochus had considered for the position until he was outbid by his rival. Returning from his incursion into Egypt to settle the situation in Judea, he frightened off Jason and restored Menelaos. In the next season, Antiochus' invasion was peremptorily ended by Rome, which had declared Egypt a protectorate back in 198. Still desperate for money and in disgrace, he returned to Judea where he began to impose laws that would bring about the homogenization of his realm.[60] These laws, because they seriously compromised Jewish practice, led to the well-known Maccabean Revolt.

At about the time when Antiochus appointed first Jason and then Menelaos as puppet high priest, the legitimate high priest, Onias, was assassinated, probably by Menelaos. His son, Onias IV, had been sent to Egypt earlier, probably to keep safe the heir to the priesthood of the Temple in Jerusalem. Between the time of the assassination and the start of Antiochus' desecration of the Temple, Onias IV had grown in stature among his Egyptian hosts.[61] Realizing that the situation in Judea was desperate, Onias petitioned Ptolemy for land in a remote part of Leontopolis on which to build a Diaspora Temple to God Most High. He planned to clear the land that had once housed an Egyptian temple, use the overabundance of trees and animals and provide for the servitors. The ostensible purpose of this request, according to the letter quoted by Josephus, was "that the Jewish inhabitants of Egypt may be able to come together there in mutual harmony and serve your [i.e., Ptolemy and Cleopatra's] interests."[62] Given the past tensions between Jews from Judea and the Ptolemies and given the recent wars and economic devastation caused by the Seleucids, "mutual harmony" might have meant a shift of loyalties toward Egypt and away from the idolatrous tyrant Antiochus IV, orchestrated by Onias.

It is interesting to note that, after his initial objection that the location might not show the proper reverence for God, what prompted Ptolemy's agreement was that Onias cited a biblical verse "There shall be an altar in Egypt to the Lord God (Isaiah 19:19)" to validate his request. That the king acquiesced for this reason is not as surprising as Modrzejewski makes out. If Ptolemy was familiar with Jewish law through the medium of the Septuagint, which had been in use for about a century by that time, its authority would have carried weight.[63]

The timing of this request is so close to that of the works of Aristobolus and the Letter of Aristeas that, with just a little imagination, we may posit an effort being undertaken to raise the legitimacy of the Greek translation in the eyes of the Jews and the Egyptians. If there was to be a Temple again on Egyptian soil, there ought to be *sacred* scripture, too. While the Letter of Aristeas sought to establish the sacredness of the translation, the work of Aristobolus sought to establish its rationality, its similarity or recognizable "Greekness." Thus, indeed, there might be "mutual harmony" among worshipers in Ptolemy's land.

Talmudic Attitudes toward the Septuagint

The Talmud, on the other hand, expresses what can only be termed ambivalence about the Septuagint. The passage from Megillah 9a mentioned above is closest to neutral. It shows familiarity with a version of the legend of the quasi-miraculous translation (or possibly with the *Letter* itself). But two other sources are not neutral. The notice in Megillat Ta'anit, an ancient pre-Mishnaic scroll of the holidays, declares a fast,[64] because: "on the eighth of Tevet, during the rule of King Ptolemy, the Torah was written in Greek, and darkness fell on the world for three days."

The post-Talmudic tractate Masekhet Soferim 1:7–8 presents a similar opinion but gives an explanation. It also repeats the material from Megillah 9a and from Masekhet Sefer Torah (emphasis added):

> Once there were *five* elders who wrote the Torah in Greek for King Ptolemy, and that day was as hard for Israel as the day the golden calf was made, for the Torah could in no way be translated adequately. According to another story, King Ptolemy gathered together seventy-two elders and placed them into seventy-two houses, without revealing to them why he had summoned them. Then he went to each and every one of them and told them to write for him the Torah of Moses your Teacher; the Omnipresent put wisdom into the heart of each one of them, so that they became all of one mind and wrote him the Torah itself, making thirteen changes.[65]

Masekhet Soferim was edited rather late; according to Strack and Stemberger, it cannot be dated earlier than the mid-eighth century CE.[66] However, they point out that parts of the material may be from earlier traditions.[67] The reading "five elders,"

as Orlinsky points out, "derives from nothing more than a scribal corruption." Both the Hebrew definite article ("the") and the letter used to represent the number five use the same Hebrew letter. One scribe read "the elders," another read "five elders."[68] The reference to the 72 scholars placed in 72 houses clearly reflects material in Megillah 9a.

There is, however, a strong philhellenic tradition to be found farther along in Megillah 9b:

> R. Simeon ben Gamaliel says, "In addition, regarding [the other] books [of Tanakh], they allow that they be translated only into Greek." Rabbi Abahu said that Rabbi Yochanan said, "The halachah is like R. Simeon b. Gamaliel." And Rabbi Yochanan said, "What is R. Simeon b. Gamaliel's reason? The Bible said 'May God broaden Yaphat that he might dwell in the tents of Shem.' May Yaphet's words be in the tents of Shem." Why not say, rather 'Gomer['s words] and Magog['s tents]'? Rabbi Chiyya bar Abba: "This is the reason: because it is written 'May God broaden Yaphet' – may Yaphet's beauty (*y'phiuto*) be in the tents of Shem."

Simeon b. Gamaliel, father of Yehudah haNasi, compiler of the Mishnah, was, according to Alfred Kolatch,[69] learned in Greek philosophy. He passed the training to some of his children. This characteristic was shared by Abahu,[70] whose relationship with the authorities was such that he was able to effect the annulling of some harsh anti-Jewish legislation. They saw the use of Greek to translate "Tanakh" as in keeping with the biblical verse from Genesis 9:27 that hinted at the peaceable relationship that might grow between the progenitors of the Greek and Jewish peoples.[71] But these sages may have been reacting to the translation of sacred texts by Jewish scholars such as Aquila, student of Rabbi Akiva. After all, Simeon b. Gamaliel was a second-century Palestinian Tanna who survived persecution by going into hiding during the times of terror that cost Akiva his life. His approval for the Greek translation, marked by its being linked to a proof text, may have served the same purpose for Aquila's work as the *Letter* served for the translation of the Torah.

Putting the Puzzle Together

I suggest that there was a political motive prompting the author of the *Letter* to seek to transfigure the Greek translation into something more than an aid to understanding. This same motive may have been at work in the mind of Aristobolus, prompting him to allude to what was familiar as a legal text in terms suggesting it as sacred literature and as a literature replete with links to Greek philosophy, making Egyptian Jews more understandable and thus more sympathetic to the rulers. There seems to be an implied criticism of the actions of the Seleucid oppressor

Antiochus IV in the high praise bestowed on Ptolemy Philadelphus for liberating "no less than 100,000 [Jewish slaves]."[72] It would seem that the elevation of the importance and legitimacy of the Septuagint has a connection with the building of the Temple in Leontopolis by Onias IV, priest-in-exile from Jerusalem. Taken together, these suggestions seem to point to the Alexandrian Diaspora's stance as loyal supporters of their Ptolemaic rulers and proud Hellenistic Jews.

The End of Jewish Alexandria

We turn now to the end of the splendid community of Diaspora Jews in Alexandria and to the fate of the Septuagint. The holy Jewish-Greek scrolls were just about the only things saved from the terrible slaughter of the Alexandrian community. They were smuggled out of the conflagration by early Christians who were able to escape the murderous frenzy attendant upon the revolt of 115–117 CE.

That revolt had been brewing at least since the decree of Augustus Caesar in 30 BCE which revoked the privileged status of Jews in Egypt that had been granted by Alexander the Great and all rulers subsequent to him. The Jews outside of Alexandria found themselves subject to a head tax, which had been created to draw a distinction between true Greek citizens and mere Egyptians. Jews, accustomed to identifying themselves as Hellenes and disassociating themselves from the Egyptian natives, suffered a painful loss of personal status and sense of security.[73] The resentment constantly clawing at the Egyptians and the Greek citizens vis-à-vis Jews began to manifest itself. According to Josephus, "the numerous punishments inflicted daily on the rioters of both parties by the authorities only served to embitter the quarrel."[74]

With hostilities building under each successive emperor and governor, it was a relatively light thing for Flaccus, the Roman governor in the late 30s CE to set the Greek and Egyptian citizenry of Alexandria against the Jews in the city. When the latter refused to place statues of Caligula in their synagogues, Flaccus, trying to show himself valuable to the mad ruler, proclaimed them "foreigners" at the mercy of all. The mob rose to the occasion, as Philo describes in his bitter invective *Against Flaccus*.[75]

After the fall of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE and the defeat of the fighters on Masada in 73, it is believed that some insurgents escaped to Egypt where they began to stir up a passion for revenge. To quell the rebellion before it could ignite, Vespasian ordered the Egyptian prefect, Tiberius Julius Lupus, to tear down the Temple of Onias in Leontopolis. Although recognizing that this Temple was a reminder of days of glory and independence for the Jews, Lupus at first merely shut the Temple's doors lest it become a rallying point for further unrest.[76] Within a year, his replacement closed the site permanently.

Anger, shame, and frustration were not so easily banished. Great resentment was resident among the Jews of Egypt not only because of the loss of two Temples

but because of the loss of status and security mentioned above. Thus, the uprising that began in 115 CE among Jews in Cyrenaica on the eastern coast of Libya spread with great rapidity to Egypt and Cyprus. Some say the desperate Jews of Cyrene planned to interfere with the Roman corn supply grown and exported from Egypt. Others suggest that the revolt was due to messianic or apocalyptic fervor spread by Zealots fleeing from Judea. But others see the hostilities as a continuation of the deteriorating relations among Jews, Greeks, and Egyptians. The Emperor Trajan, suspecting that Mesopotamian Jews would rise, too, directed that they be "cleaned out of the province."[77] Jews faced not only heavily armed Roman soldiers, but infuriated mobs of Greeks and Egyptians and their slaves, hungry for plunder and out for blood. When the dust and ashes settled, when the tens of thousands had fallen after two full years of war, there were no Jews left in Alexandria.

The Fatal or Fateful Rescue of the Septuagint

The Alexandrian Christians fled, taking the Septuagint with them, and did not return until several decades had passed. But the Jewish seed had been planted deep and an offshoot emerged, clinging to the Septuagint as the ancient stock had clung to the Torah. By that time, Christianity had taken hold in most of the Mediterranean, in the East and in parts of Europe and Africa. Copy upon copy of the sacred text had to be made and changes began to creep in. At the same time, despite upheavals in Judea that left Jerusalem in ruins, a new Greek translation was made by Aquila from the now fixed Hebrew text possibly using exegetical translation methods approved by Rabbi Akiva.[78] Just a few years later, between 170 and 200 CE, another Jewish translation was undertaken. This one, by Symmachus for the Caesarean community, is described as combining "the best Biblical Greek style, remarkable clarity, a high degree of accuracy regarding the Hebrew, and the rabbinic exegesis of his day: it might be described as a Greek Targum, or Tannaitic Septuagint."[79] Slightly later than these was the translation of Theodotion who is believed to have been a convert to Judaism from Ephesus, a city in Anatolia. He, too, probably based his work on a Hebrew exemplar, bringing the existing Greek translation into line with the new fixed text. The Three, as these scholars were known, produced translations that differed in substance and in method from the text of the Septuagint.

Revisions and copies proliferated very rapidly. Some time in the third century CE, Origen set out to categorize and display the differences to be found among the main translations of the times. His *Hexapla* was a six-columned comparison of the text of the Hebrew Bible as it existed in his day (a version that differed from the one that would have been used for the original Septuagint Pentateuch), those of the Three, and that of the Septuagint. Scholars do not agree as to whether that column contained

the standard Septuagint text as it existed in Origen's day or whether he used that column to correct the Septuagint in order to bring it into line with the "new" Hebrew text. The remaining column contained a transliterated Hebrew text which may have been a pronunciation guide for those not fluent in Hebrew. Had that work been widely available, perhaps the devastating disputations that took place over the centuries would have been forestalled. For, in some cases, a glance would have shown that the argument rested on a reading present in one version but not in another. However, the work, when it was finished, stretched some 6000 pages bound into about 15 volumes. It was probably never copied in full. It was consulted, however, as references to its contents exist in the works of other scholars.

Jobes and Silva point out the complexity of tracing the history of the Greek Bible. What emerges from their clearly written book is that we do not have the text of the Septuagint that was hailed by the Alexandrians so long ago and we do not have the Hebrew *Vorlage* of that translation. We have a composite text that has gone through many recensions and accidental changes. Those whose research includes searching for manifestations of the translators' ideological or cultural outlook have an excruciatingly difficult task. The conclusion that the authors reach is:

> Although it may seem natural to expect the LXX to reflect theological perspectives, one must always remember that the people who produced the Greek texts were translators. They had the well-defined task of producing a translation of an existing text, the Hebrew Scripture, not of writing a treatise on the eschatology of their day.
>
> While each translator probably did have a certain messianic concept and view of the afterlife – views undoubtedly shaped by the times in which they lived – it is not obvious that, given the nature of their task, the text they produced would strongly reflect those views. In contrast, books that were composed during the same period might be expected to reflect more directly the perspectives of their authors, who were not constrained by an existing text. Commentaries and midrashim on the Greek Scriptures produced in the Hellenistic period would provide a better window into the development of theological ideas during that time. Unfortunately, such material is rare.[80]

Readers of the Masoretic (traditional, fixed, canonized) Text of Hebrew Scriptures might be surprised at the state of what is now called the Septuagint. Variant readings vie for legitimacy; passages with no partner in the Hebrew Scriptures appear; word choice reveals that the Greek translators had different Hebrew texts before them than either we or even Jerome had when he sat down to render the Hebrew into Latin. But there are times when the Septuagint sheds a bright light by which we may understand a difficult Hebrew word or idea. As such times, we do not lament but rejoice that

> on the eighth of Tevet, during the rule of King Ptolemy, the Torah was written in Greek.

Notes

1 Although the terms "Jews" and "Jewish" are anachronistic, they will be used throughout this article to replace the unwieldy "people of Judea" or "former inhabitants of the Southern Kingdom."
2 It is called in papyrological documents "Yeb" which is said to mean "elephant." The name may have to do with the location of the center of trade of these animals with Nubia.
3 Not to be confused with the modern country. These three names were roughly synonymous in biblical usage.
4 All dates are BCE – Before the Common Era – unless specified as CE – Common Era.
5 Emil G. Kraeling, ed., *The Brooklyn Museum Aramaic Papyri. New Documents of the Fifth Century B.C. from the Jewish Colony at Elephantine*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1953, repr. Arno Press, 1969, pp. 43–44. Henceforth, Kraeling.
6 That is, if one accepts the theory that Deuteronomy was written shortly before its discovery in Josianic times. If one follows a more traditional approach, the wicked king Manasseh was deliberately breaking the Deuteronomic law stated in this verse.
7 According to Herodotus, *The Histories*, 2:157, as cited in Kraeling, p. 44 n.19.
8 Kraeling, p. 44.
9 The complete Greek text is reprinted in Henry Barclay Swete, *Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900, rev. edn 1902. Henceforth, Swete. The English translation is that of R. H. Charles, *The Letter of Aristeas*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913. Henceforth, references will be to the *Letter*.
10 *Letter*, section 13.
11 Kraeling, p. 45
12 According to the description in 2 Kings. The account in 2 Chronicles suggests a three-phase approach.
13 Kraeling, pp. 83ff.
14 Joseph Modrzejewski, *The Jews of Egypt from Rameses II to Emperor Hadrian*, trans. Robert Cornman, Philadelphia and Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society, 1995, p. 36. Henceforth, Modrzejewski.
15 Migdol is the northernmost Jewish outpost; Tahpanhes (Daphnai) is the site of the present Suez Canal; Noph (Memphis) is near Cairo; Pathros (Pa-ta-rsy or Land of the South) may refer to an area rather than a city.
16 See http://www.jafi.org.il/JewishAgency/English/Jewish+Education/Compelling+Content/Jewish+History/3760+BCE+79+CE/Suppression+of+Judah+to+Syrus+defeat.htm (accessed November 21, 2011). According to the time line on this website, that Jewish settlement took root between 585 and 582.
17 Kraeling also suggests (p. 46) that, had there been no Temple then, it would have taken quite some time for people to have conceived a desire for such an institution. Such quibbles are unnecessary. Jeremiah's angry words were meant to strike fear in the Elephantine worshippers, those in the Delta area and all those in between! He seems oblivious to the words of Isaiah 19:19 that predicted an altar of the Lord in the land of Egypt.

18 Kraeling, p. 45. This is very close to the reign of Psammetichus II.
19 Cited in Modrzejewski, p. 43.
20 A. Cowley, ed. and trans., *Aramaic Papyri of the Fifth Century B.C.*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923, repr. with new foreword and bibliography by K. C. Hanson, Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005. Cited at http://www.kchanson.com/ANCDOCS/westsem/passover.html (accessed October 25, 2011). Some of the laws, e.g., a prohibition on drinking intoxicants, are unique to this papyrus.
21 Modrzejewski, pp. 39–43. The pattern of civic service, settlement, accommodation or assimilation, flourishing, and sudden destruction prefigures not only the history of the Jews in Alexandria but elsewhere.
22 Established during the reign of Ptolemy I, but expanded by his successor who was said to be anintellectual giant and connoisseur of all fields of knowledge. He was not above forcefully appropriatingmanuscripts from travelers and having them hastily copied for his collection. He is said to have returnedthe copies and kept the originals!
23 See discussion on Aristobolus below.
24 Alexandria was founded in 331. There is a legend describing Alexander's good treatment of the Jews as stemming from a dream he had concerning a man whom he subsequently recognized as the priest of the Temple in Jerusalem. In the dream, the priest had encouraged him concerning his conquest of Asia. (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 11.317–345.) Stylistically, the legend has many earmarks of Alexandrian fantasy. See discussion of Alexandrian literary style below.
25 Charles Duke Yonge, *The Works of Philo Judaeus the Contemporary of Josephus, Translated from the Greek*, London, H. G. Bohn, 1854–1890), at http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/yonge/index.html, cited by http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_the_Jews_in_Egypt#Ptolemaic_and_Roman_.28400_BC_to_641_AD.29 (accessed November 21, 2011).
26 It is interesting to note that the Letter of Aristeas mentions the ransoming of Jewish slaves by Ptolemy as one of the author's first orders of business, before he relates how he delivered the royal invitation to sages from Jerusalem to translate Jewish texts. (See *Letter,* sections 12–27.)
27 As Modrzejewski points out, this was "the Law, the Torah of Moses in the form that Ezra had established a century earlier," p. 99.
28 Modrzejewski, p. 99 ff., especially ch. 5, "A Law for the Jews of Egypt."
29 Modrzejewski, p. 107.
30 Swete, p. 24.
31 Sirach (also called Ben Sira), Prolog 1:25, *ta loipa ton biblion* "the rest of the books."
32 Swete, pp. 25–26. He mentions Ezra-Nehemiah, Esther, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and some minor prophets as missing from Greek works cited in the Christian Bible. He reports that Philo's works omit references to Ruth (possibly attached to Judges), Lamentations (possibly attached to Jeremiah), Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, Esther, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Swete is baffled by missing citations from Ezekiel, as he cannot imagine that the work of a major prophet should have been missing.
33 Modrzejewski, p. 121.
34 But it is the sense of scholars today that the harsh language used to describe "Aristeas" and his letter reveals a misunderstanding of Alexandrian literature. See, e.g., Sylvie Honigman, *Septuagint and Homeric Scholarship in Alexandria: A Study in the Narrative of*

the Letter of Aristeas, Oxford: Routledge, 2003, p. 68 and *passim*. Henceforth, Honigman. The *Letter* was never intended as an historical document in the modern sense, but Swete does find some historicity in it.

35 All its Alexandrian elements, from its use of documents to its ekphrasis (poetic expatiation) on the gifts, to its symposium are described by George W. E. Nickelsburg, Stories of biblical and early post-biblical times, in Michael E. Stone, ed., *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984, ch. 2, pp. 33–87.

36 Honigman, p. 68.

37 Harry M. Orlinsky, "The Septuagint and its Hebrew Text," *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 2, *The Hellenistic Age*, eds W.D. Davies and L. Finkelstein, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, ch. 15, p. 540. Henceforth, *Cambridge*.

38 *Cambridge*, p. 540.

39 In Latin: *Interpretatio septuaginta virorum* (or: *seniorum*).

40 *Cambridge*, p. 539.

41 Rashi (1040–1105) author of commentaries on the Talmud and Tanakh (on Numbers 11:26) suggests that Moses would have wanted six from each tribe (much like Aristeas) but understood that there could be only seventy *in toto*. He asked the tribes to draw lots to ascertain which two men were not designated to receive the prophetic powers. Eldad and Medad modestly bowed out.

42 *Letter*, section 310.

43 Here one should also consider the words of Megillah 9a: "*HaKadosh Baruch Hu placed counsel into the heart of each one*."

44 Modrzejewski suggests that the prominence of the elders serves to strengthen the ties between Alexandria and Jerusalem at a time when the Ptolemies had lost their control of the latter, p. 121.

45 Tcherikover suggests that he was "counselor for Jewish affairs," of Ptolemy Philometor (in Modrzejewski, p. 121). Arnaldo Momigliano insists that Aristobolus preceded Aristeas. "Aristobolus was . . . the first to give authority to the tradition that the LXX translation was due to the initiative of Ptolemy Philadelphus and his adviser Demetrius Phalereus. He almost certainly wrote his book, which was dedicated to Ptolemy Philometor, before the publication of the *Letter of Aristeas* and may indeed have inspired it." Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom*, Cambridge: Cambridge Unversity Press, 1975, p. 116. Henceforth, Momigliano. The possibility of the two working in concourse for a greater purpose is also intriguing; see below.

46 M. Cary *et al.*, eds, *sv.* "Aristobolus (2)," *Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1966, p. 91.

47 Modrzejewski, p. 121. To show that Aristobolus' claim is not mere boasting, Modrzejewski adduces Oxyrhynchos papyrus XLI 2944, which contains a Greek version of the Judgment of Solomon similar to that in 1 Kings 3:16–28, dating from "prior to the death of Plato." While it is not a full biblical translation, it would have been available to the Greek authors.

48 As cited in Modrzejewski, p. 67; cf. Momigliano, p. 76.

49 E. H. Gifford, *EusebiiI Pamphili Evangelicae Praeparationis, Libri XV*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1903, vol. 3, part 1, published online by Roger Pearse, http://www.tertullian.org/fathers/eusebius_pe_00_eintro.htm (accessed October 25, 2011). The

Greek text for Aristobolus is *The Online Critical Pseudepigrapha* (http://ocp.tyndale.ca/). In this collection, it is possible to read Aristobolus' preserved citations of some of the Classical authors whose works he believes were influenced by pre-Septuagint Greek translations of Hebrew originals. The wording of the Biblical citations differs slightly from Rahlfs' Septuagint text (Alfred Rahlfs, ed., *Septuaginta id est Vetus Testamentum Graece iuxta LXX Interpretes*, 4th edn, for the American Bible Society, New York, Stuttgart: Privilegierte Württembergische Bibelanstalt, 1950), as is to be expected. All translations of Eusebius below are by Gifford.

50 This fact is quite suggestive. For, if Aristobolus found it necessary to explain anthropomorphisms, it stands to reason that his text, which would have been available for anyone in Alexandria, *did not lack those anthropomorphisms*. The claim of Charles T. Fritsch that the translators of the LXX sought to avoid anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms is thus weakened. See Charles T. Fritsch, *The Anti-Anthropomorphisms of the Greek Pentateuch*, Princeton Oriental Texts, 10, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1943, and the counterclaims of Orlinsky, Soffer, Hurwitz, Zlotowitz, and Kershenbaum: Harry M. Orlinsky, Studies in the Septuagint of the book of Job, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 28, Cincinnati, 1957, pp. 53–74; vol. 29, Cincinnati, 1958, pp. 229–271; vol. 30, Cincinnati, 1959, pp. 153–167. Arthur Soffer, The treatment of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms in the Septuagint of Psalms, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 28, Cincinnati, 1957, pp. 85–107. Harry M. Orlinsky, The treatment of anthropomorphisms and anthropopathisms in the Septuagint of Isaiah, *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 27, Cincinnati, 1956, pp. 193–200 and Marshall S. Hurwitz, The Septuagint of Isaiah 36–39 in relation to that of 1–35, 40–66: [Appendix: Comparison with 2 Kgs 18–20], *Hebrew Union College Annual*, vol. 28, Cincinnati, 1957, pp. 75–83; Bernard M. Zlotowitz, *The Septuagint Translation of the Hebrew Terms in Relation to God in the Book of Jeremiah*, New York: Ktav, 1981; Peg Kershenbaum, The treatment of anthropomorphisms, anthropopathisms and verbs describing God in the Septuagint translation of the book of Judges, unpublished rabbinical thesis, The Academy for Jewish Religion, New York, 2008.

51 Aristobolus' discomfort with the anthropomorphisms of the text is a feeling expressed over the centuries when Jews live in areas pervaded by Greek culture. There is a desire to show that our sacred scriptures partake of that admirable rationalism demonstrated by Greek philosophers and are, therefore, worthy of their attention. There is not much evidence that the Greeks did pay attention. But the insecurity may have given "permission" to other groups to challenge the Hebrew texts with lack of sophistication.

52 Eusebius, *Evangelicae Praeparationis*, 13.12.

53 *Letter*, sections 308–310.

54 It is unfortunate that we do not know when the celebration began. Since neither the *Letter* nor Aristobolus mentions it, it is possible that it began not after the initial translation was completed but after the importance of the translation became clear. Recognition of the importance was fostered by the works of the author of the *Letter* and by Aristobolus.

55 "Talmud" refers to the entirety of the monumental work comprised of layers of early and later grappling with profound issues, folkways, and laws of Jewish life based on material preserved and debated orally by generations of sages dating back, according to Jewish tradition, to Moses on Sinai. The material in the Mishnah, upon which the rest of

the work (called Gemarah) is based, was gathered and compiled in the early third century CE. Thus, to oversimplify a bit, "Talmud" includes "Mishnah" + "Gemarah." The Babylonian Talmud was redacted in the fifth or sixth century, the Jerusalem Talmud in the fourth.

56 Philo's version of the legend is most similar to that preserved in the Church Fathers (second century CE). According to Swete (p. 14) the rather unlikely occurrence of 72 identical translations emerging without communication made St Jerome reject the usefulness of the Septuagint text as being not a translation but a result of prophecy! Honigman (p. 119) suggests that the collaboration pointed out in the *Letter* gives the document the type of authority that would be given a contemporary edition produced by the scholars at the Library of Alexandria. The manner in which the Talmud treats the legend brings to mind the recasting of the human military victory of the Maccabees into the miracle of the oil.

57 Honigman, p. 37. Notice the similarity between this author's premise and that of Orlinsky in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*. The latter points out the Jewish themes that elevate the work; the former highlights the scholarly methods employed by the Alexandrians of the Library. Both methods were necessary to transfigure the work in the eyes of the sophisticated Alexandrian Jewish community.

58 It was cited by Demetrius the Chronographer (not the same as the Demetrius in the *Letter*), active during the reign of Ptolemy IV Philopator (221–204) although it is not clear who his audience might have been.

59 Lawrence Schiffman, http://www.myjewishlearning.com/history/Ancient_and_Medieval_History/539_BCE-632_CE/Palestine_in_the_Hellenistic_Age.shtml?HSAM (accessed November 15, 2011).

60 W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, 3rd edn, New York: Meridian Books, 1952, p. 215.

61 See Modrzejewski's brilliant reading of an official document sent to Onias in September of 164, p. 124.

62 Josephus, *Antiquities*, 13, 64–68, cited in Modrzejewski, p. 126.

63 The original Septuagint covered only the first five books of Moses. More came to be translated over the years as manuscripts were sent to Egypt.

64 This fast is still observed by some Orthodox Jews on the tenth of Tevet, the culmination of three days of terrible events beginning with the completion of the Septuagint on the eighth of the month.

65 Translated by Aryeh Reich, *The Greek Bible – Light or Darkness?*, Bar Ilan University's Parashat Hashavua Study Center, 2004, http://www.biu.ac.il/JH/Parasha/eng/vayigash/rei.html (accessed October 25, 2011).

66 H. L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, trans. and ed. Markus Bockmuehl, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996, p. 228.

67 Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, pp. 54–55. Unattributed statements may be calculated as either very early opinions that are undisputed or very late statements by modest scholars chary of setting their names alongside the former greats.

68 *Cambridge*, ch. 15, p. 539, n. 2.

69 Alfred J. Kolatch, *Masters of the Talmud, Their Lives and Views*, Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 2003, pp. 353–354.

70 Kolatch, *Masters of the Talmud*, p. 94

71 "May God broaden Yaphet, And let him dwell in the tents of Shem" (Genesis 9:27).
72 *Letter*, section 19.
73 The loss of status was thrown into the face of the community not only by local adversaries but by the Emperor Claudius in a decree dated 41 CE, warning that hostilities must stop. In that decree was a dark warning that Jews were under suspicion of planned sedition through welcoming in 'fellow travelers' from Syria and the Egyptian countryside. Although the unwanted characters alluded to by Claudius were probably early Christians, when trouble did come, it came from some of those locales.
74 Josephus, *The Jewish War*: 2, 451–489. Cited in Modrzejewski, p. 165.
75 One may find echoes of his description of the ensuing carnage and horrors in the savagery depicted in part of the liturgy for the Jewish High Holy Days. Even if one removes the impassioned and inciting language, the bottom line is the same: "These things I remember as I pour out my heart: How the wicked have devoured us" (translation from *Gates of Repentance: The New Union Prayerbook for the Days of Awe,* New York: CCAR Press, 1978).
76 Bernard M. Zlotowitz (personal communication) is struck by the similarity between the Roman official's action in this incident and that of the German police chief of Berlin, Wilhelm Krutzfeld, who, in the face of Nazi rioting on Krystallnacht, forbade the torching of the historic synagogue in the city. A number of years ago, a plaque in memory of this brave man was placed at the site of the Oranienburgerstrasse Synagogue by a delegation from the New York City Police Department.
77 Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 4, 2, 1–2, ed. K. Lake, cited in Modrzejewski, p. 198.
78 See, e.g., Strack and Stemberger, *Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash*, p. 73. They reference D. Barthelemy, *Les Devanciers d'Aquila*, Leiden, 1963, who shows the similarity of method. They also reference the opposing view of L. L. Grabbe, Aquila's translation and rabbinic exegesis, *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 33 (1982), pp. 527–536.
79 Alison Salvesen, Symmachus in the Pentateuch, *Journal of Semitic Studies*, Monograph 15, Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1991, pp. 296–297, cited in Karen Jobes and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000, p. 40. Henceforth, Jobes and Silva.
80 Jobes and Silva, p. 302.

9

Early Christianity in a Jewish Context

Julie Galambush

The Background: First-Century Messianism

Judaism held an ambivalent place in the Roman world of the first century CE. Jews made up a substantial percentage of the population (at least 5 percent by most estimates), at all levels of Roman society. All the same, the conditions experienced by specific Jewish communities varied dramatically; local bias and imperial wariness could quickly turn into anti-Jewish riots or oppressive imperial policies. Since the time of Julius Caesar (47 BCE), Jews had enjoyed exemption from serving in the military and, later, from making sacrifices on behalf of the Roman state – precisely the sort of freedoms that left them open to charges of *amixia* (unwillingness to participate in communal life and values) and *atheism* (contempt for the gods). The Jewish community was thus always balanced between official tolerance and the possibility of local resentment and hostility.

The potential for conflict was especially high in the province of Judea, the home of the Jerusalem Temple. Judea was the site of the annual Jewish pilgrimage festivals, bringing Jews from all over the Roman world. The presence of Roman rule was felt differently here, in the land that Jews considered holy not only to themselves, but to God. Thus, for example, Caligula's 40 CE decision to place his own image in the Jerusalem Temple caused riots not only throughout Israel, but as far away as Alexandria, where Philo was commissioned to lead a delegation in protest to Rome. Ultimately, Caligula was persuaded to abandon his project.

The religious beliefs of first-century Jews were diverse, ranging from the serenely philosophical Neoplatonism of Philo to the dramatic apocalypticism of the Dead

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Sea Scrolls community. Many beliefs common among first-century Jews would have been foreign to their Israelite ancestors. In particular, messianic expectation, belief in the eventual resurrection of the dead, and in the role played by martyrs in redeeming the community, had come to play important roles in the worldview of many Jews. In Israel particularly, given the constant friction between Roman rule and Jewish sensibilities, the belief that God would soon send his agent, the Messiah, to intervene decisively and finally on the Jews' behalf, constantly simmered in the background. The details of such expectations varied as whether the Messiah would be a human or divine figure, a king or a priest, and whether the "last days," or *eschaton*, would mark a time of universal peace or the end of the world itself. In all cases, however, the last days, as prophesied in the Scriptures, would be a time of vindication for the Jewish people and their beliefs.

Such messianic hopes were, of course, anathema to Rome. The messiah would free the world from injustice, but on the most practical level this meant freeing the Jews from the ever-present burden of Roman rule. Thus, from a Roman perspective, messianic beliefs were tantamount to insurrection. We have only a few records of actual messianic pretenders from the first century, but in all cases they were put to death for insurrection.

In this context, Jesus, an itinerant preacher and miracle-worker, lived and taught in early first-century Galilee, where at least some of his followers came to consider him the Messiah. Whether he considered himself the savior of the Jews is not known. He ended up being exactly successful enough to come to Rome's attention, and so, in approximately 30 CE, he was sentenced to death by crucifixion as an insurrectionist.

Jesus and His Followers

A miracle-worker hailed as the Messiah, Jesus was clearly remarkable, but by no means unique, in the first-century Jewish world. Other miracle-workers are known to have lived and other messiahs to have died in Roman-controlled Judea. More remarkable than the few facts we can piece together about Jesus are the actions of his followers after his death. A crucified messiah was by definition a failed messiah – indeed, a dangerous messiah, as Rome had an interest in shutting down any lingering support for his cause. But, according to the Gospel accounts, soon after Jesus' death some of his followers had experiences convincing them that he had been raised from the dead – resurrected.

It is futile to speculate as to the nature of Jesus' followers' religious experience; they seem to have been deeply convinced that Jesus was alive and present as a transformed, spiritual power. In fact, they said, having been exalted by God, he was now seated at the right hand of God in heaven. Moreover, Jesus' resurrection proved that he had been the Messiah after all; his resurrection marked the

beginning of the promised last days. The Messianic age had begun. The trajectory of Jesus' life and death did not, however, fit messianic expectations; Jesus had not redeemed the Jews, but had suffered the fate of failed messiahs before him. Impelled by their belief in his resurrection, however, Jesus' followers began to search the Bible for hints as to how they might make sense of a crucified-but-resurrected messiah. Texts such as Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 that described God's chosen one as "despised and rejected" and a "man of sorrows" who was mocked by all, seemed to prophesy Jesus' ignominious death. Hosea 6:2, a prophecy that "after two days [God] will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up" became a linchpin in understanding Jesus as Messiah, raised on the third day. Such texts would have reassured those Jews who already believed Jesus had been resurrected; for most, he was simply another failed messiah.

In fact, even Jesus' resurrection did not correspond precisely with any known first-century messianic beliefs. Resurrection was generally assumed to be a communal affair, in which either the righteous alone would be resurrected, or all people would be resurrected and then judged, with reward for the righteous and punishment for the wicked. Jesus' followers' belief that the Messiah had lived and died without freeing the Jews from Roman oppression, and that he alone had been resurrected, would have seemed highly implausible to most Jews. For Jesus' followers, however, the incomplete nature of Jesus' work was interpreted as a sign that he was the "one like a son of man," or human being, foretold in Daniel 7, who would return on "the clouds of heaven" to rule on behalf of God, the "Ancient of Days." Jews following Jesus as Messiah began to spread the word that the last days had begun.

The Gentiles

According to the New Testament book of Acts, Jesus-following Jews spread their message primarily by preaching in synagogues, first in Israel and then in the Diaspora. According to Acts, some Jews were attracted to the messianists' message while others took umbrage; paradoxically, it was Gentiles who were most likely to join the new sect. Gentiles loosely affiliated with synagogues (often as donors) are typically called "Godfearers," a term attested in third-century CE synagogue inscriptions from Asia Minor. These Gentiles would have been attracted to the antiquity and ethical teachings of the synagogues, and perhaps also to the idea of monotheism. They were not, however, prepared to abandon the familial and business ties that required sacrifice to pagan gods, nor (in the case of men) to undergo circumcision.

Such Gentiles, already attracted to Jewish life, may have found the messianic message especially appealing. While clearly a form of Judaism, this new sect included additional benefits: access to arcane knowledge of the end times and the

promise of a glorious afterlife, guaranteed by a heavenly patron. Belief in Jesus as Messiah thus combined Judaism with features resembling those of popular mystery religions. For Jesus' Jewish followers, however, the interest of Gentiles constituted a crisis; ultimately, it led to the first schism in the fledgling movement.

The Gentiles' eagerness to affiliate with the Jesus-followers would have provided a powerful confirmation of the group's messianic beliefs. Biblical prophecies of the end-times routinely announced that in the last days "the Gentiles [*goyim*] will come" to the light of Israel and the mountain of the Lord (see, for example, Isaiah 60:3; 2:2–4; Zechariah 14:16). If the Gentiles were arriving, then the last days must be here. Unfortunately, however, texts prophesying the Gentiles' arrival said little about what would follow. Specifically, the prophecies failed to indicate whether the Gentiles would continue to live as Gentiles, or would convert and become Jews. Opinion within the messianic community was divided, with some eager to "complete" the conversion of the Godfearers and others convinced that converting such Gentiles to Judaism would effectively deny the gift God had offered in extending his salvation to "all nations."

The course of the early conflict over Gentile conversion is difficult to trace, as the primary source of information is the New Testament, written entirely by those who favored including Gentiles without formal conversion. Acts, a history of the Jesus-movement written around 85 CE, reports that God intervened directly in the dispute, commanding that Gentiles should be required only to keep the so-called Noahide laws against adultery, idolatry, and the eating of blood (Acts 10–11; 15). The account in Acts claims that the community agreed unanimously to God's decree. A careful reading of the New Testament, however, reveals a bitter conflict ending in schism sometime before 50 CE. Thus, the apostle Paul, writing in the late 40s to a group of Gentile converts in Galatia, is horrified that other missionaries have been convincing the Galatians that they must become circumcised in order to "be saved." On the contrary, says Paul, those who want to circumcise them want only to "enslave" them. "I wish," he concludes "those who wish to unsettle you would castrate themselves" (Galatians 5:12).

The conflict over the status of Gentile converts resulted in two strands within the sect, both of which still understood themselves as essentially Jewish communities. The strand of early Christianity that required Gentiles to convert to Judaism, however, was rapidly eclipsed by the more liberal strand, and our knowledge of "the circumcisers" comes almost exclusively from the liberal group, who portray them as having been heretical from the outset. Torah-observant forms of Christianity (Christian groups in which both Jewish and converted Gentile members observed Jewish law), specifically groups called Ebionites and Nazoreans, did not simply disappear; they are mentioned in texts as late as the early fifth century (St Jerome), but descriptions of their beliefs are incomplete and often inconsistent (Cohen, 2007: 32).

The decision on the part of some Jesus-followers to include unconverted Gentiles as full members, however, proved crucial to the group's future. Those messianists

who did not require full conversion were especially attractive to Gentiles, and within twenty years of Jesus' death they had established communities in Israel, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. The New Testament describes the larger Jewish community as hostile to these messianists on the grounds that they blaspheme God and change the law of Moses (Acts 6:11, 14).

While theological disagreement surely existed, the wide diversity of first-century Jewish belief makes it unlikely that differences in belief caused significant hostility. The inclusion of unconverted Gentiles, however, had far more than simply theological implications. Judaism was a protected religion under Roman law, and the duties from which Jews were exempted were hardly insubstantial. The Jews' exemption from worshiping the patron gods of Rome meant that they alone were excused from the shared duty to support the welfare of the *oikumene*, the fictive household comprising the Roman world. While these exemptions sometimes led to resentment, pagans were generally aware that the Jewish ancestral god was "a jealous god," who did not permit them to acknowledge the gods of the city of the empire. Newly Christian Gentiles, however, were another matter. These were people who had clear obligations to the gods of Rome, of their cities, and of their families. The Jesus-following Jews who accepted Gentiles without conversion to Judaism were not only taking these Gentiles away from their ancestral and civic duties; they were enticing Gentiles away from their communal duties *without* subjecting them to the obligations of Judaism. These Christian Gentiles had no apparent duty, whether ancestral or adopted, to worship only the jealous god of the Jews; they had simply turned their backs on their families, their cities, and the empire.

The decision by some of Jesus' followers not to circumcise Gentile converts was momentous in several regards: it created a permanent schism within the messianic group (between those who did and those who did not circumcise Gentile converts); it gave the non-circumcising group tremendous appeal among those Gentiles who found Judaism attractive but who had stopped short of full conversion; and, finally, it turned an otherwise insignificant sect into a serious liability for the larger Jewish community. Whereas theological disagreements over whether Jesus had been the Messiah and whether unconverted Gentiles could become members of a Jewish community would not have provoked action against the sect, the social problems caused by these stances could not be ignored. The Jesus-followers had always been unique among messianists in that they continued to follow their founder even after Rome had put him to death. This in itself made the group potentially dangerous, as their very existence perpetuated the "sedition" for which Jesus had been killed. The new practice of recruiting, but not converting, Gentiles would have compounded the problem. Historically, the Gentile population had resented any attempts to convert Gentiles to Judaism. The messianists, however, were not turning pagans into Jews; they were simply turning good pagans into bad pagans – that is, into non-Jews who had abandoned their civic and familial duties. Such neglect of religious duties was understood to have serious consequences. Gods neglected by their

worshipers were likely to respond by sending disasters affecting the entire community; individual disregard for communal gods was thus a serious public offense in the Roman world. Moreover, if Jews were the ones persuading such individuals to abandon the gods, the entire Jewish community risked reprisals, not by pagan gods, but by the pagan populace. By deciding not to circumcise Gentile converts the Jesus-followers had made themselves a danger to the Jewish community as a whole. Fellow Jews may well have sought, as the New Testament claims, to shut down the new messianic sect. But Jewish animosity, explained in the New Testament as rage over Christians' proclamation of Jesus as Messiah or resentment over their inclusion of Gentiles, was far more likely to reflect the social reality that, in venerating an executed seditionist and luring Gentiles away from their civic duties, the new sect formed a significant liability to the larger Jewish community.

The New Testament: Jewish or Anti-Jewish?

The documents collected and preserved as the Christian New Testament were written between approximately 50 and 100 CE. All or most of the texts were composed by Jews who followed Jesus as risen Messiah. Some addressed their works to Gentile congregations, some to groups with a mixed Jewish–Gentile membership, and a few to groups composed of ethnic Jews. The earliest texts, written in the 50s, are the letters of Paul.

Paul is an ambiguous figure. Sometimes considered the first real Christian because he advocated a "Torah-free" religion, Paul did not endorse a new and different religion. It seems unlikely that *any* Jew who believed that the Messiah had arrived would respond by founding a new and different religion. Paul taught an eschatological form of Judaism in which, as part of God's design for the last days, faithful Gentiles were included among the people of Israel. The book of Acts describes Paul continuing to live as an observant Jew (see, for example, 18:18), though his own letters suggest he was willing to adapt his observance to the needs of a mixed community (1 Corinthians 9:20). Both Acts and Paul agree that as a young man he belonged to a Pharisaic group and actively persecuted the sect of Jesus' followers (Acts 9; Galatians 1:13). Neither text specifies the grounds on which he did so. Following a direct revelation of the risen Jesus, however, Paul soon became an active missionary for the messianic movement, establishing Jesus-following communities, primarily among Gentiles, in Asia Minor and Greece.

Paul's letters to his Gentile and mixed Jewish-Gentile communities provide an example of how a devoutly Jewish messianist could reimagine Jewish history in ways that can seem profoundly anti-Jewish in a modern context. The figure of Abraham provides a vivid illustration: Paul notes that God's promise to Abraham included the prophecy that Abraham would become "the father of many nations

[Hebrew: *goyim*]" (Genesis 17:4–6; cf. Romans 4:18) and that in Abraham "all the nations [*goyim*] would be blessed" (Genesis 18:18; 22:18; Galatians 3:8). For Paul, this prophecy had been fulfilled in the spread of the Christian message to the pagan world and the establishment of Gentile congregations, metaphorical "descendants" of Abraham. One can readily imagine, however, that Paul's use of Abraham to validate his mission would have met with strong resistance from those who favored formally converting Gentile members to Judaism. Abraham, after all, had sealed his acceptance of God's promise by entering the covenant of circumcision, which was incumbent upon *all* of his male descendents (see Genesis 17:12–14).

Paul's letters do not actually record this objection, but twice he goes out of his way to explain why circumcision is unnecessary for Gentiles who have become "descendants of Abraham." In his letter to the Roman congregation, a mixed Jewish–Gentile group, Paul creates an argument by means of prooftexts, a technique that would have been recognizable to his Pharisaic peers. Abraham, says Paul, was counted as righteous for believing in God's promise. Moreover, he believed and was credited with righteousness before becoming circumcised. God counts Abraham's belief as righteousness in Genesis 15 but does not command him to be circumcised until Genesis 17. Thus, says Paul, the Scripture shows that Abraham is the father of those who are righteous without circumcision as well as of those who believe and are circumcised. The argument is elegant, even if it convinces only those who wish to be convinced.

Paul develops a far more anti-Judaic defense in his letter to the Galatians. In Galatians he addresses a Gentile congregation. In Paul's absence they have been convinced by competing missionaries that they must become circumcised. Paul rips into his adversaries, claiming that they are trying to "enslave" the Gentile believers by placing them under the "curse" of the Torah (3:13). How can Paul, who tells the Roman congregation that the commandments are "holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12) here call the Torah a curse? The difference is that, while Paul honors the Torah as God's law for the Jews, he is convinced that if Gentiles submit to the requirements of Torah, they thereby reject God's generosity in accepting them without the strictures of the covenant. As an embattled member of the non-circumcising faction, Paul fiercely denies that Gentiles are in any way incomplete members of the messianic community.

Polemic like Paul's, directed against Jewish members of other Jesus-following groups, permeates the New Testament and accounts for much of its apparent anti-Jewish character. Thus, in John's Gospel, Jesus taunts Jews who had once followed him but later turned away, calling them children of "your father the devil" (John 8:31–44). Similarly, the author of Revelation condemns a competing messianic synagogue as "a synagogue of Satan," filled with those "who say they are Jews, but are not" (Revelation 2:9; 3:9). The New Testament authors were a tiny minority in the Roman as indeed in the Jewish world, fighting to defend their legitimacy as Jews. Their bitterness against other Jewish Christians whom they felt had betrayed their cause was extreme.

The four canonical Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, were written in different settings, originally for use by different communities. All were written in the wake of the first revolt against Rome (66–70 CE). The revolt, a cataclysm for the Jewish people, may have seemed literally apocalyptic to Jesus-following groups. Jesus had, after all, died without accomplishing the task of rescuing the Jewish people. If he was to return again in his glory, saving the Jews from their enemies, this would seem to be an appropriate time. Indeed, even the historian Josephus believed that the destruction of the Temple was a sign of God's anger against the people, a parallel to the destruction of Solomon's Temple six hundred years earlier (Josephus, *The Jewish War*: 4.5.2 323; 5.1.4 19–20). It would not be surprising if the messianists had taken a similar view.

The destruction of the Temple, of course, brought only an increase in Roman oppression, and an urgent need for Jews to rethink their understanding of God. The Gospels form one strand of this global rethinking of the status and destiny of the Jewish people. Written for different communities facing different pressures, the Gospels can be read as mirrors that show the various strategies used by this sect as they attempted to strengthen their identity even as the Jewish people were decimated and their own messiah failed to return. In the case of Matthew, written around 85 CE, the community addressed is predominantly Jewish, probably located in Galilee. Clearly an observant Jew, the author seeks to counter the influence of the Pharisees, asserting Jesus the Messiah as a teacher whose authority surpassed that of any rabbi. In fact, Matthew persistently (if anachronistically) portrays Jesus arguing points of law with local Pharisees, always besting them at their own game. Matthew's Jesus warns his hearers, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law," clearly countering accusations Matthew's community *had* in fact abandoned Jewish law (Matthew 5:17). Matthew's author had no sense of himself as anything but a pious and observant Jew. In a striking example of Matthew's Jewish self-identity, Jesus gives his disciples instructions on how to deal with disagreements within the community: first, approach your brother in private, then in the presence of two or three witnesses. If needed, bring the person before the entire community. If, however, anyone will not listen to the entire community, "Let them be to you as a Gentile" (Matthew 18:17). For Matthew a Gentile was by definition an outsider: it seemed self-evident that Jesus-followers were Jews. Unlike the letters of Paul, Matthew's Gospel addresses a distinctly Jewish messianic community.

The Gospel of Luke is written at about the same time as Matthew's Gospel, but probably by a Jewish author for a Gentile community. The Gospel, along with its companion volume, Acts, is addressed to a convert whom the author calls Theophilus (God-lover). Claiming that he writes to allay the concerns of this convert, Luke writes a gospel that stresses the legitimacy of both the Jesus sect and their practice of accepting uncircumcised Gentiles as members. Luke's Gospel presents the birth of Jesus as a literal continuation of the biblical narrative, explaining how God first allowed an aged but pious couple (modeled on Abraham

and Sarah) to have a son (John the Baptist), and then sent the divine spirit to impregnate a virgin (cf. Isaiah 7:14). Throughout his narrative, Luke stresses that Jesus, his family, and his followers did everything "as it is written in the law of the Lord" (2:23; cf. 2:22, 24, 27, 39; 23:56). Not only is the infant Jesus circumcised, but his parents go to Jerusalem to perform *pidyon ha-ben* (the redemption of the firstborn son; 2:23).

After Luke finishes the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection, he continues (in the book of Acts) with the story of Jesus' followers. Here he explains that although the community assiduously observed Jewish law, God commanded them that they must allow Gentiles to join without becoming circumcised (Acts 10–11; 15). Luke then describes Paul's missions, in which Gentiles accept his message in droves, while Jews become enraged, driving him out of the towns where he has been preaching. In effect, Luke explains for his Gentile reader that although the sect represents the true fulfillment of God's earlier prophecies to Israel, the Jewish people have "rejected God's purpose for themselves" (cf. Luke 7:39). God has therefore sent the gospel "to the Gentiles" instead (Acts 28:28).

Although Jesus was put to death by the Romans, the Gospels uniformly suggest that the Romans killed Jesus only because of pressure from the Jews. In the book of Acts, Peter actually tells the Jewish crowds that it was they who "killed the Author of life" (3:15). The Gospels' authors, writing in the period after Rome's destruction of Jerusalem, needed to be careful not to anger the Roman authorities. In fact, they needed to convince the Romans that the Jesus-followers were not a dangerous group, despite the fact that they venerated a convicted criminal. This would have made it easy to say that, even though the Romans carried out the actual crucifixion, it was the Jews who did not follow Jesus who were really to blame for his death. This idea – that the Jews had killed Jesus – came to be widely believed in Christian communities, especially after the Jesus-followers had stopped being a Jewish sect.

In the New Testament as a whole, one can trace the young sect's struggles as it sought to define itself and its relationship to the world, both Jewish and Gentile. Nearly every page reflects both the authors' joy at their newfound hope and their shock that (as they understood it) the Messiah had arrived without the majority of Jews even noticing. Ultimately, like any sectarians, they could only affirm that they were right by believing that all others were wrong. This deeply felt sense of the "wrongness" of the larger Jewish community is understandable in its context; only later would the New Testament's latent anti-Judaism be used to justify persecution.

Christian and Jew in the Second and Third Centuries

In the early decades following Jesus' death, his followers, whether ethnic Jews or Gentiles, would have considered themselves members of a Jewish community. The Gospels of Matthew and John, written in the 80s and 90s, say that the messianists

have been beaten in synagogues, an indication that they continued to attend synagogue services and were subject to discipline as members. As indicated above, the messianists' habit of encouraging pagans to abandon their gods would have made this sect highly problematic for the Jewish community as a whole. On the other hand, several factors would have encouraged the sectarians to consider thinking of themselves as Jews: First, ethnically Jewish sect members would have had no interest in abandoning their Jewish identity; such a move would have been especially unlikely among Jews who believed that the Messiah had at long last arrived. Godfearers, Gentiles who had been loosely affiliated with synagogues for years, saw the sect as a new development in the history of the Jews. For them, the messianic movement allowed full participation in the Jewish community at the crucial moment of God's redemption. And on a more practical level, all members of the sect would have benefited from the fact that Judaism was a "licit" religion, a recognized group granted the right of assembly by Rome.

Within the first hundred years of the sect's existence, however, its Jewish identity weakened dramatically, and in some quarters, disappeared. The revolt of 66–70 clearly left a mark on the Jesus-following community, though we know nothing about the messianists' participation (or lack of participation) in the revolt. Eusebius, writing in the fourth century, says that the leaders in Jerusalem fled to Pella in the Trans-Jordan before the city was burned. The story may be apocryphal, but as late as the fourth century ethnically Jewish sects of Christians continued to thrive in the Trans-Jordan.

In Rome, the new Flavian dynasty made the most of their victory over the Jews. As Martin Goodman has argued, the Flavians consolidated their own power by means of a propaganda campaign portraying the Jews as an especially despicable, and now vanquished, people. As an added insult, rather than rebuilding the Temple according to Roman custom, the Romans left it in ruins and required the Jews to pay into a fund (the *fiscus Judaicus*) for the rebuilding of the temple of Jupiter in Rome (Goodman, 2007: 431–442). For ethnically Jewish messianists, the humiliations of the first revolt were inescapable. For Gentile members, particularly those whose communities had always been majority or even exclusively Gentile, there was little to be gained from association with the "failed" cause of the Jews. On the contrary, the destruction of the Temple would have been easy to interpret as a sign of God's displeasure with the Jewish people who, as a whole, had (as they saw it) rejected the Messiah. Scholars estimate that by the end of the first century a majority of the Jesus-following sect were Gentiles; even more significant, the sect was now adding more new members by birth than by conversion. Gentile Christians whose parents and grandparents had belonged to the sect might see little reason to consider themselves Jews.

The Christian community of the second to third centuries was extremely diverse. Having spread across Asia Minor as far as Rome within two decades, the movement had developed without any central governing body or uniform policies. Messianists in isolated locations might not have even known of the existence of most other

communities, much less shared beliefs and practice with them. The diversity of earliest Christianity makes it impossible to isolate a date at which "Christianity" became a separate religion from "Judaism." Torah-observant communities, made up of ethnic Jews and a few converted and observant Gentiles, probably continued to live as Jews in communities with other Jews. Christians who lived in isolated Gentile communities might go a lifetime without ever seeing a Jew. All were "Christians," that is, "messiah followers" (*christianoi*, from *christos*, the Greek word for anointed one or "messiah"). Still, the passage of time and changes in the status of the Jewish community led to an increasing distinction between Jew and Christian over the second and third century.

The first such change may have come under the emperor Nerva (96–98), who, in 96 declared that the tax for the *fiscus Judaicus* would no longer be applied "stringently," but would be levied only on Jews who chose to observe their ancestral customs. As Martin Goodman has argued, by making a legal distinction between observant and nonobservant Jews Nerva took a significant (if unwitting) step toward defining Judaism as a religion rather than an ethnicity (Goodman, 1989). This step would also have had implications for Christians. Ethnically Jewish Christians would now have to make a public declaration as to whether they considered their religious practice to be "Jewish" or something else.

The Romans seem never to have treated Gentile Christians as Jews. Thus, when the emperor Claudius expelled the Jews from Rome in 49 CE, Jewish followers of Jesus were expelled while Gentile followers remained in the city. Gentile Christians, on the other hand, were understood as criminals: people who neglected their duty to the gods. Roman persecution of Christians was not widespread or systematic in this period, but when Christians were brought to the attention of the state, they were punished. In 112, Pliny, a Roman governor in northern Asia Minor, writes to the emperor, asking what to do about the local *christianoi*. Pliny points out that these people are in most respects good citizens, but refuse to worship either the gods or a statue of the emperor. As a result, Pliny has them put to death. Neither Pliny nor the accused Christians seem to consider the possibility that Christians, as a subsect of the Jews, might be exempt from pagan worship.

In 135 the community would have undergone further redefinition, as Jews were expelled from the region of Jerusalem following the Bar Kochba revolt. The expulsion of the Jews meant that the "mother church" in Jerusalem now became an exclusively Gentile congregation. By the middle of the second century many Christians had come to understand Christianity as not only separate from, but actually opposed to Judaism. Justin Martyr, for example, writing the *Dialogue with Trypho* around the year 160, argues that by rejecting Christ the Jews have also rejected God; Gentiles who have accepted Jesus as Lord have now taken the place of the Jews as the "true Israel" (*Dialogue with Trypho*, 135–136). A few decades later, Melito, the bishop of Sardis in Asia Minor, accuses the Jews of murdering *God* – that is, God incarnate in Jesus. For centuries, scholars have assumed that this intense

anti-Jewish rhetoric indicated that by the mid-second century Christianity and Judaism had become entirely separate (and hostile) religions. More recently, however, scholars have focused on the number of times Christian leaders condemned their followers for "Judaizing," that is, for including Jewish practices – keeping the Jewish Sabbath, attending synagogue worship, or celebrating Jewish festivals – as part of their Christian lifestyle. As late as the fourth century, John Chrysostom condemned members of his congregation who insisted on worshiping in a synagogue as well as in a church: "If you admire the Jewish way of life, what do you have in common with us?" (*Against the Jews*: 1.6). The fact that these "Judaizers" were seen as a problem, however, is also evidence of their importance in early Christianity: Christians seem not to have been willing to make a firm distinction between their own beliefs and those of the Jews. Bishops, at least in some areas, might declare that Christianity and Judaism were opposites; everyday Christians seem to have been less eager to abandon the people and the religion of Jesus.

Constantine

At the beginning of the fourth century Christianity, though widespread in the Roman world, was an illegal sect, brutally persecuted by Rome. In 312, however, the young Constantine (according to his biographer, Eusebius) had a vision of Christ, who told him to ride forth to his upcoming battle under the standard of the cross. Constantine won the battle, thereby becoming the head of the Western Roman Empire. The following year, Constantine and Licinius, head of the Eastern Empire, issued a joint decree mandating official toleration of Christianity. By 380 Christianity had become the official religion of the entire Empire. The fourth century thus transformed Christianity from a persecuted sect, still struggling to clarify its boundaries, to the privileged and increasingly normative belief system of the Roman world.

Constantine, intent on consolidating his power as emperor, wanted his favored religious sect to mirror and further the unity of his reign. Christianity, however, was multiform: ethnically Jewish Ebionites and Egyptian Gnostic Christians might not have even considered themselves members of the same religion. Constantine therefore called a council of all the Christian bishops (regional leaders of affiliated congregations) in 325, to reach consensus on Christian beliefs and authority structures. Contrary to his official biography, Constantine did not in fact include all bishops, but primarily bishops of what is now called "orthodox" Christianity. This was the largest and most widely spread version of the Jesus-following groups, and would thus have best served Constantine's purpose of consolidating unity within the sect. (Ironically, Constantine himself was later baptized into a competing version of Christianity called Arianism.) The bishops developed a statement that is

now called the Nicene Creed, which formalized (among other things) the belief that Jesus is God. Those bishops who disagreed were banished. This newly recognized version of Christianity also (at a somewhat later time) defined which Christian writings were authoritative and which were not. Ultimately, the writings favored by the orthodox bishops became the Christian New Testament. Books such as the widely attested "Gospel of the Hebrews," used in ethnically Jewish Christian communities, were suppressed, surviving only in fragments and in the descriptions of orthodox Christians.

Conclusions

During the second, third, and fourth centuries both orthodox Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism defined themselves as the sole true expression of Jewish tradition. Just as Justin Martyr, a Gentile Christian, claimed in 160 that Christians had become the "true Israel," so the authors of the Mishnah (c. 200) claimed that Israelites whose beliefs did not correspond with their own had "no place in the world to come" (Mishnah Sanhedrin 10.2). For a variety of reasons orthodox (Catholic) Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism succeeded in becoming normative for Gentiles and Jews respectively. Eventually, the Empire outlawed both pagan worship and conversion to Judaism, making Christianity the de facto religion of all non-Jews, and defining Judaism as both limited to ethnic Jews and, in effect, wrong.

The question of "how Jewish" Christians had continued to be in the second, third, and even fourth centuries (or, conversely, of when Christianity ceased to be a form of Judaism) points to a critical problem in reconstructing early Christianity: most of our information comes from the group that eventually gained political, as well as religious power. Orthodox Christians, whose version of Christianity had been spread by imperial patronage, naturally understood their own beliefs as having always been normative; if their position was correct (as it obviously was), then it had been correct from the beginning. Thus, in the emerging orthodox narrative, Jesus' followers had unanimously agreed not to circumcise Gentile converts (Acts 15), and Torah-observant Christianity had simply disappeared. Christians had "always" believed that Jesus was God; Jews had "always" objected to Christianity on theological grounds; Jews had "always" known that Jesus was the Messiah, but had stubbornly refused God's offer of salvation. The rabbis likewise had an interest in portraying Christians as having always, already been different from Jews. Once Judaism and Christianity had become established as "opposite" religions, the leaders of both communities defined the differences between the groups as original and absolute. The fact that Christianity had begun as a form of Judaism and, in some circles, had remained one for centuries, was largely forgotten.

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10

The Babylonian Consolidation of Rabbinic Judaism

Shai Secunda

Introduction

The significance of Diaspora

Following the destruction of the First Temple and the exile of Jews from Judea in the sixth century BCE, a new paradigm emerged that would shape Jewish history for ever more. From this point on, the Jewish community was divided between people living in the Land of Israel and those who made a home outside it, in the Diaspora (*Golah/Galut*). Even with the rebuilding of the Temple and the return of some of the exiles late in the sixth century BCE, the Jews remained a people geographically divided. Indeed, Jewish identity has been and continues to be shaped by the Homeland–Diaspora split, with the Jewish experience in the Diaspora defined by, on the one hand, longing to return to the Land of Israel, and, on the other hand, establishing deep roots abroad. Despite the fundamental contributions of those living in the Land of Israel to Jewish religious practice, belief, and the great Jewish literary tradition, it is impossible to understand Judaism as we recognize it today without taking into account the role that the Diaspora played in its formation.

Of the many communities that have dotted the colorful and varied map of the Jewish exile, the community in Babylonia can be seen as particularly representative of the Diaspora. Jewish exiles first arrived in Mesopotamia – a Greek term that means "the land between the (Euphrates and Tigris) rivers" – in 597 and

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586 BCE. For many centuries, the evidence for Babylonian Jewish history is quite meager, but the little information that we do possess allows us to assume that the exiles flourished (Gafni, 2002: 223–226). Regardless, the true significance of Babylonian Jewry was to be realized only many years later, during the third to seventh centuries CE – a period that general historians refer to as late antiquity, and some scholars of Jewish history call the "Talmudic period." It was then that the rabbinic class rose to prominence and produced the Babylonian Jewish community's magnum opus – the Babylonian Talmud, or the Bavli, as it is commonly known.

The Influence of the Babylonian Talmud (the Bavli)

The Bavli was not the only Talmud that Jews produced. It was produced more than a century after the Palestinian Talmud, or Yerushalmi, which took shape in the fourth century BCE. Nevertheless, the Bavli proved far more influential. By way of the Bavli, the Babylonian Jewish community left its mark on nearly all aspects of subsequent Jewish history, religion, and culture. The Bavli has constituted the primary source for Jewish law and theology across the centuries and throughout the world; and it has also served as a touchstone for post-Talmudic forms of learning such as Jewish philosophy and kabbala. Imaginative Talmudic stories have engendered and intersected with Jewish folklore of nearly all types, and they have inspired other forms of artistic expression as well. On a deeper plane, the Bavli has managed to infiltrate the very structure of Jewish consciousness – particularly through the medium of language. The Talmud's terse and sometimes eccentric lexicon has influenced Jewish tongues from Yiddish and Judeo-Arabic to Modern Hebrew and the speech patterns of modern yeshiva students.

The history of the Bavli is very much caught up with the history of the Jews – first that of Babylonian Jewry, and second its medieval and modern heirs. Still, despite its overwhelming significance, the Bavli's (and Babylonian Jewry's) influence cannot be measured by looking for wholly new forms of Jewish texts, rituals, theology; rather by focusing on its ostensibly *modest* reception and reshaping of antecedent forms of Judaism. Much like the Talmudic text, Babylonian Judaism was itself a kind of compilation or, better, consolidation, of earlier forms of Judaism that were reworked and transmitted within a new cultural context. This consolidation was in turn received by other Jewish communities in the years following the Bavli's completion, first in Iraq and North Africa, and later in Europe, the Land of Israel, and beyond. Thus, a critical aspect of understanding the contribution of Babylonian Jewry to Judaism is by describing what the Babylonian Talmud is, where it stands in relation to its antecedents, and what was its relationship to the dynamic cultural context in which it was produced.

Neither Here nor There: What Is the Babylonian Talmud?

By almost any standards, the Bavli is a strange work. It defies a number of basic literary expectations, especially those which pertain to questions of authorship and composition, and it can take a lifetime to study in its entirety – to say nothing of achieving mastery. Along with the challenges presented by the Talmud's dense discussions, Talmudists in every generation have struggled to discern both the Bavli's nuts and bolts as well as its larger goals. Epistles, rabbinic genealogies, and full-fledged introductions first appeared towards the end of the first and the beginning of the second millennium CE, and the genre of Talmud guides remained popular in medieval Europe and North Africa in centuries hence. The modern era, especially the past one hundred and fifty years, has seen an explosion of introductions and aids to Talmud study.

All of these attempts can be seen as compensating for a basic problem. Despite its overwhelming importance, the Bavli, like a newborn child, does not come equipped with an instruction manual. Notably, this omission is not shared with other late antique legal compilations. The roughly contemporaneous work of Roman Law, the Digest of Justinian, includes no less than three prefaces, while the Sassanian Book of a Thousand Judgments preserves a brief, theologically inclined introduction. For the Bavli's part, instead of beginning with a description of the committee responsible for its composition or a homily about the religious significance of studying law, the Talmud's opening lines form a pair of localized, exegetical questions directed at a single Mishnah – the earliest form of rabbinic literature. The omission of a preface from the Bavli, and for that matter from virtually every classical rabbinic compilation, has allowed debates about redaction, goals, audience, and more, to flourish with no end in sight, just as the absence of clear rulings at the end of many legal discussions has encouraged the same.

A further difficulty in understanding the nature of the Bavli is related to the fact that it is not a *sui generis* specimen, rather, as just noted, a kind of derivative literature. In certain respects, the Bavli signifies the culmination of the classical rabbinic project. It is first and foremost organized as a commentary on the most central rabbinic legal text – the Mishnah – which was composed about 200 CE in Roman Palestine. The primary goal of the Bavli, like the Palestinian Talmud – the somewhat earlier, fifth-century counterpart from the Land of Israel, is to explain difficult statements in the Mishnah and to compare the Mishnah with parallel collections of rabbinic material known as *baraitot* (texts "outside – *bar*" and not included in the mishnaic canon) which also can be roughly dated to early third-century CE Roman Palestine. Furthermore, since the Mishnah is an apodictic work that normally does not explain where its laws derive from, the Bavli often attempts to get at the biblical and early rabbinic roots of Mishnaic law. This is normally

pursued by citing classical Halakhic (legal) Midrash – a collection of Palestinian exegetical works from the third century CE which interpret the Torah and show how Jewish law (*halakha*) is related to Scripture. In addition, the named Babylonian rabbis cited in the Bavli take their cue from the Midrash and engage in their own biblical interpretations (Elman, 2004b). Sometimes they produce innovate readings, though many Midrashic interpretations are there to support existing religious practices and beliefs.

The Babylonian rabbinic exegetical imagination is not limited to explaining Mishnah, parallel *baraitot*, and the Bible. The Bavli cites and interprets a great variety of earlier Babylonian, but often Palestinian, rabbinic rulings, theologies, and anecdotes on subjects ranging from pharmacology and astrology to mythology and table etiquette. Often there is very little connection, if any, to the particular Mishnah at hand. It is thus possible to conceive of the Bavli as a hyper-interpretive work which seeks to analyze and explain nearly every text that enters into its orbit. The renowned twelfth-century French rabbi, Rabbeinu Tam, was onto something when he suggested that Jews who singly pursued Talmud study need not pay heed to the Talmud's own proscription to divide study time among the different pillars of the Jewish canon. Since, as a Talmudic folk-etymology would have it, the Talmud of Babylonia (*bavel*) was a perfect mixture (*balul*) of Bible, Mishnah, "Talmud," and more, the Bavli could be seen as a comprehensive and self-sufficient curriculum of Jewish learning (Bavli Qiddushin 30a). The Bavli's genius can be located in its consolidation of the classical rabbinic corpus and its subsequent reworking of its sources into a wholly unique and influential work of interpretation.

As much as the Bavli is closely connected to the sources and traditions of earlier times and other locations, it remains, unquestionably, a product of Sassanian Mesopotamia. The Bavli is the only major rabbinic work composed on the eastern side of the Rome/Persia political and cultural divide, and it contains detailed Mesopotamian geographical descriptions and colorful expressions of Babylonian Jewish *Lokalpatriotism*, or local pride (Gafni, 1990). Not a few Talmudic passages refer to encounters with Persian kings, Zoroastrian religious functionaries, and other representatives of the Sassanian Empire. More broadly, the echoes of late antique daily life – from language, food, and dress, to narrative motifs, demonology, and taxes – can be found throughout the Talmud. Notably, the moniker used to refer to Babylonian rabbinic learning in the folk etymology cited above is, quite simply, "*bavel*" – "Babylonia." As much as the Bavli signifies the culmination of a literature which was mostly produced in Palestine, the influence of place on text production should not be underestimated. Properly appreciating the Bavli, Babylonian Jewry, and the influence of Diaspora on Judaism requires one to acknowledge both internal development and external influence, and understand that when it comes to consolidations, the sum is often far more than the yield of its parts.

The World of the Talmud

The earliest Babylonian *amoraim* (the late antique rabbis who came after the tannaitic rabbis of the Mishnah and early rabbinic literature) date to the very beginning of the third century CE. At this time, change was afoot in the Iranian world, which then included Jewish Babylonia. The Parthian dynasty, which had ruled Greater Iran for over three hundred and fifty years, was on the way out, and in its place, a new dynasty with roots in Fars (an area that flanks the northeastern shores of the Persian Gulf) was rising to power, which was achieved with the defeat of the Parthian king Artabanus V in 224 CE. The ascension of the Sassanians had major implications for the political dynamics in Mesopotamia. Parts of the region had been under Roman influence for some time, and under formal Roman rule since at least the end of the late second century. The Sassanians challenged the status quo and now presented a serious, ongoing challenge to Roman presence throughout Mesopotamia and beyond (see Edwell, 2008: 149–200). Although Jewish Babylonia is in modern day Iraq and not located within classical Iranian territory, the Sassanians nevertheless centered their power and bureaucratic structure in Mesopotamia, which was fertile enough to be considered the bread-basket of the entire Empire. For most of the classical "Talmudic" period (third to sixth centuries CE), the Sassanian kings used Ctesiphon, which was in the heart of Jewish Babylonia, as their winter capital.

The Sassanian Empire consisted of a deliciously diverse salad of religious and ethnic communities. We can get an impression of the components in the mix from the inscriptions of Kerdīr, a powerful and politically connected priest of the third century BCE (see Skjaervo, 2011). Kerdīr himself was Zoroastrian, or as he would have put it, a Mazdayasnian – a worshiper of the ancient Iranian deity, Ahura Mazda. In a portion of his inscription, Kerdīr cites his opposition to false, demonic beliefs – perhaps a reference to Zoroastrian heterodoxies – and his success at having "struck down" Jews, Buddhists, Hindus, Christians, Nazarenes, Baptists, and Manichaeans. Although the Buddhists and Hindus could be found primarily further East and probably were not well represented in Mesopotamia, the other named communities were. These include the Jews, followers of the prophet Mani and the brand-new dualistic religion of Manichaeism, two different communities of Christians (see discussion in Julien and Julien, 2002), and Mandaeans (Kerdīr's "Baptists"). Although Kerdīr does not refer to them in his list, there were apparently still more communities that populated Mesopotamia, including those which spoke Aramaic and continued ancient and indigenous Babylonian traditions and beliefs.

There is ample evidence that Jews regularly interacted with Zoroastrians, Christians, and the general local, Aramaic-speaking population (Gafni, 2002: 240–241). Conversion and intermarriage were occurring between these three communities as well. Furthermore, there were intersections between Zoroastrians

and Jews in more formal interreligious contexts, including official or semiofficial disputations. Middle Persian texts refer to an official royal project of collecting wisdom from non-Persian cultures and "re-fitting" it with Zoroastrian tradition. We know that the project included the mixing of Greek philosophy and Indian science with Iranian tradition, and it may very well have included intersections with Jewish texts (Secunda, 2010). What this means is that the Sassanian Mesopotamian ethnic "salad" was not only made up of a variety of items, but that these items were melted together – as in the traditional Ashkenazi Jewish *chollent* stew.

Text and Context

Interaction between the different religious communities of Sassanian Mesopotamia left its mark on the religious practices, beliefs, and surviving textual corpora. Obvious examples include the Manichaean pantheon, which adapted many of its deities from surrounding Christian, Zoroastrian, and Buddhist communities. For their own part, there is evidence that Mandaean texts ended up incorporating biblical and even distinctly Jewish traditions. Further, an enormous cache of magical incantation bowls have survived from the period, and they testify to a remarkable intermingling of Jewish, Christian, ancient Babylonian, Mandaean, and Zoroastrian traditions (Shaked, 2002).

The Zoroastrian–Jewish encounter was one of the most extensive and fruitful in the Sassanian Empire. At the present, it seems that Jewish tradition was influenced more by Persian culture and Zoroastrianism than the other way around – though this impression may be due to the nature of the evidence that has come down to us. First, it is worth pointing out that there are significant issues in the Bavli's religious theology, such as an idea of an implacable divine anger, that appear to have developed in concert with corresponding Zoroastrian ideas (Elman, 2006). Zoroastrianism also left its mark on Jewish ritual. For example, it is possible that specific Jewish concerns regarding ritual dress, including the need to don a belt for prayer and the obligation to constantly wear a fringed, four-cornered garment, can be related to similar Zoroastrian prescriptions concerning the *kustīg*, or ritual belt, which served as a central religious symbol in Zoroastrianism (Elman, 2004a: 34). Moving away from religion and towards more general aspects of culture, the Talmud preserves a colorful anecdote which both reflects and criticizes the absorption of certain elite Persian mores by upper-class rabbis like the Babylonian *amora*, Rav Nahman. These include the consumption of Persian delicacies, the use of Persian words on a high linguistic register, naming children after Persian queens – or divinities – as well as a more relaxed attitude towards the intermingling of the sexes than many rabbis were used to (Elman, 2007).

This list could be magnified exponentially. By adducing more examples it would be possible to further demonstrate the many areas of Jewish tradition which were touched by the encounter with Zoroastrianism in Babylonia. Instead, I prefer to shift focus by considering another facet of the relationship between text and context. Here I refer to the possibility that even when a Talmudic text or Jewish tradition scarcely reflects external signs of influence, it is still possible to presume that it "reverberated" differently in the new context in which they were transmitted. This possibility is particularly significant for the current discussion which considers the way the Bavli itself, and Babylonian rabbinic Judaism in general, can be considered a consolidation of antecedent traditions which nevertheless represented a different product upon completion.

As an illustration, consider the following example. Judaism is at its heart a monotheistic religion, though one which emerged in dialogue with and polemic against polytheistic religions. One of the more interesting polemics that one finds classical Judaism taking up in this regard is a dispute against "two powers in heaven." The late Alan Segal devoted important research to identifying the actual religious groups who believed in "two powers in heaven" (Segal, 1977), though the topic continues to be debated among scholars (see Schremer, 2008). Regardless, what remains clear is that the term "two powers in heaven" and the polemics surrounding it initially emerged within the distinct sphere of Roman Palestine at the beginning of the first millennium of the Common Era. The question arises then of what happens when discussions about "two powers in heaven" migrate into a completely different cultural context, such as Sassanian Babylonia, where the terms of debate and the issues at stake are vastly different. To be specific, in the shadow of a dualistic religion like Zoroastrianism, it seems unlikely that Babylonian rabbis would transmit and discuss texts about "two powers in heaven" without ever considering its implications for the local, dominant form of dualism.

And yet, that is just what we find. The Bavli often tells stories specifically about Palestinian (and not Babylonian) rabbis arguing with people who believe in "two powers." The Talmud seems at times to merely parrot what once was a burning issue in a different cultural sphere without even realizing the larger significance of the issue at hand. It would seem that, as a consolidator, the Bavli here is merely transmitting earlier rabbinic material concerned with "two powers in heaven," and it is doing so without really understanding or updating the terms of debate.

And yet there is one telling instance in the Bavli's discussion of "two powers" where it is possible to perceive Sassanian influence. In Bavli Sanhedrin 38b–39a we are treated to a fascinating array of sources that treat various heresies, including one traced all the way back to Adam. The rabbis of course respond to the heretics and their heresies, as we find in the following dialogue:

> The emperor (some versions, "heretic") said to Rabban Gamliel: The God who created the mountains did not create the wind, as it says, "Behold, he who *formed*

> (*yatsar*) the mountains, and *created* (*u-vara*) the wind (Amos 4.13)." But now, it is written regarding Adam: And he *created* (*va-yivra*) (Gen 1.27); And he *fashioned* (*va-yitsar*) (Gen 2.7). Here too, [the God] who created this did not create that? There is a handbreadth by a handbreadth of space in the human body in which there are two cavities. The God who created this did not create that—for it says, "Shall he who *implants* (*ha-note'a*) the ear not hear; he who *forms* (*yotser*) the eye not see (Ps 94.9)?" The emperor said, "Yes!" And at the time of death they are all appeased? (BT Sanhedrin 39a)

It is possible to see within this source a debate fairly typical of the type that monotheists engaged in with various kinds of dualists and polytheists across the Roman Empire. The first two "proofs" that the emperor presents Rabban Gamliel with reflect the relatively prevalent view that two separate forces created the world – a physical one and a spiritual one. Thus, the mountains were created by a physical power and the wind by a spiritual one. Likewise, the contradictions between the description of mankind's creation in the biblical book of Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, was taken to refer to essentially two different episodes. Genesis 1 was seen by some Neoplatonists as the spiritual God's creation of the perfect, ideational human, while the account in Genesis 2 was in a number of respects a "lower" and more earthly affair. In some renditions, Man himself was created in flesh and blood while the force that created him may even have been the evil Demiurge of "Gnostics." Even the third link in the discussion, which relates to the creation of ears and eyes, seems to deal with a dualistic view, though one would think that it is no more than a caricature.

In short, the Bavli seems to preserve and transmit here a fragment that stems from a completely different cultural world. The protagonists (Rabban Gamliel and an emperor) are decidedly Palestinian, and the terms of their debate reflect some of the burning issues within the Greco-Roman sphere. And yet, the anecdote that immediately follows this one raises the question of how texts like this one may have actually resonated within a new cultural context like Sassanian Babylonia: "A magus said to Amemar: From your waist upwards is of Ohrmazd. From your waist downwards is of Ahrimen. [Amemar] said to [the magus]: If so, how does Ahrimen let Ohrmazd pass urine through his land?" As opposed to its textual "neighbor," this source quite clearly refers to the Bavli's Sassanian milieu, and it records a debate held between a Babylonian rabbi and a Zoroastrian priest about the dominion of the two major powers in Zoroastrianism – the beneficent creator, Ohrmazd (Ahura Mazda) and the malevolent Ahrimen – over the two halves of the human body. Indeed, there are original Middle Persian sources that confirm this "anatomical dualism" as a genuine Zoroastrian belief. So for example, one text from the ninth century describes a Zoroastrian–Muslim debate held in the presence of the Abbasid Caliph al-Ma'amun that concerns very similar terms. In that vein, it seems possible that the earlier passage about Rabban Gamliel and the emperor was slightly updated the Bavli's transmitters, with the final discussion

about the god who created the ear and his counterpart who formed the eye working as a kind of caricature of the Zoroastrian belief. Instead of reflecting a spirit–matter divide, like the first two proofs the emperor brings, these locate the gods on the human body, but do so in a way that pokes fun at the absurdity of the idea. The caricature directly leads up to Rabban Gamliel's final question ("at the time of death they are both appeased") which defeats the emperor once and for all (Secunda, 2010).

I have taken the time to delve into this example because, despite its apparent marginality, it is possible to look at this small textual artifact as representative of larger trends. That is, the case at hand can provide a certain amount of insight into the Bavli's role as a creative consolidator. First, when examining the way earlier, originally Palestinian, sources are incorporated into the Bavli, we need to pay careful attention to whether the texts were altered or adapted to reflect their milieu. Again, the protagonists in the Rabban Gamliel anecdote are marked as inhabitants of the Roman Empire, and two elements in the debate reflect some aspects of the theological realities there. This leads to the conclusion that the source originally derived from Roman Palestine. However, as we saw, the third and final verse and discussion point to a different kind of debate about anatomical dualism. Further, the fact that this anecdote is then juxtaposed to a debate about anatomical dualism set in Babylonia indicates that the Rabban Gamliel source has undergone some alteration.

That said, there is a point that could be, and should be, made even in cases where there is no evidence that the Bavli altered its sources. Specifically, even if the Bavli transmitted all of its received traditions faithfully, without updating, alteration, or adaptation, there still is value in considering the way that the experience of Sassanian Babylonia may have affected the way these sources were received and passed on. Recently, literary theory has progressively turned away from focusing on origins, authors, and even the independent status of literary works, and has instead emphasized the significance of the way texts are received and interpreted by their readers. This has had major implications for achieving a kind of self-awareness on the part of theorists as readers, but it is also important for understanding the dynamics of text reception, that is, the way texts are received by their readers.

The Talmudic rabbis, after all, were readers par excellence. Each time they cite a Mishnah, transmit the statement of an earlier sage, or interpret a text, they are engaged in the experience of reading. As readers, they do not need to alter the text in question in order for it to resonate in a distinct way within their world. The *new* reading of the source occurs automatically in the space between the performance of the text aloud, and the confines of their minds. As such, "reading" a source about a form of dualism encountered within Palestine could not but resonate in a unique way within a world that included Zoroastrians and Manichaeans. The same point could be made about virtually every text and source transmitted within the Babylonian Talmud and indeed any compilation of its kind. The consolidation

of the Bavli and Babylonian Judaism thus signifies a massive ingathering of sources, rituals, and beliefs that, though normally "faithfully" transmitted, inevitably came to mean something else in its new milieu.

What this means is that although the Bavli can justifiably be seen as the culmination of the rabbinic project, this is only a portion of its signification. The internal textual and religious antecedents of the Bavli and Babylonian Judaism are merely the material on which the rabbis wrote a new story – sometimes explicitly, though occasionally through the "silent" reading of the sources. The Babylonian consolidation was influenced by general cultural aspects of the Sassanian milieu, including such "banalities" as food, cuisine, and language, and "weightier" matters like theology and religion. And it, in turn, influenced further consolidations in the Jewish communities spread across the Diaspora.

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Part III

The Medieval World

Jews in Two Cultures

11

Jews in Christian Europe

Ashkenaz in the Middle Ages

Eva Haverkamp

Around the year 1200, Eleazar ben Juda ha-Roqeah (c. 1165–1238) told the following story with which he claimed the authenticity of particular pious traditions:

> They received the esoteric traditions about the arrangements of the prayers as well as the other esoteric traditions, rabbi from rabbi, all the way back to Abu Aaron, the son of R. Samuel the Prince [ha-Nasi], who had left Babylonia because of a certain incident, and he was therefore required to travel all over the world. He came to the land of Lombardy, to a certain city called Lucca. There he found our Rabbi Moses . . . and he transmitted to him all his esoteric traditions. This is R. Moses bar Qalonimos, son of R. Meshullam b. R. Qalonimos b. R. Juda. [Now R. Moses] was the first who emigrated from Lombardy, he and his sons, R. Qalonimos and R. Yequtiel, and his relative R. Itiel, as well as the rest of the people who counted. All of them were taken from Lombardy by King Charles who resettled them in Mainz. There they grew to prodigious numbers until 1096 when the Lord visited His wrath upon the holy communities. Then were we all destroyed, utterly destroyed, except for a few of our relatives who survived including R. Qalonimos the Elder. He transmitted [the esoteric tradition] . . . to R. Eleazar Hazan of Speyer. Eleazar Hazan transmitted them to R. Samuel [the] Pietist and R. Samuel [the Pietist] transmitted them to R. Juda [the] Pietist. And from him did I, the insignificant one [ha-qatan], receive the esoteric traditions about the prayers as well as other traditions. . .[1]

Part I: From the Beginnings to about 1100

Migration and first settlements

The order of transmission of lore and religious practice which Eleazar drew up is a familiar method and style of medieval Jewish historiography. Included in this

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account is the foundation history – or, better, myth – of the medieval Jewish communities north of the Alps: Emperor Charlemagne (768–814) himself had brought a group of Jews from Lombardy in Italy to the Rhineland center of Mainz. Despite the fact that the earliest reference to the Jewish community of Mainz dates only from the reign of the Ottonians and even though the story intends to create the history of a particular religious tradition, historical realities on several levels are amply reflected in this tale.[2]

Jews were serving at the court of Charlemagne. Three years before Charlemagne was crowned the first emperor of the Western Roman Empire (800), he ordered a certain Jew Isaac to accompany a delegation to the Abbasid caliph Harun al-Rashid (766–809). Mesopotamia – or Babylonia – with Baghdad was at the time not only the most important political and cultural center of the Islamic, but also of the Jewish, world with the exilarch and the geonim of the academies as influential leaders in the former Sassanian lands. Isaac's ability to communicate in this environment was surely an important reason for Charlemagne's trust in him.[3] The elephant which Isaac presented as one of the caliph's gifts to Charlemagne symbolized the success of the emissaries' mission in making the arising northern empire known to the Abbasid rulers.

The presence of Jews in Charlemagne's empire, which stretched over today's France, Germany, and northern Italy, was not restricted to the imperial court. Some Jewish communities in Provence – Narbonne, Arles, Avignon – were of late antique origin and continued to exist throughout the "Fall of the Roman Empire" and the early medieval migration period, which had otherwise devastating effects on probably all Jewish communities north of the Alps. Among those Jewish communities with interrupted continuity were Cologne and maybe Trier (at the eastern border of the Roman Empire) which reliable sources date back to the fourth century CE.[4] From southern France, Jews moved gradually to the north, "crossing" the Loire only in the eighth century, and reaching northeastern France in the ninth century.[5]

For these Jews in general, and also for some individuals and their families, Charlemagne and his successor Louis the Pious (r. 814–840) decreed legal and political charters[6] which created a close relationship with the Jews and established a tradition of protection. They regulated basic components of lawsuits between Christians and Jews (determining the number of Jewish and Christian witnesses and the kind of oath Jews had to give), and ordered in special cases direct jurisdiction through the emperor. Legislation was adopted for economic areas with religious implications, such as the prohibition to baptize slaves – and therefore free them – against the Jewish owner's will. This protective measure and the favorable treatment of Louis the Pious towards the Jews aroused angry resistance among religious circles, most prominently Bishop Agobard of Lyons (d. 840). Agobard and others aimed at isolating Jews from contacts with Christians.[7] Certain imperial prohibitions can be understood as compliant with these aims or as preventive actions against the involvement of Church authorities: in financial transactions,

Jews were not allowed to accept church property as pawn, and had to refrain from hiring Christian day labourers on Sundays and holidays. On the other hand, Louis the Pious defended his realm of influence against the Church by explicitly proclaiming his protection of individual Jews "*cum pares eorum*" (with their companions), demanding in return their fidelity.[8] This relationship was reciprocal, and reminds us of the personal obligations between a lord and his vassal.

Therefore, the story of Eleazar did not only reflect the close relationship of the two Carolingian emperors to the Jews, it also fostered this traditional relationship of protection by the emperors in general; in particular, it served as a foundation saga of Mainz that connected this community with the imperial house. From its beginnings in the tenth century, Mainz was the most important Jewish cultural center from Champagne in northeast France all the way to the east of Germany.

The earliest medieval Jewish settlements were Metz (893),[9] Cologne (ninth century, documented in 1012), and Trier (tenth century, documented in 1066). Jewish settlements in Troyes and Reims (in the Champagne region) developed in the tenth century, therefore around as early as Mainz,[10] Magdeburg,[11] and Regensburg (981), followed by Worms, Prague, and Speyer (1084)[12] in the eleventh century. These communities looked up to those in Speyer, Worms, and Mainz (in the Middle Rhine region and in close vicinity to each other), which gained such religious and legal prevalence that they were coined the "ShUM" communities (after their initials) and seen as the "birthplace" of Ashkenaz.

The formation of Jewish communities

Although the term Ashkenaz is already mentioned in the tenth century, the Jews preferred, till around the time of Eleazar, another term with a different connotation: Lotir or Land of Lotir, which clearly refers to Lotharingia and the *regnum Lotharii*.[13] As one of the three successors after the division of Charlemagne's empire it only existed between 843 and 870 as a kingdom; however, as the heartland of the Carolingian Empire it didn't lose its symbolic importance. While Christian rulers made claims to rule over all of Lotharingia till the twelfth century, the self-identification of Jews with Lotir lasted as long, but had a different quality.

The inclusion of Mainz, Worms, and, later, Speyer connected the ShUM communities with the three communities in Lotharingia – Cologne, Metz, and Trier – and the entity Lotir. The name Lotir for this region evoked the traditional relationship between Jews and the emperor, their protector, and had similar aims to the foundation saga transmitted by Eleazar. Therefore, Jews had weighty reasons for clinging to the name Lotir. What factors held this entity together and created such an identity?

The *Machzor Vitry*, a halakhic-liturgical book, says of particular circumstances of lighting a candle at Passover: "so they are accustomed to do in the Kingdom Lotir (Malchut Lotir)." In the same book, a collection of customs is referred to as

"Kuntres Lotir" (Booklet/Commentary of Lotir) or as "Seder Lotir" (the Order of Lotir). Even though probably written down by Rashi's (Shlomo ben Isaac, 1040–1105) "secretary" Simha ben Samuel of Vitry, and from a perspective outside of Lotir, we can assume a set of customs that were mostly uniform in Lotir.

Since the period up to the twelfth century was an era of immigration, the formation of such a set of customs and subsequently of a shared identity was rather complex. The waves of immigration to northern France and Germany proceeded on two routes: from Italy and from Spain via Provence to the north of France and to the Rhineland.[14] Despite the homogeneity of customs, there remained local differences, especially between Mainz and Worms, that can in part be attributed to varying traditions in the inhabitants' respective countries of origin. Whereas Mainz was under the influence of families who immigrated from Italy in the second half of the tenth century, the traditions of influential families in Worms were French.

Until the end of the eleventh century, only five families in Mainz and two families in Worms held the most important positions in their community.[15] Over generations, they held supremacy as social and spiritual leaders and represented their community in front of the Christian city ruler, the bishop. All but one of the rabbinic scholars of Mainz belonged to these distinguished and notable families, the *Mishpahot Meyuhasot*. Even the adoption of a majority voting system for communal matters in the second quarter of the eleventh century didn't jeopardize their position: the majority had to make sure that all of the "Old and the Great" – i.e., all members of the "notable families" – adhered to their opinion.[16] These families were related to each other by family ties that were further strengthened through teacher–student relationships. In order to secure their family positions, they also made sure that their daughters' rights were expanded: for instance, a ban was issued against divorcing a woman without her consent, and a rather high standard of the marriage *ketubba* (contract) ensured financial security in case of divorce or widowhood.[17] Consequently, the bearers of a "Lotir identity" were the "notable families," the scholars, and – last but not least – all community members who accepted communal decisions regarding customs and customary law.

This practice of local decision making was characteristic for rabbinical discussions. It was also based on the principle, already established by around 1000, according to which each community enjoyed autonomy in all legal affairs towards its members as well as towards other communities. As one of the first scholars, Meshullam ben Qalonimos (second half of the 10th century) allocated this autonomy and authority to each community by defining it as juridical court (*beit din*). By the thirteenth century, the community structure, its institutions, and functions were fully developed, due to the substantial rise of new community foundations and the pressure from a growing middle class who asserted a majority voting system without the predominance of the former "notable families."[18] The executive power to sanction lay in the hand of the *tovim*, between 7 and 12 "good people," who were elected by the community members and had the right

as well as the obligation to demand taxes.[19] The community decided who was admitted and who was banned from the city.[20] The *parnas*, the community leader, was in most cases not identical with the rabbis and scholars who were increasingly taking care of religious issues as legal decisions and teaching. This "professionalization" of the "rabbinate" gained momentum in the second half of the fifteenth century when rabbis were formally employed and given an income by the Jewish communities.[21]

This principle of communal autonomy and self-government is generally viewed as one of the most important achievements of the medieval Jewish Diaspora in northern Europe. Neither a structured, institutionalized, appointed leadership like that of the Nagid as in Spain, Kairouan, Egypt, or Yemen nor an even more influential central institution like that of an exilarch or gaon in the Middle East were adopted in medieval northern Europe.[22] Instead, as new foundations of immigration waves in a wide area, with long distances between Jewish communities, the communities in northern Europe had developed organizational principles which responded to the geographical isolation of each community. In the Rhineland, where the Jewish communities had settled in closer vicinity and also within the most advanced Christian urban space, representatives held assemblies to coordinate their diverse interests, their legal decisions, and to solve particular legal cases. In about 1200, 1220, and 1223, the ShUM communities created and signed on to a canon of *taqanot* (legal regulations) which became – as *Taqanot ShUM* – valid in all three communities and bolstered their predominance over smaller communities. This idea of coordination and cooperation between communities had a parallel development among the Christian cities of the Rhineland from the first half of the thirteenth century.[23]

The autonomy of each community in Lotir was also fostered by its relationship to Christian authorities. These Jewish communities had settled and developed in cathedral cities. Each of the bishops functioned both as the primary local protector of the Jewish community and as the Jews' direct mediator to the king's court. These bishops gave privileges to the Jewish communities of their city, acknowledging their communal self-government.

Also, with the granting of privileges in 1084, Rudiger Huozmann, bishop of Speyer, invited Jews to settle in order "to make a city out of his village" and to increase the reputation of his place of residence. The presence of Jews was, therefore, recognized as an important contribution towards urbanization. Within these cathedral cities, Jewish settlements were situated in the centers of urban communication, near the cathedrals and centers of power or at least in the direct area of markets and important roadways. The charters of 1084 stipulated a particular quarter and a location for the cemetery in Speyer which was given to the Jewish population on the condition of an annual fee. In general, the Jewish community was defined as an economic, religious-cultic, legal as well as a defense community: since most Jews till the twelfth century were traders, they welcomed the free right of exchanging gold and silver and of buying and selling within the city;

guests of the Speyer Jewish community were also exempted from paying tolls. Internal legal conflicts were adjudicated within the Jewish community; only indeterminable cases were brought to the attention of the bishop.

Glimpses into daily life indicate permission to sell to Christians meat Jews "consider unfit for themselves according to the sanctity of their law" and to employ Christian nurses and servants in Jewish households. This charter of 1084 is the first known catalogue of rights given not to Jewish individuals or to Jews in general, as in the Carolingian period, but to a Jewish community. Other communities received rights as well, however, Rudiger boasted that this charter would "grant [the Jews] a legal status more generous than any which the Jewish people have in any city of the German kingdom."[24]

Six years later, in 1090, the Jewish communities of Speyer and Worms gained the special protection of Salian emperor Henry IV.[25] His charters fixed the basic rights of the Jews on a broader basis, and created a new category of constitutional documents. By taking up Carolingian legislation and elements of Talmudic law, these charters were both referring to a traditional relationship between Jews and the emperor and complying with new needs and situations which Jews had communicated in their negotiations with Henry IV. In great detail, Henry defined his protection of each person against assaults from "any dignity or power, either small or great, either free man or serf." Religious persecution in the form of forced baptism was also prohibited.

The imperial protection extended to the Jews' "property . . . whether in land or in gardens or in vineyards or in fields or in slaves or in other property both movable and immovable." Not only did Henry reinforce the principle of protection for members of both communities which was formulated – for individual Jews – by Louis the Pious, he also shared Louis' standpoint on the baptism of slaves and expanded the freedom of trade and exemption from tolls to the whole empire. In juridical conflicts between Jews and Christians, "each may carry out justice and prove his case according to his law"; Jews were not to be subjected to the methods of any trial by ordeal. Disputes among Jews were to be solved within the Jewish community as was already stipulated by Bishop Rudiger. Interestingly, Henry added to Rudiger's permission of employment of Christians in households the Carolingian exemption of Christian festivals and Sundays. The list of items explicitly permissible to sell to Christians – although the free trade regulation should have covered these items – did not include meat as in Rudiger's charter, but mentioned wine, dyes, and medicine; all items which were traded in long-distance trade and reflected the knowledge of Mediterranean culture. Clearly, the Jews who had negotiated these permissions had been traders who also gained Henry's approval to apply a Talmudic regulation regarding the restitution of stolen goods in market situations.[26]

Despite the imperial privileges, the important powers remained with the bishops. In contrast, the Jews of Tzarfat (northern France) stood in the Isle de France in direct connection to the king, and in Champagne mainly to the dukes.

In the case of both regions, the autonomy of the Jewish communities didn't develop as thoroughly as in Lotir. It is indicative of a shared political reality that the Christian communities of France and the German Roman Empire stood in a similar relationship to the king and the dukes as the Jewish communities did in the respective regions. Nevertheless, the Christian political communities north of the Alps gained their relative autonomy only from the beginning of the twelfth century, and therefore later than the Jewish communities.[27]

The pogroms during the first Crusade in 1096

The assurances that were given to these communities were soon put to a gruesome test during the First Crusade in 1096. The foundation saga of Eleazar echoes the devastating persecutions by the Crusaders and the inhabitants of those towns in which the Jews had till then had neighbourly relations with Christians, in Speyer, Worms, Mainz, Cologne, Trier, Metz, Regensburg, and Prague: "There they grew to prodigious numbers until 1096 when the Lord visited his wrath upon the holy communities. Then were we all destroyed, utterly destroyed, except for a few of our relatives who survived. . . ."[28] Three Hebrew reports from the first half of the twelfth century describe the events in detail; they also give very high numbers of victims, especially for Mainz (1100 or 1300), Worms (800), and Cologne (300), and confirm in various aspects the trauma which these persecutions marked not only on the generation of victims but also on the memory of many Jews for centuries thereafter.[29]

Some of the Crusader groups legitimized their actions with the conviction that the Jews, just as the Muslims, were the enemies of Christ: these persecutors sought revenge on the Jews for the alleged collaboration of "their – the Jews' – fathers" in the killing of Christ.[30] The attackers pursued two goals, the death or the baptism of the Jews, as also reported by two of the Hebrew chronicles: "Let us wipe them out among the nations; so that the name of Israel be remembered no more, unless they become like us and profess [their belief] in the son [of the menstruating one]."[31] In order to avoid baptism, and therefore annihilation, many Jews preferred martyrdom as an act of "sanctifying the Divine Name" (*Qiddush ha-Shem*) on the model of the Aqedat Yitzhaq (the binding of Isaac by Abraham), which also included suicide and the killing of their fellow Jews.[32] This reaction, although also criticized, was soon recognized as an ideal of Ashkenazi Jews, in contrast to the communities of Jews in Spain, who more frequently preferred short-term conversion to martyrdom.[33]

As Eleazar's remark above suggests, the persecution of 1096 has been viewed and discussed as a watershed event by Jews throughout many centuries and by modern historians alike. With the persecution of 1096 a new model became the standard: the persecutions as a concomitant of a Crusade, as in the persecution in 1146/7, 1188, 1196, 1231, 1235, again in 1309 and 1421.[34]

It also left a profound impression on Christian contemporaries, among them Albertus Aquensis, who reports some time between 1100 and 1140 on the persecution of the Jews in 1096:

> The Jews, indeed, seeing how the Christian enemy were rising up against them and their little children and were sparing none of any age, even turned upon themselves and their companions, on children, women, mothers and sisters, and they all killed each other. Mothers with children at the breast – how horrible to relate – would cut their throats with knives, would stab others, preferring that they should die thus at their hands, rather than be killed by the weapons of the uncircumcised.[35]

The cited source and several others reflect what kind of knowledge and opinion Christians had about the martyrdom of the Jews. By referring to some of these texts, Israel Yuval has claimed that the apparent negative Christian attitude toward the Jewish martyrdom may have contributed to the appearance of a particularly hostile and distorted Christian interpretation of Jewish martyrology: namely, the accusation of ritual murder, the conviction that Jews kill not only their own children (in a ritual way), but Christian children in a ritual way and for ritual purposes, in general (in 1147) or in order to imitate the crucifixion of Christ (in Norwich in 1144) or to gain the children's blood for a variety of ritual and medical purposes (blood libel accusation).[36] These accusations could also be accompanied by a supposed miracle as in the case of Pforzheim in 1261: the dead body of a seven-year-old girl began to bleed and pointed to the Jews, her alleged murderers. The explanation which Thomas of Cantimpré (1201–1272) gave for this supposed action was similar to the one of Thomas of Monmouth (active between 1149 and 1173) for the events in Norwich in 1144: each year and in every country, Jews would draw by lot which Jewish community would have to provide "Christian blood" for everybody. Thomas of Cantimpré then argued that the Jews of Pforzheim sought to use this Christian blood as a remedy against the "blood flow," a supposedly particular Jewish illness.[37] All of the ritual murder or blood libel accusations, which are recur even today in parts of the world, were accompanied by persecutions of the accused.

Part II: From around 1100 to 1300

New methods in scholarship: reason and piety

As Eleazar pointed out, the persecutions affected Worms and Mainz as the intellectual centers of Lotir; many scholars were killed, among them those who had been in contact with Rashi, one of the most important scholars of the Middle Ages and himself a student in Mainz and Worms between 1055 and 1065. In Troyes,

Rashi and his school, the Tosafists ("the supplementers"), had attracted many students from Lotir by the first half of the twelfth century. A difference between Tzarfat (northern France) and the "Great Scholars of Lotir" comes to light in the kind of arguments used by Rashi and the Tosafists in their search for the literal and allegorical meaning of the Bible and the Talmud. Influenced by the Hebrew linguists of tenth-century Spain (particularly Menahem ben Saruq and Dunash ben Labrat), Rashi strived to explain the text in accordance with the rules of grammar and the syntactical context; he was searching for the *pshat* or the *peshuto shel miqra* – "the plain [or literal] meaning of the text" – "a term of marginal significance in the Talmud took centre stage in Rashi's usage, reflecting its paramount importance in his interpretive approach."[38] Whereas the Tosafists almost exclusively drew upon supporting texts in rabbinical and Talmudic literature, the argument of local tradition was much more convincing to Lotir's communities and scholars than to the Tosafists. Lotir's communities held on to their local traditions; in conflicts, the argument of a long-established praxis was valid and often decisive.[39]

Very gifted students who left the Rhineland centers and Bohemia to study in Tzarfat turned to Rabbi Yaaqov ben Meir, the grandson of Rashi, better known as Rabbenu Tam (d. 1171), who was "undoubtedly the primary figure to bring the new hermeneutic system to maturity." Students learned and developed these new methods of interpretation and analysis with such rigorousness, that a return to their home "institutions" and to more conservative approaches became very problematic. They preferred to establish their own schools in Regensburg, Würzburg, and Rothenburg which had become flourishing centers of trade with the East.[40] From now on, these communities remained on the map of the intellectual–cultural centers of Judaism.

In the course of the twelfth century, rising numbers of Jewish settlements east of the Rhine also led to increased acceptance and popularity of the term Ashkenaz over the designation Lotir. The term Lotir, with its orientation to the West, was ill suited to this new reality; it had incorporated Mainz, Worms, and Speyer, but it was unable to accommodate the shift farther east of the Rhine valley. Whereas in the past two centuries the term Ashkenaz had mainly been used to describe regions to the east of the new intellectual centers, the designation had now moved westwards – it encompassed the region from Lotir to Regensburg and further to the east. Being a biblical term derived from Genesis 10:2–5, 1 Chronicles 1:6, and Jeremiah 51:27, the term Ashkenaz[41] already had a long history of application to different regions in the East; it was therefore much more apt to be adopted and assimilated than the term Lotir with its origin in the political history of the Empire.

In the intellectual world, after more than a century of academic supremacy of Tzarfat over Ashkenaz, the cultural walls between Ashkenaz and Tzarfat were gradually lowered "in an ongoing and developing process that occurred during the second half of the twelfth century and reached its quantitative and qualitative peak in the literary output of Rabbi Isaac in the beginning of the thirteenth century," as Avraham Reiner has pointed out.[42] Rabbi Isaac ben Moses (Or

Zarua) of Vienna (bef. 1180–c. 1250) was a student of Eliezer ben Yoel ha-Levi of Bonn (Rabyah, d. 1235) who had studied in Regensburg and had made the French school of Rabbenu Tam acceptable in the more traditionally oriented Rhineland communities. Thus, Isaac Or Zarua, who also studied in Paris, became familiar with the German and French versions of Rabbenu Tam's teachings as well as with the teachings of Rabbenu Tam's successor Isaac ben Samuel of Dampierre (Isaac ha-Zaqen).

While the Jewish communities in Ashkenaz gradually acknowledged the Tosafists in their midst as legal and communal authorities, another group of scholars, the Haside Ashkenaz (the Pious of Ashkenaz), was gaining their attention. The leading figures of this new movement were Samuel ben Qalonimos (b. 1115), his son Juda ben Samuel the Hasid (1150–1217), and Juda's relative and main disciple, Eleazar ben Juda ha-Roqeah of Worms (1165–1238). Their theosophical ideas were influenced by the teachings of Jewish Neoplatonists, and were adopted by intellectual strings of the Spanish Kabbala.[43] At the center of these ideas stood the concept of an infinite and immeasurable God of pure spirituality who is omnipresent through a system of hypostases – the embracing intermediary "Kavod" or "Shekhina" – he reveals to the world.[44] Since God consists, therefore, of more than what is revealed to the world, his divine Will is also infinite, partly revealed in the Torah, partly hidden. The task of the Hasid, the Pious, is to detect and fulfill the concealed Will of God. In order for the Hasid to fulfill this task, God himself created the world as a series of trials which gives the Hasid the opportunity to strive to discover new prohibitions, to observe additional acts of religious conduct beyond those proscribed in the Halakha and to earn reward. Since "reward is proportional to pain" – which is one of the guiding principles – a casuistry of penitential acts corresponding to every degree of transgression was developed, such as: the amount of pleasure derived from sin served as criteria for self-imposed asceticism and atonement (*teshuvat ha-mishqal*). All principles pointed to the highest of all: "Be forever resourceful in fearing God" and fear – love – him with your "whole heart" – selflessly, sacrificially, totally![45] This kind of fear and love resembles a spiritualized form of *Qiddush ha-Shem*.[46] Therefore, the disastrous outcome of the 1096 persecutions has been discussed as another stimulus for the Haside Ashkenaz movement.[47] The attempt by contemporary Jews to explain the persecutions in religious terms as atonement for the adoration of the Golden Calf through the sacrifice of a generation chosen by God as especially worthy[48] could have inspired the belief that an even more pious conduct was according to God's will.

This new morality implied manifestations of asceticism, self-denial, radical humility, and even self-affliction in everyday life. Surely, not everybody was cut out for such a pious way of life! It was Juda, Samuel's son, who translated this new morality into a social elitist program and vision which also demanded political consequences. He distinguished between Pietist Jews and non-Pietist Jews, who were – according to his view – almost as "wicked" as Christians. His main

critique was directed against the communal leaders who are non-Pietists; he questioned their legitimacy, and instead propagated the charismatic and spiritual counter-leadership, a leadership for the elitist group of Pietists who would welcome new members only by initiation rites of ascetic atonement. However, the social claims for his own leadership authority, his eccentric claim to know the Will of God, and the underlying intent to force his ideas on non-Pietists made him and his group of followers rather unpopular. This reaction and a persecution in Speyer might have encouraged them to move to Regensburg.[49]

Sefer Hasidim, the nonmystical compilation of this Pietist lore and anthology of exempla, also provides a picturesque window into the daily life. Criticizing Jews for their "non-Pietist" behavior, the exempla portray quite close social interactions between Jews and Christians in all areas of society. For instance, business with monks, encounters in churches, the reading of Latin books written by monks, disguise as a nun to save a Jewish woman from rape, speak of direct cultural exchanges which the *Sefer Hasidim* – similar to Christian authorities – was attempting to curtail. Direct cooperation between Jews and Christian on the production of Hebrew books is attested in their art, as Sarit Shalev-Eyni has illustrated.[50] The existence of a shared culture between Christians and Jews in Ashkenaz which entails a rather detailed knowledge about each other, in particular regarding rituals, religious images, and symbols, has become generally accepted by today's scholarship.[51] This knowledge about each other could be used in disputations or – if severely distorted – resulted in deadly accusations. The complex relations between the penitential system and practices of the Haside Ashkenaz and those of the Christian movements of piety demonstrate how difficult it is to define the cultural boundaries between Jews and Christians in Ashkenaz.[52]

Whereas Juda's concept of an ideal Jewish society failed under the ridicule of fellow Jews, Eleazar ben Juda ha-Roqeah offered a nonsectarian and nonrevolutionary political version of a personalized piety within a conventional community and under formal leadership. *Hilekhot Hasidut* (Laws of Pietism) and *Hilekhot Teshuva* (Laws of Atonement) – as part of the preface to his handbook of Jewish Rhenish law and local custom *Sefer ha-Roqeah* – were written for the personal use of the sinner and diminished the central role of the sage advisor.[53]

Despite the differences between Samuel's, Juda's, and Eleazar's written works, they have one central aspect in common, as Ivan Marcus has put it: "The Tosafists stimulated the Pietists to commit to writing their traditions, based on earlier custom."[54] It was also in view of the Tosafists that Juda's book *Sefer Hasidim* emphasized the study of the laws of Jewish practice. On the other hand, it condoned a synthesis of newer and older methods for the most elite and well-trained Pietists, as long as "practical halakhah and other ethical and religious dimensions of Torah study be given preference over the more intellectualized pursuit of dialectic hiddushim" (i.e., innovations of the Tosafists).[55]

Evidently, Eleazar's myth reclaimed the priority of the older traditions over the new intellectual and dialectic approach of the Tosafists. On the other hand, a

number of Tosafists were not as Halakho- or Talmudocentric as Rabbenu Tam and earlier Tosafists, but seem to have been influenced by various aspects of the Pietist movement. Ephraim Kanarfogel has emphasized "the involvement of tosafists with mysticism and magic, and with asceticism and *perishut*" (separatism) which "represents the continuation of a pattern established during the pre-Crusade period in Mainz."[56] Since German as well as French Tosafists show this adaptation of aspects of the German piety movement, different paths of influence are discussed by today's scholars. Did the works of the Haside Ashkenaz also reach the French Tosafists, did the French version of Hasidut have an impact on French Tosafists, or stood the French Tosafists in the tradition of that pre-Crusade Ashkenazic rabbinic culture which Eleazar was referring to? To what extent did the Pietists and Tosafists – perhaps also independently – draw on the older traditions of asceticism, magical techniques, and mystical conceptions of Hekhalot texts?[57] Peter Schäfer has pointed to the roots in Hekhalot literature and related literature for many behaviors of the Haside Ashkenaz, who made these forms more pronounced and extensive.[58] In any case, after the subsiding of the Haside Ashkenaz movement in the second half of the thirteenth century, their concepts regarding penances and certain aspects of confession were accepted by a significant number of Ashkenazic rabbinic authorities in the late Middle Ages and beyond. Because of their references to Hasidic ideals and values, some Tosafists (and Haside Ashkenaz) were cited by various kabbalistic works and Ashkenazic *minhagim* (customs) were adopted by the Spanish kabbalistic work the Zohar.[59] Despite the intellectual and spiritual breath and openness among Tosafists and Hasidim, "the German Pietists remain the only Ashkenazic figures who expressed a strong interest in theosophy and produced a substantial, if not systematic, corpus in this area."[60]

In this light, the claim for priority implied by Eleazar's foundation myth was perhaps more political. The three leading Pietists belonged to the family of the Qalonimides. And by emphasizing their connection to Mainz and to their Italian ancestors who were among those who indeed brought the southern Italian traditions – along with the legal rulings of eighth- and ninth-century Baghdad – to study the Talmud to the north, Eleazar underscored the family's claim to leadership against the influence of the Tosafists over the Jewish communities.[61]

Protection and dependency

Another scion of the Qalonimos family, Qalonimos ben Meir of Speyer, served at the court of Emperor Frederic I Barbarossa (1152–1190); although his service was not combined with an official representation of the Jewish communities – such a position as it was known in Spain was not available in Ashkenaz – he used his service to reach a substantial tax reduction for his community. His conduct was praised by several Jewish scholars throughout the centuries and reflects the growing tension

between communities and their individual members, who could through personal tax exemptions granted by their rulers cause financial damage to their community and erode community ties.

Although the imperial protection in 1096 and, therefore, the promises of the privileges of 1090 had utterly failed, the Jewish communities still depended on such protection. In 1157, the Jews of Worms gained confirmation of the 1090 privileges from Emperor Frederic I Barbarossa. To strengthen the traditional close and direct relationship with the Jewish community, Frederic I also intended to exclude any competing claims over the Jews in any legal affair – "neither bishop nor treasurer nor count nor judge nor anyone . . . presume to deal with them or against them in any affair or exaction related to justice" – by introducing a legal constellation for the Jews which he also granted to specific Christian communities: "since they belong to our chamber [*ad cameram attineant*],"[62] i.e., they belong to the inner circle of the ruler's court and to the inner realm of his reign. This concept was applied to all Jews of the Empire even before Frederic explicitly expressed it in his privilege for the Jews of Regensburg in 1182. Just months after the expulsion of the Jews from French crown land by the French king Philip Augustus (1180–1223),[63] Frederic programmatically stated the inclusion of the Jews into his realm and his perception of the imperial office as protector of all *fideles*, Christians and Jews alike.[64] When, in 1188, the atmosphere of an impending Crusade caused persecutions of Jews in Mainz, the Jews of several communities were brought to fortified castles, among them Münzenberg, whose *camerarius* Kuno acted in the interests and as a representative of the emperor.

In 1236, Frederic II (1212–1250) reissued the privileges of his grandfather, and expanded them to all Jews of the Empire, but introduced the term *servi camerae*. The *servi camerae* status ("chamber serfdom") could now be interpreted to the disadvantage of the Jews, declaring them subordinated to the chamber as serfs or even unfree people.[65] The declaration itself was initially welcomed by the Jews since a severe blood libel accusation and persecution required the special protection of the Emperor.

Although many aspects of the 1236 privileges were, at the bequest of Jews, adopted into several statutes – in Austria (1244), Hungary (1251), Bohemia and Moravia (from 1255), Greater Poland (from 1264), Meissen (1265), as well as Silesia, Lesser Poland, and Ruthenia, and from the fourteenth century in Northern Italy – it is important to note that the term *servi* only entered the legislation of Bohemia and Poland. The *servi camerae* status was not unique to these "German" privileges. In 1176/7, statutes in the Kingdom of Aragon declared the Jews *servi regis*, and this term was adopted by several statutes in Castile as well. In France, the statute of Louis IX compared Jews to *servi* in 1230; and the English "Statute of Jewry" of 1275 defines Jews – they had arrived with the Norman conquerors in 1060 – as *serfs*.[66] Prior to these declarations, the more centralized reign in England and the French crown lands had established a binding relationship of the Jews to the king which excluded any competing claims over the Jews.

In the German Empire, the competing claims Frederic II intended to combat came especially from the Crusaders, the Pope (in 1240, Gregory IX condemned the Talmud and in 1242 in Paris had 24 wagonloads of Jewish books publicly burned), and the latter's "instrument," the Inquisition. Frederic's *servi camerae* declaration was occasioned by the blood libel accusation against the Jews in Fulda, Tauberbischofsheim, and Lauda, and the subsequent persecution by Crusaders in 1235. After consultations in imitation of an inquisition trial, Frederic II concluded publicly: "it was not indicated in the Old Testament or in the New that Jews lust for the drinking of human blood. Rather, precisely the opposite, they guard against the intake of all blood . . . We can surely assume that for those to whom even the blood of permitted animals is forbidden, the desire for human blood cannot exist . . . By this sentence of the princes, we pronounce the Jews of the aforesaid place and the rest of the Jews of Germany completely absolved of this imputed crime. . . ."[67] As a result he pronounced his protection for "our serfs the Jews." Even though Pope Innocent IV (1243–1254) in 1247, as well as several popes and secular authorities after him, clearly reiterated the absurdity of a blood libel accusation, the accusation remained widespread and led to many cruel and deadly persecutions.

In addition, the situation for the Jews became increasingly severe with changes of the papal policy under Pope Innocent III (1198–1216) which affected the general papal policy for centuries. In an attempt to assert the papal supremacy over secular rulers and the authority over the Jews, Innocent reinforced the patristic doctrine (issued by Augustine) of the "perpetual servitude" and subservience of the Jews (to Christians) for their alleged guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus, an idea which rapidly spread after 1234 by its inclusion in the Decrees of Pope Gregory IX (1227–1241), and which – ironically and unintended by the papacy – also underscored the legitimacy of the *servi camerae* status. To prevent "improper" subordination of Christians to Jews, the Fourth Lateran Council (1215) included four important decrees (paragraphs 67–70): Jewish moneylenders were prohibited from oppressing Christians with their "heavy and immoderate usury"; "Jews and Saracens shall easily be distinguishable from the rest of the populations by the quality of their clothes"; the prohibition "that Jews be given preferment in public office"; voluntary baptism was declared irreversible.[68] On the basis of a previous definition of forced baptism by Innocent III in 1201, a forcibly converted Jew was, in effect, prohibited from reverting to Judaism, a decree which overruled the papal protective policy since popes Gregory the Great (590–604) and Calixtus II (1119–1124).[69]

These canons reflect new developments in the daily relationships between Jews and Christians. Distinct signs on clothing were enforced in England (1218 by Henry III), Sicily (1221 by Frederic II), and in Aragon (1228 by James I of Aragon) in the wake of the council. In Germany, repeated attempts by church officials, councils, papal legates, and town councils especially from the fifteenth century to enforce distinctive garb – not only for Jews, but also for the Christian society – remained in

most cases unsuccessful. The badge in the form of a wheel was finally asserted in the sixteenth century.[70]

Economy: trade, moneylending, and other occupations

In the realm of economy, Jews came into the Carolingian Empire as merchants, who were either connected with the long-distance trade through other Jewish merchants or were themselves active on the different trade routes to Poland, Hungary, southern Russia, and Venice. As merchants of staple goods (for instance wine, grain, salted fish, horses and cattle, raw wool, garments, metal vessels) as well as luxury items (for example spices, medicine, precious textiles) and also slaves (although with no monopoly) they received privileges, including exemption from certain tolls.[71] Despite the negative labeling among religious circles of dealing with money as greed, their occupation in trade was seen as useful and valuable not only to the emperors, but also to the emerging urban societies of the eleventh century, so much so that, as mentioned above, in the perception of Bishop Rudiger the presence of Jews was "to make a city of the village of Speyer" (1084).[72]

Responsa – questions about legal matters to a scholar and his answers – reveal a merchants' culture of behavioral codes among Jews. According to some local customs, the relationship of a merchant to his Christian customers was exclusive and protected against competitors; the merchant was holding a monopoly on a particular customer. It was prohibited to intercept merchandise bound for a particular destination and to forestall the merchants of that location. When merchandise was arriving in the city, each merchant of that city was considered to have an equal right to the opportunities for profit and "to purchase an equal share of that merchandise."[73] In some cases, the community's control over the admittance of Jews to the city was used to curtail competition. Women were also among the merchants; Eliezer bar Nathan (d. c. 1150) underscored that women were "bailiffs and money changers and negotiate and loan and borrow and repay and receive payment and make and take deposits. . . ." Female merchants were even so much away on business, although not active in long-distance trade, that Eliezer ben Yoel ha-Levi (1140–1225) stated "that daily women go with two or three men, and they (the women) see that the scholars can not prevent nor prohibit it."[74]

Urbanization in the German kingdom expanded and intensified rapidly from the middle of the twelfth century. In an eastward direction it developed the areas east of the Elbe and Saale from the beginning of the thirteenth century when Jews arrived together with Christians from the west.[75]

More Christian merchants competed in the new markets of the old and the newly founded communities and established associations which excluded Jews. At the same time, the pace of monetary-based economic transactions increased and more demand for credit changed the opportunities for Jewish merchants. Since extending

credit as an investment strategy had always been part of the trade business and Jews had brought special know-how about credit mechanisms as family traditions from Italy and France or from the long-distance trade markets of the Mediterranean, they started to engage more and more in this former ancillary branch. From about the year 1000, Jews had played an important role in viticulture investments as well as in wine trade in the German kingdom; receiving wine as interest payments. Jewish moneylenders remained active in the wine trade during the later Middle Ages until the expulsions from towns and territories.[76] In some cases, Jewish owners of vineyards were personally involved in wine production, and, despite the prevalence of trade and moneylending, "there are further indications for some Jews making a living in agriculture."[77]

The service of Jews in matters of financial administration, toll, and coin minting was requested not only by Emperor Frederic I, but also by kings, counts, nobles, and bishops till the expulsions of the fourteenth to fifteenth centuries; they employed Jewish physicians as well.[78] In some cases, in which Jews acted as minters for Christian rulers and mint masters, coins carried the image of the Jewish minter or Jewish symbols together with the, however, dominant Christian equivalent. Until around 1230, the time of their disappearance, these symbols were used and accepted as proof regarding the high quality of the coin, and the mint master regarded the presence of Jews and Jewish symbols on their coins as advantageous. The main factor in changing the positive attitude towards the "Jewish coin" and the public display of cooperation with Jewish minters might have been the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215. In response to these decisions of the Council, the public demonstration of cooperation and of a close relationship between a Christian ruler and his Jewish minter might have been increasingly regarded as untenable and prone to criticism. This shift also meant that such coins were not to be commissioned since they might no longer be trusted by the general population.

A new negative stereotype of the Jewish moneylender was internalized by the broader population: Jews were increasingly represented as avaricious and idolatrous because of their supposed adoration of money and cupidity.[79] In 1146, Bernard of Clairvaux argued in favor of leaving the Jews alive since their presence would prevent the Christians' activity in moneylending, which he considered to be worse than Jewish moneylending; his attack on business with money was part of a criticism of society. And despite the statement of the Fourth Lateran Council: "the more the Christian Religion refrains from the exaction of usury, the more seriously does the Jewish Perfidy become rooted in it."[80] Christians from all social strata, including monasteries and clergy, remained in the credit business. The attack against moneylending was based on the biblical prohibition, for instance in Deuteronomy (23:20–21): "You shall not deduct interest from loans to your brother. But you may deduct interest from loans to foreigners." According to the interpretation of clerical scholars, Christians were not allowed to demand interest from other Christians, thereby labeling any form of taking interest as usury. While this biblical prohibition was – of course – also binding among Jews, Jews and

Christians found ways to circumvent it and enable the taking of interest among their coreligionists, often through joint ventures, or partnerships. In some cases, a Jew or a Christian was asked to function as the middleman to facilitate business among coreligionists; in others, Jews could be indebted to Christian moneylenders. Jews didn't hold a monopoly in the credit business. Italian Christian moneylenders, the "Lombards" (from Piedmont), were advancing in the fast-growing business. From the thirteenth century on, the number of their banks admitted by secular and ecclesiastical rulers north of the Alps rose exponentially.[81]

Despite the fact that this prohibition didn't apply to moneylending between Jews and Christians, influential circles arguing that moneylending is theft and leads to "stealing time from God" equated Jews with moneylenders. The term *judaizare*, once meaning "to make Jewish," was now used for "lending money." In other words: "money-lending was not condemned because it was exclusively or primarily a 'Jewish activity,' rather, because money-lending was condemned, it became a 'Jewish' activity."[82] All kinds of rulers – kings, bishops, counts, abbots – however, condoned the moneylending activities of the Jews (apart from the fact that they themselves had to raise substantial capital) since it served them as control mechanism over important "people of interest" who had loans from Jews. The successful moneylending business of Jews also allowed rulers to exact higher taxes from them. So much so that Isaac ben Moses Or Zarua (d. c. 1250), one of the most respected scholars of his time, restated the opinion of Isaac ben Samuel of Dampierre (d. c. 1200) who declared moneylending of Jews to Christians permissible for the following reason: "since everything we give as a loan, is necessary for our survival since we don't know how much tax the king is going to demand."[83] New demands had to be met or averted with bribe money.

With the substantial increase of moneylending from the thirteenth century, the relationship of the Jewish communities to the rulers who promised to secure their safety had become more and more fiscally driven. This development also affected the *servi camerae* relationship to the king. In 1286, Rudolf of Habsburg justified the property confiscation of Jews who had left his reign by declaring all Jews of the Empire as his possession in person and property. A similar policy of personal property had been decreed by the French king Louis IX (1226–1270) in 1230, relating to the lords and their relationship to "their" Jews: that no one should "obtain" the other's Jew.[84] Confiscation and arrest with ransom demands of individuals or whole communities were frequent instruments to press money from Jews, not only used by Rudolf I but also by princes and lords.[85] The most prominent victim was one of the greatest legal authorities, Rabbi Meir of Rothenburg, who was held prisoner by Rudolf from 1286 until his death in 1293. His body was held until 1307, when Alexander of Wimpfen paid the ransom money – Meir had refused and prohibited others to pay during his lifetime – to release it.[86] Extortion methods were also applied to the moneylending sector. In general, the Jews' credit business was regarded as an extension of the treasury of the king or other ruler under whose dominion the Jews lived; and the Jews had to

comply since they depended on the ruler's authority in enforcing the payment of interest and principal from their debtors. For this "service" of collecting interest and debt, the rulers often demanded a share of the profit; in some cases, they received or paid off the debts of the nobles, which allowed them to put political pressure on them.[87]

Another problem for Jewish moneylenders was a particular clause, *Schadennehmen*, in the contract between Christian business partners, popular since the thirteenth century, especially during economic crisis and in times of hunger. If one of the partners defaulted on his obligations, the other was protected by a credit from a Jewish moneylender in the name of the defaulting partner. It was then very unlikely that the Jewish moneylender – dealing with a bankrupt – would see any of his money returned to him. Furthermore, in the public opinion, he was perceived as oppressor of an unfortunate Christian who, although bankrupt, had to pay high interest rates to the Jew.

Persecutions in Ashkenaz in times of Western European expulsions

A continued series of regional and local persecutions as well as expulsions from England and France from the end of the thirteenth century made the economic interlacing of moneylending with politics and social problems apparent. Under the pretense of noncompliance with the prohibition on moneylending in the Statutum de Judeismo (1275), King Edward I ordered, in July 1290, all Jews of England to leave the island by November 1 and restore all pledges to their debtors. The king relinquished "his" Jews as a political instrument (through the Jews' moneylending business) against the barons and magnates. In return, the parliament granted him the single largest tax collection in medieval Europe.[88] English refugees to the continent were soon affected by another wave of expulsions in France which had begun in 1283 under Philip III. After regional expulsions from Gascony, Maine, Anjou, Poitou, and Nevers, Philip IV expelled the Jews from the Crown land in 1306; after their readmittance in 1315, Charles IV repeated the expulsion in 1322, the final expulsion being in 1394 by Charles VI.[89] These expulsions were enacted under a pretense of combating usury, but in fact they served to rob the Jews.

Though in the German-Roman Empire waves of expulsions of Jews set in only toward the end of the fourteenth century, persecutions had similar or even more brutal effects, reaching large regional dimensions. In 1287 in Oberwesel, Jews were accused of having ritually murdered a boy, the "Good Werner"; this accusation led to persecutions of Jews in the Middle Rhine and the Mosel area till 1289.[90] This incident occurred only one year after the blood libel accusation in Munich, where Jews were accused of drinking the blood of Christian children allegedly murdered by them. A new libel accompanied the "Rintfleisch" persecutions of 1298: since the Fourth Lateran Council had officially recognized the transubstantiation doctrine, the belief that the wafer and the wine actually become the body and the blood of

Christ through its consecration, led to the allegation that Jews would profane consecrated wafers/hosts with the intention to torture and kill Christ repeatedly, and, therefore, enact another form of ritual murder.[91]

During these persecutions, named after Rintfleisch, the leader of the marauding gangs, about 5000 Jews in about 130 locations, mainly in Franconia between Nuremberg, Würzburg and Rothenburg, were murdered; only after having won a conflict over the throne could King Albrecht I (1298–1308) intervene. These brutal killings, during which baptism was no option for escape, were orchestrated by the lower and middle classes of towns and villages, who since the thirteenth century had become increasingly dependent on credit, and were often indebted to Jews. Viniculture and agriculture – expanding areas in the middle Rhine valley and the regions south of the Main – were prone to great risks due to market developments and weather; interest rates were higher than for longer-standing credits, and this often led to resentment against Jews.

Persecutions with stronger economic motives and with regional dimensions, as well as the financial interpretations of the relationships between the Jewish communities and the rulers, their protectors, mark a turning phase for the history of the Jews in the German kingdom. The expulsions of the Jews from England and France increased the pressure on the Jews, and encouraged rulers and different strata of society in Germany in their actions against Jews. In France, the burning of the Talmud in 1242 had made a traumatic impression on Jewish scholars which Meir of Rothenburg (c. 1220–1293) had witnessed and captured in poetical lamentations. The expulsions from France severed the German Jewish scholars from an intellectual "lifeline" which had over centuries produced the ground for fruitful discussions among French and German Tosafists; this scholarly world was mirrored in the argumentative style of their scholarship. Meir of Rothenburg was the last and greatest scholar of this genre and of generations of scholars who had combined – as had Meir's teacher Isaac Or Zarua and his teacher Eleazar ben Juda ha-Roqeah – the Tosafists' approach with particular pietistic ideals (for instance asceticism) and traditions which had been further developed by the Haside Ashkenaz. His pupils, among them Meir ha-Cohen and Mordekhai ben Hillel, produced Talmudic compilations which served the scholars of the Later Middle Ages as important references for these halakhic traditions.[92] Neither Italian nor Eastern European scholars were yet able to fill in for the loss of the French schools.

Part III: Between the Western European Turning Phase and the Black Death

The presence of Jews in the German kingdom reached its peak by the first half of the fourteenth century. From around ten Jewish settlements at the time of the First Crusade, the numbers rose to about five hundred about 1300 and to about a

thousand before the disastrous persecutions during the Black Death.[93] This development was part of a general population increase during which the number of towns multiplied from about five hundred around the year 1150 to about 3500 around 1350.[94] Many of the new settlements of Jews within the newly founded towns consisted of only one or two families. The Armleder persecution destroyed the most densely populated areas of Jewish settlement, where Jews had settled since the thirteenth century.

Politics in regional persecutions

An economically motivated social uprising directed against the upper classes and the clergy could easily turn against Jews who were the "weakest link." This was the case in the regionally largest and most devastating pogroms of Ashkenaz before the persecutions during the Black Death. In 1336, the knight Arnold von Uissigheim led, as "King Armleder," his "troops" of small farmers and town people against several towns, starting in the same area, in Röttingen, in which the Rintfleisch persecution had began. Even after Arnold's arrest and execution by Count Gottfried of Hohenlohe, persecutions continued till 1338 and spread from Franconia to Hesse, the middle Rhine area, and Alsace. Sixty-five Jewish communities were attacked and largely wiped out.

The actions which Emperor Louis the Bavarian (1282–1347) took during these persecutions are indicative of wideranging developments since the first half of the thirteenth century. Under the reign of Frederic II, royal rule in general and regarding Jews had been substantially weakened, leaving the power over Jewish communities, in particular over the new foundations, to the bishops, princes, and counts. The "Judenregal," the royal privilege to rule over Jews, protect them, and receive in turn their taxes, – as implied and emphasized in the *servi camerae* status – was de facto enforced in the imperial cities and territories only.[95] In their endeavor to strengthen their royal power, subsequent kings and emperors started to utilize the Judenregal and the *servi camerae* status as a fiscal instrument to build up a constituency by granting or pawning these rights to bishops, princes, counts, and towns. The Jewish communities, who through their dependency on local and imperial protection had always been vulnerable, were now catapulted "into the firing line" of political and social conflicts. Through the commercialization of the Judenregal and subsequently of the protection of the Jews, the Jewish communities themselves were objectified, at the "mercy" of highly individualized decisions which were informed by combinations of local, regional, and state politics.

This explains why Emperor Louis the Bavarian showed no response to the killing of the Jews of Rufach and Sulz who "belonged" to the Bishop of Strasburg but intervened with an army to protect the Jews and the Jewish refugees in Colmar. His intervention secured his taxes from the Jews, since he was still in the possession of the Judenregal in the imperial city of Colmar. But he also had the Jews of Colmar

pay additional sums for this protection and for Louis' support of the anti-Armleder league in 1338. When he asked the city of Colmar to advance this extra duty, the Jews of Colmar were thrown into an additional dependence on the city of Colmar. The city council of Colmar also took over the responsibility for the tax payments of the Jews to the emperor, and received in return the possessions of the Jews including loans and pawns for two years. It is a reflection of the real security situation that the Jews of Colmar had not actually been saved by the imperial army, but by successful negotiations of patricians with anti-Jewish "forces" within the city.[96] This example shows how fiscal reasons dominated protection obligations, how the protection policy served power politics, and how, despite the payments to the emperor, security for the Jews very much depended on the outcome of local politics.

As the city councils gained influence and political weight, the situation of the Jews was often determined by complicated power constellations, as was the case in 1338 in Trier. In fear of the Armleder persecutions, Archbishop Baldwin of Trier accommodated the demands of the city council, which asked for the curtailment of the Jewish community to fifty families and a reduction of interest rates for credits of the Trier burghers with the local Jews. The city council promised, in return, the protection of the Jews, which, however, the Jews had to pay for with a rather high annual fee. In addition, the city council "took hostage" of the Jews by threatening to denounce their protection promise as soon as conflicts arose between the city council and the Archbishop. It is obvious that Archbishop Baldwin, who was otherwise a highly influential "player" in the politics of the empire, was unable to protect the Jews under his dominion.

Nevertheless, in his endeavor to profit from the financial opportunities of "his Jews" as much as possible, he adopted a particular form of dependency of the Jews towards the ruler. Jews who entered the relationship of "Erbeigenschaft" to the ruler relinquished direct ownership (*dominium directum*) over their property to the ruler, keeping only *dominium utile* (beneficial ownership). In hope of effective protection from the ruler, Jews agreed to marry and bequeath only among other Jewish "Erbeigenen." On the one hand, these Jews were not allowed to settle outside the dominion of the ruler, on the other, their right of residence remained unlimited. Despite the severe conditions of this Erbeigenschaft, it even gained attractiveness after 1349 when unlimited rights of residence for free Jews became almost impossible to obtain.[97]

The city council as well as the local lord and the artisan guilds increasingly regulated from the beginning of the fourteenth century the occupation of Jews as artisans and merchants. Political pressure came from the artisan guilds, which had gained more weight in the political processes of the city councils and contested the competition from nonmember artisans. Despite the prevalence of moneylenders among Jews in Christian public opinion, Jews remained active in a variety of crafts and in locations where curtailments were not or were only partly enacted; some of these crafts had close relations to trade and moneylending, or provided

self-subsistence with kosher food products and ritual cloths. According to the Responsa literature, especially of Meir of Rothenburg, Jews were landlords renting out houses, mint masters (sometimes in cooperation with Christian mint masters), traders of silver, lead, wool, furs, horses, items taken in pawn (of all sorts), wine, and general merchandise. Pawned items often needed to be overhauled or repaired before selling, and vineyards were accepted as pledges by moneylenders who were sometimes also winegrowers. In order to prevent contact with Christians and to eliminate competition, the activities of Jewish butchers, tailors, bakers, and brewers were severely curtailed by Christian authorities.

Due to their religious and political nature – as confraternia bound by oath they constituted a religious community with a patron saint and participated in the election of the mayor – the guilds generally excluded Jews, which makes the order of the guild in Esslingen so remarkable; there, in 1331, Jews were explicitly admitted to the guild of the tanners and parchment makers without requiring them to renounce their religion.[98]

The Armleder persecutions left Jewish communities in large areas of southern Germany devastated. They were accompanied, in 1337, by persecutions in Lower Bavaria which affected Deggendorf and about twenty Jewish communities; a Host desecration libel was propagated to legitimate the atrocities. A year later, and under the same pretext, around thirty settlements were destroyed in Lower and Upper Austria, Bohemia, and southern Moravia, starting in Pulkau.

Emperor Louis the Bavarian, who had used the granting of the "Judenregal" for his imperial politics, added another financial obligation to the Jews to fill his treasury. In 1342 he ordered the "goldener Opferpfennig," an annual head tax of one gulden for all Jews of the empire above age 12. With this first head tax in the history of the German-Roman Empire, Louis claimed direct dominion over all Jews even though he had granted away or pawned the Judenregal over many of them. Out of gratitude for political support he canceled all debt obligations to Jews for the Bishop of Speyer (in 1315) and the Burgrave of Nuremberg (in 1343). This instrument, ironically coined "Schuldentilgung" (debt redemption), had disastrous effects on the business of many Jewish moneylenders; it had been exercised by French and English kings from the twelfth century. All of these actions were based on Louis' interpretation of *servi camerae*. Emperor Charles IV (1346–1378) repeated the same programmatic interpretation that "all Jews belong to our *camera* in their body and possessions." In the Golden Bull of 1356, the Judenregal was granted to the prince electors together with the regal for mining (*Bergwerksregal*) and the regal for toll (*Zollregal*).

The Black Death

The Black Death (from 1347 in Europe) was the greatest catastrophe for most parts of Europe during the Middle Ages. The *pestilentia permaxima* (greatest

plague) – transmitted by rat fleas reaching Europe from the Himalayas on trade routes by ship across the Mediterranean – and later eruptions killed between 25 and 50 percent of the general population, who in northern Europe had already suffered a death toll of about 15 percent during the great famine between 1315 and 1318. In addition to the plague, the Jewish communities were threatened and suffered persecutions on the largest scale between 1348 and 1351; only communities at the fringes of the Empire, in Bohemia, Slovenia, and Austria, were spared persecution.

