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# A Jewish Perspective on Religious Pluralism

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# A JEWISH PERSPECTIVE ON RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

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Hava Tirosh-Samuelson

*I*n the last few decades, a new economic order has emerged worldwide, dominated not by territorial nation-states but by transnational corporations that are involved in global finance, industrial production, product distribution, resource control, banking, insurance, health services, and even education.<sup>1</sup> The primary goal of the transnational corporation is the maximization of profit and the main values that inform the ethos of the global corporation are competition, specialization, and efficiency. In the new global economy of free trade and free markets, the transport of capital, materials, goods, and people takes precedence over the autonomy, the sovereignty, and the culture of national governments and local communities. Because economic globalization entails the dissolution of tariffs and protective policies, the deregulation of international commerce, and the treatment of foreign companies as if they were local entities, globalization spells delocalization.

The current economic globalization could not have taken place without a corresponding technological revolution — in automation, transportation, and communication. In the global economy, machines have replaced human beings in virtually every sector and industry. As corporations seek to maximize profit, millions of workers have been temporarily (and, in some cases, permanently) eliminated from the economic process, and whole work categories have largely or totally disappeared, either due to automation or specialization. In part, the global reach of corporations is facilitated by the increase in speed and convenience of modes of transportation. But more important is the fact that economic institutions and individuals worldwide are now linked through satellites, telephones, cables, fax machines, and the Internet. In a global digitalized environment, transactions are completed in

nanoseconds and the lives of individuals or entire communities can be transformed instantly by people who live thousands of miles away.

The impact of globalization has been far-reaching and complex. On the one hand, globalization has improved the standard of living for many segments of the world, especially in developing countries, due to the export of scientific knowledge and technological expertise and the mass production and distribution of material goods. New technologies of food production have improved agricultural yields, providing nutrition to a world whose population is continuing to grow at an alarming rate, in part because of better health standards. Infant mortality is down and life expectancy has gone up because of global immunization programs, better sanitation and personal hygiene, and improved water quality. Large segments of the human race now enjoy better living conditions than they did half a century ago.

But on the other hand, in both developing and developed nations, globalization has also resulted in impoverishment and dislocation because transnational corporations do business where it is cheapest to conduct. When local communities lose their sources of livelihood, people are forced to relocate and, in some cases, masses of people are forced to cross borders in search of jobs. Thus, in a booming global commerce and unprecedented material abundance, the world of high-tech and automated production witnesses temporary unemployment and underemployment. In the midst of plenty, there is massive retrenchment of workers and declining relative standards of living for many people as the gap between rich and poor has increased.

The most dramatic aspect of globalization relevant to our discussion is the emergence of a global monoculture. Through high-tech telecommunication, transnational corporations can now reach remote corners of the world and dictate not only what, when, and where people will produce whatever is needed for human life, but also how life is to be lived. The corporate ideology, value system, priorities, and modes of organization have dictated a commodity-intensive lifestyle in which people define themselves by the ownership of products that are linked through advertising to their own self-image and self-esteem. In the homogenized global monoculture, entertainment conglomerates, which transmit pictures, music, and verbal messages worldwide, have gradually dismantled local cultures. All over the world, cultural cloning takes place as people listen to the same music and watch the same films or admire the same figures in pop culture. Local artists have to fend against the massive penetration of transnational corpora-

tions that has all but displaced traditional singing, accompanying, chanting, and dancing. Many communities that were once economically, socially, and culturally self-sufficient have been thrown into crisis.

In developing countries, where globalization means decolonization, industrialization, and modernization, it has become increasingly difficult to perpetuate the traditional way of life. As modern telecommunication penetrates the remote countryside, imparting traditional survival skills, customs, and ethical mores to children has been a real challenge since children are surrounded by the education dispensed through global entertainment networks. A growing gap between generations has opened, contributing to cultural and social revolutions in developing countries.

In Western industrialized nations, the very notion that the past can serve as a source of wisdom and guidance in the present is no longer taken for granted. In a technology-driven society, the seemingly unlimited possibilities of the future inspire the imagination much more than the accumulated experience of the past. Moreover, in Western countries, the very need to turn to the past has been called into question due to a crisis of representation, fueled in part by the very sophisticated technology of imaging. Under the radical skepticism of so-called “postmodernism,” the validity of traditional mega-narratives that once anchored collective memory and spelled out ways of life have been seriously undermined. Even the notion of a stable Self, which undergirded all knowledge claims, has been brought into question. Indeed, how can the past be relevant or authoritative in a technologically-based society in which new inventions and discoveries instantly become obsolete, and scientific knowledge multiplies faster than the human brain can absorb it? It is not surprising that, in the developed world, personal identity is derived from the things people own, which the transnational corporations are successfully selling to consumers, convincing them that material goods are the sole source of happiness and self-esteem. In short, in both developing and developed countries, the very link to the past is now under siege by a global culture that glamorizes youth, bodily pleasures, and perpetual innovation.

Much more can be said about the impact of globalization, especially in regard to the planet’s physical environment, but I would like to focus on one aspect of the “global moment”—homogenization of culture—from the perspective of the Jewish historical experience. I turn

to history because I believe that knowledge of the past is necessary for addressing the problems of the present and the challenges of the future. Minimally, knowledge of the past is necessary so that we will not make the same mistakes our predecessors have committed. But more significantly, knowledge of the past sheds light on deep-seated human proclivities, needs, and aspirations, thereby enabling us to make more informed decisions in the present by considering what is good for humans. I turn to the Jewish past not only because Judaism is my tradition by birth, by religious choice, and by academic specialization, but also because the Jews have existed as a distinct ethnic and religious minority as long as Western culture has existed. The history of the Jews suggests that the problem of homogenization of culture is not new; the Jews have had to face it throughout their historical existence. In their principled refusal to relinquish their own religio-ethnic identity, the Jews serve as a testimony to the intrinsic merit of religious pluralism.

The essay has three distinct sections. The first section examines interreligious pluralism in Jewish history, namely, the relationship between Jews and non-Jews, focusing on the pre-modern world. The goal of this section is to explore ways in which a minority has dealt with the challenge of homogenization, imposed on Jews from without, which made the Jews the perpetual *Other* in Western culture. In the second section, I discuss intra-religious diversity in modern Judaism, exploring the various Jewish responses to the challenges of modernity. Diversity from within has resulted in very acrimonious debates, forcing Jews to learn to live with the *Other Within*. With a better understanding of the Jewish past, the third part of the essay provides theoretical legitimation for religious pluralism within the matrix of Jewish monotheism. Out of the historical reconstruction and the theological reflection, a three-fold argument emerges: (a) religious pluralism is necessary for human well-being; (b) religious pluralism requires curtailment of political power; and (c) religious pluralism does not necessarily result in relative subjectivism. Defending the merits of religious pluralism, I conclude with a critique of the contemporary Western monoculture spread by transnational corporations.

## I. Jews and Others/Jews as the *Other*

### A. Ancient Israel

Let me turn now to the interaction between Jews and non-Jews in the past in order to get some specific data about interreligious pluralism. The story of the Jews began about 1500 BCE, with the emergence of the ancient Hebrews as a distinct ethnic group on the margin of Canaanite civilization. While the Israelites shared with other peoples of the ancient Near East certain aspects of material culture, economics, social and political institutions, and legal practices, their collective identity emerged through constant delineation of their own *otherness*. The collective identity of the ancient Israelites was forged through oral narratives about the remote origins of the group in Mesopotamia and their determination not to mix with the indigenous population of Canaan. The boundaries that separated Israel from its neighbors were both ethnic and religious. Membership in the people was understood not only as a matter of birth and blood ties, but also in terms of a special relationship into which God, the creator of the world, had entered with one people, His Chosen People, Israel.<sup>2</sup> The relationship was and still is understood as an everlasting covenant (*berit*) of mutual obligations: God is obligated to ensure Israel's safety and prosperity and, in turn, Israel is obligated to do God's will as revealed in a form of law, the Torah. The covenantal paradigm frames Israel's own self-understanding and its interaction with other nations.

Israel's self-perception as the Chosen People of God evolved over a long period of time so that in the literary records of ancient Israelite religion, the Hebrew Bible, one can find different views of the covenantal paradigm. Some voices in the Bible view the covenant with God exclusively, emphasizing the particularistic dimension of covenantal relations, while others give the covenant an inclusive slant, highlighting the universalist aspect of Jewish monotheism. In the period of the Second Temple (538 BCE – 70 CE), the legacy of ancient Israel, including the meaning of Chosenness, continued to evolve, while Israel canonized its literary traditions as Scriptures and the Jews in Judea debated the status, meaning, and scope of canonic teachings. One of these interpretations — that of the Pharisees — emerged as the dominant reading of the tradition, and it was articulated as normative Judaism in the hands of a small scholarly elite, the rabbis. These scholars of Jewish law emerged as the legal and spiritual leadership for the

Jews, who were not only dispersed throughout the Near East but who also lost the administrative and religious center of Jewish life when the Second Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE. The rabbinic interpretation of ancient Israelite religion would eventually be accepted as normative Judaism.<sup>3</sup>

The Judaism of the rabbis was grounded in the notion of a dual Torah, articulated first by the Pharisees. According to this view, at Sinai, God gave the nation of Israel through the prophet Moses not only a Written Law, but also the Oral Law, which interprets it. The legal, theological, and ethical teachings of the rabbis were developed in relation to and on the basis of canonic scriptures but they presented themselves as Oral Torah obligatory for all Jews. Since the rabbis themselves harbored a variety of perspectives that evolved over time (from the first to the sixth centuries), it is quite difficult to generalize about rabbinic Judaism. One can always find data to conflict with a given reading. Nonetheless, I would venture to propose a certain reading of the covenantal paradigm as it emerges from the teachings of the rabbis. The covenantal model explains why Jews have resisted, and continue to resist, any form of religious and cultural homogenization.