For centuries, Jews had been suspected and accused of attempting to kill Christians through such crimes as ritual murder, blood libel, or desecration of the host. In the fourteenth century, these allegations were transferred to the context of mass dying. Especially in the German-Roman Empire, Jews were accused of conspiring together with their coreligionists against Christians and causing the plague by poisoning the wells in order to gain control over Christians. As in the Armleder pogroms, conversion to Christianity was no option to escape this accusation and persecution, and economic motives related to the moneylending business were important factors. Pogroms and persecutions predated in most cases the arrival of the plague in the area, and the appearance of the radical flagellants was not the immediate cause for the outbreak of violence against Jews. Instead, persecution and killings of Jews could take the course of spontaneous outbreaks intensified by rumors about well-poisoning, sermons by Franciscans, often on Sundays or holidays, or were carefully initiated and orchestrated to serve the interest of several social and political groups in political conflicts involving cities – also among city councils, guilds, patricians, burgers, and artisans –noble rulers, and the emperor. In Erfurt, for instance, a group of patricians keen on killing the local Jews obtained a letter of support from the Margrave Frederic II of Meissen who had legal claims over the Jews of Erfurt, and reached their "goal" despite the initial resistance of the city council. Since 1346, Charles IV had been in conflict with the dynasty of the Wittelsbacher, in particular with Günther von Schwarzburg (king from January till May 1349), over the imperial throne; by granting the Judenregal to nobles or cities he applied a traditional method in order to gain political support. This time, however, he combined such grants with the assurance – for instance in the case of Frankfurt, given one month prior to the deadly persecution – that in cases of pogroms the beneficiary could keep a large portion of possessions and credits of the killed Jews. In accordance with his interpretation of the *servi camerae* status, he granted not only rights over Jews, but their possessions, as well as houses and the synagogue, for a new marketplace in the city of Nuremberg – about three weeks before the pogrom in December 1349. The pogroms of Jews in Nuremberg went not only unpunished; Charles also confirmed to the city in 1350 the possessions of all killed Jews.[99] In contrast to the persecutions of 1096 and 1298, when due to the political weakness of the emperor the protection of the Jews failed, Charles IV took advantage of the persecutions, politically and even financially. He could often count on the political elite who, in pursuit of

their own goals, used lower classes of urban society as their instruments against the Jewish population.[100]

Part IV: Movements to the East and to the South (1350–1520)

In some locations small numbers of Jews started to be readmitted months after the disastrous persecutions. In most cases, however, it took decades before Jews returned, and, even then, the continuation of new settlements was interrupted by several expulsions or abruptly ended by final local or regional expulsions some time between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century. These rather small settlements and their conditions differed in many ways from the communities before 1349. Jews hesitated to return to the western cities and towns; fewer than half of them were repopulated. This eastward shift within the German kingdom was already indicative of the emigration movements towards Eastern Europe in the wake of the final expulsions. It also negatively affected the centers of Jewish scholarship in the West, which had largely lost their intellectual elite.[101] Austria, since it had suffered less from the Black Death persecutions, attracted students and scholars from all over northern Europe. In Vienna, Aaron Klausner (d. 1408), Shalom Neustadt (d. 1415/16), Jekel of Eger, and Aaron Bluemlin established the "Austrian School," which was struck by deadly blows during the persecutions of 1420/21 ("Gezera of Vienna"). The students of this school dispersed over the different communities of the empire, but were unable to create centers of scholarship of the same status. Nevertheless, they functioned as supportive leaders, among them the great authority Jacob Molin (Maharil, d. 1427), for communities who repeatedly struggled with life-threatening situations and expulsions. Also, because of these realities, scholars produced praxis-oriented compilations of law, Responsa collections, and wrote down books of local customs (*minhagim*).[102]

In contrast to the time before 1348, collective privileges for communities or groups of Jews were now granted in very few exceptional cases. Admittance and the right to abode was predominantly based on "letters of protection" (*Schutzbriefe*) for individuals with their family and households; these rights specified in the "letters of protection" were granted for a limited and specified period of time between one and six years or, if unlimited, could be revoked at any time or within one to three months. The limitation of "letters of protection" – first documented for 1252 in Cologne – often extended to the main areas of life, most importantly permitting moneylending or other occupations while regulating conditions such as interest rates and the pawn business. These letters and the protection they promised had to be paid for by high annual taxes and were renegotiated when up for renewal. They did not protect from customs fees, additional special taxes, or debt redemptions (*Schuldentilgungen*), if not explicitly mentioned in the letters. This individualization of the legal status of Jews – which also affected the areas of jurisdiction – was further

stratified by special privileges (with tax reductions) for people with special status as physicians,[103] diplomats, and financiers serving at the court of rulers. At the other end of the social ladder were those in the service of a "Schutzjude," for example as a teacher or a maid, Jews without a "letter" who paid taxes and were, therefore, tolerated, or those Jews without any protection who were threatened with expulsion anytime.[104] The hospices of the communities, who in the High Middle Ages had mainly welcomed strangers, were now providing for more and more poor people. These poor, deprived of any right of residence, moved from community to community in search of small livelihoods.[105]

Besides occupations in the service of lords, sources after 1350 and till the beginning of the sixteenth century also mention Jews in the leatherworking industry as shoemaker, girdle maker, furrier, or saddler; in metal processing as polisher, blacksmith, gunsmith, or goldsmith; in textile production as weaver and dyer. Bookbinder, book printer, painter, maker of playing cards and dice, miller, mason, glazier, and window-maker were also possible roles.[106] The variety of professions should not hide the fact that the numbers for these professions are rather small, and not comparable to the much broader representation of Jews in a much more diverse range of professions in the Mediterranean world. Jews were admitted in these professions because they offered a niche in the economy of a particular town.

Several cities, among them Augsburg, granted – for an additional fee – citizenship to their Jews (*concivilitas*). This citizenship guaranteed the right of residence (depending on the stipulations of the *Schutzbriefe*), promised – in return for taxes – protection of life and possessions, protection against legal claims from outside courts, and trade without restrictions. This policy seems to make reference to the privileges granted to the Jews in 1090 by Emperor Henry IV. In times of politics driven by the *servi camerae* concept, however, these rights established more than ever the claims of the city council over the Jews. In hope of additional protection, the community of the Jews paid its taxes now to the city council as well as to their other protectors.[107]

Additional and increasingly higher taxes and fees payable to more than one ruler, cancellations of debts and interest payments as well as allocating credits forced by protectors, credits to bankrupted Christian business men, the fixation of low interest rates (as regulated in "letters of protection"), and the payment of bribes: all these became "legal" methods to expropriate Jews and extort large sums of money from them. Considering these opportunities for Christians, persecutions of Jews were not "necessary."

A majority of the Jews who had been admitted with "letters of protection" were moneylenders who were carrying the burden of these financial obligations (in addition to higher social and financial obligations, including alms, towards those unfortunate Jews who depended on their coreligionists). Their clients changed gradually from the end of the fourteenth century: fewer nobles and burghers were turning to Jews – the competition of Christian moneylenders was noticeable. More than before, Jews were giving credit to artisans and farmers of the

middle and lower classes, with rather high interest rates due to high risks, which often resulted in explosive resentment against the Jewish population. No large profits could be expected from these types of business (based on pawning); since it became increasingly difficult to meet the financial demands of the rulers, many Jews were impoverished. Jewish moneylenders suffered another peak of financial extortion with long-term effects as a result of two large debt redemptions by King Wenzel (1376–1400) which forced many Jews to emigrate. For a generous fee to his own treasury, King Wenzel decreed in 1385 the cancellation of interest payments benefiting 37 cities; in 1390, he ordered the cancellation of the principal and the interest in favor of princes, nobles, and their subjects in large areas of southern Germany.[108] The interest of high society and its rulers in preserving the presence of Jews diminished with their increasing poverty, since Jews ceased to be able to provide the necessary funds to finance high society's politics and businesses.

This situation encouraged the spreading of religious propaganda against usury and attacks against Jews. Traditional perceptions about the Jews as enemies of Christ were openly preached in sermons, especially by the mendicant orders, and eagerly accepted by all strata of society. The political urban communities increasingly perceived themselves as *corpus Christi mysticum* ("the mystical body of Christ"). Separating the Jews not only from the religious community of this corpus, but also from the political community of a city, seemed to many political groups necessary and legitimate goals.[109]

In consequence, till 1520 Jewish communities were expelled from most of the territories and larger cities. Among the old medieval Jewish communities, only Worms, Frankfurt am Main, and Prague survived. The expulsions followed judicial procedures. Whereas the expulsions of the Jews from England and France were acts of kings and the upper political elite, the territorial and urban expulsions in Germany were initiated by all strata of society. The individualization of the legal status of the Jews coincided with and made it possible that even personal decisions of individual rulers would lead to an expulsion. Expulsions were decreed, and accompanied by persecutions; a simple method was to revoke or not to renew letters of protection. The perpetrators, the involved Christian social groups and communities, aimed for the money and the property of the Jews. Thus, the newly founded university of Heidelberg (1386) acquired its buildings by confiscating the property of expelled Jews. The reasons for expulsions became arbitrary.

Where did these Jews go? In the wake of these expulsions, Ashkenaz changed, geographically and culturally. Those Jews who since about 1375 had turned to northern Italy in hope of finding better conditions, benefited from previous business relations into these regions, sometimes with family members. Most of them emigrated to the eastern parts of northern Italy, while former French Jews populated – increasingly after 1394 – the western Italian communities, both groups encountering Italian Jews. From the Iberian Peninsula, Jews arrived in the wake of the persecutions of 1391 as well as after the expulsion from Spain in 1492, southern Italy, and Sicily. Although to some extent within a melting pot, the Jewish

communities with their different backgrounds took care of their own traditions and prospered in their own cultural realms, accepted as citizens of the Italian cities.

Jews who turned to Eastern Europe (Poland and Hungary) from the fifteenth century found there legal traditions of mostly German origin, based on the privileges of 1090.[110] The Ashkenazic religious, legal, and communal traditions which immigrants brought with them, and those cultivated in the East, were so prevalent that the cultural center of Ashkenaz moved to the East. This geographic shift of the center of Ashkenazic culture to the East was slowly reversed in the seventeenth century, forced by the persecutions of 1648.

Notes

1 Translation is that of Marcus (1981: 67); see also Shatzmiller (1985).
2 Marcus (1998a, 1998b: 122–126). For other tales see also Raspe (2010).
3 Raspe (2010: 17); Aronius (1970: 25–26).
4 Linder (1987: 120–124, 132–138). For a different view see Schütte (2004).
5 See the discussion since 2001 and most recently between Friedrich Lotter (2004) and Michael Toch (2005).
6 Linder (1997: 333–347); Aronius (1970: 26–33).
7 Schreckenberg (1991: 491–499).
8 Linder (1997: 334–337).
9 Linder (1997: 552–553).
10 Schieffer (1998).
11 Ta-Shma (1997a).
12 Haverkamp (2005: 490–493); Porsche (2004); Transier (2004).
13 Weinreich (1980: 328–347); Gross and Schwarzfuchs (1969: 293–305).
14 Grossman (1996); Stow (1995).
15 Grossman (1992b, 1985).
16 Grossman (1975); Kanarfogel (1992a).
17 Grossman (1993, 2004).
18 Toch (2003a: 18–19; Grossman (1975); Kanarfogel (1992a).
19 Kanarfogel (1992a, 2000a).
20 Finkelstein (1924: 6–15); Toch (2003a: 19).
21 Yuval (1988).
22 Toch (2003a: 18).
23 Barzen (2003, 2004, 2012).
24 Chazan (1980: 58–59).
25 Chazan (1980: 60–66); Linder (1997: 353–358), for Worms. Gladiss (1959: 543–549). Appelt (1975: 284–286).
26 Lotter (1990).
27 Cluse, *Haverkamp and Yuval* (2003).
28 See the discussion on p. 169.
29 Cohen (2004); Haverkamp (2005: 20–24); Chazan (2000); Marcus (1999). In Regensburg, all Jews were forcibly baptized.

30 Cohen (2007).
31 Haverkamp (2005: 1–14, 252–253).
32 Haverkamp (2005: 14–24, 2009); Shepkaru (2006).
33 Yuval (2006: 172–173).
34 Mentgen (1999).
35 Edgington (2007: 52–53); Haverkamp (2008: 82).
36 Yuval (2006: 159–204).
37 Cluse (2000: 324–331).
38 Grossman (2000: 335, 337); Ta-Shma (1997b).
39 Reiner (2004: 275); (Ta-Shma 1992: 95–98); Soloveitchik (1985).
40 Reiner (2004: 277–278).
41 Marcus (2002: 449–450); Grossman (1988: 1); Krauss (1932); Elbogen, Freimann, and Tykocinski (1963: 11). The term "Ashkenaz" also superseded the terms "Alemania," and the "Rinus."
42 Reiner (2004: 276).
43 Kanarfogel (2000b: 256–257).
44 Scholem (1961: 111–116).
45 Marcus (1981: 11–12 and 21–52).
46 Schäfer (2004: 33–34).
47 Marcus (1981: 150–151, 2002: 485–486).
48 Haverkamp (2005: 15).
49 Marcus (1998b: 111–118, 1981: 55–106).
50 Shalev-Eyni (2010).
51 Schäfer (2004); Marcus (2002: 484–493, and 1996); see also Przybilski (2010), and for the 1096 chronicles Haverkamp (2009); Yuval (2006); Cohen (2004).
52 Fishman (2004, 2011).
53 Marcus (1998b: 118–126, 1981: 109–129).
54 Marcus (1998a: 413).
55 Kanarfogel (2000b: 69); Marcus (1998a: 413–414).
56 Kanarfogel (2000b: 253, 37–42).
57 Kanarfogel (2000b: 36, 51–52, 56–81, 256).
58 Schäfer (1990); Kanarfogel (2000b: 26–28, 254); Wolfson (1994).
59 Kanarfogel (2000b: 255–256).
60 Kanarfogel (2000b: 12).
61 Marcus (1998b: 118–126).
62 Chazan (1980: 63–64); Linder (1997: 353–358); Patschovsky (1993).
63 Jordan (1989: 31–34); Chazan (1973: 65–68).
64 Appelt (1990: 43–44).
65 Weiland (1963: 274–276); Patschovsky (1993); Abulafia (2004).
66 Abulafia (2004).
67 Chazan (1980: 124–126).
68 Grayzel (1966: 306–313); Aronius (1970: 174–177); Simonsohn (1991: 99).
69 Grayzel (1966: 15).
70 Mellinkoff (1993).
71 Toch (2008: 182–183).
72 See the discussion on p. 174.

73 Agus (1969: 79–94).
74 Grossman (2004: 118–119 and 122); Grossman (2001: 202 and 208); Keil (2008: 176–177).
75 Haverkamp (1992).
76 Soloveitchik (2003, 2004, 2008).
77 Toch (2008: 206).
78 Wenninger (2008); Toch (2008: 209).
79 Lipton (1999: 30–54). See also Shatzmiller (2007).
80 Grayzel (1966: 43–44).
81 Reichert (2003).
82 Lipton (1999: 33–34); Le Goff (1988).
83 Hoffmann (1910: 177).
84 Jordan (1989: 131–132).
85 Toch (2003a: 64).
86 Mattes (2003); Agus (1947).
87 For instance such was the case with Archbishop Baldwin of Trier, see Haverkamp (1985).
88 Prestwich (1997: 343); Mundill (1998, 2004); Brand (2000).
89 Nahon (2004); Jordan (1989).
90 Mentgen (1995b); Toch (2003a: 60).
91 Lotter (1988).
92 Toch (2003a: 30–31).
93 Toch (1997); Haverkamp (2002b).
94 Escher and Hirschmann (2005).
95 Toch (2003a: 48–49).
96 Mentgen (1995a: 186–189, 350–358).
97 Haverkamp (1985).
98 Maier (2010: 30, 57).
99 Haverkamp (1981: 272–278).
100 Ziwes (1995: 238–271); Jankrift (2006).
101 Toch (2003c); Haverkamp (2002b).
102 Toch (2003a: 31–32); Breuer and Guggenheim (2003); Yuval (1988).
103 Toch (2008: 209); Shatzmiller (1994).
104 Willoweit (2003: 2174–2181).
105 Barzen (2008).
106 Toch (2003b: 2139–2146).
107 Willoweit (2003: 2181–2187); Haverkamp (1996); Gilomen (2002).
108 Toch (2008: 203); Wenninger (1981: 38–48).
109 Cluse *et al.* (2003); Burgard, Haverkamp and Mentgen (1999).
110 See the discussion on p. 174.

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12

The Jews in the Medieval Arabic-Speaking World

Norman (Noam) Stillman

Until the mid-twentieth century, approximately one million Jews lived in the Arabic-speaking countries extending from Iraq in the East to Morocco in the West. Today barely four thousand remain, and over half of these are in a single country – Morocco. Another thousand are in Tunisia, and a few hundred are scattered in Egypt, Syria, and Yemen. Many of these Jewish communities had an historical presence that dated back to Antiquity, before most of these countries were in fact Arab. In the Arabian Peninsula itself, Jews were there many centuries before the birth of Islam.

During the Middle Ages, the overwhelming majority of world Jewry lived in the Muslim world, which stretched from Spain and Morocco in the West to the borders of India and China in the East. It was there that many aspects of Judaism as a religious civilization – liturgy, law, and theology – were formulated, codified, and disseminated throughout the Diaspora. Under the Judeo-Arabic symbiosis, Jewish philosophy was created, and Jews took part in the economic and intellectual life of the medieval Islamic *oikoumene* (or ecumene) on a scale unprecedented until the modern era. Hebrew language and literature underwent its most important revival since the biblical period and prior to the Haskalah (Jewish Enlightenment) and the emergence of Modern Hebrew. In medieval north Africa and Islamic Spain, the sciences of Hebrew grammar, lexicography, and the great tradition of Sephardi Hebrew poetry using rhymes and meters adapted from Arabic prosody were created. It was also in the medieval Arab-speaking world that Karaism, the most important sectarian movement since Late Antiquity, appeared. Despite its relatively small number of adherents, the Karaite movement had a profound impact as a catalyst upon majoritarian Rabbanite Judaism.

Today, in the twenty-first century, most of the Jews who emigrated from the Arab lands now reside in the State of Israel where they and their descendants

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constitute nearly half of its Jewish population. After Israel, the largest number settled in France, which had been the colonial power in Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Lebanon, and Syria, and which had played a primary modernizing role for Jews in other major Arab countries as well, such as Egypt and Iraq, through the influence of the Alliance Israélite Universelle educational network. The rest of the émigrés and their posterity are scattered in various Western European countries, the Americas, and Australia.

The history of Jews in the Arabic-speaking world is, in a very real sense, primarily the history of the Jews under Islamic rule from the birth of the last of the three great monotheistic faiths in the seventh century all the way to modern times.

Jews in Arabia at the Dawn of Islam

Although all the attempts by scholars, such as Reinhart Dozy, D. S. Margoliouth, Charles Torrey, and Yisra'el Ben Ze'ev, to reconstruct the history of the Jews of Arabia prior to the founding of Islam have been sheer speculation, it seems clear that there had been a Jewish presence in Yemen since biblical times and in the oasis communities of the Hijaz since the late Second Temple period. By the time Muhammad was born, around 571 CE, Jews constituted a familiar and well-integrated element in the population, speaking Arabic, organized into clans and tribes, and sharing in the rugged social ethos of *muruwwa* (manly virtues), celebrated by the poets of the period, including Jewish ones such as al-Samaw'al Ibn 'Adiya' (fl. mid-sixth century). The mainly pagan Arab society was aware of distinctive Jewish religious practices and probably unconsciously absorbed some Jewish (and Christian) religious and ethical notions and midrashic lore which appear in the Qur'an and early Muslim traditions. In Yemen, Jewish influence was so great that, for a short time, the royal house of the Himyarite Kingdom converted to Judaism under Yusuf Dhu Nuwas, who reigned around 517–525.

Muhammad, a merchant from Mecca, was one of those Arabs who were influenced by Jews and Christians, most likely other merchants who acted as amateur missionaries. Hearing them preach about one God, moral conduct, a sacred revealed book, and an approaching Last Judgment, all made even more powerful with picturesque homiletic tales of the prophets of old, he came to the profound conclusion that the one true God had revealed His message to different peoples at different times in their own language, and he wondered why his people had been left in darkness. His question was answered one night when, in a vision, the angel Gabriel appeared and revealed what was to be the first of the many revelations that came to comprise the Qur'an, the Muslim scripture. Many of the revelations that followed mentioned the Children of Israel and the Christians as confirming the divine message that he was now receiving. He was probably encouraged by Jews and Christians who came through Mecca on business or who

attended nearby markets and fairs. But, in 622, when Muhammad had to leave his native town due to intense opposition from its pagan elite and move to the oasis community of Medina some 250 miles to the north, he encountered opposition from the established Jewish community there, and, to his chagrin, rather than confirming the truth of his revelations, the local Jews contradicted what he claimed and ridiculed what appeared to them to be egregious errors in his versions of biblical and midrashic lore. Since he knew with the conviction of a true believer that his revelations were true, he came to the conclusion that although the Jews, as People of the Book (Ar. *ahl al-kitab*) were originally vouchsafed a genuine divine message, that it had been corrupted over time, and the belief that Jews (and also the Christians) had tampered with (Ar. *tahrif*), made substitutions (Ar. *tabdil*), and altered (Ar. *taghyir*) their Scriptures became an article of later Islamic dogma. He may already have heard the Christian accusation that the Jews had corrupted the biblical Hebrew text. This belief may also have been fostered by his first Jewish convert to Islam, ʻAbd Allah Ibn Salam, who like many medieval Jewish apostates in both the Muslim and Christian worlds proved his zeal for his new religion by "exposing" the falsehoods of his former brethren, who concealed those scriptural passages that prophesied the coming of Muhammad or Jesus, as the case might be.

Muhammad's change of attitude toward the Jews is reflected in the qur'anic verses revealed to him in Medina. Jews are associated with interconfessional strife and rivalry (Sura II:113). They believe that they alone are beloved of God (Sura V:18), and only they will achieve salvation (Sura II:111). They "pervert words from their meanings" (Sura IV: 44), and because of their disobedience to God and their many transgressions, "wretchedness and baseness were stamped upon them, and they were visited with wrath from Allah" (Sura II: 61).

In 624, after a victory against the pagans of Mecca, Muhammad found cause to expel the Banu Qaynuqaʻ, one of the three Jewish tribes in Medina. The following year, after a Muslim defeat at the hands of the Meccans, he accused the Jewish Banu Nadir of plotting against him and evicted them as well, confiscating their lands, and distributing them among his followers who had joined him from Mecca. In 627, he moved against the remaining Jewish tribe, the Banu Qurayza, accusing them of having sided with his enemies. This time he put all of the men to the sword – some six to nine hundred of them – and sold their women and children into slavery. The following year his forces advanced against the prosperous Jewish oasis of Khaybar 95 miles to the north, which had taken in the exiled Banu Nadir. After a fierce resistance the Khaybaris surrendered on terms. They agreed to pay the Umma, the Muslim community, half their annual date harvest in return for their personal safety and their right to retain their homes and property. Similar arrangements were concluded with the Jews of other oasis communities as well. The notion that the People of the Book should be fought until they paid tribute to the Umma received divine sanction in 630 when Muhammad received the qur'anic verse:

> Fight against those to whom the Scriptures were given, who believe not in Allah nor in the Last Day, who forbid not what Allah and His apostle have forbidden, and follow not the true faith, until they pay tribute out of hand and are humbled. (Sura XI: 29)

During the last year of his life, when all of Arabia paid allegiance to him, Muhammad collected tribute (Ar. *jizya*) from the Jews and Christians in Yemen and communities along the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea. This set the precedent for the practice that was followed in the coming decades when the Arabs poured out of Arabia and conquered a great empire inhabited by Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians. Indeed the payment of a tributary tax to the Islamic state by its non-Muslim subjects became an institutionalized practice down to the nineteenth (and in some places, the twentieth) century.

Jews in the Arab Empire

The year after Muhammad's death in 632, Arab armies inspired by zeal for their new faith and a desire for booty invaded the neighboring territories of the Byzantine and Persian empires. Within less than two decades they had wrested Palestine, Syria, and Egypt from the Byzantines and Iraq and Iran from the Persians. In the Byzantine provinces, local Jews and Monophysite Christians viewed the Arabs as liberators from the persecutions of Emperor Heraclius and the Greek Orthodox Church. The Jews and Nestorians of the Persian Empire, which had been wracked by internal strife, also apparently welcomed the invaders. When the Muslims invaded Spain in 711, the Jews, who had been suffering persecution at the hands of the Visigoth rulers, joined forces with the Muslims and helped them to secure the conquered cities by manning garrisons.

The Muslim conquests fostered a powerful wave of messianic expectations among Jews in the seventh and eighth centuries. Apocalyptic works such as *Sefer Eliyahu* (The Book of Elijah), *Nistarot shel Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohay* (Secrets of R. Simeon Bar Yohay), and *Tefillat Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohay* (Simeon Bar Yohay's Prayer) are among the few writings by Jews at this time. In these midrashim, the Arab conquests are viewed as a divine visitation upon the Jews' persecutors. In *Nistarot shel Rabbi Shim'on Bar Yohay*, the angel Metatron tells Bar Yohay not to fear because "the Holy One blessed be He, has only brought the Kingdom of Ishmael in order to save you from this wicked one."

The Muslim Arabs found themselves ruling over a vast empire inhabited by Christians, Zoroastrians, and Jews. Falling back upon the precedent established by Muhammad in Arabia, they did not force their new subjects to convert to Islam since they were People of the Book. As long as they surrendered, accepted the suzerainty of the Umma, paid tribute – eventually regularized as a poll tax (*jizya*)

and land tax (*kharaj*) – and comported themselves with the demeanor of humbled subjects, they were entitled to be protégés (Ar. *ahl al-dhimma*) or dhimmis. As dhimmis, they were guaranteed protection of their lives and property, were permitted freedom of economic endeavor, freedom of worship within discreet boundaries, and were entitled to a great degree of autonomy in their internal communal affairs under their own religious and temporal authorities who were themselves recognized by the Islamic state. These were no minor concessions by medieval standards and gave rise to Islam's reputation for tolerance in later Jewish historiography.

The regulations governing the legal and social status of tolerated non-Muslims evolved over time and came to be stipulated in a document known as the Pact of 'Umar. It was a theoretical treaty between the dhimmi communities and Umma and was probably based in part on the surrender agreement between the second caliph 'Umar I (r. 634–644) and the Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronios, in 639. The detailed version of the Pact in Islamic law books probably dates from nearly a century later during the caliphate of 'Umar II (r. 717–720). In addition to the canonical taxes, dhimmis were to comport themselves with humility in accordance with the qur'anic injunction. They were to give way before Muslims, rise in their presence, and never raise their hands against them. They were forbidden to bear arms, ride horses, and use regular saddles on their mounts. They were not to dress like Muslims or cut their hair like them. In the century immediately following the Islamic conquest, this stipulation on clothing merely meant the maintenance of the status quo, but with the evolution of a general Islamic fashion throughout the caliphate, the concept of differentiation (Ar. *ghiyar*) between Muslims and non-Muslims required the latter to wear identifying badges, usually a patch of cloth or specially dyed outer garments.

Certain provisions of the Pact of 'Umar such as quartering Muslim soldiers, providing military intelligence, and not harboring spies were enforced only in the early years of Arab military occupation and eventually fell into desuetude. Other stipulations, such as the ban on building dhimmi houses higher than Muslim homes, must have been added later when Muslims and non-Muslims lived side by side in the same towns. In the early years of the conquests, the Arabs settled mainly in their own encampments, separate from the native population centers. These camp towns eventually attracted dhimmis who came to provide goods and services to the conquerors and developed into new urban centers.

On the whole, Jews adapted well to the new order psychologically and economically. They had for a half a millennium already been a subject people, and their sages had given them a conception of Jewishness that was independent of land and sovereignty. The final redemption of the Jewish people would come in God's own time. The Islamic taxes upon dhimmis were no more, and perhaps even less, onerous than those under the Byzantines and Sassanians. Unlike the Christian world, Muslims held commerce in the highest respect since the founder of Islam was himself a merchant, and non-Muslims were not restricted in their occupations.

Again in contradistinction to Christendom, there were skilled Jewish artisans and craftsmen in the Islamic world from medieval to modern times. The harshest financial burdens fell upon the peasantry, and during the first century and a half of Islamic rule, Jews in the great population centers such as Bavel/Iraq completed the transition that had already begun in Talmudic times from an agrarian to a cosmopolitan way of life. The details of this process of transformation are not at all clear since, as noted above, there are very few written Jewish sources from this period, and Arab historians, who were writing in the century that followed, made only brief passing references to their non-Muslim subjects.

In addition to urbanization, Jews also underwent a process of Arabization. Arabic became the lingua franca of the caliphate and took the place of Aramaic and Greek which had served as the international languages of culture and administration throughout much of the Middle East and North Africa in previous centuries, only now across an even wider geographical expanse extending from Spain to the borders of India and China. By the tenth century, Arabic became not only the Jews' spoken vernacular, but their primary written language as well. Judeo-Arabic (Arabic in Hebrew characters) was used for everything from day-to-day correspondence to religious queries and Responsa, documents, biblical exegesis and other textual commentaries, philosophy and theology, and works on Hebrew grammar and lexicography. Only poetry was written almost exclusively in Hebrew, for reasons that will be made clear below.

The adoption of Arabic by most Jews was facilitated by several factors. Not least among these is the linguistic proximity of Arabic to Hebrew and Aramaic, all of which belong to the same Semitic language family. But there was also a psychological factor which probably facilitated the transition. Islam, like Judaism, is a strictly monotheistic, religious civilization that eschews religious iconography. Like Judaism, it is based upon an all-encompassing divine law, known as "The Path" (Ar. *shari'a*; Hebrew *halakha*) that is in part written and in part oral. Furthermore, Islam did not have the deep-seated theological hostility toward Judaism that Christianity did, and, in marked contrast to Christendom, Jews were not the only subjects who did not belong to the dominant faith, but shared their infidel status with the far more numerous Christians and Zoroastrians. Lastly, medieval Islamic civilization had a secular aspect in the domains of the arts, music, commerce, science, and philosophy, and even administration that was absent from the clerical and feudal world of Latin Christian Europe.

Jewish Communal Organization in the Abbasid Caliphate

Very little is known about Jewish communal organization and governance during the first century of Muslim rule. By the late ninth century, a clear picture begins to emerge.

A new dynasty, the Abbasids, had taken over the caliphate in 750. Its center of gravity was in Iraq, rather than Syria, where the previous Umayyad rulers had been based. In 762, the second Abbasid caliph al-Mansur founded the new capital of Baghdad which soon became the great cosmopolitan cultural as well as political center of the empire. This was to have profound consequences for the Jews of the Islamic world. Iraq was the Arabic name for the land still called by Jews Babylonia (Hebrew *Bavel*), and Baghdad was near the site of ancient Babylon. It had been for centuries been the premier center of world Jewry. Two great seats of Jewish learning, the ancient academies, or yeshivot, of Sura and Pumbeditha, headed by the geonim (sing. *gaon*), were located there. The geonim were not only the directors of these institutions, but their chief scholars and ultimate arbiters of Jewish law. Their title was in fact an abbreviation for Resh Metivat Ge'on Ya'aqov (Head of the Academy of the Pride of Jacob). It was in these institutions that the Babylonian Talmud was redacted and eventually spread throughout the world to become the constitutional framework of Jewish life. Babylonian Jewry also boasted having at its head a putative descendant of the last king of Judah, who bore the title of exilarch (Aramaic *resh galuta*). Prior to the Arab conquest, he had served as the governor of the Jews in the Sassanian Empire. Following the conquest, he was accorded official recognition by the Muslim authorities, who similarly recognized the catholicos as head of the Nestorian Christian community. With rise of the Abbasids, the exilarch was accorded considerable dignity at the caliphal court. The reason for this was twofold. The exilarch was a descendant of King David, whom Islam reveres as a prophet, and the new dynasty prided itself in its own descent from the Prophet Muhammad's uncle. Though primarily a figurehead, the exilarch held a unique status as a Jewish prince who was shown respect by Gentiles. He was thus a source of great self-esteem for all Jews and a living proof of Jacob's prophecy that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah" (Genesis 49:10). The Spanish traveler Benjamin of Tudela, who visited Baghdad in the second half of the twelfth century, describes with obvious pride and no little hyperbole the caliph's reception of the exilarch Daniel ben Hisday at court.

The exilarch served as an advisor for Jewish affairs at the caliphal court and probably also acted as an intercessor for his community, but his importance was mainly symbolic. It was the geonim who, as the interpreters of the Babylonian Talmud, occupied the highest rank of leadership among the Jews throughout the Islamic world. The authority of the geonim was based on their claim to be the sole possessors of the living, authoritative tradition of the oral Torah that went back to the rabbinic sages, the men of the Great Assembly, and ultimately back to Moses at Sinai. The exilarchs may have been royal figureheads, but, for most Jews, it was the geonim who "reigned" (Hebrew *malekhu*). Their legal decisions frequently bore the admonition: "This is the Halakah, and there is no moving from it." These legal decisions usually were issued in the form of responsa (Hebrew *teshuvot*) to queries (Hebrew *she'elot*) on law, ritual, and textual exegesis sent together with donations by the Jewish communities of the wider Islamic Diaspora. The flow of correspondence back and forth was facilitated by a network of representatives of the yeshivot

in the major Jewish population centers. Because the Responsa of the geonim were binding legal precedents, they were often recopied and collected along the way to their final destination. The representatives were themselves frequently alumni of the yeshivot or their descendants, as for example, the Ibn ʻAwkals in Fustat (Old Cairo) or the Ibn Shahins in Qayrawan (Tunisia).

In addition to the two Babylonian academies, there was a third yeshiva in the Land of Israel. This Tiberian academy considered itself a direct continuation of the ancient Sanhedrin. In the mid-tenth century, it relocated to Jerusalem. This yeshiva propagated the so-called Jerusalem Talmud, which never came to have the universal authority of the Babylonian Talmud and eventually was regarded as an ancillary legal source. The Palestinian rite had been dominant in the provinces of the Byzantine Empire. However, with the freedom of movement that took place in the centuries following the Muslim conquest, in most major towns and cities in the Islamic Mediterranean lands, there were to be found two congregations – Babylonian and Palestinian. Despite their differences in points of law and custom, they all recognized each other's orthodoxy.

By the twelfth century, the Babylonian rite with local variations became dominant throughout the entire Jewish world. This was primarily due to the activism, creativity, and intellectual prowess of the Babylonian geonim of the ninth through eleventh centuries. Rav Amram Gaon in the second half of the ninth century and Saʻadya Gaon in the first half of the tenth produced the comprehensive first prayer books which went a long way to standardizing the liturgy and general ritual practice. Saʻadya's prayer book was particular masterpiece which in addition to the prayers provided the worshiper with a complete introduction to the subject of liturgy, as well as helpful notes to the service and to individual prayers. All of this explanatory matter was in Judeo-Arabic to make it easily understandable to the layman.

Sectarian and Freethinking Challenge

Not all Jews accepted the authority of the geonim and the Talmudic form of Judaism. The most serious challenge came from the Karaite schism. This "protestant" movement denied the authenticity of the rabbinic oral tradition and accepted only the Bible as the basis for Jewish law. The name of the sect, which in Hebrew is Kara'im, seems to mean "Bible readers," although it might also be a translation of the Arabic term *daʻi*, which means "one who calls to the true faith" (i.e., a missionary). The origins of the movement are attributed to the ascetic Anan ben David, in the second half of the eighth century, who wrote a legal code in Aramaic entitled *The Book of Commandments* (*Sefer ha-Mitzvot*). Anan's legal interpretations are consistently harsher and more restrictive than normative rabbinic tradition. And his biblical literalism and his asceticism have parallels with the sects of the Second Temple period such as the Sadducees and the Essenes. However, it is

not clear whether there is any direct connection to these earlier groups or to their possible remnants that may still have existed in his time.

Full-blown Karaism came into being in the ninth and early tenth century under the leadership of men like Benjamin al-Nehawandi, who was second in later Karaite tradition only to Anan, and Daniel al-Qumisi. Both Benjamin and Daniel left a lasting influence on the movement's theology and exegetic methodology, and both appear to have been influenced by the Muslim Mu'tazilite rational theologians. Benjamin wrote two important legal works in Hebrew, a book of commandments and a book of laws (*Sefer ha-Dinim*). Daniel placed a high priority on settlement in the Holy Land, which he himself did, and issued a passionate call for his brethren in the Diaspora to join him in lamenting the destruction of the Temple and petitioning God for its restoration.

Because Karaism focused upon reading and interpreting the Biblical text, its scholars in the tenth and eleventh centuries were pioneers in the fields of Hebrew grammar and lexicography. These included Salmon ben Jeroham, Japheth ben Eli, Jeshua ben Judah, David ben Abraham al-Fasi, and Jacob al-Qirqisani. The latter produced a great Judeo-Arabic encyclopedia in 937, *The Book of Lights and Watchtowers* (*Kitab al-Anwar wal-Maraqib*) which includes law, theology, exegesis, and many other topics. It is also our primary source on Jewish sectarianism from early Islamic times to his own day.

The Karaite scholars appear to have been the first Jewish theologians since Hellenistic times to put the tools of Greek philosophy in the service of religion. They did so at a time of great intellectual ferment when the classics of Greek thought were being translated into Arabic and adopted by Muslim rationalist theologians, and they addressed many of the same issues as the latter, such as anthropomorphism, theodicy, free will, the nature of the soul, and the conflict of science and scripture.

The Karaites were not the only Jews to challenge mainstream rabbinical Judaism. In the mid-ninth century, a Jewish freethinker named Hiwi al-Balkhi, who, like his freethinking counterparts among Muslims, called into question the validity of Scripture itself, wrote a book, no longer extant, containing two hundred critiques of the inconsistencies, irrationality, gross injustices, and offenses against common sense in the Bible.

The challenges posed by the Karaites, Jewish freethinkers, and Muslim polemicists who were quick to take up the arguments of these critics against mainstream Judaism provided the impetus for a creative response from the rabbinical Jewish leaders that ensured the ultimate triumph of their brand of Judaism.

Sa'adya Gaon and the Triumph of Rabbinic Judaism

The first figure to take up the cudgel in defense of traditional rabbinic Judaism was Sa'adya Gaon (882–942). While still in his early twenties, even before he became

the head of the Sura academy, he wrote a devastating critique of Karaism, entitled *The Book of Response against Anan* (*Kitab al-Radd ʻala ʻAnan*). Saʻadya met the challenges raised by the Karaites, freethinkers like Hiwi, and the Muslim polemicists, by co-opting many of their dialectic techniques and arguments, and he did so in Arabic, in order to reach the educated layman. He produced the first prayer book with instructions and explanations in Arabic. He also composed the first systematic theology of Judaism, *The Book of Doctrines and Beliefs* (*Kitab al-Amanat wal-Iʻtiqadat*) which came to be known throughout the European Jewish world in its Hebrew translation as *Sefer ha-Emunot ve-Deʻot*. Saʻadya also took on the challenges posed by Karaite scriptural exegesis by providing mainstream Jews with the same kinds of tools. He produced pioneering studies in Hebrew grammar and redacted a Hebrew–Arabic dictionary, the *Sefer ha-Agron*. He translated the Bible into Arabic, which he complemented with a rational, philologically grounded commentary. In addition to his Responsa, he wrote the first books devoted to discrete topics of Jewish law. His impact was so enormous that the later Andalusian exegete, Abraham ibn Ezra, dubbed him "the first spokesman in every instance," and Maimonides, the supreme intellectual figure of all postbiblical Judaism, paid him the compliment, "Were it not for Saʻadya, the Torah might well have disappeared from within Israel."

The Babylonian academies continued to have vigorous intellectual leadership over the next few generations following Saʻadya. Samuel ben Hophni (d. 1013), for example, who also served as gaon of Sura, produced some 65 Judeo-Arabic works on biblical exegesis, Talmud Halakah, and philosophy. Sherira Gaon (d. 1006) composed his famous Epistle on the history of the Bablyonian yeshivot together with a chronology of the geonim. It also deals with the oral and written redaction of the Talmud, and it remains to this day one of the most important works of medieval Jewish historiography. Sherira's son and successor Hay Gaon, like Saʻadya and Ben Hophni wrote legal treatises in Judeo-Arabic and wrote a Hebrew–Arabic dictionary, *Kitab al-Hawi* (The Comprehensive Book).

Although the intellectual leadership of the Babylonian academies went into decline during the eleventh century, concomitant with the political decline of the Abbasid Caliphate in Baghdad, the triumph of rabbinical Judaism and the Talmud as its constitutional framework was by this time assured.

The Rise of Other Centers

Just as the caliphate had been undergoing a process of decentralization, which had begun in the late eighth century, the Jewish communities of the Islamic world also began to form semi-autonomous units, some of which became vibrant, creative centers of Jewish cultural life in the Babylonian tradition. We know a great deal about these communities both from the literary output of their scholars and literati

and from the enormous documentation of the so-called Cairo Geniza, a unique cache of manuscripts from the Ben Ezra Synagogue in Fustat (Old Cairo). What made this geniza different from all others is the sheer quantity of papers and parchments – some 250,000 items deposited over a millennium – and the fact that they included not merely the usual discarded religious texts, but every conceivable sort of secular writing – personal and official correspondence, communal and business records, court proceedings, and legal documents. The Cairo Geniza documents provide a detailed picture of Jewish life throughout the Islamic world, particularly within the new centers, and it sheds light on the relations between them.

Three principal Jewish communities had come into prominence by the tenth century – Ifriqiya (more or less synonymous with modern Tunisia), al-Andalus (Islamic Iberia), and Egypt. Each of these provinces had large Jewish populations and had been governed by autonomous or semi-autonomous rulers for well before the tenth century.

Ifriqiya

Ifriqiya was the first of these new centers to flourish. The heterodox Fatimids established a Shi'ite countercaliphate there in 909, expanding almost immediately east and west. The Fatimids treated their dhimmi subjects with greater tolerance and leniency than was prescribed in orthodox Sunni Islam. They did not impose the canonical discriminatory tariffs and sumptuary laws for non-Muslims, and they had even fewer qualms about employing infidels in their civil service. They encouraged commerce and made Ifriqiya "the hub of the Mediterranean." Jewish merchants became actively involved in the bustling trade that eventually extended from Iberia to India. Qayrawan, the leading metropolis of Ifriqiya and all North Africa, was not only a great Jewish commercial center, but throughout much of the tenth and eleventh centuries was the premier religious and intellectual Jewish center outside of Baghdad. The Sages of Qayrawan were singled out in Hebrew literature for their religious and secular scholarship. In the latter category, the most outstanding was the Neoplatonic philosopher and physician Isaac Israeli (d. 950). His Arabic works were studied in Hebrew and Latin translations for centuries in medieval and Renaissance Europe. His disciple Dunash ben Tamim (d. c. 960), in addition to being a philosopher and physician, wrote works on Hebrew grammar and philology and authored a commentary on the popular mystical treatise *The Book of Creation* (*Sefer ha-Yetzira*).

The Sages of Qayrawan's religious prominence rested upon the two academies that were established in the late tenth century. One was founded by Jacob ibn Shahin (d. 1006/7) and the other by Hushiel ben Elhanan (d. early eleventh century). Both men were succeeded by their sons, Nissim ben Jacob and Elhanan ben Hushiel. Rabbenu Nissim was arguably the greatest of the Sages of Qayrawan.

He was the author of an important commentary on the Talmud and an enduring classic of Jewish literature, the entertaining and didactic *Book of Comfort*. Rav Hananel (known by the acronym RaH) wrote a commentary on the entire Babylonian Talmud which enjoyed wide circulation throughout Europe in the Middle Ages; excerpts of it are still preserved in the standard printed editions of the Talmud.

The Jews of Ifriqiya possessed a strong, hierarchal communal organization on the Babylonian model. The Baghdadi scholar Nathan ha-Bavli, who moved to Qayrawan sometime after 950, wrote an account of Baghdadi Jewry at the request of the local Jews, perhaps as a template of self-government to be emulated. In place of the exilarch, the recognized head of the Jewish community before the rulers was some distinguished personage who also served in the court in some capacity. Originally called Head of the Congregations (Rosh ha-Kehillot), as of 1015 he came to bear the illustrious title of Nagid, or Prince of the Diaspora. Although the Jews of Ifriqiya had their own institutions of higher learning and a Jewish representative at court, they continued to maintain close ties with the gaonic academies in Baghdad, sending contributions and exchanging correspondence. This, however, was not the case in the other new center of Jewish life that emerged during the same period in the breakaway caliphate established by the Umayyads in Iberia.

Al-Andalus (Sepharad)

Like Ifriqiya, the Jewish community in the Islamic Iberia, called al-Andalus in Arabic and Sepharad in Hebrew, became a prominent center of Jewish life and culture in the tenth century. The culture that evolved there was so unique that it came to be recalled in later Jewish collective memory and historiography as a "Golden Age" both for its intellectual and artistic creativity and for the high degree of Jewish acculturation and integration into the broader society, including political life.

The sudden flowering of Andalusian Jewry was in part a concomitant of the establishment of an independent Caliphate of Cordoba by the Umayyad emir ʿAbd al-Rahman III in 929 and the power, ambition, and influence of his Jewish courtier Hasday ibn Shaprut (d. 975). Hasday served ʿAbd al-Rahman and his successor al-Hakam II (r. 961–976) as physician, advisor, and diplomat, and because of his status at the caliphal court, Hasday was recognized as the nasi, or titular head of the Jewish community of the country. Hasday used his position to make al-Andalus a major center of Jewish life and culture. Under his leadership, Andalusian Jewry made a decisive break from the authority of the Babylonian yeshivot. The twelfth-century historian Abraham ibn Da'ud in his *Sefer ha-Qabbala* (The Book of Tradition) attributes this secession to the fortuitous arrival in Cordoba of the Italian scholar Moses ben Hanokh in 972 as the prisoner of Spanish pirates. Moses ben Hanokh established his own yeshiva in the capital and came to be recognized as Rav Rosh (chief scholar) throughout the caliphate. But it is clear, from both Jewish and Muslim

sources, that the moving force behind this independent policy was Hasday himself, who made a concerted effort to bring Jewish scholars and books from abroad.

Furthermore, Hasday was the progenitor of a new Jewish courtly culture, modeled upon that of the Islamic ruling elite. He patronized Jewish scholars and men of letters and hosted wine parties and literary gatherings (known as *moshavim* in Hebrew and *majalis* in Arabic) in his home, during which poets recited their latest compositions and scholars debated subjects ranging from biblical exegesis to Hebrew grammar. The major debates at Hasday's salon were those between the poets Menahem Ibn Saruq and Dunash Ben Labrat. Menahem was Hasday's personal secretary. In addition to being a poet, he was a philologist and author of the first Hebrew–Hebrew dictionary, known as *Ha-Mahberet*. Dunash, who had come from north Africa seeking Hasday's patronage, pioneered what became the standard for medieval Andalusian and later Sephardi poetry – the use of rhymes and meter in the Arabic style. He also introduced secular themes from Arabic poetry such as the celebration of nature, wine, and profane love, in addition to the traditionally Jewish liturgical ones.

Andalusian Jewry remained under the secular leadership of a nasi and the religious leadership of a rav rosh until the dissolution of the Umayyad caliphate in 1009, then al-Andalus broke up into numerous principalities known as the Taifa kingdoms. They were ruled by dynasties of different ethnicities – Arab, Berber, Slav, and native Islamized Iberians. Andalusian Jewry was now fragmented, and there was a good deal of movement from place to place. However, the very fragmentation of the country provided Jews with an unprecedented opportunity for government service, and there arose a conscious class of Jewish courtiers who served in positions well beyond those of the usual petty bureaucrats, court physicians, and purveyors who could be found in other Islamic countries of the period. They included administrators and royal advisors of high rank such as Abraham ibn Muhajir (d. c. 1100) in Seville and Yekuthiel ibn Hasan in Saragossa, who was assassinated in 1039 and mourned by the young poet Solomon ibn Gabirol in a famous lament that opens with the verse "Yekuthiel's days have come to an end/A sign the Heavens were created to pass away."

The attainment of rank and political power became an ideal of the Jewish upper-class ethos. No office save that of the ruler himself seemed out of the reach of talented and ambitious Jewish courtiers, and no Jew rose closer to the pinnacles of power than Samuel ibn Naghrela, who became the chief minister in the Zirid Berber kingdom of Granada and a commander of its army in the field. He was the paragon of the Jewish courtier class and was held up as such for generations to come. In addition to being a patron of the arts and of secular and religious scholarship, as befitted a powerful Jewish courtier, he was himself one of the great masters of medieval Hebrew poetry. More than 1700 poems are attributed to him. He was also a grammarian and an outstanding Talmudic scholar who wrote the first significant collection of civil jurisprudence compiled in al-Andalus, entitled *Grand Halakah* (*Hilkhata Gavrata*). He may also have written an introduction to

the Talmud (*Mevo le-Talmud*), although the attribution of this work to him has been questioned.

Around 1027, Ibn Naghrela took on the princely title of nagid, and henceforth became known for later generations as Samuel ha-Nagid. Though praised by Ibn Da'ud for his humility, he exhibited all the hauteur of his class, and in a poetic meditation he boasts of being "the David of my generation." A sycophantic Muslim poet in his entourage went so far as to suggest in what must have seemed a blasphemous panegyric that his fellow Muslims should kiss the Jewish vizier's hands as they would the black stone of the Kaaba, since he is the dispenser of happiness and largesse. The great Muslim scholar 'Ali ibn Hazm accused him of having written a treatise criticizing the Qur'an. However, such an act would have been beyond hubris in medieval Muslim lands and is probably a reflection of Ibn Hazm's virulent anti-dhimmi animus. Ibn Hazm himself admits to not having seen the offensive polemic, but only the insufficient response of another Muslim scholar.

Traditionally minded Muslims found the entire notion of dhimmis, and even more particularly Jews, in positions of authority over believers in the Taifa kingdoms to be an affront. Ibn Hazm warns the princes to "get away from this filthy, stinking, dirty crew beset with Allah's anger and malediction." In the ten years following Samuel ha-Nagid's death in 1056, anti-Jewish sentiment built up to boiling point. Perhaps the most vitriolic piece of rabble-rousing propaganda was a vitriolic poem by Abu Ishaq al-Albiri, that circulated widely, which called for the overthrow of Samuel's son and successor Jehoseph ha-Nagid. In his screed, al-Albiri advises the Zirid king not only to rid himself of his Jewish vizier whom he describes as a fat black ram ready for slaughter, but all the Jews of Granada, comparing them to rats who "munch and crunch" upon the wealth of the kingdom. Finally, Jehoseph was assassinated in a popular uprising on the Sabbath eve of December 30, 1066. His body was crucified upon the city's main gate, and a mob sacked the Jewish quarter, slaughtering its inhabitants and razing it to the ground. Although the Jewish quarter was reestablished sometime later by survivors and newcomers, it was destroyed again in 1090 when Granada was sacked by the invading Almoravids from north Africa.

The century following the uprising against Jehoseph ha-Nagid marked a lengthy twilight period for Andalusian Jewry, and although the Jewish elite in most cities maintained their refined lifestyles, their position was steadily eroding. The pressure of the Reconquista hardened anti-dhimmi sentiment among Muslims. The zealous Berber Almoravids who had come into Iberia to save what remained of al-Andalus from the advancing Christians only sharpened the polarization, and there was a progressive decline of Jews in the civil service. The peripheral figures that did remain in government office had none of the authority or prestige of the Ibn Naghrelas and their ilk. But Islamic Spain itself no longer enjoyed the power it once had.

Jewish culture still flourished. The great North African scholar Isaac al-Fasi (known as Rif, 1013–1103), who wrote the Talmud digest, *Hilkhot Rabbati* (Great Book of Laws), took over the yeshiva of Isaac ibn Ghiyyath (1038–1089) in Lucena around 1089, and the school continued as the premier institution of Jewish studies

under al-Fasi's disciple and successor Joseph ibn Migash (1077–1141). Judah ha-Levi (c. 1075–1141) was recognized in his own lifetime as the supreme laureate of Sephardi Hebrew poetry. His contemporary, Moses ibn Ezra (d. after 1138), also one of the great poets of medieval Spain, composed the great history of Hebrew poetry in al-Andalus, *Kitab al-Muhadara wa 'l-Mudakara* (Book of Conversation and Discussion), in which he outlined the art of its prosody and rhetoric. When he went into exile in the less cultured Christian north after the Almoravid invasion, he complained in one poem that he felt "like a gentleman amongst savages/like a lion amongst apes and parrots."

The anxieties of this twilight period kindled outbreaks of apocalyptic messianism. One such incident occurred in Cordoba sometime between 1110 and 1115 when a certain Ibn Arieh claimed to be the messiah. The rabbinic elite quickly stepped in and had him publicly flogged and excommunicated. Another wider outbreak of messianic expectation that overtook the Jewish communities in Spain and Morocco took place in 1130. Judah ha-Levi was among the disappointed enthusiasts when the year passed without the messiah's appearance. However, he recovered from his spiritual crisis with a new sense of religious certainty. He became an ardent proto-Zionist and composed a stirring cycle of poems voicing his yearning to return to the Land of Israel. He also composed at this time his philosophical dialogue, *The Kuzari*, which rejected the philosophical rationalism of the Andalusian Jewish elite and declared that all efforts to obtain rank and political power in the Diaspora were in vain and that a true Jewish life was possible only in Zion. Ha-Levi took his new convictions seriously and in the twilight of his life set out for the Holy Land, then under Crusader rule, where he died in July 1141.

Thirty-one years later, open Jewish life came to an abrupt end in most of al-Andalus, which came under the control of the fanatic, sectarian Almohads, who invaded from Morocco. The Almohads did not accept the Pact of 'Umar and the traditional Islamic notion of *dhimma*. Non-Muslims converted en masse. Those who could fled to the Christian kingdoms in the north, where they continued many aspects of Andalusian Jewish culture over succeeding generations and helped to transmit many masterpieces of Judeo-Arabic and Islamic scientific and philosophical culture in Hebrew and Latin translation to European Christendom and its Jewry. Some Andalusian Jews sought refuge in the more tolerant Islamic East, but most Jews in Spain and north Africa outwardly converted to Islam while practicing Judaism in secret. This was to be a forerunner of the later crypto-Jewish phenomenon in Christian Spain. The Maimonides family was among these crypto-Jews. Both Maimon ha-Dayyan and his son Moses tried to comfort the guilt-ridden converts and maintain their faith in clandestinely circulated pastoral letters, the *Epistle of Consolation* (*Iggeret ha-Nehama*) and the *Epistle on Forced Conversion* (*Iggeret ha-Shemad*), and urged them if possible to escape to countries where they could return openly to Judaism, which they themselves eventually did in 1165, making their way first to Palestine and thence Egypt which was, as already noted, the other Jewish center that came into prominence as of the tenth century.

Egypt

Egyptian Jewry began to become important when the Fatimids moved in 971 from Ifriqiya into their newly founded capital of Cairo which they built alongside Fustat. Many north African Jews moved there along with them, and Egypt became the center of a thriving East–West commerce that extended from Iberia to India; it is clear from the Cairo Geniza documents that Jewish merchants played an active role in this international trade. In fact, Moses Maimonides' beloved younger brother, David, drowned in the Indian Ocean around 1176/7, forcing him to return to the practice of medicine to support himself and his brother's family. Maimonides served as court physician to the Qadi al-Fadil, the chief minister of the Ayyubid sultan Saladin, who supplanted the Fatimids in 1171. He became the Ra'is al-Yahud (Head of the Jews), also called nagid in Hebrew, and was succeeded in that office by his son Abraham and their direct descendants for the next three centuries. A prolific writer and the greatest legal and philosophical mind in postbiblical Jewish history, in Egypt Maimonides published, in addition to his scientific works, his philosophical chef d'oeuvre, the *Guide of the Perplexed* (*Dalalat al-Ha'irin*, known best by the title of its Hebrew translation *Moreh Nevukhim*) and his great legal code *Mishneh Torah*, his only work composed in Hebrew. He also produced an enormous corpus of over four hundred Responsa as chief Jewish legal authority in the country. Prior to Maimonides arrival in Egypt, the Jewish community had been noted for its financial importance, but not for its scholarship. It now became the leading intellectual center, rivaling Baghdad, arousing the ire of a number of Babylonian scholars, most notably the gaon Samuel ben 'Ali ibn al-Dastur, who wrote scathing critiques of Maimonides' works, and who in turn was dismissed by Maimonides as "a poor old man, truthfully an ignoramus in every respect." Maimonides' son Abraham spent much of his adult life defending his father's ideas.

Abraham Maimonides succeeded his father both as nagid and court physician as a youth of 17 or 18 in 1204. Like his father, he issued a substantial body of Responsa of which 130 have survived. An original thinker in his own right, he founded a pietist and mystic circle of followers who called themselves Hasidim, whose practices clearly influenced the Muslim Sufi mystics. His religious philosophy is set out in his magnum opus, *The Comprehensive Guide for the Servants of God* (Ar. *Kifayat al-'Abidin*). Abraham's descendants continued to write mystical treatises. However, Egypt no longer held its place as the intellectual center it had been under Moses and his son.

The Decline of the Later Middle Ages

The social, spiritual, and economic climate of Arabic-speaking lands of the Islamic world underwent a profound decline during the course of the thirteenth century.

The Reconquista, the Norman conquest of Sicily, two centuries of Crusader presence in the Levant, and the Mongol invasion which devastated Baghdad and brought an end to the Abbasid caliphate resulted in a more rigid and less tolerant Islam and a decline in the secular and humanistic tendencies of the earlier period. Jews, along with native Christians, became increasingly marginalized, living in overcrowded ghetto-like quarters, such as the Harat al-Yahud in many countries and the Mellah in Morocco. The discriminatory laws of *ghiyar* (differentiation) for non-Muslims were now rigorously enforced. In Mamluk Egypt, Jews had to wear yellow outer clothing and special neck chains when undressed in the public baths. In north Africa, where they were the only remaining dhimmis, they had to wear black or somber clothes in marked contrast to the white garments of Muslims, and, in Morocco, they had to walk barefoot through the streets of the imperial cities. Endemic disease and conversion also brought about a sharp demographic decline.

This state of affairs would only be reversed with the Ottoman conquest of much of the Middle East and part of north Africa between 1517 and 1535 and the influx of Sephardi exiles from Spain and Portugal, starting in 1492 and continuing throughout the sixteenth century as forced converts made their way into the Muslim world in order to return to the open practice of Judaism. The arrival of the Sephardim marked a veritable watershed in the history of the Jews of the Arabic-speaking and wider Muslim world, and infused new vitality – demographically, intellectually, and spiritually – into Islamicate Jewry, a culturally integral part of the Islamic world, yet not Muslim.

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13

Turning Point
The Spanish Expulsion

Jane S. Gerber

On January 2, 1492, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella marched triumphantly into the defeated city of Granada, the last Muslim stronghold on the Iberian Peninsula. On March 31 they promulgated an edict requiring that all Jews either convert or leave Spain within four months, on pain of death. This drastic edict of expulsion ended almost fifteen hundred years of Jewish life in Spain and irrevocably altered the unique Jewish civilization created on Iberian soil. Scholars still debate the origins of the expulsion decree and the identity of its authors; some question its inevitability, while others dispute the number of its intended victims. While historical questions about motivation and details of the expulsion abound, all researchers acknowledge that Jewish history assumed dramatically new demographic trends and spiritual expressions as a result of the draconian measure of expulsion of the Jews from Spain in 1492 and the expulsion of the Jews of Portugal in 1496/7.

Until the fall of Granada in 1492 a semblance of "business as usual" characterized many aspects of Jewish life in the Iberian Peninsula; contracts between Jews and Christians were renewed and renegotiated until the eve of the expulsion; communities went about their quotidian affairs despite the extraordinary levies imposed upon them to finance the final campaign against the Muslim Nasrid kingdom of Granada; selected Jewish courtiers continued to exercise power and gain access to inner court circles. Additionally, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella are recorded to have intervened repeatedly to defend their Jewish population against excesses or undue pressure on the part of the nobility, the *Hermandad*, a hostile clergy, and the general population. In retrospect, however, the signs of disintegration that prefigured the tragic end were clear; the newly established Inquisition commenced its self-appointed task of extirpating the conversos (those

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Jews converted to Christianity) from the Spanish body politic in an orgy of cruelty unleashed initially in Andalusia in the 1480s; a policy of segregation and ghettoization of the Jews in Toledo was implemented in 1481, followed up by similar measures in many other towns in the kingdom of Castile. Yet antisemitic outbursts and expressions of anti-converso hostility had been a constant feature of life throughout the fifteenth century. Although the ongoing Castilian civil war produced persistent anti-Jewish fallout throughout the latter fifteenth century, life went on in the *aljamas* (Jewish communities) much as it had in the earlier decades of the century.

The Jews were not passive witnesses to their worsening situation. In the face of the rising tide of hostility directed against them, they repeatedly attempted to strengthen their weakening communal institutions and morale. In order to repair the declining social fabric of the community, a set of communal regulations or *Takkanot* was adopted at Valladolid in 1432, designed specifically to deal with the devastating effects of the pogroms of 1391 and the continuing flood of conversions from Judaism to Christianity sparked by the Disputation of Tortosa (1412–1414) and the aggressive proselytizing of the Dominican friar Vicente Ferrer (d. 1419). Measures were devised to restore decimated Jewish educational and judicial institutions and to minimize the areas of potential friction among the Jews, the conversos, and their Old Christian neighbors. A set of sumptuary laws was promulgated to curb manifestations of affluence and to limit conspicuous consumption. Special taxes were imposed on wine and kosher meat to provide additional funds for Jewish educational institutions in the decimated communities. Class conflict had become the bane of the internal life of the community. Rich Hebrew sources give voice to vigorous preaching against the moral laxities, particularly among the rich. With the deterioration of the Jewish economic situation, communal charitable societies expanded.

At the same time, strict regulations were drafted to curb the growing problem of informers (*malshinim*) and tax-dodgers who sought exemption from community fiscal obligations by exploiting their connections with the nobility and the court. Measures were also adopted to mitigate the fiscal damage caused by the imposition of prohibitive levies on the Jews to finance the "Granada campaign" and the ransoming of the Jews from Malaga in 1487 at the time of the city's conquest from the Muslims. The rabbis repeatedly attempted to deal with the complexity of legal issues raised by the flood of converts to Christianity who were still attached in one way or another to the Jews.

Notwithstanding the darkening clouds and progressive Jewish impoverishment, the final generation of Jewish life in Spain was a time of continuing cultural creativity. The yeshivot of Guadalajara, Salamanca and elsewhere flourished until the end and poets, such as Saadia ibn Danan, were still creating Hebrew poetry in the fashion of the classical literary innovations of al-Andalus. Other Jews were pioneering in writing poetry and plays in Spanish.[1] Scientific inquiry was cultivated in small circles while kabbalistic ideas and literature, later to take root in the

Sephardic exilic communities, flourished. By the 1470s the new art of Hebrew printing was emerging in several Iberian centers. In short, fifteenth-century Spanish Jewry was still a vital and responsive community grappling with enormous challenges but scarcely on the cusp of extinction.

As the fifteenth century progressed, it became increasingly apparent, however, that Jewish life was unraveling under the strain of the complicated relations between Jews and conversos on the one hand, and the popular antagonism to both groups, who were frequently undifferentiated in Christian minds, on the other. In the background, larger unsettling issues loomed – the reconquest was almost complete, but the Ottoman advances in the East were posing new threats to Christian Europe. The anti-Jewish riots that had engulfed Spain in 1391 had already produced tens of thousands of converts to Christianity, some sincere but many simply victims of circumstances who chose conversion over martyrdom when faced with these two untenable alternatives. The scale of the pogroms in 1391 was unprecedented. By the time the storm had subsided, a significant new population of converts, perhaps in excess of a hundred thousand, had emerged. Although the Church prohibited forced baptisms in theory, and favored persuasion over coercion, in practice it would not permit forcibly converted Jews to revert to their former faith once the riots ceased. As a result of the 1391 persecutions, an unprecedented social situation emerged. Practicing Jews and forcibly converted Christians continued to live side by side. The New Christians, also known as conversos or *anusim* (Hebrew for "the forced ones"), were obliged to adhere to the faith imposed upon them but most still retained multiple familial and economic ties with their former coreligionists. Sometimes households were divided between the two faiths. At the same time that hostility to unbaptized Jews persisted, hostility to the Jewish converts and their descendants (whose sincerity in their Christian faith was suspected) increased over the course of time.

Since the converts from Judaism (conversos) were now technically Christian they were no longer restricted in their choice of professions and rapidly rose to positions of prominence in the government, the municipalities and even the Church, positions that had heretofore been barred to them as Jews. Jealousy and suspicion towards them increased, erupting in anti-converso riots in 1449 in Toledo that spilled over in short order to engulf the Jews as well. Racial criteria were soon applied to defining who was a Jew in fifteenth-century Spain. The introduction of the first of many laws of *limpieza de sangre* (purity of blood) in Toledo in 1449, barring conversos from choice areas of the economy reflected the mounting ethnic and racial definitions and distinctions that were applied to conversos despite the fact that they were Christian. The differentiation between Jews and conversos was somewhat artificial, however, given the intertwined relationships between the two. Racial distinctions would later become a prominent feature of the social landscape of Spain and Portugal, persisting long after the Jews had been expelled.

Still, Jews who had not converted were not the primary targets of popular animosity. Popular fury seemed to be focused more on the Jewish converts to

Christianity than on the members of the Jewish community. The practicing Jews hoped that stability would be enhanced with the apparent resolution of civil war in Spain, applauding and financially backing the marriage of Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile in 1474. The presence of so many conversos in the Queen's entourage seemed to be a positive sign. With the new political union of Castile and Aragon several Jews and conversos assumed their place as advisors, tax collectors, physicians, and even confessors in the court. As noted above, some scholars have pointed out that the king and queen rarely failed to defend the Jews up to the moment of the Expulsion, with only a few glaring exceptions.[2] Jewish hopes that security and political tranquility would prevail with the strengthening of the Spanish realm in the 1470s did not, however, take into account the deep-seated animus among secular and religious groups to the continuing interaction and the complex relationship of Jews and conversos.

A major turning point in the Jewish situation occurred with the introduction of a Spanish National Inquisition in 1480. Its establishment signaled a triumph of those factions within Spanish society agitating for stronger measures against the conversos as well as against the Jews. Henceforth, Church and State acted jointly to extirpate what they perceived to be the "Judaizing heresy" in their midst. From the moment that it began to operate, the Inquisition agitated for the removal of the Jews from Spain, arguing that the presence of Jews prevented the acculturation and absorption of the conversos into Christian ranks. Its opening salvos in Seville included massive roundups of conversos, the condemnation and public burning of thousands in autos-da-fé, and the introduction of harsh measures to segregate the dwindling Jewish community. The Inquisition's vigorous campaign was accompanied by bitter diatribes against Jews and Judaism as well as against conversos. A policy of partial expulsion was introduced by the Inquisition in Andalusia at the end of 1482, affecting Jews in the dioceses of Seville, Cordoba, and Cadiz, and soon thereafter Saragossa and Teruel. In retrospect, these expulsions appear to have been several simultaneous experiments in the treatment of the Jews. These included confiscation and expropriation of Jewish property as well as their segregation and local expulsion, in the hopes of separating the Jews in some definitive fashion from the conversos. But as the Inquisition uncovered nests of crypto-Judaism, some real and others extracted in confessions elicited under torture, the Holy Office decided that it no longer sufficed to isolate the Jews in order to minimize their supposed influence. Only a drastic measure such as a wholesale national expulsion of the Jews, some argued, seemed to be the answer.

The Jews couldn't be banished by the king and queen unless they were guilty of some crime or were deemed to be endangering the civil peace by their proselytizing. In 1491 the Inquisition engineered a blood libel, known as the blood libel of "El Niño de La Guardia." A trial was staged with great fanfare, intended to stoke popular passions against the Jews and to provide a pretext for expulsion. The trumped-up charge that the Jews were conspiring against Christianity through the desecration of the Host and the murder of a Christian child in order to use its blood

for ritual purposes was not new in Europe. Its effectiveness in demonizing innocent Jewish communities and stirring up the populace was generally assured. Confessions were extracted under torture from a converso that Jews and conversos were involved in this heinous crime.[3] Although there was no missing child in the town of La Guardia, nor the slightest foundation to the charge of ritual murder, the Grand Inquisitor Torquemada appointed a special investigative commission that predictably found the accused guilty, and a public execution followed in Avila. The townspeople became so agitated by anti-Jewish passion that the Jews had to seek special protection from the king. As the sixteenth-century Inquisitor Luis de Paramo later stated, the La Guardia affair was one of the decisive factors in moving the monarchs to sign the expulsion decree. The high-profile trial succeeded in creating a climate favorable to expulsion even though the decree itself, promulgated five months later, doesn't mention the blood libel. Meanwhile, the finishing touches on the expulsion decree were under deliberation.

Despite the heightened anti-Jewish agitation, the expulsion plan was carefully concealed from the public and from its intended victims. Indeed, if a plan to oust the Jews was long in the making, it was so carefully concealed that it has left no traces in the records. As late as 1488, King Ferdinand, still working hand-in-glove with his Jewish courtiers, extracted an extraordinary levy from the Jewish community payable over a period of several years. Similarly, in 1490, the sovereigns allotted tax-farming concessions to be paid out over the following four years. Additionally, the Treaty of Capitulation of Granada in January 1492 specified that the Jews could remain in the city. Either these several measures were intended to throw the Jews off guard, or, in all likelihood, the decision to implement a total rather than a partial expulsion was still being debated back and forth in the highest councils of state.[4]

There were other indications to the Jews that life might go on "as usual." Some of the most influential advisers to the king and queen, such as Isaac Abravanel and Abraham Senior, continued to retain the ear of their royal patrons even as the last chapter of Jewish life was unfolding. True, the converso population found itself suspended between two worlds, the Jewish and the Christian. Yet, there is no proof that it would have remained unassimilated, if properly instructed in the basics of Christianity. Where conventional wisdom has seen a certain inevitability in the expulsion, based upon the drastic decline of Jewish life in Spain on the heels of the pogroms of 1391, more recent research has noted that the decline was not uniform, some researchers even detecting a "renaissance" of Jewish life in the fifteenth century in smaller towns and villages, such as Morvedre near Valencia, whose ruling elite found it convenient and advantageous to protect their Jews.[5] Conditions on the ground were not uniformly bleak. In the kingdom of Valencia, for instance, the introduction of new credit mechanisms released the Jews from providing credit and lending at interest, thereby removing the major source of tension between the Jews and their Christian and Muslim neighbors. While jealousy at the political and economic ascent of conversos was ubiquitous, it was probably no worse in 1490

than it had been in prior decades. Neither were anti-Jewish satires in popular literature noticeably more biting than they had been earlier in the century.

Given these mixed conditions, why was the drastic measure of total expulsion implemented in 1492? An examination of the text of the expulsion decree reveals the extent to which the clergy, in general, and the Inquisition in particular, was involved in this final measure against the Jews of Spain. By expelling the Jews, the decree argued, wavering New Christians would be protected from the pernicious influence of the Jews. The religious underpinnings of the political act of expulsion are explained as follows:

> We are informed by the Inquisitors and by many other religious persons, ecclesiastical and secular . . . that the great damage to the Christians has resulted from and does result from the participation, conversation, and communication that they have had with the Jews, who try to always achieve by whatever means possible to subvert and to draw away faithful Christians from our holy Catholic faith . . . and to attract and pervert them to their injurious belief and opinion. . .
>
> The Holy Office of the Inquisition, seeing how some Christians are endangered by contact and communication with the Jews, has provided that the Jews be expelled from all our realms and territories, and has persuaded us to give our support and agreement to this, which we do now, because of our debts and our obligations to the said Holy Office; and we do so despite the great harm to ourselves, seeking and preferring the salvation of souls above our own profit and that of individuals.[6]

Precisely what the "pernicious" Jewish influence was is spelled out. Conversos, according to the decree, would turn to Jews for religious guidance regarding the Jewish calendar, seeking instructions on proper observance of Jewish holidays, information on the content and mode of fulfillment of Jewish law and assistance in performing circumcisions and other ritual obligations. Jews would share their religious books and their ritual foods, such as unleavened bread on Passover and kosher meat, with their converso neighbors and relatives. This assistance allegedly stemmed from the conversos' "diabolical cunning and subterfuge" as well as the Jews' "criminality," "perversity," and "deceit." As far as the accusation that Jews and conversos were in constant and intimate contact, there was more than a grain of truth to the charge. Jews and conversos were frequently part of one extended or nuclear family.

The first Inquisition trials in Aragon in 1484 had made it patently clear that conversos were still connected to the Jews, a conclusion previously demonstrated in Andalusia. Expulsion, according to the decree, was the sole answer to the Judaizing "danger" since the prior measures implemented in Andalusia of isolating the Jews or staging Inquisitorial trials, and all other measures short of expulsion had failed.

Conversos seemed to be unable to desist from their Jewish practices. The desire to expel the Jews was tinged with antisemitism. Although the language of anti-Jewishness is covered by a veneer of religious piety in the prolix decree, it is nonetheless palpable. Antisemitism is expressed in the use of the familiar metaphor of biology with the presence of the Jews likened to a dangerous infection.

The nature of the Judaism or Jewishness of the conversos has animated much of the modern scholarship on the conversos. According to some Spaniards of the post-expulsion period, the recidivism of the conversos was a factor in their expulsion. Ben Zion Netanyahu has argued, on the other hand, that many conversos had "made their peace" with their new Christian identities by the mid-fifteenth century, retreating to their former Jewish identities as a last resort only after they experienced rejection and racism on the part of the Old Christian population. Additionally, Netanyahu avers, many conversos were repelled by the excesses of the Inquisition and returned to their former Jewish roots out of remorse or even recoil or revulsion.[7] This attitude is expressed in the remark in 1491 of a converso to a young Jew who was considering conversion: "You see how they burn them, and you want to become a Christian?"[8]

The Hebrew chronicles penned soon after the expulsion were sensitive to the close working relationship between the Inquisition and the monarchy even though sixteenth-century Jewish historians didn't seek causality in political terms. It was in the nature of late medieval and early modern Jewish thinking to regard history as a manifestation of the divine will at work. According to Elijah Capsali of Crete, Queen Isabella played a decisive role in pressing expulsion as a result of the influence of her confessor Torquemada, with Ferdinand playing only a secondary and somewhat reluctant role in the events. But, although the Spanish Inquisition was established by the papacy, it worked hand-in-glove with the secular juridical system, dividing up responsibility for its actions in the name of Christianity.[9] The decisions of the Inquisition were handed over to the secular authorities for implementation.

The Hebrew sources of the immediate post-expulsion period, which tended to view Torquemada as the active force behind the decree, have set the tone of later historiography. They ascribed hesitation and ambivalence to King Ferdinand in the unfolding of the events, seeing Ferdinand's motivation as one of avarice while Queen Isabella was consumed by religious zeal. According to exiled historian Solomon ibn Verga (1450–1520):

> In Spain there was a priest who had a tremendous hatred for the Jews, and the rule is that whoever afflicts the Jews becomes a leader by doing so. He was the confessor to the queen, and he instigated the queen for the Jews to convert. If they would not do so, they would be put to the sword. The queen pleaded to the king and begged him to do this. . . . Some time later, the king gave in and decreed, at the advice of his wife, that all the Jews had to convert, and those that did not had to leave his kingdom. This was issued as a royal decree.[10]

Modern scholars have interpreted Ferdinand's role differently, emphasizing his avarice and more active role in pressing for the expulsion.[11] True, immediately upon the promulgation of the expulsion decree confiscations and fire sales of private and communal Jewish property began. The *aljamas* (organized Jewish communities) were required to pay future taxes to the Crown in order to compensate the authorities in anticipation of their future absence from the tax rolls. A large bribe was allegedly offered by chief Jewish courtier Don Isaac Abravanel to persuade the monarchs to rescind the decree. It was reportedly accepted by Ferdinand and Isabella, although the Jewish courtier's pleas were rejected. Most of the voluminous archival documentation surrounding the expulsion which Haim Beinart examined in *The Expulsion of the Jews* relates to the disposal of Jewish property and reveals a monarchy especially eager to establish its prior claim to Jewish-owned property before local authorities, Christian creditors, or the clergy and the municipalities, could step in to appropriate Jewish communal and private property. Jewish historical accounts and personal introductory comments in rabbinical works of that era lament the enormous loss in homes, orchards, libraries, and communal buildings and cemeteries, leaving the impression that enormous assets were forfeited. But the economic role of the Jews in fifteenth-century Spain as well as their material well-being has been highly exaggerated. In contrast to popular stereotypes concerning the affluence and power of the Spanish Jews in 1492, the community at the time of the expulsion was composed primarily of artisans and petty tradesmen; there were a few wealthy tax collectors but most Jews were people of modest means.[12] The conversos, by contrast, possessed the wealth and conspicuous power and were not subject to the decree. Indeed, the expulsion was explicitly designed in order to "protect" them from the "influence" of the Jews, not to expel them from the Spanish nation. Given the realities on the ground, it is most unlikely that the putative wealth of the Jews entered into decision making at the highest levels. Moreover, most of the despoliation of the Jews had already taken place by 1492 as a result of the decrees of separation or ghettoization in the 1480s.

The 1492 decree provided the opportunity to rob the Jews of their last remaining personal possessions and their cherished communal property while at the same time wiping out whatever debts were owed to them. The king protested the random and wholesale looting that occurred at the time of the expulsion. After all, the property of the Jews was theoretically the property of the royal treasury and Jewish public assets were supposed to be relinquished to the crown. But royal protests at the disorderly confiscations and expropriations did not always avail. It should be noted that Ferdinand had no need for a drastic expulsion in order to squeeze the Jews' assets from them. They were already completely subordinate to his whims and sorely pressed to meet his continuous levies.[13] Indeed, more often than not, Ferdinand appears in the sources as a defender of the Jews against various hostile anti-Jewish forces in Spanish society. Moreover, when Pope Alexander VI endowed Ferdinand and Isabella with the title of Catholic Monarchs in 1496 he praised them for having expelled the Jews without regard for the personal financial

sacrifice it cost them! It is difficult to determine whether the personal portrayal of the monarchs in the several Hebrew accounts, written in Italy and the Ottoman Empire during the first half of the sixteenth century and based either on eyewitness accounts or sources close to the events, derived from a realistic assessment of the division of power between the king and queen or from other considerations of which we are unaware.

As a result of the many obstacles and disincentives to departure, the expulsion decree immediately resulted in the expansion of the converso community in Spain. Ironically, if the alleged reason for the expulsion of the Jews was to "protect" the conversos from harmful Jewish influence, the terms of expulsion were guaranteed to augment the numbers of insincere conversos by driving the Jews into the ranks of the conversos. Only a short time frame was provided during which the Jews were permitted to wind up their affairs while those who converted would be permitted to remain in Spain and to retain their property. Those Jews who departed would be allowed to return to Spain during a limited period of time subject to their conversion upon reentry; upon conversion, the returnees could retrieve their property for the price they had obtained at the time of departure. No exceptions to the departure date were to be granted. At the same time, no transportation was provided to actually transport the Jews out of Spain and exit taxes and other confiscatory levies were demanded at the limited number of permissible exits. The formidable obstacles to departure guaranteed that many victims would convert out of desperation. Indeed, the litigation regarding the restoration of property and the return of despairing exiles forms a major part of the archival material that Haim Beinart has examined in his magisterial study of the expulsion.

The campaign to convert the hapless Jewish victims commenced immediately upon the promulgation of the expulsion decree. The successful conversion of one of the most prominent Jews of Spain, the courtier and court rabbi Abraham Senior, was regarded as a psychological coup, his baptism taking place in the presence of the king and queen. It was hoped that the rest of the Jewish population would follow suit upon seeing one of its most prominent leaders embrace Christianity.[14] The available evidence strongly suggests that the conversion of the Jews, rather than their departure, was probably the principal goal of the expulsion decree.[15] The conversionary intent of the expulsion is further suggested by the involvement of the Inquisition down to its smallest details, such as how and where the decree would be pronounced, who would be present at the decree's pronunciation and the minimal number of exits to be permitted. An ecclesiastical expert in official decrees was even involved in its drafting to determine how the decree would be phrased.

The responses of the Jews to the expulsion decree were not uniform. While despondency was widespread, the Jews were by no means passive in the acceptance of their bitter fate. One case is even recorded of Jewish rioting against the decree during which they demanded that they be given four years, not four months, to wind up their affairs. But Jewish physical resistance was swiftly quelled.[16] Spiritual resistance was widespread, taking several forms. The head of the Jewish

community, courtier Don Isaac Abravanel, movingly describes the dignity of the departing masses of Jews:

> The people heard this evil decree and they mourned. Wherever word of the decree reached, there was great mourning among the Jews. There was great trembling and sorrow the likes of which had not been experienced since the days of the exile of the Jews from their land to the land of foreigners. The Jews encouraged each other: Let us strengthen ourselves on behalf of our faith, on behalf of the Torah of our God . . . if [our enemies] let us live, we will live; and our hearts will not retrogress; we will walk forward in the name of the Lord our God.[17]

Despite his deep antipathy to Jews, even the Priest Andrés Bernáldez was moved to describe the procession of departing Jews with more than a hint of admiration and sympathy:

> In the first week of July they took the route for quitting their native land, great and small, young and old, on foot or horses, in carts each continuing his journey to his destined port. They experienced great trouble and suffered indescribable misfortunes on the road, some falling, others rising, some dying, others being born, some fainting, others being attacked by illness. There was not a Christian but that pitied them and pleaded with them to be baptized. Some from misery were converted, but they were the few. The rabbis encouraged them and made the young people and women sing and play on pipes and tambours to enliven them and keep up their spirits and they left Castile and arrived at the ports where some embarked for Portugal.[18]

Not all the refugees were as steadfast. Many converted rather than enduring expulsion. A large percentage of those who left returned to Spain as Christians before the expiration of the deadline for lawful return of converts. According to Henry Kamen perhaps as many as 50 percent of Spain's Jews either converted in 1492 without ever departing or returned as converts.[19] Many undoubtedly converted at the difficult hour of departure, deluding themselves into thinking that the trial would pass and that they could eventually return to Judaism. According to the Hebrew chronicle of Rabbi Elijah Kapsali of Crete, based upon eyewitness accounts from survivors, "thousands and thousands of Jews apostasized." In Placencia, a major Jewish community in the kingdom of Castile we are informed that:

> Some Jews, when the time for selling their goods ended, went about day and night in desperation. Many returned from the road and wherever they were and received the faith of Christ, Many others, in order not to be deprived of the homeland where they were born, and not to sell their property for a low

> price, were baptized; some with sincerity and others to accommodate themselves to the time and protect themselves with the mask of the Christian religion. Others returned from the roads, seeking baptism if their houses would be restored to them, returning the purchase money, and to many this was granted.[20]

Unlike the Moriscos (the Muslim population of Christian Spain), whose expulsion from Spain in 1609 was facilitated by the king's provision of a fleet to transport them to North Africa, the Jews had nowhere to flee and no means of transportation to a distant place of possible refuge. Moreover, in contrast to the Moriscos, the Jews of 1492 lacked any protectors abroad to whom they could appeal.

The expulsions of the Jews from Spain and Portugal marked the last of the great medieval European expulsions. The nationwide expulsion of the Jews occurred in England in 1290, in France in 1394, and in Germany at the time of the Black Death in 1348 when many German towns expelled or destroyed their Jewish communities, accusing them of causing the plague by poisoning the wells. Jews were barred from almost all of Italy, except the Papal States, the territory of Duke Ercole I of the house of Este, and the kingdom of Naples. Moreover, the simultaneous expulsion of the Jews from the Spanish possessions of Sicily and Sardinia, both occupied by the House of Aragon, added thousands of additional homeless Jews to the crush of Jews seeking asylum. While north Africa was a possible haven, the Sephardim had to bribe ruthless captains to transport them there and to rely on unsafe vessels; in the event, many refugees wound up adrift on the Mediterranean. Morocco, in particular, was a possibility. It was accessible and the king of Fez was reportedly welcoming.[21] But the Mediterranean was infested with pirates and most of the north African coastline was either impenetrable or occupied by the Portuguese and hence impenetrable.

The deportees from Castile who sought to leave by sea for areas under Muslim control had to confront seemingly insurmountable problems. Perhaps as many as 20 thousand Jews flocked to the port of Cadiz en route to North Africa. The stories of many who departed, returned, and converted to Christianity, reveal only a small part of the torments they faced. Imprisonment, rape, capture by pirates, abandonment at sea, or robbery of their few remaining possessions was their fate en route. Further traumas such as plague and local marauding Arab tribes awaited them at their north African destinations. Frequently ships loaded with refugees were abandoned by their captains and left to float adrift. If the passengers did not die on the water, they might well suffer the fate described by the Portuguese Jewish chronicler Samuel Usque:

> They were cast, like victims of contagion, upon a barren beach, far from human help. Babies begged for water and mothers raised their eyes to heaven for help, while others, reduced to despair by hunger and abandonment, dug their own graves.[22]

In a similar vein, Solomon ibn Verga provides additional details on those trying times:

> I heard pass from the lips of the old, departed from Spain, of a boat, and the fatal blow it was dealt. The skipper cast all ashore in a place uninhabited, and there most of them died of hunger; those struggled to stay on their feet until they could find a place of settlement. And one Jew among them, his wife and their two sons strove to go on; the woman, rather than let her feet stray, fainted and died. The man bore his sons, and he also fainted, as did the sons, from the hunger cast over them. When the man overcame his weakness, he found his sons dead. In a frenzy, he rose to his feet and exclaimed, "Master of the universe! You hasten to make me abandon you! Know, my Faith, against the will of those residing in heaven. I am a Jew and a Jew I shall remain; and all that you have caused me to bear and will further bring upon me shall not hinder me from worshipping you." And he gathered dirt and weeds and covered the two children and went in search of a settlement.[23]

Given the insurmountable obstacles, the easiest and safest route out of Spain seemed to be either to enter the small, landlocked northern Spanish kingdom of Navarre or to cross the border to Portugal. Both destinations would prove to be lethal. The border crossings to Portugal were heavily taxed but Portugal proved initially welcoming to both Jews and fleeing conversos. King John II (r. 1481–1495) of Portugal agreed to admit perhaps as many as 120 thousand Spanish Jews temporarily in exchange for a payment of a head tax on each person of eight cruzados, granting the Spanish refugees the right to stay in his kingdom for up to eight months. An influx of this magnitude obviously had a palpable impact in a kingdom numbering only about one million souls.[24] In exchange for a much larger payment, eight hundred households were permitted to settle permanently in Portugal.

While the presence of so many immigrants in Portugal, some Jewish and others conversos, was unsettling, the Portuguese Crown regarded them as a useful population element in a largely rural country. Their reputed entrepreneurial skills would be an asset as Portugal was gearing up to exploit her imperial position in both Asia and the New World. But popular antagonism towards the Jews and the conversos was strong. Additionally, a potential union of the Crown of Portugal with Castile and Aragon was under consideration. With the death of King John II, political machinations for the royal succession began. Isabel, the daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, and her parents wouldn't even consider a marriage union with the new Portuguese king Manuel I unless Portugal also rid itself of its Jews. A reluctant king, eager to expand his empire and to counter Spanish territorial ambitions in North Africa, consented to the betrothal terms that dictated that he too expel his Jews. Thus, in December 1496, he declared the expulsion of the Jews from Portugal.

But King Manuel I probably had no intention of actually ousting the Jews from Portugal. He instead adopted a series of draconian measures, including the kidnapping and forced baptism of Jewish children, in order to compel all the adult Jews in his kingdom to convert. When the deadline for departure approached in 1497, the entire Jewish community of Portugal was dramatically converted en masse. At the same time, realizing that such a large number of forcibly converted Jews could not become true Christians overnight, the king agreed that they be granted a breathing space during which they would be exempt from any inquiry into their religious practices. In other words, the regime promised to resist the introduction of an Inquisition in Portugal. In order to thwart the establishment of an Inquisition the conversos organized to send an annual delegation to Rome, successfully lobbying to keep the Inquisition out of their country until 1536. At the same time, however, the former Jews who were now conversos were prohibited from leaving the country. One critical result of this involuntary incarceration and delayed introduction of a Portuguese Inquisition was that it enabled the Portuguese conversos – unlike the situation in Spain where the most stalwart managed to leave – to set in place a crypto-Jewish underground and to create some semblance of a clandestine Jewish religion before the Portuguese Inquisition was introduced. The phenomenon of crypto-Judaism, also known as marranism, was able to take root before the Inquisition began to spread its tentacles. Yet, with the passage of time, their "Judaism of memory" would inevitably become approximate and blurred.

With the departure of the Jews the expanded converso population in the newly unified country now known as Spain found itself alone. It had only its own inner resources to depend upon. Returnees, now Christians in name if not yet in deed, were permitted to retrieve their Hebrew books, but only those devoted to scientific or medical subjects. All Jewish religious texts were confiscated. Most of the Spanish and Portuguese rabbinic figures had managed to leave Iberia either right before or immediately after the expulsions, settling either in Italy, north Africa or the Ottoman Empire. Deprived of teachers and rabbis to serve as role models and mentors and Jewish books that might serve as sources of instruction, the conversos of the Iberian Peninsula began the unique process of transformation into a collection of individuals who were neither wholly Catholic, yet no longer Jewish. As time passed and Jewish practice and rabbinic knowledge began to dim, what survived was an ethnic awareness of kinship among former Jews, reshaped by Christian upbringing, the dreaded Inquisition or the reading of the Bible as taught through the prism of Christianity. An occasional visit of an Ottoman, Moroccan, or Italian Jew to the Peninsula might sometimes reinforce the few rituals that could be furtively performed in the secrecy of the home. Some books were secretly transferred by traveling merchants or diplomats. Partial fragments and echoes of this activity can be gleaned from the Inquisition dossiers of trials conducted against "judaizers" in the following centuries.

The impact of the expulsion on Jewish society everywhere was incalculable. The transition from life in Spain to life in Ottoman lands was especially difficult for the

first generation of Sephardic exiles. Many conversos were consumed by messianic anticipation as they eagerly awaited deliverance from their tormented state, searching for answers to the gnawing question of the "meaning" of the expulsion; why, some asked, had they apparently been "abandoned"? Messianic expectations quickened as the half millennium approached and other critical dates with "messianic" resonance passed, leading to occasional outbursts of messianic activity, in Italy, the Eastern Mediterranean, and even in Spain and Portugal. Messianic hopes were also stoked by rumors of the discovery of lost tribes of Israel that circulated throughout Europe in the sixteenth-century age of discovery of far-off lands and remote tribes. But messianic agitation among conversos in sixteenth-century Iberia invited harsh reprisals from the Inquisition and eventually died out.

Scholars differ dramatically in their calculations of the number of Jews who were expelled from Spain in 1492. Estimates as low as 40–50 thousand people have been offered by David Wasserstein, Norman Roth, and Henry Kamen while figures as high as 600 thousand have also been hypothesized.[25] Some of the higher estimates include the many conversos who managed to leave with the stream of departing Jews. One chronicler, Alonso de Santa Cruz, offers the figure of 125 thousand Spanish Jews entering Portugal, breaking it down in the following manner:

> It is certain that those who departed via Benavente so as to enter Portugal via Bragança were 23,000; those who left via Zamora for Miranda were 30,000; via Ciudad Rodrigo. to Vilar 35,000; via Valencia to Alcantara to Marvão in Portugal 15,000; via Badajoz to Elvas 10,000. And those who were at the border of Navarre, up to 2,000 and those at the border of Vizcaya boarded ships to Africq by sea; and those who were in Jerez and Medina Sidonia and in other places and boarded ships in Puerto de Santa Maria and Cadiz were 8,000.[26]

Several other sources, perhaps all based on one primary account, concur with the figure of 125 thousand for Portugal alone. Damião de Gois, a contemporary of the events, estimates that 20 thousand households entered Portugal and paid the fee of eight cruzadas per head. Infants were exempt from the fee and households are estimated at approximately six people. Comparing the methodology and figures proposed by several contemporary chroniclers and modern Spanish scholars, Haim Beinart concludes that about 200 thousand Jews *in toto* left Spain in 1492.

While the precise number of Jews departing from Spain will perhaps never be known, the expulsion marked a demographic turning point in Jewish history. Spanish Jewry was the largest Jewish community in Europe in 1492. The expulsion was accompanied by enormous human losses. Many thousands of Jews succumbed to disease in their wanderings; many more converted and returned to Spain when resettlement elsewhere proved impossible. The majority who chose Portugal as their refuge were caught in the expulsion/forced conversion of 1496–1497. Those Jews who proceeded directly to the kingdom of Navarre in 1492 were expelled in

1498. But this northern Spanish kingdom bordered the united kingdoms of Spain and *Judenrein* France, both areas that would not permit Jewish entry. Consequently the entrapped Jews of Navarre also underwent forced baptism or martyrdom in 1498. One contemporary, Rabbi Abraham Baqrat, alluding to the tragic fate of the émigrés, calculates a mortality rate of 25 percent in his convoy to North Africa:

> And they all left, about two hundred thousand by foot, men and women and children, spread out over the mountains and the seas like a flock with no shepherd. And our enemies took pleasure in our grief, saying, these people have no Lord. And of that general number we arrived in the kingdom of Tlemcen [Algeria] with twelve thousand souls. And at that time there fell from the nation three thousand people.[27]

The expulsion of 1492 marked a major shift in the Jewish population distribution from the West to the eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. The most attractive site of resettlement was the Ottoman Empire. Welcomed by a succession of dynamic Ottoman Turkish sultans, the Spanish and Italian exiles found new opportunities in the expanding Muslim Empire. The Sephardim represented a skilled, urban population with many features that the Turks found attractive. For one, the loyalties of the embittered Spanish refugees against the Habsburg enemies of the Ottomans could be assured. Their knowledge of Europe and its languages might also be exploited to Ottoman advantage. As early as 1493 groups of Sephardic Jews began to arrive in Salonika and Istanbul. They kept arriving throughout the course of the sixteenth century. At first, they came directly from Spain or Italy. By mid-century, Portuguese secret Jews with little knowledge of Judaism also began to arrive in Ottoman ports along with a second generation of Sephardim who had found initial refuge in Italy only to be expelled once again in the sixteenth century. The immigrants who arrived in the middle of the sixteenth century after first recouping some assets in Europe also brought attractive commercial connections and know-how with them. Moreover, the Sephardim could boast a network of family members among the major emporia of Europe and the Far East, a trait that was especially attractive to the militant Turks who were not eager to personally settle in the dynamic ports of Christian Europe.

The shift of Jewish population from Iberia to the Eastern Mediterranean produced enduring cultural changes among the indigenous Jewish diasporas in the lands of Islam, particularly in its Turkish-speaking regions. The exiled Jews of Spain rapidly assumed cultural hegemony among the old Greek-speaking Jewish population, the Romaniots, previously the Jewish majority in the Balkans and Asia Minor. Within one generation, the exiles from Spain provided the leadership for a dynamic resurgence of Jewish life. They also built the institutional framework for a great cultural reawakening in the form of schools, libraries, printing presses, and publishing houses. Their skills as artisans, munitions makers, physicians, and multilingual merchants were harnessed by the Turks in the new Ottoman ports

and inland towns. Hundreds of new Jewish settlements dotted the Balkans, north Africa, and the Near East.

The exiles of 1492 were a survivor community that looked back to Spain with a combination of nostalgia, pride, and disbelief. Many, especially the Portuguese among them, were initially ill at ease in the alien and less sophisticated environment of the Ottoman Empire. Among the cultural traits that they brought from Iberia was an inflated sense of lineage and pride in their purported aristocratic lineage or genealogy. Their meeting with the Jewries of Muslim lands was fraught with misunderstandings, some based on these pretensions, some grounded in the clashes in customs and disparate traditions of the different Jewish diasporas. Former conversos also raised an enormous number of halakhic issues as a result of their wanderings, divided and broken families, and their personal experiences of having lived as Christians or in families that had been sundered by forced conversions. The tragedy of 1492 and the reconstitution of the Sephardic masses in the East produced an intellectual ferment among the Jewries of the Eastern Mediterranean during the sixteenth century that was unprecedented.

The new burst of intellectual energy among the Sephardic refugees took several forms. Communal pride in their Iberian Jewish legacy mingled with deep fears that this cultural legacy would be extinguished. The stream of refugees included many rabbis, teachers, poets, and doctors. They were animated by a determination to assure that the civilization that they had constructed in Spain would not be lost in the unprecedented historic upheaval. Printing presses were almost immediately established by Sephardim in Ferrara, Istanbul, and Salonica to preserve and disseminate the fruits of the final generation of Jewish scholarship in Spain. Printing presses also produced "how-to" books in Spanish to assist conversos who had been deprived of Jewish knowledge. Voluminous quantities of Responsa were written, especially in Salonica but also in Cairo, Edirne, and elsewhere, not only to resolve the thorny problems raised by divergent customs, but also to explain and preserve the rabbinic insights of Spanish–Jewish scholarship in its twilight years. Prayer books were specially printed to capture for the refugees and their heirs, and probably also with an eye to posterity, the nuances of difference that had characterized the many Jewish communities of Iberia and the several communities of Sicily. A rash of historical writing also poured forth from among the immigrant Jews as an unprecedented group of historians emerged, intent upon recording the events that had transpired.

The impulse to preserve extended beyond the common reflexes of all first generation immigrants to live among one's fellow countrymen. The Sephardic immigrants were characterized by separatism and uncommon persistence of their regional loyalties based on Spain, Portugal, or Italy. They soon established a multiplicity of congregations bearing the names of Saragossa, Aragon, Toledo, Murcia, Catalonia, Apulia, Calabria, Sicily, etc. in their new home cities of Istanbul, Salonica, and Safed. These congregations endured, not for one generation as is ordinarily the case, but for several centuries! The meeting of Ashkenazic, Sephardic,

Italian, Moroccan, and other Jewries evoked different interpretations of the law and frequent conflicts of competing customs in contact. One major fruit of the upheaval and reconfiguration of world Jewry in the sixteenth century was the creation of a classic compilation of Jewish law by Spanish émigré Joseph Karo, known as the Shulhan Arukh. This clear and concise work became the definitive law code among the Sephardim. With Ashkenazic glosses added, it emerged as the handy legal manual for all of world Jewry, serving at the same time as a unifying force throughout the deeply divided Sephardic diaspora.

Perhaps the most paradoxical result of the expulsion from Spain was also the least predictable. In their new lands of refuge, out of necessity or as a result of the demographic weight of the Castilians among the Spanish exiles, the various dialects of Spain were discarded in favor of Castilian. Before long, the fragmented refugees began to share not only a legacy of tragedy, but also a common language of Castilian (written in Hebrew characters and soon known as Ladino). Given the emergence of a common language in Ladino and a newly standardized set of legal traditions in the Shulhan Arukh a Sephardic quasi-national cultural entity was born. It was a culture that also preserved and nurtured the popular proverbs, ballads (*refranes* and *romanceros*), and culinary customs of medieval Spain. These fruits of medieval Spain were passed down from mother to daughter and father to son for five hundred years. Thus, paradoxically, a people previously divided into disparate groups with various regionalisms and local dialects while in Iberia, became united culturally in the Ottoman Empire to form one Sephardic trans-national people. They were no longer Catalans, Castilians, Catalonians, etc. but now Sephardic Jews.

In the aftermath and as a result of the special circumstances of the expulsion the countless conversos who remained in Spain and Portugal also left their mark on history. While they became progressively more estranged from Judaism, many infused critical questioning into the Catholic body politic as a result of their past. A good number of the converso intellectuals could be found among the followers of Erasmus. Some left their particular creative mark on Spanish literature in its sixteenth-century Golden Age by virtue of their alienated position in Iberian society. Other conversos, how many cannot be determined, joined the Spanish and Portuguese in the voyages of exploration and played a critical role in the development of the Portuguese Empire in Brazil and Goa or in Spanish America, many doing so with the hope of leaving the traces of their Jewish ancestry behind in Europe. Still other New Christians of Portugal ranging from wealthy merchant bankers and *asientistas* to modest farmers, blacksmiths, itinerant peddlers, and weavers, having endured exile from Spain, were determined to create a crypto-Jewish culture regardless of the obstacles or the personal dangers. As a result of the special circumstances of their forced conversion, their crypto-Judaism was more vigorous and long lived. Eventually, the Portuguese diaspora, most of whom were lineal descendants of the Spanish expulsion of 1492, paved the way for the resettlement of the Jews in Western Europe and the Atlantic world.

The repercussions of the expulsion of 1492 thus had a ripple effect throughout Jewish history and the far-flung Jewish Diaspora for centuries to come.

Notes

1 Conversos were especially active in Spanish belles lettres both before and after the expulsion, particularly in the crafting of pastoral and sentimental novella. Early theater, prior to Lope de Vega, was overwhelmingly a converso invention. Many Iberian Jews remained attached to Castilian literature after they left Spain for the Netherlands and the Ottoman Empire.

2 For an apologetic defense of the king and queen in English see Roth (2002: 271–316).

3 Baer (1992: vol. 2, 398–423).

4 Kriegel (1992: 79).

5 A growing literature on the expulsion includes the massive data collected by Haim Beinart in *The Expulsion of the Jews from Spain* (2002). A summary of this major work can be found in Beinart (1992). For a revisionist view of fifteenth-century Spanish Jewry based upon data from Morvedre in the kingdom of Valencia see Meyerson (2004). See also Gutwirth (1992).

6 Kamen (1992: 75 n. 8). See text of the decree in Gerber (1992: Appendix I).

7 Ben Zion Netanyahu (1966) argues forcefully that rejection of the conversos by the Christian population was an important factor in the perpetuation of crypto-Judaism among the converso population. His study of the Responsa literature of the fifteenth century traces the evolution of both the attitudes of the rabbis and the behavior of the conversos leads him to this conclusion. Other scholars, such as Yitzhak Baer, have argued with equal passion that the conversos and the Jews were one nation in sentiment.

8 Yitzhak Baer, *Die Juden im christlichen Spanien*, 2 vols (Berlin, 1936), vol. 2, p. 405 cited by Bodian (forthcoming).

9 See Llorca (1946: 118).

10 Solomon ibn Verga (1947), the 44th conversion.

11 See Netanyahu (1987 and 1968: 41).

12 Kriegel (1992: 73ff.).

13 Machiavelli invokes King Ferdinand as his model of a pragmatic, wily and calculating statesman, hardly a man to be cowed by his spouse. Royal confiscation was, however, rampant. In Sardinia, for instance, an emblem was placed on Jewish houses when expulsion was decreed, indicating that the houses were now Crown property. Those who didn't obey the decree were to be executed.

14 Some evidence exists that Senior was blackmailed into conversion, threatened with dire consequences to the entire community if he and his family did not convert. After conversion, he continued to enjoy vast resources and a glorified position at the royal court.

15 The data collected by Haim Beinart (2002: 329–412) amply illustrates how Jewish exiles in the thousands straggled back into Spain after harrowing attempts to reach north Africa, Italy and elsewhere or unsuccessful attempts to start life anew in foreign

ports. Their attempts to retrieve their property frequently resulted in litigation, records of which have been preserved in the archives. There is small but intriguing evidence that some conversos who were active in court circles, anxious to distance themselves from the Jews, were also involved in pressing for the expulsion. This suggested theory, based on cryptic evidence, would be consistent with the frequently tense relations that existed between some courtiers and clergy of converso background and the Jewish community and is consistent with the familiar phenomenon of the zealous neophyte who was anxious to distance himself from his former coreligionists. See Marx (1908).

16 In the town of Huete see Beinart (2002: 213); Suárez Fernández (1964: 401–402).

17 Cited in Schwarz (1943: 46–47).

18 Andrez Bernaldez, *Historia de los reyes Catolicos Don Fernando y Isabel* (Seville, 1869) as quoted in Raphael (1991: 71).

19 Kamen (1992).

20 Roth (2002: 309), quoting from Alonso Fernandez de Placencia, *Historia de Placencia* (Madrid, 1627), vol. 2, ch. 14.

21 Gerber (1981).

22 Usque (1964: 200).

23 Solomon ibn Verga (1947: the 52nd conversion).

24 On the immigration of Spanish Jews and conversos to Portugal see Tavares (1992: 131–139) and Soyer (2007: Introduction). Many Spanish conversos joined the stream of Jews entering Portugal in 1492, perhaps hoping to revert to Judaism once on Portuguese soil or to use the opportunity to escape to the Ottoman East.

25 Kamen (1988) and the discussion of demography in Beinart (2002: 284–290).

26 Alonso de Santa Cruz, *Cronica de los Reyes Catolicos*, ed. J. de la Mata (Seville, 1951) I, pp. 491–504 as quoted by Beinart (2002: 85 and n.336).

27 See Ben-Sasson (1961/2: 63).

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14

Medieval Jewish Mysticism

Hartley Lachter

Jewish life in the Middle Ages was at once tumultuous and creative. While it might be tempting to imagine medieval Jews as an isolated minority functioning in an autonomous sphere that interacted with non-Jewish culture only through oppression or violence, such a picture fails to represent the wide range of medieval Jewish experience. While political insecurity was a constant feature of medieval Jewish life, there were many periods of relative security during which Jews engaged in a shared culture and fruitful interchange with non-Jews. In addition to advances in the study of Jewish law and biblical exegesis, medieval Jews also developed new intellectual and literary pursuits such as philosophy, poetry, and scientific writing. One of the most influential kinds of Jewish literature to emerge from the Middle Ages is Kabbalah, often referred to as Jewish mysticism. While the category of mysticism, connoting a type of discourse regarding an experience of the divine, is often associated with Kabbalah, "esotericism" or the notion of a secret tradition stemming from revelation, is also essential for understanding kabbalistic texts. The term "Kabbalah" literally means "tradition" and refers to knowledge that is received through a mode of transmission, be it oral or written, that extends over time. Starting in the late twelfth century in southern France we begin to find texts that lay claim to such a tradition of esoteric knowledge or "Kabbalah" regarding the mysteries of the inner life of God, the process of creation, the nature of the human soul, the secret meaning of the Hebrew Bible, the cultivation of mystical experience with God, and the true inner purpose and meaning of the performance of Jewish law and ritual.

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Main Ideas

Medieval Kabbalah is a complex phenomenon, encompassing a wide range of ideas and texts from different historical periods and geographical locations. While a discussion of the general themes and central symbols and concepts found in kabbalistic texts from the Middle Ages serves as a useful point of departure for further study, it is important to bear in mind that kabbalists are far from uniform, and their books bear witness to a multifaceted domain of Jewish literature. Nonetheless, a number of important ideas stand out as significant for understanding medieval kabbalistic texts. Kabbalists, for example, tend to be particularly fascinated with the mysteries of the inner life of the divine. Scholars typically refer to religious discourse reflecting upon the secret inner life of God as "theosophy." Without shying away from the kinds of contradictions that would offend the rational sensibilities of philosophers, many kabbalists embrace the paradoxical notion of a dynamic and multifaceted Godhead or divine realm in which the unity of God encompasses ten emanations referred to as the ten "sefirot." The symbolic system of the ten sefirot is the most prominent theosophic system found in medieval kabbalistic texts – so much so that some scholars have tended to regard the discussion of the sefirot as the hallmark of medieval Kabbalah. These entities are understood as ten facets of the divine self that emerge from the most recondite aspect of God, referred to by kabbalists as *ein sof* – the "endless" or infinite divine essence. The ten sefirot reflect a dynamic transcendent realm beyond the physical plane that serves as the connection between the transcendence of *ein sof* and the physical cosmos. The sefirot have primary names, with many secondary names also associated with them. The most common primary names of the ten sefirot, starting from the top of the structure closest to *ein sof*, are: *keter* (crown), *hokhma* (wisdom), *bina* (understanding), *hesed* (righteousness), *din* (judgment), *tifferet* (beauty), *netzach* (eternity), *hod* (glory), *yesod* (foundation), *malkhut* (kingdom). The final *sefirah* is also commonly referred to as *shekhinah* or the "divine presence."

The ten sefirot are regarded in medieval kabbalistic texts as reflections of the inner realm of the divine, which is also considered to be one with the name of God, the tetragrammaton (YHWH), spelled with the letters *yod*, *he*, *vav*, and *he* in Hebrew. The name of God is more than an indicative sign that points to something beyond itself. In kabbalistic thinking, the divine name embodies the divine self and serves as a paradoxical manifestation of God. Medieval kabbalists often employ various versions of the phrase, "He is his name, and his name is he," in discussions of the relationship between God and his name. The sefirot, God, and the divine name are understood to be one entity, leading to an understanding of the words of the Torah as a text woven of many different divine names or cognomina, with inner and outer aspects that hint at the mysterious connections between God and the world. Rabbi Todros ben Joseph Abulafia (1220–1298), a kabbalist from Castile, articulates this idea in the following manner: "See and understand that he is his name and his name

is he . . . and the name of the Holy One, blessed be he, is the twenty two letters of the written Torah."[1] Or, as Joseph Gikatilla, also a kabbalist from late thirteenth-century Castile, puts it:

> Know, dear one of my soul, that due to the great concealment of the Lord, may he be blessed, and his exaltedness beyond all thought, there is no manner by which to gain knowledge of the pathway by which his powers flow into all created beings, due to the depth of the wonders of his truth and the concealment of his great name. He therefore emanated from the truth of his name other cognomina which are like entryways by which humans may grasp the working of the greatness and power of our Creator, may he be blessed. Those cognomina cleave to his name like a shell cleaves to a nut – just as the shell is exposed on the outside, while the nut remains concealed within, so too the Name of God is concealed and hidden within all of the cognomina, while the cognomina surround it and are visible.[2]

God's proper name YHWH, which encompasses the mysteries of the ten sefirot, is related to other names or "cognomina," which in turn serve as a kind of shell that encases the essential name of God, and also serve as indicators of the mysterious connections of divine power to the world. This idea serves as the basis for an approach to the Torah as a text woven of divine names, as Gikatilla argues elsewhere, "the entire Torah [is] woven from the cognomina, and the cognomina from the names, and all the holy names depend on the Name YHWH and all are united within it. The entire Torah is woven from the Name YHWH and therefore the Torah of YHWH is called perfect (Psalm 19:8)."[3] For many kabbalists, this leads to a tendency to read the Torah "theosophically," that is, as a text filled with allusions to divine names and the realm of the ten sefirot. Many influential kabbalistic texts, most notably the *Sefer ha-Zohar* (Book of Splendor), are written as commentaries on the Torah, spinning out voluminous kabbalistic mysteries from the text based on the assumption that the Torah conceals within it the mysteries of the Godhead, and that the Kabbalah contains the keys to unlock that hidden level of meaning.

Another important feature of medieval Kabbalah is "theurgy," which refers to the notion that human actions can influence the divine realm. The kabbalistic theosophy of the ten sefirot is not a static picture of the inner reaches of God, but rather a dynamic system of interacting divine attributes. The sefirot are assigned various names, as well as gender designations. The sefirot are thus multifaceted entities that relate to one another in a manner analogous to the parts of a living organism. According to many kabbalists, when Jews perform the commandments of Jewish law, they cause the sefirot to unite with one another, connecting the secret channels between them and thereby facilitating the drawing down of divine "light," or "blessing," into the world. Conversely, when Jews transgress the mandates of Jewish law, they cause disunity within the Godhead and interrupt the flow of divine energy into the world, strengthening the forces of evil and impurity. According to

this kabbalistic worldview, Judaism is envisioned as the essential mechanism for maintaining the harmony and unity of the cosmos, thereby bringing divine light and energy, often referred to as *shefa* or "overflow," into the world and thus maintaining the being of the cosmos itself. Through the performance of Jewish religious praxis, as the kabbalists imagine it, the very being of the cosmos itself is sustained. As Moses de Leon puts it, "when a man endeavors below to arrange his worship and perform the commandments, [he] sustains the worlds and stands them in their order."[4]

As was mentioned above, esotericism, or secrecy, is an important category for understanding medieval Kabbalah. The knowledge of the ten sefirot, their order, and their unique names is regarded by the kabbalists as a secret matter normally inaccessible to human reason. As Nahmanides, a towering rabbinic figure in the mid-thirteenth century and an advocate of Kabbalah, put it in his famous commentary on the Torah, the secrets of the Kabbalah are passed on "from the mouth of a wise kabbalist to the ear of an understanding kabbalist."[5] Most kabbalists discuss both oral and written sources for their kabbalistic traditions. The main point is that such knowledge is not acquired through rational speculation or logical reasoning. Kabbalah, as most kabbalists understand it, is based on heavenly revelation, and as such is accessible exclusively to those who are privy to the kabbalistic chain of transmission. Medieval kabbalists describe the origins of kabbalistic ideas and symbolism in a variety of different ways, in some cases ascribing their doctrines to revelations from the prophet Elijah, in others to the revelation on Mount Sinai, while still others ascribe their traditions to teachings revealed by angels to biblical figures. David ben Yehudah he-Hasid describes the chain of kabbalistic transmission in the following way:

> The teachers of the Patriarchs were knowledgeable angels sent from the Holy King, may his name be exalted, in order to instruct and educate them in the paths of the primordial wisdom. This is what the masters of the Kabbalah, may their memories be blessed, say: the teacher of Adam as *Razi'el*, the teacher of Shem was *Yofi'el*, the teacher of Abraham was *Tzadki'el*, the teacher of Isaac was *Rapha'el*, the teacher of Jacob was *Peli'el*, the teacher of Joseph was *Gavri'el*, the teacher of Moses was *Metatron*, the teacher of Elijah was *Malti'el*. Each one of these angels would transmit Kabbalah to his student in a book or orally in order to teach him and make known to him future events.[6]

Judaism, according to the kabbalists, contains at its core an ancient secret doctrine consisting of the theosophic system of the Kabbalah. Those who, like the kabbalists, have access to such secret theosophic knowledge are envisioned according to this model as uniquely empowered to impact the divine and cosmic realms through the practice of Judaism.

In addition to the interest in theosophy and theurgy, which serve to reformulate traditional Jewish observance as a powerful mechanism for maintaining the unity of

the Godhead and the fabric of the being of the cosmos, some kabbalists place particular attention on the cultivation of mystical techniques for attaining unusual states of consciousness in order to attain prophetic insight, as well as ecstatic self-annihilation in God. Abraham Abulafia was famous, and in some cases controversial, for his public advocacy of this kind of kabbalistic activity starting in the late thirteenth century. He describes many kinds of techniques for attaining ecstasy and prophetic insight, often involving the recitation of divine names, the permutation of Hebrew letters, and regulated breathing. Abulafia describes the cultivation of experience though the manipulation of Hebrew letters in the following manner:

> And begin to combine small letters with great ones, to reverse them and to permutate them rapidly, until your heart shall be warmed through their combinations and rejoice in their movements and in what you bring about through their permutations; and when you feel thusly that your heart is already greatly heated through the combinations . . . then you are ready to receive the emanated influx.[7]

Abulafia and his students developed a complex discourse emphasizing such practices, often of a linguistic nature, designed to enable a unitive experience with God. Medieval Kabbalah can thus be appreciated as a complex phenomenon encompassing a wide range of ideas and ways of engaging with the mysteries of the divine realm.

Brief Historical Outline[8]

Ancient sources

Kabbalists in the Middle Ages drew their inspiration and ideas from a rich range of sources. Images from the Hebrew Bible depicting prophetic inspiration or heavenly revelation, such the revelation at Mount Sinai and Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot, receive particular attention. Kabbalists also draw upon many passages in rabbinic literature that address esoteric themes. For example, medieval kabbalists often understand their doctrine as the fuller articulation of the secret matters mentioned in the Mishnah, "forbidden sexual relations may not be expounded before three [or more] people, nor the account of creation [*ma'aseh bereishit*] before two [or more], nor the account of the Chariot [*ma'aseh merkavah*] before one, unless he is a sage who understands through his own knowledge."[9] Such comments serve to ground kabbalistic claims to an ancient, esoteric tradition within Judaism. The library of the medieval kabbalists also entailed many lesser known sources from antiquity, such as a group of Jewish mystical texts commonly referred to as the Heikhalot literature from the first centuries of the Common Era. These texts

discuss the means of entering the divine "palaces" (*heikhalot*) or chambers that surround the divine throne or chariot (*merkavah*). These visions are reported in the names of famous personalities from the rabbinic schools, such as Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael. Another important text that informs medieval Kabbalah is *Sefer Yetsirah* (The Book of Creation), composed some time between the second and seventh centuries CE. This text is a short treatise of fewer than two thousand words that discusses the creation of the universe by means of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet and the ten "ineffable sefirot." It is unclear what the ten sefirot exactly are in this context, but they seem to be entities in the divine realm that are incomprehensible by the human mind, yet nonetheless represent the mysterious nature of God and serve as his tools in the creative process. The focus on the symbolism of the ten sefirot and the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in *Sefer Yetsirah* had a major impact on medieval Kabbalah.

Hasidei Ashkenaz

A significant development in the promulgation of mystical and esoteric ideas in the Jewish communities of western Christendom was the emergence of a group in the Rhineland known as the Hasidei Ashkenaz (German Pietists). This movement, which was active from roughly 1250 to 1350, had a profound impact on the kabbalistic circles in Spain in the latter part of the thirteenth century. Its three main figures came from the Kalonymide family, starting with Samuel the Hasid (mid-twelfth century), the son of Rabbi Kalonymus of Speyer; Judah the Hasid of Worms (d. 1217); and Eleazar ben Yehudah of Worms, who died between 1223 and 1232. While little of the literary activity of Samuel the Hasid remains, many associate the *Sefer Hasidim* (Book of the Pious) with the teachings of Judah the Hasid. Eleazar of Worms composed numerous works – some of considerable length – that have survived and serve as the most important evidence of this group's mystical, theological, and theosophical speculations.

The Ḥasidei Ashkenaz placed particular emphasis on ascetic renunciation and ethical discipline. Fasts, abstinence, physical pain and discomfort, and even martyrdom, were all regarded as vehicles to enable mystical illumination, especially in the form of visualizing the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence). According to the Hasidei Ashkenaz, God's essence is unknowable, yet he fills all reality and suffuses all being. By practicing ascetic renunciation and contemplating the traditional teachings of the divine mysteries regarding creation, revelation, and the meaning of the Torah, members of this school believed that they could attain the pure love of God in an encounter that was often described in ways that indicate a strong influence from the *Heikhalot* and *Merkavah* literature, as well as the *Sefer Yetsirah*. Many scholars believe that the tribulations of the Crusades and the ascetic practices of the surrounding Christian monastic communities had an impact on the particular form of religious and mystical piety of the Hasidei Ashkenaz.

Kabbalah in Provence and the *Sefer ha-Bahir*

In the 1180s a text emerged in the Provence region of southern France that has come to serve as a defining moment in the history of Jewish mysticism and esotericism. This text, known as the *Sefer ha-Bahir* (The Book of Brightness), is written in the style of an ancient rabbinic midrash. The book has a complex origin and contains at least some elements that are believed to reflect ancient Near Eastern Jewish traditions. Determining exactly what proportion of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* derives from ancient tradition and what was the innovation of authors living in twelfth-century Europe remains an open question in the scholarship. The most significant feature of the *Sefer ha-Bahir* is its focus on the ten sefirot as the ten luminous emanations of God that symbolically reveal the realm of inner divine life. By representing the secret inner life of God as an erotically charged symbolic system of ten gendered divine emanations, it took a decisive step that permanently changed the history of Jewish mysticism.

In the late twelfth century we also find traditions that associate esoteric speculation with a number of important rabbis in southern France. Abraham ben Isaac of Narbonne (1110–1179), Abraham ben David of Posquières (1125–1198), also known as Rabad, and Jacob Nazir of Lunel (d. late twelfth century) are known to have endorsed kabbalistic and mystical teachings, though little more than a few scattered hints to that effect have been preserved in their own writings. Isaac the Blind (d. c. 1235), son of Abraham ben David, lived in Narbonne and was the first major rabbi in Europe to specialize in Kabbalah. Most of his teachings were disseminated orally to his students, and only one text, a commentary on *Sefer Yetsirah*, is regarded as his own composition. This commentary is a notoriously difficult text that discusses the sefirot mentioned in *Sefer Yetsirah* in a theosophical manner. One important contribution found in Isaac the Blind's commentary is the development of the idea that the sefirot emanate from an absolutely unknowable aspect of God known as *ein sof*, or "without end."

Kabbalah in Girona

At the beginning of the thirteenth century, Kabbalah spread to Spain when the students of Isaac the Blind moved to Girona, in the region of Catalonia. Here for the first time books were composed on Kabbalah that were designed to bring these ideas to a wider audience. Some of the most important individuals from this period are Judah ibn Yakar (Nahmanides' teacher), Ezra ben Shlomo (d. 1238 or 1245), Azriel of Girona (early thirteenth century), Moses ben Nahman, also known as Nahmanides (1194–1270), Abraham ben Isaac Gerundi (mid-thirteenth century), Asher ben David (first half of the thirteenth century), and Jacob ben Sheshet (mid-thirteenth century). In an intriguing letter sent to his students in Girona, Isaac the

Blind urges them to stop composing books on Kabbalah, for fear that these texts could "fall into the hands of fools or scoffers."[10] Despite Rabbi Isaac's criticism of the literary activities of some of the Girona kabbalists, treatises on Kabbalah continued to circulate and soon spread to other communities in Spain. Moreover, the influence of a prominent rabbi such as Nahmanides openly endorsing Kabbalah (he included numerous kabbalistic allusions in his popular commentary on the Torah) was undoubtedly essential for the legitimization of Kabbalah in the Spanish Jewish communities of Catalonia, Aragon, and Castile.

Kabbalah in Castile

In the middle of the thirteenth century, Kabbalah spread to Jewish communities living in the cities and towns of Castile. Jacob ben Jacob ha-Kohen (mid-thirteenth century) and Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen (mid-thirteenth century) became known for their teaching regarding a demonic realm within God from which evil originates. This evil is composed of a set of "sefirot of impurity" that parallel the pure sefirot of God. Their pupils, Moses of Burgos (d. c. 1300), as well as Todros Abulafia, were significant rabbinic and political leaders of the Castilian Jewish community who wrote important works of Kabbalah. Moses of Burgos was the teacher of Isaac ibn Sahula (b. 1244), author of the famous poetic fable *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* (1281), as well as a kabbalistic commentary on the Song of Songs. Also active in Castile at this time was Isaac ibn Latif (c. 1210–1280), whose writings strike a very delicate balance between kabbalistic symbolism and philosophical speculation.

From the 1270s through the 1290s a number of important and lengthy kabbalistic books were written by Joseph Gikatilla (1248–1325) and Moses de Leon (1240–1305). These two figures were among the most prolific of the medieval kabbalists, and many of their compositions, such as Gikatilla's *Sha'are Orah* (Gates of Light), went on to become seminal works in the history of Kabbalah. This period of remarkable kabbalistic literary productivity took place during the controversy over the study of Aristotelian philosophy, especially as it took shape in the philosophical works of Moses Maimonides, and the pronounced increase in Christian anti-Jewish proselytizing in Western Europe. Both of these may have been a factor in the development of Kabbalah during this decisive moment in its history.

Abraham Abulafia

Abraham Abulafia, mentioned above, was born in Spain in 1240 and died some time after 1292. He propounded a kind of Kabbalah that, in addition to many of the typical theosophical motifs, focused on meditative techniques and recitation of divine names, letter permutation, numerical symbolism of Hebrew letters (*gematria*), and acrostics, designed to bring one to a state of ecstatic union with

God and to attain prophetic illumination. The goal of this mystical and prophetic experience was to untie the "knots" binding the soul to the body and the world. According to his own testimony, Abulafia wrote 26 books of prophecy based on his mystical experiences. Abulafia traveled widely and may have had messianic pretensions. He attempted to have an audience with Pope Nicholas III in 1280, possibly in order to declare himself the messiah. In the 1280s Solomon ben Abraham ibn Adret of Barcelona (c. 1235–1310) led an attack against him and had Abulafia and his works banned because of his claims that his writings were on a par with those of the biblical prophets. Abulafia was a prolific writer who, in addition to his prophetic works – of which only one, *Sefer ha-Ot*, has survived – wrote many books on topics such as Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, commentaries on *Sefer Yetsirah*, and descriptions of meditative techniques.

The Zohar

During the late 1200s a kabbalistic commentary on the Torah that would go on to have a monumental and transformative impact on Judaism and the West began to circulate in Castile. The commentary is comprised of many texts composed over a period of at least a decade, written in Aramaic in the name of important rabbis from the time of the Mishnah, in the second century CE. The most prominent personality mentioned in this collection of Kabbalistic writings is Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai. By the beginning of the fourteenth century, this collection of texts came to be known by a number of names, but the one that stood the test of time was *Sefer ha-Zohar* (The Book of Splendor).

A careful reading of the text of the Zoharic literature – which, in its printed form, is almost two thousand pages in length – reveals a pronounced influence of *Heikhalot* and *Merkavah* imagery, the writings of the Hasidei Ashkenaz, the kabbalists of Provence, Girona, and Castile, as well as some important medieval Jewish thinkers and philosophers such as Judah Ha-Levi and Moses Maimonides. The text also contains a number of foreign words of Spanish origin. This has led scholars to conclude that most if not all of the Zohar was composed in Castile toward the end of the thirteenth century. It is only in the later 1290s and early 1300s that we find citations from the Zoharic corpus with any consistency. The earliest citation is in Isaac ibn Sahula's *Meshal ha-Kadmoni* and is taken from a part of the Zohar called the *Midrash ha-Ne'elam*.

The question of the origin and authorship of the Zohar has been the subject of scholarly debate. Gershom Scholem argued that the main body of the Zohar was written by Moses de Leon.[11] This position has been revised by Yehuda Liebes, who argued that the Zohar is in fact the product of a group of Spanish kabbalists from the late thirteenth century, of which Moses de Leon was a prominent member but which also likely included Joseph Gikatilla, Todros Abulafia, Isaac ibn Sahula, Joseph of Hamadan, David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, Yoseph Shalom Ashkenazi, and Bahya ben Asher.[12]

The Zohar represents in many ways the culmination of a century of tremendous kabbalistic creativity that began in Provence in the late twelfth century and ended in Castile in the early fourteenth century. The long and rambling poetic discourses found in Zoharic texts engage with everything from the emergence of the ten sefirot from the inner reaches of God and *ein sof* to the mysteries of creation, the process of revelation, the mystical meaning of the *mitzvot* (commandments) and meditations on the gendered and highly erotic interactions of the sefirot expressed in particular as the desire of the *Shekhinah*, the tenth and lowest of the ten sefirot, to return to her male counterpart and be reassimilated into God, in keeping with trends in Kabbalah from earlier in the thirteenth century. The Zohar argues that it is by means of the actions of Jews in the physical world – especially though the performance of commandments and the study of Torah – that the sefirot can be unified and the upper and lower realms perfected. These ideas are delivered in a highly cryptic style that presumes familiarity with many of the main principles of Kabbalah as well as biblical and rabbinic literature. The Zohar encodes its kabbalistic message in a complex set of symbols that are in turn understood to be only the uncovering of mysteries contained within the words and even the letters of the Torah.

Fourteenth to sixteenth centuries: from the Spanish expulsion to the Safed community

By the fourteenth century, Kabbalah had begun to spread throughout Western Europe, north Africa, and the Middle East. Treatises such as the anonymous *Ma'arekhet ha-Elohut*, along with the commentary on the Torah by Bahya ben Asher and the *drashot* (sermons) of Joshua ibn Shu'aib, served to spread Kabbalah to wider audiences. Shem Tov ben Abraham ibn Gaon of Soria (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries) and Elhanan ben Abraham ibn Eskira (thirteenth–fourteenth centuries) became important kabbalists in Palestine, along with Isaac ben Samuel of Acre (late thirteenth–mid-fourteenth century),[13] whose *Me'irat Einaim* became a seminal exposition of the kabbalistic meaning behind the hints and allusions to secret teachings in the works of Nahmanides. Kabbalah began to spread to Italy in the early fourteenth century through the works of Menahem Recanati, who wrote a popular kabbalistic commentary on the Torah and a book on the mystical meaning of the commandments. Menahem Ziyyoni of Cologne and Avigdor Kara became important kabbalistic authorities in Germany, while Isaiah ben Joseph of Tabriz spread Kabbalah to Persia and Nathan ben Moses Kilkis wrote his *Even Sappir* in Constantinople. Two important works written some time in the second half of the fourteenth century, *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, a commentary on the first section of the Torah, and *Sefer ha-Kanah*, concerning the kabbalistic meaning of the commandments, argue that both the philosophical and literalist interpretations of Judaism are misguided and that only according to the Kabbalah can Jewish law and tradition be

properly understood. A similar sentiment is expressed in fifteenth-century Castile in the writings of Shem Tov ibn Shem Tov, who attacked the philosophical teachings of Maimonides and blamed them for the growing trend of Jewish conversion to Christianity.

Kabbalistic literary activity began to decline in Spain during the fifteenth century leading up to the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. Though there were important kabbalists such as Joseph Alcastiel, Judah Hayat, Joshua ben Samuel ibn Nehmias, and Shalom ben Saadiah ibn Saytun still living in Spain during the mid to late fifteenth century, many began to migrate even before the expulsion.

The exile of the Spanish Jewish community facilitated the spread of Kabbalah to many centers around the Mediterranean. In Italy there were active schools of kabbalists in the late fifteenth century, including Reuben Zarfati, Jonathan Alemano, and Judah Messer Leon, who undoubtedly had an impact on the development of Christian Kabbalah by Giovanni Pico della Mirandola. In north Africa during the late fifteenth and early to mid-sixteenth centuries, Abraham Sabba, Joseph Alashkar, Mordecai Buzaglo, and Shimon ibn Lavi were active teachers and writers.

With the rise of Isaac Luria and the Safed school of Kabbalah in the mid-sixteenth century, the era of medieval Kabbalah is brought to an end. However, it was an era that bore witness to the fundamental reconceptualization of Judaism in the minds of many Jews. Rabbinic Judaism tended to focus on law and ritual obligation, regarding the function of the law as the fulfillment of divine will on the part of Jews as stipulated in the covenantal relationship. While medieval Kabbalah has many important precursors in the rabbinic literature, its focus and way of conceiving of the place of Jews in the world departs in significant ways from how non-kabbalistic Jews in the Middle Ages tended to understand the rabbinic tradition. For Kabbalists, the essence of Judaism is its secret traditions and teachings regarding the mysteries of God in their relation to the Torah and commandments. Judaism becomes, in the minds of the kabbalists, a form of theurgic praxis that maintains the unity of the divine and the continued sustenance of the cosmos. To practice Judaism, according to the kabbalists, is more than the fulfillment of a covenantal obligation with God – it is a way to participate in the mysteries of the inner divine life, and to maintain connection of the universe to God. By imagining Judaism in this way, medieval kabbalists constructed a conception of Jewishness that led to a paradigm shift in the way that many Jews understood their religion, starting in the Middle Ages, and continuing into the present.

Notes

1 Todoros Abulafia, *Otzar ha-Kavod ha-Shalem*, as cited in Alexander Altmann, The *Ta'amei ha-Mitzvot* attributed to Isaac ibn Farhi and its author. *Kiryat Sefer*, 40 (1964–1965), p. 267 (Hebrew).

2 *R. Joseph Gikatilla's Commentary to Ezekiel's Chariot*, ed. Asi Farber-Ginat (Los Angeles: Cherub Press, 1998), p. 45 (Hebrew).
3 *Sha'arei Orah*, ed. Joseph ben Shlomo, 2 vols (Jerusalem: Bialik Institute, 1981), vol. 1, p. 48.
4 Moses de Leon, *The Book of the Pomegranate*, ed. Elliot Wolfson (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1988), p. 111.
5 *Peirush al ha-torah le-rabeinu moshe ben nahman*, ed. Charles Chavel (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1984), p. 7.
6 David ben Yehudah he-Hasid, in his commentary on *Sefer Yetzirah*, 21.
7 *Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, MS Oxford 1582, fol. 52a, cited in Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1988), p. 39.
8 Portions of this historical survey have been adapted from Hartley Lachter "Reading mysteries: the origins of scholarship on Jewish mysticism," which appeared in *Jewish Mysticism and Kabbalah: New Insights and Scholarship*, ed. Frederick E. Greenspahn (New York: New York University Press, 2011). For more comprehensive historical surveys of Kabbalah, to which the following is indebted, see Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (New York: Meridian, 1978), pp. 8–86; *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954); "The historical development of Jewish mysticism," in *On the Possibility of Jewish Mysticism in Our Time and Other Essays*, ed. Avraham Shapira, trans. Jonathan Chipman (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1997), pp. 121–154.
9 Mishnah Ḥagigah 2:1.
10 Cited in Gershom Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky, trans. Allan Arkush (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 394.
11 See, for example, Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1954), p. 159.
12 See Yehuda Liebes, "How the Zohar was written," in *Studies in the Zohar*, trans. A. Schwartz, S. Nakache, and P. Peli (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), pp. 85–138. For more on the complexity of the development of Zoharic literature, see Ronit Meroz, "Zoharic narratives and their adaptations," *Hispania Judaica Bulletin*, 3 (2000), pp. 3–63. Daniel Abrams has recently argued that the history of the texts of Zoharic literature is far too complex, both in terms of its redaction and the process of its composition, for this collection to be regarded as a "book." See *Kabbalistic Manuscripts and Textual Theory* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2011).
13 See Eitan Fishbane, *As Light before Dawn: The Inner World of a Medieval Kabbalist* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009).

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Part IV

The Early Modern Period (Sixteenth–Eighteenth Centuries)

15

Judaism and Science in the Age of Discovery

Joseph M. Davis

The Discovery of "Discovery"

The three centuries that fell approximately between the discovery of the Americas in 1492 and the discovery of oxygen in 1774 – roughly what historians call the "early modern period" – saw a series of crucial scientific discoveries. The telescope was invented in 1608; Isaac Newton explained his theory of gravity in 1687; in 1752, Benjamin Franklin did his famous experiments with lightning. These individual discoveries, significant though they would be for the future, were only part of a larger cultural and intellectual shift. During this period, the very notion of "discovery" was reinterpreted, perhaps even created, and so too the modern notion of "science," that is, science as a program of ever-expanding research.

In the time of Columbus, it was well accepted that everything that could possibly be known had already been known by the ancients. Knowledge might be lost and rediscovered, it was thought, but there was never any "new" knowledge; that concept was actually quite foreign to medieval thought. Ancient books and ancient languages, Latin and Greek and, conceivably, Hebrew, were thought to be basic to learning "science."

By the late eighteenth century, by the time of Benjamin Franklin, the notion of a new "invention" or a new "discovery" was commonplace, at least in certain intellectual circles. Between Columbus and Franklin, the notion of a "scientific experiment" had been developed, new ground rules had been set up for how to conduct scientific experiments, and a growing set of social institutions, such as

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Franklin's Philosophical Society, were giving "discovery" and "invention" a major place in modern culture (Park and Daston, 2006).

The same period was one of important shifts in Jewish life and religious belief. In that same fateful year of 1492, the Jews of Spain, who constituted by far the largest group of medieval Jews, were forced either to convert to Christianity or to leave Spain. By 1570, Western Europe was nearly emptied of Jews. There were small communities left in some German cities, and some major communities in northern Italy, particularly in Venice and Mantua. The center of the Jewish world had moved from Western to Eastern Europe: Poland, Greece, and Turkey. The largest community of Jews in the 1500s through the 1700s was probably Salonica, today in Greece, then ruled by Turkey (Mazower, 2004; Bell, 2008).

The relationship between the story of the birth of modern science and the story of the early modern Jews is not simple. Judaism did not move gradually or inexorably in the direction of becoming "more scientific" over this long period. In the 1770s and 1780s, it is true, a "Jewish Enlightenment" emerged, that is, a new interpretation of Judaism that was friendly to modern science, and in some ways rooted in it. But the Jewish Enlightenment was intensely controversial when it burst onto the Jewish scene, precisely because Judaism over a long period had not really been trending in this direction at all (Ruderman, 1995).

Jewish Nostalgia for the Golden Age and Traditionalism

If we may take a step backwards and generalize a little, it seems fair to say that medieval people – Christians, Jews, and Muslims alike – tended towards two different ways of thinking. One view was that things will stay the way that they are until the end of time. The other was that past ages had been better, and that the current age was one of decline.

These views were far from unreasonable. Medieval people had actually very little evidence that there had ever been a time that had been very different from their own, and practically no evidence that things had gotten better since then. Medieval Paris and Cairo were not like modern cities, full of things that are brand new, and photographs of how very different everything looked generations ago. They had very limited records of the past, and they were surrounded by the remains of Greek and Roman technologies that had been forgotten: realistic statues, long aqueducts, straight roads that had fallen into disrepair and disuse. Those medieval people inclined to a pessimistic view can surely be forgiven for thinking that they were living in an age of decline.

The Jews were particularly given to this nostalgia for earlier times. It was a basic teaching of medieval Judaism. The medieval Jews read in the Bible about powerful kings – David, Solomon, Ahab – and realized that, by comparison, they had very little political power. They read about miracles, and realized that they did not have

the power to perform miracles. And they associated all of this with their own distance from the land of Israel and Jerusalem the holy city. They saw themselves as being in "Exile" since the time of the Romans.

Logically associated with nostalgia for a Golden Age is traditionalism. If previous generations were wiser, more virtuous, closer to God, and more prosperous, then (on the whole) the best thing to do is to follow their advice and their maxims, and to imitate how they lived their lives. Not the most recent books but the most ancient were regarded as authoritative. "It is a tradition" or "it is written in the most ancient Scriptures" were regarded throughout the Middle Ages as conclusive arguments.

The Jews were particularly fond of this way of thinking. This medieval Jewish world, of nostalgia, traditionalism, Scripturalism, and Exile, remained largely intact until the nineteenth century.

Old Worlds and New Worlds

We should thus beware of attributing more influence to figures such as Copernicus or Galileo than they could possibly have had in the realm of Judaism or Jewish thought in this period. In the sixteenth–eighteenth centuries, Jews in Turkey and Poland, and even many Jews in Germany and Italy – let alone Yemen – seem to have been only very slightly aware of these landmark discoveries that were taking place. Most Jews in this period (or even later) were very distant culturally, socially, and also geographically from the centers of Western scientific thought.

Much later on, in the twentieth century, it became literally impossible for Jews, wherever they lived, to escape the global reach of modern science. This was not true earlier. For instance, Yemenite Jews had medieval traditions of the study of science. For them, as for many medieval Jews, Ptolemaic-Aristotelian astronomy was a topic of particular interest (Langermann, 1996). These patterns of medieval study and belief did not stop suddenly when the astronomer Copernicus published his magnum opus in 1543. Indeed among Ashkenazic (Central and Eastern European) Jews, study of Ptolemaic-Aristotelian astronomy grew markedly after 1550, and flourished for two or three generations until about 1620. Copernican astronomy was not taught in Jewish schools until the nineteenth century, more than two hundred years after it was developed (Levine, 1983).

The discovery of the New World, to take another important instance, had frankly very little resonance among Jews before the nineteenth century (Efron, 2001). By the mid-1600s, there were actually communities of Jews living in the Americas; for instance, the first Jews in New Amsterdam (today, New York) settled there in 1654. But, with rare exceptions, neither they nor their brethren in the Old World seem to have given any thought to the intellectual challenges that this huge continent posed to the picture of the world presented in the Bible.

The Jews of the West Indies and New Amsterdam are striking examples of a phenomenon that is much broader. From our point of view, it is obvious that the new discoveries shaped these New World Jews, and set them apart from the Jews of earlier centuries. But, by and large, they did not think of themselves this way. They did not believe that their new situation demanded any rethinking of Judaism, nor any new Jewish rituals or ways of life (Sarna, 2008).

Some Early Modern Jewish Scientists

Although what we have said is probably broadly true as a generalization, it was far from being true of each and every Jew in the early modern period. That is, there were some who were much closer to the centers of Western thought, who were much more aware of the changing intellectual times that they lived in, and who kept up with and even participated in the process of scientific discovery.

Again, we should perhaps begin with a caution against misplaced expectations. Jews did not participate in early modern science in the same way that they have done since about 1900. There was no sixteenth- or seventeenth-century Jewish Einstein. The history of early modern science can be (and typically has been) written without mention of a single Jew. That would not be possible in a history of twentieth-century science. However, there were perhaps as many as a score of early modern Jews who did make noteworthy contributions to early modern science (Ruderman, 1995; Efron, 2007).

For instance, one of the great geographers of royal Spain in the late fifteenth century, who developed modern mapping techniques, and may have provided some of the charts that Columbus used, was the Jewish scholar Abraham Zacuto (Seed, 2001). (We will leave aside the question of whether Columbus himself had Jewish ancestors.)

Another Hispanic Jew was one of the leading doctors and medical authors of the sixteenth century. João Rodrigues (1511–1568), who published under the Latin pen name of Amatus Lusitanus, pioneered the notion of a medical case history. Brought up as a Christian, he fled Spain and moved to Italy and eventually to Salonica, where he returned openly to the practice of Judaism.

Later in the sixteenth century, Abraham Colorni, a Jew of the Italian city of Mantua, was an engineer and polymath. He was an inventor of military technology; he took particular pride in the creation of weapons that could also serve as musical instruments. In 1590, he moved to Prague, where Emperor Rudolph II was a patron of scientists, artists, and engineers. Colorni published a work on codes, and dedicated it to Rudolph (Roth, 1961).

Mention should also be made of Colorni's contemporary and fellow Mantuan, the playwright and theater producer Leone de' Sommi. De' Sommi was the author of the first published work on the art or science of producing and directing plays

(Belkin, 1997). Stagecraft is perhaps no longer considered a "science," and perhaps neither is cryptography, but in the still developing world of "science" in the late sixteenth century, both Colorni's work and De' Sommi's had a place.

Indeed, the "science" of Kabbalah was not yet considered a contradiction in terms, as it later would be (Kilcher, 2000). Christian scholars of the early modern period, beginning with Pico della Mirandola and Johannes Reuchlin, developed a Christian tradition of Kabbalah, based partly on medieval Jewish texts such as the Zohar and the Book of Creation (Sefer Yetsirah). Christian Kabbalah overlapped to a considerable degree with the science (or proto-science?) of alchemy, and to a certain degree with other sciences, such as cryptography. A certain Mordechai of Nelle seems to have part of Emperor Rudolph's team of alchemists. Even such a figure as Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), who invented calculus – he and Newton – took an interest in Kabbalah, including both Christian and Jewish Kabbalah (Coudert, 1995).[1]

There were extremely few scientific "researchers" among early modern Jews (to use a concept that, as we have stressed, is somewhat anachronistic). We have already named most of the major figures. A second category of early modern Jewish "scientists," though, comprises Jews who did not contribute in any sense to the advancement of science, but whose knowledge of the sciences gave them the status of experts in the eyes of their communities.

Some were rabbis, such as Rabbi Moses Isserles (c. 1530–1572), the great rabbi of Cracow. Others were doctors. Medicine had already emerged in the later Middle Ages as a profession that was quite attractive to Jews. Most Christian medical schools of the period excluded Jews, but a Jewish infrastructure of medical education had developed in the Middle Ages, with unique licensing arrangements, in parallel to the medical schools of the Christian world, and there were medical textbooks in Hebrew. After 1671, however, Jews were permitted to study medicine at the University of Padua and received an introduction to the most recent innovations in medicine (Ruderman, 1995).

David Gans (1541–1613)

A Jew named David Gans illustrates the extent to which Jewish thinkers in the early modern period could concern themselves with scientific and technological progress. At the same time, he also shows some of the limits on their ability to think in these terms (Breuer, 1983).

Gans was a German Jew who had studied Judaism – mainly Talmud – in Poland, with the Rabbi Isserles mentioned above. Gans moved to Prague, and authored two works, one about astronomy, and the other a history of the world.

Gans did not make any astronomical discoveries himself. However, he made himself useful to the great astronomer Tycho Brahe, who was part of Emperor

Rudolph II's court in Prague. Gans wrote an introduction to astronomy, which is mostly based on medieval sources, but does briefly survey Copernicus' new system and Brahe's new discoveries. He tried to have the astronomy textbook published in 1612, during the last year of his life, but he died before he could see it through printing, and it remained unpublished until 1743.

Like Brahe himself, Gans could not bring himself to embrace the new sun-centered astronomy of Copernicus, nor to reject the ancient belief that the earth is the center of the universe. But, also like Brahe, Gans did not reject the idea of making new discoveries, and he was enthusiastic about certain new ideas. For instance, medieval scientists had not been certain that it was possible to live in the southern hemisphere of the earth. Gans saw this question as settled by the new discoveries. The whole world was habitable.

Gans' history, which he published in 1592, had two parts. The first was a history of the Jews from Adam and Eve until his own day, and the second was a history of the world, focusing mainly on kings and emperors. Amid his kings and emperors and their wars, Gans found room to celebrate the invention of printing and other "useful things and new mechanisms."

1440 Invention of the Printing Press

> The printing press was discovered in the city of Mainz by a Christian man named Johannes Guten Berg of Strasbourg. This was in the first year of the good king, Kaiser Friedrich, the year 5200, which was 1440 according to the Christian calendar. Blessed be the One who gives wisdom to man and understanding to mankind, blessed be He whose mercy has been great to us. This is a mechanism whose usefulness is so great to all of humankind. There is no wisdom or mechanism like it from the day that the Lord created Adam. Not only for studying theology and the Seven Sciences, but for craftsmen, artisans, silversmiths, masons, woodcarvers and stone-carvers and others. Useful things and new mechanisms are discovered and made famous by the printing press, each and every day, books without number for every craft. (Gans, 1983: 369)

Gans was also aware of the New World, but he was not sure that it was a new discovery.

1533 The New World is the land of Ophir

> After these things, Kaiser Karl sent great vessels to the land of America, which we just mentioned, and he conquered a large part of that land and named it Hispania Nuevo, which means New Spain, unto this day. And the king of France also conquered part of it and called it New France. Know also that according to the sages of cosmography, which is a branch of philosophy, this new world is larger than all of the lands of the Christian kings of our time in all

> the parts of Europe. And in their opinion, this land lies directly under our feet. There is no place here to explain this, but if God blesses me, I will explain it at greater length in another place. In *Light unto the Eyes*, chapter eleven, the author [a man named Azariah de' Rossi] writes that the New World is the land of Ophir, where King Solomon of blessed memory sent his ships every three years, as it is written in the book of First Kings chapter ten and in Second Chronicles chapter nine. And that author gave many proofs of this, as you may read there. (Gans, 1983: 391, as cited in Efron, 2001: 64)

Gans did not in any way challenge anything in Scripture. Quite the opposite, most of his chronicle of the first three thousand years of human history is based entirely on the Bible. Gans held, for instance, to the traditional Jewish view that the world was created in year one of the Jewish calendar, the year 3760 before the Christian era.

Gans went even beyond this sort of Bible literalism in his affirmation of Jewish tradition. He asserted not only that the Bible is correct and undisputable, but also that the Talmud is.

Not all Jewish scholars agreed with the notion of Talmudic infallibility. One who did not was another historian, a little older than Gans, the Italian Jew Azariah de' Rossi; in the quotation above Gans referred to de' Rossi's suggestion that the New World might be the biblical land of Ophir, where Solomon sent his fleet. The Talmud includes various stories that disagree in certain ways with data in the Greek and Roman historians. In his book, *Light unto the Eyes* (*Sefer Me'or 'Einayim*), de' Rossi had suggested that the Greek and Roman historians might be correct, and that the Talmud's version of events might be confused or fictionalized. De' Rossi's book was condemned in many parts of the Jewish world, not least Gans' own Prague, where Rabbi Judah Loewe declared that the book deserved to be burned. Like Rabbi Loewe, if not so vehemently, Gans rejected de' Rossi's skeptical approach to the Talmud, and reaffirmed the medieval Jewish belief that everything in the Talmud was true.

Jewish Renaissance and Reformation in the Late 1500s

One cultural or religious option that differs from holding on to every medieval tradition, but is also not the same as the scientific model of progress through research, is to recover and revive a past Golden Age. This is the model of a "Reformation" or a "Renaissance," two of the dominant themes of European culture in the early modern period. The Protestant Reformation was an attempt to return Christianity to the Golden Age of the early church before the papacy. The "Renaissance" was the effort to revive the culture of ancient Greece and Rome.

There were also Jewish efforts in this period to revive ancient beliefs and practices that were thought to have been lost. Azariah de' Rossi, for instance, made

an effort to retrieve the beliefs of the ancient Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria (fl. 40 CE). Philo's writings had been unknown to Jews for 1500 years, and Philo's combination of the beliefs of Judaism and those of Plato appealed greatly to de' Rossi.[2]

An opponent of de' Rossi's was Joseph Karo (1488–1575), one of the great scholars of Jewish law of his age. Much as Karo rejected de' Rossi's skepticism and little as he cared for his Platonic philosophizing, he did share de' Rossi's dissatisfaction with the present state of Judaism, and he too nursed the goal of returning it to a more pristine condition. For Karo, that hope was connected closely with the return to the land of Israel. Karo, who had been born in Spain, moved eventually to the city of Safed (also spelled Tsfat), in the Galilee region of the land of Israel. Besides Karo, Safed attracted an extraordinary galaxy of Bible scholars and religious poets, Jewish mystics and Talmudists. Like Karo himself, most were refugees from Spain, part of an ambitious attempt to revive Judaism by reconnecting to its roots in the land of Israel (Fine, 2003).

One of Karo's projects was to standardize the practice of Jewish law in Safed and throughout the Jewish world. To this end, he published a work called the *Shulhan Arukh*. Karo intended the work to be something the Jewish world had lacked (in his view) since the Jews had first been exiled from Israel: a standard code of Jewish law.

An opponent of de' Rossi's historical researches, as we mentioned earlier, but also an opponent of Karo's *Shulhan Arukh* project, was Rabbi Judah Loewe of Prague. Yet he too expressed deep dissatisfaction with the state of Judaism in his day, and wished to make reforms based on a return to sacred texts. Not Karo's code, not any code, but the Talmud itself should be the arbiter of Jewish life, Rabbi Loewe believed. He particularly lobbied for a reform of Jewish educational institutions.

Loewe's proposed restoration, however, was in the end no more popular than de Rossi's, and no more successful than Karo's. Even when the ancient past could be evoked as a legitimating model, the Jews of the sixteenth century were on the whole very attached to their present way of life, and not eager for any changes.

The Heritage of Maimonideanism and Anti-Maimonideanism

As we see from the example of de' Rossi, there were at least a few Jewish intellectuals in the 1500s and 1600s willing to challenge – publicly, in print – at least some parts of Jewish tradition. There were many more who held on to private doubts (Frank and Leaman, 1997).

Medieval Judaism itself, although certainly dogmatic and traditionalist to a very high degree, never unanimously rejected the questioning of religious beliefs. It included a tradition of rationalist questioning exemplified by the great medieval Jewish philosopher Moses Maimonides. This Maimonidean tradition encouraged a measure of doubt about many religious matters. Was the world really created in

3760 BCE? Perhaps, as Aristotle believed, the world has always existed, for an infinitely long time. Will the dead really be resurrected? Perhaps not everything in the Bible (or the Talmud) is correct, or is meant to be taken literally.

Some learned Jews of the early modern period had doubts like these. However, it was considered unwise, and perhaps even somewhat uncouth, to make a display of one's unbelief. Privately, though, some Jews, for instance some of the Jewish doctors mentioned above, did reject some traditional beliefs, even traditional dogmas of Judaism such as resurrection. One contemporary of de' Rossi, a doctor named Eliezer Eilburg, expressed privately his doubts about Judaism as a whole, and about the Bible. Do the Jews of our day, he asked, even believe the same religion as the Jews of the Bible, or practice the same religion? It has the same name, but what do they have in common? (Davis, 2001). A few early modern Jews may have rejected the idea of religious truth entirely, and believed only in Aristotle and (medieval) science. But if so, they kept their views to themselves.

If there was a medieval heritage of Jewish Aristotelianism, there was also, however, a tradition of Jewish opposition to Maimonides and to Aristotle and science. Maimonides was controversial in his own day and still is. Many Jews, both in the Middle Ages and in the early modern period, were convinced that it was sinful to study Aristotle or any non-Jewish writer, and sinful to entertain doubts about religious beliefs.

Spanish and Portuguese Jews and Their Doubts

But some early modern Jews had an inclination towards religious doubt. The expulsion of Jews from Spain in 1492, followed by the forced conversion of all the Jews of Portugal in 1494, had produced a large group of so-called "new Christians." Cut off from Judaism, they were also persecuted by the Inquisition. Their private beliefs (Christian? Jewish? neither?) were disputed at that time and have been ever since.

Whether by coincidence or not, some intellectuals of this group of Spaniards (it is hard to know whether to call them Jews, or what to call them at all[3]) were inclined towards philosophical skepticism. Francisco Sanches wrote a Latin work, *Quod Nihil Scitur* (Why Nothing Can Be Known), published in 1581. One might also mention his contemporary and distant cousin, Michel de Montaigne, the famous French essayist and skeptic, who was descended from Spanish Jews.

Some New Christians left Spain and Portugal and succeeded in returning to Judaism. We have already mentioned Amatus Lusitanus, whose life followed this trajectory. But many of these returning Spanish and Portuguese Jews maintained a certain ambiguity in their religious allegiances. Some after having returned to Judaism, for instance in Amsterdam in the seventeenth century, continued to live as Christians elsewhere when they traveled. Others, for instance the community who

settled in Bordeaux, never formally returned to Judaism at all until well into the eighteenth century, and for more than a century lived an unofficial Jewish lifestyle while living officially as Christians (Graizbord, 2004).

Furthermore, these returning Jews, whose lives had been led and whose education had been acquired in an entirely Christian setting, completely outside of the Jewish community, found much of rabbinic Judaism quite unfamiliar and difficult to accept, and quite difficult to square with the Bible. Doubts such as these found an eloquent spokesman in Uriel d'Acosta (1585–1640) in Amsterdam. He particularly questioned whether the Bible teaches the notion of an immortal soul, or reward and punishment in the hereafter. Generally he questioned the validity of rabbinic (as he put it, "Pharisaic") Judaism, and even the value of established religion as a whole. Rabbinic Judaism made great efforts to keep Amsterdam Jewry and the returning Spanish and Portuguese Jews under its aegis. D'Acosta was forced to recant his doubts, later he committed suicide.

The doubts of the returning Iberian Jews such as d'Acosta did not produce an Iberian Reformation in Judaism, that is, a movement that would break with the larger world of traditional Judaism. However, the lifestyle of these Iberian Jews – their clothes, the books they read, and generally their manners – was understandably more open to the influences of Christian culture, than was the lifestyle of other Jews, for instance the Jews of Poland. This was a difference that would continue to make itself felt throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Benedict Spinoza (1632–1677)

Although most early modern Jews, as we have said, existed far from the centers of early modern science, there was one who was at the very center of Western thought in this period, and who did much to create the modern world of science, Enlightenment, and progress. That was one of the great Jewish heretics of seventeenth-century Amsterdam, Benedict (Baruch) Spinoza (Israel, 2001; Nadler, 2001).

Spinoza lived all of his life in the Netherlands. His parents were Portuguese Jews who had escaped the Inquisition and come to Amsterdam. His father was a merchant. In 1656, when he was 24, rumors of young Spinoza's radical opinions came to the leaders of the Jewish community of Amsterdam. For example, it was rumored that, like d'Acosta, Spinoza did not believe in the afterlife. The community excommunicated Spinoza (put him into *herem*, a sort of shunning), and demanded that he recant his heretical opinions. Spinoza never recanted, and for the rest of his life he had no significant contact with Jews.

Spinoza's life was short – he died at the age of 45, in 1677 – and apart from his excommunication, mostly uneventful. He never married; he stayed out of the limelight. (He is said to have worn a ring with the Latin inscription *Caute* – caution.)

He had a small group of like-minded friends; he made money by making glass lenses. But his quiet life belies the huge revolution that he was carrying out in the realm of Western ideas.

Spinoza was the first major Western philosopher, of any religion, to reject Scripture. For more than a thousand years, for almost two thousand years, all the major Western philosophers, whether Christian, Muslim, or Jewish, had accepted their religions; they had accepted the basic authority of religious tradition and religious scripture, be it the Bible or the Qur'an. The task of religious philosophy through all this period had been one of harmonization: harmonizing revelation and reason, nature and miracle, Scripture and Aristotle.

Around a generation before Spinoza, the scientist and philosopher René Descartes (of whom Spinoza was to a large extent a follower) had already rejected Aristotle and the Aristotelian system of the sciences. Descartes proposed a new system, a system of modern science (as we would say), more mathematical than Aristotelian science and hence better able to predict future outcomes. But Descartes never breathed a word against Scripture. (Spinoza wasn't the only cautious person in seventeenth-century Europe.)

Spinoza's revolution was more dangerous than Descartes', and in its way at least as fateful. Spinoza wrote a whole book about the Bible. He argued that as history it is inaccurate, as philosophy or theology largely untruthful, and as law outdated and unhelpful. The Pentateuch was not written by Moses, he argued; the prophets were not terribly wise men; the Jews are not a chosen people; the Bible is not a supernatural book. The Bible has amusing stories; some of them (not all) teach good morals. That is all it has.

In addition to this, Spinoza was one of the first major Western philosophers to speak in favor of democracy. He was one of the first, perhaps the first, to recommend freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and freedom of religion. If our teachings and laws will not come from the Bible, where will they come from? Spinoza recommended that laws be established democratically, and that teachings be open to debate.

Spinoza did not write for a Jewish audience. But it is clear that he expected his ideas to benefit the Jews among others. It is not simply that he opposed religious persecution, although he did. He was painfully aware of the long history of Jewish–Christian hatred, and saw it as a self-sustaining cycle of hatred and violence. He saw himself as opening a door, smallest of all doors, out of this sort of cycle, all too common throughout the world. That small door was science and reason.

Rejecting Scripture, Spinoza embraced science to an uncommonly strong degree. It is unreasonable, Spinoza argued (as we might say, unscientific), to hate anyone at all, even one's enemies. There is no more reason for someone to hate his enemies than for someone who is hot to hate the sun. (A parasol, on the other hand, is a useful invention.) The scientist understands that we cannot help being who we are, and on that account cannot help doing what we do. We are subject – our brains and our emotions no less than our hands or feet – to natural

laws. We can and ought to change and grow, but it is utter folly to hate others for changing and growing differently than we would wish.

Was Spinoza Jewish? That is, clearly he grew up as a Jew. But did he remain "Jewish" after his excommunication? After all, he did not practice Judaism; he did not believe in Judaism, and he had no contact, or almost no contact, with other Jews. He flirted with Christianity for a time – he was particularly attracted by the early Quakers – but he never became a Christian. He was seen by others as a Jew, even by some of his own friends. It is hard to be certain how he saw himself.

It is certain that Spinoza offered no program for what "modern Judaism" would look like. In one short passage, he did suggest vaguely that Jews would benefit themselves – might even become an independent nation – were they to try to become braver and stronger, or even raise an army, and leave aside some of the religious traditions and personal inhibitions that prevented this. But Spinoza did not make any effort to involve himself in Jewish affairs at all, let alone create a Jewish army.

After Spinoza, no cadre of Jewish Cartesians or Jewish Spinozists arose to take up the cudgels of rationalism within Judaism. Given Spinoza's dismissal of Jewish law and tradition, given his radicalism, and quite frankly given his own lack of interest in the project of enlisting Jewish support, this is perhaps not so surprising. It would be almost a full century until Spinoza began to reach a Jewish readership and would begin to inspire a major rethinking of Judaism.

The Rise of Mystical Judaism

We noted at the beginning of this chapter that the path of Judaism over these three centuries was not in the direction of science. In spite of David Gans, in spite of the Jewish scientists we discussed, in spite of the doubts of the returning Jews from Spain and Portugal, and in spite of Spinoza,[4] Judaism was hardly any more attuned to modern science in 1700 than it had been in 1500, and perhaps less.

Rather, the overwhelming direction of Jewish thought and Jewish life during the three centuries after the expulsion from Spain was towards Jewish mysticism, Kabbalah. Kabbalah is a somewhat vague or flexible body of teachings, concerned centrally with ascending towards God, that is, towards knowledge of divine mysteries and the mysteries of the Torah. Kabbalists of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries claimed knowledge of past lives; they claimed the ability to exorcize demons and – at least potentially, if not always in practice – the ability to perform miracles. Kabbalistic teachings offered profound explanations of many puzzling passages in the Bible and the Talmud, and of the meaning of many of the rituals in rabbinic Judaism.

Ascent towards God in Kabbalah is also a path of spiritual self-perfection. Kabbalah was associated not only with mysteries and miracles, but also,

importantly, with very strict religious and ethical standards. A kabbalist, in short, was also expected to be a saint. Pride of place among the kabbalist-saints of the early modern period must go to the Jewish scholars who congregated in the small city of Safed about the middle of the sixteenth century. We have already mentioned this group in connection with the efforts to reform and revive Judaism. In 1569, they were joined by a Jewish mystic from Egypt, sometimes called the "Ari," the Lion, a man named Isaac Luria. Largely by the force of his personal charisma and saintliness, Luria established himself as the first among equals (Fine, 2003).

In the Middle Ages, Kabbalah had been one Jewish stream among others, hardly more significant than the Jewish Aristotelianism of the followers of Maimonides. Kabbalah had comprised at most one style of Jewish piety, one style of saintliness from among several, one style of interpretation of difficult passages and practices. Few indeed were the medieval Jews who observed special kabbalistic customs (for instance, the custom of midnight vigils). Opposition to Kabbalah, particularly among Jewish Aristotelians, was not unknown. Over the course of the sixteenth century, first in Safed and then throughout the Jewish world, Kabbalah became a part of Judaism whose authority was beyond question. Jewish Aristotelianism nearly disappeared. Kabbalistic customs were popularized, both among men and among women. Differences among kabbalists remained; Luria's different disciples and followers, for instance, interpreted his teachings in strikingly different ways. But opposition to Kabbalah became vanishingly rare within the Jewish community and perhaps disappeared altogether. By 1600, to reject Kabbalah was to reject Judaism.

As noted above, it is unclear in retrospect why Jewish philosophy took such a nosedive over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and why Kabbalah was received with such enthusiasm. Why did Luria become someone whose miracles most Jews in 1700 believed in, while Spinoza had no Jewish followers?

It was suggested earlier that one factor may have been geography. Judaism flourished in regions such as Poland and the Balkans where Christian and Muslim pietism and mysticism were flourishing, and were not centers of modern science. Safed in the land of Israel could put it itself forward as the new center of Jewish life; Amsterdam could not. Had Turkey or Poland become centers of modern science – something not so far fetched in 1492: Copernicus was from Poland – early modern Judaism might have looked very different. Or, to put it the other way, if London and Paris had been home to large Jewish communities in 1700, early modern Judaism might have looked quite different. But instead, in 1700, an increasing fraction of all Jews lived in small Polish towns, while Paris and London had almost no Jews at all (Bell, 2008: 35–82).[5]

Still, there was a major community of Jews in Amsterdam, as noted above, and one in Venice, another center of early modern science. Galileo himself lived just outside of Venice, in Padua. Why do we find in these places as well such a growing enthusiasm for Kabbalah, and such a weak effort (until the late 1700s) to create a more scientific Judaism?

It is not clear, to be quite honest, whether the new scientific discoveries of this period, such as those of Galileo, strengthened the possibility of an "enlightened" Judaism or whether they made it more difficult. Aristotelian Judaism, the heritage of Maimonides, was the only form of non-kabbalistic Judaism that had been inherited from the Middle Ages. Each time Aristotle took a hit from a new discovery – the New World, or the moons of Jupiter – the Maimonidean heritage became a little less plausible. On the other hand, each new discovery, paradoxically, made Kabbalah more attractive. Kabbalah, as discussed, was quite flexible and could accommodate new discoveries much more easily. Its ties to alchemy have already been mentioned.

We should certainly also recall the end of the Galileo story. Victories of science were perhaps a little rarer in the 1600s and 1700s than we would like to fancy. Even in Italy (let alone the small towns of Poland), there was a great deal of distrust of the new, and it was dangerous to appear too eager for change. D'Acosta was a suicide; Spinoza was excommunicated.

Rationalistic and Kabbalistic Leaders

Jewish rationalism also lacked effective leadership in the seventeenth century. Spinoza, as we have stressed, refused to play such a role. A Jewish contemporary of Galileo's, a Venetian rabbi named Leon Modena, was perhaps the closest that early modern Judaism came to such a leader of a potential rationalistic reinterpretation of Judaism.

A man of many accomplishments, a gifted writer, a brilliant preacher, Modena offered an extensive critique of Judaism as it was practiced in his day, and a wealth of suggestions for reform. But he wrote up his critique anonymously, and he circulated it privately. His reform suggestions were not followed up. Moreover – and this is crucial for our question of science and traditionalism – Modena's plea was to return Jewish law to its state in a Golden Age. He demanded a restoration or reformation of ancient law, not a modernization of it. Even anonymously, he was unwilling to suggest that he knew better than the great leaders of ancient times (Fishman, 1997).

Kabbalah, by contrast to Jewish rationalism, nourished a long row of charismatic Jewish leaders imbued with almost infinite self-confidence. Karo thought that God Himself/Herself (since Karo conceived of his Maggid, his instructing spirit, sometimes as male and sometimes as female) spoke to him in waking dreams and at least once spoke directly from his mouth (Fine, 2003: 61).

A century after Karo, another kabbalistic adept, Shabbetai Tsevi (1626–1676; one sees his name spelled many different ways), announced that he was the Messiah. Unlike Modena, Shabbetai claimed the authority to suspend Jewish laws and to make new ones. Messianism is of course the *ne plus ultra* (the highest possible type)

of a Renaissance or a Reformation. Shabbetai Tsevi, like Isaac Luria before him, intended not merely to restore the Golden Age before the Exile, the Golden Age of King David and King Solomon, but the Golden Age before the Apple, before Sin itself had entered the world.

Spinoza probably mocked Shabbetai's believers; his wry comment about raising a Jewish army was presumably a poke at Shabbetai's failure to do anything of the sort (Nadler, 2001: 132, 254). Shabbetai, having been threatened with a martyr's death by the Turkish sultan, had actually converted to Islam. One would have thought that this would tend to discredit him among Jews. Nevertheless, although occasionally persecuted by the rabbis, Shabbetai's followers (some of them great rabbis themselves) continued to exert enormous influence within Judaism throughout the eighteenth century.

Kabbalah and Liberty

Science triumphed eventually in the West by allying itself (as we made mention in our discussion of Spinoza) to the forces of democracy and liberty. But for Jews in the 1600s and 1700s, it was Kabbalah that more openly declared its willingness to expand the realm of the permissible, the realm of personal liberty.

The messianic leader Shabbetai Tsevi, if he did not actually begin this trend, certainly accelerated it. He and his followers, desperate to justify his actions within a Judaic framework, including his conversion to Islam, leaned heavily on kabbalistic notions of what one might call legitimate sin.

Kabbalah is above all a system of spiritual ascent. But, already in the early Middle Ages, Kabbalah taught paradoxically that spiritual ascent is never only in one direction. No one ascends and ascends and ascends and never goes down. The process of ascent is cyclical; it has troughs and peaks; you often need to go down in order to go up. In the seventeenth century, this notion of "going down in order to go up" was both radicalized and popularized. It was made into a rationale, or perhaps one should say a mystique, for many kinds of actions prohibited by Jewish law. This created a space for experimentation in Judaism, in which the Hasidic movement in Poland would take root in the mid-eighteenth century. Eighteenth-century Hasidism combined kabbalistic spirituality with innovative ritual, and institutionalized the charismatic leadership of the kabbalist-saint.

In the early eighteenth century, therefore, Kabbalah covered the waterfront, so to speak. Jews looking for strict discipline and lofty ethical goals studied Kabbalah. But so did those who chafed at the bit, and who were searching for greater leniency and freedom within Judaism. Those who demanded that Judaism be rooted in present-day religious experience gravitated mostly to charismatic, miracle-working kabbalistic leaders. On the other hand, those who remained focused on ancient traditions as the bearer of all truth, that basic medieval consensus that we have

described – for them Kabbalah was a sacred part of that ancient tradition, a pinnacle of Torah learning.

Moses Mendelssohn and the Jewish Enlightenment: Science and Liberty

Over the course of the eighteenth century, there was increasing interest among Jews in science, although not usually very up-to-date science (Feiner, 2010). We have noticed, just for instance, that David Gans' book on astronomy was finally published in 1743. But Judaism lacked a figure committed to the new world of scientific discoveries, with the authority and self-confidence of a Maimonides, who would announce that Judaism was in dire need of correction and updating – until the last decades of the eighteenth century, when the hunchbacked Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) provided the commanding and self-confident leadership that the cause of science in Judaism had so conspicuously lacked (Altmann, 1973).

Mendelssohn was a ritually observant Jew, what today might be called an Orthodox Jew. He was tremendously well read, in English and French as well as German, and kept abreast of the intellectual trends of his day. He had read Spinoza, although he kept a certain distance between himself and his controversial predecessor. Mendelssohn was a Bible scholar; he had studied a little Talmud and a good deal of Jewish philosophy. He was intimately involved in the Jewish community, publishing works in Hebrew, encouraging other Jewish religious scholars, founding schools, giving political advice and assistance to various Jewish communities, especially his own community of Berlin. Furthermore, he was tremendously hospitable and extremely well liked. He was to the Jews of Berlin the precise equivalent of Benjamin Franklin to Philadelphia: full of ideas, always ready to help out.

Unlike Franklin, Mendelssohn did no scientific research. Like Franklin, he was a reformer and a spokesman for liberty. Mendelssohn provided a model of how one could hold together commitment to Judaism, commitment to the cause of science, and commitment to the cause of liberty. He offered an understanding of Judaism that embraced change and adaptation, and opened the world to the modern Jewish world of change and crisis.

Notes

1 Newton, however, despised both Kabbalah and Leibniz.
2 Notice that, from de' Rossi's point of view, even the discovery of the New World appeared restorative, since King Solomon's fleet (he argued) had known the way there.
3 They are sometimes called Marranos or conversos.

4 Or perhaps actually on account of Spinoza, as we argued. Spinoza may have made modern science less palatable for Jews by linking it so closely to the rejection of Scripture and Judaism.

5 Jews would be permitted to return to England in 1656; there were already a few Jews living in London without formal permission. There was no official Jewish community in Paris until the French Revolution, and neither London nor Paris was a major center of Jewish life until about 1830. The Amsterdam community was founded in the 1610s, but grew quickly; Amsterdam was the Jewish boomtown of the 1600s.

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16

A History of Hasidism

Origins and Developments

Gadi Sagiv

Hasidism is a Jewish pietistic movement that originated in the first half of eighteenth-century Eastern Europe and has had a central place in Jewish life, culture, and religion over the last two hundred and fifty years.

Historians who pioneered research on Hasidism during the first half of the twentieth century tended to divide its history into early and later Hasidism. Early Hasidism (from its emergence until 1815) was perceived to be the creative and pathbreaking period, whereas later Hasidism (post-1815) was described by these historians as a "degenerated" phenomenon that "withdrew" from the "radicalism" of the early period. Consequently, these scholars did not deem later Hasidism as worthy of research; only in the last two decades of the twentieth century has a new generation of scholars begun to correct this bias. While a discussion of this historiographical discourse lies beyond the confines of this chapter, it should be emphasized from the outset that this essay does not accept these dated suppositions, but rather aims to study early and later Hasidism in equal measure.

Setting

Hasidism is a multifaceted phenomenon that comprises social structure, politics, theology, ritual, music, dance, and other social, cultural, and religious manifestations. As such, a description of Hasidism requires laying out several of the contexts in which it emerged. In elaborating such contexts, we are not implying that Hasidism was a reaction to these circumstances, but rather that it emerged within them.

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Hasidism appeared around the second third of the eighteenth century in Poland. The Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an ever-weakening state in terms of its central government and economy. The state finally ceased to exist, and over the course of a three-phase process (1772, 1793, 1795), most of the area of Poland (save a relatively small area around Warsaw) was partitioned between the three surrounding empires: Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Hasidism, which had begun without a state orientation, was gradually required to operate in state or imperial contexts. Nevertheless, a more or less shared ethos and connections between leaders and adherents from both sides of the border also shaped it as a transnational phenomenon.

From the perspective of Jewish society, Hasidism emerged during a relatively stable period in terms of Jewish autonomy, led in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by two Jewish councils: the Vaad Arba Aratsot (Council of Four Lands) and the Vaad Medinat Lita (Council of the Lithuanian State). However, over the course of the eighteenth century, together with the weakening of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Polish rulers tried to permanently undermine this autonomy and gradually revoked some of its prerogatives. This process of decline in Jewish autonomy intensified after the partitions of Poland under the imperial rulers, who now also had cultural agendas, aiming to integrate and acculturate Jewish society into non-Jewish society.

Considering the general religious context, the emergence of Hasidism can be understood as part of a cross-European pietistic Christian awakening in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that did not skip the areas in which Hasidism emerged. Although one cannot point to direct influences between these movements, it is not impossible that Hasidism and other pietistic movements were all responses to similar circumstances. Recent research also shows that, among the masses, Jews and Christians often turned to parallel shamanistic religious figures who performed similar practices.

Within a Jewish religious context, one should bear in mind that Kabbalah – the major trend of Jewish mysticism – was central to the religious mentality and ritual life of Jews in Eastern Europe in the early modern period. However, during the era in which Hasidism emerged, one cannot ignore that there were manifestations of Kabbalah that were perceived to be heretical: Sabbatianism was a fairly fresh memory, and its offshoot in Poland, Frankism, was an existing challenge when Hasidism emerged. So although Kabbalistic lore was considered part and parcel of Judaism, there were restrictions on it, and there was a basic suspicion within rabbinic circles against new cultural phenomena based on Kabbalah. In any case, the aforementioned religious contexts can shed light not only on the emergence of Hasidism but also on the resistance to it.

It is within the latter kabbalistic context that the term "Hasid" should be understood. This term has a long history in Jewish society and culture from ancient times, and until the early modern period it should be translated as "pious"

or "pietist," as the Oxford English Dictionary defines the latter, "A person who places particular emphasis on depth of religious feeling or strict religious practice." In early modern Eastern European Jewish society, such pietism usually had an esoteric and mystical background that originated both a medieval movement of Jewish pietists from the areas of the Rhineland (Hasidei Ashkenaz) and the kabbalistic culture of sixteenth-century Safed (Palestine). While Hasidism was named after these pietists, the terms "Hasid" and "Hasidism" underwent a change that will be explained below. Scholars often use the term "old-style" Hasids and Hasidism to describe the pietism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and to differentiate it from the Hasidic movement discussed in this article.

Hasidism emerged as a religious phenomenon against the backdrop of this kabbalistic mentality, and the figures that are later considered to be early Hasidic masters were actually old-style Hasids. These old-style Hasids were usually learned in Kabbalah and performed kabbalistic rituals, including some rituals that were ascetic. Some of these old-style Hasids were secluded mystics; others were more like "wandering saints" preaching for penitence. Some of these pietists were called *Baalei-Shem* (Owners of the Holy Name; *Baal Shem* in the singular form). These *Baalei-Shem* can be described as kabbalistic shamans. They performed diverse practices – from healing individuals to business consultancy to other practices intended to protect a community from attacks by demons. It should be emphasized that, within Jewish society of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the profession of a *Baal Shem* had no negative connotations. *Baalei-Shem* were usually learned individuals, and their clients hailed from various strata of Jewish society, including elite circles.

Beginnings: The *Baal Shem Tov* (Besht) and His Contemporaries

There is no single event that can be considered the beginning of Hasidism. What can be said is that the figures later considered to be the first Hasidic masters were a loose network of that kind of old-style Hasid who were present and active in the Carpathians and in the southeastern areas of the kingdom of Poland during the first half of the eighteenth century, especially the region of Podolia. The most famous figure of this group was a pietist named R. Israel ben Eliezer (1698/1700–1760), who is known as the *Baal Shem Tov* (the good *Baal Shem*) or – in the Hebrew acronym – the Besht.

As is common with saints and cultural heroes, the biography of the Besht consists of many hagiographical elements. The most extensive collection of biographical traditions about the Besht is the book *Shivhei haBesht* (In Praise of the Besht); first

published in 1814 it contains a collection of stories about the Besht and his contemporaries. The late publication of the book, along with its hagiographical tendency and style, make it unreliable for reconstructing the biography of the Besht. What can be said with some certainty (based on complementary sources) is that the Besht spent his early years in the Carpathian region, and his later years in Mezhibezh in Podolia. However, the Besht had a life of constant travel, and one can basically distinguish between his role as a *Baal Shem* whose clientele constituted a wide audience and his role as a spiritual leader for select elite old-style Hasids. Contrary to the celebrated image of the Besht, it is known today that he was not a complete outsider, some kind of hero who suddenly appeared from a secluded life in the Carpathians. Recent research shows that, at least in Mezhibezh, he was a respected member of the community, and that his role as *Baal Shem* was considered a communal post that granted him financial benefit of tax exemption. Although the Besht was a member of his community, as well as a member of a circle of pietists, there is a basis for the hypothesis that his contemporaries considered him a very special figure in the following fields: he was a *Baal Shem* who might have been considered superior to other *Baalei-Shem* of the time; he was a mystic who reported to have experienced extraordinary ecstasy during his prayer in the synagogue – apart from the body language of ecstasy that was observed by his disciples during synagogue prayers, he reported that during these ecstasies he experienced ascension to heavenly worlds, where he spoke with angels and even the Messiah; he acted not only on behalf of his private clientele but also on behalf of the whole people of Israel.

After the Besht

A key to understanding the "success" of Hasidism was the fact that the Besht had disciples who had leadership qualities and could solidify and spread his message. An important disciple was Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polnoye (d. 1782). R. Yaakov was a Rabbi in Shargorod who became a disciple of the Besht and subsequently lost his professional position and was compelled to leave town. R. Yaakov Yosef left an imprint via his fruitful writings, which provided the foundation for several homiletic books. In his book he elaborated Hasidic doctrines, as understood by him, and, significantly, many quotations in the name of the Besht.

Another important disciple of the Besht was R. Dov Ber of Mezritsh (d. 1772), who was called the "Great Maggid" or just "The Maggid." Whereas we don't know if R. Yaakov Yosef had disciples, it is clear that the Maggid was a charismatic leader. In contradistinction to the Besht and his contemporaries, the Maggid was not a "wandering saint." Settled in his home, he received visitors and disciples, and his home compound evolved into the first Hasidic Court.

The Ethos and Its Conveyance

A major aspect of Hasidism is its spiritual and ethical message. The Hasidic masters from the Besht onward conveyed their teaching via a traditional medium – the sermon; these sermons were given to small audiences of select disciples, but as Hasidism grew into a movement after the time of the Maggid of Mezritsh, sermons were gradually given to wide heterogeneous audiences of varying intellectual backgrounds. The Hasidic leaders had to convey their message in a manner that would be relevant and significant for all of their audience members. But the sermons were not only a means to convey a textual message. Of no less importance was their role as "cultural performances." The nontextual components of the sermon – body language and voice intonation – were complementary to the text; for some audience members who had difficulty understanding the sermon's content, these were its major significance.

Although Hasidic masters emphasized different nuances in their teachings, one can highlight a few common themes that are characteristic of the sermon of the majority of the masters.

Inspired by Kabbalistic theology, the major theological axiom of Hasidism is the ubiquitous immanence of deity in the world. That is, everything in the world has a divine spark, or vitality inside it. While immanentism seems similar to pantheism, it should not to be confused with pantheism: God is everywhere, yet not identical to the world. God also has a transcendent aspect.

A major principle of Hasidic worship is an outgrowth of the immanentist axiom: If everything has divine presence, then everything should be a substance for worship of God. In every action, a man should try to attach his soul to the internal divine presence. Thus, every action becomes an act of mystical attachment to God.

This demand of ubiquitous attachment to God sometimes resulted in radical theological expression. If every deed should be a source of worship, then it should also apply to daily activities that seem to lack any sacredness, such as eating, working, and having sexual intercourse. Moreover, this ubiquitous attachment should also be done within the domain of evil and sin. For example, Hasidic doctrines demand that sinful thoughts not be thrown away, but rather contemplated to find God's presence within.

It should be emphasized that none of these ideas was a Hasidic innovation; every single one of them can be discerned in earlier kabbalistic and moral literature. Consequently, the question regarding the appeal of these ideas is still open, and it is part of the larger question regarding the general appeal and draw of Hasidism. One of the proposed answers to this bigger question is that the Hasidic masters succeeded in touching and reaching different audiences simultaneously, via a single sermon. By emphasizing a relatively simple theology as well as several principles of worship resulting from it, Hasidic masters succeeded in generating a sense of spiritual elite to all of their disciples, intellectuals and laypeople alike.

Yet, there is one foundation of the Hasidic ethos that seems unique in comparison to other spiritual phenomena in Judaism – the notion of the Tsaddik. Like the term "Hasid," the term "Tsaddik" also has a long history in Judaism. Literally, it means "righteous" in Hebrew, but the long kabbalistic tradition endowed it with the connotation of an individual who mediates between the earthly and divine, a channel that can uplift human prayers to God and at the same time bring down divine forces to help human beings. Hasidic masters characterized themselves as these sorts of Tsaddiks and their adherents also adopted the term; the term "Hasid" came to denote a member of the new movement of Hasidism, as well as a disciple of a Hasidic leader, a disciple of the Tsaddik.

The Opposition to Hasidism

It is arguable if opposition to specific Hasidic figures can be found already during the time of the Besht and his disciples. But it is clear that it was not until the 1770s that the opposition against all Hasids evolved into an organized phenomenon. The organized opposition began with bans on Hasids in some major communities and was expressed in a rich corpus of polemical texts. R. Eliyahu of Vilna ("The Vilna Gaon") was known as the leader of this organized opposition, yet it is unclear how much he actually led the opposition or simply granted it his authoritative name.

There was no single major reason for opposition to Hasidism; it seems that several motivations converged. First, by propagating an ethos of old-style Hasids, the new Hasids were accused of popularizing elitist practices and arrogantly acting like kabbalists. Thus, Hasidism was seen as breaking the existing social borders between the elite and the masses. Second, by establishing separate prayer groups, Hasids were accused of separatism and of undermining community cohesion. Third, the antinomian potential of some of the Hasidic doctrines (a border that Hasids usually dared not cross) resulted in accusing Hasidism of being a new form of Sabbateanism. Fourth, the conspicuous mystical tendency of the Hasidic ethos was seen as contradictory to the ancient Jewish ethos of Torah study.

In the early nineteenth century, the opposition took on a local intracommunal character. While this decline might be partially explained by the passing of R. Eliyahu as well as by the passing of those who authored polemical texts, it appears to be primarily related to the fact that many people realized that Hasidism was basically a traditionalist movement, and that the actual differences between Hasidism and their opponents were not as sharp as noted in the polemical literature. Moreover, Hasids and their opponents felt the need to cooperate against new and much more threatening forces that will be discussed below in greater detail: the emergence of Jewish Enlightenment in Eastern Europe, and the threatening force of absolutist regimes.

Nevertheless, the history of the conflicts as well as the existing differences between Hasids and non-Hasids created an image of separateness between Hasids and non-Hasids. The latter, who initially constituted the untitled existing rabbinic majority, were later called by Hasids "Mitnagdim" (opponents), and later on the term "Litvaks" (Lithuanians) took hold. However, there was in essence always a considerable silent portion of Jewish society that did not clearly identify with either Hasids or Litvaks.

Becoming a Movement

Hasidism was not founded per se by a particular person on a particular day in a particular place, as mentioned above, but gradually emerged through a process that took several years. The Besht was never the formal and agreed-upon leader of the new pietism later called "Hasidism." The Maggid was not the Besht's single agreed-upon successor and cannot be labeled the "leader" of Hasidism. It was probably only as a result of the outbreak of resistance to Hasidism that Hasidism became a social movement, characterized by an ideology and social structure. And even in its most established state, the structure of Hasidism has never been of a single agreed-upon leader at the top of a hierarchy and with canonized scripts. Rather, Hasidism has always been a pluralistic structure of a loose and decentralized network of leaders, with each leader having a constituency of disciples to whom he conveyed his spiritual message, which might have been quite different from that imparted by other leaders. The structure of their constituency was also not rigid: Although every leader had his close faithful disciples, there were always many disciples on the periphery of the Hasidic community. Some of them concurrently maintained simultaneous parallel connections with more than one leader.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Hasidism was a phenomenon in the Jewish society that could not be ignored, and, in popular consciousness, it conjured an image of having "conquered" Jewish society. However, it is difficult to ground this image in actual demographic data, because the authorities of the Eastern European states did not include this parameter of identity in the censuses that were then conducted periodically. At least for the Polish regions, some scholarly concerns could be taken to imply that until 1830 Hasidism did not exceed 15 percent of the Jewish population. But even the minimalist demographers agree that by 1840, approximately 30 percent of the Jewish population had some kind of Hasidic identity. This ratio is significant; there was no other single movement that drew so many adherents among the Jews of Eastern Europe.

From the time of the Maggid of Mezritsh, Hasidic courts became central institutions of the Hasidic movement. A court was usually a large compound that functioned not only as the house of the Tsaddik and his family, but also as an arena of social encounter between the Tsaddik and his Hasids, and between the

Hasids themselves. Hasids travelled to the court to meet their leader, and ask for his help in various matters. They paid money for the Tsaddik's services and were required to express loyalty to the Tsaddik. The Tsaddik, in turn, performed various mystical and magical practices that were intended to provide the Hasid with the help he had requested. Between the Tsaddik and his Hasids, there were personnel who operated the complex institution of the court. They collected the payments to the Tsaddik, organized the events in the court, and functioned as points of contact on behalf of the Tsaddik.

Spread and Diversification

The Hasidic masters, who were charismatic leaders ascribed with divine inspiration by their adherents, transferred leadership to their charismatic disciples. However, from the last two decades of the eighteenth century, sons of Hasidic masters too were perceived as charismatic figures, and after the passing away of their fathers, became the leaders of the disciples. This father-to-son bequeathing of leadership was how dynasties of Tsaddiks were established, and, in time, the dynastic principle became the dominant pattern of leadership in Hasidism. The first dynasties were controversial, and opponents of Hasidism argued that they reflected a preference of family ties over spiritual competency. However, the Hasidic position argued that heirs were not chosen because they were heirs, but rather because they inherited their fathers' charisma. One should also bear in mind that the inheritance of spiritual leadership posts was not a Hasidic innovation in Eastern European Jewish society: rabbinic posts were also transferred via inheritance, and this pattern of transference of leadership contributed to a community's social stability. The son of a Tsaddik was educated from infancy into a Hasidic way of life; he was well known in the community, and choosing him reduced the potential for conflict between disciples, although not preventing the impending succession disputes between brothers who were heirs of the same Tsaddik. In any case, the dynasty became the most characteristic social structure in Hasidism. Many of the most famous dynasties today – Habad, Karlin, etc. – were established by the disciples of the Maggid of Mezritsh.

Around each dynasty of Tsaddiks was a community of Hasids, and together the leader and his adherents formed a Hasidic group that was also called "Hasidism," but in a sense of particularity (e.g., Habad Hasidism, Satmar Hasidism). These particular Hasidisms varied not only in terms of their distinct lineage and separate groups of adherents, but often also in terms of ethos, ritual, custom, and lifestyle. It is difficult to reliably characterize these differences, and one should bear in mind that they changed throughout history, and were often formulated in order to differentiate between the groups. However, many characterizations became common knowledge among the Hasids and non-Hasids alike, because the lifestyles

of the Tsaddiks and their adherents could be observed by other Hasids at public events, and the ethos that was conveyed via sermons became part and parcel of the particular group's identity.

Thus, within the Hasidic groups in Russia, Hasids and scholars agree that Habad Hasidism was characterized by intellectualism and by a tendency towards encouraging mystical contemplation among all Hasids; Ruzhin-Sadegura by a regal-style lifestyle of Tsaddiks; Chernobyl Hasidism had a non-intellectual ascetic tendency that differentiated it from both Habad and Ruzhin; and Karlin Hasids used to pray with special enthusiasm.

Hasidic groups in Russia were also more adaptive to modernity, in contrast to Hasidic groups in Galicia and Hungary that were more hostile. The ethos of these latter groups, such as Sanz and Belz, was based on traditional rabbinic Torah study. Whereas most of the Tsaddiks in Russia were social and mystical leaders, the Galician and Hungarian leaders were also halakhic authorities and served in rabbinic posts.

Although dynasties characterized the Hasidic movement, one should not forget the major exception to this phenomenon: Bratslav Hasidism. Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav (1772–1810) was one of the most controversial Hasidic leaders of his time. Significantly, when he died, his adherents refused to appoint a successor, and from then until today Bratslav Hasids see themselves as the direct adherents of Rabbi Nahman, to whom messianic roles were attributed. Throughout the history of Hasidism, Bratslav Hasids suffered social persecution at the hands of Tsaddiks and Hasids from other groups. It seems that by maintaining a fraternity without a leader, they demonstrated an alternative way of conducting Hasidic life, an alternative that might have been perceived as a threat to the prevailing Hasidic social order.

Hasidism, the State and the Jewish Enlightenment

The partition of Poland into Prussia, Russia, and Austria resulted in the partitioning of the Jews into these empires. There is almost no evidence of the presence of Hasidism in the Prussian regions, so Hasidism became divided between Russia and Austria. In the Austrian Empire, Hasidism had a considerable presence in the eastern provinces that constituted Galicia. In Russia, Hasidism was active within the western provinces that constituted the "Pale of Settlement." Additionally, a Polish political entity, the duchy of Warsaw, was founded in 1807 from regions taken from Prussia by Napoleon, and, after the Congress of Vienna in 1815, the Kingdom of Poland (also known as "Congress Poland") was founded under Russian sovereignty. Thus, from the second decade of the nineteenth century, Hasidism was shaped by three political and cultural contexts: Austrian, Russian, and Polish. During the nineteenth century, especially in its second half, Hasidism continued to

spread in almost all directions: eastward to new and inner Russia, southward to Bessarabia and later Romania, and southwestward to Hungary. However, there is little evidence of Hasidic presence in Prussia, as mentioned above, or in the northern provinces of Lithuania. Scholars suggested that this was due to opposition to Hasidism, initially inculcated by the Mithnagdim (the opponents of Hasidism) and later by "Maskilim" (supporters of the Enlightenment), who prevented its dissemination.

Despite the differences in attitude between the regimes in the Austrian and the Russian empires and between the rulers in each of these empires, in all of these regimes one can identify a mixture of attitudes that seek to separate Jews from the surrounding society, side by side with newer attitudes, inspired by the European Enlightenment, that aim to promote the integration and acculturation of Jews. The stance promoting integration was accompanied by actions that meant to diminish Jewish autonomy. Initially, this modern attitude actually benefited Hasidism, framing it as a legitimate alternative to the traditional "Kahal" (Jewish community) Conspicuous expressions of this attitude were imperial decrees that allowed the establishment of separate Hasidic prayer houses. But, as time passed, the Russian and Austrian authorities were increasingly influenced by Jewish Maskilim and their anti-Hasidic views were gradually absorbed by the authorities. Governmental bureaucracies were amenable to the image of Hasidic doctrines as irrational mystical fanaticism, and the image of the Tsaddiks as charlatans who in addition to fostering fanaticism exploited their folk. Hasidic leadership and social structure, which at the turn of the nineteenth century was seen by the authorities as an alternative and a balancing factor to the old manifestations of Jewish autonomy, became a threat of its own by the mid-nineteenth century. State authorities, especially in Russia, became gradually more and more involved in defining and imposing a policy toward Hasidic leaders. Tsaddiks in Russia were often under secret surveillance, and there is extensive governmental discussion documented in state archives regarding the recommended way to tackle the dangerous influence of the Tsaddiks. A reader of the archives can distinguish between two voices within the bureaucracy: One attitude emphasized the destabilizing influence of the Tsaddiks and favored arresting or deporting them so that they could not continue to foster their fanaticism; a contesting attitude claimed that such harsh measures could result in agitation within Jewish society, potentially destabilizing it more than the Tsaddiks themselves. It seems that the latter attitude was accepted, and that the authorities decided not to deport the Tsaddiks to Siberia but only to forbid them from leaving their dwelling places, thereby restricting their encounters with their adherents. Although these measures did not break Hasidism, they did weaken its influence.

Whereas the Mithnagdim, the rabbinic opponents, constituted the resistance to Hasidism in the eighteenth century, during the first two thirds of the nineteenth century the principal opponents were the Maskilim, proponents of the "Haskalah" or the Jewish Enlightenment. Although Maskilim variegated in worldview and

style, they shared a vision of an acculturated modernized Jewish people, free from the burdens of irrational traditionalism, which they understood as fanaticism. For Maskilim, Hasidism – with its pietistic tendency, accompanied by an authoritative figure, the Tsaddik – was perceived to be the most degenerate manifestation of Judaism and the biggest obstacle to modernization. On the other hand, Hasidic leaders viewed Maskilim as their fiercest enemies, because, in contrast to the Mithnagdim, who shared traditionalism with the Hasidim, Maskilim were suspected of leaning toward heresy. The battle of Maskilim against Hasidim was conducted in polemical and satirical literature, and through advising state authorities to act harshly against Hasids. Hasids tried to slander the Maskilim, presenting them as corrupt and heretical. In their battle against Hasidism, Maskilim extensively cooperated with the state authorities. On more than one occasion, Maskilim encouraged state officials to impose restrictions on Hasidism, in an effort to stave off its spread.

Toward the End of the Nineteenth Century

During the nineteenth century, the largest Jewish Diaspora lived in Russia. Following the reforms of Tsar Alexander II, Russia underwent dramatic social and economic changes during the 1860s and 1870s, resulting, inter alia, in processes of internal migration, urbanization, and industrialization. From these years onward, one can discern a general trend of weakening of the social and spiritual appeal of Hasidism, and probably a drop in the numbers of adherents. Yet, this process should be understood against the backdrop of general processes of weakening the traditional Jewish society experienced in general.

A major outcome of these transformations of Russian society was the massive migration from Eastern Europe that occurred between the years 1880 and 1925, especially from Russia to the United States. Hasids migrated among other Jews, and established their prayer houses (*shtiblekh*) in America as early as the 1870s. However, because Hasidic leaders were suspicious about the possibility of maintaining traditional Jewish life in America and were less impoverished than their Hasids – the first Tsaddiks or their family members did not come to the United States before World War I.

Hasidism in the Twentieth Century

It was World War I that dramatically changed the life of the Hasidic elite. Until then, Tsaddik courts were in small townlets (*shtetlekh*). In addition to direct Jewish victims of the war, physical insecurity after World War I remained in the

revolutionary upheavals that followed. Hasidic courts faced unprecedented difficulties, resulting in the financial collapse of some courts and others migrating to the big cities.

In the early 1920s – after World War I, the Bolshevik revolution, the civil wars in the Soviet Union, and the Polish–Soviet wars – Hasidism entered the last two decades of stability in Europe. It was split into four old–new states: Poland, the Soviet Union, Romania, and Hungary. Whereas the Soviet regime restricted Jewish religious activity and persecuted Hasidic leaders, it seems that in the other countries, Hasidic life continued without any particular interference. Especially in the second Polish republic, which was founded after World War I, Hasids participated in municipal political life, as did other Jewish groups. The orthodox parties cooperated in the political arena, especially via the orthodox organization Adudat Israel (founded 1912), in order to preserve Jewish religious life, in the battle against Jewish nonreligious parties, such as the secular Zionists.

However, one should keep in mind that, during these years, Hasidic courts were also established outside Eastern Europe. In addition to the aforementioned Hasidic courts in the United States, there were Hasids who lived in Palestine continuously from the eighteenth century and some courts migrated there during the twentieth century. A minor Hasidic presence could also be discerned in Western Europe.

As Hasidism played a key role in Eastern European Jewish society, World War II and the Holocaust liquidated Hasidic life in Europe. Hasids were murdered like other Jews, and many Hasidic leaders were murdered as well. However, there were a few prominent Hasidic leaders who succeeded in escaping from Europe and reestablished their courts in other diasporas, especially in the United States and Palestine. Harsh criticism was directed towards these leaders, mostly by non-Hasids. They were accused of abandoning their flock and saving their own lives, which in many instances involved cooperating (in itself controversial) with secular Zionists or Nazi officials. Yet, another point of view highlights that, by fleeing ruined Europe, they ensured the survival of their Hasidic groups.

Hasidism in the Twenty-First Century

In the beginning of the twenty-first century, Hasidism has spread to almost all Jewish diasporas, and has become well known outside Judaism. This process – which has its most conspicuous expression in Habad Hasidism – sometimes leads to using the title "Hasidism" as a metonym for "Judaism."

Hasidism began as a network of small elitist groups of kabbalists in Eastern Europe. In a few decades, it evolved into a pietistic movement that was spread in all of Eastern Europe. But, from the nineteenth century, Hasidism became a major part of the emerging orthodox Judaism. Although it ceased to exist as a separate

movement, it did maintain the notion of the Tsaddik, the Hasidic leader, and his family, the dynasty, as perhaps its most distinguished manifestation.

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Jews and Judaism in the Early Modern New World

Central and North America

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Introduction

While the dates accepted for the early modern period can vary widely, depending on geographical location and theme, most scholars would agree that the early modern period began some time in the fifteenth century and ended some time in the eighteenth century. That is, early modernity grew out of the Middle Ages and developed into modernity. Not surprisingly, the early modern period shared characteristics of what came before and after. In particular, early modern society witnessed the expansion of global travel, communication, and economy; the development of nation states and increasing attempts to define and locate authority; the growth of population; the reform of religious theology and practice; and the advance of technology, in areas from agriculture and navigation to astronomy and medicine. At the same time, early modern societies remained rooted in religious traditions, customs, and frequently prejudices, and they developed along trajectories already established in the later Middle Ages.

For Jews, as well, the early modern period was a time of both significant change and continuity. Jewish populations shifted eastward, with enormous settlements of Jews taking root in Eastern Europe and the Ottoman Empire. Amidst ongoing legal and social restrictions, Jews became ever more engaged in economic endeavors, particularly as trade shifted in some important ways from local to regional and international and from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic. Jews also increasingly engaged the regnant cultures in which they resided, in ways that enhanced Jewish

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culture and simultaneously challenged traditional Jewish norms and communal structures.

Following along the path of more general early modern developments, Jews entered new professions and traveled to new lands, making their way along with European explorers, adventurers, merchants, and settlers to the Americas and the Far East. Throughout the early modern period – including in the Americas (or the New World) – just exactly who was a Jew was an important, if at times murky, issue. Were Jews individuals who adhered to Jewish law (Halakah) openly; were they individuals who secretly practiced some Jewish rites; or were they simply individuals who others (frequently secular or religious authorities) identified as Jews? Given the complexity of early modern identities, it may not be too surprising to answer yes to all of the above. Therefore, when we speak of Jews in the New World in the early modern period we are at times referring to people labeled as Jews, New Christians (Christians of Jewish descent), and crypto-Jews (individuals who may have been forcibly converted (*anusim*), but still harbored Jewish convictions or practices; also referred to as *Marranos* (a derogatory term), or conversos (individuals who may have been nominally Christian, but who continued to practice some Jewish, or allegedly Jewish, rites secretly).

Early Exploration

The year 1492 was momentous in Jewish and Spanish history. In that year, the Jews were expelled from Spain, the Christian Reconquest of Granada and its associated dislocation of Muslims from Iberia was completed, and Christopher Columbus (1451–1506) set sail on his famous journey to what would be called the New World. Some scholars have suggested that the coincidence of the first two of these developments may have been related to royal attempts to consolidate political power and create a homogeneous national religious identity. The connection between the expulsion and Columbus' voyage has likewise excited historical speculation. This is particularly the case since some have suggested that Columbus himself may have been descended from Jews, some Jews at the royal court, though not all, seemed to support Columbus' plan, and several New Christians probably traveled with Columbus. The confluence of two defining events in early modern history – the expulsion and the voyages of exploration – indeed raises some intriguing questions that can serve profitably to begin a discussion of Jewish life in the New World.

We have evidence that New Christians and crypto-Jews had probably already made their way to Spanish America with Columbus, the Portuguese Pedro Alvares Cabral in Brazil, and later Hernando Cortes. Among Columbus' crew, the interpreter Luis de Torres was a recent convert to Christianity. De Torres was proficient in Hebrew and to some extent Arabic and other languages. He appears to have been successful in communicating with natives in what was termed

Hispaniola by the explorers, serving perhaps as one of the first European settlers in the New World – though it should be remembered that he was later killed by natives along with the few dozen other men left to colonize the island. At least two Jewish sailors and two physicians of Jewish origin may have accompanied Columbus. There was also an apothecary of Jewish descent on the voyage; he was later tried by the Inquisition as a crypto-Jew.[1]

Jews had been heavily involved in science and technology at the end of the Middle Ages. As cultural intermediaries between the Muslim and Christian worlds, Jews served as important translators in the recovery of ancient philosophy and science, but also as instigators in the development and spread of new technologies. The Portuguese, who were among the important early explorers, recognized the value that some Jews offered in this arena. Jewish scientists who were drawn to the Portuguese royal court, especially that of Prince Henry the Navigator (1394–1460), contributed to the development of navigation by improving measurements of latitude and the accuracy of navigational maps. Columbus himself had benefited from the technological advancements in navigation by Jews, notably those of Abraham Zacuto (1452–c. 1515). Zacuto was known both as a historian and an astronomer, and his scientific work was patronized by leading church officials and Portuguese rulers. His astronomical charts were widely known and utilized by Vasco da Gama, among others. Columbus possessed a translation of these charts, which he used profitably. According to one account, Columbus utilized the tables to predict a lunar eclipse, thereby convincing natives in Jamaica that he had made the moon disappear. Like other Iberian Jews, Zacuto fled forced conversions, leaving behind his professional standing and position.

Many Jews were aware of the explorations and settlement in the New World. Large numbers of pamphlets and books that referenced such events could be found in European Jewish libraries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In some cases, Jews attempted to understand the findings in the New World with recourse to longstanding typological models drawn from the Hebrew Bible. Some Jewish chroniclers discussed the European expansion westward as an example of European aggressiveness. By the end of the sixteenth century, however, Jewish scholars often viewed the discoveries as an opportunity to tout Jewish scientific accomplishments. The expanding world also signaled an opportunity for Jewish and Christian intellectual collaboration and advancement, and held out the possibility of toleration for Jews. The chronicler David Gans (1541–1613) from Prague, for example, described very objectively the exploration of Amerigo Vespucci and cited a range of opposing scholars regarding the dating of the voyage. He also discussed the naming of the newly found lands – noting that they were called New Spain, but also placing them within the biblical context by referring to them by the name "Ophir" that was discussed in the first book of Kings. Here, and elsewhere, Gans drew from biblical, rabbinic, and contemporary Jewish writings as well as contemporary Christian chroniclers and scholars.

The discovery of peoples in the Americas raised all sorts of theological questions and a good deal of discussion, particularly in the Spanish universities. Were these

people inherently simple and good or were they natural slaves? Heated discussions ensued that drew from classical philosophy and contemporary politics and ranged from missionary sensitivity to European expansion. Dramatic events, such as the voyages of discovery, further excited messianic speculation around the globe for Jews and non-Jews alike, with Native Americans often considered to be remnants of the long sought after Ten Lost Tribes. The important Amsterdam rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), who developed a host of relationships with Christian scholars and who advocated vociferously for the readmission of Jews to England, speculated about the meaning of the natives in America for world history. Menasseh became increasingly taken with the story of the Ten Lost Tribes. In 1650, he dedicated a Latin work, *The Hope of Israel*, to the English Parliament. In that work and elsewhere he expounded on a variety of similarities he saw between the native Americans and Jews: circumcision among the Indians of the Yucatan; rending of garments in mourning by the Totons of New Spain; maintaining fires on altars by Mexicans; and certain aspects of the practice of family purity laws by Nicaraguans.

Early Settlements and Communities

By the beginning of the sixteenth century Iberian rulers prohibited, at least theoretically, all people of Jewish origin – Jews or New Christians descended from Jews – from entering the West Indies (1501) or crossing the Atlantic Ocean (1522). While not all New Christians would have been secretly practicing Judaism, of course, a sizeable number apparently were, and many parts of the New World in fact became havens for such crypto-Jews. Still, the enforcement of exclusionary restrictions may have been quite lenient, especially as the need for settlers was acute. Therefore, by the middle of the sixteenth century, small settlements of Portuguese New Christians had sprouted throughout New Spain. Whatever the reasons – such as escape from the Inquisition in Europe or the allure of expanding trade routes or far-flung familial networks – some scholars have speculated that there were more Spanish crypto-Jews than Spanish Catholics in Mexico City. In fact, Marranos and New Christians were engaged in all aspects of colonial trade. They maintained communication with Jews and New Christians in Europe and the Near East and they developed vibrant communities. Some even reverted to private or open practice of Judaism or aspects of Jewish observance.

Inquisition

Given the extent of alleged crypto-Jewish activity, the Inquisition quickly reared its head and assembled parts of its extensive apparatus in the New World – in some

places as early as the 1520s and actively in Portuguese and Spanish possessions. The Inquisition confiscated the property of alleged crypto-Jews and therefore it had significant economic, as well as religious, impact. Based on inventories of properties from the Inquisition in Brazil, it appears that the vast majority of alleged crypto-Jews came from the middling classes, though some clearly possessed much more significant means. While the Inquisition was not established permanently in Brazil, there were numerous and extended episodes of prosecution in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Throughout the New World, the Inquisition's "work" proceeded unabated into the eighteenth century, with numerous and moving accounts by individuals who "confessed" under duress, but who in some cases opted for martyrdom.

Ironically, the Inquisition itself stimulated crypto-Jewish movement to the New World when it banished some of its European victims there.[2] It also helped to spread the crypto-Jewish population throughout the New World, as secretly practicing Jews already there rushed to escape it. Some have maintained that the Inquisition itself created Judaism among New Christians by teaching those it was persecuting about the beliefs and practices they were alleged to have practiced, but generally had little knowledge about. Nevertheless, the Inquisition was successful from the standpoint that by the end of the first quarter of the seventeenth century the flow of conversos and crypto-Jews to the New World had greatly decreased. As in Europe, in the New World, the Inquisition may have been utilized for a range of purposes – as a way to stamp out alleged Judaizing religious practice, but also as a means to redress fears among Old Christians of social and economic competition from New Christians. The range of Inquisition victims included compelling individuals such as Luis Rodriguez de Carvajal, who was born in Castile in 1566 of New Christian parents. Luis made his way to the Americas in 1580, where he may have met the Portuguese physician and crypto-Jew Manuel de Morales, who would later be burned in effigy in an auto-da-fé by the Mexican Holy Office in 1593. Morales possessed a very literalist approach to the Bible, which he had constructed from a diversity of experiences and perspectives. He had also had contact with New Christians and crypto-Jews who had lived among Jews in Italy and North Africa. Ironically, Luis' theology, if such a word can be used, took more concrete shape within the Inquisition prison, where he also began to proselytize. Unwilling to renounce his beliefs, he was likely first garroted before being burned in an auto-da-fé of 66 prisoners in a main plaza in Mexico City in 1596.

The Inquisition threw into relief the religious as well as the political tensions alive in Europe and being played out, in part, in the New World as well. Conflicts between political powers in Europe, particularly the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch, and later the English and French, resonated in the New World. Rivalries between Portugal and Spain also escalated in the seventeenth century, particularly in the period after Portugal broke free from Spanish domination in 1640. All of these political conflicts, as well as the economic competition stoked by the resources and trade of the New World, affected the lives of many in the Americas – including the

substantial population of New Christians, some of whom practiced some Jewish rituals and were frequently labeled by Christians and the Inquisition as Judaizers.

Dutch Brazil

The transfer of political suzerainty could lead to political turmoil and change conditions quickly and drastically. With Dutch incursions into northeast Brazil in the first half of the seventeenth century, the stage was set for further Jewish settlements in the New World. Jews flocked to parts of the New World under Dutch influence from the Netherlands and from other places because of fairly tolerant Dutch religious policies and economic opportunities. In 1638 a group of two hundred Jews arrived in Dutch Brazil. By the middle of the seventeenth century the council minutes book of the Jews in Brazil listed more than a hundred and fifty males (probably heads of houses). Even after many Jews died or returned to the Netherlands during the war with Portugal, there may still have been about six hundred and fifty Jews (1650).

The first, and in many respects most significant, Jewish settlement developed in Recife. By 1645 there may have been as many as 1450 Jews in Recife. The community brought Rabbi Josiau Pardo from Amsterdam and established a community governing structure. By 1636 Jews in Recife had already constructed a synagogue – the first in the Americas – and they created schools and issued communal legislation. Jews were involved in many different professions, including crafts, trade, the sugar industry, tax farming, and the slave trade. Jews were at times involved in local and regional politics and Jews also participated in the militia, forming their own company exempt from guard duty on the Sabbath. Dutch recognition of Jews as citizens to be defended if captured at sea reflected the value of Jews in the lucrative Atlantic trade as well as the relatively tolerant and mercantile attitude of some among the Dutch authorities.

In Recife, as in most other sizeable early modern Jewish communities, the Jewish community was governed by a council (*mahamad*), which was composed of four councilors (*parnasim*) and one official (*gabbai*), generally elected for one-year terms. Communal regulations permitted the election by majority of any male members, including relatives, provided that they did not serve together. Men who had been converted (circumcised) in Brazil were not to be considered for office for one year, "so that they may become more conversant in matters pertaining to Judaism."[3] The power of the communal regulations was to be absolute. The councilmen were charged to enforce the regulations, and were themselves to be bound by the regulations. In Recife the regulations were read publicly and agreed to by each member.

The Dutch position in Recife was always somewhat tenuous, and, when the Dutch were run out in 1654 by Portuguese forces, the Jews of Recife had to move quickly. As with the Jews throughout conquered parts of Dutch Brazil, Jews had only a few

months to migrate. Many Jews returned to Amsterdam (some two hundred families from the late 1640s into the early 1650s); some also tried their luck throughout the Caribbean; and a few made their way to New Amsterdam (later New York).

Another successful Jewish settlement was in Surinam. Jews moved there beginning in the 1630s, with several waves of settlement. By the end of the 1660s more than five hundred Jews of diverse backgrounds, owning several dozen sugar plantations and thousands of slaves, resided there. That number grew to two thousand by the early eighteenth century, with the initial settlement of the Joden Savanne being replaced by a growing Jewish settlement in the capital of Paramaribo. Jews may have constituted as much as one third of the total white population. Integration clearly occurred in the community, though with clear levels of privileges. Communal decrees reference Negro Jews who were circumcised, but did not allow such individuals full participation in synagogue services.[4] Jews in the Joden Savanne maintained close relations with the Jewish community in Amsterdam. Some of the local communal structures and practices mirrored those of that large mother community. The Surinamese Jews also maintained close relations with Jewish communities in North America.

The Jewish community developed a full range of social service associations. Still, there were internal disruptions, particularly between Sephardic Jews (those of Iberian origin) and the growing number of Ashkenazic Jews (those of German, and later Eastern European, origin) – a situation rather similar to that being played out in some of the larger Sephardic communities in Europe. In the late seventeenth century Ashkenazic Jews accounted for no more than 13 percent of the Jewish population. That would balloon by the middle of the eighteenth century to 50 percent. Sephardic Jews did not always see eye to eye among themselves either, and there are records of intense discord within their ranks. A third, unofficial, group of Jews in Surinam was comprised of mulatto Jews, probably children of slaves. While these individuals were accorded some communal privileges, they organized their own fraternity and eventually constructed their own village synagogue. As the need for Jews to help in the development of the economy began to wane by the late eighteenth century, the position of the Jews also weakened. The somewhat muffled anti-Jewish sentiments among non-Jews increased and calls were voiced to create a Jewish ghetto in the capital in the 1770s.

New Christians and Jews played an important role in the central sugar industry that developed in parts of the New World, especially in Brazil under the auspices of the Dutch United East India Company. The former, with their mobility, kin networks, Portuguese descent, and ability to integrate into local social structures, were particularly successful and involved in this area. Of course, as recent studies have indicated, familial relationships did not, of necessity, lead to partnerships or trust.[5] What is more, New Christians and Jews were able to transcend boundaries of kinship in establishing broad trading networks throughout the Mediterranean and Atlantic. Such relationships were strengthened by the dissemination of commercial knowledge and the establishment of increasingly standardized legal norms.

Jews and New Christians made their way to other parts of South America as well. Small enclaves of Portuguese New Christians also existed in Argentina, then under Portuguese rule. We do not know how many may have practiced Judaism, but we do know that in 1620 they accounted for at least 96 of the two thousand residents of Buenos Aires, a location which was particularly attractive because of the lively, and often illicit, trade being conducted there. Of this group, 34 were farmers, 25 artisans, and 14 sailors. New Christian settlement expanded northward to other important posts, including Lima in Peru. Increased by migrants from Mexico, Panama, and other locations, the Portuguese population, many of Jewish descent, in Peru grew dramatically.

The Caribbean

Utilizing kin networks that allowed for provisions from New York and small outlets in Spain and the Spanish colonies, Jews were involved in shipping cacao, tobacco, hides, and local crops. In some important ways the Caribbean environment was relatively favorable, at least in areas that were governed by the Dutch and later British. The Dutch, in particular, encouraged Jewish settlement and economic development, particularly in their rivalry with the Spanish and Portuguese. The Dutch West India Company found Jews particularly useful, especially given Jewish initiative to develop new businesses and cultivate various goods.

Some Jews moved from Recife to Curaçao and quickly established the foundations of a community, again under the tolerant eye of the Dutch who had conquered the island in 1634. In Curaçao the Jewish population increased steadily. By 1702 there were approximately six hundred Jews and by 1789 fifteen hundred, with the vast majority living in Willemstad. Jews played a significant role in the rich trade that connected New World resources to Europe, especially through Amsterdam. One of the earliest Europeans to settle in Curaçao was Samuel Cohen. He had been born in Portugal and lived as a Marrano in Brazil. Knowledgeable in a wide range of languages, including native American languages, he was employed by the Dutch in their conquest of Pernambuco. He served as an interpreter and later as overseer of the Indian population. Cohen was referred to by contemporaries as a Jew and his dietary predisposition against pork was noted from time to time. Another significant personality settling in Curaçao was Eliahu Lopez, who became rabbi (*hakham*) of the community. He was of Spanish Marrano background, trained in rabbinics in Amsterdam. He had previously held a rabbinical post in Barbados, supported by an influential Brazilian family, until the middle of the 1690s.

The small island of Saint Eustatius provides yet another example of growth and decline of the Jews in Dutch America. Twenty-one Jews inhabited the small island in 1721, a number that would grow to four hundred and fifty just under three decades later – representing more than half of the population of free citizens on the

island. The community was closely aligned with that of Curaçao and was heavily involved in trade between the Caribbean and North America, supplying Americans during the Revolution. Although the French allowed Jews to remain when they captured the island in 1781, by 1816 there were only a handful of Jews left on the island. With the ascendance of North American communities such as New York in the later eighteenth century, relations with and dependence upon American communities increased even further. This was particularly the case at difficult times of war and in the aftermath of natural disasters. After a severe hurricane swept through St. Eustatius in fall 1772, for example, the Jews there called upon coreligionists in New York for support to help rebuild the devastated synagogue.

Other key Jewish settlements in the Caribbean were under British control, including Barbados and Jamaica. Barbados was something of a success story for Jewish settlement. In 1670 there were three hundred and by the middle of the eighteenth century there were between four and five hundred Jews of Sephardic descent in Barbados. Jews were involved in a range of commercial ventures and also cultivated sugar and coffee. Jamaica had been ruled by the Spanish until 1655. During that period many crypto-Jews resided on the island. With the British takeover, secretly practicing Jews began to practice more openly and founded a synagogue (in the same year the city of Port Royal was destroyed by an earthquake). Jews on the islands were involved in trade but also local crafts, including the preparation of indigo, curing of vanilla, distilling, and in administering plantations. With British encouragement, or at least tacit approval, piracy took hold in the Caribbean, with some pirates, Jews like Abraham Cohen among them, becoming involved in a range of activities and with a home base on the island.

Jews and New Christians from France, especially Bayonne and Bordeaux, also made their way to New World lands held by the French, particularly in the Caribbean. French authorities tended to look poorly upon conversos returning to Judaism and they took a firm stand against Judaizing. Anti-Jewish sentiment also followed Jews to the New World. A French Catholic priest visiting Martinique in the early 1660s, for example, bemoaned that "The Jews, the biggest and most cruel enemies of Jesus Christ, whom they Crucified, publicly exercise their religion and keep the Sabbath."[6] The famous "Black Code," with anti-Jewish restrictions, was extended to the New World by the French king Louis XIV in 1685. The oppressive Code resulted in the migration of Jews from French holdings throughout the Caribbean and Guianas. Still, settlements of Jews, as in Martinique and Guadeloupe, did form in the mid-seventeenth century, even if for only a brief period. The Jewish community of Martinique numbered fewer than a hundred in the late seventeenth century, but well into the early eighteenth century there may still have been enough Jews for a *minyan*, the ten adult men required for certain prayers. By the end of the century there was no significant Jewish presence there.

Some Jews also made their way to New France (Canada) during the eighteenth century, despite various restrictions imposed by French officials. In the relatively large towns of Montreal, Quebec, and Three Rivers, Jews, as they were in other

North American centers, were involved as merchants. There, and elsewhere, despite their small size they may have accounted for 10 percent of individuals involved in this profession. The first congregation in Montreal was organized in 1768 by 15 Jews. Revealing their important ties to the New York Jewish community, they took the name, Shearith Israel, borrowing from the New York congregation. Although most of these early Jews were of Ashkenazic origin, they adopted the Sephardic rites that still predominated in the New York and Philadelphia communities.

Slavery and the Slave Trade

New Christians and Jews played a role in the Atlantic slave trade. Involvement was greatest in the seventeenth century in Dutch-held lands and began to decrease rapidly by the end of the eighteenth century. Like other New World plantation owners, some Jews owned slaves. In seventeenth-century Barbados, for example, 105 Jewish households owned more than five hundred slaves; in eighteenth-century Jamaica the approximately three hundred Jewish households accounted for more than three thousand slaves. In general, however, such numbers reflected larger social trends and in many cases Jews owned no or substantially fewer slaves than non-Jews involved in slave holding. While some individual Jews in Charleston, especially, but also in Rhode Island, were engaged in the slave market, such activity was not particularly significant in most major North American Jewish centers.

Perhaps even more intriguing than Jewish participation in the slave trade were relations between Jews and African slaves in domestic situations. Women of African origin, in particular, were important in the development of the Sephardic settlements, particularly in areas with limited, and primarily male, populations. Jewish communal law in the New World paralleled that of colonial powers in prohibiting formal marriage between whites and African slaves. However, sexual relations outside marriage (notably between white males and black females) entailed few, or little enforced, practical restrictions. When the birth of children resulted, the status of such individuals could be complex and it pointed to a number of significant issues in early modern life in the New World. Though they might have lower social status, the offspring of such relationships might still be recognized as members of the Jewish community. At times, household slaves were converted to Judaism and freed, though again, generally with a lower status within the community.[7] In Surinam the congregational status of full members who married mulattos was itself lowered and in the 1734 regulations mulatto Jews in the Joden Savanne were not allowed honors on holidays or Sabbaths, though they did retain some ritual honors on *Rosh Hodesh* (the New Month) and minor fast days. They were forced to sit in more undesirable locations in the synagogue and they were not admitted as full members of the congregation. In 1754 it was stipulated that the offspring of male

community members married to mulatto women would also be considered mulattos.

North America: From Dutch to British Control

In New Amsterdam, later to be known as New York, in 1654 a small group of 23 Jews sought refuge after the Portuguese had ousted the Dutch from parts of Brazil. They faced initial restriction and a significant Jewish community did not develop until the 1680s. The Dutch West India Company director of New Netherland, Peter Stuyvesant, wrote to the Directors of the Amsterdam Chamber of the Company announcing that, "The Jews who have arrived here [fleeing the Portuguese in Brazil] would nearly all like to remain here." But, he continued, he had learned ". . . that they (with their customary usury and deceitful trading with the Christians) were very repugnant to the inferior magistrates, as also to the people having the most affection for you."[8] He argued that it would be best to turn them away, concluding that they were a "deceitful race" and "hateful blasphemers of the name of Christ," and he requested that they "be not allowed to further infect and trouble this new colony . . . ."[9] Lobbying on behalf of the potential settlers, representatives of the Jewish community in Amsterdam asserted that the Jews in Brazil had been both faithful and useful to the Dutch. Reminding the authorities that many Jews were in fact shareholders in the Dutch West India Company, they concluded by appealing to economic and legal arguments:

> As foreign nations consent that the Jewish nation may go to live and trade in their territories, how can your Honors forbid the same and refuse transportation to this Portuguese nation who reside here and have been settled here well on to about sixty years, many also being born here and confirmed burghers, and this to a land that needs people for its increase?[10]

The Company responded to Stuyvesant indicating that forcing the Jews out would be unfair, and in 1655 it ruled that the Portuguese Jews should be allowed to "travel and trade to and in New Netherland and live and remain there, provided the poor among them shall not become a burden to the company of the community, but be supported by their own nation." They were, after all, Dutch subjects. In 1656 it was further ordered that the Jews be granted the same civic and political liberties that they had in the Netherlands, but "without the said Jews becoming thereby entitled to a license to exercise and carry on their religion in synagogues or gatherings."[11] Stuyvesant had instigated other restrictions, including prohibitions to trade and to serve in the militia in lieu of a special tax, as well as to own land and engage in retail professions. Several influential Jews petitioned the Company again and in 1657 Jews in New Amsterdam were permitted rights as burghers, allowed to

be involved in trade and to hold property. Eventually they won the request to be able to serve in the militia as well. Jews would gain additional rights with the takeover of the area by the British in the 1660s. These rights included permission to hold elected public office and the ability to build synagogues for public worship.

In North America the vast majority of early Jewish settlers were Sephardic (often Spanish-Portuguese Jews originally from Amsterdam and later, after 1685 and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, an increasing number of Sephardim from France and French-controlled lands). After about 1720 most Jews were Ashkenazic, of central European origin. Many Jews made their way to North America through Barbados or Jamaica. The first major settling point for Jews in North America was in New Amsterdam, which under the English became New York. An organized Jewish community was formed by 1706 and a house of worship was purchased in the 1720s, at the same time that the cemetery was expanded. A synagogue was dedicated in 1730; soon a separate school building was added. At the time there may have been as many as 225 Jews – in a general population of eight thousand. By 1775 the number of Jews in New York may have grown to four hundred.

The New York community developed formal governing structures and processes, which provided regulations for a wide range of activities in ways quite similar to other early modern Jewish communities. As in most other small settlements, there was little distinction between the community and the primary congregation(s), making the congregational bylaws the equivalent of communal constitutions. With the expansion of the congregation *Shearith Israel* (Remnant of Israel), a formal constitution was created in 1728. The constitution identified the key officials to be appointed or elected and specified their responsibilities. The details of the document focused on maintaining order and cohesion among the members and a united front to the external (Jewish and non-Jewish) world. Disputes would be sent before the communal councilors (*parnasim*), who would also have the power to assist the poor of the community, according to rules that prescribed how much charity could be doled out to individuals and for what periods of time. The articles of the constitution were to be read aloud in the congregation twice annually in both Portuguese and English, reflecting the background and makeup of the congregational membership itself. Later additions, for example that of 1768, provided even greater detail about the specific responsibilities of communal officials – such as the beadle (*shammash*), who was responsible for preparation and maintenance of the synagogue, among other things – and the appointment of specific individuals in such capacities.

Other important North American settlements also developed under the British. In Newport (Rhode Island), where a community formed no later than 1678, the community had matured significantly by the last half of the eighteenth century to house a Jewish social club (starting in 1761). The club was organized along a strict regimen of rules that dictated governance and scheduling. Religion and politics were not issues to be discussed overtly in the club, where members – males – would gather (club hours were 5–10 pm each weekday) for gambling, meals, and

conversation. Members could bring one guest, but stiff fines were levied on individuals who broke rules or who missed three nights successively without being sick or out of town. Newport boasted a Jewish population of two hundred Jews in a general population of nine thousand by 1774.

Philadelphia, where many Jews from New York migrated, became the largest Jewish center in British North America by 1755. Further south, important Jewish communities could be found in Charleston and Savannah. By the 1730s Charleston was the hub of the south and an important trade and industrial center. The Jewish community formed there in the 1740s, with a synagogue in 1749. By the Revolution some two hundred Jews resided in Charleston, though many spread out from there to other regions. At the same time, Jews were making their way in increasing numbers further west in parts of Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Massachusetts. By the American Revolution, North America Jewry numbered approximately 2500.

While Jews may not have been excessively involved in long-distance trade, we nonetheless have record of some remarkable figures who maintained far-flung connections and business. Consider the example of Aaron Lopez of Newport. A master businessman, Lopez competed with the most successful entrepreneurs in the New World. He had been born in Portugal in 1731, in a crypto-Jewish environment. He traveled to Newport in 1752 with his wife, daughter, and brother. After his wife died, he remarried into a prominent local family, eventually affording him ample business connections and lines of credit. He began as a retailer and wholesaler, shipping goods between Boston and New York. It took several years, but Lopez eventually became involved in the Atlantic trade. He owned or chartered ships (between 1765 and 1771 he owned at least 27 in whole or part), which eventually touched ports throughout the New World, Europe (England, Holland, Spain, and Portugal), as well as parts of Africa. Another prominent example of Jews involved in commerce, and which highlights the importance of familial networks and partnerships, was the Gratz family. Bernard Gratz, of Polish descent, had emigrated from London in 1754. Involved in the trade of kosher meat in the West Indies, Gratz participated with other merchants in a boycott of British goods at pivotal times on the eve of the Revolution. Gratz and his brother helped to found the synagogue in Philadelphia and both served in lay leadership roles on the synagogue board. They supplied goods to the Continental army and after the war they were involved in the battle to secure rights for Jews in Pennsylvania.

Beginnings of Modernity: From the Colonial to the National

The treatment of Jews in Europe and in European colonies could vary a great deal and change quickly. As elsewhere, the position and toleration of the Jews were related to the Jews' perceived usefulness in trade. Jews, crypto-Jews, and New Christians clearly played an important role in the developing trade between the

Americas and Europe. Jewish success was therefore often linked to that of the colonial powers, with Jews enjoying particular prosperity at the height of Dutch enterprise in Brazil. The position of Jews became more normative and legally accepted by the end of the eighteenth century, especially in British holdings.

Still, colonial Jews did not possess full civil rights. Jews were a tiny minority in a Christian population. In some cases requirements of Christian oaths effectively barred Jews from certain public offices and positions at schools. The Maryland Constitution of 1776, for example, was quite clear that only Christians could hold office. It was noted in article 35, "That no other test or qualification ought to be required, on admission to any office of trust or profit, than such oath of support and fidelity to this State, and such oath of office, as shall be directed by this convention, or the legislature of this State, and a declaration of a belief in the Christian religion. . . ."[12]

Christian bias against Jews in the New World continued a long-standing tradition in Europe of seeing Jews as cursed for denying and allegedly killing Jesus and rejecting the teachings of the New Testament. Many religious and political leaders sought to find ways to convert Jews to Christianity. William Penn, for example, urged Jews to accept Jesus and the New Testament: "If you will but turn in your Minds and consider that His Divine Light Shines in you, and shows you the Error and Vanity of your Minds and Affections, and if you would but give your selves to obey the same, through the Course of your Lives, you would become a Tender People."[13] Many early American leaders harbored a deep Christian, usually Protestant, sensibility, that remained prejudiced against Jews and Judaism. John Quincy Adams, to take another example, saw the Jews as inherently different, adhering to foreign religious and cultural systems and values.

Nevertheless, as in the Old World, Jewish Scriptures were an important part of the religion and society in the New World. Much of Puritan ideology in North America was based on social and religious concepts culled from the Hebrew Bible. Indeed, the Pilgrims saw themselves as Israelites escaping persecution and establishing themselves as God's new Chosen People in a new land. A strong strand of messianism added to this sentiment in the later eighteenth century.

While not granting particular political rights, the British Naturalization Acts of 1740 and 1753, as well as other legislation, allowed Jews to widen the scope of their economic endeavors and held the promise that Jews might acquire important legal rights as citizens. By the last quarter of the eighteenth century New York was perhaps the first state formally to renounce religious discrimination: "this convention doth further, in the name and by the authority of the good people of this State, ordain, determine, and declare, that the free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship, without discrimination or preference, shall forever hereafter be allowed, within this State, to all mankind. . . ."[14] Likewise, The Virginia Bill for Establishing Religious Freedom granted full citizenship in 1785 to individuals, regardless of religious practice. Whatever theoretical

restrictions existed for Jews, in practice Jews clearly enjoyed some level of integration and toleration, particularly as many restrictions were enforced inconsistently, if at all. As one visitor to New York noted already in 1748, "In fine, they [the Jews] enjoy all the privileges common to the other inhabitants of this town and province."[15]

Of course, Jewish rights and anti-Jewish discrimination could vary tremendously by location. Removed from the world of formal religion and politics, on a personal and everyday level, evidence suggests that Jews maintained close and often friendly relations with their Christian neighbors, despite the stereotypical imagery and conversionary zeal spewed by religious leaders. Increasing levels of toleration could lead to social and cultural integration of Jews. They could also lead to increased cases of transgression of Jewish religious law and intermarriage, phenomena for which we have evidence already in the first half of the eighteenth century. In Philadelphia, the establishment of a synagogue around 1770 was accompanied by a lengthy discussion of obligations for communal officials and householders. The document, which would coalesce into something of a communal constitution, also indicated punishments that might be issued in the case of individuals who desecrated the Sabbath, suggesting at least proscriptively that there were individuals who were less connected with Jewish religious observances in colonial America. In smaller settlements of Jews, especially, we have correspondence that suggests diversion from traditional observance to be an increasing phenomenon – though it should be noted that such issues are reflected in the communal documents of larger and more established Jewish communities in Europe as well. The Philadelphia communal ordinance also addressed the issue of individuals who did not want to support the community. The latter could be assessed particularly high fees for a cemetery lot by the communal officials. Here we have indication of individuals increasingly separating themselves from the community and a certain degree of communal impotence in forcing individuals into what would increasingly be seen as a voluntary association. At the same time, the community continued to maintain some controls, particularly since burial in a Jewish cemetery remained non-negotiable for some of the most communally resistant individuals.

Most colonial Jews supported the Revolution and saw it as an opportunity to gain liberty and rights. The United States Constitution (1789) and the Bill of Rights (1791) in fact strengthened prescriptions against discrimination for public office based on religious belief and supported freedom of religious consciousness. Many Jews served in the militia or the Continental army, and several achieved fairly high rank. As we have seen, Jewish merchants participated in blockades and other Jews were involved in finance. Haym Solomon, for example, who had worked as an American agent under the British, opened a brokerage business and became quite successful. During the war he served as chief broker to Robert Morris, the superintendent of finance, making much needed funds available for the colonial army.

In the new territories (according to the Northwest Ordinance of 1787) Jews had equal rights with all other citizens. Ironically, Jews had more legal privileges at the federal level after the war than they did in most states. Even in New York, Sunday laws dictated what kinds of activities were prohibited on the Christian Sabbath and the penalties to be exacted for those transgressing them. In Pennsylvania and elsewhere, the Jews lobbied for at least another decade for the right to hold public office, noting the faithful services of Jews in the struggle for national liberty.

The Jews in the New World were still an extremely small segment of early modern world Jewry even on the eve of the American Revolution. Despite their relatively small numbers, however, they reflected many important early modern developments – geographical and commercial expansion, technological innovation, and the growing struggle between traditionalism and integration with broader social and cultural surroundings – and they pointed to important developments in modernity – secularism, legal emancipation, voluntary and diffused communal organization, etc.

In a certain sense Jews in the early modern Americas were closely tied to the mores, practices, and control of large Jewish communities in Europe (particularly Amsterdam, and later London). At the same time, American Jews also confronted conditions that could be quite different, that elicited different responses, and that created both new opportunities and challenges. At what point the torch passed from early modern to modern for Jews in the Americas is a bit difficult to say. Jews continued to face prejudice well into the twentieth century. And yet the realities in the Americas, particularly as the political landscape shifted from European colonial to homegrown nationalist movements, would soon witness dramatic Jewish growth in some places and the creation of new structures and sensibilities for Jewish society, culture, and history.

Notes

1 Uchmany, 2001: 187.
2 Pieroni, 2001.
3 Wiznitzer, 1954: 59.
4 Frankel, 2001.
5 Trivellato, 2009.
6 Arbell, 2001: 291.
7 Ben Ur, 2001.
8 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995: 452.
9 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995: 452.
10 Marcus, 1990: 71–72.
11 Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995: 453.
12 Marcus, 1996: 96.
13 Dinnerstein, 1994: 7.
14 Marcus, 1996: 96.
15 Marcus, 1996: 47.

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18

The Jews of the Ottoman Empire

Yaron Ayalon

The Ottoman Empire was a state founded as a principality in the early fourteenth century in western Anatolia (today western Turkey) by a group of tribes led by Osman (later Sultan Osman I, r. 1299–1326), after whom the dynasty was named. At its territorial height in the sixteenth century, the Empire ruled over parts of southeastern Europe, Anatolia, the Arabic-speaking lands of the Middle East, and north Africa. The Ottomans brought an end to the Byzantine Empire when they captured the latter's capital, Constantinople (later Istanbul), in 1453. They destroyed the Mamluk Sultanate, which had ruled from Cairo since the mid-thirteenth century, by capturing most of the Arab lands in 1516–1517, and continued to fight Safavid Iran on its eastern borders through the eighteenth century. The Empire embarked on a series of military and administrative reforms in the last decades of the eighteenth century, culminating in the Tanzimat period of the mid-nineteenth century. Modernization of its army and bureaucracy and the adoption of new technologies did not save the Empire in World War I, when it found itself on the losing side. Most lands previously held by the Ottomans were then divided between the British and the French. In Anatolia, the Ottoman Empire was succeeded by the Republic of Turkey. This chapter will explore the lives of Jews living under Ottoman rule, from the Ottoman state's earliest conquest to its collapse.

General Background

Jews had lived in areas that came under Ottoman rule for centuries. The Jews the Ottomans first encountered in their conquests were Greek-speaking. Known as

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Romaniots, they were the descendants of Jews who had lived in Anatolia and Greece under Byzantine rule. The early Ottomans were religiously pluralistic, permitting freedom of worship and allowing Jews (and Christians) to own land and property, and pursue almost any profession. In the fourteenth century the Ottoman state practiced religious diversity that attracted many Jews to the Empire, particularly from Europe where they were often persecuted. One of the first Ottoman cities to have a large Jewish population was Edirne (Adrianople). After the city fell to Ottoman rule in 1365, and became the state's capital, it began to attract Jewish populations from the Byzantine frontier and conquered areas in the Balkans, and it was a destination for many European Jewish immigrants. Edirne thus became the first city in the Empire to have an Ashkenazi community, which in the decades after the conquest absorbed Jewish immigrants from Hungary, southern Germany, France, Italy, Poland, and Russia. By the end of the fourteenth century, Edirne had the largest Jewish population in the Empire. In the early fifteenth century, one of the leading scholars in Edirne, Rabbi Isaac Ashkenazi, allegedly wrote a letter to various Jewish communities in Europe, encouraging Jews to immigrate to the Ottoman Empire. Regardless of the veracity of this story, an influx of Ashkenazi Jews came to the Empire throughout the fifteenth century, settling in cities such as Salonica, Sofia, Plovdiv, and Nikopol (Nicopolis).

After the Ottomans conquered Constantinople and made it their capital, renamed Istanbul, Sultan Mehmed II (r. 1451–1481) put much effort into repopulating the city, especially with non-Muslims, whom he regarded as skillful and of good business intuitions. Mehmet II's population policy forced many to leave towns and villages in Anatolia and the Balkans and migrate to Istanbul. This created the basis for flourishing Jewish, Armenian, and Greek Orthodox communities there. In the second half of the fifteenth century, the Jewish community in Istanbul was constantly increasing. It comprised Romaniot and Ashkenazi Jews, a small community of Karaites, and a few Sephardis, who had come to the Empire even before the expulsion from Spain of 1492.

The expulsion from Spain forced about a hundred thousand Iberian Jews to emigrate, and many of them chose to settle in Ottoman lands. Jewish sources speak of a decree Sultan Bayezid II (r. 1481–1512) had issued, inviting the expellees to settle in the Empire. However, there is no evidence that such a document was ever written. It is more likely that the relative tolerance of the Ottoman authorities to non-Muslims was more appealing to Jews than Christian regimes in Europe; and that the Ottomans saw no reason to prevent the settlement of people who would bring economic prosperity to their Empire. Estimates speak of twelve thousand Jewish households, representing about sixty thousand people, who immigrated to the Empire in the first decade after 1492. At first, the newcomers settled primarily in Istanbul and Salonica. After the Ottoman conquest of the Arab lands, many Sephardim moved there, from within the Empire or coming straight from Europe. In cities such as Damascus, Aleppo, and Cairo, the Sephardim joined the local Arab Jews, who had adopted the language and many of the customs of the lands they had

lived in for centuries. Subsequent waves of immigration, mostly of Sephardim, who after the expulsion had first moved to other European countries, continued throughout the sixteenth century. Under Ottoman rule, Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity and led a Jewish life clandestinely (known as conversos, Marranos, or *anusim*) were able to return to their Judaism openly. The sixteenth century also saw the gradual assimilation of Jews of various denominations into the Sephardic one. In this process, the Romaniot tradition practically ceased to exist.

Various types of population movements that included Jews characterized the seventeenth century. During the Khmelnitsky Uprising in 1648, a large number of Jews were abducted and brought to Istanbul to be sold as slaves. Although most of these Jews were redeemed by local congregations, many of them did not return to their homes but instead settled in Istanbul or certain cities in Bulgaria. In these areas the newcomers, mostly Ashkenazi Jews from Poland and the Ukraine, formed new congregations and did not assimilate into the Sephardi majority. Throughout the century, the *anusim* continued to arrive in the Empire, many of whom "returned" to their Judaism – a lifestyle they had heard about from their ancestors but never experienced. And finally, in the second half of the seventeenth century, Jewish merchants from France and Italy, known as the *frankos*, settled in the Empire. Arriving in major commercial centers with European Christian merchants – Salonica, Izmir, Aleppo, to name a few – they first settled in those cities temporarily. A century later, the descendants of the *frankos* were still living in the Empire. They were never fully integrated into local communities, refused to adopt their customs or accept their rabbis' ordinances, and insisted on a model that allowed them to be exempt from rabbinical ordinances in return for providing generous financial support to the local community.

Under Islamic rule, Jews and Christians were officially second-class subjects, who had to live under certain limitations that changed from time to time. These included prohibitions on renovating or building new houses of worship, wearing clothes in certain colors, riding horses, or obtaining positions with the state. In addition to regular taxes the state collected, Jews and Christians were required to pay a special poll tax in exchange for their exemption from military service. From time to time, other ad hoc taxes were imposed as well. In return for complying with such limitations, Jews and Christians were recognized minorities, and were allowed to practice their religions and administer their own communal affairs. This arrangement continued in principle under Ottoman rule, although most historians agree that the Ottomans were not very strict in enforcing laws regarding non-Muslims. This is apparent in the many new synagogues built whenever Jews arrived at a new place, or in the occupations some wealthy Jews pursued, in which they exercised authority over Muslims – an undesirable condition according to Islamic law.

Estimating how many Jews lived in the Ottoman Empire is virtually impossible for the period before the late nineteenth century, and, even then, figures are rough estimates only. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Empire did not conduct censuses. The only information we have about populations comes from

foreign observers, who had no accurate means of estimating how many people lived in a certain city, and from Ottoman tax records. The latter, however, suffered from two deficiencies: they recorded tax payers in a unit called "household" rather than listing individuals, and, since it was fairly easy to evade taxes, the records reflected only those who had actually paid them. Despite these problems, historians have tried to assess population figures through combining various sources. Thus in Istanbul there were, for example, about ten thousand Jews in 1478, a number that climbed to 48 thousand in 1535, dropped to about 15 thousand by the end of the sixteenth century, continued to decline for most of the seventeenth century, and eventually rose to nearly 22 thousand in 1688. In Salonica, a city that had from the early sixteenth century to its conquest by the Nazis a Jewish majority, there were fewer than a thousand Jews before the arrival of the Sephardim, but over sixty thousand in 1913, when the Ottomans lost the city to the Greeks. In smaller communities, such as Aleppo, there were no more than two thousand Jews in the early sixteenth century, but the numbers reached nearly five thousand by the mid-nineteenth century. Overall, the number of Jews in the Empire was about sixty thousand in the mid-sixteenth century. The estimates of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, already based on Ottoman population surveys, speak of anything between three hundred and four hundred and fifty thousand Jews living in the Empire.

Patterns of Organization

In Ottoman cities, Jews lived mostly in or around an area known as the Jewish quarter. This had more to do with convenience – living in proximity to coreligionists, access to kosher food and communal services – than state-imposed regulations. Not all Jews lived in the Jewish quarter. Some resided in the heart of predominantly Christian or Muslim areas, sometimes even sharing a house with non-Jews. Furthermore, Jewish quarters were never entirely Jewish; Muslims and Christians lived there too. Overall, the area known as the Jewish quarter was where most communal activity took place, and where synagogues were located. In larger cities, such as Istanbul, there was more than one Jewish neighborhood.

Most Jews in the Ottoman Empire lived in cities. There they organized in congregations, formed along denominational lines. Some congregations were named after the city of origin of its members, as it happened when the expellees from Iberia settled in the Empire. In major cities, such as Istanbul, Salonica, and Edirne, there were by the second half of the sixteenth century many congregations, sometimes over a hundred. There, supra-congregational institutions evolved. Such bodies included representatives from all, or the largest, congregations. They addressed the need to coordinate issues that pertained to all Jews in the city, the collection of state taxes, and the representation of Jewish interests to the

Ottomans. In smaller cities, the community was made up of only two or three congregations – Sephardi, Ashkenazi, Romaniot, or Musta'aribi – and in some places there was only one.

Two processes can be said to have characterized Ottoman Jewish congregations in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. One was the splitting of congregations due to internal disputes. This happened mostly in the large cities, such as Istanbul and Salonica. The other and more notable development was the unification of congregations, or the assimilation of one congregation into another. This happened mostly because of the overwhelming majority the Sephardim had in Ottoman cities. With time, the Sephardic tradition and language (Ladino, or Judeo-Spanish) replaced the customs Jews living in the Empire had practiced before. This process brought about the almost complete integration of Romaniot and Musta'aribi congregations into Sephardic ones. In some areas, the new congregations reflected elements from old and new traditions. Such was the case in Damascus and Aleppo, in Syria, where the communities accepted most of the Sephardi customs, yet continued to speak Arabic, a language the Sephardis had to learn. Furthermore, the communities in Syria adopted the marriage laws of the Damascene Musta'aribis, which forbade men from taking a second wife, a practice most Sephardic communities had not banned before the nineteenth century.

The affairs of each congregation revolved around a synagogue. The synagogue served multiple purposes. It was a house of worship; the place where the rabbinical court met, Jewish children were educated, and communal charity collected and dispensed; and it was also where the community's taxpaying heads of households assembled to discuss communal affairs or appoint new officials. Furthermore, the synagogue was also a venue for social and sometimes even business encounters that had nothing to do with the place's role as a house of prayer.

The leadership of Jewish communities in the Empire was usually shared by two groups: the rabbis and the *parnasim*, or aldermen. The title "chief rabbi," which one often comes across in the Jewish literature, is somewhat misleading. Most of the information we have about Jewish communal organization before the sixteenth century concerns Istanbul. According to a story of dubious veracity, after the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople Sultan Mehmed II appointed Rabbi Moses Capsali to be the chief rabbi of the Jews in the Empire. It is fairly clear that Capsali fulfilled some leadership position in the Jewish community; however, his authority and that of his successor, Elijah Mizrahi, was limited to Istanbul and its environs, and there to the Romaniot congregations only. The Ashkenazim and the Karaites were not bound by these rabbis' ordinances. After Mizrahi died in 1526, and until the nineteenth century, Jews did not use the term "chief rabbi" to describe a leadership position, and the Ottomans only did so sporadically, usually referring to communal leaders who represented their people to the authorities. In the interim, rabbis fulfilled leadership positions in their communities as judges in the Jewish court, leaders of prayer at the synagogue, and teachers of Torah and Talmud. They were spiritual rather than practical leaders of their congregations, and usually

did not handle administrative matters. Only small communities in the Empire had one rabbi; most had a number of scholars of more or less similar stature. The rabbis, beyond being the spiritual leaders of their congregations, served on the tribunal of the rabbinical court, and as such issued rulings considered binding. Those who refused to comply with the judgments of the court could be excommunicated or turned in to the Muslim authorities. In practice, however, use of these methods to enforce the court's decisions was rare.

This limited authority of the rabbinical establishment stood in contrast to that of the *parnasim*. The latter were lay leaders entrusted with the administration of daily affairs of the community, including handling all monitory issues and contacts with the Ottoman authorities. As such, they assessed state and communal taxes, arranged commercial agreements with Jewish merchants who came to trade in their town, and usually got their way with pushing communal decisions that fit their agenda. The Ottomans, like earlier Islamic rulers, did not intervene in the internal affairs of communities; as long as certain communal officials represented the community and were responsible for the payment of taxes in time, the state did not attempt to interfere in or change the structure of communal leadership. Even after 1835, the year the sultan appointed a chief rabbi to represent the Jews of the Empire, the Ottomans did not impose changes in the internal structure of Jewish communities; however, in the second half of the nineteenth century, administrative and legal changes the Ottomans introduced affected the functioning and leadership structures of Jewish communities.

The Jewish community served the spiritual and material needs of its members. It was one social circle among many people could belong to, and as such its authority over its members was limited. The one place where the community had virtually no competition was the collection and distribution of charity. In a typical Ottoman city, people of different religious groups interacted on many levels. Between Muslims, Christians, and Jews there were business relations, friendships, neighborly ties, and even familial bonds. When one was in need of assistance, the first place to turn to was the family. But when that was not enough, a person would seek one's religious community; indeed, there were very few known instances of Jews applying to receive charitable support from non-Jews. The customary distribution of alms outside the gates of mosques, churches, and synagogues, was intended almost exclusively for members of that respective group.

Charitable institutions were an integral part of the Jewish community since antiquity. The structure of communal relief institutions in the Ottoman period resembled, with some variances, that which existed in Mediterranean communities in the medieval period. In his *Mishneh Torah*, Maimonides laid out the principles that should guide communities in asking for and distributing alms. Accordingly, each congregation or community was to have officials responsible for handling charity, who would collect funds daily or weekly at the synagogue. At times, the charity officers would attempt to raise additional funds to pay for the redeeming of captives or another large expense the community had to face.

In principle, money, food, and clothing items the officers collected were placed in an alms box and later distributed to the needy according to criteria that changed from one place to another, and that were meant to guarantee that only those deserving help got it. In some communities in the Ottoman Empire, the alms box had evolved into a system of funds, each meant to fulfill a different need, such as sustaining orphans, visiting the sick, hosting guests from other cities, burial of the poor, paying for wedding expenses of orphaned brides, and the study of Torah; in some places there was also a general fund, used for providing food and clothing to the needy.

The Sephardim brought with them a new type of charitable institution: the *hevrah*. This was a private society or confraternity founded with the purpose of dispensing various charitable services to Jews in a certain city. Such societies existed on the Iberian Peninsula at least from the thirteenth century; by the time of the expulsion, they were already widespread. Initially, the *hevrah* was formed to take care of burial arrangements and expenses of members of the community. By so doing, it performed a role the community was traditionally responsible for; and it mimicked a social process that had been taking place in Christian communities in Spain and elsewhere in Europe, where private societies were replacing the Church as the purveyor of certain charitable services. Very much like in Christianity, the *hevrah* was an exclusive club whose members were among the wealthy of each community, and who used the society as a means to increase their prestige and patronage over their coreligionists. Rabbis and other communal leaders accepted the *hevrah* even though it challenged the monopoly the community had over charitable giving, mostly because the *hevrah* was more efficient in taking care of certain needs and had better resources.

In the Ottoman Empire, the Sephardim set up such societies as had existed in Spain. With time, their functions expanded to include other services beyond burial arrangements. This process reflected the inability of congregations and communities to handle public charity, especially during the financial crisis of the late sixteenth century, when the number of Jews dependent on charity rose dramatically. Thus many of the charitable functions described above, which Jewish communities had been fulfilling for centuries, were taken over by these charitable societies. In some locales, the societies ceased being a separate, private body, but were rather fully integrated into the community, since the people in charge of these organizations were the same laymen who served as the *parnasim* of the congregation. The evolution of the *hevrah* in the Ottoman Empire differed from place to place. In Istanbul, Salonica, Edirne, and Izmir, charitable societies became so intrinsic to the Jewish experience that no community could do without them. In other cities, such organizations were slow to develop, even when Jews living there adopted Sephardi customs. This happened, for instance, in Damascus and Aleppo, where the *hevrah* first emerged in the late eighteenth century. Until then, traditional charitable institutions run by the community itself persisted.

Economic Life

As common people (*reaya*), Jews (and Christians) could not obtain jobs that necessitated membership in the ruling military class (*askeri*), such as provincial governors and their deputies, and positions in the army, and, naturally, they could not pursue professions that by definition had to be performed by a Muslim, such as judges in Muslim courts or jurists (*muftis*). Still, some Jews made a living by rendering services for the state, primarily through tax farming – the contracting out of the rights to collect revenues for a state agency. To obtain a tax farm, one had to make a substantial investment. Romaniot Jews in Istanbul held tax farms as early as the fifteenth century, sometimes in partnership with non-Jews. The customs duties at the sea ports, for example, were known to be mostly in control of Jews in that period. Tax farming continued to attract Jewish investors after the arrival of the Sephardim, around the capital as well as in the Arab lands conquered in 1516–1517. In many towns in Egypt, for example, it became customary for wealthy Jews to obtain a contract from the state to collect customs duties. The customs house was in the hands of Jews in Syria as well, from the second half of the sixteenth century, and into the nineteenth. Such tax-farming rights were often hereditary; by the eighteenth century, it was nearly impossible for anyone not from the tax-farming families to obtain a position at the customs house. From the early seventeenth century, Muslims were gradually replacing non-Muslims as tax farmers in the European provinces of the Empire, and in Anatolia.

In addition to tax farming, Jews held various positions in the Imperial Palace, through which they acquired great wealth and influence that sometimes allowed them to help other Jews. In the sixteenth and first half of the seventeenth century, Jews, mainly from Spain and Italy, served in the palace as physicians, counselors, and translators. Sultans Mehmed II, Bayezid II, Selim I (r. 1512–1520), and Süleyman I (r. 1520–1566) employed Jews as their personal physicians; there were usually a few Jewish physicians serving in the palace at one time. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, over forty Jews were serving as physicians in the palace; for an unknown reason that number then declined to only four by mid-century.

Beyond such key positions, and despite certain legal limitations, all professions were open to Jews, who were indeed represented in many fields of the Ottoman economy. From the sixteenth century and through the eighteenth, one finds Jews who were moneychangers or bankers; clerks and transcribers; providers of merchandise or credit; jewelers; physicians; tailors; cloth dyers and drapers; butchers or sellers of poultry, liver, and other meats; greengrocers; pharmacists; millers; makers of rope, limestone, candles, sugar, and beads; peddlers; itinerant buyers and sellers of junk; and day-laborers and apprentices of various sorts.

Istanbul, Edirne, and Salonica were the three major commercial centers of the Empire in the sixteenth century. Of the three, the latter became a magnet for Jewish

merchants from within and outside the Empire. For most of the sixteenth century, Salonica served as the Empire's hub for wool and cloth production and export to Europe – an industry that was mostly in the hands of Jews. The textile industry in Salonica was dependent on other commercial centers in the manufacturing process of wool. Wool woven in Salonica was sent to Safed, in Palestine, to be dyed. When a number of great scholars who attracted many followers to the city died within a few years in the 1570s, the city was depleted of most of its Jews. A chain of natural disasters that hit Safed in the last decade of the sixteenth century caused its remaining Jewish population to leave. This had an immediate effect on the cloth industry in Salonica, which within a few years nearly ceased to function. Jews from Salonica then left the city, in search of other commercial opportunities. They found these in Izmir, which in the early seventeenth century became the main port in the Empire for the trade and export of silk coming from the Far East. In the early years of the century, Izmir had only one congregation, whereas in 1688 it had nine. In July of that year, about half of Izmir, including the port and most of the Jewish quarter, was destroyed in an earthquake. Most of the Jews who had survived the quake and the fires that subsequently broke out left the city, with the greater share of them going to Istanbul or Aleppo, the new trade center for cloths and other luxury commodities.

A financial crisis the Empire was experiencing for most of the eighteenth century led to a deterioration in the economic standing of many Jews. The capitulation agreements (grants made to Christian nations, conferring rights and privileges on their subjects in the Ottoman dominions) which the Empire had begun to strike with European states in the sixteenth century, created many opportunities for Europeans in the Empire. By the late seventeenth century, European merchants and diplomats were stationed in virtually all commercial centers, where many Jews had conducted business. The Europeans preferred to hire local Christians rather than Jews, and not to deal with Jewish merchants. Throughout the eighteenth century, then, the economic and political prospects of Jews in the Empire narrowed. The number of Jews holding key positions declined, and so their representation in most of the professions mentioned above.

Intellectual Developments

The coming of the Sephardim to the Empire led to an intellectual efflorescence that lasted through most of the sixteenth century. Within the wave of Sephardi immigrants, there were a great number of scholars. In Istanbul and Salonica they set up schools for the study of the Torah. Some were small rooms that educated few children, while others were larger institutions that also supplied their students' food and clothing. Sephardi scholars also founded academies of higher learning, or yeshivas. These were not merely academic institutions, but also acted

as meeting places for the sages who engaged in scholastic discussions and then wrote legal opinions. The establishment of numerous places of learning naturally created venues for thought and scholarship, which yielded an impressive volume of books and tracts. From late 1493, much of this intellectual output was channeled through the Hebrew (and Ladino) printing presses in the Empire, first in Istanbul, and from 1512 also in Salonica. These produced texts of both religious and nonreligious content. Together with the Jewish presses in Italy, they helped spread the written word across the Ottoman Jewish world, made religious texts more accessible, and thus encouraged discourse between scholars of distant communities.

Another leading center of learning was Safed. In the first half of the sixteenth century, the town attracted students and scholars from all over the Jewish world. Safed was the locus of activity of Jacob Berab (d. 1541). Berab founded a yeshivah there, and some of his students later became famous rabbis whose works still influence Jewish thought today. Among Berab's students were Moses Mitrani (d. 1580); Joseph Karo (d. 1575), author of the *Shulhan Arukh* (The Set Table), one of the most authoritative compendia of Jewish law; and Isaac Luria (d. 1572) who is considered by some to have been the founder of modern Kabbalah. Berab is best most known for his attempt to renew the process of ordination of new rabbis, which according to Jewish tradition would have signaled the coming of the messiah. The rabbis of Jerusalem managed to block this initiative and force Berab to flee Safed, but the struggle between Berab and the Jerusalem rabbis attracted many to Safed to study with Berab's disciples. The flow of students to Safed continued until the 1570s, when within a few years the generation of Karo and Luria passed away. From about 1580, intellectual activity in the city declined, as academies in cities outside Palestine attracted more students. Istanbul and Edirne continued to serve as important intellectual centers.

Izmir was another. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Shabbetai Tsevi episode threw the Ottoman Jewish world into turmoil. A native of Izmir, Shabbetai Tsevi (d. 1676) was a student of rabbis Joseph Escapa and Aaron Lapapa, who were renowned in the Ottoman Jewish world for their learning. Tsevi began sounding messianic claims publicly in 1648, the year of the Khmelnitsky uprising and mass pogroms of Jews in Eastern Europe. In the early 1650s he was excommunicated and then expelled from Izmir, and spent several years wandering in various communities in the Ottoman Empire. In the summer of 1665 Tsevi proclaimed himself the messiah, first in Gaza, then in Jerusalem, whence he embarked on a summer-long journey back to his native Izmir. Tsevi passed through Safed, Damascus, and Aleppo, where his appearance resulted in manifestations of mass ecstasy and announcements of the "appearance" of new prophets. By the time Tsevi reached Izmir, communities all across the Ottoman Empire had been swept into his messianic message. In many places, people quit their jobs or closed their businesses, and committed themselves to prayer, atonement, and charity. In Izmir, Tsevi was accepted as the leader of the community, appointing and dismissing

rabbis and other functionaries. The Ottomans, weary of unnecessary trouble in their domains, eventually apprehended Tsevi in early 1666 on his way to Istanbul. They brought him in front of the Ottoman imperial council in September, 1666, where Tsevi was given the choice between death and conversion to Islam. He chose the latter, and lived the rest of his life with a small group of followers, first in Edirne, then in Ülgün (Ulcinj, in Montenegro), where he was exiled in 1672, and where he eventually died. Tsevi's apostasy was a source of great distress for many Jews in the Empire and beyond. For the most part, it brought an abrupt end to his messianic movement. Historians generally agree that the Shabbetai Tsevi crisis reignited intellectual activity in the Ottoman Jewish world. This included the rise of many families of rabbis who became spiritual leaders in their communities, and in the latter part of the eighteenth century, political activists. Consequently, there was a revival of Jewish printing after a long period of paucity of produced works. For most of the eighteenth century, Jewish printing houses published countless texts and operated in nearly every major Jewish center. This trend continued and expanded in the nineteenth century.

The Nineteenth Century and Beyond

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, the Ottoman Empire began to undergo a series of modernizing reforms. Thanks to opponents of change in court and the military, these advanced slowly before 1826, when the elite infantry corps, the Janissaries, was abolished. Reforms in the structure of government, the military, and education took full force after 1826 under Sultan Mahmud II (r. 1808–1839), and continued under his two successors, Abdülmecid (r. 1839–1861) and Abdülaziz (r. 1861–1876). The period of reforms under the latter two sultans is known as the Tanzimat (reorganization). The Ottoman policy during the Tanzimat was embodied in two imperial decrees announced in 1839 and 1856.

At first, the reforms had limited effect on Jewish communities in the Empire. Before the 1830s, the state hardly intervened in the internal affairs of its non-Muslim communities as long as taxes were paid on time and no laws were violated. As part of the legal reforms, the Empire sought to end the discrimination against non-Muslims. It did so first by establishing four legally equal communities: Muslims, Armenians, Greeks, and Jews. Even before the state officially announced the equality of its subjects in 1839, it sought to grant formal recognition to the four communities by appointing an official to represent the interest of each group. While the Armenians and Greeks already had a patriarch who was the head of their communities, Jews did not have a centralized form of leadership. In fact, as we have seen, Jewish communities in the Empire were led by groups of rabbis and laymen, and there was no hierarchy that placed one community above another. The Ottomans, believing all non-Muslim communities had similar leadership mechanisms, or simply

seeking a convenient solution, appointed in 1835 a chief rabbi (*haham bashi*) from among the Jews of Istanbul to represent the Jews of the Empire before the authorities. The first chief rabbi, Rabbi Abraham ha-Levi, was recognized as the civil and religious head of the Jews. In the following years, chief rabbis would be chosen by the Jews of Istanbul and a small number of delegates from other communities, and then recognized by the state.

Jews in Istanbul and elsewhere in the Empire viewed the appointment of a chief rabbi as an imposition and unnecessary meddling in the internal affairs of the community. The reluctance of the Jewish community to accept the chief rabbi meant that until 1864 there were in fact two chief rabbis: one the Istanbul community selected as its spiritual leader, and another the Ottomans appointed and whose role was limited to official ceremonies. By 1864, however, the two positions were united, as noted renown scholars had served as chief rabbi for the state and gave the position prestige. From that time, the person the community elected as its leader was conferred by the sultan to be the chief rabbi of the Jews. Yet, even after 1864, the chief rabbi had practically no authority outside Istanbul. Other communities, perhaps inspired by the emerging centralization of the Ottoman Jewish world, appointed their own leading scholars, and adhered to the chief rabbi in Istanbul only nominally.

In the meanwhile, reforms in the Empire prompted certain changes within the Jewish community. In 1865 the Jews of Istanbul adopted an elaborate organic statute for communal administration. The statute defined the different roles of religious, lay, and mixed institutions within the community, as well as the chief rabbi's responsibilities. When it was time to elect a new chief rabbi, the statute determined that representatives of Jewish communities from all over the Empire would convene in Istanbul, in addition to the local delegates. This was done to encourage other communities to recognize the chief rabbi of Istanbul as the leader of all the Jews in the Empire. Due to internal struggles between modernists and traditionalists within the Istanbul community, however, the rules of the statute were never implemented. The Ottomans continued to appoint chief rabbis and recognize the election of rabbis to leadership positions in communities outside Istanbul. Only in 1909 did the Istanbul community elect a chief rabbi, Hayyim Nahoum, according to the procedures of the organic statute. The Ottomans then conferred on Nahoum the title "Chief Rabbi of All the Jews of the Capital and Its Dependencies and of All the Jews Resident in the Ottoman Empire." Nahoum was the only person to hold this title. He served as chief rabbi until 1920.

Between 1835 and 1909 the Ottomans attempted to make official appointments in Jewish communities outside Istanbul. The office of chief rabbi was hence instituted in several other Jewish communities: Izmir, Salonica, and Bursa already in 1835, and Edirne and Sofia a year later; Sarajevo in 1840; Jerusalem in 1841; Baghdad in 1849; and Tripoli, in north Africa, in 1874. In some cities, the Ottoman-appointed rabbi replaced an older leadership position that had existed in that community, while in others, as had happened in Istanbul, two functionaries

continued to coexist for some time. Although the Ottomans understood that the chief rabbi in Istanbul had no sway over communities outside the capital, they still regarded him as the official through which messages and orders would pass down from the central government to the Jews of the Empire. In addition, the chief rabbi of Istanbul had to officially submit each appointment made in the provinces to the approval of the authorities. By this, the Ottomans sought to create a hierarchical structure to Jewish communities that had not existed before. It was only in 1909, however, that they succeeded in imposing the authority of the rabbi of Istanbul over the rest of the Empire's Jews.

The transformation of leadership patterns among Ottoman Jews reflected the greater process of modernization communities all over the Empire were experiencing in the nineteenth century. The main manifestation of the modernizing of Jewish communities was conflicts between traditionalists and modernists. Revolving primarily around the question of education, such disputes transcended denominational lines. Among the Sephardic majority, rabbis tended to object to the opening of schools that taught a Western curriculum, foundations that provided healthcare and charity outside of communal institutions, and the establishment of newspapers of a secular nature, whereas lay leaders were pushing for such reforms to enable their communities' younger generations to succeed financially in a changing world. Within the Ashkenazi community – one that had grown tremendously in that century due to persecutions of Jews in Europe – traditionalists opposed the attempts of German Reform Jews to introduce secular education, teach foreign languages, and change ritual customs. The struggle between traditionalists and the rabbinical establishment on the one hand, and modernists and laymen on the other, was eventually decided in favor of the latter, thanks mainly to two factors: state intervention, and Jewish philanthropic societies from outside the Empire.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the Ottoman Empire sought to reform its educational system, found schools that taught a Western curriculum, bring in European instructors, and send graduates of its state schools to study in Europe. The Ottoman overhaul of the educational system was part of the greater Tanzimat reforms of the mid-nineteenth century – a series of reforms the Ottoman state embarked on in 1839 to bring the Empire to European standards. The changes in Ottoman education did not skip non-Muslim communities. The Ottomans supported and encouraged attempts to provide non-religious education. In 1854, the first Jewish school that offered a program incorporating secular studies opened in Istanbul. In 1856, an Austrian Jewish family founded a school in Jerusalem that offered religious and secular studies in German. Another such school followed in the city in 1864, when the Rothschilds of Vienna established a school for girls that taught in French and English. These were modest beginnings, however. Until the mid-1860s, most attempts to start modern schools – such as in Salonica, Edirne, and Izmir – were met with strong rabbinical and traditionalist opposition that rendered the projects unsuccessful.

Meaningful change came only in the late 1860s with the beginning of the Alliance Israélite Universelle's (AIU) involvement among Ottoman Jews. The AIU was founded in Paris in 1860 with the goal of promoting the emancipation and social integration of Jews wherever they may be. This goal was achieved primarily through schooling. The first attempts of the AIU to establish modern schools in the Ottoman Empire failed; of three schools founded in 1864, two closed after two years. It was only in the 1870s that AIU's schools began to succeed, due to increased cooperation with the communities where such schools were opened, and greater state support for the AIU, whose schools emphasized Ottoman patriotism alongside Jewish values. By the early 1880s, the AIU was operating a number of schools throughout the Empire. They included Baghdad (1864), Edirne (1867), Salonica (1873), Izmir (1873), Istanbul (1875), and Damascus (1880). This network expanded in the 1890s and the first decade of the twentieth century, to include smaller cities such as Aydin, Basra, Bursa, Haifa, Jaffa, Mosul, Safed, and Tiberias. In 1912 the number of AIU schools in the Ottoman Empire had reached 115, all teaching in French. Their total estimated enrollment was 19 thousand. This number may not seem so high, but the AIU touched Jewish communities in the Empire not only through schooling. From the 1870s, the AIU established various social associations and societies for mutual aid. The AIU thus became instrumental in shaping the worldviews and experiences of Ottoman Jews, and was responsible in part for the social and intellectual transformations that occurred in communities in the late nineteenth century.

The AIU's activities among Ottoman Jews contributed to the break from tradition many communities had experienced in the late nineteenth century. Another factor was the attraction of many Jews to non-Jewish European and American schools. These were founded all over the Empire from the 1860s, mostly by Protestant and Catholic missionaries. French and British schools seem to have been particularly popular among Jews. In 1906, for example, 490 Jewish students were attending English Protestant schools in Istanbul, and similar numbers were enrolled in secular and Catholic French schools. At about the same time, American Protestant schools in Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine enrolled Jews as well. Missionary schools, as far as we know, failed to convert a substantial number of Jews to Christianity. But they instilled in their Jewish students a cosmopolitan outlook, a hunger for learning other languages and exploring unfamiliar cultures, and provided them with greater opportunities to succeed outside the Jewish world. This reduced the dependency of many on their communities, and eroded rabbinical authority even further.

The modernization of Ottoman Jewry resulted in new opportunities for economic mobility. Although many Jews continued to make a living as merchants or craftsmen, by the end of the nineteenth century a Jewish middle class had emerged. The members of this class pursued professions in the emerging banking and financial, manufacturing, and trade sectors; and the lifting of official discrimination against non-Muslims made entering government service a feasible option for many.

After a municipality law was adopted in 1855, the government allowed, and at times encouraged, the appointment of Jews to state, provincial, and city councils. Jews also began to serve as judges in the new nonreligious criminal and commercial courts. Throughout the nineteenth century, the number of Jews serving in the palace increased. Sultan Abdülhamid II (r. 1876–1909), for example, employed a number of Jewish physicians and dentists.

Another factor contributing to the modernization of Ottoman Jews was the proliferation of Jewish newspapers. Jewish printing in the Empire flourished in the sixteenth century; however, until the nineteenth century, it was mostly limited to books of a religious content. When newspapers and magazines started to appear in the Empire in Turkish and Arabic, the Jews did not lag behind, and took advantage of this new medium. The first Jewish newspapers in the Ottoman Empire appeared in the 1840s. In the 1870s, dozens of Jewish newspapers in Ladino, Hebrew, and French were being published, mostly in the large centers: Istanbul, Izmir, Salonica, and Sofia. These were intended for mass distribution, and even though it is hard to estimate readership at that period, there is no doubt that some Jewish newspapers were widely read. Jewish newspapers represented an array of ideologies, including Ottomanism, Zionism, and socialism. During the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II, fierce censorship prevented the publication of Jewish (and non-Jewish) newspapers that expressed opinions unfavorable to the state, such as Zionism. After the Young Turk revolution of 1908 censorship was partly lifted and Zionist organizations were allowed to operate in the open. This led to an efflorescence in the Jewish press, which in the years leading to World War I represented mostly Zionist and socialist agendas. Jewish newspapers and magazines of the last decade of Ottoman rule covered local and international events, and disseminated liberal and secularist ideas. The great number of such publications and their popularity among Ottoman Jewry were an indication of the profound changes Ottoman Jews had undergone in the last century of the Empire's existence.

The nineteenth and early twentieth century continued the Ottoman pattern of losing territories to its neighbors, and it saw the rise of nationalist movements that claimed independence for their people, often successfully. Thus Greece (but not Salonica) was lost by 1830, Bulgaria in 1878, Egypt in 1882, and most of the Empire's territories in Europe by the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913. These territorial losses meant that, by the outbreak of World War I, many formerly Ottoman Jews no longer lived under Ottoman rule. When the Ottoman Empire disintegrated at the end of the war, its Arab provinces were divided between Britain and France. In the remaining territory – Anatolia and eastern Thrace – a new state emerged on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire, called the Republic of Turkey. Jews continued to live there through the 1920s and 30s. Keeping its neutrality in World War II, Turkey was a safe haven for Jews who managed to escape the Nazis. The proclamation of the State of Israel in 1948 prompted most Turkish Jews to emigrate, to Israel or elsewhere. Approximately 20 thousand Jews remain in Turkey, concentrated mostly in Istanbul and Izmir.

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Part V
The Modern Period

19

How Jews Modernized

The Western Nations

Carsten Schapkow

Before modernization affected Western and Central Europe, Jews were expelled from a variety of countries during the course of the Middle Ages. In the early modern period, individuals such as court Jews were deemed useful by the government, worked as financial advisors for princes, and were thus enabled to take up residence in cities that formerly had excluded Jews from living within the city limits. This special status could be dismissed simply if the ruler changed his mind; Jews could face expulsion or other forms of harsh treatment as in medieval times.

Besides the court Jews, who interacted with the nobility as financial advisors and also spoke on behalf of the Jewish community, the overwhelming majority of the Jews in the West were very poor and these Jews were categorized as "beggar Jews." From the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, Jews were forced into Jewish districts, called *ghettos* in Italian, were not allowed to work in a variety of professions, and were required to wear symbols such as a yellow badge that would help to identify them as Jews. On the other hand, Jewish autonomy remained intact. This allowed for religious, legal, social, and cultural self-sufficiency of the Jewish community within the sovereign non-Jewish state. Aspects of Jewish self-government were already developed in ancient times and consisted of the congregation, which enabled ten adult males anywhere to form a workable group, the court of justice, the system of self-taxation, and welfare institutions. Because of this mobile infrastructure, well-built religious traditions remained intact for the majority of the Jews until the coming of the era of emancipation. At this point the sovereigns in Europe and the political elite were no longer interested in supervising the Jewish community. Thus, scholars have called the Jews "a people apart" because they lived a life segregated from the Christians in a ghetto and interacted mainly on the basis of economic necessity. Jews in

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Christian Europe were dependant on non-Jewish patrons and protectors; however, they also followed the Talmudic saying *dina de-malkhuta dina* ("the law of the land is binding").

Starting around 1570 in Western Europe, economic mercantilism gave Jews more room to settle in various Central and Western European territories. The Thirty Years War (1618–1648) fostered the integration of the court Jews as a small Jewish elite into Central European societies. The states realized the economic benefits they would receive from the Jews in their territories in tax revenue and stimulus for the economy. These Jews were considered useful to the state, which had a long-term impact on the legal situation of the Jews in general.

England had expelled the Jews in 1290 and saw few Jews, mainly of Sephardic descent, before the end of the seventeenth century. The Irish Deist and political philosopher John Toland (1670–1722), who wrote *Reasons for Naturalizing the Jews in Great Britain and Ireland* in 1714, was influenced by Thomas Hobbes, Baruch Spinoza, and John Locke and became one of the most radical followers of the Enlightenment in Britain. His pamphlet was written anonymously during the public debate regarding the naturalization of foreign-born Protestants in Great Britain. Toland's essay was the earliest plea for a comprehensive toleration including the Jews. Although it did not directly lead to the emancipation of the Jews it fostered literary discussion which would also influence public opinion. Toland argued England would benefit immeasurably from attracting Jews to its shores. In his pamphlet he maintained that the manifest faults of the Jew were not natural but circumstantial. Toland wanted to show that Jews are indeed as useful "as any other people whatsoever" and not dangerous to the interest of the state. If the state granted them equal opportunity and dignity the Jews would prove to be resourceful and loyal subjects. Wherever the Jews were expelled the country suffered from the loss: something Toland emphasized when referring to the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. Toland understood the Jews as being loyal to their adoptive country because they have no fatherland of their own. Their loyalty to their place of residency could be found in history and their admission on English soil would benefit the country and especially its economy. In 1753 the House of Parliament passed "The Jew Bill" stating Jews could be naturalized without swearing a Christian oath. But in 1754 the Jewish Naturalization Act of 1753 was repealed because of widespread opposition. This brought English Jews in 1760 to found the "Board of Deputies" and press for emancipation of the Jews in England. But not until 1885 was the Christian Oath finally abolished, which enabled Jews to have access to all political offices.

Unlike Britain, the situation in the Netherlands affected three different groups of Jews. First, Sephardic Jews from the Iberian Peninsula, whose members returned to Judaism in the Netherlands after they have been raised as Catholics; second, a group of German Jews; and, after 1648, a third group of Polish Jews who flocked to Amsterdam after the infamous Chmielnicki massacre. In particular those stemming

originally from the Iberian Peninsula sometimes mixed Christian with Jewish traditions and questioned the role of religious authorities and the belief in a personal God – the essence of monotheist religions like Judaism and Christianity. This is best documented in the life and works of Uriel da Costa (1585–1640) and Baruch de Spinoza (1632–1677). Both were banned from the Jewish community in Amsterdam, the first committed suicide, the latter left the Jewish community behind and lived and worked with other so-called freethinkers and established a legacy of arguably the most influential early enlightened thinking. The Jews were tolerated in the Netherlands but a concept of equality was not established before the French took over in 1796.

Works of early modern enlightened thinkers such as Spinoza had an impact on a variety of transformation in European societies in the years from 1750 to 1914, including an explosive growth in industry and trade, revolutions in politics and family life, and the unification of nation states. And the Jews became part of that historic process. Central to it was a close connection between the state that grants citizenship and the idea that the Jews have to do something for it, namely to change into modern individuals. This affected the majority of the Jews who were still poor and dependent upon the support of more wealthy community members. Starting in Western Europe in the 1780s the Jewish Enlightenment, Haskalah in Hebrew, tried to prepare the Jews to become part of non-Jewish society. This process was based on the optimistic belief that the emancipation of the Jews, the conferring on them of the rights and duties of citizens, would break down the division between Christian and Jew, and make them into Frenchmen, Englishmen or Germans of the Jewish faith by a jettisoning of national culture and identity and, most important, by emancipation.

During the course of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Jews became citizens, mainly in Western and Central Europe, at first in France in 1790–1791, in the Netherlands in 1796, in the whole of Italy in 1870, in the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1867, and in Germany in 1871. One result of the process of emancipation was that Western European Jews tended to exchange a traditional for a more secular understanding of a Jewish identity, or a concept of identity that saw Judaism foremost as a religion, but with secular knowledge as an integral part. Because of the variety of concepts there was no uniform definition of the ways the Jews modernized in the West. The ideology of secularism and the process of secularization differs from community to community, from region to region, and from state to state, according to the nature of the particular society's religion and religious institutions and the pressure from the general society to assimilate. Moreover, one could never describe an essential German, French, or Italian culture because local traditions remained intact. Modernization of the Jews was more of a transformation of traditional Judaism than a decline; it rarely led either to conversion to Christianity or to a feeling of being disassociated from Judaism. Modernization of the Jews in the West created many-sided forms of a modern Jewish identity.

Self-Education and New Models of Social Relations

The declared goal of the Haskalah, the Jewish Enlightenment, was to usher Jews, previously cut off from European culture, into the ambit of this culture by engaging with and espousing positions postulated by the Enlightenment. The Haskalah was the movement of a Jewish elite. The era of its evolution and high point is roughly 1750 to 1812; in Eastern Europe it began later and lasted longer. Jews in Germany played a crucial role in it and were perceived as a role model for the Jews in Eastern Europe. This intellectual movement developed via an internal discussion and an external non-Jewish discourse, though these were never fully separated one from the other. The Haskalah was distinguished by the language employed: German or Hebrew. At the end of this process lay the formation of the new type of the German Jew: a Jew who spoke only German, made religion a private affair, and cultivated close contact with Christians in literary salons and periodicals. This restructuring in German Judaism from a traditional lifestyle to an acculturated Judaism without any deeper religious bond to Judaism brought with it an entirely novel attribution of Jewish identity, perhaps best encapsulated in the slogan "emancipation through education." Moses Mendelssohn was considered by contemporaries – Jews and non-Jews – as living proof that it was possible for a Jew to become part of learned and educated society. It was possible because Mendelssohn had acknowledged the need to educate himself according to the rules of the Enlightenment.

Moses Mendelssohn (1729–1786) was born in Dessau. His father was a Torah scribe. In 1743 Mendelssohn joined his teacher David Fraenkel and travelled with him on foot from the German town Dessau to the Prussian capital Berlin. Fraenkel, who was appointed rabbi in Berlin, could only take Mendelssohn with him because he had a job and this enabled Mendelssohn to study with him in Berlin. After Mendelssohn's studies with Rabbi Frankel ended, he worked as a tutor for the silk merchant Isaac Bernhard, only permitted because Bernhard convinced the Prussian government that Mendelssohn would be an important member of his household. Thus Mendelssohn received the status as a "protected Jew," or *Schutzjude*, who had to pay a body tax as a Jew to the State of Prussia. Under existing laws, Mendelssohn could have been deported from Berlin without protection based on employment. In Bernhard's house he taught his pupil German and mathematics and himself philosophy and German, Latin, French, Italian, and English literature. Mendelssohn's living standard improved and he was able to purchase books for the first time in his life. Among others he read the works of Spinoza, Cicero, Euclid, Aristotle, Plato, Newton, Montesquieu, Rousseau, and Voltaire. He also came into contact with two non-Jewish intellectuals: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, a playwright and journalist, and Friedrich Nicolai, a bookseller and leading publisher.

In Lessing's play *The Jews*, published in 1754, an anonymous traveler, who had on the previous day rescued a nobleman and his entourage from the highway robbers, initially assumed to be "damned Jews, now identifies the robber as none other than

the steward and the administrator of the Baron's own estate. Finally, the traveler discloses his own identity: he is a Jew without the symbols of Jewishness, neither a beard nor a traditional garb. As a well-educated human being, he could not be "identified" as a Jew. Spinoza might have been an ideal here, or even Mendelssohn himself, who, for enlightened Christians like Lessing, was living proof that a Jew can change and become part of European culture. In two of his plays Lessing referred to Jewish figures in this regard. In *The Jews*, written in 1749, this was the philosopher Spinoza; in his play *Nathan the Wise*, published in 1779, Mendelssohn became a role model for this type of an enlightened character. This was still exceptional: most Jews in Central Europe at this time lived apart from mainstream society in inadequate living conditions.

One of the central tenets of the Enlightenment was an ideal embodied in self-education through studying of secular subjects. The central concern of the Enlightenment was, as formulated by Immanuel Kant in 1784, "Man's leaving his self-caused immaturity. Immaturity is the incapacity to use one's own understanding without the guidance of another. . . . The motto of enlightenment is therefore: Sapere aude! Have courage to use your own intelligence!" Among all Enlightenment thinkers, this postulate led to a critique of the absolute claim to truth raised by revealed religion and absolute monarchy. The new ideal of society developed in the Enlightenment was to be achieved by guiding individuals to a free, dignified, and happy existence in a new society. What drove the Enlightenment was an unrestrained and optimistic faith in progress, which remained throughout the age of its influence, although with varying degrees of confidence. Enlightenment thinkers were quite conscious of their Christian heritage. Even if they actively espoused Deistic views which assumed the Creator, they rejected the notion of a personal God affecting events in the world. Nonetheless, they accepted without question that Christianity had supplanted Judaism and that it was only a matter of time until Judaism would perforce dissolve through massive Jewish conversion to Christianity.

Lessing was the son of a Lutheran pastor and became a freethinker; in his journalism and plays he preached tolerance and the rule of reason. Freethinkers were often seen as atheists because they stood outside the religious and social conventions of this time. Lessing was fascinated by Mendelssohn whom he declared to be "an honor to his nation" because he was a living proof of the Enlightenment's major tenets: He had "become what he was by the force of his own thinking, with the help of a few books." Mendelssohn was also grateful for Lessing's influence. Mendelssohn joined the ranks of the best-known German authors after his book *Phaedon or the Immortality of the Soul in Three Dialogues* appeared in 1767. In this book the existence of God was proved by reason alone, without recourse to revelation. *Phaedon* articulated one of the main dogmas of natural religion, that Reason itself was divine and thus held a promise of immortality. The changing atmosphere enabled a Jew to write a books dealing with general philosophical issues in German. This would have been impossible before his time, and the book was translated

into many languages. Mendelssohn became a European celebrity, the so-called German Socrates.

German–Jewish relations beyond the borders of these intellectual elite reflected mainly the limitations of eighteenth-century tolerance. The social contact between Jews and Christians in Germany was defined by Jacob Katz (1973) as a "semi-neutral society," identifying German society as not really accepting Jews as individuals as part of the German nation. The Prussian king Friedrich II vetoed Mendelssohn's election to the Prussian Academy of Sciences because he was a Jew – in addition to becoming an eminent philosopher writing in German, Mendelssohn remained an observant Jew. Moreover, he also worked in the field of Hebrew; his Bible translation was one of his most prestigious works. This, nevertheless, was not part of the perception his enlightened Christian friends had of him. Mendelssohn also believed that his religious identity was part of his private life. He was observant, but felt integrated as an intellectual into the surrounding major society. Judaism was for him a faith of reason. He could never abandon it for Christianity, whose revealed dogmas, in his view, contradicted reason. However, the Christian environment was not aware or not willing to acknowledge that Mendelssohn remained an observant Jew and never questioned Judaism to be the central cornerstone of his life. His enlightened Christian colleagues only recognized that he shared many positions with them. The resulting problem became obvious in the Lavater controversy. Lavater, a Protestant deacon from Zurich, took upon himself the task to convert Mendelssohn to Christianity after reading Mendelssohn's *Phaedon*. Lavater had translated a book by the Swiss philosopher and naturalist Charles Bonnet, *Philosophical Paligenesis or Ideas on the Past and Future States of Living Beings*, which purported to prove the truth of the Christian faith scientifically. Discussion of physiognomy played a significant role in it. According to Lavater, Mendelssohn's countenance was noble, which would make him an ideal Christian. If Mendelssohn could not disprove this truth he must convert. Lavater hoped that the conversion of the German Socrates would convince all German Jews to become Christians, an important step toward heralding the Second Coming of Christ. Mendelssohn's friends did not defend him and criticize Lavater; they remained silent as part of this "semi-neutral society."