## **B. The Covenantal Paradigm: Particular Universality**

First, the covenantal paradigm created a framework within which Judaism interpreted the relationship between the Jewish people and other nations. Indeed, the covenantal paradigm established a dialectical relationship between Israel's well-being as experienced in history and Israel's commitment to God. When Israel is exclusively loyal to God, the true ruler of the universe, and does God's wish, Israel flourishes and prospers. But when Israel forgets the special covenant with God and adopts the ways of other "gods," it incurs great suffering.<sup>4</sup> For its betrayal, God justly punishes Israel by delivering it into the control of other nations, even to the point of exiling the Chosen People from the land God gave as collateral of the special relationship. Thus, the covenantal model provides the prism through which Israel interprets its status in the world, including its relationship to other "gods." It is Jewish loyalty to the covenant that stands at the core of the Jewish resistance to other religious worldviews.

Second, the covenantal paradigm established a close link between the past and the future in Jewish self-understanding. Israel was not chosen to be God's people because it was better than other nations, but

for reasons known to God only. Israel was elected to worship God alone and expected to be devoted to God by observing God's commandments, the *mitzvot*, as articulated in God's Torah (both Written and Oral). To the extent that Israel has any merit, it is due to Israel's ancestors, the patriarchs and matriarchs, who were exceptional in their belief in God. Israel, therefore, can never forget its ancestors and must look to them as models of good conduct. To stand in a covenantal relationship with God entails learning from the past in order to flourish in the present and be rewarded in the future. Precisely because God has pledged an everlasting commitment to Israel, the people can never lose hope in God. No matter how much Israel suffers in the present, the hope for the better future can never be exhausted. Always learning from the past in order to secure a better future, Israel continues to assert its loyalty to God, despite evidence of its infidelity to the covenant. It is the link between past, present, and future in Jewish self-understanding that compels me to study the historical past of the Jewish people in order to draw some lessons about our predicament in the present and challenges for the future.

Third, if Israel is to be God's people, it must conduct itself in a certain manner that facilitates the presence of God in its midst. To interact with God within the parameters of the Covenant, Israel must become holy: "You shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19: 6). Holiness has both ritual and moral dimensions, which historically can be traced to the interests of the priests and the prophets, respectively. In rabbinic Judaism, the ritual and moral dimensions are closely linked: God can be present in Israel only if Israel properly observes a complex code of ritual purity (many of its details can be understood against prevailing practices in the ancient Near East) and if Israel, both individually and collectively, behaves morally toward the poor, the widow, the orphan, and the resident alien (*ger*) (Leviticus 19: 33–34).<sup>5</sup> Through detailed commands, rabbinic Judaism spelled out how one is to become holy through sanctification of time, space, the body, human relations, and ritual performance. Out of these detailed prescriptions for holiness, *Halakhah* (i.e., Jewish law, broadly conceived) regulates all aspects of Jewish life, including the relationship with non-Jews.

The Jewish doctrine of Chosenness illustrates the complexity of interreligious pluralism in Judaism. The doctrine, especially in its rabbinic elaboration, is a particularistic program with universal dimensions. It is particularistic in its application: only the people chosen by



God, for reasons known only to God, are obligated to observe very specific things as ways to communicate with God, be they observance of the Sabbath, strict dietary restrictions, or prayers. The 613 commandments specified by rabbinic Judaism are obligatory for Jews only, the recipients of God's Torah; they do not pertain to non-Jews. The Jews alone bear the consequences of observance or non-observance of God's prescriptions.

Yet this very particularistic program also includes universal aspects. First, during the Hellenistic period, Judaism opened itself to non-Jews through religious conversion open to all gentile peoples. The proselyte (*ger tzedek*) had equal status with born Jews in terms of religious obligations and one was required to love him or her as one loves oneself.<sup>6</sup> For the gentiles who do not convert to Judaism, rabbinic law carves out a special category of legal obligations that purport to all human beings. These are the seven Noachide laws that spell out the obligation to refrain from negative conduct (such as murder, theft, and incest), as well as the positive command to establish courts of law.<sup>7</sup> These obligations are necessary for human society to exist and they function as natural laws do. Second, on the basis of biblical law, rabbinic Judaism recognizes the category of the resident alien (*ger*) toward whom Israel has special duties. Remembering Israel's own initial status as alien in Egypt, Israel is called to treat the resident aliens with compassion and justice so as to protect their humanity. Third, rabbinic law recognizes the intrinsic worth of all humans by virtue of being created "in the divine image" and the command to "love your neighbor as you love yourself" is extended not only to born Jews but to all human beings.<sup>8</sup> Israel's program for holiness thus includes the *Other*. Fourth, absorbing the virtue ethics of Hellenistic culture, rabbinic Judaism spelled out ethical ideals that enable those who aspire to them to be better human beings. The rabbinic conception of moral perfection (*shlemut*) speaks in the name of the human species at large, even though the path toward human perfection is defined by the particulars of Jewish law. And finally, in continuity with biblical prophets, rabbinic Judaism envisioned a utopian future for humanity at large, and not just for Israel. In the end of days, all nations will recognize the God of Israel as the one and only God, while remaining ethnically distinct.<sup>9</sup>

The fusion of particularism and universalism in Judaism made it an anomaly in the Greco-Roman world. Alongside hostility and ridicule, the Jews provoked both fascination and admiration, attracting some gentiles to adopt certain Jewish rituals without converting to

Judaism.<sup>10</sup> In the Hellenistic and Roman empires, Judaism stood out because it was a national religion: the religious identity of the Jews was inseparable from their ethnic identity. Unlike other nations that absorbed the “gods” of the dominant civilization into their own pantheon of deities, Jewish monotheism precluded such syncretism. The Jews stubbornly rejected the dominant civic religion of the Hellenistic and Roman Empires and conducted their national politics as a service to God. It is not surprising that the first recorded religious persecution in history was directed against the national religion of the Jews. In 167 BCE, Antiochus IV correctly understood that to subdue the Jewish nation in Judea and restore law and order to the Seleucid empire, he must curtail the freedom to practice the laws of the Torah. Conversely, the Jews interpreted their opposition to foreign presence on the Land and in their Temple as a struggle between false “gods” and the one and only true God to Whom their allegiance was due. When Jews regained control of the Temple in 164 BCE, this was celebrated as God’s victory and expressed through the ritual cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The renewal of Jewish political sovereignty, however, did not entail unity. During the short period of Jewish political independence in Judea (140 BCE–6 CE), the Jews fiercely debated what constitutes allegiance to the God of Israel. Both the role of the Temple in Jerusalem and the meaning of God’s Torah were the subjects of heated controversies, reflecting the social agendas of different groups as well as different visions about the desired degree of interaction between Jews and the dominant Hellenistic civilization and the attitude toward the Roman rulers of Palestine. Interreligious pluralism was closely linked to intra-religious pluralism. The internal tensions within the Jewish community and the struggle between Judea and Rome finally reached a crisis in the Great War of 66–70, which led to the demise of Jewish sovereignty in Judea and the rise of one interpretation—Pharisaism—to become normative Judaism.

### **C. Jews in the Middle Ages**

With the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE and the failure of yet another revolt in 132–135, the dream of worshipping God in a Jewish polity was postponed to the remote future of the Messianic Age, when a king Messiah would reconstitute the Davidic monarchy. That dream would be realized in the twentieth century when secular

Jews, who rejected the traditional, passive waiting for the Messiah, resettled in the Land of Israel and eventually founded the modern state of Israel in 1948. Until the twentieth century, the Jews survived as a distinct ethnic-national minority that enjoyed a large measure of legal and cultural autonomy, first in the Roman and Byzantine empires and later in Islam and Christendom.

In the diaspora, the Jews enjoyed extensive religious and legal autonomy. They conducted their life according to their own religious laws and managed most of their internal affairs on their own under the leadership of rabbis who functioned as judges, administrators, teachers, and spiritual leaders.<sup>11</sup> By the third century CE, the rabbis conceded the depoliticization of Judaism when they validated the dominant legal system within the parameters of Jewish Law. Legal allegiance to a foreign monarch no longer conflicted with religious allegiance to God and His Torah, notwithstanding the persistent messianic dream about the return to the Land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Davidic monarchy. Coming to terms with their external political powerlessness, the Jews adapted themselves to life in exile under the domination of foreign nations.

In the Middle Ages, the Jews found themselves living in the orbit of two distinct civilizations—Islam and Christendom. In both cases, they were recognized as a religio-ethnic minority that enjoyed protection of life and property in return for special taxation and inferior social status. But there was considerable difference between the attitudes of Islam and Christianity to the Jewish minority. A later newcomer to Near Eastern religions, Islam recognized both Judaism and Christianity as genuinely divinely revealed traditions, albeit distorted ones, and accorded to Jews and Christians the status of “protected people” (*dhimmi*). Though the status entailed institutionalized discrimination, it did create a legal place for Jews in Islamic societies and enabled Jews to take part in almost all aspects of life, even including holding positions of power within the Islamic state. Moreover, in Islam’s self-understanding, the Jews did not play an important role, even though the early Medinan community under Muhammad emerged through struggle with Jews of Medina. And Islam spread as a religion of a small minority—the Arabs—who conquered vast territories. While the new religion was the glue of the multi-ethnic empire, Islam did compromise its own dream of uniting religion and politics when it accorded special status to the “People of the Book.”

Medieval Islam can serve as a positive example of interreligious pluralism, in which a minority culture flourishes by adopting and adapting the cultural modes of the majority. Absorbing both the Arabic language and modes of Islamic culture, Jews reinterpreted rabbinic Judaism which gave rise to new modes of self-expression. Jewish law, biblical exegesis, poetry and prose, philosophy and the sciences, and Jewish theology were all cast anew under the influence of Islamic culture, without losing their distinct Jewishness. Writing in Arabic or Hebrew, Jewish authors continued to assert Jewish uniqueness and even spiritual superiority, in literary style taken over from their surrounding culture. The cultural symbiosis between Judaism and Islam, especially from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, is an example that cultural interaction need not erase collective identity and *otherness*. Nonetheless, we must not romanticize the medieval past. In Islam, too, Jews had to sustain periodic outbursts of hostility and forced conversions to the dominant religion, and the long stretches of peaceful co-existence were possible because of the hierarchical structure of Islamic civilization in which Muslims and Islam enjoyed privileged status. That hierarchical model for religious pluralism would be challenged by the principles of liberal democracy in modernity.