Yet Mendelssohn's views were clear. He respected Jesus as a historical figure who never rejected Judaism or proclaimed his divinity. Judaism was a faith of reason for him whereas Christianity in its revealed dogmas contradicted reason. Mendelssohn was convinced that Judaism was a religion consisting of laws whereas Christianity depends on miracles. Mendelssohn was certain that Jews must open their minds and embrace Western culture in order to become integrated; they had to prove that Judaism is no barrier to enlightened ideas. But they should never abandon the faith; something which was significant for Mendelssohn, but the next generation no longer saw: how the enlightened and secular as well as the religious sphere could come together in the kind of peaceful harmony that Mendelssohn had achieved. If Judaism and Christianity shared the same ground, some successors

argued, why remain Jewish when the mainstream society followed a sophisticated Deist way of life?

The Role of Jews in European Society from the Late Eighteenth Century

To consider Jews useful did not, however, necessitate treating them as equal to Christians. That, briefly, was the prevailing mentality when the famous tract *Über die bürgerliche Verbesserung der Juden* (On the Bourgeois Betterment of the Jews), written by the Prussian administrative official Christian Wilhelm Dohm (1751–1821), appeared in 1781. It was addressed not only to an educated class but expressly to the political decision makers and representatives of the administration in Prussia. Dohm was hoping to press both the Prussian State and the Jews for reform. In his critique he characterized both the Jewish religion and the State that kept Jews apart from general professions as backward.

Emancipation of the Jews, according to Dohm, was morally just. Besides, Dohm was convinced that the emancipation of the Jews would serve the general interest of the state. His understanding of emancipation is clearly related to a mercantilist concept of usefulness; however, it is also a critique of the power of religion. At this time, the Prussian Jews were divided into groups on the basis of the General Privilege of 1750 based on a combination of medieval and modern aspects. These groups were classified according to income, which as a rule permitted only a limited right of residence. Jews were still seen as untrustworthy elements; the State, however, did not treat them any longer as subjects of the king. As a consequence, significant elements of Jewish autonomy came under observation by the state.

Paths toward Citizenship

Prussia was not the only example of this treatment in the German-speaking lands. On the basis of granting residence rights to former court Jews, there was no general admission of Jews in Vienna until 1848. Dohm proceeded on the basis of the assumption that the wretched plight of the Jews in Germany was due to their terrible living conditions, which had brought about a "greater depravity of the Jews." Dohm argued that the State had to open all professions to the Jews and thus enable the "miserable Asiatic refugees" to become auspicious and improved members of the civil society. He believed that the Jews "might be more morally corrupted than other nations and even guilty of relatively more bad behavior than Christians" due to their oppressed situation in society. He was convinced that emancipation of the Jews would take time, at least two generations, because Jews

would need time for their betterment. As a first step to improve their inner condition Jews had to learn German, which would demonstrate that they might fit into a non-Jewish majority society.

Dohm reasoned that as soon as these external living conditions – and thus the unsatisfactory moral situation of this population – were improved, a change in their internal attitudes would follow suit. He argued that it was the State's duty to watch over the progress made by the Jews even after their acceptance as equal subjects, and to constantly further the betterment of their internal constitution. Part of this program of betterment was the opening up of all branches of commerce and trade to the Jews, while abolishing the constraint of guild membership, which had excluded Jews from pursuing many professions and trades. By contrast, Dohm did not wish to see Jews permitted to hold a government position, since their internal condition was not yet prepared to cope effectively with such tasks.

The reactions towards Dohm's proposal among Jews and Christians differed. There were, for instance, prominent Christian scholars such as the Orientalist and theologian Johann David Michaelis who simply rejected the idea that Jews could ever overcome their so called "corruptness." Michaelis did not believe that Jews could become valuable members of society; he described them as unchangeable and thus "a people apart." He argues that the Jews are more deceitful than Dohm accredits them. Michaelis misconstrued statistical to claim that Jews disproportionally engaged in thievery.

Moreover, Michaelis believed that the national pride of the Jews is what was preventing them from assimilating into German society. Therefore, he did not agree with Dohm on the issue of granting Jews citizenship. His reasons for not allowing them full citizenship are as follows: The purpose of the Law of Moses is to maintain and keep the Jewish people separate from all other peoples. In particular their dietary laws would never allow them to form a true partnership with German people. As a consequence the Jew would never be able to enroll in military service and defend the county honorably because of his religious practices and dietary laws. In addition Michaelis puts forward an argument based on racial appearance, arguing that Jews in general do not meet the minimum height requirement for military service. The Jews, moreover, still hoped to return to Palestine; their current home would always be a temporary residence. Based on this assumption, to grant full citizenship to the Jews would only weaken the character of the German state.

Moses Mendelssohn, who criticized Michaelis, also wondered why Dohm's plea mentioned betterment but not civil equality. All in all, the overwhelming majority of German-speaking Jews saw Dohm's plea as a chance to guide Jews, previously cut off from European culture, into the general culture by engaging with Enlightenment ideas. But Germans and Jews had differing views when it came to questions of emancipation and civil equality. While the German texts were dominated by debate on the bourgeois betterment of the Jews and the need to prevent antisemitic attacks and root out prejudice, in the internal Jewish discussion

conducted in Hebrew these topics were almost meaningless, because they were in a very fundamental sense noncontroversial and obvious.

The first significant legal reform of Jewish status did not occur in one of the German states, but in Austria, following the Edict of Tolerance promulgated by Emperor Joseph II in 1782. It allowed Jews access to the skilled trades, educational institutions, government service, and the professions. Jewish men were soon no longer exempt from military service. On the other hand, the legal authority of the rabbis was abolished. Moreover, Jewish business records were to be kept in German and not in Yiddish or Hebrew any longer. This has to be understood as a measure to bring the Jews to Western culture and to administer Jewish affairs in a language that could be understood by German-speaking bureaucrats.

Dohm's analysis, together with the impact of the French Revolution and Napoleon's rise to power, led to an altered policy toward the Jews in the German territories as well. But Dohm remained alone in his far-reaching call for Jewish emancipation on the basis of a reciprocal assimilation. Many Christian contemporaries asserted that, due to their religion, the Jews were unable to integrate into the non-Jewish majority society.

It was France where discussions about emancipation of the Jews finally made Jews citizens of a nation state for the first time in modernity. Already in 1785 in Metz a prestigious essay competition with the title *How to Make the Jews Happy and Useful* was held. It was won by the Abbé Grégoire, who emphasized the Jews' "regeneration." In his *Essay on the Physical, Moral and Political Regeneration of the Jews* (1789) he criticized Michaelis' allegations as lacking proof. Following the French Revolution in 1789, the status of Jews was discussed at great length. As a delegate to the French National Assembly Abbé Grégoire placed a motion for Jewish emancipation, although his negative views of Judaism and "Jewish" commercial behavior were evident. It was Stanislas de Cleremont-Tonerre who declared at the Debate on the Eligibility of Jews for Citizenship in 1789 that "the Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals. They must be citizens."

Thus, Jews should be considered as fully fledged French citizens on an individual basis. But this ideal of equality did not include all the Jews of France. At first only the already highly acculturated Sephardic Jews of Bordeaux became citizens, in 1790. In 1791 the Ashkenazim of Alsace, who were traditional and mainly Yiddish speaking, were included as well. For the first time, the Jews were treated in law on exactly the same basis as non-Jews. As Napoleon's armies swept over Europe (1796–1812), they brought Jewish emancipation to the countries they invaded: the Netherlands, Italy, and Germany. The Code Civil and the Code Napoleon were implemented, and in the kingdom of Westphalia Jews became citizens. Jews in Eastern Europe were undecided whether to regard Napoleon as a latter-day Cyrus (referring to the Emperor of Persia, who allowed the Jews to return to Palestine, take their religious symbols with them and rebuilt the Temple), as an agent of divine redemption, or as a diabolical source of secularism. Napoleon, although widely praised among

Western Jews as a liberator, remained skeptical about the willingness of the Jews to change. This can be seen in the 1806 "Assembly of Jewish Notables," or "Sanhedrin," Napoleon had called for, precisely to allay this suspicion.

Before Napoleon brought emancipation to the Jews in Europe there was discussion about the status of the Jews but few practical changes. In Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm II (1786–1797), who succeeded Friedrich II, did not initiate civic reforms along the lines proposed by Dohm. Only 21 prominent businessmen, including David Friedländer who became a prominent Jewish reformist in Berlin, received Prussian citizenship, the rest (a hundred thousand) still lived without those rights, and under oppression. Friedländer lacked Mendelssohn's passion to combine both cultures: the Jewish and the German. By this time a significant number of Jewish intellectuals had abandoned Judaism altogether and were baptized as Christians. In 1799 – thirteen years after Mendelssohn had died – Friedländer proposed anonymously a mass conversion to a minimal, Deist form of Christianity. Friedländer proposed to accept Christianity if he and his colleagues were freed from the confession of certain dogmas, most notably the divinity of Jesus and the acceptance of the sacraments. The proposal was rejected by the Protestant leadership. For Friedländer not only the ritual principles of Judaism, but also the dogmas of Christianity, were contrary to reason. Friedländer's position towards Judaism was ambivalent: He was critical of rabbinic Judaism but enthusiastic about "pure Judaism" embodied in its pure ethical teachings. Friedländer's open letter can be read both as a proposal for conversion and an apologia for Judaism.

In order to better contextualize the ambivalence of Jewish identity politics one has to look to such figures as Salomon Maimon (1752/4–1800), who gives us another view on how the Jews modernized in the West. Maimon was born in Polish Lithuania, in either Niewiz or Sukoviboeg, near the town Mir on the Niemen River under the name Salomon ben Joshua. He was raised in a traditional Jewish environment, and was considered a notable Talmudic scholar by the age of 11. In his autobiography Maimon refers to the influence of the great religious philosopher Moses Maimonides (1160–1205) whose rationalistic thoughts embodied in his book *More newuchim* gave him an idea how philosophical knowledge could be combined with religious belief. Maimon's, the first modern Jewish, autobiography, followed the manner of Rousseau. It is modern because Maimon focuses on his own intellectual development and writes a Jewish version of the German *Bildungsroman*. In the autobiography Maimon describes his journey from the East to the West, from Polish Lithuania to Berlin – the capital of the Haskalah with Mendelssohn as its head. The name change from Ben Joshua to Maimon indicates, to Liliane Weisberg, "the difference between orthodox religion and free spirit, between tradition and Enlightenment, between East and West, and between past and present" (cited in Gilman and Zipes 1997: 110).

As Maimon travelled for the first time to Berlin, entrance was refused to him by the representatives of the Jewish community at the city gate because Maimonides' *More newuchim* was in his possession. This book, written in 1190, gives an

explanation for those among the Jews who see a contradiction between philosophy and the literal (word-to-word) teachings of the Bible. It addresses a small philosophical educated elite that was knowledgeable about Aristotelian philosophy. Maimon claimed as to be preparing a new edition and commentary of the work, which was considered subversive in some orthodox circles. But more humiliating for Maimon was the way already acculturated German Jews made fun of him because of his traditional garb and his inability to speak one language adequately. His mixture of languages and his dress invited the German Jews he met to treat him like a clown.

Later Maimon studied the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, who said that only Maimon understood his philosophical system correctly. Maimon developed his own philosophical system but remained a freethinker. Maimon's intellectual journey from a traditional Jewish living world in Polish Lithuania to one of the capitals of the Enlightenment embodied for Western European Jews the perspective of the East as a place of darkness and a remote medieval past. Moreover, because of the prejudices of the Catholic Poles there was no mutual intellectual exchange between Jews and Poles, and Maimon refers to the backwardness of Polish society in general. Maimon's perception in regard to his heritage as an Eastern Jew is particularly important when he talks about the educational system among the Eastern European Jews that he had experienced himself. This system has "imprisoned his children," he argues, and only the "emergence from Talmudic Darkness" could offer intellectual and personal freedom for these individuals. As an enlightened individual himself Maimon criticizes in particular the lack of a pure language among the Polish Jews. Moreover, the concentration on Talmudic studies could not offer a real answer for individuals longing for knowledge. Clearly, this is more a critique of the ways the Talmud is taught than the content itself. After Maimon studied books on natural sciences in modern languages he was able to see the truth, "but in the thickest darkness I have perceived some light." Maimon came to the conclusion that there is no education, no culture among the Eastern European Jews. Although Maimon remained a skeptic towards religion throughout his lifetime he always emphasized his Jewish identity when calling himself "a stiff-necked Jew. My religion enjoins me to *believe nothing*, but to *think* the truth and to *practice goodness*."

The main shift from tradition to modernity can be seen in the transformation of the educational sector Maimon was already arguing for. With the modification of the local heder (Jewish elementary school) the "Jewish Free School" was founded in Berlin in 1778. Similar schools were founded in Seesen (1801), the Philantropin in Frankfurt (1804), and the Samson School in Wolfenbüttel (1807). Educational reforms pressed for a remodeled curriculum at Jewish schools. It consisted of the Hebrew Bible, Jewish philosophy, Hebrew grammar, and poetry as well as rabbinic teachings. Moreover, a secular component was added consisting of subjects such as the vernacular language, mathematics, as well as learning to behave in the mainstream non-Jewish society.

Israel Jacobson (1768–1828), a wealthy banker and a supporter of emancipation, founded the Jewish school in Seesen. The town belonged to the kingdom of Westphalia which Napoleon's brother Jerome was ruling. Jews were not only citizens, they also had access to all offices. In 1810 Jacobson annexed a synagogue to his school, the so-called Jacob's Temple. There were Hebrew and Latin Bible verses in the portal pediment, indicating that Judaism and Christianity had much in common. On the roof there was even a bell tower. For the first time, a Jewish religious service was accompanied by choral singing of German hymns, and organ music. Many prayers traditionally spoken by the entire community were now reserved for the cantor. Jacobson introduced a sermon in the German language, meant to serve the purpose of teaching culture and not religion. Jacobson also installed confirmation ceremonies for boys and girls – previously nonexistent in Judaism.

Spurning of the idea of equal civil status for Jews became ever more vehement, especially from the 1790s on. Many non-Jewish intellectuals began to turn away from the universalistic humanitarian positions of the Enlightenment, connected with the French Revolution, and which to a certain extent had sought to implement in hard concrete the abstract ideas of the Enlightenment. The criticism was voiced against the representatives of the French Revolution and the successor regime to Napoleon: it alleged that there was no longer any validity to the credo of freedom, equality, and fraternity, the declaration of human rights and the establishment of a republican polity. Although people might well accept these goals theoretically, these ideals were transmuted into egoism, arbitrary rule, and the desire to subjugate other peoples. After nationalist thinking had started to spread from the middle of the century among the educated strata, principally in debates on cultural issues, in confrontation with Napoleonic rule after 1806, a political nationalism emerged. This was manifest mainly in the form of ethnically infused nationalism, a *Volkstumsnationalismus*, in confrontation, taking on solid forms oriented to clear points of reference. Large segments of early nationalist theorizing derived from the patriotic writings of the eighteenth century, and it was rapidly accepted by the educated for that reason.

In the eyes of reformist politicians in Germany, the full emancipation and equality of the French Jews was an undertaking dangerous to the state, and was interpreted as impractical. The Prussian Edict on the Jews of 1812 was promulgated as an integral component of the reforms in Prussia, although in the main owing directly to the special situation after the Napoleon's defeat of Prussia. The edict abolished the body tax and rendered the Jews living in Prussia "nationals and Prussian citizens," but at the same time revealed the widespread attitude of rejection of the Jews among the intellectual elite in Prussia and throughout Germany. After the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, Jewish ghettos and other restrictions were restored in much of Germany and Italy. The Congress of Vienna in 1815 marked a conservative revolution in Europe and also changed the political existence of the European Jews. But it would be too limited to focus on restrictions.

The process of a transformation from a traditional Jewish community divided from European culture into a modern form of Jewish identity took on many facets. Whether it is called assimilation or acculturation the key emphasis should be directed to the idea of diversity. What scholars have called a Jewish "subculture" can be found in various forms of philanthropic and cultural associations founded by middle-class Jews. These forms of identifying embodied Jacob Katz's "semi-neutral society" and began in literary salons around 1800. Here Jews and Christians met in Jewish households; those same Christian men who felt very attracted to single Jewish women would never have invited them to their homes. This is surely a gender phenomenon of the time, but not solely. Jewish distinctiveness was preserved within the subculture, but this separateness also reflected the enduring exclusion of Jews from full acceptance into mainstream society. Another example of an ambivalent relation to one's own Jewish identity can be found in the German poet Heine (1797–1856) who converted in 1825 to Lutheranism. He was hoping that his "dry conversion" without embracing the teachings of Christianity would help him gain a doctorate and pursue a career as civil servant or academic. All his attempts were unsuccessful. Heine coined the term "a ticket of admission to European culture" but also declared that he never really left Judaism and therefore could not return to it.

During the nineteenth century Jewish social transformations continued to take place and Jews flocked to the fast growing cities: Berlin, Hamburg, Vienna, and Paris. Few Jews became artisans or farmers, despite attempts by reformers to encourage this. Jews tended to work in trade or in finance, and soon became particularly numerous in journalism and other cultural professions. Many Jews soon became part of the new middle class and a new form of bourgeois Jewish culture emerged as many Western European Jews eagerly adopted the new, more secular values of the modern era. Because this transformation of Jewish life occurred in all walks of life even the most conservative circles could not avoid being affected.

In Germany, in particular, Jews seized the notions of *Bildung* and *Kultur* – moral and intellectual improvement through secular high culture. This not only affected Jews living in the German-speaking lands, because the accomplishments of German Jews were widely perceived as a role model among enlightened Jews, in particular in Eastern Europe. It was a key concept of the Jewish Enlightenment to look down on traditional Jews, who were deemed backward mainly because of their strong religious observance, which was considered a barrier for the Enlightenment. Their commitment to this ideal of self-improvement allowed the German Jews in two or three decades to leave a hermetically closed system centered on divine sacraments to an emancipated and agonistic culture centered on man. Deist positions that regarded traditional Judaism as a relic of the past became more and more fashionable. In his old age Mendelssohn accepted that his eldest son had given up Hebrew studies, and no longer strictly followed the Jewish laws. For the Jews in Germany their attachment to German culture demonstrated their patriotism as

Germans which can be found in many manifestations of the newly bourgeois German Jews. At the turn of the eighteenth to nineteenth centuries, a significant number of Jewish intellectuals abandoned Judaism altogether, and were baptized as Christians.

The loss of emancipation following the defeat of Napoleon led to intensified Jewish responses in the West that incorporated earlier moves to the reform of Jewish teaching associations and religious places. A Jewish reform movement soon emerged, spearheaded by urban, bourgeois, German Jews. It influenced Jews throughout Europe and the United States from the 1820s and 1830s. The philosophical background of the reform movement was influenced by the Enlightenment rationalism of Moses Mendelssohn and Saul Ascher, who in his *Leviathan* (1792) reinterpreted Judaism as an ethical religion, based on principles of faith rather than on rituals.

In 1817 the first reformed synagogue, the New Israelite Temple Association, was founded in Hamburg. Key reforms in worship incorporated a shorter service, including some prayers in German, a sermon, and choral singing accompanied by an organ. The role of the organ was widely discussed, for instance the Jews in Vienna never installed an organ. They would use the traditional liturgy, but order and decorum would reign supreme. During the service Jews should remain quiet all the time. In particular the last point was seen as a way to present contemporary Jews as well educated in Western manners and no longer affected by traditional settings in a Polish synagogue and cheder.

Propagators of the reform movement felt that the whole legal part of Jewish tradition, the Halakah, prevented the necessary adaptations facilitating the Jew's integration in the non-Jewish world. Doctrinal reforms focused in particular on the minimization of Messianism. Traditionalists opposed these reforms. Zacharias Frankel (1801–1875) objected to the use of the vernacular in services. Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808–1888), the leading theologian of neo-orthodox Judaism, believed that Jews should participate fully in the modern world. However, he also emphasized Jewish religious duty, and was theologically fundamentalist. All these movements responded to the changes in the Jewish and non-Jewish society of the time. The different views on these questions, by the 1870s, led to the split of German Jewry into opposing religious camps.

Wissenschaft des Judentums

Closely linked to the religious reform is the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* (Science of Judaism) movement where Jewish scholars began to study Judaism in secular terms. All these modern movements in Judaism that appeared during the era of emancipation – Reform, neo-Orthodox, Conservative, as well as the academic study of Judaism, *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, created a diverse understanding of Judaism.

However, they were united by a common adherence to *Bildung* and the ideology of emancipation. Following the defeat of Napoleon many restrictions were again imposed on the Jews. Their devotion to *Bildung* was limited because Jews were excluded from studying a number of subjects at university. Moreover, after graduation Jews could not find positions, even after conversion to Christianity, because of widespread antisemitism, in particular among the elites. What is called Jewish Studies today was not part of the curriculum in institutions of higher education; only at Jewish theological seminars could these kinds of study be carried out.

In 1819 the infamous Hep-Hep riots against the Jewish population broke out in southwestern Germany. Soon after the riots three young Jewish men – Eduard Gans (1798–1839), Leopold Zunz (1794–1886), and Moses Moser (1796–1838) – met to discuss the situation of the Jews. They came from different backgrounds. Gans was the son of a court Jew; Moser a banker and secular; Zunz, the poorest, had experienced an oppressive religious orphanage. Learned in the Talmud, Zunz had also received a secular education at the Samons School in Wolfenbüttel. Gans, who had studied law, applied for a teaching job in 1812, referring to the 1812 edict of emancipation. His application was unsuccessful. The relevant minister argued the Christian character of the state could not accept a Jewish teacher, except in medicine or the natural sciences. The decision of the minister was called "Lex Gans."

As a reaction these three men founded the Society for the Culture and Science of the Jews (*Verein für Cultur und Wissenschaft der Juden*) in 1819. The Jewish scholars involved in the Society began to study Judaism in secular terms, but the ideal of *Bildung* was embodied in the concept of self-improvement through literature, philosophy, and the arts. The term *Wissenschaft* stands for much more than science and empirical research. For them Judaism was part of a European cultural tradition. In their understanding Jews had contributed to philosophy and natural sciences in many European countries, for instance in Spain during the Middle Ages and in the Netherlands during the early modern period. This was for them the proof that Jews could be useful members of society. However, it was also apparent that the Jews in Germany had to improve in order to achieve the high standard they had previously demonstrated in Spain and in the Netherlands. The religious cult and the educational system were their main target. This proved to be an argument against many enlightened thinkers who understood Judaism as unhistorical and in contrast to the inner depths and organic wholeness of personality, nature, and culture – which German Romantics claimed for themselves. Leopold Zunz, in his *On Rabbinic Literature* of 1818, initiated the study of rabbinical texts in their historical context, and in secular terms, as cultural and literary documents. Zunz's science of Judaism also had an impact on Judaism as a religion. In his *The Sermons of the Jews* (1832) he showed that the weekly synagogue sermon in the vernacular was an ancient form, not a recent imitation of Christianity.

The leading authority of Reform Judaism, Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), argued that Judaism had always been an evolving religion, and that Reform Judaism,

therefore, was truer to the authentic spirit of faith. For him Judaism was inseparable from European culture, as the fruitful history has shown. This is also true for Moritz Steinschneider (1816–1907), the "father of Jewish bibliography," who saw the Jews as a nation and not simply as a religious confession. He contributed studies on Jewish literature, especially on the interaction between Hebrew and Arabic literature in the Middle Ages.

No uniform definition of the ways the Jews modernized in the West can be presented when discussing the ideology of secularism and the process of secularization, since it differs from community to community, from region to region and from state to state, according to the nature of the particular society's religion and religious institutions and the pressure from the general society to assimilate. This is also true because there was never something one could describe as essentially German, French, or Italian culture. Modernization of the Jews was more of a change from traditional Judaism than a decline of Judaism that would lead either to conversion or a feeling of disassociation. The changes led to a variety of identity concepts but they all had in common that the culture and language of the respective nation-state was embraced. It was a patriotic act to feel at home, even without being a citizen of the nation-state in which Jews were living. Even the intensifying antisemitism at the end of the nineteenth century changed this only to some extent; Zionism did not win much support in the West. It was the common belief that Jews could and should feel at home in the Diaspora in Western Europe.

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The Zionist Movement and the Path to Statehood

Brian Amkraut

Zionism represents a political, social, and, in some cases, a religious ideology, which, like many other "isms," often straddles a delicate balance and ongoing tension between the ideas that motivate its supporters and the real life implementation that seeks to embody those notions. Not surprisingly a universally accepted definition of Zionism remains elusive – and perhaps always has been – as its supporters and detractors, whether Jewish or not, will imbue the term with certain foci and characteristics according to recognized or unrecognized biases. For purposes of clarity and consistency Zionism can be understood in this relatively simple formulation: Zionism represents the belief that the Jews are a nation – albeit a small one among the families of nations representing the world's inhabitants – and as a nation Jews require a territory of their own in their ancestral homeland (be it known as Palestine or the Land of Israel).

While this tension between ideology and reality seems commonplace amidst the challenges (from within and without) that Israel has faced since its founding in 1948, in truth there was neither unanimity of purpose or action on the part of Zionists who helped lay the foundations for the state in the decades prior. Indeed understanding the history of Zionism and ultimately the creation and fate of the State of Israel demands the ability to apply the age old Jewish tradition of multiple interpretations and perspectives, even those deeply at odds with one another, coexisting within a broader general consensus.

Historical Context

The emergence of Zionism as an emotional and ideological force in Jewish life must be understood as a product of both the broader sweep of Jewish history

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and specific intellectual and political trends that unfolded in the late nineteenth century.

Zionism is undoubtedly a modern phenomenon and a reflection of its times: a product of the era of Enlightenment and experiments in political emancipation, with their unforeseen consequences for European Jewry. It emerged on the scene as a visible international movement promoting Jewish nationalism in an age when other nations, large and small, advocated both their own national identities and the right to sovereignty on their ancestral homelands. Zionism was then, and today remains, unique among nationalist constructs in that the "nation" or "people" it claimed to represent had not enjoyed sovereignty for nearly two millennia. Furthermore, the Jewish people throughout that time had been scattered across the globe and expressed their affinity for one another as a function of religious outlook. Indeed the religious culture and practice of Diaspora Judaism, which still exists in some tension with Zionism even after 1948, served as the broader ideological background from which Zionism emerged. The very root of the word, Zion, reflects a biblical allusion to the Holy Land and the Temple in its capital Jerusalem, most often from the perspective of a people exiled from that home. The formalization of Jewish worship, particularly daily prayer, which became normative practice during the Common Era, included continual reference to the divine promise of redemption through return to Zion. So even as Zionism was not warmly embraced by religious authorities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the ultimate attraction of many Jews to the Zionist message is understandable given the fact that the notion of Jewish peoplehood (the concept of *am yisrael*) was already widely held among the Jewish masses and that belief in an ultimate return to the land of Israel (*shivat Zion*) was almost universally accepted among Jews during the two millennia following the destruction of the second Temple. Prior to the onset of modern Zionism Jews did inhabit the land of Israel, primarily in the four "holy" cities of Jerusalem, Hebron, Tiberias, and Safed. Consisting largely of scholars and their families, as well as pious Jews who made the trip to the Holy Land in order to be buried on sacred soil, their survival was almost entirely dependent on the largesse of Jewish charitable giving abroad, which was then distributed among the Jewish poor of Palestine.

Zionism and the Enlightenment

A connection between Zionism and the Enlightenment might seem incongruous as the Enlightenment often preached the rights of man with an emphasis on humanism, and the ultimate impact of Enlightenment thought on the Jewish condition is generally viewed through the prism of political emancipation and equality in the Diaspora. Even the Jewish offshoot of the Enlightenment, the Haskalah, is generally perceived as a mechanism for acculturating Jews into modern

society, providing a vehicle for Jewish acceptance and ultimately civil and political equality. Zionism, conversely, presented itself as the antithesis of assimilation, its leaders generally making the case that emancipation was an illusion and civil equality, not to mention social acceptance, would always be denied Jews in the end. And while it is certainly true that the emergence of Zionism owed some debt to the broader culture of nationalism, particularly romantic nationalism, which arose in reaction to the French Revolution, it also embraced a central tenet of the politics of Jewish emancipation, the quest for normalcy.

Moses Mendelssohn and other Maskilim (supporters of the Jewish Enlightenment), not to mention non-Jewish intellectuals who supported the concept of political emancipation, argued that the basis for granting Jews civil equality was the fact that they, specifically enlightened Jews, but also Jews more generally, differed little in their essence from other rational Europeans. As such they were entitled to the trappings of a normal existence as individuals with equal rights. Arguably, Zionism merely extrapolated the notion of normalcy and equality from the realm of the individual onto the realm of the nation. Early Zionist champions and sympathizers did not necessarily reject the theoretical foundations of the Enlightenment and political emancipation but rather they grew disenchanted by the failure of the various attempts at realizing a society supposedly structured on enlightened principles to live up to its ideals, especially regarding the so-called Jewish question.

The First Generation

While certainly an intrepid scholar can find antecedents to Zionist ideology among Jewish scholars and orators (and even among some non-Jews) prior to the 1880s, these precursors of Zionism never attracted anything close to mass appeal or even general awareness, be it among Jews or the general public. It makes sense therefore to give appropriate attribution to the generation of leaders and specific individuals who introduced the basic tenets of Zionism to the broader public and developed institutional mechanisms allowing for organizational infrastructure in Palestine as well as among the Diaspora Jewry.

Of course the name most frequently associated with the founding of Zionism is Theodor Herzl, and his biography and contribution to the movement is addressed below, but from a historical perspective the Zionist cause had already enjoyed nearly two decades of activity in Eastern Europe among the so-called "Lovers of Zion" (*Hibbat Zion* or *Hovevei Zion*) by the time Herzl came upon the scene. The individual largely responsible for proliferating the notion of a widespread Jewish return to Zion as a means of ameliorating the distress of Jewish life in the Diaspora was a Western-educated Russian physician by the name of Leo Pinsker, who, like Herzl afterwards, had initially embraced the Enlightenment and emancipation as the most effective solution to the Jewish Question. Yet events and forces outside the

control of the Jewish community compelled Pinsker and other intellectuals who shared his modernist tendencies to reassess their faith in the ability of Enlightenment ideology to penetrate the conservative and often reactionary forces that dominated Eastern Europe through the Tsarist regimes of the Russian Empire. The fact that Zionism ultimately found its broadest base of support among the oppressed Jews of Eastern Europe must be understood from the perspective of the specific history of that community and the despair that overcame it in the late nineteenth century.

Having endured centuries of religious oppression not all that different from the trials that faced Jews throughout Western Christendom, by the beginning of the eighteenth century the Jews living under Russian control included large numbers who resided in territory that had once been under Polish sovereignty. To prevent Jewish penetration and influence into broader Russian society, Russian monarchs from Catherine the Great onwards limited Jewish geographical, educational, and professional opportunities. A policy of extreme Russification had been attempted at times, including the dreaded Cantonist policies of recruiting Jewish boys into the Russian army for over 25 years of service. So why would Pinsker or any Russian Jew have convinced themselves that Western notions of emancipation had any prospect for success in Tsarist Russia? Even in Russia, eventually the winds of changed seemed to blow. In the middle of the nineteenth century the crown was assumed by Tsar Alexander II, who soon enjoyed the moniker "the Reformer," as his reign heralded some important preliminary steps towards liberalizing Tsarist autocracy. Many Jewish intellectuals in Russia welcomed this change as a move towards broader Westernization, which would ultimately include liberalization of Jewish policies and perhaps even a drive towards political emancipation such as Jews already enjoyed in Western Europe. Yet those dreams were ultimately shattered following the assassination of Alexander II in 1881 – the death of the "Reformer" brought in its wake a wave of pogroms and wanton destruction of Jewish life and property, which, while not unprecedented by any means, signaled a cultural shift among Russia's political and intellectual elite regarding the Jewish population. Jewish intellectuals felt abandoned by non-Jews who had previously supported liberalization, and aspirations of acceptance and civil equality proved false.

Despairing of the likelihood that Jews in Russia would ever taste the fruits of civil and political equality Pinsker penned a small pamphlet in German titled *Autoemancipation: An Appeal to His People by a Russian Jew*, which succinctly argued that Jews had no choice but to declare and accept their own nationalism as the surrounding world clearly rejected them. Capturing the same sentiment that Herzl would subsequently articulate, Pinsker made the case that the Jewish problem as such stemmed from the fact that the Jewish people had no coherent national framework. "It is everywhere a guest and nowhere at home." In order to rectify that anomaly, "we finally must have a home, if not a country of our

own." Ironically, in this first foray into Jewish nationalism, Pinsker does not assert Jewish provenance over its ancient homeland as a central tenet of his solution to Jewish homelessness; in fact he argues Jews "must not dream of restoring ancient Judaea" and not focus on a place that was the scene of Jewish destruction. In explaining the word he used to title his work, Pinsker called for "emancipation as a nation among nations by the acquisition of a home of their own."

Despite his rejection of Palestine as an object of Jewish renaissance, Pinsker's central theme of Jewish homelessness found its most welcome audience among Jewish intellectuals, many so-called Hebraists, who immediately connected Pinsker's call for Jewish sovereignty to the age-old promise of return to Zion and the Hebrew cultural revival that had emerged from Eastern European Haskalah. Pinsker was soon co-opted by these lovers of Zion and found himself leading *Hibbat Zion* in Russia, which slowly began to attract adherents and even spawned independent attempts at Jewish agricultural settlement in Palestine. Of note among these early Jewish immigrant groups to the Holy Land was the organization that went by the acronym BILU, for *Bet Ya'akov Lechu Ve-nelchah* (House of Jacob, go forth! Isaiah 2:5). BILU and other groups that began to spring up in the 1880s and 1890s represented a new era in Jewish immigration into Palestine, as these young *halutzim* (pioneers) saw relocation to the land of Israel as not only a means of escaping the oppression of antisemitic regimes and neighbors, but as a first step in reestablishing the Jewish nation on its own soil. A key component of this vision was agricultural settlement on the land, for the purpose of creating a model of Jewish life that was self-sustainable and not dependent on philanthropic support from the Diaspora. While numerically the BILU represented only a very small fraction of Jewish settlement in Palestine, their endeavors and their spirit found expression throughout Eastern Europe and they were part of a larger wave of *aliyah* (immigration to Palestine). The BILU also represented the first infusion of Marxist ideology into the slowly burgeoning world of Zionism, as the young idealists hoped to build a model society of social equality in addition to living off the fruits of their labors. This approach would find greater expression in subsequent generations, particularly among those who came to Palestine with the so-called *Second Aliyah*, in the wake of the Russian Revolution of 1905, who created the communal and cooperative farming villages known as kibbutzim and moshavim. The independent, often unorganized, Jewish settlement activity in Ottoman-ruled Palestine was eventually framed as "practical" Zionism. In other words, this movement attempted to create the return to Zion at a grass roots level.

Thus Zionism in the 1890s was geographically limited to pockets of followers in Eastern Europe and the few isolated settlements of Jewish immigrants in Palestine. That framework changed when Theodor Herzl applied his talents and energy to the Zionist cause.

Theodor Herzl

Like Pinsker nearly 15 years earlier, Theodor Herzl's path to Jewish nationalism did not spring from longstanding devotion to the ancestral faith and innate yearning for redemption's return to Zion. Herzl, a lawyer by training and a journalist by trade, shared the Enlightenment perspective that the Jewish condition would be ameliorated over time as a result of an educated and tolerant society granting Jews political and civil equality and ultimately even social acceptance. According to Zionist lore Herzl turned away from this ideal and considered the idea of a separate Jewish nationalism during the early stages of the Dreyfus Affair in France. When Captain Alfred Dreyfus was publicly stripped of rank and degraded, and the onlookers shouted "down with the Jews," Herzl supposedly had an epiphany that emancipation in France was a failure, as even assimilated Jews such as Dreyfus were seen first and foremost as Jews and not as Frenchmen. In truth the Dreyfus incident was not Herzl's first encounter with antisemitism nor was his advocacy of Jewish national identity his first attempt to intellectualize a response to the Jewish Question. Nevertheless the moment certainly represented a turning point in Herzl's life and subsequently had a critical impact on the development of Zionism as an ideology and political movement.

Herzl's public role as a correspondent and commentator for the widely read Vienna-based newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* gave him visibility and even notoriety in certain intellectual and political circles throughout Western Europe. Thus Herzl's decision to embrace Zionism carried greater weight with both well-meaning Gentiles and Eastern European Jews precisely because he was not Jewishly identified but was more recognizable as a general European intellectual.

Herzl organized his thoughts on Jewish nationalism in a short book he called *Der Judenstaat*, a title often translated as "The Jewish State" (as indeed the first English language volume was titled) but more accurately phrased in English as "The Jews' State." The distinction is notable as Herzl's presentation focused exclusively on the need for a state in order to resolve the challenges confronting Jews as individuals and as a collective entity, but the solution he proposed encompasses little that could be characterized as either culturally or religiously "Jewish." Herzl's formulation is simple and elegant in that he lays out the underlying issue of antisemitism, in terms distinct from those that were normative at the time, and then lays out his proposed solution. In his words: "The Jewish question persists wherever Jews live in appreciable numbers. Wherever it does not exist, it is brought in together with Jewish immigrants . . . This is the case, and will inevitably be so, everywhere, even in highly civilized countries – see, for instance, France – so long as the Jewish question is not solved on the political level." In short, rather than ascribing Judeophobia as merely a relic of ancient prejudices and as a legacy or irrational religious traditions, a problem which would surely disappear as society recognizes the errors of its ways and embraces the humanistic vision of the Enlightenment,

Herzl argued that antisemitism is a simple product, or by-product, of Jewish national distinctiveness. Boldly asserting that the Jews are a singular people (no easy step for an avowed assimilationist), he then concluded that as such they will surely not be absorbed by the host nations among whom they currently reside, as long as they are perceived as an alien entity. While his insights seem to echo those of Pinsker, no evidence has ever emerged to demonstrate that Herzl had any knowledge of Pinsker or his work at the time he wrote *Der Judenstaat*.

Even more concise is Herzl's essential formulation of the solution. "Let sovereignty be granted us over a portion of the globe adequate to meet our rightful national requirements; we will attend to the rest." He went on to lay out a step by step process, from the raising of significant Jewish capital – "the Company" – securing of a charter for territory, creation of essential infrastructure, and the ultimate migration of Jewish masses and elites. While Herzl mentioned Palestine as an option, his book initially allows for the possibility of other potential venues for Jewish settlement.

Of course Herzl did plow new territory in terms of the grandeur of his proposal. His innovation perhaps was in framing the entire issue, the Jewish question and the subsequent solution, as a matter of international concern. In terms of understanding Herzl's subsequent activity to promote his idea and his own version of diplomacy among European leaders, great and small, this fundamental principle of the expected universal support for his ideas is essential. As Herzl made the case that his argument was eminently logical, he had great expectations with respect to the reception his vision would receive among others. Two significant constituencies, which were both central to the enterprise as Herzl saw it playing out, remained unconvinced, during Herzl's lifetime, of the programs' merits. Herzl had every confidence that Jewish financial and political leadership, notably the preeminent Jewish family, the Rothschilds, would endorse his approach, providing both the necessary political legitimacy and financial backing. Though they did support Jewish agricultural activity in Palestine, they vehemently rejected Herzl's nationalist assertions. As he saw the creation of a sovereign Jewish state as a means of alleviating the stressful Jewish presence in European lands, Herzl also expected the leaders of European nations to lend credence to his proposal. In this respect he was more successful, though in general he remained disappointed.

What soon became apparent to Herzl was that the recognized Jewish leadership, religious or otherwise, was at best lukewarm to his ideas, and more often totally hostile. On the other hand, as a result of 15 years of organization in Europe and emigration to Palestine, the poor and powerless Jews of Russia and Rumania embraced the call to Jewish sovereignty, provided the focus was the land of Israel, and heralded Herzl as a latter day messiah. Within a year of the publication of *Der Judenstaat*, Herzl called for a conclave of Zionist enthusiasts, and the First Zionist Congress convened in Basle, Switzerland, in 1897. The Congress formally adopted a statement of Zionist purpose including the following opening declaration: "The aim of Zionism is to create for the Jewish people a home in Palestine

secured by public law." In his diary following the Congress's conclusion Herzl prophetically wrote, "At Basle, I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. If not in 5 years, certainly in 50, everyone will know it."

The years following that first congress saw Herzl dedicate himself, body and soul, to realizing the Zionist agenda. His activity included diplomatic inquiries with the Ottoman sultan in Istanbul, petitions to European kings, princes, and ministers of state, and of course continued engagement with his adoring supporters, the impoverished, oppressed, yet Zionistically inspired Eastern European Jews. Herzl's diplomacy ultimately elicited a positive response from London, where the British government publicly acknowledged the need to take some action to support the needs of Russian Jewry and went so far as to suggest to Herzl that His Majesty's government might consider providing some land suitable for colonization from the British holdings in East Africa. The so-called Uganda Plan, as it was known when Herzl brought it before a Zionist Congress in 1903, ultimately came to naught, but was notable in both legitimizing Jewish nationalist claims with a great European power and perhaps more so for galvanizing Eastern European Jews' demands that only Palestine could serve as the homeland for the Jewish people. Herzl would claim shock and surprise when the very population whose immediate needs he hoped to serve rejected the possibility of a haven in Africa, arguing that only Zion could provide the solution to the Jewish people's needs. Within a year Herzl died from pneumonia he contracted as a result of cardiac difficulties, having literally worked himself to death in pursuit of the Zionist dream.

While mourned throughout the Jewish world as a gigantic figure in contemporary Jewish life, Herzl's ideas hardly enjoyed universal acclaim among European Jews. Significantly both the religious leadership, including both Orthodox and Reform rabbis, as well as "Jewish notables" almost unanimously rejected Herzl's arguments. Orthodox rabbis took the traditional approach that the Jewish return to Zion could only occur within the framework of messianic redemption, and that attempts by contemporary Jews to take matters into their own hands were inappropriate and bordered on blasphemy and heresy. For the assimilated Jewish elites, including Reform rabbis, the basic nationalist premise of Zionism undermined their quest for acceptance through Enlightenment and Emancipation. Even as Jews in France had enjoyed civil equality for over a century, along came the Zionists who argued that Jews were not merely a religious group, but a national one, confirming antisemites' claims that a Jew was not and could not be a Frenchman.

Among Zionists, who supported Herzl as titular head of the World Zionist Organization, opinion varied regarding the appropriate tactics and strategies. Foreshadowing the political divisions that would characterize the realities of governing a Jewish state after 1948, the Zionist movement represented a big tent encompassing divergent opinions.

Ahad Ha-am and Cultural Zionism

Even before the arrival of Herzl and the establishment of a formal political organization a fundamental dilemma emerged regarding the primary emphasis of Zionist activity – a split which would only deepen in later years. The challenge came from the pen of an Eastern European Hebraist by the name of Asher Ginzberg, writing under the pseudonym "Ahad Ha-am" (One of the People). Like many others drawn to Zionism in Russia, Ginzberg had received a rigorous traditional Jewish education yet abandoned the religiously observant lifestyle in which he was raised and adopted a more broadly intellectual outlook. Ahad Ha-am accepted the basic premises that the Jews were indeed their own national entity and that they would remain aliens amidst the countries of the Diaspora. But whereas the practical Zionist colonization activities, and the subsequent political agenda under Herzl, sought to mitigate the physical distress of European Jewry, Ahad Ha-am challenged this basic formulation. From his appearance on the scene in 1889 with an article titled "This is Not the Way," which critiqued the haphazard settlement activity in Palestine, to his ongoing challenges to Zionist political activity, Ahad Ha-am served as an ideological guide and mentor for those championing what came to be known as "cultural Zionism."

In Ahad Ha-am's theoretical construction the political and physical challenges confronting European Jews, horrific and unwarranted as they may have been, took a back seat to the fact that the Jews as a people had lost touch with their spiritual essence, those qualities which made the Jewish people an entity worth preserving. He marshaled arguments based on both fact and theory, as he understood them, to support an approach that focused attention on cultural work in the Diaspora as essential preliminary steps prior to organized mass Jewish emigration to Palestine. On purely practical grounds he argued that late nineteenth-century Palestine could not sustain millions of inhabitants, and therefore the vast majority of Jews would not be leaving the Diaspora any time soon. He further made the case that merely transplanting Jewish life from Europe to the land of Israel would not effectively serve the true aims of Zionism, which was the renaissance of the Jewish people in the modern era. To frame his argument in religious terms, one could say the people were not yet worthy of the redemption, spiritual or political, that a return to Zion should provide. Effective cultural education throughout the Diaspora would entail reacquainting the Jewish people with their language (Hebrew), their intellectual heritage (prophetic wisdom), and their homeland (the land of Israel) for the purpose of creating positive national identification.

According to Ahad Ha-am the erosion of the ghetto had ramifications for the Jews of Western Europe and Eastern Europe: emancipation (in the West) created opportunities for Jews to assimilate, only to feel rejected soon enough, hence the attraction of some Western European Jews to Zionism under Herzl's leadership. For Eastern European Jews, however, a different modern challenge had emerged,

in that the powerful unifying force that Diaspora Judaism had held for so many centuries was under attack, with no modern alternative emerging to occupy that void. Filling this lacuna, according to Ahad Ha-am, represented the true essence of Zionism, not mass colonization and not political organization. In response to the great fanfare of the First Zionist Congress in 1897 with its focus on obtaining a charter, Ahad Ha-am wrote,

> [Judaism] does not need an independent State, but only the creation in its native land of conditions favorable to its development: a good-sized settlement of Jews working without hindrance in every branch of civilization, from agriculture and handicrafts to science and literature. This Jewish settlement, which will be a gradual growth, will become in course of time the center of the nation, wherein its spirit will find pure expression and develop in all its aspects to the highest degree of perfection of which it is capable. Then, from this center, the spirit of Judaism will radiate to the great circumference, to all the communities of the Diaspora, to inspire them with new life and to preserve the over-all unity of our people.

These words represent the essence of Ahad Ha-am's perspective, which was a powerful force in shaping both the small community of Jewish immigrants in Palestine that would become the kernel of Jewish national rebirth and the attitude of Jewish communities throughout the world, which would find some element of centrality and solidarity with Israel.

Religious Zionism

In one of the great ironies of Jewish history, the forces of organized religious Jewish life initially lined up in opposition to Herzl. Yet the intellectual forerunners of modern Zionist thought often came from the ranks of religious leadership and in the early twenty-first century Jewish religious groups that do not identify themselves as ardent Zionists are the exception. Orthodox Jewish leadership had to overcome two significant impediments to embrace Zionism: one was the widely accepted notion that return to Zion should not reside in the hands of man, but rather was an issue for divine intervention. Second, the vast majority of Zionist leaders and sympathizers came from the ranks of the nonreligious, many of whom openly expressed antipathy to organized religion and rabbinic leadership.

The very same forces that spurred Zionist activity in the first place ultimately convinced some religious leaders that supporting Jewish return to Palestine was a worthy cause. Specifically the material well-being of Jewish communities in Eastern Europe in the wake of vicious pogroms and antisemitic legislation resulted in increasing despair and frustration. So too the ongoing inroads of secularization,

even within previously isolated enclaves of Orthodox Jewish life, were challenging the continuity of the Torah as a preserving force in Jewish life. As the alternatives many Jews were turning to included embracing atheistic Communism and emigration to a godless America, the Zionist option might even have appeared less threatening. Some Orthodox rabbis even embraced the notion (ultimately widely accepted) that Jews had it within their power to hasten the era of redemption by reestablishing their presence in the land of Israel. And arguably the only effective response to the settlement of thousands of secular Jews in Palestine would be the presence of religious Jewish life as a realistic alternative. For religiously inclined Jewish nationalists, cooperation with the secular leadership of the Zionist movement was a bargain they were willing to concede for the greater good.

In 1902 religious Zionists created their own organization, called Mizrachi (an abbreviation of *mercaz ruchani* – spiritual center) in order to maintain independence in educational matters. Fittingly the group adopted the motto "The land of Israel for the people of Israel according to the Torah of Israel." In Palestine itself some religious leaders found ways to accommodate the growing presence of secular nonreligious Jews by imbuing their presence with cosmic significance outweighing their rejection of conventional Jewish religion. Most notable in this regard was the legacy of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook, the first Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine. Kook was legendary for his willingness to engage with the most secular of the Jewish pioneers, providing religious functions when necessary, or generally sharing their joy in revitalizing Jewish Palestine. He argued for the innate unity of the Jewish people regardless of their religious outlooks and would frequently refer to the secular pioneers as doing essential work in reclaiming the land and thus contributing to the repairing of the universe and hastening the arrival of the Messiah. Contrary to typical Orthodox leadership in Europe, Kook claimed that the Diaspora must be abandoned and that the Jewish people as a holy people could only realize their true destiny in the land of Israel.

Labor Zionism

As Zionism began to flourish in late nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, it is not at all surprising that the broader intellectual and political trends of that setting found their way into Zionist discourse and activity. During this era revolutionary sentiment was widespread and the Jewish working class of Russia became increasingly exposed to the socialist doctrines of Marx and others. Not merely coincidentally, the year 1897, which saw the first Zionist Congress, also witnessed the founding of the dominant Jewish worker's movement in Eastern Europe, the Bund (General Jewish Worker's Union in Poland and Russia). As the young Jewish intellectuals who would eventually lead the Zionist movement and the Yishuv (Jewish community of Palestine) increasingly came out of this environment

(particularly the generation of the *Second Aliyah*), an approach to Jewish nationalism arose imbued with the class consciousness and political idealism of Socialism. The notion that Jewish return to Zion could only find legitimacy if the new entity were organized along the lines of true equality and the creation of a model society contained elements of both prophetic messianism and revolutionary idealism.

In addition to social ideals that found expression in the experiments of kibbutzim and moshavim (the communal and cooperative agricultural enterprises that had enormous cultural impact on the Yishuv and Israel), Labor Zionism can be understood in a more fundamentally nation-building context. Expanding on the concept of auto-emancipation, that national rebirth only occurs through self-actualization, some early Zionist activists recognized that Jewish labor, particularly agricultural work, represented an essential component to this national revitalization. Echoing both the romantic nationalism of central Europe, with its rootedness in the soil of the fatherland, and the affinity for peasantry and populism embodied by Tolstoy, one can even go so far as to argue that a "religion of labor" took hold among many idealists. The importance of Jewish labor on Jewish land became a powerful force in organizing otherwise disparate immigrant groups in Palestine, but also served to highlight increasing tensions with the local Arab population. As a matter of course, realizing the vision of Jewish labor on Jewish land in Palestine often entailed displacing Arab laborers from employment opportunities and displacing Arab peasants (*felaheen*) from farmland purchased for Zionist colonization. From a political perspective, both in a localized sense through the kibbutz and from a national perspective through the Histadrut (federation of Zionist trade unions formed in 1920), organized labor played a central role in creating the building blocks for political independence. Labor's political parties represented the dominant factions in Jewish Palestine and seamlessly took over the offices of state following Israel's declaration of independence in 1948.

Historical Events

Of course the ideologies and leading personalities that characterized Zionism evolved in accordance with the environments, whether Jewish or not, in which they unfolded. Just as the impetus for Zionist organization can be found in the broader landscape of Jewish life in Russia or Western Europe, so too the broader historical context shaped the ultimate course of Zionist activity. Two contexts of particular consequence had the greatest impact on when and how Zionism increasingly transitioned from a movement of ideas to a movement of actions. Of unique significance were the ways that world events impacted Palestine as a geographical region. Under Ottoman control at the onset of Zionist activity, the region was subsequently ruled by the British as a League of Nations Mandate for nearly thirty years, until the United Nations resolved to create an independent state in

November 1947. Of equal and related importance from the Jewish perspective were the pressures continually confronting European Jewry, even after the collapse of the Tsarist regime in Russia, with European antisemitism finding its most destructive expression with the rise and expansion of Nazi Germany in the 1930s and the Holocaust it unleashed during World War II.

When considering Palestine as the object of Zionist attention, clearly the land had its own unique social and political development that impacted both the Lovers of Zion's "practical" Zionist settlement activity and the political Zionism championed by Herzl and those who followed in his footsteps. Of course Palestine was an inhabited territory, whose people had its own social and political traditions. And while it would be inappropriate to suggest that Zionist leaders were unaware of the Arab presence in Palestine, it would nevertheless be accurate to note that many European Zionists did not seriously consider that Arab presence to represent an impediment to Zionist aspirations. Indeed Herzl, among his many diplomatic forays, continually held faith in the likelihood that the sultan in Istanbul would provide a charter for Jewish title to Palestine in exchange for Jewish assistance in alleviating the Ottoman debt. Needless to say Herzl was misinformed and no evidence suggests that the sultan or anyone in the Ottoman regime gave any consideration to Zionist intentions regarding Palestine. Insight into Herzl's expectations regarding the native population can be gleaned from reading his utopian novel *Altneuland* (Old-New Land). In this vision the local inhabitants prosper and glory in the great gifts of European civilization that the Jewish immigrants have brought. To be sure Herzl was a product of his surroundings and the language he generally employed, the very notion of the charter for example, smacked of Old World European chauvinism consistent with the leading voices of the nineteenth-century political elite.

Among his many critiques of Zionist leadership Ahad Ha-am noted their incorrect appreciation for what he called "the Arab problem" in Palestine. Early Zionist settlers as a matter of course had frequent contact with native Arabs, and over time those interactions became increasingly antagonistic. Zionist ideology that called exclusively for Jewish labor on Jewish farms removed a source of gainful employment for Arab workers. Zionist land acquisition policies, through the Jewish National Fund, while legally taking title to property, and often paying top dollar to absentee landlords, frequently displaced tenant farmers whose ire quite logically fell on the new inhabitants and not on those who sold the land.

On a macroscopic level the gradual yet steady progress of Zionist immigration and investment in Palestine necessitated an attitudinal shift among Palestine's Arabs. While some Arabs, even those among the political elite, may have seen the first steps of Jewish colonization as an opportunity for economic modernization with little prospect for broader political or cultural impact, such notions generally vanished by the end of World War I.

As was the case with other defeated imperial powers, the territory controlled by the Ottoman Empire was targeted for dismemberment even before the conclusion

of hostilities. Palestine, as birthplace of Christianity and communication crossroads of the Middle East, received special attention from the Allied Powers, specifically France and Great Britain. Though a loosely defined geographic area under Ottoman rule, diplomats eventually drew lines on a map, cartographically defining Palestine at the end of the war to include land stretching from the Mediterranean in the west to beyond the Jordan River as far as the borders of present-day Iraq in the east. By late 1917 it became clear that the British had the dominant interest in the region and some sympathies for the Zionist idea when they issued the "Balfour Declaration." This document, which had no true legal standing, was nevertheless incorporated into the language of the Mandate for Palestine the British received from the League of Nations in 1920. (The Mandate system was created to allow a transition period for new states to create the infrastructure and political awareness for self-government.) With suitably ambiguous diplomatic language the document called for the "establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," and that the British would "use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine . . ." The entire period of Mandatory rule in Palestine, and the ramifications these years had in the postwar era, hinged on the words of this document and the multiple interpretations offered by various parties to understand its true meaning.

For Zionist activists the Balfour Declaration represented Herzl's charter, the legally recognized basis for the creation of a sovereign state, with the support of a great world power. Even as the League granted the Mandate with provisions for implementing Balfour's words, the document's true implications became muddled. In 1921, Palestine on the map was split into two entities with the land east of the Jordan River parceled off to create the Hashemite kingdom of Trans-Jordan and the land west of the Jordan to remain as Mandatory Palestine. For the next three decades British authorities struggled to implement Balfour's vision within the framework of their ever-changing Foreign and Colonial Office priorities. Most Jewish leaders viewed the text as encouraging large-scale Jewish immigration – an essential precursor to establishing a national home. Yet Arab leaders, if they lent the document any credence, focused on the phrase prohibiting activity that would prejudice the civil and religious rights of Palestinian Arabs. This dilemma vexed British authorities until they ended the terms of the Mandate in 1948.

The challenge became increasingly acute in the decade prior to the outbreak of World War II. The pressures confronting European Jewry grew steadily throughout the interwar period. The general dislocation following the end of World War I saw many Eastern European Jews attempt to pick up emigration patterns that had been established before the war – with hundreds of thousands looking to flee westward each year. The Civil War in Russia that raged following the Bolshevik Revolution caught many Jews in its trap and increased emigration pressure. Yet

Table 20.1 Population estimates for Ottoman and Mandatory Palestine.[a]

Year	*Arabs*	*%*	*Jews*	*%*	*Total*
1870	367,224	98	7,000	2	375,000
1893	469,000	98	10,000	2	497,000
1912	525,000	93	40,000	6	565,000
1920	542,000	90	61,000	10	603,000
1925	598,000	83	120,000	17	719,000
1930	763,000	82	165,000	18	928,000
1935	886,000	71	355,000	29	1,241,000
1940	1,014,000	69	463,000	31	1,478,000
1946	1,237,000	65	608,000	35	1,845,000

[a] Figures are estimates collected from a number of sources and aggregated at http://www.mideastweb.org/palpop.htm (accessed March 16, 2011)

the most frequent object of emigration, the United States, established strict immigration quotas in the 1920s, essentially eliminating America as a potential destination for most European Jews. By the late 1920s, the newly independent state of Poland, home to over three million Jews, embraced antisemitic leaders and policies, further increasing the pool of potential emigrants. And in January 1933 Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany, heralding the age of Nazism and the clear and visible threat it represented for Jewish survival in Europe. So Zionism's significance in the broader landscape of Jewish life during the 1920s and 1930s grew as emigration to Palestine represented a viable solution for the problems confronting Jews in Poland, Germany, and elsewhere. Table 20.1 shows the population growth for Arabs and Jews in Palestine in the late Ottoman and British Mandatory eras.

In a bitter historical irony, just as it seemed that stars could be aligning for maximal realization of Zionist goals – a great power legitimizing Jewish claims to the land of Israel and a significant push compelling European Jews to look to the land of Israel at least as a haven if not as a homeland – realities on the ground in Palestine stood in the way. In theory the British Colonial Office determined Jewish immigration quotas for Palestine as a function of the land's "economic absorptive capacity" – a prudent model based on the notion that job opportunities were the supreme determining factor regarding successful or unsuccessful immigration of individuals and groups. In reality political considerations impacted the economic formulation. Not surprisingly apparent increases in Jewish immigration and land purchase in Palestine encountered considerable resistance from Palestinian Arab leaders who, quite accurately, viewed increases in Jewish population and land ownership as roadblocks in the way of their own national aspirations, be they to create an independent Arab Palestine or to represent a key component of broader pan-Arab nationalism. Notable increases in quota restrictions often met physical

resistance by Palestinian Arabs, which typically resulted in British review of overall Palestine policy. Violent outbreaks occurred in 1921, 1929, and throughout a three-year period from 1936 to 1939. The latter period, known in Zionist literature as "The Arab Uprising," coincided with the acceleration of Nazi persecution of Jews in Germany and the expansion of Nazi rule into Austria and Czechoslovakia. Following a two-year review period, which included consideration of partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab enclaves, the British produced a White Paper in 1939 which would limit Jewish immigration to 75 thousand, total, over a five-year period, at which point Palestine could form its own legislature (with a decidedly Arab majority) to determine future immigration policy.

Zionist leaders in Palestine and Europe struggled with finding the right way to diplomatically engage the British Colonial Office while asserting their rights to open immigration from an increasingly volatile Europe. Among those most vocal in his demands that His Majesty's government fulfill its commitment to Zionism along maximal lines was the journalist and orator Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky, whose political outlook served as a forerunner to the more right-wing political parties in Israel, notably Herut and subsequently Likud. Interestingly, regarding relations with Palestinian Arabs, Jabotinsky argued the legitimacy of Arab concerns with Zionist infiltration and he called for respecting the Arabs' willingness to fight for what they believed were their rights. Therefore, he concluded, one could not hope, as many left-wing Zionist leaders did, to convince local Arab leaders that Zionist intentions were wholly benevolent and thereby pacify them; but rather true Zionists were obligated to demonstrate that they too were asserting their own national rights and that they would stand and fight, and die, for the national rights they believed entitled them to rule in Palestine. Jabotinsky's approach became known as "The Iron Wall," based on a phrase he used to describe the model of resistance he would erect to persevere in the inevitable conflict with local Arabs. This "iron wall" would deter Arabs from further aggression. Though reviled by many in Labor Zionist circles, no doubt some of Jabotinsky's ideas concerning relations with surrounding Arab nations came to dominate Israeli politics on both the left and the right.

Within the Yishuv during this period the earlier ideological tensions between practical work, political activity, and cultural renaissance seemed to develop a relatively peaceful coexistence. A politically astute figure such as David Ben-Gurion recognized that each of these directions, if not necessarily prioritized one over the other, could coalesce towards the creation of a people effectively prepared to take on the identity and responsibilities of a sovereign nation when the opportunity would arise. This process included a somewhat militant emphasis on Hebraic language and rootedness in the land of Israel and the inculcation of a new ethos of Jewish strength and independence among new Jewish immigrants, and even more so with native born Palestinian Jews, known as Sabras (based on the Hebrew for the cactus fruit which was characterized as tough and protective on the outside but sweet and soft on the inside). Some voices did argue that the political goal of

sovereignty undermined the Prophetic essence of the Jewish tradition which underpinned the Zionist renaissance. Figures such as the philosopher Martin Buber claimed that conventional sovereignty would inevitably result in a defensive culture of militarism, and so they organized as Brith Shalom (Covenant of Peace), and subsequently a political party under the name Ichud (Union), and supported the formation of a binational entity in the land of Israel, with neither Jews nor Arabs asserting governmental authority, which would still provide a homeland in which Jews could live creatively and peaceably. While a notable movement intellectually, Brith Shalom had limited political impact, especially as the 1930s gave way to World War II, the Holocaust, and soon after the war for Israeli independence, and notions of a binational utopia subsequently received little attention.

Following World War II, of course, and the revelation of unspeakable atrocities committed by the Nazis against the Jewish population of Europe, Zionism enjoyed nearly universal support among Jews throughout the world, and was nearly unanimously touted by Holocaust survivors in the Displaced Persons Camps of Europe as the only acceptable solution to the still unresolved Jewish Question in Europe. With its newly dominant voice as the leading community of the Jewish Diaspora, American Jewry strongly advocated for the Zionist agenda, lobbying its political leaders, raising dearly needed financial support, and ultimately even smuggling weapons and military personnel into the Middle East in support of the young Jewish state's struggle for survival. American political support was vital in securing the United Nations resolution of November 29, 1947, calling for the creation of an independent Jewish state and an independent Arab state in Mandatory Palestine.

As Ahad Ha-am had envisioned, the Jewish community of Palestine and the new State of Israel served as a unifying force, a center from which radiated identity more than any specific culture, and spawned a new image of Jewish pride previously unknown for many centuries. So too did Herzl's vision come to fruition as in May 1948, only slightly beyond his prediction of fifty years from the First Zionist Congress, the Jewish State of Israel took its place among the world's family of nations. A fundamental question remains whether Israeli sovereignty normalizes the Jewish condition or whether the challenging history of Israel reinforces the notion of Jewish distinctiveness.

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21

The Jews in the Land of the Russian Tsars

Jarrod Tanny

In the opening scene of the 1971 film *Fiddler on the Roof*, a musical depicting Jewish life in the waning years of Tsarist Russia, a rabbi – the soul of the small Jewish community – is shown surrounded by his eager Talmudic pupils. One of the students stops the great sage to ask him a vexing question:

STUDENT: Rabbi may I ask you a question?
RABBI: Certainly Leybish!
STUDENT: Is there a proper blessing for the tsar?
RABBI: A blessing for the tsar? Of course! May God bless and keep the tsar far away from us!

In many respects, this sequence captures American Jewry's collective memory of life in the old country, the land of their ancestors: poverty and antisemitism, coupled with a sense of community and solace through Judaism and family. That the film depicts this era in a whimsical manner is due to the safety of time and distance; Tsarist Russia was comfortably "far away" for the Jews of America in the 1970s.

Most viewers would of course recognize that the film (and the Broadway play that preceded it) is not historically accurate, as it was clearly intended to entertain. Yet the film's message resonates well with much of the early scholarship that sought to document the history of Russian Jewry. Indeed, the first Jewish historians, writing during the final years of the Tsarist regime in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, tended to see Russia in terms of a collision between antisemitic persecution and Judaic tradition. Even the great historian Simon Dubnow, who was the first scholar to painstakingly document the history of Russia's Jews, described late Imperial Russia in such stark terms: a backward autocratic land where few had

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freedom; it was the antithesis of the enlightened west, where the Jews had been emancipated during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; it was a land where vestiges of medieval antisemitism dictated governmental policy, with cossacks on horseback regularly plundering the helpless Jews. But it was also a land where spirituality and Judaism weathered the storm of persecution and solidified the bonds of these small Jewish communities (known in Yiddish as shtetls). Dubnow depicted the tsar, his bureaucrats, and their anti-Jewish legislation through the prism of "pharaohs," "Hamans," and captivity – yet another moment in the epic cycle of Jewish suffering and survival.

Simon Dubnow should not be faulted for the limitations of his work, as he was conducting his research and writing this portion of his history from within the land of the tsars, without the detachment of time and space. Moreover, Dubnow laid the foundations for future historians, who, building upon his pioneering work, have demonstrated that Jewish life in Tsarist Russia was far more complex. Persecution and suffering in a backward empire is not the whole story. This was an era of dynamic change for Russia and its multiethnic population, including its Jews, who by 1900 numbered over five million, approximately 50 percent of world Jewry. To fully understand how the history of this multifaceted community unfolded, we need to take a step back and examine the state of Imperial Russia and the Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe when these two entities first collided in the modern world, during the last quarter of the eighteenth century.

The Land of the Russian Tsars

Tsarist Russia was a massive entity, an enormous empire that straddled two continents, stretching from Poland in the West through the vast expanses of Siberia to the Pacific Ocean. At the crossroads between Europe and Asia, Russia's rulers had, for centuries, sought to define the character of their domain as a unique polity, a society that was neither quite East nor West. But, in the eighteenth century, Russia's rulers took the decisive step of orienting themselves geopolitically toward Europe. Beginning with Peter the Great (r. 1682–1725), the Russian tsars looked to England, France, the Dutch Netherlands, and the many German principalities for scientific, intellectual, military, and political inspiration; Europe was modernizing and Russia wanted to participate. The tsars sought to make Russia into a great power, but they intended to do so by picking and choosing the best of Europe, to introduce modernization without undermining Russia's distinctive character.

Eighteenth-century Russia was in fact quite different from its European neighbors. The tsar (also known as emperor from 1721 onwards) ruled Russia as an "autocrat," who, in theory, owned all the land and controlled its inhabitants, from the lowliest peasant to the wealthiest nobleman. The vast majority of Russians plowed the fields as serfs, toiling their days away for the nobility and the state.

Whereas the institution of serfdom had largely disappeared from Western Europe by the late Middle Ages, in Russia it continued to serve as the foundation of the state's agrarian economy and the government's principal instrument of social control. Although it became clear by the late 1700s that such a system was outmoded and economically counterproductive, discarding it proved to be a major challenge, and serfdom was only eliminated in 1861. By this time Europe had experienced several waves of political and industrial revolution, thus making autocratic agrarian Russia seem like a land that time had forgotten.

That serfdom was only abolished a century and a half after Peter the Great turned his gaze upon Europe speaks volumes of the conundrum that gripped Russia's rulers from the eighteenth century onwards: how can autocratic agrarian Russia reform its political, social, and economic systems without succumbing to the violent forces of revolution and social upheaval? Empress Catherine the Great (r. 1762–1796), who considered herself an "enlightened" ruler and avidly corresponded with Voltaire and other great philosophers of her era, nevertheless reacted with horror when the French Revolution of 1789 degenerated into mass violence in the name of the Enlightenment ideals she cherished. Westernization was tempered by a fear of instability, and this led to the preservation and strengthening of Russia's autocratic system. Such was the state of affairs in the Russian Empire when Russia's "Jewish Question" came into being.

The Origins of Russian Jewry

According to the 1897 census, there were over five million Jews in Russia, making up 4 percent of Russia's total population. By this time several hundred thousand Russian Jews had already left the Empire for the United States, Western Europe, Palestine, and other lands, in search of a better life. In terms of sheer numbers, Russia was the center of world Jewry. Yet when Catherine the Great had come to power in 1762, there were practically no Jews living in Russia. Russia's rulers had occasionally admitted some Jews, mostly merchants, but they were rarely permitted to stay. Most recently, the Empress Elizabeth (r. 1741–1762) had decreed in 1743 that she had no desire "to profit from the enemies of Christ," and ordered Russia's small Jewish community to pack up and leave en masse (Pipes, 1975: 5). Judeophobia coupled with a belief in Jewish mendacity rendered the Jews unwelcome in Orthodox Russia, much as they had been unwelcome in England, France, and other west European countries during the late middle ages and early modern era.

So how did Russia become home to millions of Jews in such a short time? It may be fair to say that Russia "inherited" its Jewish population, through the conquest, dismemberment, and annexation of neighboring Poland. Poland, by the mid-eighteenth century, was in many respects an anomaly in Europe. Although a

monarchy, Poland's king was elected and he wielded little authority before an all-powerful nobility. Poland had once been a great European state, with a thriving economy and distinguished centers of culture and science. But, as the years wore on, Poland fell victim to economic decline and feuding factions among its nobility, who increasingly became the tools of the neighboring states that sought to gain control of this geographically strategic piece of territory. Between 1772 and 1795, Russia, Prussia, and the Austrian Habsburg Empire – all of which shared borders with Poland – invaded and conquered Poland in stages. Russia annexed most of Poland's eastern territories: what is today Ukraine, Lithuania, and Belarus. These lands consisted of thousands of peasant villages and the largest concentration of Jews on the European continent. In a matter of decades, Russia acquired a massive Jewish population for the first time in its history.

The Jews of Poland had a long and complex history before their acquisition by Russia. When the Jews of Western Europe had been expelled during the late middle ages from England, France, and the German lands, thousands found refuge in Poland, where they came to play a pivotal role in the Polish economy. The rich and powerful Polish nobility controlled vast estates in the country's eastern regions, yet few among them desired to inhabit this hinterland, amidst the peasantry and far away from the cultural and political life of Cracow and Warsaw. The Jewish migrants provided a perfect solution: they would serve as leaseholders (known as *arendators*), acting as land managers, tax collectors, and tavern keepers for the noblemen. The Polish Jew became the middleman between lord and peasant, one who was also active in trade and other occupations that tied the countryside to the cities. It was an auspicious relationship for all, except for the peasants whose daily encounters with the Jews led to a heightening of antisemitism. They saw the Jews, the reputed killers of Christ, as the source of their economic misery, and, when rebellions periodically flared up, it took little to direct pent-up grievances against the Jewish middlemen. The Cossack rebellion of 1648 was the most deadly, resulting in the massacres of hundreds of thousands of Jews, a cataclysmic event that has scarred Jewish memory ever since.

Yet the Jews of Poland had come to see this region as their home. For all the economic downturns, periodic eruptions of antisemitism, and political intrigue amongst their overlords, Polish Jewry had established a modus vivendi in these lands, building relatively stable communities which allowed Judaism to survive and flourish. Following the traditions developed in medieval times, the Jews of Poland enjoyed political, cultural, and religious autonomy. Jewish leaders were permitted to govern their communities (*kehilot* in Hebrew) according to rabbinic law, so long as they remained peaceful, did not violate the laws of Poland, and did not challenge the preeminent place of the nobility. With Yiddish serving as their primary language and the Torah as their guiding light, Polish Jewry had constructed a world of their own, one that was simultaneously an integral part of Poland, yet separated from their Christian neighbors by language, God, and customs. This principle of Jewish autonomy had a long pedigree, first developed in the rabbinic academies of

sixth-century Babylon. It was ideal for a people in exile, who often found themselves on the move, subject to the control of many different governments; rulers came and went, but rabbinic Judaism as a way of life and a way of community proved to be durable and flexible enough to survive almost any calamity. From the Jewish perspective, Russia's annexation of Poland could have been a mere blip on the radar; it need not have disrupted the rhythm of Jewish history.

The Birth of the "Jewish Question" in Russia

But Russia's acquisition of approximately one million Jews between 1772 and 1795 occurred during a major turning point in European history, for this was the era when revolution erupted in France and then spilled over its borders, when monarchies were destroyed in the name of enlightenment and liberty. The Russian tsars feared for their empire's stability. And stability necessitated a well-policed empire with a submissive population. Adjacent to revolutionary Europe, Russia's Polish provinces were seen by the tsars as a volatile region in dire need of administrative reform. They believed that a cautious program of modernization from above would preserve social stability, maintain Russia's status as a great power and a key player in European affairs, yet simultaneously avert the feared violent revolution that could destroy the autocracy and the governing Romanov dynasty. With so many Jews concentrated in this region, possessing little knowledge of the Russian language, and having played an integral role in the economic system of the now extinct Polish state, Russia's rulers needed to find space within its existing social structure for this new and unfamiliar community.

But where did the Jews fit? By the late eighteenth century, Russian society was divided into "estates" (*sosloviia*), a system of legal classification which laid out the rights and obligations of every Russian subject. The nature of one's work, the amount of taxes one owed, the extent to which one could travel freely across the Empire, the rights one enjoyed before the courts – all these aspects of an individual's life depended on one's legal classification. Being a "nobleman," a "merchant," or a "peasant" was as much a matter of law as a way of life. Although the tsars tried to fashion a well-ordered social system, the reality was far more complex, and the system became increasingly muddled as Russia expanded territorially, particularly into regions of ethnic diversity, whose populations did not easily fit into Russia's existing legal categories. In 1772, the legal definition of the Russian Jew emerged as a vexing issue. And despite the government's repeated attempts to solve the Jewish Question, it grew in complexity and controversy as Tsarist Russia lumbered through the nineteenth century and the fear of revolution from below became increasingly acute.

The Jews had been the merchants and economic middlemen in the Polish economy, and it would have made sense to absorb the Jews into the middle estates,

where they could continue to ply their trades among the peasants, manage the inns and taverns, collect revenue, and lease farmland and factories. As merchants, the Jews would be able to journey to the far flung corners of the Russian Empire and flourish commercially. Yet such an option was fraught with obstacles. The regime feared that the strengthening of the Jews as a "middle class" could potentially evoke the ire of others. The peasants would continue to see the Jews as exploiters who enriched themselves at their expense, now with the apparent blessing of the tsar. Second, Russia's native merchant class was still in its incipient stages of development. The regime worried that the Jews' infamous aptitude for trade and their long history of migration would lead them to settle throughout Russia and dominate the Empire's commerce. Both these developments could lead to popular hostility, which in turn could lead to instability, disdain for the autocracy, and, at worst, rebellion and revolution. Another issue was the fate of Jewish communal autonomy. If the Jews were to be integrated into the Empire's various estates, their rights and obligations to the crown would supersede their legal positions within the Jewish communities. It would mean chipping away at the institutions that had allowed the Jews to preserve their way of life for centuries, which would lead to resentment and the possibility of conflict. Like most preindustrial communities, the Jews of Russia did not always welcome the intrusion of change from the outside.

To be sure, the Russian state faced a similar situation with the dozens of ethnic and religious minorities it had absorbed during its centuries of expansion. But the Jewish question was in many respects distinct, because of their economic profile, because they inhabited a strategically sensitive borderland adjacent to volatile Europe, and because Russia's Jews had thousands of brethren on the other side of the border, in Austria and Germany, who were becoming politically active and were destined to receive equal rights from their governments. The legacy of medieval antisemitism, which had condemned the Jews as the killers of Christ, further compounded the issue for the tsars. Fear, mistrust, and outright contempt would often affect Russia's approach to the Jewish question.

The Russian government thus acquired a large Jewish population, yet it had no coherent Jewish policy. Motivated by two goals – to integrate this alien people while simultaneously preserving the Empire's stability – the tsars of late Imperial Russia would slog through the nineteenth century, promulgating contradictory legislation that would fragment and transform the Jewish communities, but rarely in the manner they had anticipated.

The Creation of the Pale of Settlement

Between 1772 and 1825 the Russian government passed numerous decrees intended to define the place of the Jews and their existing communal institutions within the Russian system. While most of this legislation came to naught, a few edicts did have

fateful consequences, and would serve as the cornerstone of Russia's Jewish policy until the early twentieth century. A series of decrees passed between 1791 and 1804 restricted the geographic mobility of Russian Jewry, establishing the boundaries of what became known as the "Pale of Settlement." The Pale of Settlement consisted of the former Polish lands along with a vast swath of territory further south in the Black Sea region, and its boundaries formed the limits of where the Jews were allowed to reside in Russia. Without special permission, a Russian Jew could not settle in the rest of the empire, with cities like St Petersburg and Moscow being inaccessible except to the lucky few. Jewish mobility was further restricted within the Pale of Settlement. In certain regions the Jews were prohibited from residing in the countryside, even if they had been living there already for generations. In 1823 and 1824, twenty thousand Jews were forcibly evicted from rural areas and resettled into overcrowded neighboring cities, with no provisions made for housing or employment. Such policies were economically devastating, because the Jews had previously played such a pivotal role in the rural economy. The government dealt an additional blow to the Jews by banning them from the liquor trade, a lucrative industry they had formerly managed on behalf of the Polish nobility.

The first historians to study the origins of the Pale of Settlement saw such policies as the product of Russian antisemitism. The Jews were an alien people, religious infidels who were unwelcome in the Christian Tsarist empire. Yet the restrictions enacted against the Jews must be seen in the larger Russian context. The government believed that granting the Jews freedom of movement and occupation would have a destabilizing effect on the empire, evoking the anger of the impoverished peasantry and the struggling merchants. Furthermore, it must be remembered that Russia was *not* a free society by our own modern standards. Few in Russia enjoyed unfettered social and geographic mobility. Clinging to its antiquated social and political structures, the Russian government limited the mobility of its subjects in an effort to preserve the regime's stability in the face of mounting popular discontent.

Such restrictive legislation hurt the Jews economically, and did little to foster their integration into the Empire's social structures. The *kehilot* continued to function as in earlier times, with rabbis guiding their communities, and Jewish educational institutions operating autonomously. But the government's inertia on the Jewish question only lasted until 1825, when Tsar Nicholas I came to power and initiated a program to transform the Jews and their relationship to the state. What followed was a half-century of government-driven modernization that would have a lasting impact on the world's largest Jewish community.

Modernization from Above: Coercion and Enlightenment

The reigns of Nicholas I (r. 1825–1855) and Alexander II (r. 1855–1881) were eras of profound transformation for Russia's diverse populations. At first glance it may seem as if little of lasting consequence transpired during these years, particularly

when set against the backdrop of the European continent – which was rocked by waves of revolution and the birth of nation-states. Yet Russia did experience change, with much of it occurring under the guarded vigilance of the tsar, who was determined to preserve the autocracy at all costs. The abolition of serfdom in 1861 was undoubtedly the most visible reform, but there were many others, including a series of measures aimed at the Jews of the Pale of Settlement.

Tsar Nicholas I lived in fear of revolution and unhesitatingly deployed the forces of repression to crush any movement or individuals who challenged his autocratic prerogatives. Yet Nicholas was not a conservative and reactionary monarch; coercion was his chosen instrument for effecting social transformation. He would drag his subjects kicking and screaming into a highly selective modernity whether they liked it or not. His first significant legislation affecting the Jews is a case in point. In 1827, Nicholas decreed that the Jews would henceforth be conscripted into the military, with a service requirement of 25 years. Any male between the ages of 12 and 25 could be drafted, and those under 18 would have to serve additional years in special military colonies, where they would be subject to harsh discipline and made into loyal subjects. The government believed that uprooting the Jews while still young would facilitate their transformation into Russians, which, it was hoped, would include conversion to Christianity. At least half of the conscripted Jewish adolescents did in fact convert, with a substantial number of adult soldiers also embracing the tsar's faith.

Attempted integration through military service was hardly a Russian phenomenon. Universal conscription increasingly became the norm throughout much of Europe during the nineteenth century, a key element of the new social contract established between rulers and citizens, who served the state in return for civil liberties, including economic freedom, social mobility, and political rights. For the Jews of Western Europe this was emancipation, the right to become free and enjoy social equality. But in autocratic Russia, where the tsar retained his monopoly on politics, where the estate system remained in place, civil liberties did not accompany service to the state. Becoming "Frenchmen" and becoming "Germans" meant unprecedented opportunities for the Jews, whereas becoming "Russians" seemed to engender enslavement to a repressive regime.

While the tsar may have been pleased with the results of forced conscription, the policy divided the Jewish communities, and they quickly came to resent such intrusion by the state once it became clear that political emancipation was not part the government's agenda. Recruitment created conflict within the shtetl, with the social elite adopting all sorts of strategies to manipulate this easily corruptible system. The rich bought their way out, so the poor bore the brunt of the burden; local troublemakers were handed off to the authorities, ridding the community of undesirables; some families employed Jewish kidnappers (known as *"khappers"* in Yiddish) to force the children of others into the arms of the military. Nobody wanted to lose their loved ones, and some were prepared to use fraud, bribery, and even violence to escape the clutches of the encroaching state.

Many observers saw antisemitism as the driving force behind this policy, with the conversion of the recruits merely being the first step in the elimination of the Jews as a religious group in Russia. Yet viewed in the context of Nicholas I's other policies, it becomes clear that the picture is more complicated. Even if Nicholas yearned to see the Jews embrace the Orthodox Christian faith en masse, his goal was more modest: integration through state-sponsored enlightenment. He sought to educate his Jewish subjects in the Russian language and culture; to modernize the Jewish institutions he saw as a legacy of the middle ages; to train rabbis to be community leaders *and* servants of the state. The tsar's ministers even recruited "enlightened" Jewish intellectuals from Germany, like Max Lilienthal, to help implement a modernized Jewish school curriculum. And, in 1845, the government opened two rabbinical seminaries to train "crown rabbis," who would owe their loyalty to the state and would serve as intermediaries between the tsar and his Jewish subjects.

But Nicholas did not win over the majority of Russia's Jews to his modernization program. Traditional Jews resented the abrogation of the *kehilot*'s autonomy and the state's intrusion into Judaism, which was a way of life, not merely a religion. Conversely, progressive Jews welcomed modernization but disdained the government's refusal to eliminate the numerous restrictions on Jewish mobility. Few were allowed to settle beyond the Pale of Settlement; many occupations remained closed off to Jews; and the new laws abetted severe social conflict and poverty within the shtetl. Such discontent was hardly exclusive to the Jews, and, when Nicholas died in 1855 during the disastrous Crimean War (1853–1856), his thirty-year reign was largely seen as an utter failure.

If Nicholas I remained a lifelong proponent of coercion, then his son and successor, Alexander II, concluded that loosening the grip of the autocracy was a necessary step for the modernization of Russia. During his 25-year reign he implemented numerous reforms, including the emancipation of the peasantry, a process begun in 1861, which affected the status and fate of 52 million Russian subjects. Other reforms tackled military service, the judiciary, and local government. Consistent with this new approach, the government eased some of the restrictions and discriminatory legislation affecting the Jews, including the despised military colonies for adolescents. Certain "categories" of Jews were granted greater geographical mobility, such as merchants of the first guild, artisans, army veterans, and those with a university degree. It was an age of optimism about the future, and just as Western-oriented Russian intellectuals hoped for a constitution, civil rights, and democracy, the Jewish intelligentsia came to expect the social emancipation that their religious brethren in France, Germany, and elsewhere had received. But Alexander II, much like his predecessors, only believed in limited change, and, when revolutionaries assassinated him in 1881, Tsarist Russia was still an autocracy, with a government that had lost the support of even the moderate reformers who had faith in the efficacy of enlightenment from above.

A Russian Jewish Enlightenment

Although critics branded Russia and its social system as an archaic remnant of the Middle Ages, a prison house of nations whose government offered mere cosmetic reforms, much in fact had changed during the mid-nineteenth century, particularly for Russia's Jews. To be sure, poverty in the shtetl was on the rise, and the Jewish populace became increasingly irritated at the regime for not living up to their expectations. But this was a Jewish community whose leading figures were now part of a nascent public sphere, contributing to the national debate over the future of Russia. The Jewish Enlightenment (Haskalah in Hebrew) trickled into Russia from the neighboring German lands, and a legion of Jewish intellectuals took up the task of participating in the transformation of Russian Jewry. While many of them had confidence in the government's modernization program, they were not content to sit around and be molded in the regime's image. What language should modern Russian Jews speak? What role should Judaism play in governing communal life? What sort of school curriculum would be most appropriate? How could traditional Jews be induced to take up new occupations, including agriculture? How could the Jews demonstrate their loyalty as Russians while preserving their cultural distinctiveness and identity? Jewish intellectuals raised their heads and insisted upon being heard. This was the birth of Russian Jewish politics.

This was also a time of greater mobility. Although the Jews were confined to the Pale of Settlement, many were willing and able to move around within the Pale in search of opportunity. On the shores of the Black Sea, the province of New Russia (*Novorossiia*) may have been part of the Pale, but it was a region with a distinct history and it was largely terra incognita for Russia's Jews. Catherine the Great had conquered this large swath of sparsely inhabited territory from the Ottoman Empire in the late eighteenth century, and, with a vision of economic prosperity coupled with a need to populate this strategically sensitive frontier region, offered prospective settlers social, political, and economic incentives to abandon their homes and colonize the province. Founded in 1794, Odessa quickly became the most important and most populous city in New Russia, with an ethnically diverse community, a vibrant culture, and a thriving economy. That the Jews played an integral role in the city's development is demonstrated by their exponential demographic growth: in 1829, there were 7900 Jews in Odessa, making up 15.2 percent of the population; by 1873, the Jewish share of the population had risen to over one quarter of Odessa's 193 thousand inhabitants; and, in 1892, the Jewish community numbered 112,235, with one out of every three Odessans being Jewish. For the Jews of the shtetl, Odessa (and to a certain extent, New Russia in general) was a land of possibility, Russia's Eldorado, much as America stimulated the imagination of Europe's impoverished masses. But New Russia was a mere carriage ride away, a promised land that could be reached without the perils of a transatlantic journey.

Not only did Odessa's Jews assume a dominant place in the regional economy, the educated Jewish elite also made the city into an important center of the Jewish Enlightenment. One prominent intellectual insisted that Odessa's nascent Jewish community had "regenerated itself," abandoning religion and "oriental isolation," in favor of commerce – a "modern divinity," that made Odessa's Jews into productive members of society (Tarnopol, 1855: 19, 137, 8). Odessa's Jewish community could thus serve as a model for Russia's impoverished shtetl Jews, who could also be remade through a secular education and business opportunities, under the guiding hands of a progressive monarch and a modern intelligentsia.

Not every Jew achieved prosperity in New Russia, just as most immigrants found little more than poverty in America. And Odessa was in many respects an exception among the cities of the Pale, resembling an American frontier boomtown like San Francisco more than Minsk, Pinsk, Berdichev, or Vilna, the heartland of the shtetl. But the case of Odessa suggests two important points about Russian Jewry during the mid-nineteenth century. First, modernization within autocratic Russia was not impossible. Second, leading Jewish figures in Russia *believed* – at least for a time – that tsar and Jew could work together to bring about meaningful reform. The tsar need not remain "far away from us."

The Age of Reaction

The assassination of Alexander II in 1881 ushered in an era of reaction. Although some historians debate the extent to which 1881 was a radical turning point – indeed many Russian intellectuals, Jewish or otherwise, had lost faith in the Tsarist regime by the 1870s, but there were others who remained optimistic for the rest of the century – the new tsar, Alexander III, officially abandoned any pretense to loosening the shackles of autocracy. Many of Russia's ethnic minorities felt the iron fist of Alexander III, such as the Poles, who had launched a number of political rebellions against Russian rule in previous decades. But it seemed as if the Jews were singled out for special treatment, that a virulent Judeophobia now infected the imperial court, that the Jews would be blamed for all the ills that beset the ailing empire.

The regime believed that Russia's Jews were disproportionately involved in the revolutionary movement, intent on overthrowing the autocracy. By this time, Jews throughout Europe were joining socialist movements and, in fact, one of the terrorists implicated in Alexander II's assassination was of Jewish descent. It took little to inflame the Christian masses in the Pale against the Jews, and, in the months following the assassination, mob violence, known as "pogroms," spread throughout much of southwestern Russia. It was widely believed at the time that the government was responsible for orchestrating the pogroms, out of hatred for the Jews and as a cynical ploy to use them as scapegoats for Russia's numerous tribulations. Historians have since exonerated Alexander III's regime, which neither

initiated nor encouraged the pogroms. Russia's rulers were gripped by a growing fear of their own subjects; mob violence against the Jews could easily be transformed into uncontainable revolutionary violence against the autocrat, should the radical socialists infiltrate their ranks and exploit their pent-up grievances.

But the Jews were nevertheless guilty from the regime's perspective for all this unrest, precisely *because* the masses seemed to detest the Jews and were intent on meting out mob justice against the killers of Christ, the heathens who had exploited them economically for centuries. The government needed to contain the anger of the masses, and to accomplish this they needed to contain the Jews. Consequently, Alexander III's government enacted a series of counter-reforms that reversed most of the gains the Jews had made in previous decades. In May 1882, the tsar issued the so-called "Temporary Rules," which, for all intents and purposes, remained in effect until the overthrow of the Romanov dynasty in 1917. The laws further restricted Jewish freedom of movement within the Pale, including a ban on settling and managing real estate in most villages. They also prohibited the Jews from conducting business on Sundays and Christian holidays. Whereas the regime had previously tolerated many of the Jews who had illegally settled outside the Pale, the police now conducted frequent raids and mass deportations. Even those Jews who had received official permission to settle in the interior of Russia were now subject to police surveillance and repeated harassment. Other restrictive measures followed the May Laws in subsequent years: in 1887, quotas were placed on Jewish enrollment in all institutions of higher education; in 1889, all non-Christian applicants for the bar had to receive governmental approval at the ministerial level; and, in 1892, Jews were excluded from serving on municipal councils. Little changed in 1894 with the death of Alexander III and the succession of his son Nicholas II, the emperor who was destined to preside over Russia's descent into the wars and revolutions that would bring three centuries of Romanov rule to a bloody conclusion.

The twilight of Imperial Russia was a time of impoverishment, misery, and anger for most Russian subjects. The peasant rebellions that scarred the landscape and a burgeoning socialist movement that advocated the violent decimation of the autocracy merely fortified the regime's intransigence. As these were also years of industrialization in Russia, a working class came into being, one whose rage over abysmally low wages and appalling factory conditions fomented the growth of Marxist political parties. The elite among Russia's numerous ethnic minorities were just as furious, and, influenced by the rise of nationalism in Europe, demanded autonomy or even outright independence from the Russian dominated Empire. The Jews were just one of the many enraged communities in the land of the tsar. But the persistence of discriminatory laws and the eruption of even deadlier pogroms – most notably one in Kishinev in 1903 which resulted in 49 dead and hundreds of homes and businesses destroyed – heightened the feeling of persecution among the Jews. Few envisioned a joyous future under Tsarist rule. It was time for radical solutions to a seemingly ineradicable crisis.

Radical Solutions to the Jewish Question

Historians generally agree that 1881 was a turning point for Russian Jewry, as it ushered in an era of "post-liberal" solutions to the Jewish question. Whereas liberalism in western Europe – capitalism, parliamentary democracy, universal civil rights – effectively ended the medieval segregation of the Jews and gave them legal equality, in late Imperial Russia these ideas now seemed dead in the water. Those who rejected the status quo in Russia looked to more radical solutions, including socialism, nationalism, and emigration from the Empire. What they shared in common was a belief that emancipation would never occur – could never occur – under the tsars, for the system was inherently autocratic and eternally hostile to the Jews. The Haskalah gave way to the forces of radicalism.

Nationalism, an ideology rooted in the belief that ethnocultural communities have an intrinsic right to govern themselves, had, by 1881, become incredibly popular throughout eastern Europe, a region dominated by the multiethnic Russian, Ottoman, and Habsburg Empires. The Poles, the Czechs, and the Serbs were just a few of the many groups that demanded the liberation of *their* "historic homelands" from colonial rule. Nationalism germinated among the Jews as well, but unlike Europe's other stateless people, the Jews were a Diaspora community, who had been physically separated from their historic homeland, Ancient Israel, centuries earlier. Even though Jewish consciousness had preserved an intimate psychological connection with the Holy Land throughout the long dark night of exile, a mass exodus to the land of the patriarchs – then under Ottoman control and known as Palestine – seemed like an absurd fantasy to most Jews. Yet the power of nationalism proved to be infectious and the feeling of oppression was overwhelming enough for many Russian Jews to adopt what later became known as "Zionism," an ideology that envisioned the physical reconnection of the Jews to the land of Israel, and the revival of their pre-Exilic cultural heritage. Zionism was not a homogeneous movement, and its proponents disagreed over tactics and objectives. But they were unified by their determination to "negate the Diaspora," to bring two thousand years of psychological and physical exile to a conclusion, to "normalize" the Jews by making them like other nations, with a national homeland, an army, and a vibrant culture. For Zionists, the Haskalah was a failure because the emancipation of the Jews could never be realized in a state ruled by Gentiles. Confinement to the Pale of Settlement and the continuing eruption of pogroms was all the evidence they needed.

Zionism was not the only "postliberal" solution to the Jewish question, and, given the obstacles precluding a mass exodus to Palestine, many Jews found the answer to their troubles in socialism, no less radical than Zionism, but free of its geographical impediments. Socialism had existed for decades in Western Europe and Russia before Alexander II's assassination at the hands of populists, who sought to transform Russia into a radically egalitarian society, an agricultural utopia rooted in collective labor and communal sharing. But, in the 1890s, a new form of

socialism, known as Marxism, began to percolate in the Tsarist empire, one that had first emerged in Germany, but would ultimately have its greatest impact in Russia. Marxists (also known as Communists) favored the toppling of the state through a "proletarian revolution," in which the exploited factory workers would seize power and construct a classless society. Although Karl Marx had first formulated a coherent Communist ideology in the late 1840s, his ideas had little impact in Russia until industrialization began in the 1890s. The growth of Russian industry spawned a Russian proletariat, and Marxist intellectuals began to organize their constituency, with the Jews playing a leading role in the movement that was destined to alter the course of Russian history.

One of the most enduring antisemitic stereotypes of the modern era is the belief that the Jews are predisposed to Communism and that a global Judeo-Communist conspiracy has repeatedly threatened to topple governments and envelop civilization. From the late nineteenth century onwards, political demagogues deployed this stereotype to frighten people into supporting their own movements and to channel popular discontent with the status quo against the Jews. Yet most stereotypes have a certain basis in reality, and many of Russia's Jews did view Communism as the logical solution to both the Jewish question *and* the misery of the hungry masses and exploited factory workers. Marxism not only envisioned a classless society, it also predicted a world without races, nationalities, and religions. For the many Jewish intellectuals who were perplexed and infuriated over the continued segregation of the Jews in Russia, Communism promised a way out: they would assimilate themselves into a cause that was greater than themselves; they would overcome their social alienation by becoming one with an international brotherhood of humanity.

Such abstract utopian visions, however, do not fully explain the Jewish attraction to Communism. Industrialization in the Pale of Settlement coupled with growing poverty in the shtetl compelled many young Jews to seek work in the factory. Even though the Marxist Jewish intelligentsia sought to organize all oppressed workers, irrespective of ethnicity and religion, they found themselves, at least initially, preaching to a Jewish proletariat. Jewish workers tended to have a higher literacy rate than ethnic Russian laborers, making them the likeliest consumers of socialist literature. Moreover, Jewish workers mostly spoke and read Yiddish, not Russian, so there was a need for a Jewish intelligentsia who could communicate with them. In October 1897, delegates from various regional Jewish socialist movements gathered in Vilna to officially found the General Union of Jewish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia (commonly known as the Bund). As time went on the Bund became the chief agitators for Jewish socialism, envisioning a communist revolution in (and beyond) Russia where the Jews could enjoy equality and cultural autonomy. A modernized, secular Jewish culture would flourish in a proletarian state where workers of all nations would control the means of production and consume the fruit of their labor. In many respects the Bund represented a creative attempt to combine socialism with nationalism. Many orthodox Marxists –

including ones of Jewish descent like Leon Trotsky and the many others who would participate in Lenin's Bolshevik revolution – rejected the Bund because of its determination to preserve Jewish culture, and, as one critic sardonically put it, the Bundists were nothing more than "Zionists with sea sickness."

The Bund was not the only Jewish political movement that attempted to merge socialism with nationalism, because the rise of a Jewish proletariat occurred in the context of Jewish legal segregation and the escalation of antisemitic violence. Russia's Jews were doubly oppressed – as a class and as an ethnoreligious community. Because class and ethnicity reinforced one another, socialism and nationalism were not necessarily seen as mutually exclusive. The boundaries between the two currents were fluid, with intellectuals and workers frequently changing their allegiances, or, equally common, creating new movements that sought to accommodate both of these ideological tendencies. And not all of these hybrid movements suffered from "sea sickness," as the age of Jewish radicalism begat Jewish children who left Russia for Palestine, convinced that a socialist utopia could be built in the ancestral land of their people.

"Sea sickness," in fact, is one ailment Russian Jewry did not exhibit during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for this was an era of mass migration. Between 1880 and World War I, approximately 2.4 million Jews left Eastern Europe, with the majority coming from the Russian Empire. Most of these migrants – 86 percent – went to the United States, which, until the imposition of immigration quotas in the 1920s, was willing to accept almost anybody so long as they were healthy and their papers were in order. If Tsarist oppression pushed the Jews out of the shtetl, then rumors of boundless opportunity pulled them to America, which was venerated as "the golden land" ("*der goldene medine*," in Yiddish), where "gold was rolling in the streets." Even though most immigrants found poverty, slept in overcrowded roach-infested apartments, and slaved away for 18 hours a day in the factories, few chose to return to Russia. In America the Jews could practice their religion freely, enjoy full civil rights, and live without the fear of marauding cossacks. America was politically hospitable and one could realistically envision a brighter future. Conversely, only 3 percent of Jewish emigrants from Eastern Europe went to Palestine during this era. The Ottoman government was hostile to Zionism, and the Jewish Holy Land remained a desert backwater with few of the amenities that even the poorest Europeans took for granted. Few could imagine that a Jewish state in Palestine would become a reality in the mid-twentieth century.

At Home in the Shtetl

Radical times breed revolutionary politics, but they also provide fertile environments for cultural creativity. There is of course a strong relationship between

politics and cultural innovations in literature, music, humor, and (in the twentieth century) film. The development of modern Hebrew literature in the shtetl occurred in tandem with Zionism and a yearning to abandon Yiddish – the language of Jewish exile – in favor of the language of the ancient Israelites, the Hebraic warriors who fiercely battled their adversaries. Chaim Nachman Bialik's 1903 poem, "In the City of Slaughter," in which he reproaches his fellow Jews for their apparent submissiveness during the Kishinev pogrom, is a case in point. He commanded his people to fight back, and he did so in the language of their ancestors. Similarly, the Yiddish language found its place on the political spectrum, with the Bund (and various other socialist movements) who sanctified it as the authentic language of the oppressed Jewish masses, not simply a linguistic tool for politically indoctrinating the proletariat. Jewish political radicalism abetted the proliferation of modern Jewish culture.

Yet not all modern Jewish culture in late Tsarist Russia was overtly political. Art for the sake of art had its place, particularly in the realm of Yiddish literature, which was, paradoxically, experiencing its Golden Age at the very moment Zionists and assimilationists were calling for its abandonment, branding it a corrupt jargon, a mishmash of German and a dozen other languages, the vernacular of the medieval ghetto. But it was still the mother tongue of the vast majority of Jews in Russia – 97 percent, according the census of 1897 – which meant there was a prospective literary audience, unlike Hebrew, which *nobody* spoke as their mother tongue in the nineteenth century. By 1900, a secular Yiddish literature was flourishing in the shtetl, with two writers in particular towering above the rest. Sholem Abramovich (who often wrote under the penname Mendele Mokher Sforim), and Sholem Rabinovich (who used Sholem Aleichem as his moniker) brought the shtetl to life in the hundreds of stories they produced. Although they were disciples of the Haskalah, their mature work was not overtly didactic. The antisemitism, poverty, and political issues of the day often served as the backdrop of their tales, but they used wit and satire to bring the shtetl's eccentric characters to life. Sholem Aleichem's innumerable works have stood the test of time, and the fact that they subsequently found eager audiences in America, Israel, and the Soviet Union – three fundamentally different societies – is a testament to their depth and power.

Not all Jews were consumed with radical politics, even if Tsarist Russia had become an uncomfortable place to live. Although thousands of Jews embraced Communism and other apocalyptic political ideologies, and millions more sought refuge in distant lands, many Russian Jews pursued communal development at the local level, through the creation of charities, literary circles, theaters, and historical societies to commemorate and celebrate the long history of East European Jewry. Still other Russian Jews simply wanted to go about their lives as their parents and their grandparents had. They wanted to live according to the rhythm of the Jewish calendar, focused on God, Torah, and family. Many of them were "politically modern" insofar as they consciously retreated into the realm of tradition as a response to an unwanted modernity. But, as far as they were concerned, they were

doing what their ancestors had done for centuries: in Russia, and before that in Poland, and before that in medieval Ashkenaz. They wanted little more than God to bless them and keep Communism, Zionism, and, the tsar "far away from us."

Descent into Armageddon

But this was not to be. The violent forces of change would ultimately consume the shtetl, much as they would consume most of Russia's traditional communities who were ambivalent about the intrusion of modernity, whether Christian peasants, nomadic Muslims, or Orthodox Jews. Russia would be in upheaval for much of the first half of the twentieth century, with the first two decades witnessing the downfall of the autocracy and the triumph of Russian Communism. It was a decisive period for Russian Jewry, given their centrality in the Empire's politics, and given the dynamics of the Pale of Settlement, which was increasingly gripped by class and ethnic conflict. And the Pale's location in Russia's western borderlands meant that unprecedented violence would engulf the Jews, as the fate of Europe's empires would be decided on Eastern Europe's battlefields during World War I.

Between 1905 and 1920, war and revolution dominated Russia, simultaneously engendering misery and politically empowering the masses. In 1905, revolution nearly toppled the autocracy, and the Jews – whether they were politically active or not – endured significant tribulations for their alleged disloyalty to Mother Russia. In October, a massive pogrom erupted in the streets of Odessa, eclipsing all earlier ones due to its scale, with over five hundred dead, three hundred injured, and 1600 homes and businesses sustaining damages. Labor unrest and political turmoil meant mobilized workers in the street, and the prominence of the Jews among Odessa's wealthy merchants and revolutionary activists meant that angry mobs of Gentiles could easily turn against the Jews. Back in 1881, the reactionary tsar Alexander III had understood the danger of uncontained violence against the Jews. But his son Nicholas II was not so astute. Nicholas may not have been directly responsible for causing the Odessa pogrom and the smaller ones that occurred in other cities, but his government did little to stop them, even giving moral and financial support to the protofascist right-wing organizations, like the Black Hundreds, that terrorized the Jewish masses and called for their elimination from Russia's nascent public sphere.

But the autocracy did not collapse in 1905, and Nicholas II gradually restored his authority, promising the meaningful reforms that his predecessors failed to implement. The tsar, however, did not learn from either his own or his predecessors' mistakes, and Russia's entry into World War I in 1914 proved to be his undoing. The war was an unmitigated disaster for Russia. The soldiers at the front were forced to endure carnage, disease, and hunger for the sake of an empire that did little to alleviate their misery or improve their quality of life. At first, Russian

revolutionaries were divided over the war, with some offering their cautious support for the sake of patriotism. But, as the fighting dragged on, even the moderate political left demanded an end to the war. They called for a cessation of hostilities and meaningful social justice in the name of the suffering masses.

All of Russia's toiling classes – soldiers, workers, and peasants – suffered immensely during the war. But the Jews probably suffered more than any other group, because much of the fighting took place in the Pale of Settlement. Russian Jews were swept up in a war that had little to do with them, and they were forced to serve in the army and support a regime that had given them nothing. Though 650 thousand Jews were conscripted into the Russian military, this did not prevent the government from accusing them of collective treason, for allegedly collaborating with the German enemy. While there is no evidence to support such charges, the government's paranoia had a certain rational basis, given the animosity of the Jews toward the autocracy, their considerable involvement in revolutionary politics, and the location of the Pale of Settlement, on the border with Germany and the Habsburg Empire, two states that had emancipated *their* Jews in the previous century. The Tsarist government trusted few of its subjects, least of all its Jews.

And if forced conscription and daily exposure to modern warfare were not enough, the Jews felt the full wrath of the autocracy. Between half a million and one million Jews were deported eastwards in fear of their potential collaboration with the enemy. Most were given 24 to 48 hours to pack their belongings and leave their homes. Pogroms, summary executions, rape, and plunder became daily occurrences for those who remained. Ironically, World War I ended the juridical confinement of the Jews to the Pale of Settlement, not because the government sought to abolish it, but simply because the total breakdown of law and order prevented the autocracy from effectively policing its vast domain and its enraged population.

Given all the calamities experienced by the Jews and Russia's other subjects, it is little wonder that the Romanov dynasty collapsed in February 1917 with few shedding a tear. Many observers saw this as the dawn of a new age. But others simply wanted to go home, to work and to feed their families. Nobody knew what the future held, including Russia's new provisional government, which exuberantly promised peace, freedom, democracy, and sustenance.

The Dawn of a New Era

The revolution of February 1917 gave the Jews the emancipation they had been denied under the Romanovs. But the end of autocracy did not result in immediate peace and prosperity for them, or for anyone else in Russia. 1917 proved to be a year filled with proliferating political radicalism, peasant rebellions, labor unrest, and the secession of some ethnic minorities who envisioned a future free from Russia.

World War I continued and so did the pogroms. Consequently, Vladimir Lenin's Marxist Bolshevik Party grew in strength because it promised an immediate end to *all* of Russia's troubles, and their utopian vision of a Communist paradise resonated with many. The Bolsheviks seized power in October of that year, but it would take them until 1920 to entrench their authority in ravaged Russia, fighting a bitter civil war against their opponents. And this meant more misery for the Jews, as much of the fighting took place in the former Pale, where multiple armies and pillaging bandits blamed the Jews for all their troubles. The Jews now enjoyed freedom of movement and equal rights, but this was not sufficient to protect them from the violence. The era of pogroms continued through 1920.

When the dust finally settled, it became clear that the Bolshevik revolution marked the beginning of a new chapter in Jewish history, much as it marked a new chapter in Russian history. The Communist government wanted to sweep away all vestiges of Imperial Russia, the "prison house of nations" it accused of exploiting the masses for the benefit of the tsar and his aristocrats. And indeed, the previous hundred and fifty years had been a time of severe persecution for the Jews. But it was also a time of modernization, political experimentation, and cultural creativity in the shtetl, where the persistence of tradition often concealed the profound changes that were taking place. Perhaps most significantly, it was an era when the Jewish world became intertwined with Russia, a new relationship that would engender both trauma and achievements, a relationship that would endure into the twenty-first century.

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22

The Great Migration

1881–1924

Jessica Cooperman

From 1881 to 1924 a great wave of immigration brought more than two million Jews to the United States. They arrived on ships, often after having traveled many hundreds of miles by land from their hometowns across Europe to the ports of embarkation where they set sail for a new life in America. These Jews represented only a small percentage of the nearly 25 million immigrants who landed on American shores during this era of mass migration, but their arrival triggered a seismic shift in the dynamics of American Jewish life. In 1800, approximately 2500 Jews lived in the United States. Earlier waves of migration helped to bring that number to fifty thousand in 1850, but by 1900 the Jewish population of the United States had grown to one million and by 1920 it soared to over three and a half million (Sarna, 2004: 375). These immigrants, through their sheer numbers as well as the cultural, political, and religious concerns and commitments they brought with them and nurtured in their new country, left an indelible mark on Jewish life in America.

Jews had made their homes in the United States from as early as 1654 when 23 refugees arrived in New Amsterdam after the conquest of Dutch Recife, Brazil, by the Portuguese. From that point forward, a steady and ever-growing stream of Jewish immigrants came to America, hoping to build a life in the New World. Some sought freedom from the anti-Jewish restrictions and policies of their homelands, but most, like other immigrants, hoped to take advantage of the opportunities America offered for creating a better and more stable future for themselves and their families.

In the first half of the nineteenth century Jewish immigrants had often come from the German states and further west, but by the end of the century patterns of migration shifted. As Jewish life grew more financially and politically stable in Western and Central Europe, fewer individuals from these communities sought

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their fortunes abroad. Conditions in Eastern Europe, however, took a different course. Eastern European Jews had been part of earlier waves of immigration to the United States. Indeed, by 1852 there were enough Russian Jews in New York City to establish their own synagogue, Beth Hamedrash Hagodol, and there were contingents of Eastern European Jews in Buffalo, Chicago, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, as well as other American cities. (Diner, 2004: 80–81) But in the 1880s Jews in Eastern Europe faced new struggles at home and felt increased pressure to emigrate.

In the eastern regions of the Habsburg Empire, Jews found themselves on uncertain terrain as ethnic and regional nationalist movements challenged the foundations of imperial rule. Widespread economic decline in Eastern and Southern Europe took its toll as well, undercutting the traditional bases of Jewish livelihood as artisans, peddlers, shopkeepers, and communal and religious functionaries. In Tsarist Russia, conditions were made particularly hard by the ascension of Alexander III to the throne in 1881. Following the assassination of his predecessor, Alexander II, the new tsar enacted a series of explicitly antisemitic policies. When acts of violence and rioting against Jews, known as pogroms, erupted in cities and villages throughout the southeast, the government not only refused to aid Jewish victims, it blamed them for inciting the attacks and passed restrictive measures directed against Jews. Laws constricting Jewish freedoms and reinforcing regulations limiting Jewish residence were passed, and Russian Jews found their lives restricted to the cities and towns of the westernmost region of the empire known as the Pale of Settlement.

The Pale encompassed territory that Russia had annexed during the partitions of Poland in the late eighteenth century and included much of present-day Poland, Lithuania, Belarus, Moldova, and Ukraine. It was a relatively large geographic region, but Jewish life within it was severely constrained. Because Jews could live only in the Pale, west of what had historically been considered Russia, their aspirations for integrating into Russian society were frustrated and they no longer had access to the country's universities or major centers of trade and professional life. Because, even within the Pale, Jews could only settle in a limited number of towns and cities, economic conditions became unsustainable. The Jewish population grew rapidly and it was soon all but impossible to earn a living, much less to imagine a path toward a more stable life in the Pale. Recalling her childhood there, author Mary Antin wrote: "[t]here were ten times as many stores as there should have been, ten times as many tailors, cobblers, barbers, tinsmiths. A Gentile, if he failed in Polotzk could go elsewhere, where there was less competition. A Jew could make the circle of the Pale, only to find the same conditions as at home" (Antin, 1997: 22). After 1881, therefore, episodes of violence, restrictions on residence and other freedoms, and seemingly inescapable poverty made Jewish life in Eastern Europe precarious, and led many to turn to emigration as their best option for building a better future.

Nearly one third of Eastern Europe's Jews chose to leave. Not all of them came to America. Some settled in the cities of Western Europe, others opted to go to

Canada, Argentina or Palestine, but nearly 90 percent of them came to the United States, and they tended to see their move as a permanent one. For those from the Russian Empire, leaving the Pale of Settlement was forbidden and return placed them in a legally perilous position. For others, the difficult circumstances they left behind made them unlikely to embrace the cyclical patterns of migration and return typical of Italians and other immigrant groups. Eastern European Jews saw the move to the United States as necessary for their survival. They did not send money home in the hope of someday buying land or improving the position of family in their country of origin. Instead they worked to secure passage for their entire family to come to America and to establish themselves in their new homeland.

For those traveling with limited resources, the process of migration was often grueling and filled with anxieties. Immigrants traveled over land by whatever means they could to port cities like Hamburg, where they might board a ship from the Hamburg-American Line destined for New York. Even though steam travel had reduced the time necessary for a transatlantic voyage, passage still took up to two weeks, often with limited food and in horribly cramped and unsanitary conditions. Because the shipping lines were responsible for the return passage of those denied entry to the United States, emigrants had to undergo medical inspections before boarding ship. Failing to pass this initial inspection meant one had to face the terrifying prospect of being stuck in a foreign city with no obvious way to complete the journey, and little if any remaining money. Worse still, having a child or a parent fail to pass inspection led to a choice between dividing the family, with uncertain prospects for reunion, or forfeiting costly tickets.

Upon arrival in the United States, immigrants found themselves once again subjected to inspection and examination. When Rachel Calof arrived in New York Harbor from Russia in 1894, the port of entrance on Ellis Island seemed to her like a gate to heaven guarded by all-powerful government agents. She wrote that even after the difficulties of the long journey "no previous experience aroused for all such anxiety as the test of Ellis Island," where "with at word or a gesture from an official, one standing a few feet from the gate opening to the golden land could be refused entry . . ." (Calof, 1995: 19) Indeed, soon after Ellis Island opened in 1892 it became known as the "Isle of Tears" for the many shed by those who were turned away after coming so far.

Tears of reunion were shed at Ellis Island as well. Because of the expense and challenge of the journey, many families immigrated in stages, sending one or two members ahead, hoping that they would soon earn enough money to send for the rest. Fathers, husbands, and sons often went first, on the assumption that they would have the easiest time finding work. Sometimes the separation that ensued proved more than bonds of family could bear, as evidenced by the letters carried in American Jewish newspapers from women searching for fathers and husbands who had decided to make a fresh start in America unburdened by their families. But, for most immigrants, family ties held fast and husbands, wives, sons, and daughters

worked together to ensure that they could all make the journey and start their new life together.

Because of the focus on emigrating as a family, almost equal numbers of Jewish men and women arrived in the United States during this period and virtually everyone contributed to the family economy, working both inside and outside of the home. Married women tended to work at home, often by taking in boarders who would share the family's cramped quarters. The rest of the family, including teenage children, found other ways to earn money, particularly by peddling goods, and, if they were successful, by setting up small shops. Some immigrants, like Rachel Calof, set off for places as far flung as North Dakota, where she and her husband Abraham became homesteaders, but they were an exception to the rule. Most Jewish immigrants arriving during this period settled in large cities like Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago, Cincinnati, Cleveland, San Francisco, and, first and foremost, New York City, which soon became the largest center of Jewish life in the world.

Immigrants may have chosen to settle in New York simply because, after traveling so far, those who landed in New York Harbor were unwilling or unable to journey any further. Others, however, must have been drawn to the Jewish neighborhoods in and around New York City, where they could settle among *landsleit*, or countrymen, with whom they could speak Yiddish, the vernacular of most East European Jews, and to whom they could turn for advice or assistance as they struggled to establish themselves. But most importantly, New York, like other large cities, held out the prospect of work and that, more than anything else, was what these immigrants had come to find.

In these cities, Jewish immigrants were drawn by the thousands into the needle trades, finding work in both large factories and tiny sweatshops cutting, trimming, and sewing cloaks, skirts, suits, shirtwaists, and other articles of ready-to-wear clothing. The concentration of garment manufacturing in New York was so dense that by 1905 half of all the clothing manufactured in the United States was made in Lower Manhattan. Many Jewish immigrants had worked in the garment industry before arriving in the United States and this experience gave them a competitive edge in the job market. It also helped to turn clothing manufacturing into a Jewish-dominated industry. By the turn of the twentieth century more than 75 percent of garment workers in New York City were Jewish (Dwork, 1997: 130).

Bosses and owners in the garment industry were often Jewish as well. Many had started as tailors, sometimes working in their homes with family members to assist in the production of a finished garment. Some, having achieved some success, transformed themselves into contractors, delivering unsewn garments to other families and picking up completed work, or running a small sweatshop in a tenement apartment where others came to work under their supervision. The very successful among them went on to open their own factories, where employees, Jewish and non-Jewish, would work side by side for hours, for low wages and in unsafe conditions, cutting, basting, sewing, and finishing garments.

The shared experience and background of the workers, managers, and bosses sometimes imparted what historian Susan Glenn has described as a "familial tone" to these workshops and factories (Glenn, 1991: 134). In them, Jewish immigrants could work together with friends and family members. Unmarried women made a up a large percentage of the Jewish workforce, and the presence of young people, male and female, all facing similar struggles and challenges, made the shops sites of friendship, occasionally romance, and of solidarity. It did not, however, make them easy or safe places to work. Tenement sweatshops were cramped, dirty, hot, and unsanitary. Factory shops were larger, and brighter, but they were often just as unsafe. "The machines were all in a row," Mollie Linker recalled, "And it was hot. . .. And you had their big heavy winter coats on your lap, and you worked, and you sweated. . .. You had a little half hour for lunch (we worked close to ten hours). And you talked. But you kept so busy and the machines were roaring but you talked. You had to be careful not to stitch your fingers in" (Glenn, 1991: 150).

The dangerous conditions in the shops were evidence that ethnic solidarity did not necessarily unite the interests of workers and bosses. Those who had struggled to the top of the industry sought to "sweat" the most labor they could out of their employees and saw little advantage in making things easier for newcomers. They had worked hard to succeed in America without receiving much accommodation, and they expected those who followed to do the same. Traditionally religious Jews, in particular, learned quickly that working for a Jewish boss did not necessarily mean that allowances would be made for observing Jewish holidays. Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, was a workday in America, and Jews who would not work on Saturday were often told not to bother returning on Monday.

For young women working alongside men of all ages, the shops brought the additional danger of sexual harassment and the frustration of discrimination. Women, regardless of their actual skills, were considered unskilled workers and were therefore paid less than men. This inequality in pay and in working conditions was hard to bear, not only because of its inherent injustice, but because young women's wages were a crucial part of the family economy. In some households, unmarried daughters were the primary breadwinners, supporting parents and siblings and working to bring other family members to America. Their financial importance gave these young women both profound responsibility and a new sense of own their worth and abilities. Unfair treatment at the hands of exploitive bosses thus appeared all the more intolerable.

It is perhaps little wonder, then, that Jewish women became disproportionately active in labor unions and in union organizing. Clara Lemlich was already committed to leftist politics and the cause of workers' rights when she arrived in the United States from the Ukraine in 1905, but her experiences in a Lower East Side garment shop convinced her not only that workers must unionize, but that women must play an active role in the movement. She began organizing her female coworkers to join the fledgling International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) in 1906. In November 1909, at a mass meeting featuring prominent labor

leaders like Samuel Gompers, after listening as "each one talked about the terrible conditions of the workers in the shops . . . [without giving] any practical or valid solution," Lemlich rose to her feet and said "I make a motion that we go out in a general strike." She brought the audience to its feet and launched what became known as the "Uprising of the 20,000" for the 20 thousand shirtwaist makers, many of them young women, who followed her call for a strike (Wenger, 2007: 161). The strikers demanded better wages and working conditions, and they walked picket lines throughout the winter until the strike was settled in February of 1910. The gains they made were modest, but the example of these women, willing to brave the cold and at times the assaults of the police, helped to energize the labor movement and to galvanize Jewish support for the unions.

Perhaps no event, however, came to symbolize the struggles of garment workers more than the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911. Triangle had been one of the companies targeted by striking workers in 1909, but its Jewish owners Max Blanck and Isaac Harris had refused to accede to the union's demands and conditions at the factory had not improved. Near closing time on March 25, 1911, fire broke out on the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the Triangle factory in Lower Manhattan. When frantic workers tried to escape, they found that the doors to the workrooms had been locked in order to keep them inside, and that fire escapes were rusted, broken, and insufficient to save all those threatened by the flames. One hundred and forty-six employees of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory died that afternoon, some burnt in the fire, others having jumped to their deaths out of the windows. The crowds that had gathered on the streets watched in horror as the bodies of workers, predominantly young Italian and Jewish women, fell to the pavement below.

Newspapers across the country carried the story of the fire and its terrible toll, and reactions to the tragedy made issues of worker safety a national concern, producing a number of new requirements for fire safety in the workplace. The fire also cemented Jewish loyalty to the unions and to the causes of the left. As Mary Domsky-Abrams, a survivor of the fire, recalled, "The tragedy steeled us in our later battles for the trade union and libertarian-socialist movements to which we devoted our lives" (Domsky-Abrams, n.d.). Rose Schneiderman, an ILGWU organizer speaking at a rally following the fire, told her audience that after so much blood had been spilled, "it is up to the working people to save themselves. The only way they can save themselves is by a strong working class movement" (Wenger, 2007: 163). Many Eastern European Jews agreed and joined not only the ILGWU but also the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, the Cap and Hat Workers, and the umbrella United Hebrew Trades. They also embraced leftist politics, electing Socialist candidate Meyer London to Congress three times and making Morris Hillquit, an attorney, labor activist, and socialist theoretician, a viable contender for the office of Mayor of New York City in 1917. Through their commitment to unions and the struggle for workers rights, Eastern European Jewish immigrants thus became integrated into American political life and became an important contingent within the local and national political landscape.

While Jews may have been overrepresented in the ranks of American socialists, certainly not all Jews were socialists and, even among those who were, many embraced particularly Jewish expressions of leftist politics. To a certain extent this was due to language. Most Eastern European Jewish immigrants spoke Yiddish and sought organizations and institutions where they could communicate comfortably even if this limited their engagement with other communities. But commitment to Yiddish often represented more than just convenience. For some it became a critical expression of Jewish culture. The Arbeiter Ring, or Workmen's Circle, was founded in 1892 as a benevolent society, providing its members with mutual aid as they adjusted to life in America and insurance in cases of death, illness, or financial need. In this sense, it functioned similarly to the many *landsmanshaftn*, or hometown societies, that appeared in immigrant neighborhoods. But unlike a typical *landsmanshaft*, the Arbeiter Ring was organized to promote the ideals of socialism rather than to facilitate bonds between immigrants who had come from the same hometown. Education, as a necessary step to political awareness and engagement, was thus a crucial part of the organization's program, and it offered classes and lectures on a vast range of topics including anthropology, biology, cultural and economic history, geology, law, psychology, religion, and sociology.

Because the Arbeiter Ring aspired to educate the Jewish masses, it functioned in Yiddish, the language of the people, and its speakers often incorporated references to the traditional Jewish culture and religion of the audiences they sought to enlighten, framing issues of political and economic justice in terms of traditional Jewish concepts like *tzedakah* (social justice) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world). Workmen's Circle programs were so successful that the society soon expanded beyond New York to open branches across the country and eventually to launch a network of Yiddish-language schools for children in cities like Chicago, Philadelphia, Milwaukee, Newark, Baltimore, Rochester, and Denver, as well as in New York. These schools sought to impart a socialist-oriented education, but one that was deeply infused with *Yiddishkeit* or cultural Jewishness. For many members, and their children, the Arbeiter Ring offered something more valuable to them than instruction in socialist ideology: It provided them with a means to integrate their identity as Jews with their new American context. Through the Arbeiter Ring, Jewish immigrants could become conversant in the issues and concerns of the day, but do so in a Yiddish-speaking and deeply Jewish environment. Workmen's Circles and groups like them thus served as a crucial step on immigrants' paths to Americanization. They reflected and supported the particularities of Jewish life, while providing an introduction to the broader world of American culture, history, and politics.

Workmen's Circles also created Jewish communities outside the realm of the synagogue and of traditional religious practice. They helped to forge a sense of American Jewishness that was largely secular, cultural, and linguistic rather than religious. But while secular expressions of Jewishness appealed to many Jews, particularly those on the left, Judaism, in many forms, flourished in America as well.

Earlier immigrants had embraced the Reform Movement and by the 1880s Reform Judaism was well established in the United States. Hebrew Union College, the Reform rabbinical seminary, was established in 1875 and graduated its first class in 1883, celebrating with the soon infamous "*trefa* (unkosher) banquet," at which traditional Jewish dietary laws were flouted. By the early years of the twentieth century, some Jews whose families had arrived in the 1880s or later had joined the Reform Movement, and some even went on to pursue ordination at Hebrew Union College and to serve as Reform rabbis. But most Eastern European Jews arriving during this period, even those who were not strict in their own religious observance, tended to prefer the traditional practices of Orthodox Judaism. Indeed, while in 1881 only a tiny minority of the approximately two hundred synagogues in the United States identified as Orthodox, by 1910 America was home to more than two thousand synagogues, over 90 percent of which called themselves Orthodox (Sorin, 1992: 175).

The persistence of traditional Judaism existed, however, alongside a continuing process of adaptation to the demands of life in America. The six-day work week, for example, often meant that Jews could not observe a Saturday Sabbath, nor could they be assured of opportunities to celebrate holidays in accordance with Jewish law, but those who wanted to found ways to practice their Judaism within American norms. In many cases, this meant religious compromise. A family that wished to observe the Sabbath might, for example, send some members to work on Saturdays, violating the Sabbath but allowing others to observe the day of rest. Such arrangements did not comply with strict interpretations of Judaism, but neither did they necessarily indicate a rejection of tradition. Rather, they reflected efforts to balance spiritual and practical needs.

Jews also found new ways of engaging with Judaism and observing its rituals. The holiday of Hanukkah, a minor festival in Europe, became increasingly important within the American Jewish calendar, largely because of its proximity to Christmas. Passover, a holiday traditionally marked by carefully and thoroughly cleaning the home to rid it of any traces of leavened bread, became an occasion to buy new things and partake of the wonders of American consumer culture. Changes such as these were often interpreted as signs that, once settled in America, Jewish immigrants cast off their Judaism. They are perhaps better seen, however, as indications of the many ways that Jewish immigrants sought to retain and revitalize their commitments to Judaism and Jewishness while becoming increasingly integrated into the rhythms of American life.

Jewish immigrants also built and supported a vast array of new artistic and intellectual institutions that contributed to the creation of a uniquely vibrant American Jewish culture. Yiddish theater boomed on the Lower East Side of Manhattan and in touring companies that traveled across the country. The theater offered audiences an escape from workday realities and a chance to indulge in cathartic fantasy as they cheered for their heroes, wept for those in distress, and booed the villains. As Yiddish theater star Jacob Adler wrote in his memoir, "The

poor boy, by day a baster for a tailor, an errand boy on Orchard or Rivington Street, was by night the king, the soul of our theater . . . When we were good, how broad and proud his happiness, his triumph. He was more than an onlooker. He believed what he saw on stage, gave himself to it, lived it with his whole heart, his whole soul" (Wenger, 2007: 171).

The theater offered audiences a chance to see their own lives reflected on stage as they watched characters struggle with traditional fathers, out of touch with the demands of modern reality, or with rebellious children who rejected the wisdom of their elders and set off on their own reckless paths. Through these plays, they received both the comfort of knowing that they were not alone in their worries and guidance as to how best to balance the many demands and challenges of adapting to American life. Not content simply to portray the immigrant experience, however, Yiddish theater helped to introduce its audiences to great works of Western culture, as in the immensely popular Yiddish adaptations of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, and *King Lear* brought to life on stage by actors like Adler and Boris Thomashefsky. The Yiddish theater also gave rise to a generation of Yiddish writers, like Jacob Gordin, Sholom Aleichem, I. L. Peretz, and Sholom Asch, whose works were first performed on the Yiddish stage, and to performers like Al Jolson and Molly Picon, whose success took them all the way to Hollywood.

Newspapers were another vital institution of Jewish life in America and the Jewish population was large enough to support multiple papers with different perspectives. The English-language Jewish press was well established in America before the start of the Great Migration of the 1880s, but the influx of so many new immigrants gave new momentum to the business. Zionist-oriented Hebrew language newspapers like *ha'Leumi* and *Hapisgah* appeared, as did papers in other Jewish languages, like Ladino, and a vibrant and diverse Yiddish press took shape. Some Yiddish papers, like the *Morgen Journal*, catered to a religiously Orthodox readership; others, like the *Freiheit*, leaned towards communism. But by far the most widely read Yiddish newspaper was the *Jewish Daily Forward*, edited by Abraham Cahan.

The *Forward* was socialist in its general orientation, but its politics were tempered by a pragmatic desire to help the Jewish immigrant find his or her way in America. Like most Jewish papers, the *Forward* reported on local, national, and international events that allowed its readers to stay informed about Jewish life back in Europe while becoming familiar with American politics, culture, and society. But amidst its regular news items, the paper also ran an advice column, known as the *Bintel Brief* or "bundle of letters." Letters dealt with questions of love, money, work, family, and how to adjust to life in America. Readers wrote to the editor about their concerns, and Cahan offered advice that was both practical and sympathetic. To one young man suffering from homesickness and longing for his parents back in Russia, Cahan wrote,

> almost all immigrants yearn deeply for dear ones and home at first. They are compared with plants that are transplanted to new ground. At first it seems

> that they are withering, but in time most of them revive and take root in the new earth . . . . This young man . . . must not consider going home, but try to take root here. He should try . . . to make something of himself so that in time he will be able to bring his parents here. (Metzker, 1971: 118)

Through the letters, readers could appreciate that they were not alone in their struggles, and through the sure and confident tone of the responses, readers could gain a sense of how to manage their new lives. Cahan advocated neither strict traditionalism nor a mad rush to Americanization. Rather, he counseled a middle path that allowed readers to maintain their sense of Jewish identity as they pursued their American dreams. The paper, like the Yiddish theater and other cultural institutions, thus helped these Jews shape their own vision of life in America.

Jewish immigrants from this period benefited, however, not just from the communal institutions that they founded for themselves but also from the philanthropic support of Jews already established in the United States. Wealthy "uptown" Jews motivated both by sympathy and by anxiety that these newcomers might stir up antisemitic sentiment in the country, worked with considerable devotion to defend, educate, and improve the lot of their coreligionists. Examples of Jewish philanthropy abounded: financier Jacob Schiff funded the establishment of organizations like New York's Educational Alliance, which offered classes, lectures, and a library to adults and children eager for access to schooling. Attorney Louis Marshall, president of the patrician American Jewish Committee, founded in 1906 to advocate for Jewish interests at home and abroad, fought to keep the gates of America open to Jewish immigrants even as public and political sentiment began to turn against mass migration. Lillian Wald turned away from her comfortable middle-class background in order to found and run the Henry Street Settlement, which helped educate and provide recreation for immigrant children and their parents, and to create the Visiting Nurse Service, which provided in-home medical care for the poor of the Lower East Side.

These institutions and others like them provided desperately needed services, but they also operated with a sense of paternalism that did not go unnoticed by those who received their assistance. Established American Jews sought to speed new immigrants' acculturation to American norms and tastes, and they used these various charitable endeavors partly as an effort to rid the newcomers of their seemingly backward dress, manners, habits, and language. Many immigrants, perceiving that education offered the most promising path to achieving their American dreams, took full advantage of the educational opportunities opened to them though this philanthropy. Some also embraced the lessons in Americanization they received and agreed that living in the United States required change. But as these immigrants built their own charitable, educational, and cultural institutions, and as they achieved their own successes in America, they began to rebel against the condescension they saw in the philanthropy of more settled American Jews.

By the early years of the twentieth century, Eastern European Jews were no longer content to be seen as the poor cousins of earlier immigrants. They now represented the majority of American Jews and were fast becoming established enough to challenge their "uptown" brethren for positions of leadership. By 1917 even the American Jewish Committee found itself threatened by "downtown" demands for the creation of an American Jewish Congress, run on more democratic lines and sympathetic to the interests and perspectives of this new generation. The Committee survived the challenge but, like all major Jewish institutions, it did so only by recognizing that the immigrants of the Great Migration had now become part of the American Jewish mainstream.

Immigration to the United States slowed during World War I and in 1924 the Johnson-Reed Act effectively brought the era of mass migration to an end. The new law imposed restrictive quotas on immigration based on country of origin. The quota permitted entry to only 2 percent of the total number of persons from each of the European nations listed in the 1890 United States census, thus limiting the total number of immigrants allowed in, and favoring those from countries more heavily represented in earlier waves of immigration. Prospective immigrants coming from Eastern and Southern Europe, as so many had during the Great Migration, found that their quotas were quickly filled and their opportunities for entering the United States severely restricted. The new quotas reflected America's growing hostility to immigrants, and its conviction that those coming from Eastern and Southern Europe represented a corrupting influence on the country. The quotas were not directed exclusively against Jews, but while almost 120 thousand Jewish immigrants arrived in 1921, accounting for 14 percent of the total number of newcomers to America that year, only ten thousand were admitted in 1924, accounting for a little less than 3.5 percent of the entire immigrant population (Garland 2009: 199).

Those Jews who had arrived in the United States during the Great Migration faced a country increasingly suspicious of both immigrants and Jews as the 1920s went on, but they found that antisemitism, even when it came from as prominent a citizen as Henry Ford, could not prevent them from becoming Americans. In the absence of new waves of immigrants coming from Eastern Europe, these Jews adapted and Americanized. They sent their children to public schools, they aspired to jobs beyond the factories and sweatshops, and they found ways to balance their commitments to Jewishness with the demands of their new home. By the end of the Great Migration the United States had become a major center of Jewish life, and American Jews – "uptown" and "downtown," well established and newly arrived – had fashioned a uniquely American and distinctly Jewish sense of identity and culture.

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23

Polish Jewry between the World Wars

Sean Martin

When the Polish state conferred upon Cecylja Klaftenowa the order of Polonia Restituta in 1930, one of the highest awards conferred by the state on civilians, the citation noted her "state-creating" work and declared that "the Jews on whose behalf Dr. Klaftenowa works are citizens of the Polish state, and whoever works to economically benefit Polish Jewry also renders the state meritorious service."[1] Cecylja Klaftenowa, a doctor of biology, played a significant role in the history of Jewish social welfare and, as a member of the city council, in the history of Lwów (today known as L'viv, Ukraine). As the founder of vocational schools for girls, and the driving force behind the founding of vocational schools for boys, Klaftenowa dedicated her life's work to improving educational opportunities for Jewish children. Her practice of social work, her Jewish activism, and her journalism advanced her cause, to educate Jewish youth and provide them with the means with which they could live independently. As the state's award suggests, this was a cause that found favor with the Polish government. While it is clear that the political state served by Klaftenowa's work was Poland, it is less clear that her efforts benefited two nations, a nation of Poles who formed the majority population in a political state and a nation of Jews who, though a minority in Poland, nonetheless had developed a strong national identity.

The signal achievement of the Jews in Poland between 1918 and 1939 was the creation of nationally conscious, nearly autonomous organizations of civil society intended to train a generation of Jewish leaders to realize Jewish goals in Poland. These organizations and institutions encompassed nearly every area of life, including politics, economics, religion, education, and culture, but those that proved to be most influential concerned the care and education of Jewish children and youth. Younger Jews made up a significant proportion of the Jewish population; 64 percent of Jews in Poland in 1921 were under the age of 29. Given the economic

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and social conditions of life in Poland in 1918, the task faced by Jewish community leaders like Klaftenowa was a challenging one. Like their neighbors, Jews were forced to rebuild community institutions that had been transformed by the course of World War I and the establishment of the Polish state immediately after the war on November 11, 1918. Jews also faced the challenge of living lives as members of a national minority, a group significantly outnumbered by the majority population but with a singular status as a people and a nation. Jewish leaders understood the needs of their people and stood ready to address them, using their own skills and talents and the help of the Jewish community outside Poland.

Understanding the complexity of our identities as individuals and as members of larger groups in society is essential when studying the history of the Jews in Poland. We can and do describe ourselves as members of specific ethnic, cultural, linguistic, religious, and political groups. Our membership in these various groups is, for the most part, voluntary. We may place more emphasis on one of these groups than another. For example, we may feel more strongly tied to a specific religious identity than to the language that we speak. We may share some of these characteristics with our neighbors, and this may ease the establishment of positive relationships. However, it is also possible that we do not belong to the same groups as our neighbors, a fact which may complicate our relationships and make coexistence difficult. While our ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious identities are usually determined for us by our parents, we have only limited control over the political circumstances into which our children are born. For example, a Jew born in Warsaw in 1910 was a subject of the Russian tsar; after World War I, that individual was a citizen of the Polish state. Membership in a political state, whether that state is an empire or a democratic republic, changes as the political circumstances change, but it is this membership, this legal belonging, that often determines our economic opportunities, the extent of our education, the languages we learn, and our freedom to pursue our interests and achieve our goals. This legal belonging also often engenders real feelings of loyalty and patriotism, even if one does not belong to the majority culture.

We understand nationalism as the feeling of belonging to a larger group with which we identify closely, a group that seeks often, but not always, to establish political control within a specific territory for members of that group. Terms such as nationality and ethnicity are often used in specific ways that may cloud our understanding of people's experiences. For example, the term nationality is often used in the American context to describe the ethnic backgrounds of citizens of the United States; its use may obscure the extent to which Americans identify politically with the United States of America. Using nationality in this way has little meaning in the context of Eastern Europe, where Poles, Jews, Ukrainians, Byelorussians, Lithuanians, and others all defined themselves as belonging to specific nations (not nationalities), even if their nations did not exist within defined, defensible borders. Throughout the nineteenth century, each of these groups under imperial rule developed their own nationalist movements, in an attempt to achieve what we might describe as national or cultural (if not political) autonomy, or the ability of a

group, such as a nation, to make its own decisions about its people's lives without the interference (or with the minimal interference) of another nation. The peoples of these nations lived as neighbors under the control of other nations (whether defined politically as empires or democratic republics); thus, the prewar empires and, indeed, the interwar Polish republic, are best described as multinational states.

By 1918 the failure of the Enlightenment effort to define Jews as solely a religious group without other characteristics distinguishing them from their mostly Christian neighbors had failed. The antisemitic policies of the Russian Empire impelled Jewish leaders in the late nineteenth century to turn to ideologies that stressed the peoplehood of the Jews, not just their separate religious traditions. Like the other peoples of Europe, Jews had established an active nationalist movement that sought both improved circumstances for its people and a territorial homeland. Once the relatively greater freedoms of the Polish state made possible a significantly greater scope of national activity, Jewish community leaders took action to realize their goals, resulting in a panoply of organizations that allowed Jews to express themselves in varied ways as Jews and as Poles. For Jews, then, the struggle for some kind of autonomy became increasingly important, especially after the establishment of a nominally democratic Polish state, in which Jews hoped to exercise their freedoms and to develop as a national group, albeit with the restriction of living within a state politically controlled by Polish citizens. Polish citizenship conditioned Jewish development after World War I, but it did not prevent the development of a multiplicity of Jewish identities.

The newly formed Polish state was indeed a resurrection, the answer to what was described throughout the nineteenth century as the Polish Question. This question concerned the lack of existence of an independent Poland after the partitions of that country by the Habsburg, Russian, and Prussian empires erased Poland, but not Poles, from the map in the late eighteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century, Poles fought valiantly but in vain for their independence. During the years of World War I, both Roman Dmowski, a leader of the National Democrats on the right, and Józef Piłsudski, a prewar socialist leader and military officer, fought for Poland's independence. With the fall of the empires at the end of the war, Polish military and political leaders were able to declare independence and fight to establish and maintain political borders. The borders were not formally settled until 1923. The new state established Polish rule over a diverse population. Included inside the boundary to the east were the largely Polish city of Wilno (Vilnius), the largely Polish city of Lwów, and the district of Volynia. In the south, the new state encompassed the entirety of the Habsburg province of Galicia and, in the west, the city of Poznań and part of Pomorze. The Jews of Poland lived primarily in the *kresy* (the eastern borderlands), Galicia, and in Congress Poland, the area of Poland formerly within the Russian Empire. Within these borders lived four substantial national minority populations: Ukrainians, Jews, Belorussians, and Germans.

While the transition to independence was swift, the transition to military and political stability was protracted, and dangerous for Poland's Jews. Significant

violence accompanied the end of the war, including pogroms in Lwów in 1918–1919, presaging the difficulties the nations of interwar Poland would face. Jews were simply caught in the middle of the separate Polish and Ukrainian struggles for independence. Forced to choose sides, Jews remained neutral, a decision neither Poles nor Ukrainians appreciated. The Polish–Soviet War of 1920–1921 ended in victory for the Poles but suggests the vulnerability of the state's borders and the precariousness of the political situation. With the conclusion of this conflict, Poland's political development could proceed. Conflict between the right and left, between Dmowski and Piłsudski and the movements each represented, continued throughout the interwar period and is generally seen as one way of viewing Polish history, as a struggle between those who see Poland's history as inclusive of the other peoples with whom Poles were neighbors and those who view Poland solely as a nation for Poles. The violence of the pogroms and the continued warfare delayed the development of the country and increased the challenges facing the Jewish community. The establishment of the borders fulfilled nationalist goals and presented the fledgling state's leaders with an array of pressing issues, not least of which was how to maintain control over a restive multinational population. Their neighbors simply did not belong to the same ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious (and indeed national) groups as the majority populations did. Their neighbors did belong to other, smaller, less influential political groups, political groups which for varying reasons were simply not able to fight for and defend territorial borders inside of which they could establish legitimate political control. In addition, each region of Poland, and each region's Jewish community, brought with it experience of different political traditions and a different socioeconomic structure, compounding the challenges of integration. As part of the peace agreement negotiated at Versailles in 1919, the Polish state accepted the Minorities Protection Treaty, designed to protect the rights of the minorities within its new borders.