The Jewish experience in Christendom provides a much darker perspective on interreligious interaction.<sup>12</sup> In contrast to Islam, in Christendom the relations between Jews and non-Jews were necessarily more antagonistic, because Christianity defined itself from the outset as the “True Israel” which had supplanted Israel in the flesh. Since Christianity was first a Jewish sect before it became a gentile Church, Christian self-understanding was inseparably linked to Jews and Judaism. The tragic relationship between the two religions was rooted in the ambivalent status of the Jew in Christian self-understanding. On the one hand, the Jews not only refused to acknowledge the Christian claim about Jesus as the Savior, they were also directly accused of killing the Son of God. In their stubborn infidelity, the Jews hindered the universal spread of Christian Gospel and the culmination of its sacred history in the Second Coming of Christ. But on the other hand, Christianity (unlike Gnosticism) did acknowledge Israel in the flesh as the recipient of the initial divine revelation and did consider the Bible of the Jews as part of its own canon, albeit relegating it to the status of Old Testament that had been superseded by the New Testament. The Jews functioned as the “Witness People” of the Christian universal message and had to be protected in order to validate the Christian

message toward the pagan world. In theory, moreover, Jesus' teaching of love had to be extended to all people, including Jews, challenging the Christian to love the very person whose continued existence denied the universality of Christian claims. So long as the Jews existed, Christianity remained unfulfilled. The two sibling religions were thus entangled in a neurotic love-hate bond that left a trail of Jewish blood in Western history.

Briefly, the Christianization of the West spelled the deterioration of Jewish status. From being Roman citizens, who practiced a legal religion of great antiquity, Jews would be reduced in the next centuries to the status of a permanent alien minority whose presence was both necessary and irritating. In the late fourth century, St. Augustine articulated the doctrine that Pope Gregory I translated into policy in the sixth century: the Jews must not be molested and killed, but must be kept in a subordinated status to Christians to remind them of their eternal sins.

Utilitarian reasons, however, would make the presence of the Jews in the midst of the Christian world economically beneficial. From the tenth century onward, Jews played an important economic role in the urbanization of Europe, concentrating in commerce and money lending. The latter activity, so odious to Christians, would breed deep resentment and hostility toward the Jews, contributing to their demonization in popular imagination. Legal protection was offered to Jews by emperors and monarchs, who considered the Jews "serfs of the Chamber." Special taxes levied on Jews served as important sources of funds to the royal treasuries, but the Jews could be legally dispensed with whenever their presence was no longer deemed useful. Thus, in the thirteenth century, as emperors fought with popes and monarchs struggled with the aristocracy, the Jews were often used as pawns in larger political struggles, leading to regional or total expulsions. The status of the Jewish minority in Europe rapidly deteriorated: blood libels, accusations that Jews desecrated the Host, staged spectacles in which rabbinic literature was put on trial, economic exclusion and exploitation, physical attacks, and regional or total expulsions of Jews were all part of the tragic story of Jewish-Christian relations in the late Middle Ages.

In the midst of this sad story of abuse, nonetheless, we should remember that Jews enjoyed legal and cultural autonomy, and that Jewish legal creativity reached unprecedented heights in Western Europe during the 12th and 13th centuries. The very growth of Jewish

legal thinking, especially biblical exegesis, was respectfully acknowledged by some Christian biblical interpreters and theologians in the twelfth century, leading them to adopt certain textual strategies articulated by Jewish commentators. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Jewish and Christian scholars would also collaborate in the translation of ancient philosophical and scientific texts so that a schoolman, such as Thomas Aquinas, consulted the views of Jewish philosophers, such as Maimonides, while still advising kings to keep the Jews in a subordinated status. Other Christian theologians, some recent converts from Judaism, would use the growth of legal innovation to argue that the Judaism of the thirteenth century was not a continuation of rabbinic Judaism and that it should not be accorded protection. The attack on the rabbinic tradition in the thirteenth century was led by recent Jewish converts to Christianity who became formidable polemicists against their previous brethren. From 1290 onward, a series of expulsions would bring an end to Jewish presence in Western Europe, redrawing the map of Jewish diaspora. Jews moved eastward to new territories in Eastern Europe and to the Ottoman Empire. In both places, they enjoyed benign conditions that facilitated immense cultural growth until the mid-seventeenth century. Some interesting changes occurred during the transition from the Middle Ages to the modern period (from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries), illustrating how porous the boundaries were between the two religions. In Renaissance Italy, the revival of the classical heritage by the humanists brought about genuine interest in the study of Hebrew and rabbinic sources, privileging *Kabbalah*, the Jewish mystical tradition, which was now declared to contain ancient theology that culminated in Christianity. But neither humanism and its emphasis on the inherent dignity of humanity nor the rise of Protestantism would ease Jewish-Christian relations. On the one hand, the sixteenth century, beginning in Italy, witnessed the ghettoization of the Jews and the erection of physical, visible barriers between Jews and Christians that remained in place until the French Revolution. The interaction between Jews and Christians was primarily functional, limited to specific business transactions, and rarely involved socialization. But on the other hand, the mass conversion of Jews in Iberia in the fifteenth century created a situation in which Judaism and Christianity became even more entangled with each other. After centuries of pressuring Jews to convert, the New Christians would be the object of distrust and suspicion, manifested in the activities of the Inquisition whose goal was to weed out

any form of continuing Judaization among the New Christians. Some of them, indeed, continued to harbor allegiance to Judaism and eventually would find their way back to Judaism in Holland, England, Italy, the Ottoman Empire, or the New World. The return of the New Christians to Judaism would have an important impact on Jewish culture and religious self-understanding in the seventeenth century, manifested, in particular, in their role during the messianic outburst in the middle of the century. The Christians who reverted to Judaism were also the basis for the establishment of new Jewish communities in areas from which Jews had been previously expelled or never allowed to settle. It was the French Revolution that compelled Europe to rethink its attitude toward the Jews and grant them civil rights as citizens. But the emancipation of the Jews would result in major intra-religious disputes about the meaning of Judaism.

In sum, the complex story of the Jewish past provides models (some positive and some negative) from which to view the challenge of homogenization. The historical experience of the Jews indicates the complex nexus between religious pluralism and political power. The history of the Jews compels us to wonder: Is religious pluralism the result of political powerlessness or rather the moral obligation of the politically strong? Is toleration of religions other than one's own a concession to defacto reality or a benevolent condescension that the victor accords the vanquished? Suffice it to say that the data highlights the importance of making the right choices. It is always up to humans to determine how they will interact with other humans. What we *do*, in other words, is much more important than what we *say* or *think*. Whether to subdue, oppress, or eliminate the opposing *Other* or, conversely, to accept and make room for the *Other* as distinct from oneself are all voluntary decisions that rational humans can undertake. Inter-religious pluralism is predicated upon respect for the *Other* and the willingness to acknowledge the rightful existence of the *Other* within the boundaries of one's own society, without expecting the *Other* to play a role in one's own self-understanding.

## II. Intra-Religious Diversity in Modern Judaism

### A. Jews Enter European Society

The relations between Jews and non-Jews changed considerably in the modern period, but remained no less complex and ridden with ten-

sions. In Judaism, there is a close link between intra-religious and interreligious pluralism. How Jews should interact with non-Jews and non-Jewish cultures has been a matter of debate from the very inception of Jewish history. If Jews are to be totally open to the culture of their neighbors, radical acculturation could threaten the allegiance to the Jewish collective lifestyle, values, beliefs, and practices. Whether the process of acculturation is rapid and dramatic or slow and gradual, the challenge for Jews is always the same: where does the boundary between Judaism and other civilizations, societies, and cultures lie? What are the limits of integration and acculturation and does one still remain Jewish if these limits are crossed? Is membership in the Jewish people a matter of practice or belief or some particular combination of both? Which beliefs and which practices are necessary and sufficient conditions for inclusion in the Jewish people? And what is the status of a person born Jewish but who no longer feels connected to the Jewish people in any significant way?

These questions became extremely acute during the modern period, due to the secularization of the West and the rise of modern, liberal democracy as the dominant political theory. In the modern period, the very notion of Judaism as a religious ethnicity was no longer taken for granted and a debate ensued whether Judaism was a "religion" or an "ethnicity." The debate emerged already in the late eighteenth century and was inseparable from the process of Emancipation, namely, the granting of formal civil rights to Jews in the country of residence. In theory, the Emancipation entailed that Jews be recognized as equal citizens whose inalienable rights are protected by law. The Emancipation was to bring a formal end to centuries of discrimination, hostility, and marginalization of Jews in Western society. In practice, however, the Emancipation of Jews was a much more complex process, interwoven with the modernization and secularization of Christian Europe.

To begin with, the Emancipation of the Jews was the logical conclusion of the democratic principles of the French Revolution and the assumptions of the Enlightenment which undergirded it.<sup>13</sup> If, indeed, all humans are by nature equal, and if Jews are humans, then Jews are equal and all laws that discriminate against them must be removed. The first part of the Emancipation process involved an intense debate about the humanity of the Jews. Their presumably objectionable traits were cited as a major reason why they could not become equal citizens under the law. Logic prevailed over age-old animosity and the ghetto's



walls, which physically and socially separated Jews, came down when the ideals of the French Revolution were exported throughout Europe by the armies of Napoleon.

The logic of the Emancipation, however, stood in conflict with the very nature of Judaism as a religious ethnicity.<sup>14</sup> The Emancipation was granted to Jews as individuals, endowed with rights—but Jews do not exist merely as individuals and being Jewish is not merely a matter of personal belief; rather, it involves a comprehensive way of life that can be sustained only when Jews are connected to other Jews. Jewish corporate existence, however, was incompatible with the modern nation-state, as Napoleon was quick to understand, and had to disappear if Jews were to become citizens of the modern, democratic nation-state. The corporate status of the Jewish community had to be abolished because Jews could not constitute “a state within a state.” The Emancipation, then, denied the collective dimension of Judaism and compelled Jews to see themselves as members of a religious denomination whose faith was expressed in some specific ritual practices. By denying the corporate structure of Judaism, the Emancipation tacitly expected Jews to disappear as a distinct entity.

No less problematic was the fact that legal emancipation did not entail a transformation of Europe’s emotional stance toward Jews. Entrenched hatred and suspicion continued to exist, resulting in continued social exclusion and discrimination throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. Whether or not these negative attitudes are to be ascribed directly to Christian teachings is a debate that need not concern us here. What is evident is that Jews remained the hated *Other* long after they were formally granted civil rights. Indeed, the more Jews were integrated into European society during the second half of the nineteenth century, the more Europe had to rationalize its traditional hatred. The legitimization came in the form of pseudo-scientific racial theory that highlighted the Jewish *Other* on biological grounds. Given the inherited difference between Jews and other people, the Jewish presence in Europe became a “problem” to be solved. The Nazis proposed the Final Solution to Jewish *Otherness*, and the horrors of the Holocaust serve as an ominous reminder about what humans are capable of doing to each other in the name of imposing unity and sameness.

While the Emancipation indeed brought an end to Jewish formal segregation, the meaning of being Jewish became much more complex. In the modern nation-state, the Jewish community had lost its legal

grip over its members. As Jews became citizens, association with other Jews was a voluntary matter left to the discretion of the individual. Moreover, the loss of Jewish autonomy meant that there was no recognized Jewish authority to dictate to Jews how to behave or what to think. It was up to each and every Jew to decide how to express a continued allegiance to Judaism and what value to accord the Jewish tradition in one's personal life. Plurality of opinions about the nature of Judaism and the conduct that flows from it became the major characteristic of modernity for Jews.

Ironically, while the Emancipation dissolved Jewish self-government, allowing each Jew to decide how to be Jewish, the rise of modern anti-semitism reminded them that no matter how they wished to express their Jewishness, being Jewish is **not** a matter of choice but a matter of birth and blood. Modernity, in short, created an ongoing identity crisis for Jews who have been asking themselves three fundamental questions: Why should one remain Jewish? What is Judaism? How should one be Jewish? There are as many answers to these questions as there are Jews, but several dominant approaches emerged during the nineteenth century in Europe and then continued to evolve during the twentieth century in America and Israel.

## **B. Jewish Responses to the Emancipation**

The first type of response to the challenge of modernity was acculturation and assimilation. In Western and Central Europe, Jews eagerly welcomed the possibility of social and cultural integration and enthusiastically immersed themselves in the dominant culture, which they regarded as superior to their own. As Heinrich Heine and many intellectuals of his generation felt, being Jewish was an unfortunate accident of birth that had to be discarded if one was to enjoy the progress of modern life. Conversion to Christianity was but an entry ticket to full participation in society.<sup>15</sup> But Heine and other Jewish intellectuals would also quickly discover that shedding one's Jewish identity was psychologically very difficult, resulting in profound inner conflict and bouts of self-hatred. While in theory the modern nation-state did not require Jews to formally convert in order to gain citizenship, in reality Jews were continually excluded from various occupations and positions which they could obtain only after formal conversion. For those who actively sought to rid themselves of their Jewishness, it was just a

matter of one or two generations before active assimilation meant the loss of Jewish identity altogether.

Most Jews in Western and Central Europe, however, wished to integrate into modern Western society without denying their Jewish ethnic identity. The apparent secularization of Western culture during the nineteenth century created the (false?) impression that Jews could actively contribute to Western culture as members of the new modern nation-state, without being reminded of their Jewishness. Gladly forsaking traditional Jewish upbringing, which many found embarrassingly backward, European Jews delved into secular activities in literature, drama, art, music, journalism, the liberal professions, and the natural sciences, all of which were now open to them. The unprecedented creativity of Jews in these secular pursuits would create the impression that Jews were themselves the creators and main beneficiaries of modernity. This perception would greatly contribute to modern anti-semitism and the claim that the Jews are responsible for the ills of modernity, such as social disintegration, breakdown of families, loss of traditional morals, and the like.

Looking at Judaism through the lens of modern European culture, many Jews found their tradition to be inadequate and called for its transformation from within. If Jews were to enter modern life, Judaism had to be modernized. Those who sought the reform of Judaism from within wished to remain Jewish, but they now looked at Judaism strictly as a set of beliefs, rather than a comprehensive way of life of an ethnic group.<sup>16</sup> As an equal citizen, a Jew is German or a Frenchman of the “Mosaic faith,” an individual who shares with all humans the principles of universal rationalism, and differs from them only in regard to the commitment to spread the universal essence of Judaism — ethical monotheism — to humanity at large. The rational beliefs of Judaism are not only compatible with membership in the modern nation-state, the Jews’ commitment to an ancient tradition of justice make them especially good citizens who work for the progress of humanity.

If the essence of Judaism is a universal “ethical monotheism” that addresses all humans, what about the particularistic features of the Jewish tradition, such as the doctrine of Chosenness, the Hebrew language, the endlessly minute legal practices, and the longing for the coming of the Messiah and the return of Jews to the Land of Israel? Furthermore, since Judaism had been a way of life, what about all the peculiar rituals, practices, customs, and sensibilities that differentiated Jews from their neighbors? Indeed, the advocates of Reform were will-

ing to either discard or radically transform the particularistic features of Judaism in order to facilitate integration into modern life. Traditional Judaism could not remain the same if Jews were to join the modern world.

The theoretical underpinning for the reform of Judaism came from the philosophy of the Enlightenment, especially as formulated by Immanuel Kant. Reform Jewish theologians accepted the primacy of the individual as a rational, autonomous, self-legislating agent for whom religion is a set of ethical, universalizable moral principles. Therefore, from the perspective of the Reformers, heteronomous Jewish law has no authority over the individual, unless the agent chooses to make specific elements of the Jewish legal tradition binding upon him/herself. The Halakhic tradition articulated by the rabbis was thus declared non-binding, a product of human historical activity that over the centuries had become entrenched, distorting the essence of Judaism. That essence is to be found in the ethical teachings of biblical prophets, but the Bible, too, was viewed as divinely inspired rather than divinely revealed. The biblical text had to be subjected to rational analysis by the tools of contemporary science and its message accepted only to the extent that it expressed the "essence of Judaism."

The Reform agenda of biblical criticism, redesigning the synagogue service, and the assault on the authority of the legal tradition, unleashed a major outcry by Jews who felt obliged to protect Judaism from its destroyers. The opponents of change proudly adopted the term "Orthodox," originally used as a derisive term to denote those who opposed the modernization of Judaism. Thus, Orthodoxy itself came into being as a product of Jewish struggle with modernity, even though Orthodoxy presented itself as the defender of a divinely revealed, eternal, and authoritative legal tradition. To the Orthodox, Judaism was not just a matter of faith but a comprehensive way of life guided by the principles of Torah as interpreted by authoritative rabbis whose rulings are part of the Oral Law. Not surprisingly, when Orthodox thinkers, such as Samson Raphael Hirsch, would attempt to articulate a theory of eternal Judaism, they would employ contemporary philosophical categories absorbed in European universities that were now open to Jews.<sup>17</sup>

But if the early proponents of Orthodoxy, especially in Germany, were university educated rabbis who believed that Judaism is compatible with a certain measure of cultural integration, by the 1870s they would find themselves criticized by other Orthodox leaders who

would eventually be called Ultra-Orthodox. The internal division of Orthodoxy took place in Hungary, which granted Jews full civil rights in 1867.<sup>18</sup> Hungarian Jews, including those who practiced traditional Jewish life, did join the political process and sent delegates to the Hungarian parliament, indicating that initially Orthodoxy did not denounce democracy and its values. It was an internal debate about the nature of Jewish involvement in Hungarian politics that resulted in factionalism within Orthodoxy and the rise of Ultra-Orthodoxy. The latter would militantly reject accommodation with modernity, especially in terms of culture and education, willingly isolating themselves from the style and sensibilities of the modern world. Ironically, Ultra-Orthodox thinkers had themselves to **construct** a conception of unchanging Jewish tradition in order to legitimize their isolationist stance, while bringing about the politicization of Jewish religious life. It is this version of Orthodoxy that survived the Holocaust (since extermination of the Jews in Hungary only began in 1944) and has experienced unprecedented growth in the United States and Israel in the last few decades.

How much to change and how to legitimize change has been the bone of contention among the various strands of modern Judaism. Between the Reformers and the Orthodox camp were those who acknowledged that Judaism was a product of historical processes of change, but who thought that modernization of Judaism should conform to the principles of Jewish tradition. Jewish Law itself, they noted, recognized the distinction between divinely revealed law (*mi-deoraita*, literally, "from the Torah") and human interpretation (*mi-derabanan*, literally, "from the rabbis") and that change has been a characteristic of Jewish life from the very beginning. According to this so-called "Positive-Historical School," Judaism evolved over time in response to changing historical circumstances, but the tradition itself created the parameters of change and placed the authority for change on the Jewish people as a whole. As a product of history, Judaism could be studied by the tools of the academic science of history, but changes in Judaism had to be proposed in moderation, taking into consideration the unique features and sensibilities of Jewish life. Thus, prayer had to remain in Hebrew and not in the vernacular, allegiance to the Land of Israel had to be declared even though Jews were now part of modern society, and the belief in a personal messiah had to be affirmed.

In twentieth-century America, the views of the “Positive Historical School” would be translated as a program for the Americanization of the masses of traditional Jews who had emigrated from East European countries (1880 – 1924), enabling them to remain loyal to their East European Jewish folkways while becoming fully Americanized.<sup>19</sup> This has come to be called Conservative Judaism, to be distinguished from Reform Judaism, which provided the program for the Americanization of the first wave of Jewish immigrants from Germany and Central Europe in the mid-nineteenth century. For traditional East European Jews, American Reform Judaism was too foreign. They needed a different program to enable them to become Americanized without losing their ties to traditional Judaism. That was supplied by Conservative Judaism, although its leaders were originally members of Reform Judaism and its financial support came from wealthy Jews who sided with Reform.