The Jews of Poland between the wars exhibited an impressive diversity. The approximately three million Jews in the country made up 10 percent of the population. In most of the country's largest cities, Jews numbered at least 25 percent of the residents. The community included traditionally observant Jews and those who had long given up any pretense of observance. Politically conservative religious Jews, nationally conscious Zionists, working-class Bundists (Jewish socialists), and assimilationists coexisted, if uncomfortably, in the *kehilot* (see below) and, sometimes, in the political alliances that formed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Jews increasingly began to use Polish in daily life, and Yiddish cultural activists, both religious and secular, worked alongside Hebrew teachers preparing youth for emigration to Palestine. While the community might be described generally as lower middle class to poor, some Jews were quite wealthy while others lived in abject poverty. Jews were primarily an urban minority, living in both large cities and small towns (the *shtetlakh*, from *shtetl*, for small town), but some did live in rural areas. All of these internal differences made any attempt at unity a significant undertaking. A multiplicity of political views and cultural practices

characterizes the Jewish community in interwar Poland, making generalizations hazardous. Jewish leaders attempted to address their community's needs with a variety of approaches, each of which appealed to a different constituency.

The devastation of the conflict that had begun in 1914 was significant. American Jewish leader Henrietta Szold likened the destruction of the war to a "hurban," or catastrophe, equal to the destruction of the Temple in ancient times. Towns and cities had been destroyed. Sixty thousand Jewish children had been orphaned during the war. Caring for these children, insuring that they remained within the Jewish community, is just one example of the tasks Jewish leaders faced. Prewar institutions, especially the *kehilot* (sing. *kehilah*), the local bodies which officially governed Jewish communities before (and after) the war, were simply not prepared to meet the Jewish population's tremendous needs or the challenges of organizing Jewish life in a rapidly changing Polish state. In addition, the Jewish communities in each region of Poland differed socioeconomically and in their experiences in the exercise of politics. As a result, new leaders in the community emerged to affect the political system and to develop new institutions to address the community's needs.

Jewish hopes for the Polish state had already been tempered by the violence of the pogroms throughout Galicia in the immediate postwar period; they were soon to be further dashed by the political developments that followed. The challenges for those wanting to see Poland build a democracy respectful of its citizens belonging to other nations was significant. A Bloc of National Minorities was formed in the Sejm, Poland's parliament in 1921, an effort to improve cooperation and leverage their groups' small numbers in their favor. Hostility toward the minorities soon became apparent, most notably in the 1922 assassination of the nation's first president, Gabriel Narutowicz, who was seen as having achieved victory by minority votes. In addition, the economic policies adopted by Prime Minister Władysław Grabski in 1923 disproportionately hurt small businesses, many of which were owned by Jews. Excluded from jobs in the civil service, Jews were forced to turn to professions like law and medicine, in which they could set up private practice. Perhaps the worst of the policies to affect Jews was the compulsory Sunday rest legislation, which forced Jews to close on Sunday. This regulation, a policy that caused significant economic distress, meant that Jews observing the Sabbath were forced to close their shops two days out of the week, rather than just one. Such policies hurt both Jews and non-Jewish consumers.

Thus, by the 1920s, the political approaches of assimilationism and integration had faded from favor, and other approaches, more self-consciously Jewish, took on greater significance. Zionist political leaders emerged to represent many Jews within the community in a variety of Zionist parties. A Polish division of the Bund (the party of Jewish socialists formed in the Russian Empire in 1897) was founded in Lublin in 1917. Orthodox leaders in Poland turned to the sphere of politics in order to defend Jews against the increasing secularization of society. Agudes Yisroel (Union of Israel) had represented the interests of traditional Jews since its formation in Kattowitz (Katowice) in 1912. Another party, the Folkists, made national cultural autonomy its main platform. The party emerged in Warsaw in 1916 under the

leadership of Yiddishist Noah Pryłucki. Throughout the interwar period, these parties, and the splinter parties they inevitably engendered, competed for the votes of Jews and participated in a dizzying array of political alliances with both Jewish and non-Jewish parties throughout the 1920s and 1930s. This remarkable diversity of political opinion hindered any attempts at unity and reflected diverging views of religion, secular culture, and economic class. Political alternatives existed for nearly any combination of views, including religious Zionist (Mizrakhi) and socialist Zionist (Poale Zion, both left and right). Typically, the Polish state favored the politically conservative religious views of Agudes Yisroel to the more challenging views of the Zionists and Bundists, a sign that Polish officials understood the distinction between Jews as a religious group and Jews as a nation aspiring toward some kind of autonomy within the Polish state.

Significant political instability and frequent changes in governments dominated by the National Democrats characterized the 1920s. In response to this instability, General Piłsudski, the foremost leader of the left, took power in a military coup in 1926. Despite his method of attaining political power, Piłsudski was seen as a hero, especially by the Jews. Piłsudski, unlike his political opponents, was not an antisemite, and his socialist views offered Jews more hope than those of other political leaders. Piłsudski's leadership was constantly under challenge, though, and he maintained control only by authoritarian measures. A center-left alliance was formed in 1929 as a democratic alternative to Piłsudski's Sanacja (reform or regeneration) regime, but the regime arrested the opposition leaders just a year later. Worse yet, in 1934 Poland officially renounced the Minorities Protection Treaty and signed a nonaggression pact with Germany. Though never as effective politically as he was militarily, Piłsudski did keep the extreme nationalists from attaining power in the 1930s. At his death in 1935, Piłsudski was revered as a national hero, especially by the Jewish community.

Indeed, Polish Jews read the situation correctly. After Piłsudski's death, antisemitism became more overt and an official part of government legislation. In 1936 the Polish government passed a law limiting the practice of ritual slaughter; in the same year, a pogrom in Przytyk claiming three Jewish victims was followed by violence in which a Pole was killed. The subsequent imprisonment of the Pole's attacker led to a strike of Jewish workers throughout Poland. The Yiddish poet Mordecai Gebirtig described this incident eloquently in his song "*S'brent*" (It Burns). In 1937 Polish Prime Minister Felicjan Sławoj-Składkowski approved an economic boycott of Jewish businesses. Poland's universities had never offered an especially tolerant environment for Jewish students. In the 1930s, the practice of assigning Jews to separate benches in classrooms (often termed ghetto benches) became more frequent as right-wing students grew more militant. By the late 1930s, Poland had become a much less hospitable place to live for Jews than in the comparatively hopeful years immediately following the war.

The period between the wars was just over twenty years, not all of which were free from armed conflict. For the Polish state, the challenges of governance and

integration were significant, if not insurmountable. The national, cultural, and religious differences between Poles and Jews (and other groups as well) necessitated the development of separate institutional frameworks to solve what were, after all, similar problems of providing improved education, minimal social services, and greater economic opportunities. To improve their circumstances during this period, Jewish community leaders established institutions and organizations of all kinds to aid the members of their community, including newspapers and schools, orphanages and old age homes, Zionist youth groups and socialist reading rooms, libraries and theaters, professional associations and sports clubs. These organizations of civil society manifested Jewish values and transmitted these values to the younger generations. The institutions and organizations described here effectively operated as what might be best described as semi-autonomous institutions of a Jewish civil society. Subject to the rules and regulations of the state, they were nonetheless the result of private (both individual and collective) enterprise. Given very real constraints, especially antisemitism expressed as political, economic, cultural, and social discrimination, the Jews of interwar Poland succeeded remarkably in improving their circumstances and in developing a Jewish culture without equal elsewhere in the Diaspora.

This culture was trilingual, expressed in Yiddish, Polish, and Hebrew. A thriving Jewish daily press in Polish developed in Kraków, Lwów, and Warsaw. Hebrew became increasingly important, as Zionist groups sponsored classes and lectures promoting the language, especially among the youth. Though Jews increasingly assimilated toward Polish during this period, Yiddish culture flourished. Warsaw was home to the future Nobel winner Isaac Bashevis Singer. Daily newspapers in Yiddish served Jewish communities throughout Poland, and Yiddish plays and films were produced. In spite of antisemitic policies and practices, Jews attained professional success in literature, education, politics, law, medicine, and many other fields, allowing them to make important cultural contributions. While the Jewish religious tradition remained strong during this period, these changes in educational, cultural, and professional opportunities also provided distinct challenges. The period was one of roiling change until the very outbreak of World War II in 1939.

The variety of political and cultural opinions in this period insured that the generation that grew to adulthood in the period between the wars had significantly greater opportunities to express varying forms of Jewish identity than previous generations. The recovery from war, the bleak economic prospects, the increased secularization, the growth of mass culture, and the development of a Jewish civil society all combined to create a generational cohort that came of age before the start of what came to be known as World War II. Thus, the experience of a Jewish child in Poland born in 1920 was markedly different from one born in 1900. While this generation had significantly greater freedom to create a future in Poland, young Jews also faced unprecedented challenges, especially in the midst of the economic depression and increased antisemitism of the 1930s. The experiences of Jewish

youth after 1918 and the community's response to their needs show us how the Jewish community hoped to develop as a nation and to be a part of life in Poland.

Those responsible for transforming the lives of Jewish youth were many, including the Polish state, the *kehilot*, private Jewish political parties and organizations, American Jews, and, not least, the youth themselves. In the prewar empires, the *kehilot* traditionally supervised the Jewish community's religious life and acted as the official representative of the community in interactions with government authorities. While the *kehilot* continued to function in the 1920s and 1930s, new representatives of the Jewish community emerged, including those affiliated with political parties and individual leaders who contributed substantially to the progress of the Jewish community through their philanthropic work, organizational efforts, or professional achievements. These new leaders, both men and women, operated largely outside of the traditional structure of the *kehilah* and so changed the definition of "organized Jewish community." Significantly, the work of Jewish women quietly but nonetheless powerfully challenged the patriarchal culture of both Jews and Poles and helped to transform the Jewish community by developing institutions independent of Polish state and Jewish communal governance. While some of the new leaders' work may have been in institutions originally established by the *kehilot* before 1914, they also founded new political parties, schools, and social welfare organizations that, by virtue of their success, began to change how the Jewish community functioned and how it interacted with government authorities. In addition, Jews in America, so many of whom had ties to Poland, came to play an increasingly important role in Polish Jewish life. Most notably, the organizational and financial assistance offered by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, founded to provide relief to Jews in Europe in 1914, was crucial in many aspects of social welfare, especially in its aid to local credit cooperatives and health and child care associations. This relationship with American Jews was at times problematic for both Jews and Poles, but it was always present and always necessary for the development of Polish Jews. Jewish youth themselves also became increasingly active in the newly organized Jewish community, taking on roles specifically designed to train them as future Jewish leaders, whether in Poland or Palestine.

Perhaps the most significant statistic regarding Jewish youth in Poland concerns attendance in public schools. Approximately 80 percent of Jewish children in the interwar period attended Polish public schools. The generation of the Second Polish Republic was the first to be formally educated in Polish, to be educated alongside Polish children, and to be systematically exposed to Poland's national ideals. The Minorities Protection Treaty did allow for the development of private education, and private Jewish schools did flourish in independent Poland, despite the dire economic circumstances. But private schools were not cheap, and so public schools became the default option for Jewish parents throughout Poland. Most importantly, this participation in public schools insured that Jewish children were educated in Polish and exposed to ideals of Polish citizenship. In practice, this meant the

celebration of the name days of Polish leaders or attendance and participation in ceremonies marking such events as the May 3rd Constitution Day or Independence Day on November 11th. Jewish children were being taught to be part of a larger community.

This larger community also insisted on religious instruction in the schools. Religion, specifically Roman Catholicism, was an important part of Polish national life and had a significant presence in the schools. Public school records noted the national affiliation and religious confession of students, and a system of offering religious instruction in their faiths was developed. According to Article 120 of the Polish constitution, religion was a compulsory subject for students under the age of 18 in the Polish public school system. Given the religious diversity in the new state, this instruction presented many difficulties. The system of religious instruction was organized very soon after the establishment of Poland's Second Republic, but it continued to evolve throughout the 1920s and 1930s. In individual schools, Roman Catholic priests or teachers of Jewish religion assigned by the *kehilah* taught religion once each week for two hours. Instruction for Jewish children was provided in schools with a minimum of 12 Jewish students. In cities where there were enough children of one faith, it was determined that these children should be directed to attend the same school, in order to make the teaching of religion easier. When fewer than 12 students of one faith attended a public school, they could be taken to a religion class at a nearby school once a week for two hours, assuming that the class would consist of Jewish children from other schools, so that the number of students would be at least 12. The difficulties of this system are clear enough. Simply counting the students and determining how and when instruction could be provided were significant bureaucratic tasks. That some children remained outside the system is very likely and that others were not always provided for adequately, if at all, is a certainty. Still, the attempt to provide instruction was made, an attempt that attests both to the sincerity of Polish efforts to create a society where religion was sanctioned by state authorities and to the tenacity of Jewish leaders to educate their children. Separate religious instruction in the public schools is an excellent example of how Poles and Jews lived both separately and together during the interwar period, challenging us to consider the innovative ways citizens of East European states attempted to maintain their religious and cultural traditions even as they were developing into modern societies. The problems associated with religious instruction included both the practical logistics of scheduling and the challenge of accommodating minority religious views within the modern educational system of the majority. Teaching religion in the public schools was one way for both government and society to maintain the religious values of interwar Poland's varied populations.

While participation in the public schools may have offered students greater opportunities, it also reduced the number of hours available for religious instruction. Polish authorities did not force assimilation through the public school system, but their failure to adequately provide for minority students led many Jews to see the public schools as simply an instrument of the assimilation they were anxious to

avoid. Jewish parents were also accustomed to a level of religious instruction that public schools could never hope to match. Formal instruction in the Torah, Mishnah, and Talmud began in a *heder* (literally, room) as early as the age of three for Jewish boys. The heder was a private school for boys, and sometimes girls, usually run out of the home of a private teacher. Many memoirs document the rote nature of this instruction and the shortcomings of the instructors. Nonetheless, this system of instruction insured that Jewish knowledge passed from one generation to the next. The modernization of the interwar period challenged this system, forcing the development of supplementary afternoon schools and, also, the development of private Jewish schools that could offer a full range of subjects alongside a religious curriculum fully controlled by the Jewish community.

That the Polish government never lived up to its guarantees regarding the education of minority students is well known. Jews responded by developing private schools to meet specific needs. Though Poland's national minorities were free to develop their own private schools, these schools never received the promised governmental support, whether financial or moral. Still, a sophisticated network of private Jewish schools offered parents an impressive range of educational options for their children. Supported by the Bund and Labor Zionists, CYSHO (Di Tsentrale Yidishe Shul-Organizatsye, The Central Yiddish School Organization) grew into a system of 219 institutions serving 24 thousand students. The Tarbut schools, very strong in the eastern borderlands, offered a secular Zionist education and included kindergartens, elementary and secondary schools, specialized schools for teacher training and agriculture, and adult education. The Tarbut network served 45 thousand students in 270 institutions. Agudes Yisroel also sponsored a network of schools, Chorew. Established in 1924, this school system encompassed 580 institutions serving over 73 thousand students, a number that suggests the popularity of this specifically religious educational alternative. Thus, if parents were able to pay the necessary tuition and fees, there were educational alternatives. These educational networks formed to preserve and promote specific versions of different Jewish identities, some religious, some secular. These identities, and these schools, were also often tied to specific political movements, even if only in a general sense. Other schools, such as bilingual Polish and Hebrew secondary schools, were opened in larger cities. The school networks described above offered a Jewish environment in a rapidly changing society, subject to government regulation.

An additional network of private Jewish schools deserves special recognition, both because of the innovative nature of the education offered and because the schools continue to operate today, though outside of Poland. In an effort to stem the acculturation of Jewish girls, who traditionally did not receive the same education in religion as Jewish boys, Sarah Schenirer established the Beys Yankev (House of Jacob) schools for Jewish girls in Kraków in 1917. These schools offered Jewish girls religious instruction. Born to a Hasidic family, Schenirer grew up in a religious environment but longed for a more extensive education, even turning to

courses in Polish culture offered by local instructors in Kraków before World War I. After spending time in Vienna during the war, she returned to Kraków and established the first Beys Yankev school, using modern pedagogical methods to nurture Jewish tradition. Schenirer met personally with parents to stress the importance of religious education. She quickly gained the support of Agudes Yisroel leaders, who took over her work in 1922 and developed schools throughout Poland and abroad using her model. The Beys Yankev schools were supplementary schools, providing instruction to girls who were already enrolled in government-sponsored schools. After Agudes Yisroel began to organize the schools as part of their party's core activities, Schenirer continued her involvement, lecturing and writing on the need for religious education and founding a Beys Yankev teachers' seminary in Kraków. She is a unique figure, a woman of traditional values who took on a pioneering role in modern education and whose contribution to Jewish life can still be seen today.

The most prominent figure in the fight to improve the lives of Jewish children was Janusz Korczak (born Henryk Goldszmidt, 1878/9–1942), a physician, educator, and author. Both Jews and Poles recognize Korczak for the scope of his work and his contributions to child welfare, pedagogy, and literature; indeed, it is difficult to identify another individual equally acclaimed by both groups. Born to a secular family, Korczak lived his life as a Jew and as a Pole. He was the director of the Jewish Orphans' Home in Warsaw from 1912 to 1942, aided during most of this period by his longtime associate Stefania Wilczyńska. In the 1920s, he founded Nasz Dom (Our Home), a home for Catholic children run by his colleague Maria Falska. These institutions were run according to Korczak's principle that children should govern themselves, that "children shall not be, but rather already *are*, people." Korczak's children's homes included a children's parliament, court, and newspaper, within a structure that taught children how to care for others. While Korczak affected many children in his career as a physician and administrator of homes for children, his books and stories influenced many more. *How to Love a Child* and *A Child's Right to Respect* outline his philosophy for parents and educators. Korczak's *King Matt the First* is a fable about a child-king and his attempt to introduce reforms to solve his country's problems. Most significantly, Korczak published a regular supplement to the Warsaw Polish-language Jewish daily *Nasz Przegląd* (Our Review). *Mały Przegląd* (Little Review) appeared for 13 years and was edited and written by children for children. The writings of *Mały Przegląd*, documenting the younger generation's experiences and their transition to the Polish language, are an invaluable historical source. For a short time in the 1930s, Korczak also broadcast his stories on Polish radio, as the "Old Doctor." Korczak's varied professional activities and, above all, his pedagogical philosophy insisting on the dignity of the child earned him professional respect and an international following. Despite opportunities to leave the Warsaw Ghetto during the war, Korczak remained at the Jewish Orphans' Home with Wilczyńska and the children until their deportation to Treblinka in 1942.

By World War I Korczak was well established in his work and his institutions became a part of the wider community's efforts to address the pressing needs of children. The development of the Polish state allowed his activities to flourish even as new, similar institutions were founded all across Poland. Most prominent among the social welfare organizations founded to improve the lot of Polish Jews were the Society for Safeguarding the Health of the Jewish Population (Towarzystwo Ochrony Zdrowia Ludności Żydowskiej; hereafter, TOZ), established in 1921, and the Central Union of Associations Caring for Jewish Orphans (Centralny Związek Towarzystw Opieki nad Żydowskimi Sierotami; hereafter, CENTOS), formed in 1924.

Originally a Polish branch of the Society for the Protection of Jewish Health (Obshchestvo Zdravookhraneniia Evreev, OZE) in St Petersburg, TOZ focused its health care initiatives on mothers and children, establishing milk stations for mothers, day care centers, vaccination programs, afterschool programs, and summer camps throughout Poland. These programs dramatically improved the health of mothers and children. The success of TOZ was perhaps due in part to its emphasis on the prevention and treatment of disease. The physicians and nurses of TOZ focused on the practical, from the treatment of boils to admonitions to protect food from flies. Throughout this period, TOZ published *Folksgezunt* (People's Health), a Yiddish journal founded by Tsemakh Szabad, a physician from Vilnius also active in education and politics. The journal dispensed the most practical hygiene and safety advice, including stark illustrations exhorting readers to keep a tidy room or not to put one's hands into a light socket. In 1939 TOZ operated 368 clinics and institutes in 72 locations. Operating in both large cities and small towns, TOZ offered services for needs not met by parents, the *kehilah*, or the Polish state. The clinics and institutes of TOZ were funded by membership donations, funds from the *kehilah*, Jewish support from abroad, and, at least until the depression of the 1930s, public funds from local city councils. The range of funding sources suggests the number of parties interested in improving the health of Jewish children. Notable are the contributions from the state, however minimal, and the significantly more substantial financial support from abroad.

CENTOS united the work of a few hundred smaller associations caring for Jewish orphans. Formed by volunteer community leaders, both women and men, these associations formed in the midst of World War I to address the growing need. In response to the crisis, women like Róża Melzerowa (Pomeranc-Melcerowa, 1880–1934), a Zionist activist and organizer of Jewish women who had studied in Vienna, Leipzig, and Paris (and later a member of the Polish Sejm), worked during the war to build homes for orphaned children. Melzerowa established a home for orphaned girls in Lwów in 1916 and she was one of the first Jewish leaders to turn to foreign Jews for support, campaigning actively to raise funds for her cause. Private associations, like the home founded by Melzerowa, and literally hundreds of smaller groups that were member associations of CENTOS, were a communal, if fragmented, response to the destruction of World War I. With few exceptions,

Jewish children's associations received their greatest income from dues-paying members, reflecting the grass roots nature of their development. Like Korczak, those behind the organization of Jewish children's groups, whether in Poland's largest cities or smallest shtetls, were individuals, usually doctors, lawyers, or teachers, who recognized the need and responded accordingly.

CENTOS quickly became the leading organization in Jewish child welfare in Poland, bringing together individual leaders from Kraków, Vilnius, Warsaw, and Lwów and all points in between. Support from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee enabled the leaders of CENTOS to distribute funds to the associations, establish communications between the groups, and promote the cause of Jewish child welfare to the larger Jewish and Polish communities. In the late 1920s, the leaders of CENTOS broadened the focus of their work to include providing assistance to all needy children, not just orphans. This expansion of the group's mission was meant to better reflect the work they had already done and the work they still intended to do. In 1938, the institutions within CENTOS included, among other associations, 26 orphanages, 75 day-care facilities, three clinics for mothers and children, and summer colonies in over thirty locations. Together, the institutions of CENTOS served nearly 30 thousand children in 1938.

Child welfare associations provide an especially interesting lens for the study of Jewish history in Poland because they reveal the interaction resulting from the combined support of individuals, the organized Jewish community (both locally and internationally), and local and state authorities. For example, a ribbon-cutting ceremony for a day-care facility in Białystok included the playing of the Polish national anthem and a special blessing for Józef Piłsudski. In the guest book for the occasion, the provincial governor wrote on the first page, "Whoever cares for the good of the Nation cannot be indifferent to the fate of the child. I look forward to your institution raising competent citizens, sensitive to the fate and needs of humanity."[2] The children who were to benefit from the facility prepared a special program for the opening, with songs in both Polish and Yiddish, and the assembled guests enjoyed a small reception. Such occasions were common in Poland when Jewish leaders opened a new facility. The visit by Polish officials was simply a ceremonial function of state authorities, an obligatory visit to a new local institution. Nonetheless, the governor's remarks in the guest book suggest both the cooperation between local Jewish leaders and, as mentioned earlier, the tension between the Polish and Jewish nations. While the Jewish leaders who established such institutions worked in close cooperation with the newly formed Polish state, they also acted from a motivation to benefit a private group, the Jewish nation. The governor's remarks are very carefully and indefinitely phrased; none could take offense. Yet the efforts to establish private day-care facilities, orphanages, and other such institutions were fraught with obstacles, and the relationship between the Jewish associations that founded these groups and the Polish state was equally fraught with tension. Polish officials viewed the support from American Jews as threatening, seeing the Minorities Protection Treaty as imposed by foreign

interests. This resentment betrayed a lack of understanding of the national identity of Jews and an understandable confusion regarding the support and development of national minority communities. Yet the minimal support the state did provide suggests a recognition of the vital work of Jewish community leaders.

A defining feature of Jews in Poland after World War I was the politicization of Jewish youth. The bleak economic circumstances and even bleaker prospects, combined with continued discrimination, encouraged young Jews to turn to the ideologies of the various political movements for solutions to their problems. The various political parties sponsored youth groups, which offered young Jews an opportunity to learn more about politics and current events and, perhaps more importantly, to socialize. The geography of young Jewish lives included far more than their immediate surroundings; it encompassed Palestine, a territory in which they believed the realization of their nationalist or socialist dreams could be a reality. Zionist youth groups were especially popular, growing in this period "like mushrooms after a summer rain."[3] Indeed, the number of groups and splinter factions is dizzying, and the ideological differences between these groups minor. As opportunities for employment and education grew even more restricted, emigration to Palestine proved an especially attractive option for young Zionists, and many youth groups provided training for just this possibility. Youth autobiographies submitted in the 1930s to YIVO, the Yiddish Institute for Scientific Research founded in Vilna in 1925, offer a picture of the period's ideological ferment and the feelings of youth as they navigated to adulthood.[4] The Jewish youth group, whatever its specific orientation, was a crucial aspect of the transition to adulthood.

The meeting place of the youth group (often described as "the local" or a "nest") became a second home for many young Jews. The political parties and youth groups often defined the experiences of young people, making possible opportunities to study and learn and to prepare for emigration to Palestine. A respondent to a newspaper's survey of the lives of Jewish youth described how he sought refuge in his organization's meeting place:

> Evening. Outside, lousy weather. Rain blows in the faces of those out walking. What nasty weather! Brrr! Everywhere it's sad. To this extent, life is in harmony with nature. I grab my jacket and run out of the house. The clocktower strikes 7:00. Still half an hour to the meeting. I wander around the city without any goal. On one of the streets I notice a fight. They're beating someone. Who's beating whom? "Please sir, what is this?" – "You don't know?" They're beating some Jew! I tremble. I want to escape right away. "For what? Why?" – "They're beating because they beat! They're just warming up!" I turn to ask someone else. – "Better not to ask, because these antisemites are ready, and you'll be next!" Finally a cop appears, who, with difficulty, breaks up the "action". The spectators disperse, and I, along with them. I turn down an alley of the Jewish quarter, where our organization is located. I can't quiet down. My heart is pounding with pain. In my ears I

> hear them saying, "They're beating, they're beating! They're just warming up!" I ask myself: "Why doesn't anybody react? It's always like this!"
>
> Suddenly I hear voices singing . . . the song surrounds me; it's coming from our "nest". At the sight of our "nest", I raise my head, and I'm sure of myself. "Here I don't have to be afraid of anybody!"[5]

Participation in private Jewish groups of all kinds allowed youth opportunities to explore a variety of identities, both religious and secular and, most importantly, political. They provided safe havens in an increasingly hostile world.

Jewish youth in Poland between the wars grew up with significantly different challenges and opportunities than did previous generations. The political freedom that engendered the social movements to which they belonged was unprecedented. Indeed, the leaders of the organizations to which they belonged were able to work toward and achieve their goals as Jews in a Polish state. These goals included specifically nationalist goals, such as the training of young Jews to go to Palestine. But they also included aims meant simply to improve the lives of Jews in Poland, through the establishment of schools, clinics, and summer camps, among other institutions. Difficult as conditions were, private Jewish groups continued to plan for a Jewish future in Poland, even as late as 1939. Only in retrospect were Jews in Poland on the edge of destruction in 1939. Jews in Poland faced serious challenges to their existence as a national minority community, and even as individuals, but, thanks to their efforts over the previous twenty years, they had developed a vibrant civil society able to defend Jewish goals and to cooperate with the Polish state.

Throughout the period between the wars, Jewish community leaders in independent Poland were in the process of creating a network of political parties, social welfare agencies, social organizations, and cultural institutions outside the boundaries of the organized Jewish community and the newly formed Polish state. The founders of such groups were caught between being good Polish citizens and their desire to lead autonomous, or at least semi-autonomous, private Jewish institutions. Was this activity a private endeavor meant to build the Jewish nation or can it be considered even a part of public efforts to rebuild the Polish state? The state's recognition of Cecylja Klaftenowa with its highest civilian honor suggests that this work was considered a part of the effort to rebuild the Polish state, at least officially. The institutional ties between local Polish government and Jewish associations of all kinds suggest that Jews and Poles had begun to reorganize fundamentally the way their communities worked. Neither the *kehilah* nor the Polish state could be expected to meet in full the fundamental needs of the Jewish community after World War I. Jewish activists rose to the challenge, and, like those of their ethnic Polish neighbors, their achievements in such a short time are truly impressive. Working within a society that demanded they meet the varying interests of several constituencies (Jews in Poland and abroad, the *kehilah*, the

Polish state), they managed to develop a framework of institutions that reflected both a degree of integration into the larger Polish community and Jewish goals. Maintaining the distinction between private need and public responsibility, the leaders of Jewish civil society in Poland before World War II demonstrated the admittedly tenuous possibilities of growth for a religiously and ethnically distinct nation within a multinational state.

Notes

1 Cecylja Klaftenowa – Polonia Restituta, *Przegląd Społeczny*, November 1930, p. 404.
2 Wiadomości z central sierocych, *Przegląd Społeczny*, February 1929, pp. 84–85.
3 K. Cwi, Zieluń, *Nasza Opinja*, 25(152), February 2, 1936, p. 11.
4 Jeffrey Shandler (ed.) (2002) *Awakening Lives; Autobiographies of Jewish Youth in Poland before the Holocaust*, New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
5 ___ndel z Lublina, Jestem Żydem, *Nasza Opinja*, 21(148), January 5, 1936, p. 11. The name of the author is obscured in the original text. From the original Polish, it can be discerned that the author is male, and from the remaining letters, it is likely that the name was Mendel.

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24

Organized Movements of American Judaism

From 1880 to World War II

Michael R. Cohen

On the eve of mass migration to the United States, many believed that American Judaism was on the verge of unity. Isaac Mayer Wise's dream of a *Minhag America*, an American Rite, seemed to be within reach, and the Hebrew *Union* College (HUC) and *Union* of American Hebrew Congregations seemed to provide an organizational framework for all American congregations to work together. Following the Civil War, Americans on the whole longed for unity, and it appeared as if union was truly at hand for American Jewry as well. This dream, however, was not to be.

Following the graduation ceremony of HUC's first class of rabbis in 1883, which drew over one hundred rabbis and lay leaders from across the country, attendees were treated to a nine-course dinner. The menu, however, shattered any illusions of unity. Clams, shrimp, frogs' legs, and crabs were served, and dairy products were mixed with meat – all in violation of traditional Jewish dietary laws. Some were angry and left in protest, while other traditionalists were simply insulted. Though the incident seems to have been a simple mistake on the part of the caterer, rather than apologizing, Wise and other Reform leaders instead argued that dietary laws were no longer relevant. Thus the so-called "*treyfa* banquet" led to the division of American Jewry into two broad camps – "Reform," and "everything else."

This essay will trace American Judaism from the *treyfa* banquet to World War II. During this era, American Judaism separated into multiple groups, however the ideologies of each group were frequently undefined, and the boundaries between the groups were often porous. Reform Judaism was the first to declare a platform, yet it had become more traditional by World War II. Orthodoxy was divided into modern Orthodoxy and fervent Orthodoxy, and each group had its own institutional structures. Conservative Judaism had no clear platform, and in fact was a coalition of rabbis from across the American Jewish spectrum. Thus, by World

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War II, American Judaism was characterized by a spectrum rather than clear ideological groupings.

In 1885, shortly after the *treyfa* banquet, a public disputation between Alexander Kohut and Kaufman Kohler helped to crystallize the division of American Judaism. Kohut was a traditional yet progressive rabbi, who bristled at Reform Judaism's disregard for Jewish law. "A Reform which seeks to progress without the Mosaic-rabbinical tradition," he maintained, "is a deformity – a skeleton without flesh and sinew, without spirit and heart. It is suicide; and suicide is not reform." Kaufman Kohler, a Reform rabbi, responded. "The gauntlet thrown in our faces," he maintained, "must be taken up at once." Kohler criticized Kohut's position, and asked, rhetorically, which position American Judaism should choose: "The one that turns the dials of the time backward, or the one that proudly points to the forward move of history?"[1]

Because Reform had no clear platform, and no clear definition of just how such a movement could point toward the future, Kohler, Wise, and other Reform leaders gathered in 1886 to offer a clear answer. The result of their deliberations was the Pittsburgh Platform, which offered the first set of defining principles for American Reform Judaism. The platform was not focused on particular issues of ritual, which may have been of prime interest to the average congregant, but rather it emphasized a broader set of principles. Among those was the idea that the Bible was not divine truth, that many traditional Jewish laws (such as *kashrut*: dietary laws) were "altogether foreign to our present mental and spiritual state" and maintaining these laws was "apt rather to obstruct than to further modern spiritual elevation," and the notion that Reform Jews considered themselves a religious community and not a nation – and no longer sought a return to Palestine. For Isaac Mayer Wise, the Pittsburgh Platform was a "Declaration of Independence."[2]

In practice, the Pittsburgh Platform helped to usher in the era known as Classical Reform. Classical Reform congregations were primarily comprised of American Jews of German descent, they generally featured mixed seating and organs, and men frequently did not wear head coverings or prayer shawls. Mixed choirs that included both men and women, Jews and non-Jews, were not uncommon. Places of worship were referred to as temples, reflecting the understanding that Jews were now at home in America and there was no longer a need to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. Services were conducted largely in English, electricity was used in the synagogue on the Sabbath, and synagogue functions were generally not kosher. Classical Reform Judaism also prized morality and social justice over the observance of traditional laws.[3]

While the Pittsburgh Platform and Classical Reform Judaism was one response to the *treyfa* banquet and the Kohut–Kohler controversy, more traditional responses also began to emerge. Yet unlike Reform, these responses did not contain specific platforms, and instead were comprised of shifting coalitions of groups and individuals. The first sign of a coalition was the 1886 founding of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) as an alternative rabbinical training school

to HUC, for "Jews of America faithful to Mosaic law and ancestral tradition." JTS positioned itself as an organization opposed to the Pittsburgh Platform, and represented a spectrum of beliefs to the right of Reform. Some of its early leaders were willing to introduce some changes that differed from traditional Orthodox practices, while others refused to do so. Some served in modern Orthodox congregations that resisted "innovations such as organs, [mixed] pews, disuse of Taleth [prayer shawls], female voices in the choir, Christians in the choir, etc," while others served in Conservative congregations, representing "the Judaism which permits some of the innovations named" – though just which innovations distinguished one from the other would remain unclear for decades. These imprecise definitions remind us that it is much more helpful to view American Judaism at the turn of the century as a spectrum rather than a division into clear movements.[4]

Many self-identified modern Orthodox Jews were deeply involved in JTS, and they soon created a new organization that would "protest against the teachings of Reform rabbis not in accord with the teachings of the Torah." These rabbis founded the Orthodox Union (OU), and they focused much of their efforts initially at emulating for recent immigrants a synthesis of Americanization and Orthodox tradition.[5] Yet like JTS, the OU frequently had difficulty reaching these new immigrants, even though the new American arrivals similarly used the term "Orthodox" to describe themselves.

These recent immigrants and their congregations generally practiced a more fervent form of Orthodoxy that was transplanted from Eastern Europe, and which resisted many forms of Americanization that were advocated by the modern Orthodox. This created a split within Orthodoxy, both ideologically and institutionally, and prevented a unified Orthodox movement from emerging in the early years of the twentieth century. One modern Orthodox leader defined this more traditional form of Orthodoxy as one that insists upon a certain ritual and certain forms, but objects to English Sermons, has little or no decorum, fails to hold its young men and young women, refuses in its schools Hebrew and religious education to girls and cares little whether women and girls attend religious service or not, and also degrades womanhood. The fact that one self-identified Orthodox rabbi could say this about others who also identified as Orthodox, demonstrates the bifurcation within Orthodoxy during this era.

Just as there were ideological splits amongst the Orthodox, there were also institutional splits. The modern Orthodox found a home in JTS and the OU, but these organizations were generally eschewed at first by the recent immigrants. Instead, new immigrants gravitated toward their own institutions, including the Etz Chaim Yeshiva, and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, which merged in 1915 to become Yeshiva University. Immigrant rabbis also created their own rabbinical organization – the Agudath ha-Rabbanim, or Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada. The Agudath ha-Rabbanim wanted to fulfill the divine "obligation to unite and form a union of Orthodox rabbis" to take on "the

constant desecration of Torah all around them." Their goal was to root out "unqualified persons" who "pose as rabbis," and also to increase levels of observance.

Thus Orthodoxy in the early years of the twentieth century was not unified, but was divided into two general groupings, each with its own institutions. Yet modern Orthodoxy itself was also splitting into multiple camps. By 1915, some modern Orthodox rabbis had remained committed to JTS, while others' primary alliance became Yeshiva University. Moreover, while some were committed to the OU, other modern Orthodox rabbis turned to the United Synagogue of America, an organization that they shared with self-identified Conservative rabbis. Modern Orthodoxy shared institutions with Conservative Judaism, and the story of how these two movements distinguished themselves institutionally and doctrinally from one another is in many ways the story of how the structure of organized American Jewish movements emerged.

The Conservative movement, from its earliest days, was never intended to distinguish modern Orthodox from Conservative Jews, but rather was intended to *unite* these two groups. The Conservative movement was built around Solomon Schechter, who arrived at JTS in 1902 seeking to revitalize a struggling institution. In a similar fashion to the followers of other charismatic religious leaders, Schechter's students at JTS created Conservative Judaism to spread their teacher's ideals and to carry out his legacy.[6]

Solomon Schechter arrived in America as one of the foremost Jewish scholars in the world. He was born into a Romanian Hasidic family, and, after studying in a traditional yeshiva, he attended a rabbinical school in L'viv. He then moved west – first to Vienna and then to Berlin – where he encountered *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, the scientific, scholarly study of Judaism. From there, Schechter moved to Britain in 1883, where he began to teach rabbinics at Jews' College in London. He published tracts on ancient Hebrew texts, and he then accepted a position at Cambridge University teaching the Talmud. He continued to publish, but it was while at Cambridge that he discovered ancient manuscripts and fragments that had been preserved in the Cairo Genizah. This discovery brought Schechter fame throughout the Jewish world, and it was with this background that he arrived in America in 1902 to lead the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Schechter's vision was to *unite* traditional Jewry behind the fairly simple message of English sermons, modern education, and decorum in the synagogue. He argued that the English sermon was "the only means of making the public acquainted with the word of God, the tenets of Judaism and the history of Israel's heroic sufferings." Moreover, he claimed that "to oppose proper pedagogical methods in the instruction of our children, means to be instrumental in the bringing up of a rebellious generation, which will not only be ignorant of Judaism, but will hate and abhor it." Finally, Schechter maintained that "to object to strict order and decorum in our places of worship, means to expel our children from the synagogue. . .." Without these three elements, he believed, "traditional Judaism will not survive

another generation in this country." Schechter's vision was broad based and intended to unite. "What we intend to accomplish is not to create a new party," he vociferously argued.[7]

As the leader of JTS, Schechter had the opportunity to shape a cadre of students, his disciples, who could spread his message throughout America. Not surprisingly, and reflecting the diversity within JTS, Schechter's disciples were fundamentally divided and occupied different places on the American Jewish spectrum. Some identified as Orthodox, others called themselves Conservative, and some even arrived at JTS with some training from HUC. Some disciples had no qualms about eating a dairy meal at a restaurant that was not under proper kosher supervision, while others refused to do so. Mixed seating and organ music were perfectly acceptable in the eyes of some disciples, while others strongly opposed. Essentially, entering or graduating from JTS did not require a strict set of principles that would distinguish the student or rabbi from any other movement. It simply meant a broad commitment to Schechter's vision of a traditional Judaism infused with English, decorum, and modern education.

With different religious outlooks, it was only natural that the disciples' congregations would look radically different from one another. One disciple, Herman Abramowitz, served in a Montreal congregation that was deeply committed to Schechter's vision. This congregation did not use an organ on the Sabbath and also featured separate seating, and the rabbi found little conflict within his congregation and remained there for a career that spanned over fifty years.

Another rabbi, Herman Rubenovitz, accepted a position at an Orthodox congregation in Boston that looked radically different, and his experiences were different as well. When he came to the congregation, he believed that "the old ways and methods were still observed,"[8] and that the congregation needed to Americanize in order to make it more in line with his own interpretation of Schechter's vision. After he arrived he introduced modest measures to increase levels of decorum, but later split his congregation along generational lines, and introduced an organ during Sabbath worship. Thus the Montreal and Boston congregations were very different, but they were both led by JTS graduates who were implementing their interpretation of Schechter's vision.

While these two rabbis had very different congregations, other congregations challenged Seminary graduates by their inability to decide on how they interpreted traditional Judaism. One congregation in Washington, DC, for example, was distinguished by its indecisiveness. It was founded as an Orthodox congregation, and its constitution declared that "no alteration, amendment, or modification shall ever at any time be made to those articles of the constitution pertaining to the mode of worship."[9] It was under the leadership of one JTS graduate, who felt that he had been unsuccessful in winning the congregation over to his vision. He believed that while the congregation professed to be Orthodox, its members did not live Orthodox lifestyles. After he left, the congregation invited an East European-trained rabbi to take over, and shortly thereafter another Seminary-trained

rabbi – Louis Egelson. Egelson hoped to remake this Orthodox congregation by introducing greater levels of decorum, by incorporating English, and by instituting modern educational methods. When he heard protests from the older generation, he dug in his heels, and delivered a sermon entitled "Some Weeds of Orthodox Judaism," in which he called certain practices "little more than the superstitious baggage of an outmoded past."[10] This split his congregation along generational lines, and Egelson was ultimately ousted by a mere two votes. While Egelson joined the institutions of the Reform movement, the Washington congregation continued to demonstrate its indecisiveness. Over the span of about a decade, it was led by at least three additional Seminary graduates and one European-trained *hazzan* (cantor).

The Boston and Washington congregations are just two of a countless number of examples that demonstrate that there was no clear congregational constituency in place for Seminary graduates in the early years of the twentieth century. According to one rabbi, there were still "few communities that desire to maintain the principles of Traditional Judaism, and at the same time, realize the value of decorum and the English sermon in the service, and of modern methods in inculcating the principles of our faith in the hearts of the coming generation."[11] Instead of ready-made congregations, it was up to the individual disciple to craft a congregation that aligned with his interpretation of Schechter's vision. One rabbi observed that "conservative congregations in America are not born, but have to be made by the graduates of the Seminary. The congregations are either orthodox or reform, and the rabbi has either to bring them back or to advance them to conservatism."[12]

In addition to the overlap between Conservative and modern Orthodox Judaisms, there was also a significant amount of overlap between Conservative and Reform congregations. One disciple maintained that opportunities were available in Reform congregations that had "rebelled at the extremes to which Reform was going."[13] He maintained that "had it not been for the radical Rabbis the Jewish congregations would never have drifted to radical reform." Therefore, it was "the duty and function of those who are opposed to radicalism and who are inclined to battle against its pernicious influence to go to places where they can be of some account by acting as a bulwark against further reforms."[14]

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century, it was clear that there was no platform that both unified the disciples and also distinguished them from the other groupings along the Jewish spectrum. But what was it then that united the disciples? In large part, this unity was derived by personal relationships – both with Schechter and with each other – that were initially fostered during their time at JTS. Schechter served as a mentor and father figure to many of his disciples, and, together with his wife Mathilde, transformed their home into a center for his students. "Really to know Dr. Schechter, one had to observe him in his home," one disciple wrote. "Theirs was an open house, and at his table on Sabbaths and Holidays, there were always Seminary students, distinguished visitors from

abroad, as well as impoverished scholars, and stranded rabbis." This student recalled how "the hospitality extended was ample and warm, and everyone was encouraged not only to share the good edibles, but also to participate in the stimulating conversation, and to enjoy the flow of wit so characteristic of our great teacher."[15]

That same student recalled that in addition to his role as leader of the Seminary, Schechter "nevertheless found time to interest himself in the personal problems and needs of each Seminary student. His attitude toward the student body was that of father and friend." He also remembered an incident shortly after the death of his father where Schechter "noticed that I was depressed and run-down, and insisted that I go away for a rest, and vacation to recover." Moreover, he wrote that Schechter was frequently approached by "indigent scholars and needy rabbis . . . seeking his encouragement and financial assistance. He would encourage them to continue their researches, and at the same time he would provide for their maintenance, toward which he often contributed far beyond his means."[16]

In addition to a close relationship between Schechter and the disciples, the disciples themselves developed close friendships with one another. They attended the Seminary during the formative years of their lives – their late teens and early twenties. They roomed together, and many foreign-born students helped native-born students to learn tenets of traditional Judaism, while many native-born students helped their European-born friends to learn English. They socialized together during their days at the Seminary, and continued to summer together at various vacation spots along the East Coast throughout their lives.

What is essential here is that these personal relationships helped to overcome the diversity within the group, and this diversity was institutionalized within the organizations that would later become the institutions of the Conservative movement. First, in the Seminary Alumni Association, which would later become the Rabbinical Assembly, "the question of religious policy seems to have been left out of consideration . . . [T]his is very significant in so far as it seems that the graduates of the seminary, as a body, have considered the question of [theology] as non-germane to its raison d'être."[17]

This embrace of their own diversity was essential in the transition of leadership from Schechter, the charismatic leader, to his disciples. The most important instrument that allowed Schechter to transfer his authority was undoubtedly the United Synagogue of America, today known as the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. While the organization today acts as a congregational body for the Conservative movement, it was created as a rabbinic group that helped Schechter and his disciples more effectively implement their vision. It was also created so that all of Schechter's disciples would feel welcome in the organization, regardless of their differences. The United Synagogue was so effective in transitioning leadership from Schechter to his disciples because it embraced diversity and did not allow fundamental differences in religious beliefs to outweigh common mission and personal bonds.

The United Synagogue's constitution emphasized the elements shared by Schechter's disciples, and ignored those that may have been divisive. Its primary aim followed Schechter's broad vision of strengthening Judaism among members of the next generation while remaining committed to tradition. The preamble of the organization's Constitution reflected this, and declared that the United Synagogue would "further the observance of the Sabbath and the Dietary Laws," "foster Jewish religious life in the home," and "encourage the establishment of Jewish religious schools. . .."[18] In addition to these broad aims, with which most American rabbis would agree, the preamble then reinforced its commitment to diversity by declaring that while the United Synagogue would not endorse any particular reforms to the service, it would "embrace all elements essentially loyal to traditional Judaism and in sympathy with the purposes outlined above."[19] The organization wanted "to be known as an organization which invites all those who would throw in their influence on the side of traditional and historical Judaism to join it. We would like to represent all Israel, and will accept the character of a party only if it will be forced upon us."[20]

Member rabbis were free to be guided by their own beliefs and practices on issues like mixed seating and the organ, but they remained united by Schechter's vision of a traditional Judaism with English sermons, modern education, and decorum. The ability of his disciples to hold positions of leadership in the United Synagogue, regardless of their own beliefs and practices, certainly tempered the need for them to break away and found competing institutions. All were welcome in the United Synagogue, and very few of Schechter's disciples set out on their own.

By offering leadership positions to those with very different viewpoints, and by entrusting his disciples to "expand and correct" his vision, Schechter transferred his authority to a group of disciples in much the same way that a secular corporation would move from a founder to a board of directors during the later years of that founder's life. While the founder would continue to command the respect of the organization's new leadership, the new board of directors would be empowered to make decisions on its own, preparing it for a smooth transition of power after the death of the founder.[21]

Schechter's death in 1915 only increased the resolve of his disciples to carry out their teacher's vision *together* through the United Synagogue. His students understood that Schechter's dream had not yet reached fruition, and they were committed to ensuring that it would. Elias Solomon, a Schechter disciple, maintained that when Schechter's "labors will have produced splendid fruits in the careers of those who sat under him . . . in the pulpit, and the school, in their lives, in their several communities, then the world will know what a great power he was for the building of Judaism in this country." Herman Abramowitz also expressed the sentiments of his fellow disciples when he wrote that Schechter's "work shall continue after him, his influence shall be multiplied a thousand fold, his faithful disciples shall disseminate his teachings throughout the length and breadth of this land."[22] Elias Solomon hoped that this would happen through the United

Synagogue, the organization that Schechter "regarded as his most worthy bequest to American Jewish life."[23] Schechter's disciples remained essentially unified in the United Synagogue after his death.

But while the embrace of diversity allowed Schechter to effectively transfer authority to his disciples, it also became the critical obstacle that prevented the Conservative movement from articulating its own platform and staking out its own unique territory along the American Jewish spectrum before World War II. The elements held in common by Schechter's disciples were so broad that they were not unique to them alone – all but the most radical Reform and the most fervent Orthodox rabbis could find some common ground.

Throughout the 1920s, for example, the OU's vision was almost indistinguishable from the United Synagogue's platform. The OU advocated a traditional Judaism that was infused with English sermons and decorum – a vision remarkably similar to Schechter's ideals. Just like the United Synagogue, the OU was also accepting of innovations like mixed seating – as late as 1951, one estimate suggested that 50 percent of these modern Orthodox congregations featured mixed seating, a reality very different than we know today.[24]

The interwar years, in fact, saw the growth of a modern Orthodoxy that closely resembled what others called Conservative Judaism. In fact, one disciple believed that some of his colleagues were "puzzled to understand wherein we conservatives, so-called, differ from the revamped orthodoxy which permits decorum in the service and English in the sermon." While there were more progressive disciples "whose point of view and whose congregations would never be tolerated in the Orthodox Union, are not these same men regarded as quasi-heretics by our own ecclesiastical authorities . . .?" the disciple rhetorically asked. "Is there not therefore ground for the suspicion that many of us here are merely tolerated because of the exigencies of organization which often permit logical inconsistencies to go on?" He argued that the present state of affairs was "a confusing situation, which is bound to work to the detriment of the Conservative party."[25]

Throughout the 1920s, other observers suggested that while modern Orthodoxy was becoming more liberal, Reform Judaism was becoming more traditional, and inching closer to the practices of the disciples by increasingly supporting Zionism, committing to Jewish peoplehood, and reinvigorating traditions like the bar mitzvah and the lighting of Hanukkah candles.[26] Reform rabbis, observed one disciple, were now expected to place "greater emphasis upon the beauty of ceremony in the synagogues and in the home." While not all Reform congregations were moving in this direction, the trend was widespread enough so that the disciples noticed. One Reform leader confessed that "the Reform movement had erred in neglecting the element of emotionalism in religion," and also acknowledged the importance of Palestine, though he still disapproved of Zionism as a political movement. This, he claimed, was "a new attitude" for "American Reform Judaism. . .." The fear was that if this trend continued, "it may yet encroach upon what we are pleased to call Conservative Judaism, and thus possibly dispossess us of

a good portion of our rationale . . . as Reform Judaism becomes more conservative, retaining at the same time its title, its cohorts, and its discipline, it will leave to conservative Judaism less and less to hold on to as its nostrum."[27]

Ultimately, with Orthodoxy's push to the left, and Reform's move to the right, this disciple feared that "as Orthodoxy becomes more and more de-Ghettoized and Reform becomes more and more Conservatized, what will be left for the Conservative Jew to do? How will he be distinguished from the other two? With both his wings substantially clipped he will surely be in a precarious position."[28] To carve out their own niche, Schechter's disciples began to call for unique attributes that would distinguish their movement from the others. Rabbis in the OU were doing the same thing, but to distinguish one group from the other, the OU created boundaries by defining deviant behavior – mixed seating, for example, became increasingly taboo. Yet with a history of diversity, Schechter's disciples were unable to create unique boundaries – they continued to welcome rabbis irrespective of their stances on such issues as mixed seating, for fear that boundaries would alienate those with whom they shared such deep friendships and goals.

Instead, they began the futile task of articulating positive attributes that members *inside* the group shared. This process is best observed through a 1927 debate that was sparked by Louis Finkelstein's paper, "The Things That Unite Us." As the title suggests, the paper tried to articulate the elements that those in the emerging Conservative movement held in common. A response to Finkelstein by Max Kadushin did not disagree with Finkelstein's central premise that there were common factors, but instead tried to define *different* factors that united the group of disciples. Another response by Eugene Kohn, another disciple, dismissed most of Finkelstein's points, but argued that the only common factor amongst them that could possibly distinguish them from other rabbis was their commitment to the Seminary that Schechter had been so instrumental in shaping. Though Schechter's disciples desperately wanted to move past the common denominator of discipleship, they never quite could.

Thus, by mid-century, American Judaism was hardly differentiated into the tripartite structure with which the twentieth century ended. By mid-century, Orthodoxy on the whole had grown increasingly more liberal, and it was frequently impossible to tell an OU congregation from a United Synagogue congregation. The Conservative movement now had an institutional framework, but that framework was based on inclusivity and unity rather than a unique platform. Reform was returning to many of the traditions that Classical Reform had cast aside. Further complicating the picture, some of those who had advocated for a clear Conservative platform, and who were frustrated by the emerging movement's emphasis on inclusivity, were instead slowly creating the Reconstructionist movement – which began as the left wing of the Conservative movement.

It was only in the years after World War II that the structured movements of American Judaism began to coalesce. Orthodoxy shifted to the right in the postwar years, and the OU became increasingly traditional and distinguishable from the

United Synagogue. In increasing numbers, graduates of Yeshiva University took posts in OU congregations, and JTS rabbis identified as Conservative rather than modern Orthodox. The United Synagogue and the Rabbinical Assembly continued to work toward the process of self-definition, and one of the most important events that helped to differentiate Orthodoxy from Conservative Judaism was the Conservative movement's decision to allow the use of electricity to further the observance of the Sabbath. Nevertheless, by World War II, American Jewish movements constituted a spectrum, and lacked clearly defined ideological boundaries.

Notes

1 Kohut, *Ethics of our Fathers*, 7; Kohler, *Backwards or Forwards: A Series of Discourses on Reform Judaism* (New York, 1885), 7, 9, cited in Sarna (2004: 147).
2 Sarna (2004: 150).
3 Sarna (2004: 194–195).
4 Mendes to Adler, February 14 1913, American Jewish Archives MS 39, box , folder 3 (Cincinnati, Ohio).
5 Gurock (2009: 125).
6 The following section is adapted from Cohen (forthcoming).
7 Solomon Schechter, "Address Delivered at the 1913 Convention," USAAR (1913): 19.
8 Rubenovitz (1967: 31).
9 Rabinowitz (1993: 103–104).
10 Rabinowitz (1993: 308).
11 Cohen to Adler, 11/23/17, Ratner Center, Jewish Theological Seminary Library, RG 15A.
12 Rosenger to Colleague, Ratner RG 15A Box 23 Folder 10.
13 Levinthal (1973: 205–206).
14 Ratner Center, RG 15A Box 1 Folder 1a (1 of 2), Abels to Schechter, 9/5/1911).
15 Rubenovitz (1967: 19). For more examples of this charismatic bond between Schechter and his disciples see Michael Cohen (forthcoming), particularly chapter 1.
16 Rubenovitz (1967: 19).
17 *Jewish Exponent,* 21 June 1901, 10, quoted in Fierstein (2001: 5).
18 Preamble of the Constitution of the United Synagogue of America, USAR (1913): 9.
19 Preamble of the Constitution of the United Synagogue of America, USAR (1913): 9.
20 Rosenblum (1970: 174–175, 207, 213). This explanation of the name "Agudath Jeshurun" was offered in the July 9, 1912 call to organize the organization, which was sent to the alumni, and signed by Jacob Kohn and Mordecai Kaplan. This document appears in Rosenblum (1970: 175), who notes that the original is in the Rubenovitz collection, Archives of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (AJTSA). Also see pp. 154–175.
21 The theory I present here for the transition from Schechter to the United Synagogue is based upon Jonathan G. Andelson, "Postcharismatic Authority in the Amana Society: The Legacy of Christian Metz," in Miller (1991: 42–45).

22 AJTSA, 58.
23 AJTSA, ARC 106, Folder 1/10, ND
24 Sarna, "Mixed Seating in the American Synagogue," in Wertheimer (1987: 380–381). Also see Jenna Joselit (1990: 104), who has pointed out that "it was only during the years following World War II, when the *mechitzah* [partition] became the yardstick by which American Jews distinguished an Orthodox from a Conservative synagogue."
25 Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly (PRA) (1927): 34, 7/7/1927.
26 Sarna (2004: 249–250).
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25

Paths of Modernity

Jewish Women in Central Europe

Kerry Wallach

In March 1931, on the occasion of the third annual celebration of the "Day of the Book," German Jewish journalist Doris Wittner argued that Jewish women numbered especially prominently among women who were the active creators of modern thought and culture. Furthermore, Witter provocatively claimed that many pioneering works by Jewish women reflected a direct connection to ancient Jewish culture and tradition – and even to the "Jewish God." Indeed, Jewish women encountered modern Europe in ways that were often distinct from those of non-Jewish women, as evidenced by both their cultural production and community involvement. In addressing the tensions between Jewish and general spheres, and between the traditional and the modern, this chapter explores Jewish women's experiences of modernity in Central Europe in the early twentieth century (c. 1900–1939). An overview of the period prior to 1900 serves to contextualize changes from the fin de siècle to the interwar period. Specific cultural contributions come to light in a close examination of Jewish women's engagement with literature, journalism, and the arts. The final section explores regional differences between the urban centers of Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, and Zurich, where women cultivated approaches to modernity particular to their respective locations.

Paradoxically, Jewish women served as active agents of European modernization, as Wittner suggested, but also as keepers of Jewish traditions. Through involvement in cultural circles, social gatherings, and political and welfare organizations, many forged innovative paths and even served as forerunners of modernity. Disproportionately represented among feminists and university students, Jewish women also figured prominently in many avant-garde literary and artistic movements. At the same time, women who adhered to the requirements of traditional observance struggled to balance the demands of the modern world with

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age-old Jewish customs. Culture created both by and for a Jewish audience was subject to critique by conservative members of Jewish communities, and therefore was not generally on the cutting edge. In fact, many religiously observant Jewish women were active primarily in domestic spaces well into the twentieth century; only a few exceptional religious women found a way to integrate tradition with the modern innovations in their lives.

Overview of Jewish Women in Central Europe before 1900

It is instructive to look back several centuries in order to gain a better understanding of the roles women played in twentieth-century Jewish culture. Jewish women in Central Europe took on exceptionally modern roles already in the early modern period, as historian Monika Richarz and others have demonstrated (2006: 87–104). While their fathers, brothers, and husbands studied the Torah and other traditional Jewish texts, women such as Glikl bas Judah Leib, best known for her autobiographical writing, engaged in entrepreneurial activities and thereby provided financial support for their families. This changed with the embourgeoisement or bourgeois acculturation of German Jewry in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the growth of the middle class made it such that the vast majority of Jewish women (along with their non-Jewish counterparts) primarily occupied the domestic spaces of home and family life.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a handful of Jewish women gained extreme prominence as salonières, the organizers and hostesses of important salons, particularly in Berlin and Vienna. These salons provided gathering places for Jewish women as well as philosophers, actors, and members of the aristocracy; many served as centers of German cultural life. At a time when well-to-do Jewish women were denied religious education but encouraged to pursue secular subjects such as foreign languages, music, and novels, it was only logical that they began to socialize with non-Jews. Henriette Herz, the wife of the physician Marcus Herz, ran a salon known to be the highpoint of Berlin cultural life about 1800. Berlin was also home to other Jewish salon hostesses including Rebecca Friedländer (or Regina Frohberg), who produced 16 novels, and Amalie Beer, mother of the composer Jacob Meyerbeer. Fanny von Arnstein and Cäcelie, two daughters from the powerful Itzig family in Berlin, both married Viennese Jews with aristocratic titles and hosted salons in Vienna. Perhaps the best-known Berlin salonière, Rahel Levin Varnhagen often entertained such notables as Wilhelm and Alexander von Humboldt and Prince Louis Ferdinand of Prussia. Varnhagen's numerous letters, over 10 thousand of which have been collected, testify to her expansive social network. In the early nineteenth century, it was very difficult for Jews to achieve such levels of success, particularly in light of the Christian-dominated Romantic movement. Many Jewish salon women had a fairly conflicted relationship to Judaism, and the majority converted to Christianity (Hertz, 1998).

Nineteenth-century Jewish women were, strangely enough, both advocates of acculturation and protectors of Jewish tradition and religious life. Even as they encouraged their children to pursue paths that would lead to bourgeois acculturation, they remained keepers of "domestic Judaism" and played an active role in cultivating Jewish traditions in the home (Kaplan, 1991: 64f.). Women were also participants in the evolution of the European Jewish Reform Movement, though they did not serve as religious leaders until well into the twentieth century; the first woman to be ordained as a rabbi, Regina Jonas, received her rabbinical certification in 1935 (Meyer, 2011: 152). But the first confirmation of Jewish girls took place already in 1814, and by 1817, girls were being confirmed at the Beer Temple in Berlin. In the 1820s, confirmations for both boys and girls were introduced in Vienna (Rose, 2008: 29f.). Activists such as Goldschmidt and Lina Morgenstern published several early feminist texts in the 1840s; Goldschmidt in particular was engaged on behalf of early religious reform and women's emancipation. Writer Fanny Lewald, who converted to Christianity, wrote novels that questioned conversion, a well-known autobiography, and numerous feminist writings. In the final decade of the nineteenth century, Nahida Remy (later Nahida Ruth Lazarus), a convert to Judaism, openly glorified women who adhered to traditional Jewish values in *The Jewish Woman* (*Das jüdische Weib*, 1892; see Meyer, 2011: 141–148). By 1900, Jewish women were well positioned to make an impact as modern cultural trendsetters as well as protectors and reformers of Jewish tradition.

Changes from the Fin-de-Siècle to the Interwar Period

In their roles as salon hostesses and society leaders, Jewish women in the early twentieth century continued to influence and set the tone for trends in literature, art, politics, and other aspects of modern life. By the 1920s they had begun studying at universities, become capable businesswomen who worked in commercial enterprises or offices, and had put their artistic talents to work in the fine arts. Moreover, a disproportionate number of Jewish women in Central Europe were involved in general women's movements, and many served as leaders both in general organizations and in Jewish feminist organizations. In fact, several scholars have credited Jewish women with serving as a force of modernization: They were early advocates of birth control, played a significant role in the migration of Jewish families to cities, and were more apt to attend a university or join organizations than their non-Jewish counterparts (Grossmann, 1995: 49; Freidenreich, 2002: 16; Hyman, 2006: 31–32).

By 1900, Central European Jewish women were by and large more acculturated into mainstream society than their counterparts in Eastern Europe, particularly with respect to language usage. Though a small percentage of women in Central Europe were born into religious or immigrant families from Eastern Europe and

thus were raised speaking Yiddish or Russian, German was the primary spoken language of most Jewish women in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland, and also the language in which most wrote literature and letters. A small number of Swiss Jewish women spoke and wrote in French, including philosopher Jeanne Hersch. In the Czech Republic and Hungary, many Jews were raised bilingual and spoke either German and Czech or German and Hungarian (Magyar); others spoke no German, but spoke Yiddish in addition to Czech or Hungarian. Certainly some Central European women had a working knowledge of Hebrew for religious purposes, though only a small percentage were ardent Zionists who studied Hebrew as part of a plan to emigrate to Eretz Israel. More began to study Hebrew in the 1930s; many considered emigration in light of the growing threat of Nazism.

The early twentieth century witnessed a revival of the salon culture that had previously flourished around 1800: in both Berlin and Vienna, Jewish women continued to host salon-like gatherings for both Jewish and non-Jewish attendees, thereby making an active contribution to the development of modern culture. The Berlin salons of writer Auguste Hauschner around 1900 were compared to earlier gatherings organized by Rahel Levin Varnhagen, though the more modern time in which Hauschner lived permitted her to be as ardently Jewish in public as she was German. Berlin salons continued to exist through the 1920s, sometimes mainly for specific Jewish subgroups such as Zionists. Salon hostesses during the Weimar Republic (1919–1933) included Liberal journalist Doris Wittner and Zionist Ajala Grüngard; in addition, many non-Jewish women had taken to hosting salons by the Weimar period.

Different political spheres, both general and Jewish, also provided Jewish women with opportunities for activism and involvement. Many, such as revolutionary Rosa Luxemburg, who helped found the German Communist Party in 1918, held prominent positions in left-wing politics; contemporary journalist Bertha Badt-Strauss argued that Luxemburg's Judaism played a role in her involvement in socialism and the workers' movement (Hahn, 2005: 113). With the growth of Zionism and other Jewish political movements, like-minded women also forged alliances on behalf of various Jewish organizations. Social worker Henriette May and writer Else Dormitzer, for example, played a key role in rallying women to become active members of the Centralverein deutscher Staatsbürger jüdischen Glaubens (Central Union of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith), an organization that worked to combat antisemitism.

Viennese Jewish women, too, furthered social and intellectual exchange through their salons before and during the interwar period. Journalist and salonière Berta Zuckerkandl-Szeps, who is thought to have been in direct competition with socialite Alma Mahler-Werfel, hosted gatherings for Jewish and non-Jewish intellectuals ranging from theater director Max Reinhardt to prominent German-language Jewish authors such as Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, and Arthur Schnitzler (Spoerri, 2009: 165f.). In addition to founding the first school in Vienna to prepare girls for university and participating in numerous other social welfare projects,

salon hostess Eugenie Schwarzwald also furthered intellectual exchange by integrating avant-garde ideas with concrete innovations in pedagogy and social welfare (Silverman, 2007: 156–157). The Schwarzwald school, which was 69 percent Jewish in 1910, was attended primarily by the daughters of established upper class Viennese Jews (Rose, 2008: 16).

Among the most progressive modern Jewish women – and those who later became active in the creation of modern thought or science – were those who attended university. These Jewish university women were not satisfied with becoming homemakers, but rather sought out modernizing paths as physicians, educators, scientists, lawyers, and social reformers. Though a majority of Central European Jewish university women married and had children, some remained single, including physicians Käthe Frankenthal and Charlotte Wolff, and social work pioneer Alice Salomon (Freidenreich, 2002: 1–2, 112–132). Orthodox physician and mother of five Rahel Straus, whose groundbreaking work in the medical field involved working a clinic that performed early abortions, was also very active in the Jewish women's movement, to the point that several scholars have dubbed her representative of the "new Jewish woman" (Prestel, 1998: 139; Freidenreich, 2009: 145). An exceptional woman, Straus balanced raising a family with a medical career and activism on behalf of Jewish women.

Other university-educated women were at the forefront of scholarship in the humanities. Whereas a large number studied German, French, or English literature, others studied classical or ancient languages, art history, history, philosophy, and musicology (Freidenreich, 2002: 59–60). Trained as a literary scholar, journalist Bertha Badt-Strauss was among the first women in a German-speaking country to receive a doctoral degree; she was also the first woman to receive a doctorate in philosophy from the Friedrich-Wilhelms-University in Berlin in 1908. Badt-Strauss published several studies of Jewish men and women including a book on Moses Mendelssohn and a history of Jewish women (*Jüdinnen*, 1937). Historian Selma Stern, having received her doctorate in history from the University of Munich in 1914, was among the first women to demonstrate scholarly interest in Jewish topics, and is still well known today for her many writings on Jewish history. With a dissertation on St Augustine, political philosopher Hannah Arendt also numbered among the Central European women who received a doctorate in the humanities in the 1920s.

Both Jewish women who received university degrees, and others who didn't, went on to transform the workforce in a variety of pioneering ways, despite the fact that the majority still remained close to the domestic sphere. Like Jewish men, more than half of working Jewish women were involved in commercial fields such as selling merchandise and produce, and 10 percent worked in free professions such as health and welfare. Although large numbers of women entered the German workforce during the early twentieth century (approximately 32 percent of Jewish women in Prussia were employed by 1925), several scholars have demonstrated that in fact a smaller percentage of Jewish women worked outside the home compared to German women in general (Meyer, 1998: 68; Kaplan, 2005: 215f.;

Richarz, 2006: 101). Marion Kaplan in particular has written extensively on the ways in which women served as cultural mediators in the domestic sphere, both with respect to introducing trends of acculturation and as guardians of the Jewish tradition (1991: 64f.)

For Jewish women living in Central Europe in the early twentieth century, the quest to become modern was interwoven with participation in the general women's movement, and often entailed additional involvement with the Jewish women's movement. The fact that Jewish women were active in both German and Jewish women's movements suggests they may have participated in some modernizing processes to a greater degree than non-Jewish women. According to Maya Fassmann, Jewish women were statistically overrepresented in the German women's movement regardless of their tendency to also found their own Jewish women's groups (1993: 147–165). Founded by Bertha Pappenheim and Sidonie Werner in 1904, the Jüdischer Frauenbund (League of Jewish Women) in Germany combined Jewish identity with feminist goals, advocating both for women's rights within Jewish communities and for new approaches to social welfare. By the late 1920s, at least one quarter of all Jewish women between 15 and 65, over fifty thousand in total, were members of the Frauenbund. In 1912, just shortly after the Frauenbund was founded, 19 local Jewish women's associations joined together to form the Sisterhood of the B'nai B'rith, with Ernestine Eschelbacher as both founder and president until her death in July 1931. In addition to being active in social spheres, intellectual and scientific movements, and leaders in both general and Jewish women's movements, Jewish women were notable producers of many different forms of modern culture.

Cultural Contributions of Jewish Women

From literary and journalistic contributions to avant-garde artistic movements, to fields in the arts including photography, fashion, theater, film, and dance, Jewish women played a formative role in shaping the Central European cultural landscape. In most cases, however, their contributions to general culture in no way reflected their Jewishness or affiliation to Judaism. Yet many participants in general European culture were also active in the creation of distinctly Jewish culture intended primarily for Jewish audiences, and still others created works exclusively aimed at Jews. A few well-known figures, such as poet Else Lasker-Schüler, became known for Jewish-themed writings even in general circles.

Literature and journalism

Though not always counted among the most prominent writers of the early twentieth century, a number of Jewish women penned important literary texts that

would eventually become part of the "canon" of modern European Jewish literature. For example, women writers made significant contributions to the genre of the ghetto story (*Ghettogeschichte*), a predominantly male genre that first became popular in the mid-1800s, and which aimed to depict the isolated experiences of ghetto or shtetl life for those out of touch with Jewish traditions. Writing under the pseudonym Ulrich Frank, Ulla Wolff-Frankfurter published numerous ghetto stories about Jewish life in Silesia beginning in the 1890s. Like many women with extensive knowledge of Jewish traditions, she was the daughter of a rabbi; she also married a rabbi. One of the few women to publish ghetto stories under her own name, Galician-born Zionist writer and woman's activist Rosa Pomeranz was also well known to readers of German Jewish newspapers and Jewish-themed literature. Pomeranz's Zionist writings further encouraged mothers to lead their children to Zionism, and to teach them "the language, literature and history of [the Jewish] nation" (Rose, 2008: 114). The memoirs of East European Pauline Wengeroff, who was perhaps the first Jewish woman to write her memoirs for public consumption, also introduced German readers to the "authentic" Jewish traditions and rituals of Eastern Jewish life (Magnus, 2011: 14). Wengeroff's writings also suggest that Jewish women in Eastern Europe were actively involved in the creation of a modern Jewish identity during the early decades of the twentieth century.

During the Weimar Republic, a period of relative freedom for both women and Jews in Germany, numerous Jewish women achieved astounding popularity as writers of general fiction and poetry that dealt with issues related to women's emancipation. In fact, they numbered among the leading female authors active in the literary movement known as New Objectivity (*Neue Sachlichkeit*), which evolved partly in response to German Expressionism: they described realistic, concrete scenarios using straightforward language. Only rarely did their most popular works treat Jewish themes, though it is possible that Jewishness informed the perspectives from which they wrote. Vicki Baum, Gabriele Tergit, and Mascha Kaléko represent three exemplary Jewish women who first received acclaim for their groundbreaking writings during the Weimar period; interestingly, all three later became known in English-speaking countries following their exile from Germany. As someone who published a few Jewish-themed ghetto stories early on in her career, Viennese-born Vicki Baum was particularly well known among Jewish readers. Additionally, Baum's prolific career writing bestselling fiction for the Ullstein publishing house in Berlin catapulted her toward international fame: her novel *Grand Hotel* (*Menschen im Hotel*, 1929), which centers around a stenographer's struggle to appear as a well-dressed new woman (*neue Frau*), was made into a film that won the Academy Award for Best Picture in 1932. Similarly, writer Gabriele Tergit, best known for her feuilletons in the *Berliner Tageblatt* and other general Berlin newspapers, also wrote popular novels about characters with qualities of the new woman. Only after 1933, when authors known to be Jewish were banned from publishing in Germany, did Tergit take up Jewish

subjects in her writing. Galician-born poet Mascha Kaléko, too, first incorporated explicitly Jewish subjects into her writing after her poetry about modern women was banned in about 1935. Yet it is Kaléko's first volume, *The Lyrical Stenobook* (*Das lyrische Stenogrammheft*, 1933), that has sold over a hundred thousand copies, more than any other German-language volume of poetry aside from classic German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe.

Many Jewish women writers worked in the field of journalism, which grew tremendously with the explosion of new mass media in the early twentieth century. As journalists, Jewish women penned everything from front-page articles about current events or important cultural figures, to essays about women's roles in both general and Jewish society, to feuilletons about literature, fashion, and film. They published in general newspapers and magazines such as the *Berliner Tageblatt* and *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung*, and the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* in Vienna. In fact, one 1928 serialized novel by bestselling author Vicki Baum is thought to have increased the circulation of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* by two hundred thousand copies. But these journalists also contributed massively to the German-language Jewish press, which reached its heyday in the late 1920s with over a hundred different periodicals aimed at Jewish readers; truly modern "Jewish journalists" were able to appeal to both Jewish and general audiences. Prolific writers such as Wittner, Badt-Strauss, and Clementine Krämer contributed both to general papers and to popular German Jewish newspapers such as the non-partisan *Israelitisches Familienblatt*, the Zionist *Jüdische Rundschau*, and the Liberal *Centralverein-Zeitung*. Indeed, through all of these literary and journalistic forms, Jewish women took a highly active role in shaping the ways in which modernity was presented to both Jewish and non-Jewish readers.

Arts and entertainment

Active in nearly all fields of the arts, Central European Jewish women were among the creative avant-garde who revolutionized the modern fine arts and entertainment world in the first few decades of the twentieth century. As painters, sculptors, photographers, fashion journalists, fashion designers, and theater and film actresses, Jewish women made significant contributions to artistic movements. Several were also known for their representations of distinctly Jewish subjects, and actors occasionally had the opportunity to perform the roles of Jewish characters. Though the majority of Jewish women artists and performers participated in modern movements in ways that were not discernibly Jewish, it is possible to conclude that their social circles might have been especially supportive of creative endeavors.

A number of women working in the fine arts specialized in modern interpretations of Jewish themes, suggesting that traditional Jewish interpretations informed and were compatible with the work of at least several artists. Art historian Rahel Wischnitzer-Bernstein is well known for her important contributions to the study of art in Berlin, both through the Yiddish-language periodical *Milgroym* and her

research on Jewish artists. Several artists born in Eastern Europe, including Regina Mundlak and Rahel Szalit, promoted "authentic" Eastern culture to Jewish audiences in Germany. Based in Berlin, both women exhibited their work with the help of well-known Jewish artist Max Liebermann. In a particularly innovative way, Szalit's lithographs from the 1920s combined modern Expressionist techniques with traditional Jewish motifs; many of her images appeared as illustrations to Yiddish literary works by authors such as Sholem Aleichem. At the same time, Szalit contributed to general avant-garde movements: she was known in Berlin circles for her paintings of modern women that were in line with the New Objectivity. Sculptor Erna Weill first became interested in Jewish themes somewhat later; she took inspiration for her work from Martin Buber's course on Hasidism at the Frankfurt Lehrhaus beginning in 1933. Weill went on to craft pieces such as a Havdalah spice box, Shabbat candleholders, and many sculptures with biblical themes. After immigrating to the United States, she became a founding member of a group of New Jersey artists called the Modern Artists Guild.

Central European Jewish women numbered among the most notable figures working with the modern medium of photography in the 1920s and 1930s: their photographs were an integral part of the modern visual landscape. To be sure, their work could be found everywhere, from exhibition halls, to illustrated periodicals, to bestselling book covers. Among these photographers were Ellen Auerbach, Aenne Biermann, Marianne Breslauer, Liselotte Grschebina, Lotte and Ruth Jacobi, Lucia Moholy, and Yva (Else Neuländer-Simon). Several were also enlisted to take photographs of products to be used in advertisements, thereby contributing to the growing consumer culture of Central Europe. Occasionally their work featured Jewish subjects: Ruth Jacobi's photographs of Jews on New York's Lower East Side, for example, appeared on the covers of German translations of American Jewish literature.

Many Jewish women held prominent positions at the intersections of art, fashion, and consumer culture; one could even argue that the European fashion industries of the early twentieth century would not have been the same without their creative input. Indeed, Jews were disproportionately represented in the garment industry: by 1932, nearly 80 percent of department stores and 60 percent of wholesale and retail clothing businesses in Germany were owned by Jews (Kremer, 2007: 14). Though women were more likely to be engaged as retail clerks or consumers in the garment and related industries, some were involved in the production end in various ways. For example, hat designer Regina Friedländer was a leading name in the ready-to-wear fashion industry of Berlin; designs from her upscale boutique appeared in fashion magazines and as part of elegant film costumes. Fashion journalists Elsa Herzog, Ola Alsen, and Julie Elias contributed fashion editorials to general women's magazines such as *Die Dame*, and occasionally even to Jewish periodicals. When Lisl Goldarbeiter and Böske Simon were crowned international beauty queens in 1929, they were featured prominently wearing the latest fashions in both general and Jewish magazines. It should also be noted, however, that

representations of fashion in Jewish magazines were often subjected to the criticism of Jewish religious authorities and thus generally lagged several years behind the trends.

In the entertainment world, several Viennese-born Jewish performers were especially well known for their theatrical talents and famous performances under the direction of Jewish theater directors including Otto Brahm and Max Reinhardt. In fact, contemporary critics including Arnold Zweig and Doris Wittner determined that these women were gifted tragediennes, or tragic performers, precisely because of the suffering and alienation they had experienced as Jews. Indeed, theater actresses Elisabeth Bergner, Fritzi Massary, Maria Orska, and Irene Triesch achieved spectacular degrees of success for both Jewish and general audiences in Vienna and in Weimar Berlin. Operetta diva Fritzi Massary became so successful, in part due to performances at Berlin's Metropol Theater, that she was able to promote her own brand of cigarettes in Germany and internationally. Despite her conversion to Christianity, Massary was credited with having introduced the notion of "Jewish women as objects of public reverence on and off stage" (Otte, 2006: 239). Already famous for her theatrical roles, Elisabeth Bergner went on to become one of the best-known female Jewish film stars to emerge from Europe.

In the fine arts, in fashion, and in the entertainment world, Jewish women made significant contributions to modern European culture – some of which were surely informed by their connections to Jewishness. Many Jewish women artists engaged with and were even at the forefront of avant-garde movements from Expressionism to New Objectivity, and several of their works focused on Jewish themes. Photographers became known for their innovative styles and participation in the Bauhaus and other schools; their photographs were also used for practical purposes such as book and advertisement illustrations, and sometimes for Jewish literary works. Female fashion writers and designers participated in an industry in which Jews had long been overrepresented. Finally, theater and film stars were hailed as talented performers in Europe and all over the world, in part because of their supposed ability to connect to Jewish traditions.

Women in Metropolitan Centers of Jewish Life in Central Europe

Early twentieth-century Central European Jewish life and culture gravitated around metropolitan centers in Germany, Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Switzerland. By the 1930s, Berlin, Vienna, and Budapest were each home to Jewish populations of nearly two hundred thousand; Prague's Jewish population of more than 90 thousand was not far behind. The following section examines several representative urban centers to illuminate similarities and differences between women's experiences in Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Budapest, and Zurich. Of course,

many other important cities should be taken into consideration – particularly Hamburg, Frankfurt, and Munich – but a sampling of five cities suffices to shed light on basic regional differences.

Berlin

The cultural capital of Germany in the early twentieth century, as today, Berlin's range of Jewish women encompassed all types, from the most innovative and modern to the most traditional, and from the most acculturated Jews of German descent to East European immigrants. The capital city was also home to writers, artists, and actors from Vienna, Munich, and elsewhere, who sought out the cafés of Berlin in which to make a name for themselves. Compared to Munich, Frankfurt, or Hamburg, Berlin was relatively liberal and thus attracted more members of the avant-garde. In contrast, Frankfurt was known as a center of religious Jewish life, and Munich was the seat of more traditional and Zionist endeavors. But due in part to its capital status, Berlin housed central institutions such as the Association for Liberal Judaism and the Zionist Federation of Germany.

As the center of culture and also the city with the largest Jewish population in Germany (approximately 160 thousand or 4 percent of the city's population in 1925), Berlin was also the most popular location for German Jewish women's organizations. The German Jewish women's movement had its seat in Berlin, and numerous other organizations and print organs also stemmed from Berlin. Bertha Falkenberg, President of the Berlin chapter of the Frauenbund from 1924, was also active in the Central Welfare Office of the Berlin Jewish Community. Several Jewish women's periodicals including the *Blätter des jüdischen Frauenbundes* (1924–1938) and *Die jüdische Frau* (1925–1927) were published in Berlin. And it was in Berlin in 1928 that British Reform Jewish leader Lily Montagu became the first woman to deliver a sermon from the pulpit of a German synagogue.

Many of the culturally engaged modern Jewish women described in this essay lived and worked in Berlin for at least a portion of their careers; indeed, everyone who was anyone seems to have passed through Berlin during the 1920s, and many through its notable cafés. For example, Else Lasker-Schüler was a regular at the Romanisches Café, where she befriended important figures such as Yiddish poet Abraham Nokhum Stencl. Similarly, poet Mascha Kaléko was effectively discovered while sitting in the Romanisches Café. Toward the end of the Weimar period, actress Irene Triesch held readings and performances of Scripture for Berlin's Reform Jewish community. Gertrud Kolmar's poetry and prose writings, most published for the first time after World War II, literarily engage the urban setting of Berlin. Further, Berlin's Scheunenviertel, the area near Alexanderplatz, was home to the Yiddish-language culture of East European immigrants, including many women who worked to support their families. Berlin thus provided a space in which all types of Jewish women could gather and flourish, among them

activists, politically engaged Liberals and Zionists, writers and artists, and East European immigrants.

Vienna

In the decades after 1900, Jewish women in Vienna struggled with both rising antisemitism and gender-based stereotypes, and many turned away from Judaism or ignored it completely. Historian Marsha Rozenblit has argued that prior to World War I, the Jews of Habsburg Austria developed a tripartite identity: they were politically Austrian, culturally German, and ethnically Jewish. With the rise of Austrian nationalism and antisemitism in the interwar period, many Viennese Jews converted to Christianity; others instead sought out Zionist politics (Rozenblit, 2001: 4; Holmes and Silverman, 2009: 11). Jewish women also possessed a fourth layer of gender identity, and according to historian Alison Rose (2008; 4) could be understood to have embraced a quadripartite identity: "Austrian loyalty, German (or other) culture, Jewish ethnicity, and female gender." But in light of developments in psychoanalysis, among other factors, Viennese Jewish women were increasingly sexualized and stereotyped. Many downplayed Jewishness in their public lives, even as they increasingly participated in contemporary political, philanthropic, and social welfare organizations.

Nevertheless, a good number of Viennese women remained active in Jewish circles, and many contributed to the growth of Jewish feminist and philanthropic organizations in Vienna, as well as to Jewish publications. Philanthropic organizations provided Jewish women with important opportunities to enter public life in Vienna beginning in the nineteenth century. The Israelitischer Frauen-Wohltätigkeits-Verein (Israelite Women's Charity Society) was founded in 1815; by 1915, a total of 88 Jewish charity organizations operated in Vienna, of which 18 were women's organizations (Rose, 2008: 46–47). Zionists Erna Patak and Anitta Müller-Cohen were especially active in the Viennese Jewish women's movement. The first World Congress of Jewish Women was held in Vienna in May 1923; the third World Congress of Zionist Women, in August 1923. When Vienna's Jewish population peaked at around 185 thousand in 1938, Jewish women were involved in numerous women's organizations, both Jewish and general.

Women were also active in many different publication spheres in interwar Vienna, contributing more works than ever before to both prominent Viennese newspapers and the Jewish press, in addition to novels and dramas. Lisa Silverman has argued that writers such as Veza Canetti and Else Feldmann constructed the Leopoldstadt, a heavily Jewish area of Vienna, as an "in between" space between public sphere and private home; moreover, she deems their contributions to the socialist *Arbeiter-Zeitung* indicative of a "secular Jewish subculture in interwar Vienna" (Silverman, 2006: 31). The Jewish press, too, reveals that Viennese women were actively involved in forging a modern Jewish identity. The *Wiener*

Morgenzeitung, the only German-language Jewish newspaper ever to appear on a daily basis, included occasional sections on the modern Jewish household that clearly were aimed at female readers. The Zionist magazine *Menorah*, edited in part by Josefine Hoffmann, published articles, fashion sections, and advertisements which reveal that even the observant Jewish women of Vienna were interested in modern styles compatible with Jewish values. Despite the presence of antisemitism and misogyny that confronted Viennese Jewish women with additional challenges, many took an active role in contributing to Viennese modernisms and to the Jewish culture produced in Vienna.

Prague

Jewish women from Bohemia, later Czechoslovakia, faced different localized decisions about national affiliation and language, and which cultural traditions to embrace: many Prague Jews spoke German and were German-liberal cultural leaders, whereas others aligned themselves with the Czech culture of Bohemia. In what Scott Spector has termed the "unhealthy, cramped insularity" of Franz Kafka's fin de siècle, women were often located in the periphery, beyond the inner cultural and intellectual center of Prague (Spector, 2000: 22). Some Czech-speaking Jewish women, such as Gisa Picková-Saudková, were active in the Czech-Jewish nationalist movement beginning in the 1880s, and many Czech-Zionist women rejected life in the Diaspora (Iggers, 1995: 198). In contrast, a number of German-speaking Jewish women from Prague, which was also the center of Jewish life in Bohemia more generally, became involved in women's organizations in Germany. In order to continue this involvement, many moved to Berlin or other destinations abroad.

Like their German counterparts, many Jewish women in Prague entered the professional workforce during the final decades of the nineteenth century, though a husband often proved necessary for women to gain access to all aspects of Prague society. Wilma Iggers has argued that because there was no female equivalent of the male Jewish intelligentsia in Prague and only a few women managed to attend university, Prague Jewish women generally were stuck waiting to be matched with the proper husband in order to become a part of middle class society (1995: 23–26). As if to illustrate this phenomenon, the two female protagonists in Max Brod's popular novel *Jewesses* (*Jüdinnen*, 1911) struggle to secure husbands during a summer spent in the fashionable Czech resort town of Teplitz.

Even in what seem to have been stifling conditions for Jewish women in Prague, a few exceptional Jewish women forged successful paths as social and cultural figureheads. Berta Fanta hosted literary salons attended by her son-in-law Hugo Bergmann, as well as other Zionist intellectuals including Felix Weltsch and Max Brod. Fanta's sister founded the Club of German Women Artists, and the two sisters were active participants in the Club for Women's Progress, which was part of the women's emancipation movement in Prague. Philanthropic activities such as

caring for the elderly as well as young pregnant girls constituted other achievements of Fanta's (Iggers, 1995: 149–151). Despite these and other cultural contributions, Jewish women rarely constitute the main subjects of scholarly studies of Jewish Prague.

Budapest

Budapest attracted a large Jewish population which rivaled that of Vienna, the capital city of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Sometimes considered the "Jewish city" of the Empire (1867–1918), Budapest served as a crossroads of Western and Eastern Jewish models that brought together a diverse range of Jews and Jewish communities. Like Prague, Budapest was also a metropolitan center of Jewish cultural life that did not always grant full access to women (Gazsi, Pető, and Toronyi, 2007: 9). Yet Jewish women certainly operated within the broad framework of Jewish life in Budapest, a city in which Jews made up approximately 21 percent of the population beginning in the 1880s (Gluck, 2004: 3). Hungarian Jewry was a middle and upper-middle-class sector within Hungarian society; Jews were overrepresented among merchants, craftsmen, and business owners (Patai, 1996: 439). As in fin de siècle Prague, many Jews in Budapest spoke German. Budapest as a metropolis was vibrant, modern, and boasted the Western allure of over five hundred cafés.

Like Viennese and Prague women, many Jewish women in the area around Budapest engaged in activities related to social welfare, a "moderate" form of activism generally considered acceptable for women. The first women's group sprung up in Pest in the 1840s; it was succeeded by the Pest Jewish Women's Association, founded by Johanna Bischitz (born Hani Fischer). From 1866 to 1943, this organization ran public welfare projects such as an orphanage for Jewish girls that also provided religious education, and a successful kosher public soup kitchen. Katalin Gerő, the director of the Jewish Girls' Orphanage, wrote that she cared for over 1300 girls from all social strata. As Julia Richers has pointed out, these activities suggest that even the organization's more general welfare concerns were primarily directed toward members of the Jewish community, an indication that the Pest Jewish Women's Association participated in a modernized form of tzedakah or charity (2007: 127–135).

A few Jewish women were, however, daring enough to take greater risks in their quest for success in modern Budapest; some even aligned themselves with Hungary as a nation. Feminist activists such as Vilma Glücklich and Rosika Schwimmer were internationally acknowledged founders of the Hungarian feminist movement; journalists such as Szerén Buchinger and Mariska Gárdos became important figures in the socialist women's movement (Juhász, 2007: 171–175). Viennese psychoanalyst Melanie Klein (Reizes) lived and worked in Budapest for more than a decade beginning in 1910. Böske Simon became the first Jewish beauty queen to win a

national European contest when she was crowned Miss Hungary in January 1929; she went on to win the title of Miss Europe on behalf of Hungary. Artist Ilka Gedő became known for her masterful drawings of Budapest, many of which took Jewish spaces such as the Budapest ghetto as their subjects. The lives of Jewish women in Budapest reflect a broad range of modern experiences, from the creation of Jewish-themed works of art, to involvement with Jewish organizations, to activism in Hungarian and Socialist groups.

Zurich

Switzerland, and especially its largest city Zurich, provided a place where Jewish women intellectuals could flourish. In fact, many traveled to Zurich from Eastern and Central Europe to take advantage of the university privileges afforded to women, and, after 1933, the relative freedoms afforded to Jews. As a multinational confederation of four major cultures and their languages (German, French, Italian, and Romansh), Switzerland proved an obvious choice for many exiles. Beginning in the late nineteenth century, the liberal policies of Swiss universities began to attract female students who did not have the same options for higher education in other countries. Women traveled from Germany, Vienna, and Tsarist Russia to earn degrees at Swiss institutions (Freidenreich, 2002: 11–12). Eugenie Schwarzwald, who received her doctorate in German literature at the University of Zurich in 1900, went on to establish a school for girls in order to prepare them for university study. Rosa Luxemburg was among the Jewish women who studied at the University of Zurich, which first admitted female doctoral students in 1866 (though women were permitted to attend lectures beginning in 1847). In general, Switzerland was home to a large number of Russian Jewish intellectuals beginning in 1890, particularly after the First Zionist Congress in Basle in 1897.

Despite Switzerland's relatively low Jewish population over the last century, which has hovered around 20 thousand, it has housed a disproportionate number of Jewish women's organizations, suggesting that, at times, Jewish women in Switzerland have been even more politically engaged than their counterparts in other countries. The first Israelite Women's Group of Basle was founded in the year 1834, though Switzerland's major Jewish women's umbrella organization, the Association of Swiss Jewish Women's Organizations, was first founded in 1924. During the 1930s, Swiss Jewish women's groups banded together with other general women's groups to carry out welfare activities such as providing refuge and Hanukkah packages for Jewish children from other countries (Weingarten-Guggenheim, 2005: 157–167).

After the Nazi rise to power in 1933, Switzerland provided temporary or more permanent refuge for numerous Jews fleeing Germany. In fact, many Jewish intellectuals ended up in Zurich, which made it a de facto center of Jewish and liberal German culture in the 1930s. After her arrival in Zurich in 1933, poet Else Lasker-Schüler became a regular at its Café Selekt, about which she wrote:

"Here no emigrant suffers from any immediate crisis." For others, Zurich provided a center for feminist engagement. The writer and philosopher Margarete Susman, who had lived in Zurich as a child in the 1880s, again made her home in Zurich from 1934. In Zurich, Susman continued the numerous feminist undertakings and Jewish community work she had begun in Frankfurt before 1934, and she gave many lectures for Swiss women's organizations as well as for Jewish organizations. While living in Switzerland, Susman maintained a close friendship with historian Selma Stern, who spent the final decades of her life in Basle. Though many of its residents came to Zurich adventitiously, Zurich proved another urban center where Jewish women could spread their intellectual wings.

Conclusion

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, many Jewish women in Central Europe made a name for themselves as agents or forerunners of modernity. Despite traditional gender roles that attempted to restrict women's involvement beyond domestic spheres, Jewish women hosted salons that served as central gathering points in urban areas such as Berlin, Vienna, and Prague; they also played leading roles in the founding of organizations pertaining to both the general and Jewish women's movements, were extremely active in social work and related fields, and made significant contributions to cultural fields including literature, journalism, and the fine arts. Yet the modern paths taken by Jewish women led in several directions: some participated primarily in general women's and cultural movements, including avant-garde trends such as Expressionism, New Objectivity, and Bauhaus; others contributed to the creation of culture that was distinctly Jewish in some way, from literature or artworks with Jewish themes, to performances for Jewish audiences or organizations. To be sure, general and Jewish culture also overlapped at numerous points of intersection. What in fact made much of this cultural production most modern was its versatility and ability to appeal to different groups, both Jewish and general, and traditional and modern.

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26

Antisemitism and Anti-Jewish Hostility

Richard S. Levy

Jews have endured two great epochs of enmity and, as the evidence strongly suggests, have embarked upon a third. Each stage has built upon previous conceptions of what was wrong with the Jews, adding new to sometimes quite ancient formulations about their flaws. Their aversion to honest labor, perverse religious rites, inherent malevolence toward outsiders, lack of creative contributions to civilization – these are observations dating from Antiquity that have made their way into modern times. Others, however, are more recent inventions, such as the Jews' ability to monopolize information, high finance, and the cultural patrimonies of whole nations, all of which they put in the service of achieving hegemony over non-Jews. It is rare that a particular claim of Jewish evil, once lodged, ever wholly disappears from the list of wrongdoings. Medieval staples such as host defilement, well-poisoning, and ritual murder may not recur in their original forms, but all have their modern echoes. Even allegations that once had some grounding in fact but have long since lost a meaningful relationship to reality persist into the present day in one form or another. Jewish slumlords, pawnbrokers, and loan sharks, few and far between nowadays, are nonetheless enshrined in popular culture as instantly recognizable types.

The functions of Jew-hatred have proliferated over time, continually demonstrating its adaptability to the needs of individuals and groups, secular states and religious societies, political movements and non-governmental organizations, each able to find what it needs in a richly elaborated body of negative images, thoughts, and raw feelings about the Jews. From this legacy, adversaries piece together the inimical Jew they require, emphasizing particular destructive traits said to be part of the Jewish essence. Jew-hatred is seldom their only

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agenda, however. After a certain critical mass of suspicion regarding the intentions and character of Jews had been achieved – and it is difficult to say exactly when in history that milestone was reached – anti-Jewish hostility and, later, antisemitism could be deployed for broader purposes. For example, early in the history of the church, the term *Judaizer* served to denounce those Christians who continued certain of Judaism's abrogated practices. In the 1830s, critics of Young Germany, a literary movement in which the Jews Heinrich Heine and Ludwig Börne were active, had only to refer to it as "Young Palestine" to make their opposition absolutely clear to the broad public. Such was the cultural resonance of the word *Jew* that merely associating an ideological movement, economic scheme, or cultural venture with Jewish individuals or groups could become a powerful argument against such ideas or activities. Taking note of this attribute, Paul Massing (1949) aptly described antisemitism as a "leavening agent" because time and again it was deployed to inspire worn out causes or freshly minted ones with new vigor or greater immediacy.

Arousing broadly or narrowly focused antagonism in an audience or mobilizing a population for political action on the basis of Jew-hatred would be difficult to understand without presupposing an already existing sympathy between its producers and consumers. Too often, however, it is assumed that the relationship between those sending anti-Jewish messages and those receiving them is a transparent one, that spokesmen perfectly represented the views of their audiences; they simply articulated the desires of their listeners better than they were able to do for themselves. Yet it was probably never that simple. Clearly, the framing of anti-Jewish arguments and the theoretical justifications for taking action against Jews required talents that were not widely present in the general population. Jew-hatred and antisemitism were in this sense, mediated phenomena, the work of those talented enough to write books and newspaper articles, craft images in stone or paint, or to otherwise express their ideas. Most of what we know about anti-Jewish hostility we have garnered from analyzing these cultural productions. What we do not learn from this process is what the general audience, the consumers of anti-Jewish verbal and visual imagery, thought about it or did because of it. Did those Romans able to read Seneca agree that Jews were both sinister and ridiculous? Or did they, with other notable thinkers, see them and their god as soft and effeminate because they rested on every seventh day? In the next millennium, when the mob stormed the Jewish quarters of Europe, was it because of what it had heard or read or seen, urging them to riot? Were its motives the same as those who goaded them to act? Anti-Jewish writers and antisemitic demagogues have asked themselves these very sorts of questions throughout history, and have often expressed dissatisfaction with the commitment or understanding of their audiences. The popularity of Jew-hatred in any age is, given the sources at our disposal, difficult to measure precisely, and for this reason we should guard against easy assumptions.

Theological Jew-Hatred

With the gradual separation of the early Christian church from the Judaism that gave it birth until approximately the middle of the seventeenth century, a primarily although not exclusively theological Jew-hatred isolated Jews from their neighbors. They bore the physical and psychological marks of an inferior status that was formally and informally sanctioned by authority and tradition. Even when the causes of popular anger against them had clear material bases, most famously in the practice of usury, the justification for their persecution was essentially theological. It was not merely usury but *Jewish* usury that was punished by the mob or the prince as one of many sins that had steadily accrued to Jews since the Crucifixion. No doubt, the important economic functions they performed, other than money-lending, such as tax collecting or estate management, would have been obnoxious to their neighbors in and of themselves; they were doubly so when carried out to the profit of religious deviants and enemies of Christ.

Their dispersal as powerless minorities among Christian communities throughout Europe rendered them highly vulnerable. Privileged by princes who exploited their services, they were despised by ordinary people. The occasional rise to eminence usually proved brief and often provoked popular aggression that was endorsed and sometimes initiated by religious authorities; violence was meant both to chastise and ritually exclude them from mainstream life. They were also subject to extortion by secular authority, regularly expelled from their homes until they paid hefty fines, and sometimes, when their usefulness had been exhausted, driven off for good. Times of religious enthusiasm, such as during the Crusades, the monastic revivals, and the Reformation, or periods of social crisis, such as that precipitated by the Black Death of the fourteenth century, made them into targets of violent retribution when the religiously inspired were reminded of the threat their very existence posed to the larger community.

Although a recounting of Christian–Jewish relations over the years stretching from the Crusades to the dawn of the early modern era may read like a monotonous tale of pillage, expulsion, extortion, and persecution, building step by step toward an atrocious crescendo in the twentieth century, the reality was less linear, and less inevitable in its logic, than this scenario would suggest. Long periods of relatively peaceful coexistence between Jews and Christians have left no mark on the historical record. In some places, and at some times, they clearly interacted beyond the economic sphere. Why else would Church councils forbid the taking of meals together, the holding of public office by Jews, their blessing of Christian crops, intermarriage, or the conversion of Christians to Judaism, if these activities were not taking place often enough to warrant intervention? If Jews were so utterly isolated and marginalized, why was it thought necessary to identify them by special dress and other physical signs? Few would deny, despite this counterevidence, that the status of Jews during the Middle Ages declined steadily, that, even when left in

peace, they could have had no faith in their ultimate security. Nevertheless, the particular contribution of medieval Jew-hatred to the development of antisemitism – and a reason to distinguish between them – was cognitive rather than programmatic. Europeans learned how to *think* about Jews during the Middle Ages – in ever more fantastic and irrational ways, as Gavin Langmuir maintains – but it was antisemitism that would teach them what to *do* about Jews.

Of the many medieval ideas about Jews transmitted to posterity, two were particularly important in the development and sustaining of antisemitism in the modern era. The most obvious of these was the inextricable association of Jews with money and all its uses and abuses. The Jew as usurer made a seamless transition from a theologically dominated view of the world to a more secular one. Long after the Church's prohibition against lending money for interest had lost its authority, the sin of usury still clung to popular notions of Jewry. Money, after all, is an obsessive concern for a great many people everywhere and in every epoch. Few think they have enough; few think that they ought not to have more. Seeing others, alien and far less deserving, who seem to have accumulated great riches, has given rise to and perpetuated intense hatred. In the modern era, new and angry justifications emerged for hating Jews' moneymaking talents that owed only a slight debt to scriptures. For socialists, Jews became the quintessential capitalist exploiters. Nationalists and populists accused them of controlling the money supply and ruthlessly using it for the enslavement of the people. For racists, their facility with money and their unproductive uses of it were genetically inherited traits. The Jews' uncanny ability to accumulate (other people's) money, to multiply and manipulate it to the detriment of non-Jews, constituted perhaps the most broadly based, long-lived, and potent stereotype of all.

The second inheritance from the Middle Ages, although more subtle, was, quite possibly, even more important than the Jews' association with money. Because Judaism gave birth to the dominant Christianity but then refused to disappear from its world, the survival of Jews and their outmoded religion posed special problems. Solving these preoccupied the greater and lesser minds of Christendom throughout the Middle Ages and beyond. The most influential conceptualization of the proper role and place of Jews, although it did not put an end to further speculation, has come to be known as the doctrine of Jewish witness. This was the work of Augustine of Hippo (354–430), who conceived of Jews as the living witnesses to the antiquity and supremacy of Christianity. Until their eventual conversion and disappearance at the end of days, their purpose was to show the faithful the truth of Christianity . . . and the costs of unbelief. This they accomplished with their suffering. They should not be killed or coerced to convert. They could go on living and they could still adhere to their now hollow and superseded faith, but implicit in this formulation was an obvious truth: they ought not to prosper, exercise authority over Christians, or escape from degraded lives.

There is much scholarly disagreement about the exact meaning of Augustine's ideas. Some have suggested that, as harsh as his theology may sound to modern

ears, he really intended to show some solicitude for Jewish well-being. Unlike other heretics and unbelievers, for example the Albigensians of southern France, Jews were not simply to be exterminated or forced to accept the cross. In a Christian world, according to the doctrine of witness, Jews had a function, and that function served as a rationale for their continued existence.

Yet the function was not an enviable one. When individual Jews and whole Jewish communities managed at various times and places to shake off their constraints and sometimes rise to prominence, their success was usually short lived. Their enemies, competitors, and victims had, with Augustine's doctrine, a potent argument at their disposal. The wealth and influence of Jews in a Christian society was a violation of divine will; it was *ipso facto* simply wrong. Jews needed to be returned to their proper role and forcefully reminded of their lowly status. Vestiges of the doctrine of witness continued to exert influence into the modern era, convincing even lapsed or lukewarm Christians that there was something significantly amiss in a world where Jews exercised power over non-Jews or were seen to be thriving. Augustine's concept, however divested of its subtleties, had become an axiom. It required no elaboration and relieved ordinary people of the need to think about what it was precisely that made Jewish success unacceptable.

The Modern Persistence of Jew-Hatred

Many elements of medieval thinking about Jews, in addition to the two already discussed, lived on into a more secular age, surviving the crumbling of Christendom's unity and religion's gradual loss of paramount influence on the way people understood the world or lived their lives. As discussions began during the second half of the eighteenth century regarding the status of Jews in Western and Central Europe and in many places overseas where Europeans had settled, the negative stereotypes about Jews from earlier epochs proved resilient – and not just among the ignorant. Men with enlightened ideas who thought the time had come to reform the lot of the Jews also saw the need for great improvement in the human qualities of this debased people. Much work would have to be done on their habits, character, and attitudes toward their fellow men, before they could become useful. What distinguished their friends from those who argued against even the possibility of making them into productive citizens was the belief that granting Jews rights and putting an end to discrimination would facilitate their humanization. But both advocates and adversaries agreed that the Jews, as they stood, were deficient. This was the case even with famously enlightened thinkers, like Voltaire. Forward-looking in so many of his views, implacably hostile toward Christianity, a champion of reason and tolerance, he was certainly no friend of Jews, "an ignorant and barbarous people." Superstitious, grasping, malevolent slaves to a mindlessly legalistic religion, they were living reminders of the Dark Ages, an obstacle to

the progress of mankind. In all the categories they regarded as humanly important, Voltaire and other luminaries of the age found Jews always and everywhere ethically, socially, politically, culturally, and militarily worthless. Even admitting that they had been victimized by Christian persecution, Voltaire denied them any special sympathy. In ancient times, they, too, had behaved as dreadfully as any of their modern tormentors.

The recent rethinking of the meaning of the Enlightenment has stressed some of its darker essentials, particularly its inability or unwillingness to deal with difference or with exceptions to its grandiose generalizations about mankind. Adam Sutcliffe (2010) has argued persuasively that Jewish difference, in particular, proved virtually impossible for enlightened thinkers to fit into their rationalist and universalist thought. The received wisdom concerning Jewish failings and the knotty problems Jews posed to the philosophical systems of the enlighteners combined to produce a new sort of hostility.

Conspicuously missing from this version of the shortcomings of the Jews was anything like Augustine's rationalization for their continued existence. With a few exceptions, the men of the Enlightenment were equally contemptuous of all revealed religion; they did not seek "witnesses" to the superior truth of Christianity, nor were they grateful for Judaism's genesis of it. In the thinking of the enlighteners, Jews lost even this ambiguous function. It was not that Voltaire, Diderot, Herder, or Kant advocated genocide for Jews, or that they even envisioned such a possibility. In fact, most favored emancipating them from discriminatory laws. But in the course of the next two centuries, their thorough critique of Jewish uselessness, without the saving grace of witness, left the door open for men who were far less humane in their ambitions.

Burdened by this new, or at least somewhat new, way of thinking ill about Jews, the long process of Jewish emancipation got under way. The achievement of equality was difficult, almost always contested, often granted and then retreated from, and in many places more a matter of theory rather than actual practice. In 1819, the discussion of extending rights to Jews triggered violence; a wave of anti-Jewish riots that ranged from Alsace to Prague, Copenhagen, Krakow, and Riga. Not until the mid-nineteenth century was regularizing the status of Jews deemed a self-evident necessity and then not by everyone. When it did arrive, emancipation was tacitly understood as contractual in nature. Jews received some or all of the rights of citizens as a pledge to be redeemed by their reformation; they had to show themselves worthy of full equality. Implicitly – sometimes quite explicitly – the final test of their having made good on their side of the bargain was the surrender of their Judaism and anything else that might be construed as part of a separate Jewish identity. Understandably, Jews did not fully accept this one-sided proposition. They thought equality was their right as human beings.

The Age of Enlightenment thus bequeathed to the modern era an ambiguous set of ideas about Jews. On the one hand, despite all the difficulties presented by their peculiarities, it set in motion their emancipation, accepting their humanity, at least

in theory. On the other, it embraced and perpetuated old prejudices and added some newly formulated ones that proved enduringly harmful. It did not, however, invent or practice antisemitism. That was a response to what Albert Lindemann (2000) has called "the rise of the Jews."

It is good to have some baseline of comparison in order to put Jewish upward mobility into perspective. Well into the eighteenth century, Jews in Central and Western Europe were part of either a very small overprivileged group – the so-called court Jews whose economic services were vital to governing powers – or a much larger group of the severely underprivileged. By the end of the eighteenth century, an estimated 80 percent of German-speaking Jews lived in poverty, subject to paralyzing limitations on their freedom of movement and right to earn a living. A scant century later, by 1900, Jews in Frankfurt am Main were paying four times more in taxes than Protestants and eight times more than Catholics, a sure sign of their appreciably greater income levels. In the 1880s, Jews made up over 9 percent of the university student population of Prussia, approximately ten times their proportion of the general population. In Hungary during the emancipation era, the Jewish minority provided 50 percent of the medical practitioners, 45 percent of the lawyers, 40 percent of the journalists, and 25 percent of those professionally engaged in the arts. Jews had been banned from Vienna in 1669 and allowed to return only in small numbers (in exchange for large "toleration" payments). But, by 1903, they numbered nearly 150 thousand. Although constituting approximately 9 percent of the general population, half of the female students in Vienna's high schools in 1900 were Jews. In 1892, just before the Dreyfus Affair broke, three hundred Jewish officers were serving in the French army. Benjamin Disraeli, a Jewish convert to the Anglican Church, "having climbed to the top of the greasy pole," became England's prime minister in 1868 and again in 1874.

Wherever Jews were granted civil rights, and even in some places where these were withheld, they began to improve their lives, moving into the ranks of the urban middle class and making determined use of new opportunities. There is enough evidence to suggest that the Jewish birthrate in Europe and America exceeded that of non-Jews, most likely the result of a higher standard of living. Throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century their progress in all areas of modern life was astonishing to themselves and to onlookers. As contributors to the arts and sciences, beneficiaries of higher education, accumulators of wealth, innovators in business, revolutionizers of the media, leaders of political parties and social movements, and holders of public offices, Jews flourished. But, of course, this was not the whole story. The "rise of the Jews," although indisputable, was far from even and far from universal. In many German cities at the close of the nineteenth century, at least a quarter of the Jews did not earn the minimum level to be taxpayers. Well into the twentieth century, there were still slums in many European cities where eastern European immigrants relied on Jewish welfare agencies. Those who had stayed in the East were prosperous only relative to the crushing poverty of their neighbors. In many countries, Jews were excluded from

or denied advancement in the professional civil service, academia, and the military. In the 1920s and 1930s, Jewish social progress in east and east central Europe was interrupted and, in places, reversed.

The contrast between the Jews' pre- and post-emancipatory existence, the rapidity of their rise, and the visibility of its fruits could not remain unnoticed by non-Jewish society. Nor was it likely to be unresented. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a reaction to the rise of the Jews that made no allowances for the counterevidence cited above produced a new version of their essence, one that incorporated medieval and enlightened ideas, but added an important element of its own – with significant consequences. This new conception of what was wrong with the Jews and the movement that eventually developed from it searched for and found a new word to describe itself: "antisemitism."

Those who came to call themselves antisemites, first in Germany, but then in Hungary, Austria, France, most of the rest of Europe, and where Europeans exerted influence in the larger world, shared a changed image of Jews. No longer simply ridiculous, inferior, sinister, or contemptible beings who could be shut up in a ghetto or subjected to arbitrary violence, Jews had grown frighteningly, autonomously powerful. If action were not taken against their accumulation of wealth, office, and strategic positions in state and society, they would dominate non-Jews, destroy their communities, and put an end to their freedom. Their formal emancipation (1867 in Austria; 1869–1871 in Germany), it was feared, put the seal of law on their rise. Thanks to their liberal allies and dupes, Jews were now not merely equal members of the nation but maneuvering into position to exercise a brutal dictatorship. This augmented version of Jewish evil, a fear-driven reaction to the rise of the Jews, was so threatening that it required, not just new ways of thinking about Jews, but resolute action.

Wilhelm Marr (1819–1904), one of the chief popularizers of the term antisemitism and the first to use it for explicitly political purposes, called the attention of his German countrymen in his 1879 pamphlet to the all-but-complete "victory of Jewry over Germandom." He never tired of scolding them for their having let this perilous situation develop to a point where it might well be irreversible. His grim prophecy notwithstanding, Marr and those who shared his views about a Jewish conspiracy for world domination developed a political response they always thought of as heroic and desperate, a last chance to avert Armageddon. Marr warned that the old methods of keeping Jews within well-defined boundaries were now inadequate. The occasional pogrom, haphazardly enforced discriminatory laws, even the brilliant literary exposé, such as he himself had written in the past, would not disempower the Jews. The conspiracy they had been engaging in furtively, but with ever-growing effectiveness, for the past 1800 years, they could now conduct right out in the open.

The men and (very few) women who came together to fight Jewish power were a varied lot. Disappointed democrats, déclassé noblemen, Christian conservatives, violence-prone reactionaries, thwarted academics, "life reformers," career failures,

bankrupts, and cranks were numerous. But antisemitism attracted more than society's angry misfits. Among its best-known advocates and already famous before making their contributions to organized antisemitism were the composer Richard Wagner, Hohenzollern Court Chaplain Adolf Stoecker, the industrialist Henry Ford, poets, novelists, historians, generals, and men of letters from many countries. In Austria, Hungary, Germany, Poland, and Romania, university student elites became early converts to antisemitism and spread its messages to the broader public. Leaving aside the cynical opportunists who saw mobilizing potential in Jew-hatred and those who might be called "situational antisemites," individuals who floated in and out of the movement and who occasionally voted for antisemitic candidates, the true believers who fashioned the movement and articulated its ideology shared some common characteristics, no matter what their national origins or personal idiosyncrasies. Most important among these – and virtually unprecedented in previous centuries – was a new level of commitment. Voltaire may have been eloquent in his detestation of Jews, but they occupied a quite small part of his attentions; his voluminous writings were overwhelmingly devoted to other matters. It is difficult to think of any churchman of the Middle Ages or early modern era whose public life or writings was as wholly absorbed by the Jewish Question, as that of any number of activists among the antisemites of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the rare individual might recant his faith, the typical "sincere" antisemite was beyond learning or changing. His commitment was full time and lifelong, even despite years of apparent failure. The personal testimonies of several individuals describe their discovery of anti-semitism as a life-changing event, one that made past, present, and future into a harmonious whole. Having unearthed the infallible key to the dark inner workings of history, politics, society, and culture, the antisemite could not surrender such privileged knowledge and fall back into the same state of naiveté and confusion that characterized most of his countrymen.

The political movement launched by Wilhelm Marr, and improved upon by a number of his like-minded contemporaries in Germany, sought to turn back the Jewish onslaught. Antisemitic politics was action-based and programmatic right from its very beginnings, meant to be a long-term proposition, because the Jewish power it fantasized about would take years, perhaps centuries, to defeat. The movement swiftly spread beyond Germany's borders and everywhere took on the same features. Organizing at the grassroots level, small antisemitic parties began contesting elections, feeding upon the social grievances produced by modernizing economies. Activists launched reform societies, newspapers, learned journals, and auxiliary clubs, providing an institutional foundation for the movement. Chronically short of funds, they staged mass meetings and never ceased campaigning. The content of their ideology drew heavily upon stereotypes with deep roots in the past, adapted to current needs and clothed in scientific language. The usurious Jew of the Middle Ages became the international banker, making and breaking nations at will. The defiler of the host became the purveyor of adulterated food. Grisly tales of

ritual murder, apparently in no need of updating, were sensations in Hungary, Bohemia, and Germany.

Much has been made in the scholarly literature of the adoption of a racist orientation by antisemitic ideologues and organizations at this time. No doubt, this was an important innovation in the history of Jew-hatred, but important for whom? The question raised earlier in this essay about the mediated nature of antisemitism and anti-Jewish hostility is relevant here. Although the thinkers of the movement prided themselves on the modernity of their outlook and the scientific nature of their efforts, they were noticeably reluctant to share racial theory with the voters they were trying to win over. Sophisticated racist arguments were for the cognoscenti, not ordinary people. Otto Böckel, the first antisemite to enter the German Reichstag in 1887, appealed to his peasant constituents with biblical-sounding injunctions, such as his "Ten Commandments for the Livestock Jobber." The fine points of racist thinking he saved for the antisemitic intelligentsia in Berlin. The basic assumptions of antisemites may have owed much to a biological or cultural racism, but their anti-Jewish stump rhetoric and their newspaper articles stuck to the traditional accusations of moral inferiority, greed, and hatred of all non-Jews. Added to these qualifications of the importance of racism it should be remembered that several antisemitic parties made little or no use of it; in Eastern Europe it was relatively rare, and in the Muslim world today it does not play a key role in enmity toward Jews.

Almost all of the European antisemitic parties that became active in the last quarter of the nineteenth century had their moments in the national limelight. With one exception, however, all of them soon faltered. No piece of unequivocally antisemitic legislation passed through state or national parliaments before World War I. (A few local prohibitions against kosher slaughtering had as much to do with animal rights as with antisemitism.) Even the one exception to the pattern of failure, the Christian Social Party of Austria (CSP), led by Karl Lueger, could not be deemed a great success. Although the CSP dominated Viennese politics, repeatedly elected Lueger mayor (1897–1910), and played a major role in Austrian political life, it was not able to hinder Jewish participation in the economic and cultural life of the imperial capital; it is not even clear that the party made much of an effort to do so.

The reasons for the general failure of pre-World War I antisemitism bear consideration. Ultimately, the evidence points to a lack of interest in the general populations the parties and pressure groups tried to enlist to the cause. An insufficient number of Germans, Hungarians, Frenchmen, and Austrians cared enough about the Jewish Question to make it a political priority; they almost certainly harbored numerous prejudices against Jews, but they had more pressing problems of economic survival, national vindication, or moral regeneration to attend to. Another factor that limited the possibility of success had to do with the conventional outlook of all but a few of the politically involved antisemites. They were at first optimistic about the potential of popular politics. With hard and

disciplined work, they thought it would be only a matter of time before antisemitism formed the basis of a mass movement that would elect a majority in parliament. Thereupon, and completely legally, constitutions would be changed and legislation crafted that would disenfranchise the Jews and disempower them forever. But, soon it became apparent that they had miscalculated. None of the parties proved able to reach out beyond its numerous but fragmented lower middle-class electoral base. A scandal-prone, rivalrous, politically ham-fisted leadership, shabby and short-lived newspapers, and antisemitic parliamentarians who proved singularly inept when it came to the practical work of preparing legislative bills also handicapped the movement. As their faith in parliamentary politics evaporated, antisemitic politicians, no matter where they started politically, shifted to the right, becoming vocal critics of the institutions and laws that had let them down. There had to be something wrong with a state and a society that sat idly by while Jews amassed ever greater powers. Having exhausted their potential and the patience of the electorate, most of the parties had disappeared or were at the point of doing so when war broke out in 1914.

World War I revived antisemitism's fortunes. But it was a new antisemitism, shorn of conventionality. Its rhetoric was more extreme. Politically motivated murder became commonplace in the 1920s. The growth in radicalism had many causes, but certainly the war and its aftermath had much to do with making the antisemites' wild claims and bogus theories more believable to a broader public. The world was in crisis. Ancient dynasties and empires had fallen, traditional morality was laughable to the young and the "new woman," state institutions lost their legitimacy. Armies, once thought invincible, had been defeated, national borders changed overnight, the forces of the left and the right threatened to destroy all semblance of stability. Without this ferment, it would be otherwise difficult to explain the popularity of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a cut and paste fabrication that detailed an outlandishly elaborate Jewish plot for world domination. World War I and the Russian Revolution of 1917 corroborated the Elders' fiendish plot. Bolsheviks of Jewish ancestry and the Balfour Declaration of 1917, favoring the creation of a national home for Jews, convinced many that Jews had unleashed war and revolution to achieve their ends. They had the blood of millions of innocents on their hands.

The fragile democracies that came into existence after the war one by one drifted toward dictatorship. Antisemitism, as had not often been the case before the war, could now marshal the force of government behind it. In Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, and Romania governments at least sympathetic to the goals of native antisemitic parties oversaw the implementation of laws limiting the rights of Jews to practice certain occupations. Quotas on their admission to universities were either formally enacted or tacitly accepted in many countries (including the United States). Well before the Holocaust descended upon the Jews of East and East Central Europe they had been singled out for legal and extralegal attack, with the apparent approval of their countrymen and the active involvement of their governments.

The most skillful exploiters of the turmoil of the interwar years proved to be the Nazis. From their first appearance on the political stage, they showed little interest in reviving the forms and methods of prewar parliamentary antisemitism; these had proven woefully inadequate. When Nazis ran for parliament in the 1920s they did so with the intention of using it as a platform to reach a wider audience. Since the crimes of the Jews had now been revealed in all their horrifying magnitude, the idea that the Jewish peril could be repelled with legislative proposals or constitutional reforms seemed absurd. Democracy, in any case, was a device used by Jews to confuse the people. Street violence, death threats, and shameless libel replaced the relatively sedate political behavior of the prewar antisemites and were Hitler's way of distinguishing his movement from its many competitors. He could be depended upon to adopt the most radical position on any issue. His press was the crudest. His propaganda posters were the most lurid. He seemed best able to understand what the times demanded.

Radical antisemitism helped the Nazis gain an identity, but how important was it to their eventual "seizure of power" in 1933? Just how many Germans shared the party's goal-oriented, activist brand of Jew-hatred or saw solving the Jewish problem as the "world's foremost problem" or wanted Jews driven entirely out of German life is, of course, impossible to know. However, judging from Hitler's unceasing complaints about the sentimentality and unreliability of his people in the matter of the Jewish Question, the number was never as great as he wished. From 1928 or 1930 at the latest, antisemitism receded into the background of Nazi political campaigning and propaganda, replaced by anti-communism and promises to save the economy from ruin. Hitler had recognized that antisemitism had already secured the support of all the Germans he could hope to mobilize around that particular issue. Even within the ranks of the Nazi Party, according to one important contemporary study, perhaps only a fifth of the members could be classified as fanatical antisemites; the rest had other priorities. This is not to say that the great majority of Germans found Nazi antisemitism objectionable. It was not a reason to withhold one's vote as the party became the largest in the Reichstag. After Hitler gained power and soon began stripping Germany's Jews of their rights, few non-Jews protested. The Aryanization of Jewish property, later the auctioning off of deportees' goods, enriched many Germans and offended few. After 1933, the regime renewed its shrill antisemitic propaganda, now with all the resources of the state at its disposal. Whether "racial education" intensified prejudices based on "folk wisdom" or simply reinforced them is a matter of conjecture. Michael Berkowitz (2007) has pointed out that the Nazis, when seeking popular support for measures at home or abroad, were more likely to resort to representations of inherent Jewish criminality than elaborate racial arguments. Of course, it can be argued that the issue of just how well the regime represented the antisemitism of the German people is scarcely relevant. Doris Bergen's explanation of how antisemitism functioned within the Nazi system of destruction stresses the importance of wedding anti-Jewish policy to government authority. Official

measures and perfectly legal actions, at least according to Nazi conceptions of law, implicated ever greater numbers of Germans in the disenfranchisement and despoliation of the Jews. The regime made it easy for Germans to act like antisemites, even if they were no more than casually prejudiced. No matter what the degree of congruence between the ultimate desires of leaders and the immediate interests of the led, the Hitler state was able to organize and carry out genocide without meaningful opposition.

Antisemitism after the Holocaust

Despite the toll on human life and the unimaginable suffering of the survivors of genocide, organizations dedicated to combating the power of the Jews or manipulating the prejudices of ordinary people for some end or other continued their efforts without interruption. Thus, antisemitism has a post-Holocaust history. Anti-Jewish policies initiated by Josef Stalin in the USSR were continued by his successors. Wreckers of the national economy, secret allies of socialism's enemies, cosmopolitans, wire-pullers of US imperialism – these were now said to be the attributes of "Zionists" rather than Jews. "Anti-Zionism," a transparent disguise for antisemitism, occasionally had deadly consequences, especially for communists of Jewish background. Official Soviet and Eastern bloc antisemitism legally harassed Jews, regularly defamed them, inhibited their professional advancement, and prevented their emigration but never approached the genocidal objective of the Nazis. Antisemitism has also survived the fall of the Soviet Empire, in many cases reverting to late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century forms, but because there are relatively few Jews left in Eastern Europe and because antisemitic movements are no longer invested with the power or authority of the state, their potential to do harm appears to be limited.

Elsewhere, the normative right-wing antisemitism that originated in the late nineteenth century with the stated purpose of disempowering the Jews and saving humanity has not wholly disappeared. However, it seems to be in great disarray, driven to the political fringe, operating mostly on the Internet, and essentially withdrawn from practical, programmatic politics. The operational aspects of twentieth-century antisemitism – dismantling of legal safeguards, ghettoization, expulsion, murder – seem to have faded away. Organized antisemitism offers little by way of a solution of the Jewish Question, substituting exposé, libelous rhetoric, and other sorts of posturing. Individuals, some of them prominent figures in cultural, economic, or political life, occasionally denounce the state of Israel, compare Jews to Nazis, Palestine to Auschwitz, but then return to their customary pursuits. They reject accusations of antisemitism. They certainly bear no comparison to the full-time antisemitic activists of the past. The themes of traditional antisemitism are still diffused through cartoons, books, verbal and written insults.

Some believe that the Internet has given even tiny organizations a very long reach and enhanced their dangerousness. But the opposite may well be the case. To take one example, for every antisemitic site promoting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, there are six or seven debunking that hoax. Antisemites have cheap and easy access to their potential audience, but so do their challengers. It is no longer possible for antisemites to get their message out without being contested thoroughly and effectively. The Internet cuts both ways, perhaps attracting some converts to the cause but also warning off others.

The decline of traditional organized antisemitism has not been widely commented upon or even noticed in some circles. That is because there is an antisemitism in the world today that seems ready to fill the vacuum, one that strikes nearly all observers as highly dangerous and growing more serious all the time. Antisemitism now thrives in the Muslim world, including the Islamic Diaspora, and it ought to temper any optimism we feel about the decline of institutionalized antisemitism in the Christian West. It is still too soon to be certain, but the shift of antisemitism's primary field of operations to the Muslim world may have already initiated that third epoch of hostility alluded to at the beginning of this essay.

Although it owes much to European models and precedents of the previous two epochs, employs familiar images, and recycles well-worn arguments, Islamist antisemitism has contributed original features of its own. Recent desecrations of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, menacing graffiti, and physical attacks on Jews are not novel phenomena. Only the perpetrators represent a departure from the past. There is general consensus that the acts of violence in most European cities and the rising incidence of hate crimes directed against Jews over the last decade have been carried out mostly by Muslim youths rather than by skinheads, neo-Nazis, or other radical rightists. How much of this is simple thuggery and how much ideologically driven is uncertain. The desperate rage of Muslim youths in Parisian suburbs may well have sociological and economic roots. It is harder to explain their frequent targeting of Jews, however, without referencing a raw antisemitic ideology disseminated by radical clerics and reinforced by Arab-language media. Much of this, of course, is attributable to anger toward Israel and its treatment of Palestinians, but much is not reducible to that cause. As of yet, the violence, except for its favored targets, seems random, lacking organization or any clear agenda. It is nonetheless threatening to develop the infrastructure that might, in fact, make it more effectively programmatic.

In the Arab Middle East, Iran, and Malaysia governmental collusion or overt direction of antisemitic agitation has reached levels experienced in Europe only during the interwar years. That era's blending of legitimate authority and extra-governmental organizations with antisemitic agendas, as has been shown, proved devastating to the rights of Jews; in the Third Reich, when government became the driving force behind antisemitism, it proved deadly. The espousal of antisemitic goals by state agencies grants them a legitimacy in the eyes of ordinary citizens that

is difficult for even the most dedicated movements to achieve on their own. In the Muslim world the implicit and explicit endorsement of antisemitism by government is more the rule than the exception.

As during the Middle Ages and in modern times, anti-Jewish hostility in the Muslim world is also a mediated experience for ordinary people. Those able and anxious to articulate an antisemitic ideology have always faced the problem of inspiring the proper understanding of the Jewish danger in the mass of their fellow countrymen, people normally much less interested or committed to staving off a danger they do not adequately grasp. In previous epochs, the sorts of people who devoted their lives to this cause were not often to be found among a nation's illustrious intellectuals, cultural icons, or opinion-makers. But, in the Islamic public sphere, it is exactly the secular and religious elite, including the political leadership, that has taken the lead in indoctrinating the masses with an antisemitic worldview. All the indications strongly suggest that they have been more successful in fashioning a mass constituency that shares their basic attitudes and goals than any similar attempt at mediation from the past.

To conclude, a brief examination of the career of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* will illustrate the mixture of the old and the new that is characteristic of Islamist antisemitism. Having appeared just over a century ago and still surfacing now and then, the *Protocols* has been consigned to the outer reaches of public discourse in Europe and the Americas. It is now far more likely to be printed, quoted, and taken seriously for political purposes in the Middle East and in the Islamic Diaspora. The first translation into Arabic dates from 1921. In the 1950s and afterwards, state agencies in Egypt, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Syria sponsored translations and financed wide distribution of the book, lending it a standing with the public not attained anywhere in the West. Arab leaders, no matter how dubious they were about the authenticity of the book, used it as an alibi for military defeat at the hands of Israel and for other governmental failures. The *Protocols* showed that World Jewry, with its awesome resources, its craven accomplices, and its utter ruthlessness, was the true explanation for Israel's victories. As the *Protocols* retreated into insignificance in the West, Muslim religious and nationalist movements, with and without state funding at their command, took up the slack. In 2003, Mahathir Mohamad, prime minister of Malaysia, distanced himself from Henry Ford's version of the *Protocols* even as his own party distributed free copies. Article 32 of the Hamas Charter directly cites the *Protocols* as proof of a Zionist-imperialist plan of conquest.

However, endorsement by prominent individuals and organizations has never sufficed to make the *Protocols* into an effective agent of mass mobilization. Standing in the way of its practical utility is the problem of the text itself. Not alone its essential absurdity but the remoteness of its esoteric references, veiled allusions to long forgotten historical developments, and pseudo-philosophical arguments make it all but unreadable for its original intended audience of semi-educated Westerners. It is probably all the more indecipherable for the general population of Islamic

countries whose frames of reference are wholly alien to the manufacturers of the *Protocols*. Arab-language television has overcome this hindrance with the 41-episode *Knight Without a Horse*, loosely but recognizably based on the *Protocols*. The dramatization skates over the text's complicated arguments while delivering, directly into Arab homes, the essential message of a bloodthirsty Jewish conspiracy. Programming of this nature, government sanctioned in most every case, makes antisemitic imagery and the familiar claims about Jewish wickedness effortlessly, entertainingly available. It is not unreasonable to fear that a far more sophisticated media will embed antisemitism more deeply and widely in the population than at any time in the past.

Conclusion

Given the bewildering array of uses to which the organized hatred of Jews has been put in the history examined here, it would be foolhardy to try to arrive at any universal conclusions. Drawing one lesson, however, seems warranted. Thus far it can be said that anti-Jewish hostility and antisemitism have solved none of the problems they have promised to remedy. Massacres of Jews did not prevent the return of the plague in the fourteenth and subsequent centuries. Forbidding them to own taverns, lend money, or live in wide stretches of the Russian empire did not relieve peasant indebtedness or drunkenness. Nazi genocide, to take the most radical promise of all, did not stave off disaster for Germans or lead to utopia. On the basis of antisemitism's historical record of making good on its promises, it is fair to predict that it will also do absolutely nothing to improve the fortunes of the Muslim world.

Perhaps, it is not too naive to hope that men and women can recognize the futility of attempting to reach salvation by organizing hatred, and that they can do so before the world passes through yet another wave of purposeless destruction. True, we may not often learn from history, but the perils of ignoring this particular history should be clear to all.

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Part VI

Jews and Judaism since the Holocaust and the Birth of Israel

27

The Existential Crisis of the Holocaust

Peter Haas

Introduction

It is hard to come up with exact figures and even words for describing the devastation caused by the Holocaust. The rise, expansion, and collapse of the Third Reich and its allies caused havoc and destruction of governments, civil organizations, and populations across virtually all of Europe and deep into the Soviet Union. It is clear that the ideological impetus behind the war and the Holocaust was not just the territorial expansion of Germany and the elimination of the Jewish population and culture, but had much broader ambitions to remake the entire political, economic, and demographic map of at least Europe, if not much of the world. Although Nazi officialdom maintained surprisingly detailed records of what they were doing, the sheer scale of activity renders it impossible to grasp in any comprehensive way what truly happened. It is the sheer massiveness, brutality, and venality of what occurred that has raised profound questions about modernity in the West in general, and among Jewish communities in particular.

Before proceeding, it may be helpful nonetheless to offer some cumulative figures on what the Nazi regime wrought. In general, the total deaths of World War II are estimated to be approximately fifty million (Winter, 2001), including both military and civilians (out of an estimated total population of about 577 million in 1939: Kirk, 1969: 24). In addition, there were somewhere between 11 and 20 million refugees and displaced persons of various sorts throughout Europe at the end of the war (Displaced Persons Camp, 2010). The infrastructure of Europe had also been severely damaged by the war. Virtually every major city, town, and village had

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been fought over and in many cases bombed, often repeatedly. These raw figures of course do not begin to capture the physical and psychological trauma that survivors of all kinds endured. It is fair to say that, 65 years after the war, Europe and Europeans are still struggling at various levels to deal with that horrid past.

The Jewish statistics tell their own story. It is difficult to estimate the total number of Jews killed during the Nazi years, with numbers ranging from the most conservative 5.1 million (Hilberg, 1979: 670) to Lucy Dawidowicz's figure of 5.9 million (Dawidowicz 1979: 544). Probably the most reliable are those charted in *The Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (Gutman 1990, vol. 4: 1799), which gives a range of 5.6–5.85 million. This was out of a total world Jewish population of something like 16 million, and a European Jewish population estimated at about 9.8 million. Among these deaths were approximately 1.5 million children, producing a significant demographic gap for the succeeding generation upon which recovery would be built. In addition there was the destruction of virtually every Jewish building in Europe and the entire dismantlement of all Jewish civic and religious organizations: schools, yeshivas, welfare funds, hospitals, old age homes, businesses, community centers, theaters, political organizations, and synagogues. Those Jews who did survive in camps or in hiding or in other ways had literally no community to which to return. Most, of course, did not want to return. In some cases they preferred emigration elsewhere rather than return to the Soviet Union, the Ukraine, or Poland, for example. Even those who did return to their former countries of residence found that the material and economics of immediate postwar Europe made rebuilding nearly impossible. So those remnants of European Jewry that did survive largely scattered to British Palestine (or, after 1948, to the State of Israel) to the United States, or elsewhere. Although many individual Jews survived the onslaught, the wonderfully vibrant and creative life of European Jewry, religious, artistic, cultural, political, was entirely over. European Jewry as a living community had not been revived in any meaningful way sixty years later.

Although World War II, and the Holocaust, ended formally on May 8, 1945 with the surrender of German forces to the Allied supreme commanders, the effects of the Nazi program of genocide continued to lead to death and destruction for some time. The momentum could simply not be stopped in its tracks. In the concentration camp of Bergen Belsen, for example, liberated prisoners at the camp continued to die in significant numbers. Although the camp was taken by the British on April 15, 1945, nearly another nine thousand deaths are recorded by the end of the month, and another four and a half thousand in May and a few hundred more in June. These deaths were the result of the lingering effects of malnutrition, maltreatment, and disease, despite the best efforts of the British occupying forces to care for the survivors (Bergen-Belsen, 2010). Significant health issues, both physical and psychological, as well as premature deaths, continued in the survivor community for months and even years (see, for example, Krell and Sherman, 1997).

Given the collapse of the overall situation in Germany and the numerous forced death marches into already overcrowded camps all across Germany, the experience of immediate postwar Bergen-Belsen can be taken as representative of what was happening across Europe. Needless to say, the deaths recorded in Bergen-Belsen in the first six weeks after liberation reflect only the immediate post-liberation state of affairs.

Of course surviving the camps and living through the first weeks of liberation was only the first step in a long process of rehabilitation. For many survivors, the first priority was to find any surviving family members. In most cases this was, of course, a fruitless search. This meant that many survivors were very much on their own in a Europe that was economically, politically, and psychologically unable to offer them support. They were also a part of a vast number of several million persons who were displaced in one way or another.

The second step was usually to find a place to settle and begin building a life. Here experiences varied widely. For children, there was often no place to return to since they had "grown up" in the camps. Many were orphans and so needed to be placed with foster or adoptive families. Survivors from the Soviet Union often did not want to return there but preferred to stay in the West. Some returnees to Poland encountered antisemitism, even death, as in the infamous Kielce pogrom of July 1946. Others returned to their hometowns in Holland, France, even Germany, only to find their homes gone or occupied by others, their businesses destroyed, and the general economy such that starting over was impossible. Eventually a system of Displaced Persons Camps was established under United Nations auspices to house, feed, and care for the more permanently displaced persons. Various Jewish organizations began to work with the refugees, offering education, job training, and some rehabilitation. By 1946, however, there still remained about a quarter of a million Jews stranded in Displaced Persons Camps across the continent (Gutman, 1990: 377ff.). Only gradually was this population moved out. Those who hoped to move to the United States found their way blocked until the passage of the Displaced Persons' Act of 1948. Subsequently some seventy to eighty thousand succeeded in coming to the United States and another 16 thousand found their way to Canada (Roth, 2000: 581). Most of the rest had resolved to migrate to British Palestine, but because of the immigration blockade the British kept in effect, many ended up in British detention camps in Cyprus and elsewhere, and were able to enter legally only after the State of Israel was declared in 1948. Clearly the process of repatriating, or even "patriating" survivors was a long and difficult affair for everyone involved. By 1952, most of the camps had been shut down, but this was fully seven years after the end of the war. The last Displaced Person's Camp, Foehrenwald in Bavaria, did not close down until 1957.

Although the majority of Jewish survivors had been resettled by the middle of the 1950s, the aftereffects of the Holocaust were far from over. There was, of course, the task of coming to terms with the sheer scale and magnitude of what

occurred. The first scholarly attempt to piece together the entire Holocaust operation was Raul Hilberg's famous 1961 study, *The Destruction of European Jews*. The book made clear for the first time how pervasive the Nazi machinery was for identifying, isolating, transporting, imprisoning, and eventually killing the Jews of Europe. The book also laid out the process by which the victims' property – houses, apartments, furniture, clothing, jewelry, stocks, and all other assets of a modern human life – was seized, accounted for, and distributed. That same year saw the beginning of the widely publicized trial of Adolf Eichmann in Jerusalem as well as the release of the film *Judgment at Nuremberg*. Two other highly influential books also made their appearance at roughly this same time: Elie Wiesel's *Night* (first published in English in 1960) and Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963). The confluence of these events brought the question of the Holocaust forcefully into the public forum and raised in particular new insights and disturbing questions about the character of the perpetrators, the bystanders, and the victims. The 1967 "Six Day War" in the Middle East brought the new Israeli and American Jewish generation face to face with what seemed like another existential threat, a sort of completion of the "Final Solution." By the late 1960s, the Holocaust and the various questions it raised had become fully part of American, European, and Israeli intellectual and public discourse.

It hardly needs remarking that the historical, political, philosophical, moral, and theological questions of the Holocaust continue to evolve and provoke heated discussion as new information surfaces and scholarly analysis proceeds. The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 began a process that made it possible for Western scholars for the first time to have access to the vast archival resources of Eastern Europe, opening up entirely new vistas on the Nazi regime and its operation. Film director Steven Spielberg began a project of videotaping interviews with survivors in 1994, and has made some 52 thousand such interviews available to researchers and scholars, who now have access to eyewitness details of specific camps and events (see, for example, USC Shoah Foundation Institute, 2010). In addition, the archive of the International Tracing Service at Bad Arolsen, containing some 17.5 million files, was finally opened to scholars in 2007. Various trials involving reparations, the fate of former Jewish communal property, alleged war criminals, and stolen artwork continue to be filed and to provide new details. While the reading and digestion of these resources has barely even scratched the surface, it is more than fair to say that our understanding of the Holocaust has broadened, deepened, and widened considerably over the last generation.

With this general background in mind, we can turn to the existential crises which the Holocaust has generated in the Jewish community. In the following discussion I will focus on three areas in particular: (i) the theological issue of the presence, absence, and nature of the deity; (ii) the politics and policies inside the State of Israel and between the State and the Diaspora; and (iii) the Jewish relationship to the Enlightenment and to modern Western values.

The Enlightenment

The term "Enlightenment" refers to the broad intellectual, cultural, and political developments that took place in Europe during the eighteenth century and beyond. The stimulus behind these developments was the conviction that human reason was the route to truth and that the application of human rationality based on that reasoned truth would form the basis for legitimate authority and improvement in the human condition. The impressive technological developments that characterized the "Industrial Revolution," which was occurring at the same time, seemed to confirm the notion that the traditional social, political, and economic structures were obstacles to human progress and so needed to be overcome. In the course of the Enlightenment, many of the established configurations of European culture were therefore replaced by newly formed "rational" alternatives.