During the twentieth century, especially after the Holocaust, the differences between Conservative and Reform have narrowed considerably. Reform Judaism became more traditional in practice and affirmative of the national dimension of Jewish existence; and the rank and file of the Conservative movement in the second and third generations were neither deeply knowledgeable regarding traditional Jewish life nor informed about the way the leadership of the movement made decisions about how to adapt to American life. Nonetheless, there are many differences in worship style and theological emphasis. Reform Judaism has been extremely open to non-Jews, no longer requires a spouse of intermarriage to convert to Judaism, and recognizes the Jewishness of a child even if only the father is Jewish. Reform congregations debate today the status of non-Jewish spouses and their role in Jewish communal life and religious services. Conservative Judaism continues to assert the centrality of Hebrew in synagogue worship and the authority of Halakhic process, but changes within the movement, most profoundly in regard to the status of women, indicate how flexible and open to change this movement is. These progressive forms of modern Judaism still retain separate institutional structures, but they join forces in struggles against Orthodoxy. The latter has experienced a remarkable resurgence in the last two decades, as many Jews seeking deeper spiritual meaning find their way to traditional Jewish sources.

The real struggle between liberal forms of Judaism and Orthodox variants is now waged in the state of Israel, where non-Orthodox forms of Judaism are not validated. Conversions by Reform and Con-

servative rabbis are not considered valid, and there is considerable hostility toward the Reform and Conservative presence in Israel. Some Orthodox rabbis have gone as far as saying that Reform and Conservative Judaism are not even forms of Judaism, and secular Jews who know little about religion or about the history of modern Judaism accept these assertions. Both Reform and Conservative Judaism are viewed as American imports that have little relevance in the complex reality of Israel. In the modern state of Israel, intra-Jewish factionalism has been exacerbated because Israel has no separation between religion and state. All views, religious or secular, are given political expression and fight for survival in Israel's robust democratic system. To understand intra-Jewish diversity in the state of Israel we need to briefly remember how the state came into being and what it signified in Jewish consciousness.

The state of Israel was founded in 1948 after seven decades of Zionist activity.<sup>20</sup> Zionism emerged in Europe in the 1890s as a response to modern anti-semitism, arguing that the Emancipation of the Jews had failed: the West did not and could not absorb the Jews as equal citizens because of the long-standing fear and hatred of Jews ("Judeophobia") that permeated Western consciousness. The only solution to the Jewish problem was a mass migration of the Jews out of Europe and the creation of a "national home." The Zionists had to prove that the Jews were indeed a distinct nation (as against the Jewish assimilationists, secularists, reformers, and socialists, all of whom denied Jewish national existence). The Zionist claim was difficult to prove since the Jewish nation lacked the marks of other nations: a land of its own, political sovereignty, and a national culture. Indeed, to become a normal nation, the Jews had to acquire these features, but they had to do so by relying primarily on themselves, emancipating themselves from the debilitating habits of diaspora existence for two millennia. Nations should lend political support to the movement, but it was the Jews who should liberate themselves from the disabilities imposed on them by other nations.

### **C. Zionist Variants**

From its inception, Zionism was rooted in a paradox.<sup>21</sup> On the one hand, Zionism was a radical departure from traditional Judaism in terms of analysis, goals, and modes of operation. The original visionary of Zionism, Theodor Herzl (1860–1904), was a highly assimilated

Jew from Budapest, a successful journalist and playwright in Vienna who was forced to come to terms with modern anti-semitism during the Dreyfus trial in Paris in 1894. His analysis of the Jewish predicament was thoroughly secular, inspired by European nationalist movements, especially Italian nationalism. Without making any appeal to the sources of Judaism, Herzl envisioned the creation of a Jewish state that would actualize the best ideals of European society (a peculiar mixture of European liberal democracy, humanism, and socialism). The new, *just* society would restore dignity to the Jews and be a model for humanity.<sup>22</sup> Herzl himself was willing to compromise about the location of the new national home, and his readiness to entertain the British proposal of Uganda led to serious opposition. Herzl's opponents were East European Jews who understood that Zionism could not succeed unless it captured the yearnings and ideals of the Jewish tradition. The only homeland of the Jew must be the Land of Israel, at this point an underdeveloped region of the Ottoman Empire.

For the critics of Herzl, Zionism was not only a revolution against exilic conditions but also a continuity with the Jewish religious past, albeit through major modifications. Zionism would have to liberate the Jews not only from the oppression of diaspora existence but from the very limiting religious beliefs of the Jewish Halakhic tradition, without disengaging them from their literary sources. The vehicle of the creation of a Zionist culture would be the Hebrew language itself, which would now be used not only for prayer but for daily conversation and literary expression about all aspects of the human condition. Hebrew language and literature would supplant all Jewish diaspora dialects, especially Yiddish, the language which prevented the modernization of the Jews in Europe. The revival of Hebrew would enable Zionists to reconnect with the remote past of the Jewish people — ancient biblical Israel — whose historical reality was the very justification of Zionist return to the Land of Israel. From the new center of Jewish life, a modern, national Hebrew culture would radiate, serving as a focal point for the transformation of Jewish life in the diaspora, which would continue to exist. Through a slow, dedicated cultural transformation of diaspora mentality, a new Jewish person would emerge: a secular, fearless, free, self-reliant, and modern Jew who could relate to non-Jews as a true equal.<sup>23</sup>

The most radical Zionist transformation was to concern the very attitude toward physical nature. The return to the Land of Israel was to effect a major economic transformation of Jewish life: Jews would no



longer find their livelihood from finance and commerce but become farmers who work the land with their own hands. Farming would reverse the alienation of Jews from nature, imposed on Jews by non-Jewish society and contributing to Jewish weakness. The new Jew, as Max Nordau put it, will be a “muscular Jew:” strong in body and fierce in spirit, who will conquer his or her own weakness and thereby conquer the very arid and inhospitable land.<sup>24</sup> The Zionist program was to be achieved not through military conquest but through self-conquest and conquest of the land through tilling. The Jew had to conquer his or her own weakness by reuniting with the land and deriving new strength from nature, the very nature that rabbinic Judaism relegated to the margin in centuries of divine worship.

But how could this be accomplished by young, inexperienced, Jewish idealists who had no experience in farming? The answer was by joining individuals into communes, organized as semi-military units to conquer the Land and to create a new Jewish person. The communal lifestyle created by Zionism was a matter of necessity, but within a short time its ideological justification was provided by Jewish socialists who were disillusioned with socialist universalism and the Russian Revolution. In the late nineteenth century, Jews were very attracted to European socialist movements because of the emphasis on universal brotherhood and universal solutions to the problems of humanity.<sup>25</sup> Though many Jewish socialists had a hard time giving up their middle-class lifestyle, they passionately called for the debunking of capitalist economic structures as a way to remove all forms of injustice, once and for all. In the new socialist order that transforms humanity itself, the Jewish problem would simply disappear.

But, by the first decade of the twentieth century, it became clear that socialism was a dubious solution: first, European socialism was not devoid of anti-semitism and, second, socialist analysis of economic development was not borne out by Jewish history. The Jews are not a class, but a people divided by conflicting economic interests. The solution to the Jewish predicament in modernity would come only when Jewish nationalism, i.e., Zionism, conducts itself according to socialist principles as adapted to the particular conditions of the Jewish people. A socialist version of Zionism would function as the ideological superstructure for the communal lifestyle of the new pioneers in Palestine, who firmly believed that, at last, the universal values of justice and equality could become a reality for Jews.<sup>26</sup>

What the early Zionist pioneers thought was *just*, however, conflicted with the views of the indigenous Arab population in Palestine. The Arabs were quick to understand that a mass migration of European Jews to Palestine would change the nature of the place. Ironically, it was Zionist settlement that rekindled the nationalist sentiments of the local Palestinian population, leading to bloody conflicts about the control of the land. From the Arab perspective, Zionist settlement was anything but *just*; it was, rather, a usurpation of rights through cunning and deception, which had to be prevented. Palestinian nationalism emerged as Arab nations in the Middle East were overthrowing the last vestiges of European imperialism, even though the new Arab nations themselves had come into being as creations of imperial power.<sup>27</sup> And it was the manipulation by the global superpowers, England and France, of conflicting national movements that would leave the Middle East embroiled in interminable struggle. In the Arab, predominantly Muslim, Middle East, the new Jewish presence was once again the rejected *Other*. Treatment of the Jewish minority in Arab states deteriorated significantly from the benign tolerance in the pre-modern period.<sup>28</sup>

In the tense relations between Zionist settlers and local Arab populations the new communes, known as *kibbutzim*, served essential defensive roles. Though Palestine after 1922 was under the British Mandate, the safety of individuals and property was periodically jeopardized by a hostile Arab population who understood the nature of the struggle perhaps better than the Zionist settlers. The *kibbutzim* were the foundation for the emergence of new Jewish military prowess, first for the sake of self-defense against Arabs and later directed against the British Mandate itself with the final push toward the creation of a new Jewish state. And the new communes were also the foundation of a new Hebrew culture. How Jewish was the new culture? This is a very difficult question to answer. On the surface, the *kibbutz* culture was thoroughly secular. Belief in God was neither asserted nor expected, and the traditional Jewish religious lifestyle was practically abandoned, a relic of the bourgeois, diasporic past that had to be overthrown by the Zionist revolution. Yet a closer look indicates a greater degree of continuity with the Jewish tradition. In the *kibbutzim*, the Bible was studied as national literature; the Sabbath and the holidays were celebrated with new creative rituals; and a strong nationalist identity was forged through the study of Jewish history in which anti-semitism was emphasized.

The Hebrew culture of the kibbutzim defined what Israeli culture would be after the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948. When the state was declared, however, it defined itself not as a “state for Jews” (as Herzl envisioned it) but rather as a “Jewish State,” where Jews from all over the world have an automatic right to become citizens by virtue of being Jewish. The precise meaning of “Jewish State,” however, was rather unclear, leaving Jews in Israel and the world over to debate it endlessly. The state of Israel came into being with the support of world nations three years after the demise of one third of the Jewish people in the Holocaust. Though the Holocaust alone was not the cause of the creation of the state, it clearly was an important contributing factor.

#### **D. The State of Israel: A House Divided**

The suffering of the Jews in the Holocaust finally brought the nations of the world to support the Zionist agenda, but the creation of the state of Israel meant little peace, either externally or internally. The Jews in Israel have remained the perennial *Other*, fighting for the right of the state to exist among nations that wish to see its demise. And within the state of Israel it is the Arab Palestinian population who functions as the “*Other Within*.” Though enjoying citizenship, the Arabs have not enjoyed the same rights and have suffered from the intentionally discriminatory policies of successive Israeli governments to keep the Arab sector less developed than the Jewish majority. After 1967, Palestinian nationalism, which attempted to address the plight of the 1948 refugees, gained momentum among Israeli Arabs, further complicating the interdependence between the Jewish state and its Arab neighbors.

From within, a heated debate about the Jewish character of the new state has been raging. If Israel is a Jewish State (and not only a secular state where Jews are the majority), then should Israeli culture and society be conducted according to the principles of Jewish religious law? Since many of the early Zionists were avid secularists, a return to a religiously governed state seemed to be the worst application of diaspora mentality.<sup>29</sup> But it was the religious Jews who rejected any attempt to create a constitution for the nascent state on the ground that the Torah is the only constitution of the Jewish people. In the first three decades of the Jewish state (1948–1977), the political culture was the legacy of socialist Zionism, now translated into the ideal of “statism,” the subjugation of all agendas to the needs of the new state. This ideol-

ogy served Israel well in the very difficult early years, when it had to absorb millions of Jews, including Holocaust survivors and Jews who were forced to leave newly established Arab nations. The Jewish immigrants from Muslim countries did not undergo the Emancipation or modernization; they remained tied to the Jewish religious tradition that they could practice in relative peace as second-class citizens.

The absorption of massive Jewish immigration from Muslim countries into a new nation of immigrants from Europe was ridden with difficulties, and left scars, which are felt to this day. Resenting their inferior social status, Jews from Muslim countries have harbored resentment toward the institutions, culture, and style of Israeli society. The newcomers would change the political map of Israel in 1977, toppling a Labor government and electing a rival party whose policies were privatization and the dismantling of the welfare state. Since 1977, Jews from Muslim nations have become ever stronger in Israeli politics and culture, changing the flavor and orientation of Israeli life.

At the close of the twentieth century, the state of Israel is by no means closer to internal peace. On the contrary, the rival visions about the Jewishness of the state have become more antagonistic and at times it seems that Israel is on the brink of civil war. These debates are all carried out in the political arena as over twenty parties vie for power and the Jewish religion has become thoroughly politicized. Religious parties, even Ultra-Orthodox that find the state of Israel to be a negation of Judaism's ideals, employ politics in order to gain financial support from the state for their favorite institution. The politicization of religion further contributes to the alienation and hostility between secularists and traditionalists, tensions between Israel and the liberal Jews of the diaspora, and frustration among Israelis who begin to doubt the ability of Jews to govern themselves.

### **III. Judaism and Religious Pluralism**

The first two sections provide a lot of historical data to illustrate my position that we cannot talk about "religion" in abstract general terms. It is only when we understand a religious tradition on its own terms that we can begin to develop a perspective about the role of religion in contemporary life. So what can the story of Judaism tell us about the problem of global homogenization of culture? In the last section of this essay, I reflect on the historical data from a theological perspective. As a Jewish theologian, I regard all the sacred sources of Judaism (includ-

ing biblical, rabbinic, philosophic, and mystical) as the wellspring from which I draw the wisdom that enables me to make sense of life and respond to contemporary challenges, including the challenge of globalization. Speaking on the basis of the sources of Judaism, I offer some reflections about the challenge of globalization not as definite, closely argued conclusions but as tentative suggestions for further reflection.

### A. Pluralism is a Human Good

The historical experience of the Jewish people teaches the need to protect the uniqueness of groups and individuals against the demands for homogenization. In their principled refusal to be anything other than who they are, Jews over the centuries have, in effect, been saying “respect our difference; allow us to be who we are; don’t assimilate us into your own self-understanding; don’t impose your values, beliefs, sensibilities, and rituals on us, because we are not you.” In their persistent presence and their intense internal debates, Jews stand as a testimony to the value of pluralism both *vis-à-vis* other traditions and from within Judaism itself. I, therefore, maintain that pluralism is itself good: a society that allows for religious diversity is better than a society in which only one outlook or one perspective is allowed to flourish. This message is particularly relevant today in a world that is becoming increasingly homogeneous, where cultural differences have been blurred and local cultures and religious traditions are under the threat of extinction. The history of the Jews suggests to us that whenever only one form of human self-expression (be it religious or secular) is permitted to flourish, injustice necessarily ensues, because other forms have to be oppressed, marginalized, or obliterated. The very persistence of the Jewish people stands as a challenge against uniformity and conformism.

The same is true for Judaism itself. Modern Jews must remember that traditional Judaism was never monolithic, even though until the modern period Jews have accepted the rabbinic version as normative. Jews have disagreed about the meaning of Judaism even in the pre-modern period: in the tenth century Karaites challenged the authority of the rabbis and in the thirteenth century the philosophers debated the true meaning of Jewish monotheism. Practices no less than beliefs were hotly debated, especially when Jews from different regions were forced to live with each other due to expulsions and migrations. Internal Jewish diversity has been intensified in the modern period because

no communal body has any authority over Jews. Therefore, any attempt to make one version of Judaism the one and only “authentic” version is historically, theologically, and politically dubious. Historically, it denies the actual plurality of views in Judaism; theologically, it is, at least in my view, a misreading of Jewish monotheism; and politically, it leads to religious coercion in which Jews commit injustice against each other. Religious coercion conflicts not only with the democratic principle of freedom to think and believe, but also with some of the deepest religious teachings of Judaism which counsel peace, tolerance, respect, and love of the *Other*. To impose but one interpretation of Judaism to the exclusion of all others is a grave error.

### **B. Religious Justifications for Pluralism**

My support for religious pluralism and opposition to religious coercion (between Jews and non-Jews or among Jews) may seem to be contrary to the claims of monotheism. Since monotheism, after all, asserts the existence of one God, does not Jewish monotheism itself legitimize the struggle against “contending gods”? Not in my humble opinion. Jewish monotheism, as I understand it, is compatible with pluralism because it asserts that true oneness belongs only to God and not to humans, not even to humans who speak in the name of God or any absolute truth. Oneness and truth belong to God because God is the Creator of all things and all things ultimately owe their existence to God. Since the created order, by definition, is governed by multiplicity and not unity, any attempt by creatures to impose the uniformity of a singular vision in the created world is to improperly pretend to be God, to know God’s mind, and to speak God’s truth as God knows it. That, I believe, is the mark of human hubris that underlies so many of the ethnic, political, and religious conflicts in human society. Such hubris is based on the erroneous notion that humans can, in principle, possess the entire truth. But the divine truth is infinite; it can never be exhausted by one human version of it. The divine truth is always larger, deeper, more complex, and more subtle than any one human perspective can express. When humans try to “play God,” they necessarily give what is finite, partial, and incomplete the status of the infinite, the full, and the complete. Put differently, if we allow just one, partial version of the infinite truth to dominate all others, we necessar-

ily propagate error and commit injustice by oppressing, marginalizing, or obliterating other visions of reality.

Any form of ideational coercion (religious or secular) also ignores another deep insight of Jewish monotheism: the belief that all humans are created in the divine image. Despite the radical differences between the created and the Creator, Jewish monotheism asserts that humans are, in some respect, like God. Regardless how we interpret the meaning of the “divine image” (e.g., as the human soul, the human intellect alone, or some intrinsic human worth), the belief that all humans are created by God in the image of God makes any attempt to diminish the humanity of another person or another group a sin against God. The dehumanization of others, through coercion, oppression, exploitation, abuse, torture, or marginalization are all offenses against the divine aspect of human nature. Humans commit such offenses precisely because humans are not God. The history of the human race has thus been replete with war, conflicts, suffering, torture, and injustice, because we have all failed to live up to the divine aspect in us, even though we may speak in the name of absolute truth, sacred texts, and religious authorities. It is only when we remember that all human beings are created in the image of God that we can begin to honor differences and respect the *otherness* of those who are unlike us.

Much religious intolerance over the centuries has been committed in the name of the divinely revealed status of certain truth claims. Presumably, a given religious tradition, or an interpretation thereof, has absolute status because it is revealed by God. But I maintain that a pluralistic reading of Jewish monotheism is compatible with the belief in divine revelation because, as Abraham Joshua Heschel put it, “Judaism is based upon a minimum of revelation and a maximum of interpretation, upon the will of God and upon the understanding of Israel.”<sup>30</sup> Following Martin Buber’s understanding of divine revelation as a human response to the presence of God, I, too, insist that divine revelation can be accessed only through interpretation. But the latter, alas, is a human activity subject to ambiguity and opaqueness, necessarily resulting in diversity. The rabbis themselves were aware of this principle when they distinguished between that which comes from God and that which is legislated by humans. The responses to God’s presence are always partial, incomplete, and fallible. Judaism could evolve over the centuries through the activity of interpretation, which gave rise to diverse views of the infinite truth. Any attempt to arrest the process by

claiming that one reading of Judaism is the exclusive, authentic version is, in fact, to undermine one of the main sources of Jewish survival and vitality. Judaism will continue to grow and respond to future challenges only if interpretation is kept alive, resulting, in turn, in pluralism of opinions and practices.