In many ways, France represents the most striking example of the implications of the Enlightenment. The few short years of the French Revolution witnessed the overthrow of the aristocracy, subjects of the king turned into citizens of the state, the erasure of the special status of the Church in favor of a secular society, and the rise to power of entrepreneurs and wealthy bourgeoisie. In the course of these revolutionary events, the status of the Jews very early on rose to the surface. If the old medieval social order was being dismantled in favor of the universality of human values and rights and if the traditional authority of Christian teaching was being subjected to rational and neutral inquiry, then the place of Jews and Judaism in the "new world order" was suddenly an open question. The attitude of the Enlightenment is most famously illustrated by a serious of comments made by the Count of Clermont-Tonnerre in the French National Assembly on December 23, 1789. On religion, the Count noted that the "Declaration of Rights" states "that no one shall be persecuted for his religious beliefs." He went on to point out that the law had no hold over a person's soul, but only a person's actions. From this he concluded that "Every religion must prove but one thing – that it is moral." From this grand statement, Count Clermont-Tonnerre segues to the Jews: "The Jews should be denied everything as a nation, but granted everything as individuals" (Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995: 114–115). In short, from his point of view, as far as the law was concerned, a Jew could believe anything he or she wanted, provided that he or she acted in accord with rational morality. At the same time, however, the Jews as a corporate group had no claim to special rights, privileges, or obligations. In short, Jews were to be treated exactly as all other Frenchmen, provided that they acted like all other Frenchmen, and of course provided that they recognized the overarching authority of the State. These stipulations received concrete articulation, and acceptance, in the famous conference of French Jewish leaders in the so-called "Paris Sanhedrin" of 1806–1807.

The "emancipation" of the Jewish community from its medieval restrictions, more or less along the lines laid out in France, slowly but steadily moved across

Europe during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By the end of the nineteenth century, Jews in Western, Central, and most of Eastern Europe had been released from their ghettos, were allowed to pursue educational and professional careers, and were enjoying full legal rights as citizens of their respective countries. To be sure there was some social, political, and religious opposition to these developments, especially from the more conservative elements of society – the Church, the remaining aristocracies, etc. This opposition coalesced into racial antisemitism (a word that came into use in the 1860 and 1870s). By and large, however, Jews by the end of the nineteenth century had enthusiastically embraced the new opportunities made available to them and had become "Europeans of the Mosaic persuasion."

It needs to be pointed out that the acceptance of the "Enlightenment bargain" demanded some profound changes in Jewish life. In particular, Jews were expected to give up their traditional lifestyle and practices and, in the words of one Russian "enlightened" Jewish leader, Judah Leib Gordon, "Be a man abroad and a Jew in your tent, A brother to your countrymen . . ." ("Awake My Soul," 1860, cited in Mendes-Flohr and Reinharz, 1995: 384). For the vast majority of Jews, the bargain was well worth the price. Jews across Europe left the ghetto; gave up Yiddish and Hebrew for the local French, German, Polish, Russian, etc. vernacular; adopted contemporary European garb, manners, education, and careers; and adapted or abandoned Jewish traditions concerning holidays, Sabbath, prayer, and diet. In Germany and Hungary, enlightened Jewish scholars and rabbis redefined Judaism as a religion the essential core of which was "ethnical monotheism" and its various laws, rituals, rules, and customs being nothing more than historical accretions to be tossed aside as history moved forward. The new "Liberal" or "Reform" or "Neolog" Judaisms that emerged soon became the standards for Jewish religious life, with more traditional, later labeled "Orthodox," Judaism reduced to tiny subcommunities in most of Western and Central Europe. Only in Russia did the Enlightenment not achieve significant penetration in the Jewish community by the mid-nineteenth century, although Russian Jews who migrated to North America between 1880 and World War I very quickly became Americanized and developed their own version of enlightened Judaism, the "Conservative" movement. As late as the 1920s and 1930s, virtually all Western Jews saw the Jewish compact with the Enlightenment to be highly attractive and promising. The vast majority of Jews saw themselves, hand-in-hand with their Christian brethren, on the way to creating a new social utopia for everyone.

To be sure, there were blemishes on this otherwise bright and optimistic worldview. The famous composer Richard Wagner published his polemic against Jewish composers, "Jewishness in Music," in 1850; Wilhelm Marr, a German publicist credited with inventing the word "antisemitism," published his pamphlet "The Victory of the Jewish Spirit over the Germanic Spirit Observed from a non-Religious Perspective" in 1873. The Dreyfus Affair, which began with a court case in 1894 and lead to over a decade of anti-Jewish agitation in France, shocked many

assimilated Jews, including most famously Theodore Herzl, the founder of modern Zionism. Karl Leuger, leader of the Christian Social Party and an outspoken antisemite served as mayor of Vienna from 1897 to 1910. The list goes on. In general, however, none of this seemed to derail the sense of Enlightenment optimism in general, nor its Jewish support in particular.

This optimism began to suffer significant damage by the turn of the twentieth century. In part this was due to the realization that the modern world had not so much eradicated human poverty, hunger, and misery, as it had created a whole new underclass of sufferers: the working proletariat. The horrors of World War I shattered any optimistic hopes that technology would be used only for the good and the betterment of the human condition. The excesses of the Stalinist regime in Russia disabused many of the notion that the socialist revolution in Russia was going to finally institute a utopia on a national scale. The 1920s and 1930s, precisely the years during which the Nazi party rose to power, were a period also of profound questioning, even disillusionment with the purported assurances of the Enlightenment and of modernity.

As far as the Jewish community is concerned, loyalty to the Enlightenment ideal seemed to be shaken but holding well into the 1930s. Many Jews in Germany, and elsewhere in Europe and North America, in fact regarded the rise to power of the Nazi party to be a temporary detour, a sort of political anomaly that would have no long-term consequences. But by the time of the Kristallnacht riots in November 1938, even the most optimistic Jews could see that the German Jewish community was in significant long-term danger. By the outbreak of war in 1939, it was becoming clear that in fact Jewish communities throughout Europe were facing a threat of existential proportions. The unfolding of the Holocaust, with its deportations, ghettos, starvation, labor camps, killing units (Einsatzgruppen), and death camps, and of the massive devastations of World War II altogether, buried any remaining thought, among Jews and non-Jews alike, that the Enlightenment had ushered in a period in which reason would triumph over barbarianism, in which Jews would be accepted by Christians as brothers and colleagues, and in which technology would be employed for the good of all humankind.

The problem facing Jews, and Jewish communal leaders and thinkers, in the post-Holocaust world, was where to go next. The liberal Judaisms of Europe and North America had fashioned themselves as "Enlightenment" communities, treating the Jewish tradition as either a source of a universal spiritual inspiration, or as a part of some general Jewish ethnicity, or as kind of modern liberal Protestant-like movement of social justice. With the total collapse of the Enlightenment assumptions upon which these responses were built, these notions of liberal Judaism came to be seen as naive at best and positively dangerous at worst. The result was that Jews born after the Holocaust exhibited only loose identification, if any, with such classical Enlightenment expressions of Judaism. Those who felt committed to Jewish continuity began searching for new assumptions upon which to anchor their Jewishness. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, several trends were emerging.

Among the most dramatic was the so-called "baal teshuva" movement which saw tens of thousands of Jews "return" to a form of Orthodoxy or discover a new and "authentic" Jewish spirituality through Lubavitch/Chabad Hasidism. Even among liberal Jews in the Reform movement, there was greater acceptance of tradition, from the wearing of *kippot* (yarmulkas) to a greater amount of Hebrew in the worship service. Beyond the religious denominations themselves, there was a marked increase in identification with Zionism. Jewish voting patterns across the country registered a slow but significant shift to the right with a rough average of 25 percent of American Jewish voters casting ballots for conservative candidates in local, state, and national elections. Overall, it is fair to say that Jewish faith in the ultimate trustworthiness of the outside world became much shakier than it had been prior to the Holocaust.

The people who had to deal with the disillusionments of the post-Holocaust world most directly were Jewish theologians. Jewish theology was traditionally based on the notion that the Jewish people had a covenant with the deity and that this covenant implied a certain divine protection. But the divine seemed strikingly silent, if not totally absent, in "Auschwitz." How, then, was one to talk about a Jewish god, the importance of obedience and faith in that god, and the importance of Judaism altogether, in the face of what felt like divine abandonment?

Theological Questions

I should start this section by noting that Judaism historically has not been a theology-based religion in the way that most forms of Christianity are. There have throughout Jewish history been Jewish theologians, but for the average Jew in his or her everyday life, the real questions have to do with Halakah, what are the right and wrong, good and bad, things to do, based on the Jewish legal tradition. Most Jews do not ask, nor do they expect clarity on, major theological issues such as theodicy (the existence of evil in the world). Nonetheless, the impact of the Holocaust naturally raises these kinds of questions. So while there are a number of post-Holocaust thinkers who have tried to put together a theological response to the Holocaust, it cannot be said that there is any broad consensus within the Jewish community about these issues.

Needless to say, the question as to how to account for the absence of the divine during the Holocaust has sparked a variety of answers. One of the initial questions was whether or not the Holocaust required a new theology at all. Traditional theologians tended to think not. From their point of view, catastrophes had befallen the people throughout history, from the enslavement in Egypt, to the destructions of the First and Second Jerusalem temples, to the massacres of the Middle Ages, to the nineteenth-century Russian pogroms. To be sure, the Holocaust represents a different degree of atrocity, but that in and of itself does not raise new theological questions.

From the perspective of these ultra-conservative rabbis, the answer to why the Jews were allowed to undergo the punishments of the Nazis was the same as why the Babylonians were allowed to ransack Jerusalem in biblical times – the sins of the Jewish people. In this present case, the sins had to do either with the mass apostasy during the nineteenth century (to liberal Judaisms, or to assimilation into Gentile culture) or to the secularist Zionist movement (or to both, which could be seen as opposite sides of the same coin). One of the proponents of the former view is Rabbi Eliezer Menahem Schach, a former leader of the Lithuanian Yeshivah Orthodoxy in Israel (he died in 1999) who claimed that yet another Holocaust could occur because of the widespread abandonment of Judaism (by which he meant of ultra-Orthodoxy) and the pervasive "desecration" of the Sabbath. Those blaming Zionism itself include most notably Rabbi Josef Moshe Teitelbaum, the rebbe of the anti-Zionist Satmar sect of Hasidism (Ravitsky, 1996: 124). These views, it should be noted, are very much of the fringe elements of ultra-Orthodox Judaism.

A more central theological response, still from the Orthodox world, is that of Eliezer Berkovits (1973). Berkovits draws on a mystical Jewish concept of the "hiding of the divine face" (*hester panim*). The roots of the doctrine are biblical ("I will hide My countenance from them,/And see how they fare in the end" – Deuteronomy 31:20; Jewish Publication Society translation). In general, the phrase has been used as a metaphor to indicate the transcendence of the divine from human comprehension. Martin Buber, in his 1952 book *The Eclipse of God*, used the terms more as a way of talking about the inability of modern people to have a close personal relationship with the divine. For Berkovits, the "hiding of the divine presence" was used to explain why divine care seemed to be absent during the Holocaust. It was not so much, Berkovits argues, that the divine is unknowing, uncaring, or incapable of helping. Rather, the Holocaust represents one of those periodic times when the divine face goes into eclipse so that human beings have full freedom. That the covenant at Sinai is still operative is proven, for him, by the fact that not only did the Jews as a people survive, but are now building a new life in Israel.

While Berkovits' views draw on traditional Jewish vocabulary and metaphors, albeit in a somewhat new way, his theology is hardly comforting. The notion of a divine savior who on random occasions simply disappears renders trust in such a deity insecure at best. One possible response to this is simply to say that reliance on the divine is not the issue at all. Rather, the Holocaust is a sort of modern-day revelation that the Jewish people are being called upon to ensure their own survival at all costs. The most well-known advocate of this view was the philosopher Emil Fackenheim, himself a Holocaust survivor, who argued that the most important "commandment" issuing forth from the Holocaust was never to allow Hitler to have a posthumous victory (Fackenheim, 1999). In fact, Fackenheim claimed that this imperative to survive is on the level of the revelation as Sinai (Fackenheim calls this the 614th Commandment, adding on to the traditional number of 613 commandments held to have been given by the divine), and therefore makes it

part of the core of post-Holocaust Judaism. He has been criticized for turning Judaism, in effect, into a community whose purpose is to survive the Holocaust, not to fulfill any other divine or human role. Insofar as Fackenheim avoids any discussion of the divine and focuses only on the human response to the Holocaust, he can be categorized as a non-theologian.

At this point, one may well ask why bother to believe in any divine promise at all in the wake of the Holocaust. Richard Rubenstein takes this challenge seriously and declares, in his *After Auschwitz* (1961), that we must now squarely face the reality that "God is dead." By this he means that reliance on divine salvation in history is meaningless, that there is no larger divine plan, and that there is no deity that really cares. Like Fackenheim, but without the theological sounding language, Rubenstein also is announcing that the old covenant with the god of Sinai has to be understood in the aftermath of the Holocaust to be no longer relevant.

None of the above three approaches (Holocaust as deserved punishment, as a result of the self-abstinence of the divine, as reflecting the "death" of the divine) has achieved much traction in the general Jewish community. Most Jews who think about matters theological are caught in the middle of two unacceptable extremes. On the one hand, the total absence of the divine renders Judaism nothing more than an ethnic group with no meaning beyond its own survival. On the other hand is a deity who is so vindictive and "jealous" so as to allow the Holocaust, including the death of 1.5 million children. Why, it is rightly asked, would anyone want to worship such a deity? The dichotomy is most starkly stated and dealt with by David Blumenthal, who argued in *Facing the Abusing God* (1993) that while God has revealed the divine self as loving and kind, there are also incidences in which the divine is also capable of tolerating, sometimes even commanding, incredible cruelty. Our vocation, in the face of such a deity, is to stand as a community both of faith and of protest. In essence, we have to accept God for what God is and celebrate and support the good and positive while protesting the abusive.

While obviously a difficult theological position for most people to live within, Blumenthal's argument may in the end reflect the sentiment of most modern Jews. It is not so distant in orientation to probably the most popular voice of the Holocaust survivor community, Elie Wiesel. Wiesel, a writer more than a theologian, describes in his many books the profound difficulties of living with the God who allowed the Holocaust, but also stresses that in the end this is the God we have and that believing in God, no matter how hard, is better than a universe with no god at all.

As noted at the beginning of this section, theology has never been a major stream of Jewish intellectual activity. The Holocaust obviously raises all sorts of questions about the nature of God, the nature of the Jewish people, and the meaning of history more generally. For the ultra-Orthodox, there is a theological imperative to justify God. For other Jews, belief in God has become tangential or immaterial anyway, so talk about the death of God does not come across as particularly threatening. For many, if not most Jews, the Holocaust has simply cast the

questions of theodicy and of the nature of God into the public forum and has left in its wake a series of unsatisfactory answers. The Jewish relationship to the deity remains today as fraught, confused, and ambivalent as it has ever been.

Zionism

The term "Zionism" covers a range of movements that developed in the second half of the nineteenth century that called for the creation of a Jewish national homeland. In broad strokes, the idea of a modern day Jewish homeland grew out of the various nationalisms that were taking hold in Europe during this century. One of the creations of the Enlightenment was the notion of the nation-state as we now conceive of it. In essence the idea was that the various peoples of Europe comprised "nations" (or ethnic groups) each of which had its characteristic history, language, folklore, customs, religion, and so on. During the nineteenth century, each of these "nations" found itself caught in a struggle to create its own geographic and political space (a "state") in the wake of the collapse of the older medieval order. Just as there emerged a secular state of France for the French, the assumption was that there should also be a "Germany" for the Germans, an "Italy" for the Italians, a "Hungary" for the Magyars, a "Serbia" for the Serbs, and so on. One of the persistent issues that arose with each of these movements was the question of what status should be accorded to non-national minorities within such nation-states. This question led to the ongoing political discussions about "minority rights" that dominated almost all international meetings of the nineteenth century. A subset of these discussions, of course, was the place of the Jews, as we have seen above in the case of France and Napoleon's Sanhedrin. In fact, some form of the Jewish Question was a topic at almost every one of the international conferences of the period.

The idea that there should also be a "Jewish" state was far from self-evident on both the Jewish and the non-Jewish side. The various Jewish communities of Europe had markedly different attitudes to the topic. The Jews in France had already been "emancipated" and were perfectly happy to consider themselves, and be considered by others, as fully French. German-speaking Jews also were anxious to be seen as fully Germans, albeit of the "Mosaic persuasion." The same was true for all the Western European countries. The further east one travelled, however, the more complicated the attitudes became. In Poland, there was a large assimilated Jewish Polish population in the big cities, but Jews in the small towns, villages, and shtetls of the Polish hinterland hardly thought of themselves, or were seen by their neighbors, as Poles. Jews of the Ukraine and Russia also almost never saw themselves as sharing a nationality with the Ukrainian and Russian peasants around them. In their own minds, these Eastern European Jews saw themselves as a distinct national group.

When the modern Zionist movement began to take shape, it is hardly surprising that it gained what little traction it did in Russia. The first real Zionist movement

was the "Lovers of Zion" (*Hovevei Zion*) which emerged in 1881 largely in the Russian city of Odessa. It focused from the very beginning on returning Jews to "Zion" (then, of course, Turkish Palestine) to work the land. Although this movement did send some tens of thousands of Jews and did succeed in establishing a few villages, it was largely a failure. The first fully organized Zionist movement, the World Zionist Organization, was founded in 1897 by Theodor Herzl, then a newspaper reporter covering the Dreyfus Affair unfolding in France. The movement was highly organized and gradually was able to set up the social, economic, and political structures that would become the State of Israel. It was largely run and financed by Western Jews, especially in Germany and England (and to a lesser degree in France), while the people who actually arrived in Palestine were largely "Russians." Back in Germany, Britain and France, the movement was considered by the vast majority of Jews as at best a fringe movement of Russian dreamers, and at worst an active threat to their own status. The whole argument of the Zionist movement, after all, was that Jews were not really Germans or Frenchmen or British at all, but did constitute a distinct nationality of their own. Well into the 1920s, virtually all Jews in Western Europe and North America would have described themselves as non-Zionist, and some even as anti-Zionist. What sympathy the movement did have in the West was linked mostly to its being seen as a charity for helping Russian Jews fleeing Tsarist, and later revolutionary, Russia. Even Russian Jews regarded Zionism as a last resort. It is significant that of the roughly three million Jews who fled Russia between 1881 and World War I, the vast majority came to North America, and most of the rest remained for whatever reason in Europe. Only a tiny fraction, maybe forty thousand, took the Zionist route, and many, possibly up to half, found the difficulties too great to overcome and subsequently abandoned Palestine.

Until the rise of the Nazis, then, a nationalist movement to create a Jewish homeland in Palestine was not considered a reasonable program by the overwhelming mass of Jews in Western Europe and North America. Even the wave of Jews fleeing to British Palestine from Poland and Germany in the 1920s and 1930s (the so-called "Fourth" and "Fifth" wave of *aliyah*, or immigration) were there not out of Zionist or nationalist conviction, but because of lack of any alternative. Until 1939 there were very few slots for refugees altogether in any Western country, let alone Jewish ones, and after 1939 emigration out of Europe was all but impossible anyway.

The Holocaust had a radical effect on Jewish attitudes toward a Jewish national home. It first of all unleashed a sizable migration of survivors, many erstwhile Displaced Persons Camp inmates, into British Palestine (which still limited Jewish migration into the region) and then into the newly declared State of Israel. Altogether some two hundred and fifty thousand Holocaust survivors were part of the Israeli population of just over 1.2 million in 1950, comprising slightly over one fifth of the population. The United States accepted the second largest number of survivors, something in the area of eighty to a hundred thousand. These

immigrants brought with them both tremendous anger and a fierce determination to survive the Arab attacks on Jews during the Israeli War of Independence and the years immediately following. From the Israeli perspective, the Holocaust affirmed two central concepts. One was that Jewish life in Europe in particular and in the Diaspora more generally was doomed, a concept often termed "negation of the Diaspora" (*Shelilat haGolah*). The other was that the only real solution to the Jewish Question was the creation of a strong and independent Jewish homeland to which the scattered "exiles" of the Diaspora would return. These attitudes were symbolized in institutionalized form in diverse ways in the new State, for example the creation of a kibbutz Lohamei HaGeta'ot ("Fighters of the Ghettoes") located in Western Galilee, which included a number of survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, or the naming of kibbutz Yad Mordechai ("Memorial of Mordechai") near the Gaza Strip in honor of the fallen commander of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, Mordechai Anielewicz. In addition, a national day of Holocaust remembrance (Yom Hashoah) was established in 1951, and linked to Israel Independence Day, eight days later (eight days is the length of several traditional Jewish holidays like Sukkot and Passover). The linkage suggests the death of Diaspora Judaism and its rebirth in the State of Israel.

In America, by far the largest, wealthiest and most influential Jewish Diaspora community in the post-Holocaust era, the effect was equally striking, although quite different in direction. In particular, the American Jewish community did not understand the lesson of the Holocaust to be the negation of Diaspora Jewish life. Yet support for Israel, whether as a way to aid Holocaust survivors, or as a more ideological turn to embracing the concept of Jewish national identity, became a standard public feature of the "organized" Jewish community. Anti-Zionism in America retreated to the extreme margins of the community. While very few American Jews actually made the decision to leave the United States and settle in Israel, despite the calls by Israeli leaders to do so, American Jews came to feel a tight kinship to, and even a kind of shared destiny with, the State of Israel, that had not existed before the Holocaust. Support of Israel in fact moved very much into the center of American Jewish public identity and political activism. This was especially noticeable in the wake of the 1967 Six Day War, during which time the very existence of the State seemed in doubt. Combined with the growing ethnic power movements, the new generation of American Jews in the 1960s and 1970s was much more open about its pride in, connection with, and support for, the State of Israel.

As the State of Israel grew, gained military hegemony, and began to be economically self-sufficient, with a Jewish population that grew to roughly equal or even outnumber the American Jewish population by the early 2000s, a bipolarity developed in Jewish life, with a center in Israel characterized by strong Zionist and religious streams on the one hand, and an American center, assimilated but ethnically identified, on the other. Each of these centers, of course, was fully aware of the Holocaust, but was drawing different lessons from it about homeland versus Diaspora, about the character of the Jewish state, about the nature of Jewish

identity, about the proper teachings and practice of the Jewish religion, even about the very question of who is or is not a legitimate part of the Jewish people. Over the last few decades, the gap between these different answers to these very basic questions has not only failed to diminish, but in fact has broadened and deepened at times to near crisis point. Internal discussions of all these foundational questions almost inevitably have the differing sides invoke the Holocaust and its lessons to "prove" their point of view.

Conclusion

At the end of the day, it seems clear that the world Jewish community is still reeling from the effects of the Holocaust and is still trying to recover its sense of identity, the meaning of its history, its relationship to the divine, and its relationship to the rest of the world. The shattering effects of the Holocaust are still sending out shockwaves two generations later. Several patterns are emerging however. One is that the easy optimism of the Enlightenment, with its promise of the acceptance of the Jews, as Jews, into the modern world, is largely dead. The second is that Zionism, whatever that term might mean, has moved from the margins of Jewish life to the very center of Jewish internal discourse. The third is that the Jewish struggle with the divine has been given new energy, both positive and negative. Where this all leads is of course very unclear. What is clear, however, is that the Judaism that entered into the modern world in the eighteenth, nineteenth, and early twentieth centuries, is now fully of the past and a whole new sense of Jewishness and Judaism is emerging. Whatever evolves over the next generations, it will clearly be a Jewish community that has been radically reshaped and reconceived in light of the Holocaust and its myriad lessons.

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28

American Jews and the Jewish State

David Bamberger

Part I: The Turning Point

> Our airplanes and our missiles are at this moment shelling all Israel's towns and villages. (Cairo Radio, bulletin broadcast June 5, 1967)[1]

Nightmare

War had begun in the Middle East. Cairo Radio boasted of the success of Egypt's army. The President of Syria echoed its triumphant tone, envisioning the Arabs ending the war by assembling in Israel's largest city: "We have decided that this battle will be one for the final liberation from imperialism and Zionism," he said. "We shall meet in Tel Aviv."[2] Around the world, people waited impatiently for further news. Would the Jewish State survive?

Viewed by generations

For members of the older generation, anything seemed possible. They had been witness to World War II, to Hitler, and to the extermination of more than one third of the world's Jewish population. It was not hard for them to imagine that the Jewish State, born out of the calamity of the Holocaust, would itself end up in ashes.

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For anyone under the age of 25, the annihilation of the State of Israel was all but unimaginable. These young people were the first in two millennia for whom a Jewish State had always existed. A lucky few had attended a bar mitzvah ceremony in 1953 when a member of the Israeli Cabinet – later to be the fourth Premier of Israel – Golda Meir had emphasized this connection. "Today as a bar mitzvah you are celebrating your thirteenth birthday," she said, "and the State of Israel is five years old. When you are 21, Israel will be celebrating its own bar mitzvah."[3] Now the State was 19 years old. Could it suddenly be wiped off the map?

Faced with the possibility of Israel's imminent destruction, many American Jews were surprised to find out how much they cared. In the past, they might have been somewhat interested in Israel. They might have taken pride in how it provided homes for Jewish immigrants from around the world, and how its soldiers had defeated the Arab armies. To some degree, however, those reactions had been largely intellectual ones. Now, as the world waited for any shred of reliable news from the Middle East, they found that their identification and concern with Israel was deep and visceral.

Six extraordinary days

The following days produced a nearly audible sigh of relief throughout the Jewish world. The Arab news reports had been entirely false. By the time that Cairo radio was boasting of the success of its planes and missiles, its airforce had already been obliterated, most of its aircraft destroyed while still on the ground. By the end of what became known as the "Six Day War," the Sinai Peninsula had been captured by Israel's soldiers. The Golan Heights, the hills along Israel's northern border from which Syrian soldiers had fired on Jewish farming settlements in the valley below, were firmly in Israeli hands. The entire land area on the west side of the Jordan River was in the hands of the Israel Defense Forces.

Most startling was the news from Jerusalem. Since Israel's War of Independence in 1948, the kingdom of Jordan had controlled the Old City, home to sacred sites of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Jews were forbidden to enter the area, and gravestones from Jewish cemeteries were used to build latrines.

Now, the entire city was in Israel's control.

David and Goliath

Throughout the world, the perception of Israel changed. For the first 19 years of its existence, the Jewish State had been perceived as the little David facing the hideous power of Goliath – the massed Arab nations swearing its impending destruction. After the Six Day War, Israel was three and a half times its original size, controlled its own capital, and had 1.2 million Arab refugees under its control.[4] It had earned

new respect through the brilliant planning of its officers, and the passion, dedication, and effectiveness of its soldiers.

Israel was no longer seen as an endangered enclave living on borrowed time. It had proven itself to be the dominant military power in the Middle East. Even the Arab states, though continuing to pay lip service to their goal of conquering the entire State of Israel, spoke more and more about the need to regain their own lands lost in the war.

David had become Goliath.

Opportunities rejected and seized

The Israeli government expected to return most of its gains in exchange for a comprehensive peace settlement with its neighbors. This hope was met with bitter disappointment. The Arab states refused to enter into any negotiations; in fact, they continued to reject Israel's right to exist. In later years, Abba Eban, as foreign minister of Israel, would describe the situation succinctly: "The Arabs never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity."[5]

Yet the Arabs most directly affected by the Six Day War – those who found themselves living under Israeli control in Gaza and in the "West Bank" (the area west of the Jordan River on Israel's eastern border) – chose a different option.[6] These people had ample reason to be bitter. During Israel's War of Independence, they (or their parents) had fled to neighboring countries, confidently expecting to return when the Arab armies crushed the new Jewish state.[7] When Israel was victorious, these Arabs were stranded as refugees. In the following years, as Israel welcomed some three hundred thousand Jews expelled from Arab nations, the Arab nations refused to give homes to their Muslim brethren. Instead, these people were forced to live in refugee camps, paid for largely by the United States. Still, the refugees hoped that the Arab armies would make good their promise to destroy Israel and restore them to the land which had once been their home.

The stunning defeat of the Arab states shattered their claim to be the defenders of the refugees. The way was open for the displaced people to find their own champion. They found it in a small organization, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which grew rapidly in membership and prestige.

A new claim

The PLO leadership made a strategic decision to ignore a critical fact: There already was a state created specifically for Arabs in the land that today encompasses the territories of Israel and Jordan – the territory known for centuries as "Palestine."

Following World War I, Great Britain had been given control of Palestine with an international mandate to transform the entire area into a Jewish homeland.

Instead, the British split off the portion east of the Jordan River – far more than half the total area – and helped it become an independent Arab nation that would come to be known as "the kingdom of Jordan." During the 1948–1949 war (which Israelis call "the War of Independence" and which Arabs call "Nakba" – "disaster"), this de facto Palestinian kingdom gained control over an additional area west of the Jordan River ("the West Bank").

No one in the Arab world spoke of turning this newly conquered territory into a separate state. It was only after 1967, when Israel captured this area during the Six Day War, that claims were made on behalf of "the Palestinian people." It was not totally clear who this meant. The term was not restricted to the Arab refugees whose families had lived until 1948 in the territory that had become the State of Israel – not even the entire PLO leadership fit this definition. It was not those who had ever lived in a "Palestinian state" – no such nation ever existed. Prior to World War I, Palestine it had merely been an impoverished district of the large empire ruled by the Ottoman Turks.

A campaign without a plan

If it was not quite clear who the PLO represented, it was even less clear what the organization was offering. The destruction of Israel was virtually the only thing on its agenda. Its leaders had no cogent plan for creating a new Arab state (that concept wasn't even part of the PLO's original charter), and over the years rejected every opportunity to seize the advantages of stability, economic growth, joint tourism opportunities, and improved standards of living that peace would have provided. Its corrupt leadership siphoned off untold amounts of money from the sums donated to the Palestinian cause by other Arab states.

Nevertheless, the PLO displayed a certain genius in creating worldwide acceptance of the concept that "the Palestinian people" was a displaced national entity entitled to its own state on the West Bank. It was able to make this case to the international community even though for many years it made clear that statehood would be merely a first step in an ongoing campaign to eradicate Israel. The Arab world rallied behind the PLO, recognizing it as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

A new strategy

The Palestine Liberation Organization also developed a new strategy. If conventional armies were incapable of defeating Israel, the PLO would use unconventional warfare: terrorism. This took a variety of forms including the hijacking of planes and, in 1972, the kidnapping and murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic Games. Although many nations condemned these actions, they

simultaneously gave the PLO increased recognition and made its leader, Yasser Arafat, into a celebrity. In 1974, he became the first person not the head of a government to be invited to address a full session of the United Nations. He was also the first person to speak to the UN wearing a holster.

Those years set the framework within which the world in general, and the American Jewish community in particular, would function up to our own time: a safe and secure Israel too strong for the Arab world to destroy, and a Palestinian movement that, regardless of its behavior, retains international sympathy.

Part II: From Generation to Generation

> One generation's nightmare becomes the next generation's sociology, and even those who have walked through the fire have trouble remembering exactly what those burning coals felt like. (Stephen King, *Danse Macabre*)[8]

It would require at least a small book (perhaps a large one!) to detail how the Six Day War and its aftermath continued to play out in the following decades.[9] However, the purpose of this essay is to not to detail the fascinating, tumultuous, and often bewildering events of the Middle East, but rather to examine the relationship of American Jewry to those events, and specifically to the State of Israel.

As indicated in Part I of this chapter, a discussion of "American Jewry" must take into account the dramatically different worldviews of successive generations. The degree of change over time is perhaps best indicated by a document known as "The Pittsburgh Platform" which expressed the attitudes of American Reform Jews in 1885. One of its key statements was: "We recognize, in the modern era of universal culture of heart and intellect, the approaching of the realization of Israel's great Messianic hope for the establishment of the kingdom of truth, justice, and peace among all men."[10]

We need hardly dwell on the two world wars, the Holocaust or Shoah, and all the other events that proved this nineteenth-century optimism to be stunningly naive. Rather, let us look at the modern era by skipping ahead to 2010 and imagining the family of a junior in college. We'll call the student Rachel. She is twenty years old, having been born in 1990. Her parents, we will assume, were born in 1960, and her grandparents in 1930.[11]

The grandparents' worldview: uncertainty

Ask Grandma and Grandpa about how the world has changed since they were young and their answer focuses on technology. They remember when it first became possible to make a long-distance phone call without the help of an operator – though making such a call was expensive and only for emergencies and very special occasions. They vividly recall the first use of a jet plane for passengers,

not to mention the first manned spaceflight. They are still not fully adjusted to the sight of their grandchildren walking around with hi-tech cell phones, blithely carrying more computing power on their hips than the first astronauts took to the moon.

Yet, when pressed, the grandparents talk about a change that affects them much more deeply. They remember growing up at a time when their identity as Jews was fundamental to their lives.

Their own parents (like most children of immigrants) rejected "the old ways" and wanted to be seen as "true Americans." They dressed like Americans, they talked like Americans, and they tried not to be "too Jewish." The effort was not totally successful. There were still colleges with Jewish quotas, jobs and houses for which "only Christians need apply." A Catholic priest developed a large radio audience for his antisemitic, pro-Nazi broadcasts.[12]

Partly as a consequence, Rachel's grandparents, like most second-generation Americans, were determined to preserve their national heritage. When they moved out of the city center, for example, they chose a growing new suburb with a Jewish community, and joined a newly built synagogue which became the center of many of their social and community activities.

All this gave them stability in a world that they perceived as fundamentally fragile. They had grown up with the family surrounding the radio, listening to the news of World War II. In 1943, when Grandpa was bar mitzvah (bat mitzvah for girls was all but unknown at that time), the outcome of the Allied struggle with Germany and Japan was still very much in doubt. Two years later the Allies would prevail, but victory would reveal the horrors of the Nazi attempt to exterminate world Jewry. The optimism brought about by the end of World War II had also been blunted by the resurgence of the Soviet Union and the enslavement of Eastern Europe by Russian domination. Inside the Soviet Union, more than two and a half million Jews were subjected to severe discrimination.

Yes, there was much for which to be thankful, especially America's stunning postwar prosperity and the creation of the State of Israel. But who knew how long either would last? The horror the grandparents felt as the Six Day War began and the terror they experienced when Cairo made its triumphant broadcasts never totally faded. As a result, making financial contributions to Israel was, for them, a major priority. Whether it was to purchase trees that restored the land, to provide resettlement funds for waves of immigrants from Europe, Arab lands, Ethiopia, and Russia, or simply to contribute to the building of the new country, they were always proud and happy to help.

The parents' worldview: progress

Rachel's parents have an entirely different worldview. They grew up at a time that knew almost no limits – literally. One of their earliest memories was staying up late on July 20, 1969, to watch the first man set foot on the moon. Family vacations

reached to Europe and Israel. Rock and roll, controversial in the previous decade, was now a way to share in an international celebration of popular culture. The pace of technological advance was accelerating. They saw their first personal computers when they went to college, and yet early in their professional careers the new devices were becoming commonplace.

As children born in 1960, they were spared understanding the assassinations of President Kennedy in 1963 and Martin Luther King in 1969. The Vietnam War, which so undermined America's political fabric, ended when they were only 15. Rather than being troubled by all this, they were able to benefit from many of the liberal attitudes that had become part of American life during the 1960s and early 1970s. Earning a driver's license was their rite of passage, providing a degree of freedom, mobility, and privacy previously unknown to young people.

The women's movements had bent or broken many barriers. There was never any question, for example, that Mother would celebrate her thirteenth birthday with a bat mitzvah ceremony. After all, in the previous year, 1972, Cleveland-born Sally Priesand had been ordained as the first female rabbi in America.

In many other ways, optimism was in order for Jews. Organized antisemitism had essentially disappeared: it lost all respectability in America after the revelations of the Nazi slaughter of the Jews. When Mom and Dad applied to college, the idea of a "Jewish quota" was never even considered. On the contrary, most colleges had some sort of support organization for Jewish students and academic courses in Judaic studies.

As teenagers they had seen Israel threatened once again – their bar/bat mitzvah year had been darkened by Egypt's attack on Yom Kippur, 1973. For Israelis this had been traumatic – the nation had been caught unprepared and sustained heavy losses – but for the young Americans the truly important thing was that Israel had once again been victorious, and six years later signed a peace agreement with Egypt.

The one really negative aspect of their world was the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States: Communism versus the free world. This interfaced with the one great Jewish issue facing their generation: the Jews trapped within the Soviet Union, unable to practice or study Judaism yet prevented from assimilating into the general Russian population (Jewish passports were stamped with "J" to single them out as Jews), and rarely allowed to leave. However, these problems were solved before their daughter Rachel's first birthday. The Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and Jews were suddenly allowed to emigrate to Israel. They responded in large numbers. The Russian émigrés in Israel, and their children, now number over one million.

Mom and Dad were pleased with all this. They were proud of their heritage (they made a point of looking for a Jewish person to marry, although many of their Jewish friends did not), and contributed to the support of Israel, but they could not claim the passionate attachment their parents had known. With its internal politics, periodic scandals, endless battles with the Palestinians, as well as its prosperity, Israel seemed more and more like "just another country."

Rachel's worldview: choice

For Rachel, the end of Soviet Russia was nothing more than a reference in a dull history text. What pleased her about the date of her birth was that it was the year that the World Wide Web had been launched. She could, with effort, remember a time before everyone had a cell phone, but for her the Internet and e-mail had always existed.

This meant that her life provided an almost infinite number of choices. She could speak to anyone, watch any program, read any document, and hear any music, in almost any location at almost any time. Everywhere she enjoyed options. One science magazine estimated that, thanks to in vitro fertilization, surrogacy, egg donation, and a variety of more exotic techniques, there were – in addition to the "old-fashioned way" – no less than 13 methods through which a woman could become a mother![13]

In such a world it is hard for Rachel to focus on any particular area of world politics. She is interested in Israel, and certainly does not want to see it destroyed, but she doesn't want to see any other state destroyed either. She recognizes that Israel faces some special challenges, but so do other nations, including the United States. She feels a certain pride in Israel's remarkable economic and scientific accomplishments, but these successes make it hard for her to believe that it really needs her help.

For her, the overriding threat is the memory of September 11, 2001, when Muslim terrorists flew planes into the Pentagon building in Washington, nearly succeeded in flying another into the White House, and most spectacularly brought the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City crashing into rubble. Rachel is deeply concerned about the rise of Muslim extremism, but she regards this as an international issue, not particularly as a threat to Israel.

Part III: A Cast of Characters

"Two Jews, three opinions." (Jewish saying)[14]

In Part I of this chapter, I argued that the Six Day War was the turning point in the relationship of American Jewry (and, indeed, the world community) to the State of Israel. In Part II, I illustrated how the development of Israel was perceived by different generations.

It would be foolish, however, to suggest that any generation has a unitary response to events. This is particularly true of the Jews, who – since biblical times and the Almighty's complaint about them being a "stiffnecked" people" – have been noted for their passion for debate, and their wide range of opinions.

When I invented Rachel and her family as a way of illustrating the vast differences between generations of American Jews and their attitudes to the

State of Israel, I did not mean to suggest the picture as "typical." Particularly with today's "generation of choices," it would be hard to define "typical" in any meaningful way. Therefore, we need to amplify our perception of American Jews in the early days of the twenty-first century. Let us consider the attitudes of some of the people who would be Rachel's Jewish friends and contemporaries.[15]

Pro-Palestinians

Arthur and Ellen are appalled by the behavior of the Israeli government, and are totally sympathetic to the cause of the Palestinians. What Rachel would describe as Arab propaganda is for Arthur and Ellen a description of the truth. While Rachel regards any misfortunes that fall on the Palestinians to be the result of Arab refusal to acknowledge the right of Israel to exist, Arthur and Ellen do not acknowledge Israel's existence as a right. They agree with the Arabs who insist that Israel was thrust upon the Muslim Middle East by Western powers who felt some degree of guilt for permitting the Nazi atrocities, but who did not want to admit Jewish refugees to their own countries.

The very concept of a "Jewish state" is anathema to these college students. They believe strongly that religion and government should be separated everywhere. As Jews they are angered by those who refer to America as a "Christian nation," and find the idea of a "Jewish state" equally unacceptable. They believe that the solution to the Middle East problem is for all those living in Gaza, Israel, and the West Bank to create a single, modern, multinational democracy. If Arabs become a majority in the country and gain control of the government, so be it.

They firmly reject any suggestion that they are antisemitic or anti-Jewish. "Whatever else our Jewish background involves," they say, "it certainly means standing up for the oppressed and persecuted." That they are vocal participants in every college demonstration against Israel reflects their frustration that, in their minds, the oppressors are now the Jews.

Waiting for Messiah

Ari also has a problem with the concept of "Jewish state"; but while Arthur and Ellen are opposed to the nature of the "state," Ari's issue is that, in his opinion, Israel is not really "Jewish."

He was raised in a family of committed Reform Jews (his name at that time was "Justin"), but by the time he completed high school he had found Reform unsatisfactory. He investigated a Conservative synagogue, but felt it was no more than "slow-acting Reform." Although these liberal branches of Judaism claimed respect for Jewish law, both left room for choice as to what laws made sense for modern times. "What can it mean to have a 'law' that no one is obligated

to obey?" he asked. "Why read the fourth commandment if no one really observes the Sabbath? How can one claim to be Jewish and still regard the Decalogue as merely The Ten Suggestions?"

He concluded that the only way to be a true Jew was to observe Jewish Law as it had been developed by sages over the centuries. He changed his name to Ari, in honor of the sixteenth-century mystic known by that name, and committed himself to the long and intensive course of study that would one day make him an Orthodox rabbi.

He recognizes that most Orthodox Jews have not only accommodated themselves to the concept of a modern Jewish state, but are active participants in the life of the country, including a strong involvement in its politics. Ari, however, is not one of them. He believes that the restoration of the Jewish people to the territory promised to Abraham can only happen when the Holy One (blessed be He) determines that it is time to send the Messiah. Ari wants to live in the land of Israel, for that is where the Messiah will come and, should he come in our day, it would be unimaginably marvelous to be there to welcome him. Even if Ari is not fortunate enough to see the Messiah, he deeply believes in the holiness of the Holy Land. Nevertheless, he acknowledges the contradiction of living in a country where he regards the government as illegitimate, but would be forced to rely on it for security and basic services. He has decided to defer any decision on this until after he completes his studies. For now, he spends the time away from his books encouraging other Jews to become observant of the commandments. He never utters the words "the State of Israel."

The Indifferent

Anthony doesn't care about religion, about politics, or about Israel. He agreed to be bar mitzvah – it made his family happy and brought him lots of presents, but he has never since entered a synagogue. He works hard on his profession, loves jazz, and is truly happy with his girlfriend Christine – born Roman Catholic with a total disinterest in religion and an unquestioning commitment to birth control. They like to travel, but neither has ever suggested a trip to Israel.

Aliyah

Heather and Michael married when they graduated from college, and immediately made *aliyah*, resettling in Israel.[16]

They had visited Israel several times as students and tourists, and had no illusions about what would face them while living there. They were fully aware of the challenges of living in a small country, and the frustrations involved in dealing with Israeli politics. In addition, important as this decision was for them, it was not an

effort at making "a statement." They enjoyed life in America and adored their families. They simply wanted to live in a truly Jewish environment.

They love being in a country where vacations are determined by the Jewish calendar. They want to raise children without ever having to explain to teachers why their kids would not attend school on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. They want their offspring to learn Hebrew as their native language, not as an ancient code to be memorized weekly in a Hebrew school.

For Heather and Michael, the journey does not so much mean that they have left America as much as that they have returned to the land of their ancestors. In their own minds, they have truly gone home.

American Zionist

Esther is happy being a fervently patriotic American and a totally devoted Zionist. In fact, she sees America and Israel as the twin anchors of her life. For her bat mitzvah she was given a life membership in Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, and she became one if its youngest active members. She took part in every activity open to teenagers, including raising funds for Hadassah's projects in the Jewish state. She was particularly proud to be able to give some support to Hadassah's signature healthcare programs in Israel, knowing that they would benefit everyone in need, whether Jew, Christian, or Muslim. For Esther, this race-blind care expresses the essence of Judaism.

She loves to visit Israel and may take some classes at the Hebrew University, but she knows that she would never move there. She cannot imagine moving thousands of miles from her family to struggle with the languages and politics of the Middle East. She is devoted to America and feels that it too can benefit from her talents. (She spent the fall of her freshman year at college rounding up support to elect Barack Obama as the first African American president.) Moreover, she feels it needs citizens who will speak up to encourage the US government to support the State of Israel. God bless America!

Part IV: In Conclusion

I could add to this fictional "cast of characters" almost indefinitely. I hope that these sketches will be sufficient to suggest the range of attitudes that characterize American Jews as they try to define their special relationship to the Jewish State.[17]

I would like to end this chapter with some portentous conclusion, but that would involve predicting the future of the Jews of the United States, Israel, and its neighbors. If it is always difficult to foretell events, this is particularly true with the story of American Jewry, and totally impossible concerning the Middle East. The

certainties of one day have suddenly proved illusory, while "impossible" things have taken place.

It would be gratifying to be able to feel that the United States, acting with widespread support from the American Jewish community, will soon bring the Palestinians and Israelis into negotiations that will successfully reconcile the two sides, bringing peace and prosperity to the region. At this writing, unfortunately, it is difficult to imagine such a thing taking place. It would, perhaps, require a miracle.

However, we should remember the words of the first prime minister of the Jewish State, David Ben-Gurion: "In Israel, in order to be a realist you must believe in miracles."[18]

Notes

1 As reported by the BBC, cited in Oren (2002: 178).
2 Nureddin al-Atassi, quoted in Oren (2002: 195).
3 Personal recollection of the author. The words printed here accurately reflect the statement made at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, New York City, October 24, 1953, but may not be the precise words used on the occasion.
4 Oren (2002: 307).
5 Attributed to Abba Eban after the Geneva Peace Conference with Arab countries (21 December 1973), (http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Abba_Eban (accessed November 18, 2011).
6 Many Arabs had always lived within Israel's borders and were Arab citizens. Arabs who lived in Jerusalem were made Israeli citizens when the city was unified.
7 There is disagreement as to the degree that these people left on their own, at the instigation of Arab leaders, and to what extent they were driven from their homes by Israeli soldiers. What is clear is that those Arabs who chose to stay in the new state became full citizens and represented 15 percent of its population. See Bamberger (1994: 128).
8 King (1981).
9 For example, the Israeli government in 2005 evacuated the Gaza strip, removing Israeli citizens and demolishing their settlements. The hope was that this would provide the Palestinians an opportunity to implement a successful independent government that would work to establish a peaceful relationship with the Jewish State. Instead, the Arabs in Gaza regarded this as merely a step toward the stated goal of obliterating Israel. To prove this was no idle threat, they continued to use Gaza as a base from which to launch more than 8600 rockets into Israel, occasionally with deadly effect. Though these attacks were widely criticized, the nations of the world made no effort to stop them. Finally, Israel conducted a three-week attack in a largely successful attempt to stop the attacks. However, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) passed a resolution condemning Israel and a subsequent UN report was widely seen as one-sided in its criticisms of Israel.
10 From "The Pittsburgh Platform," a statement of the attitudes of Liberal Jewish rabbis adopted at a conference in Pittsburgh in 1885. Quoted in Schwartzman (1955: 119).

The complete text can be found online at http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Judaism/pittsburgh_program.html (accessed November 8, 2011).

11 "Rachel" and her family are fictional constructs and are not modeled on any specific individual.

12 Father Charles Edward Coughlin (1891–1979).

13 Richardson (1998).

14 Variously attributed. According to Sandee Brawarsky and Deborah Mark, who used it as the title of their collection of twentieth-century American Jewish quotations, "Whoever said it first, though, probably said it quite some time ago. The notion . . . goes back at least as far as the Talmud" (Brawarsky and Mark, 1998: xi).

15 These characters are also fictional constructs and are not modeled on any specific individual.

16 "Aliyah" is a Hebrew word meaning "go up," and is used to refer to "going up" to the land of Israel. Each of the first waves of immigrants to Israel is called an "aliyah," and the organization to rescue young people from Nazi Germany and bring them to the land of Israel was known as "Youth Aliyah."

17 A similar essay could be written about the issues facing non-Jews as they consider the State of Israel. Christians and Muslims consider the land of Israel to be "the Holy Land" with special ties to their own religious traditions. These attitudes are of great importance, but are not the subject of this essay.

18 Interview on CBS (October 5, 1956).

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29

Judaism(s) in Contemporary America

Dana Evan Kaplan

American Judaism is distinctive from Judaism as it has been understood and practiced at every other time period throughout history and in every other geographical location. As Jacob Neusner writes, "Judaism in America is different from Judaism as it has ever been known, and as it is practiced everywhere else in the world today."[1] This is in large part because the United States is a pluralistic society historically based on religious denominationalism. The study of American Judaism is therefore a fascinating topic that must be understood in the context of the impact that American society has had on religion generally. While Judaism is a unique religion, it has followed the institutional patterns set by the American sociological context. After you finish reading this chapter, you should have a better understanding of not only how but also why American Judaism(s) differs from Judaism(s) in other parts of the world.

Since the name of this book is *History of Jews and Judaism*, this chapter will look at how Jews structured and practiced Judaism in America. This volume is concerned with Jewish civilization as a whole and so we will not study "Judaism" the religion to the exclusion of "Jewishness" the ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the focus will be on "Judaism" rather than "Jewishness." But how does one separate between religious and ethnic elements? Much religious behavior can be understood as expressions of ethnicity and much ethnic identification may mask religious yearnings. While Jews cannot be completely separated from Judaism nor Judaism entirely separated from Jews, we want to focus on those American Jews who are committed to observing Judaism as a religion rather than those who wish to retain an ethnic identity without any religious element. Neusner has called this first group "Judaists" to distinguish them from those who see their Jewish identities as social or cultural rather than religious. This is an arbitrary distinction that some object to, but

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it may help us to focus on our topic of "Judaism(s) in Contemporary America" and so therefore may be justifiable.

Until the last couple of decades, the dominant American Jewish identity focused on what has been termed "civil Judaism." Based on the concept of civil religion developed by sociologists of American religion, pioneered by Robert Bellah, Jonathan S. Woocher has argued that civil Judaism includes the following beliefs or, perhaps more accurately, values: civil Judaism affirms the unity of the Jewish people; their mutual responsibility; the need to work for the survival of the Jewish people in a threatening world; the centrality of the State of Israel; a nostalgic appreciation for the value of Jewish tradition; a stress on doing good deeds and promoting philanthropy; and seeing their Jewishness and Americanness as compatible and indeed complementary forms of overlapping identity.[2] As a consequence, most American Jews did not draw direct association between their Jewish identity and their actual religious practices. Indeed, there is little explicitly "religious" substance among these values. Instead, these American Jews focused on "feeling Jewish," a subjective state that became harder and harder to clearly identify as the years progressed. The problem was that an identity based primarily on subjective feeling was too amorphous to be easily passed on from parents to children.

By the 1980s, many felt that this civil Judaism lacked spiritual content precisely because it was so public. Despite their public involvement, many of these Jewish institutional leaders observed little ceremony in their family lives. One rabbi told journalist Charles E. Silberman that "These federation leaders may be Jews in public, but they're goyim [gentiles] at home."[3] In response to this withering criticism, Jewish leaders began to consider the need to take Judaism seriously as a spiritual practice and not just a public identity. This trend was eventually embraced by the Jewish Federations themselves, which organized seminars and weekend retreats to expose community volunteers to Jewish religious experiences. Whereas once the Federation was regarded as an organization that would maintain strict neutrality, over the past two decades it has emerged as a proponent of voluntaristic ceremonialism. Concern with the future of Judaism has been one of the major reasons why it has abandoned secularism in favor of Jewish spirituality.

While Judaism had popularly been regarded as a religion based on home practice, the synagogue attempted to fill the void left by steadily declining degrees of home-based ritual observance. In the United States, much of the practice of American Judaism took place in the synagogue. Jack Wertheimer argues that "the American synagogue attracts more members and affords greater opportunities for participation than any other voluntary institutions established by Jews in the United States." Some congregations became known as vibrant and lively places, while others developed reputations as institutions that did many lifecycle events without engaging most participants in a religious experience.

For many younger people, their Jewish practices developed in response to exposure at summer camp or youth group, rather than from what they observed at

home or at their local synagogue. These types of informal Jewish experiences have been very important because they enabled young people to see Judaism being practiced in a vibrant environment, which was frequently in dramatic contrast to what they observed in their local communities. The Jewish practice that they had observed in their local synagogues was frequently uninspiring. It was also based on the mechanical repetition of rituals that people had observed their elders performing in an earlier time when Jewish life was much closer to the immigrant experience. This gave it a degree of authenticity which was seen as lacking by many by the 1980s.

You may have already noted the word "Judaism" in the title of this chapter has an "s" in parenthesis after it, implying that there may be more than one Judaism that we need to look at. In the United States, four major American Jewish denominations (Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and Reconstructionist) have developed since the middle to late nineteenth century. In addition, there are numerous other groups not regarded as full denominations. In recent decades, there has emerged a chasm separating the Orthodox and non-Orthodox, suggesting that it is possible to divide American Judaism into two groups – those who feel obligated by the entirety of Jewish law and those who only practice selected elements of the Jewish ritual system. The use of the parenthesis also implies a postmodern understanding of the term in which there may not be any single definition acceptable and, indeed, that it may be possible to have multiple, even conflicting, conceptions that can coexist without requiring any resolution.

The intellectual basis for the existence of different denominations is that different belief systems can be derived from the same historical religion. The modern premise that different approaches to religion are possible is in dramatic contrast to the premodern worldview. In the medieval mindset, there was one form of Judaism. For the vast majority of Jews during this time period, there was a broad consensus concerning what constituted acceptable Jewish belief and practice. We call this approach traditional Judaism in contrast with modern forms of Judaism, which may deviate from each other in both theology and practice.

According to traditional Judaism, all of the commandments of the Torah should be practiced in their entirety. The commandments are divinely given and are interpreted by the rabbis, who explain how they are to be observed in specific circumstances. Since the Torah is divinely given, there is no possibility for reinterpretation or adaptation of traditional practices to fit new social circumstances. Those who study societies over extended periods observe that conceptions do change, even in groups that are opposed to the idea itself. However, such a process takes place unconsciously and over a relatively long period. In contrast, the American non-Orthodox movements (and even some of the liberal American Jewish groups that identify as Orthodox) have consciously set out to reinterpret traditional religious concepts and have made deliberate changes in how the Jewish religion is practiced.

The Four Major Denominations and Other American Jewish Religious Groups

By dividing their religious institutions on the basis of denomination, American Jews were following an American pattern. Religious denominations served to reinforce the ideal of religious pluralism which was so important in the construction of American society. Denominationalism also provided an institutional structure for those who sought out religious affiliation, and thus provided American society with valuable civic organizations that could help to perform good works that the government could not or would not involve itself in. In the two or three decades immediately following World War II, they were so central that Andrew M. Greeley described religious life in the United States during this period as "the denominational society."[4]

American Judaism in the immediate postwar period was divided into three denominations – Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox. By the late 1960s, the Reconstructionist movement was slowly being recognized by many as a fourth denomination, even though it was much smaller numerically than the other three. Those who wanted to join a synagogue – or felt they needed to so they could send their children to religious school – usually chose a synagogue affiliated with one of these denominations.

The era of denominationalism did not last. By the late 1980s, Robert Wuthnow was arguing that the religious environment had shifted dramatically and that "denominational barriers have ceased to function as hermetic categories of religious identification."[5] The nature of American society began changing rapidly and the divisions that had formerly seemed so rigid began dissolving. While this opened up tremendous social and economic opportunities for millions of individuals, it threatened the institutional viability of organizations that had been built on the basis of denominational division. While all of the American Jewish denominations still exist, they do not dominate the American Jewish religious landscape the way they once did.

Actually, the denominations did not initially seek to be denominational. Each of the three early Jewish denominations had originally seen itself as representing the vast majority of the American Jewish community and, according to most scholars, had not intended to establish their movements as denominations. The first of the American synagogue organizations to be created was the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), which was established in 1873. This became the umbrella body for all Reform congregations in the United States. Under the influence of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, layman Moritz Loth issued a call to congregations to come together, primarily for the purpose of funding an American rabbinical college. This was seen as an urgent need, since all rabbis up to this time came from Europe and there was no way to ensure that they were trained to function effectively in an American environment.

As indicated by the title of the organization, the UAHC was intended to be a union of all American synagogues. The word "Reform" was not mentioned because the leaders of the organization originally expected to appeal to a broad spectrum of congregations with various ideologies and ritual practices. Similarly, other Reform-oriented institutions including the Hebrew Union College (HUC, established 1875), the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR, established 1889), and the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR, established 1922) likewise carried nondenominational names befitting their intended broad communal purpose. It was only the social reality which transformed them after the fact into denominational institutions.

The Orthodox was the only one of the original three denominations to give its institutions and organizations distinctively denominational names. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU) was founded in 1898 to protect "Orthodox Judaism whenever occasions arise in civic and social matters." The leaders wrote that they created the organization "to protest against declarations of Reform rabbis not in accord with the teachings of our Torah." But most Orthodox leaders saw their denominational identity as temporary, believing that either all American Jews would eventually join them, or would assimilate out of existence.

The United Synagogue of America (USA, established in 1913, later renamed the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, USCJ) was organized under the leadership of Professor Solomon Schechter to encompass most of the non-Reform synagogues in the United States. Schechter modeled the new organization on the United Synagogue of Great Britain, which was officially Orthodox but, like the organization that Schechter was creating, served a broad constituency. The expectation was that the Jewish Theological Seminary of America would produce rabbis for those synagogues not wishing to affiliate with the UAHC. Even though they were to become a liberal-oriented group, they called themselves "Conservative" to contrast their traditional approach against that of the Reform movement. Conservative leaders saw the Reform as a small faction and expected that they would attract the overwhelming majority of American synagogues. This held true for a certain period of time, but the Conservative movement, by the 1970s, was on the way to becoming a shrinking minority.

Reconstructionist Judaism is the only one of the four major denominations that was developed entirely in the United States. The Reform movement was founded in Germany at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Conservative movement traces its roots to the Historical School, which broke away from German Reform in the 1840s, and Orthodoxy likewise coalesced in Germany as a distinct movement in response to the perceived threat of religious reform. All of these movements were the product of many Jews working together over the course of many generations. In contrast, the Reconstructionist movement was inspired by a single person: Rabbi Mordecai M. Kaplan, and developed into a movement through the efforts of a small group of his disciples. Kaplan espoused a rationalistic approach to Judaism that encompassed all aspects of Jewish civilization rather than a narrow definition of Judaism as just a religion.

In recent decades, new Jewish religious groups have begun forming, some of which can be seen as incipient denominations. This includes the Jewish Renewal movement, led by Rabbi Zalman Schacter-Shalomi, who combines kabbalistic and Hasidic teachings in an egalitarian framework. They describe themselves as a worldwide transdenominational movement grounded in Judaism's prophetic and mystical traditions. Emphasizing ecstatic practices such as meditating, chanting, dancing, and seeking alternative forms of consciousness, Jewish Renewal is designed to reinvigorate traditional Judaism while borrowing from other approaches to spirituality.

Humanist Judaism, in contrast, emphasizes Jewish culture rather than belief in God. While the term can refer to a broad array of phenomenon, the Humanistic movement was founded by Rabbi Sherwin Wine in 1963. Wine developed a liturgy that reflected his belief that there was no personal God but that the holidays and practices of Judaism could be perpetuated without such a belief. In 1969, a group of likeminded congregations created the Society for Humanistic Judaism. The movement has been broadly tolerant, accepting intermarriage, gay unions, and various other social changes.

Another phenomenon which has been getting more attention has been that of the independent minyanim, lay-led worship and study communities that combine a commitment to Jewish law with egalitarianism. Most independent minyanim try to stick closely to the traditional liturgy while emphasizing the Jewish prayer service as a spiritual experience. Drawing their participants mostly from the Conservative movement, the independent minyanim movement is volunteer led with no paid clergy, does not affiliate with any of the existing Jewish denominations, and has been founded in the past decade.

There are many other groups and subgroups that constitute contemporary American Judaism. Each focuses on different aspects of Jewish traditions and interprets this tradition in various ways. What they all share in common is a dialogue with the sacred texts of historic Judaism. Nevertheless, they differ dramatically in terms of religious belief and practice. Let us now look at each of the major denominations.

The Reform Movement

The Reform movement, the largest American Jewish religious denomination since the 1980s, has been simultaneously moving in two seemingly opposite directions: Temples are using more Hebrew and reintroducing traditional rituals, but at the same time accepting radical new definitions of Jewish identity and religious fidelity. The first Reformers – usually identified as "German Jews" but who in fact came from many Central European regions – were seeking a middle course between traditional Judaism, which they wanted to break away from, and conversion

to Christianity, which they wanted to avoid. Looking for a way to remain Jewish while adapting to prevailing social customs, they hoped that by introducing modern aesthetics and strict decorum, they could make Jewish worship services more attractive. Therefore, most of the early reforms focused on minor cosmetic changes. They abbreviated the liturgy and added a sermon in the vernacular, a mixed choir accompanied by an organ, and German as well as Hebrew prayers.

The history of Reform Judaism in the United States differs profoundly from that in Europe. Whereas in Europe the movement developed under the shadow of antisemitism and the threat of conversion to Christianity, in the United States a freer and more pluralistic atmosphere prevailed. The first attempt at Reform in the United States occurred in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1824, when 47 members of Congregation Beth Elohim signed a petition requesting that their congregational leadership institute certain ritual reforms, including the introduction of prayers in English. The congregational board rejected the request, and a small group of intellectuals decided to form a new congregation, to be based on enlightened liberal values. On November 21, 1824, the Reformed Society of Israelites came into being, and the group published the first American Reform prayer book, *The Sabbath Service and Miscellaneous Prayers Adopted by the Reformed Society of Israelites*.[6] Although the original group disbanded in 1833, due in part to the relocation and subsequent death of one of its more dynamic leaders, an interesting Sephardic intellectual named Isaac Harby, Mother Congregation Beth Elohim soon began to move toward Reform under the leadership of its *hazzan*, Gustavus Poznanski.[7]

Far more important for the development of the Reform movement in the United States was the arrival of large numbers of central European Jews beginning in the 1830s. The Jewish population of the United States jumped from approximately three thousand in 1820 to 15 thousand in 1840 and 150 thousand in 1860.[8] Although many scholars have assumed that these immigrants brought Reform Judaism with them from Germany, Leon Jick has argued that American Reform was not "imported" but rather developed in the United States.[9] While Jick overstates his argument, his book is a much needed corrective to the earlier historical consensus.

Jewish immigrants settled throughout the United States. As they established businesses and built homes, local Jews began to put more effort into building a Jewish community. They consecrated cemeteries and held High Holy Day services, usually in a private home or a hotel meeting room. Eventually, they erected synagogue buildings and, if the community was large enough, engaged a religious leader with training in religious matters in the old country who could read the Hebrew prayers and perform the required rituals. For congregations in Albany, Georgia, Fort Wayne, Indiana, or Lexington, Kentucky, this was sufficient.

As the immigrants gradually acculturated, they wanted their synagogue practice to reflect American norms. They wanted to use English as well as Hebrew in the services and to create an atmosphere to which they could bring Christian neighbors, who would come away impressed with the propriety and nobility of the ritual. Thus they moved their congregations toward Reform, not out of an intellectually

based theological commitment, but as a practical response to daily life in the United States. Most of the functionaries went along with that trend. They were not theologically motivated but rather saw the practical benefits of adapting religious practices to the American patterns of living.

But ideologically motivated reformers also existed. One group of liberal religious intellectuals in Baltimore formed a *Verein* in 1842, a small religious group that met to discuss theology and conduct services based on that theology, the Har Sinai Verein. In 1845 a similar group founded Emanu-El in New York City, which developed into the largest and most prestigious Reform congregation in the country. These groups, dedicated to Reform Judaism in ideological terms, differed from the vast majority of congregations in the United States, whose members were more concerned with the realities of everyday life in America than with the intricacies of Judaic theological debate.

Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century reformers stressed the importance of ethical monotheism. They believed that the unique ethical and moral message of Judaism derived directly from one all-good God who was responsible for creating everything in the world. Ethics thus derived organically from monotheism. Reform Jews prided themselves on their commitment to rational thought and therefore concluded that science explained how the universe was born. There was no conflict between the two and religion could adapt to new scientific discoveries. The acceptance of scientific theory and religious cosmology was not seen as conflicting, since the laws of science carried out God's will. Nevertheless, most Reform Jews believed that God created the world in some way and continued to be involved in an ongoing process of creation. The biblical account of creation was not a scientific theory of the world's origins, but rather a religious myth of great spiritual value. The Torah was a holy text because it reflected the religious perceptions of the ancient Israelites. Much, but not all, of what the ancient Israelites thought and wrote continued to be relevant and significant. The movement stressed universalism. Judaism was a religion that spoke to the human condition, and to all humans.

The Reform movement changed its direction as a consequence of the increasingly brutal nature of the twentieth century. World War I jump-started the process of reexamining the liberal sense that had propelled Reform religious thought until that time. The movement's optimistic view of human progress in collaboration with God underwent further change after the rise of the Nazi movement in Germany and the subsequent murder of six million Jews. In the aftermath of that tragedy, the Reform movement veered away from its universalistic triumphalism toward a more ethnically based cultural identity.

Even though the 1885 *Declaration of Principles* had argued that Jews should remain together solely as a religious group to fulfill their mission of bringing ethical monotheism to the world, the rise in antisemitism threatened Jewish physical survival, a concern that far outweighed theology or ideology. Policies that had seemed levelheaded just a few decades earlier now appeared naive and foolhardy.

As a result, the CCAR adopted the Columbus Platform in 1937, officially named *The Guiding Principles of Reform Judaism*. This new platform embraced Jewish peoplehood and leaned toward support of political Zionism. The culmination of a revolutionary shift in the ideology of the American Reform movement, it encouraged a greater diversity of opinion and a multiplicity of approaches.[10]

By 1945 the Reform movement was generally supportive of Zionism and the soon-to-be-created state of Israel. The interwar period saw the rise of two strongly pro-Zionist Reform rabbis, Stephen S. Wise and Abba Hillel Silver. Wise established the Jewish Institute of Religion (JIR) in New York City in 1922 to provide a Zionist alternative to Hebrew Union College. Wise believed in both the importance of social justice and the centrality of Jewish peoplehood. With Wise, Silver formed the American Zionist Emergency Council, which lobbied the US Congress on behalf of the Zionist movement. Silver was the leader who announced to the United Nations that Israel had declared itself an independent state. Both men were Classical Reformers devoted to Jewish nationalism, a synthesis that would have been incongruous just a few decades earlier.

Maurice N. Eisendrath, who became UAHC executive director in 1943 and president in 1946, moved the national headquarters from Cincinnati to New York, where he constructed an entire building for the organization on Fifth Avenue across the street from Central Park and next to Congregation Emanu-El.[11] He called the new headquarters the "House of Living Judaism," and it remained the operating center of the Reform movement until it was sold in 1998. Nelson Glueck, a world-famous archaeologist who had appeared on the cover of *Time*, became president of HUC in 1947. While many viewed him as more interested in his archaeological pursuits than in his administrative responsibilities, his fame brought a great deal of attention to the movement. He oversaw the 1950 merger of HUC with JIR, and under his leadership HUC-JIR established a third US branch in Los Angeles in 1954 and a fourth campus in Jerusalem in 1963.[12] Although this growth may have owed more to the burgeoning of the American Jewish community than to Glueck, the perception grew that the Reform movement had competent and visionary leadership.

The leaders could project this image of a strong, unified movement partly because of the number of pressing causes that could galvanize members of Reform congregations. In the 1960s many Reform Jews became involved in the US civil rights struggle as well as in the movement opposing the war in Vietnam. The Six Day War of 1967 dramatically increased American Jews' emotional connection and commitment to the state of Israel. As they worried about its ability to survive in the face of Arab promises to destroy the country during the tense three weeks preceding the war, many came to realize how important the state of Israel had become to them. This fear resurfaced in 1973 when Israel's physical survival was in doubt during the early stages of the Yom Kippur War. The cumulative effect was to increase dramatically the Zionist fervor of most American Jews, a sea change felt throughout the movement.

Alexander M. Schindler, who became president of the UAHC in 1973, gained renown for his assertive support of the social action agenda of the Reform movement of the 1970s and 1980s, including civil rights, world peace, nuclear disarmament, a "Marshall Plan" for the poor, feminism, and gay rights, as well as his opposition to the death penalty. Although this advocacy landed Schindler frequently in the pages of the *New York Times*, he got along with traditional Jews and Israeli leaders better than had any of his predecessors. Despite a disinterest in administrative issues, Schindler and his German accent became synonymous with Reform Judaism. His leadership inspired not only individuals, but also entire temples, to join the movement. During his presidency, the UAHC grew from four hundred congregations in 1973 to about 875 in 1995. Of course, the continuing move to suburbia made much of this growth possible, but Schindler's inspirational leadership on issues meaningful to American Jews disconnected from traditional belief or practice played an important role.

Schindler is perhaps best remembered for two issues, his outreach to intermarried couples and his advocacy of patrilineal descent. Intermarriage had long been a taboo in the Jewish community, and many parents ostracized children who "married out." Some would even sit shiva for children about to intermarry, as if the child had died. Schindler, who felt strongly that this taboo was counterproductive as well as inappropriate, came to believe that a bold gesture was in order. At a meeting of the UAHC's Board of Trustees in Houston in December 1978, he issued a public call to the Reform movement to reach out to the non-Jewish spouses in interfaith marriages. Even more surprising, he urged making the Jewish religion available to unchurched Gentiles. This controversial call to proselytize those with no connections of blood or marriage to the Jewish community appeared to be a dramatic departure from two thousand years of Jewish religious policy against proselytization. His critics argued that such a move would encourage certain Christian groups to launch opposing campaigns against the Jewish community, using Schindler's call as an excuse for proselytizing unaffiliated Jews. Despite the attention that this suggestion created, little proselytizing of unchurched Gentiles has occurred in the succeeding years, whereas many outreach programs to interfaith couples have been developed.

During the Schindler years the Reform movement adopted the patrilineal descent resolution, which stated that the child of one Jewish partner is "under the presumption of Jewish descent."[13] While the document's vague wording led to some difficulties, the patrilineal descent policy insured that if one's father was Jewish and one's mother was not, one would still be regarded as Jewish, provided that one was raised as a Jew. This would supplement rather than replace the traditional matrilineal descent policy, which established that the children of a Jewish mother would be Jewish regardless of their father's faith.

Also during Schindler's presidency, the Reform movement allowed women to assume a more central role in the synagogue, a direct consequence of the feminist movement that influenced every aspect of American life. As American women in

the 1960s and 1970s took on a far greater role in religious life, the Reform movement responded actively to the changing gender-role expectations. Increasing numbers of congregations allowed women to assume responsibility for all aspects of religious and communal life, even the rabbinate. In 1972, Sally J. Priesand became the first woman ordained a Reform rabbi at HUC-JIR, a revolutionary breakthrough. Even though Reform Judaism had been committed to egalitarianism from its origins in the early nineteenth century, it had maintained a male-only policy in the rabbinate. Priesand's ordination moved congregations to look at the role of women in new ways. Since 1972, hundreds of women have enrolled in HUC. As the changes in the Reform movement paralleled social changes, its character as an American religious denomination made it popular with an increasingly Americanized Jewish community.

Reform practice today, especially in the synagogue itself, is characterized by the partial restoration of a number of formerly abrogated rites and rituals. Ritual items eliminated by the Classical Reformers, such as the yarmulke, tallith, and even tefillin, have been brought back. But because of the concept of religious autonomy, individual congregations cannot and do not require congregants to wear any of these traditional prayer items. Rather, they are offered to those who find them religiously meaningful or who prefer to wear them as an expression of traditionalist nostalgia. This generates some incongruous and perhaps amusing situations. For example, it is not uncommon to find congregations where many of the women wear yarmulkes and tallitot, while most of the men sit bareheaded and bare shouldered. This is the converse of the norm in traditional synagogues, where all men wear yarmulkes, tallitot, and tefillin, and women rarely do.

Another dramatic trend has been the move away from a formal style of worship and music toward more jubilant and enthusiastic prayer. Certain particularly progressive congregations, such as the independent Congregation B'nai Jeshurun on the Upper West Side of New York, have served as models for most congregations that have been slowly evolving toward this more informal, exuberant style. The formalized Classical Reform service, which could uncharitably be called sterile, no longer impresses many with its dignity and majesty. Younger people have grown up with a different aesthetic. New types of music incorporate simple Israeli, Hasidic, and folk styles, a style of worship developed at the UAHC summer camps under the rubric of the North American Federation of Temple Youth (NFTY) programs.

Eric H. Yoffie, president of the UAHC from 1996 to 2012, inherited a movement that had grown substantially in numbers yet was perceived as having fundamental problems. Yoffie moved quickly and boldly to address these challenges, taking advantage of the new enthusiasm for spirituality and launching a systematic campaign to rebuild the entire Reform movement. Yet, financial problems and a sudden loss in membership made it difficult to maintain momentum. The next president of the URJ will need to move quickly to stabilize the movement numerically and create a mechanism to address difficult problems that threaten

to undermine the Reform movement precisely as similar issues had done so much damage to the Conservative movement just a decade or so earlier.

The Conservative Movement and Its Reconstructionist Offshoot

According to Rabbi Robert Gordis, Conservative Judaism is "dedicated to the conservation and development of traditional Judaism in the modern spirit."[14] Conservative religious leaders differed from their Reform counterparts in that they believed that Halakah, the Hebrew term for Jewish law, remained the most important form of Jewish religious expression. Reform had rejected Halakah in its entirety, and this dispute had led to the creation of the Conservative movement at the end of the nineteenth century. Even the name of the movement derived directly from this conflict. The Conservative movement was more conservative than the Reform in matters relating to Halakah, and that was the reason that they chose that particular name.

The beginnings of the Conservative movement can be traced to Rabbi Sabato Morais of Congregation Mikveh Israel in Philadelphia, who gathered a group of supporters together at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York to plan for a new American Jewish rabbinical seminary that would be more traditional than Hebrew Union College. Some wanted to call it the Orthodox Seminary, but the majority decided to call it the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTSA), taking the name from the Breslau school upon which it was modeled. The JTSA opened in 1887 and ordained its first rabbi in 1893, but when Morais died in 1897, the school floundered. By 1901, it seemed certain that JTS would close, but a group of Reform philanthropists came to believe that the seminary was essential for the training of American Jewish religious leaders who would be suitable for the masses of Eastern European Jews then arriving on the shores of the United States. They recruited Solomon Schechter in 1902 to become president of the reorganized school. Schechter is credited with developing a vision for what became the Conservative movement, speaking eloquently about the need to balance tradition with change.

Schechter argued that the community becomes the religious authority for determining change. Judaism needs to be studied using modern methods of scholarship, and modern methodology can help Conservative scholars to understand how postbiblical Judaism developed over the course of centuries. The Torah had been interpreted and reinterpreted by Jews throughout the ages, and how the Torah was understood was the determining factor in setting communal religious standards. "Catholic Israel" developed certain patterns of belief and behavior based on their instinctive response to both Jewish tradition and the external social environment. The Conservative movement can and should make changes based upon how Klal Israel, the Jewish community, developed their understanding and

practice of traditional Judaism. As early as 1901, a rabbinical organization was founded to support the Conservative movement, but it was only in 1919 that it took the name The Rabbinical Assembly of America, which was later shortened to drop the "of America." The United Synagogue of America was established in 1913 with 22 founding congregations. These congregations were traditional in their practices, but did not necessarily have a clear theological understanding of what made them different from Orthodox congregations in terms of religious belief. They did understand that congregational members of the United Synagogue rejected radical reform, and congregations that worshipped without head coverings on the men, or used the *Union Prayer Book*, or instituted other radical deviations from traditional practices, were banned from membership. It was easier for the Conservative movement to define itself in terms of what it rejected rather than what it believed.

The movement was ideologically vague, which in part was a deliberate institutional strategy appropriate for an "umbrella organization." This flexible approach proved successful at attracting individuals as well as congregations who were seeking a middle path. Yet, there were serious internal contradictions within the Conservative movement. Neil Gillman, a JTS professor, admits that the writings of the founders were "riddled" with inner tensions. He cites examples of contradictory beliefs, such as that Torah is the eternally binding word of God, but also that the teachings of the Torah are responsive to changing times, and that the people decide what practices to change and what to retain, but the scholars have to inspire the people so that they may know what to change. While such inconsistency can be found in any nonfundamentalist modern religious movement, the Conservative movement appeared to be overwhelmed by doubt and uncertainty.

The new JTS chancellor, Arnold Eisen (surprisingly not an ordained rabbi), acknowledged the terrible problems the movement was facing in a speech to the Rabbinical Assembly (RA). The movement "largely dropped the ball" by allowing halakhic pluralism to become its core message. "Let's be mature about this," Eisen was reported as having said. "Agreeing to disagree is not enough to keep a movement going." The Conservative movement must find a way to build the same sort of intense communities that has made Orthodox life so attractive. "If we can't win on that count, we can't win."[15] Since becoming the leader of the movement, Eisen has attempted to restructure the movement so that its resources are allocated towards the fulfillment of its mission. This has meant scaling down the scholarship which made JTS such a prestigious institution but did little to advance the cause of Conservative Judaism in the United States. The movement will need to focus on its core mission and coalesce around its strongest affiliates, while debating and clarifying its beliefs and values.

The Reconstructionist movement was an offshoot of the Conservative movement. Mordecai Kaplan taught for many decades at the Jewish Theological Seminary, the bastion of Conservative Judaism. Kaplan did not intend to found a new denomination, but rather to influence the many rabbinical students that he taught and spread his ideas throughout the entire Jewish community. This puzzled

many of his followers, and frustrated others, because they believed that the logic of his own arguments made it clear that Reconstructionism should become a full denomination. Some believe that his movement would have been much more successful if it had been founded in the 1930s or 1940s rather than the 1960s.

A number of scholars concluded that "it appears that Kaplan was radical in thought but cautious in deed."[16] Perhaps part of the explanation was that Kaplan was deeply committed to Klal Israel, the ideal of Jewish unity, and he did not want to introduce further divisiveness into an already fragmented American Jewish community. He originally had hoped that Reconstructionism could "provide a rationale and a program for that conception of Jewish unity which might enable Jews to transcend the differences that divide them, assuming, of course, that they are aware of having at least one thing in common, the desire to remain Jews."[17]

The pressure on Kaplan to allow his followers to create a new denomination had been building for many years, but Kaplan worried that focusing too much energy on individual congregations could dissipate much of the enthusiasm necessary for revitalizing national Jewish cultural life. By 1963, Kaplan had retired from JTS, making it easier for him to go along with plans that were being formed to make Reconstructionism a separate denomination. At a meeting in Buffalo, New York that same year, a group of Reconstructionist activists persuaded Kaplan, then aged 83, to agree to the creation of a Reconstructionist rabbinical school. No longer working directly for the Conservative movement, Kaplan felt free to participate in the founding of a new movement.

This required a shift in organizational strategy. The Reconstructionist Federation of Congregations had, ever since its creation in 1955, required that affiliated congregations be members of one of the major American Jewish religious denominations because Reconstructionism was seen as a supplementary philosophy. Now, the organization was renamed the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations, and it became a denominational organization in its own right.

The Reconstructionist Rabbinical College (RRC) set up a joint program with the Department of Religion at Temple University in Philadelphia. Originally, rabbinical students were required to enroll as doctoral students and study for both degrees simultaneously, but this requirement was modified and then later dropped. RRC's curriculum was influenced by Kaplan's idea of Judaism as an evolving religious civilization. Students focused on a different period of Jewish history and culture each year; biblical, rabbinic, medieval, modern, contemporary. Many of the early graduates took pulpits in Conservative congregations, while others took positions with Jewish organizations or educational institutions because there were very few Reconstructionist synagogues that could afford to hire full-time rabbis.

Already in 1968, the Reconstructionist movement accepted patrilineal descent. The annual convention of the Federation of Reconstructionist Congregations and Havurot (FRCH, now the JRF) that year adopted a resolution that stated that the parents of children born of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother should be informed that the Reconstructionist movement and its affiliated institutions will

consider these children Jews if the parents commit themselves to rear their children as Jews "by providing circumcision for boys, Jewish education for boys and girls, and if the children fulfill the requirements of bar and bat mitzvah or confirmation."[18] This was a revolutionary policy change because Jewish law held that a person is Jewish if he or she inherits his or her Jewish identity from his or her mother or converts to Judaism.

The Reconstructionist movement changed this definition to allow for a person to inherit his or her Jewish identity from either their mother or their father. This fit better into their egalitarian ethos, and also seemed to be more logical, since what was important to them was how the child was raised rather than which parent had been born Jewish. The Reform movement voted to publicly accept patrilineal descent in 1983 – about 15 years later. It is true that the Reform movement had had a longstanding practice, dating back to at least 1947, of accepting the child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother as Jewish without formal conversion if the child attended a Jewish religious school and studied toward confirmation, but the Reconstructionist movement was the first to pass an official public declaration accepting patrilineal descent.[19] The issue became a full-blown controversy when the Reform rabbinate voted to accept patrilineal descent because the Reform movement was much larger and therefore their decision affected far more people.

In recent years, the Reconstructionist movement has experienced a spurt in growth – it has gone from 1 to 2 percent of the identified American Jewish population. There are just over a hundred congregations now affiliated with the Reconstructionist federation. Many are going through a major transition in terms of their structure and function. Most had started out as highly participatory groups of intellectuals and communal nonconformists. They met for prayers and studied in living rooms or basements and liked it that way. More than anything else, they wanted to avoid the emphasis on building grand synagogues that they believed afflicted the other Jewish denominations. Even today, many Reconstructionist Jews still feel that building campaigns generate negative energy, perverting genuine Jewish values and putting too much emphasis on who can give the most money. David Zinner, a member of the Columbia Jewish Congregation in Columbia, Maryland, said that his friends in their congregation prefer meeting in an interfaith center rather than going through the difficult process of fundraising. "A lot of synagogues see it as a major triumph when they get their own building. For us it might be a failure."[20]

The movement has published new prayer books in recent years, including a 1275- page *machzor* with gender-neutral English translation prepared by poet Joel Rosenberg. The editors have tried to balance the desire for spirituality with the need to remain somewhat faithful to Kaplan's original religious vision. Many of Kaplan's original religious beliefs have been reinterpreted or simply replaced in recent years. For example, Kaplan rejected the belief in a "supernatural" God, but many of the current generation of Reconstructionist leaders are attracted to approaches that emphasize mystical emotionalism rather than philosophical

rationalism. The movement prides itself on being on the "cutting edge" of Jewish life and therefore they expect to have a certain degree of inconsistency, as new ideas germinate and make their way from conception to implementation.

Orthodox Judaism

Orthodox Judaism teaches that both the written and oral law were given from God to Moses at Mount Sinai. God made an exclusive covenant with the children of Israel, and that covenant was detailed in the laws of Moses. Orthodox Jews believe that there was an Oral Law given to Moses along with the Written Law, in which God explained verbally those laws which needed elucidation. These laws were discussed and debated by the sages, and were eventually written down in the form of the Talmud. The laws of the Talmud were later codified and the legal codes became the authoritative listings of what Jews needed to observe.

Synagogue Judaism in the American colonies and the early national republic followed traditional patterns. While the early American Jews differed in religious background and level of ritual observance, all those who attended synagogue participated in traditional prayer. The early German and Eastern European Jewish immigrants likewise either joined an existing traditional Sephardic synagogue or, after 1820, founded their own. While the majority of these congregations slowly gravitated towards Reform Judaism, some held on to their traditionalist principles. Isaac Leeser began using the term "Orthodox" and "Orthodoxy" in his monthly journal the Occident in the 1840s to refer to those who opposed the incipient Reform movement, which was then beginning to grow and develop throughout the United States.[21]

The traditional element was greatly strengthened after the Eastern European immigration began in 1881. There were, however, many pressures on the immigrants to abandon the strict observance of Halakah and the vast majority succumbed. When they were given the choice between working on Saturdays and facing severe economic deprivation, most quickly began to violate the Sabbath. There was, however, a small minority who were absolutely committed to strict halakhic observance, regardless of the economic or social costs. But Orthodoxy was a small group that seemed to be losing support throughout the first half of the twentieth century.

As early as 1918, a group of Orthodox Jews from Poland established the Torah Vodaath Yeshiva in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. It began as a modern Orthodox Zionist school, but in the following decade evolved into a "black hat Yeshiva."[22] Torah Vodaath was the exception; most of the major American yeshivas were established by refugees from Nazism. During the 1930s, the American Orthodox community was being strengthened by the arrival of thousands of Orthodox Jews fleeing the Nazis. Legal immigration permits had been reduced drastically in 1924,

and it was extremely difficult to be given a visa of any type to the United States. Nevertheless, a few lucky or well-connected Orthodox Jews were able somehow to make it to America, escaping the catastrophe looming over the Jews of Europe. Many were Lithuanian yeshiva students (also called Litvisch or Litvak in slang diminutive), devoted to the study of Talmud and codes. Sometimes called "black hat" Orthodox Jews because of the type of formal hat that the men frequently wore, they quickly formed yeshivas modeled on the Eastern European Talmudic academies that they had been forced to abandon.

There were also a number of important Hasidic leaders who arrived in these years, including the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Joseph I. Schneersohn, who came to New York in 1940. His son-in-law and future successor, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, arrived a year later. The Satmar rebbe, Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum, came in 1946. Schneerson moved to Crown Heights while Teitelbaum settled in Williamsburg, both in Brooklyn, New York. There were more than a dozen other Hasidic sects who were able to reorganize in the United States, mostly in Brooklyn. The surviving Hasidim flocked around their rebbes, or if their rebbe had been murdered, found a new spiritual leader.

In the years following World War II, the mainstream American Jewish community paid little attention to these Orthodox refugees. Most segregated themselves in strictly Orthodox subcommunities in Brooklyn and a handful of other locations. They participated little, if at all, in broader Jewish communal organizations or community efforts of any type. But, over the next fifty years, they would come to assume a much greater importance, as the Haredim (the ultra-Orthodox) began to pressure the more accommodationist modern Orthodox leaders to withdraw from multidenominational pluralistic organizations such as the Synagogue Council of America (SCA) and the New York Board of Rabbis (NYBR). Many of the sectarian Orthodox groups began to build new institutions to accommodate their growing communities. They began to publish an extensive literature which was read eagerly by those connected to their communities.

Unlike the Conservative, Reform, or Reconstructionist denominations, Orthodoxy was always diverse and never had one set of denominational institutions. The moderate (called modern or, more recently, centrist) Orthodox come the closest to replicating the model of having one central organization or institution to represent the union of congregations, the association of rabbis, and the rabbinical training program. The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, also known as the Orthodox Union (OU), the National Council of Young Israel, and the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) represent the modern or moderate congregations within Orthodoxy. The Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) represents the bulk of the more modernist Orthodox rabbis. Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) and, more recently, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT), provide professional training to future modern or centrist Orthodox rabbis.

The various haredi groups have numerous formal and informal hierarchies and organizational structures. The Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and

Canada (Agudas HaRabbonim) is a relatively small haredi rabbinical organization founded in 1902, which was once influential but has become known primarily for its periodic issuing of polemical attacks against the non-Orthodox. The main umbrella group for the haredim is Agudath Israel of America. Agudath Israel was founded in 1912 in Katowice, which was then in Germany and is now part of Poland, and the American branch was established in 1939. Agudath Israel is primarily an advocacy organization. Its representatives testify at government hearings and before government bodies, seeking to explain the Orthodox position on various issues to politicians, legislators, judges, and the like. It also has numerous departments which provide educational, legal, or religious programs to its members and other interested parties.

Scholars of the postwar era were almost uniformly negative about Orthodoxy's future. Many Orthodox Jews likewise had grave doubts about the future of their own movement. In an often quoted comment, Marshall Sklare wrote in 1955 that the history of American Orthodoxy was "a case study of institutional decay."[23] Sociologists subscribed to the theory that conservative forms of any religious group corresponded with low social and economic standing. Therefore, Orthodoxy was incompatible with the middle-class aspirations of most American Jews, and was destined to decline as they became more affluent. But those who expected Orthodoxy to disappear were to be disappointed. Most of the nonobservant Orthodox faded away, but there remained substantial numbers of committed Orthodox Jews of various theological convictions. To the astonishment of those who had predicted their demise, the Orthodox began to rebuild. In an article published in 1998, Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter wrote, "With its increasing confidence, institutional strength, and extraordinary unselfconsciousness, Orthodoxy has achieved a presence and a prominence in America simply and literally unimaginable even a mere four decades ago."[24]

Despite many good faith efforts, the Jewish community has become divided between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, with the modern or centrist Orthodox trying to remain linked to both camps. According to one viewpoint, the Orthodox and non-Orthodox were destined to go their different ways. Non-Orthodox Jews were determined to acculturate into American society, and that acculturation process inevitably meant that they would develop common interests with non-Jewish friends and neighbors. This would lead to higher rates of intermarriage, and many of these intermarriages would not lead to the conversion of the non-Jewish spouse. Since Jewish law recognizes as Jewish only those children that are born to a Jewish mother or who were converted to Judaism according to Halakah, it was inevitable that substantial and growing numbers of American Jews would not be Jewish by Orthodox criteria.

The Orthodox had understood there to be an unwritten agreement with the non-Orthodox – the non-Orthodox might deviate from traditional Jewish belief and practice, but they would not change the very definition of who was a Jew. This was the bedrock upon which Jewish unity was based, because it was the determination

of who was a member of the Tribe. Like any family, the Jewish people might disagree about all sorts of things, but they were still family.

But in 1983, the Reform movement officially accepted patrilineal descent as a basis for claiming Jewish identity. At their annual conference, the Central Conference of American Rabbis (CCAR) voted to accept the report of the Committee on Patrilineal Descent. "The purpose of this document is to establish the Jewish status of the children of mixed marriages in the Reform Jewish community of North America." The rabbis went on to say that the issue of mixed marriage was one of the most "pressing human issues" for the Jewish community. "We face today an unprecedented situation due to the changed conditions in which decisions concerning the status of the child of a mixed marriage are to be made." While the Patrilineal Descent Resolution is regarded as the breaking point in the Orthodox/non-Orthodox relationship, it really was precipitated by the drastically increasing intermarriage rate. This increase motivated the Reform rabbis to respond proactively, and it was this increase that created an unbridgeable gulf between the movements.

The Patrilineal Descent Resolution and the Orthodox reiteration that Halakah could never accommodate such a policy led to fears that there would be two types of Jews and two separate Jewish communities. The one hope was that a joint *beit din*, a religious court, could be created that could convert non-Jews to Judaism for all of the American Jewish denominations. Since each of the movements had different and indeed contradictory religious principles, such an institution would have required a great number of concessions by all parties.

Efforts to create a common approach to personal status go back to the interwar period. At that time, there was relatively little concern about the intermarriage issue. What worried rabbinical authorities was the differing approaches towards bills of divorce. The Reform movement had done away entirely with the need for a religious divorce. This meant that if a Jewish couple were married by a Reform rabbi and later divorced, they would probably not bother to go through the Jewish divorce procedure since their Reform rabbi would tell them that a civil divorce was sufficient. This was not acceptable to traditionalists, who followed the law specifying that a woman was regarded as married until she received a get. Should she have children with any other man – even though she regarded herself as divorced – she would be regarded as committing adultery, and her children could be classified as *mamzerim* (the closest English word would be illegitimate children). Jewish law allows mamzers only to marry other mamzers, and stigmatizes them in a number of other ways.

This concern was partially alleviated when Orthodox authorities ruled that Reform marriages were not halakhically valid and therefore couples married by Reform rabbis did not absolutely need a get. In what became one of his most important halakhic rulings, Rabbi Moshe Feinstein wrote a *teshuva* that two Jews who had been married in a Reform wedding ceremony did not require a get when they got divorced because Feinstein did not regard the ceremony as

being legitimate. As a consequence of this seemingly rejectionist decision, women who had remarried without getting a get would not have mamzer children as long as their first marriage had been officiated at by a Reform (or possibly Conservative) rabbi. Therefore, Feinstein's decision served to avoid the designation of thousands or even tens of thousands of offspring as mamzers. This decision became quite important after the *baal teshuvah* movement gained momentum in the 1970s. This was an informal grouping of mostly younger Jews who embraced Orthodoxy after having been raised in assimilated homes. Many of the baalei teshuvah might have been regarded as mamzers if Feinstein had ruled that non-Orthodox wedding ceremonies were halakhically valid Jewish rituals.

Yet there were many cases where the husband would not or could not give his wife a get, making her an *agunah*, an abandoned wife who could not remarry because she had no get. In 1935, Rabbi Louis M. Epstein recommended adding an amendment to the *ketubah* in which the wife would be entitled to receive a get without her husband's signature if he disappeared or refused to cooperate. Epstein, who was a scholar in the Conservative movement, had hoped that his halakhic argumentation would persuade Orthodox rabbinic authorities to go along with this legal innovation, but they would not. In 1953, Rabbi Saul Lieberman, also from the Conservative movement, floated a new halakhic solution to what was called the problem of the *agunah*. Lieberman found new halakhic justifications that he hoped would sway the Orthodox sages, and he met secretly with Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in an effort to create a joint Orthodox–Conservative *beit din*. Soloveitchik respected Lieberman's Talmudic acumen, and he did his best to encourage moderate elements within Orthodoxy to cooperate, but this did not lead anywhere either.

Soloveitchik urged Orthodox Jews, and particularly Orthodox rabbis, to continue meeting with Reform and Conservative leaders, since the non-Orthodox represented the majority of the American Jewish community and it was only possible to address communal problems through dialogue. He did, however, also seem to stress that this cooperation should only be for the purpose of meeting Jewish communal needs and he rejected any "religious" interaction. Despite this very significant "but," the responsum was remembered primarily as a liberal ruling. Despite the already distant relations between the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox, there were a number of forums where they came together. The two major motivations for such interdenominational cooperation were the search for philanthropic support and the need to combat antisemitism. Rabbis or lay leaders representing the Orthodox did sit together with non-Orthodox representatives in meetings held under the auspices of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA, since renamed the United Jewish Communities); the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; the World Zionist Organization (WZO), the Jewish Agency and other Zionist groups; and the Anti-Defamation League, the Simon Wiesenthal Center, and other groups devoted to fighting antisemitism.

The Council of Torah Sages of Agudath Israel rejected Soloveitchik's argument for cooperation with the various denominations on communal issues, stating that organizational cooperation with the non-Orthodox was de facto recognition and endorsement, and therefore prohibited. In 1956, 11 yeshiva heads, under the aegis of the Union of Orthodox Rabbis (Agudas HaRabbanim), signed a statement prohibiting any Orthodox rabbis who accepted their authority from interacting with Conservative or Reform clergy in any joint organization or for any common religious purpose. "It is forbidden by the law of our sacred Torah to participate with them [the non-Orthodox denominational movements] either as an individual or as an organized communal body."

The ban on cooperation with the non-Orthodox included the Synagogue Council of America (SCA), a pluralistic organization established in 1926, which had members representing the full spectrum of Jewish religious life. Those who see Soloveitchik as a relative liberal believe that he refused to sign the petition, responding that there were many topics that required the cooperation of all the American Jewish denominations. Those who see Soloveitchik as more conservative believe that he was never given a chance to sign the petition. Whatever the historical truth may have been, both the Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America (OU) used Soloveitchik's supposed stand to justify remaining as members of the Synagogue Council of America.

While Soloveitchik had apparently approved Orthodox participation in the Synagogue Council of America, those more to the right continually worked to undermine that decision. After the Reform movement ordained Sally Priesand in 1972, some lobbied for Orthodox withdrawal from the New York Board of Rabbis. The more moderate Orthodox were able to ward off the challenge to the status quo at that time, although they felt a tremendous amount of pressure. Fears grew that the Orthodox and the non-Orthodox would split into two separate groups, two separate peoples. One Orthodox rabbi warned of "the coming cataclysm."[25] The United Jewish Appeal stopped using their slogan "We Are One" because it seemed to no longer represent either reality or any reasonable hope of a short-term future.

After many years of criticism, the moderate Orthodox who sustained pluralistic Jewish dialogue finally buckled under to Haredi pressure. They withdrew from the Synagogue Council of America (SCA), which then disbanded in 1994. The push to end interdenominational religious cooperation eventually caused virtually all of the multidenominational organizations and programs to stop functioning, or to become de facto associations of non-Orthodox rabbis. Since then, there has been far less interdenominational dialogue. While some observers such as Jack Wertheimer have been surprised that the level of conflict appears to have been lowered, others argue that the fighting has mostly stopped because there is nothing left to say.[26]

Increasing Focus on Personal Spirituality

Why do most American Jews practice only some of the requirements of their religion? One reason is that the practice of Judaism has been strongly influenced by the impact of individualism on American society. Since the 1960s, Americans have come to regard religion more and more as a matter of personal choice, rather than an inherited obligation. This choice includes being able to choose one's perspective within one's denomination, but it also includes the ability to choose from among different religious denominational alternatives. It even means having the choice of choosing whether to affiliate with any religious tradition or remain completely removed from religious activity of any type. This individualistic approach has produced a "religious marketplace" in which numerous faiths and denominations openly compete for believers by recruiting new members from outside of their congregational spheres to supplement their existing memberships.

To put this in theoretical terms, Charles S. Liebman presents two models to explain how the individual Jew has related to Judaism in the modern period. One model is that of public Judaism, where the individual is seen as part of the collective entity. The individual feels a sense of responsibility towards the Jewish people and understands that they have obligations to fulfill toward this entity. They do not have the right to pursue their selfish interest to the exclusion of the collective needs of the Jewish people as a whole. In contrast, private Judaism refers to the individual meaning that each person finds in the religion. For those who see their Jewish commitment as privatized, what matters is the spiritual benefit that the individual Jew can derive from the beliefs and practices of the religion.[27] The 1980s and 1990s were a time in which private Judaism became more and more popular and public Judaism less and less.

The most successful approaches to Jewish religious revitalization all stress the spiritual wisdom that has lain hidden in Judaism, inaccessible to the emotionally semi-involved participant who was sent to Hebrew school and pushed through a "bar mitzvah factory" as part of childhood rites of initiation. A relatively small group of spiritually hungry seekers began a process that helped many American Jews rediscover the deep spiritual wisdom of the Jewish tradition. They are – or at least, they were, until recently – mostly on the edges of the Jewish community, struggling for acceptability or in some cases reveling in their reputation as rabble-rousers and troublemakers. Many of the most creative ideas for revitalizing Judaism have come from small groups of young people looking for personal ways of connecting to God. The massive Jewish organizations headquartered in fancy office buildings in New York were unable or unwilling to provide much leadership, and it is primarily those on the periphery who provided the new models of spirituality.

There has been a growing awareness of the importance of bringing the sacred into the family, particularly into the lives of children. Jewish tradition required a

great deal of time and effort to be expended in household preparations. The entire day on Friday was needed to cook and clean and prepare the home for the Sabbath. Cleaning the house for Passover took at least a week, which included taking everything out of the cabinets and searching for foods prohibited on Passover. The sheer energy exerted in these efforts was an effective instrument of religious training because they included grandparents, parents, and children, aunts and uncles, neighbors and friends. The children saw how the entire community worked together to prepare for the holiday and they understood how important that must make it. Those days are long gone, and those parents that want their children to feel some of that spiritual energy need to consciously make plans to create it themselves.

Having a residual loyalty to Jewish ethnicity is clearly no longer enough to compel American Jews to make the effort to preserve Judaism as a living religion for themselves and their families. They need to feel that Judaism can open up new sources of enlightenment to the complex questions they face along with their families. These are not generally metaphysical questions about how to understand the universe but rather practical issues about how to live their lives in a complex society.

Deciding to be Jewish is not a rational choice that is derived from an objective analysis of the pluses and minuses of doing that versus doing something else. Rather, it is an emotional decision that is the result of a complex set of variables that include the relationships one formed in childhood and the experiences that one has undergone in camp, school, and synagogue. Many Americans now have multiple identities, and the American Jewish community is in the process of adapting to that fact. The stronger the pull of a vibrant and compelling Jewish spirituality, the more competitive Judaism can be in the "religious marketplace."

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30

Traditional Judaism in the Twenty-First Century

Mark I. Dunaevsky

Introduction

The other chapters in this volume are based on well-established and documented historical facts. These facts are subject to the historian's acts of reinterpretation, which refine our understanding of the past, and to the potential, but rare, discovery of new facts. But, for the most part, the past is a known thing, and historians may disagree on the margin, but in general, we have a pretty good idea of what has already happened.

However, describing traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century is an entirely different project, one which presents at least three challenges. First, the twenty-first century is only a decade old, so there are only approximately ten years of developments to report. Compared to the period of the Second Temple, or the Haskalah, there is comparatively little to describe. Second, the twenty-first century is unfolding right now. Its history is being written and rewritten in the acts and writings, and on the Internet forums and blogs, of its participants. It is a moving target. Historians agree about the general contours of the Second Temple period or the Haskalah. But with respect to traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century, it is not yet clear who or what history will deem important enough to remember, and what acts or books – or blogs – will be significant; which of these will future generations deem made history and which they will judge as insignificant, or which they will not judge at all. Third, if the task is to project into the future, and describe what the challenges for traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century will be, and

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how traditional Judaism will meet those challenges, then one is in the realm of speculation and guesswork, perhaps educated, informed guesswork, but guesswork all the same. And history has a way of frustrating speculators. But at least the speculator may speculate freely.

Definition: What Is Traditional?

One problem with talking about traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century is defining "traditional Judaism." The task of definition is important, even if it cannot be done perfectly, because at the start of the twenty-first century traditional Judaism is far from homogeneous. There needs to be some sense of what is in and what is out. After all, all self-describing branches of Judaism claim a "tradition" of some kind. Reform Judaism, for example, often thought of as the least traditional of the forms of Judaism, sees itself in some way as sharing goals and concerns with the biblical, prophetic tradition.

"Orthodox" is a good approximation for "traditional." The problem with "Orthodox" is that it leaves out those who explicitly describe themselves as "traditional," but not necessarily as "Orthodox." "Halakhic" is another plausible approximation of "traditional." The Conservative movement claims to be "halakhic," but may have relinquished the right to use that term many years ago. At least one Conservative thinker, Rabbi Neil Gilman, has argued that the Conservative movement should stop calling itself halakhic.

Traditional Judaism might be one of those "we know it when we see it" phenomena. That approach is useful, and may be the best that can be done. But an attempt at greater rigor is worthwhile.

Traditional Judaism can be defined as that which bases its practices, or claims to base its practices, on juridical reasoning about Halakah from primary sources, including the Talmud; the Rishonim, medieval commentators who interpreted the Talmud; *Shulhan Arukh*, Joseph Karo's sixteenth-century codification of Halakah, and its commentaries; and later authoritative halakhic texts. It is the kind of reasoning lawyers and courts do, but not legislatures. This definition is broad enough to include both the ultra-Orthodox Haredi movements as well as the not ultra-Orthodox Union for Traditional Judaism, both of which would acknowledge that Judaism currently lacks a legislative body, a Sanhedrin, and therefore, both could easily assent to the definition. The definition is also narrow enough to exclude Conservative Judaism, despite Conservative Judaism's claims to be halakhic. Conservative Judaism proceeds, in no small part, legislatively, through a body enacting new rules and regulations, and often by plebiscite. Orthodox and traditional movements all claim to act only in a juridical manner, deriving legal conclusions from what already exists. None would claim to act legislatively, though some clearly legislate in the guise of legal reasoning. For this reason, it is important

to note the emphasis on the claim to act juridically, and not legislatively. This definition is useful, about as useful as the "we know when we see it" standard, and both will be violated in this chapter when expedient to do so.

A Thought Experiment

One can perform a kind of thought experiment to get a sense of the fragmented nature of traditional Judaism at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Imagine a mainstream Orthodox synagogue in the second half of the twentieth century. Its services were more or less like those in any other mainstream Orthodox synagogue (putting aside differences of *nusach*, the order and manner of reciting the service, and *minhag*, local customs and practices). The rabbi would undoubtedly have been a man, usually university educated (even if he did not attend Yeshiva University), and very likely a member of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA). A woman would not have been called up for an *aliyah*, to recite the blessing for the reading of the Torah. The sanctuary would have a *mechitza*, or a women's gallery, separating the men from the women. The congregation probably would have described itself as Zionist, or Religious Zionist. Perhaps American and Israeli flags would have been posted on the *bima* or flanking the *aron kodesh*, the Ark containing the Torah scrolls.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, there is at least one Orthodox synagogue which claims to have the first Orthodox woman rabbi on its staff. Other Orthodox synagogues call women for *aliyot*, based on the *psaq* (halakhic ruling) of one Modern Orthodox rabbi in Israel. Many Orthodox congregants, owing to the advancements of one generation over the past generation are university-educated professionals. However, for many Orthodox, especially among the Haredim in Israel, and increasingly in the United States as well, any secular education is taboo, or, at best, tolerated, but only to earn a living. Many Orthodox congregations still see Israel as "the first flowering of the Redemption," while in too many others, the modern State of Israel is viewed with suspicion and sometimes with outright animosity.

Josephus identified at least four factions which comprised Judaism in the first century: Pharisees, Saducees, Essenes, and a "fourth philosophy," which he describes as being akin to the Pharisees, but more politically radical in its opposition to Roman rule. To these four factions one can add the Rabbis, who may or may not have been the heirs of the Pharisees, Zealots, a slightly later development in religious–political affairs, and smaller sects, like the emerging Christians. Each of these groups claimed to be authentic Judaism, representing a continuation of Judaism's genuine past or the only hope for Judaism's survival and future. The result of this diversity in first-century Judaism was not, as some might have hoped, a rich and diverse Jewish community, but, as we know from Josephus and other sources, civil war.

Josephus is worth noting at this point, because if one is to guess about the future based on the past, then traditional Judaism in the twenty-first century in many ways resembles nothing as much as Judaism as described by Josephus two thousand years ago. The shattering at the start of the twenty-first century seems again not to be richness and diversity, but perhaps fragmentation and even animosity.

The Center Cannot Hold

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein was, until recently, co-Rosh Yeshiva, with Rabbi Yehudah Amital (d. 2010), of Yeshivat Har Etzion, a *yeshivat hesder* in Israel. Students at a *yeshivat hesder* combine their yeshiva studies with military service, completing their military service in six years, instead of the typical two years. It is an artifact of Religious Zionism. Rabbi Lichtenstein describes his students as not loving Torah study less, but of loving Israel more.

Rabbi Lichtenstein is one of a number of leading Modern Orthodox rabbis, and, at the age of 77 years, is something of an elder statesman and spokesman for Modern Orthodoxy. He is, without doubt, an important Talmudist and a *talmid chacham*, responsible for training many Modern Orthodox leaders both in and out of Israel. His status is in part due to his undiluted commitment to Talmud Torah and halakhic observance. His status is also due in part to his commitment to Religious Zionism, as well as to his appreciation and affection for the Western Canon advocated by Matthew Arnold, as "the best that has been said and thought in the world." He was a doctoral student of Douglas Bush and is a Milton scholar of some note himself. And, in some part, his status is also due to his association with his famous father-in-law, the leading Orthodox theologian Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, known as the Rav, who served for much of his life as Rosh Yeshiva of Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (RIETS) at Yeshiva University, and as a leading rabbi in Boston's Orthodox community in the twentieth century. Rabbi Lichtenstein himself is a *musmach* (ordainee) of RIETS.

Rabbi Lichtenstein has all the qualities to be a leading Modern Orthodox rabbi: commitment to Religious Zionism, secular education, extensive Talmudic and rabbinic learning and even brilliance, and one degree of separation from the Rav. He espouses a particularly strong version of Modern Orthodoxy, *Torah u' Mada*, which means, more or less, a deep commitment to Torah education and practice and an almost equally deep commitment to secular education. He defends absolutely *hokhma ba-goyim*, non-Jewish wisdom and values. In his book, *Leaves of Faith* (2003: 94), he writes "Who can fail to be inspired by the ethical idealism of Plato, the passionate fervor of Augustine, or the visionary grandeur of Milton? . . . There is nothing in our medieval poetry to rival Dante, and nothing in our modern literature to compare with Kant, and we would do well to admit it." Milton and Dante get additional mentions, as do Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Aristotle, Frost,

Newman, and others. He cites them freely and fluently. Rabbi Lichtenstein's vision of Modern Orthodoxy is heartening to an Orthodox rabbi who is besotted by Dante and finds Kant inescapable. It is a hard core Modern Orthodoxy, which understands the intrinsic value of non-Jewish wisdom, and the inherent significance of the Western Canon. It is also a rarefied Modern Orthodoxy. Most university professors would attest to the difficulty in getting undergraduates to love Dante and Kant, or even to remember something of them after the final exam. Rabbi Lichtenstein wants to build a kind of Judaism on the assumption that all Orthodox Jews take them as seriously as he does. Rabbi Lichtenstein, Paris born and Harvard educated, is both urbane and cosmopolitan in a way that most of his students and admirers are not, even those who claim adherence to, or at least agreement with, his vision of Orthodoxy.

There are other problems with this approach. It is culturally conservative, more in line with the idea of the Western Canon advocated by Matthew Arnold. Few people read Newman any more. And those who read literature and philosophy are more inclined to turn to Jacques Derrida, Paul DeMan, and Michel Foucault, and their postmodern progeny.

The limits of this kind of Modern Orthodoxy can be seen in the following. In 2009, the Israeli publisher Koren published a new siddur (prayer book) under the imprimatur of the American mainstream Orthodox Union, more commonly known as the OU, the people who declare Oreos kosher. The English translation and commentary are by the English Chief Rabbi, Jonathan Sacks, who was educated at Cambridge, Oxford, and Kings' College London. The commentary includes references to Orthodox authorities, like the Rav, as well as to non-Orthodox and even non-Jewish thinkers, like the English philosopher Sir Bernard Williams, an avowed atheist. The Koren-Sacks siddur also includes prayers for Israeli Independence Day, *Yom Yersushalayim*, as well as prayers for the Israeli Defense Forces and the Israeli government. Modern Orthodox Jews embraced the Koren-Sacks siddur enthusiastically, and saw it as an alternative to the ubiquitous Art Scroll siddur, which is seen by some as Haredi propaganda.

The siddur ticks off all of the items on the Modern Orthodox checklist: Religious Zionism, extensive, secular education, Talmudic and halakhic commitment, and invocation of the Rav. However, it raises another issue. Rabbi Sacks, to be sure, is a first-rate scholar, a *talmid chacham*, and an Orthodox rabbis' rabbi. But in producing a siddur for American Modern Orthodox congregations, the *American* Orthodox Union turned to an *English* rabbi for his translation and commentary. This fact suggests (i) that a rabbi of sufficient *secular* erudition and resources, along the lines which Rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks live, cannot be found in America; (ii) the appeal of hard core Modern Orthodoxy is limited; and (iii) it may be a phenomenon limited to the Anglophone world, which includes Anglophones living in Israel, and their children, often identified as *Dati'im* ("Religious").

The Rav, Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, was a genius of the first order, *sui generis*, and a unique master of both Talmud and Halakah, as well as modern philosophy.

Without a doubt, he was Jewish giant in the twentieth century. The twenty-first century has yet to produce someone of his stature for Orthodox Judaism. He has become a marker or signifier of Modern Orthodoxy. By association with the Rav, one establishes one's Modern Orthodox bona fides. The Rav was Modern Orthodoxy at its best, and it is as if that through any association with him, one is Modern Orthodox as well. This syllogism applies to Yeshiva University and its RIETS seminary, with which the Rav was associated for much of his life. This is not to suggest that rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks, or any of a number of Modern Orthodox leaders have not earned their achievements honestly. But the Rav remains a reminder of a time when there was one person, a spiritual tent in which dwelled *Torah u' Mada* so completely. For Modern Orthodoxy to thrive in the twenty-first century, Modern Orthodox thinkers will need to let the Rav take his place among the greats of the past, and create a space for the next generation of great Modern Orthodox rabbis and thinkers, the next generation of Modern Orthodox *gedolim*. One problem that Modern Orthodoxy faces, at the cusp of the twenty-first century, is that though there are many Modern Orthodox Jews (even if they haven't read the *Divine Comedy*, or mastered the *First Critique*), Modern Orthodox institutions – Yeshiva University, the OU, and the RCA, have been politically naive and haven't tried hard enough to promote Modern Orthodoxy. These failings allow for the creation of a space in the Orthodox world for competitors to rise.

There is a deeper issue lurking within the Modern Orthodoxy of rabbis Lichtenstein and Sacks. Dante and Kant, and the rest of the Western Canon, are part of a world view of Western Humanism and Enlightenment. One place this world view leads to is egalitarianism. In this worldview, Jews are not special or "chosen," and ultimately women are as good as men. Both of these principles can come into conflict with Orthodoxy generally, but more importantly into conflict with specific halakhic practices. It is a blind spot in Modern Orthodoxy not to see that this is a place where Milton, Dante, and Kant lead. Indeed, the question of feminism has become perhaps the major issue facing Orthodoxy in the twenty-first century.

I Ordained a Rabba, and (Almost) No One Cared

In June 2009, Modern Orthodox Rabbi Avi Weiss, of Riverdale, the Bronx, New York, confirmed (but not ordained) Sara Hurwitz as Maharat, a Hebrew acronym for the unwieldy designation which translates as "Halakhic, spiritual, and Torah leader," a neologism designed to confer the idea of "rabbi," but not the title. In February of 2010, Rabbi Weiss changed the title to rabba, the feminine form of rabbi, effectively ordaining Sara Hurwitz, who it is now claimed, became the first Orthodox woman rabbi. She serves as rabba of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

and as Dean of the Yeshivat Maharat, an institute founded by Rabbi Weiss to train future Orthodox women rabbis. The course of training undertaken by Rabba Hurwitz and the students at Yeshivat Maharat is, according to Rabbi Weiss, identical to the rabbinical training received by students at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT), an Open (not "Modern") Orthodox Yeshiva, also started by Rabbi Weiss to promote his vision of "Open Orthodoxy."

Whatever the halakhic justifications adduced by Rabbi Weiss for the ordination of women, it is clear that the practice is a break from all Orthodox practice of the past, and from mainstream Orthodox practice today. Both the mainstream Modern Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America (RCA) and the Haredi Agudath Israel condemned Rabbi Weiss for his actions, stopping short of stating that practice was contrary to Halakah. (Graduates of YCT are not admitted to membership in the RCA.) After that, they left him alone, watching carefully to see what his next step will be. The ordination of an Orthodox woman rabbi is not without some precedent in Modern Orthodoxy. Orthodox women are qualified as *yoatzot*, halakhic advisors on matters of family purity, and as *toanot*, attorneys-at-law who represent parties before rabbinic courts in Israel. But these are limited jurisdictions, and none have taken a title "rabbi." These positions for women have remained largely uncontroversial within Modern Orthodoxy. Even Rabba Hurwitz's clerical activities, according to Rabbi Weiss, will be circumscribed. She will not officiate at weddings or be a witness, cannot be counted toward a minyan, and she cannot be a *dayan*, rabbinic judge, all activities clearly prohibited to women by Halakah.

A few years prior to the ordination of Rabba Hurwitz, an Israeli Modern Orthodox Rabbi, Mendel Shapiro, published a *tshuva*, responsum, arguing through some halakhic jiggery pokery that it is halakhically permissible for women to be called for *aliyot* and to read from the Torah in an Orthodox synagogue, provided other necessities of Orthodoxy (for example, a minyan of ten men, a *mechitza*) are in place. Mainstream Modern Orthodoxy rejects Rabbi Shapiro's opinion, finding it to be legislation in the guise of *psaq*. Indeed, the practice has not yet found a home at Rabbi Weiss's own synagogue in the Bronx, New York. However, it has found acceptance on the far frontier of Modern Orthodoxy, in the establishment of so-called "partnership minyanim," and in even in some Hillel Houses on university campuses.

What motivates this openness to a kind of "halakhic feminism," and Rabbi Weiss's "open Orthodoxy" generally, is, at its best, a moral sense. To the extent the moral question is one for the community, it becomes a political matter as well. It is, in this view, immoral to disenfranchise half of Orthodoxy from greater participation in Jewish communal life, especially when that half, the women within Orthodoxy, have notable achievements in Torah study and observance to its credit. It is important to note that Rabba Hurwitz, and likely those who will come after her, exhibit behavior that is neither flaming nor radical. Rabba Hurwitz is married and she covers her hair, as many married Orthodox women do. The moral sense behind this kind of Orthodox extends to a greater interest in liberal, social, political issues as

well, and it is not unusual for a YCT student to be politically engaged, typically in liberal causes.

This version of Orthodoxy has one advantage over classical Modern Orthodoxy. Most Modern Orthodox rabbis, those who received their *smicha* from RIETS, for example, tend to take positions in Modern Orthodox synagogues and schools. Graduates of YCT, perhaps because their career options are more limited, take positions in community organizations, non-denominational Hebrew schools, and Hillel Houses. In other words, they take the positions that many Modern Orthodox rabbis do not. This fact gives them broad exposure within the Jewish community, amplifying their influence beyond their numbers.

"Open Orthodoxy" (a term which has not yet achieved widespread usage) tries to solve the moral dilemmas within the framework of Halakah. It is for this reason that Rabbi Shapiro's responsum on women's *aliyot* has resonated strongly with some. It is an attempt to find a way for the Halakah to accommodate the sense that there is something wrong with not giving women *aliyot*.

This approach is different from looking to Halakah for moral guidance, something Jews have been doing for millenia. For example, Rabbi Aaron Soloveichik, brother of the Rav and an important rosh yeshiva in Chicago in his own right, vigorously opposed the Vietnam war, especially after the bombing of Cambodia, as contrary to Halakah. The Rav, on the other hand, was more generous in his acceptance of a war against Communism. Many Modern Orthodox Jews continue to support a variety of political causes, often citing halakhic reasons for their involvement.

However, Rabbi Weiss and his ilk are convinced that when a political or moral intuition conflicts with Halakah, a space can be made within Halakah to accommodate it. The problem is that sooner or later, the two will conflict without accommodation. Returning to the question of feminism, Rabba Hurwitz, even if she gains greater acceptance within the Modern Orthodox community, will never be counted for a minyan or be a *dayan*. Halakhic accommodation to moral and political sensitivities is asymptotic. They will never meet, or be congruent. And if Halakah is infinitely malleable to accommodate any possibility then either it stops being Halakah, or it becomes legislation. "Open Orthodoxy" needs to decide what it will do at the limits of Halakah and morality, whether it will continue to be a halakhic movement or not.

The Union for Traditional Judaism

The Union for Traditional Judaism was created by the more Orthodox wing of the Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary when JTS began ordaining women. Rabbi Shaul Lieberman, a great Talmudist and Orthodox rabbi and professor at JTS wrote a *tshuva* forbidding the ordination of women. After his death in 1983, JTS

started ordaining women. Rabbis David Halivni (an Orthodox Chaim Berlin graduate), Haim Dimitrovsky, and Jose Faur, among others, left JTS. The result was the Union for Traditional Judaism (UTJ) a "transdenominational" movement committed to Torah and halakhic observance. Indeed, there is, in principle, little in the stated "Declaration of Principles" of the UTJ that many ultra-Orthodox would find objectionable. Traditional Judaism is, in some ways, congruent with Modern Orthodoxy. Some of its rabbis, Rabbi Alan Yuter for, example, rabbi of an Orthodox synagogue in Baltimore, studied for and received Orthodox ordination, after leaving JTS. The UTJ maintains its own seminary, headed by Rabbi Halivni, and its own rabbinical organization. Rabbis affiliated with the UTJ are also among the most important academic rabbis in North America. For example, Rabbi Halivni is Littauer Professor of Talmud and Classical Rabbinics at Columbia University. Rabbi David Novak teaches philosophy at the University of Toronto.

The UTJ deserves mention because of the curious way history sometimes works. The very reason for the existence of the UTJ is Rabbi Lieberman's objection to the ordination of women. Yet, Rabbi Weiss, a Modern (or "Open") Orthodox rabbi has ordained a woman. What was at one time the most conservative of the Conservative movement has leapfrogged the most liberal wing of Orthodoxy. At least in this one area, Traditional Judaism is more "Orthodox," than at least one form of Orthodoxy, though it remains to be seen whether its position on ordaining women will shift.

Traditional Judaism comes across as a small, quiet movement, but it has some promise. Rabbi Halivni is a recognized *talmid chacham*, at least by those who measure such things by true scholarship. In some ways, Traditional Judaism is very much like mainstream Orthodoxy of the twentieth century, and may appeal to many traditional Jews who don't feel quite at home in Orthodox or Conservative Judaism – if they only were to know more about it.

Haredim: Men in Hats

Haim Amsalem, is a rabbi and former Israeli Member of Knesset for the ultra-Orthodox Sephardi Shas party. He is the author of several important works on the Talmud and Halakah. Indeed, during his time with Shas he was the only Shas MK who was also a rabbi. In November of 2010, Rabbi Amsalem stated in interview in the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*, that perpetual, lifelong learning in *kollel* is not for everyone, and that Haredi schools should teach core subjects, like math and language skills, that would enable Haredim to enter the workforce. He also said that Haredim should serve in the IDF and should work for a living to support themselves and their families. To many outside the Haredi world, Rabbi Amsalem's proposals were immoderate only to the extent that they didn't go far enough. To Haredim they were heresy.

The religious leadership of Shas immediately responded to Rabbi Amsalem's remarks by demanding that he surrender his seat in the Knesset. The Haredi press called him a thief and a heretic, and compared him to Amalek, the ancient enemy of the Israelites. He was blamed for the drought which has plagued Israel in recent years. In response, Rabbi Amsalem has repudiated Shas, and now sits in the Knesset as an independent.

The "Amsalem Incident" encapsulates some key features of Haredi life in Israel, and by comparison, outside of Israel and in the United States. These features are a rejection of modernity, a commitment to an ideology of *daat torah* (see below), and an unsustainable in its present state, indeed, failing, economic model for its communities.

The original Haredim, sometimes called ultra-Orthodox, were those Orthodox Jews who rejected the advances of modernity and the Enlightenment, by refusing all engagement with modernity, and even rejecting participation in the *Torah u'Mada* worldview of Modern Orthodoxy. In some cases, in Eastern Europe, modernity was not an option for Haredim because Jews were persecuted and forced to live in ghettos. In other cases, again especially in Eastern Europe, modernity took a particularly anti-Jewish, antireligious form, such as Marxism, making any engagement with it particularly unappealing for many Orthodox Jews. As a result, Haredim generally reject any non-Jewish education, which they see as a threat to the integrity of Orthodox belief and lifestyle. Many Haredim also have a distrust of non-Jewish government. This distrust can be traced back to the hatred of the Tsarist, and later Communist, governments, but now includes even the government of the State of Israel, which is viewed as fundamentally anti-religious. They are not technological Luddites, but many reject computers and the Internet because the Internet is a gateway to the non-Jewish world. However, some Haredim have compromised with the Israeli government, and the Agudat Israel and Shas parties represent Haredi interests in the Knesset, and in fact carry considerable political weight.

Haredim generally subscribe to an ideology called *daat Torah*, roughly, "Torah belief." This belief system entails a complete commitment to the Torah. What distinguishes it from other versions of Orthodoxy is that Torah is expressed through the words of recognized *gedolim*, not merely great rabbis or greatly learned persons, but elder Haredi leaders. It is as if the Hasidic rebbe and the Lithuanian rabbi have merged into this new character, the Haredi *gadol*. Pronouncements of *gedolim* are taken as absolute; they are true and their commands must be followed as authoritative declarations of Torah intent and belief. Often, the pronouncements are bare, and differ from classic Responsa, which were reasoned, and subject to reasoned critique. The pronouncements of *gedolim*, though said to be expressions of genuine Torah-based ideology, come close to the legislative. That is, rather than deriving the opinions from established sources, the pronouncements amount to new rules and regulations for the Haredi community. But *daat Torah* involves a degree of false consciousness, or at least self-deception. The Haredi community,

which thinks of itself as the most religiously conservative, may in fact be breaking with tradition and embracing what is in reality a new legislative method, with a self-appointed legislature of *gedolim*.

Rabbi Amsalem's disagreement with the religious leadership of the Shas party was seen by many Haredim as heretical precisely because he went against *daat Torah*, in publicly disobeying the pronouncements of *gedolim,* in both his criticism of Haredi lifestyle and education, and in his refusal to surrender his Knesset seat when ordered to do so by *gedolim*. Pronouncements made in the name of *daat Torah* are often fundamentalist in nature and antimodern.

Haredim are like snow. To the untrained eye, all snow is alike. But to the experienced Eskimo tracker, there are differences in snow, its texture or color, that make a world of difference. One difference, as noted above, is that some Haredim participate in Israeli politics, while others reject the modern State of Israel, going so far as to make common cause with some of Israel's enemies. Haredim also include Hasidim and Mitnagdim, a distinction which may be lost on some, but which is important in Orthodox life.

The differences among Haredim can be seen in the following incident. Both the Neturei Karta and Satmar Chassidim are Haredim. They reject modernity and Western values. They condone only the most minimal non-Jewish education. Both groups are actively anti-Israel and anti-Zionist. But the Neturei Karta are Mitnagdim ("opponents"), those whose customs and practices derive from the early opponents of Hasidism, mostly descending from Lithuanian emigres to Israel in the early nineteenth century, but with no part in the building of the modern State of Israel in the twentieth century. Satmar are Hungarian Hasidim. In December 2006, a delegation of Neturei Karta attended a Holocaust revisionist conference in Tehran. They posed for photo ops with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. To be sure, none believed that the Holocaust was a fraud, and indeed many lost family members in the concentration camps. But the Neturei Karta's hatred of Israel compelled them to make common cause with one of Israel's enemies. (The Neturei Karta has in the past also sought relations with Arafat, the PLO, and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan.) Soon thereafter, Rabbi Zalman Leib Teitlebaum, one of the current pretenders to the leadership of the Satmar community, issued a scathing indictment of the Neturei Karta, instructing his Hasidim to distance themselves from them. The Satmar condemnation of the Neturei Karta was published in *Der Yid*, a Satmar newspaper in New York, and posters condemning the Neturei Karta were, for a while, plastered on walls in Bnei Brak and Mea Shearim, Israel's largest Haredi communities. As a result, Satmar have withdrawn from anti-Zionist protests because of the presence of Neturei Karta.

In Israel, according to a 2010 study by the independent Taub Center for Social Policy Studies, 65 percent of Haredi men are unemployed, relying largely on extensive state welfare. According to recent US Census data, only 4.5% of the residents of 25 or older of Kiryas Yoel, a largely Satmar enclave in upstate New York, hold a bachelors degree. Over 60 percent do not own a car. The median income

is $18,000. To be sure, in the United States and Europe, Haredim fare somewhat better than in Israel. Many receive some form of secular education or vocational training, and some American Haredim, more those aligned with Agudat Israel than with Satmar or Neturei Karta, even go on to professions like accounting and law. Yet, with prolific families, overall low employment, and limited education, the Haredi world is facing an economic crisis. This crisis has been offered as one explanation for the incidence of financial crimes committed by Haredim in recent years.

Rabbi Amsalem's remarks involve another level of complication in the Haredi world. Rabbi Amsalem is a Sephardi, and the Shas party is a Sephardic political party. Yet, the Haredi world and its institutions and ideas are foreign to Sephardim. There is no native Sephardi Haredi culture. Yet Sephardim and Shas are increasingly aligning themselves with Haredim of Eastern European origin.

In 2010, the Israeli Supreme Court ordered the desegregation of a Hasidic Haredi girls' school in the town of Emanuel. Sephardi students were separated from their Ashkenazi classmates. A fence separated the Sepahardi girls from Asheknazi girls during recess. The Hasidic parents and administration of the school reported to jail rather than abide by the Court's order to desegregate. They claimed that the Court was taking a first step into regulating Haredi religious education, and would fight such intrusion to the end. Remarkably, the leading Sephardi Rabbi in the world, Ovadia Yosef, sometimes called the spiritual head of Shas, sided with the Haredim, and supported school segregation. The desire to be seen as "Sephardi Haredim" was so strong that Rabbi Yosef condemned his own son, who called for desegregation, as well as Rabbi Amsalem, who also supported desegregation of the Emanuel school. The existence of "Sephardi Haredim" can be traced back to the influence of Ashkenazic yeshivot on the Sephardic population in Israel in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In part, it is an artifact of Rabbi Yosef's political agenda, to align Shas with Haredi political clout. Whether this phenomenon has staying power, or whether there will be a Sephardi backlash to it, remains to be seen.

It is in this context that Rabbi Haim Amsalem stated that Haredi education needs to prepare Haredim to work and support themselves. However, the Haredi world saw Rabbi Amsalem's remarks as a capitulation to modernity, and as a threat by the "heretical" and Zionist government to interfere with Jewish life and Jewish education, as an opening to introduce an alien culture into the Haredi world.

In the twenty-first century, Haredim need to face economic reality. The current culture of economic dependence and unemployment cannot be sustained. Haredim need basic education and they need to work. They also need to face political reality. Within Israel, there is growing sentiment, among both Orthodox *dati'im* and non-Orthodox, that the state cannot and should not continue to support the Haredi community with extensive welfare. Haredim and their leaders need to change, because the status quo cannot be maintained.

And Then There's Chabad

Chabad-Lubavitcher Hasidim find themselves between a rock and hard place. To many non-Orthodox, Chabad is Haredi, because their observance is strict and they wear hats. But within the Haredi world, Chabad is heretical. Chabad supports Israel. Lubavitch Hasidim reach out to unaffiliated Jews. They have comparatively high levels of education and employment. They use the Internet. Yet, they are really not Modern Orthodox. Chabad can legitimately be called another branch of Orthodoxy. Much has been made in recent years about Chabad messianism. To a large extent the controversy has died down, with Chabad leadership taking steps to purge the most die-hard messianists from the larger group.

The paradox of Chabad can be traced back to the movement's early days in America. The then rebbe, Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson, came to America in 1941. He escaped from Russia, where he was persecuted and arrested, going to Warsaw and fleeing again one step ahead of the Nazis. But it did not take him long to realize that America was not like Russia or Poland, and that it offered unique opportunities.

In September 1944, Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson published an open letter to Jewish American servicemen. After offering them words of encouragement, he tells them that they, in the armed services, have an opportunity to perform a mitzva "rarely afforded to a civilian." That mitzva is "to love they neighbor like thyself." He goes on to explain that serving in the armed forces forges bonds of camaraderie through shared ideals, experiences, and dangers. This bond with one's comrade-in-arms is an opportunity to help him "spiritually and materially." It is a stunning statement. After the time of the Maccabees, military service was an anathema to most Jews. Certainly, conscription into the Russian army, Tsarist or Communist, was a fate to be dreaded. But Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson rejected the anti-American sentiment of many Eastern European rabbis. To see military service as an opportunity for religious growth would have been unthinkable to Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson's forebears, but he saw a difference.

When Rabbi Joseph Y. Schneerson signed his US citizenship papers he wore a traditional Hasidic fur hat for the occasion. When his son-in-law, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, took over as leader of Chabad-Lubavitch in 1951, he dispensed with the fur hat, and put on a fedora. The Hasidim followed. Since that time, photographs show generations of Lubavitch Hasidim looking dapper in natty suits and snappy fedoras – more Humphrey Bogart than Tevye the Milkman.

It was under Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the Rebbe, that Chabad became an international institution. The Rebbe was worldly in ways that most Hasidic leaders were not. He was educated in Berlin and Paris. At least according to one story, possibly apocryphal, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson visited and stayed with Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik in Berlin, while the former was auditing

courses and the latter was studying philosophy. One reason the story has such currency is that it invokes the thought that the man who would become the Rebbe and the man who would become the Rav, roomed together, even if only briefly. In any event, in 1937 the Rebbe would earn a degree in electrical engineering from ESTP, one of the Grande Ecoles, an engineering school in the Montparnasse district of Paris, and would later study at the Sorbonne until he had to flee France from the Nazis. During the war he worked as an electrical engineer at the Brooklyn Navy Yards.

It is by now commonplace to point to the success of Chabad Lubavitch in the thousands of institutions it has established around the world. But this success has roots not only in the Rebbe's unique background – for a Hasidic leader – but in his appreciation of the American experience and modernity. Indeed, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that had the Rebbe not been a rebbe, he might have been described as Modern Orthodox.

English Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks went to Cambridge to study economics and philosophy. But he credits the Lubavitcher Rebbe with telling him to become a rabbi. According to Rabbi Sacks, the Lubavitcher Rebbe wanted leaders, Orthodox leaders of all kinds, and not just Hasidim. In a more startling example, Rabbi Haim Dimitrovsky, an Orthodox rabbi and professor of Talmud at the Conservative JTS, asked the Lubavitcher Rebbe whether he should remain at JTS. The Rebbe told him he should, as long as Rabbi Shaul Lieberman was also there. Despite the caveat concerning Rabbi Lieberman, it would be hard to imagine any Orthodox leader today taking the same position, in part because both the Conservative and Orthodox movements have changed, but in part because of the Lubavitcher Rebbe's unique appreciation for what a modern, and American, Orthodox Judaism needed.

Many Chabad *shluchim*, emissaries, take positions in small towns and on college campuses where they are often the only Orthodox Jews, and sometimes the only Jewish institution in the area. They reach out to unaffiliated Jews. But as much as they have an effect on other Jews, other Jews also have an effect on them. They encounter non-Orthodox people and ideas. Their children are often not raised in Orthodox neighborhoods, and spend their formative years exposed to world which is not Orthodox, and sometimes not very Jewish at all. As a result, many Chabad Lubavitch Hasidim are more aware and tolerant of, if not quite open to, the larger world, than other, more secluded Hasidic sects.

Chabad has shown a remarkable ability to succeed in the years since the death of the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It has learned to function as an institution, governed by a board and directors, and not by a single charismatic leader. If Chabad is to continue in the twenty-first century, then it must first deal with any latent messianism firmly and finally. Furthermore, it has to continue to recognize the diversity of traditional Judaism. But, moreover, it cannot forget the adaptability to and insight into modernity that its leaders showed in the past.

Who Wins?

It is apparent to us that of the four factions Josephus described two thousand years ago, the Pharisees won. Rabbinic thought after the destruction of the Second Temple derives from the Pharisees, and Judaism today, in one way or another, is Rabbinic Judaism. For the reasons for the success of the Pharisees, see the chapters in this volume by Werlin, Pearce, Secunda, and Galambush.

Each aspect of traditional/Orthodox Judaism today has points of appeal, but also genuine problems. And, each thinks it is right. The greatest problems are perhaps faced by the Haredim, because their problems are economic. Their way of life cannot sustain itself materially. The differences between the versions of Orthodoxy existing today will undoubtedly compete, and there will be a winner. But history is, by definition, unknowable, and it remains for time and the next generation of historians to determine who wins in the twenty-first century.

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Further reading

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There are many books on Haredim, but the best insights into the Haredi world come from their own publications, such as the newspapers *Hamodia* and *Yated Ne'eman*, both of which publish English editions, and neither of which have websites.

31

Contemporary American Jewish Culture

Ted Merwin

Unlike other Western religions whose followers are united by a common set of beliefs and practices, Judaism has always been a culture as well as a faith. Whether or not they believe in God or even belong to a synagogue, Jews are united by the foods that they eat, the holidays that they celebrate, the jokes that they share, and by a sense of nationality that for many expresses itself in a strong connection to the Jewish homeland in the Middle East. Indeed, an increasing percentage of American Jews define their Jewishness in primarily cultural rather than religious terms.[1]

The word "culture" is not easy to define. The British critic Raymond Williams famously distinguished between "culture" and "society" in seeing culture as offering a commentary on the social world. Later theorists, especially at the University of Birmingham, where the field of "cultural studies" originated in the 1980s, collapsed this distinction somewhat by emphasizing the political and ideological nature of culture, its embeddedness within contests over power. At the same time, the essential hybridity of culture was also noted, in that cultures are never pure or unadulterated, but always develop through a process of mixing, cross-breeding, and cross-fertilization.

American Jewish culture is an especially complex example of cultural fusion. Because Jewish religion and culture are interpenetrating, and because Jews have lived for so long in so many different places, it is difficult to pin down what constitutes "Jewish culture" to begin with. Jewish law has always been shaped by the cultural context in which it was written and enforced. As David Biale has noted, Jewish culture "acted as a kind of expansive interpretation of the law" and law "was only one aspect of a wider culture that as much shaped the law after its own values as it was shaped by it."[2] In America, a land founded on ideals of freedom, the productive tension between Jewish law and Jewish culture has helped to create

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much of mainstream American culture, from Hollywood to humor magazines, from food to stand-up comedy.

Throughout this chapter will be a concern with how the historical experience of Jews has conditioned their cultural productivity, and how Jewish and American values have, often simultaneously, both clashed with and complemented one another. As Stephen Whitfield has put it, "Jewish culture in the United States has not been endogenous, and an acute receptivity to outside forces makes it difficult to locate what is Jewish in American Jewish culture. But what makes that culture special is that values, symbols and ideas have circulated in both directions – not merely from majority to minority, but in an interactive and reciprocal fashion."[3]

Jews came to America with a rich set of cultural practices that were, in many ways, incompatible with American capitalist values. These American values elevated the individual over the community, emphasized the earning of money through productive labor rather than the rewards of contemplation and study, and valorized freedom rather than the constraints of constant obligations to perform religious rituals or to believe in a certain way. American Jewish culture developed in the gap between these two ways of approaching the world – it was a bridge between Jewish and American values.[4]

The Earliest Jewish Settlement in America and the Beginning of American Jewish Culture

Jewish life began in America in 1654, with the arrival of a boatload of 23 Jews from Recife, a region of Brazil that, having been wrested by the Dutch from the Portuguese, had become a haven for thousands of Jews fleeing from the Spanish Inquisition. When the Portuguese reconquered Recife, the Jews were forced once again to set sail, and some ended up in the Dutch colony of New Amsterdam, which was ultimately to be renamed New York by the British occupiers. As the Jewish population of the American colonies increased throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Jewish culture grew apace as well. Many of the surviving examples of Jewish cultural forms that we have are related to Jewish worship, as in the "Mizrach" (East) sampler that was hung on the Eastern wall of a Jewish home, since Jews customarily face toward Jerusalem when they pray. For example, in the late eighteenth century Rebecca Hendricks of New York embroidered a cross-stitch sampler on twenty-count linen of the 78th Psalm, which recounts the miraculous deliverance of the Israelites from bondage in Egypt.

Those Jews who became prominent commissioned portraits of themselves. Like much of contemporary Jewish culture, the specifically Jewish content of these portraits is difficult to assess, since few contain overt markers of Jewish identity. A portrait of the German-born merchant-trader Moses Raphael Levy, painted by

the Dutch artist Gerardus Duyckinck in the 1720s, shows Levy seated in a front of a window in a richly brocaded coat and flowing white wig, a sailing ship visible through the window. Levy, who served at one point as president of New York's Shearith Israel, the first Jewish congregation in the 13 colonies, shows off his considerable wealth and prestige, but downplays his Jewish background. The artists that Jewish patrons commissioned were among the most illustrious portrait painters of the day, including William Dunlap, John Wesley Jarvis, Charles Peale Polk, and Thomas Sully – all of whom had developed sterling reputations in their service to the non-Jewish upper class.

The lack of any Jewish references in a portrait of an obviously Jewish subject communicates something in itself – a strong desire to be seen as American rather than Jewish. Art critic Richard Brilliant sees this as part of the strategies of representation adopted by both Jews and non-Jews during the colonial period, in which their class position was displayed through "proclamatory images" that affirmed both their American identity and their social class. Brilliant notes that at a time when success in business often depended to a large extent on one's appearance, the portrait itself could help to establish or solidify one's position in society. This was true even though the painting was typically displayed in a domestic setting, such as the semi-private space of a sitting or dining room.[5] Downplaying their Jewish identity, wealthy and important Jews cloaked it beneath an American veneer.