I have argued so far that plurality of views, perspectives, and practices is itself a mark of the created order. In the created order, things are what they are because they are limited by boundaries that mark identity: to be something, a thing must be distinguished from that which it is not. Affirmation of self, then, necessarily involves the assertion of *otherness*. There is ample psychological research, especially by the so-called “object-relation” psychologists, to support this claim. In Judaism, the necessity of boundaries is conveyed in the biblical narrative of creation. In Genesis, the world came into being as an act of separation of elements from each other: the heavens are separated from the earth, the water from dry land, vegetation from animal life, and humans from animals. Creation, then, is depicted not as an act of bringing existence from non-existence but as an act of setting limits, of delineating boundaries and asserting differences. The religious doctrine of creation sanctions difference.

The doctrine of creation (not to be confused with creationism) is at the basis of the Jewish view of reality.<sup>31</sup> From the separation between the Creator and the created, the divine and the human, or God and nature, through the separation between the holy and the profane, the permitted and the forbidden, to the separation between Israel and the nations, Judaism explicitly affirms the necessity of boundaries and the establishment of differences. The numerous commandments in regard to time, place, social relations, the body, and religious rituals all illustrate the centrality of boundaries in Jewish self-understanding. Concomitantly, sinful conduct is viewed in terms of crossing or blurring boundaries established by divine revelation (which accords with the principles that informed God’s initial act of creation). Setting things apart and treating them according to their proper status is at the core of Jewish religious conduct.

Yet boundaries, as we have seen in the historical survey of the Jewish past, do not exclude interaction. Let me explore this idea on theological grounds. In a creation-based belief system, what could be more *other* than God? Jewish monotheism asserts that the Creator God is the *Wholly Other*, Who is unlike anything else. In the Middle Ages, Jewish philosophers further explained how the oneness of God is different



from the unity of discrete things and how God is both unique and unknowable. Notwithstanding the radical difference between God and the created world, the God of Judaism is not only transcendent but also imminent in the world that He created. God is present in some way both in the natural world and in human history, so that a relationship with the Creator God is possible. Moreover, the belief that God revealed His Will in the form of the Torah is the way in which Judaism makes it clear that humans can interact with God. In other words, even radical difference, such as the difference between God and created humans, does not exclude relationship. In fact, in the mystical strand of Judaism, the Kabbalah, God's *otherness* demands interaction with non-divine reality, especially human beings. According to the Kabbalah, imperfection and disharmony are not only the mark of the created order, they are also a feature of divine reality. And it is only the joint effort of God and humans that can redeem reality (individual, social, cosmic, and divine) from its inherent imperfection. But one need not go to Kabbalah to find the Jewish insistence on the interdependence of God and humanity; it is a basic feature of the Jewish understanding of religious worship.

Yet all versions of Jewish theology insist that redemption belongs to the remote future of the Messianic Age and not to the present. The ideal cannot be realized in time-space; it can only be approximated.<sup>32</sup> Jewish worship in all its diverse forms is thus an ongoing effort to attain closeness to God while recognizing that, until the Messianic Age, such closeness is at best momentary and temporary. Even a mystical experience, which some outstanding personalities clearly aspired to attain, cannot overcome the limitations of the created order. Until the Messianic Age, Jews live in an unredeemed, though not unredeemable, world. Jewish action in the created, spatio-temporal order is geared to make the world a better place to live because it is more suitable for the presence of God. Jewish action in the moral-social sphere, such as feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and caring for the sick, cannot in and of itself, redeem the world, because human action is, by definition, partial, limited, and incomplete. This is why the Jews could not and cannot accept the claims of Christianity and why all messianic contenders in Jewish history have been proven to be false messiahs. That human reality is not yet redeemed is also suggested by the failure of modern Zionism and secular ideologies, such as socialism, to deliver the Jews and/or humanity from the condition of imperfection. All utopian agendas, which assert success in the here and now, are going

to be proven a failure in the created order. From a Jewish perspective, they constitute a form of idolatry. If so, then the divine must remain an ideal that inspires humans to be better, not an ideal already actualized in time-space.

### C. Religion and Political Power

Plurality of religious views, perspectives, and practices is thus the mark of an unredeemed world, a world that is governed by finitude, uncertainty, and ambiguity rather than by triumphalist uniformity. In practice, pluralism means that individuals, social groups, and nations must all learn to limit their appetite for power and curb their desire for domination or expansion. Asking humans to exercise self-control so that others can exist is clearly in the interest of the powerless. Indeed, I advocate limits on power precisely because I am familiar with the political powerlessness of the Jews for two millennia. But what about those who already possess power? Could they willingly give it up in order to accommodate pluralism?

The Jewish experience in history can be used as a basis for reflections on the meaning of political power. Like all things in the created order, political power is at best temporary, if not entirely illusory. Empires, states, governments, bureaucracies, and social institutions all come and go, subject to the process of change; none remains powerful forever. The lesson of history, especially Jewish history, is that more often than not it is in the interest of the temporarily powerful to allow the *Other* not only to exist but to thrive. On the basis of Jewish history, one can make a strong argument that a political structure in which differences are allowed to be expressed rather than squashed will last longer than one in which uniformity is enforced. But to allow diverse groups to exist requires that members of a polity create laws and political structures that curb the power of the state or ruler. Limited power, as is advocated by the democratic vision, cannot be established merely through self-restraint on the part of the powerful; it requires laws to enforce and protect the interests of the powerless.

The history of the Jews captures the problematical relationship between pluralism and political power. On the one hand, Jewish culture could thrive without political power, especially when Jews lived in multi-ethnic and multi-religious polities. But on the other hand, Jewish political powerlessness also had a high price attached to it: not only could defenseless Jews be easy prey to their enemies, Jews could

easily lose their self-esteem and pride and incorporate the negative perception of the others into their own self-understanding. Jewish persistent self-hatred is one of the heavy costs that Jews paid for their powerlessness. Regaining political power was, therefore, a necessity for Jews in the modern period.

In the state of Israel, as we have seen, the Jews had to come to terms with the presence of a large Arab minority, itself religiously diverse, as well as with the burning nationalist self-definition of the Arab population. The victims of the past now possess political power, which can be used either justly or unjustly. Being a victim in the past does not preclude being a victimizer in the present. The occupation of the territories that Israel conquered in 1967 in a war imposed on it by Arab neighbors has been posing the most difficult challenge to Jews. Abuses of power, which only galvanized Palestinian nationalism, have seriously damaged the moral integrity of Israelis. This lesson is now understood by larger segments of Israeli society, and it is very possible that, under the current government, the road will be paved for separating the two nations so that Israel will not oppress the Palestinians and they, in turn, will not attempt to undermine Israel's existence. How to achieve this political separation is indeed very complicated, but I believe that, in principle, it is the setting of clear boundaries that could bring about the end to abuse.

The other challenge to the modern state of Israel pertains to the nature of democracy. In the pre-modern world, religious pluralism could sometimes be maintained within a hierarchical structure. Each religious minority could conduct itself by its own laws with the personal status of individuals derived from membership in a well-defined religious group. While hierarchies are compatible with religious pluralism, it is important to remember that the minority is always viewed as inferior (both in theory and in practice) and that it is precisely that inferiority which modern democratic principles have challenged. Though democracy may be more *just* in theory, democracy (at least in the particular version of the European Enlightenment) also undermines the self-definition of the group. This has been the lesson of the Emancipation of the Jews, who were expected to disintegrate as a group once they received citizenship in a modern democracy. How religious groups can continue to retain their differences in a democratic structure is the challenge for the twenty-first century. The American solution to the problem was the separation of state and religion, but that model itself emerged out of a Christian understanding of religion

which does not cohere with the corporate structure of other religions such as Judaism. Still, Jews in fact have managed to flourish in the modern world, especially in America, in part resisting total assimilation because of the existence of the state of Israel. In the state of Israel, the tension between democratic pluralism and traditional Judaism is now felt most acutely, both in the interaction between the various factions in Israel and in regard to the Arab minority. Israel is now a house divided and only time will tell whether it will articulate a pluralistic vision which allows for diverse readings of Judaism to coexist along with Christian and Islamic minorities. Let me explore now how this challenge could be addressed on the basis of the religious teachings of Judaism.

#### D. The Limits of Pluralism

If pluralism expresses a deep-seated truth about the human condition, does that imply that pluralism is an absolute value? I don't think so. Pluralism is an instrumental good, but not an absolute good. Although a world that allows for more visions, ways of life, and habits of the heart is better than a world in which this is not allowed, it does not mean that pluralism should be unlimited. Pluralism is limited by morality and by truth. Views or practices which expressly call for the elimination of the *Other* (as Nazism called for the extermination of the Jews) or for the subjugation of the *Other* (as racist ideologies in the United States and in apartheid South Africa have advocated) are both morally wrong and untrue. They are morally wrong because they compromise (to say the least) the humanity of those who are declared inferior, and what they claim about the *Other* to legitimize discrimination and oppression is factually untrue (i.e., Jews are not a sub-human species; blacks are not naturally inferior to whites).

To declare a given viewpoint untrue implies that the truth-value of various claims, including those uttered in the name of God, can be taken to task by rational humans. Pluralism does not mean that humans have to give up their ability to pass judgment on various truth claims. This is not to glorify human rationality nor is it to equate humanity with the ability to think. Rather, it is to say that humans have a responsibility to employ their thinking capacity and not to accept certain teachings as true when they are patently false. The obligation to exercise rationality is acute in our generation due to the proliferation of sophisticated advertisements that easily manipulate human

limitations. As the Nazis understood so well, manipulating public opinion and creating false myths have become much easier with the technological advances of the twentieth century. The horrendous history of racism, of which the Jews have been major, though not the only, victims, places on humans the obligation to differentiate between truth and false claims so as to protect intrinsic human dignity and worth. Pluralism, then, need not result in epistemic relativism. As faulty and limited as it is, human reasoning can make reasonable separation between what is true and what is false in a large segment of human experience. The reliance on reason has been the major strategy of self-defense Jews have employed in their polemics against non-Jews; it should now be employed in internal Jewish polemics.