Over time, as styles in both clothing and portraiture changed, American Jews were portrayed in less stiff and formal ways, with more natural-seeming postures and expressions. Yet they still retained the taint of outsiderness. Rebecca Gratz, a pillar of Philadelphia Jewish society, had her portrait done three times by Sully in the early 1830s, first wearing a broad-brimmed hat, then with a sand-colored turban secured around her chin with a blue-gray and green ribbon, and then a year later with a Dutch-style ruff around her neck. Judith Lewin has argued that the middle portrait is particularly revealing because turbans, which Jewish women and prostitutes were required to wear in Renaissance Italy, were a sign of exoticism and sexual availability.[6] Even Jews who were considered important and upstanding members of society were still perceived as outsiders.

Many silver Jewish ritual objects, including Sabbath candlesticks and kiddush cups (used to contain wine over which the blessing of the Sabbath is recited) survive from Colonial American Jewish life, as opposed to those made of more fragile or perishable materials. The most illustrious colonial Jewish artist, whose work also straddled the religious and secular realms, was New York silversmith Myer Myers (1723–1795). Myers executed many items for Jewish ritual use, such as clips used during the ritual of *brit milah* (circumcision) and Torah finials (tall ornate caps, often with little bells, used to surmount the large wooden dowels around which the Torah scroll is wrapped). These finials, which he crafted in the decade leading up to the Revolutionary War, are counted among the most impressive objects of precious metal produced in all of Colonial America.

Yet Myers himself does not seem to have had much connection to a synagogue or Jewish community. Like his much better known counterpart in Boston, Paul Revere, Myers had wealthy patrons from across the political spectrum who commissioned him to create intricately ornamented candlesticks, bread baskets, jugs, chocolate pots, and other items for their dining room tables that spoke to their rising economic and social mobility.

Just as Jews had to find new ways of being Jewish in America, sometimes objects changed their function in their own journey across the seas. Take, for example, a late eighteenth-century engraved silver mustard pot imported from England by the Gomez family of New York. The mustard pot, which has a blue glass insert designed to hold condiments, took on new life in America as an *etrog* holder – a container for the lemon-like citron used to celebrate the Jewish harvest festival of Sukkot, which takes place in the fall just a few days after Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. In America, the mustard pot was converted to ritual use, adding fragrance to the annual celebration of the bounty of the land. "Whether a priceless family heirloom brought over from the Old Country," Jenna Weissman Joselit has written, "or a decorative trifle – a *tshatshke* – objects inhabited and enlivened the lives of thousands of American Jewish families, rendering Jewishness tangible."[7]

The Jewish Migration from Central Europe

The Jewish population of the United States remained relatively small, though, until the arrival of a large number of Jews from Central Europe in the middle of the nineteenth century. This group of Jews were driven to emigrate mostly because of economic and social restrictions that made it difficult to find jobs or even get married. They typically started life in America as peddlers, often serving the frontier communities that sprang up as the young nation moved its borders progressively westward, before in many cases working their way up to owning general stores, department stores, catalog retailers (like Sears Roebuck) and investment houses.

Jews who participated in the westward expansion sought to retain Jewish religion and customs at the same time as they eagerly embraced the American way of life. Wooden Torah Arks that were carved in America were often surmounted by American eagles. Jewish folk art incorporated American patriotic motifs, such as an 1861 *shiviti* (a plaque that aids meditation on the divine, often used as decoration in the synagogue) in the form of a paper-cut that includes American flags flying on top of a representation of the heavenly gates. And a Torah wimple (piece of cloth tied around the scroll when it is rolled up and not being read) that reads *yegadlo* ("He will raise him up") has a flag flying proudly from the word's final letter, *lamed*, that extends across the top of the entire word.

Yet, as we have seen in the Colonial period, the distinction between religious and cultural works was not always hard and fast. A colored lithograph, published in

New York in 1877, shows Tsar Alexander II reviewing his Jewish soldiers on the eve of the Day of Atonement during the Russo-Turkish War. The picture show the Jews, who are wearing prayer shawls (tallitot) and phylacteries (tefillin) as they gather outside a makeshift synagogue that is being used for prayer on the holiest day of the year. Hanukkah lamps made of tin (known as the "poor man's silver") enabled Jews, whether or not they regularly attended synagogue, to celebrate the wintertime festival in their homes. And a painted banner of the national Jewish fraternal organization Kesher Shel Barzel (Order of the Iron Knot), which lasted from 1860 to 1903, depicts the biblical scene of the dove bringing the olive branch to Noah's ark (Genesis 8:11) as the boat tosses on the waves, with a rainbow shining overhead.

The Jewish Exodus from Eastern Europe and the Creation of Yiddish Culture in America

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth, a large influx of Jews from Eastern Europe reshaped the contours of American culture. The emigration of almost two million Jews from the former Pale of Settlement, established by Catherine the Great to confine and control the Jews of the Russian Empire, was triggered by a number of both "push" and "pull" factors, including political and economic exploitation, mob attacks (pogroms), improved overseas transportation, and expanding economic opportunities in the New World (which Eastern European Jews often learned about through letters received from relatives who had already made the move).

After an arduous and often miserable journey by ship, the vast majority of these immigrants ended up in New York, crammed into rickety tenements in the low-rent Manhattan district known as the Lower East Side. Once Jews began pouring into America, they were generally there to stay, with little thought of returning to a hostile Europe that, with the seismic economic and political shifts that accompanied industrialization, murderously scapegoated them for its economic ills and political instability.

Most ended up working in the garment business, which, in its dependence on fashion and the fickleness of public taste, made it an easy leap to the entertainment business. Indeed, the determination to make it in the New World, to prove themselves, and to make up in brains and hard work what they lacked in brawn made for a devil-may-care, go-for-broke attitude that was ideally suited to the nascent entertainment industry in New York – an industry that depended less on capital and more on moxie and willingness to take risks. Perhaps, taking the colonial Jewish interest in portraiture and self-display one step further, immigrant Jews embraced the performing rather than the visual arts, beginning with the Yiddish theater as a way of building and shaping community around the public articulation of common themes of displacement, nostalgia, accommodation, and adjustment.

The Yiddish theater had begun in Jasy, Romania, in the 1870s but burgeoned on the Lower East Side as actors, playwrights, composers, directors, and theatrical producers arrived from Eastern Europe as part of the mass migration. It provided entertainment ranging from vaudeville and comedy sketches to translations of plays from pioneering Western European dramatists like Henrik Ibsen and August Strindberg. Indeed, by the turn of the twentieth century, the most popular dramatist on the Yiddish stage in America was none other than William Shakespeare, whose tragedies were, according to theatrical posters at the time, "*fartaytsht un farbesert*" – translated and improved – by being adapted into dramas of Jewish family life.[8] Other plays reached back nostalgically to Eastern Europe, dealt with the problems of tenement and sweatshop life, or presented colorful pageants drawn from either the Bible or from Jewish history. From these Yiddish theatrical roots grew the shoots of American Jewish vaudeville, theater, film, and, later, television.

Even when Jewish immigration from Eastern Europe was almost entirely ended in 1924 with the passage of anti-immigrant federal legislation (in an isolationist move that was to have terrible consequences in the following decade with the inflexibility of the American government in accepting refugees from Hitler's Europe), and the number of Yiddish speakers began to decline, the Yiddish theater in New York drew new vitality from the growth of modernism in Europe, incorporating theatrical innovation and experimentation in works like S. Ansky's *The Dybbuk*, and H. Leivick's *The Golem*, both of which drew from medieval Jewish folklore steeped in the supernatural.

Second-Generation American Jewish Culture

It was the second-generation Jews – the children of Jewish immigrants – brought up on the streets of the ghetto and desperate for recognition and success, who broke into American society. Some bucked powerful antisemitic attitudes in society to become writers and intellectuals in the first few decades of the twentieth century, helping to found the modern fields of literature and social science. Among these were critic Alfred Kazin (part of the circle of "New York intellectuals" that included Philip Rahv, Lionel Trilling, and Irving Howe), fiction writers Henry Roth and Delmore Schwartz, anthropologist Franz Boas, and sociologist Louis Wirth.

During the 1920s, known as the Roaring Twenties or the Jazz Age, second-generation Jewish entertainers came to the fore. As the white supremacist organization known as the Ku Klux Klan reached its height, and the nation's chief automaker, Henry Ford, spewed antisemitic venom in the pages of his influential newspaper, *The Dearborn Independent*, the children of Jewish immigrants nevertheless rose to the heights of American popular culture with their songs and comedy routines, many of which were inflected with a Jewish sensibility. Howe has described the "hysterical frenzy with which many of them worked, their need to

perform under the highest possible pressure, as if still heeding the Jewish folk view that for a Jew to succeed he must do things twice as well, or as hard, as a gentile."[9]

Jewish composers like Irving Berlin and George Gershwin helped to create the new rhythm of American life, with popular songs and stage musicals that celebrated the excitement and vitality of the multireligious and multiethnic urban culture in which Jews were beginning to play such a prominent role. Among Berlin's iconic show tunes for stage and screen were "White Christmas" and "Easter Parade" – songs that redefined Christian holidays in secular terms as quintessentially American. Gershwin's jazzy, exuberant "Rhapsody in Blue," "An American in Paris," and "Porgy and Bess" melded African American musical styles with Eastern European klezmer (Jewish folk) and Jewish cantorial rhythms, creating a new synthesis of black and Jewish music.

Beginning with blackface routines or routines that emphasized their Jewish otherness, second-generation Jewish comedians laid the groundwork for twentieth-century popular culture in its obsession with outsider humor, with the overturning of social convention through racial or ethnic difference. "A long-contained vulgarity," Howe writes, "which had already come to form a vital portion of Yiddish culture in eastern Europe as a challenge to rabbinic denial and shtetl smugness, now broke through the skin of immigrant life."[10]

Gilbert Seldes, a Jewish critic, wrote about two of the most celebrated Jewish performers of that era, Fanny Brice and Al Jolson, as "possessed" by a "daimonic" energy that electrified both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences by exploding conventions about what could be said and done on stage – much as African American comedians like Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy would do in a later generation. Such seemingly boundless energy also spoke to the ferocious desire of second-generation Jews to succeed in American society, and it served, Seldes believed, to channel some of the rage that they felt toward a culture that marginalized them by placing strict Jewish quotas on university admissions and excluding Jews from many occupations, residential areas, hotels, and country clubs.[11]

Brice, who grew up on the Lower East Side, did not speak Yiddish herself, but employed a heavy Yiddish accent in her routines in order to poke fun at Jewish immigrant culture. In one of the most famous, "Second Hand Rose," re-recorded by dozens of entertainers throughout the twentieth century, her character complains of feelings of inferiority stemming from the fact that all of her clothes and other possessions are used. "Second Hand Rose" can be read as an indictment of her own immigrant parents for transmitting to her a Jewish identity that makes her a "second class" citizen in America, who must constantly face humiliation for being perpetually behind the times. Brice's other early routines, such as "I'm an Indian" and "Becky is Back in the Ballet," derived their humor from stereotypes of Jewish women as ungainly, ungraceful, and overly masculine in their needing to take on the responsibilities of husbands who – conditioned by Eastern European Jewish culture to dedicate their time to study and prayer – were too passive and unaggressive to be successful in making a living in America.

Eddie Cantor, who also grew up on the Lower East Side, was a short, slight comedian with large eyes who, after breaking into show business with blackface routines, began doing Jewish comedy. Among his vaudeville routines, which he later repeated both on Broadway and on television, "Joe's Blue Front," or "A Belt in the Back," he played an unscrupulous clothing salesman in a down-at-the-heels men's suit store on the Lower East Side. In cahoots with another salesman, Cantor tries to sell one ridiculously inappropriate, ill-fitting suit after another to an indecisive but unsuspecting customer. However, it is really the Jewish salesmen whose inability to "fit" into America is foregrounded by the skit, which portrays them as money-grubbing and unmasculine.[12]

Thus, even as Jews took control of their own representations, they continued to use age-old Jewish stereotypes as fodder for their routines. Why would these stereotypes have such staying power? Weren't comedians like Brice and Cantor playing with fire, so to speak, by reigniting controversies about whether or not Jews were truly assimilable into Western society? Many scholars have identified a "self-deprecating" quality in Jewish humor, in which Jews purportedly turned on themselves the rage that they felt toward the surrounding cultures that oppressed them. But perhaps early twentieth-century Jewish comedy should be viewed as more strategic, in that Jewish entertainers took up these stereotypes in order to suggest that they – and, by extension, their second generation Jewish audiences – had moved beyond them in their successful acculturation into American society.

The frequent use of blackface by early twentieth–century Jewish comedians has sparked tremendous controversy among scholars. Some see it as a way for Jews to express sympathy with African Americans even in the act of ridiculing them. But others see Jews as paradoxically becoming "white" by acting in blackface, distancing themselves from African Americans and becoming more acceptable to mainstream Americans.[13] Sophie Tucker, who also started her career in blackface, was a portly, buxom comedian whose bold and gutsy songs were filled with sexual references. Tucker, along with non-Jewish entertainers like Mae West, overturned age-old stereotypes of passive females who kept their sexual desire under wraps. The impish, irrepressible Molly Picon, a Yiddish theater and film star who captivated Broadway audiences with her joie de vivre, specialized in "breeches" roles – impersonating men for comic effect. Belle Baker, a ragtime and torch singer, scored hits with Irving Berlin's "Blue Skies," the Jewish dialect song "Cohen Owes Me $97," and the now classic tearjerker "My Yiddishe Mama," about an immigrant Jewish mother in a Lower East Side tenement.

Not all Jewish comedians used explicitly Jewish material. Perhaps the most successful Jewish comedy team of all, the five Marx Brothers, convulsed audiences with routines that melded slapstick and verbal humor, but made few references to their Jewish background.[14] Perhaps the Jewishness of the Marx Brothers resides in their anarchic humor, their overturning of social structures and conventions. As Charles Musser has written of one of their best films, *Animal Crackers*, the brothers play "Jewish hustlers insinuating themselves into WASP high society, itself shown

to be a model of corruption and doubtful respectability. . . ."[15] Musser sees this as a commentary on the exclusion of Jews from universities, country clubs, upper class residential communities, and other societal institutions.

The Rise of Jewish Broadway

Even as the Yiddish theater entered its final flowering in America in the 1920s, its audiences were peeling off and flocking to Broadway, where hundreds of plays produced each year by mostly Jewish producers, directors, and playwrights. The English-speaking children of Jewish immigrants comprised a large portion of the audience for these plays, many of which were stereotype-laden comedies that satirized Jewish family life in New York.

Among the most popular Broadway comedies was a farce about an intermarriage between a Jewish man and a Catholic woman called *Abie's Irish Rose*. The play, which was written by the non-Jewish playwright Anne Nichols, used broad ethnic stereotypes to make fun of both Jewish and Irish immigrants while suggesting that their children might be free of prejudice and able to be acculturated into American society. It ran for five years on Broadway (and throughout the country, in its numerous touring companies) and earned millions of dollars for its author.[16] In addition to their vaudeville antecedents, the broad-brush characters in *Abie's Irish Rose* and other Jewish-themed comedies owed much to the Jewish cartoon characters that populated the Sunday newspaper comics – strips like Harry Hershfield's "Abie the Agent" and Milt Gross's "Dunt Esk" ("Don't Ask," pronounced in a Yiddish accent) showed immigrant Jews trying to negotiate the bewildering conditions of New York life.

Another, more serious, Jewish-themed play from the same decade, which also had an intermarriage element, was Samson Raphaelson's *The Jazz Singer*, about the son of a cantor who must choose between remaining loyal to his ancestral faith and becoming a blackface performer on Broadway along with a non-Jewish showgirl. The play spoke to the conflicts that many Jews felt as they moved away from the world of their parents into the wider society. It was filmed in 1927, starring Jolson, as one of the first "talkies" – films with synchronized sound. It thus functioned as a kind of announcement that Jews had arrived at the center of American culture, exemplified in one of the main character's legendary lines, "You ain't heard nothing yet."

Hollywood as a Jewish Invention

Jews indeed had a lot more to say, and they were quickly developing new technologies that enabled them to say it. Almost all the major Hollywood film studios were founded by Jews, many of whom had migrated from the clothing

industry, in which success also depended on accurately gauging public taste. Adolph Zukor at Paramount Pictures, Harry M. Cohn at Columbia Pictures, Carl Laemmle at Universal Studios, Samuel Goldwyn and Louis B. Mayer at Metro Goldwyn Mayer, and Jack and Harry Warner at Warner Brothers – all were Jews who came to Hollywood to find a more fluid social system, less overt antisemitism, and consistently balmy weather (making it possible to film throughout the year) than on the East Coast or even in the Midwest.

Yet by the 1930s, almost none of their films contained Jewish characters or made any explicit mention of Jewishness. As Henry Popkin wrote in a now-classic 1952 essay, "The Vanishing Jew of our Popular Culture," a fear of an antisemitic backlash led to the "de-Semitization" of popular entertainment. While he conceded the "New York idea that Jewishness is not freakish or embarrassing," he also speculated that the exclusion of Jews from films sprang from "the desire to prettify, to depict life with discordant elements. Jews are an intrusion; they do not belong to the pretty picture."[17]

Yet historian Neal Gabler points out that in their very absence of overt Jewish themes, the films made by the Jewish moguls expressed the way in which these quintessential Jewish outsiders felt socially excluded from an America that they nevertheless continued to cherish as a land of infinite possibility and self-transformation. Gabler posits that the American Dream was thus, in an exquisite irony, invented by Jews who were barred from participating in the "real" America.[18]

As Jews moved to the suburbs in the years following World War II, they increasingly tried to blend in to the white Christian culture that they found outside New York. They advanced rapidly in the professions, becoming arguably the most visible and successful ethnic group in America. Yet they still retained an outsider sensibility. The spirit of Jewish vaudeville, along with the tradition of Catskills humor, survived for decades in the outrageous humor of entertainers like Mickey Katz and Allan Sherman. Katz ("Knish Doctor," "Borscht Riders in the Sky," "Bagel Call Rag") who came to prominence in the 1950s, gleefully made fun of Jewish culture – especially Jewish food – using Yiddish expressions, humorous sound effects, and klezmer (Eastern European Jewish and gypsy)-inspired melodies.

In the early 1960s, Allan Sherman burst onto the scene with entirely English-language parodies, invariably set to familiar popular songs or to classical music. Among Sherman's most indelible creations were "Hello Muddah, Hello Fadduh," a Jewish boy's desperate lament from summer camp, "Harvey and Sheila," about a Jewish couple's move to the suburbs, and "Comin' Through the Rye," about the pleasures of Jewish delicatessen food. While Sherman's star burnt out quickly, he left a lasting legacy in his perfection of the parody form; many Jews still incorporate similar parodies in their Passover seders, commemorating the Exodus from Egypt by spoofing the evil Pharoah in Allan Sherman style.

Another signal development in the postwar period was the launch of *MAD Magazine* in 1952. Invented by cartoonist Harvey Kurtzman and businessman

William Gaines, both of whom had Jewish roots, *MAD* (which started as a comic book) began by parodying other comics (Superman became "Superduperman" and Mickey Mouse turned into "Mickey Rodent" and graduated to satirizing society in general. The cheeky, subversive magazine unmasked hypocrisy in all its forms, which it found rampant in advertising, business, and politics in the 1950s, and then in the sexual revolution, pollution, the Vietnam War, and recreational drug use in the 1960s.[19] "For the smarter kids of two generations," Brian Siano has written, "MAD was a revelation: it was the first to tell us that the toys we were being sold were garbage, our teachers were phonies, our leaders were fools, our religious counselors were hypocrites, and even our parents were lying to us about damn near anything."[20]

The Jewish involvement in popular culture continued with the rise of the Broadway musical, which came to define much of American culture. Jewish (although thoroughly secular) composers like Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein created some of the most enduring of all musicals, including *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma!*, *Annie Get Your Gun*, and *Carousel*. Despite their Jewish creators, these musicals, like the Hollywood films of the time, rarely presented Jewish characters. However, in their tendency toward political liberalism (which was endemic to the New York Jewish community at the time), they often focus on outsiders who overcome social exclusion. In so doing, they can be read, according to scholar Andrea Most, as springing from the historical Jewish experience of marginalization.[21] Many of these musicals were also turned into films, bringing them to an audience far beyond Broadway.

Jewish film comedy came into its own in the 1970s, with films that took up the theme of the outsider. Stand-up comedian turned film director Woody Allen moved from formless, vaudeville-style comedies (*Bananas*, *Take the Money and Run*, *Love and Death*) to more sophisticated films about romances between neurotic, over-intellectual Jewish men and Protestant women (*Annie Hall*, *Manhattan*). Mel Brooks punctured pretensions with his sexual and scatological humor, which spoofed everything from the Holocaust (*The Producers*) to American racism (*Blazing Saddles*) to modern science (*Young Frankenstein*); some of his films have since been turned into Broadway musicals.

Other important American Jewish film directors, all of whom have occasionally taken up Jewish themes in their work, include Steven Spielberg (*Schindler's List*), Sidney Lumet (*Exodus*, *The Pawnbroker*), Barry Levinson (*Avalon*, *Liberty Heights*), David Mamet (*Glengarry Glen Ross, Homicide*) and the Coen Brothers (*Barton Fink*, *A Serious Man*). In the twenty-first century, one of the most accomplished Jewish directors in Hollywood is Judd Apatow, who creates ribald and often heartbreaking comedies about modern relationships.

By the 1960s, the rise of the Civil Rights Movement made it possible for the members of other ethnic groups, including Jews, to feel more comfortable putting themselves, as Jews, in front of the American footlights and camera lens. One of the first openly Jewish musicals, Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick's *Fiddler*

on the Roof, idealized and romanticized the Eastern European Jewish experience, tapping into a deep well of nostalgia among both Jews and non-Jews for a simpler world based on traditional pieties. Overt Jewish themes were, however, almost entirely absent from the work of Stephen Sondheim, a Jewish composer who, beginning in the 1960s, singlehandedly reinvented the Broadway musical by making it more down-to-earth, focusing on the emotional dynamics of relationships. With his jagged and dissonant rhythms, Sondheim's distinctive sound opened up new possibilities for musical theater as a reflection of contemporary issues and concerns.

As Jews emerged into greater visibility on stage and screen, they also achieved a new stature in American literature. A triumvirate of Jewish writers became the leading lights of the American literary world. Saul Bellow, who hailed from Chicago, won critical and popular acclaim with his depictions of alienated Jewish intellectuals attempting desperately to find purchase in American society; his best-known novels included *The Adventures of Augie March*, *Herzog*, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, and *Humboldt's Gift*. Novelist and short story writer Bernard Malamud, author of *The Natural*, *The Fixer*, "Angel Levine" and "The Magic Barrel," created indelible characters, many of whom were Jewish, mired in a poverty-stricken immigrant world that they could only escape through a kind of divine or mystical intervention. And in novels like *Goodbye Columbus* and *Portnoy's Complaint,* Philip Roth began by satirizing suburban Jewish life with a frankness that shocked Jews and non-Jews alike; he has gone on to explore deeper themes of identity, sex, and death with the same comic brio, establishing himself as perhaps the foremost American writer of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century.

Other Jewish writers of note from the 1960s and 1970s include Bronx-born short story writer Grace Paley, who in stories like "Goodbye and Good Luck" and "The Loudest Voice" explores issues of race, class, and left-wing politics; Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, best known for "Howl" and "Kaddish," overturned convention with his impassioned, explicit works that openly expressed his homosexual identity and political radicalism. Finally, short story writer/playwright Bruce Jay Friedman, who wrote such works as *Scuba Duba*, *Steambath*, and *Have You Spoken to Any Jews Lately?* presents neurotic but charming losers who manage only barely to negotiate the bewildering world in which they find themselves.

Jews and Jewish Themes on Television

Jews were also extraordinarily active in popularizing the new post-war medium of television. Milton Berle, who was one of the first television stars, convulsed audiences with his cross-dressing and. Sid Caesar and Imogene Coca's long-running *Your Show of Shows* (formerly *Admiral Broadway Review* and succeeded by *Caesar's Hour*) presented a 90-minute series of original comedy skits, almost all of whom

were written by Jewish writers, including Carl Reiner, Mel Brooks, Woody Allen, Larry Gelbart, and Neil Simon.

One of the most durable of all pop culture products was *The Goldbergs*, a show about a Jewish family, created by writer-actress Gertrude Berg that ran from 1929 to 1946 on radio and from 1949 to 1956 on television. The show, which revolved around Berg's character, Molly Goldberg, showed the trials and tribulations of a lower middle-class Jewish family first living in the Bronx and then, when it turned into a television show, moving to the suburbs. George Lipsitz has argued that the Goldbergs and other working-class ethnic sitcoms (such as the black sitcom, *Amos 'n' Andy*, and the Irish series, *The Honeymooners*), served a "legitimizing function" for ethnic difference at a time when "a rising standard of living, urban renewal and suburbanization contributed to declines in ethnic and class identity."[22]

Jews also took an essential role in creating the major television shows of the 1970s and 1980s. Jewish producer Norman Lear created the landmark show *All in the Family*, which was the first show to come to grips with the social issues of the time period, including the Vietnam War, Civil Rights Movement, and the widespread surge in ethnic consciousness for minority groups. Starring Carroll O'Connor as the bigoted patriarch Archie Bunker, who clashed frequently with his liberal son-in-law (played by Rob Reiner, who went on to direct *When Harry Met Sally* and other films), the show occasionally delved into the status of Jews, as in one episode, "Stretch Cunningham, Goodbye" (aired on January 29, 1977), Archie discovers that his deceased coworker on the loading dock was Jewish only after he has agreed to give a "urology" for him.

Another popular show of the 1970s, *M*A*S*H*, dealt with the madcap adventures of a group of doctors and nurses at a mobile medical facility during the Korean War. While it had no explicit Jewish characters or themes, Larry Gelbart, who was the show's executive producer, has said that it can be interpreted as about the Jewish condition. "I think these people were ghettoized. They were in a place they didn't want to be and were powerless to change their conditions."[23]

Stand-up comics of the postwar period, virtually all of whom honed their skills by entertaining Jewish patrons in the summer resort hotels of the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York, included Berle, along with Henny Youngman, Red Buttons, Shecky Greene, Buddy Hackett, and Alan King. Such comics, called *tummlers* after the Yiddish word for noisemaker, often doubled as social directors for these "Borscht Belt" hotels, with the responsibility of keeping the clientele amused at all times with their pranks, jests, and daily "Simon Sez" tournaments. By the early 1970s, the rise of stand-alone comedy clubs in major American cities (especially New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles) fueled the careers of a new generation of Jewish comedians, including Richard Belzer, David Brenner, Andy Kaufman, Jerry Seinfeld, Rita Rudner, and Paul Reiser.

Jewish producer Lorne Michaels combined stand-up with television to create *NBC's Saturday Night*, which was ultimately renamed *Saturday Night Live*. The

show's many Jewish writers, including Rosie Shuster, Al Franken, and Alan Zweibel, did not avoid Jewish themes in their comedy; in one episode, "Jewess Jeans" (which aired on February 16, 1980), Gilda Radner played a materialistic Jewish shopper with Jewish stars sewed to the rear of her slacks. Later SNL alumni like Jon Lovitz and Adam Sandler made their Jewish identity a central theme of their work, as in Sandler's phenomenally popular Hanukkah song that "reveals" which Hollywood celebrities are Jewish.

By the mid-1970s, a character from the popular *Mary Tyler Moore Show* named Rhoda Morgenstern (played by Valerie Harper) got her own show, *Rhoda*, and her success helped to launch a number of Jewish characters on different shows, especially those set (like *Rhoda* itself) in New York. But it was a show from the 1990s, *Seinfeld*, that became the most successful Jewish show of all time, earning billions of dollars for its cocreators, Jerry Seinfeld and Larry David. Starring Jerry Seinfeld as a Jewish comic in Manhattan surrounded by a gang of off-the-wall friends, all of whom were played by Jewish actors (although none of whom were explicitly labeled as Jewish), the show was one of the first "observational comedies" in which the humor was based on the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

The show ran for nine seasons and became a cultural touchstone about American urban life. Many of the episodes revolved around typical New York Jewish foods, including chocolate babka (a Russian cake), black and white cookies, kreplach (dumplings), and marble rye bread. In one episode, (Jewish dentist episode), Jerry and his friends suspect that Jerry's dentist converted to Judaism just so that he could tell Jewish jokes with impunity. The characters on Seinfeld, in the words of Irwin and Cara Hirsch, "reflect the worst civilized (nonviolent) qualities that exist in most people, and these are flaunted with cynical humor. The message given by the creators is that this represents an exaggeration of what most middle-class, educated, and apparently evolved people are like. . . ."[24]

After *Seinfeld* went off the air, David went on to have his own show, *Curb Your Enthusiasm*, in which he plays a narcissistic, utterly tactless television producer. In each episode, David commits social blunders based on his insensitivity. Disdainful of everyone around him, including his non-Jewish wife, Cheryl (played by Cheryl Hines) and his best friend and manager, Jeff (Jeff Garlin), David uses his wealth and prestige to avoid the consequences of his actions. As in Seinfeld, the show is distinguished by the complexity of its overlapping plots and subplots. In one episode, "The Survivor," he gets permission from a rabbi to have a one night stand with the Orthodox Jewish wife of the owner of a local dry cleaning store. Hearing that David's father has a friend who is a "survivor," the rabbi mistakenly brings the star of a reality TV show to meet with the victim of the Holocaust.

The surge in ethnic consciousness that began in the 1970s was not limited to Jews; African Americans, Irish, and other groups asserted pride in their own roots. But it was particularly far reaching for Jews, who embraced Irving Howe's landmark study of the Lower East Side, *World of Our Fathers*, published in 1976,

the same year as the nation's bicentennial. The 1970s also gave birth to a revival of Eastern European Jewish dance music, klezmer, which employs highly ornamented melodies to mimic the sounds of laughing and wailing. Giora Feidman, Andy Statman, and Henry Sapoznik promoted klezmer both in the concert hall and as a vibrant folk tradition suitable for Jewish weddings, bar/bat mitzvahs, and other celebrations.

Other folk musicians turned to the reinvention of the synagogue liturgy, revitalizing the Jewish worship experience with new tunes to both Hebrew and English songs. Shlomo Carlebach, known as the "Singing Rabbi," was the scion of a rabbinical dynasty in Germany who ended up in Berkeley in the 1960s, where his catchy tunes, based on Hasidic *niggunim* (songs without words) became a lifeline for young runaways and drug addicts before becoming a part of the mainstream of American synagogue life. Debbie Friedman, an openly lesbian composer and singer, crafted inspirational melodies that also revolutionized the prayer experience for many Jews; she also helped to popularize healing services in the synagogue in which people pray for the physical, emotional, and spiritual health of themselves and their loved ones.

Part of the reason for increased attention to Jewish culture beginning in the 1970s was the precipitous rise in the percentage of Jews who were marrying non-Jews. While in the early twentieth century intermarriage rates were so small as to be almost nonexistent (despite the prominence of intermarriage as a theme in popular culture, as discussed earlier), by 1970, Jews were marrying out at a rate of 13 percent, which more than doubled to 28 percent by the end of the 1970s. It reached 43 percent by the end of the 1980s, before topping out at 47 percent by the beginning of the new millennium. This caused great consternation among leaders of the American Jewish community, with some warning – somewhat apocalyptically – that intermarriage posed as grave a danger to Jewish continuity as the Holocaust had done. Given that intermarried couples were statistically less likely to join synagogues or perform Jewish rituals than their in-married counterparts, Jewish culture took on increasing importance as a way of keeping intermarried Jews, along with their partners and children, within the Jewish orbit.

It was not until 2005, however, that the impact of Jewish culture on Jewish identity was first measured. In a study commissioned by the National Foundation for Jewish Culture, sociologists Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman focused on young (those in their twenties or thirties) and unaffiliated Jewish New Yorkers and found that cultural events that were explicitly labeled as Jewish, especially those sponsored by avant-garde Jewish music groups like the Hip Hop Hoodios (rap group) or Golem (klezmer band) gave this demographic a way of connecting to Jewish life outside the traditional religious or institutional framework. Cohen and Kelman suggest that the very ambivalence that many young Jews feel about their own heritage is expressed at these events in three major ways – through irreverence, iconoclasm, and irony.[25]

The Future of American Jewish Culture

Can Jewish culture sustain the American Jewish community? Some scholars believe that the well of Jewish culture will run dry as Jews become progressively more assimilated into American society, the vast majority of Jews are increasingly ignorant of their own ancestral traditions, and American Judaism is increasingly dominated by the Orthodox (especially the ultra-Orthodox, who, with their large birth rate, represent a growing percentage of the American Jewish population). As Elaine Kauvar has put it, "the issue of whether there is to be an American Jewish culture is vexing, for the present generation of American Jews must cope with the dilemma of identity, the problem of parochialism, and the threat of fragmentation – all of which, some have warned, imperil the existence of the Jews as a people."[26] They call for a widespread religious revival to replenish Jewish life in America. Others point to the ongoing democratization of Jewish culture, as opportunities for Jewish cultural expression proliferate, with thousands of Jewish websites, an ever-increasing number of new Jewish books and films (many of which are self-published or self-produced) and a burgeoning interest in Jewish culture on the part of non-Jews.

Jewish culture in the early twenty-first century is marked by its satirical, rebellious, transgressive energy. An exemplar of this is *Heeb Magazine*, a publication that pushes the envelope in its sexual and scatological content as way of staking a claim against the Jewish pieties of the past. Just as *MAD Magazine* helped a generation of Jews to express their outrage toward an unjust society, *Heeb* (the title of which is a joke on the antisemitic shortening of "Hebrew" to "Hebe" in the early twentieth century) is known for its stunts, such as photographing a pig running across a traditional Sabbath table, spoofing Mel Gibson's film *The Passion of the Christ* with a topless (and body pierced) Virgin Mary and a Jesus who used a tallith as his loincloth, and posing Roseanne Barr as Adolf Hitler in drag holding a tray of "burned Jew cookies."

The same spirit of flagrant offensiveness infuses the work of popular comedians Sarah Silverman and the English Sacha Baron Cohen, both of whom play with virulent antisemitic stereotypes in their work. Is American Jewish comedy getting increasingly desperate as the knowledge of Judaism within American culture (among both Jews and non-Jews) is diminishing, and as the fragmentation of the media has grown to the point that humor needs to be more and more outrageous in order to get any attention? Or is Jewish culture simply mimicking the rest of American culture, which continues to struggle with the puritanical strain deeply embedded in the American psyche?

Some observers have hailed the dawn of what they call the "New Jewish Culture," which journalist Mordecai Drache describes as a phenomenon that redefines Jewishness itself, in the same way that early twentieth-century Yiddish-speaking socialists and anarchists in America reacted against the religiously,

politically, and socially conservative Judaism of their own day. The heirs to this radical tradition, Drache writes, are trying to craft "a more 'hip' Judaism that is sexy, urban, de-ghettoized, queer-positive, and treats the sexes and all religions equally – often employing cultural media such as music, theatre, and digital or traditional visual arts." One example of this is the Six Points Fellowship established by the Foundation for Jewish Culture, which gives grants to Jewish artists who are reshaping the boundaries of Jewish art; among recent recipients are a performance artist who turned the Passover seder into a dance-theatre piece. That Jewish organizations are willing to invest in Jewish culture, even at what Drache sees as a "miniscule" level, is, in his view, a sign of the "almost desperate efforts to reach disaffected Jews who refuse to set foot in a synagogue."[27]

The future of American Jewish culture is wrapped up in the new technologies that are reshaping American society. Bob Goldfarb has argued that rather than replace culture, media tends to expand the audience for culture. But Goldfarb (who notes that the words "communicate" and "community" come from the same Latin root meaning "to share") believes that both Jewish media and Jewish culture are in decline, partly because they lack communal support. "If nothing changes," he warns, "future generations will soon lose their feeling for Jewish culture in the same way that recent generations of American Jews have lost their connection to Jewish languages. Their cultural curiosity will be drawn to Thai architecture and Peruvian cooking and African musics."[28] Yet an interest in Jewish culture and in other cultures is not necessarily mutually exclusive. The story of Jewish life in America has been in which Jewish and American culture have succeeded each other, existed simultaneously, overlapped each other, and been superimposed on each other. As long as Jews live in America, Jewish culture will continue to help supply the definition of what it means to be a Jew.

Notes

1 See Egon Mayer, Barry Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, "American Jewish Identity Survey," City University of New York Graduate School, 2001, available at www.gc.cuny.edu/faculty/research_studies/ajis.pdf (accessed November 9, 2011). This study found that more Jews than members of most other religious groups defined themselves as "secular" rather than "religious," and that almost a third of even those Jews who identify with different Jewish denominations consider themselves to be "secular" or "somewhat secular." A more recent study by Leonard Saxe at Brandeis University came up with a much lower percentage of secular Jews; it concluded that although only one million out of 6.5 million American Jews decline a religious identification. However, Saxe discovered that the majority of those who do consider themselves to be Jewish "by religion" do not belong to synagogues or participate in Jewish lifecycle events; it is not clear what their religiosity consists of. See Gal Beckerman, "New Study Finds More Jews in the United States than Previously Thought," *Forward* (December 22, 2010).

2 David Biale, *Cultures of the Jews* (New York: Schocken, 2002).
3 Stephen Whitfield, "Declarations of Independence: American Jewish Culture in the Twentieth Century," in Biale, *Cultures of the Jews*, p. 1109.
4 Of course, capitalism was hardly absent from the Eastern European Jewish context from which the greatest number of American Jews came, and it was frequently linked with antisemitism. See Jerry Z. Muller, *Capitalism and the Jews* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011). The idea that Jewish and American culture existed as distinct realms and needed to be combined as part of the process of making Jews into Americans has been interrogated by scholars, most cogently by Jonathan Sarna in his essay, "The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture," *Jewish Social Studies*, 5(1/2) (Autumn 1998–Winter 1999), pp. 52–79.
5 Richard Brilliant, ed., *Facing the New World: Jewish Portraits in Colonial and Federal America* (New York: Prestel, 1997). See also John Mendelsohn, "Jewish Portraits in Colonial America," *Artnet Magazine* (October 7, 1997), www.artnet.com/magazine_pre2000/reviews/mendelsohn/mendelsohn10-7-97.asp, accessed November 9, 2011.
6 Judith Lewin, "Legends of Rebecca: Ivanhoe, Dynamic Identification, and the Portraits of Rebecca Gratz," *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies and Gender Issues*, 10 (2005), pp. 178–212.
7 Jenna Weissman Joselit, *The Wonders of America: Reinventing Jewish Culture, 1880–1950* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1994), p. 6.
8 See Joel Berkowitz, *Shakespeare on the American Yiddish Stage* (Des Moines: University of Iowa Press, 2002).
9 Irving Howe, *World of Our Fathers: The Journey of the East European Jews to America and the Life They Found and Made* (New York: Galahad Books, 1994), p. 566.
10 Howe, *World of Our Fathers*, p. 558.
11 Gilbert Seldes, *The 7 Lively Arts* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1924), p. 175.
12 See Ted Merwin, *In Their Own Image: New York Jews in Jazz Age Popular Culture* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006), pp. 41–45.
13 See Michael Rogin, *Blackface/White Noise: Jewish Immigrants in the Hollywood Melting Pot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996).
14 As J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler have written, "No other American performers have engendered more wide-ranging speculation on the Jewish origins of their art than the Marx Brothers." J. Hoberman and Jeffrey Shandler, *Entertaining America: Jews, Movies and Broadcasting* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 159.
15 Quoted in Hoberman and Shandler, *Entertaining America*, p. 163.
16 See Ted Merwin, "The Performance of Jewish Ethnicity in Anne Nichols' 'Abie's Irish Rose,'" *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 20(2) (Winter, 2001), pp. 3–37.
17 Henry Popkin, "The Vanishing Jew of Our Popular Culture: The Little Man Who Is No Longer There," *Commentary*, 14(1) (July 1952), pp. 46–55.
18 Neal Gabler, *An Empire of Their Own: How the Jews Invented Hollywood* (New York: Anchor Books, 1988).
19 Maria Reidelbach, *Completely MAD: A History of the Comic Book and Magazine* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1991).

20 Brian Siano, "Tales from the Crypt – Comic Books and Censorship – The Skeptical Eye," *The Humanist* (March/April 1994).

21 See Andrea Most, *Making Americans: Jews and the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

22 George Lipsitz, "The Meaning of Memory: Family, Class and Ethnicity in Early Network Television Programs," in Lynn Spigel and Denise Mann, eds, *Private Screenings: Television and the Female Consumer* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1992), pp. 71–72.

23 Arie Kaplan, "Wizards of Wit: How Jews Revolutionized Comedy in America; Part II: 1970–1989 – From Assaulted to Assimilated," *Reform Judaism* (Spring 2002).

24 Irwin and Cara Hirsch, "Seinfeld's Humor Noir: A Look at Our Dark Side," *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 28(3) (Fall 2000), pp. 116–123.

25 Steven M. Cohen and Ari Y. Kelman, *Cultural Events and Jewish Identities: Young Adult Jews in New York* (New York: National Foundation for Jewish Culture, 2005), p. 84.

26 "Some Reflections on Contemporary American Jewish Culture," *Contemporary Literature*, 34(3) (1993), p. 337.

27 Mordecai Drache, "The Old/New Jewish Culture: Queerness, Yiddish, and ReJEWvenation," *Zeek* (December 2005).

28 Bob Goldfarb, "Culture, Media and the Jewish Future," *Jewish Culture, The Blog* (December 28, 2009). Goldfarb's assertion that Jews have "lost their connection to Jewish languages" works only in the case of Yiddish; only a tiny minority of American Jews (most of them recent immigrants from Israel) have ever spoken Hebrew with any degree of fluency.

32

Israeli Culture from 1948 to the Present

Keren Rubinstein

Introduction: Israeli Cultural History

What is culture? One scholar argues it is the shared content of people's lives (Dominguez, 1989). But when approaching Israeli culture one must consider whether it is that which is practiced and produced in Israel, or that which best manifests Israeliness. This is an unresolved matter which brings to mind the sheer wealth of content that could be considered here. And which of the many cultures sustained in Israel should one explore? The lines that delineate one culture from another usually correspond with ethnicity and ideology, so that in the Israeli case, there are not only many cultures to consider, but also ongoing debates about their content, boundaries, and significance to the national construct. Culture is embroiled in struggles for representation and equality, national identity and privilege, empowerment and disempowerment, so that the task of defining culture is complicated in the case of a national unit as diverse and debated as that of Israel. The following survey is concerned with a number of cultural fields and in particular the ways in which Israeli cultures and subcultures, arts, leisure, media, and communications correspond with shifting expressions of ethnicity, ideology, and national identity. Any national culture is comprised of universal elements as well as unique or particularistic ones.

Israeli culture is a heterogeneous entity that has developed over what historians consider distinct periods, beginning with the foundation leading to 1948, immediately followed by the absorption of large numbers of Jewish immigrants from many parts of north Africa, the Middle East, Europe, and the Balkans in the

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country's first decade. The most significant cultural shift that occurred at this time was that from Hebrew culture to Israeli culture, the creation of an Israeli national identity and the concurrent extrication of both Palestinian and Yiddish culture as definitive elements of the embryonic Jewish State. After the 1948 Israeli War of Independence institutional efforts were devoted to the creation of a Western country on the Mediterranean, a secular Jewish democracy founded according to Zionist ideology. The same process is called the Nakba by Palestinians, referencing the destruction of their culture and home in order to erect the Jewish national home.

This historical process was accompanied and promulgated by a cultural revolution of the New Jew whose life would no longer be determined by the torments of exile and its associated disenfranchisement. The official approach taken by the Ashkenazi Zionist leadership toward the influx of migrants was that of a melting pot, within which a cultural polarity or hierarchy formed according to ethnic lines termed Mizrahi or Ashkenazi. Migrants were to shed their old culture and become renewed as Israelis. Certain institutions became enlisted in this effort of assimilation and socialization, namely the military and educational system. This process did not, however, seek to dissolve the cultures of Orthodox Jews and Arabs, although over the years both have had to undergo cultural "Israelization" by learning Hebrew and adopting other aspects of Israeli culture.

In the 1960s and early 1970s Israel continued to witness shifts and struggles to define Israeli culture. This was a particularly charged debate following the 1967 Six Day War and the Israeli occupation of Palestinian-inhabited territories formerly belonging to Jordan and Egypt. This occupation of land and the militarization of relations with the Palestinian people had many severe implications for Israeli civilians across social groups. The 1973 Yom Kippur War had great impact on Israelis' self-image as undefeatable, further affecting literature, arts, and public discourse. The defeat of the socialist labor party in the elections of 1977 ushered in a conservative Likud government. This was a watershed event that diversified arts and culture by admitting previously marginalized voices into public discourse. The 1982 Lebanon War and the First Intifada (1987–1993), towards which a public consensus was never reached, acted as catalysts in many cultural and intellectual fields. By the 1990s Israeli universities became the venue for a discussion of the Zionist hegemony, although the process began in earnest in the 1980s with scholarly works that challenged Israel's master narrative and collective memory.

Further influences on Israeli culture were found in the imported traditions of considerable numbers of immigrants from Ethiopia and the former Soviet Union in the 1980s and 1990s. This period also saw growing influence from the United States, in commerce, media, and communications. Technological innovation continues to affect the ways in which Israelis consume and produce local and global culture.

Clashes between Israelis and Palestinians, left and right and Orthodox and secular had all but culminated at the time of the signing of the Oslo Accords by the Israeli government and the Palestinian Liberation Organization (1993). This diplomatic development prompted further debate about Israeli national identity and boundaries.

The assassination of Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin (1995) by a conservative Orthodox Jewish Israeli signaled that internal debates were also far from peaceful. The post-Oslo period was followed by the Second Intifada (2000) and the contentious and ongoing construction of the concrete Israeli West Bank barrier, known in Hebrew as the Separation Fence (the construction of which began in 2002).

From the 1980s onward some scholars had referred to Israel as having become post-Zionist, since Zionist ideology and its important icons, such as the mythologized Sabra (native-born Israeli), had preserved little of their former potency. Multiple cultural shifts had marked a trend of normalization of Israeli life, in other words, a collective existence more comparable with other Western countries where there is no contentious military occupation or disputed territory. One can identify many expressions of cultural escapism since the 1990s, concurrent with a wave of privatizations of Israeli business and culture.

In the twenty-first century significant transformation in Israeli collective and private cultural practices continued. Significant geopolitical events such as the Disengagement Plan (2005), the Second Lebanon War (2006), and the Gaza War (2009) caused preexisting sociocultural rifts to widen. Further debates took place about the implications of increasing numbers of non-Jewish labor migrants living in Israel.

The cultural shifts that occurred along this historical trajectory correlate with an ideological transition from the melting pot approach of Israel's founding years, to a view of culture that perceives the nation as a mosaic with distinct coexistent cultures. The Israeli cultural pendulum swings from a religious, ethnocentric, and conservative system to a capitalist and democratic system that is typically globalist and liberal. Civic culture in Israel is increasingly associated with "democratic faith" (Almog, 2004) or an ostensible celebration of freedom, independence, individualism, and personal achievement, and global causes including the environment, the global market, multiculturalism, and tolerance towards the less familiar. While debates about what should constitute Israeli culture continue, one can find abundant examples of the hybrid nature of Israeli literature, art, music, media, religious practices, and leisure activities. Israeli culture, a synthesis of Western and Eastern cultural practices, is informed by multiple traditions and corresponds with a tumultuous struggle to define Israeli identity, borders, and ideology.

I have chosen to concentrate on certain elements of Israeli culture. Little attention has been devoted to sports, for instance, partly because it is not my area of expertise. However, one can extrapolate the processes illustrated herein to assess other aspects of Israeli culture.

Social Groups and Subcultures

The Israeli social spectrum is made up of many labels: Jewish, Arab, Palestinian, Sabra, Ashkenazi, Mizrahi, Sephardic, Muslim, Christian, Orthodox, secular,

indigenous – each social, religious, or ethnic category of identification participating in the production and definition of cross-fertilizing cultures and subcultures. Israeli language is an exemplary product of this network of narratives and experiences, constituted as it is by biblical, medieval, and modern Hebrew, as well as Yiddish, Arabic, French, Russian, English, and other languages, all of which infuse the production of cultural texts and local customs. Each of these instances of cultural convergence is further informed by the way in which Israeli nationalism or Zionist ideology filtered the content of the various imported cultures and married them with the uniquely Mediterranean and Middle Eastern context.

In 1948, certain cultural traditions were celebrated and privileged within the emergent melting pot, namely those of Ashkenazis with Socialist Zionist pedigree, while the traditions associated with cultures of the Middle East were downgraded, along with Orthodox Jewish and the Exilic or Diasporic culture of Jewish townships of Europe before emancipation.

One product of the Zionist cultural revolution was the iconic Sabra, a social archetype imbued with mythological symbolism. The Sabra is an invented normative persona of the Israeli-born Jew. This archetype was derived from the name for the wild prickly pear and applied to those Jewish Israelis who embodied native Israeliness most clearly. Informed by Socialist Zionist and pioneering ideals, a belief in territorial rootedness to the Jewish biblical homeland and elements of Palestinian culture, Sabra culture celebrated collective manual labor and sacrifice of the individual for the sake of the nation. The increased immigration and cultural diversity of the 1940s and 1950s led to concerted efforts to create a homogeneous nation modeled after this cultural synthesis.

One of the Sabra's typical characteristics is his "dugriyut," a term denoting straightforwardness, informal address, and a direct, unassuming mode of conduct. This element of collective interaction in Israel was contrasted by the more bourgeois, genteel sensitivity associated with the British Mandate (1922–1948). An example of "dugriyut" is found in the autobiographical works of Netiva Ben-Yehuda, one of the few Palmach female fighters to receive the level of attention leveled at her male counterparts, partly due to her contributions to Israeli language, literature, and talk-back radio. As she states in the introduction to *Between Calendars* (1981), which she insists is neither her memoir, nor an instance of belles lettres, nor her country's historiography, "one can say that the book is an interview. As if someone, unseen, who knows nothing about 'then,' asks me questions throughout the book, and more questions, and asks again and again, and the whole book are the answers I give – *in speech*" (emphasis in original).

Ashkenazi Jews, broadly defined as those from Germany, Poland, Russia, Galicia, Lithuania, Romania, and adjacent territories, were endowed with a sense of cultural superiority, largely due to the fact that Zionist figureheads were themselves Ashkenazi. Mizrahi and Sephardic Israelis are broadly defined as those descended from the Spanish Jews that resettled in northern Africa, the Arab Middle East, Greece, the Balkans, and other parts of Europe.

Israel is an immigrant country, although the main bonding agent of the Jewish population is, ostensibly, Jewish civilization. It is difficult to argue that such a wide range of national groups would share much in terms of their culture beyond the rhetorical identification as Jews, especially since the New Jew was to discard of much of his religious, historical, and cultural baggage. Israeli culture developed in a way that was discontinuous from Jewish history. Instead, the pre-Exilic period of biblical Judaism was evoked by Zionist rhetoric, and with it notions of heroism, territorial rootedness, and ethnic homogeneity. This link with the ancient past nourished a cultural and ideological movement of artists and writers that called themselves New Canaanites and although the movement was short lived, its mark on Israeli culture was significant.

Degrees of Jewish religiosity are fundamental determinants of cultural divides in Israel, with little cultural crossover between Orthodox and secular Jews. Although most Israeli Jews are secular or maintain only select religious practices, there has been a noteworthy rise in the return to Jewish Orthodoxy as well as mysticism and other spiritual practices that circumnavigate the Orthodox sector. For example, a famous rabbi who had emigrated from Morocco, named the Baba Sali, gained the reputation of a miracle healer in the 1970s, becoming an icon and hero among many north African Israeli Jews not otherwise identified as Orthodox.

While Mizrahi and Sephardic cultural practices were set to become subsumed into the wider, predominantly Ashkenazi national culture, so too were the habits, rituals, and artistic practices of Palestinian Arabs, most of whom became displaced in 1948 while those that remained under Israeli jurisdiction were significantly marginalized. This resulted in the systemic demotion of both Christian and Muslim Palestinian cultures and manifested in the renaming of places in Hebrew, the celebration of the Jewish calendar, the importation of Western practices, and the inculcation of society with Zionism. Certain elements of Palestinian life were appropriated by Zionist culture, such as aspects of Palestinian music, language, and food, many of which were already common to both Jewish and Palestinian residents of Israel who had lived amid Muslim societies. Other non-Jewish minorities, such as Bedouin and Druze communities, remain as pockets of relative cultural continuity.

In the twenty-first century there has been a growing tendency within Israeli academia to interrogate the terms used to define Israeli society and the ideology that had governed its development (Silberstein, 1999). There have been consistent efforts to illustrate the diversity and variation that exist within each ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic sector of the population of Israel. This has also applied to the study of Israeli culture.

Cultural practices in Israel further diverge along geographic lines and a significant variation exists among urban, rural, and peripheral cultures, patterns of consumption and leisure activities. Since most Israelis now live in cities, there has been a growing trend of "normalization" of cultural practices. However, during the country's early decades, collective settlement or kibbutz was one of the primary expressions of Zionist ideology and national commitment. Mostly small

agricultural settlements, the kibbutzim spouted an elite culture of togetherness, asceticism, idealism, and rhetoric of gender equality. Today only a fraction of Israelis remain in the kibbutzim as these undergo economic reform, that is, privatization. While pioneering culture sought to rescue Jewish life from both ghetto and the corrupt metropolis, Israelis today have by and large abandoned the notion of working the land in collective settlements.

Meanwhile, Israeli urban centers continue to grow, the most expansive metropolis being greater Tel Aviv, which was already the largest urban settlement in Israel in 1948. It remains the main site of avant-garde Israeli culture, much of which is based in and around the Bohemian parts of Jaffa and the center's café culture, largely imported by German immigrants in the first half of the twentieth century. In Jerusalem, however, culture developed along different lines, given the religious character of the city and its unique historical significance. Although many of the institutions of national culture are situated in Jerusalem, including the Bezalel Art Academy (1906), the Hebrew University (1925), the Hebrew Language Academy (1953), the Israel Museum (1959), the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial (1959), and the Israeli Knesset (parliament), it is undoubtedly Tel Aviv that dictates the popular trends of secular Israeli culture. Indeed, Israel's declaration of Independence occurred at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art. Since its foundation in the early twentieth century, Tel Aviv has been compared with New York for its culture of youth, leisure, fashion, the "in" and "out" restaurants, songs, venues, and celebrities. Its culture is increasingly divergent from Zionist culture. Some say that Jerusalem is for praying, Haifa is for working, and Tel Aviv is for dancing. However, outside these main cities there exist countless towns and settlements that inhabit the cultural and social periphery.

While the first decade of the Israeli State was a time of economic hardship, with a policy of rationing foods and other basic items, the country has gradually achieved economic prosperity. By the late 1980s a new era in Israeli economy was underway – that of heightened capitalism. Government regulation was diminished, subsidies were canceled, and privatization became widespread. Israel was also increasingly involved in free market trade and rising imports. In the early 1990s the gross domestic product rose significantly and consumerism increased with it. News reports spoke of a shopping fever. The more capitalist and materialistic the country became, the less pronounced was its Zionist character. In the twenty-first century, Israel inhabits a pluralistic society in which the citizen is perceived as a consumer rather than a producer.

Impact of Military and Politics on National Culture

The geopolitical reality of Israel and the Middle East has been of significant impact upon Israeli culture. Much has been said about the long-term impacts of living in a

protracted military conflict, and these are reflected in a great deal of Israeli culture. Since Israeli sovereignty was secured and maintained through ongoing military action, a great influence has been the military sphere itself. Jewish militarism in Palestine prior to Independence took the form of fighting units that provided the Sabra with a context in which to express his (or her) national devotion. Units such as the Palmach later formed Tzahal (the Israeli Defense Forces: IDF) and continued to function as symbols for the Jewish collective. Political leadership and army became united in the early years of the state, and this cultural synthesis was the basis for the country's cultural and civilian militarism. Tzahal, furthermore, was one of the main institutions that contributed to the melting pot approach to nation-building.

The Israeli army is often touted as possessing a relatively relaxed culture. Israelis in military uniform do not dress excessively formally nor do they carry themselves with the same degree of severity as do some others. Furthermore, in relative terms, the Israeli military does not organize a significant number of parades and official ceremonies, a fact which some scholars attribute to its frequent deployment and to the relatively porous boundaries between the military and civilian spheres. This latter facet of Israeli life has had a great impact upon national culture, particularly its language, camaraderie, exclusivity, and class and ethnic cross-cultural fertilization. The bleeding of military and civilian norms into each other also results from the system of Reserve Duty, which recalls certain ranks into service in times of increased military threat. One would seamlessly transition from working at home, in the field, or office, to the army base or combative territory. Ever since the first Lebanon War in 1982 there has been an increase in conscientious objection to military service, contributing to a growing culture of shirking or evasion of national service. Nowadays there is a growing debate about the level of commitment of Israeli youth to their military duties. This decline in collectivist and nationalist ideology has been accompanied by a growing culture of travel and tourism, perceived by some as a manifestation of the desire to escape the difficult realities of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

The Israeli calendar offers a synthesis of Jewish tradition and Western perception of time, so that religious holy days such as the Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah), The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), Passover (Pesach), and others are marked nationally and are accompanied by cessation of work, but the year is numbered as it is in the Gregorian calendar. The weekday is also defined by Jewish traditions, so that the work week begins on Sunday. The Israeli civic calendar's most important days include the Day of Independence (Yom Ha'atzma'ut), with its public ceremonies, festive street parades, family barbeques, and field trips; the Day of Remembrance (Yom Hazikaron) for fallen Israeli soldiers; and Holocaust and Heroism Day (Yom Hashoah), a commemoration of the victims of Nazism. These and other commemorative rituals form a central component of Israeli national culture. And yet, political culture in Israel has transformed from an oligarchic hegemony of Socialist Zionism, the representatives of which were also strongly affiliated with the arts, media, law, and military, to an increasingly pluralistic one.

In terms of their cultural significance to most Israelis, national celebrations have been replaced with election campaigns as a result of this gradual decline of Zionist culture.

Literature

Zionist literature was one of the most important vehicles of social mobilization in the lead-up to the creation of the State of Israel. Theodor (Binyamin Zeev) Herzl (1860–1904), the Viennese Jewish writer considered the visionary of the Jewish state, had outlined his vision in the utopian novel *Alteneuland* (1902), which informed the subsequent debates over what Israeli culture should be. The very recreation of Hebrew language from one that arguably lay dormant in exile to a modern lingua franca was crucial to the formation of a uniquely Israeli literary imagination. In the years immediately following the Declaration of Independence literature continued to express the ideologies of pioneering Zionist Israelis. The works of the 1948 generation, also known as the generation of the land, those who fought in the Palmach and IDF units in 1948 and, subsequently, used mostly naturalistic prose to express the creation of New Jews, Sabras, and Zionists molded out of migrants and their children. The belief in the necessity of sacrifice, and in particular that made under fire, made its way into much of the fiction and verse of early Israeli literature. One popular writer of this period was Israeli-born Moshe Shamir, whose book *With His Own Hands* (1950) captured a collective experience that was epitomized by his young brother who died as a young soldier defending his people. S. Yizhar (Yizhar Smilansky), of Shamir's generation and a Palmach fighter, published "Hirbet Hiza'a" (1949) a short story about the repressed experience of the Nakba, the expulsion of Palestinians from their village upon its occupation by Israeli soldiers. Scholars concur that while early Israeli literature portrayed an explicit ideological orientation, dissonant voices were always heard, including even some of the earlier works of Nobel Laureate Shmuel Yosef Agnon, whose gaze upon the Jewish Diaspora and the individual was often informed by an ideological struggle.

While an Israeli literary canon was beginning to form as both an extension of and a departure from earlier Jewish writing, so too publishing houses and the social and academic structures of literary criticism were consolidating. Literary journals, for example, were already extant in the dozens in 1948, but new publications were constantly appearing in an attempt to challenge the cultural elite. Despite countless debates about the roles and boundaries of Israeli literature, it was already apparent that works written in languages other than Hebrew would struggle for admission into the national canon, even though Arabic is an official language in the country.

Israeli fiction in the late 1950s and early 1960s assumed an increasingly critical mode, expressing commitment to the country while questioning its personal cost. Writers known as the State Generation, who came to maturity with the Jewish State already in existence, didn't always agree with the founding ideals of their fathers,

marking both a generational and an ideological shift. Some of them produced what became known as the New Wave of Israeli literature. An exemplary proponent of this shift is Jerusalem-born Amos Oz, whose antiheroic characters often inhabit realms iconic of Zionist idealism, such as the kibbutz or the military unit, but stripped of their former patina and shown to be tense and conflict ridden. By the 1980s Oz had become a cultural hero and national representative. His contemporary, Israeli-born Avraham B. Yehoshua, also preferred psychologically complex characters and allegories, expressive of ideological tension. Oz and Yehoshua came to be identified with the new culture of individualism that would ultimately lead to the fall of the mythological Sabra.

Poetry had also become an increasingly critical medium. German-born Natan Zach resented the cultural and artistic ethnocentrism of earlier poets and refused to serve Zionist propaganda, as did fellow German-born poet Yehuda Amichai. Both turned towards a private perception of the Israeli experience and away from the glorified collective one. Of particular note is the ground breaking verse of Yona Vollach, who stands out as one of the most important female poets of Israel, known particularly for her eroticization of Jewish religious themes. Israeli poetry as a vehicle for political protest had gained momentum particularly after the 1967 Six Day War, with many works expressing in increasingly informal Hebrew the ambivalence and the struggle between individual and collective obligations in the Jewish State.

Writing that challenged Zionist ideology, sometimes called post-Zionist literature, came from many parts of Israeli society. Writers such as Baghdad-born Sammy Michael and Casablanca-born Albert Swissa wrote about their identities as Arab Jews, thus challenging the reliance upon the Mizrahi–Ashkenazi dichotomy, and the belief that Jewish people were unable to exist in a fruitful, symbiotic relationship with non-Jewish, let alone Islamic, host societies in the Diaspora. For example, Michael's novel *Equal and Less Equal* (1974) described life in the temporary, transitional camps in the early years of statehood and called attention to subsequent ethnic discrimination against Jews in Israel.

Israeli literature had for a long time remained largely attuned to Ashkenazi voices and middle-class, secular Jewish values, although, by the late 1970s, alongside the decline of Socialist Zionism, Israeli literature became increasingly diverse in both form and content. This is sometimes referred to as the Other Wave of Israeli Literature, and was instrumental in challenging the national canon, that which was taught at schools and awarded prizes, included in anthologies, and enjoyed the widest readership. Israeli women were particularly benefited by this diversification, as well as those who had lived with memories of the Holocaust, whether that which they experienced or that by which their parents were scarred. This trend intensified after the 1982 Lebanon War, during which poetry was once again a vehicle for the antiwar movement, as was the case during the first Intifada.

Palestinian literature was also becoming increasingly available to Hebrew readers by way of more translations from Arabic. Palestinian poetry had long

been engaged in cultural dissent from the Zionist Jewish national establishment, expressing social or economic inequality and life in the margins. Yet it was Palestinian prose that was most impactful upon the Jewish public, in particular works by MP Emile Habiby and the younger Anton Shammas, who had translated Habiby's works into Hebrew. Both were born in northern Israel to Christian families and reflected in their writing the experience of systemic disempowerment under Israeli military occupation between 1948 and 1967 and the personal ramifications of being second-class citizens.

By the 1990s Israeli literature had become increasingly polyglot and cosmopolitan, with a growing number of publications of experimental literary fiction, autobiographical novels, works departing from the social center and exploring the peripheries, and works critical of the Jewish nation-state in explicit ways. Orly Castel-Bloom, for example, has written novels and short stories that undermine literary norms while scoring a devoted readership, while Etgar Keret, her junior, gained meteoric success when he published his short stories of inexplicable, fantastic, often ultraviolent realities. Keret writes about the military experience in a way that breaks taboos and rearticulates the Israeli condition and experience as freed from any ideological affiliation. Often tagged as post-Zionist literature, it conveys a national identity informed by conflicting narratives and counternarratives.

Music

Music in Israel is diverse and informed by multiple traditions, instruments, rhythms, and styles. In addition to local, original music, Israelis listen to a great deal of musical imports. Early European migrants, for instance, had brought with them classical music and the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra was established as early as 1936. However, Zionist culture rested heavily upon popular Hebrew song. The lyrics (often set to popular East European melodies) described the experience of collective national rebirth in the land of Israel, and were often sung collectively, in a ritualistic way that continues till this day (among older generations in particular) as a patriotic expression and a nostalgic reminiscence. The Israeli military had contributed a great deal of popular music to Israeli culture, with bands such as the Palmach's Chizbatron (1948–1949) and the popular Nachal band (1950–1993), offering joyous and light Hebrew music, popular among both soldiers and civilians alike and designed to raise morale. Hebrew song was influenced by many other national styles including American folk, French chanson, and Russian music, but came to constitute the folk music of Israel. The songs of Naomi Shemer and Ehud Manor further enriched this repertoire, becoming unofficial national anthems.

Soon enough, military bands found replicas in the civilian sphere. By the late 1960s American and British jazz and pop influences could be identified in Israeli music, as in the hits of Tel Aviv-born Arik Einstein, also known for his acting.

Forming one of the earliest Israeli rock bands, the High Windows Trio (1967), Einstein and his collaborators sang whimsically about biblical figures and antiwar sentiment, thus also becoming among the earliest censored musicians. Einstein's hippie sensitivities combined so successfully with elements of the mythological Sabra that he remained popular through the 1970s and beyond. The 1980s continued to sprout solemn and introspective popular music, commonly seen as an expression of the bitter sobriety of the period.

Israeli music exemplifies cultural stratification along ethnic lines. Middle Eastern musical traditions were intended for dissolution in the melting pot. However, Israel became host to a unique hybrid Mizrahi, Mediterranean sound, influenced by Arabic and Islamic, Turkish and Greek music. Greek musicians such as Aris San and Trifonas appeared in nightclubs in Jaffa in the 1950s, to ecstatic audiences, while Egyptian musicians Umm Kulthum and Farid al-Atrash were also popular, in spite of concerted efforts to downplay Arabic culture. Despite gaining a devoted following from that time onwards, Mediterranean and Mizrahi music long struggled to gain critical acclaim from the musical establishment. However, its commercial success was unrivalled, and epitomized by the busy and loud cassette tape stalls in the marketplace in Tel Aviv's Central Bus Station. Cassette tapes enabled many artists otherwise ignored by big recording companies to record and propagate their material. While the national broadcasting authority had established the Mizrahi Song Festival in 1971, thus legitimizing many hitherto derided musicians, including the ever-popular Zohar Argov, this inadvertently relegated this music as marginal, stigmatized, and non-mainstream. Mizrahi and Mediterranean music began making its way to the center stage after the 1977 political shift, which was based in large part upon ethnic protest. However, this has been a gradual and as yet incomplete journey for equality.

After the 1987 Intifada erupted, some popular musicians expressed their political objection to the violence in their work. For instance, Chava Alberstein utilized the lyrics of "Chad Gadya," sung annually at Passover, to voice her dismay at the violent engagement. The song was banned from radio stations and she was fiercely criticized for it.

Mizrahi, Middle Eastern, and Mediterranean music has gained popularity with the emergence of more hybrid forms, such as those found in the music of Tippex, a band headed by Kobi Oz, himself of Mizrahi origin and from the southern development town of Sderot. Tippex's music is essentially Western, but Oz infuses his songs with occasional Mizrahi tunes and lyrics that reflect the social peripheries. This fusion of Western and Eastern musical styles is also found in the popular, Greek-inspired songs of Yehuda Poliker.

Further influences upon Israeli music came in the 1980s from South America, and in particular Brazil, as well as from American soul and blues. This contributed to a lessening cultural ethnocentrism and a cosmopolitan character. Israel hosts numerous musical styles, including Hasidic, trance, klezmer, alternative rock, punk, metal, hip-hop, rap, and more. But Israelis continue to be devout followers of

the music that emerges from the local experience, while striving for relevance in a globalized arena. Israeli rock, for example, has been conceptualized as an instance of "globalized Israeliness," an example of music that is both nationally specific and yet relevant to a foreign audience.

Visual Arts

While Israeli art is influenced by Jewish, Mediterranean, Ottoman, Armenian, and European artistic traditions, it is further influenced by American and Western trends that occurred concurrently with its own development. Scholarship in this field focuses on the local and universal components of Israeli art, and its relationship with Jewish and Arab motifs and crafts. The emergence of modern art in Israel is sometimes seen to converge with the opening of the Bezalel Academy of Art and Design in Jerusalem (1906), which contributed to the development of Israeli cubism, expressionism, abstract, and avant-garde tendencies.

Like other components of Israeli culture, visual arts began as a platform for pioneering and patriotic ideals, signaling the modernism inherent to the Zionist movement. An important early stream of Israeli art was the Canaanite Movement. It sought to establish firmer bonds to the ancient Hebrew past by drawing upon biblical sources and local aesthetics. In works by Canaanite sculptor Yitzhak Danziger, for instance, there is an overt negation of Jewishness, and yet his works are considered cornerstones of Israeli art. The synthesis of ancient Mesopotamian aesthetics with Western influences was further visible in the works of the New Horizons movement (Ofakim Chadashim), an offshoot of the Canaanite Movement, whose works were exhibited in 1948 in the Tel Aviv Museum of Art and promoted abstraction.

In the 1950s Israeli visual arts were somewhat polarized. Social realism influenced the themes and forms of some artists while an abstract expressionism increasingly dominated the works of others. These trends expressed the multidimensional relationship between Israeli art and society. Subjects across the fields of sculpture and painting ranged from the Israeli landscape, the Socialist movement, World War II and the Holocaust, as well as Jewish history, biblical themes, and kabbalistic mysticism.

In the late 1960s, and particularly after the 1967 Six Day War, Israeli visual arts became increasingly geared towards political protest. At that time Tel Aviv filled with art galleries and exhibitions, partly diminishing the influence of state institutions such as the Israel Museum in Jerusalem. With the strong influence of American abstract expressionism and pop art, the works of artists such as Yigal Tumarkin and Michael Druks also emerged as statements on the shifting role and function of art in Israeli society. A contemporaneous trend was that termed Material Poverty (Dalut Ha-Chomer), which emphasized media that was unpolished, industrial in

appearance and stripped of the glory of high art. It has been argued that this trend also demonstrates the centrality of text and marginality of visual aesthetics in Jewish tradition. The movement soon became identified as the mainstream of Israeli art, and was epitomized in the rough-hewn collages and paintings of the Tel-Avivian artist Rafi Lavi.

At the same time Israeli art was frequently installed outdoors, questioning the relationship between society and territory. The culture of militarism and national security, along with political icons, have often appeared in Israeli art from the late 1960s onwards. Over recent decades there have been countless critical representations of Sabra iconography including military symbols and soldiers' portraits, as in the photographic works of Adi Nes and the paintings of Assam abu-Shakra. Indeed, iconoclastic attitudes to Israeli founding narratives have become commonplace, including imagery borrowed from national days of remembrance and commemoration rituals.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, while Israeli academics and intellectuals debated the validity of post-Zionism, a series of retrospective exhibitions further encouraged the Israeli public to revisit its history. For example, curator Batia Doner's 1989 exhibition "Living with the Dream" showed placards from the early years of Israeli statehood, aimed at prompting spectators to ponder their identity and shared ideals, heroes, and forms of self-representation. Since that time there have been some shifts in the institutionalization of Israeli art, with the emergence of Studio magazine (1989–2008) and the gradual shift of museums and galleries to peripheral areas outside Tel Aviv and Jerusalem.

Israeli visual arts provide a lens onto the cultural shift from the consolidation of national myths to their disassembly and revision. They also demonstrate the prevalence of Jewish male artists and the relatively secondary nature of female and minority artists.

Film

Although films had been produced in Israel since the 1930s, supported by the Jewish National Fund and Keren ha-yesod (United Israel Appeal; literally The Foundation Fund), it was not until the country's second decade that cinema became an important cultural medium. Early Israeli cinema, often scripted in English for American audiences, showed national heroes in situations that paralleled the Zionist narrative of national rebirth, prevalent in contemporary theater, literature, and journalism. But in the 1960s Israeli film began expanding its parameters and engaging with the medium in increasingly artistic ways. *A Hole in the Moon* (1965) starred iconic performer, satirist, and writer Uri Zohar and was a groundbreaking production that marked a permanent shift in Israeli cinema. The film reflected a growing awareness of cultural stereotypes and the Zionist dream's inconsistencies and was awarded the Critics' Award at the Cannes Film Festival. The film also

paved the way for subsequent independent Israeli cinema, which drew its influences from abroad, namely from French New Wave film, Italian neorealism, and the psychological dimensions of Swedish film. Global trends also showed up in contemplative dramas like *Three Days and a Child* (1969) based upon a novella by A. B. Yehoshua, and *Peeping Toms* (1973) starring Uri Zohar and Arik Einstein.

Certain genres became prominent, for instance the ethnic comedy. An early example of this was the ever popular *Salah Shabati* (1964), written by Hungarian immigrant Ephraim Kishon. Commercially successful, these popular comedies were dismissively dubbed Burekas Films, since they most often portrayed life in the social peripheries and were made cheaply and quickly. It is worth noting that many of these films were envisioned by directors who lived in different social spheres from their characters and often offered caricaturized or ridiculed images of Mizrahi Jews and Arabs. Nonetheless, their films were among few expressions of cultural diversity in early Israeli culture.

Israeli film in the late 1970s and 1980s became increasingly political. This was particularly so after the 1973 Yom-Kippur War. The military is one of the most prevalent themes in Israeli cinema, intensifying further after the 1982 Lebanon War. This was evident in *The Smile of the Lamb* (1983), based on a novel by David Grossman, offering Israeli audiences one of the first opportunities to identify with an Arab hero. Another example is *I Don't Give a Damn* (1987), based on a novel by Dan Ben-Amotz and portraying the struggles of a severely battle-wounded man. Ben-Amotz was a Polish-born writer and performer who had reinvented himself as a Sabra and had contributed immensely to the Israeli language (composing a number of slang dictionaries with fellow Palmach fighter, Netiva Ben-Yehuda).

Palestinian cinema is also experiencing growth, but has not yet reached wide Israeli audiences, although some Israeli Palestinian actors have. Of note is prolific actor and director Muhammad Bakri, whose film *1948* (1998) documented Palestinian memories of the Nakba. Bakri's documentary *Jenin, Jenin* (2002), banned by the Israel Film Fund but screened in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Haifa nonetheless, delivered oral testimonies of that year's Israeli military invasion of a Palestinian refugee camp in Jenin. George Khleifi was active in both directing and documenting Palestinian cinema and was also involved with Docaviv, Israel's annual documentary film festival, until his resignation in 2002 in protest at the Israeli government.

The Israeli film industry is made up of approximately one hundred independent production companies, ten production studios, and many post-production centers. There are 13 film schools in Israel and two state-sponsored bodies for film-making support. The Israeli Film Fund supports over a dozen films annually.

Recent films have sometimes been overtly post-Zionist, for instance *The Black Panthers in Israel Speak* (2002) by Sami Shalom Chetrit, about Mizrahi struggle, while other productions offer whimsical stories about life in the Israeli peripheries, such as *Aviva, My Love* (2006), which topped the Israeli box office upon its release. It was the first local film to do so in years. That year, local films drew crowds twice as big as those of the previous year. Contemporary Israeli cinema is increasingly

concerned with the social and political realities of the region, with productions that explore the Orthodox and secular divide (*Ushpizin*, 2004), the kibbutz movement (*Sweet Mud*, 2006), the military experience (*Beaufort*, 2007), the second Intifada (*Frozen Days*, 2005), siege mentality (*The Shelter*, 2007), the Holocaust (*Walk on Water*, 2004), and the Palestinian struggle for territory (*Lemon Tree*, 2008).

Theater

In the early years of the state, theater was perceived as an important vehicle for the Zionist cultural shift, and there had been several independent theaters prior to 1948, including the workers' theater Ha-ohel and the satirical theater Ha-kumkum. In 1926 the Moscow Ha-bima theater came to Israel, later uniting with the national theatrical organization. Its star, Hanna Rovina, became an icon of the Israeli stage. A few years before Independence Ha-kameri Theater was established as Tel Aviv's municipal theater, aimed at staging Sabra plays rather than the Russian and classically influenced Ha-bima. In 1948 Ha-kameri staged Moshe Shamir's *He Walked through the Fields*, a mainstay of secular Jewish, Sabra, and Zionist culture. In the subsequent decades new theaters opened up, including regional theaters in Haifa, Be'er Sheva, and Jerusalem.

One of the most important Israeli playwrights was Tel Aviv-born Nissim Aloni, whose writing renovated Israeli drama. His plays challenged the heroism of national icons and were a great commercial success. He worked with Israeli-born actors whose accent represented Israeli nativity, altering the Exilic nature of many of the plays that appeared in Ha-bima. He had also helped to found Ha-gashash ha-chiver, a humorous performance group that was crucial to the legitimization of Mizrahi language and experience.

In the 1970s Israeli theater continued to diversify and shift its focus to social issues. An emergent icon of Israeli drama was Tel Aviv-born Chanoch Levine, who was raised in an Orthodox home but later joined the Communist Party. His plays, mostly satirical dramas replete with sarcasm and pacifism, were both incredibly popular and fiercely controversial. Yet venues such as Ha-kameri Theater remained supportive of his work, for instance his satirical cabaret *The Queen of the Bath* (1970), about corruption in the army. The play was censored.

Israeli-born Joshua Sobol was another important contributor to Israeli drama, particularly after the Lebanon War of 1982, when his plays explored the relationship between the Holocaust and Israeli identity. Due to their politically inflammatory nature, Sobol's plays were often accompanied by demonstrations outside the theater, and he was sometimes labeled a traitor and enemy of Israel.

With the outbreak of the Intifada in 1987 there was a growing trend of staging translated Palestinian plays, while in 1994 there was an Israeli–Palestinian coproduction of *Romeo and Juliet*.

The Russian influence on Israeli theater was made manifest once again in the 1990s with the formation of the Gesher Theater in Jaffa by emigrants from the former Soviet Union. Gesher staged plays in both Hebrew and Russian, while venues for Yiddish and Arabic theater were also launched around the same period. Israeli theater has gradually become a critical medium, but has simultaneously experienced financial difficulty, leading to the importation of popular musicals and similarly commercial productions from abroad.

Dance

The Israeli national dance is the Hora, and like public singing it is an expression of the spirit of ideological conviction and collective devotion. With the melting pot culture, the dance forms of north African and Arab-Jewish immigrants were also conceptualized as folkloric practices, representative of the past rather than present Israeli way of life, and practiced within pockets of the population and not as an official national cultural expression. However, certain steps such as the Debka were incorporated in the Israeli tradition of folk dancing (*rikudey am*).

Third-generation Israelis, in particular those who came to maturity following the power shift in Israel, have experienced a return to their cultural roots, uncovering hitherto disdained practices including bygone dance traditions from other parts of the world. Combined with the legacy of collective folk dances and influences from abroad, contemporary Israeli dance is a dynamic field, with dance troops such as Bat-Sheva and Bat-Dor joining a list of successful cultural exports.

Newspapers

Israeli journalism was a perpetuation of East European Jewish journalism of the second half of the nineteenth century, when it was a central pillar of the Zionist movement. During the British Mandate there were a dozen Jewish weeklies and monthlies that reflected ideological streams within the Zionist movement, the main daily publication being *Davar* (1925–1996), the mouthpiece of the Hebrew Workers Union of Eretz Yisrael. It demonstrated identification with the Labor and Zionist movements, openly reporting in a way that was biased to their ideologies. The concurrent *Al ha-mishmar* (1943–1995) was affiliated with the more orthodox socialist stream of Zionism, which included Ha-shomer ha-tza'ir and other socialist movements. The closure of these newspapers is related to the decline of socialism in Israel.

Ha'aretz (1919), independent of a particular party, resembled English-language journalism of the time in its relative openness and impartiality and its operation according to liberal and commercial concerns. It has recently been touted as one of

the main expressions of free speech and critical thinking in Israel. *Yediot Aharonot* (1939) was also modeled as a popular Western newspaper, and along with *Ha'aretz* signaled the eventual decline of the party papers. *Maariv* was established in 1948 by the editorial team of *Yediot Aharonot*, in particular Azriel Kerlibach, a Jewish writer from Germany. This evening newspaper rapidly became a popular and influential publication, unaffiliated with any particular political party.

In the early years of the state a number of foreign-language publications were extant, including newspapers in Hungarian, Rumanian, Yiddish, Russian, and Polish. Today there are countless publications in Israel in languages other than Hebrew, primarily Arabic, Russian, and Romanian.

On the first day of statehood only one "united" newspaper was published, with a picture of the iconic Herzl on the front. The country's first war showed a tendency of war reportage that avoided traumatic and nonheroic stories in favor of tales of courage and sacrifice. These reports seldom articulated the losses suffered by the enemy and any crimes that occurred during the war.

Ha-olam ha-ze (1950) was taken over by German-born Uri Avneri in order to revolutionize Israeli journalism. It was driven by his ambivalence, social concern, and rebelliousness. It was typified by a more casual vernacular and could be considered the first Israeli tabloid. Its contributors were often young men and women just released from military service, who reported on popular culture, as well as political and military developments, often accompanying their reports with photographs. The newspaper's orientation was critical and antiestablishment, focusing on poverty, unlawful employment, crime, prostitution, suicide, and other social hardships. This publication closed in the 1990s, after a gradual decline resulting from the departure of many of its journalists in favor of other, richer publications, and Avneri's turn to politics.

After the 1973 Yom Kippur War Israeli print media underwent a noticeable shift toward more critical reportage and editorials. There was a general demystification of Israeli political leadership, while newspapers such as *Yediot Aharonot* exposed longstanding trends of self-censorship among staff. In their place emerged a new wave of columnists and reporters who spoke openly about their political disaffection. Israeli-born Yehonatan Geffen is a journalist altered by his military experience in 1973. His column, "The Fourth Side of the War," voiced his disillusionment with Israel's military power and the country's vicissitudes, while also acknowledging the strength of his commitment to Israel. Although writing in *Maariv*, a relatively conservative publication, Geffen was popular for his self-deprecating humor and his image as an antihero. He became identified as a representative of the new Sabra, one deeply affected by Western universalism. Another writer breaking taboos and showing the Israel backstreet was Dan Ben-Amotz (mentioned above). Among many others, Ben-Amotz signaled the emergence of new journalism in Israel in the late 1970s.

In 1978 the Schocken family (who had owned *Ha'aretz* since 1936) decided to inaugurate the Jerusalem local paper *Kol ha-ir*, modeled after American publications

such as *The Village Voice* in New York. Within a year its Tel Aviv equivalent, *Ha-ir*, was published with an emphasis on local culture, as well as social and national issues. It became a major contributor to the charged relationship between Israeli journalism and Zionist ideology.

Within a decade, local newspapers, which had multiplied considerably in number, posed significant competition to the national dailies, due to their advertising potential, the loss of the patina of the government and leadership following, in particular, the 1982 Lebanon War and an increase in individualism, hedonism, and consumerism, political fluctuations and the growing voice of the peripheries in government and elsewhere. The pluralism inherent in contemporary Israeli culture is further manifested in the existence of countless special interest publications. For instance, there are over a dozen Orthodox Jewish newspapers and magazines currently available in Israel, and countless publications in Russian.

Radio

Similar to Israeli newspapers, early radio broadcasts were partly independent yet strongly loyal to the government. Israeli radio gradually expanded its themes and perspectives, shifting from a didactic agenda to one of light, popular entertainment. Radio quickly became a symbol of the consolidation of Israeli leisure culture.

Israeli radio grew out of the transmissions of Mandatory Palestine. Upon its absorption into the Jewish national project the potential of radio to offer information, music, stories, and news to Israelis was fully realized. It became a critical element in the consolidation and shaping of shared national language and tone. On the eve of the Declaration of Independence most residents of Israel were listening to their radio transmitters while Kol Yisra'el delivered a live transmission of the United Nations' vote. The Kol Yisra'el station was government operated and was broadcast from Jerusalem, where it is still situated. In the early years of statehood Israeli households did not necessarily have a radio, but it was nonetheless an important tool of information-sharing, instilling the Hebrew language and Zionist culture in the thousands of new immigrants arriving in the country. Public information delivery (*hasbara*) was a central component of early Israeli radio.

Kol Yisra'el included brief reports of local and global news, interviews with public figures, documentaries, educational programs about Jewish and Zionist history, arts and culture, recorded plays, and a program helping Jewish refugees wishing to locate their relatives. Broadcasts included cultural performances including choirs, orchestras, military bands, Bible quizzes, and musical programs. In the second decade of statehood Israelis came to own radio transmitters more commonly and on Saturday mornings the largest number of Israelis tuned in. The monthly program *Three in a Boat* (1956–1959) starring Dan Ben Amotz, Shalom Rozenfeld, and Shaul Biver, among others, became one of the most popular

broadcasts. It was a satirical program with music, improvisation, and humor that was sharp and uninhibited, in a Hebrew that accurately reflected the spoken vernacular rather than the official language. However, the most popular flagship programs of Kol Yisra'el were and remain the news broadcasts. Following the model set by BBC Radio in England, these programs had a typical opening and conclusion with the national anthem, Hatikva.

In 1950 Galey tzahal began its broadcasts, under the auspices of the newly formed IDF. This station unified previous transmissions by other military sources. From its earliest days, Galey tzahal was the radio station for young listeners.

In 1960 Israel began broadcasts on Gal Bet (later to be renamed Reshet Bet), which played more popular music and entertainment shows, along with news, cultural, and educational programs. That same year the first triannual bible quiz was recorded in front of a live audience and broadcast to the nation, celebrating and institutionalizing the country's secular Jewish character. National song festivals were also broadcast from that year onward, drawing large audiences. The following year Kol Yisrael broadcast the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolph Eichmann directly from the courtroom in Jerusalem.

In 1965 the Israeli Broadcasting Authority was founded. It was responsible for the inauguration of the Education Television Channel (1966) and increasing radio broadcasting hours and locations. Radio became an increasingly important source of news, with hourly broadcasts forwarded with a familiar beep. Within that decade, and particularly after the general strike that shut down Kol Yisra'el and Reshet Bet in 1969, Galey tzahal became a pillar of Israeli culture. Featuring many talkback shows for young listeners, the station became increasingly influential on Israeli collective discourse. Numerous presenters on these stations and others have become icons of Israeli popular culture.

In 1973 Iranian-born peace activist Avraham "Aibie" Natan began what would be the first Israeli pirate station, The Voice of Peace, from a ship docked outside Israeli waters. The station was strongly influenced by American radio and played a great deal of Western popular music. In 1976 Reshet Gimel began broadcasts of mostly popular music, talk radio for lovers, and other programs that matched the growing interest in imported and popular youth culture and casual discourse.

In 1988 Arutz Sheva began its broadcasts as a pirate radio station. It was associated with the Gush Emunim settler movement of conservative Orthodox Jews. Since that time Arutz Sheva has become a media network of television shows, a newspaper, and an online forum. Today there are over a hundred and fifty pirate radio stations in Israel, marking a gradual process of localization and decentralization of Israeli media and communications. This further contributes to the sustenance of Israeli subcultures.

Radio Tel Aviv was the first Israeli broadcaster to express the transformation of Sabra culture when it chose to play foreign songs on Holocaust and Heroism Day and the Day of Remembrance in 2002, reasoning that the fallen soldiers would have enjoyed those songs as much as Israeli songs.

Television

Israeli television broadcasts commenced with the Independence Day military parades in 1968, despite the objections of the country's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion (1886–1973). The potential to use television for propaganda, and in particular that directed at the neighboring Arab countries, was the deciding factor in going ahead and, with the help of the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), Israeli television was established in 1966, with the first channel known as Ha-televiziya ha-chinuchit (Educational Television). Prior to that some Israelis who owned television sets could receive broadcasts from Lebanon and other regional areas. Ha-arutz ha-rishon (The First Channel) was founded in 1970, with nearly half of all Israeli households in possession of a television at the time. Early broadcasts included educational programs, children's and young adult programming, and adult programs in the evening, with half an hour of Arabic news and political reports. There was a weekly program on Arab life in Israel, its current events, sport, and portraits of Arab citizens. At the outset Israeli programming expressed a preference for local experience and language over imported programs. Every night programming would end at midnight with the national anthem and the reading of verses from the Bible. This signoff became a national icon.

As television became increasingly prevalent, so did the audience's attraction to imported American (and some British) programs, particularly Westerns, family shows, action movies, and serial shows for young viewers. Local programming was usually studio discussions and panels, nostalgia, and game shows. There were also documentaries, but the greatest importance was placed upon the news program. This, and, in particular, the extended Friday editions have been likened by scholars to a unifying national ritual. Unlike print media, most early Israeli television was aligned with political leadership, rather than intent on challenging it. Many subsequent programs were modeled upon foreign shows, but simultaneously developed uniquely Israeli markers, such as the extended documentary items, a kind of cinematic anthropological exposition of the lives of real Israelis. However, patriotism did not go entirely unchallenged on Israeli television. From 1970 to 1973, popular Israeli entertainers Uri Zohar and Zvi Shisel, musical icon Arik Einstein, and rock musician Shalom Chanoch produced, directed, wrote, and starred in *Lul*, a series of television shows that signaled a new sensitivity, a satirical edge, and what became recognized as local hippie culture.

Media events such as Memorial Days on Herzl Mount, the Independence Day junior Bible quiz, broadcasts of the Olympic Games, the games of Maccabi Tel Aviv (the largest sports corporation in the country, with soccer and basketball teams, among others), and an Israeli version of *This is Your Life*, were delivered under the banner of national unity. Israel joined the Eurovision Song Contest on the eve of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, and was represented by Ilanit, a blonde songstress

wearing a Bedouin dress reminiscent of Israeli folk dance. This and subsequent broadcasts of the program joined the national television ritual.

It was the Yom Kippur War that established Israeli television's status as a central source of information, particularly in times of national instability. This was also the first war to have been shown on TV, providing images for the collective memory of the event. A year later broadcasts of *Nikui rosh* (Head Cleaning) began, a satirical variety show of humorous skits aimed at presenting Israeli reality more truthfully while passing sharp criticism over the government from a leftist perspective. The program aroused many objections along with unprecedented positive viewer support. Some even believe the program led to the political shift in power in 1977 and the eventual downfall of the Labor movement. Although the show went off air in 1976, its creator was awarded the Israeli Prize for Media and it paved the way for future Israeli satire. The show's creator went on to produce many other programs, including the first Friday night host show with a live audience, airing in 1979. This extremely popular show, which has since seen many replicas, changed Israel's Friday night culture, altering mealtimes in the kibbutzim, family Sabbath rituals, and weekend leisure habits.

In 1977 the election campaign became a televised event, as did Egyptian president Anwar Sadat's visit to Israel. That year another popular television show began its broadcasts, running for twenty years. This was *Zehu ze*, an entertaining variety show for young viewers that contained a satirical undercurrent, with caricaturized national icons including political and cultural leaders. During the First Gulf War (1990), the first fully televised war, *Zehu ze* had the highest ratings. The sarcastic and nihilistic culture embodied in this show was highly influential upon young Israeli viewers of the late twentieth century.

After 1977 Israeli television became increasingly exposed to American programs, with *Dallas* listed among the most popular Israeli television programs in 1983. Soon after Israeli black and white televisions were exchanged for color, and by the mid-1980s television had become the most important media outlet in the creation of Israeli discourse and identity, while the central broadcasting authority, centered in Jerusalem, began losing its stronghold through the introduction of VCRs to Israeli households and the appearance of video libraries in every neighborhood. In 1986 Channel Two began broadcasts. By 1993 Israeli cable television had also begun, gaining instant and very high popularity. Studies show that Israelis adopted cable television faster than any other Western society. With channels in multiple languages for different interest groups, cable television was successful, but in the 1990s it was Channel Two that was most influential, with its American sensitivity and style, rapid news items, reports from the scene of terror attacks, political talk shows, soap operas (including locally made shows like *Ramat Aviv Gimel*) and the popular satirical show *Ha-chamishiya ha-kamerit*, running since 1993. This program's uncensored, uninhibited humor, sarcasm, and absurdity, constitute important markers of the cultural shifts that occurred in Israel in the 1990s, while demonstrating the ongoing tendency to satirize and criticize.

In 1998 a new show aired on Channel One, the state-sponsored channel. *Tekuma* (Revival) was an episodic historical documentary about the establishment of Israel, marking the country's fiftieth anniversary celebrations and the post-Zionism debates. Although drawing heavily from institutionalized sources, the show also included Palestinian and Mizrahi testimonies. One episode, for example, drew upon Emile Habiby's novel *The Pessoptimist* (1974) to evince the non-Zionist perspective.

Conclusion: Globalization and Americanization

Since the 1990s the globalization of Israeli culture has been nourished by the Internet, which, together with the country's technological achievements and the trend of hi-tech startup companies has emerged as an important avenue for cultural expression and innovation.

Another example of the globalization and Americanization of Israeli culture can be found in the menus and food culture of the country. Israel's national gastronomical symbol had long been the falafel, although it is Egyptian in origin. By the 1970s and 1980s the falafel had undergone a gradual decline as the national dish, becoming replaced by the equally Middle-Eastern shawarma (a meat-filled pita pocket), as well as by pizza and hamburgers. The increased popularity of these fast foods reflected the gradual globalization seen in many other cultural fields. Since the 1990s Israeli food culture has been increasingly dominated by American fast food chains, with McDonald's restaurants proving a favorite. While American fast food chains continue to be popular in Israel, there is a concurrent trend of ethnic food outlets opening up in malls and vending home-style hot meals on Fridays. Part of this trendy return to gastronomic roots has been the renaissance of the falafel, with gourmet falafel eateries opening up along with ones that emulate American fast food chains in their franchising, service, and seating arrangement. This expresses a reaching-out to global trends in food culture, fusing with local customs and the nostalgic return to roots or retrospective culture. It is arguable whether imported practices and norms erode Israeli culture or redefine it, although some scholars believe that the globalization of culture enables individuals within a nation to reconstruct, redefine, and reinvent their collective identity while retaining their regional uniqueness.

Israeli society is culturally diverse. Early attempts to assimilate Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews into Ashkenazi culture have failed, so that the socioeconomic gap between these "two Israels" persists. Russian and Ethiopian immigrants, for example, participate fully in Israeli culture without becoming resocialized. It was not until their arrival in the 1990s that the melting pot strategy was officially abandoned.

This survey demonstrates that Israeli culture has historically been dominated by Ashkenazi Jews, despite Mizrahis constituting the numerical majority. It also shows

that most cultural icons have been male. One remains hopeful that in becoming more attuned to minority voices, Israeli culture will become increasingly pluralistic.

This survey has not explored all aspects of secular Israeli culture, and one could look into the nature of contemporary Yiddishkeit or the return to European Yiddish tradition, which parallels the return to roots across the ethnic divide. One could also examine Israeli travel culture, said to be both representative of the desire for normalcy and of the escape from local realities. The growing field of comics and graphic narratives is of further interest, rapidly becoming one of Israel's emerging new media art forms. But in each of these fields one would encounter elements of sameness and of uniqueness, and further indication that national culture cannot be seen as a homogeneous entity.

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33

The Israeli Economy

Paul Rivlin

Introduction

The achievements of the Israeli economy over the last 63 years have been immense. The population has grown from 600 thousand Jews and 150 thousand Arabs at independence to 5.8 million Jews and 1.6 million Arabs at the end of 2010. The national income rose from under $6 billion in 1950 to $220 billion in 2010 (2010 prices and exchange rates). As a result, GDP per capita went up from $4200 to $28,500 in the same period, a near sevenfold rise in real terms.

How was this achieved? This chapter will begin by examining the development of the Israeli economy and that of the Yishuv, or Jewish community in Palestine, from the beginning of Zionism until the founding of the state. It will then look at the development of the Israeli economy since 1948.

The Yishuv

In the early 1880s, when the Zionist movement became active, the population of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) numbered some 25,000. By 1922 the population had risen to 84,000. The national income was $8 million or almost $1500 per capita; by 1945 it had increased twentyfold to $157 million and income per capita had risen 70 percent to $2560 per capita, using 2010 prices and exchange rates. What explains this growth? The short answer is population growth largely

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due to immigration; imports of capital that permitted fast rates of investment; successful organization and high levels of motivation.

The Zionist movement that created the state of Israel emerged in the nineteenth century. It was largely a secular response to the rising nationalism and antisemitism that prevailed in Eastern Europe, where most Jews lived, although it also had a religious impetus, based on biblical notions of the coming of the Messiah and the need to redeem the Holy Land. Between 1881 and 1939, as pogroms resulted in the massacres of thousands of Jews, some 3.3 million left Europe, the vast majority for the United States.

The number that went to Palestine was small: between 1882 and 1903 some 25 thousand Jews emigrated there, with acceleration after the turn of the century. In 1897 the first Zionist congress was held in Basle and this created the World Zionist Movement, led by Theodor Herzl. The Zionist movement believed that the Jews were a people like any other and therefore had the same right to a homeland, or what was later demanded: a country. The persecution of the Jews in Russia and Eastern Europe also demonstrated this need. In the 1930s, as the persecution worsened and in the 1940s took the form of mass murder during the Holocaust, the pressure became even greater. Despite this, for different reasons, the emigration of Jews to Palestine remained small compared with the number that emigrated to the United States and other Western countries.

Many Eastern European Jews were influenced by a combination of nationalism and socialist ideas. Jews played a major role in the Russian revolution and the communist and socialist movements throughout Europe. Among the Zionists, there were socialists who believed that recreating a society such as existed in Europe was not in the Jewish interest. Only Labor Zionism would, in their view, free the Jews, not only from antisemitism, but also from capitalist exploitation. Jewish capitalism existed in Palestine, partly as a result of the investments made, among others by Baron Edmund de Rothschild. He and some of the socialists were to come into conflict over wages and work conditions.

The aim of Labor Zionism was to change the structure of Jewish socioeconomic structure and employment so as to "invert the pyramid." In nineteenth-century Eastern Europe, Jews were largely prevented from owning land. This had been true for centuries; most Jews lived in villages or small towns because there were often restrictions on movement to the cities. Although the economy was largely agricultural, they were therefore not farmers and most worked as traders and professionals. They were perceived by their compatriots as lacking roots and loyalty to the countries in which they lived because they often had more in common with fellow Jews abroad. This, in turn, encouraged feelings of separateness and antisemitism. Inverting the pyramid involved creating a new socialist society with a large agricultural workforce that would implement the biblical injunction of *Geulat Ha'aretz* (redeeming the land).

With the backing of Socialist Zionists, the agricultural workforce in the Yishuv became politically if not numerically dominant. The emphasis on agriculture made

economic as well as ideological sense. The Zionist settlers created the first sector in a modern economy, one that would not only provide employment but also over time conditions and materials for industry. Wherever industrialization has been successful it has been preceded, or accompanied, by an agricultural revolution.

In the early part of the twentieth century, immigration into Palestine was classified chronologically. This has been useful because the immigrants of the various *aliyot* (plural of *aliyah*, meaning immigration to the land of Israel) had significantly different characteristics. The First Aliyah took place between 1882 and 1903 and followed the outbreak of pogroms (massacres) of Jews in Russia. Some thirty thousand Jewish immigrants arrived in Palestine in this period. Most of the immigrants came from Eastern Europe and there was a small immigration from Yemen. The East European immigrants of the First Aliyah aimed to rebuild Jewish life politically and spiritually and chose an agricultural way of life as an example to others. They were not socialists and the early agricultural settlements – such as Rishon LeZion, Rosh Pina, Zikhron Ya'aqov, and Gedera – were based on private property. Harsh physical conditions, heavy Ottoman taxation, and Arab opposition made life very tough and many immigrants left the country. Baron Edmund de Rothschild assisted in the development of the Yishuv by investing in settlements and providing employment.

The Second Aliyah also followed pogroms in Russia. Some forty thousand Jews immigrated during this period, but absorption difficulties and the weakness of the economy resulted in nearly half of them leaving. Despite this, the Second Aliyah had a profound impact on the development of the Yishuv. Many of its members were young, socialist, and highly motivated. In 1909, the first Jewish city in the world – Tel Aviv – was created. In the same year Degania, the first kibbutz, or voluntary communal agricultural settlement was founded. These events were indicators of two significant trends in the Yishuv: the growth of Jewish population in the Yishuv as a result of immigration and the role of Labor Zionism.

The Hebrew language was revived by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, who regarded Hebrew and Zionism to be symbiotic. Modern Hebrew was spoken by members of the Second Aliyah, and Hebrew literature and Hebrew newspapers began to flourish at this time. Political parties were founded and organizations of agricultural workers were founded.

Immigration was interrupted by World War I and those that arrived after the war formed the Third Aliyah. This was triggered by the October Revolution in Russia, and the pogroms that followed it there as well as in Poland and Hungary. In 1917, immigration was encouraged by the British conquest of Palestine and the Balfour Declaration that expressed Britain's support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Most members of the Third Aliyah were young *halutzim* (Hebrew for pioneers) from Eastern Europe. In the 1920s, the British mandatory government imposed quotas on immigration but these did not initially cause significant tensions between the British and the Jews. By 1923, the population of the Yishuv had reached ninety thousand. New immigrants built towns, paved roads, and drained the

marshes of the Jezreel Valley and the Hefer Plain and worked in agriculture and also settled in the towns. The Histadrut (the General Federation of Labor); the Elected Assembly and the National Council, representative institutions of the Yishuv) were established at this time. In 1948, the Elected Assembly became the Knesset, Israel's parliament and the National Council became the government.

The socialist sector of the Yishuv began to develop more rapidly when significant numbers of ideologically motivated immigrants came to Palestine during the Second Aliyah (Second Immigrant Wave: 1904–1914) and Third Aliyah (1919–1923). The total number of immigrants in these two waves was about seventy thousand, but their influence was far greater than their numbers suggest. It was during the 1920s that the Histadrut was created, not only as a trade union but also as an employer and provider of welfare services. It was to become one of the most powerful bodies in the Yishuv and then in Israel. The British adopted a policy of laissez faire: Jews and Arabs were encouraged to run their own affairs and the former did so in a highly organized way. The Histadrut primarily served the Jewish working class. It included the kibbutzim in its membership and was the backbone of a state within a state, providing services that the British did not, such as education, health and welfare. In 1920 the Histadrut also set up the Hagana, a defense organization to protect the Yishuv from Arab attacks, that was to become the basis of the Israeli army in 1948.

The Fourth Aliyah of 1924–1929 was stimulated by the international economic crisis and anti-Jewish policies in Poland, as well as the introduction of quotas on immigration to the United States. Some eighty thousand Jews came to Palestine during the Fourth Aliyah and about a quarter of them eventually left. Most these immigrants were middle class and brought modest sums of capital with which they established small businesses and workshops. They were much less socialist than the Third Aliyah and many settled in the towns. They were looked down on by some of the socialists of the Third Aliyah who considered them to be landlords and profit-seeking bourgeoisie. Despite the economic problems that faced the Yishuv, the Fourth Aliyah strengthened the economy, furthered industrial development and also increased the rural labor supply.

Up to the mid-1920s most immigrants came from Eastern Europe, largely from areas that became part of the Soviet Union. From the mid-1920s the majority came from Poland and from the 1930s from Germany and Central Europe. Immigrants from the Western parts of Europe tended to have better education than those from the East. Until 1933, there were no restrictions in on the entry of Jewish students to universities as there had been in Russia before the revolution. Average income levels were higher than in Eastern Europe among Jews and non-Jews. The academic and technological standards of Central and West European universities were superior to those in the East.

During World War II, the immigration effort focused on rescuing Jews from Nazi-occupied Europe with very limited success. While small numbers of immigrants entered the country on visas issued under the British quota most of them

were illegal. Between 1919 and 1947, immigration equaled an annual average of 6.8 percent of the Jewish population of Palestine and in 1919–1939 the annual average was 8.5 percent. These were very high shares compared with other immigrant-receiving countries.

Between 1919 and 1948 some 550 thousand Jews and 67 thousand non-Jews (mainly Arabs) immigrated to Palestine. About 90 percent of the Jewish immigrants came from Europe. As a result, the Yishuv benefited from rapid population growth and a rise in average educational levels. While no official records of the educational levels of immigrants were kept during the Mandate, some calculations have been made. In 1931, the Jewish male population of Palestine had 7.6 median years of schooling and the female population 5.6 years. About half of the population was born abroad and in 1926 about 47 percent of them stated that they had learned Hebrew prior to their immigration. The acquisition of a second language and the ability to use it on arrival in Palestine were considerable economic assets for the immigrants and for the Yishuv as a whole. Illiteracy declined from 14.1 percent of the Jewish population aged 14 years and over in 1931 to 6.3 percent in 1948. In 1940–1944, the proportion of adult males aged 25 years old or more who registered with the recruitment committees set up by the Yishuv to supply troops for the British army, was measured by educational level. The proportion of those born in Palestine with post-secondary education was 7.8 percent. Of those who immigrated between 1918 and 1932 it was 14 percent and of those who immigrated between 1933 and 1939 it was 25.6 percent. These were very high levels by international standards.

Between the early 1920s and the mid-1930s, the economy of the Yishuv grew very rapidly. Growth was accompanied by structural change. Between 1921 and 1939, agricultural production in the Jewish economy increased nearly 16-fold, in manufacturing 14-fold, and, in construction, 3.3-fold. As a result, the volume of output of these sectors in the Jewish economy rapidly overtook that of the Arab economy. In 1921, Jewish output was equal to 31 percent of Arab output and in 1939 to 141 percent. In the late 1930s slower growth was experienced due to deteriorating international economic conditions and increased conflict in Palestine.

The growth of the labor force, the high average quality of human capital and imports of capital made economic development possible. Another factor was the economic policy of the Mandatory authorities. The British issued tenders for the development of Dead Sea minerals and the generation and distribution of electricity. Both of these were won by Jewish groups and, following the creation of the state of Israel, they became publicly owned entities. The British also provided some protection against imports for local industry in order to stimulate economic development. In 1924, protection was provided for the building, milling, distilling, match, and tobacco industries. In 1925, some imports were allowed without duty on condition that they were used in exports of finished products. During World War II, the British army increased its orders for goods and services from the Yishuv, resulting in the rapid growth of industrial production.

The rate of investment in the Yishuv was very high: in the period 1922–1947 it equaled 46 percent of national income, including investment in fixed assets, unimproved land, and government. The share in total resources (that included the surplus of imports over exports), was lower but still impressive, at nearly 24 percent. The high level of investment was made possible by imports of capital. Most of these were from private sources and included unilateral transfers by immigrants, private investments made by Jews living abroad, and funds raised by the Zionist movement from the international Jewish community.

The Jewish leadership faced formidable difficulties in its efforts to develop the economy. The first was that it lacked control of territory, as the country was ruled by the Ottomans and then the British. Second, the local market was very small and the returns on investment were low given the risks and uncertainties involved. As a result, Zionism had a greater appeal to the Jewish masses of Eastern Europe than to Jewish capitalists of the West, and even less to non-Jewish ones. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there were very few Jewish capitalists and most of them confined themselves to philanthropy. If the immigrants were to be absorbed, capital was needed. The solution was found in the formation of public bodies, controlled by the political leadership of the Yishuv and the Zionist movement. They created the Jewish National Fund and other bodies to raise funds in the Diaspora and invest them in the Yishuv. Capital was raised from the more prosperous Jews in Central and Western Europe and in the Americas, while the immigrants came mainly from Eastern Europe. The Jews of Eastern European supplied the ideology based on the revolutionary ideas of Marxism, the Tolstoyan desire for a simple, rural way of life and Anarchist notions of self-government. The fusion of these concepts led to the creation of the kibbutzim, the moshavim (semi-collectives), and the Histadrut.

While socialist labor mainly came from Eastern Europe, capital came from the richer Jewish communities of the West, including the United States. The Yishuv, and Israel in its early years, attracted little direct foreign investment. Few foreign Jews (and virtually no non-Jews) were willing to set up businesses using their own funds. Jews were however, willing to give money to help develop the Yishuv. They donated funds to quasi-governmental bodies that had been set up by the Zionist movement. This strengthened the quasi-state organizations vis-à-vis the private sector. As these bodies were dominated by the socialists, investment in agriculture was favored. This created a symbiosis between the private and public sector that later became an important feature of Israel's political economy. Most Jewish capital was brought by individuals. Between 1922 and 1947, net transfers by Jewish immigrants came to 110 million Palestine pounds; transfers by Jewish public institutions totaled 65 million Palestine pounds. Total transfers by non-Jewish public institutions and the government came to only 20 million Palestine pounds.

The combination of immigration and capital imports was very successful in producing economic growth. Immigration stimulated the demand for housing, consumer durables, and other services and their contribution to the labor force

increased the productivity of capital and the returns on it. Immigrants brought their own capital – physical, financial and human – so that the supply of capital matched and sometimes even exceeded the rapid growth of the labor force. In 1939, Jews constituted 31 percent of the population; 88 percent of total industrial investment capital; 89 percent of net industrial output; 70 percent of the industrial labor force; 89 percent of the wage bill; and 90 percent of the installed horsepower employed in industry.

The war years were ones of relative prosperity, mainly because the economy of the Yishuv had important markets in the British military establishment in the Middle East. In the period 1922–1939, the Yishuv exported 8 million Palestine pounds worth of goods and services to the British army in Palestine. In 1940–1947, the total was 180 million. The war disrupted the international citrus trade, something that helped to persuade many against reliance on external trade.

These experiences invoked a national ideology of self-sufficiency that reinforced the socialist orientation of much of the society. After the Declaration of Independence in 1948, the leadership favored minimal reliance on foreign sources so as to build a self-sufficient economy. This ideology was shared with other developing countries, and had broad support from economists and the international financial institutions. It was not, however, one that would permit sufficient economic growth in the 1950s when Israel was forced to search for foreign capital.

Many of the institutions that came to dominate Israel's economy and society after independence had their origins in the in the Yishuv. The Labor movement – that controlled the political and economic development of Israel from 1948 to 1977 – consisted of the Histadrut with its affiliated bodies, and, in various forms, the Labor Party. The Histadrut, both a labor union and one of the largest employers in the country, played a central role in the economy and in the provision of social services and had considerable political influence. Labor was therefore much more than a factor of production: it was a political movement with a strong economic base and a sense of mission.

Israel

In 1948 Israel was an egalitarian society, in terms of the distribution of income and its social ethos. The Labor party and its left-wing allies dominated the life of the state, despite an early policy introduced by the first prime minister and Labor leader, David Ben-Gurion, to build up state, rather than party, institutions. This policy meant that much of what had been done by sectoral or political groups before independence (such as providing educational and employment services) was to be carried out by the government.

The effects of the Holocaust in Europe and the War of Independence (in which 1 percent of the Jewish population of the Yishuv was killed) were the background to

a major effort of national renewal. There was little to buy and most of the population had a low standard of living, but there was a sense of mission. Following independence, the most significant changes were the welding of military groups into the Israel Defense Forces, the introduction of state education systems, and the government's increased responsibility for social welfare and employment.

Labor Zionists came to Palestine in order to create a new type of Jewish society and a new type of Jew. They aspired to return to manual labor, particularly on the land, and to change the Jewish psyche and society by building a socialist economy in which people would be self-reliant and value physical work, in contrast to how they perceived the Diaspora. In this sense their mission was revolutionary. Unlike agriculture and industry, the service sector was considered parasitic and intellectuals were viewed ambiguously by labor leaders. This ideology gave rise to many conflicts. The Socialist Zionists initially sought fraternal relations with Arab workers and peasants and wanted to include them in the Histadrut but opposed their employment by Jewish capitalists at lower wages than those that Jews would accept. With the creation the state, many Labor leaders and activists took positions in government and ceased to provide the personal example of manual labor that had been the movement's ideology. Since 1948, events have also weakened the ideology of the Labor movement. After independence, many Jews from North Africa and the Middle East immigrated, and as they were largely unskilled they were often employed in low-status positions. They were often sent to development towns in the periphery, where basic industries were set up to employ them. These industries were not established on a completely economic basis, and the immigrant workers were employed at low wages. With the education of the younger generation, productivity and real wages rose, but they largely failed to take leading positions in the Labor-run economy and the Histadrut.

The attempts to prevent Arab employment in the Jewish economy continued until the early 1950s. The aim of this policy was to maintain employment and wages for the large numbers of largely unskilled Jewish immigrants. Gradually this policy changed, and Arabs started to work in Jewish agriculture and construction. These patterns were reinforced after 1967, when Israel gained control of the West Bank and Gaza, with its Palestinian population numbering one million. Within a few years, Arabs from these areas began to supplant Israeli Arabs and Jews of Middle Eastern and north African origin in low-status occupations such as construction work. The latter moved up the ladder in terms of their work status, gaining jobs in the service and public sectors.

After independence, the tasks facing the country became more complex. The early waves of immigration were not self-financing and the costs of absorbing them were huge. Although Israel achieved independence and survived the invasion by the Arab states in 1948, the conflict imposed major losses of life and other costs. By the early 1950s it was clear that the major economic task was to obtain sources of capital to finance investment so that the economy could grow and provide employment. This was not an easy task given Israel's isolation in the Middle

East. It was achieved with aid from the international Jewish community, German reparations, and some assistance from the United States government. These sources of finance were used to develop industry that provided employment for immigrants and supplied the basic needs of the population. Economic policy was very pragmatic: In the 1950s Labor governments relied on the private sector and even on foreign entrepreneurs to provide much of the impetus for industrialization. These policies were highly successful in achieving growth: between 1950 and 1965, Israel's national income rose over fivefold in real terms and national income per capita rose 2.5-fold. In the 1960s, when the industries developed behind protective barriers had saturated local markets, a trade agreement was negotiated with the European Economic Community (EEC) that gradually changed Israel into an export-led economy. The balance of payments remained precarious for the first 55 years of Israel's history and, whenever the current deficit reached a level that was hard to finance, the government was forced to squeeze the economy and devalue the currency, thus reducing imports and slowing the rate of growth. In the 1970s the agreement with the EEC was strengthened and in 1985 a free-trade agreement was signed with the United States. These developments helped to move the economy towards an export orientation that has become an increasingly powerful motor of growth.

The 1960s also saw an expansion of defense production as a result of the French arms embargo. Israel had relied on French armaments from the 1950s until the Six Day War of 1967, when the French president, Charles de Gaulle, banned further sales. The dramatic victory in the Six Day War gave the economy a huge boost that lasted until the Yom Kippur War of 1973. Decisions to make Israel's army one of 'quality' to match Arab numerical superiority were to have profound consequences for industrial development and economic growth. The United States, recognizing Israel as a regional power, extended military and economic assistance. Military assistance meant that Israel obtained United States technology and, as it had in the past, this was absorbed "hands on" with Israelis visiting the plants manufacturing the equipment they were buying, testing and even modifying it. This provided crucial opportunities for learning by doing and a web of connections between Israeli and United States' companies. Gradually this spilled into civilian sectors helping in the growth of the high technology sector in Israel.

The balance of payments constraint remained and resulted in periodic deflationary policies designed to restrain domestic demand, reduce imports, and encourage exports. Once the balance of payments improved, the restraints were eased. In 1967 this occurred because the Six Day War boosted government spending on the military and led to a wave of almost euphoric confidence in Israel. The encouragement of domestic military industries led to the beginning what has since been called the high technology revolution. The confidence in Israel and its new strategic position as a regional power also encouraged small, but significant foreign investment in research and development of technology. Between 1967 and 1973 about a hundred thousand immigrants arrived from Western countries. Many

of them had financial capital as well as higher education and were able to enter the labor market and finance their own immigration. There was also a small immigration from the Soviet Union, a result of the United States policy of détente. The feeling of security encouraged social unrest: the neglected second generation of immigrants from the Middle East and north Africa no longer deferred to the country's Labor leadership. The government responded to the demonstrations by developing social welfare programs. These were funded out of a growing budget deficit that did not seem to be a problem as the economy was growing.

Positive economic trends ended with the Yom Kippur War of 1973. This brought massive loss of life, injury, and huge military losses. Government spending on the military grew but tax revenues were affected by the reduced level of economic activity that resulted from the war. From 1975, when Israel returned the Sinai oilfields to Egypt, the balance of payments suffered from increased oil import costs that followed the dramatic rises in international oil prices of 1973. This worsened when international oil prices rose sharply in 1979. The government tried to stabilize the economy and also introduced a major reform of the income tax system with some success.

In 1977 the Labor Party lost the general elections and for the first time a right-wing, Likud-led government came to power. This change was the result of the alienation of many underprivileged Jewish voters of Middle Eastern origin, a more general rejection of an increasingly corrupt Labor Party and a delayed reaction to the conduct of the Yom Kippur War. The Likud combined three main groups. First, nationalists who wanted to accelerate the construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (the expansion of settlements has continued ever since at great economic and political cost). Second, populists who wanted to increase benefits to the poorer section of the community. Third, there were liberals, who believed that government interference was damaging the economy. (In Israel and Europe, unlike the US, liberals are those who believe in reducing government intervention in the economy.) The economic policies followed were disastrous, resulting in a rapid acceleration of inflation, larger budget, and balance of payments deficits and rising foreign debt and slow economic growth. In 1982 the Lebanon War compounded these problems. In 1984, the general elections resulted in a stalemate between the Likud and Labor and they formed a coalition government. By 1985, after a number of unsuccessful attempts to stabilize the economy, Israel was on the edge of economic catastrophe.

In July 1985 a comprehensive stabilization program was introduced that was both simultaneous and comprehensive in dealing with all the aspects of the crisis: hyperinflation, dollarization (the shekel had lost its function as a store of value), huge budget and balance of payments deficits, and a loss of international financial credibility that made borrowing abroad hard and very expensive. The program succeeded in reducing inflation from an annual rate of approaching 500 percent in the first half of 1985 to 20 percent in the second half. The budget deficit was slashed and the balance of payments strengthened. The United States

provided $1.5 billion in aid that gave the program credibility both inside Israel and abroad.

Israel has learned the lessons of economic crisis of the 1980s. In order to prevent inflation, the exchange rate was kept stable for much of the period from 1985 to 1990. In the mid-1990s the government and the Bank of Israel (the central bank) decided to bring inflation down to 2–3 percent annually: this was achieved with tight economic policies. Fiscal and monetary policies have been conservative ever since.

In the years 1986–1995, following the stabilization of the economy in 1985 and with mass immigration from 1990 onwards, GDP increased by an annual average rate of 5.2 percent. The economic stabilization program of July 1985 reduced the role of the state and introduced a new, more liberalized economic order. The links between stabilization and liberalization are important. The early 1990s brought significant moves to liberalize foreign trade and capital markets. In the years 1996–2003, economic growth decelerated to only 2.7 percent, which, when population growth is taken into account, meant that GDP/capita was the same in 2003 as it had been in 1997. This has therefore been called the "second lost decade." The main reason for the lack of growth was the negative impact of monetary and fiscal policies designed to reduce inflation still further, the collapse of the hi-tech boom in 2001 and the Second Intifada, or Palestinian revolt. By 2004 economic growth had recovered and continued at a rapid rate until 2008. In 2004, the tax on income from investments at home and abroad was equalized, which encouraged Israelis to seek higher returns abroad and contributed to a rise in investment income. The boom – centered on the high technology sector – encouraged a huge increase in foreign investment and was largely export based. This generated the balance of payments current account into surplus and as a result the foreign debt became negative: Israel accumulated net foreign assets. The stream of income on these assets helped to strengthen the current account of the balance of payments. In 2005, the Bank of Israel abolished the "exchange rate path" that it used to prevent excessive changes, but since 2009 it has bought billions of dollars to limit the rise in the shekel against the dollar and other foreign currencies. In 2010 Israel joined the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

Since the 1960s there has been a reversal of the Socialist Zionist work ethic. The service sector grew; Israeli Arabs, Palestinians, and then other foreign workers were employed in the manual jobs that Jews did not want. The idea that manual labor would contribute to the redemption of the Jewish people also came into conflict with the desire, and the need, for higher education. In a country lacking raw materials, it was realized that the labor force was virtually the only economic resource. Increasing its skill level would, therefore, make an important contribution to economic development. Investment in education and training increased reduced the prestige of agriculture, construction, and other sectors reliant on manual labor. Government, with its large bureaucracy, became a growing source of employment

in the service sector; inflation led to the growth of financial services, especially banking. These factors reinforced the movement away from manual and industrial employment.

The Israeli economy in the twenty-first century is characterized by several features. The first is financial strength, as demonstrated in the international financial crisis of 2008–2009.This was manifest in the balance of payments, the government budget, and the banking system and reflects the cautious way that the economy has been managed since 1985. Behind this financial strength were the rapid development of high technology exports and the discovery of large gas reserves have already changed the energy balance and further strengthened the balance of payments. In 2005, Israel consumed 1.6 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas and in 2009, about 4.2 bcm. More than half of the natural gas is provided by Israeli sources, the rest is purchased from Egypt. In 2010, natural gas was the source of 40 percent of Israel's electricity production. The increase in gas production saved hundreds of millions of dollars of imports. This sector will grow rapidly in the coming years.

Second, is the very large allocation of resources for defense, although it has fallen as a share of GDP since 1975. Defense still accounts for a larger share of GDP than in most countries, even after allowing for United States' military assistance. Compulsory military service for men remains three years and for women two years, and the absence from the labor force of these tens of thousands of potential workers results in a significant loss of production. On the beneficial side, the military has trained thousands of young people in high technology and has stimulated production in that sector.

Third, Israel is plagued by poverty and inequality in the distribution of income. Between 1999 and 2009 the Gini coefficient of income distribution before taxes and transfers fell from 0.5167 to 0.5099, or by 1.3 percent. The Gini coefficient is defined as a ratio with a range from 0 and 1 (or 0% to 100%). A low Gini coefficient indicates more equal income or wealth distribution, with zero corresponding to perfect equality while higher Gini coefficients indicate more unequal distribution, with one corresponding to perfect inequality. These figures suggest that the factors causing inequality have weakened in recent years. The index for income after taxes and transfers increased from 0.3593 to 0.3892 or 8.3 percent, indicating that the effectiveness of government measures, in the form of taxes and benefits, to redistribute income, had weakened. The separation between pre-tax and benefit incomes and post-tax and benefit incomes captures only part of the effect of government policy.

In Israel the poor are officially defined using a relative poverty measure, as those having an income below 50 percent of the median income, while in the rest of the OECD, the rate is usually 60 percent. The standard of living of a household depends not only on its income but also on its needs that are determined by its size. The additional income needed by each additional person in a family declines as family size increases because there are economies of scale. To measure poverty, an equivalence scale is constructed to calculate what each member of a family needs.

The economies of scale assumed abroad are much greater than those in Israel, one reason that more people why more recorded as poor in the latter.

In 2009, 1.77 million people, or 20.5 percent of the population, lived in poverty (excluding the Arab population of Jerusalem, many of whom have Israeli resident status and are thus registered with the National Insurance Institute). Depending on which measures are used the rate of poverty had remained stable or declined slightly in the period 2005–2007/8. The relative poverty indices shows stability while the absolute poverty index shows a fall and that based on basic needs shows an increase. The rate of poverty is one of the highest in Western countries and there are several reasons for this. The first is low earnings: Many Israelis in full-time employment earn less than the official minimum wage and there are even public sector employees who are entitled to income supplements because they earn less than the official minimum. The low-skilled labor force grew with the import of Palestinian and then other foreign workers. This helped to moderate wage rises for the lower paid. Furthermore the availability of low-paid jobs in the manufacturing sector has been reduced by the effects of globalization. The resulting unemployment of Israelis (unemployed Palestinians and other foreigners leave the Israeli labor market when demand for labor falls) also puts downward pressure on wages. The second is a set of factors special to Israel, associated with two minority groups: the Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox communities. The Arab community suffers very high levels of poverty largely because of low earnings and the very low participation of women in the labor force. Large family size lowers income per capita and reduces the resources that can be invested in each child. In the ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi, community the reluctance or even refusal of many parents to provide their children with basic studies in English, math, science, and citizenship means that they cannot obtain a school leaving certificate. This severely limits their future earning ability and helps to confine them and their families to poverty that is also worsened by very large average family size. The preference of many ultra-Orthodox men for state-subsidized religious study further limits income and places a large burden on the state budget.

Conclusions

For many years Israelis felt that their society was strong but their economy weak. This has now been reversed: the economy has become much stronger while the society has become weaker. That seems paradoxical given that between 1948 and 2010 Israel attracted just over three million immigrants, a very large number for a country whose population at the end of 2010 was 7.7 million. In 1948, two thirds of the population was born abroad; in 2010 one third of the population was made up of immigrants. The effects of immigration are central in Israel's economic history. Economic policy has been dominated by the search for capital

that would permit the growth of employment and output, given the increase in the supply of labor made possible by immigration. In the last decade, this has increasingly come from foreign investment, something that has transformed Israel's economy.

Israel has also experienced a profound change from a state-led economy to a much more liberalized and globalized one. It has developed a consumer society based on the Western model in which the satisfaction of individual wants rather than collective needs is paramount. Public spending on social programs has been reduced and the distribution of income and wealth has become more unequal. In the first decade of the twenty-first century the balance of payment constraint ended and Israel began to experience surpluses on the current account of the balance of payments, net inflows of capital and an appreciating exchange rate along with economic growth. This huge transformation has enabled the economy to survive the recent international recession better than many developed countries. Structural change, most notably the development of high technology resulted in a huge increase of both exports and foreign investment in Israel. The development of this sector was closely related to Israel's efforts to increase self-reliance in military technology and the success of economic stabilization and liberalization policies followed since the mid-1980s.

Pragmatic economic policy is a good thing as long as there is an overall aim. In the early stages of their development, countries may find it hard to define their economic strategy using the market mechanism alone. This suggests that governments can play a useful role. Israel's very fast GDP and GDP/capita growth rates in the 1950s seem to validate this. Since then the Israel has moved broadly in the direction that most economists advocate and has benefited in terms of economic growth and rising living standards. In the last twenty years, however, wide gaps have opened in the distribution of income, wealth and educational achievement. Poverty has become chronic and deep. There is a risk that these problems may become endemic and threaten the future of the economy because they remove significant numbers of people from the labor market and result in poverty being passed down from one generation to the next. Israel will have to find ways to combine elements of social equity with economic growth if it wants to avoid major domestic tension.

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Ethnic Diversity in Israel

Ari Ariel

Introduction

Zionism, as we are so often told, is a European ideology. It emerged in the nineteenth century as an attempt to solve the Jewish question in Europe, and perhaps to remedy the apparent ambivalences of the European Enlightenment with regard to Jews. As such, its target audience and its early adherents were naturally European. Although there was diversity within Jewish populations, particularly differences between Eastern European and Western European Jews, Zionism posited the Jewish people as a single national group. Ethnic differences were, therefore, elided in favor of the imagination of a new modern Jew. As an ideological movement Zionism resonated with a portion of the Jewish intelligentsia which, led by Theodor Herzl, founded a political organization to encourage migration to Palestine, with the aim of establishing a Jewish state there. By 1948 some seven hundred thousand Jews were living in Palestine.

Initially Zionism had little impact on Jews in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). Where it did make modest inroads, Jews often understood it as a movement for Hebrew cultural renaissance and not necessarily a call for migration and political sovereignty. Furthermore, even when MENA Jews expressed ideological interest in Zionism, the World Zionist Organization (WZO) did little to encourage this, and was not willing to allocate resources to promote further interest. The WZO simply did not see MENA Jews as the natural target audience for its activities. As a result, in the pre-State period Middle Eastern Jewish migration to Palestine was limited; accounting for about 12 percent of immigrants.[1]

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World War II and the establishment of the State of Israel altered this demographic trend. The Nazi genocide in Europe expunged much of the potential reservoir of immigrants that the Zionists had aspired to attract. Therefore, the Israeli government, facing an acute demographic crisis, began to encourage Middle Eastern immigration. For some time, colonialism, Arab Nationalism(s), and Zionism had exerted contradictory centrifugal forces on Jewish communities, increasing intercommunal tensions, and making Jewish life in MENA tenuous. Both the Ottomans and the Colonial powers had established political and economic structures characterized by a high degree of religious differentiation; communal identity was largely confessional. Jews in the Ottoman Empire were identified first and foremost as Jews, both by themselves and the larger Ottoman public. The rise of independence movements, Arab nationalism(s), and Zionism obscured the place of Jews in their home societies. Were Jews aligned with the colonial powers, from which they derived financial, and sometimes political, advantage? Were Jewish speakers of Arabic a part of the Arab nation? Were they part of the state-based nations that emerged post-independence? Were they, by nature of being Jewish, Zionists? These questions made the transition to the world of nation-states unsettling. The establishment of Israel in 1948 complicated this situation further. Neither the new Arab governments nor the Zionist movement distinguished sufficiently between Jews and Zionists. As Arab states rallied around the Palestinian cause, Jews were accused of being crypto-Zionists, acting against the Arab nation, and even being spies, whether or not they had any ties to Zionism. Episodes of violence against Jews increased. All this forced local Jewish communities to question the viability of their futures in the region. The vast majority of MENA Jews would emigrate in the coming decades and most would go to Israel. From the mid-1950s they would account for about half of the Jewish population of Israel.

The early years of the State were marked by a massive influx of immigrants from both Europe and MENA. As the population of Israel quickly doubled, ideologues and politicians alike worried that, unlike the early pioneers, the newcomers were not devoted adherents of Zionism. They would therefore, have to be indoctrinated and assimilated into a new national culture. In theory, this "melting pot" ideology applied equally to all immigrants. They would all take part in the formation of a new Hebrew society, which required the negation of their Diasporic cultures and identities. Education and militarily service, in particular, would serve as the vehicles for assimilating the newcomers to Israel. In practice, however, all Jews were not equal. European Jews viewed their Middle Eastern coreligionists with the typical Orientalist ambivalence common at the time. Even positive stereotypes of Middle Eastern Jews reflected European assumptions about their archaic nature. Middle Eastern spirituality, for example, was contrasted to European science and innovation and, therefore, reinforced the idea that MENA Jews were primitive. Their religiosity was at one and the same time portrayed as a contribution to the new national identity, as it reflected a primordial essence linked to biblical Jewishness,

and a core element of Middle Eastern character that would have to be erased to bring MENA Jews into modernity. This is but one example. In short, Ashkenazi culture would dominate the new State. Thus, while all the immigrants would have to shed their distinctiveness to become Israelis, MENA Jews would have to change to a far greater extent than European Jews.

It should be noted that European Jews tended to view MENA Jews as a single bloc, and they used a variety of collective terms to identify them as such, including Eastern, Oriental, and Sephardic. The last of these refers to a liturgical tradition practiced by those Jews who trace their religious lineage back to Muslin Spain prior to the 1492 Expulsion. However, it is often used in opposition to Ashkenazi to refer to all non-European Jews, even if their liturgies differ from Sephardic practice. It must also be noted that MENA Jewish communities did not view themselves as a single group. Only after migration to Israel did some sense of a single "Eastern" community begin to appear within MENA Jewry. With this shift, new identity terms emerged. *Bnei edot ha-mizrahi* (descendant of the Eastern communities), used during Israel's first decades, has now largely been replaced by Mizrahim (Easterners), which is more reflective of the identity reconstruction MENA Jews have undergone post-immigration and is understood as more empowering as it unites these groups politically. Recently, leftist-oriented scholars and activists have been using the term Arab Jew to assert culture continuity with the period pre-immigration. In an attempt to employ historically appropriate terminology, I will use "MENA Jews" to express the diversity of this group for all periods prior to the 1980s. For the decades after this, I will use the term "Mizrahim."

Early Encounters

It is not surprising that, post independence, relations between European and MENA Jews were marked by a degree of Orientalism. Pre-State encounters evinced the same prejudicial attitudes. The first official contact between the Zionist establishment in Palestine and a MENA Jewish community was Shmuel Yavnieli's mission to Yemen in 1911. Yemeni Jewish migration to "the land of Israel" began in 1881, provoked primarily by economic factors, along with political, religious, and perhaps even nascent ethnonational inclinations. The explicit permission of the Ottoman government, which ruled both Palestine and Sanaa, the political center of Yemen, mitigated the risks of migration and further facilitated movement. Most of the Yemeni immigrants settled in Jerusalem or Jaffa and were incorporated into the old Yishuv. In 1909, however, several families settled in Rehovot and Rishon Lezion to work as agricultural laborers. This prompted the idea that Yemeni Jews, who the Zionist settlers believed would demand relatively low salaries, could replace Palestinian Arab workers and thus facilitate the "conquest of labor." In 1911 Yavnieli was sent to Yemen by the WZO, Hapoel Hatzair (the Young Worker

group), and the Planters' Union to induce Yemeni Jews to immigrate to Palestine to work as farmers on newly developing Jewish plantation moshavot.

Both Yavnieli's travel log, and the reactions of European Jewish settlers in Palestine to the Yemeni migrants, foreshadow the development of a complex ethnic quagmire in Israel. Yavnieli reacted to the Jews in Yemen in ambivalent ways. He clearly acknowledged them as part of a universal Jewish question that Zionism sought to address. He was impressed with their religiosity and their thirst for knowledge, but found them primitive and naive, believing "everyone who comes and tells them (anything), even the stories of 1001 nights."[2] For that reason, Yavnieli was optimistic that he would achieve his mission, and did, in fact, convince a sizeable number of Yemeni Jews to immigrate to Palestine. He promised the migrants a livable wage and free housing on arrival. However, the first group he sent to the moshavot soon wrote back to Yemen complaining bitterly about both:

> After *yom tov* we went to request houses, and they gave one house to every 3 families. And at the beginning of the month of *Heshvan* they kicked us out, and now we are in horses' stables, and the rent for each stable is 6 franks a month. And we are in great sorrow because of the houses they gave us. The rate (salary) of work is 2 *bishlikim* and this doesn't suffice for the needs or rent of the house.[3]

Yavnieli was quite disheartened by this and complained to the WZO: "I did not want to delude people. I didn't promise more than human behavior, and if this is lacking I cannot continue my work."[4]

Worse than the economic hardship the Yemenis faced was the demeaning attitude of the Ashkenazi workers. This is quite clear from the annals of Hapoel Hatzair. The workers saw the Yemenis as a threat to their livelihood. This is unsurprising since the specific function of the new immigrants, from the perspective of the Planters' Union, was to supply "Hebrew" labor at low salaries. The workers, therefore, verbally and physically abused the Yemeni immigrants, demanding that they be expelled from the plantations and forced to "go back to Yemen."[5]

On the other hand, the ideologues of Hapoel Hatzair recognized that they had played an active role in recruiting Yemeni immigrants and, therefore, had some responsibility toward them. Like Yavnieli, they saw the Yemenis as participants in the movement to "gather the nation from all ends of the universe," and they frequently admonished the farmers for treating them "worse than the Arabs (*zarim*)."[6] Nonetheless, Hapoel Hatzair itself is filled with typical Orientalist attitudes toward the Yemenis, who are described as loyal, honest, patient, satisfied with little, imbued with love of country and the spirit of Judaism, but are simultaneously portrayed as unclean, unorganized, ignorant, overly religious, premodern, and primitive. Many articles paternalistically expressed sympathy for the Yemenis, who had difficulty adjusting to modern life since they "stand at a stage of development of hundreds or maybe thousands of years ago."[7] To help

the Yemenis acclimatize Hapoel Hatzair advocated their cultural education. They had to learn new "national manners," and be raised "from the level that they are situated in, to restore them to human form."[8] Yemenis resisted these stereotypical portrayals and argued that they were no different from the Ashkenazi workers, except that they were given inferior provisions. They complained that while Ashkenazi workers live in houses with proper flooring, they "live among cows excrement, among the flies, the fleas, and the bugs, and no one has mercy on them."[9] They also complained that their salaries were insufficient to purchase new clothing or proper food, let alone to build new lives for themselves and their families. In other words, the Yemenis saw any discrepancy between themselves and the Ashkenazi workers as economic, not cultural. They did not believe they had to assimilate European ways of life, but saw their work, and their Jewishness, as sufficient testimony to their participation in the Zionist movement.

Early State Encounters

The mass immigration of MENA Jews to Israel after the establishment of the State did little to alter the prejudicial and stereotypical attitudes of their European coreligionists. If anything, it made them worse, as some Ashkenazi Jews came to see the Middle Easterners as a culture threat. The State was devoted to a program of acculturation and assimilation and, as mentioned earlier, was in fact concerned with the cultural and ideological status of both European and Middle Eastern immigrants. All Diasporic culture would have to be negated to create a modern Jewish culture. The establishment, however, had a clear preference for European culture. This meant that European immigrants could maintain much of their cultural heritage while greater pressure, both direct and indirect, was exerted on Middle Eastern immigrants to shed theirs.

Certain aspects of MENA Jewish culture were accepted, and at times even encouraged. In fact, these could even be used to "indigenize" the mostly immigrant European Jewish population. Early Jewish settlers had emulated Arab behavior and appropriated Arab cultural products for just this purpose. However, with increased conflict in Palestine, the Arab became the enemy, and Arab culture had to be transformed if it was to be absorbed into Israeli society. Cuisine is perhaps the best example of this. Palestinian foods were quickly adopted by Jewish immigrants, and were even promoted by the WZO, Hadassah, and others as healthy foods that were more appropriate for the local climate than Diaspora foods. As such, they could serve as the model for a new Israeli cuisine. After independence, the mass migration of MENA Jews allowed for Palestinian foods to be redefined as part of their cultural inheritance. For their part, Middle Eastern Jews adopted these foods as part of their culinary repertoire, particularly on the menus of the "oriental" restaurants that they were increasingly opening in the 1950s, despite the fact that they were not necessarily foods eaten in their countries of origin.[10] By the late 1950s even the

army, which played a key role in Ben-Gurion's "melting pot" ideology, began to serve hummus on the assumption that it was a dish that "those coming from oriental countries are used to."[11] Therefore hummus could be adopted as a Jewish "oriental" food, and eating it could function as an embodying practice which made the Jewish immigrants from Europe local.

Other aspects of Middle Eastern immigrant culture were likewise tolerated. The Israel establishment had come to see preserving some of the ethnic character of the various groups that made up the Jewish landscape of Israel as a desirable goal. Each group was understood as contributing something to the nation, although on clearly uneven terms. The dance group Inbal exposes the limit of MENA Jewish contribution. Sarah Levi Tanai established the group using Yemeni dancers and choreographed modern dance pieces using Yemeni themes and movement as the fundamental elements of an artistic form based an "authentic articulation of cultural body language."[12] Tanai and Inbal were acclaimed by much of the international dance world, including such prominent figures as Jerome Robbins, Martha Graham, and Anna Sokolow, and received support from the Israeli government. In 1957 they embarked on their first international tour, but were soon criticized in Israel as folklore, and thus, by definition, not art. Inbal was therefore inappropriate as a representative of Israeli high culture; this despite the international praise and the fact that Tanai herself saw Inbal as Israeli, or even universal. In fact, criticism increased when American dance reviewers recognized Inbal's work as modern and Israeli, suggesting that it was Yemeni Jews representing Israel abroad, and not the work itself, which provoked the censure.

Some aspects of early ethnic discrimination in Israel were more overt. While the Israeli authorities exhibited ambivalence toward Jewish refugees from Europe and a reluctance to address their experiences during the Holocaust, the State valued European immigrants over Middle Easterners, and feared that they were likely to move elsewhere if their needs were not met. As a result it provided them with better services. It made every effort to provide Europeans with permanent housing in desirable locations, but exhibited little urgency in moving MENA Jews out of transit camps. Outside of the camps, Jews from Iraq and Yemen, who arrived in Israel in the early 1950s, were settled primarily in central areas, often in formerly Palestinian neighborhoods, while those from north Africa, who arrived later in the 1950s and 1960s, were primarily settled in development towns in peripheral areas with limited economic possibilities. As a result, identity based on country of origin, as opposed to a general Middle Eastern (or later Mizrahi) identity, remained salient. In addition, this spatial disparity would later mean that north Africans would be underrepresented in the developing Mizrahi middle class.

Middle Eastern children also received poorer educations than Europeans. They were mostly assigned to national religious schools, where the instructors were twice as likely to lack proper teaching credentials. In the late 1950s the State attempted to increase Middle Eastern high school attendance through tuition subsidies. At the same time, however, a system was introduced that directed Ashkenazi children to

higher academics and managerial positions while tracking Middle Easterners to vocational schools preparing them for manual or low-skill industrial labor. The differentiation in education, of course, corresponds to a wage disparity.[13] If one remembers the above-mentioned importation of Yemeni Jews to serve as manual labor at the beginning of the century, it appears that continuity in ethnic relations exists between the pre-State and early State periods.

The Socioeconomic Gap and Ethnic Protest

MENA Jews were not passive in the face of discrimination. As early as 1949 transit camp inhabitants protested poor conditions and prejudicial treatment. Favoritism for Ashkenazis in the allocation of housing and jobs were the major grievances of almost all demonstrations. Dissent culminated ten years later in a series of demonstrations in Haifa's Wadi Salib neighborhood led by David Ben-Harush of the Union of North African Immigrants. Sparked by a small-scale altercation between the police and a Moroccan resident of the neighborhood, the underlying reason for the outbreak of rioting was anti-Middle Eastern discrimination generally, and the assignment of superior housing to recent Polish immigrants, while Wadi Salib was overcrowded and underserved. These demonstrations, which persisted for about two months and spread to other parts of the country, were perhaps the first indication to the Israeli public at large that the socioeconomic gap between Middle Eastern and European Jews was a serious problem.

The Israeli Black Panthers, inspired by the eponymous American movement, carried out an even more sustained period of protest throughout the country, lasting for two years, from 1971 to 1973. Like the Wadi Salib protests, the Panthers were motivated primarily by the sense of deprivation and discrimination. The 1967 war, however, had intensified these feelings, both by reopening questions of Israeli self-definition, and because of the major change to the Israeli labor market effected by the occupation of the territories and the sudden influx of low wage Palestinian workers, who competed with MENA Jews for jobs.[14] Perhaps the most significant shift marked by the Black Panther movement was one of ethnic identification. As noted above, country-based identification had maintained salience post immigration. Thus even political protest took on specific local identities. The Wadi Salib protests, for example, were conspicuously north African. That is not to say that they had no impact on the larger MENA Jewish population. However, they were carried out in the name of north African immigrants and much of the media coverage, as well as declarations made by protesters themselves, referred to north Africans and/or Moroccans. The Black Panther movement, led by a younger generation, born in Israel, was increasingly aware of structural discrimination against MENA Jews as a whole, and therefore heralded the prevalence of a Mizrahi identity. Iraqi, Moroccan, and Yemeni continued to be relevant ethnic markers, but politics, and particularly political protest, would from then on be performed as Mizrahim. It

should also be noted that neither the Wadi Salib, nor the Black Panther protests were anti-establishment, despite the tendency of some observers to see them as such. Both called for equal rights, fair distribution of resources, and political integration, but neither called for the destruction of the regime. On the contrary, their appeals, similar to those of Yemeni Jews in the pre-State period, were based on citizenship and Jewishness.

Since the 1970s Mizrahi ethnic protest has influenced Israeli elections significantly. Mizrahi voters began gradually to withdraw support from the dominant Labor party, and instead voted for Likud. This was the result of the fact that Labor had been in power for almost thirty years and had, in that time, continuously marginalized the Mizrahim. In addition, a new generation of Israel-born Mizrahim entered the electorate, both more resentful of discrimination and more confident in their own political action. In 1977 their votes enabled Likud to take control of the Israeli government for the first time. This trend increased to the extent that in the early 1990s two thirds of the Likud vote came from Mizrahim.[15]

Likud power, however, did little to improve the socioeconomic gap between Ashkenazim and Mizrahim. In fact, since the 1950s this gap has continuously grown. This runs counter to the generally held assumptions of an entire generation of Israeli academics who blamed this gap on two major factors. First, they insisted that MENA Jews had come from "traditional" societies, which lacked complex modern/Western economic and political structures, and therefore could not easily adapt to the Israeli context; and second, that MENA Jews migrated to Israel after the establishment of the State, during a period in which the country was at war, burdened by mass immigration, involvement, and simply unable to extend the type of aid that it had to earlier immigrants. Accordingly, they believed that first generation MENA immigrants faced particular hardships assimilating, but that future generations would be integrated, and thus equal to Ashkenazi Israelis.[16]

Neither of these explanations is adequate. Middle Eastern Jews did not, in fact, come from less modern places than Europeans. Even accepting the highly tenuous model of linear development, the high level of diversity among all Jewish immigrants to Israel would have to be acknowledged. To put in plainly, few Mizrahim had come from isolated desert regions, neither were all Ashkenazim from London, Berlin, or Vienna. Most Middle Eastern Jews were urban, and came from cities that had undergone a great deal of development along modern western lines. Jews from Cairo or Baghdad, for example, were often more educated, politically active, and entrepreneurial than their coreligionists in the Pale of Settlement. In fact, for a significant number of Middle Eastern Jews, migration to Israel may have represented a decline in standard of living. Second, the assumption that Mizrahim were not prepared for the level of modern economic development they encountered in Israel grossly exaggerates the state of the Israeli economy at the time that they arrived. Large-scale industrialization of Israel only began to take place in the 1950s after both the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim arrived. It was made possible primarily by foreign capital, including donations from abroad, German reparations, and US government loans.

Moreover, the large influx of immigrants expanded the Israeli market and provided the necessary labor force for the expansion simultaneously. In this process, the Ashkenazim and Mizrahim should have been equally poised to exploit new economic opportunities. In fact, however, the government seems to have prioritized and allocated resources in a way that developed certain segments of Israeli society at the expense of others. The Ashkezanim were incorporated into the governing, managerial, and ruling class while the Mizrahim were incorporated, by and large, as cheap unskilled labor. What is most striking is that, contrary to the claims that second-generation Mizrahim would be integrated, and that the socioeconomic gap would close, or at least narrow, gaps in education and wages have in fact widened with each generation.[17]

The ascendancy of Likud did not change this, and by the mid-1980s a new Mizrahi political force was on the scene. Initially founded in 1983 as an offshoot of the Ashkenazi Agudat Israel party to represent religiously observant Sephardic Jews, Shas won seats on the Jerusalem city council and in the Knesset in following year. In 1988 Shas broke away from the Agudat Israel and has operated independently ever since. It is the most successful Mizrahi political organization in Israeli history, though it is worth noting that the party labels itself Sephardic because of that term's religious connotation. In fact, Shas is an acronym for Shomrei Torah Sfaradim, or Sephardic Torah Guardians. Throughout the 1990s Shas won an ever increasing number of Knesset seats becoming the third most popular political party in the country. There is some disagreement in the literature over how to account for this electoral success. Shas appeals not only to observant voters, but also to those Mizrahim who are disillusioned with the large Ashkenazi parties. It has had particular success in development towns, winning many former Likud supporters into its fold. The party has also expanded into a network of schools, social movements, and media outlets, including several radio stations, a newspaper, and a television station. Shas' rhetoric includes a combination of religious, ethnic, and social discourses, and while the party accuses the Ashkenazi establishment of discriminatory policies, it does so in the name of universal Israeli Jewishness, appealing to a form of ethno-nationalism that is integrative rather than separatist. Given the tumultuous nature of Israeli politics, Shas' resiliency is impressive and it can be expected to remain an important party for the foreseeable future.[18]

Mizrahim and Palestinians

Political activists have sometimes posited Mizrahim and Palestinians as natural allies because of their structural and cultural affinities. That is to say, both are portrayed as Middle Eastern groups discriminated against by Ashkenazi hegemony. While there is some similarity in their positions, this reading may be superficial. Despite discrimination, the Israeli establishment has always defined Middle Eastern Jews as part of the Jewish nation in accordance with the ethnoreligious

foundation of the State. On the other hand, Palestinians, even when granted Israeli citizenship, are placed outside of the nation. As a result, Mizrahi struggle has generally called for equal rights based on membership in the core ethnoreligious group. In fact, Mizrahim often posit their inclusion in opposition to Palestinian Arabs. At times Mizrahim even manifest strong anti-Arab sentiment, likely the result of both competition in the labor force as noted above, and their collective historical memories of the contentious period in the Arab world prior to immigration to Israel. Even more importantly, anti-Arab sentiment represents a tacit rejection of their own association with a culture that the dominant Ashkenazi establishment perceives as culturally inferior. Some Mizrahim seem to have internalized this prejudice in a way that borders on self-rejection.

On the other hand, the problematic of Middle Eastern Jewish identity in Israel is often most clear when it is used explicitly as a tool to counter Palestinian national claims. For example, in his penetrating analysis of the World Organization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), Yehouda Shanhav has shown that the Israeli government withdrew its support from this organization because its attempt to offer a "Jewish answer to the PLO" was based on an ethnic discourse that the establishment viewed as a threat to the ideological foundation of the State. WOJAC, founded in the 1970s and funded by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Jewish Agency, claimed that as an indigenous population MENA Jews had legitimate rights to territory and sovereignty in Israel. This was intended to offset the Palestinian assertion that Jews were colonial settlers. However, WOJAC's claim split Jewish history along ethnic lines, and, worse, highlighted the fact that European Jews were foreign to the region. Moreover, claims of indigenousness challenged the basic Zionist historical narrative based on a dichotomy between exile and Zion. For Zionism, the act of *aliyah* to Israel is a return to a homeland, and entails the negation of Diaspora and Jewish regeneration. But WOJAC legitimized territorial sovereignty in Israel by claiming that MENA Jews were always in the region, blurring the distinction between exile and home. If MENA Jews were never in the Diaspora, then migration to Israel could not be portrayed as a homecoming, and the messianic significance of negating exile would be undermined. WOJAC's stance, intended to support Israel's right to land at the expense of the Palestinians, exposed a rift between Jewish groups and underlined the sometimes peculiar positioning of MENA Jews within Zionist ideology. The government, therefore, came to see WOJAC as ethnically divisive, and a threat to national unity, and cut off support for the organization.[19]

The Ethiopian and Russian Immigrations

Two more recent communal immigrations have impacted the ethnic composition of the Jewish community in Israel and reflect some of the successes and failures of

assimilation in Israel. Starting in the mid-1980s Ethiopian Jews began immigrating to Israel. This movement peaked in May 1991 in what became known as "Operation Solomon." Due to political instability in Ethiopia, the Israeli government carried out a massive airlift, transporting over 14 thousand Ethiopian Jews to Israel within a period of thirty six hours. Smaller group migrations continued, and by 2001 over sixty thousand Ethiopian Jews had entered Israel. The authorities, conscious of the errors made in absorbing waves of immigrants in the 1950s, vowed not to make the same mistakes again. Despite this, similar policies providing for provisional housing and educational tracking were implemented. Again, schools and the army served as the mechanism by which Ethiopians were assimilated into the dominant culture. On the other hand, the government has made good faith attempts to move Ethiopians to permanent housing in central areas and to increase matriculation rates in universities. While these have been somewhat successful, they have been limited by socioeconomic factors.[20]

Two particularly contentious areas of Ethiopian–Israeli relations should be noted. In 1996 the newspaper *Maariv* revealed that for years Israeli blood banks had been freezing and then discarding blood donated by Ethiopian Jews. This sparked mass protests and accusations of racist policy. A government commission argued that discarding the blood was reasonable because Ethiopians had a statistically higher rate of infection with AIDS than the rest of the Israeli population. No adequate explanation was offered as to why the donors were not informed that their blood would not be used. Perhaps the intention was to avoid stigmatizing the Ethiopian population, an outcome ironically brought about by the policy. The second contentious issue is the question of religious status. Israeli law privileges the Orthodox Jewish establishment with control over personal status issues. Since the Ethiopian community did not follow rabbinic traditions, the Israeli religious establishment would not recognize the authority of the Ethiopian clergy. Their status therefore immediately declined upon immigration. Moreover, since conversions and marriages performed by the Ethiopian clergy could not be recognized, the Jewishness of the entire community was called into question. Though the Orthodox demand that the Ethiopians undergo conversion was dropped, the authorities refused to accept Ethiopian Judaism as a legitimate tradition with legal authority. This is not surprising, since no non-Orthodox form of Judaism is officially recognized in Israel. However, it does highlight the expectation that Ethiopians in Israel will assimilate into normative Judaism at the expense of their own traditions.

At the same time that Ethiopian Jews were migrating to Israel, a massive wave of immigrants entered the country from the former Soviet Union (FSU). This was provoked by political and economic stability in the FSU. There is little indication that Zionist ideology motivated these immigrants. However, since legal migration to the United States and Western Europe was limited, the majority went to Israel. By 2001, Jews from the FSU in Israel, along with their spouses, and first-generation children, numbered around 1.1 million people and accounted for 18 percent of the

population of the country. They are now the largest single group in Israel. Interestingly, this group includes a large number of non-Jews. Intermarriage was common in the FSU, and spouses, children, and grandchildren of Jews were able to immigrate under the law of return.[21]

Jews from the FSU are a heterogeneous group. The majority are from the Russian Federation and the Ukraine, and the remainder from other European and Asian republics. They share a language (Russian) and have come to form a significant ethnic bloc in Israel. The sheer size of this group meant that no serious attempt could be made to assimilate it and it has quickly assumed a prominent political position. Interaction with the general Israeli society is largely limited to the workplace, though FSU Jews indicate that they feel a cultural affinity with the secular Ashkenazi segment of Israeli society. In fact, there is some indication that due to this group's high level of education and identification as Western, it views itself as superior to much of the veteran Israeli population. Accordingly, FSU Jews have endeavored to maintain Russian-language culture in Israel through an engagement with independent creative arts, and the establishment of newspapers and radio and television stations. Likewise, they have maintained ties with their former home countries. All this would seem to portend the preservation of boundaries between this group and other Israelis. However, FSU Jews have a low birth rate which may promote the integration of future generations.

Despite the difficulty with unemployment and low wages faced by all immigrants, the high level of education of a large percentage of the FSU Jews in Israel has allowed them to compete fairly well in the Israeli labor market. While the group's average wage is lower than that of the general Israeli labor force, this is being reversed with length of stay in the country, especially for those in skilled and white collar positions. Economic success, along with identification with middle class Israeli Ashkenazi culture, makes it likely that in the long run the FSU Jews will be incorporated into that group.

Conclusion

Israeli sociologist Sammy Smooha has recently compared the Mizrahi immigrations of the 1950s with the recent migrations from the FSU to Israel, describing them as "stories of failure versus stories of success."[22] While the Mizrahim immigrated with limited resources to a young, underdeveloped state, FSU Jews migrate to a well-established country with a high level of education and human capital. While the establishment compelled Mizrahi immigrants to eschew their cultural distinctiveness and enter the Israeli melting pot, little pressure is brought to bear on FSU immigrants to abandon their Western culture. Moreover, while the Mizrahim were, by and large, incorporated into the lower classes of Israeli society, Smooha predicts that the FSU immigrants will likely be incorporated into the middle and upper class of Israel.

It would be tempting to argue that this is because of the different economic and historical contexts of the 1950s and 1990s, however, the Ethiopian migration suggests otherwise. Of course, Ethiopian Jews immigrated to Israel without the benefit of higher education or common culture with the dominant Ashkenazi sector of Israel. But even the demographic disparity is insufficient to explain the extra pressure to assimilate exerted on the Ethiopians, or the paternalistic guidance they often receive, which increases their dependence on the State, while the FSU Jews enjoy a policy of "direct absorption," providing support without formal government intervention.

Faced with a group of immigrants with few of the skills necessary to compete in Israel's modern economy, the State has implemented policies genuinely intended to improve the Ethiopians' housing conditions and facilitate their entry into educational institutions and the workplace. Their success has been mixed. That said, it is hard to ignore the similarity in the State's attitude toward the Ethiopian immigration and that of the Mizrahim in the 1950s, particularly in the realm of culture. Ethiopians, like the Mizrahim before them, are expected to become normative European Israelis, while the preservation of distinctive cultural elements is discouraged. The same expectations simply do not exist of FSU Jews. Western culture is still hegemonic in Israel. However, as the younger generation of Israel-born Ethiopians comes of age, it is likely that they will insert themselves into an increasingly multicultural Israeli arena. And if Smooha is right about the importance of class in immigrant absorption, it will be the Ethiopians' entry into the workforce that will determine their standing in Israeli society. Likewise, it is important to note that despite the bumpy road taken toward assimilation, a small but important Mizrahi middle class has formed and is growing. Largely integrated with Ashkenazi Israel but preserving and performing Mizrahi culture, this group can be expected to play an ever increasing role in Israeli politics and society.[23]

Notes

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5 *Hapoel Hatzair*, 1912, nos 9, 10, 12; 1913, no. 11.
6 *Hapoel Hatzair*, 1908, no. 10; 1913, no. 42.
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Part VII
Special Topics

35

The World of Jewish Music

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Music is an integral part of all aspects of Jewish life. As such, it is an important medium for the transmission of Jewish texts and for the expression of Jewish values. At the same time, the nature and history of Jewish music reflect evolving communal attitudes towards Judaism and music, as well as the ongoing interaction between Jews and their neighbors. This chapter will offer an overview of the range of music that has emerged over three millennia and across three broad cultural communities: Eidot HaMizrach (the Eastern Communities), the Jews of Sepharad, and Ashkenazic Jewry.

The Roots of Jewish Music

The biblical identification of Jubal as the ancestor of "all those who play the lyre and the pipe" (Genesis 4:21) testifies to the universality of music-making as a human enterprise. The first uniquely Jewish music-making occurs as the children of Israel emerge as an Israelite nation crossing the Re(e)d Sea on their flight from Egyptian slavery: their first communal act of praise takes the form of a song to the Lord (Exodus 15:1–19). Later, David's military victories (1 Samuel 22:12) as well as his transfer of the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem (2 Samuel 6) are accompanied with song. The Bible thus makes clear that music is an appropriate accompaniment to prayer as well as to significant moments in the national life of the people.

This sharing of sacred and secular moments became a model for the use of music in Jewish life and indeed, for the interaction between Jewish and non-Jewish musical forms. Moses' "Song of the Sea" likely took the form of the Egyptian melodies with which he and the Israelites would have been familiar. Centuries later, as the musical

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rites of the Temple emerged (see 1 Chronicles 6 and 16 as well as 2 Chronicles 7), the instruments selected for liturgical use were often the same as those that accompanied military parades and dance. Psalm 150 suggests that God be praised both with liturgical instruments (harps, lyres, and trumpets) as well as with the timbrel, lute, and pipe that typically accompanied dance and other secular activities. Much more significantly, the "prefatory notes" preceding many of the Psalms (containing authorship information as well as indicating "performance practice") frequently make cryptic references to otherwise unknown terms ("ayelet ha-shachar," "ha-gitit," "elem rechokim," etc.) that some suggest are references to popular melodies of the day to which the sacred texts may have been chanted. The decision to include flutes in the orchestra of the rebuilt Temple made by the exiles who returned from Babylonia at the end of the sixth century BCE further demonstrates the readiness of the Jewish community to adopt musical practices that were familiar (flutes were popular in Babylonia) but not a traditional part of Jewish ritual.

From this brief introduction, we may conclude that Jewish music, at its point of origin, contained few, if any unique musical attributes, and was merely a reflection of the surrounding culture. There did emerge elaborate rituals involving choral and orchestral performance that distinguished Temple worship from other contemporaneous practice;[1] Talmudic references suggest that Jewish music was not "raucous" like that of the Egyptians or "erotic" like that of the Greeks. The likelihood remains, however, that there was little demarcation between the overall styles of the melodies, and use of the very same tunes in ritual and popular singing cannot be discounted.

Into the Diaspora

The content and context of Jewish musical practice, both sacred and secular, underwent significant change in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE. Without the Temple, the sacrifices that had formed the centerpiece of Jewish liturgy were discontinued, and with them, the elaborate choral and orchestral music that accompanied them. The rabbis imposed a state of mourning on the Jewish community and sought to ban all forms of musical expression, but soon found such a draconian pronouncement impossible to enforce; the lullabies and work songs that were part of daily life could not be cut off by simple decree. More important, the rabbis needed to create a prayer-based ritual to substitute for the sacrifices, and the natural ability of melody to carry text was critical to the educational process by means of which the new liturgy would be disseminated. *Shelichei tzibbur* (representatives of the community) replaced the levitical musicians as leaders of Jewish worship.[2] As the liturgy continued to evolve, however, it became increasingly difficult for the average congregant to master all the musical and liturgical demands, and a cadre of expert *hazzanim*[3] emerged who presided over more esoteric holiday services.

At this juncture, however, Jewish musical practice faced an even greater crisis than the need to replace its texts or those who presided over them – exile. In addition to those who had remained in Babylonia after the first Temple was destroyed,[4] Jews were now much more widely scattered. Some Jews were taken into captivity in Rome, while others made their way deeper into Europe. During the course of the first millennium of the Common Era, Jewish liturgical practice became centralized around a prayer book, but the expression of those texts became a reflection of the musical customs of their new environments.

Eidot HaMizrach: the Eastern communities

Those Jews who remained in the Middle East were best able to retain the existing flavor of Jewish musical practice. While local customs varied widely, there was nevertheless a consistency in the overall style of music favored in the region. On ordinary occasions, simple syllabic chants with limited melodic ranges enabled the faithful to declaim their texts. On festivals or other occasions when there was time to indulge in more elaborate musical performance, melismatic chants predominated, allowing individual words or even syllables to be chanted across a lengthy sequence of notes. Men chanted Hebrew psalms or quasi-liturgical poems as part of their recreational singing on festivals or holiday celebrations; women tended to sing a separate repertoire of Judeo-Arabic songs describing family life or imagining romantic love that would release them from the drudgery of daily chores.

While individual Jews made their way into the Iberian Peninsula early in the Common Era, it was not until the Moslem conquest of the region in the eighth century that large numbers of Jews followed their Arab cousins to the area. Along with the Arab culture that can still be seen in "Spanish" architecture and poetry of the period, the Jews brought their musical traditions, still reflective of the Middle Eastern milieu. Those Jews who remained in Spain and Portugal following the Catholic triumph in the Crusades of the late eleventh century came to be known as Sephardim (from the classical Hebrew word for "Spain"), and thus different from their coreligionists who remained in Arab lands.[5] They also found their music increasingly influenced by the evolving styles of the West. Ironically, the so-called Gregorian chant of the Church (codified during the sixth-century reign of Pope Gregory, but entrenched for many years prior) was believed to be reminiscent of Temple traditions, since Jesus and his early followers were Jews themselves and thus familiar with Temple rites. During the Middle Ages and early Renaissance, however, Western music incorporated strongly metrical rhythms and harmonic supports that overshadowed most vestiges of Arab music. Furthermore, regular exposure to performances of secular music by wandering minstrels of the day led to frequent musical exchanges between the Jewish community and their Christian neighbors that influenced both sacred and secular melodies. One well-known

romance (a popular tune, often a love song, sung in Judeo-Spanish) *Los Bilbilicos* (also known as *La Rosa Enflorece*) shares a melody with the Sabbath table song, *Tzur Mishelo Achalnu*. It is impossible to offer precise dates for these folk melodies, since the tunes were rarely notated, but it can be assumed that the former must have come first, because it would have been unseemly to "defile" a liturgical hymn by associating it with a secular text. Still, the easy acceptance of the tune for both secular and sacred use is testimony to the existence of a willingness to "borrow" musical styles across any liturgical or cultural divides.

The Jews of Sepharad

When the Jews were expelled from Spain (1492) and Portugal (1497), they once more carried their melodies into exile with them. This time, the liturgical texts were mostly fixed, but the melodies with which they were sung underwent variation and substitution as Jews came into contact with new cultural influences in the many lands where they sought refuge. Jewish-themed songs for holiday and lifecycle celebrations, as well as completely secular songs sung by Jews, also experienced musical transformations as they came into their new surroundings. Jews in Morocco, Greece, Turkey, and (the former) Yugoslavia continued to sing songs of Spanish kings, warrior maidens, and the castles of Barcelona, but the melodies for these common stories reflected regional tunes, and the texts accepted new terms in Arabic, Greek, Turkish, and other local languages. Transmitted orally (Judeo-Spanish, also known as Ladino, was chiefly a home-based language and rarely used for literary composition or even personal correspondence), these songs continued to evolve in their new communities, long enough to be captured by modern ethnographers. They also inspired new songs in the local style well into the modern era: one anonymous song from Turkey celebrates how good it feels to dance the Charleston; Flory Jagoda (b. 1925) has made a great contribution to knowledge of the recent past, and to the vitalization of the contemporary Sephardic repertoire, recording songs handed down to her by her grandmother in Bosnia, and writing new songs in the traditional style (1989a and b).

Sephardic music sung by Jews who fled north to the Netherlands took on even stronger resemblance to Western musical forms. As the Jews became comfortably assimilated into local society, they took advantage of economic opportunities presented by the colonizing activities of Dutch explorers. Jewish immigrants from Amsterdam made their way to South America and the Caribbean in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and from Brazil to American shores in 1654. While the sheer number of adherents to this northern Sephardic tradition waned over the years, in large part due to their assimilation within Ashkenazic communities, the tendency of these more Westernized communities to notate their liturgical melodies enabled them to be faithfully maintained into the twenty-first century.

Ashkenazic Jewry

The Jews who made their way to Central and Eastern Europe came to be known as Ashkenazim (from *Ashkenaz*, the ancient Hebrew term for "Germany"). As in other communities, local variants were numerous, but these are largely incidental, but for the occasional preference of the major mode by German Jews for some rituals where Eastern Europeans favor minor melodies. All Ashkenazic Jews, however, share the MiSinai tunes that emerged in Germany between the eleventh and fifteenth centuries.[6] Largely associated with the High Holy Day liturgy of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, these melodies and melodic fragments constitute some of the most enduring and universal aspects of Ashkenazic liturgical tradition. Beyond the MiSinai tunes, however, the strong preference among Ashkenazic rabbis for maintenance of local musical custom (versus the acceptance of the role of improvisation in the local musical tradition of Jews in Arab lands, for instance) led to consensus among Ashkenazic Jews regarding the "correct" chanting of liturgical texts. Here again, however, there is evidence that the MiSinai melodies share strong similarity to contemporaneous non-Jewish songs.

The greater tendency of Western musicians to notate their songs provides the best available evidence of exchanges between Jewish and non-Jewish musicians involving all aspects of Ashkenazic music. Eric Werner (1959) documents similarities between Christian plainchant and Ashkenazic song affecting the MiSinai melodies as well as other aspects of Jewish liturgical tradition. Early work by Idelsohn (1929) also describes the interchange between musicians performing on informal occasions outside the more strict constraints of the synagogue. Notwithstanding their rejection of music following the destruction of the Temple, the rabbis encouraged the use of music for the obligatory rejoicing that accompanied Jewish weddings (as well as the more rare dedications of synagogue buildings or Torah scrolls), and recognized the contribution of klezmorim to these events. These itinerant musicians usually lacked formal training, but were skilled enough to play most of the music requested of them by ear. Because Jewish performers tended to be more personally reliable than others (the negative reputation musicians have for questionable professional and personal behavior is long lived) they were often requested to play outside the Jewish community, where they learned the popular tunes of the day. They often imported these "foreign" melodies to their Jewish audiences, in addition to playing Jewish tunes for their non-Jewish listeners; as long as the music was lively enough for dancing, everyone was happy.

The emergence of Hasidism in the mid-eighteenth century also had a profound effect on Jewish attitudes toward music of all forms. Led by Israel ben Eliezer (1700–1760), known better as the *Ba'al Shem Tov* (the owner of the good name), the Hasidim believed strongly in the power of music to enable one to achieve *dveykut*, a closeness with God. They also believed that there is a divine spark in every human creation, so that any melody might have the capacity to contribute to one's spiritual

elevation, if only it is sung with proper devotion. In addition to songs attributed to the Hasidic leaders themselves (either actually composed by the rabbis or by members of their "courts" who were inspired by them), stories abound of rabbis who "bought" melodies from shepherds or appropriated military marches or drinking songs for their purposes. Interestingly, the Hasidic masters championed the "*nig'n*," a wordless tune that could be sung at any tempo and express any emotion. Discarding the "profane" lyrics of imported melodies was the easiest way to give them new life and expand their aesthetic potential; in other cases, the rabbis would append Psalm verses or other biblical quotations. In this manner, hundreds of "foreign" melodies entered the repertoire, and as klezmorim performed them at various venues, the songs achieved great popularity, even outside the Hasidic community.

The repertoire of Ashkenazic music underwent further dramatic transformation in response to the emancipation of Central European Jewish communities in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. With citizenship came opportunities for university and conservatory study, and Jews could now develop the formal skills that would enable their further musical development. They also had greater exposure to secular and even sacred musical forms that some aspired to promote within the Jewish community. Notwithstanding the flourishing of Jewish folk music, synagogue song had remained constrained by rabbinic attitudes, and continued to be dominated by monophonic chants and little congregational participation.[7] Some leaders within the German community sought to reform Jewish practices to better reflect modern sensibilities, and, in addition to changing the vernacular of Jewish prayer from Hebrew to German, they were eager to enhance their services with the highest forms of Western music. The *nusach* (traditional chant) of Jewish worship was discarded, as were prohibitions against art music and, eventually, the use of instruments. Jewish musicians were now expected to emulate Johann Sebastian Bach (1685–1750), who as *kantor* (cantor) of his church in Leipzig, composed great music for his congregation. This created two problems: Not all of the new cantors were able composers, and many synagogue musicians relied upon already existing psalm settings and hymns by non-Jewish composers. More critically, the abandonment of *nusach* brought to an end the consistent and homogeneous liturgical practices that had unified Ashkenazic Jews for centuries. In place of the time-honored tradition, Jewish congregations, even within the same city, imported a disparate assortment of unfamiliar melodies.

Synagogue ritual was saved from a state of perpetual musical anarchy through the leadership of Solomon Sulzer (1804–1890). Raised in an observant Austrian home, but schooled in Western music, Sulzer maintained respect for the ancient musical traditions, but aspired to elevate the synagogue service with the best that modernity had to offer. Sulzer had been blessed with a remarkable voice that inspired his 1826 engagement as chief cantor of the Great Synagogue in Vienna, an appointment that brought him to the attention of composer Franz Schubert (1797–1831); Sulzer had premiered several of Schubert's songs in salons held at the

composer's home. When Sulzer published two volumes entitled *Schir Tziyon* (Song of Zion, 1840 and 1865) his renown within and outside the Jewish community brought great attention to his compositions. Cantors who aspired to emulate Sulzer in all manner of personal and professional comportment were now able, at least, to sing the master's music.

Sulzer's music was the first to fill the liturgical void created by the reformers' zeal, and spread rapidly; his melodies for *Shema* and *Ki MiTziyon* remain the standards in Ashkenazic synagogues around the world. Congregations across Austria and Germany clamored for his new music, complete with choral accompaniment, challenging *hazzanim* whose knowledge of synagogue tradition did not usually include formal musical skills. In Berlin, a young Louis Lewandowski (1821–1894) was engaged as choir master to aid the local *hazzan* in interpreting Sulzer's scores. Lewandowski was the first Jew to graduate from the prestigious Berlin Academy, and later used his skills to compose his own music for the synagogue; his settings of *Lecha Dodi*, *Tzaddik Katamar*, the Friday night *Kiddush*, and *Kol Nidre* are well known.

The popularity of these new compositions, that combined reverence for their texts with the highest level of musicianship, spread widely, affecting even communities in Eastern Europe whose populations were never officially "enlightened."[8] The *chor shul* (choral synagogue) became extremely popular in cities like Kiev and Odessa, and provided the early inspiration for composition of art and theater works that pushed the boundaries of Jewish music.

Jewish Music on Stage

The grudging recognition of the need for music in the synagogue eventually led to the development of intricate systems of liturgical chant. The rabbis also accepted the proliferation of quasi-liturgical songs for holiday and lifecycle celebrations, and turned a blind eye to secular songs accompanying childrearing, household chores, and work life (especially since they frequently carried references to Jewish life and values.) There was no room within Jewish tradition, however, for music that would serve as pure entertainment, without some ritual or educational purposes. By the late nineteenth century, continuing contact between Jewish and non-Jewish communities and increasing recognition of a widespread lack of knowledge about Jewish history and tradition among the masses led some to believe that theatrical and other ventures might serve a positive communal function. Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908) earned himself the title "father of the Yiddish theater" by capitalizing on existing traditions of wedding entertainers and *Purimspiels*[9] in a campaign to elevate the masses with tales inspired by the Bible and Jewish history, and librettos carrying high Jewish moral values. Goldfaden's operettas included *Di Kishefmacherin* (The Witch) (1878), *Shulamith* (1880), *Dr Almasaro* (1880),

Bar Kochba (1883), *Akejdas Yitzchak* (The Binding of Isaac) (1891), *Meilits Ioisher* (*The Messenger of Justice*) (1897), and *Ben Ami* (Son of My People) (1907). A multitalented impresario who wrote, directed, and produced his own ventures, he was less a "composer" than a "melodist" and adapter of preexisting materials; his best-known song, *Rozhinkes Mit Mandlen*, was based on a contemporaneous lullaby, *Unter Dem Kind's Vigele*. Goldfaden's efforts inspired the proliferation of other troupes, but their collective success was cut short by Tsar Alexander III, who imposed a ban on Yiddish theater in 1883. The increasing anti-Jewish sentiment of the time provided an impetus for the immigration of some two million Eastern European Jews to America between 1880 and 1920, and these included Yiddish actors who established new troupes in New York and other American cities.

Russian antisemitism provoked an unexpected response among those Jews who declined to leave Europe. Surrounded by nationalist sentiments that consciously excluded them from participation in Russian culture, Jewish intellectuals increasingly turned to exploration of a Jewish culture from which they had previously sought to distance themselves.[10] Ethnographic expeditions to the Russian hinterlands produced anthologies of Jewish folk poetry and song. In 1901, composer Joel Engel (1868–1927) presented a lecture-demonstration at the Moscow Polytechnic Institute that featured his arrangements of ten folk songs from amidst several hundred collected. The program was well received by its primarily non-Jewish audience, and reported on favorably in both the Jewish and secular press, inspiring Engel to continue his efforts on behalf of Jewish folk song. He subsequently repeated the presentation at the St Petersburg Conservatory, this time attracting several of the school's Jewish students to the audience. Engel's lecture held special interest for one of them, Ephraim Skliar (1871–1943), who, unlike most of his fellow Jewish students, had had an early immersion in Jewish music as the son of a cantor and a stint as a *zingerl* (a young singer, typically accompanying an itinerant *hazzan*). Skliar was sufficiently excited by Engel's work to attempt to emulate it. In 1902 he formed a Jewish music club at the Conservatory called *Kinor Zion* (Lyre of Zion). In that same year, Skliar arranged a Yiddish folk song for his work in Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov's (1844–1908) composition class. Rimsky-Korsakov spent an entire class session praising the work and concluded the lesson by encouraging his Jewish students to take up the cause of Jewish music.

Kinor Zion was a brief experiment, cut short by Skliar's graduation from the Conservatory the following year, but his interest in Jewish music never waned. He was later joined by new students Lazare Saminsky (1882–1959), Solomon Rosowsky (1878–1962), Michael Gniessen (1883–1957), and others, and in 1908 they secured permission from the local authorities to establish *Die Gesellschaft für jüdische Volksmusik*, the Society for Jewish Folk Music. In truth, the members of the Society were less interested in Jewish folk music, per se, than in their use of it to produce genuine Jewish art music. In this, they modeled their activity after the Nationalist music of Russia and other countries that included traditional folk material in their art music.[11] The members of the Society were eager to establish themselves as

composers in a Russian milieu that would otherwise have rejected them for being Jews. Like Goldfaden, these composers were also galvanized by the opportunity to raise the level of the Jewish masses, this time alerting them to their own heritage of traditional music, and demonstrating that Jews could create music that could stand on stage and be both artistic and Jewish.

During the height of its activity, from 1908 to 1918,[12] the Society published some 88 works, ranging from anthologies of folk songs to choral arrangements, art songs, and a great many chamber works featuring violin or cello with piano accompaniment. These small-scale works were easily performed in the towns and villages where Society members traveled to promote their activities, presenting more than a hundred and fifty concerts in the years 1909–1910. The composers' early work focused on settings of familiar Jewish melodies, in an effort to highlight the Jewish musical content of their work and to engage listeners who were largely unfamiliar with art music. Rosowsky's setting of *Lomir Zich Iberbetn* (Let Us Reconcile) and Joseph Achron's (1886–1943) treatments of the nursery rhyme, *In a Kleyner Shtibele* (In a Small Cottage) and the (previously cited) lullaby, *Unter Dem Kind's Vigele* (Under the Child's Cradle) are examples. The composers quickly moved on, though, to writing compositions that bore the flavor of Jewish tradition, without necessarily quoting preexisting materials. Songs in Yiddish could easily be acknowledged as part of the continuum of Jewish music; there was already a vast repertoire of Yiddish folk songs whose only connection to the Jewish people was, indeed, their language (including the above-mentioned *Lomir Zich Iberbetn* and *In a Kleyner Shtibele*). Instrumental works devoid of "Jewish" text faced a more difficult road: there is nothing intrinsically Jewish about a sonata for violin and piano. Jewish titles like *Hebraische Tanz* (Hebrew Dance) and *Hebraische Melodie* (Hebrew Melody) encouraged audiences to listen with a "Jewish ear," but, in reality, these composers, who had already created an unprecedented genre called "Jewish art music," were consciously pushing the envelope for what might be considered Jewish music.

Jewish Music in America

An improved climate for Yiddish theater in Russia gave a new lease to the life of that genre, and invitations for some of the Society's members to compose incidental music for new dramatic productions provided a healthy intersection between these two new forms for the stage. Still, the massive migration of Jews to America (among them most of the members of the Society for Jewish Folk Music) in the first part of the twentieth century could not help but shift the focus of Jewish music activity to the New World. Klezmer bands and talented thespians found homes in the Yiddish theater, and favorite songs from the most popular performances sold thousands of copies in sheet music and on new 78 rpm recordings.

Several of the transplanted Society members became associated with the Reform synagogue, serving as music directors and organists, and writing new music (including complete settings of the Sabbath liturgy) for cantor and choir, with organ and other instrumental accompaniment. Ironically, the Orthodox community also offered a venue for exceptional performances of Jewish music. The eagerness of metropolitan Orthodox synagogues to attract large congregations gave rise to a "Golden Age of *Hazzanut*." Virtuoso cantors like Joseph "Yossele" Rosenblatt (1882–1933), Mordechai Hershman (1888–1940), Zavel Kwartin (1874–1953), and Moshe Koussevitzky (1899–1966) performed on concert stages as well as in the synagogue, and made their way into thousands of homes through their popular recordings of cantorial music (and occasional Yiddish songs).

For many, however, this move to America was more than geographic; the cultural differences between Europe and the United States created lures and opportunities that were difficult to ignore. Stars of Second Avenue's Yiddish Theater made their way to Broadway, or much further West, to Hollywood and the burgeoning film industry. The best of the klezmorim joined the big bands of the Swing era and more than a few talented Jewish musicians sold their songs on Tin Pan Alley, rather than writing for exclusively Jewish entertainment.

American concert halls also welcomed the development of new art music with Jewish themes – even when the audiences were not exclusively Jewish. Ernest Bloch (1881–1959) contributed a long list of "Jewish" titles to the repertoire; *Schelomo, Rhapsody for Cello and Orchestra* (1916) and his *Baal Shem Suite* (also known as *Three Pictures of Jewish Life*) *for violin and piano* (1923) remain standards, and his epic *Avodat HaKodesh (Sacred Service)* for cantor, choir, and orchestra (1933), though intended for use in the synagogue, has been more frequently presented on the concert stage. Darius Milhaud (1892–1974), Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco (1895–1968), Arnold Schoenberg (1874–1951), Aaron Copland (1900–1990) and Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990) head the list of well-known composers who included music with Jewish content in their catalogs. They have been joined more recently by David Diamond (1915–2005), Samuel Adler (b. 1928), Steve Reich (b. 1936), Paul Schoenfield (b. 1947), Judith Lang Zaimont (b. 1945), and Osvaldo Golijov (b. 1960), among others. As the envelope created by the work of the Society for Jewish Folk Music was stretched ever wider, champions of Jewish music continued efforts to "define" Jewish music without reaching consensus.

Continuing cultural developments in America had an impact on her Jewish citizens and their music. By the second half of the twentieth century, the soldiers who had "saved the world" from Fascism did not want to sit passively in their synagogues, listening to performances by the cantor and choir. In the Orthodox community, a native-born generation of American Jews established "Young Israel" synagogues where lay *shelichei tzibbur* led services dominated by active congregational participation. Congregational singing was also championed early by leaders of the American-created Conservative Movement. The Cantors Assembly produced *Zamru Lo*, a three-volume anthology of melodies that retained the traditional

nusach but allowed congregants to take an active role in the singing. Max Wohlberg (1907–1996) who taught cantors-in-training at the movement's flagship Jewish Theological Seminary of America encouraged his students to bring these tunes to their congregations, and composed his own melodies that have transformed the services of all denominations. In the Reform movement, composers like Max Janowski (1917–1991) and Ben Steinberg (b. 1930) included unison refrains and lyric melodies in their works for cantor and choir, so that congregants could feel comfortable singing along.

The line between "ritual" and "secular" Jewish music has always been blurred, as has the distinction between "Jewish" music and that of its surroundings. Since the 1960s, those overlapping influences have had growing cultural and economic significance with the burgeoning of a popular Jewish music industry in America. Not surprisingly, the first ventures came from Orthodox young people comfortable with their religious identities, but eager to express themselves in an American vernacular. They translated the populist klezmer bands of old into contemporary folk and rock ensembles with Jewish names like *The Rabbi's Sons* and *Ruach*. These bands set liturgical texts to music, but with no expectation that the music would find its way into the synagogue; in the Orthodox community, the continuing prohibition on the use of instruments in the synagogue continued to be observed. Somewhat ironically, however, the populist singing of the Young Israel congregations drew no lines to separate what (unaccompanied) melodies might be used during worship. There, as elsewhere throughout Jewish history, liturgical texts might be adapted to these new, youthful melodies, as well as to Broadway show tunes, television theme songs, or radio hits.

Another important exception to the presumption against crossover between the "popular" and liturgical repertoires involved the music of Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach (1925–1994). Carlebach was educated in mainstream seminaries before adopting a Hasidic approach to Jewish life and music, and used his prodigious melodic skills and charismatic personality to reach out to Jews across the generational and denominational spectrum, performing in coffee houses and on college campuses across America and beyond. He made many professional recordings that helped to spread his songs, many of which quickly reached the status of "traditional folk songs" and were adopted by independent prayer groups and established congregations alike. In the past, when the text associated with a favorite melody fell out of favor, Jewish communities would preserve the tune by associating it with a new or different text. In the case of Carlebach's music, prayer leaders indicated their fondness for his tunes by adapting the same melody to suit a variety of liturgical moments.

The Reform community also welcomed contemporary music, often produced and disseminated through its summer camps and youth movements. The difference here was that the very same music might be used in services on Friday night and in a concert on Saturday night. Melodies for *Shalom Rav* and *Oseh Shalom* by Cantor Jeff Klepper (b. 1952) and Rabbi Dan Freelander (b. 1952) of the duo *Kol B'Seder*, and

Mi Shebeirach by Debbie Friedman (1952–2011) became part of Reform liturgy and of popular performance.

Just as other communities sang their popular music in Judeo-Arabic, Ladino, and Yiddish, it was not long before American Jewish musicians began to sing in their own vernacular, English. Some of these songs combined liturgy in Hebrew with spontaneous English translations, while others moved away from traditional texts entirely. Female composers like Friedman, Linda Hirschhorn (b. 1947), and Geela Rayzel Raphael (b. 1953) frequently highlighted the stories of biblical women, while others attempted to reference Jewish history and values through their song lyrics. Safam, a Boston-based band established in 1974, has written music in a variety of contemporary musical styles, while Moshe Yess (1945–2011), the Diaspora Yeshiva Band (based in Israel, but with American-born musicians), and Stacey Beyer (b. 1960), among others, have written songs that adapt American country and bluegrass music.

Jewish Music in Israel

All Israeli music is not Jewish. Though founded as a refuge for the Jewish people, Israel has always been home to many populations. Its residents include Christians and Muslims as well as totally secular Jews who proudly claim Israeli citizenship but decline to identify with Judaism. Even Hebrew is no longer an exclusively Jewish language; since being reborn in the modern era, *lashon haKodesh* (the holy tongue) has been used for everything from international commerce to street repair and garbage collection. There is a great deal of Israeli music that is simply Israeli – and not even distinctively so.

But since the moment in 1881 when new waves of Russian antisemitism inspired modern immigration to the Holy Land, Jews from around the world have returned to their ancient home, bringing with them the languages and cultural flavors of their native lands. This "ingathering" of the Jewish people yielded a cacophony of cultural conflicts and ethnic debates that, like everything else about Jews and their lives, has been reflected in music. Efforts to define "Israeli music" have failed to come to any useful consensus, but despite the best intentions of some of its most liberal protagonists, the "Jewish" voice in Israeli music remains a regular refrain. It manifests most clearly in a genre described by cultural historians as simply *shirei eretz yisrael*, songs of the land of Israel. The first of these were folk tunes imported by European immigrants,[13] their lyrics (in stilted, Ashkenazic Hebrew, and studded with biblical quotations) proclaiming that the land would once again yield its milk and honey. Mordecai Zeira (1905–1968), Matityahu Shelem (1904–1975), and Yedidia Admon (1894–1905), all immigrants from Europe, were among the "fathers of Israeli folk song" who wrote new melodies to express their admiration for the physical beauty of the reclaimed land, and the joy of harvest celebrations on the

kibbutz (an agricultural collective).They adopted the songs of the shepherds who played their flutes to the flocks on Israel's ancient hills, but also incorporated the flavors of the nomadic peoples who shared the land, and of the Jews from Arab lands. This mingling of East and West also emerged as the most salient characteristic of the nascent Israeli music, and had a strong impact on early developments of Israeli art music led by Paul Ben-Haim (1897–1982), Alexander Uriah Boskovich (1907–1964), and others.

Love of the land of Israel is not the sole component in establishing the "Jewishness" of Israeli music: there are biblical quotations and Jewish values sprinkled liberally among many otherwise "secular" songs punctuating Israel's accomplishments over the years. Efforts to irrigate the desert were extolled with prophetic images of water returning to the wilderness, and the hit song from the short-lived 1956 Sinai Campaign evoked references to the Israelites' first experiences at the foot of Mount Sinai. Naomi Shemer's famous anthem, *Yerushalayim Shel Zahav* (Jerusalem of Gold) was written to punctuate the annual Independence Day song festival in 1967. It borrowed biblical history and Talmudic quotations to paint a song of longing for the Old City that still remained under Jordanian control that spring. When the city was liberated a few weeks later, the songs that celebrated the reunification extolled the "City of David" and reminded the nation that it was the home of the Temple and the center of Torah. The popularity of Hasidic and Oriental Song Festivals in the 1970s and 1980s gave prominence to settings of traditional texts. Not surprisingly, in an era of internal and external threats to Israeli political security and physical wellbeing, a generation of musicians that once thrived on political commentary and satire is returning to the Bible and the prayer book. Entire festivals and long lists of recordings are devoted to settings of *piyyutim* (quasi-liturgical religious poetry) and performers from Shlomo Gronich (b. 1949) to Kobi Oz (b. 1969) have produced albums that "return to the sources." Further, response to Israel's internal cultural conflicts has produced collaborations among musicians representing a wide range of styles and personal beliefs. New song texts describe Israeli multiculturalism as a "coat of many colors" and attempt to resolve religious and ethnic debates by having the singers agree simply that, "I am a Jew."

Outside of Israel, Israeli music – especially that which blends Jewish consciousness with a memorable tune – has been a topic of interest for Diaspora Jews, and a relatively easy means for non-speakers of Hebrew to engage with Israeli song.[14] During the 1930s the Jewish Agency disseminated "Palestinian folk songs" on postcards in an attempt to link Jewish communities abroad with the culture of the Yishuv and to attract donations to help support the growing settlements. In the early years of the state, Israeli settings of biblical and liturgical texts made their way into prayer services, wedding celebrations, classrooms, and summer camps, especially in North America. After the Six Day War of 1967, advertising campaigns directed at Diaspora audiences combined Israeli songs with compelling images of the Holy Land to try to increase tourism. New recording technologies, music

videos, and easy Internet distribution have brought Israeli artists to international audiences, within and outside the Jewish community.

The World of Jewish Music

One ironic development in Jewish music in the postmodern era has been the rediscovery of historic Jewish musical sounds. The revival of klezmer music, beginning in the early 1970s, heralded a reawakening of interest in all aspects of Yiddish music and culture. The fact that klezmer has achieved some of its greatest popularity among non-Jewish European audiences and musicians might be surprising if it were not for the fact that the roots of this music are indeed in the larger European society that sustained the Jewish community for more than a thousand years. More recent but parallel efforts have been undertaken to preserve the music of a variety of Jewish ethnic communities from Spain to Iraq. In each of these instances, there has also been interest in the music from the non-Jews who lived next door, attesting to the "universality" of the music which the Jews simply adapted to suit their texts. But more consistent with the development of Jewish music over the past three millennia have been attempts to create new music by capitalizing on "traditional" ethnic strains. Galeet Dardashti (b. c. 1975) of Divahn combines her family's Persian roots with modern sensibilities. Yasmin Levy (b. 1975) recreates the songs of her family's Sephardic heritage and writes her own new music in a similar vein (and language). Achinoam Nini (b. 1969) combines the music she learned at home from her Yemenite parents with the music of American singer-songwriters like Joni Mitchell (b. 1943) that she learned during her youth in New York City. And Chava Alberstein (b. 1948) returned to her native tongue to record an album of her own new Yiddish compositions (*The Well*, 1998) with the highly regarded Klezmatics. The success of that collaboration led her to return to Yiddish for portions of her 2001 recording, *Foreign Letters*, and to produce a second, all-Yiddish album *Lemale*, in 2006.

At the same time, contemporary performers are including Jewish messages in new musical styles that have no obvious connection with the Jewish community. The Hip Hop Hoodios (Josh Norek and Abraham Velez) describe themselves as a "Latino-Jewish urban collective" and aggressively combine Hispanic and Jewish musical materials and languages put to a hip-hop beat. Matisyahu (b. Matthew Paul Miller, 1979) has adopted a Hasidic lifestyle, but conveys his belief in the coming of the Messiah and his commitment to Jerusalem with the sounds of reggae, rock, and hip-hop beat boxing. The popularity of these artists and the success of their music are not limited to their acceptance within the Jewish community. Instead, it signals a new cosmopolitanism for Jewish music that may be historically unprecedented, but is likely pointing to the future course for Jewish music, with one foot grounded in tradition, and the second ready to head off in any new direction that sounds promising.

Notes

1 References to "choral" and "orchestral" performances in the Temple should not be confused with contemporary usage of those terms. "Choral" singing meant "group performance" but did not involve harmonies employed in modern choirs. Orchestras were limited to the specific instruments permitted for use in the Temple, and also likely involved "simultaneous" playing that merely attempted to support the singing, without any of the harmonic or contrapuntal composition associated with Western ensembles.

2 All Temple activity was the domain of members of the biblical tribe of Levi. Members of specific levitical families were designated to provide musical accompaniment.

3 The term "*hazzan*" carries various meanings and associations. First used in the fifth century, it referred to ritual functionaries who would take responsibility for such synagogue-based tasks as rolling the Torah scrolls to their proper places (for non-contiguous holiday readings) and tidying the rooms where services took place. The term was also used pejoratively to refer to *shelichei tzibbur* who would extend the services with over-long offerings of extemporaneous prayers and displays of their own vocal prowess.

4 The first Jerusalem Temple was destroyed in 586 BCE and the Jewish community was largely taken into exile in Babylonia. Permission was given to "return" to Israel at the end of the sixth century BCE, but, by then, many Jews had become entrenched in local society with little to no memory of life in the Holy Land, and so large numbers declined the opportunity. Babylonia (ancient Iraq) thus became the first continuous Diaspora community, and remained an important center of Jewish life until the twentieth century.

5 Contemporary use of the term to denote all non-Ashkenazic Jews reflects the common origin as well as shared religious rituals and philosophies of the Eastern/Oriental and Sephardic communities, but fails to take into consideration the very real cultural distinctions that emerged between the groups.

6 "MiSinai" means literally "from Sinai" a designation suggesting that the melodies were conveyed at Mount Sinai along with the Torah. Known in Poland as *Scarbove niggunim* (sacred melodies), these tunes are unquestionably European in their origin, but are considered "lofty" songs, befitting their emotionally charged texts. These texts are recited in a season when Jews repent of their sins in hopes of securing health, economic success, and personal good fortune in the coming year. It is understandable, then, that Jews would seek to come before God in a familiar musical milieu. Even the most liberal communities that have accepted new music for a variety of High Holy Day texts continue to retain the most important of these melodies, including the tune that pervades the evening service and the setting of the *Kol Nidre* text recited as a prelude to Yom Kippur prayers.

7 There are examples of choral art music written for synagogues in Italy and Amsterdam, but these were isolated instances that did not gain full acceptance, and are also notably outside the Ashkenazic realm, where rabbinic rulings against music tended to be more strictly enforced.

8 Political emancipation of Jews in France, Germany, and Austria facilitated intellectual "enlightenment."

9 The only "permitted" theatrical performances in the Jewish community, these usually comic retellings of the story of biblical Queen Esther had existed since the early Middle Ages. The "performances" were staged in conjunction with the annual holiday, often by roving bands of youths who sought "payment" in the form of pastries and liquor.

10 It is important to note that not all Jews lived in stereotypical shtetls or adhered faithfully to traditional Jewish practice.

11 Mikhail Glinka (1804–1857) was the first to use Russian folk song to create classical art music. His patriotic opera, *A Life for the Tsar* (1836), inspired songs by Balakirev, the opera, *Boris Godunov* (1873) by Modest Mussorgsky, and others.

12 Political and economic upheavals between 1918 and 1921 forced the closure of the St Petersburg chapter and most other subsidiaries. The Moscow group reestablished itself as the Society for Jewish Music and continued its activities until anti-Jewish government policies forced its closure at the end of 1929.

13 Naftali Herz Imber rewarded the people who offered him hospitality during his visits to the early settlements of the Yishuv (pre-State Israel) with recitations of his poetry. Samuel Cohen, a recent immigrant to Rishon LeTziyon, adapted the lyrics of one of Imber's poems to the melody of a Romanian folk song, *Carul cu boi* (Cart and Ox) The resulting song, *Hatikvah*, was quickly adopted as the Zionist anthem and has been sung by Jews around the world since the late nineteenth century. When the crowds that gathered to hear Ben-Gurion proclaim Israel's independence on May 14, 1948 greeted his announcement by singing *Hatikvah*, it became the de facto anthem of the new Jewish state, but it was not officially accepted as such until a vote of the Israeli parliament in 2004.

14 There is also pride in the fact that Israeli pop musicians have embraced all of the contemporary musical forms in their turn, but the linguistic demands for appreciating recent trends in rap and hip-hop have generally kept non-native speakers from fully embracing the newest songs.

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American Jewry's Identification with Israel

Problems and Prospects

Laurence J. Silberstein

Introduction: Transformative Forces in Twentieth-Century American Jewish Life

In 1979, Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, a committed Zionist and respected leader of the American Jewish community, sought to dramatize a far reaching and, in his view, dangerous change occurring in American Jewish life:

> One can no longer be excommunicated in Modern America for not believing in God, for living totally outside the tradition, or even for marrying out. Instead, a new heresy had now emerged to mark the boundaries of legitimate Jewish identity, the heresy of opposition to Israel and Zionism.[1]

Hertzberg, whose views I shall discuss at greater length below, was calling attention to a phenomenon that I shall refer to as Israelism, in which the uncritical identification with Israel was seen to be an essential component of Jewishness. In Hertzberg's view, far from being a natural part of historical Jewishness, Israelism constituted a significant and dangerous change.

The establishment of the State of Israel in 1948 is undoubtedly regarded by most Jews as a major moment in modern Jewish history. However, prior to Israel's victory in the Six Day War (1967), an unquestioning identification with the state had not yet come to be widely seen as essential to American Jewish identity.[2] In the wake of Israel's overwhelming victory, what some scholars refer to as Israelism began to emerge as one of the most powerful forces in American Jewish life. Shaped

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by the discourse emanating from major Jewish organizations, the identification with Israel emerged as a foundational component of American Jewishness.[3] During the 1970s and 1980s, most American Jews seem to have embraced the premise that to be a loyal Jew was to uncritically support the policies and practices of the Israeli government. As a corollary, it was believed that Jews must refrain from any public criticism of these policies. Any departure from this uncritical identification with Israel was widely regarded as detrimental both to Israel and to American Jewry.

To some scholars, this identification with Israel was a key component of American Jewry's new civil religion. The concept of civil religion, drawn from the writings of sociologist Robert Bellah, is used to describe a complex of narratives, sites, rituals, heroes, and institutions regarded as sacred in the culture of organized Jewish communal life. While civil religion is commonly synthesized with the conventional Jewish religion, it is often used to replace it. Among the foundations of American Jewish civil religion are the identification with the State of Israel and the attachment to the memory of the Holocaust.[4]

The majoritarian American Jewish discourse regarding Israel, widely regarded as the authoritative discourse, continues to be dominated by a simplistic binary: one is either "pro-Israel," which requires unequivocally endorsing Israeli actions and policies, or "anti-Israel."[5] To be pro-Israel is to accept uncritically the narrative being disseminated by whichever Israeli government happens to be in power. Those who publicly question that narrative, challenge Israeli policies and practices, or express sympathy with the plight of Palestinians are commonly labeled as anti-Israel, anti-Jewish, antisemitic, and self-hating.

The limits imposed on Jewish public discourse have made it difficult, often impossible, to publicly explore or debate the complexities of Israeli life and its effects on Jewish identity. Strict boundaries inhibit American Jews' ability to publicly express concern for the effects of Israeli practices and policies on Palestinians. Visiting Israeli scholars, accustomed to the more contentious Israeli culture, frequently express surprise or shock at the narrow limits imposed on American Jewish public Jewish discourse.

Nonetheless, despite efforts to stifle dissent, a constant stream of minoritarian voices continually challenge what has been purported to be the "official" discourse. These challenges have taken a variety of forms including writings by scholars, rabbis, and public intellectuals; peace groups; journals, and individual statements objecting to the simplistic identification with Israel that seem to pervade Jewish life. Thus, by the 1990s, if not before, it was becoming increasingly clear that significant changes were occurring among American Jews.

By the end of the twentieth century, events in Israel were helping to fuel minoritarian forces in American Jewish life. One such event was the emergence of post-Zionism, a discourse that envisioned the possibility of Israel moving beyond the conventional Zionist discourse and becoming a fully democratic state. Most of those contributing to post-Zionist discourse were academic scholars who were radically transforming the ways that Israeli history was being represented both in

Israel and the United States. In addition to historians, Israeli sociologists, anthropologists, philosophers, and cultural critics helped to make American readers more aware of the complex character of Israel society and culture. As a result, it became more difficult for Jews both in Israel and the United States to continue adhering to simplistic mythic assumptions about Israeli society and culture.

A second event contributing to the rethinking of American Jewry's highly simplistic identification with Israel was the news that direct peace negotiations were being carried on in Oslo between Israel and the Palestinians, something considered to be impossible by many Israeli and American Jews. When, in 1993, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin stood in the White House Rose Garden and publicly affirmed the national aspirations of the Palestinian people, many Jews felt that an important roadblock to rethinking the realities of the Middle East had been removed. With one dramatic speech, Rabin wiped away years of refusal by Israeli leaders to acknowledge the existence of a Palestinian nation. Notwithstanding the subsequent breakdown of the Oslo process, dialogue with the Palestinians, previously considered to be a taboo, now became a reality. In the process, the boundaries of the internal American Jewish dialogue were widened. In Israel, as in the United States, the prospect of a Palestinian state was no longer considered to be a delusion.

Accordingly, a growing number of American Jews found the dominant unreflective and uncritical approach to Israel to be increasingly untenable. Dissatisfied with the limits imposed on communal discourse, more and more American Jews began to publicly question and criticize Israel's ongoing occupation of the West Bank, its treatment of Palestinians both inside and outside of the state, and its continued building of settlements in the West Bank. A growing number also began to open to the possibility, represented in post-Zionist discourse, that Zionism was incapable of adequately defining and addressing the problems in the Middle East.

Nor was the identification with Israel the only aspect of American Jewish life being called into question. Other minoritarian voices were at work challenging and rethinking other dimensions of Jewishness in the United States. These included challenges to the prevailing ways that Jews represent and relate to the memory of the Holocaust; questioning the assumption that Jewishness is essentially a matter of religion; and challenging the prevailing male- dominated discourse within which Jewishness is discussed and enacted. Owing to space limitations, I shall limit my discussion to those who are rethinking the identification with Israel and its place in American Jewish life.

This chapter is an attempt to help open up the spaces of American Jewish discourse on Israel and explore its implications for the ways that Jewishness and Jewish identity are understood. To that end, I shall discuss a variety of views that see no inherent conflict between questioning policies and practices of the Israeli government and being a loyal, committed Jew. Among these voices, which I call minoritarian, there are those who challenge the Zionist premises on which the state of Israel has been founded.

Following philosopher Gilles Deleuze, I use the concepts majoritarian/minoritarian not as numerical terms, but as a way of highlighting the multiplicity of forces within Jewish life. These terms put into question a prevailing assumption that there is an authoritative, foundational, or essential model of Jewishness or Jewish identity. They thus suggest that, as in any collectivity, there are multiple forces operating in Jewish life at any given time, generating differing perspectives on Jewishness. Viewed in this way, Jewishness is a continual state of flux or becoming. Accordingly, the question of authenticity is continually in play. Positions considered to be minoritarian at one point in time, may subsequently come to be accepted as part of the majoritarian or authoritative model. While some advocate creative experimentation in an effort to transform what is taken to be majoritarian, others resist change and seek to block these forces.

The case of Zionism enables us to see how what, at one time, was regarded as a minoritarian perspective may come to be seen at another time as majoritarian or authoritative. When Zionism first emerged in the last decades of the nineteenth century, it was viewed by most Jewish leaders as an inauthentic deviation from what they held to be true Jewishness. Yet by the second half of the twentieth century, Zionism had come to be widely accepted among Jews as an essential component of Jewishness. At the same time, questioning the legitimacy of the Zionist model came to be viewed as heretical. Thus Zionism, regarded in one period as a minoritarian force, eventually came to be accepted as the standard. For those who today embrace a minoritarian perspective, however, it is by no means out of the question that Jewishness may be so transformed so that Zionism will no longer be part of the majoritarian model of Jewishness.

With some exceptions, scholarly accounts of American Jewry commonly represent minoritarian Jewish voices as marginal or illegitimate. Embracing the majoritarian perspective, most scholars have viewed identification with a Jewish state as a natural and essential component of being Jewish. As a result, limits have been imposed on the viable transformative possibilities within Jewish life. However, as seen above, what is viewed as transgressive in one era may subsequently transform what comes to be considered legitimately Jewish in another.

Although largely unrecognized, a growing number of American Jews are embracing positions that resemble those which in Israeli have been referred to as post-Zionist. In this sense, to be post-Zionist is to believe that Zionist discourse does not provide a viable way to frame either the complex realities of the Middle East or the realities of American Jewish life. As I shall discuss below, many American Jews already consider Zionist concepts such as homeland and Diaspora to be obsolete. For them, homeland no longer refers to a land in the Middle East, but rather it refers to the particular land in which they live. Rather than oppose a Jewish state, these Jews find it to be either irrelevant to or problematic for their Jewishness.

For a growing number of American Jews, some of whom I shall discuss, the uncritical identification with Israel and Zionist discourse raises profound ethical issues. In their view, Jews have an ethical responsibility to challenge and criticize

Israeli policies and practices and the way that they are supported by American Jews. They are particularly concerned that Jewish public discourse, insofar as it desensitizes Jews to the effects of Israeli policies and practices on its Palestinian others, undermines Jewish ethics.

While many Jews believe that only a unified American Jewish position towards Israel serves the best interests of both Israel and American Jewry, others advocate multiplicity and difference as necessary for a healthy, vibrant community. In the view of the latter, frank and open dialogue is essential for a dynamic and creative communal life. Ironically, the openness of debate that some seek to establish among American Jews has characterized Israeli society since its inception.

Since Israel's establishment, a broad spectrum of positions, largely unrecognized, have existed among American Jews regarding its place in Jewish life. One of the most controversial positions argues that it is not only legitimate, but healthy, for Jews to formulate critical positions and foster open debate. As more Jews are coming to realize, to speak of any of these positions as pro- or anti-Israel, as many Jews and Jewish organizations are wont to do, is indicative of a highly oversimplified perspective that belies the complexity of the situation.

A New Form of Heresy

In the decades following the Six Day War (1967), any Jewish individual or group that publicly questioned Israel's actions was accused of exposing Jews to the judging eye of non-Jews and undermining the security both of Israel and of Jews in general. With few exceptions, national Jewish organizations worked to stifle open criticism of Israel. Yet, notwithstanding these efforts to impose a silence on the Jewish community, a small but persistent stream of critical voices could be heard.

One of these critics was Rabbi Arthur Hertzberg, whose announcement of a new heresy was cited at the beginning of this chapter. In applying this term Hertzberg sought to put into question the uncritical identification with Israel that had emerged as a new litmus test of Jewish identity. No longer, as in the past, was a heretic one who publicly denied religious *doxa* (doctrines) or transgressed religious norms and practices. Now, the concept of heresy was being used to delegitimate Jews who publicly criticized Israeli policies and practices. Particularly within the context of Jewish organizations and institutions, Jews who voiced attitudes and perspectives critical of Israel were publicly denounced in a manner previously reserved for religious heretics. Thus, new boundaries were being drawn to distinguish legitimate from illegitimate Jewishness.

Hertzberg was himself a committed Zionist who embraced the teachings of the Hebrew writer Ahad Ha-am. In Ahad Ha-am's perspective, a Jewish homeland, rather than a place to which all Jews should immigrate, serves as a spiritual center in which Jewish culture can flourish, Notwithstanding his Zionist perspective,

Hertzberg vehemently objected to the compliant stance of national Jewish organizations which subordinated themselves to every Israeli government no matter how objectionable its policies and practices. Also, while feeling a strong bond, Hertzberg could not accept that identification with Israel could effectively replace religious beliefs and practices as the foundation for American Jewish life.

Hertzberg was particularly troubled by the militant form of Zionism embodied in such leaders as Menachem Begin and was outspoken in his criticisms of the 1982 invasion of Lebanon conducted under Begin's leadership. At the same time, he was critical of American Jewish leaders who refused to speak out against it. He also criticized Israel's efforts to expropriate the Arab lands conquered in the Six Day War, siding instead with former prime minister David Ben-Gurion, who, in the wake of Israel's victory, advocated returning those lands to the Palestinians.

Another Jewish scholar who vehemently objected to American Jewry's uncritical embrace of Israel and Zionism was Jacob Neusner, a rabbi and university professor, who considered himself to be a Zionist. Yet he, too, was deeply concerned about the commanding position that identification with Israel had assumed among American Jews. Writing in the late 1970s, Neusner focused his criticism on the mythic force that the narrative "From Holocaust to Redemption" had acquired in American Jewish life.

Whereas earlier generations of Jews were inspired and motivated by biblical myths, contemporary American Jewry, he argued, was inspired primarily by narratives build on contemporary events in Jewish history. Instead of deriving inspiration from biblical narratives about creation, revelation, and redemption, American Jews drew their inspiration from narratives about the Israel and the Holocaust. Much of their Jewish identity derived from memorializing the victims of the Holocaust and celebrating the State of Israel. These events and the myths that were built around them infuse the life of American Jews with a sense of transcendent meaning.[6] Although having occurred far from America's shores and remote from American Jews' everyday experiences, these events constitute the generative myth by which American Jews make sense of and decide what to do with that part of them set aside for being Jewish.[7]

Neusner was disturbed by the ways that American Jews used Israel and the Holocaust to "make sense of why he or she is Jewish." To answer questions such as "why in a free society a person should be part of the Jewish people, or what it means to take part in the life of that people," Jews should not be turning to events "far from America's shores and remote from American Jews' everyday experiences." Instead, they should seek the answers to these questions within their own immediate life experience. Only there will they discover a new rationale for preserving their Jewishness. In Neusner's view, it was nothing short of delusionary for American Jews to ground their Jewishness in a place where they did not live or events in which they did not directly participate.

However, Neusner did not deny the Jewish community's need for myth. But these myths, these foundational narratives that imbue life with meaning and

purpose, should resonate with their felt experience and be "appropriate to the circumstances of the 1970s and beyond . . . whatever they may be." To continue embracing the myth of "Holocaust and redemption" would only contribute to the atrophy of American Jewish life. As a result, "the younger generation will be deprived of the everyday experience of the transcendent, if that experience has to take the form of holocaust and redemption."[8]

Neusner's analysis of American Jewry's relationship to Israel through the language of myth was significantly broadened and expanded in the work of Jonathan Woocher. Writing in 1987, Woocher applied the concept civil religion, a term made popular by sociologist Robert Bella, as described above.[9] Focusing on description and analysis rather than criticism, Woocher argued that American Jewry had shifted the focus of their spiritual life from a transcendent deity to the polity of the Jewish people. Woocher, like Neusner, considered myths and rituals relating to Israel and the Holocaust to be central to this new American Jewish civil religion. Within the civil religion, Israeli narratives, spaces, and personalities were transformed for American Jews into sacred myths, sacred sites, and sacred heroes. Without adopting a particularly critical stance, Woocher nonetheless made a significant contribution to explaining the religious force that Israel and the Holocaust had acquired in the life of American Jews.

In addition to Hertzberg and Neusner, political scientist and columnist Leonard Fein questioned the dominant American Jewish narrative regarding Israel. Fein, however, rather than talk in terms of myth and heresy, shifted the focus of his criticism to the discourse of power. For many Jewish thinkers, the major lesson of the Holocaust was that Jews could never again allow themselves to be in a position of powerlessness. Without a state of their own, Jews were at the mercy of other nations. Only with the establishment of a Jewish nation state, ran the argument, had Jews gained power. Now, for the first time in two thousand years, they were capable of defending themselves, a feeling expressed in the cry "never again" voiced by Israeli soldiers in June 1967. According to this perspective, in the post-Holocaust era, the most urgent need was for Jews to establish a position of power that would secure them against persecution and violence.

Fein viewed the problem of power differently. Although supporting a strong state of Israel, he saw the basic danger to be the abuse of power. Having succeeded in establishing a state in the name of the Jewish people, Israelis, and by extension American Jews, were confronted with ethical challenges previously unknown to them: "The story is about how, in our generation, the Jews have come to power, in Israel and America, and about our response to that transforming change in the historic Jewish condition."[10] Thus, the major problem regarding Israel was how Jews, unaccustomed to exercising political and military power, would adapt to the new circumstances. Having criticized other nations throughout history for their abuse of power, would Jews, having now attained military and political power, act differently? Long deprived of such power, Jews were eagerly embracing and

celebrating it. However, they all too often overlooked the dangers that power posed to the Jewish people itself.

While most American Jews accepted the Jewish rise to power as embodied in the new Jewish state to be an unequivocal blessing, Fein was one of a small number of dissenting voices. Power, rather than something to be eagerly embraced, was a test of the truth of Jewish ethics: "It is the question of truth in Jewish advertising; of whether, now that we have won some measure of autonomy, we are who we have said we are and want to be."[11]

In addition to the writers discussed above, a number of liberal American rabbis repeatedly expressed concern over Israel's role as occupying power. Employing the rhetoric of the biblical prophets, they objected to the role of Jews as occupiers who controlled the lives of over 1.5 million Palestinians. American Jews, by censuring all dissenting voices, were being complicit in this oppression. "The cruelest paradox is that though Israelis, despite their emergency, debate what attitudes to take to the Palestinians, in America merely to raise the issue is to risk being branded a heretic or an enemy of the Jews."[12]

The Rise and Fall of Breira

A rare example of organized public criticism of Israeli policies was the organization Breira, established in the spring of 1973. The case of Breira provides an excellent example of the efforts of majoritarian Jewish organizations to stifle, silence, and demonize minoritarian critics of Israel within the American Jewish community. According to Breira, American Jews have a responsibility to work for a just solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict. As explained by Rabbi Arnold Jacob Wolf, the very name Breira,

> betokened our desire for an alternative (breira in Hebrew) to the intransigence of both the PLO and the several governments of Israel. We proposed what has come to be known as the two-state solution, now more than ever the chief possibility for a peaceful, long-term solution to the Middle East conflict.[13]

In the document proclaiming its founding, Breira, to the consternation of many Jews, called on Israel to make territorial concessions to the Palestinians and recognize the legitimacy of Palestinian national aspirations. With regard to the internal conditions of American Jewry, Breira deplored "those pressures in American Jewish life which make open discussion on these and other vital issues virtually synonymous with heresy."[14]

Breira represented a highly significant effort to provide a minoritarian voice within American Jewry. Originally gaining the support of numerous scholars, rabbis, and writers, Breira also "generated fierce international debate over the limits

of public dissent on conflict in Jewish communal life and virtually every major Jewish organization took a public stand on the group and what it advocated."[15] Rejecting efforts of critics to identify their position with that of Israel's enemies, Breira proclaimed its love for both the people and the land of Israel:

> Our immediate and overriding concern is peace in the Middle East. Our concern grows out of love and respect for the people and the land of Israel as well as our understanding that the continuity of Jewish life in the Diaspora is inexorably linked to the existence of Israel.

To Breira, those who uncritically supported Israeli actions were actually complicit in the injustices committed in the name of the state. Turning the tables on those who accused them of harming the Jewish cause and denounced them for breaking silence, they argued:

> We are not innocent bystanders. If we share the anxieties about Israeli's policies, we have the responsibility to say so. If we detect mistakes which might have catastrophic consequences, we must not ignore or swallow our *concern . . . For the sake of Zion, we shall not be silent*.[16]

In the early period of its brief life, Breira attracted support from dozens of Conservative and Reform rabbis, members of Washington *havurot* (fellowships), and socialist Zionist groups like HaShomer HaTzair who were prepared to transgress the taboo against publicly criticizing Israel. Through criticisms and attacks in Jewish journals and newspapers, by 1976, Breira's opponents gained control of the public debate. Even as the national press was reporting on a new openness within the Jewish community, the tide had begun to turn.[17] Despite what had, for a short time, appeared to be a new willingness of American Jews to accept public criticism of Israel's policies and actions, "by the end of 1977 Breira was dead."[18]

An Emerging Post-Zionist Ethos in America: Hope Renewed and Dashed

Throughout the 1980s, a small but growing number of American Jews were becoming disenchanted with the conventional narratives about Israel disseminated by American Jewish organizations and educational institutions. Although initially regarded as a great victory of Israel, the Six Day War of June 1967 and the ensuing occupation of the West Bank and Gaza soon generated increasing criticism among American Jews as well as their Israeli counterparts, Over the next two decades, a number of new Jewish peace groups emerged including Breira, American Friends of Peace Now (1981) and Brit Zedek veShalom (2002). The liberal journal *Tikkun*

(1986), which published many articles by American and Israeli writers criticizing Israeli practices and policies, provided a forum for those who challenged the majoritarian narrative.

Among American Jews in the 1980s, a growing number of dissenting voices began to question the viability of a humane and democratic Jewish state. In the face of changing realities, including the Lebanon War of 1982 and the First Intifada (Uprising), one began to hear more public expressions of disillusionment. A notable example was Bernard Avishai's *The Tragedy of Zionism: Revolution and Democracy in the Land of Israel,* which appeared in 1985.[19] Moving to Israel in the hope of finding a society that successfully blended Labor Zionism and democracy, Avishai encountered a legal and political system which fell far short of filling the requirements of a fully democratic society. "Israelis enjoy many civil liberties, but the state also enforces important laws and economic regulations which contradict democratic ethics."[20] Among these contradictions were the absence of civil marriage, the prohibition against selling land to non-Jews, particularly Arabs, the discriminatory practices against Arab citizens, the annexational trends in the West Bank and Gaza, the lack of political and civil rights for Palestinians living in the occupied territories, and the intensifying alienation of Israeli Jews from Palestinians.

Anticipating what soon came to be known as a post-Zionist perspective, Avishai criticized the failure of outdated Zionist ways of thinking "to meet the challenges of a post-zionist Israel."[21] Arguing that "Zionism is tragically obsolete," Avishai criticized Jews in the West, particularly the United States, who, largely ignorant of Zionist doxa and the complex realities of Israeli society, nonetheless continued to embrace Zionism. Rather than a sign of strength, this uncritical embrace, Avishai argued, pointed to an underlying paradox within American Jewish life: "Perhaps the hardest thing for old Zionists to concede is what Ben-Gurion at once perceived and repressed: that a profession of Zionism in the West, and especially in America, is not so much a resistance to assimilation but a symptom of it."[22] Avishai's narrative of faith and disillusionment was to be reiterated by a steady stream of American Jewish academicians and intellectuals.

Meanwhile, a 1990 article in *Tikkun* by Israeli historian Benny Morris helped make American readers aware of a significant development in Israeli scholarship. Referred to by Morris as New Historians, a group of Israeli scholars had begun to challenge the dominant Israeli historical narratives.[23] Born after the 1948 war and reaching adulthood after the 1967 war, the Israel in which these scholars had grown up differed significantly from the one described in official state narratives or taught to schoolchildren. Living in an Israel that was an occupying power ruling over territories occupied with over one million Palestinian inhabitants, they were led to ask new questions rarely asked by the previous generation of scholars. Applying new scholarly perspectives, this small but growing body of historians, social scientists, philosophers. and literary scholars produced a body of writings that challenged the dominant representations of Israeli history and society.[24] Labeled by critics as post-Zionist, they utilized comparative methodologies rarely used by

Israeli scholars, and drew upon previously classified documents to lay the ground for a major rethinking of Israel's Zionist foundations.[25] As a result, they significantly altered the narratives regarding the effects of the early Zionist settlement on the economic life of the indigenous Palestinian population; the Israeli role in the flight of threequarters of a million Palestinians in 1948–1949; the problematic treatment of Jewish immigrants from Middle Eastern countries (Mizrahim) in the early decades of the state; and questioned the claims regarding Israel's efforts to bring about peace following the 1948 war.

In his landmark book, *The Origins of the Palestinian Refugee Problem* (1989), Morris skillfully drew on previously classified documents to weave together a balanced and complex account of conditions leading to the flight of Israel's Arab population across the land. According to Morris, who acknowledged being shocked by what he had discovered, the Israeli military played a significant role in expelling a large number of Palestinian Arabs from their homes, not only during the war of 1948 but afterwards as well. Such findings helped to dispel the mythic image of Israeli history that prevailed among both Israeli and American Jews and helped to fuel a more critical approach. For American Jews as for Israelis, the writings of Morris and other Israeli scholars helped to foster an alternative, less mythic, more complex, understanding of Israeli history and society.

Like their Israeli counterparts, many Americans, particularly Jewish scholars, were shocked by these revelations. Having been raised and educated to view Israel in mythic terms, they found themselves in the position of having to rethink the nature of the state and their relationship to it. As the number of courses on Israel and the Middle East on college campuses expanded, a new generation of American Jewish students was introduced to a very different Israel.

In the early 1990s, the challenge to the majoritarian American Jewish position on Israel received a powerful and unexpected impetus from the news that the government of Yitzhak Rabin had been secretly engaged in peace negotiations with Palestinian representatives in Oslo. In 1993, speaking in the White House Rose Garden, Rabin became the first Israeli leader to publicly declare the legitimacy of Palestinian national aspirations. In so doing, he removed a long-standing taboo and opened a new space for Jewish public discourse, Israeli as well as American.

For a short time, it appeared to many as if peace was within reach. In the euphoria that followed, some observers even began, prematurely as it turned out, to ponder the effects peace would have on American Jewish identity. How, they wondered, without recurring crises in the Middle East, would Jewish organizations continue to inspire and motivate American Jews?

However, by the end of the 1990s, Rabin had been murdered by a Jewish assassin, peace negotiations were at a standstill, and the Oslo peace initiative was being increasingly demonized. In the words of one observer, "American Jews moved subtly but conclusively from being one people (K'lal Yisrael in Hebrew) to becoming many peoples."[26]

In the wake of these events, a surge of new disenchantment was becoming evident.[27] Undoubtedly, a good deal of this disenchantment may have been the result of unrealistic expectations. Faced with what many considered to be the deteriorating state of American Jewry, many rabbis, communal leaders, and educators viewed a strong attachment to Israel as helping to bring about a renewed of Jewish life in the United States. For a small but growing number of American Jews, however, the realities of Israeli life and history continued to produce a deep sense of disappointment and disillusionment.

Rising Criticism and Intensifying Conflict: Ratcheting Up the Discourse

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, one finds a recurring theme of disenchantment in writings by American Jewish scholars and intellectuals. Writing in 2004 of his experience while serving on reserve duty during the 1982 Lebanon War, Aryeh Cohen, an American Jewish scholar born in Israel, describes how he came to realize that

> the zionist narratives that had played such a decisive role in shaping his Jewishness were nothing but myths: Slowly, in fits and starts, dark nights of struggling, hours of conversation, the myth crumbled. Purity of arms fell away, then purity of intention, then integrity of purpose. Surprisingly, the last to go was the abiding belief that the State of Israel was and had to be the center of the Jewish universe.[28]

Although unable to "recall that there was a single, particular moment when the light went on and I realized that the zionist narrative was also myth," Cohen eventually decided to leave Israel and move to the United States. Rejecting the Zionist concept that affirmed the State of Israel as the center of the Jewish world, he criticized the ways in which the borders of Jewish public discourse "are assiduously patrolled by self-appointed guardians of the walls." While Israel seeks to speak for the entire world Jewish community while the Jews who speak for Israel "confound and subvert the Judaism I love and teach – the Judaism that can contribute to creating a better and more just world." Moreover, Cohen came to see that far from being "a spiritual and intellectual wasteland drawing sustenance from Jerusalem, the Diaspora – especially the North American Diaspora – has flourished."[29]

In 2004, playwright Tony Kushner and writer Alisa Solomon published an important collection of dissenting views on Israel by American Jews. The book provides diverse critical perspectives on Israel by a variety of writers, scholars, and artists, and put forth views on American Jewish identity that diverged from those commonly represented as mainstream. Writing in the wake of the second

and more violent Intifada (2000), the editors spoke of "Our shared anger, bewilderment, grief, and occasional despair over the Palestinian-Israeli conflict."[30] Kushner and Solomon also expressed their deep concern over the widespread, but relatively recent conflation of Judaism and Jewish identity with Israel and Israeli nationalism. Such a conflation and the resulting interpretation of Jewish identity had, they argued, "done a great disservice to the heterogeneity of Jewish thought, to the centuries- old Jewish tradition of lively dispute and rigorous, unapologetic skeptical inquiry." Disturbed by what they regarded as the "artificial flattening and deadening of discourse within the Jewish community "enforced by rage and even violence," they decried the ways in which "the vital connection between Jewish culture and the struggle for social and economic justice is coming apart."[31]

Kushner and Solomon also took issue with a quarter-page statement in the *New York Times* (April 15, 2002), in which a group of Jewish writers and scholars, "including some of the most prominent names in Jewish-American literature and intellectual life" expressed their unqualified support for Israel and asked readers to join them in condemning suicide attacks on Israeli Jews. One of the things that troubled Kushner and Solomon was the fact that "the word 'Palestinian' does not appear at any point in the declaration."[32] They were further disturbed that, while the statement emphasized the suffering of Israelis, no mention was made of the heavy casualties suffered by the Palestinians in the West Bank in February and March 2002, as a result of attacks by the Israeli military.

> That the word 'Palestinian' cannot occur at any point in their declaration is more than a sign of how polarized discourse around the conflict has become. It also reveals how desperately a certain version of 'love for the state of Israel' requires nothing less than the disappearance of Palestinians, at least figuratively.[33]

Troubled by the skewed ways that the Jewish relationship to Israel is represented in the United States, Kushner and Solomon challenged those who would impose rigid boundaries in an effort to enforce a unity and rigidity on the basic heterogeneity of Jewish life. They thus viewed their book as an effort to open spaces for and highlight the place of difference in American Jewish life. Although most of the contributors expressed a deep feeling of connection to Israel, it was very different from that uncritical, subservient connection that characterized the majoritarian model of American Jewry.

The editors and contributors alike also rejected the commonly heard argument that to publicly criticize Israel is to endanger Israel. Instead, they insisted that criticism is fully consistent with supporting Israel. Moreover, identifying as Jewish in no way precludes supporting Palestinians' national claims or expressing compassion for their suffering. Thus, the articles render problematic the conventional binary of pro-Israel/Anti-Palestinian and pro-Palestinian/anti-Israel.

Among the contributors, novelist Jonathan Safran Foer, whose book *Everything Is Illuminated* and the film based upon it had been warmly welcomed by Jewish audiences, expressed his anger and confusion about his relationship to Israel:

> I felt, at the center of my being, a reflexive core. It wasn't the residue of Hebrew school indoctrination, and it wasn't any sort of intellectual peace I'd come to. It was angry, and ashamed, and relentless, and fundamental to me. Leaving, I then realized, would be as difficult as coming had been. The distance surrounds me. The wall divides me. I am entirely confused in the deepest part of me. And it's not a good confusion. It's not a beautiful, sustaining argument. It's painful. And it's a confusion that I absolutely must face.[34]

On another front, historian Yuri Slezkine, the author of a highly suggestive and widely praised book on Russian Jews in the late nineteenth century, expressed how troubled he was by what he considered to be a double standard that existed among American Jews. According to Slezkine, Jews regularly accept Israeli practices which, if carried out by another nation on its Jewish inhabitants, would produce an outcry of moral outrage. Responding to a common argument that Israel, a besieged country, needs to act to ensure its survival as a Jewish state, Slezkine observes:

> The Holocaust created an aura around Israel that made it different from all other modern states that excluded it from some of the expectations that are usually associated with modern states – and from certain criticisms. Because of its very special role, history, and moral claims, Israel became the state to which standard rules don't apply.[35]

As an example of actions taken by Israel that other states are prevented from doing, Slezkine pointed to the construction of the wall separating Israel from Palestinian communities in the West Bank. Speaking to an interviewer he observed,

> Yes, like build walls. There was an attempt to build a wall in a town in the Czech Republic – to separate the Gypsy area from the rest of the town. [What happened?] There was an outcry. It couldn't be done. So, this seems to me to be yet another tragic irony in the history of the Jews: The attempt to create a state like any other led to the creation of a state that is remarkably different from the family of states it set out to join.[36]

It should in no way be assumed that the weakening of ties to Israel was limited to Jewish academicians and public intellectuals. Reviewing the data from a series of studies going back to the 1980s, scholars Steven M. Cohen and Ari Kerman found "diminished attachment to Israel among American Jews."[37] According to the

authors, "a massive shift in attitudes toward Israel" was occurring. Although it is primarily the younger population that is "the least Israel-engaged," the authors argue that this group is increasingly replacing the older generation which is "the most Israel-engaged." In light of the formative role played by Israel in the constructing of American Jewish identity, these changes have profound implications. In their view, the fact that:

> each age group is less Israel-attached than its elders suggests that we are in the midst of a long-term and ongoing decline in Israel attachment. The age-related differences cannot be attributed primarily to family life cycle effects, if only because the age-related declines characterize the entire age spectrum from the very old to the very young.[38]

Additional evidence of the disaffection of young American Jews was cited in a widely discussed article published in 2010 by Columbia professor Peter Beinart. Beinart's article focused on a series of focus groups of young Jews commissioned by several Jewish philanthropists who wanted to know "why American Jewish college students were not more vigorously rebutting campus criticism of Israel." Beinart called the report prepared by Republican pollster Frank Luntz as "the most damning indictment of the organized American Jewish community that I have ever seen." Beinart lists three characteristic beliefs that characterized these young Jews. First, they "reserve the right to question the Israeli position" and they resisted "anything they see as 'group think.'" Second, these young Jews "desperately want peace," and third, "some empathized with the plight of the Palestinians." What this meant to Beinart is that most of these young Jews "were liberals, broadly defined." While they were not necessarily opposed to Zionism, "the only Zionism they found attractive was a Zionism that recognized Palestinians as deserving of dignity and capable of peace." Moreover, they "were quite willing to condemn an Israeli government that did not share these beliefs."

Beinart concluded, among other things, that "in the face of a growing tension between liberal positions and Israeli realities, the liberalism of young Jews was trumping their attachment to Israel. In cases where there were conflicts, young Jews preferred the liberal position to the Israeli one." Having been raised as liberals and taught to identify with Israel, these young Jews felt a strong tension. Having grown up during a period in which Israel was an occupying power exerting overwhelming military superiority against a far weaker Palestinian enemy,

> They are more conscious than their parents of the degree in which Israeli behavior violates liberal ideals and, and less willing to grant Israel an exemption because it survival seems in peril. Because they have inherited their parents' liberalism, they cannot embrace their uncritical Zionism. Because their liberalism is real, they can see that the liberalism of their parents is fake.[39]

An example of the strident and contentious tone that informs public discourse on Israel among American Jews is the controversy that erupted around the writings of historian Tony Judt. A Jew who had lived for a time in Israel and had even considered moving there, Judt had written a series of articles (2002, 2005, 2007) in which he expressed serious reservations about the viability of the Zionist vision of a Jewish nation-state in the Middle East and reflected on possible alternatives, Among his most provocative positions was his view that:

> In a world where nations and peoples increasingly intermingle and intermarry at will; where cultural and national impediments to communication have all but collapsed; where more and more of us have multiple elective identities . . . Israel is truly an anachronism. And not just an anachronism but a dysfunctional one. In today's "clash of cultures" between open, pluralist democracies and belligerently intolerant, faith-driven ethno-states, Israel actually risks falling into the wrong camp.[40]

In Judt's view, a Jewish state dominated by a particular ethnoreligious group is not viable. Moreover, Israel's continued occupation of the West Bank and Gaza not only posed a danger to the state, but also perpetuated a highly difficult and often dangerous situation for Jews throughout the world. After exploring the alternatives, Judt argued that the only way for Israel to remain viable and democratic was to reconstitute itself as a bi-national state, a position set forth in the 1930s and 1940s by such figures as Martin Buber and Judah Magnes: "A binational state in the Middle East would require the emergence, among Jews and Arabs alike, of a new political class. The very idea is an unpromising mix of realism and utopia, hardly an auspicious place to begin. But the alternatives are far, far worse."[41]

While understanding how his views provoked those supporting Israel as a Jewish state, Judt was unprepared for the outpouring of anger and invective. While some critics accused him of being antisemitic, others went so far as to link his views to Nazism, of "belonging to the Nazi Left," of hating Jews, and of denying Israel's right to exist. Executives of Jewish organizations accused him of "pandering to genocide" and being "party to preparations for a final solution." As Judt reported, one Harvard law professor made an analogy with Adolf Hitler's one-state solution for all of Europe, while a former speech writer for President Bush charged him with advocating "genocidal liberalism." A writer from *The New Republic* referred to his views as "anti-Zionism with a human face."[42] Commenting on the hysterical tone of many of the reactions, Judt expressed his deep concern over "the direction in which the American Jewish community is moving; Reaction to the essay suggests that this anxiety is well founded."[43]

Further effects of the controversy included the withdrawal of an invitation to Judt to speak to the group 20/20 at the Polish Consulate in New York and pressure on him to cancel a speaking engagement at the Holocaust Resource Center at

Manhattan College. In both instances, the hosts referred to pressure that had been brought by rabbis and communal leaders.[44]

Other efforts to control Jewish public discourse regarding Israel came about in reaction to Tony Kushner, whose coedited book *Wrestling with Zion* was discussed above. Kushner had also written the screenplay for Steven Spielberg's film, *Munich* (which attempted to provide a balanced depiction of both Israeli and Palestinian claims.) The film had been widely criticized within the Jewish community for what was seen as its "moral equivalency," i.e., assigning equal weight to the claims and actions of Palestinians and Israelis alike. An invitation to Kushner to speak at Brandeis University's 2006 commencement aroused strong reactions among some groups of Jews who objected to his appearance at a Jewish-sponsored university. As described by Kushner in a letter written to Brandeis' President, the reactions echoed those provoked by Judt's articles:

> In the past several months, since I wrote the screenplay for the film Munich, I've become exhaustively familiar with a small but energetic and strident group of people who have called me immoral, an anti-Semite, a self-loathing Jew. In the hysteria of their invective there's a discernible desire to establish an orthodoxy, dissension from which is heresy.

A significant event that played a major role in opening spaces of American Jewish public discourse on Israel was the establishment of a lobbying and political action group J Street in 2008. In the view of its founders, J Street provided a much needed alternative to the highly influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), regarded in many circles, particularly in Washington, as the voice of American Jewry on matters relating to Israel. Although AIPAC had gained a controlling position in shaping American public discourse on Israel, J Street's founders considered AIPAC's hardline position on the Israeli–Palestinian conflict to be unrepresentative of the views of the broader American Jewish community. In contrast, J Street advocated negotiating with the Palestinians for a two-state solution and "the right of the Palestinians to a sovereign state of their own."[45] Recognizing the constraints that had been placed on debates about Israel within the American Jewish community, J Street sought to "actively promote debate in the United States that is as open and spirited as it is in Israel" and rejected "alliances with the religious right or any radical ideologues" that had marked the activities of AIPAC and other Jewish organizations.[46] Responding to attacks claiming that it was not truly supportive of Israel, J Street characterized itself as pro-Israel and supportive of the original Zionist idea of a Jewish homeland. However, they rejected the assumption "that agreeing with everything that the current Israeli government does should be the litmus test of for what it means to be pro-Israel."[47] As both an advocacy group and a Political Action Group, J Street has sought to counter the impression created by AIPAC that dialogue and reconciliation, including efforts to engage in dialogue with Hamas, are inimical to Israel's best interests. In July 2009,

J Street was invited along with representatives of other American Jewish organizations to a meeting with President Obama at the White House, a highly significant accomplishment. As expressed by one Israeli observer, J Street's founding was an important step toward towards broadening the terms of debate in Washington and correcting the highly imbalanced representation of Israel's interests among American Jews.[48]

Beyond Zionism: Rethinking Homeland and Diaspora

A different kind of challenge to the majoritarian position regarding the place of Israel in American Jewish life comes from those who reject the Zionist claim that Israel is the Jewish homeland. In a widely discussed article on Diaspora published in 1993 in the highly respected academic journal *Critical Inquiry,* Jewish Studies scholars Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin formulated a Diasporist view of Jewishness. Objecting to the prevailing Zionist narrative which represents Diaspora as "the forced product of war and destruction" following the downfall of Judea in 70 CE, the Boyarins argue that the historical facts prove otherwise. Rather than being an imposed situation, the Jewish Diaspora actually emerged centuries prior to the destruction of the Temple when the majority of Jews lived voluntarily outside of the land.[49] However, this fact is suppressed in Zionist accounts of history.

In addition to the historical argument, the Boyarins also challenge the assumptions on which the Zionist solution rests:

> The solution of Zionism, that is, Jewish state hegemony, except insofar as it represented an emergency and temporary rescue operation, seems to us the subversion of Jewish culture and not its culmination. If represents the substitution of a European, Western cultural-political formation for a traditional Jewish one that has been based on a sharing, at best, of political power with others and that takes on entirely other meanings when combined with political hegemony.[50]

In their view, the history of Jewish Diaspora demonstrates that it is possible for a people to "maintain its distinctive culture, its difference, without controlling land, a fortiori, without controlling another people or developing a need to dispossess them of their lands."[51] While acknowledging the importance of Zionism as a temporary emergency rescue operation, they argue that a permanent Jewish state hegemony undermines the distinctive ethical concerns and practices that have marked Diaspora Jewry's efforts to resist assimilation and annihilation. Thus, in contrast to the prevailing Zionist view which denigrates Jewish life in Diaspora, the Boyarins propose a non-Zionist Jewish ethic which privileges Diaspora:

> We want to propose a privileging of Diaspora, a dissociation of ethnicities and political hegemonies as the only social structure that even begins to make possible maintenance of cultural identity in a world grown thoroughly and inextricably interdependent. Indeed, we would suggest that Diaspora, and not monotheism, may be the most important contribution that Judaism has to make to the world, although we would not deny the positive role that monotheism has played in making Diaspora possible.[52]

A different approach to the question of Diaspora is offered by Caryn Aviv and David Shneer in their book *New Jews: The End of the Jewish Diaspora* (2005). Rather than provide a critique of the conventional Zionist historical narrative, Aviv and Shneer ground their approach in ethnographic research. Studying Jews in several major world centers, the authors found that the Zionist discourse on Israel was simply irrelevant to those whom they label the New Jews. In the United States, the former Soviet Union and Europe, Jews "are rethinking their ideas about Israel, and the tensions between diaspora and homeland, here and there."[53] Not only have Jews moved beyond the boundaries of the Zionist discourse on homeland and Diaspora, they are "dismantling the very idea of diaspora in the way they live their lives."[54] Among the New Jews, there is a growing effort to "break down the inherent dichotomy informing the Israel/diaspora metaphor."

Eschewing the use of concepts like Diaspora and homeland, New Jews have become global, thus putting into question the conventional zionist spatial division. Mirroring concerns that some have labeled post-Zionist, "some secular and religious Jews have gone so far as to question the certainty of the Zionist idea."[55] They thus raise a question previously limited to a select group of Jewish intellectuals including Marxists, bi-nationalists, and the Israeli cultural group known as "Canaanites": "Is there a place for a Jewish state in a multicultural, transnational world?"[56]

Aviv and Shneer also found that New Jews are questioning the reality of a distinct Jewish people existing as a collective unified whole. Such a concept, they argue, simply fails to convey the realities of how Jewish identities and communities operate.[57] Rather than speak of "the Jewish people," "new Jews speak in terms of 'Jewish peoples.'"[58] In that new Jewish world, "power – cultural, political, economic – flows in many directions and to and from diverse places." Accordingly, whereas the Boyarins talk in terms of the conflict between Zionist and non- or post-Zionist discourse, Aviv and Shneer see an already transformed reality.

American Jews and Israel: Toward a Theoretically Informed Critique

A noteworthy challenge to the effort of American Jews to define Jewishness in terms of a particular kind of identification with Israel was occasioned by a statement of then Harvard President Lawrence Summers in 2002. Summers was troubled by

what he perceived to be the biased and unjustified criticism of Israel that was spreading across American university campuses.[59] In response, philosopher and feminist theorist Judith Butler objected to what she saw as Summer's effort to impose strict limits on Jewish public discourse. In her view, Summer's statement, which assumed that any criticism of Israel is anti-Israel – is tantamount to questioning Israel's right to exist. Summer's statement was therefore an effort to control "the kind of speech that circulates in the public sphere."[60]

Butler was particularly concerned about the way in which Summer equated Jewishness with a particular kind of identification with Israel. Such an assumption, Butler argued, has the effect of excluding those Jews, like herself, who, while emotionally invested in Israel, feel free to openly criticize its policies and practices.

> I take it that Summers view relies on the full and seamless identification of the Jewish people with the state of Israel, not only an 'identification' that he makes in coupling the two, but also an identification that he assumed to be subjectively adopted by Jews themselves.[61]

Butler, the author of influential works about the complexities of identity formation, emphasized its effects of identification on those defined as the "other." Insofar as Summers sought to place boundaries around Jewishness, he was excluding Jews who reject the majoritarian position on Israel. In Butler's view, having published critical statements regarding Israel's occupation of the West Bank and its actions towards the Palestinians, she would not be included in Summer's definition of Jewish: "What do we make of Jews, including myself, who are emotionally invested in the state of Israel, critical of its current form, and call for a radical restructuring of its economic and juridical base precisely because they are so invested?"[62] Butler insisted on the need for public spaces within the Jewish world that would encourage open debate and critique, Such spaces, she argued, help bring to light that heterogeneity of Jewish thought referred to by Kushner and Solomon. Butler also objected to any effort to essentialize Jewish and Jewishness by positing boundaries around what is legitimately Jewish. Such efforts, she argued, belie the complexity and multiplicity of Jewishness, Jewish identity, and Israeli society, "The 'Jew' exceeds both determinations, and is to be found, substantively, as this diasporic excess, a historically and culturally changing identity that takes no single form and has no single tells."[63]

Butler thus argues that group identity carries with it the obligation to reflect and criticize. Since determining who "we" are also determines who "they" are, critique may be seen to be an ethical responsibility of group belonging.

A further contribution that highlights the relationship of critique to Jewish belonging is that of postcolonial and cultural critic Homi K. Bhabha. Writing in a collection of essays on the parameters of modern Jewish identity, Bhabha argues that along with membership in a group comes the responsibility to negotiate and criticize the group's borders and boundaries:

> The value in belonging to a community, or signifying a sense of collective solidarity, does not lie in cultivating some deep structure of cultural authenticity conserved in the homogeneous empty time of tradition. A productive cultural confrontation lies in the ability to negotiate the ambivalent liminalities of a culture, its perceptual and experiential boundaries.

Jews, like all groups, must continually engage in a negotiation of internal differences. Insofar as the boundaries of a group are in a continual state of flux, this negotiation is necessary to the health and well being of any group. Rather than simply defining and defending the group's borders, internal as well as external, members have an ethical responsibility to participate in such negotiation:

> A community's real fault, its internal contradictions, or a singled out subject of difference, become the passage-ways through which a negotiation turns into the basis for a negotiated share in the collective person. Such passage-ways must be kept open for a range of border-crossings and cross-border identifications so that, in that iterative process, the community may be remembered.[64]

In Bhabha's view, the danger within a group is not internal criticism, but rather the form of belonging that seeks to forestall or prevent reflection and critique. Like Butler, Bhabha argues that this danger can only be averted in a community that is open rather than closed, inclusive rather than exclusive.

Conclusion

Viewed from this perspective, the writers whose work I have discussed may be seen as contributing to the vitality of the American Jewish community. Rather than present a danger to the health of the Jewish community, those who encourage reflecting on and criticizing the majoritarian view regarding American Jewry's identification with Israel help to shed light on and subject to criticism what Bhabha calls "the ambivalent liminalities" of Jewish culture. Challenging the efforts to obscure or suppress those spaces in which the clarity of Jewish identity is unclear, writers like the Boyarins, Shneer, Aviv, Kushner, Solomon, Cohen, Slezkine, Judt, Butler, and others have sought to open the internal borders of Jewish life. In so doing, they help create the spaces for a broader range of border crossings and cross-border identifications. In place of a normalizing majoritarian discourse that privileges center over margin, majority over minority, and unity over difference, these writers advocate a form of Jewishness that affirms multiplicity over singularity and difference over sameness. Challenging the majoritarian model of American Jewishness, which places the uncritical identification with Israel at the center, they seek to transform and broaden the ways in which American Jews enact their Jewishness.

Notes

1 Arthur Hertzberg, *Being Jewish in America. The Modern Experience*, New York: Schocken Books, 1979, p. 223, quoted in Leonard Fein, *Where Are We? The Inner Life of America's Jews*, New York: Harper & Row, 1988, pp. 86–87. See also Arthur Hertzberg, *Jewish Polemics*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1992, esp. Part 2, In Debate with Israel, and Part 6, In Debate with American Jews.

2 For Jewish attitudes towards Israel prior to the Six Day War (1967), see Marshall Sklare and Joseph Greenblum, *Jewish Identity on the Suburban Frontier*, vol. 1, New York: American Jewish Committee, 1967, ch. 6, and Nathan Glazer, *American Judaism*, 2nd edn, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972, ch. IX, Epilogue.

3 These organizations include but were not limited to: The Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, The Council of Jewish Federations, the United Jewish Appeal, the Anti-Defamation League of Bnai Brith, the American Jewish Committee, the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), and the Zionist Organization of America. See J. J. Goldberg, *Jewish Power: Inside the American Jewish Establishment*, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987, ch. 3.

4 See Jonathan Woocher, *Sacred Survival: The Civil Religion of American Jews*, Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1987.

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37

The Jewish Holy Days

Stanley Schachter

Our discussion of Jewish holy days concentrates on the central ideas that imbue each of them with its own distinctive quality. We will not attempt to present a detailed description of their ritual practices. Also beyond our scope are the ways in which our holy days have constantly reshaped themselves in their modes of observance through the attachment of new meanings, new texts and new rituals. Our approach will be to examine and to understand our holy days as key moments that enable us to experience a distinctive relationship to our people's past and to its dreams of the future.

Shabbat (The Sabbath Day)

Its full Hebrew name, Yom Shabbat, means the day of rest. It is the first holy day we meet in the Bible where it is presented as the culminating response to the preceding six days of Creation. Unique among all biblical holy days, the Shabbat is the only one that has no connection to a specific event in the history of the Jewish people. What then is it that gives Shabbat an importance so great that justifies its being celebrated every seventh day for all time?

The old cliché that "time is of the essence" turns out to be indispensable for our understanding of the meaning of Shabbat. By a happy coincidence, both our ancient Torah and modern physics are in accord regarding a critical aspect of time; that it moves always in only one direction, forward. The great British physicist Sir Arthur Eddington described it as the "arrow of time." In the Torah's lyrical language, the birth of time is the opening act, without which the entire saga of Creation could not have occurred. It is the ever forward movement of time,

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pictured by the Torah as day one, followed by days two, three, four, five, and six, that allows the world of nature to come into being. In the biblical Creation epic time, like Eddington's "arrow," moves always in a single direction. Time can never be undone or made to reverse itself. Each day of Creation is the outcome of advancing time, and each merits the Torah's congratulatory salutation: "God saw that it was good." The picture of God that emerges is that of a master craftsman who creates the dimension of time in order to fashion the successive, more and more complex, elements of space.

We owe to the Torah the notion of the seven-day week that eventually became a universal measure of time. For the Torah, every seventh day is to be set aside and made completely different from the preceding six days. Humans, fashioned on the sixth day, are the only creatures described as formed in God's image. Only they are charged with the task of maintaining the world. Only they have the capacity to identify with God's joy when He surveyed all that He had brought forth as time advanced. Only humans can grasp and share the knowledge that time is an ever unfolding, always forward advancing dimension. Paradoxically, only humans can appreciate the significance of resting from work and setting aside a day of rest in order to contemplate and celebrate the achievements of work.

The Torah's depiction of Creation completing itself in a day of rest, can serve as the miniscule template for the entire unfolding of history. Creation is thus seen not as an end in itself, but as a series of beginning points meant to reach a time of completion. Each moment of time is meant to bring us nearer to the ultimate goal, to an era of ever widening Shabbat experience that will be celebrated by all human beings. Understood this way, each weekly Shabbat, freed from weekday concerns, when preoccupation with monetary matters and the stress of the workplace are set aside, replaced by devotion to peaceful contemplation, to tranquil moments shared with family and community, is experienced as a foretaste of the final triumph of unfolding time. All of these hopes are captured in the Psalmist's paean of praise which hails the Shabbat as the precursor to a final, worldwide messianic future time. It takes its cue from the opening words of Psalm 91: "A psalm, a song to be sung on the day of Shabbat" – a song, says an interpretive midrash, for a time to come, a time that will be altogether Shabbat, a time of rest eternal (Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah, 31a).

Unlike all other Jewish holy days, Shabbat was not conceived as the capturing and reexperiencing of a Jewish historical event. It therefore transcends the experience of a single people. It is entirely devoted to a dream, a hope, a prayer, and a message beamed to all humanity that history is not meant to be an ever-recurrent cycle of endless failure and conflict. It grows from the conviction that Shabbat must not be relegated to abstract verbiage, but must be shared as an event, a weekly celebration, a palpable taste of a reality to be that will bind all of mankind in the gentle bonds of enduring togetherness and peace.

The Pilgrimage Holidays: Pesach, Shavuot, Sukkot

When we turn our attention to the three pilgrimage holidays, we are struck immediately by the shared characteristic that sets them apart sharply from Shabbat. Nowhere does the biblical narrative connect them to the realm of time which, as we have seen, is critical to our understanding of Shabbat. All three are born in the transforming experiences that occur early in the lives of our ancestors, events that shaped them into a people. Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot are presented as entry points, ritualized moments in the yearly calendar that keep alive the memory of those events. On another more profound level they serve as vehicles whereby we can identify with the trials and triumphs of our ancestors as they lived through those moments. What begins as remembrance can become an act of imagining ourselves as participants in them, allowing us to see ourselves as living with the past, and not merely living in it.

Pesach (Passover)

Biblical historians have generally settled on the date of 1250 BCE as the approximate time of our ancestors' escape from Egypt and their debased centuries-long existence as slaves. The epic of their stunning release serves as the birth moment of a new history, the history of the Jewish people. No longer is it the saga of a tiny, conflict-ridden nomadic family or of occasional larger-than-life individuals, sometimes inspired, often bewildering. The Torah's description of Israel's flight to freedom is mirrored in the Pesach festival, a seven-day event (eight days in lands other than Israel) during which texts and foods are combined to create rituals of remembrance and identification. The number seven, it should be kept in mind, is often encountered as a biblical device tracing to the biblical tale of the seven days of Creation, and adapted to other contexts to convey the sense of completion or the successful conclusion of transforming events. In the case of the Pesach festival, it conveys the sense that the liberation of our ancestors, though sudden and rapid, was too momentous to be encompassed by the ceremonies of a single day's commemoration.

Shavuot (Feast of Weeks)

The story of the Exodus from Egypt swiftly moves the newly freed people to the Sinai desert en route to their return to the Promised Land, the home of their forebears. Even more important, the rapid trek will bring them to the mountain of Sinai where they will hear the words of the Ten Commandments – better

understood as the ten utterances since not all of them are commandments. The Torah's description is a phantasmagoria of dazzling lights, thunderous sounds, and the gripping fear of a people unable to comprehend the meaning of its freedom, all of which signify to the reader that the Hebrew people will henceforth be the bearers of radically new religious doctrines. As the collective emissaries of a new way of apprehending the divine they are to be separated from all other peoples, and as bearers of a new code of moral behavior, all of its members, regardless of social position, wealth, royal status, or other rank, will be judged equally by their faithfulness to its demands.

This vivid dramatization of the encounter at Mount Sinai is encapsulated in the festival of Shavuot (a single day in Israel; two days in Diaspora lands), a name meaning "weeks," recalling the passage of seven weeks from the onset of the exodus to their arrival at Mount Sinai; hence the name Pentecost, from the Greek, meaning "the holiday of the fiftieth day." While Shavuot has long been regarded as an independent holiday, it is best understood as the culminating moment of the Exodus, marking the metamorphosis from physical escape to national purpose.

Sukkot (Tabernacles)

The Fall season is home to the third festival, Sukkot (Tabernacles) whose name literally means "booths," calling to mind the sometimes brutal and often distressful conditions endured by the former slaves in what unfolded as a series of tortuous detours over a period of forty years as they made their fitful way across the desert to Canaan. Sukkot is rich in agricultural symbolism: the *lulav* (palm branch), *hadas* and *arava* (myrtle and willow twigs), *etrog* (citron). Ritual practice combines them to evoke the image of a fruit-bearing tree, a bearer of a measure of shade and sustenance during the harsh times of the relentless years of wandering. The booths, which give the holiday its name, conjure up the image of the twig huts that served as makeshift housing during those fateful years.

The Torah, candidly and clearly, indicates that the seasons of the three festivals coincide precisely with the significant harvest times in the agricultural cycles of the land of Israel: Pesach, the starting time of the barley harvest; Shavuot, ending the harvest of other grains; Sukkot, when the harvest of vegetable and fruits was completed. This means, of course, that the celebrating of nature's gifts as sacred moments long predated the historical events the Torah later attached to them. This should be understood as more than a satisfying coincidence in which the theme of planting and growth, from seed to harvest, happily mirrors the birth and nurturing moments of the Jewish people. We must not forget that for our ancestors who underwent the many generations of slavery, their "seed" memories included their earliest beginnings as a tiny family group in Canaan where their transition from nomadic existence to a more settled one depended heavily on the predictability of agricultural seasons.

For their descendants, redeemed from slavery, their overwhelming goal was to return to Canaan and to resume the way of life that was so intimately bound to the phases of nature. Significantly, for the generation of former slaves, their remembered tales of Canaan and their personal experiences combined similar motifs of anxiety. The farmer's investment of grueling labor carries no assurance that nature's forces will reward his efforts with a bountiful harvest. Similarly, the freed slaves experienced cruel moments when hoped-for successes were overturned by hunger, thirst, desert marauders, and, at times, their own rebellions.

An unusual element of the observance of the three holidays is the Torah's requirement that they be collectively celebrated by all Jews of Israel at the place where the Temple of God was to be erected. The Torah does not specify where the temple's location is to be. In time, it became Jerusalem, which served also as the seat of government and the home of Israel's kings. No reason is given for this law, but plausible reasons can be found. It is self-evident that the experiences that led to the creation of the three holidays involved the presence of the entire people. Second, all three are connected to the journey from Egypt to Canaan. The three festivals were likely intended to be observed as reenactments when masses of Jews would perform their own journey to a sacred destination. The Torah designates each of these holidays as a "chag," a term related to the Arabic "haj" designating the seasonal journeying of Moslems to their holy center of Mecca.

The holy days of Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot can be seen too as moments that connect us to the rigors and the uncertainties that accompany our own life journeys, serving as reminders that our achievements, whether physical or material, are never guaranteed, and require of us that we too live a lifestyle of shared community. Viewed in this light, these holidays are constantly renewed as journeys of memory, identification, hope, and commitment.

Rosh Hashanah (The New Year Festival)

Literally the "head of the year," Rosh Hashanah occurs at the beginning of the month of Tishri, marking the start of the year in the Jewish lunar calendar. The Torah records it as a single day (later two days in Diaspora lands), but nowhere refers to it as the start of the year. The Torah, in two places (Leviticus 23:24–25; Numbers 29:1–2), provides the barest of information. The Leviticus source notes it as a Shabbat, a day of complete rest with but a solitary ritual, the sounding of the ram's horn, a kind of trumpet. Numbers, with only slight differences, repeats the same two requirements. Absent too is any sense that Rosh Hashanah is a time of pleading for God's forgiveness so that the new year may begin with a clean slate. Nor is there even the faintest echo of Rosh Hashanah as the opening act in a powerful spiritual drama that unfolds over a period of ten days, culminating in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement.

What brought about the transformation of Rosh Hashanah from the meager holy day of the Torah into the festival of later times? One explanation centers on the ceremony of the sounding of the ram's horn, noting its prominence in the rituals of the new year day in Ancient Near Eastern societies. A feature of such celebrations was the symbolic re-coronation of the king who demonstrated his powers of mercy by declaring amnesty for selected people who had been judged guilty by the courts. The sounds of the ram's horn served as a joyful accompaniment to the ceremonies of the day. According to this interpretation, it is assumed that Rosh Hashanah was enlarged and enhanced by transmuting these observances into a reenactment of God's coronation as Israel's king who bestows mercy.

A parallel explanation sees a different set of comparisons. It focuses on the belief in some Ancient Near Eastern cultures that on their new year's day the entire panoply of lesser gods would leave their posts in order to visit and pay homage to the chief deity, leaving the world for that day untended and subject to the whims of evil forces. The first day of the year was thus a day of great fear and danger during which all normal activities were suppressed. Only on the day following, upon the return of the gods, did the people venture from their homes, visit one another, and share festive meals to celebrate the beginning of a new year. Biblical Judaism, in many ways a rejection of pagan practices, nevertheless held a similar belief in the special powers of the new year day, but concentrated on the frailties of human actions and the need for change.

While admittedly conjectural, such interpretations do help us to better relate to the evolution of Rosh Hashanah into a time for introspective attention to wrongful deeds in the year just ended, while at the same time recommitting us to the renewal of a relationship to God. By emphasizing the start of the new year as a time of remembrance, a theme captured in another of the holiday's names, Yom Hazikaron (the Day of Remembrance), the holiday was transformed into a time of mutual remembrance; by ourselves, so that we might begin the process of repentance and change, and by God whom we celebrate as King, so that He might forgive.

Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)

As we have seen, the beginning of the year was sketched in the Torah in the most minimal way, providing a date but no name. Its only rituals, a special holy day animal sacrifice and the sounding of the ram's horn, were performed by priests. We are told nothing of how the day was to be commemorated by the people as a whole, whether as a community or in the privacy of their homes. By contrast, Yom Kippur receives substantial attention on both levels. In the same chapter (Leviticus 23:26–31) its date, the tenth of the seventh month, is immediately followed by the holy day's name, *Yom Kippurim*. Next we are told that two principal daily activities, the eating of food and workday routines, are to be avoided for the entire day. A stern

admonition warns that violators of these two commandments will be grievously punished.

Still more dramatic, and at far greater length, an earlier chapter (Leviticus 16:2–34) spells out manifold rules for the observance of Yom Kippur in the Shrine (the *Aron ha-Kodesh*; eventually erected in Jerusalem and known thereafter as the Temple). There, on Yom Kippur, the high priest, garbed in special garments worn only on that day, would perform a series of purification rituals for himself, his family, fellow priests, the Temple, and the entire people of Israel. He performed these rites as the intermediary between God and the people, thereby assuring forgiveness for their sins of the prior year.

The most dramatic ritual, performed on no other day of the year, was the selection of a goat upon whose head the High Priest was to symbolically place the sins of the entire people, after which it was to be dispatched to a remote wilderness area and released, signaling to the Temple worshipers that they too were now released from their sins and thereby absolved. Following the destruction of the Temple by the Roman occupiers in 70 CE, and over the course of many centuries, synagogue prayers filled with interpretive allusions to the Temple's rituals created a striking atmosphere for Jewish worshippers in which they could imagine themselves witnessing the ceremonies in the Temple. It is generally agreed that the destruction of the Temple became the main impetus to create the institution of the synagogue and its formalized prayers as the Temple's substitute. In the case of Yom Kippur, whose ceremonies in the Temple were witnessed by no more than a tiny fraction of the Jewish people, the glory of the Temple was kept alive through prayer services in which words replaced rituals.

Of great interest is that we do not find in the Torah a single allusion to a relationship between Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, but over time the two holidays became linked, assuming roles as the opening and closing acts of an intense introspective drama which came to be known as The Ten Days of Repentance. In a spiritual environment that consciously avoided the revelries of an extended season of new year celebrations known from other national and religious cultures, The Ten Days of Repentance became a distinctive and powerful experience for both individuals and the larger community. Each year, throughout the ten days, the appeal to both mind and emotions through the daily repetition of basic prayer themes reaches its climax in a wordless release in the sound of a single, elongated note from the ram's horn marking the conclusion of Yom Kippur.

Hanukah (Holiday of Rededication)

Hanukah has come down to us as the commemoration of a victory that spared Jews the destruction of their religious heritage along with the ruthless extermination of much life. Like Purim, the Hanukah historical account omits God as an active

presence that determined the outcome of the struggle. Except for these two similarities, there are no other significant features that the two holidays share. The Scroll of Esther, source of the Purim narrative, is set in ancient Babylonia at an undetermined time when a murderous decree issued by the monarch threatened the Jews of the realm with annihilation, a plot for which we lack any supporting historical evidence. The Hanukah struggle is altogether different. We possess a reliable historical document – Maccabees: Book One – which tells of a different kind of conflict, wars in Palestine in which Jews were pitted at times against fellow Jews and, at other times, against the might of Syrian political powers and their professional armies. It also provides reliable dating, about 165 BCE, denoting the success of the Jewish zealots, the Maccabean religious party, in wresting control of the Temple in Jerusalem from the hands of the Jewish Hellenizing forces, thereby restoring control of the Temple to the historical priesthood and the ancient practices set down in the Torah. (Maccabees: Book One has been preserved along with a second, nonhistorical version – Maccabees: Book Two – written originally in Greek and intended primarily to impress the large Jewish community of Egypt with the importance of the Hanukah festival.)

Significant too is Book One's account of the intra-Jewish repeated eruptions of warfare that continued over a span of four decades from 175 to 135 BCE, from the reign of the Syrian monarch Antiochus IV to the death of Simon, youngest of the Maccabean brothers, leaders of the zealot forces in their battles throughout Palestine. Detailed too are times and places when Syrian military forces joined the fray, mostly but not always to restore political and religious hegemony to the Hellenized Jewish side.

Jewish religious tradition, for its own reasons, has transmitted to us a truncated, divergent version of the events. It did this in part by excluding Maccabees: Book One from the canon of Jewish Scripture, preferring to portray the warring antagonists as pious Jewish loyalists who prevailed against Syrian pagan troops, thus omitting the battles, truly a civil war of Jew against Jew. It also confined its version of the struggle to its early years leading to the recapture of the Temple. It also created the beguiling tale of a small amount of oil, a single day's worth for illuminating the Temple's restored candelabrum, that miraculously lasted for eight days (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b) thereby creating the basis for the annual ritual of lighting the Hanukah lamp in Jewish homes for eight days beginning on the evening of the twenty-fifth of Kislev.

Maccabees: Book Two (chs 1 and 10) sees a parallel between the eight-day ceremonies in the rededicated Temple and the original rites at the inauguration of the Temple built by King Solomon, ceremonies that concluded also on the eighth day (1 Kings, 8:66). It describes how, at the onset of the Maccabean uprising, Jewish loyalists, unable to observe the eight-day Fall festival of Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles) in the desecrated Temple, would leave their homes and hide in deserted mountain areas in order to observe simulated holiday rituals. Thus, the return to a cleansed and restored Temple during the eight-day Hanukah renewal

celebration, was understood as a belated making-up for the proper Sukkot observance they had been denied.

Neither explanation helps to explain the much later story of the miracle of the oil. One possible interpretation connects it to the Roman occupation of Palestine beginning about 65 BCE, beginning a long period of subjugation. According to this view, an annual celebration of a successful military uprising against a foreign occupier would undoubtedly have been perceived by the occupier as a threat. Therefore, the tale of the miracle of the oil made for a benign, unthreatening explanation of the holiday's origin.

We suggest too that the story of the oil captures in a symbolic way an essential teaching of Hanukah that has nourished the Jewish mind and imagination for millennia; that it represents the capacity and the will of a small people, dedicated to its religious faith, to outlast forces, both external and internal, that have sought to dilute its message or to destroy it entirely. Jews have lived this message and have seen it reiterated and revalidated during many times of oppression throughout their long history and continue to look upon the glow of the Hanukah lights as a graphic reminder of their survival and their capacity for renewal.

Purim: Fact or Fiction?

"Puru" in ancient Akkadian means a lottery, the kind of event whose outcome, when undertaken by government forces, can have fateful, even disastrous consequences. The holiday of Purim whose name, as told in the biblical Scroll of Esther, traces to a lottery created by Haman, the evil senior vizier of Emperor Ahasuerus, to determine the date when all the Jews of Persia were to be put to death and their wealth confiscated. The story of the plot, its many intrigues and the final reversal of its grim intentions into the sudden victory of the Jews, has left us the Esther Scroll as the sole record of the events, as well as the birth of the commemoration annually on the fourteenth of Adar of the Jewish triumph.

Purim has few rituals. Unlike earlier biblical holidays, Purim is not a day of "rest." There are no restrictions on work or other typical daily routines. A public chanting of the Esther scroll – usually referred to as the Megillah – takes place on the evening of the fourteenth of Adar and, in many congregations, is repeated the following morning. Distributing "portions," i.e. food items, to friends, along with charity money to at least two poor people is a second requirement. A festive, celebrational dinner is eaten towards the waning hours of the day, closing out the Purim ceremonies.

From a historical perspective, Purim is riddled with questions. The events described in the Megillah cannot be verified or dated. The king, bearing a name common to Persian dynasts, cannot be accurately verified. No known reference exists to the king's harem favorite, the Jewish maiden Esther. The Jewish heroes of

the tale, Mordecai and Esther, carry names that are Hebraized versions of two major Babylonian gods, Marduk and Ishtar; remarkably so, given Judaism's absolute monotheistic character. A striking additional mystery is the complete absence of the name of God anywhere in the Esther Scroll, making the victory of the Jews over their oppressors the result of human intervention alone.

All of these unanswerable questions have generated others. Is the Purim story meant to be a fictionalized telling of an actual event? Is it intended to be a championing of human responses to evil rather than passive dependence upon divine mercy? Is a major theme the integration of Jews into roles of power within Persian society? Does it perhaps carry the opposite message that whenever Jews live as outsiders in exile communities, their lives will be troubled by lurking dangers that may erupt at any time? Or is the Scroll of Esther nothing more than a Jewish reworking of a popular folk theme, widespread among other transplanted Diaspora groups in Persia, in which plotters of evil are made to suffer the fate they intended for others?

Purim, whatever its origins, has evolved into a day of celebration and revelry, in which costumes, games, noise, parodies, comic storytelling, and light-hearted songs engage the imaginations of young and old.

Tish'ah B'av (Remembrance of Destruction)

The destruction of the Temple, ancient Judaism's holiest site, occurred on the ninth of Av, Tish'ah B'av. The catastrophe it has represented for the Jewish people ever after has made Tish'ah B'av Judaism's saddest day of remembrance. On that date in the year 586 BCE, Babylonian forces completed the annihilation of Jerusalem and its defenders, reducing the city and the Temple to rubble. The calamity was twofold, marking the end of Jewish sovereignty and the disappearance of its central religious institution, its priesthood, and the daily sacrifices upon its altars. Soon after, the catastrophe was followed by the forced exile of countless thousands of Jews to Babylonia, among them its greatest religious teachers along with the ablest leaders of government and commerce. Left behind were, from the perspective of the conquerors, those least likely to foment rebellion in the future. From every direction all signs pointed to the likely extinction of the Jews as a people and of their unprecedented religion of monotheism.

Contrary to the anticipated disappearance of the Jewish people, the exiles in Babylonia not only survived, but thrived; the first example of a self-sufficient Diaspora Jewish community. Descendants of the original exiles returned to Jerusalem as early as fifty years later; reestablished it as the capital of an independent nation and rebuilt the Temple on the site of the destroyed one. The Second Temple, as it came to be known, underwent subsequent expansion and beautification, attracting Jewish worshippers in great numbers from all parts of the Middle East.

Five centuries later, in a tragic repeat of history, the ninth of Av once again became embedded in Jewish memory, and continues to be brought to mind as the day when Roman forces completed the second destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple. Once again, Jewish sovereignty over the land of Israel vanished and a new, mass dispersion of Jews to other lands began.

Jewish imagination has attached to the ninth of Av recollections of other expulsions that befell Jews in ensuing centuries; the expulsion in 1290 of Jewish subjects from England, not rescinded until 1655; the massive expulsion of Jews from Spain (along with Muslims) in 1492; the outbreak of World War I in the summer of 1914, culminating in little more than two decades in the savage holocaust that claimed six million Jewish victims during World War II.

In 1948, almost nineteen hundred years later, by act of the United Nations Organization, for the first time since the destruction and expulsion at the hands of the Romans, Jewish sovereignty was restored by the creation of the independent State of Israel. Many rabbinic leaders proclaimed that moment as nothing less than the fulfillment of promises made by prophets of the Bible, and of such scope that it should no longer be required to observe Tish'ah B'av as a day of collective Jewish mourning. Others declared that the new State of Israel's Yom Hazikaron, the memorial day for the thousands of Israeli Jews who perished in the War of Independence, should henceforth become the inclusive date for remembering all historic Jewish tragedies, including the two destructions of the Temple. Still others proposed that the newly established Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Remembrance Day – take on that role. None of the proposals led to action and Tish'ah B'av has remained as it has been throughout the centuries.

Tish'ah B'av's commemorative rites include a full day of fasting by adults, beginning on the eve of the ninth and lasting for twenty-five hours. Adults and children gather in synagogues to hear the chanting of the Lamentations, the biblical book composed in remembrance of the first destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. Included in the prayer services are mournful poetic texts, composed over many centuries, expanding on themes in Lamentations. Private behavior includes abstinence from all activities of a pleasurable nature.

Jewish religious legislation limited days of fasting to the hours between sunrise and sunset, approximately a half day's duration. Such days are referred to as minor fasts. On Yom Kippur and Tish'ah B'av, the sole exceptions, the fast is observed for an entire day.

The synagogue environment on Tish'ah B'av is somber and emotionally evocative, intended to create an atmosphere of sadness. The Torah Ark, emptied of its scrolls, is left open. Its curtain, typically one of the more attractive visual adornments of the sanctuary, is removed. The chanting of prayers and the book of Lamentations is done slowly and in a plaintive chant that is limited to this one day of the year.

The seventeenth of Tammuz, occurring in the summer month preceding Av, has its own sad linkage to Tish'ah B'av, recalling the date when the Romans succeeded in breaching the massive wall that protected Jerusalem, marking the start of a

three-week period of destruction and carnage that ended with the burning and collapse of the Temple on the ninth of Av. The entire three-week period is traditionally observed as a time when joyful celebrations, such as weddings, are not held.

Historical memory is an intrinsic part of the rituals of Jewish holidays. Tish'ah B'av, as a day of memory, embodies the Jewish religious conviction that no disaster, no matter how devastating, may be made into an occasion to wallow in despair or to breed a sense of permanent hopelessness. Jewish memory, faithful to its prophetic teachings, has constantly created ways to transcend the tragedies of the past by strengthening its belief in the possibility of a redemptive future.

Tu B'shevat (The New Year Day of Trees)

In the descriptions of Purim, Hanukah, and Tish'ah B'av, we have seen that Jewish holy days are not restricted to those commanded in the Torah. Here we discuss a calendar date that has gained sanctity in an unexpected way. Tu B'shevat (the fifteenth of Shevat) is one of the least ritualized holidays of the Jewish year. The Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1) lists it as one of four dates in the calendar year, each titled a new year day. Tu B'shevat marks the date early in the spring of the year when the annual tax on fruit trees, the tithe, took effect in the land of Israel; hence its official name, The New Year Day of Trees. The date was clearly tied to the end of the annual rainy season when blossoms appearing on fruit trees allowed tax inspectors to determine the expected yield of the fruit harvest and the amount of the mandatory tithe. In a land and at a time when agriculture was the major component of the economy, determining the tithe amount was of major consequence.

We know of no liturgical ceremonies that were part of the annual occurrence of Tu B'shevat. In early synagogue ritual it was deemed a joyous date, a day when penitential prayers were considered inappropriate and therefore omitted. For the same reason, fasting, whether for communal or personal reasons, was not permitted. Over time, Ashkenazic (European) and Sephardic (Mediterranean) Jews developed separate customs of celebrating the date, featuring the eating of fruits for which the land of Israel was famed, along with appropriate prayer texts, celebrating the day as a thanksgiving occasion for God's gift to the Jewish people, a fertile land figuratively "flowing with milk and honey."

A major change in the perception and celebration of Tu B'shevat came about in the early years of the twentieth century with the rapid establishment of many agricultural settlements as part of the Zionist inspired mission of return to Palestine. With it, a new folk hero personality, the farmer-settler, emerged, and with it Tu B'shevat took on new significance as a celebration not limited to fruit trees, but expanded to include all trees. As a transformed holiday it has become the special day of the year when masses of people of all ages trek to barren areas of the land and plant saplings as part of the national effort of reforestation.

Growing in popularity among Jews in Israel and other countries is a home ceremony derived from mystical texts and modeled on the Passover Seder. In place of the ritual of four cups of wine of the Passover ceremony, the Tu B'shevat Seder features four different fruits indigenous to Israel's agriculture.

Less well known is that the date for determining the amount of tithe for fruit trees was the subject of dispute. In the Mishnah (Rosh Hashanah 1:1) we are told that the fifteenth of Shevat – the date favored by the Hillel school of interpretation – was opposed by the Shamai school, whose view implies that by the first of Shevat fruit blossoms are at their maximum on the first of Shevat and, therefore, the tithe amount should be imposed upon farmers as of that date. The Hillel approach appears to be based on the normal variation in blossoming times between different areas of the country, so that in hill and mountain terrain blossoming would not reach its reach maximum until later. Given that the beneficiaries of the tithe were the poor and classes of people who were excluded from land ownership, the Hillel ruling made for greater generosity.

Still, the question remains: Was there something special about the number fifteen rather than, say, fourteen or sixteen? Was it an arbitrary choice or did it rest on something implicit in the lunar calendar? Lunar reckoning was long established as a feature of Middle Eastern nations and religions, many of whose people believed that the fifteenth day of the lunar month – the day of the full moon – was the turning point of the month. Among the early Babylonians, the fifteenth of Shabatu (Shevat) was the date when the priests would decide whether to add a thirteenth month, a second Addaru (Adar), creating a thirteen-month year. If, on the night of the fifteenth, the planet Ninsianna (Venus) was not visible, by adding the extra month the shorter lunar year was brought into alignment was the solar year. The decision was, in effect, the announcement that the major springtime barley harvest was still two months away. The significance of the fifteenth of Shevat was no doubt well known to the Jews in their two major centers, Israel and Babylonia, impacting the Jewish lunar calendar by adding a thirteenth month in certain years too. Significantly, the Hillel school's insistence on setting the tithing date on the fifteenth of Shevat, although unconnected to the barley harvest, resulted in greater assistance to needy citizens.

The Making of New Days of Remembrance

World War II brought about two enormous convulsions in Jewish life. One was the Holocaust, Nazi Germany's war of extinction against Europe's Jews, resulting in the horrific deaths of six million Jews and the near obliteration of Jewish life in all its forms in much of Europe. The second was the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 by action of the United Nations Organization. Both events, the one a trauma, the other a rebirth, have entered into the Jewish calendar as times of remembrance.

Jewish leadership, both secular and religious, and especially Holocaust survivors, were unanimous in recognizing the need for a Holocaust day of remembrance, but could not agree on the most appropriate date. Orthodox rabbinic leaders, both in Israel and other countries were for the most part opposed to creating a new calendar date. They strongly advocated incorporating Holocaust remembrance into the existing day of fasting, Tish'ah B'av (the ninth of Av), the day recalling the destructions of the temple in Jerusalem. Non-Orthodox rabbinic leaders, along with the great majority of Holocaust survivors and secular Jews, were in agreement that the scope of the tragedy merited its own day of remembrance separate and apart from the commemorations of other tragedies in Jewish history. On April 12, 1951, Israel's parliament, the Knesset, adopted a resolution establishing the twenty-seventh of Nisan as Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Memorial Day), "a day of perpetual remembrance for the House of Israel." It has become the official date for Jews wherever they reside.

As of now, a half century later, no agreed upon liturgy for Yom Hashoah has been developed. Both in Israel and in other countries various customs have arisen. In Israel, by action of the Knesset, all places of entertainment must be closed on the evening of Yom Hashoah. It is a growing custom in synagogues to light six memorial candles, symbolic of the six million victims. In the privacy of a home, the prevalent custom is for a single memorial candle to burn for 24 hours. Many communities have established commemorative public gatherings at which Holocaust survivors and, increasingly, the descendants of survivors offer reflections on the Holocaust. Diaspora religious schools, both synagogue and community sponsored, have created Holocaust teaching materials for their students. We find too that a small but growing number of public high schools are incorporating similar materials into their history curricula.

Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Israel Independence Day) and Yom Hazikaron (Memorial Day)

On May 14, 1948, corresponding to the fifth of Iyar, in response to the resolution of the United Nations Organization, Israel's prime minister David Ben-Gurion proclaimed the creation of the State of Israel at a special session of the Knesset. The Hebrew date has become an annual celebration that takes place on two levels. In Israel, Yom Ha'atzma'ut (Independence Day) is a day of parades, public gatherings, picnicking, speeches, music, and dancing. On another level, evolving prayer customs have placed a distinctive stamp upon it. Many congregations feature a reading from the Torah added to the morning service. In most congregations, verses from Deuteronomy 17 promising God's blessings on the land of Israel and its inhabitants are the passages read. The reading is followed by the chanting of passages from the Book of Isaiah (10; 11–12), his messianic vision of the dispersed people of Israel restored to their ancestral homeland where they will be blessed to

live in tranquility. Prayers of praise taken from long-established festivals of joy are also added to the prayer service.

Linked to Yom Ha'atzma'ut in Israel, and observed one day earlier, is Yom Hazikaron, the memorial day set aside to recall the thousands of Israelis, both soldiers and civilians, who perished in the War of Independence which erupted within hours of the declaration of independence. The principal ritual, the sounding of sirens, occurs at eleven o'clock in the morning in every city and town in Israel. At the sound of the sirens, all traffic comes to a halt. Passengers exit their vehicles; pedestrians come to a stop. Masses of people stand in silence for two full minutes while the sirens sound. It is a somber ritual where silence prevails; more eloquent than words.

In Jerusalem, Israel's national capital, a ceremony is held on the same day at Mount Herzl at the grave of Theodor Herzl, the father of political Zionism; presided over by the Speaker of the Knesset. Its principal ritual is the kindling of a torch whose flame is passed to 12 additional torches, symbolizing the biblical tribes of Israel. It has also become widely practiced in Israel on Yom Hazikaron to visit the graves of family members and friends who lost their lives in the War of Independence.

The Inner Workings of the Jewish Calendar

It is often assumed that it is the lunar nature of the Jewish calendar that regulates the timing of Jewish holy days. Excluding the unique and unrelated timing of the Shabbat, which simply occurs every seventh day, it is more correct to describe the Jewish calendar as "lunisolar" rather than lunar, inasmuch as both lunar and solar reckonings are involved in fixing the timing of Jewish holy days. Lunar-wise, Jewish months are measured by the cycles of the moon; approximately twenty-nine and a half days (29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes, three and a half seconds), adding up to a year of 354 days, approximately 11 days shorter than the solar year. Biblical law, however, requires that the three principal festivals – Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot – must occur at specific harvest seasons; harvests, of course, are determined by solar cycles. The shorter lunar year, without periodic adjustment, would constantly drift backwards in relationship to the solar year. Pesach, to cite one example, is fixed by biblical law to coincide with the springtime barley harvest of ancient Israel. Without such adjustments, the Pesach month of Nisan would meander over time through every season of the year, and only at rare intervals match the time of the barley harvest.

To prevent this "wandering" of the lunar year, carefully calibrated adjustments were devised by adding a thirteenth month, Adar Bet, to specific lunar years; a total of seven such intercalations in a cycle of 19 years (years 3, 6, 8, 11, 14, 17, 19); an adjustment that brings the lunar year into close relationship to the agricultural

cycles controlled by the solar year. It is believed that this reform of the Jewish calendar year was institutionalized about the year 360 CE. We now know that an even earlier Babylonian calendar dealt with identical issues in much the same way. But unlike its predecessor, the Jewish year posed specific Jewish issues. Yom Kippur, for example, as mandated by the Bible must be observed as a complete day of rest; i.e. desisting from all manner of work. Were the Shabbat, equally a day of complete rest, to precede Yom Kippur by one day or follow it by one day, the obligatory duration of Yom Kippur would interfere with the required length of the Shabbat. A permanent adjustment built into the Jewish calendar prevents Yom Kippur from occurring on a Friday or a Sunday.

Another unusual characteristic of Jewish calendar calculations is the length of an hour. Both the lunar and the solar calendars have the same 12 hour division of daylight and nighttime hours. Unlike the solar calendar that assigns 60 minutes to every hour, there is no fixed length to the Jewish lunar hour; it changes according to the amount of daylight and dark in a given day. Thus, the 12 hours of daylight in a summer month will have far more than 60 minutes each; the reverse will be true of winter days.

The relationship between the Jewish calendar and the older Babylonian one from which it was derived can be seen also in the similarity of the names each uses for the months of the year. In the Jewish calendar, these names replaced the original Hebrew ones found in Jewish Scriptures.

Hebrew	**Babylonian**
Nisan	Nisannu
Iyar	Ayaru
Sivan	Simanu
Tammuz	Dumuzu
Av	Abu
Elul	Ululu
Tishre	Tasritu
Marheshvan	Arahsamnu
Kislev	Kislimu
Tevet	Tebetu
Shevat	Sabatu
Adar	Addaru

Afterthoughts

Throughout our discussion of the holy days of the Jewish year, one connecting thread binds all of them together; that they are the moments in which we recreate and relive times past. Whether as joyous festivals or as commemoration of

tragedies, whether ancient or recent, they beckon us to withdraw from our present preoccupations and to step back into time. At such moments we may succeed in seeing ourselves, not as remote onlookers, but as participants in the shaping events in the long unfolding of Jewish history. The goal, however, is not to live in the past, but to live with the past. The distinction is critical to how we relate to our holy days. Each of them becomes an opportunity to extract eternal messages that can shape our lives now and in the future.

One example may suffice: Hanukah is a thanksgiving celebration of a military victory that happened more than two millennia ago. Our modest wintertime ritual of lighting small flames for eight days in the dark hours of night has become an affirmation of an inner light that must always be kept lit, giving courage to the few to prevail against the many. The tangible light of Hanukah becomes a pointer both to the past and to the future, and to freedoms yet to be won.

We have concentrated on the core ideas embedded in these holy days, as found in our foundational Jewish texts and, where possible, utilizing significant information and insights from other sources. We have not attempted to present the emotional content of these days or the impact of diverse customs that have become integral to them in far-flung Jewish communities over the many centuries, or the never-ceasing creation of prayer texts, music, home ceremonies, and even special foods; all of them collectively adding to and deepening the meaning of these sacred times. In these ways each of the holy days of the Jewish year becomes an opportunity for constantly growing participation and appreciation, both privately and within a community. Indeed, they can become life-changing moments.

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