### E. Judaism and the Challenges of Globalization

Where does this all leave us as far as globalization is concerned? With the technological advances of the twentieth century and the breakdown of national boundaries, our world has become smaller and smaller, forcing groups, ideologies, and traditions to come to terms with each other. The shrinking of the world and the proliferation of sophisticated technology make us all more vulnerable to conflicts that could easily destroy not only the feuding parties but also large segments of world population—as well as the physical environment that makes life on this planet feasible. Globalization would be a positive process that leads to world peace only if it allows for diversity, only if it allows for pluralism of opinions, styles, cultures, ideologies, and practices. Preserving differences can be compatible with listening to one another, honoring differences, and allowing the *Other* to flourish, **if we so wish**. But to do so, religions, nations, ideologies, and individuals will all have to exercise the virtue of self-restraint. They will have to curb the scope of their claims without giving up their own identity. Humbly coming to terms with the limits of human created existence and avoiding the temptation of arrogance, we must allow for those who are different from us not only to exist next to us but also to thrive. In the created, finite, incomplete, and unredeemed world, we have no choice but to follow the words of Leviticus 19: 26: “*ve-ahavta le-reakha kamokha* (love your neighbor as you love yourself).” But to love the *Other* and make the *Other* our brother, we must first know who we are. For me, as a Jew, a historian of Judaism, and a Jewish theologian, this

knowledge comes from the affirmation of the link to the past, especially the past of the Jewish people.

It is as a Jew that I speak against the dangers that face a world governed by transnational corporations whose major concern is the maximization of profit. The transnational world will be, most likely, less prone to global wars (since they jeopardize the interests of the transnational corporation) but it is also a world in which human diversity is seriously threatened as local customs, traditions, and sensibilities are obliterated in the name of corporate materialism. In this environment, being human is equated with possession of material goods from which one can derive comfort and pleasure. This is a dangerously simplistic understanding of "human" against which Judaism, as well as other religious traditions, speak most forcefully. Judaism reminds us that while bodily pleasures are good in themselves, they must not be made into the ultimate end of human life. Our full humanity can be expressed not when we exclusively pursue material pleasures but when we devote ourselves to the worship of God within which bodily joy has a legitimate place. As Judaism has spoken truth to earthly powers in the past, it must now speak truth to transnational corporations, resisting their campaign to impose on the global village a shallow form of commodity-centered "happiness." Judaism can and must remind us all that human well-being involves much more than material comfort and that neither profit nor efficiency are ultimate human values. Judaism and other religious traditions, each in their own unique way, remind us where we come from and what human life is really about. Let us remember these lessons as we move to face the challenges of the "global moment." ●

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## Notes

1. There is extensive literature on the process of globalization. My presentation of the process and my general negative stance toward it are indebted to the essays in *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn Toward the Local*, edited by Jerry Mander and Edward Goldsmith (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1996). For a more positive portrayal of globalization and the argument that globalization is conducive to world peace and standards of human rights, consult Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree: Understanding Globalization* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1998).
2. For an account of biblical covenantal theology, consult D. J. McCarthy, *Old Testament Covenant* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1973); D. R. Hillers, *Covenant: The History of a Biblical Idea* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University, 1969); E. E. Mendenhall, "Covenant" in *The Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1 (1962).

3. For a succinct account of the rise of rabbinic Judaism, consult Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1986).
4. The dialectics of the covenant is spelled out most clearly in Deuteronomy 8: 1–20. It serves as the organizing principle of Israelite historiography in the Books of Judges and I and II Kings and serves as the justification for the rebukes of the prophets.
5. In the Bible, the status of the resident aliens is set on par with orphans, widows, and the poor, all of whom are economically marginal. Biblical laws specify that these groups are entitled to gather gleaning and forgotten sheaves left in the field after reaping (Leviticus 23: 22, Deuteronomy 24: 29); that they be paid *just wages* (Deuteronomy 24: 14); that they not be oppressed (Exodus 22: 20); that they be given a share of the tithes (Deuteronomy 14: 29); that they be able to share in the festival of rejoicing (Deuteronomy 16: 11, 14); and that justice not be perverted where they are concerned (Deuteronomy 24: 17, 27: 19).
6. Midrash ha-Gadol in Leviticus 19: 34.
7. The seven Noachide commandments are mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud Yoma 67b and other places. Some Talmudic sources regard them as the basis for a natural standard of morality and justice (Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 56a–59b; Tosefta Avodah Zarah 8:4). For an analysis of the Seven Noachide laws and the status of the resident alien in Judaism, consult David Novak, *The Image of the Non-Jew in Judaism: An Historical and Constructive Study of the Noachide Laws* (New York and Toronto, 1983).
8. In Midrash ha-Gadol in Leviticus 19: 34, the rabbinic source states: “the stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens, you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”
9. See Avot de-Rabbi Nathan, Chapter 35.
10. On the rather complex perception of the Jews in the ancient world, see Louis H. Feldman, *Jews and Gentile in the Ancient World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
11. For an overview of Jewish status in the Middle Ages, consult Mark R. Cohen, *Under the Crescent and Cross* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).
12. For a detailed account of the evolution of Jewish status in Christendom, consult Kenneth R. Stow, *Alienated Minority: The Jews of Medieval Latin Europe* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1992).
13. This argument is best explained in Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews: The Origins of Modern Anti-Semitism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1968).
14. The internal tensions between the logic of the Emancipation and Judaism are explored by Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973).
15. Heinrich Heine made the famous statement: “The baptismal certificate is the ticket of admission to European culture.” See Hugo Bieber, *Heinrich Heine: A Biographical Anthology*, trans. M. Hadas (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1956), 157. Excerpted in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Judah Reinharz, *The Jew in the Modern World: a Documentary History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 259.
16. The history of Reform Judaism is recounted in Michael Meyer, *Responses to Modernity: A History of the Reform Movement in Judaism* (New York: Oxford, 1988).

17. See David Ellenson, "German Jewish Orthodoxy: Tradition in the Context of Culture," in *The Uses of Tradition: Jewish Continuity in the Modern Era*, Jack Wertheimer, ed. (New York and Jerusalem: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1992), 5–22.
18. The reason for the rise of Ultra-Orthodoxy and its constructive use of the concept of "tradition" are explored by Michael Silber, *The Uses of Tradition*, pp. 23–84. For a fuller treatment of the subject, see Jacob Katz, *A House Divided: Orthodoxy and Schism in Nineteenth-Century Central European Jewry*, trans. Zipora Brody (Boston: Brandeis University Press, 1999).
19. For an overview of Conservative Judaism, consult Neil Gillman, *Conservative Judaism* (New York: Behrman House, 1993).
20. For an excellent survey of the history of Zionism and the relevant primary sources, consult Arthur Hertzberg, *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, rev. edition (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1997).
21. For an analysis of the paradox, see Sholomo Avineri, *The Making of Modern Zionism: The Intellectual Origins of the Jewish State* (New York: Basic Books, 1981).
22. *Ibid.*, 88–101.
23. This so-called "cultural Zionism" was most rigorously argued by the Russian Zionist, Asher Ginzburg, known by the pen name of "Ahad Ha-am" (literally, "one of the people"). For his vision of Zionism, consult Avineri, pp. 112–124.
24. Max Nordau (1849–1923), a physician, literary critic, and novelist, was a friend and associate of Herzl. He coined the term "muscular Jews" (*muskel Juden*) in the opening address he delivered, in June 1903, during the Second Zionist Congress. The relevant passages are excerpted in Paul Mendes-Flohr and Judah Reinharz, eds., *The Jew in the Modern World*, pp. 547–48.
25. On Jewish involvement in the European socialist movement, see Robert Wistrich: *Socialism and the Jews: The Dilemmas of Assimilation in Germany and Austria-Hungary* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1982).
26. This solution was articulated by Nahman Syrkin (1867–1924). For analysis of his position, consult Avineri, *Modern Zionism*, pp. 125–38.
27. Zionist historiographers are now engaged in a heated debate about the place of Arab nationalism in the emergence of the state of Israel and Zionist self-understanding. For a revisionist perspective of Zionism, consult Avi Shlaim, *Collusion Over the Jordan* (New York, 1988); Ilan Pape, *Britain and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 1948–1951* (London, 1988); Simha Flapan, *The Birth of Israel* (New York, 1987); and Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem: 1947–1949* (Cambridge, 1988).
28. Jewish presence in Islamic countries has radically dwindled since the establishment of the state of Israel. In Iraq, where there were about 150,000 Jews in 1948, only 70 remain today. In Syria, there are about 300 Jews, in Lebanon about 80, in Jordan, Egypt, and Yemen fewer still. In Saudi Arabia and Yemen, Jews don't appear in official counts. In Morocco, which had about 300,000 Jews in 1948, about 6,000 remain. In Algeria, which saw 115,000 Jews emigrate hastily to France at Independence in 1962, the count is down to a few hundred. In Tunisia, which counted 105,000 Jews in 1950, there are no more than 2,500. In Libya, where a 1931 census counted 24,500 Jews, one recent count put the number of Jews remaining at 5. In Turkey, a community of 90,000 in 1948 has shrunk to less than a quarter of that now.



29. The internal contradictions of Zionism, especially the tension between modern democratic principles and the nationalist agenda, are brought out by Bernard Avishai, *The Tragedy of Zionism: Revolution and Democracy in the Land of Israel* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985).
30. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1955), 274.
31. See Norbert Samuelson, *Judaism and the Doctrine of Creation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).
32. This understanding of the Jewish messianic ideal is indebted to the views of Hermann Cohen, the Neo-Kantian German Jewish philosopher, and his twentieth century followers. The most passionate argument in favor of a prescriptive understanding of Jewish messianism was offered by Steven Schwarzchild. See Steven Schwarzchild, "On Jewish Eschatology," in *The Pursuit of the Ideal: Jewish Writings of Steven Schwarzchild*, Menachem Kellner, ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1990), 209–28.